Melbourne House, Volume 2 eBook

Melbourne House, Volume 2 by Susan Warner

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VOL. II.

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MELBOURNE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

The next day turned out so warm, that the carriage was not brought for Daisy till late in the afternoon. Then it came, with her father and Dr. Sandford; and Daisy was lifted in Mr. Randolph's arms and carefully placed on the front seat of the carriage, which she had all to herself. Her father and the doctor got in and sat opposite to her; and the carriage drove away.

The parting with Juanita had been very tenderly affectionate and had gone very near to Daisy's heart. Not choosing to shew this more than she could help, as usual, Daisy at first lay still on the cushions with an exceedingly old-fashioned face; it was as demure and sedate as if the gravity of forty years had been over it. But presently the carriage turned the corner into the road to Melbourne; Daisy caught sight for a second of the houses and church, spires of Crum Elbow, that she had not seen for so long. A pink flush rose over her face.

"What is it, Daisy?" said Mr. Randolph, who had been watching her.

"Papa—it's so nice to see things again!"

"You had a pretty dull time of it at Mrs. Benoit's?" remarked the doctor.

“No—O no, I didn’t. I did not have it dull at all.”

“How did you escape that, Daisy?”

“I do not know, Dr. Sandford. There was no room for dulness.”

The gentlemen smiled, but Daisy’s father with a not altogether satisfied expression. He grew satisfied, as he marked the changes in Daisy’s face. The ride was delightful to her. The carriage was easy; she was nicely placed; and through the open glass before her she could look out quite uninterruptedly. It was so pleasant, she thought, even to see the road and the fences again. That little bit of view before Mrs. Benoit’s window she had studied over and over till she knew it by heart. Now every step brought something new; and the roll of the carriage wheels was itself enlivening. There was a reaped grain field; there a meadow with cattle pasturing. Now they passed a farm wagon going home, laden with sheaves; next came a cottage, well known but not seen for a long time, with its wonted half door open and the cottager’s children playing about. Then came patches of woodland, with the sun shining through; and a field of flourishing Indian corn with the sunlight all over it; then more meadows with cattle.

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“Do you ride comfortably, Daisy?” her father asked, bending over to her.

“Yes, papa. It is so nice!”

Mr. Randolph gave up care about Daisy, and the two gentlemen fell into a conversation which did not regard her, and lasted till the carriage stopped at the door of Melbourne House. And there was her mother, and there were Preston and his mother and sister, and Gary McFarlane, who had been away and come back again, all waiting to welcome her; besides some other guests who were now at Melbourne.

Mr. Randolph, got out of the carriage first. Dr. Sandford followed him; but then without giving place to anybody else, he himself took Daisy carefully off the seat where she lay, lifted her out in his arms, and carried her into the house. All the others trooped around and after him, through the hall and into the drawing room, where the doctor laid his little charge on the sofa and put the pillows behind her so that she could sit up comfortably. Then he stood back and let the others come to her. Mrs. Randolph gave her some very contented kisses; so did Mr. Randolph. Very glad and tender his were, at having his little daughter back there again.

“We are very much pleased to see you here, Daisy,” her aunt said.

“Poor Daisy,” said Eloise.

“Glad to come back to life and the world again, Daisy?” said Preston, standing at the back of her sofa and drumming on it.

“I understand, Daisy,” said McFarlane, “that you have been an enchanted beauty, or a sleeping princess, during these weeks of my absence—under the guardianship of an old black witch, who drew incantations and water together from her well every morning.”

“I can answer for the incantations,” said Preston. “I have heard ’em.”

Daisy’s face flushed all over. “Preston, you do very wrong,” she said, turning her head round to him. But Preston only burst into a fit of laughter, which he turned away to hide. Others of the company now came up to take Daisy’s hand and kiss her and say how glad they were to see her; these people were very much strangers to Daisy and their greeting was no particular pleasure; but it had to be attended to. Then tea came in, and Daisy was well petted. It was very pleasant to have it so; after the silence and quiet of Juanita’s little cottage, the lights and dresses and people and silver urn and tea service and flowers made quite a picture. Flowers had been in the cottage too, but not such wealth of them. Just opposite to Daisy in the middle of the floor stood a great stone basket, or wide vase, on a pedestal; and this vase was a mass of beautiful flowers. Trailing wreaths of roses and fuchsias and geraniums even floated down from the edges of the vase and sought the floor; the pedestal was half draped with them. It

was a very lovely sight to Daisy's eyes. And then her mother ordered a little stand brought to the sofa's side; and her father placed it; and Gary brought her cup of tea, and Dr. Sandford spread her slice of toast. Daisy felt as if she loved everybody, and was very happy. The summer air floated in at the long windows, just as it used to do. It was *home*. Daisy began to realize the fact.

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Meanwhile attention ceased to be filled with her particular affairs, and conversation flowed off as usual, away from her. Preston still held his station at the back of the sofa, where he dipped sponge cake in tea with a wonderful persistency; in fact the question seemed to be whether he or the cake basket would give out first; but for a while Daisy eat her toast in happy quiet; watching everybody and enjoying everything. Till Gary McFarlane drew near, and took a seat, as if for a regular siege.

“So what about those incantations, Daisy?” he said.

“I do not know what you mean, Mr. McFarlane.”

“No? don’t you? That’s odd. You have been so long in the witch’s precincts. You have heard them, of course?”

“I do not know what you mean, Mr. McFarlane.”

“Why you must have been bewitched. I wonder, now, if the witch’s house did not seem to you a palace?”

“It seemed a very nice place.”

“And the witch herself a sable princess?”

“I think she is a great deal better than a princess.”

“Exactly so,” said Gary with a perfectly sober face. “The witch drew water, didn’t she?”

“I don’t know what you mean. Mrs. Benoit used to bring pails of water from her well.”

“Very good. And you never heard her incantations, muttering in the morning before the dew was off the grass, or at night just as the first beams of the moon, lighted on the topmost boughs of the trees?”

Daisy was confounded. “Mr. McFarlane,” she said after a moment’s looking at him—“I hope I do not know what you mean.”

At that, Gary McFarlane went off into an ecstacy of laughter, delighted and amused beyond count. Preston interrupted the sponge cake exercise, and Daisy felt her sofa shaking with his burden of amusement. What had she done? Glancing her eye towards Dr. Sandford, who sat near, she saw that a very decided smile was curling the corners of *his* mouth. A flush came up all over Daisy’s face; she took some tea, but it did not taste good any longer.

“What did you think I meant?—come Daisy, tell me,” said Gary, returning to Daisy as soon as he could get over his paroxysm of laughter. “What did you think I meant? I

shouldn't wonder if you had some private witchcraft of your own. Come! what did you *think* I meant?"

While he had been laughing, Daisy had been trying to get command of herself and to get her throat clear for talking; there had been a very uncomfortable thick feeling in it at first. Now she answered with simple dignity and soberness,

"I did not know, Mr. McFarlane, but you meant Juanita's prayers."

"Does she pray?" said Gary innocently.

"Yes."

"Long prayers, Daisy?"

"Yes," (unwillingly now.)

"Then that must have been what you heard!" Gary said looking up to Preston. No answer came from him. Gary was as sober now as seven judges.

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“Did she speak her prayers where you could hear her, Daisy?”

“I used to hear her—”

“Mornings and evenings?”

“Yes.”

“But you heard her in broad day, Preston?”

“Yes; one afternoon it was. I heard her as soon as I got near the house. Daisy was asleep, and I went away as wise as I came.”

“This grows interesting,” said Gary returning to Daisy. “Could you hear the words that were said?”

“No.”

“Only a muttering?”

Daisy was silent. The tears came into her eyes.

“Depend upon it, Daisy, it was incantations you heard. Description agrees exactly. Confess now, didn’t a sort of feeling grow over you—creep over you—whenever you heard that muttering sound, as if you would do anything that black woman told you?”

Daisy was silent.

“Don’t you know it is not proper to pray so that people can hear you? ’tisn’t the way to do. Witches pray that way—not good Christian people. I regard it as a very fortunate thing, Daisy, that we have got you safe out of her hands. Don’t you think that prayer ought to be private?”

“Yes,” said Daisy. She was overwhelmed with the rapidity and liveliness of Gary’s utterances, which he rattled forth as lightly as if they had been the multiplication table.

“Yes, just so. It is not even a matter to be talked about—too sacred—so I am offending even against my own laws; but I wanted to know how far the old witch had got hold of you. Didn’t you feel when you heard her mutterings, as if some sort of a spell was creeping over you?”

Daisy wished some sort of a spell could come over *him*; but she did not know what to say.

“Didn’t you gradually grow into the belief that she was a sort of saint, Daisy?”

“What is a saint, Mr. McFarlane?”

Gary at that wheeled partly round, and stroked his chin and moustache with the most comical expression of doubt and confusion.

“I declare I don’t know, Daisy! I think it means a person who is too good for this world, and therefore isn’t allowed to live here. They all go off in flames of some sort—may look like glory, but is very uncomfortable—and there is a peculiar odour about them. Doctor, what is that odour called?”

Gary spoke with absurd soberness, but the doctor gave him no attention.

“The odour of sanctity!—that is it!” said Gary. “I had forgot. I don’t know what it is like, myself; but it must be very disagreeable to have such a peculiarity attached to one.”

“How can anybody be too good for this world?” Daisy ventured.

“Too good to live in it! You can’t live among people unless you live like them—so the saints all leave the rest of the world in some way or other; the children die, and the grown ones go missionaries or become nuns—they are a sort of human meteor—shine and disappear, but don’t really accomplish much, because no one wants to be meteors. So your old woman can’t be a saint, Daisy, or she would have quitted the world long ago.”

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Something called off Gary. Daisy was left feeling very thoroughly disturbed. That people could talk so—and think so—about what was so precious to her; talk about being saints, as if it were an undesirable thing; and as if such were unlovely. Her thought went back to Juanita, who seemed now half a world's distance away instead of a few miles; her love and gentleness and truth and wisdom, her prayers and way of living, did seem to Daisy somewhat unearthly in their beauty, compared with that which surrounded her now; but so unearthly, that it could not be understood and must not be talked about. Juanita could not be understood here; could Daisy? She felt hurt and troubled and sorry; she did not like to hear such talk, but Gary was about as easy to stop as a cataract.

Dr. Sandford, lifting his eyes from what had occupied them, though his ears had not been stopped, saw that the face of his little charge was flushed with pain and her eyes glistening. He came and took Gary's place, and silently felt of her hand and looked at her; but he did not ask Daisy what was the matter, because he pretty well knew. His own face, as usual, shewed nothing; however, Daisy's came back to its accustomed expression.

"Dr. Sandford," said she softly, "what is a meteor?"

"Meteors are fiery stones which fall on the earth occasionally."

"Where do they come from?"

"Doctors are divided."

"But where do *you* think they come from?"

If Dr. Sandford's vanity could be touched by a child, it received a touch then. It was so plain, that what satisfied him would satisfy her. He would not give the skeptical answer which rose to his lips. Looking at the pure, wise little face which watched his, he made answer simply, not without a smile:

"I am inclined to think they are wandering bodies, that we fall in with now and then, in our journey round the sun."

"Dr. Sandford, what do they look like?"

"You have seen shooting-stars?"

"Yes—are those meteors?"

"Those are meteors that do not come to the earth. Sometimes they are nearer, and look like great fire-balls."

“Have you seen them?”

“Yes, a great many.”

“And have you seen them after they fell on the ground?”

“Yes.”

“What are they like then?”

“A very black stone, on the outside, and made up of various metals and earths within.”

“But then, what makes them look like fire-balls, before they fall?”

“Can’t tell, Daisy. As I said, the doctors are divided; and I really have no opinion that you would understand if I gave it.”

Daisy would have liked to hear all the opinions, but she did not ask for them. Preston was still standing at the back of the sofa, and started a new subject.

“Dr. Sandford, how soon will Daisy’s foot let her go to Silver Lake?”

“In what way do you propose to get there?”

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“By boat, sir, across the river; and the rest of the way is walking.”

“On plain ground?”

“Not exactly!” said Preston.

“How far do you call it?”

“Three miles.”

“Of walking! I think Daisy may walk across this floor by next week; and in a little while after she may go up and down stairs.”

“O doctor!” exclaimed Preston. “Why, at that rate, she cannot go to Silver Lake at all!”

“Does she want to go very much?” said the doctor. The question was really put at Daisy’s face, and answered by a little flush that was not a flush of pain this time. He saw what a depth of meaning there was in it; what a charm, the sound of Silver Lake had for Daisy. No wonder, to a little girl who had lain for so many weeks looking out of one window, where there was not much to be seen, either.

“Who is going, Daisy?” said the doctor.

“Mamma means to make up a large party—I do not know exactly who.”

“Then I think I can promise that you shall go too. You may count upon me for that.”

Daisy’s eyes shone and sparkled, but she said not a word. Preston was less sagacious.

“Will you do something to make her foot strong, sir?” he asked.

“When you have studied in my profession, you will know more about a physician’s powers,”—was all the answer he got. The doctor turned off to conversation with other people, and Daisy was left to herself again. She was very happy; it was very pleasant to lie there comfortably on the sofa, and feel that her long imprisonment was over; it was amusing to look at so many people together, after having for days and days looked at only one; and the old wonted scene, the place and the lights, and the flowers and the dresses, yes, and the voices, gave her the new sense of being at home. Nevertheless, Daisy mused a little over some things that were not altogether pleasant. The faces that she scanned had none of them the placid nobleness of the face of her black nurse; no voice within her hearing had such sweet modulation; and Daisy felt a consciousness that Juanita’s little cottage lay within the bounds of a kingdom which Mrs. Randolph’s drawing-room had no knowledge of. Gradually Daisy’s head became full of that thought; along with the accompanying consciousness, that a subject of that kingdom would be alone here and find nobody to help her.

“Daisy, what’s the matter?” whispered Preston. “You are as sober as a judge.”

“Am I?” said Daisy.

“What’s to pay?”

“Nothing. I feel very nicely.”

“Why don’t you look like other people, then?”

“I suppose,” said Daisy slowly, “I do not feel like other people.”

“I wish you’d make haste about it, then,” said Preston.

“Do be my own dear little old Daisy! Don’t be grave and wise.”

“Are you going to spend the night here, Daisy?” said Dr. Sandford, coming up to the sofa.

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“No, sir,” said Daisy, smiling.

“Where then?”

“I suppose, in my room, sir—up-stairs.”

“I must see you there before I go; and it is time now. Shall I carry you up?”

“If you please, sir.”

“Pray do not, Dr. Sandford!” said Mrs. Randolph. “Mr. Randolph will do it, or one of the servants. There is no occasion for you to trouble yourself.”

“Thank you, ma’am, but I like to see after my patients myself. Unless Daisy prefers other hands.”

Mrs. Randolph protested. The doctor stood quiet and looked at Daisy, waiting for her to say what she would like. Now Daisy knew, that of all hands which had touched her, the doctor’s and Juanita’s were far the best; and of those two, the doctor’s; perhaps because he was the strongest. Her father was very kind and tender, but he did not understand the business.

“I should like Dr. Sandford to take me,” she said, when she found she must speak.

“Then I will trouble you, Mrs. Randolph, for somebody to shew me the way.” And the doctor stooped and put his strong arms under Daisy, and lifted her up.

“Quite a conquest, I declare, you have made, Dr. Sandford!” said Mrs. Randolph, laughing. “Preston, shew the way, and I’ll send June.”

So the doctor marched off with Daisy, Preston going before to shew the way. He carried her without the least jar or awkwardness, through the company, out into the hall, and up the stairs. There June met him, and took Preston’s office from him. Into Daisy’s own room at last they came, and Dr. Sandford laid his little charge at once on her bed.

“You must not try to move, Daisy, until I see you again. Stay here till then.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good-night.”

“Good-night. Thank you, sir, for bringing me up.”

Dr. Sandford smiled. “Thank you,” said he, and with a wave of his hand, away he went.

“O June!” said Daisy, “how glad I am to see you.”

June had seen Daisy only once during her abode at Mrs. Benoit's cottage; and now Daisy squeezed her hands and welcomed the sight of her with great affection; and June on her part, though not given to demonstrations, smiled till her wrinkles took all sorts of queer shapes, and even shewed her deep black eyes twinkling with something like moisture. They certainly were; and putting the smiles and the tears together, Daisy felt sure that June was as glad to see her as she was to see June. In truth, Daisy was a sort of household deity to June, and she welcomed her back accordingly, in her secret heart; but her words on that subject, as on all others, were few. The business of undressing, however, went on with great tenderness. When it was finished, Daisy missed Juanita. For then Juanita had been accustomed to bring her Bible, and read and pray; and that had been a time Daisy always enjoyed wonderfully. Now, in bed, at night, she could not see to read for herself. She dismissed June, and was left alone in her old room, with, as she justly thought, a great deal to pray for. And praying, little Daisy went to sleep.

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CHAPTER II.

The next day Daisy felt very much at home. Her orders were not to stir till the doctor came. So after breakfast and after receiving visits from everybody in the house, she was left to her own devices, for it happened that everybody had something on hand that morning and nobody staid with her.

Left with June, Daisy lay for awhile feasting her eyes on all the pleasant wonted objects around her. She was a particular little body, and very fond of her room and its furniture and arrangements. Then came a hankering for the sight of some of her concealed treasures from which she had been separated so long.

“June, I wish you would open the drawer of my bureau, the second drawer from the top, and put your hand back at the left side and give me a book that lies there.”

June got the key and rummaged. “Don’t feel nothing, Miss Daisy.”

“Quite back, June, under everything—”

“Why, Miss Daisy, it’s tucked away as though you didn’t mean nobody should never find it!”

Precisely what Daisy did mean. But there it was, safe enough—Mr. Dinwiddie’s Bible. Daisy’s hands and eyes welcomed it. She asked for nothing more in a good while after that; and June curiously watched her, with immense reverence. The thin pale little face, a little turned from the light, so that she could see better; the intent eyes; the wise little mouth, where childish innocence and oldish prudence made a queer meeting; the slim little fingers that held the book; above all, the sweet calm of the face. June would not gaze, but she looked and looked, as she could, by glances; and nearly worshipped her little mistress in her heart. She thought it almost ominous and awful to see a child read the Bible so. For Daisy looked at it with loving eyes, as at words that were a pleasure to her. It was no duty-work, that reading. At last Daisy shut the book, to June’s relief.

“June, I want to see my old things. I would like to have them here on the bed.”

“What things, Miss Daisy?”

“I would like my bird of paradise first. You can put a big book here for it to stand on, where it will be steady.”

The bird of paradise June brought, and placed as ordered. It was a bird of spun glass only, but a great beauty in Daisy’s eyes. Its tail was of such fine threads of glass that it waved with the least breath.

“How pretty it is! You may take it away, June, for I am afraid it will get broken; and now bring me my Chinese puzzle, and set my cathedral here. You can bring it here without hurting it, can’t you?”

“Where is your puzzle, Miss Daisy?”

“It is in the upper drawer of my cabinet,” (so Daisy called a small chest of drawers which held her varieties) “and the cathedral stands on the top, under the glass shade. Be very careful, June.”

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June accomplished both parts of her business. The “cathedral” was a beautiful model of a famous one, made in ivory. It was rather more than a foot long, and high, of course, in proportion. Every window and doorway and pillar and arcade was there, in its exact place and size, according to the scale of the model; and a beautiful thing it was to look upon for any eyes that loved beauty. Daisy’s eyes loved it well, and now for a long time she lay back on her pillow watching and studying the lights among those arcades, which the rich colour of the ivory, grown yellow with time, made so very pleasant to see. Daisy studied and thought. The Chinese puzzle got no attention. At last she cried, “June, I should like to have my Egyptian spoon.”

[Illustration]

“What is that, Miss Daisy?”

“My Egyptian spoon—it is a long, carved, wooden thing, with something like a spoon at one end; it is quite brown. Look for it in the next drawer, June, you will find it there. It don’t look like a spoon.”

“There is nothing like it in this drawer, Miss Daisy.”

“Yes, it is. It is wrapped up in paper.”

“Nothing here wrapped in paper,” said June, rummaging.

“Aren’t my chessmen there? and my Indian canoe? and my moccasins?—”

“Yes, Miss Daisy, all them’s here.”

“Well, the spoon is there too, then; it was with the canoe and the moccasins.”

“It ain’t here, Miss Daisy.”

“Then look in all the other drawers, June.”

June did so; no spoon. Daisy half raised herself up for a frightened look towards her “cabinet.”

“Has anybody done anything to my drawers while I have been away?”

“No, Miss Daisy, not as I know of.”

“June, please look in them all—every one.”

“’Taint here, Miss Daisy.”

Daisy lay down again and lay thinking.

“June, is mamma in her room?”

“Yes, Miss Daisy.”

“Ask her—tell her I want to speak to her very much.”

Mrs. Randolph came.

“Mamma,” said Daisy, “do you know anything about my Egyptian spoon?”

“Do you want it, Daisy?”

“O yes, mamma! I do. June cannot find it. Do you know where it is?”

“Yes—it is not a thing for a child like you, Daisy, and I let your aunt Gary have it. She wanted it for her collection. I will get you anything else you like in place of it.”

“But mamma, I told aunt Gary she could not have it. She asked me, and I told her she could not have it.”

“I have told her she might, Daisy. Something else will give you more pleasure. You are not an ungenerous child.”

“But, mamma! it was *mine*. It belonged to me.”

“Hush, Daisy; that is not a proper way to speak to me. I allow you to do what you like with your things in general; this was much fitter for your aunt Gary than for you. It was something beyond your appreciation. Do not oblige me to remind you that your things are mine.”

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Mrs. Randolph spoke as if half displeased already, and left the room. Daisy lay with a great flush upon her face, and in a state of perturbation.

Her spoon was gone; that was beyond question, and Daisy's little spirit was in tumultuous disturbance—very uncommon indeed with her. Grief, and the sense of wrong, and the feeling of anger strove together. Did she not appreciate her old spoon? when every leaf of the lotus carving and every marking of the duck's bill had been noted and studied over and over, with a wondering regard to the dark hands that so many, many years and ages ago had fashioned it. Would Mrs. Gary love it as well? Daisy did not believe any such thing. And then it was the gift of Nora and Mr. Dinwiddie, and precious by association; and it was *gone*. Daisy lay still on her pillow, with a slow tear now and then gathering in her eyes, but also with an ominous line on her brow. There was a great sense of injustice at work—the feeling that she had been robbed; and that she was powerless to right herself. Her mother had done it; in her secret thought Daisy knew that, and that she would not have done it to Ransom. Yet in the deep fixed habit of obedience and awe of her mother, Daisy sheered off from directly blaming her as much as possible, and let the burden of her displeasure fall on Mrs. Gary. She was bitterly hurt at her mother's action, however; doubly hurt, at the loss and at the manner of it; and the slow tears kept coming and rolling down to wet her pillow. For a while Daisy pondered the means of getting her treasure back; by a word to her father, or a representation to Preston, or by boldly demanding the spoon of Mrs. Gary herself. Daisy felt as if she must have it back somehow. But any of these ways, even if successful, would make trouble; a great deal of trouble; and it would be, Daisy had an inward consciousness all the time, unworthy of a Christian child. But she felt angry with Mrs. Gary, and as if she could never forgive her. Daisy, though not passionate, was persistent in her character; her gentleness covered a not exactly yielding disposition.

In the midst of all this, Dr. Sandford came in, fresh from his morning's drive, and sat down by the bedside.

"Do you want to go down stairs, Daisy?"

"No, sir; I think not."

"Not? What's the matter? Are you of a misanthropical turn of mind?"

"I do not know. Dr. Sandford; I do not know what that is."

"Well, now you have got back to human society and fellowship, don't you want to enjoy it?"

"I should not enjoy it to-day."

"If I do not see you down stairs, you will have to stay up till another day."

“Yes, sir.”

“What is the matter, Daisy?” And now the doctor bent over and looked hard in her face. The wet spot in her pillow no doubt he had seen long ago. Daisy’s eyes drooped.

“Look up here, and give me an answer.”

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“I can’t very well tell you, sir.”

“Why do you not want to go down stairs?”

“Because, Dr. Sandford, I am not good.”

“Not good!” said he. “I thought you always were good.”

Daisy’s eye reddened and her lip twitched. He saw that there was some uncommon disturbance on hand; and there was the wet spot on the pillow.

“Something has troubled you,” he said; and with that he laid his hand—it was a fresh, cool hand, pleasant to feel—upon Daisy’s forehead, and kept it there; sometimes looking at her, and as often looking somewhere else. It was very agreeable to Daisy; she did not stir her head from under the hand; and gradually she quieted down, and her nerves, which were all ruffled, like a bird’s feathers, grew smooth. There were no lines in her forehead when Dr. Sandford took away his hand again.

“Now tell me,” said he smiling, “what was the matter? Shall I take you down to the library now?”

“O no, sir, if you please. Please do not, Dr. Sandford! I am not ready, I am not fit.”

“Not fit?” said the doctor, eyeing her, and very much at a loss what to make of this. “Do you mean that you want to be more finely attired before you make your appearance in company?”

“No, sir,” said Daisy. It struck her with a great sorrow, his saying this. She knew her outward attire was faultless; bright and nice as new silver was every bit of Daisy’s dress, from her smooth hair to her neat little slippers; it was all white and clean. But the inward adorning which God looked at—in what a state was that? Daisy felt a double pang; that Dr. Sandford should so far mistake her as to think her full of silly vanity, and on the other hand, that he should so much, too well judge of her as to think her always good. The witnessing tinge came about Daisy’s eyelids again.

“Dr. Sandford, if people tell you their private affairs, of course it is confidential?”

“Of course,” said the doctor, without moving a muscle.

“Then I will tell you what I meant. I am not good. I am dressed well enough; but I have anger in my heart.”

Dr. Sandford did not say how much he was surprised; for Daisy looked as meek as a lamb. But he was a philosopher, and interested.

“Then I am sure you have had reason, Daisy.”

“I think I had,” said Daisy, but without looking less sorrowful.

“Do you not consider that one has a right to be angry when one has a reason?”

“But one shouldn’t stay angry,” said the child, folding her hands over her heart.

“How are you going to help it, Daisy?”

“There is a way, Dr. Sandford.”

“Is there? But you see I am in the dark now. I am as much abroad about that, as you were about a journey of three hundred years to the sun. When I am angry I never find that I can help it. I can maybe help using my horsewhip; but I cannot manage the anger.”

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“No—” said Daisy, looking up at him, and thinking how terrible it must be to have to encounter anger from his blue eye.

“What then, Daisy? how do you make out your position?”

Daisy did not very well like to say. She had a certain consciousness—or fear—that it would not be understood, and she would be laughed at—not openly, for Dr. Sandford was never impolite; but yet she shrunk from the cold glance of unbelief, or of derision, however well and kindly masked. She was silent.

“Haven’t we got into a confidential position yet?” said the doctor.

“Yes, sir, but—”

“Speak on.”

“Jesus will help us, Dr. Sandford, if we ask him.” And tears, that were tears of deep penitence now, rushed to Daisy’s eyes.

“I do not believe, Daisy, to begin with, that you know what anger means.”

“I have been angry this morning,” said Daisy sadly. “I am angry now, I think.”

“How do you feel when you are angry?”

“I feel wrong. I do not want to see the person—I feel she would be disagreeable to me, and if I spoke to her I should want to say something disagreeable.”

“Very natural,” said the doctor.

“But it is wrong.”

“If you can help it, Daisy. I always feel disagreeable when I am angry. I feel a little disagreeable now that you are angry.”

Daisy could not help smiling at that.

“Now suppose we go down stairs.”

“O no, sir. O no, Dr. Sandford, please! I am not ready—I would rather not go down stairs to-day. Please don’t take me!”

“To-morrow you must, Daisy. I shall not give you any longer than till then.”

