

Big and Little Sisters eBook

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CHAPTER I.

It was a Saturday morning in December at the Indian Mission School. Two young Sioux girls were going up the stairs—Hannah Straight Tree and Cordelia Running Bird. It was their Saturday for cleaning. The two girls drew a heavy breath in prospect of the difficult task that confronted them. The great unplastered mission building was a chilly place throughout the winter, and the halls and stairway that morning were drafty from the blustering wind that swept the Dakota plains and came through the outer doors below, where restless children kept going to and fro continually. The young hall-girls shivered on the upper landing, and stepped back in a sheltered niche in which the brooms were hanging. They had thrown their aprons over their heads and shoulders, and were dreading to begin their work.

“My floor and stairs always look nicer than your floor and stairs,” said Hannah Straight Tree to Cordelia Running Bird.

“Because you have the teachers’ side, and that’s always nicer, to begin with, than the girls’ side,” answered Cordelia Running Bird. “You know the teachers never walk whole-feet when you are scrubbing. If they have to go by, they walk tiptoe, and their toes are sharp and clean and do not make big tracks. But all the children on my side walk whole-feet over the wet floor when I am scrubbing, and their shoes are big and muddy. Ugh! big tracks they make! But I have learned the motto, every word, and I can speak that when I feel discouraged with my work.” Cordelia Running Bird gazed at the motto, while the dormitory girls flocked by, and when the hall was quiet she repeated it in the peculiar monotonous tone with which an Indian pupil usually recites:

“Those who faithfully perform the task of keeping clean the dark places, the cold places and the rough places, are they to whom it may indeed be said, ‘Well done.’”

“I shall not try to learn the motto, for it makes my memory tired,” said Hannah Straight Tree. “I do not like to think hard or work hard. I am glad I have the teachers’ side.”

“If you do not think hard you will have a heart that is a dark place, like the scrub-pail closet, and it will be hard to keep it clean of wrong thoughts, like the white mother talked about in Sunday-school. The motto means inside of us as well as places where we live. I like to think hard,” said Cordelia Running Bird. “I heard the teacher tell the white mother that I had the best memory of any middle-sized girl, and she said it was as good as many white girls’ memories of my age, and that is ’most fourteen. So I am to speak the longest middle-sized piece in the Christmas entertainment.”

“Ee!” cried Hannah Straight Tree, “hear her brag because she has a white memory! If the teacher praised me, I should be ashamed to tell it!”



“She will not praise you, for you are always very dumb in school. You will not try to speak a lesson only with the class in concert,” said Cordelia Running Bird. “I shall try to finish very fast this morning. There are only two more Saturdays till Christmas, and today I want to feather-stitch the little new blue dress for Susie. She will wear it every day when she is here Christmas. Many white and Indian visitors will be here.”



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“And you will feel so proud because the visitors and the school will look at Susie, and the middle-sized and little girls will always choose her in the games. They would not choose my little sister if she played,” said Hannah Straight Tree, with a sudden downcast look.

“Dolly is so shy I do not know if she would go into the middle of the ring if they should choose her, and she would not know the way to choose back,” answered Cordelia Running Bird.

“Ee! She would! She would!” disputed Hannah Straight Tree. “Dolly is as brave and smart as Susie—smarter, too, for she is shorter! She could play the games if I would let her!”

“But you will not,” replied the other; “you must not scold about my little sister. Susie knows the motions in the Jack Frost song so well the teachers says that she can motion with the children in the Christmas entertainment.”

“She does not motion right,” said Hannah Straight Tree. “She gets behind, and when they sing:

“He nips little children on the nose,
He pinches little children on the toes,
He pulls little children by the ears,
And brings to their eyes the big, round tears,”

she is only nipping her nose when the rest are pulling their ears.”

“But she is so little she looks cute, and the visitors and school will laugh at her and praise her,” said Cordelia Running Bird, undismayed. “She will not wear the blue dress in the Jack Frost song. She will wear a red dress from my mission box. I asked the white mother if I could not buy the red cloth for an entertainment dress for Susie with the money that she paid because I tended baby one month till the nurse-girl came. And she said if I wished I could put a nickel on the missionary plate twenty Sundays, which would be one dollar, and so buy the cloth. She said it would be teaching me to give, as well as to receive. She keeps the nickel with the school pennies, and I take one every Sunday.”

“And you lift your hand so high and drop the nickel very too loud, so all the school can hear, when Amy Swimmer passes you the plate!” cried Hannah Straight Tree. “Just like it says, ‘Ee! I am putting on a nickel, and the rest can only give one penny! And I earned my money, and the pennies are money that their people sent them.’”

“You are very jealous,” was the calm reply. “I shall hire a large girl to cut it fine and help make the red dress very fast. The sewing teacher has not time for such dresses. Ver-



y pr-r-etty it will look!” Cordelia Running Bird smiled prospectively, displaying small white teeth and two round dimples. “Christmas evening I shall curl Susie’s hair with a slate pencil, and she will wear fine shoes, and black stockings with the red dress. My father brought them with the blue dress, and I keep them in my cupboard.”



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“You are much vain because your father is an agency policeman and earns money, so he buys nice things for Susie,” Hannah Straight Tree said, with growing envy. “Dolly has to wear the issue goods, and she will not look pretty Christmas time! Her dress will be a kind that looks black, and Lucinda only knows a way to make it look like an Indian dress. She will wear cowskin shoes so much too large, and very ugly-colored stockings. If her dress gets torn before she comes, Lucinda will not mend it nice—only draw it up so puckery. Very lots of grease spots will be on it, and her hair will be so snarly I shall have to comb her very fast.”

“My little sister is not torn and dirty any time,” said Cordelia Running Bird, “for my mother came to mission school when she was young and learned the neat way.”

“My big sister only went to camp school just a little while,” said Hannah Straight Tree. “When my mother died she had to stay at home and work and keep my little sister. Now again my father has got married, and Lucinda wants to come to school and bring my little sister. Dolly was five birthdays last Thanksgiving dinner.”

“Susie was five birthdays while I was at home vacation. I would be so glad if she could stay at school next time she comes, but she was sliding on the ice, and she fell and broke herself right here.” Cordelia touched her collarbone. “She is mended, but my mother is afraid to leave her with the children now,” she added. “But next year she will leave her. If your big and little sister come to school they will have nice mission things.”

“But they cannot for my father,” Hannah Straight Tree said, with deepening gloom. “He would let Lucinda, but he says Dolly is too short; she must be ten birthdays when she comes. Lucinda loves Dolly, so she will not leave her, and my stepmother is cross-tempered. Lucinda will be twenty-one birthdays—much too old to come to school—when Dolly is ten birthdays.”

“You can tell your father the teachers like the Indian children come to school when they are very short, so they can grow them more white-minded,” said Cordelia Running Bird.

“I told him, but he says he does not want his children very white-minded. He says I came to school so short that they have grown me too white-minded. I tell him I am very Indian-minded, but he tells me I do not know white from Indian. Lucinda is so sad she will not try. She looks so horrid—Dolly, too—I am much ashamed of them. I shall not speak to them before the white visitors and the teachers—only down at camp.”

“Then you will be very wrong,” said Cordelia Running Bird. “I would not be ashamed to speak to my own people anywhere.”



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“Ee! You talk so good because your father wears a grand policeman’s coat and trousers, and your mother’s head is in a hood!” said Hannah Straight Tree, excitedly. “My father wears a very funny Indian clothes, and feathers in his hairs, and my big sister’s head is in a shawl. All the girls will say on Christmas, ‘Susie looked just like a fairy in the Jack Frost song. We shall give her very lots of candy from our Christmas bags.’ Dolly knows the Jack Frost motions; I taught her, and she did them with the children down at camp. But I shall not tell the teacher, for Dolly has no pretty things to wear. That is why I won’t let her play the games. If my father saw her in the Jack Frost songs and games, he would be glad she is so smart and just like he would let her come to school. But you would be so sorry if my big and little sister came to school. You think Susie is a skin-white girl and Dolly is a very copper-colored Indian.”

“You do not speak true,” was the denial. “I should not be sorry, and I do not think Susie is a skin-white girl. She is very copper-colored, too.”

“But you do not wish Dolly would be in the Jack Frost song and wear a red dress just like Susie’s!” challenged Hannah Straight Tree, disconcerting her companion with the piercing gaze habitual to her race.

Though not quite innocent of all the charges laid to her, Cordelia Running Bird was a truthful girl, and she would not disown a failing plainly set before her by another. She evaded her companion’s gaze in silence.