Away went Dr. Sandford to the library; kept Daisy’s counsel, and told Mrs. Randolph she was to remain in her room to-day.

“She thinks too much,” he said. “There is too much self-introversion.”

“I know it! but what can we do?” said Mr. Randolph. “She has been kept from books as much as possible.”

“Amusement and the society of children.”

“Ay, but she likes older society better.”

“Good morning,” said the doctor.

“Stay! Dr. Sandford, I have great confidence in you. I wish you would take in hand not Daisy’s foot merely but the general management of her, and give us your advice. She has not gained, on the whole, this summer, and is very delicate.”

“Rather—” said the doctor. And away he went.

CHAPTER III.

Meanwhile Daisy turned away from her beautiful little ivory cathedral, and opened Mr. Dinwiddie’s Bible. Her heart was not at all comforted yet; and indeed her talk with Dr. Sandford had rather roused her to keener discomfort. She had confessed herself wrong, and had told him the way to get right; yet she herself, in spite of knowing the way, was not right, but very far from it. So she felt. Her heart was very sore for the hurt she had suffered;

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it gave her a twinge every time she thought of the lotus carving of her spoon handle, and those odd representations of fish in the bowl of it. She lay over on her pillow, slowly turning and turning the pages of her Bible, and tear after tear slowly gathering one after another, and filling her eyes and rolling down to her pillow to make another wet spot. There was no harm in that, if that had been all. Daisy had reason. But what troubled her was, that she was so strongly displeased with her aunt Gary. She did not want to see her or hear her, and the thought of a kiss from her was unendurable. Nay, Daisy felt as if she would like to punish her, if she could; or at least to repossess herself of her stolen property by fair means or by foul. She was almost inclined to think that she must have it at all events. And at the same time, she had told Dr. Sandford that she was not right. So Daisy lay slowly turning the pages of her Bible, looking for some word that might catch her eye and be a help to her. There were a good many marks in the Bible, scattered here and there, made by its former owner. One of these stopped Daisy's search, and gave her something to think of. It stood opposite these words:

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Daisy considered that. What "vocation" meant, she did not know, nor who was "the prisoner of the Lord," nor what that could mean; but yet she caught at something of the sense. "Walk worthy," she understood that; and guessed what "vocation" stood for. Ay! that was just it, and that was just what Daisy was not doing. The next words, too, were plain enough.

"With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

"Forbearing one another"—easy to read, how hard to do! Mrs. Gary's image was very ugly yet to Daisy. Could she speak pleasantly to her aunt? could she even look pleasantly at her? could she "forbear" all unkindness, even in thought? Not yet! Daisy felt very miserable and very much ashamed of herself, even while her anger was in abiding strength and vigour.

She went on, reading through the whole chapter; not because she had not enough already to think about, but because she did not feel that she could obey it. Some of the chapter she did not quite understand; but she went on reading, all the same, till she came to the last verse. That went through and through Daisy's heart, and her eyes filled so full that by the time she got to the end of it she could not see to read at all. These were the words:

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

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That quite broke Daisy's heart. She rolled herself over upon her open Bible, so as to hide her face in her pillow, and there Daisy had a good cry. *She* standing out about a little thing, when Jesus was willing to forgive such loads and loads of naughtiness in her! Daisy would have no friendship with her resentment any more. She turned her back upon it, and fled from it, and sought eagerly that help by which, as she had told Dr. Sandford, it might be overcome. And she had said right. He who is called Jesus because be saves his people from their sins, will not leave anybody under their power who heartily trusts in him for deliverance from them.

Daisy received several visits that day, but they were all flying visits; everybody was busy. However they put to the proof the state of her feeling towards several persons. The next day the first person she saw was the doctor.

"How do you do, Daisy? Ready to go down stairs to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you got the better of your anger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pray, at what hour did your indignation take flight?" said the doctor, looking at the gentle little face before him.

"I think—about three hours after you were here yesterday," said Daisy soberly. The doctor looked at her, and his gravity gave way, so far at least as to let the corners of his lips curl away from some very white teeth. Dr. Sandford rarely laughed. And there was nothing mocking about his smile now, though I have used the word "curl;" it was merely what Daisy considered a very intelligent and very benign curve of the mouth. Indeed she liked it very much.

"Have you seen the offending party since that time, Daisy?"

"Yes, sir."

"And did you feel no return of displeasure?"

"No, sir."

There was something so exceedingly sweet in Daisy's expression of face, so unruffled in its loving calm and assurance, that Dr Sandford received quite a new impression in his views of human character.

"I shall have an account to settle with that young Preston one of these days," he remarked as he took Daisy's little form in his arms.

“O he did nothing!” said Daisy. “It wasn’t Preston at all. He had nothing to do with it!”

“He had not?” said the doctor.

“Not at all; nor any other boy.”

“Beyond my management, then!” said the doctor; and he moved off. He had stood still to say that word or two; Daisy’s arm was round his neck to help support herself; the two looked into each other’s faces. Certainly that had come to pass which at one time she had thought unlikely; Daisy was very fond of the doctor.

He carried her now down to the library, and laid her on a sofa. Nobody at all was there. The long windows were standing open; the morning sweet air blew gently in; the books, and chairs, and tables which made the room pretty to Daisy’s eyes, looked very pleasant after the long weeks in which she had not seen them. But along with her joy at seeing them again was mixed a vivid recollection of the terrible scene she had gone through there, a few days before her accident. However, nothing could make Daisy anything but happy just now.

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“You must remain here until I come again,” said the doctor; “and now I will send some of the rest of the family to you.”

The first one that came was her father. He sat down by the sofa, and was so tenderly glad to have her there again, that Daisy’s little heart leaped for joy. She put her hand in his, and lay looking into his face.

“Papa, it is nice,” she said.

“What?”

“O to be here, and with you again.”

Mr. Randolph put his lips down to Daisy’s, and kissed them a good many times.

“Do you know we are going to Silver Lake with you as soon as you are strong enough?”

“O yes, papa! Dr. Sandford says he can manage it. But I don’t know when.”

“In a week or two more.”

“Papa, who is going?”

“Everybody, I suppose.”

“But I mean, is anybody to be invited?”

“I think we must ask Dr. Sandford.”

“O yes, papa! I wish he would go. But is anybody else to be asked?”

“I do not know, Daisy. Whom would you like to have invited?”

“Papa, I would like *very* much to have Nora Dinwiddie. She has come back.”

“Well, tell your mother so.”

Daisy was silent a little; then she began on a new theme.

“Papa, what is a ’vocation’?”

“What is *what*, Daisy?”

“Vocation, papa.”

“Where did you get that word?”

“I found it in a book.”

“It means commonly a person’s business or employment.”

“Only that, papa?”

“There is another sense in which it is used, but you would hardly understand it.”

“Please tell me, papa.”

“Why?”

“Papa, I like to know the meanings of things. Please tell me.”

“Daisy, it means a ’calling’—in the idea that some persons are particularly appointed to a certain place or work in the world.”

Daisy looked a little hard at him, and then said, “Thank you, papa.”

“Daisy, I hope you do not think *you* have a ‘vocation,’” said Mr. Randolph, half smiling.

“Papa,” said the child, “I cannot help it.”

“No, perhaps not,” said Mr. Randolph, stooping again to Daisy’s lips. “When you are older and wiser you will know better. At present your vocation is to be a good little daughter. Now what are you going to do to-day? Here is Preston—if you want him; or I will do for you what you please.”

“Yes, Daisy, what shall we do?” said Preston.

“O, are you at leisure?”

“All your own, Daisy, for this morning at any rate. What shall we do?”

“O Preston, would you mind getting my tray for me; and let us go on with the battle of Hastings?”

“With what?” said Mr. Randolph, laughing.

“The battle of Hastings, papa—English history, you know. Captain Drummond and I got just there and then we stopped. But Harold was killed—wasn’t he, papa?”

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“I believe he was, Daisy.”

“Good for him, too,” said Preston. “He was nothing but a usurper. William the Conqueror was a great deal more of a man.”

“But he was just as much of a usurper, wasn’t he?” said Daisy.

“You must mind your ethics, Preston,” Mr. Randolph said, laughing. “Daisy is on the Saxon side.”

“Preston, will you get the tray, please? June will give it to you.”

Preston did not quite understand the philosophy of the tray; however, Daisy must be humoured. It was brought. By Daisy’s order it had been carefully protected from dust and danger; and the lineaments of England, as traced by the captain some time ago, were fresh and in good order. Daisy hung over the map with great interest, renewing her acquaintance with various localities, and gradually getting Preston warmed up to the play. It was quite exciting; for with every movement of William’s victorious footsteps, the course of his progress had to be carefully studied out on a printed map, and then the towns and villages which marked his way noted on the clay map, and their places betokened by wooden pins. Daisy suggested that these pins should have sealing-wax heads of different colours to distinguish the cities, the villages, and the forts from each other. Making these, interrupted doubtless the march of the Conqueror and of history, but in the end much increased Daisy’s satisfaction, and if the truth be told, Preston’s too.

“There,—now you can see at a glance where the castles are; don’t their red heads look pretty! And, O Preston! we ought to have some way of marking the battle-fields; don’t you think so?”

“The map of England will be nothing but marks then, by and by,” said Preston.

“Will it? But it would be very curious. Preston, just give me a little piece of that pink blotting paper from the library table; it is in the portfolio there. Now I can put a little square bit of this on every battle-field, and pressing it a little, it will stick, I think. There! —there is Hastings. Do you see, Preston? That will do nicely.”

“England will be all pink blotting paper by and by,” said Preston.

“Then it will be very curious,” said Daisy. “Were new kings *always* coming to push out the old ones?”

“Not like William the Conqueror. But yet it was something very like that, Daisy. When a king died, two of his children would both want the place; so they would fight.”

“But two men fighting would not make a battle-field.”

“O Daisy, Daisy!” cried Preston; “do you know no better than that?”

“Well, but who else would fight with them?”

“Why, all the kingdom! Part would fight for the right, you know, as the Saxons did with Harold; and part would fight to be the best fellows and to get the fat places.”

“Fat places?” said Daisy. At which Preston went off into one of his laughs. Daisy looked on. How could she be expected to understand him?

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“What is the matter, my dear? What are you doing?” Daisy started.

“We are studying English, history, aunt Gary.”

“*History*, my dear? And what is all this muss, and these red and black spots? does your mamma allow this in the library?”

“Just the place to study history, I am sure, mamma,” said Preston; “and you cannot have less muss than this where people are fighting. But I really don’t know what you mean, ma’am; there cannot be a cleaner map, except for the blood shed on it.”

“Blood?” said Mrs. Gary. “My dear”—as Preston burst into another laugh—“you must not let him tease you.”

Daisy’s look was so very unruffled and gentle that perhaps it put Mrs. Gary in mind of another subject.

“Did you know, Daisy, that I had robbed you of your old-fashioned spoon?”

“I found it was not among my things,” said Daisy.

“My dear, your mother thought you would not value it; and it was very desirable to my collection. I took it with her consent.”

“I am willing you should have it, aunt Gary.”

“Were you very angry, my dear, when you found where it had gone?”

“I am not angry now, aunt Gary.”

Certainly Daisy was not; yet something in the child’s look or manner made the lady willing to drop the subject. Its very calm gentleness did not testify to anything like unconcern about the matter; and if there had been concern, Mrs. Gary was not desirous to awaken it again. She kissed Daisy, said she was a good girl, and walked off. Daisy wondered if her aunt had a fancy for trilobites.

“What was all that about, Daisy?” Preston asked.

“O never mind—let us go on with William the Conqueror.”

“What spoon of yours has she got?”

“My Egyptian spoon.”

“That old carved thing with the duck’s bill?”

“Yes. Now, Preston, what comes next?”

“Didn’t you say she could not have it?”

“No matter what I said, if I say that she can have it now.”

“Did you give it to her?”

“Preston, that has nothing to do with William the Conqueror. Please let us go on.”

“Daisy, I want to know. Did you give it to her?”

“I am willing she should have it. Now, Preston, go on?”

“But I say, did you give my mother that spoon?”

“Preston,” said Daisy, “do you think it is quite proper to question me in that manner about what you see I do not wish to have you know?”

Preston laughed, though he looked vexed, and kissed her, nobody being in the library; he was too big a boy to have done it if anybody had been looking on. And after that he played the historico-geographical play with her for a very long time; finding it, with Daisy’s eagerness and freshness, a very good play indeed. Only he would persist in calling every cause of war, every disputed succession, every rivalry of candidates, an *Egyptian spoon*. Daisy could not prevent him. She had a very happy morning; and Dr. Sandford was well satisfied with her bright face when he came, towards night, and carried, her up stairs again.

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But Daisy was getting well now. It was only a few days more, and Dr. Sandford permitted her to walk a little way herself on her own feet. A little way at first, across the floor and back; no more that day; but from that time Daisy felt whole again. Soon she could walk to please herself, up and down stairs and everywhere; though she was not allowed to go far enough to tire her foot while it was yet unused to exercise.

Now all her home ways fell again into their accustomed order. Daisy could get up and be dressed; nobody knows what a luxury that is unless he has been hindered of it for a good while. She could stand at her window and look out; and go down on her own feet to join the family at breakfast. Her father procured her a seat next himself now, which Daisy did not use to have; and she enjoyed it. She knew he enjoyed it too; and it made breakfast a very happy time to Daisy. After breakfast she was at her own disposal, as of old. Nobody wished her to do anything but please herself.

At this moment nothing pleased Daisy better than to go on with English history. With Preston, if she could get him; if not, alone, with her book and her tray map. Poring over it, Daisy would lie on the sofa, or sit on a little bench with the tray on the floor; planting her towns and castles, or going hack to those already planted with a fresh interest from new associations. Certain red-headed and certain black-headed and certain green-headed pins came to be very well known and familiar in the course of time. And in course of time, too, the soil of England came to be very much overspread with little squares of pink blotting-paper. To Daisy it grew to be a commentary on the wickedness of mankind. Preston remarked on the multitude there was of Egyptian spoons.

“What do you mean by that, Preston?” said his aunt.

“Causes of quarrel, ma’am.”

“Why do you call them Egyptian spoons?”

“Causes of trouble, I should say, ma’am.”

“And again I say, why do you call them Egyptian spoons?”

“I beg your pardon, aunt Felicia. Egypt was always a cause of trouble to the faithful; and I was afraid little Daisy has had just a spoonful of it lately.”

“Daisy, what have you been saying to your cousin?”

“Nothing, mamma, about that; only what Preston asked me.”

“I am sure you did not say what I asked of you, Daisy. She told me nothing at all, aunt Felicia, except by what she did not tell me.”

“She behaved very sweetly about it, indeed,” said Mrs. Gary. “She made me feel quite easy about keeping it. I shall have to find out what I can send, to Daisy that she will like.”

“What are you and Preston doing there?” Mrs. Randolph asked with a cloudy face.

“Studying, mamma; I am. English history.”

“That is no way of studying; and that tray—what have you got in it?”

“England, mamma.”

Preston laughed. Mrs. Randolph did not join him.

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“What have you got in that thing, Daisy? sand?”

“O no, mamma—it’s something—it’s prepared clay, I believe.”

“Prepared!” said Mrs. Randolph. “Prepared for something besides my library. You are hanging over it all day, Daisy—I do not believe it is good for you.”

“O mamma, it is!”

“I think I shall try whether it is not good for you to be without it.”

“O no, mamma.” Daisy looked in dismay. “Do ask Dr. Sandford if he thinks it is not good for me.”

“There he is, then,” said Mrs. Randolph, “Doctor, I wish you would see whether Daisy is occupying herself, in your judgment, well, when she is hanging over that thing half the day.”

Dr. Sandford came up. Daisy was not afraid of his decision, for she knew he was on her side. Mrs. Randolph on the other hand did not wish, to dispute it, for she was, like most other people, on the doctor’s side. He came up and looked at the tray.

“What is this?”

“The map of England, sir.”

“Pray what are you doing with it?”

“Making it, sir, and studying English history.”

“What are these pins? armies? or warriors? they are in confusion enough.”

“O there is no confusion,” said Daisy. “They are castles and towns.”

“For instance?—”

“This is Dover Castle,” said Daisy, touching a red-headed pin; “and this is Caernarvon, and Conway; and these black ones are towns. There is London—and Liverpool—and York—and Oxford—don’t you see?”

“I see, but it would take a witch to remember. What are you doing?”

“Studying English history, sir; and as fast as we come to a great town or castle we mark it. These bits of paper shew where the great battle-fields are.”

“Original!” said the doctor.

“No sir, it is not,” said Daisy. “Captain Drummond taught it to me.”

“What, the history?”

“No; but this way of playing.”

Preston was laughing and trying to keep quiet. Nothing could be graver than the doctor.

“Is it interesting, this way of playing?”

“Very!” said Daisy, with a good deal of eagerness, more than she wished to shew.

“I wish you would forbid it, Dr. Sandford,” said Daisy’s mother. “I do not believe in such a method of study, nor wish Daisy to be engrossed with any study at all. She is not fit for it.”

“Whereabouts are you?” said the doctor to Daisy.

“We are just getting through the wars of the Roses.”

“Ah! I never can remember how those wars began—can you?”

“They began when the Duke of York tried to get the crown of Henry the Sixth. But I think he was wrong—don’t you?”

“Somebody is always wrong in those affairs,” said the doctor. “You are getting through the wars of the Roses. What do you find was the end of them?”

“When the Earl of Richmond came. We have just finished the battle of Bosworth Field. Then he married Elizabeth of York, and so they wore the two roses together.”

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“Harmoniously?” said the doctor.

“I don’t know, sir. I do not know anything about Henry the Seventh yet.”

“What was going on in the rest of the world while the Roses were at war in England?”

“O I don’t know, sir!” said Daisy, looking up with a sudden expression of humbleness. “I do not know anything about anywhere else.”

“You do not know where the Hudson River was then.”

“I suppose it was where it is now?”

“Geographically, Daisy; but not politically, socially, or commercially. Melbourne House was not thinking of building; and the Indians ferried their canoes over to Silver Lake, where a civilized party are going in a few days to eat chicken salad under very different auspices.”

“Were there no white people here?”

“Columbus had not discovered America, even. He did that just about seven years after Henry the Seventh was crowned on Bosworth Field.”

“I don’t know who Columbus was,” Daisy said, with a glance so wistful and profound in its sense of ignorance, that Dr. Sandford smiled.

“You will hear about him soon,” he said, turning away to Mrs. Randolph. That lady did not look by any means well pleased. The doctor stood before her looking down, with the sort of frank, calm bearing that characterized him.

“Are you not, in part at least, a Southerner?” was the lady’s first question.

“I am sorry I must lose so much of your good opinion as to confess myself a Yankee,” said the doctor steadily.

“Are you going to give your sanction to Daisy’s plunging herself into study, and books, and all that sort of thing, Dr. Sandford?”

“Not beyond *my* depth to reach her.”

“I do not think it is good for her. She is very fond of it, and she does a great deal too much of it when she begins; and she wants strengthening first, in my opinion. You have said enough now to make her crazy after the history of the whole world.”

“Mrs. Randolph, I must remind you that though, you can hinder a tree from growing, in a particular place, you cannot a fungus; if the conditions be favourable.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think this may be a good alterative.”

The lady looked a little hard at the doctor.

“There is one book I wish you could hinder her from reading,” she said, lowering her tone.

“What is that, madam?”

“She is just the child not to bear it; and she is injured by poring over the Bible.”

“Put the Bibles out of her way,” suggested the doctor.

“I have, as much as I can; but it is not possible to do it perfectly.”

“Then I counsel you to allow her the use of this medicine,” said Dr. Sandford, glancing towards the tray, which no longer held Daisy’s attention. For together with her mother’s lowering of voice, the one word “Bible” had come to her consciousness. Daisy was at no loss to guess what it meant. The low tones of the speakers gave her sufficient information.

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Thus far; that her Bible was reckoned an undesirable treasure for her by her mother. Was her own dear little particular Bible in danger? the one that Mr. Dinwiddie had given her? Daisy was alarmed. She did not enjoy any more battle-fields, nor enter with good heart into her history work from that time, until she could get up stairs again and see that it was safe, and contrive some way or place to keep it safe in time to come. Where could such a place be? It was a puzzle, because all Daisy's things were, of course, open to her mother. Perhaps Daisy's fears were needless; but after the affair of her Egyptian spoon she looked with jealous eves not only on her Bible, but on her trilobite. She sat down with a dismayed little face, to think where she could find a hiding-place. She thought of putting the Bible under her bed or pillow; but the bed was turned over every morning, and the servants would find it. None of her bureau drawers or cabinet drawers were secure. Daisy pondered all manner of impossible places. At last fixed upon a spot of the floor covered by an ottoman. The ottoman was hollow and not very heavy, and never moved after the room was put in order every day. Till the room was put in order Daisy hid her Bible in a drawer; then took it out and consigned it to the obscurity of the ottoman.

She was greatly afraid, then, of being found reading it. She had not heard the words which passed between the doctor and her mother; only the word "Bible;" but the low tones made her well enough aware that the matter of their talk was somehow adverse; it boded nothing kindly to her and the Bible. So Daisy was in another perplexity; and resolved that to be as safe as she could, she would read with locked doors for the future. And as doors must not be locked at times when her mother might be coming and going, Daisy chose early morning and late evening for her Bible-reading. She used to let June undress her, and finish all her duties of dressing-maid; then she sent her away and locked her doors, and read in comfort. This lasted a little while; then one unlucky night Daisy forgot to unlock her doors. The morning came, and June with it; but June could neither get in nor dare knock loud enough to make Daisy hear; she was obliged to come round through her mistress's dressing-room. But Daisy's door on that side was locked too! June was going softly away.

"What do you want?" said her mistress.

"If you please, ma'am," said June, stopping very unwillingly—"I thought it was time to wake Miss Daisy."

"Why do you not go in, then?"

"Ma'am—the door is locked," said June, in a scarce audible undertone.

"Locked?—knock."

June went back and knocked.

“Louder,” said Mrs. Randolph, who was under her maid’s hands; “you would not waken a cat at that rate. Make yourself heard.”

June’s taps, however, continued so fearfully gentle, that Mrs. Randolph, arose and came to the door herself. One or two of the touches of her imperative fingers brought a little figure in white night-dress and just-awakened face, to open the door.

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“Daisy,” said her mother, “what is your door fast for?”

“Mamma—I wanted it fast for a few minutes.”

“Did you lock it last night or this morning?”

“Last night—I thought—I meant to have opened it.”

“Both your doors?”

“Yes, mamma.”

“All night locked! Now, Daisy, I forbid you ever to turn the key in your door again, night or day.”

“O mamma!—I want it shut sometimes.”

“Hush. Go and let June dress you.”

June was vexed enough with herself to have inflicted some punishment on her awkward tongue and head, when she saw that Daisy was for some reason or other deeply grieved. The tears gathered and fell, quietly, all through the process of dressing; and a sort of sob heaved from the child’s breast now and then, without words and most involuntary. Juanita’s cottage was a palace to Melbourne House, if peace made the furniture. But June did not know what to say; so she was silent too.

When June was gone Daisy went to her beloved window, and stood there. She did not like to kneel, because her mother might come in, or even June, while she was doing so. She stood at the sweet open window, and prayed that the Lord would take care of her, and help her to pray however she could. And then the thought of those words came to Daisy:—“Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” She remembered very well how Captain Drummond had described the way a good soldier takes things—hard and disagreeable things as well as others. It is part of his business to endure them; he expects them, and minds them not at all in comparison with the service in which he is engaged. And a soldier of Jesus Christ has only to obey him, and take willingly whatever comes in the line of his service. What matter? The only thing was to obey orders, and do the work she was set upon. Hardships did not seem much like hardships when she thought of them in this way. And then it occurred to Daisy, that if she *could* not fasten her doors, she had better just kneel down as usual with them open. She could not do without praying; and if she must be in traded upon, why it was a little hardship that she had better not mind. And when she had thought that, Daisy kneeled down; and she never had any more trouble about it. She did fancy, even that first morning, that she heard the lock of her door turn; but she did not move to see, and hearing nothing more she soon forgot it. Nobody wore such a bright and fresh face at the breakfast-table as Daisy; such a glad and uncareful face; and Mrs. Randolph seeing

it, was reassured; though she had just seen her little daughter at her prayers, on her knees, by the window. She looked so happy now, that the lady was inclined to hope her religion was a childish folly, which would pass away and be forgotten in time.

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But for the present Daisy was a soldier; and meditating much on a service which she had to perform. That very day, if you had been there, and worn an invisible cap, you might have gone into her room and seen what she was about. On the ottoman aforesaid Daisy's writing-desk was placed; and before it on a cricket sat Daisy, with a face, O how grave and busy! A very weight of care of some sort seemed to lie under her childish little brow. She was opening her desk and looking out paper; some she felt and rejected—it was too thin or too blue, or something; she tried her pen on another kind; it did not go well. At last a thick little sheet of note paper was chosen; and Daisy began to write. Or rather, sat over the paper with her pen in her fingers, thinking how to write. She looked very anxious; then took bits of paper and a pencil and tried different forms of a sentence. At last, with slow care, and fingers that trembled, a line or two was inscribed on the beautiful thick little sheet of English note paper.

> "Dear papa, won't you think about being a Christian? Do not be displeased with
>
> "DAISY."

It was written all out, as fair as she could; and then you might have seen Daisy's little round head go down on her hands on the desk. It did not move for a good while. When it was lifted up, she sought out an envelope rather hurriedly, directed it, folded and put in her note, and sealed it.

Daisy shut her desk then, and with a manner not quite as calm and careless as usual, went to her father's dressing table and stood considering where she should put the note. Under the cushion, it might be seen first by a servant, and then delivered to Mr. Randolph in the midst of company. Under his dressing-box, the same fate threatened it. Daisy peered about, and thought, and trembled for several minutes. She had a fancy that she did not want him to get it before the next morning, when he would be quietly dressing here alone. He would certainly be opening his dressing-box before that. The only place Daisy could be sure would not be invaded before that, was the place she chose; she took off the cover of his box of shaving soap and with some trouble squeezed the note in so that it would lie safely hid; then put on the cover and put the box in its place, and went away with light hands and a heavy heart. Heavy, that is, with a burden of doubt mingled with fear. Would Mr. Randolph be angry? Daisy could not feel sure that that would not be the consequence of her proceeding. Perhaps he would be very much displeased, and think it very disrespectful and improper that his little daughter should take so much upon herself. Daisy knew quite well all that. But who else in the world would take the responsibility if she did not? No one; and Daisy with all her fear did not once think of going to get her note away again before it should be read. Her heart yearned towards her father. He was so very gentle and

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tender in his manner with her, more than ever, Daisy thought; she felt that the love between them was growing strong and deep even beyond what it used to be. And while he knew nothing of the joy that filled her own heart, and while he refused obedience to the laws that she knew were binding on him as well as on her, he must be also, she knew, without the favour and blessing of God. He had no part in it; nothing to do with it; and Daisy's heart swelled with childish sorrow and longing. She had thought a great deal about it, and concluded that she must bear "the message," even plainly in words, to her father, before she could feel satisfied. Little hands might take the message, Juanita had said; so humbly Daisy's took it; and then she prayed that it might not be for nothing. She knew all her hands could do was not much.

All the remainder of that day, Daisy never forgot her note in the box of shaving soap. She knew it was extremely unlikely that the box would be opened sooner than the next morning; nevertheless, whenever Mr. Randolph came near where she was, Daisy looked up with something like a start. There was nothing in his face to alarm her; and so night came, and Daisy kissed him twice for good night, wondering to herself whether he would feel like kissing her when they met again. Never mind, the message must be delivered, cost what it might. Yes, this was soldier's service. Daisy was going into the enemy's country.

Mr. Randolph had felt the lingering touch of Daisy's lips, and the thought of it came to him more than once in the course of the evening—"like the wind that breathes upon a bank of violets"—with a breath of sweetness in the remembrance. Nevertheless he had pretty well forgotten it, when he pulled off the cover of his box of shaving soap the next morning. He was belated and in something of a hurry. If ever a man suddenly forgot his hurry, Mr. Randolph did, that morning. He knew the unformed, rather irregular and stiff handwriting in a moment; and concluded that Daisy had some request to make on her own account which she was too timid to speak out in words. That was what he expected when he opened the paper; but Eve could not have been much more surprised when the serpent spoke to her in the garden of Eden, than was Mr. Randolph at finding that his little lamb of a child had dared to open her mouth to him in this fashion.

"Mr. Randolph, you will be late," said the lady who owned that name, coming to his door. And seeing her husband standing still with his elbow leaning on his dressing-table, she walked in.

"You will assuredly be late! what have you got there?"

The little sheet of English note-paper lay spread out on the dressing-table. Mr. Randolph was looking at it. He did not answer, and the lady bent nearer for a moment and then stood upright.

“Daisy!” exclaimed Mrs. Randolph.

Her husband made an inarticulate sort of a noise, as he turned away and took up his neglected shaving soap.

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“What is this?” said the lady in astonishment.

“What you see—” said Mr. Randolph.

“Where did it come from?”

“The signature tells you.”

“But where did you get it?”

“Here—this moment.”

“The impertinent little minx!”

“Hush. She does not mean to be impertinent, Felicia.”

“Do you like misbehaviour that is not meant, Mr. Randolph?”

“Better than that which *is* meant.”

“I told you the child would get ruined in that place,” said Mrs. Randolph, after musing a few minutes over the little sheet of note-paper.

Mr. Randolph made a lather and applied it. That might be the reason why he made no answer.

“I call it impertinence,” the lady went on, “and very well grown impertinence too—from a child like that! It is the trick of all religious people, to think themselves better and wiser than the rest of the world; but I think Daisy has learnt the lesson early!”

Still silence on Mr. Randolph’s part and steady attention to his toilet duties.

“What notice do you mean to take of this?”

“I think, none at all.”

“Mr. Randolph, Daisy is ruined!”

“I do not quite see it yet.”

“I wish you would see it. She is full of stupid stiff ways, which will be habits fixed as iron in a little time if we do not break them up. She does not act like a child.”

“She is very like a child to me,” said Mr. Randolph.

“You do not see. Do you observe her way whenever she sits down to table? She covers her face and remains in silent prayer, I suppose, a minute or so.”

A slight laugh came from Mrs. Randolph with the words. Mr. Randolph could not well laugh, for he was shaving. He remarked that he had never seen it.

“I wish you would remember and take notice. She does it regularly. And she is not a docile child *any* longer, I give you warning. You will find it very difficult to do anything with her in the way of breaking up this religious stiffness of hers.”

Mr. Randolph was silent a while, and Mrs. Randolph looked vexed. At length he remarked that indirect ways were the best.

“It will take both,” said his wife; “direct and indirect.” And after that they went down to breakfast.

Mr. Randolph was the last, and he was not early; but this morning Daisy was later still. Her father watched for her coming, and did not see it after all; Daisy stole in so quietly, she was in her seat by his side before he had noticed her. Then perceiving the gentle, sweet, quiet little face beside him, and recognizing the timid feeling which made Daisy afraid to meet his eye, he could not refrain; he bent down and gave her a kiss. He was very much touched by the little fluttering start and glance which Daisy returned to this salutation, and he saw that a pink flush of pleasure came into her cheeks. Perhaps

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all this put the subject of watching her out of Mr. Randolph's head; he certainly did not see the minute, a few minutes later, when Daisy's hand stole to her brow and her eyes were for a short space hidden and her hand moveless. Mrs. Randolph saw it, and saw that he did not. Daisy had forgotten that anybody could see her. The thanksgiving of her heart had more burden to-day than the ordinary gifts of the morning which she was wont to remember. Her father was not angry with her! It took a load off Daisy's heart; and she looked so happy all breakfast time that Mr. Randolph was very much inclined to slight his wife's fears.

Juanita's constant habit of thankfulness and of expressing her thankfulness, during the weeks Daisy had spent with her had gone down into the child's heart. With every meal, though taken by herself all alone, Daisy had seen the old woman acknowledging gratefully from whose hand she got it. And with other things beside meals; and it had seemed sweet and pleasant to Daisy to do so. At home, when she was suddenly transferred to her father's stately board, where every beauty and luxury were gathered together and an array of friends to help each other enjoy it; and no one remembered, no one acknowledged that any gratitude was due to the hand that had supplied the board and given the friends, Daisy's heart was pained by a great sense of want. Not thank God for all these things? give no acknowledgement of praise to him? She could not bear to have it so. She thought nobody would notice her, or know what she was doing if they did notice her; and she used to put her hand over her brow and comfort her own heart with giving the thanks she wanted to express. She soon forgot to be afraid anybody would notice her. But Mrs. Randolph marked it all, and now never missed the minute when Daisy's face was shielded.

CHAPTER IV.

The thing on hand now was the expedition to Silver Lake. Daisy's foot and ankle were getting sufficient strength to bear all the work that need be asked of them; and it was best to go while the hot weather still lingered. It was early in September, and the day was fixed. Quite a party was going. There were no visitors at Melbourne House now except Mrs. Gary and her children; but that brought the home party up to seven. Dr. Sandford was going, of course. Then some other neighbours. Mrs. Stanfield had promised to go, with her little daughter Ella and her older daughter Theresa. Mrs. Fish was coming from another quarter of the country, with her children, Alexander and Frederica. Mr. Fish and Mr. Stanfield were to go too; and Mr. and Mrs. Sandford, the doctor's brother and sister-in-law. However, though this was to be such a strong muster, Daisy thought of only two or three of the number that concerned her personally. Preston and Ransom, of course; Alexander Fish; though the two latter she thought of as likely to make disturbance more than

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anything else; and Daisy liked a most lady-like quietness and propriety in everything in which she was engaged. But besides these there was only Ella Stanfield whose age would bring her into contact with Daisy; and Daisy, very much of late accustomed to being alone or with older people, looked with some doubtfulness at the prospect of having a young companion to entertain. With that exception, and it hardly made one, nothing could look brighter in the distance than Silver Lake.

Several days passed between Daisy's giving the note to her father and the one fixed on for the expedition. In all that time Daisy was left to guess whether or not it had been seen and read by him. No sign or token told her; there was none; and Daisy could only conclude that he *must* have seen it, because he could not very well help doing so. But she was not at all discouraged. Rather the contrary; seeing that certainly her father was not displeased with her.

In all these days too, Mr. Randolph had ample time and chance to observe Daisy's action which had so disturbed her mother at meal times. Yet hitherto he had never spoken of it. In fact it was so quietly done that often the moment escaped him; and at other times, Daisy's manner so asked for a shield rather than a trumpet, and the little face that looked up from being covered with her hand was so bright and sweet, that perhaps his heart shrank from saying anything that would change the expression. At any rate, Daisy had been safe thus far.

Great preparations were making for the Silver Lake day. Thursday it was to be. Wednesday evening Dr. Sandford was at Melbourne. Daisy was considering the arrangements of a little packed basket of her own.

"Are you expecting to have a good time to-morrow, Daisy?" he asked. Daisy smiled as she said yes.

"But you will have to keep quiet. I shall not let you run about like the rest."

"I can sit quiet and look at the lake," said Daisy; with so absolutely contented a face that the doctor smiled.

"But in parties of pleasure, do you know, my friend, it generally happens that people cannot do what they expected to do?"

"Then I can do something else," said Daisy, looking very fearless of anything disagreeable.

"Will you let your old friend, Nora Dinwiddie, join the party?"

"Nora! O is Nora coming?" exclaimed Daisy.

“Mrs. Sandford commissioned me to make the enquiry, Mrs. Randolph, whether one more would be too many? Her little relation, Daisy’s friend I believe, has returned to her for the rest of the season.”

“Certainly!” Mrs. Randolph said,—“there was room for everybody.” The lady’s manner told nothing; but nevertheless Daisy did not venture to shew her joy. She did not say another word about Nora. The hour of meeting was determined, and the doctor withdrew. Daisy looked over the contents of her basket again with fresh satisfaction, made sure that all was right and everything there; and went to bed happy.

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Thursday morning broke fair as eye could see. The September sun rose in a haze of warm rays; promising, as Mrs. Randolph said, that the heat would be stifling by and by. Daisy did not care, for her part. They had breakfast earlier than usual; for the plan was to get on the other side of the river before the sun should be too oppressive. They had scarcely risen from the table when the Sandford party drove up to the door. These were to go in a boat with the party from Melbourne House. Mr. and Mrs. Fish, from higher up the river, were to cross in their own boat and join the rest at the spot appointed on the opposite shore. The Stanfields were to do the same, starting from a different point; friends having arrived that would swell their numbers beyond the original four. Of all this, Daisy cared just for one thing; that Nora was come and was to go in the boat with her, and no other. The meeting between the two children, on the steps of Melbourne, was most joyous.

“O Nora! I’m so glad you have come!”—and, “O Daisy! I’m so glad to be here!”—and a small host of small questions and answers, that indeed meant a great deal, but would not read for much.

“O Nora, isn’t it nice!” said Daisy, as they stood on the steps, while the carriages waited, below before the door.

“It’s grand,” said Nora. “Why aunt Frances says we shall be gone all day.”

“To be sure we shall,” said Daisy. “Papa is going to fish; and so is Preston, and Dr. Sandford and other people, I suppose; and some of the men take their tackle along too. There is nice fish in the Lake.”

“What men do you mean?” said Nora.

“O, the men that manage the boat and carry the baskets; there are ever so many baskets to go, you know; and the men must carry them; because the path won’t let a wagon go.”

“Who is going to carry you?” said Dr. Sandford coming out behind them.

“Me?” said Daisy.

“Yes.”

“Why I do not want anybody to carry me, Dr. Sandford.”

“Don’t you? I do. And I shall want two men to do it. Whom will you have? I have arranged a mountain chair for you, Daisy.”

“A chair!” said Daisy. How could that be? And then she saw in Dr. Sandford’s wagon, a chair to be sure; a common, light, cane-bottomed arm-chair; with poles sticking out

before and behind it very oddly. She looked up at the doctor, and Nora demanded what that was?

“Something like the chairs they use in the mountains of Switzerland, to carry ladies up and down.”

“To carry me?” said Daisy.

“For that purpose. Now see whom you will have to do it.”

Daisy and Nora ran away together to consult her father. The matter was soon arranged. James the footman, and Michael the coachman, were to go to carry baskets and help manage the boat; James being something of a sailor. Now Logan and Sam were pressed into the service; the latter to take James’s business, as porter, and leave the latter free to be a chair-bearer.

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“I don’t see how the boat is to carry all the people,” Nora remarked.

“O yes,” said Daisy, “it is a big boat; it will hold everybody, I guess; and it goes with a sail, Nora. Won’t that be nice? Papa knows how to manage it.”

“It will want a very large boat to take us all,” Nora persisted. “I went out with Marmaduke in a sail-boat once—*he* knows how to manage a sail-boat too;—and I am sure it wouldn’t have held half as many people as we have got here. No, nor a quarter as many.”

“O yes, but our boat is bigger, I suppose,” said Daisy. “Don’t you like to go in a boat, Nora?”

“I like it if it don’t lean over too far,” said Nora. “I thought it was going to turn over once or twice, when I was out with Marmaduke that time. I was afraid.”

“I am not afraid with papa,” said Daisy. “I know he can manage it.”

“Why so can Marmaduke manage it,” said Nora; “and he said I needn’t be afraid; but I was.”

The carriages took the whole party down to the shore in a few minutes. There lay the sail-boat all ready, her sails shaken out; and James and Sam, on board already, received basket after basket from the hands of Logan and the coachman and stowed them away in what seemed to be a place of ample accommodations. Daisy and Nora, hand in hand, stood on the shore looking at all that was done, and with eager eyes. The summer breeze just played lightly and rippled the water, on which the morning sun made a warm glow, early in the day as it was.

“What *could* so many baskets be wanted for?” said Nora.

“Why, to carry all the things. You know there will be a great many people to eat dinner at Silver Lake.”

“Dinner?” said Nora; “do people eat dinner when they go to a pic-nic?”

“Why yes. What do you think they do?”

“I thought it was just a pic-nic.”

[Illustration]

“What is that?” said Daisy curiously. But just then there was a stir; the ladies and gentlemen were getting into the boat, and the children had to be ready for their turn. It came; and Mr. Randolph handed one after the other safe over the gunwale of the big

sail-boat and placed them happily beside each other in the middle space, where they could have an excellent time for talking. But they wanted no talking at first. When all were aboard and ready, the boat was cast loose from the shore and her sail trimmed to catch the soft northerly air that came blowing down the river. Slowly the sail caught the breeze—would it be strong enough to take her? the children thought—slowly, very slowly, the boat edged its way out from the shore—then the breeze filled the sail full, took good hold, and began to push the little vessel with a sensible motion out towards the river channel. Steady and sweet the motion was, gathering speed. The water presently rippled under the boat's prow, and she yielded gently a little to the pressure on the sail, tipped herself gracefully a little over, and began to cleave her way through the rippling water in good earnest. Then how the waves sparkled! how cheery the movement was! how delicious the summer air over the water! although, the sun was throwing down his beams with great power already and the, day promised to be sultrily hot.

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“It is going to be intense,” said Mrs. Randolph.

“Melting!”—said Mrs. Gary.

“You will have enough of it before the end of the day—” remarked Mr. Sandford. Mr. Sandford was a good-humoured looking gentleman, with a sensible face and black whiskers; but he was a gentleman, and Daisy approved of him. He was very unlike his brother. His wife was a very plain person, in feature, and not very talkative; letting her husband do that for her; but kindly and pleasant nevertheless; and Daisy approved of her too.

“At what hour do you expect the day *will* end, practically?” inquired Mrs. Randolph of her husband. He smiled.

“I should say—judging from present tokens—not till the sun gets well down on his western way.”

“First-rate!” said Preston aside. “We’ll have a good time for fishing.”

“But that will make it very late crossing the river, Mr. Randolph? will it not?”

“It may.”

“There is a moon,” said Mrs. Sandford.

“Moon! I hope we are not to be beholden to the moon’s good offices!” exclaimed the other lady. “It is only ten o’clock now—not that. We shall be tired to death of the woods before we have done with them.”

“You must try fishing, aunt Felicia,” said Preston.

“Yes—a good idea,” remarked Mr. Sandford. “I do not know how the ladies can get along without some sport—ha, ha! There is a boat on the lake—isn’t there?”

“They say so,” Mr. Randolph returned. “I have not been there for a long time.”

“Then I shall take the charge of your entertainment, Mrs. Randolph,” Mr. Sandford went on. “I shall persuade you to put yourself under my guidance, and let me initiate you into the mysteries of pickerel catching.”

“I do not think you can persuade me out of the shade—if once I get in it again—” said the lady.

“Why mamma,” said Ransom, “pickerel fishing is splendid!”

Mr. Randolph looked at Daisy. No heat nor shadow too much for her! With one hand clasped in Nora's, her little face was a pattern of perfect content; nay, it was full of delighted joy. Mr. Randolph thought he could endure his portion of the heat.

"Nora," said Daisy, "isn't it nice?"

"It goes nicely now," said Nora.

"But isn't it pleasant?"

"Yes. It is a great deal pleasanter than in a little boat. This one is good and large."

"Isn't the water pretty?"

"I like the green grass better," said Nora.

"O yes! but then I like this too. I like it very much. Nora, what did you mean by a pic-nic?"

"A pic-nic?" said Nora.

"Yes; you said you thought people did not eat dinner, but it was a *pic-nic*."

"Well, I thought they didn't."

"What did you mean by a *pic-nic*?"

"Why I meant just that. You know what a pic-nic is."

"We always have dinner when we go on a pic-nic," said Daisy.

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“Then I don’t think it is a pic-nic.”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know. Daisy, are you going to ride in that queer chair?”

“I suppose so. My ankle isn’t quite strong yet, you know. Wasn’t it nice of Dr. Sandford to prepare it for me?”

“I don’t know, *I* don’t think he is nice,” said Nora.

Which expression of opinion was so very startling to Daisy that it took her some time to recover from it. She sought out the doctor with her eye where he was sitting forward of the mast, somewhat hid from her by a piece of the sail; she scanned his countenance, with its calm nobleness of feature, and steadfast, reserved, beautiful blue eye. Doubtless, he was not everything Daisy wished him; nevertheless to her he was very “nice” indeed. Her eye came back satisfied.

At the other end of the boat the party were talkative and gay. Mr. Randolph held the main sheet in his own hand; Mr. Sandford had the rudder; neither of them had much to do; for the wind was gentle and fair, and the boat kept her straight course for the opposite shore. The river was wide however at this place; the other shore was an object in view for a good while before they reached it. Slowly and steadily the little skiff skimmed over; they got to the middle of the river; then the trees before them on the other side, with the cleared fields in one or two spots, began to shew in more distinct forms and colours. The sun was very hot! So hot, that it seemed to kill the breeze. As they drew near their place of disembarkation, the motion of the vessel grew slack; the sail fluttered now and then; the propelling force just lasted till they got to shore, and then nobody said anything more of any air felt to be stirring.

“I think we had better stay on the water,” said Mrs. Gary. “It is positively stifling here.”

“It will be better when we get in the woods,” suggested Mr. Sandford.

“No,—begging your pardon,” Mr. Randolph answered.

“No?—will it be worse, Mr. Randolph?” said his wife.

“I hope not—for I think you could broil a beefsteak here in another hour; when the sun gets on the meridian.”

“Then do let us move away from here at once! it is oppressive. I do not know how we are going to walk, but I suppose we shall find out. We may hope there will be a little freshness by the lake.”

Mr. Stanfield's boat however had to be waited for a few minutes. It got to shore just as Mr. Fish's skiff appeared in sight coasting down on the same side, from behind a point. The whole party were soon together, exchanging shakes of the hand and puffs of condolence on the state of the atmosphere. There was presently a division of forces. All the boys, Preston, Ransom, and Alexander Fish, compared notes and fishing tackle. The ladies and gentlemen, with one or two elder girls, Frederica Fish and Theresa Stanfield and Eloise Gary, congregated into a moving

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mass of muslins and parasols. While Daisy and Nora were joined by Ella Stanfield; and a great constraint fell upon all three. Ella was a comparative stranger; a nice looking child, thoughtful and old beyond her years. She looked like gravity; Nora liked gayety; while Daisy was most like the thing that bears her name. They stood like little pinks of propriety, without saying anything to each other. This constraint was soon broken up by the preparations for the march. On enquiry it was found that there were two or three ways to the lake. One was short and easy (in comparison) but very narrow; a mere footpath through the woods. Another had a wider track; but it had also a rough footing of rocks and stones, and was much longer; taking a circuit to reach the place. Another still was only used by eager lovers of the picturesque, though it was said to reward them.

As soon as all this was explained to the understanding of the company, the larger division set off immediately for the easiest and quickest road to the lake; no other recommendation was worth a moment's considering. With quick disappearance one after another muslin dress and gay parasol was lost within the edge of the woods which their chosen path immediately entered. They vanished from the shore. Every one of them was presently out of sight. Mr. Randolph had seen that Dr. Sandford was putting Daisy into her travelling conveyance; and thinking no attention of his own could be needful he had gone on in advance of the party with Mrs. Stanfield. The very last of them, muslins and parasols and all, was swallowed up in the enclosing woods, almost before Daisy was established in her chair. Her bearers lifted it then to receive instructions from Dr. Sandford as to their method of playing their part. They were Logan and Sam; James was devoted to his own particular charge.

"Why where are Nora and Ella?" Daisy suddenly exclaimed.

"Everybody seems to have gone on," answered the doctor. "Except the boys. Now Daisy, are you comfortable? is it all right?"

"It is nice, Dr. Sandford!"—But at the same time Daisy wondered much and grieved not a little that her companions should have left her to go alone. Was that kindness? or good manners?

"Did they know which way I was going?" she said.

"I fancy so," said the doctor; "they have done as everybody else does—gone with the crowd. Now, you fellows, you know the way."

"Yes, sir."

“When you come to a house, remember, you must turn sharp to the right. Boys, you must go with the chair as a body-guard.”

“Why must we?” said Ransom.

“You would not have your sister go alone?”

“You are going that way.”

“You are mistaken. I am not.”

“She has got Logan and Sam to take care of her. Girls always have to be taken care of!” exclaimed Ransom in disgust.

“I am astonished at your want of gallantry. Preston, I shall depend on you to see that the chair is properly attended.”

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“Which way are you going, sir?”

“By myself—to see if I can get a shot at something.”

Preston did not look delighted, Daisy saw, though he accepted the charge the doctor gave him. The doctor himself strode off with his gun, disappearing in the woods at the nearest point. Daisy was left with her two bearers and her three attendants.

“Well boys, we may as well get along,” said Ransom discontentedly. “There is no occasion that we should keep poking on behind this concern.”

They passed it and took the lead. Preston as he passed asked Daisy how it went, and if she were comfortable. It went very nicely, and she was very comfortable; and receiving this assurance Preston sprang forward to regain Alexander Fish’s company, with whom he was holding an animated discourse on the making and using of artificial flies. The three boys trudged along in advance; the motions of their busy heads, and of their active feet, telling that there was no lack of interest or excitement *there*. The chair followed steadily with its little burden. It went nicely; she was very comfortable; it was a new and most pleasant mode of getting over the ground; and yet—there was something at work in Daisy’s heart that was not pleasure. She was sadly disappointed. She was left alone. It had tried her a good deal that Nora and Ella should have ran after the larger party with so cavalier an abandonment of her, when they knew her chair must go another road. Then she was very sorry that the doctor had seen good to forsake her; and felt that from the thoughtfulness or unselfishness of boys she had little to hope for. Look at them! there they went before her, putting more and more distance between them and the chair every minute. Perhaps they would entirely forget their little convoy and be out of sight in a trifle more time. And in all that big party of pleasure, everybody engaged with somebody else, she was left with no one to speak to her, and no company at all but that of Logan and Sam. Daisy two or three times put up her hand stealthily to her face to get rid of a tear that had found its way there. Daisy thought at first that she would not have done so to her friends as they had done to her; but then presently she reflected what reason she had to know better and to do better, that they had not; and instead of anything like resentment, a very gentle and tender feeling of pity and kindness arose in Daisy’s mind toward them. Her hurt sense of unfriendliness quite soothed itself away; and now Daisy began to enjoy herself and the day and the party of pleasure. Her share of it, at least. Her chair was under shadow of the tall woods now. It is true, it was very hot there. No air seemed moving. The chair-bearers often raised an arm to their brows to wipe away the heated moisture that stood there and ran down their faces. But Daisy had no exertion to make; and instead of that, her own motion seemed to give a little life to the lifeless air. Then

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she was at leisure to look and enjoy; not having even to take care of her own footing. The depth of green leafage over her head when she looked up; the depth of green shade on either hand of her, pierced by the endless colonnade of the boles of trees; how wildly beautiful it was! Daisy thought of a good many things she would like to ask Dr. Sandford—if she had the liberty; but he did not talk about wonderful things to her now that she was well and had her own means of amusement. Now and then Daisy had the sight of a red squirrel, running along a tree bough or scampering over the ground from one rock to another. What jumps he would make to get out of her way! And birds were singing too, sometimes; and mosses were spread out in luxuriant patches of wood carpeting in many places; and rocks were brown and grey, and grown with other mosses and ferns; and through all this fairy work of beauty Daisy's chair went at an easy, quiet pace, with a motion that she thought it very pleasant to feel.

It was a wild old wood, which nobody had ever meddled with. Things were just as nature's work had made them. The path the little party were travelling was a wood road merely, where country wagons had made a track; or more properly, where the country people had made a track for their wagons. It was but a rough way; stumps of trees that had been cut down stood right in the middle of it; and rocks and stones were in some places very thickly strewn over it. After some time of wandering over level ground, the path took a turn and began to get among the hills. It wound up and down and was bordered now by steep hillsides and sharp-rising rocks. It was all the wilder and prettier. The house Dr. Sandford spoke of had been passed; the turn had been taken; there was nothing to do now but follow on till they found the lake; but there were no signs of it yet, nor any sound of voices to be heard in the distance. Even the boys were gone on out of sight; the stillness of summer noon was all through the deep woods, for it is a time of day when the birds do not feel like ringing much. Daisy enjoyed it. She thought no one of all their company was having a better time probably than she.

Suddenly Sam, who was foremost of the bearers, gave a great shout; and at the same instant dropped his end of Daisy's chair and sprang to one side. Then stood still.

"What for air ye playing capers like that?" inquired Logan, with an air of great disgust and a strong Scotch accent. Sam stood still, drawing his countenance into all manner of grimaces.

"Speak then, can't ye! What ails ye? Don't stand there like a Merry Andrew, boy!"

"I've hurted myself!" Sam groaned.

"And how did ye hurt yourself? When ye were walking along, couldn't ye go for'rard quietly? Where's the hurt?"

“My foot!” said Sam bending down to it. “I can’t stir it. Oh!”

“Did ye hurt yourself before or after ye gave such a loup?” Logan grunted, going over however now to bring his own wisdom to bear on Sam’s causes of trouble. “Whatever possessed ye boy, with the end of the chair in your hand?”

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“I see a sarpent—” said Sam submissively.

“A sarpent!” echoed Logan—“it’s not your pairt to be frighted if you see a sarpent. What hurt would the sight of the brute do ye? There’s no harm come to ye, boy, but the start.”

“I can’t move it—” repeated Sam under his breath.

“Logan, perhaps he has sprained his ankle,” said Daisy from her chair; where at first she had been pretty well frightened.

“Weel—I don’t see it,” replied Logan slowly and unbelievingly.

“How does it feel, Sam?” Daisy asked.

“It don’t feel without I stir it, Miss Daisy—and then, it’s like a knife.”

“He has sprained it, I am afraid, Logan,” said Daisy getting out of her chair and coming to the consultation. “I think it is swelling now.”

Sam had bared his unfortunate ankle, Logan looked up from it to the little speaker whose words were so quietly wise, with unspoken admiration.

“Can’t ye walk then, Sam?” he urged. “Here is Miss Daisy in the middle of the road and wanting to be at the Lake—and how much farther it may be to the Lake is a subject unknown to me. Can’t ye bear your foot surely?”

Sam’s reply was sorrowful but decided; he could not bear it at all, with any weight upon it.

“Never mind, Logan,” said Daisy; “I can wait. You had better go forward and see if you can find the boys. They can take care of me.”

Logan felt the justness of this proposition, and at once put his long legs in swift motion to overtake the advance party; exercising a good strong voice too presently in hallooing to them. Daisy was left with Sam. The thought crossed her mind that this was getting to be an odd party of pleasure; but her real concern was for the sprained ankle. That, she was very sorry for. Her own delay and disappointment she took patiently.

Logan’s halloos brought the boys to a stand. They waited till he came up to them, not deeming it necessary on their part to go back to see what was the matter. When they heard his news there was a disagreeable pause. What was to be done?

“Daisy can walk the rest of the way,” was the decision of her brother.

“How far is it?” said Preston.

“I don’t know!—it’s no great things of a walk anyhow. Girls are always getting into trouble!”

“But what has got to be done with Sam?” said Preston.

“He can take care of himself,” said Sam’s young master.

“He can’t move, sir, on his own feet,” said Logan.

“You’ll have to carry him, then. I suppose we cannot leave him in the woods, for humanity.”

“There’s Miss Daisy, sir.”

“What a plague!” exclaimed Ransom. “Daisy can walk. She must at any rate; and you can bring her chair along to make firewood. Boys we ought to be there this minute—at the Lake. We shall be cheated out of all our fishing before dinner. That’s along of mounting guard on a girl! And after dinner there won’t be two inches of time.”