“You are thinking hard! You cannot say it!” was the fierce indictment from Hannah Straight Tree.

“But—I wish she could be in another motion song—and wear a—green dress,” came the hesitating answer.

“Ee! You think they would not watch Susie all the time if Dolly motioned Jack Frost, too, and looked like Susie! And you do not wish that Dolly had a blue dress—only ugly green—and looked like Susie in the games,” said Hannah Straight Tree.

“But little white girls do not need to wear alike dresses,” was Cordelia Running Bird’s argument. “Because the little white visitor last summer looked just like a fairy in the pretty pink with white lace, did her sister have to wish another little white girl looked the very too same?” she asked.

“There is a difference, but I cannot tell,” answered Hannah Straight Tree, taking down her broom in puzzled moodiness.

The two girls went about their work in a most unfortunate state of mind. Hannah’s discontent at Dolly’s lack and Susie’s plenty, and the prospect of Cordelia’s triumphs



through the petted little sister, grew upon her, and resulted in unlooked-for trials to Cordelia, who was much discomfited by the force of her companion's criticisms.

Cordelia Running Bird was a bright, attractive girl, quite conscientious in discharging her industrial and school duties, and much interested in the Sunday-school; but in a private talk the very day before, the teachers had referred to her in some perplexity.



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“I wish Cordelia Running Bird were a little different,” said the school-teacher. “She leads her class, and is a credit to the school in most respects, but she is rather too ambitious to outdo others. It creates jealousy.”

“I have observed that she is notional in the making of her dresses,” said the sewing teacher. “She is apt to want the skirt a little wider and the hem a half-inch deeper than the regular uniform. And she asks to have more buttonholes, which means more buttons, and an extra ruffle on the waist. But she begs me so politely and appears so thankful, if I grant these trifling favors, that I find myself indulging her too frequently. She does the extra work herself, cheerfully and neatly, if not speedily, but closely watched by others. She has learned as if by intuition that variety is the spice of life, but she seems unconscious of the fact that she makes the other girls discontented. But she is so pleasant and obedient, as a rule, that minor faults may be forgiven her,” the white mother charitably concluded.

CHAPTER II.

As something quite unusual at that season in the Dakotas, there had been a thaw the day before, and a great quantity of mud had been tracked in on the girls' side by the sewing classes coming from the schoolhouse, separate from the main mission building, to the upstairs room in which the sewing work was done.

Hannah Straight Tree quickly swept her portion of the hall, for there was but little mud on the teachers' side, and was proceeding to her stairs before Cordelia Running Bird was half way along her floor.

“You have not taken up your dirt! You have swept it over on my side!” exclaimed Cordelia Running Bird, who, with all her close attention to her own work, kept a sharp eye on the other's movements.

“There is little, and it will not be much work to take it up with yours,” was Hannah's reply. “When we finished yesterday I lent our dustpan to the middle dormitory girls—they said theirs was too broken—and they lost it. Now they say they can borrow the south dormitory dustpan, and they shall not hunt ours. You can always find things better than I can, so you must hunt it and take up my dirt,” was Hannah Straight Tree's demand.

“Tokee! How strange you talk!” exclaimed Cordelia Running Bird, in amazement. “The dormitory girls must ask for a new dustpan if they break theirs. It is not the rule to lend things, for it makes confusion; if you lent the dustpan you must find it and take up your dirt, for I have more to do than you. It is Number 8, and you can tell it when you see it.”



“You are very cross as well as proud and vain—and you have learned the motto, every word. If I had learned the motto I should try to be good,” said Hannah Straight Tree.

“The motto does not say a girl can tell us we must do a work that is not ours, and we must mind her. I shall sweep your dirt back,” was the warm reply.



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Cordelia Running Bird gave her broom a sudden push and sent the sweepings flying backward in a cloud.

“Now look how mean you are! Again I have to sweep my floor!” cried Hannah Straight Tree, angrily. “Proud—vain—cross—mean!” She counted the four failings on her fingers.

“Not the least bit do I care,” replied Cordelia Running Bird, stung beyond endurance by Hannah’s taunts. “I was not cross at first, but now I am, because you call me four bad names. I am now glad your little sister cannot play the games, or motion in one song, or even have an ugly green dress. I am not sorry that your big and little sister cannot come to school, and very much I wish I had not learned the motto.”

Here the young Sioux girl, who was compelled to battle with hereditary pride and stubbornness in every effort to do right, forgot the white mother’s admonition that the heart might be a dark place and a cold place needing to be cleansed of evil thoughts.

Hannah Straight Tree did not hunt the dustpan, but with perseverance worthy of a better cause, she brushed the sweepings from her floor and stairs upon a ragged palm-leaf fan which she discovered in a corner, and, dropping them into the scrub-pail, took them out of doors. Cordelia brought a shoe-box from her cupboard in the playroom and applied it as an inconvenient dustpan. Meanwhile dustpan Number 8 remained in the darkest corner of the middle dormitory closet, where it had been pushed in the rush of clearing up the day before.

Cordelia Running Bird’s work of making clean her floor and stairs was even harder than she had expected. Never had there seemed so many errands to and fro by those who did the weekly cleaning in the three dormitories, numbering quite a force. The thaw had ended in a freezing snow squall in the night, but a sufficient quantity of mud was clinging to the broad soles of the government shoes that tramped across Cordelia’s wet floor to insure a startling trail of footprints.

“I cannot keep them up, they come again so fast,” she murmured to herself in grim despair, while wringing out her mop-rag to attack a line of tracks imprinted by the largest girl in school, in going to and from the laundry to dispose of laid-off sheets and pillow-cases. “*Ver-ry hor-r-i-d* pictures of the ugly issue shoes. I will not wear them. I am wearing kid store shoes my father buys for every day. The dormitory girls are shovel-footed, and I Wish they could not walk one step—only lie in bed!”

She was overheard by Hannah Straight Tree, coming up the girls’ stairs at that moment. Hannah’s own work had been done with little difficulty, and she had obtained permission to help the middle dormitory girls, for reasons all her own.



The reckless speech was repeated to the dormitory girls by Hannah Straight Tree, much to their displeasure.

“The dormitory girls are shovel-footed, and she wishes they could not walk one step, only lie in bed!” exclaimed the largest girl, sitting down on a straw-tick to discuss the matter. “Then we should be cripples, and, tokee! how many cripples there would be!”

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“If they came from both the other dormitories into this to lie down with the middle dormitory girls, there would be one cripple in each bed, and in one there would be two cripples,” said a broom girl, who was quite expert at figures, having studied on the problem with the aid of broom-straws representing cripples.

This portrayal of the startling situation, if Cordelia Running Bird’s wish could be fulfilled, increased the shock of indignation in the dormitories.

“Ee!” cried one, “we hate the ugly government shoes, of course, and wish that we could wear the nice shoes from our mission boxes every day. But we cannot, only Sundays—and we have to change them after Sunday-school—and when we wear our best clothes for white visitors. Cordelia Running Bird will not wear the government shoes because her father is an agency policeman, and can buy store shoes for every day.”

“I was always much ashamed of my big feet, and now I am more ashamed,” complained the largest girl. “If the dormitory girls are shovel-footed, every large girl in this school is shovel-footed.”

“Cordelia was very cross about the dustpan, too, but we can pay her back,” said Hannah Straight Tree, adding fresh fuel to the fire.

“Now I shall not show her how to feather-stitch the little blue dress,” said the largest girl, who was quite famous at embroidery, and had partly promised to instruct Cordelia Running Bird in her work that day.

“And I shall not help her make the little red dress, as she will be wanting me next week,” resolved a south dormitory bed girl, Emma Two Bears, who was standing in the doorway. Emma was the most experienced dressmaker of the large girls’ class and was generous, as a rule, in helping younger girls. “I am sorry now that I cut and made the little blue waist, but I did not think she would so soon be wishing me a cripple.”

“And you need not praise the little blue and red dresses if she gets them done; but I am sure she cannot,” gloried Hannah Straight Tree.

“Ee! We will not. We will call them ugly issue goods,” said one of the girls.

“Or watch her little sister in the Jack Frost song,” said another.

“We will shut our eyes!” exclaimed another.

“And the middle-sized and short girls need not choose Susie in the games,” came from another.

“We will tell them not to. They will choose Dolly,” cried a fifth.



“But Dolly looks so horrid, I am much ashamed of her,” was Hannah Straight Tree’s answer.