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“Hush, Ransom!” said Preston.

At this point the consultation was enlarged, and its character somewhat modified by the coming of Dr. Sandford upon the scene. From a height not far off, where he was roaming with his gun, he had perceived the group discerned that something was wrong, and come down with a quick step to reach them. His eye rather than his voice asked what was the matter. He was answered in various styles by the different members of the group.

“Here is a muss!” said Ransom.

“Miss Daisy, sir, she is left standing in the middle o’ the forest!”—said Logan.

“Sam has very stupidly sprained his ankle,” said Preston, “and cannot move.”

The doctor without a word turned in the direction from which Logan had come. “Follow me, young gentlemen,” said he, looking over his shoulder,——“I shall need your help.” So unwillingly enough, the boys, fishing tackle and all, turned back upon their steps, and followed. They soon came to Daisy’s emptied chair, where she stood mounting guard over Sam.

The ankle was badly sprained; there was no doubt of that. Sam not only could carry nobody; he must himself be carried. The doctor ordered that Logan should take him on his back and convey him as far as the poor little house they had passed on the way. A good lift it was, for Sam was a well grown, stout fellow; but Logan was a long-limbed, sinewy, brawny Scotchman, and he made no difficulty of the job. The doctor in the first place deposited his gun against a tree, and did what was needful for the hurt ankle.

“Now,” said he to Daisy, “how are you going to get forward?”

“I can walk the rest of the way,” said Daisy.

“Pardon me. Not with my leave. Boys, which, of you will take the honour of being chair-bearers? I have my gun to care for.”

“I will be one,” said Preston.

“And Ransom will be the other. Come, sir!”

“Honour!”—said Ransom as he moved sullenly forward. “I think girls ought to stay at home when there is anything going on. They are plaguily in one’s way!”

“That is a very womanish speech,” said the doctor; “in so far as that it is very unmanly.”

Ransom's temper nowise improved by this reply, he took up sulkily his ends of the chair poles; and once more the party set forward. It was not quite so pleasant now for Daisy; her chair was no longer carried smoothly. Preston, who was in advance, did his part perfectly well; but Ransom, behind her, let the chair go up and go down and sway about very unsteadily, besides that every step was with a jolting motion. It kept Daisy in constant uneasiness. Dr. Sandford walked on just before with his gun; Alexander Fish came after, laughing and jesting with the other boys.

"How does it go, Daisy?" said the doctor, stopping after a while to inquire.

"Mayn't I get out and walk, Dr. Sandford?"

"What for?"

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“I should like it very much!”

“Do you not ride easily?”

“Not quite,” said Daisy. “It throws me about a good deal.”

“Ah! Did it do so when Logan and Sam carried you?”

“I did not feel it then,” said Daisy unwillingly.

“Your porters are unskilled.”

The doctor took his station by Ransom’s hand, remarking that he would see that he did his work well. And he was as good as his word. He kept a constant eye on the management of the chair: and when Ransom neglected his duty, gave him a word of admonition or advice, so keen and contemptuous in its rebuke, though slight and dry, that even Ransom’s thickness of apprehension felt it, and sheered off from meeting it. The last part of the distance Daisy was thoroughly well cared for, and in silence; for the doctor’s presence had put a stop to all bantering between the boys. In furious silence on Ransom’s part this last portion of the way was accomplished.

At the lake at last! And in Daisy’s breast at least, everything but pleasure was now forgotten. A very beautiful sheet of water, not very small either, with broken shores, lay girdled, round with the unbroken forest. Close to the edge of the lake the great trees rose up and flung their arms over; the stems and trunks and branches were given back again in the smooth mirror below. Where the path came out upon the lake, a spread of greensward extended under the trees for a considerable space; and this was spotted and variegated now with the scattered members of the pleasure party. Blue and pink and white and green, the various light muslins contrasted with the grey or the white dresses of the gentlemen; while parasols were thrown about, and here and there a red shawl lay upon the ground, for somebody’s reclining carpet. To add to all this, which made already a very pretty picture under the canopy of the great trees, a boat lay moored at a little point further on; baskets and hampers congregated with great promise in another quarter under guard of James and one or two of his helpers; and upon it all the sunlight just peeped through the trees, making sunny flecks upon the ground. Nobody wanted more of it, to tell the truth; everybody’s immediate business upon reaching the place had been to throw himself down and get cool. Daisy and Dr. Sandford were the two signal exceptions.

Nora and Ella came running up, and there was a storm of questions. “O Daisy, isn’t it beautiful!” “How came you to be so long getting here?” “Did you have a nice ride?” “O Daisy, what are we going to do, you and Ella, and I? Everybody else is going to do something.”

“What are they going to do?” said Daisy.

“O I don’t know! everything. Mr. Randolph is going out in the boat to fish, and all the ladies are going with him—Mrs. Sandford and Mrs. Stanfield and your mother; only Mrs. Fish isn’t going; but Mr. Sandford is. And Eloise, your cousin, is going to see about having the dinner ready; and Theresa Stanfield is in that too; I think they have got the most fun; but nobody is doing anything yet. It’s too hot. Are you hot, Daisy?”

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“Not very.”

“O Daisy,” said Ella Stanfield, “couldn’t *we* fish?”

“There are so many boys—” said Daisy; “I do not believe there will be any fishing tackle for us.”

“Can you fish, Daisy?” asked the doctor, who stood near, looking after his gun.

“No, sir. I did catch a fish once—but it was only my line caught it.”

“Not your hand at the end of the line?”

“My hand was not there. The line was lying on the bank and my hook in the water.”

“Oh! that was it!”

Away went the doctor with his gun, and the boys sped off with their fishing rods. The heat was too great for anybody else to move. Nevertheless, what are parties of pleasure for *but* pleasure? they must not let the whole day slip away with nothing done but lying in the shade of the trees. There was a little island in the lake, well wooded like its shores. It was proposed that the ladies’ fishing party should row over to the island, and there, under another shady grove, carry on their designs against the pickerel. Daisy’s wish was to go with that party in the boat and watch their sport; especially as Mr. Randolph was the leader and manager of it. She was not asked to go; there was no room for the little people; so they stood on the shore and saw the setting-off, and watched the bright dimples every stroke of the oars made in the surface of the lake.

The people were pretty well scattered now. Nobody was left on the ground but Mrs. Gary and Mrs. Fish, sitting under a tree at some distance, talking; and Eloise and Theresa, who were charged to superintend the laying of the cloth. Having nothing particular to do, the three children became hangers-on, to watch how this business would be conducted; ready to help if they got a chance.

It was found a difficult business to arrange places for so many people on the grass; and the girls finally and wisely gave it up. They determined to set out the eatables only, on a tablecloth spread to receive them; but to let everybody eat where he felt disposed, or where he could find the best bit of shade. Shade was the best thing that day, Theresa Stanfield declared. But the first thing of all was to light a fire; for coffee must be boiled, and tea made. The fire was not a troublesome thing to have, for dead wood was in plenty for the gathering. James and Logan, who had come to the scene of action, soon had that going; and the children forgot that it was hot, in the beauty and the novelty of the thing, and laughed at Theresa’s red cheeks as she stooped over the coals with her coffee-pot. About coffee Daisy was ignorant. But tea had been made in her behalf by Juanita too many times for her not to have the whole proceeding fixed in her memory.

“O Eloise, you must not make that *tea* now!” she exclaimed.

“Mustn’t I!”

“No. It will be spoiled.”

“Some other things have had the same fate,” said Eloise.

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“It will not be good for anything, Eloise,” Daisy persisted gently. “It should not be made but just before you want it—just a few minutes.”

“You are wise, Daisy,” returned her cousin. “I do not know so much as you do, you see.”

Daisy fell back a little. Eloise and Theresa went to unpacking the hampers; and James, acting under their direction, carried and placed the various articles they took out, placed and replaced; for as new and unlooked-for additions were made to the stock of viands, the arrangement of those already on the tablecloth had to be varied. There was a wonderful supply; for a hamper had come from every house that had sent members to the party.

“What shall we do with it all?” said Eloise.

“Find out what people like—or are expected to like. Just look at the cold chickens! and the ham! I am so thankful for that red lobster, to make a variety. There are three boxes of sardines—and what is that?”

“Anchovy paste.”

“Well!—and look at the other things! We want an army to eat them. There is a dog, to begin with.”

Theresa said it with comical coolness; but Eloise screamed, as a little spaniel was perceived to be snuffing round the tablecloth.

“It’s Ransom’s dog! Run, Daisy, run, and keep him off. Just stay there and keep watch of him, or he’ll be all over everything. Daisy, run!”

Daisy left the hampers, and walked, or indeed obeyed orders and ran, to where the little spaniel was threatening a rout among the whole army of cold chickens. Daisy called him off, and then stood by to take care of him. It was very amusing to see Eloise and Theresa unpack the hampers; and Ella and Nora, finding it so, made no move to join Daisy in her distant watch. The men were busy running to and fro with the unpacked eatables, and keeping up the fire, and setting piles of plates everywhere, and laying glasses all round the tablecloth—for they would not stand up—and putting wine in coolers, that is to say, in pails of ice water. Daisy felt alone again, left out of the play. She looked at Nora and Ella in the distance—that is, just far enough away to be out of her society, eagerly standing over the hampers; and for a moment felt not very well pleased, either with them or her cousin Eloise. But then she remembered that she was tired, and sat down with her back against a tree; resolved to take all things patiently, if she could; and she very soon found enough to do, and amusing enough, in ordering the arrangement of the dishes on the tablecloth. Logan was sure to set a thing down in the wrong place, if he set it anywhere; and even James was confused in such a very novel

state of his department. Daisy found exercise for all her wisdom, and full content came with full employment, naturally.

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You can make pleasure out of almost anything, if you set about it. In the intervals she rested, and watched the distant figures of the fishing party on the island; and gladdened herself with the beauty and the sweet air of the wood, and the flecks of sunshine and moving shadow on the ground beneath the trees. I am afraid nobody else found the air sweet, unless it were the doctor. He was hardy, and besides had a philosophical way of looking at things. Daisy watched for his coming, afraid that he might wander off beyond luncheon time; but he did not come. The three boys, however, a less welcome sight, had recollected that there was something forward besides fishing; and came strolling along through the trees towards the tablecloth. Preston was stopped to speak to his mother; the other two approached Daisy.

“Hello!” said Ransom, “here we are! now where’s everybody else? I’m furious as a lion.”

“A hungry lion,” said Alexander Fish. “I wish we had got some fish for the people to cook. That’s fun. I tell you, Ransom, it’s fun to see the work they make with it.”

“Fish is no count, *I* think,” said Ransom. “It’s only good to catch. I can stand a lobster salad, though. But I can’t stand long without something. What’s the use of waiting? They aren’t coming back yonder till night. They haven’t stirred yet.”

Ransom’s eyes indicated the party on the island. And acting upon his announced opinion, Ransom, paid his respects in a practical form, not to cold chicken and bread, but to a dish of cream cakes which stood conveniently near. And having eaten one, in three mouthfuls, he stretched out his hand and took another. Happily then some meringues attracted his attention; and he stood with a cream cake in one hand and a meringue in the other, taking them alternately or both together. The meringues began to disappear fast. Daisy warned him that the only dish of those delicacies in all the entertainment was the one into which he was making such inroads. Ransom paid her no heed and helped himself to another.

“Ransom, that is not fair,” said his sister. “There are no more but those, and you will have them all gone. Just look, now, how the dish looks!”

“How the dish looks!” said Ransom mockingly. “None of your business.”

“It is not right. Don’t Ransom!” Daisy said, as his hand was extended for a fourth meringue.

“Want ’em for yourself?” said Ransom sneeringly. “I say, Alexander—here’s a game! Here’s something just fit for a man’s luncheon in a summer day—something nice and light and nourishing. Here’s a lark pie—I know what it is, for I saw Joanna making it. Now we’ll have this and be off.”

“You must not, Ransom,” Daisy urged anxiously. But Ransom seized the pie from its place and proceeded to cut into it, seeing that nobody was near to hinder him.

“Ransom, you ought not to do it,” pleaded Daisy. “You ought to wait your turn. You are worse than Fido.”

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“Am I?” said Ransom fiercely. “Take that! Mind your own affairs, and let mine alone. You are not queen here yet, if you think you are.”

A tolerably smart box on the ear was the accompaniment to this speech. Nobody was near. Alexander, after joining his friend in a meringue or two with a cream cake, not feeling quite comfortable in the connection, had moved off. So did Ransom now, but he carried his pie with him and called the other two boys to bear him company in making lunch of it. Preston was much too gentlemanly a fellow to take part even of a lark pie in such circumstances; he walked off in disdain, leaving Ransom and Alexander to do what they liked. And they liked the pie so well that I am bound to say nothing of it remained very soon excepting the dish. Even the bones were swallowed by Fido.

Daisy was left alone under the tree with her occupation gone; for Fido was after the lark bones. Her ear rang a few minutes from the application of Ransom’s hand; but that effect had passed off long before Daisy’s mind was quieted. For gentle as she was, Daisy was a little lady who had a very deep and particular sense of personal dignity; she felt wronged as well as hurt. Her father and mother never indulged in that method of punishment; and if they had, Ransom’s hand was certainly not another one to inflict it.

Daisy was quite as much stung by the insult as by the unkindness; but she felt both. She felt both so much that she was greatly discomposed. Her watch over the feast was entirely forgotten; luckily Fido had gone off with his master, and chickens were no longer in immediate danger. Daisy rubbed away first one tear and then another, feeling a sort of bitter fire hot at her heart; and then she began to be dissatisfied at finding herself so angry. This would not do; anger was something she had no business with; how could she carry her Lord’s message, or do anything to serve him, in such a temper? It would not do; but there it was, offended dignity and pride, hot at her heart. Nobody would have thought perhaps that Daisy was proud; but you never can tell what is in a person’s heart till it is tried; and then the kinds of pride are various. It does not follow because you have none of one sort that you have not plenty of another sort. However, finding this fire at her heart quite too much for her to manage, Daisy went away from her watching-place; crept away among the trees without any one’s observing her; till she had put some distance between her and the party, and found a further shelter from them in a big moss-grown rock and large tree. There was a bed of moss, soft and brown, on the other side of the rock; and there Daisy fell down on her knees and began to remember—“Thou therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

CHAPTER V.

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Certainly the sun was very hot that day. The fishers on the island found it so, notwithstanding that they had sought out every one for himself the shadiest, freshest nook that could be found. Nothing was fresh; and if the trees did hinder the sunshine from falling on some parts of the ground, they kept off none of it from the water; and the glare from that was said to be unendurable. Even where there was not much glare strictly speaking; people were not particular in their speech that day. At last they voted that holding lines in the water was of no use; fish could not be expected to leave their cool depths below to seek the sunny regions near the surface of the water; “they would be fools if they did,” one of the ladies remarked. Fish never were supposed to be very wise creatures, Mr. Sandford informed her; but nevertheless, it was resolved not to reckon upon their want of wisdom at this time, but to put up and go back to shore, and try what cold chicken would do. So just about the hour when the sun’s work for the day verges towards the hottest, the little boat was seen again stealing over the sunny surface of the lake, back to where the tablecloth lay spread for the tired people.

A little while before it reached that place, Dr. Sandford arrived upon the scene. He locked a little warm in the face; but his white shooting coat did not seem less affected by the state of the weather than the doctor’s temper. Mrs. Gary and Mrs. Fish he found sunk in somnolency at the foot of the tree where they had been talking. The young ladies were sitting by the emptied hampers, deep in confab. The boys and Fido, over against the outspread feast, were arranging fishing tackle, and watching the return of the boat; with eyes of anticipation. To them came the doctor.

“Where is your sister, Ransom?”

“I don’t know.” The tone meant, I don’t care.

“I do not see her anywhere.”

“No more do I,” said Ransom, without raising his eyes from his fishing line.

“Where is she?”

“I told you, I don’t know.”

“Did she go with the fishing party?”

“No sir; she was here when we came,” Alexander Fish spoke up.

“Yes, I remember she was here,” said Preston. “I remember seeing her. She cannot be far off. It’s hot enough to keep people from straying far.”

The doctor, being not absolutely satisfied with this reasoning, and having nothing better to do, occupied himself with a search after the missing Daisy. It lasted some time, and he was beginning to be not quite easy in his mind; when, being a sportsman, his eye

detected something at a distance which was not moss nor stone. In two minutes the doctor came up with it. It was Daisy, fast asleep on her moss bed behind the rock. Her head lay on her arm which was curled up under it; and profound slumber had left the little pale face as serene as usual. The doctor was warm by this time. He sat down on the moss beside her; and putting his arm under Daisy's shoulders lifted her up, by way of waking her, speaking to her at the same moment. But to his amusement, Daisy no sooner got her eyes well open than she shook herself free of him, and sat as demure as possible opposite to him on the moss.

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“Dr. Sandford!—I believe—I got asleep,” she said in a bewildered kind of way.

“How did you get *here*, Daisy?”

“I came here, sir.”

“What for did you come here?”

Daisy looked troubled; glanced at the doctors face, and then rested her head on her hand.

“Who has been vexing you now?” said he at haphazard.

“I am not vexed,” said Daisy in the gentlest of all possible tones.

“Tired?”

“I think I am tired.”

“Honour bright, Daisy!—has not some one been vexing you?”

“I ought not to have been vexed,” said Daisy slowly.

“I will wager that you are wrong there, and that you ought to have been vexed. Who was it, Daisy?”

“Never mind, please, Dr. Sandford! It is no matter at all now.”

She put her little hand confidingly in the doctor’s as she spoke and looked very earnest. He could not resist her.

“I wish I had come sooner,” he said. “I shall be suspicious of everybody, Daisy. Come—you and I must go to dinner, or there will be a hue and cry after us.”

Indeed by this time the whole party were gathered, and in impatient expectation that the dinner would make up to them in some degree for the various disappointments of the morning. All were gathered and had arranged themselves conveniently upon the grass, around the feast which was spread out upon the tablecloth, before anybody knew that two of their number were wanting. The cry was just raised, “Where is the doctor?”—-when the doctor hove in sight with Daisy by his side. Everybody was placed already; and it was very natural that the doctor keeping hold of Daisy’s hand, led her with him to the spot that seemed to be left for his occupancy, and seated her there beside him. On the other side of Daisy was Mrs. Stanfield. She was very well satisfied with this arrangement, seeing that her father was surrounded by people and busy besides; and that Nora and Ella were with Alexander and Ransom.

What a gay tableful they were! all talking and laughing, though everybody declared himself exceeded by the heat and bored by the fishing, and generally tired of everything but eating and drinking. But iced champagne was now at the parched lips, and boned turkey and jellied ham were waiting attention, and a good time had come. It was some while, of course, before Daisy could be served. She waited, feeling very happy and amused; for a party of people taking a cold dinner out of doors do not look nor act exactly like the same people taking a hot dinner in the house. Daisy never dreamed that anybody was noticing *her*. She had a disagreeable surprise.

“Daisy,” said Mrs. Randolph from a little distance, and across several people,—“Daisy, what did you do that for?”

“Mamma!”—said Daisy. “What, mamma?”

“Have you a headache?”

“O no, mamma.”

“What did you put up your hand to your brow for?”

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“Mamma?”—said Daisy, very much bewildered. For she knew nothing was the matter, and she could not guess what her mother was thinking of. Moreover, somehow, Mrs. Randolph’s words or manner had acted to stop the voices of all the company in her neighbourhood; and everybody was waiting and looking to see what the subject of interest might be. Mrs. Randolph’s words could come now with their usual calm distinctness; and Daisy’s answers, no matter how softly spoken, could be well heard. In a good deal of wonder Daisy repeated, “Mamma?”

“You put up your hand and sat with your eyes covered—did you not, just now?”

“Yes, mamma.”—No need to bid anybody look and listen now; the rosy flush that had spread itself all over Daisy’s pale cheeks sufficiently aroused curiosity.

“I notice that you do so before every meal—is it not the case?”

“Yes, mamma.”

Dr. Sandford could hear the caught breath. He did not look, except by a glance, but he listened.

“What does that mean, Daisy?”

“Mamma?”—said the child in distress.

“I ask you, what that means? what is it for?”

“Mamma—may I come round there and speak to you?”

“Certainly not. Sit still in your place and answer.”

But Daisy was silent, very flushed.

“Do you hear, Daisy? what does that action mean? I wish to know.”

“Mamma, may I speak to you in private and tell you?”

“Are you ashamed of it? are you ashamed to tell me?”

“No, mamma.”

“Then do it at once.”

But everybody waited in vain to hear the answer. It did not come.

“I shall not ask you again, Daisy.”

“Mamma,” said the child low and modestly, but with steadiness,—“I was praying.”

“Praying! were you! Why do you choose that particular time for your private devotions?”

It was almost too much. The tears started in Daisy’s eyes; but presently she answered, —“Because God is good to us, mamma.”

“He is always good,” said Mrs. Randolph. “That is a very silly practice of yours, Daisy, and very unbecoming. There is a proper way of doing everything.”

The lady’s manner said that the subject was dismissed, and her guests returned to their ordinary conversation. Except the doctor and Daisy. She was overwhelmed, and he was gravely unsocial.

Was it silly?—that bound her heart had made up to the feet of her King? That joyful thanksgiving, and expression of love, and pledge of obedience, and prayer for help? It was something better than the meal often to Daisy; something sweeter and happier. Was it silly? and must she do so no more except when she was alone?

Daisy had quite forgotten that eating and drinking was part of the present matter in hand, when Dr. Sandford softly asked her what she would like to have. Daisy said anything he pleased; not caring herself, and indeed in too much confusion of mind yet to know or think about the business. And her appetite was gone. Dr. Sandford provided for her with kind care, what she liked too; but nothing was good to Daisy. She broke bread and swallowed milk mechanically; the more substantial food she refused utterly. Bread and milk and grapes were Daisy’s dinner.

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“It’s good to be somebody’s favourite,” Ransom said to her after the meal was over. “Nobody got any grapes but you.”

“Nobody? Why Ransom, I thought everybody had them.”

“*I* didn’t,—nor Preston, nor Alexander—not a berry; and Nora and Ella Stanfield didn’t. You are the favourite.”

“O Nora,” said Daisy, “didn’t you have any grapes? I’m sorry!”

“I had peaches,” said Nora. “I like peaches a great deal the best. Daisy, what shall we do now?”

“Suppose we sit down and have a talk.”

“A talk?” said Nora. “Suppose we have a game of hide and seek? It’s such a good place.”

“Or forfeits?” said Ella. “It is too hot to play hide and seek.”

“I don’t think it is hot,” said Nora. “The sun don’t shine now.”

“Daisy, don’t you want to go out with me in the boat?” said Preston coming up. “We’ll get in the shade, and see if you can catch a pickerel as well as you did a trout.”

“O I should like that!” said Daisy eagerly. She saw the kindness of Preston’s meaning. He wanted to make her forget her vexations.

“And may we go too?” Nora asked.

“Certainly; but Daisy and I are going to do the fishing. You must be content to look on. We will go round to the other side of the island, Daisy; it is pretty there, I know. And we shall have a better chance for the pickerel, for the sun is gone under a cloud.”

So the sun had; but at that very moment the cloud passed off and the brilliant hot beams fell with what seemed renewed brilliancy on the lake, and on all the ground which they could touch.

“It will go under again,” said Preston. “We do not mind trifles. Come, Daisy.”

“Daisy, you must not go,” said Dr. Sandford looking round. He was just moving away to see some one else, and was gone in a minute.

“The doctor is all very well when one is sick,” said Preston; “but I never heard he had a right to command people when they are well. Daisy, we will not mind him.”

“I must,” said Daisy, meekly. “But you can go without me, if you want to.”

“Nonsense, dear little Daisy! you are not obliged to do what *everybody* says,” her cousin urged. “Dr. Sandford has no more business to say what you shall do than what I shall do. I will not let him rule you so. Come! we will go try for the pickerel. Go, Nora and Ella, run away with the baskets to the boat. Come, Daisy, come!”

“No, Preston, I cannot.”

“Because of what that stupid man says? or don’t you want to go!”

“I would like to go very much, thank you, Preston.”

“Then you shall!”

“No. I cannot.”

“Daisy, you might as well obey me as Dr. Sandford.”

“I do not think so.”

“Nora and Ella are going. You will be left alone.”

“I hope you will catch some pickerel,” said Daisy steadily.

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But Preston was vexed. He did not like it that his word should not have as much weight with his little cousin as any other person's, after her father and mother. Like other boys, and men, for the most part, he was fond of having his own way even in little things; though he sought it in a polite fashion. And Daisy was very fond of him, and always followed his lead; but now he could not move her. He went off at a bound, and soon was out upon the water, with the girls and Alexander and Ransom also who had joined him.

Daisy would have liked the shelter of her mossy hiding-place again. She stood in the shade of a tree looking after the boat; feeling very much left alone and greatly disposed to have a good crying time; but that was not her way of meeting trouble. What a strange day of pleasure this Silver Lake business had turned out! Yet Daisy had enjoyed many things in it; but her mother's attack upon her at luncheon had sobered her completely. It was such a sign of what she might expect. Daisy presently fell to considering what she should do; and then remembered her old refuge, prayer; and then concluded that she was a very happy little girl after all. And instead of being hurt that Nora had been with her so little that day, it was very natural, Daisy said to herself. Of course, Nora wanted to go in the boat with Preston after fish; it was too good an opportunity to be lost; and of course she had liked to walk in the morning with the larger and gayer party. It was all right, Daisy decided, although not what she herself would have done in the circumstances. Would her note to her father have been reckoned "silly" too? Very likely. Daisy turned her wistful eyes to where he was; sitting in a group of ladies and gentlemen, talking. Daisy could not go to him. Further along, Mrs. Gary was fighting the heat under a tree by herself. No attraction there. Still further—the doctor was standing talking to the two young ladies. As Daisy looked, he quitted them and came towards her.

"Have I spoiled all your pleasure, Daisy?"

"No, sir."

"Are you angry with me?"

The answer this time was given with such an affectionate bright smile that the doctor must have been hard not to feel it.

"You do not seem to have much pleasure on hand just now," said he; "would you like to take a little walk with me, and see if we can find any wonderful things?"

Daisy's face was quite answer enough, it was so full of content. The doctor had no intention to tire her; be strolled along the borders of the lake, which was wild and lovely all the more as they got further away from the pic-nic ground. Firs and oaks stood thick all along, with many other trees also; the ground was carpeted with layers of moss; great rocks rose up by the water's edge, grey and brown with lichens. It was not so hot

now. The sun's glare was shielded off. On a mossy carpet beside the water's edge the doctor and Daisy sat down. Undoubtedly the doctor had never taken so much trouble with a child before; but Daisy was a study to him.

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“We do not find the wonderful things, Daisy,” he remarked, throwing himself back upon the moss with his hands under his head. His cap fell off; his blue eyes looked at her with a sort of contented laziness; never sleepily. Daisy smiled at him.

“I do,” she said.

“You do! What have you found!”

“I think everything is wonderful.”

“A profound truth,” said the doctor; “but you are very young to find it out. Instance, Daisy.”

“But you want to go to sleep, sir.”

“How dare you say so? No, I don’t. I want to have a talk with you about something wonderful.”

Daisy thought he looked a little sleepy, for his eyelids drooped well over his eyes; nevertheless the eyes saw keenly enough the start of pleasure into hers. And they had seen the pale, subdued look of the face that it had worn before. Nevertheless, in spite of that start, Daisy remained as quiet as a mouse, looking at him.

“Don’t you think I can talk while I am enjoying myself in this fashion?” said the doctor.

“I think you can talk any way,” said Daisy; “but you *look* a great deal more like sleeping, sir.”

“None of that. Go on, Daisy. Only do not say anything about the sun, now that it has gone under a cloud. Let us forget it for a little while.”

“What shall I take, then?”

“I don’t care. Something green and refreshing.”

Daisy looked around her. On every side she saw things that she had no doubt would be very interesting to talk about; she did not know which to choose. There were the trees; the firs and hemlocks, and the oaks and maples, growing thick on every hand. No doubt those beautiful structures had uses and characters of wonder; she had a great mind to ask the doctor to tell her about them. But the great boulder beside which they were hid from view, divided her attention; it was very large, and rounded off on all sides, lying quietly on the ground; and Daisy was curious to know how it came to be so grown over with green things; mosses and ferns draped it all over; how could they grow on the bare rock?

“Well, Daisy?” said her friend, watching how Daisy’s countenance woke up from its subdued expression.

“Dr. Sandford, how could these things grow on the rock? these green things?”

“What green things?”

“Why, ever so many sorts. Here is moss, a great deal of it, of different kinds; and there is beautiful brake at the top, like plumes of feathers. How can they grow there?”

“Why not?”

“I thought everything wanted some earth to grow in.”

“Have they none?”

“I don’t know. I thought not. They must have very little indeed, Dr. Sandford.”

“Very little will do, I suppose.”

“But I do not see how *any* earth got there,” said Daisy. “It was only a bare rock at first, of course.”

“At first,” repeated the doctor. “Well, Daisy, I suppose it was no more. But there is something else growing there, which you have not spoken of.”

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“Is there?” said Daisy. “I do not see anything else.”

“Pardon me—you do see it.”

“Then I do not know what it is,” said Daisy laughing. Absolutely, the sober, sober little face had forgotten its care, and the eyes were alight with intelligence and curiosity, and the lips were unbent in good honest laughter. The doctor raised himself up to a sitting posture.

“What do you call those grey and brown patches of colour that hide your rock all over?”

“Grey and brown?” said Daisy wistfully—“those are just the colours of the rock, aren’t they?”

“No. Look close.”

“Why, Dr. Sandford, what is it? It is not the rock—some of it is not—but here is a spot of yellow that is nothing else, I think.”

“You must learn not to trust your eyes, Daisy. That is something that grows; it is not rock; it is a vegetable. If I had my pocket lens here I would shew you; but I am afraid—-yes, I have left it at home.”

“Why it is!” cried Daisy. “I can see now—it is *not* rock. What is it, Dr. Sandford?”

“Lichen.”

“What is that, sir?”

“It is one of the lowest forms of vegetable life. It is the first dress the rocks wear, Daisy.”

“But what does it live on?”

“Air and water, I suppose.”

“I never knew that was a vegetable,” said Daisy musingly. “I thought it was the colour of the rock.”

“That goes to prepare soil for the mosses, Daisy.”

“O how, Dr. Sandford?”

“In time the surface of the rock is crumbled a little by its action; then its own decay furnishes a very little addition to that. In favourable situations a stray oak leaf or two falls and lies there, and also decays, and by and by there is a little coating of soil or a

little lodgment of it in a crevice or cavity, enough for the flying spores of some moss to take root and find home."

"And then the moss decays and makes soil for the ferns?"

"I suppose so."

Daisy stood looking with a countenance of delighted intelligence at the great boulder, which was now to her a representative and witness of natural processes she had had no knowledge of before. The mosses, the brakes, the lichen, had all gained new beauty and interest in her eyes. The doctor watched her and then scrambled up to his feet and came to her side.

"Look here, Daisy," said he, stooping down at the foot of the rock and shewing her where tufts of a delicate little green plant clustered, bearing little umbrella-like heads on tiny shafts of handles.

"What is that Dr. Sandford?"

"Something wonderful."

"Is it? It is pretty. What is it, sir?"

[Illustration]

"It is a plant somewhere between the mosses and the lichens in its character—it is one of the liverworts, and they are some of the first plants to go in advance of superior vegetation. This is called *Marchantia*."

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“And is it wonderful, Dr. Sandford?”

“If I could shew it to you, you would think so. Look here, Daisy—on the surface of this leaf do you see little raised spots here and there?”

“Yes, I see them.”

“Those are, when they are finished, little baskets.”

“Baskets?” exclaimed Daisy delightedly. “I can’t see anything like a basket now.”

“No, it is too small for you to see; you must take it on my word, who have seen it. They are baskets, and such baskets as you never dreamed of. The shape is elegant, and round the edge, Daisy, they are cut into a fringe of teeth, and each tooth is cut again into teeth, making a fringe around *its* tiny edge.”

“I wish I could see it,” said Daisy.

“Now if you were my little sister, and lived with me, I could shew you these things in the evenings.”

Daisy responded to this with a very grateful and somewhat wistful smile, but immediately went on with the business in hand.

“Do these little baskets hold anything, Dr. Sandford”

“Yes. Baskets are always made to hold something.”

“What do they hold?”

“They hold what are called *spores*; that is, little bits of things which, whenever they get a chance, begin to grow and make new plants.”

“Seeds?” said Daisy.

“They answer the purpose of seeds.”

“How do they get out of the basket? do the winds blow them out?”

“Or the rain washes them out. If they lie long enough in the basket, they will take root there, and then there is a new plant seen growing out of the old one.”

“How wonderful it is!” said Daisy.

“There is another wonder about it. It does not matter which way these little spores lie on the ground or in the basket; but the side that happens to be exposed to the light, after a

time, prepares itself to expand into the surface of a frond, while the dark side sends down a tiny root."

"And it does not matter which side lies uppermost?"

"No, not in the beginning."

"What is a *frond*, Dr. Sandford?"

"This sort of seed-bearing leaf is called so."

"How pretty it is!" said Daisy. "What are these little things like umbrellas?"

"These carry the real seed vessels of the plant."

"Other seeds. Dr. Sandford, is *everything* wonderful?"

"What do you think about it?"

"I do not know but a very little," said Daisy; "but I never should have thought this little green moss—or what did you say it was?"

"Liverwort. Its name is Marchantia."

"This liverwort; I never should have supposed it was anything but pretty, and of course good for something; but now I never heard anything so wonderful."

"More than the sun?" said Dr. Sandford smiling.

"It is more surprising, I think," said Daisy.

"Pray, what makes you conclude so securely that this little Marchantia is *good for something*?"

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Daisy gave him a quick look of wisdom and suspicion mingled. The doctor was getting a very good amusement himself, and quite entered into the matter. He waited for Daisy's answer. It came diplomatically.

"*Isn't* everything good for something, sir?"

"'Pon my word, I don't know," said the doctor. "My enquiry was for the grounds of your opinion, Daisy."

"It was not an opinion. I do not think I am old enough to have an opinion."

"What was it, Daisy?"

The doctor was still crouching down by the side of the rock examining carelessly whatever he found there. Daisy looked at him and waited, and felt at last that good manners required her to speak.

"You said, sir, that baskets were made to hold something."

"So your remark was an inference from mine?"

"No, sir."

"Go on, Daisy."

"I only said it, sir, because I knew it was true."

There was an odd contrast between the extreme modesty of Daisy's manner and the positiveness of her words.

"It is said to be a great philosophical truth, Daisy; but what I want to know is how you, not being a philosopher, have got such firm hold of it?"

He faced Daisy now, and she gave way as usual before the searching blue eyes. One soft look, and her eyes fell away.

"I only thought it. Dr. Sandford, because in the beginning—when God had made everything—the Bible says he saw that it was all good."

"Daisy, how came you to be such a lover of the Bible?"

Daisy did not speak at once, and when she did it was a departure from the subject.

"Dr. Sandford, I felt a drop of rain on my face!"

“And here is another,” said the doctor getting up. “This is what I have expected all day. Come, Daisy—you must be off in your chaise-a-porteurs without delay.”

“But Nora, and Ella, and the boys!—they are away off on the lake.”

“They will scuttle home now,” said the doctor, “but I have nothing to do with them. You are my business, Daisy.”

Accordingly he carried her back to the lunching place, not indeed in his arms, but with a strong hand that made her progress over the stones and moss very rapid, and that gave her a great flying leap whenever occasion was, over any obstacle that happened to be in the way. There was need enough for haste. The light veil of haze that had seemed to curtain off the sunlight so happily from the lake and the party, proved now to have been only the advancing soft border of an immense thick cloud coming up from the west. No light veil now; a deep, dark covering was over the face of the sky, without break or fold; the drop or two of rain that had been felt were merely the outriders of an approaching storm. Low threatening, distant mutterings of thunder from behind the mountains, told the party what they might expect before long.

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There was sudden confusion. Nobody wanted to be out in the storm, and to avoid it seemed a difficult problem. Hastily the ladies caught up their scarfs and bags, and set off upon a scattering flight through the woods to the shore, those who were nearest or first ready not stopping to wait for the others. Quickly the luncheon ground was deserted; fast the blue and white flutter of muslins disappeared in the enveloping woods; hastily the remainder of the packing went on to get the hampers again in readiness to move. In the midst of all this, who was to carry Daisy's chair?

"You say there is a house somewhere on the way," said Mr. Randolph to the doctor. "If you will go forward with Daisy at once, I will stay to look after those children in the boat. They are coming now as fast as they can."

"Can you carry my gun?"

"Certainly. Doctor, I will take that office, if you will stay behind till the boat gets to land."

"Thank you—it is better arranged the other way. The storm will be upon us before the ladies get to the shore, I fear."

"Then they had better take the other route."

Mr. Randolph in haste despatched one of the men to recall the fleeing members of the party, and bring them, round by the other road to the house. But before that, the doctor had put Daisy in her chair, and with Logan at the other end of it had set off to reach shelter. It grew very dark; and it was sultrily still in the woods. Not a leaf trembled on its stem. The steps of the two chair-bearers sounded ominously in the entire hush of everything. The gloom still deepened. The doctor and Logan with swift, steady strides carried the chair along at a goodly rate; not as it had come in the morning. In the midst of this, and after it had gone on some time in silence, Daisy twisted herself round to look at the doctor and give him a smile.

"You do not seem concerned, Daisy, in the view of getting wet?"

"Why no," said Daisy twisting round, again, "it is nice. I am only sorry for the people who are so frightened."

"What is nice? getting wet?"

"O no," said Daisy. "Maybe I shall not get wet—you go so fast."

But at this moment there came a nearer growl of thunder, and the leaves in the tops of the trees rustled as if a breath had passed over them. Then were still.

"Can you mend your pace, Logan?" said the doctor.

“Ay, sir!”—came in the deep, cheery utterance of Logan’s Scotch voice.

“Hold fast, Daisy”—said the doctor; and the two chair-bearers changed their pace for a swinging trot. It was needful to hold on now indeed, for this gait jolted the chair a good deal; but it got over the ground, and Daisy found it excessively amusing. They passed the thick-standing tree stems in quick succession now; the rocks uprising from the side of the path were left behind one after another; they reached the sharp bend in the road;

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and keeping up the swinging trot with a steadiness which shewed good wind on the part of both the chair-bearers, at last the little house where Sam had been left hove in view. Time it was; full time. One and another sough of the wind had bowed the tree-tops with a token of what was coming; one and another bright flash of lightning had illumined the woody wilderness; and now just as the chair stopped, drops began to fall which seemed as large as cherry-stones, mingled with hail a good deal larger. Their patter sounded on the leaves a minute or two; then ceased.

“That will do, Logan,” said the doctor. “Bring the chair in under shelter if you can; and come in yourself. This will be a shower.” And he led Daisy into the house.

If ever you saw a dark-looking place, that was the room into which the house door admitted them. Two little windows seemed at this instant to let in the darkness rather than the light; they were not very clean, besides being small. A description which Daisy would have said applied to the whole room. She stood still in the middle of the floor, not seeing any place to sit down, that she could make up her mind to take. The doctor went to the window. Logan took a chair. Sam was sitting disconsolately in a corner. It was hard to say to what class of people the house belonged; poor people they were of course; and things looked as if they were simply living there because too poor to live anywhere else. A slatternly woman stared at the intruders; a dirty child crawled over the hearth. Daisy could not endure to touch anything, except with the soles of her shoes. So she stood upright in the middle of the floor; till the doctor turned round.

“Daisy!—are you going to stand there till the shower is over?”

“Yes, sir,”—Daisy answered patiently. A smile curled the doctor’s lips. He opened the door and lifted in the chair with its long poles, which indeed half filled the little room; but Daisy sat down. The woman looked on in astonishment.

“Be she weakly, like?” she asked at length of the doctor.

“Has been—” he answered.

“And what be that thing for?”

“It is for going up and down mountains.”

“Have you come from the mountings!” she asked in great surprise. The doctor was in for it. He was obliged to explain. Meanwhile the darkness continued and the rain did not yet fall. A breath of wind now and then brushed heavily past the house, and sunk into silence. The minutes passed.

“It will be a happiness if they get here before it begins,” said Dr. Sandford; “it will come when it comes!”

“Be there *more* comin’?” said the woman.

“A houseful. We are only the beginning.”

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She moved about now with somewhat of anxiety to get sundry things out of the way, which yet there seemed no other place for; a frying pan was set up in a corner; a broom took position by the fire place; a pail of water was lifted on the table; and divers knives and forks and platters hustled into a chimney cupboard. Little room enough when all was done. At last the woman caught up the sprawling baby and sat down with it opposite the broom, on the other side the fire, in one of the three chairs the place contained. Sam had another. Logan was on a box. The woman's eyes said, "Now I am ready to see all that comes."

CHAPTER VI.

It was some time first, and the rain still did not fall. It was very black, and flashes from distant lightning with mutterings of the thunder were frequent and threatening; still no rain unless a few ominous drops. At last voices and fluttering muslins came down the road; the flutter came near, and in poured a stream of gay people at the door of the poor little room. Gay as to their dress and attire, that is; for gayety was not to be found at present in their words and behaviour. The woman in the chimney corner hugged up closer her dirty baby with the delight of so unwonted a feast to her eyes.

"Is there nothing better than *this* to be had?" said Mrs. Fish. And her tone was indescribable.

"How long have we got to remain here, doctor?" said a more cheery voice.

"Mrs. Stanfield, until the rain has come, and gone."

"It would be better to be out in it," whispered Theresa to her mother.

"My love, there is no other shelter on this side the river."

"There will not be standing room for us all presently—" said Eloise Gary.

Pretty nearly so; for when the second detachment of the party arrived, in a minute more, people looked at each other across a throng of heads. They got in; that was all. To sit down or to move much was out of the question.

"Daisy, you can't have this big chair of yours in here," said Ransom in an energetic whisper. "Don't you see there is no room for it?"

Daisy saw there was very little. She got up patiently and stood, though feeling very tired; while her chair was got out of the door with a good deal of difficulty.

"Are you tired, my darling?" said her father bending down to the pale little face.

“A little, papa,” said Daisy sighing.

No more words, but Mr. Randolph lifted Daisy in his arms and gave her a resting place there. Daisy was afraid she was too heavy for him, but it was very comfortable to sit there, with her arm on his shoulder. Her face looked its content; the only face in which such an expression could be seen at present; though the gentlemen took the thing coolly, and Mr. Randolph and the two Sandfords looked as usual. But now the delayed storm drew near. The thunder notified

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with every burst the fact that it was coming speedily; the lightning became vivid and constant. A premonitory sweep of the wind—and the clouds gave out their treasures of rain and hail with tremendous fury. The lightning was terrible now, and the darkness of the intervals between so great that the company could scarcely see each other's faces. This was more than some of the party had bargained for, and there was a degree of confusion. Screams from a few of the ladies and exclamations of terror from others were mixed now and then with words that sounded very like an oath to Daisy's ear, though they were not spoken in levity. She bent her head round to look in the face of the lady who had last used them, as if to assure herself what was meant; and then her head went down on Mr. Randolph's shoulder and her face was hidden.

"Daisy—" whispered her father.

"Yes, papa."

"Are you afraid?"

"No, papa—not for myself."

"What? Look up here, Daisy."

She lifted her face; it was wistful and troubled.

"Are you concerned about the storm, my darling?"

"No, papa; not myself."

"How then, Daisy?"

She shuddered. "Papa, I wish they would not scream so!"

"Why does that trouble *you*?" said Mr. Randolph smiling.

But Daisy's face was unutterably grave, as a new brilliant band of forked lightning glittered outside the windows, and the burst of the thunderbolt sounded as if at their very feet, making a renewal of the same cries and exclamations.

"Why does it trouble you, Daisy?" said Mr. Randolph soothingly, feeling the quiver of the child's frame.

"Papa," said Daisy with intense expression,—"they do not love Jesus!"—And her head went down again to be hid on her father's shoulder.

Mr. Randolph did nothing to bring it up again; and Daisy lay quite still, while the storm raged in full fury, and the screams and ejaculations of the ladies were joined now and then by a word of impatience from one of the gentlemen, or a “Hech, sirs!” in Logan’s smothered Scotch brogue. Once Mr. Randolph felt Daisy’s lips pressed against his face, and then her other arm came round his neck and nestling there closely she was after that as still as a mouse. The storm lasted a long time. The lightning and thunder at last removed their violence some distance off; then the wind and the rain did their part, which they had not fully done before. And all the while the poor party of pleasure sat or stood as thick as bees in a hive, in the miserable shelter of the cottage. Miserable yet welcome. Very tired and impatient the people became as they grew less frightened. Daisy had long been fast asleep. The day waned and drew near its ending. When sunset was, nobody could tell by the light; but that night was at hand was at last evident from the darkness.

“Your arms must be weary, Mr. Randolph,” said Dr. Sandford. “Let me relieve you of your burden.”

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“I cannot let you do that.”

“I will,” said the doctor. “Daisy being my charge as well as yours, gives me a right.” And the transfer was actually made before Daisy was aware of it. She waked up however, with a feeling of some change and a doubt upon her mind as to what custody she was in; but she was not sure, till the woman of the house lit a miserable dip candle, which threw a light that mocked the darkness over the weary company. Daisy did not like the arrangement at all.

“Dr. Sandford!” she exclaimed. “I shall tire you. Please put me on the floor and let me stand.”

“No—you cannot,” said the doctor decidedly. “Be a good child, Daisy. Lay your head down and go to sleep again.”

And greatly to Daisy’s astonishment the doctor’s moustache brushed her lip. Now Daisy had always thought to herself that she would never allow anybody that wore a moustache to kiss her; here it was done, without leave asked; and if the doctor was so independent of rules as that, she thought she had best not provoke him. Besides, she remembered that her father must be tired with carrying her so long; and moreover, if Dr. Sandford liked her well enough to kiss her, maybe he would not care for the trouble of holding her for a while. At any rate Daisy submitted peaceably to the necessity; put her arm over the doctor’s shoulder to support herself and laid her head down; though not to sleep. She watched everything that was going on now. What a roomful of weary and impatient people they were! packed like cattle in a pen, for closeness; and how the rain poured and beat outside the house! The shelter was something to be thankful for, and yet how unthankful everybody looked. Some of the gentlemen shewed calm fortitude under their trials; but the poor ladies’ chagrined faces said that days of pleasure were misnamed. Alexander Fish had gone to sleep; Ransom looked cross; Preston as usual gentlemanly, though bored. From one to another Daisy’s eye roved. Nora and Ella were sitting on the table; in full confab. Other people were sitting there too; the table was full.

“The storm is slackening—” Mr. Randolph remarked to the doctor.

“It will be over in a little while more.”

“What do you think of it, Daisy?” said her father noticing her look.

“Of what, papa?”

“Parties of pleasure in general.”

“Papa,—I have had a very nice time.”

“You have had a nice sleep,” said her father laughing; “and that colours your views of things. The rest of us have not had that advantage.”

“Daisy, I am surprised to hear you say what you do,” the doctor remarked as Mr. Randolph turned away. He spoke softly.

“Why, sir?”

“I thought your day had not been altogether agreeable?”

“Do you think anything is apt to be *altogether* agreeable, Dr. Sandford?” Daisy said, with a demure waiving of the subject which was worthy of much older years. The quaintness of this remark was infinite.

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“What has been the agreeableness to-day, for instance?”

“O, a great deal; my ride in the chair,—that was nice! and all *our* walk, and what you were telling me; and coming over the river—” Daisy paused.

“And what do you think of being carried in the arms of gentlemen,” said Mrs. Gary, who had overheard a few words,—“while other little girls have to get along as they can? as tired as you are, I dare say.”

“I cannot help it, aunt Gary,” said Daisy. But the remark served to justify her view of things; for what had in truth been altogether agreeable up to that minute was so no longer. Daisy was uneasy.

“Dr. Sandford,” she whispered after a few moments,—“I am rested—I can stand now. I am tiring you. Please set me down.”

“No. Be quiet, Daisy,” said her friend peremptorily. And as the little head went down again obediently on his shoulder, he gave again a gentle kiss to her lips. Daisy did not mind Mrs. Gary after that.

The storm slackened off now rapidly. The patter of the rain lessened and grew still; a sweet reviving air blew in at the windows. Of course the road was drenched with wet and every tree dripping; nevertheless the journey must be made to the boats, and the poor ladies were even glad to set out to undertake it. But it would not be an easy journey either, on the whole. Some time before this the doctor had despatched Logan on an errand. He now declared he must wait for his return; and desired Mr. Randolph to go forward and help take care of the rest of the party and have no concern about Daisy; he would keep her in charge.

“Shall I do that, Daisy?” said Mr. Randolph, fearing it might trouble her. But Daisy said, “Yes, papa”—with no hesitation; and the plan was acted upon. Gathering up their floating muslin dresses, tying handkerchiefs over their heads, with shrinking and yet eager steps, one by one they filed out at the door of the little hut. Just as the last one went, Logan came; he had been to the boats and brought thence the doctor’s cloak, which, with more providence than the rest of the party who were less used to travelling, he had taken the precaution to bring. Now this, by the doctor’s order, was spread over Daisy’s chair, which having been pushed out of doors, had got wet; she was placed in it then, and the folds of the cloak brought well round and over her, so that nothing could be more secure than she was from the wet with which every leaf and bough was dripping overhead, and every foot of soil loaded underneath. Dr. Sandford took one end of the poles and Logan the other, and the last of the party they set forth. Why Dr. Sandford had made this arrangement, was best known to himself. Perhaps he preferred it to having Mrs. Fish on his arm, who was a very fine lady; perhaps he preferred it to the attentions he might have had to pay to the younger damsels of the

party, who would all three have been on his hands at once, very likely. At all events he did prefer to be one of the chair-bearers, and Daisy was very glad of it.

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The rest of the party were well in advance, out of sight and hearing. Tramp, tramp, the steady regular footfall of her bearers, and the light plashing of rain drops as they fell, and the stir of the wind in the leaves, were all the sounds that Daisy heard. No rain fell now; on the contrary the heaven was clear as a bell, and light enough came through the woods to shew the way with comfortable certainty. Overhead the stars were shining down with wonderful brilliancy, through the air which the storm had cleansed from all vapours; the moon was coming up somewhere, too. The smell of the trees and other green things was exceedingly sweet after the rain; and the delicious soft air was very delicious after the sultry day. Never in her life after did Daisy forget that night's work. This ride from the cottage to the shore was something she enjoyed with all her might. It was so wild and strange as well as sweet. Rocks and tree trunks, and the turnings of the road had all such a mysterious new look, different from what daylight shewed them; it was an endless pleasure. Till the walk ended. It came out at last upon the shore of the river and into the moonlight. High in the eastern sky the moon hung, shedding her broad light down all over the river which crisped and sparkled under it; and there by the water's edge the members of the party of pleasure were huddled together preparing to embark. Over their heads the sails of Mr. Randolph's boat stood up in the moonlight. The doctor and Logan set down their burden and waited. The Fish's were getting on board their little vessel, which was moved by oars alone.

"Mrs. Stanfield, you had better come with us," Mr. Randolph said. "There is plenty of room. Your boat is too small. You would find it unpleasantly rough in mid-channel."

"O, is it rough?" exclaimed the lady.

"For your little row-boat—I am afraid you would find it so. The wind has roughened the water considerably, and it has not had time to get quiet. Come with us, and we will all take supper together at Melbourne."

It was arranged so. The party were stowed away in the large sail-boat, which held them all well enough; the children being happy at finding themselves seated together.

"What are we waiting for?" said Mrs. Gary when all had been in their places some minutes, and conversation was the only thing moving. "What are we staying here for?"

"Sam."

"Where's Sam?"

"He is yonder—in our late place of shelter. James and Michael have gone to fetch him with Daisy's chair."

"Sam! Why, he might have stayed there till to-morrow and no hurt. Have we got to wait till the men go there and bring him back? We shall be late at supper!"

“The river will be all the quieter, Mrs. Gary,” said Mr. Randolph mischievously.

“The river? You don’t mean to say it is not quiet?”

“It was not, quiet a while ago, I assure you.”

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“Well, I do think, if ever there was a misnamed thing, it is a party of pleasure,” said the lady disconsolately.

“They are very pleasant when they are over, sister Gary,” said Mr. Randolph.

“Daisy,” Nora whispered, “are you afraid?”

“No.”

“Your father says it is rough.”

“He knows how to manage the boat,” said Daisy.

“It isn’t rough, I don’t believe,” said Ella Stanfield. “It isn’t rough now.”

“I wish we were at the other side,” said Nora.

“O Nora, I think it is nice,” said Daisy. “How bright the moonlight is! Look—all over the river there is a broad strip. I hope we shall sail along just in that strip. Isn’t it wonderful, Nora?”

“No. What?” said Nora.

“That there should be something like a looking-glass up in the sky to catch the sunlight and reflect it down to us when we cannot see the sun itself.”

“What looking-glass?”

“Well, the moon catches the sunlight just so, as a looking glass would.”

“How do you know, Daisy? *I* think it shines.”

“I know because I have been told. It does not shine, any more than a looking-glass.”

“Who told you?”

“Dr. Sandford,” Daisy whispered.

“Did he! Then why don’t we have the moon every night?”

“Because the looking-glass, if you can imagine that it is a looking-glass, does not always hang where it can catch the sun.”

“Don’t it? I don’t like to think it is a looking-glass,” said Nora. “I would a great deal rather think it is the moon.”

“Well, so it is,” said Daisy. “You can think so.”

“Daisy, what should we do if it should be rough in the middle of the river?”

“*I* like it,” said Ella Stanfield.

“Perhaps it will not be very rough,” said Daisy.

“But suppose it should? And where the moon don’t shine it is so dark!”

“Nora,” said Daisy very low, “don’t you love Jesus?”

Nora at that flounced round, and turning her face from Daisy and the moonlight, began to talk to Ella Stanfield on the other side of her. Daisy did not understand what it meant.

All this while, and a good while longer, the rest of the people were waiting with various degrees of patience and impatience for the coming of Sam and the men. It was pretty there by the shore, if they had not been impatient. The evening breeze was exceedingly fragrant and fresh; the light which streamed down from the moon was sparkling on all the surface of the water, and laid a broad band of illumination like a causeway across the river. In one or two places the light shewed the sails of a sloop or schooner on her way up or down; and along the shore it grew daintily hazy and soft. But impatience was nevertheless the prominent feeling on board the sail-boat; and it had good time to display itself before Michael and James could go all the distance back to the house and bring Sam away from it.

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“Here he is!” “There they are at last!”—were the words of hail with which their appearance was greeted. “Now off”—and with all haste the three were received on board and the vessel pushed out into the stream. Immediately her sail caught the breeze which came fair down the river, and careening a little as she took it, her head began to make good speed across the causeway of moonlight. But then the ladies began to scream; for in mid-channel the wind was fresh and the waters had not quite forgotten yet the tumult of the late storm, which had tossed them well. The sail-boat danced bravely, up and down, going across the waves. Among the frightened people was Nora, who grasping Daisy’s dress with one hand and some part of the boat with the other, kept uttering little cries of “Oh Daisy”—“Oh! Daisy”—with every fresh lurch of the vessel. Ella Stanfield had thrown herself down in her mother’s lap. Daisy was very much tried.