Cordelia Running Bird heard the fierce discussion through the open door, near which she knelt at work, and the bitter tears ran down her face.

When at length her work was done as well as she was able, and the last stair wiped, she went back upstairs on tiptoe to inspect her floor and see if it was dry. She was met by Hannah Straight Tree on the upper landing, carrying a pail of scrub water, mixed with ashes, from the dormitory. Hannah set it on the top stair, and then glanced wickedly at Cordelia through half-closed eyes that meant mischief.



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“What if I should tip it over?” she said.

“Ee! You must not. It would freeze, and I should have to scald my hands with too hot water, thawing it!” exclaiming Cordelia Running Bird, rushing to prevent her.

In her haste to keep the pail from being overturned Cordelia hit it with her foot, upsetting it herself. The stairs were deluged with the contents, Hannah Straight Tree fell back with a laugh. “Now see what you have done yourself! I did not spill one drop. You cannot say I did.”

Cordelia Running Bird burst into upbraiding exclamations in Dakota, which, because they wished them to learn to speak English, was a forbidden language in the school except on Sundays and on holidays. By an odd mishap of memory, Cordelia was apt to break the rule in moments of excitement, and she knew the penalty too well.

“Now you have talked Dakota, and you must report yourself,” Hannah Straight Tree said triumphantly. “You wished the dormitory girls would have to lie in bed—now you must lie in bed yourself. You cannot feather-stitch or speak to anyone.”

The unclean water froze upon the stairs, and Cordelia Running Bird’s work of thawing it with hot water was a long and painful process. When it was accomplished, though but poorly, she went upstairs a second time, passing through the front hall to the white mother’s room to report that she had spoken in Dakota.

“Again, Cordelia? How can you forget so often?” said the young white mother in a seriously inquiring tone.

The little Indian girl’s excitement had now given place to discouragement. She was silent for some time, then she murmured an original defense.

“The cross thoughts come in Indian, and I speak them out that way. Che-cha (hateful) means much more in Indian than in English. Dakota is my own language, and it tells me how to scold just right.”

“No, dear, just wrong,” was the reply. Then looking at the draggled little figure with head drooped moodily and smarting hands locked tightly at the sides, the white mother added, “You have had a cold, hard time this morning in the hall, I know. Have you been cross about your work?” The gentle voice invited confidence, but it did not melt Cordelia Running Bird.

“Yes, ma’am. I was very cross at Hannah Straight Tree and the dormitory girls. I called the dormitory girls a name, and then a pail of very dirty water was tipped over on my stairs, so again I had to clean them, and I screamed at Hannah Straight Tree in Dakota.”

“Did Hannah tip it over?”



“No, ma’am, I tipped it over.”

With all her sense of injury, Cordelia Running Bird would not tell tales to divide the blame.

The white mother saw that there was more than she knew of connected with the trouble in the hall, but seeing that the race mood was upon Cordelia, she forbore all further questions.

“It has often been explained that if the older pupils spoke Dakota very much the little ones would speak it, too, and not learn English as they should,” she said. “I’m sorry that the cross thoughts caused you to forget, Cordelia Running Bird.”



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"I am very cross now," said Cordelia, fearing her confession might be misconstrued as a repentance. "I have enemies that I am hating very hard. I shall be thinking Indian thoughts about them while I lie in bed."

"I hope the cross thoughts will leave you if you lie in bed, where you can be alone, and try to drive them out. I will send your dinner to the dormitory," said the white mother.

"I cannot eat one bite for many days. I wish to starve," Cordelia Running Bird said, as she turned away.

CHAPTER III.

The girls had finished working in the dormitories and had gone below. Cordelia Running Bird was relieved that she would not have to meet them and endure such looks as they might give, though not allowed to speak to her.

Going to her corner in the south dormitory, she put on her nightgown and crept into bed. She hid her head beneath the blankets to shut out the sounds below, in which she was to have no part for several hours.

But though Cordelia Running Bird was in solitude, her sharp ears caught the noise of romping children in the playroom, and the frequent dropping of the sliding-doors upon the narrow individual cupboards, indicating an excessive rummaging of shelves. Cordelia knew full well the prying habits of the Indian children.

"I am glad I have the red dress in my trunk, but they will meddle with my other things and look at Susie's blue dress, and then roll it up in such bad wrinkles," she said to herself. "Just like they will drop a skein of feather-stitching silk and tramp it with their feet till it is very dirty. Then some girl will pick it up to sew her doll clothes, and there will not be enough for Susie's dress."

Cordelia Running Bird held her breath as these thoughts came to her.

"But I do not know if I can feather-stitch it now, for there is no one to teach me, that I know of. Just like Hannah Straight Tree and the dormitory girls will tell the whole school to hate me, and they will. If I cannot get a large girl to help make the red dress, and I try to do it all alone, it will fit so bad, and I cannot get it done in time. What if I should tell my mother to have Susie stay at camp, and not once come inside the yard Christmas time? Then she would not need the dresses, and they could not call them issue goods, and not choose Susie in the games, and shut their eyes at her."

Cordelia lay very still, but the thought of Susie's missing the festivities by staying in the big building in the mission pasture, where the Indian visitors camped in winter, was put from her in short order.



“Susie shall not stay in camp. I shall find a way to get the dresses done, and she shall motion Jack Frost and see the Christmas tree. I shall tell them I am tired of playing silly games, and Susie shall not play, either, so they cannot leave her out. And I shall tell the school they must not watch Susie motion, for they are such horrid Indians they would scare her very bad. When Hannah Straight Tree’s big and little sister come into the playroom I shall walk close up to them and pull my dress away, and look at it so sharp, and say, so Hannah hears me, ‘Those wild Indians have so many grease spots I am much afraid of catching them.’”

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While plotting these misdeeds Cordelia Running Bird fell asleep. A young girl from the teachers' table brought her dinner on a tray and set it by the bed without awaking her. She did not wake up until near the middle of the afternoon. She found that the white mother had stolen into the dormitory with a small book which she had placed upon the pillow. There was a narrow white ribbon, frayed and yellow, wound around the book and tied on one side in a bow. The rooms below now were quiet, for the wind had lulled and the entire school was out of doors.

Looking from the window near her bed, Cordelia saw the broad, white plains illumined with brilliant sunshine and the girls exercising on the glittering crust of snow occasioned by the thaw. The little girls were sliding down hill on boards and broken shovels, cast-off dripping-pans and ash-pans—everything, indeed, that could be seized on for coasting. A group of large and middle-sized girls were walking over the mission pasture, stretching for a mile on every side. Another band of girls was packed into a long, wide bob-sled on the point of starting with the white mother to the little log post office down the river.

“Very lots of fun, and I am being punished here in bed!” Cordelia said to herself, mournfully. “Now the bob-sled starts, and very loud the sleigh-bells ring. The white mother drives, and she must hold the lines so tight, for very fast the horses want to go. We go to the post office by the al-pha-bet on Saturday, and this day it is the P’s and R’s—there are no Q’s—so it is my turn. Very fast I meant to feather-stitch, so I could spare the time to go. Ee! There is Hannah Straight Tree in my place. She made me talk Dakota and get punished. Now she gets my sleigh-ride!” And Cordelia Running Bird threw herself back upon the pillow, giving vent to wild, resentful tears.

When the tears had spent themselves the Indian girl raised her head and saw the little book on the other pillow.

“Tokee! The white mother put it here. She always keeps it, and it means that I can look at it now.”

Cordelia unwound the ribbon, opening the little book.

“Annie’s Bible, and I never thought of her to-day! Just like I am forgetting her so fast. Here is Helen’s letter. I shall read that first.”

[Illustration: She read the little note slowly.]

She took a little white note from a dainty envelope and read it slowly, but with understanding that spoke of previous acquaintance with the words:

“*Dear Annie:* Will you let this little Bible be your friend and guide, as I have tried to have it for my friend and guide since I have been a King’s Daughter? I have marked some

verses I have learned and have recited in the meeting of our circle, and I wish that you might care to learn them and recite them in your meeting at the school. "The King's Daughters in the

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Far East love to think about the Indian girls away out West, who are also members of our circle. Isn't it a sweet thought, Annie, that although so widely separated, we are all the children of one family in Christ, and are cared for by the same heavenly Father?

"Yours with loving interest,
"Helen Merriam, Hartford, Conn.
"Aged 16."

"It came in Annie's mission box, and Helen was her unknown white friend," said Cordelia Running Bird, as she put the letter back into the envelope. "I shall next read Annie's letter." And she took another little missive from the Bible, written with a pencil on the tablet paper of the school, in wavering penmanship that showed the weakness of the writer's hand. Cordelia read:

"*Dear Cordelia:* Annie Running Bird will leave this Bible to Cordelia Running Bird, my sister, for I cannot carry it to heaven, and in heaven I shall not need to read the words that Jesus spoke on earth, for I shall hear him speak up there. But Cordelia will not just yet be bearing Jesus speak up there, and she will need to read this Bible and must mind just what it tells her. Dear Cordelia, you can have this Bible for your own when you are fourteen birthdays, so you will be old enough to take good care of it and read it very lots. But if you want to borrow it before it is your own, the white mother will please lend it to you, so you always give it back, and do not lose the letters and the pieces of my hairs that will be in it. I did not learn all of Helen's verses for the King's Daughters' meeting, for I got too sick to study, and my memory feels so queer. I have put a cross behind the ones I learned, and, dear Cordelia, wilt you try to learn them, too, and all the rest that Helen marked? The one I tried to think of most is St. Matthew, chapter 5:44. "Good-by, dear sister, for I cannot live much longer, I am so pained with the hard coughing all the time. These words I write so you will not forget me. I wish to see my father and my mother and my little sister very much. But if I cannot, you must give my love to them, and all my other friends, and tell them they must meet me in the better world. And you must, too.

"So again I say good-by, dear sister,
"Annie running Bird,
"Aged 16."

"P. S.—Write good-by to Helen and my love."

"She lies at the agency. She sleeps with those that are happy," mused Cordelia, looking at the lock of hair with reverent eyes. "It was very cold one year ago this winter, when she had the whooping-cough so hard it made her lungs so sick she could not live.



“My mother had the fever very long and hard at home and could not come to watch her; my father came, but could not stay long, for my mother was so sick. But the teachers took good care of Annie, and the large girls helped them. I could only sit by her in daytime, for the teachers said I was too young to stay up nights. The dormitory girls were very kind to Annie, and they used to sit up nights, when they had worked all day and were so tired, to watch her.



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“Emma Two Bears has a sweet song, and one night when she was watching Annie, and there was a blizzard, and the wind cried very loud, like many dogs all round the house, Annie was afraid; so she asked would Emma sing ‘The Sweet By and By,’ and Emma sang it louder than the wind, but very sweet. Annie said it made her feel so happy that again she would not be afraid.

“And once more when Annie could not eat one bite of anything and was so very faint, Hannah Straight Tree thought that she could drink some rosebud porridge, so she ran away without permission, and waded through the deep snow to the rosebushes up the river, to pick off some buds to make the porridge. She froze her shortest right side toe, and a wild steer watched her very fierce, but Hannah Straight Tree did not care, for she was all the time thinking Annie was so faint. And Annie drank a little porridge and told Hannah she was very glad indeed. And they did not punish Hannah, for the rosebuds were for Annie.

“When the Indian preacher told at Annie’s funeral how she was so good and learned so many Bible verses for the King’s Daughters’ meetings, there was much crying in the schoolhouse, for the girls all felt so bad. And before I got into the wagon with my father, when we carried Annie to the agency, Hannah Straight Tree whispered that she did not want to sleep with anyone but me, and if they put another girl in bed with her she would be sure to turn her back and never say one word to her.

“Now the dormitory girls and Hannah Straight Tree are my enemies. The verse that Annie tried to think of most is all about enemies. I cannot read it just now. I shall read some other verses first.”

Many of the verses her sister had marked were familiar to Cordelia, for, as Annie had requested, she had been allowed to take the little Bible when in thoughtful mood, perhaps when kept within doors on a stormy Sunday afternoon. She had read them often, asking explanation of the hard words from the teachers, and had learned a number of the simplest ones in preparation for her own admission to the King’s Daughters Circle, which would be before long, she had hoped.

“Here is one about the tongue, that has the straight marks Helen made, and Annie’s cross behind it. This I have not learned to say.”

Cordelia Running Bird read aloud slowly: *“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boast-eth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kind-leth.”*

“That means to brag with the tongue and make folks very cross. Hannah Straight Tree bragged because her floor and stairs are always nicer than my floor and stairs,” Cordelia said. “But just like I have bragged some, too,” she added. “My tongue has talked so much because my father is an agency policeman and my little sister has nice

things. And I bragged about my white memory and my store shoes. But I was only talking to myself about the ugly issue shoes, and Hannah Straight Tree went and told it.”



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She turned the leaves and found another text: “*A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.*’ I did not speak soft when I told Hannah Straight Tree she was very dumb in school, and I was glad Dolly could not motion in a single song, or even have an ugly green dress, and I was not sorry that her big and little sister could not come to school. And Dolly and Lucinda have not said mean things to me, so why should I be cross at them? But Hannah would not find the dustpan and take up her dirt, and that was very mean. Now here is one that I have learned. I can say it without looking at the book.”

Cordelia Running Bird shut her eyes and carefully re-peated: “*Pride goeth before destruction, and a haught-y spirit before a fall.*’ Haughty means to feel stuck-up. The pail fell downstairs and made me talk Dakota, so I had to come to bed, because I was stuck-up and made Hannah Straight Tree cross. Just like they all would not be hating me if I had not been haught-y. But the dormitory girls were very mean to walk whole-feet on my wet floor. If they had walked heel or tiptoe I should not have scolded to myself about the ugly issue shoes, and called them shovel-footed, and wished they had to lie in bed. But I did not wish them to be cripples—only have a good long rest till I was through scrubbing. But Hannah was mean to go and tell. I can find no verse that will excuse her and the dormitory girls.”

Here Cordelia Running Bird fell to pitying herself anew.

“I shall now read Annie’s best verse, but it will be very hard to mind those words that Jesus spoke.”

Cordelia Running Bird wound the ribbon round the little Bible, tying it with care, and laid the book close by her on the bed; then she ate her dinner with a hearty relish. She had hardly finished when the door from the front hall was opened, and the young white mother, rosy from her sleigh-ride, looked into the dormitory. She saw the little Bible lying near Cordelia, glanced inquiringly at the dark-faced girl, and then smiled and nodded, to receive a cheerful smile in answer.

“Jump up quickly, dear, and dress,” she said. “Some little girls are going up the river to the store, and one of the girls is Cordelia Running Bird.”

Cordelia started out of bed in joyful haste.

“Are you ready to give back the Bible?” asked the white mother, coming to the bed.

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Cordelia Running Bird, handing her the little book. “Thank you very much. It made me think of Annie, so I read it, and it told me I must love my enemies, so just like I shall do it now.”

“I am very glad the cross thoughts have left you,” was the answer. “Now put on your plaid dress and be ready in ten minutes.”



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Cordelia flew to get the plaid dress from the closet, and was ready and downstairs in a twinkling. The little girls selected for the drive were in the playroom putting on their hoods and coats in great delight. Cordelia hurriedly put on her own, and, opening her cupboard, she unlocked a doll trunk, taking out a tiny purse for coins, whose portly sides bespoke some wealth within. She looked an instant at the blue dress and the silk for feather-stitching, finding to her great relief that they had not been touched. She locked them in the doll trunk, put the little key into the purse, and whisked away.

“The store is much nicer than the post office,” was her joyous reflection, as she slipped the purse into her pocket on her way outdoors. “Very long have I been saving this last part of all the money that I earned tending baby; now I have a chance to spend it with my own eyes.”

Down the steep hill went the bob-sled to the great Missouri River, where it took the straight, smooth road on the snow-laden ice. The sewing teacher drove the horses, giving them free rein. The school-teacher sat beside her on the seat, and Cordelia and the girls were snuggled down in hay upon the bottom of the sled, with comforters for lap-ropes.

The little log store was but two miles distant, and the party were not long in reaching it. It stood upon a steep bluff on the opposite shore. The white man who kept it dealt to some extent in Indian curiosities, of which the two teachers were in quest to send as Christmas gifts to Eastern friends.

“We wish to look especially at moccasins and Indian dolls,” said the school-teacher to the trader when they had made known their errand.

[Illustration: “We wish to look especially at moccasins and Indian dolls,” said the teacher.]

“I’ve got some first-class moccasins, both porcupined and beaded, but no Indian dolls,” replied the trader. “Indian dolls are growing mighty scarce, now the young squaws get so much put into their minds to do. Only the old-timers understand the trick of making dolls.”

“I am disappointed that you have none, for I wished to send one to my little niece. But I must wait and try to get one elsewhere.”