“Nora,” she said, “I wish you would not cry so!”

“But I am afraid!”

“I wish you would be comforted, and not cry out so,” sighed Daisy. “Papa says there is no danger—didn’t you hear him?”

“But oh, I am afraid!” re-echoed Nora.

Daisy folded her hands and tried to bide patiently the time of smooth water. It came, partially at least, as they neared the opposite bank. The boat went steadily; spirits revived; and soon the passage was brought to an end and the sail-boat laid alongside the little jetty, on which the party, men, women and children, stepped out with as sincere a feeling of pleasure as had moved them all day. Carriages were in waiting; a few minutes brought the whole company to Melbourne House.

Here they were to stay supper; and the ladies and gentlemen dispersed to various dressing rooms to prepare for it. Soonest of all ready and in the drawing room were the three children.

“I am so hungry!” said Nora.

“So am I!” said Ella Stanfield.

“We shall have supper presently,” said Daisy.

“O Daisy, weren’t you afraid in the boat, when it went up and down so?”

“I do not think I was afraid,” said Daisy, “if other people had not been so disturbed.”

“I don’t see how they could help being disturbed,” said Ella Stanfield. “Why the boat didn’t sail straight at all.”

“But *that* does not do any harm,” said Daisy.

“How do you know?” said Nora. “*I* think it does harm; I do not think it is safe.”

“But you know, Nora, when the disciples were in the boat, and thought it was not safe—-the wind blew so, you know—they ought to have trusted Jesus and not been afraid.”

Nora and Ella both looked at Daisy for a minute after this speech, and then by some train of association Nora started another subject.

“Daisy, have you got my Egyptian spoon yet?”

Now was Daisy in a great difficulty. She flushed; the little face which had been pale enough before, became of a delicate pink hue all over. Not knowing what to say she said nothing.

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“Have you got it yet?” repeated Nora curiously.

“No, Nora. I have not.”

“You have *not*? What have you done with it?”

“Nothing.”

“My Egyptian spoon! that Marmaduke gave me to give to you! You have not kept it! What did you do with it, Daisy?”

“I did nothing with it.”

“Did you break it?”

“No.”

“Did you give it away?”

“O Nora, I loved it very much,” said poor Daisy; “but I could not keep it. I could not!”

“Why couldn’t you? I would not have given it to you, Daisy, if I had thought you would not have kept it.”

“I wanted to keep it very much—but I could not,” said Daisy with the tears in her eyes.

“Why ‘could not’? why couldn’t you? did you give it away, Daisy? that spoon I gave you?”

“Nora, I could not help it! Somebody else wanted it very much, and I was obliged to let her have it. I could not help it.”

“I shall tell Marmaduke that you did not care for it,” said Nora in an offended tone. “I wish I had kept it myself. It was a beautiful spoon.”

Daisy looked very much troubled.

“Who has got it?” Nora went on.

“It is no matter who has got it,” said Daisy. “I couldn’t keep it.”

“She is right, Nora,” said Preston, who came up just then, at the same time with the doctor. “She could not keep it, because it was taken away from her without any leave asked. I mean she shall have it back, too, one of these days. Don’t you say another word to Daisy!—she has behaved like a little angel about it.”

Preston's manner made an impression, as well as his words. Nora was checked.

"What is all that, Nora?" the doctor asked.

Now Nora had a great awe of him. She did not dare not answer.

"It is about a spoon I gave Daisy, that she gave away."

"She did not, I tell you!" said Preston.

"A spoon?" said the doctor. "Silver?"

"O no! A beautiful, old, very old, carved, queer old spoon, with a duck's bill, that came out of an old Egyptian tomb, and was put there ever so long ago."

"Did your brother give it to you?"

"Yes, to give to Daisy, and she gave it to somebody else."

"Nora, I did not give it as you think I did. I loved it very much. I would not have let anybody have it if I could have helped it."

"Who has got it, Daisy?" asked the doctor.

Daisy looked at him, looked perplexed, flushed a little, finally said with demure gentleness, "Dr. Sandford, I think I ought not to tell."

The doctor smiled, took Daisy's hand, and led her off to the supper room, whither they were now invited. So it happened that her seat at the table was again by his side. Daisy liked it. Just then she did not care about being with Nora.

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The people gathered, bright and fresh, around the supper table, all seeming to have forgotten their fatigues and frights; and every face looked smiling or gracious. The day was over, the river was crossed; the people were hungry; and the most dainty and perfectly arranged supply of refreshments stood on the board. Coffee and tea steamed out their grateful announcements; ice cream stood in red and white pyramids of firmness; oysters and cold meats and lobster salad offered all that hungry people could desire; and everybody was in a peculiar state of gratified content and expectation. Daisy was no exception. She had let slip her momentary trouble about the Egyptian spoon; and in her quiet corner, quite unnoticed as she thought, looked at the bright scene and enjoyed it. She liked being under the doctor's care too, and his care of her was very thoughtful and kind. He did not forget the little quiet mouse at his elbow; but after he had properly attended to the other people whose claims came first, he served her nicely with whatever was good for her. Was Daisy going to omit her usual giving of thanks? She thought of her mother's interference with a moment's flash of hesitancy; but resolved to go on just as usual. She did not think she would be noticed, everybody was so busy; and at any rate there was a burden of gladness in her little heart that must speak. While the talking and laughing and click of knives and forks was thick all around her, Daisy's little head bent in a moment's oblivion of it all behind her hand.

She had raised her head and just taken her fork in her fingers when she heard her own name. She looked up.

"Daisy—" said her mother quietly—"come here."

Daisy left her seat and went round to her mother's side.

"You may go up stairs," said Mrs. Randolph.

"Mamma?"—

"Go—and remain till I send for you."

Daisy slipped away quietly, before anybody could notice that she was gone or going. Then slowly went up the stairs and along the passages to her own room. It was empty and dark, except for the moonlight without; June had not expected her to be there, and had not made preparation. Daisy went and kneeled down in her old place by her window; her eyes filled as full of tears as they could hold. She bent her little head to brush them away, but they came again. Daisy was faint and tired; she wanted her supper very much; and she had enjoyed the supper-table very much; it was a great mortification to exchange it for the gloom and silence of her moonlit room. She had not a bit of strength to keep her spirits up. Daisy felt weak. And what was the matter? Only—that she had, against her mother's pleasure, repeated her acknowledgment of the hand that had given her all good things. How many good things that day! And was she not to make such acknowledgment any more? Ought she to please her mother in this?

Had she really done wrong? Daisy could not tell; she thought not; she could not wish she had not done what she did; but at the same time it was very miserable to have Mrs. Randolph at odds with her on such a point as this.

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Daisy shed some tears about it; yet not a great many, and without the least bitterness in them. But she felt faint and tired and disappointed. Here, however, at her own room window, and alone, there was no bar to thanksgivings; and Daisy had them in her heart, as well as prayers for the people who had them not. She was too tired to pray at last; she only knelt at the window with her arms on the sill, (Daisy was raised up on an ottoman) and looked out at the moonlight, feeling as if she was going into a dream.

“Miss Daisy!”—said the smothered voice of June behind her—“are you there, Miss Daisy?”

June’s accent was doubtful and startled. Daisy turned round.

“Miss Daisy!—I thought you was in the supper-room.”

“No, June—I’m here.”

“Will you go to bed, Miss Daisy?”

“I wish, June, you would get me something to eat, first,” said Daisy languidly.

“Didn’t you get your supper, Miss Daisy?”

“No, and I’m hungry. I haven’t had anything since the dinner at the lake. I wish you’d make haste, June.”

June knew from Daisy’s way of speaking, as well as from the facts of the case, that there was some trouble on foot. She went off to get supper, and as she went along the passages the mulatto woman’s hand was clenched upon itself, though her face shewed only its usual wrinkles.

Small delay was there before she was back again, and with her June had brought a supply of very nearly everything there had been on the supper-table. She set down her tray, prepared a table for Daisy, and placed a chair. The room was light now with two wax candles. Daisy sat down and took a review.

“What will you have now, Miss Daisy? here’s some hot oysters—nice and hot. I’ll get you some ice cream when you’re ready to eat it—Hiram’s got it in the freezer for you. Make haste, Miss Daisy—these oysters is good.”

But Daisy did not make haste. She looked at the supper tray thoughtfully.

“June,” she said with a very gentle pure glance of her eyes up at the mulatto woman’s face—“I am very much obliged to you—but I don’t think mamma means me to eat these things to-night—Will you just get me some milk and some bread? I’ll take some bread and milk!”

“Miss Daisy, these oysters is good for you,” said June.

“I’ll take some bread and milk to-night—if you will please make haste. Thank you, June.”

“Miss Daisy—then maybe take a sandwich.”

“No—I will have nothing but bread and milk. Only quick, June.”

June went off for the bread and milk, and then very unwillingly carried her supper-tray down stairs again. Going through one of the passages she was met by her master.

“Where is that coming from, June?” he asked her in surprise.

“From Miss Daisy’s room, sir.”

“Has she been taking supper up there?”

“No, sir—Miss Daisy wouldn’t touch nothing.”

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“Is she unwell?” Mr. Randolph asked in a startled tone.

“No, sir.” June’s tone was dry. Mr. Randolph marched at once to the room in question, where Daisy was eating her bread and milk.

“What are you doing, Daisy?”

“Papa!”—said the child with a start; and then quietly—“I am taking my supper.”

“Were you not at the table down stairs?”

“Yes, papa.”

“How came you not to have your supper there?”

“I had to come away, papa.”

“Are you not well, Daisy?” said Mr. Randolph tenderly, bending down over her chair.

“Yes, papa—quite well.”

“Then why did you come away?”

Daisy’s spoon lay still in her fingers and her eyes reddened.

“Mamma sent me.”

If the child was to have any supper at all, Mr. Randolph saw, he must forbear his questioning. He rose up from leaning over her chair.

“Go on, Daisy—” he said; and he left her, but did not leave the room. He walked up and down the floor at a little distance, while Daisy finished her bread and milk She was too much in want of it not to do that. When it was done she got out of her chair and stood on the floor looking at her father, as gentle as a young sparrow. He came and wheeled her chair round and sat down upon it.

“What is the matter, Daisy?”

“Mamma was displeased with me.” The child dropped her eyes.

“What about?”

“Papa”—said Daisy slowly, trying for words and perhaps also for self-command—-“mamma was displeased with me because—I—”

“What?”

“Papa—because I did what she did not like at dinner.”

“At dinner? what was that?”

The child lifted her eyes now to her father’s face, a little wistfully.

“Papa—don’t you know?—I was only praying a minute.”

Mr. Randolph stretched out his arm, drew Daisy up to him, placed her on his knee, and looked down into her face.

“Did you have no supper down stairs?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you like bread and milk better than other things?”

“No, papa.”

“I met June with a great tray of supper things, and she said you would not eat them. Why was that?”

“Papa,” said Daisy, “I thought mamma did not mean me to have those things to-night.”

“She did not forbid you?”

“No, papa.”

Mr. Randolph’s arm was round Daisy; now he wrapped both arms about her, bringing her up close to his breast, and putting down his lips to her face, he kissed her over and over, with a great tenderness.

“Have you had a pleasant day?”

“Papa, I have had a great many pleasant things,” said Daisy eagerly. Her voice had changed and a glad tone had come into it.

“Dr. Sandford took proper care of you?”

“Papa, he is *very* good!” said Daisy strongly.

“I rather think he thinks you are.”

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“He is nice, papa.”

“Nice—” said Mr. Randolph. “He is pretty well. But now, Daisy, what do you think of going to bed and to sleep?”

“Yes, papa.”

“And to-morrow, if you have got into any difficulty, you may come to me and talk about it.”

Daisy returned a very earnest caress to her father’s good night kiss, and afterwards had no difficulty in doing as he had said. And so ended the day on Silver Lake.

CHAPTER VII.

Daisy reflected the next morning as to what was her right course with respect to the action that had troubled her mother so much. Ought she to do it? In the abstract it was right to do it; but ought *she* in these circumstances? And how much of a Christian’s ordinary duty might she be required to forego? and where must the stand be made? Daisy did not know; she had rather the mind of a soldier, and was much inclined to obey her orders, as such, come what might. That is, it seemed to her that so she would be in the sure and safe way; but Daisy had no appetite at all for the fighting that this course would ensure. One thing she knew by experience; that if she drew upon herself a direct command to do such a thing no more, the order would stand; there would be no dealing with it afterwards except in the way of submission. That command she had not in this case yet received, and she judged it prudent not to risk receiving it. She went down to breakfast as usual, but she did not bow her little head to give any thanks or make any prayers. She hoped the breakfast would pass off quietly. So it did as to that matter. But another subject came up.

“What became of you last night at supper, Daisy?” her aunt asked. “Dr. Sandford was enquiring for you. I think you received quite your share of attention, for so young a lady, for my part.”

“Daisy had more than anybody else, yesterday,” remarked Eloise.

“A sprained or a broken ankle is a very good thing occasionally,” said Mr. Randolph.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Gary—“I think Daisy had quite the best time of anybody yesterday. A palanquin with gentlemen for her porters, and friendly arms to go to sleep in—most devoted care!”

“Yes, I was one of her porters,” said Ransom. “I think Dr. Sandford takes rather too much on himself.”

“Did he take *you*?” said Mr. Randolph.

“Yes, sir,—when there was no occasion.”

“Why Ransom,” said Daisy, “there was no one else to carry my chair but Preston and you.”

“Did Preston feel aggrieved?” asked his uncle.

“Certainly not, sir,” replied the boy. “It was a pleasure.”

“It was not Ransom’s business,” said Mrs. Randolph.

“I suppose it was not the doctor’s business either,” said Mr. Randolph—“though he made it so afterwards.”

“O, I dare say it was a pleasure to him, too,” said Mrs. Gary. “Really, the doctor did not take care of anybody yesterday, that I saw, except Daisy. I thought he admired Frederica Fish—I had heard so—but there was nothing of it. Daisy was quite queen of the day.”

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Mr. Randolph smiled. Ransom seemed to consider himself insulted. “I suppose that was the reason,” he said, “that she called me worse than a dog, because I took a meringue from the dinner-spread.”

“Did you do that, Daisy?” asked her mother.

“No, mamma,” said Daisy low. Her nice had flushed with astonishment and sorrow.

“You did,” said Ransom. “You said just that.”

“O no, Ransom you forget.”

“What *did* you say, Daisy?” asked her mother.

“Mamma, I did not say *that*. I said something—I did not mean it for anything like that.”

“Tell me exactly what you did say—and no more delay.”

“Wait till after breakfast,” said Mr. Randolph. “I wish to be present at the investigation of this subject, Felicia—but I would rather take it by itself than with my coffee.”

So there was a lull in the storm which seemed to be gathering. It gave Daisy time to think. She was in a great puzzle. How she could get through the matter without exposing all Ransom’s behaviour, all at least which went before the blow given to herself, Daisy did not see; she was afraid that truth would force her to bring it all out. And she was very unwilling to do that, because in the first place she had established a full amnesty in her own heart for all that Ransom had done, and wished rather for an opportunity to please than to criminate him; and in the second place, in her inward consciousness she knew that Mrs. Randolph was likely to be displeased with her, in any event. She would certainly, if Daisy were an occasion of bringing Ransom into disgrace; though the child doubted privately whether her word would have weight enough with her mother for that. Ransom also had time to think, and his brow grew gloomy. An investigation is never what a guilty party desires; and judging her by himself, Ransom had reason to dread the chance of retaliation which such a proceeding would give his little sister. So Daisy and Ransom wore thoughtful faces during the rest of breakfast-time; and the result of Ransom’s reflections was that the investigation would go on most pleasantly without him. He made up his mind to slip away, if he had a chance, and be missing. He had the chance; for Mr. and Mrs. Randolph were engaged with a call of some neighbours immediately after breakfast; all thought of the children’s affairs seemed to be departed. Ransom waited a safe time, and then departed too, with Preston, on an expedition which would last all the morning. Daisy alone bided the hour, a good deal disturbed in the view of what it might bring.

She was summoned at last to the library. Her father and mother were there alone; but just after Daisy came in she was followed by Dr. Sandford. The doctor came with a

message. Mrs. Sandford, his sister, he said, sent by him to beg that Daisy might come to spend the day with Nora Dinwiddie, who much desired her presence. In the event of a favourable answer, the doctor said he would himself drive Daisy over, and would call for that purpose in another hour or two. He delivered his message, and Mrs. Randolph replied at once that Daisy could not go; she could not permit it.

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Mr. Randolph saw the flush of hope and disappointment on Daisy's face and the witness of another kind in her eyes; though with her characteristic steady self-control she neither moved nor spoke, and suffered the tears to come no farther. Dr. Sandford saw it too, but he said nothing. Mr. Randolph spoke.

"Is that decision on account of Daisy's supposed delinquency in that matter?"

"Of course—" Mrs. Randolph answered drily.

"Can you explain it, Daisy?" her father asked, gravely and kindly drawing her up to his side. Daisy struggled with some thought.

"Papa," she said softly, "will mamma be satisfied to punish me and let it go so?"

"Let it go how?"

"Would she be satisfied with this punishment, I mean, and not make me say anything more about it?"

"I should not. I intend to know the whole. Can you explain it?"

"I think I can, papa," Daisy said, but with a troubled unwillingness, her father saw. He saw too that it was not the unwillingness of a troubled conscience.

"Dr. Sandford, if you are willing to take the trouble of stopping without the certainty of taking Daisy back with you, I have some hopes that the result may be satisfactory to all parties."

"*Au revoir*, then," said the doctor, and he strode off.

"Now, Daisy," said her father, still having his arms about her—"what is it?" Mrs. Randolph stood by the table and looked coldly down at the group. Daisy was under great difficulty; that was plain.

"Papa—I wish Ransom could tell you!"

"Where is the boy?"

Mrs. Randolph rang the bell.

"It is no use, mamma; he has gone off with Preston somewhere."

"That is a mere subterfuge, Daisy, to gain time."

Daisy certainly looked troubled enough, and timid also; though her meek look at her mother did not plead guilty to this accusation.

“Speak, Daisy; the telling whatever there is to tell must come upon you,” her father said. “Your business is to explain the charge Ransom has brought against you.”

All Daisy’s meditations had not brought her to the point of knowing what to say in this conjuncture. She hesitated.

“Speak, Daisy!” her father said peremptorily.

“Papa, they had put me—Eloise and Theresa Stanfield—they had put me to watch the things.”

“What things?”

“The dinner—the things that had been taken out of the hampers and were spread on the tablecloth, where we dined.”

“Watch for fear the fishes would carry them off?”

“No, sir, but Fido; Ransom’s dog; he was running about.”

“Oh! Well?—”

“I kept Fido off, but I could not keep Ransom—” Daisy said low. “He was taking things.”

“And why should he not?” said Mrs. Randolph coldly. “Why should not Ransom take a sandwich, or a peach, if he wanted one? or anything else, if he was hungry. There was enough provision for everybody.”

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Daisy looked up at her mother, with a quick refutation of this statement of the case in her mind, but something stayed her lips. Mr. Randolph saw and read the look. He put his arm round Daisy and drew her up to him, speaking with grave decision.

“Daisy, say all you have to say at once—do you hear me? and spare neither for Ransom nor yourself. Tell all there is to be told, without any shuffling.”

“Papa, I should not have objected to his having a sandwich—or as many as he liked. I should have thought it was proper. But he took the meringues—and so many that the dish was left very small; and then he carried off Joanna’s lark pie, the whole of it; and he did not mind what I said; and then, I believe—I suppose that is what Ransom meant—I believe I told him he was worse than Fido.”

“Was Ransom offended at that?”

“Yes, papa. He did not like my speaking to him at all.”

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Randolph. “Boys never like to be tutored by girls; and Daisy must expect her brother will not like it if she meddles with him; and especially if she addresses such language to him.”

“I said only exactly that, mamma.”

“Ransom put it differently.”

A flush came up all over Daisy’s face; she looked at her mother appealingly, but said nothing and the next moment her eyes fell.

“Did Ransom answer you at the time, Daisy?”

“Yes, sir,” Daisy said in a low voice.

“How?”

“Papa!—” said Daisy confounded.

“What did he say to you?”

“He did not say much—” said Daisy.

“Tell me what his answer was?”

“Papa, he struck my ears,” said Daisy. A great crimson glow came all over her face, and she hid it in her father’s breast; like an injured thing running to shelter. Mr. Randolph

was lying on a sofa; he folded his arm round Daisy, but spoke never a word. Mrs. Randolph moved impatiently.

“Boys will do such things,” she said. “It is very absurd in Daisy to mind it. Boys will do such things—she must learn that it is not her place or business to find fault with her brother. I think she deserved what she got. It will teach her a lesson.”

“Boys shall not do such things in my house,” said Mr. Randolph in his usual quiet manner.

“As you please!” said the lady in a very dissatisfied way; “but I think it is only what all boys do.”

“Felicia, I wish to reverse your decision about this day’s pleasure. Seeing Daisy has had her lesson, do you not think she might be indulged with the play after it?”

“As you please!” returned the lady very drily.

“Do you want to go, Daisy?”

“If you please, papa.” Daisy spoke without shewing her face.

“Is Mr. Dinwiddie at Mrs. Sandford’s?” inquired Mrs. Randolph.

“O no, mamma!” Daisy looked up. “He is not coming. He is gone a great way off. I do not suppose he is ever coming here again; and Nora is going away soon.”

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Mrs. Randolph moved off.

“Felicia—” said her husband. The lady paused. “I intend that Ransom shall have a lesson, too. I shall take away the remaining week of his vacation. To-morrow he goes back to school. I tell you, that you may give the necessary orders.”

“For this boy’s freak, Mr. Randolph?”

“For what you please. He must learn that such behaviour is not permitted here.”

Mrs. Randolph did not share the folly with which she charged Daisy, for she made no answer at all, and only with a slight toss of her haughty head resumed her walk out of the room. Daisy would fain have spoken, but she did not dare; and for some minutes after they were left alone her father and she were profoundly silent. Mr. Randolph revolving the behaviour of Daisy as he now understood it; her willing silence and enforced speech, and the gentleness manifested towards her brother, with the meek obedience rendered to her mother and himself. Perhaps his thoughts went deeper still. While Daisy reflected with sorrow on the state of mind sure to be produced now both in Ransom and Mrs. Randolph towards her. A matter which she could do nothing to help. She did not dare say one word to change her father’s purpose about Ransom; she knew quite well it would be no use. She stood silent by his sofa, one little hand resting fondly on his shoulder, but profoundly quiet. Then she remembered that she had something else to talk about.

“Papa—” she said wheeling round a little to face him.

“Well, Daisy?”

“Do you feel like talking?”

“Hardly—it is so hot,” said Mr. Randolph. “Set open that sash door a little more, Daisy. Now come here. What is it?”

“Shall I wait till another time, papa?”

“No.”

He had passed an arm round her, and she stood as before with one hand resting on his shoulder.

“Papa—it was about—what last night you said I might talk to you about.”

“I remember. Go on, Daisy.”

“Papa,” said the child, a little in doubt how to go on—“I want to do what is right.”

“There is generally little difficulty in doing that, Daisy.”

Daisy thought otherwise!

“Papa, I think mamma does not like me to do what I think is right,” she said very low and humbly.

“Your mother is the best judge, Daisy. What are you talking about?”

“*That*, papa—that you said I might talk to you about.”

“What is it? Let us understand one another clearly.”

“About—It was only that I liked to pray and give thanks a minute at meal times.” Daisy spoke very softly and as if she would fain not have spoken.

“That is a mere indifferent ceremony, Daisy, which some people perform. It is not binding on you, certainly, if your mother has any objection to your doing it.”

“But, papa,”—Daisy began eagerly and then checked herself, and went on slowly—“you would not like it if you were to give me anything, and I should not thank you?”

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“Cases are not parallel, Daisy.”

She wondered in her simplicity why they were not; but her questions had already ventured pretty far; she did not dare count too much upon her father’s gentleness. She stood looking at him with unsatisfied eyes.

“In one sense we receive everything we have from the bounty of Heaven.”

“Yes, papa.”

“If your wish were carried out, we should be covering our faces all the time—if that formality is needed in giving thanks.”

Daisy had thoughts, but she was afraid to utter them. She looked at Mr. Randolph with the same unsatisfied eyes.

“Do you see, Daisy?”

“No, papa.”

“Don’t you!” said Mr. Randolph smiling. “Difficulties still unsolved? Can you state them, Daisy?”

“Papa, you said I might shew you in the Bible things—do you remember?”

“Things? What things?”

“Papa, if I wanted to do things that I thought were right—you promised that if *you* thought they were in the Bible, I might do as it said.”

“Humph!”—said Mr. Randolph, with a very doubtful sort of a grunt, between displeasure at his own word, and annoyance at the trouble it might bring upon him. Nevertheless, he remembered the promise. Daisy went on timidly.

“When you get up—by and by, papa,—may I shew you what is in the Bible?”

“You need not wait till I get up—shew it to me now.”

“I cannot lift that big Bible, papa.”

Mr. Randolph rose up from the sofa, went to the shelves where it lay, and brought the great Bible to the library table. Then stood and watched Daisy, who kneeled in a chair by the table and busily turned over the large leaves, her little face very wise and intent, her little hands small to manage the big book before her. Had such a child and such a book anything to do with each other, Mr. Randolph thought? But Daisy presently found

her place, and looking up at him drew a little back that her father might see it. He stooped over Daisy and read,

"*In everything give thanks*."

"Do you see it, papa?"

"Yes."

"Then here is another place—I know where to find it—"

She turned over more leaves, stopped again, and Mr. Randolph stooped and read,—

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mr. Randolph read, and went and threw himself on his sofa again. Daisy came beside him. A wistful earnestness in the one face; a careless sort of embarrassment on the other.

"You are led astray, little Daisy, by a common mistake of ignorant readers. You fancy that these words are to be taken literally—whereas they mean simply that we should cultivate a thankful spirit. That, of course, I agree to."

"But, papa," said Daisy, "is a thankful spirit the same thing quite as giving thanks?"

"It is a much better thing, Daisy, in my opinion."

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“But, papa, would not a thankful spirit like to *give* thanks?”

“I have no objection, Daisy.”

The tears came into Daisy’s eyes. Her mother *had*.

“Papa—”

“Well? Let us get to the end of this difficulty if we can.”

“I am afraid we cannot, papa. Because if you had told me to do a thing so, you would mean it just so, and I should do it.”

Mr. Randolph wrapped his arms round Daisy and brought her close to his breast. “Look here, Daisy,” said he—“tell me. Do you really try to give thanks everywhere, and for all things, as the word says?”

“I do not *try*, papa—I like to do it.”

“Do you give thanks for *everything*?”

“I think I do, papa; for everything that gives me pleasure.”

“For Mrs. Sandford’s invitation to-day, for instance?”

“O yes, papa,” said Daisy smiling.

He brought the little head down within reach of his lips and kissed it a good many times.

“I wish my little Daisy would not think so much.”

“I think only to know what is right to do, papa.”

“It is right to mind mamma and me, and let us think for you.”

“And the Bible, papa?”

“You are quite growing an old woman a good while before the time.”

Daisy kissed him with good child-like kisses, laying her little head in his neck and clasping her arms around him; for all that, her heart was busy yet.

“Papa,” she said, “what do you think is right for me to do?”

“Thinking exhausts me, Daisy. It is too hot to-day for such an exercise.”

Daisy drew back and looked at him, with one hand resting on his shoulder. She did not dare urge any more in words; her look spoke her anxious, disappointed questioning of her father's meaning. Perhaps he did not care to meet such a gaze of inquiry, for he pulled her down again in his arms.

"I do not want you to be an old woman."

"But, papa—that is not the thing."

"I will not have it, Daisy."