While the two teachers were examining the moccasins, Cordelia Running Bird and the children were absorbed in looking at the china dolls and other articles displayed upon the shelves and hanging from a wire stretched above the counter.



“I was telling Hannah Straight Tree I should buy a big doll for Susie, and a red silk handkerchief for my father, and a blue silk handkerchief for my mother, and should hang them on the Christmas tree,” said Cordelia, partly to herself and partly to the little girls.

“Kee! I would not hang them,” said a prudent little maid of ten years. “Hannah Straight Tree told the other girls, and they are very yelous— that is not the word, but I forget it— for they say they cannot hang their people anything. They say you think the name ‘Running Bird’ is very stylish, and you wish to hear it called so often at the Christmas tree.”



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“Of course I shall not hang them,” said Cordelia, firmly. “And I shall not buy a doll for Susie, for my father always buys her one. I was going to brag about her having two,” she added candidly. “And I shall not buy the silk handkerchiefs. They have the issue cotton ones and some other ones that my father bought;” and she withdrew her eyes from the display of cheap and gaudy handkerchiefs of so-called silk material suspended from the wire. “I shall buy a cake pan with a steeple for my mother, and a hairbrush for my father, for his hairs stick up so straight and stiff. And I shall give the presents very still at camp, so the school will not be jealous.”

Having thus subdued her vanity, Cordelia Running Bird shyly bought the articles she had selected from the trader’s boy, who helped his father in the store. She also bought four hair ribbons and a little bag of candy, having left two silver quarters. She was considering how to spend them when her eyes alighted on some little brown shoes and a pair of stockings matching them, beneath a small glass show-case.

“Ver-r-y st-y-lish little shoes and stockings!” she exclaimed, forgetting in her rapture to be shy before the trader’s boy.

The small girls crowded upon tiptoe at the show-case, peering through the glass sides to inspect the little wonders.

“Just the color of an Indian,” observed a little maid of seven, holding up her slim hand to compare it with the red-brown shoes and stockings. “But they made them for a little white girl. They are like the ones the little white visitor with the pink dress wore last summer.”

“They are just as pretty for a little Indian girl,” replied Cordelia. “They would be just right for Susie,” with a longing eye.

“But Susie does not need them,” said the prudent little girl. “She has a black shoes and stockings in your cupboard that are very nice.”

“But she could have two pairs. These would be so pretty with the red dress in the Jack Frost song. She could wear the black ones with the blue dress,” said Cordelia, seized anew with her besetting sin and growing helpless in its grasp.

She asked the number of the shoes, finding it the same that Susie wore. Then she asked the price. She could buy the shoes and stockings for a dollar and a half.

“One dollar more than I have got,” she said in feverish regret. She was intently silent for a little, then she turned, and, running quickly to the school-teacher, drew her to one side, where they could talk unheard.

“The Indian doll my grandmother made for me is very nice and new, for I have kept it in my trunk so much. I will give it to you if you please to give me one dollar—that is what



they gave my grandmother for her dolls when she would sell them at the agency,” Cordelia said, in eager undertone.

“Why, child, you surely cannot wish to sell your Indian doll that has a beaded buckskin dress just like the one your grandmother wore when she was your age?” said the school-teacher in surprise. “No, thank you, dear. You wish to give me pleasure, but I cannot accept it, for I know you love the little Indian grandmother better than you could the prettiest white doll in the Christmas box,” she added, gratefully.



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“It is very Indian-minded, and I do not now care for it,” replied the girl, with a clouded face. “I wish to buy the little brown shoes and stockings in the glass box,” pointing to the show-case. “I have only fifty cents.”

“Why, of course, Cordelia, if you really wish to sell it,” was the response. “The shoes and stockings are for Susie, I suppose, but are not the black ones nice enough?”

Cordelia had displayed the little black shoes and stockings to the teachers with a deal of pride.

“But the brown ones are much prettier for the Jack Frost song,” she argued, pressingly.

“Very well,” replied the teacher, opening her purse and handing her the dollar, with a sorry look. “Perhaps, however, we would better see the little things before you buy them.”

The brown shoes and stockings were examined by the teachers and were thought quite satisfactory for the price. Cordelia bought them breathlessly and hid them in her coat pocket to insure their safety.

But the home-going in the early moonlight evening was less joyous than had been the journey to the store. To the young Sioux girl the sleigh-bells seemed to jingle harshly, and the gumbo hills, whose tops were bare of snow, seemed frowning blackly from across the river.

Cordelia Running Bird passed some peppermints to the children, which awoke a burst of gratitude.

“We little girls shall always choose Susie in the games,” said one.

“Yes,” exclaimed another, “Hannah Straight Tree and the dormitory girls have told us not to, but we shall.”

“Ee! Talk lower so the teacher will not hear you,” said Cordelia, with a sudden flutter of the breath. “You must choose Dolly half the time— if Susie plays.”

“She is too bad-looking,” said a third. “Susie has two pairs of pretty shoes, and two nice dresses, and we like her better.”

“But you must not talk that way before the larger girls,” Cordelia cautioned in an undertone. “Dolly has a new hair ribbon like the red one I have bought for Susie—both are in my lap. And I have bought a pink one for Lucinda. I wish to do them good— Hannah Straight Tree, too. You must tell the larger girls you like Dolly just as well as Susie. If they wear alike ribbons on their braids it will be nice.”



“A new ribbon cannot dress Dolly up,” remarked the prudent little girl. “The points of her hairs will look like Susie’s points, and that is all.”

CHAPTER V.

Sunday morning there was wonder in the school to see Cordelia Running Bird in the heavy government shoes that had been lying in her cupboard since the distribution of the clothing early in the fall. And when it was observed that she had dressed for Sunday-school and had not changed the shoes the wonder grew to pure amazement.

“Ee! What ails the vainest girl in South Dakota? She will now be wearing issue shoes to Sunday-school!” exclaimed a dormitory girl, among a group of large and middle-sized pupils gathered in the music room, adjoining the playroom, in Sunday-school attire.

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Cordelia sat in a corner with her eyes upon her Sunday-school lesson. Her feet were planted side by side as if with studied care.

“Just like she is very scared because the large and middle-sized girls do not speak to her since yesterday. She is not sorry, only scared,” said Hannah Straight Tree. “See, she sticks her feet out very far, so we will see the shoes and think she is not vain; but we will not believe her. She has found the dustpan, too, because she is so scared of me. She bragged so much she made me cross, so I told her she must find it and take up my dirt, yesterday. She minded me this morning.”

“She will be more scared before we speak to her,” remarked the bread girl. “Ver-r-y ugly issue shoes! She ought to wear a dragging dress to hide them.”

There was a burst of laughter, while the keen, black eyes of the entire group were fixed upon Cordelia Running Bird’s feet. She did not draw them back nor lift her eyes, but suddenly her dusky face grew scarlet, and there was a nervous trembling of her lips that moved persistently in an attempted study of the lesson. She had heard the words, as the girls intended she should. They were speaking in Dakota without fear of being understood by the white mother, who was in the playroom passing pennies for the missionary plate.

The white mother heard the laugh and stepped into the space between the sliding doors, which were ajar. She saw the girls’ resentment at a glance, and that it was directed at Cordelia Running Bird. She was troubled, but could not combat the feeling that had spread throughout the school, to mar the peace and quiet of the Sabbath, which these Indian girls were wont to keep in reverent spirit.

“She has bought another pair of shoes for Susie—stockings, too—not black ones, like the little schoolgirls have to wear for best, but very stylish brown ones,” Hannah Straight Tree said. “She put them in her trunk last night. I crept upstairs and watched her, for the children said she had them in her pocket. The large and middle-sized girls must not see them till the entertainment, but the little girls keep saying they are like the ones the little white visitor that wore the dress that was pink dim-i-ty, had on. Ver-ry white-minded shoes! She wants to hire me to like her, if she does not wish to have Dolly in the Jack Frost song with Susie, so she bought new hair ribbons at the store for Dolly and Lucinda. She told the little girls because she knew they would tell me. But Dolly and Lucinda shall not wear them. Very cotton silk, of course.”

The ringing of the bell for Sunday-school relieved Cordelia Running Bird of the torment she was undergoing. Conversation was suspended, and the girls put on their hoods and marched in a procession to the school-house, guided by the teachers.

Cordelia had a trying hour in Sunday-school. The middle-sized girls, her companions in the white mother’s class, indulged in frequent whispering at her expense and kept deep

silence when she tried to lead the class, as she was wont, in reading reference verses and in concert recitation of the memory verses and the Golden Text. Thus it happened that she read a reference verse alone, in faltering accents, with the eyes of all the class upon her:

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“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

“She gives a nickel every Sunday, so she minds the verse and gets the red dress very cheap,” Hannah Straight Tree whispered from the seat behind.

The white mother heard the whisper, but the words were in Dakota, so she failed to understand. She saw Cordelia Running Bird shrink and color and her face grow very grave. Seeing this the class ceased whispering, but the white mother’s faithful teachings went unheeded, and she saw the lesson was a failure. In fact, the whole room was in sad disorder from the opening to the close of Sunday-school, and all three teachers were perplexed and disappointed by the strange behavior of their usually attentive pupils.

“How unfortunate that the race mood has attacked the school when Christmas is approaching, and we wish the girls to do their best and be their happiest,” said the white mother, lingering; for a minute in the schoolroom after the dismissal. “Cordelia seems about the only one, except the little girls, who isn’t out of sorts to-day, yet she is the one they are all against. The older girls all seem displeased at her.”

“The large girls worried me with loud and constant whispering and inattention to the lesson,” was the school-teacher’s sorrowful report. “There were so many, with the superintendent’s class combined with mine, I found it quite impossible to keep good order, as you probably observed.”

The superintendent was not present. He had started for the distant railroad station two days previously to get the Christmas boxes.

“I have never had the slightest trouble with both classes, heretofore, but to-day they seemed to throw off all restraint, and I was simply in despair,” added the young teacher with a strained expression in her voice. “They whispered in Dakota, and their meaning was a mystery, but I heard Cordelia Running Bird’s name and Hannah Straight Tree’s very often, also Susie, Dolly and Lucinda.”

“There was some trouble in the hall yesterday, which made Cordelia Running Bird moody for a time, but she recovered her good-nature in the afternoon and seems to be behaving nicely now, although much hurt by the treatment which she is receiving from the girls,” the white mother said.

“The children were excited also,” said the teacher, who had taught the infant class. “They whispered much in English, and I gathered from their talk that the unusual wardrobe which Cordelia is preparing for her little sister to appear in during her Christmas visit, has to do with the disturbance. I was forced to hear about the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings, and the blue dress and the black shoes and

stockings, till I knew not what to do. It seems that Hannah is vexed about the little things, and the other girls are sympathizing with her, and they seem to have some grievance of their own, besides.”

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“That explains it,” said the white mother. “Perhaps it was unwise to let Cordelia have the red cashmere for the little dress, but she is paying for it by contributing a portion of her hard-earned money to the missionary fund. Her patience with the baby, who was very fretful, was quite wonderful. She cheerfully devoted all her playtime for a month to baby, while I gave attention to the little children, and I thought it but a just reward to let her have the little dress, especially as it was in her mission box. Her father had not brought the blue dress then, But dear me! She has added brown shoes and stockings, which I didn’t in the least expect.”

The children in their bedtime talk had told the white mother of Cordelia Running Bird’s purchase at the store, and later in the evening the second teacher had informed her of the barter of the Indian doll.

“The brown shoes and stockings must be laid to my account. Whatever can be done?” exclaimed the school-teacher, in dismay.

“Nothing,” said the white mother, firmly. “I wish Cordelia was less extravagant, and we will be careful to restrain her after this. But Indian girls must learn as well as white girls to respect the right of property. The girls have been allowed much freedom in the spending of what money they could call their own, but it has mostly gone for hair ribbons and candy, and there has been no trouble before. I hope the feeling will subside, however, in a day or two. So many Christmas pleasures are in prospect that the girls will surely have no room for strife and envy in their hearts.”

Here the teachers hastened to the mission building to discharge the duties that devolved upon them after Sunday-school.

Just before sunset Monday afternoon a flock of girls were gathered at the stile in front, watching with intensity a solitary little figure moving slowly on a far side of the pasture, near the barbed wire fence.

“Again there walks Cordelia Running Bird very far away,” said Hannah Straight Tree. “She has walked alone two afternoons. She must be thinking very hard.”

“She is going on the mourner’s walk,” observed the girl who kept the playroom. “When an Indian walks alone, so far and very slow, that means they are too sad. She cannot be happy, for the large girls—only me—and the middle-sized girls do not talk to her. Then, too, of course, she thinks of Annie. It was just one year ago this Monday that they took her to the agency. The large girls did not wash, because there was a funeral.”

“And Cordelia Running Bird was so proud because the girls all cried,” said Hannah. “Now I wish we had not cried.”



“Kee! You must not be so mean as that,” exclaimed the largest girl, in shocked surprise. “Of course we cried for Annie. She was very kind to everyone—not cross like us.”

“She was a very little cross, sometimes, because she was an Indian. She tried much harder than Cordelia Running Bird.”

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“I am glad I sang ‘The Sweet By and By’ when she was so afraid,” said Emma Two Bears.

The girls were silent for a little, stirred by memories of the schoolmate who had passed into the life beyond.

Meantime the solitary girl in the snowy pasture continued her walk.

“I can wish I had not told Cordelia Running Bird that I would not sleep with anyone but her,” said Hannah. “I am glad she is not in the middle dormitory now.”

“They put her in our dormitory so that she can go and tell the teachers if a little girl is sick, or cries,” remarked the prudent little girl, who had arrived upon the scene with several other children. “The teachers say she wakes up easy, and is braver in the dark than any other girl.”

“Ee! Cordelia Running Bird is a dress pattern for the other girls—I mean a pattern!” Hannah cried. “Cordelia is the bravest, and she has a white memory, so she has the longest piece. Cordelia is polite. She keeps her clothes so clean and does not tear them, so the missionary ladies send her prettier things, for the teachers write she is so nice. The visitors always talk about Cordelia Running Bird very lots. They do not think the girls are listening, but they are.”

“They should not listen. That is stealing talk, the white mother says,” replied the prudent little girl. “We like Cordelia Running Bird, for she does not scold us little girls and tell us we are in the way, as you do,” was the bold defense. “We shall choose Susie in the games.”

“If the little girls choose Susie, the large and middle-sized girls can pull their hairs when they are combing them,” was the appalling threat from Hannah Straight Tree. “If they tell the teachers we can say their hairs were snarly and we could not help it.”

“Ee! We shall not pull the little girls’ hairs and tell a lie,” said Emma Two Bears, rallying her honest principles. “We can treat Cordelia Running Bird cross because she called us shovel-footed, and is very vain, so we should punish her, but we will not be wicked.”

“I did not say we shall—I said we can,” retracted Hannah, in confusion.

“The girls were very mean to walk whole-feet where she was scrubbing,” said the playroom girl, who knew from sad experience what Cordelia’s trials must have been. “It makes me very cross because the little girls will not stay out or, sit still on the benches when I scrub the playroom, and they do not make big tracks, if they do walk whole-feet.”



“You can speak to her, because she could not call you shovel-footed, for the white mother lets you always wear the mission shoes,” said Hannah Straight Tree, growing bold again.

“Because I have an onion—no, a bunion—on my foot. The issue shoes would make it worse. Just like there is no girl in school that does not hate to have the horrid whole-foot tracks on her wet floor.”

“I hate them—some,” confessed a middle dormitory girl.



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"I, too," admitted a south dormitory girl. "I threw a few drops of scrub water on a girl that walked whole-feet."

"I told a girl her tracks were so big, just like she had on snowshoes," said a north dormitory girl, reluctantly.

"Of course, I made the very biggest kind of tracks on Cordelia Running Bird's wet floor," said the largest girl; "but if we walk tiptoe all the other girls will laugh and say, 'See how she nips along. She tries to walk so nice, just like the teachers.' And if we are walking on our heels they say, 'Very awkward; hear her tramp just like a steer.' But it is not kind to walk whole-feet."

The race mood was upon the wane, and Hannah Straight Tree was fast losing influence.

"I would not have cared so much about the blue dress and the black shoes and stockings, but she bought the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings, when her little sister does not need them," Hannah argued in an injured tone.

"She did not buy them with your money," said the playroom girl. "You would not have taken care of a cross baby four weeks, and missed a plum picnic, and not played a leap, to earn pretty things for Dolly. You are much too lazy."

"Now I shall not stay another minute!" springing from the stile in deep chagrin. "You all can like Cordelia Running Bird if you want to, but I shall not like her."

Hannah Straight Tree ran into the house, and those remaining turned again to watch Cordelia. She had reached a sloping bluff, down which the fence extended to the flats beside the river. She stood a moment on the edge, then wrapped her clothes about her and sat down on the crust. Presently she disappeared.