"Papa," she said with a small laugh, "what shall I do to help it? I do not know how I came to be an old woman."

"Go off and play with Nora Dinwiddie. Are you ready to go?"

"Yes, papa—except my hat and gloves."

"Do not think anymore to-day. I will think for you by and by. But Daisy, why should you and I set ourselves up to be better than other people?"

"How, papa?"

"Do you know anybody else that lives up to your views on the subject of thanksgiving?"

"O yes, papa."

"Who?"

Daisy softly said, "Juanita does, papa, I think."

"A poor ignorant woman, Daisy, and very likely full of superstitions. Her race often are."

"What is a superstition, papa?"

"A religious notion which has no foundation in truth."

"Then papa, can it be superstition to do just what God tells us to do?"

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“You are too deep for me, Daisy,” said Mr. Randolph languidly. “Go and get ready for Dr. Sandford. He will be here presently.”

So Daisy went, feeling very uncertain of the result of her talk, but doubtful and discouraged. Mr. Randolph had a book in hand when she returned to the library: she could not speak to him any more; and soon indeed the doctor came, helped her into his gig, and drove off with her.

Now it was pleasant. The fine gravelled roads in the grounds of Melbourne were in beautiful order after the rain; no dust rose yet, and all the trees and flowers were in a refreshed state of life and sweetness. Truly it was a very hot day, but Daisy found nothing amiss. Neither, apparently, did the doctor’s good horse. He trotted along without seeming to mind the sun; and Daisy in a good deal of glee enjoyed everything. It was private glee—in her own mind; she did not offer any conversation; and the doctor, of Mr. Randolph’s mind, perhaps, that it was a warm day, threw himself back in his seat and watched her lazily. Daisy on the contrary sat up and looked busily out. They drove in the first place for a good distance through her own home grounds, coming out to the public road by the church where Mr. Pyne preached, and near which the wintergreens grew. It looked beautiful this morning, with its ivy all washed and fresh from the rain. Indeed all nature was in a sort of glittering condition. When they came out on the public way it was still beautiful; no dust, and fields and grass and trees all shining.

The road they travelled now was one scarce known to Daisy; the carriages from Melbourne never went that way; another was always chosen at the beginning of all their excursions whether of business or pleasure. No gentlemen’s seats were to be seen; an occasional farmhouse stood in the midst of its crops and meadows; and more frequently a yet poorer sort of house stood close by the roadside. The road in this place was sometimes rough, and the doctor’s good horse left his trot and picked his way slowly along, giving Daisy by this means an opportunity to inspect everything more closely. There was often little pleasure in the inspection. About half a mile from the church, Daisy’s attention was drawn by one of these poor houses. It was very small, unpainted and dreary-looking, having a narrow courtyard between it and the road. As the gig was very slowly going past, Daisy uttered an exclamation, the first word she had uttered in a long while.

“O Dr. Sandford!—what is that? Something is the matter!”

“No,” said the doctor coolly, “nothing is the matter—more than usual.”

“But a woman was on her hands and knees on the ground? wasn’t it a woman?”

“Yes. She cannot move about in any other way. She is a cripple.”

“She cannot stand up?” said Daisy, looking distressed and horrified.

“No. She has no use of her lower limbs. She is accustomed, to it, Daisy; she never had the use of them, or never for a very long while.”

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“Is she *old*?”

“Pretty old, I fancy. But she does not know her age herself, and nobody else knows it.”

“Has she got nice people to take care of her?”

The doctor smiled at the earnest little face. “She has nobody.”

“No one to take care of her?” said Daisy.

“No. She lives there alone.”

“But, Dr. Sandford, how does she do—how does she manage?”

“In some way that would be difficult for you and me to understand, I suppose—like the ways of the beavers and wasps.”

“I can understand *those*” said Daisy, “they were made to get along as they do; they have got all they want.”

Daisy was silent, musing, for a little time; then she broke out again.

“Isn’t she very miserable, Dr. Sandford?”

“She is a very crabbed old thing, so the inference is fair that she is miserable. In fact, I do not see how she can avoid it.”

Daisy pondered perhaps this misery which she could so little imagine; however she let the subject drop as to any more words about it. She was only what the doctor called “quaintly sober,” all the rest of the way.

“Why she looks child-like and bright enough now,” said Mrs. Sandford, to whom he made the remark. Daisy and Nora were exchanging mutual gratulations. The doctor looked at them.

“At the rate in which she is growing old,” said he, “she will have the soul of Methusaleh in a body of twenty years.”

“I don’t believe it,” said Mrs. Sandford.

Nora and Daisy had a great day of it. Nothing broke the full flow of business and pleasure during all the long hours; the day was not hot to them, nor the shadows long in coming. Behind the house there was a deep grassy dell through which a brook ran. Over this brook in the dell a great black walnut tree cast its constant flickering shadow; flickering when the wind played in the leaves and branches, although to-day the air was

still and sultry, and the leaves and the shadows were still too, and did not move. But there was life enough in the branches of the old walnut, for a large family of grey squirrels had established themselves there. Old and young, large and small; it was impossible to tell, by counting, how many there might be in the family; at least now while they were going in and out and running all over; but Nora said Mrs. Sandford had counted fifteen of them at one time. That was in cold weather, when they had gathered on the piazza to get the nuts she threw to them. This kind of intercourse with society had made the squirrels comparatively tame, so that they had no particular objections to shew themselves to the two children; and when Nora and Daisy kept quiet they had great entertainment in watching the gambols of the pretty grey creatures. One in particular, the mother of the family, Nora said, was bolder or more familiar than the rest; and came often and came pretty near, to look at the children with her bright little eyes, and let them see her beautiful feathery tail and graceful motions. It was a great delight to Daisy. Nora had seen them before, as she said, and did not care quite so much about the sight.

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“I wonder what use squirrels are?” said Daisy.

“I guess they are not of any use,” said Nora.

“O, I guess everything is of use.”

“Why no it isn’t,” said Nora. “Grass is not of any use.”

“O Nora! Think—what would the cows and horses do?”

“Well, then, stones are not of any use.”

“Yes they are—to build houses—don’t you know?”

“Houses might be built of wood,” said Nora.

“So they might. But then, Nora, wooden houses would not last so long as stone ones.”

“Well—people could build new ones.”

“But houses might be wanted where there was not wood enough to build them.”

“I never saw such a place,” said Nora. “I never saw a place where there was not wood enough. And if there is such a place anywhere, people could not live in it, because they would have nothing to make fires with.”

Daisy considered.

“But Nora, I think it cannot be so. I guess everything is made for some use. Dr. Sandford told me yesterday what the use is of those queer brown leaves that grow upon rocks—you know—and the use of little mosses, that I never thought before were good for anything. They are to begin to prepare a place on the rocks where things can grow.”

“Why, they grow themselves,” said Nora.

“Yes, but I mean other things—ferns and flowers and other things.”

“Well, what is the use of *them*?” said Nora.

“O Nora—just think how pretty they are.”

“But prettiness isn’t use.”

“I think it is,” said Daisy; “and I dare say they have other uses that we do not know. And I think, Nora, that God would not have taken such care to dress up the old rocks if the rocks were no good.”

“Did He do it?” said Nora.

“Why, certainly. He did everything, you know.”

“Of course; but I thought they just grew,” said Nora.

The children were silent a little, watching the squirrels. Daisy began again abruptly.

“Nora, did you ever see that crippled woman that lives on the mill road a little way from our church?”

“Old Molly Skelton, do you mean?”

“I do not know what her name is—she cannot walk; she creeps about as if she had no legs.”

“I’ve seen her. Isn’t she horrid?”

“Did you ever see her near by?”

“No, I guess I haven’t. I have heard Duke tell about her.”

“What? do tell me.”

“O she’s a horrid old thing—that is all I know.”

“How, horrid?”

“Why, she is wicked, and she don’t know anything. She would hardly listen to Marmaduke when, he wanted to talk to her.”

“Has she got a Bible, I wonder?” said Daisy in an awestruck voice.

“She? She can’t read. She don’t know anything; and she is as ugly and cross as she can be.”

“Was she cross to Mr. Dinwiddie?”

“Yes, indeed. He said he never saw such a crabbed old thing. O she’s horrid. I don’t like to ride by that way.”

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The children were called in to dinner, and kept in the house by Mrs. Sandford during the intensest heat of the day. But when the afternoon was cooling off, or at least growing less oppressive, the two children again sought the shade under the walnut tree, where the gurgle of the water over the stones, and the company of the squirrels in the tree, made the place pleasant. And there they sat down in a great state of mutual contentment. Nora's feet were swinging about for very jollity. But Daisy sat still. Perhaps she was tired. Nevertheless it could not be that which made her little face by and by take on it as profound an expression as if she had been looking over all Methuselah's years.

"Nora—" said Daisy, and stopped.

"What?" said Nora, kicking her heels.

"You know that poor old crippled woman—what did you call her?"

"Molly Skelton?"

"Suppose you were in her place—what do you think you would wish for?"

"In her place!" said Nora. "I should wish for everything."

"Yes, but I mean, things that you could have."

"I should wish some doctor would come and make me straight, the first thing; and then—"

"No, Nora, but I mean, things that might be possible, you know. I do not mean things like a fairy tale."

"I don't know," said Nora. "I don't believe Molly Skelton wishes for anything."

"But what would *you* wish for, in her place?"

"I should want to be straight, and stand and go about like other people."

"Yes, Nora, but I say! I mean, what would you wish for that would not be impossible?"

"Why, Daisy, how funny! Let me see. I should wish that somebody would come and be good to me, I think."

"How?"

"O—tell me stories and read to me, and take tea with me—and I don't know what!"

“Do you suppose nobody ever does take tea with her?” said Daisy, upon whose fancy a new shadow of wretchedness darkened.

“I guess not,” said Nora. “I don’t believe anybody would. I guess nobody likes her well enough, she is so bad.”

“Who gets her tea for her then?”

“Why nobody. She does it herself.”

“How *can* she?”

“I don’t know. Marmaduke says she keeps her house clean too, though she only goes about on her hands and knees.”

“Nora,” said Daisy, “that isn’t like the Bible.”

“What isn’t?”

“Don’t you remember what the Bible says? that whatever we would like other people to do to us, we should do so to them.”

“What do you mean, Daisy?”

“I mean just so.”

“But what isn’t like the Bible?”

“Why—to let that poor old woman go without what we would like if we were in her place.”

“Why Daisy! Molly Skelton! The Bible does not mean that we ought to go and make visits to such horrid people as that.”

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“You said you would like it if you were in her place,” observed Daisy, “and I know *I* should. I thought so when you told me.”

“But, Daisy, she is wicked!”

“Well, Jesus loves wicked people,” said Daisy calmly. “Maybe she will wear a white robe in heaven, and have a crown of gold upon her head.”

“Daisy!—she is wicked,” exclaimed Nora indignantly. “Wicked people do not go to heaven.”

“Yes, but if Jesus gives them his white robe, they do,” said Daisy. “He came to save wicked people.”

“I don’t want to talk any more about Molly Skelton,” said Nora. “Look, Daisy!—there’s the old mother squirrel peeping out of her hole. Do you see? Now she is coming out—-see her black eyes! now there’s her beautiful feather tail!”—

This subject was to the full as interesting to Daisy as it was to her friend; and in watching the grey family in the walnut tree and trying to induce them to come near and get some almonds, the rest of the afternoon flew by. Only the “mother squirrel” could be tempted near; but she, older in experience and wisdom than her young ones, did venture into the neighbourhood of the children, attracted by the nuts they threw down; and getting pretty close to them, before she would venture quite so far as where the nuts lay, she sat down on her haunches to look and see whether all were safe; curling her thick, light plume of a tail up along her back, or whisking it about in various lines of beauty, while her bright little black eyes took all the observations they were equal to. It was unending amusement for the children; and then to see Mrs. Bunny finally seize an almond and spring away with it, was very charming. So the afternoon sped; nor ever brought one moment of weariness, until the summons came to bid the children into the house again to tea.

CHAPTER IX.

After tea the doctor took Daisy in his gig and drove her home. The drive was unmarked by a single thing; except that just as they were passing the cripple’s house Daisy broke silence and asked,

“Is that woman—Molly Skelton—is she very poor, Dr. Sandford?”

“If to live on charity be poor. I do not suppose the neighbours let her suffer.”

“Is she cross to everybody, Dr. Sandford?”

“She has the name of it, I believe, Daisy. I really do not remember whether she was cross to me or not.”

“Then you know her?”

“Yes. I know everybody.”

The family at Melbourne were found just taking their late tea as the doctor and Daisy entered. They were met with complaints of the heat; though Daisy thought the drawing room was exceeding pleasant, the air came in at the long windows with such gentle freshness from the river. The doctor took a cup of tea and declared the day was excellent if you only rode fifty miles through the heat of it.

“Coolness is coolness, after that,” he said.

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Daisy sat in a corner and wondered at the people. Hot? and suffocating? she had no recollection of any such thing all day. How delicious it had been in that green dell under the walnut tree, with the grey squirrels!

“How has it been with you, Daisy?” said her aunt at last.

“Nice, aunt Gary.”

Two or three people smiled; Daisy’s favourite word came out with such a dulcet tone of a smooth and clear spirit. It was a syrup drop of sweetness in the midst of flat and acid qualities.

“It has been satisfactory, has it?” said her aunt, in a tone which did not share the character. “Come here, Daisy—I have got something for you. You know I robbed you a little while ago, and promised to try to find something to make amends. Now come and see if I have done it. Preston, fetch that box here.”

A neat wooden case of some size was brought by Preston, and set at his mother’s feet. Mrs. Gary unlocked it, and went on to take out of its enveloping coverings a very elegant French doll; a real empress Eugenie. The doll’s face was even modelled into some likeness to the beauty she was named after; a diadem sat gracefully on her head, and her robes were a miniature imitation of royalty, but very exquisitely fashioned. Everybody exclaimed at the perfection of the beautiful toy, except Daisy herself, who stood quite still and quiet looking at it. Mrs. Gary had not done yet. The empress had a wardrobe; and such variety and elegance and finish of attire of all sorts rarely falls to the lot of a doll. A very large wardrobe it was, and every article perfectly finished and well made as if meant for actual wear. Mrs. Gary displayed her present; Daisy looked on, standing by her father’s knee and with one hand resting on it.

“Have you nothing to say to express your pleasure, Daisy?”—This was Mrs. Randolph’s question.

Daisy at the word pronounced a sober “thank you, aunt Gary.” But it was so very sober and passionless that Mrs. Randolph grew impatient.

“I do not hear you express any pleasure, Daisy,” she said meaningly.

Daisy turned her face towards her mother with a doubtful look, and was silent.

“Speak!” said Mrs. Randolph.

“What, mamma?”

“Whatever you choose, to shew your sense of your aunt’s kindness.”

“Do not concern yourself, my dear,” said her sister. “I am sorry if I have failed in meeting Daisy’s taste—that is all.”

“Daisy, speak, or leave the room”—said Mrs. Randolph.

“Mamma,” said Daisy, pushed into a corner, “I would speak, but I do not know what to say.”

“Tell your aunt Gary she has given you a great deal of pleasure.”

Daisy looked again mutely at her mother, somewhat distressed.

“Tell her so, Daisy!” Mrs. Randolph repeated in a tone of command.

“I cannot, mamma—” the child answered sorrowfully.

“Do you mean to tell your aunt that her exquisite present gives you *no* pleasure?”

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“I did not intend to tell her so,” Daisy answered in a low voice. Another storm rising! Storms seemed to get up very easily in these days.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Gary, “do not concern yourself. It is not of the least consequence, as far as I am concerned. Preston, remove this box. If Daisy chooses to receive it, perhaps it will find more favour at another time.”

Mrs. Gary got up and moved off.

“Mr. Randolph, I will trouble you to dismiss Daisy,” said his wife. “If she cannot behave properly she cannot be in the room with me.”

Daisy was still standing with her hand on her father’s knee. The other little hand came for a moment across her brows and rested there; but she would not cry; her lip did not even tremble.

“First let me understand,” said her father; and he lifted Daisy on his knee kindly. “Daisy, I never saw you uncivil before.”

“Papa, I am very sorry—” said the child.

“Can you explain it?”

“Papa, I would have been civil if I could; but I had nothing to say.”

“That is the very place where a person of good manners shews himself different from a person who has no manners at all. Good manners finds something to say.”

“But, papa, there was nothing *true*.”

“The doll gave you no pleasure?”

“No, papa,” said Daisy low.

“And you felt no obligation for the thoughtfulness and kindness of your aunt in getting for you so elegant a present?”

Daisy hesitated and flushed.

“Daisy, answer,” said her father gravely.

“No, papa,”—Daisy said low as before.

“Why not?”

“Papa,” said Daisy with a good deal of difficulty and hesitation—“that is all passed—I do not want to say anything more about it.”

“About what?”

“About—papa, I do not think mamma would like to have me talk about it.”

“Go on, Daisy.—About what?”

“All that trouble we had, papa.”

“What I want to know is, why you did not feel grateful for your aunt’s kindness just now, which she had been at some pains to shew you.”

“Papa,” said Daisy wistfully,—“it was not kindness—it was pay; and I did not want pay.”

“Pay? For what?”

“For my Egyptian spoon, papa.”

“I do not understand what you are talking of, Daisy.”

“No, papa,” said Daisy; so simply shewing her wish that he should not as well as her knowledge that he did not, that Mr. Randolph could not forbear smiling.

“But I mean to understand it,” he said.

“It was my old Egyptian spoon, papa; the doll was meant to be pay for that.”

A little explanation was necessary in order to bring to Mr. Randolph’s mind the facts Daisy referred to, the spoon itself and the time and occasion when it was bestowed on her.

“Did you give your Egyptian spoon to your aunt Gary?”

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“I said she might have it, papa.”

“Unwillingly?”

“No, papa—willingly.”

“In exchange for this doll?”

“O no, papa—not in exchange for anything. I did not want any exchange.”

“If I remember, Daisy,” said Mr. Randolph, “your aunt Gary desired to have that spoon the very day it was given to you; and I thought you did not wish she should have it?”

“No, papa—so I didn’t.”

“Your mind changed afterward?”

“I do not think my mind changed,” said Daisy slowly—“but I was willing she should have it.”

“Daisy, this whole affair is a mystery to me yet. In this case, why was it not kind in your aunt to bestow this French doll upon you? it seems to me very kind.”

“Yes papa—you do not understand.”

“Make me understand. Daisy, I command you to tell me all that you have not told me. You need not think of anything now, except my command.”

Daisy did, perhaps; for now her lip quivered slightly; and for a moment she hid her face in her father’s bosom. Mr. Randolph wrapped his arms round her and stooped his head to hear the story which Daisy was obliged to give. She gave it fully, and he heard it quite through in silence. And he made no observation upon it when it was finished; he only asked her,

“Was there no resentment in your refusal of thanks to your aunt just now?”

“No, papa”—said Daisy; with too sweet and artless utterance for him to doubt her.

“But then, Daisy, we come back to the cause of your mother’s displeasure. Good breeding requires that people should not be rude, even by silence.”

“Papa, I did not know how to be polite with truth.”

“You could have said you were very much obliged to your aunt.”

“But, I was *not*, papa.”

“Not obliged to her?”

“No, sir.”

“But, Daisy, that is a civil form, of expression which it is usual to avail oneself of upon such occasions. It does not necessarily mean much.”

“But, papa, would she not have thought I meant it, if I had said so?”

“Very likely. That is the polite advantage gained.”

“But papa. *I* should have known that I did not mean it; and it would not have been true.”

“This is getting to be too deep a question for you to discuss to-night—it is time for you to go to bed. But I cannot have you rude.”

Daisy kissed her father, who had been extremely gentle and tender with her, and went off to her room. Mr. Randolph’s brow looked moody.

“Have you brought Daisy’s ideas into order?” asked his wife, who had been engaged in conversation with Dr. Sandford.

“She has rather brought confusion into mine,” said the gentleman.

“What is the matter?”

“Truth and Daisy, versus civility and the world. And it is not easy to make a child comprehend some of the fine distinctions we are accustomed to draw. White and black are *very* white and black, to such eyes, and no allowance is made for a painter’s lights and shades.”

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“She must make allowance for what your eyes see,” said Mrs. Randolph.

Mr. Randolph made no answer.

“Daisy is entirely changed,” her mother went on,—“and is become utterly obstinate and unmanageable. Perfectly self-important too—she thinks there is no wisdom now but her own. I may thank you for it, Dr. Sandford.”

“You do me too much honour,” said the doctor.

“It is an honour you share with Mr. Dinwiddie.”

“I did not know I shared anything with Mr. Dinwiddie.”

“He has infected the child with a set of perfectly fanatical notions; and you persisted in keeping her under that creature’s care, where they had time to grow strong.”

“I will do all I can to repair mischief done,” said the doctor. “Mrs. Benoit is a good nurse for the body and you will bear me witness it was for repairs of *that* I was called in. What is the other damage referred to?”

“Fanaticism.”

“Rather young for that disease to take deep root,” said the doctor.

“Anything takes deep root in Daisy; whatever she takes up she holds to.”

“I advise you to let her be fanatical then a little while longer,” said the doctor, “till she has time to lay up some strength.”

And the doctor took his departure.

“I am sure that is wise counsel, Felicia,” Mr. Randolph said. But the lady made him no answer.

Ransom went off to school the next day, as his father had promised. Mrs. Randolph looked very gloomy; Mrs. Gary looked not otherwise; and Daisy thought the mental and social horizon foreboded stormy weather. But very happily, as it seemed to her, before dinner there was an arrival of some expected visitors, coming to stay for a time in the house. They had been desired as well as expected; there was a famous lady and a learned gentleman among them; and every eye and ear were taken up with attending to their words or waiting upon their movements. Daisy and her concerns were, she thought, forgotten.

She enjoyed the feeling of this for a little while; and then ordered her pony chaise. And presently you might have seen a little figure in a white frock come out upon the front steps, with a large flat on her head and driving gloves on her hands and in one of them a little basket. Down the steps she came and took her place in the chaise and gathered up the reins. The black pony was ready, with another boy in place of Sam; nobody interfered with her; and off they went, the wheels of the little chaise rolling smoothly over the gravel, Loupe in a gentle waddling trot, and Daisy in a contented state of mind. It was very pleasant! Clear sunny air, yet not too hot, and the afternoon shadows beginning to make all things look lovely. Daisy took the way to the church, passed out upon the high road, and turned the pony's head in the direction which she had taken with Dr. Sandford the day before. She did not go quite so fast, however; so that it was a little

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time before she came in sight of the poor old house which she recognized as Molly Skelton's. Daisy drew the reins then and let Loupe walk slowly up a slight ascent in the road which led to it. But when the chaise was fairly opposite the house door, Daisy drew the reins still more and brought Loupe to a stand-still. She peered forth then anxiously to see if the poor old inmate of the house were to be seen anywhere.

As she looked, the house door opened; and with a very straitened and touched heart Daisy watched the crippled old creature come from within, crawl down over the door step, and make her slow way into the little path before the house. A path of a few yards ran from the road to the house door, and it was bordered with a rough-looking array of flowers. Rough-looking, because they were set or had sprung up rather confusedly, and the path between had no care but was only worn by the feet of travellers and the hands and knees of the poor inhabitant of the place. Yet some sort of care was bestowed on the flowers themselves, for no weeds had been suffered to choke them; and even the encroaching grass had been removed from trespassing too nearly on their little occupation of ground. The flowers themselves shot up and grew as they had a mind. Prince's feather was conspicuous, and some ragged balsams. A few yellow marigolds made a forlorn attempt to look bright, and one tall sunflower raised its great head above all the rest; proclaiming the quality of the little kingdom where it reigned. The poor cripple moved down a few steps from the house door, and began grubbing with her hands around the roots of a bunch of balsams.

Daisy looked a minute or two, very still, and then bade the boy hold her pony; while without troubling herself about his mystification she got out of the chaise, and basket in hand, opened the wicket and softly went up the path. The neat little shoes and spotless white dress were close beside the poor creature grubbing there in the ground before she knew it, and there they stood still; Daisy was a good deal at a loss how to speak. She was not immediately perceived; the head of the cripple had a three-cornered handkerchief thrown over it to defend it from the sun and she was earnestly grubbing at the roots of her balsam; the earth-stained fingers and the old brown stuff dress, which was of course dragged along in the dirt too, made a sad contrast with the spotless freshness of the little motionless figure that was at her side, almost touching her. Daisy concluded to wait till she should be seen, and then speak, though how to speak she did not very well know and she rather dreaded the moment.

It came, when in throwing her weeds aside a glance of the cripple saw, instead of stones and grass, two very neat and black and well shaped little shoes planted there almost within reach of her hand. She drew herself back from the balsam and looked sideways up, to see what the shoes belonged to. Daisy saw her face then; it was a bad face; so disagreeable that she looked away from it instantly to the balsams.

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“What are you doing to your flowers?” she asked gently. The gentle little child voice seemed to astonish the woman, although after an instant she made surly answer,—

“Whose business is it?”

“Wouldn’t it be easier,” said Daisy, not looking at her, “if you had something to help you get the weeds up? Don’t you want a fork, or a hoe, or something?”

“I’ve got forks,” said the cripple sullenly. “I use ’em to eat with.”

“No, but I mean, something to help you with the weeds,” said Daisy—“that sort of fork, or a trowel.”

The woman spread her brown fingers of both hands, like birds’ claws, covered with the dirt in which she had been digging. “I’ve got forks enough,” she said savagely—“them’s what goes into my weeds. Now go ’long!—”

The last words were uttered with a sudden jerk, and as she spoke them she plunged her hands into the dirt, and bringing up a double handful cast it with a spiteful fling upon the neat little black shoes. Woe to white stockings, if they had been visible; but Daisy’s shoes came up high and tight around her ankle, and the earth thrown upon them fell off easily again; except only that it lodged in the eyelet holes of the boot lacing and sifted through a little there, and some had gone as high as the top of the boot and fell in. Quite enough to make Daisy uncomfortable, besides that the action half frightened her. She quitted the ground, went back to her pony chaise without even attempting to do anything with the contents of her basket. Daisy could go no further with her feet in this condition. She turned the pony’s head and drove back to Melbourne.

CHAPTER X.

“Will I take him to the stable, Miss Daisy?” inquired the boy, as Daisy got out at the back door.

“No. Just wait a little for me, Lewis.”

Up stairs went Daisy; took off her boots and got rid of the soil they had brought home; that was the first thing. Then, in spotless order again, she went back to Lewis and inquired where Logan was at work. Thither she drove the pony chaise.

“Logan,” said Daisy coming up to him; she had left Loupe in Lewis’s care; “what do you use to help you get up weeds?”

“Maybe a hoe, Miss Daisy; or whiles a weeding fork.”

“Have you got one here?”

“No, Miss Daisy. Was it a fork you were wanting?”

“Yes, I want one, Logan.”

“And will you be wanting it noo?”

“Yes, I want it now, if you please.”

“Bill, you go home and get Miss Daisy one o’ them small hand forks—out o’ that new lot—them’s slenderer.”

“And Logan, I want another thing. I want a little rose bush—and if you can, I want it with a rose open or a bud on it.”

“A rose bush!” said Logan. “Ye want it to be set some place, nae doute?”

“Yes, I do; but I want to set it out myself, Logan; so it must not be *too* big a bush, you know, for I couldn’t manage it.”

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“Perhaps Miss Daisy had better let me manage it. It’s dirty work, Miss Daisy.”

“No; I only want the rose bush. I will take care of it, Logan. Have you got one that I can have?”

“Ou, ay, Miss Daisy! there’s a forest of rose bushes; ye can just please yourself.”

“Where is it?”