"She has slid down hill," observed the playroom girl. "She must be going to the river."

"She should not. It will soon be dark, and she is all alone," said Emma Two Bears, in a tone betraying some anxiety.

CHAPTER VI.

Cordelia Running Bid held her clothes about her with one hand, steering with her feet, and reached the flats in safety. She arose and stood still and looked toward the river to a space of open water on the near side of a sandbar, half way over.



She took a few steps forward rather slowly, then her pace quickened more and more, till she was running breathlessly, as if in fear of losing her resolve to carry out some plan she was intent upon.

In rushing through a hollow lined with willow trees she slipped and almost lost her footing, and in struggling to regain it she released her hold upon a well-filled gingham bag which she had hid beneath her coat and dropped it on the ground. She picked it up and hung it by the draw-string on her arm, but with this interruption of her headlong course there came a corresponding halt of purpose. So she turned aside and walked a few yards down the hollow, where she found a log on which to seat herself.



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Presently she murmured in the passive monotone of a despairing Indian girl: "Just like I have to stop and think before I do it. If I drown the blue dress and the black shoes and stockings and the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings, I can write to Hannah Straight Tree, for she will not let me speak to her: 'Now you see I truly am not vain, for I have put the Christmas clothes for Susie in my workbag, and a stone, so it would sink, and I have drowned them in the airhole in the middle of the river.'

"But again that would be bragging," was her puzzled afterthought. "Just like Jesus is not helping me one bit, for very fast I went and bought the brown shoes and stockings after I had prayed to stop being vain. And the teachers looked so sorry, and I was ashamed to tell the white mother. Everything I say and do is vain and bragging, and I cannot think hard enough to help it. My tongue bragged about Dolly and Lucinda's hair ribbons to the little girls, and my feet bragged about the issue shoes, I stuck them out so far. And when the girls made fun of me I did not pull the shoes back, for I wanted them to think I was not scared, but sorry. I was truly trying to try hard, but I was trying the wrong way. Now my pencil will be bragging if it tells Hannah Straight Tree I have drowned the things."

Cordelia sat in troubled thought while the pink and golden colors of the sunset faded from the sky above the bluffs and the wind sighed through the hollow.

"The white mother says it is not right to even waste a pin, and many nice things that have cost much money would be wasted if I drowned them. I shall look at them and think again what I can do."

She drew the contents from the bag and spread them on her lap. First she gave attention to the little blue dress she had helped to make at the expense of many play hours.

[Illustration: She drew the contents from her bag and spread them on her lap.]

"Emma Two Bears made the waist so nice and said she would not take one thing for pay, but I made her take a shell necklace that was very pretty; but I did not care for it myself, it was so Indian-minded. Emma is so generous. I wish I could be generous. If I should give the blue dress to Dolly, and the black shoes and stockings, just like I should be some generous. What if I should truly do it?" with a sudden interest in her tone.

"She would look as pretty as the little schoolgirls then, and she could motion Jack Frost, and Hannah and the others could not say Susie did not need the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings. I am 'most sure Jessie Turning Heart will help me make the red dress, if I bring the playroom wood for her, till we change work next month. She hates to bring wood, for her foot gets cold, and then the sore bunch pinches her much worse. She is very fast and stylish making dresses, and she feather-stitches; and she says she is not cross at me. She said one time she liked to sew so much, just like she would be getting up and sewing in her sleep. So I shall ask her to trade work.



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“But Hannah Straight Tree says she hates light blue, for it makes a copper-colored Indian look much blacker; and she hates one tuck, and there would have to be one, for the blue dress is too long for Dolly. And it smuts some, too, and is not soft and fine. Hannah would not want it. She would say Susie looked much nicer in the red dress, and Dolly should not motion Jack Frost in the blue one.”

Cordelia put the blue dress and the black shoes and stockings back into the bag, and spread the red cashmere across her lap and smoothed it lovingly.

“It feels so soft I like to rub it. Just the color of the one rose on the white mother’s window bush.” She held it up, luxuriating in its warm red glow. “Ver-ry sw-e-et and pretty—and the brown shoes and stockings, too. I shall put them on the clean snow and look at them.”

She spread the things on the hard white crust and viewed them with increasing admiration. Suddenly she caught them up and hid them in her apron, for the sight of them was far too tempting; then she locked her hands together in her lap and sat so still a wood-mouse dared to leave his hole beneath the log and frisk about her feet.

“The baby was so cross I could not play one bit the whole four weeks,” she said at length, in supplicating tones. “Just like I earned the dress so hard. I thought I did not care much for the Indian doll, but my grandmother cannot make another, for she now has par-a-lay-sis in her hands—the doctor says it is. And I sold the Indian doll to get the brown shoes and stockings. Dolly has a round face, and her eyes are pretty. Susie has a thin face, and she is a very little cross-eyed, so she needs a prettier dress to look as nice as Dolly.

“But Lucinda cannot come to school if Dolly cannot, and she feels so sad. If Dolly’s father saw her looking very pretty in a red dress and a brown shoes and stockings, just like he would feel so happier he would let her come to school. Then Lucinda would be glad, and she would learn the neat way, and they would grow Dolly more white-minded. The verse I read yesterday was a King’s Daughters’ verse. Helen marked it—Annie, too.

“What if Annie should be looking down from up there,”—pointing to a newly glimmering star—“and speaking just like this: ‘Dear Cordelia, these words I tell you—’ It is more blessed to give than to receive.” I would give the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings to the little girl named Dolly Straight Tree.”

Cordelia looked another minute at the star.

“Of course Annie cannot speak those words up there, but she would like to have me do it, and my father and my mother would not care, for I should tell them just like Annie thought I ought to; and they always let me do a thing I want to, anyhow.



“If an Indian likes another Indian very much he will give him a big present. My father told an Indian man one time, ‘I am your friend, so I shall give you a pony.’ And he did. And the Indian man told my father, ‘I am your friend, so I shall give you a steer.’ And a white man laughed and said it was a good trade. But the Indians did not laugh. They said my father and the other Indian were very generous.



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“Now I have found the right way, and it makes me very happier, and I shall not change my thoughts.” in firm relief. “I shall do this kind: Till Dolly and Lucinda come I shall not say one word to any girl, or even tell the white mother. Then Susie’s best things I shall give to Hannah Straight Tree in a way that will surprise her. Tokee! there rings the half-hour bell till supper, and I am down here, and it is moonlight.”

Cordelia hastily replaced the best things in the bag and scampered home.

CHAPTER VII.

Cordelia Running Bird carried out her plan of asking Jessie Turning Heart, the playroom girl, to help her make the red dress, and the latter willingly agreed to “trade work,” and escape bringing in the wood to the torture of her lame foot.

Cordelia found that she had undertaken no light task, for there were violent snowstorms in the next two weeks, and an enormous quantity of wood was swallowed by the great stove in the playroom, which must needs be kept red-hot from long before dawn until bedtime, to dispel the freezing atmosphere within.

Owing to the influence of the playroom girl, the large and middle-sized girls in general ceased to be intensely hostile to Cordelia, but they did not break the seal of silence, so she could not ask help from among them. The small girls showed their friendship for Cordelia now and then by marching in a line behind her from the wood-yard laden with what fuel they could bring, or even going down the path the older girls had broken to the flats for willow fagots, which they tied upon their backs and brought to her for kindling.

Hannah Straight Tree tried Cordelia’s resolution to do good to her by stealthy persecutions that escaped the notice of the teachers, who remarked to one another in relief that Hannah and the other girls appeared in better humor toward Cordelia, and the fatter had regained her cheerful spirits.

Hannah took her station in the little outside hall one blustering afternoon, watching through the side window till Cordelia climbed the porch steps loaded to her chin with wood; then Hannah braced her back against the outside door. Cordelia spared one hand with difficulty, tugging at the door with wind-tossed garments, all in vain. She dropped her wood to use both hands. The door would sometimes stick when lightly closed, and thinking this to be the case, she threw her weight against it in a forcible attempt to burst it open. Hannah jumped away and darted through the inside door in silent glee.

Cordelia fell full length into the hall and struck her head against the inner threshold. She lay in a dazed condition for a little, then aroused herself, to catch a glimpse of



Hannah peering through the window of the inside door. She vanished instantly, but the expression of her face had told Cordelia where the mischief lay.

“She will not let me like her,” thought Cordelia, struggling to her feet with aching head, and blinking back the tears. “Just like I shall have to hate her just a little while I do her good.”

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She turned, and saw to her surprise that Emma Two Bears, who had come behind her to the porch, was gathering up her wood. Emma often helped to fill the wood-box in the music room, as an especial friend of hers attended to that work, and Cordelia feared her wood was being boldly captured for that purpose. She was about to cry out sharply, but restrained herself and fell back silently, while Emma passed into the house. Cordelia followed her, and saw with sinking heart that Emma took a straight track through the playroom for the music room; but on the threshold of the room she whirled about, and, walking to the playroom wood-box, dropped the wood in.

“Thank you very much!” exclaimed Cordelia, in sign language on her fingers. Etiquette forbade her to employ her tongue in the expression of her gratitude, seeing that the girls had placed a ban on it. A curious contortion of the deaf-and-dumb alphabet was used among the Indian girls when pride forbade the use of speech.

“You need not thank me. I am only punishing Hannah Straight Tree,” Emma answered, likewise with her fingers.

This exchange of compliments was read without scruple by the many pairs of eyes, including Hannah’s, that were watching the affair.

“Emma Two Bears talks deaf-and-dumb to her. Now we can plan crack-the-whip with her, for that is not a speaking game,” observed a middle-sized girl, who had been a comrade of Cordelia’s heretofore.

“She will not have time to crack the whip,” said Hannah. “She is going to the south dormitory, where she sits her whole playtime helping sew the red dress for Susie, so she can look nicer than the other little home sisters and the little schoolgirls.”

“You are very jealous-minded, and you try hard to spite Cordelia Running Bird,” said the recent comrade.

“You can talk that way because you have no little sister,” grumbled Hannah.

Cordelia passed upstairs with quick steps.

“Just like the large and middle-sized girls—only Hannah Straight Tree— will again be speaking to me pretty soon,” she said to Jessie Turning Heart, who sat beside a sunny window in the south dormitory sewing briskly on the little red waist.

“They cannot speak to you till Christmas day, because they all said they would not,” Jessie answered. “Then if you ap-ol-ogize and say you do not wish them to be cripples any more, and that you will stop talking vain, they will again speak to you, and they will walk heel or tiptoe on your floor.”



“I shall write an ap-ol-ogy in Dakota on three papers Christmas morning, and pin them on a side of the three dormitories, but you must not tell, because I do not wish to brag what I shall do,” Cordelia said, in strictest confidence.

“I think it would be better if you had but one shoes and stockings and best dress for Susie. But you cannot help it now,” the playroom girl replied. “Two best dresses and two shoes and stockings look too many, when the other little home sisters have not one best thing.”



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Cordelia Running Bird was quite strongly tempted to confide still further in the friendly playroom girl, who had sustained her through the trying tempest of events, but she resisted and began to hem the little skirt in silence.

“Ee! how short you have it!” Jessie noticed suddenly. “You must think Susie is to grow the other way before she wears it.”

Cordelia’s only answer was a noncommittal smile which Jessie failed to understand. This thought, however, suddenly impressed Cordelia:

“Now it is too short for Susie, and the hem is not one bit too wide, so I could not let it down. What if Hannah Straight Tree is so cross she will not let Dolly wear it? And there is no other little home sister just the size of Dolly that could wear it, and is coming Christmas. Just like Hannah will not take it and will keep on hating me forever and ever, so I cannot do her good.”

Whether this foreboding was fulfilled, or otherwise, will be explained in Hannah’s letter to the King’s Daughter in the Far East, who had sent the little Bible and the loving message to the King’s Daughter in the Far West:

“Dear Helen Merriam: Now I shall write you a letter, for Cordelia Running Bird cannot, for she says it, would be bragging. It is all about Christmas, and our big and little sisters. Cordelia’s big sister is now in heaven, and Cordelia wrote good-by to you from Annie. My big sister is now in the First Reader, but she cannot help it, for my mother died, and so Lucinda had to stay at home and keep Dolly, and that is my little sister.

“And it was about Susie—that is Cordelia’s little sister—that I got so mean and jealous, for she had a nice Christmas things—two kinds—and Dolly would not have one kind, and she would look so horrid. So I called Cordelia Running Bird proud, vain, cross, mean. And I talked about her so the girls got cross at her. And I made her push a pail of scrub water downstairs, so she talked Dakota and had to lie in bed and could not feather-stitch the blue dress, for it smutted so the silk would be too dirty. But she feather-stitched the red dress, and she sold her Indian doll, and it was her grandmother’s when she was Cordelia’s age, so she bought the brown shoes and stockings. “And Cordelia read the King’s Daughters’ verses, ‘Love your enemies,’ and ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’ so she put the red dress and the brown shoes and stockings and two hair ribbons in a box, and Jessie Turning Heart tied a blue scarf round my eyes so tight I could not see, and led me to the chicken house. And I put my hand on the box, and Jessie pulled off the scarf, and I uncovered the box and found the things. And Cordelia Running Bird had pinned a piece of paper on the red dress, and

these words were written on it: 'Dear Hannah Straight Tree, I am your friend, so I shall give you



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these best Christmas things for Dolly. And will you please take the hair ribbons, for they are not very cotton silk?" "And I was very 'shamed, and said I would not take them, I had been so mean. But Cordelia Running Bird said I must, for she had made the red dress too short for Susie, so if I did not it would be wasted. So I told her I would take it if she would excuse my meanness, but I should not take the brown shoes and stockings—only just the black ones. But she begged so hard just like I had to. And Cordelia and I scrubbed Dolly very hard in a tub, for Lucinda has not learned the neat way, and she did not cry, only laughed. And the white mother found some very little underclothes for her, and we curled her hair with a slate pencil, and she wore the best things and looked so pretty. And the brown shoes were a little bit too large, but they did not show." "And Dolly motioned Jack Frost very cunning, and they looked at Dolly more than Susie, but Cordelia Running Bird did not care. And my father was so happier he laughed and laughed when Dolly nipped her nose and pinched her toes just right, and when the song stopped he slapped his knees and cried very loud, he was so glad about Dolly." "And after the Christmas tree my father told the teachers (and Emma Two Bears was interpreter): 'Your school is a good place, for it makes the Indian children very smart, and you treat the Indian visitors very kind, so I shall let Dolly stay, and then Lucinda will stay, too.' Very fast Lucinda stopped being sad, for she thought before my father would not let Dolly stay till she was ten birthdays, and Lucinda loves her so she would not stay without her." "And the doll they hung me on the Christmas tree was bigger than Cordelia Running Bird's, and its hairs and clothes were prettier, so I told Cordelia, 'I am your friend, and I shall give you my doll.' And she did not want to take it, but I made her. So she said, 'I am your friend, and I shall give you my doll, but it is not so nice as yours.'

"And Cordelia Running Bird and I now walk together all the time, and again I shall never be mean to her. And they did not choose Susie quite so much as Dolly in the games, but Cordelia says that makes her glad. And it was because she read the King's Daughters' verses.

"Now I shall put an end to this too long letter. Many days have I been writing it, and the girls, said just like I was writing a book. And Cordelia sends her love.

"From your unknown American Indian friend,
"Hannah straight Thee."

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“P. S.—Cordelia Running Bird nearly drowned both kinds of Christmas clothes, and then she thought to give the best kind to Dolly. And Susie did not care because she had to wear the blue dress, and it smutted so her hands and face got dirty, and the black shoes and stockings. She was just as happier. And the teacher saved Cordelia’s Indian doll and gave it back to her, because she knew she loved it very hard. And Cordelia was so glad she hugged it very tight.” Again P. S.—Cordelia wrote, ‘Peace on earth, good-will toward men. I do not wish the dormitory girls were cripples, and I will stop talking vain and will always wear the issue shoes every day. And will they please excuse me?’ And they did. And now they walk heel or tiptoe on Cordelia’s wet floor. Lucinda will now learn the neat way, and they will grow Dolly more white-minded, for she came to school so short. And again I say it was the King’s Daughters’ verses. And I do not like to think hard, but I shall try to learn them, too. And we did not shut our eyes at Susie when she motioned Jack Frost, as we meant to just for spite. And the girls all said Cordelia was so generous, she said she nearly got vain again. So I shall stop this time.”

[Illustration: Helen read the letter to her King’s Daughters circle.]

Helen read the letter to her King’s Daughters Circle, and a young member, thinking of the little Sioux maiden at the far Northwestern Mission who had tried to overcome her faults and love her enemies, repeated softly:

“For thou hast a little strength, and thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name.”