[Illustration]

Seeing his little mistress was greatly in earnest and must be presently satisfied, Logan cast a wistful glance or two at his own proper work in hand which he was abandoning, and walked away with Daisy. The flower garden and nursery were at some distance; but Daisy trudged along as patiently as he. Her little face was busy-looking now and eager, as well as wise; but no tinge of colour would yet own itself at home in those pale cheeks. Logan glanced at her now and then and was, as she said, “very good.” He thought he was about the best business, after all, that could occupy him. He directed his steps to a great garden that yet was not the show garden, but hid away behind the plantations of trees and shrubbery. There were a vast number of plants and flowers here, too; but they were not in show order, and were in fact only the reserve stock, for supplying vacancies or preparing changes or especially for furnishing cut flowers to the house; of which a large quantity must every day be sent in. There was a very nursery of rose trees, smaller and larger. Logan peered about, very particular in his own line as to how every thing should be done; at last he found and chose just the right thing for Daisy. A slender, thrifty young plant, with healthy strong leaves and shoots, and at the top a bud shewing red and a half opened sweet rose. Daisy was quite satisfied.

“Now where is it going, Miss Daisy?” Logan inquired.

“I am going to plant it out myself, Logan; it is going in a place—where I want it.”

“Surely! but does Miss Daisy know how to plant a rose tree?”

“Won’t you tell me how, Logan?”

“Weel, Miss Daisy, there must be a hole dug for it, in the first place; you must take a trowel and make a hole for it—But your dress will be the waur!” he exclaimed, glancing at his little mistress’s spotless draperies.

“Never mind; only go on and tell me exactly how to manage, Logan.”

“Does Miss Daisy intend to do it this afternoon?”

“Yes.”

“Aweel, you must take a trowel and make a hole,” said Logan, nipping off some useless buds and shoots from the plants in his neighbourhood as he was speaking—“and be sure your hole is deep as it should be; and make the bottom soft with your trowel, or throw in a little earth, well broken, for the roots to rest on”------

“How shall I know when my hole is deep enough?”

“Weel, Miss Daisy, it depends on the haighth of the roots—ye must even try and see till ye get it deep enough; but whatever ye do, keep the crown of the plant above ground.”

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“And what is the crown of the plant, Logan?”

Logan stooped down and put his fingers to the stem of a rose tree.

“It’s just called the crown o’ the plant, Miss Daisy, here where the roots goes one way and the stem springs up another. Miss Daisy sees, there’s a kind o’ shouther there.”

“No, I don’t see,” said Daisy.

Logan put in his spade, and with a turn or two brought up the little rose bush he had chosen for her purpose; and holding the ball of earth, in his hand, shewed her the part of the plant he spoke of, just above the surface of the soil.

“It’s the most tenderest pairt of the vegetable nature,” he said; “and it must be kept out of the ground, where it can breathe, like; it won’t answer to cover it up.”

“I will not,” said Daisy. “Then?—”

“Then, when ye have gotten the place prepared, ye must set in this ball of earth, as haill as ye can keep it; but if it gets broken off, as it’s like it will!—then ye must set the roots kindly in on the soft earth, and let them lie just natural; and put in the soft earth over them; and when ye have got a little in press it down a bit; and then more, after the same manner, until it’s all filled up.”

“Why must it be pressed down?”

“Weel, Miss Daisy, it must be dune; the roots is accustomed to have the soil tight round them, and they don’t like it unless they have it so. It’s a vara good way, to have a watering pot of water and make a puddle in the bottom of the hole, and set the roots in that and throw in the soil; and then it settles itself all round them, and ye need not to coax it with your fingers. But if ye don’t puddle the roots, the bush must be well watered and soaked when ye have dune.”

“Very well, Logan—thank you. Now please put it in a basket for me, with a trowel, and let me take a watering pot of water too; or Lewis can carry that, can’t he?”

“He can take whatever ye have a mind,” said Logan; “but where is it going?”

“I’ll take the basket with the rose,” said Daisy—“it’s going a little way—you can set it just here, in my chaise, Logan.”

The gardener deposited the basket safely in the chaise, and Daisy got in and shook the reins. Lewis, much wondering and a little disgustful, was accommodated with a watering pot full of water, by the grinning Logan.

“See ye ride steady now, boy,” he said. “Ye won’t want to shew any graces of horsemanship, the day!”

Whatever Lewis might have wanted, the necessity upon him was pretty stringent. A watering pot full of water he found a very uncomfortable bundle to carry on horseback; he was bound to ride at the gentlest of paces, or inflict an involuntary cold bath upon himself every other step. Much marvelling at the arrangement which made a carriage and horses needful to move a rose bush, Lewis followed as gently as he could the progress of his little mistress’s pony chaise; which was much swifter than he liked

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it; until his marvelling was increased by its turning out of Melbourne grounds and taking a course up the road again. Towards the same place! On went Daisy, much too fast for the watering pot; till the cripple's cottage came in sight a second time. There, just at the foot of the little rise in the road which led up to the cottage gate, Loupe suddenly fell to very slow going. The watering pot went easily enough for several yards; and then Loupe stopped. What was the matter?

Something was the matter, yet Daisy did not summon Lewis. She sat quite still, looking before her up to the cottage, with a thoughtful, puzzled, troubled face. The matter was, that just there and not before, the remembrance of her mother's command had flashed on her—that she should have nothing to do with any stranger out of the house unless she had first got leave. Daisy was stopped short. Get leave? She would never get leave to speak again to that poor crabbed, crippled, forlorn creature; and who else would take up the endeavour to be kind to her? Who else would even try to win her to a knowledge of the Bible and Bible joys? and how would that poor ignorant mortal ever get out of the darkness into the light? Daisy did not know how to give her up; yet she could not go on. The sweet rose on the top of her little rose tree mocked her, with kindness undone and good not attempted. Daisy sat still, confounded at this new barrier her mother's will had put in her way.

Wheels came rapidly coursing along the road in front of her, and in a moment Dr. Sandford's gig had whirled past the cottage and bore down the hill. But recognizing the pony chaise in the road, he too came to a stop as sudden as Daisy's had been. The two were close beside each other.

"Where away, Daisy?"

"I do not understand, Dr. Sandford."

"Where are you going? or rather, why are you standing still here?"

"Because I was in doubt what to do."

"Did the doubt take you here, in the middle of the road?"

"Yes, Dr. Sandford."

"What is it, Daisy? To whom are you carrying a rose bush?"

"I am afraid—nobody."

"What is the matter—or the doubt?"

“It is a question of duty, Dr. Sandford.”

“Then I will decide it for you. Go on and do what you wish to do. That will be right.”

“O no, sir,” said Daisy, smiling at her adviser—“that is just what would be wrong. I cannot.”

“Cannot what?”

“Do that, sir; do what I wish to do.” And Daisy sighed withal.

“What do you wish to do?”

The doctor was quite serious and as usual a little imperative in his questions, and Daisy knew him to be trusted.

“I wanted to take this little rose bush and set it out in the garden up there.”

“*There?*? do you mean the garden of that cottage?” said the doctor pointing with his whip.

“Yes, sir.”

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“Are you bound thither now?”

“No, sir—I am going home.”

“Rose bush and all? Daisy, let Lewis get Loupe home, and you come here and ride with me. Come! I want you.”

Truly Daisy wanted nothing else. She left rose bush and watering pot, chaise and pony, to Lewis’s management, and gladly let the doctor take her up beside him. She liked to drive with him; he had a fine horse and went fast; and there were other reasons.

Now they drove off in fine style; fast, over the good roads; whisked by Melbourne, sped away along south, catching glimpses of the river from time to time, with the hills on the further side hazily blue and indistinct with the September haze of sunbeams. Near hand the green of plantations and woodland was varied with brown grainfields, where grain had been, and with ripening Indian corn and buckwheat; but more especially with here and there a stately roof-tree or gable of some fine new or old country house. The light was mellow, the air was good; in the excitement of her drive Daisy half forgot her perplexity and discomfiture. Till the doctor said, suddenly looking round at her with a smile,

“Now I should like to know the history of that rose bush.”

“O, there is no history about it,” said Daisy, quite taken by surprise.

“Everything has a beginning, a middle, and an end,” said the doctor. “What was the beginning of this?”

“Only, Dr. Sandford,” said Daisy doubtfully,—“I was sorry for that poor woman, after what you told me about her.”

“Molly Skelton?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you thought to comfort her with rose bushes?”

“No sir,—but—I wanted to get on good terms with her.”

“Are you on any other terms?”

“She does not know me, you know, sir,” said Daisy lifting to her friend a face that was beyond his comprehension,—“and I do not think she was very well pleased to see me in her garden a little while ago.”

“You have been in her garden, then?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Daisy, will you excuse me for asking, why you should be on any terms whatever with Molly Skelton?”

“She is so unhappy, Dr. Sandford,”—Daisy said, looking up again.

“And do you think you can do anything to make her less unhappy?”

“I thought”—Daisy did not look up now, but the doctor watching her saw a witnessing tinge that he knew coming about her eyelids, and a softened line of lip, that made him listen the closer,—“I thought—I might teach her something that would make her happy, —if I could.”

“What would you teach her, Daisy?”

“I would teach her to read—perhaps—I thought; if she would like me and let me.”

“Is reading a specific for happiness?”

“No sir—but—the Bible!” Daisy said with a sudden glance. And so clear and sure the speech of her childish eye was, that the doctor though believing nothing of it would not breathe a question of that which she believed.

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“O that is it!” he said. “Well, Daisy, this is the beginning; but though I came in upon the middle of the subject I do not understand it yet. Why did not the rose tree get to its destination?”

“Because—I remembered, just when I had got to the bottom of the hill, that mamma would not let me.”

Daisy’s tone of voice told more than she knew of her subdued state of disappointment.

“Mrs. Randolph had forbidden you to go to Molly’s cottage?”

“No sir; but she had forbidden me to speak to anybody without having her leave. I had forgotten it till just that minute.”

“Ask her leave, and then go. What is the difficulty in that, Daisy?”

“She will not give me leave, Dr. Sandford. Mamma does not like me to——do such things.”

“Do you care much about it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Present your request to Mrs. Randolph to-morrow, Daisy—that is my advice to you.”

“It would be no use, Dr. Sandford.”

“Perhaps not; but I advise you to take my advice; and lay the rose bush by the heels till to-morrow afternoon.”

“By the heels, sir?”

“Yes. Logan will tell you what that means.”

Daisy looked with such a gaze of steadfast inquiry up in the doctor’s face, that he had hard work to command his countenance. She could not make out anything from his face, except that somehow she got a little encouragement from it; and then they whirled in at the gate of Melbourne and in another minute were at home. Daisy went off to see after her rose-bush, find Logan, and have it laid by the heels. The doctor marched in through the hall, into the library, and then catching sight of Mr. Randolph on the piazza, he went out there. Mr. Randolph was enjoying the September sunlight, and seemed to be doing nothing else.

“Good afternoon!” said the doctor.

“How do you do?” said Mr. Randolph. “Can you possibly have business on hand, doctor, in this weather?”

“Very good weather for business,” said the doctor.

“Too good. It is enough to look and breathe.”

All Mr. Randolph was doing, apparently. He was lounging on a settee, with a satisfied expression of countenance. The doctor put himself in a great cane chair and followed the direction of his host’s eyes, to the opposite river and mountains; over which there was a glory of light and atmosphere. Came back to Mr. Randolph’s face with an air of the disparaged business.

“It is not bad, driving.”

“No, I suppose not!”

“Your little daughter likes business better than you do.” A smile came over Mr. Randolph’s face, a smile of much meaning.

“She likes it too well, doctor. I wish I could infuse some degree of nonchalant carelessness into Daisy’s little wise head.”

“We must deal with things as we find them,” said the doctor. “I met her this afternoon in the road, with a carriage-load of business on hand; but what was very bad for her, it was arrested business.”

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“How do you mean?”

The doctor rose here to give his chair to Mrs. Randolph, who stepped out through the library window. He fetched another for himself and went on.

“She was in the middle of the road, her chaise loaded with baskets and greenhouse plants, and with a general distribution of garden tools between herself and her outrider. All in the middle of the road at a stand-still—chaise and pony and all,—and Daisy herself in particular. I found it was an interrupted expedition, and invited Daisy to take a ride with me; which she did, and I got at the rationale of the affair. And I come now to make the request, as her physician, not as her friend, that her expeditions may be as little interfered with as possible. Let her energies work. The very best thing for her is that they should find something to work upon, and receive no interruption.”

“What interrupted her this afternoon?”

“Conscience—as I understand it.”

“There is no dealing with Daisy’s conscience, doctor,” said Mr. Randolph with a smile. “What *that* says, Daisy feels herself bound to do.”

“Do not burden her conscience then,” said the doctor. “Not just now—till she gets stronger.”

“Where was she going this afternoon?” Mrs. Randolph asked in her calm voice.

“On an errand of the most Utopian benevolence”—

“Having what for its object?”

“A miserable old crippled creature, who lives in a poor cottage about half a mile from your gate.”

“What was Daisy desiring to do, doctor?”

“Carry some comfort to this forlorn thing, I believe; whom nobody else thinks of comforting.”

“Do you know what shape the comfort was to take?”

“I think,” said the doctor,—“I am not quite sure, but I think, it was a rose bush.”

Mr. Randolph looked at his wife and straightened himself up to a sitting posture.

“And what hindered her, Dr. Sandford?”

“I think, some understanding that she had not liberty to go on.”

“Very proper in Daisy,” said Mrs. Randolph.

“That is your child who is wanting in docility,” remarked Mr. Randolph.

“She might have remembered my orders before she got so far,”—said the lady.

“I wish you would change the orders,” said Dr. Sandford boldly.

“Not even to oblige you, doctor,” said Mrs. Randolph. “Daisy has an idea that the companions who are not fit for her are precisely the ones whom she should cultivate.”

“I think Daisy would state the question differently, however,” Mr. Randolph remarked.

“She has a tinge of the wildest fanaticism,” Mrs. Randolph went on, dropping her work and facing the doctor. “Wherever there are rags and dirt, there, by force of contrast, Daisy thinks it is her business to go. This is a miserable place, I suppose, that she was aiming for this afternoon—is it not?”

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“Very miserable. But the point is, to visit it would have made Daisy happy.”

“It is sheer fanaticism!” said Mrs. Randolph. “I cannot let her encourage it. If I did, she would not be fit for anything by and by. She is fit for very little now.”

“You will of course judge as you please about it,” said the doctor; “but it is my duty to tell you that the danger in that line is far more than compensated by the advantage to be gained. For Daisy’s health, she should be checked in nothing; let her go where she will and do what she will; the more business on hand the better, that carries her out of doors and out of herself. With a strong body and secure health, you will find it far easier to manage fanaticism.”

“I am sure Dr. Sandford is right, Felicia,” said Mr. Randolph.

“I know Daisy—” said the lady.

“I think I know fanaticism,” said the doctor; “and if I do, the best thing you can do with it is to give it plenty of sun and air.”

“Is it quite safe for Daisy to go to this cottage you speak of?” Mr. Randolph asked.

“Quite safe.”

“I cannot think of letting Daisy go there, Mr. Randolph!” said his wife.

“What danger do you apprehend, Felicia?”

It was not quite so easy to say. The lady handled her tetting pins, which were in her fingers, for a moment or two in silence; then let them fall, and raised her handsome head.

“Daisy must be withdrawn entirely from the associations which have taken possession of her—if it is possible. The very best thing for her in my opinion would be to send her to a boarding school. Unless you wish your daughter to grow up a confirmed *religieuse*, Mr. Randolph. Do you wish that?”

“I have not considered it. What do you suppose Daisy will do to harm herself, at this place Dr. Sandford speaks of?”

“Some absurdity, that just cherishes the temper she is in.”

“Quite as likely”—to wear it out, Mr. Randolph was going to say; but some remembrance of Daisy came up and stopped him.

“Good evening!” said the doctor, rising to his feet.

“Are you going, Dr. Sandford?”

“Yes.”

“Then you recommend that we let Daisy go to this place, and alone?”

“In my capacity of physician I should *order* it,” said the doctor with a smile; “only, I do not like to give orders and have them dishonoured.”

Off he went.

“Felicia,” said Mr. Randolph, “I believe he is right.”

“I am sure he knows nothing about it,” said the lady.

“Do you? Daisy is very delicate.”

“She will never die of want of resolution.”

“Felicia, I mean to enquire into Daisy’s wishes and purposes about this matter; and if I find them unobjectionable, I shall give her leave to go on with it.”

“You do not know what you are about, Mr. Randolph.”

“I shall find out, then,” said the gentleman. “I would rather she would be a *religieuse* than a shadow.”

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CHAPTER XI.

Daisy pondered over the doctor's counsel. It was friendly; but she hardly thought well advised. He did not know her father and mother so well as she did. Yet she went to find out Logan that afternoon on her return from the drive, and saw the rose-bush laid by the heels; with perhaps just a shadow of hope in her heart that her friend the doctor might mean to put in a plea for her somewhere. The hope faded when she got back to the house, and the doctor was gone, and Mrs. Randolph's handsome face looked its usual calm impassiveness. What use to ask her such a thing as leave to go to the cripple's cottage? No use at all, Daisy knew. The request alone would probably move displeasure. Every look at her mother's face settled this conviction more and more deeply in Daisy's mind; and she ended by giving up the subject. There was no hope. She could do nothing for any poor person, she was sure, under her mother's permission, beyond carrying soup and jelly in her pony chaise and maybe going in to give it. And that was not much; and there were very few poor people around Melbourne that wanted just that sort of attention.

So Daisy gave up her scheme. Nevertheless next morning it gave her a twinge of heart to see her rose-bush laid by the heels, exactly like her hopes. Daisy stood and looked at it. The sweet half-blown rose at the top of the little tree hung ingloriously over the soil, and yet looked so lovely and smelt so sweet; and Daisy had hoped it might win poor Molly Skelton's favour, or at least begin to open a way for it to come in due time.

"So ye didn't get your bush planted—" said Logan coming up.

"No."

"Your hands were not strong enough to make the hole deep for it, Miss Daisy?"

"Yes, I think they could; but I met with an interruption yesterday, Logan."

"Weel—it'll just bide here till ye want it."

Daisy wished it was back in its old place again; but she did not like to say so, and she went slowly back to the house. As she mounted the piazza steps she heard her father's voice. He was there before the library windows.

"Come here, Daisy. What are you about?" he said drawing her up in his arms.

"Nothing, papa."

"How do you like doing nothing?"

"Papa, I think it is not at all agreeable."

“You do! So I supposed. What were you about yesterday afternoon?”

“I went to ride with Dr. Sandford.”

“Did that occupy the whole afternoon?”

“O no, papa.”

“Were you doing nothing the rest of the time?”

“No sir, not *nothing*.”

“Daisy, I wish you would be a little more frank. Have you any objection to tell me what you were doing?”

“No, papa;—but I did not think it would give you any pleasure. I was only trying to do something.”

“It would give me pleasure to have you tell about it.”

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“I must tell you more then, papa.” And standing with her arm on her father’s shoulder, looking over to the blue mountains on the other side of the river, Daisy went on.

“There is a poor woman living half a mile from here, papa, that I saw one day when I was riding with Dr. Sandford. She is a cripple. Papa, her legs and feet are all bent up under her, so that she cannot walk at all; her way of moving is by dragging herself along over the ground on her hands and knees; her hands and her gown all down in the dirt.”

“That is your idea of extreme misery, is it not, Daisy?”

“Papa, do you not think it is—it must be—very uncomfortable?”

“Very, I should think.”

“But that is not her worst misery. Papa, she is all alone; the neighbours bring her food, but nobody stops to eat it with her. She is all alone by night and by day; and she is disagreeable in her temper, I believe, and she has nobody to love her and she loves nobody.”

“Which of those two things is the worst, Daisy?”

“What two things, papa?”

“To love nobody, or to have nobody to love her?”

“Papa—I do not know.” Then remembering Juanita, Daisy suddenly added,—“Papa, I should think it must be the worst to love nobody.”

“Do you? Pray why?”

“It would not make her happy, I think, to have people love her if she did not love them.”

“And you think loving others would be better, without anybody to give love back?”

“I should think it would be very hard!”—said Daisy with a most profound expression of thoughtfulness.

“Well—this poor cripple, I understand, lacks both those conditions of happiness?”

“Yes, papa.”

“What then? You were going to tell me something about her.”

“Not much about *her*” said Daisy, “but only about myself.”

“A much more interesting subject to me, Daisy.”

You could only see the faintest expression of pleasure in the line of Daisy's lips; she was looking very sober and a trifle anxious.

"I only thought, papa, I would try if I could not do something to make that poor woman happier."

"What did you try?"

"The first thing was to get her to know me and like me, you know, papa; because she is rather cross and does not like people generally, I believe."

"So you went to see her?"

"I have never spoken much to her, papa. But I went inside of her gate one day, and saw her trying to take care of some poor flowers; so then I thought, maybe, if I took her a nice little rose-bush, she might like it."

"And then like you? Well—you tried the experiment?"

"No, papa. I did get a rose-bush from Logan and he told me how to plant it; and I was on my way to the cottage and had almost got there; and then I recollected mamma had said I must not speak to anybody without her leave."

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“So you came home?”

“Yes, papa. No, papa, I went to ride with Dr. Sandford.”

“Have you asked leave of your mother?”

“No, papa,”—said Daisy, in a tone of voice which sufficiently expressed that she did not intend it.

“So my dear little Daisy,” said her father drawing his arm round her a little more closely—“you think a rose-bush would serve instead of friends to make this poor creature happy?”

“O no, papa!”

“What was the purpose of it, then?”

“Only—to get her to like me, papa.”

“What were *you* going to do to make her happy?”

“Papa, if you lived in such a place, in such a way, wouldn’t you like to have a friend come and see you sometimes?”

“Certainly!—if you were the friend.”

“I thought—by and by—she might learn to like it,” Daisy said in the most sedately meek way possible. Her father could not forbear a smile.

“But Daisy, from what you tell me, I am at a loss to understand the part that all this could have had in *your* happiness.”

“O papa—she is so miserable!” was Daisy’s answer. Mr. Randolph drew her close and kissed her.

“*You* are not miserable?”

“No, papa—but—”

“But what?”

“I would like to give her a little bit of comfort.”

There was much earnestness, and a little sorrow, in Daisy’s eyes.

“I am not sure that it is right for you to go to such places.”

“Papa, may I shew you something?” said the child with sudden life.

“Anything, Daisy.”

She rushed away; was gone a full five minutes; then came softly to Mr. Randolph’s shoulder with an open book in her hand. It was Joanna’s Bible, for Daisy did not dare bring her own; and it was open at these words—

“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

“What does this mean, Daisy? It seems very plain; but what do I want with it?”

“Only, papa, that is what makes me think it is right.”

“What is right?”

“To do this, papa.”

“Well but, are you in want of somebody to come and make you happy?”

“O no, papa—but if I were in her place, then I should be.”

“Do you suppose this commands us to do in every case what we would like ourselves in the circumstances?”

“Papa—I suppose so—if it wouldn’t be something wrong.”

“At that rate, I should have to let you go with your rose-bush,” said Mr. Randolph.

“O papa!” said Daisy, “do you think, if you asked her, mamma would perhaps say I might?”

“Can’t tell, Daisy—I think I shall try my powers of persuasion.”

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For answer to which, Daisy clasped her arms round his neck and gave him some very earnest caresses, comprised in one great kiss and a clinging of her little head in his neck for the space of half a minute. It meant a great deal; so much that Mr. Randolph was unable for the rest of the day to get rid of a sort of lingering echo of Daisy's Bible words; they haunted him, and haunted him with a strange sense of the house being at cross purposes, and Daisy's line of life lying quite athwart and contrary to all the rest. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you;"—who else at Melbourne considered that for one moment?

However, Mr. Randolph had a fresh talk with his wife; the end of which was that he gave Daisy leave to do what she liked in the matter of Molly Skelton; and was rewarded on the spot by seeing the pink tinge which instantly started into the pale cheeks.

No lack of energy had Daisy for the rest of that day. She went off first to see what was the condition of her rose-bush; pretty fair; lying by the heels seemed to agree with it quite well. Then the pony chaise was ordered and a watering pot of water again; much to the boy's disgust who was to carry it; and Daisy took her dinner with quiet satisfaction. So soon as the afternoon had become pleasantly cool, Daisy's driving gloves and hat went on, the chaise was summoned, and rose-bush and all she set forth on her expedition. Mr. Randolph watched her off, acknowledging that certainly for the present the doctor was right; whether in the future Mrs. Randolph would prove to have been right also, he was disagreeably uncertain. Still, he was not quite sure that he wished Daisy anything other than she was.

Troubled by no fears or prognostications, meanwhile, the pony chaise and its mistress went on their way. No, Daisy had no fears. She did doubt what Molly's immediate reception of her advances might be; her first experience bade her doubt; but the spirit of love in her little heart was overcoming; it poured over Molly a flood of sunny affections and purposes, in the warmth and glow of which the poor cripple's crabbedness and sourness of manner and temper were quite swallowed up and lost. Daisy drove on, very happy and thankful, till the little hill was gained, and slowly walking up it Loupe stopped, nothing loth, before the gate of Molly Skelton's courtyard.

A little bit of hesitation came over Daisy now, not about what was to be done, but how to do it. The cripple was in her flowery bit of ground, grubbing around her balsams as usual. The clear afternoon sunbeams shone all over what seemed to Daisy all distressing together. The ragged balsams—the coarse bloom of prince's feather and cockscomb—some straggling tufts of ribband grass and four-o'clocks and marigolds—-and the great sunflower nodding its head on high over all; while weeds were only kept away from the very growth of the flowers and started up everywhere else, and grass grew irregularly where

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grass should not; and in the midst of it all the poor cripple on her hands and knees in the dirt, more uncared-for, more unseemly and unlovely than her little plot of weeds and flowers. Daisy looked at her, with a new tide of tenderness flowing up in her heart, along with the doubt how her mission should be executed or how it would be received; then she gave up her reins, took the rose-tree in her hands, and softly opened the little wicket gate. She went up the path and stood beside the cripple, who hearing the gate shut had risen from her grubbing in the earth and sat back looking at who was coming. Daisy went on without hesitation now. She had prayed out all her prayer about it before setting out from home.

“I have brought you a rose-bush,” she said simply. “Do you like roses? this is very sweet. I thought maybe you would like a rose. Where would you like to have it go?”

The answer was a very strange sort of questioning grunt—inarticulate—nevertheless expressive of rude wonder and incredulity, as far as it expressed anything. And Molly stared.

“Where shall I put this rose-tree?” said Daisy. “Where would it look prettiest? May I put it here, by these balsams?”

No answer in words; but instead of a sign of assent, the cripple after looking a moment longer at Daisy and the rose-tree, put her hand beyond the balsams and grubbed up a tuft of what the country people call “creepin’ Charley;” and then sitting back as before, signified to Daisy by a movement of her hand that the rose-bush might go in that place. That was all Daisy wanted. She fell to work with her trowel, glad enough to be permitted, and dug a hole, with great pains and some trouble; for the soil was hard as soon as she got a little below the surface. But with great diligence Daisy worked and scooped, till by repeated trials she found she had the hole deep enough and large enough; and then she tenderly set the roots of the rose-tree in the prepared place and shook fine soil over them, as Logan had told her; pressing it down from time to time, until the job was finished and the little tree stood securely planted. A great feat accomplished. Daisy stayed not, but ran off to the road for the watering pot, and bringing it with some difficulty to the spot without soiling herself, she gave the rose-bush a thorough watering; watered it till she was sure the refreshment had penetrated down to the very roots. All the while the cripple sat back gazing at her; gazing alternately at the rose-bush and the planting, and at the white delicate frock the child wore and the daintily neat shoes and stockings, and the handsome flat hat with its costly riband. I think the view of these latter things must in some degree have neutralized the effect of the sweet rose looking at her from the top of the little bush; because Molly on the whole was not gracious. Daisy had finished her work and set down her empty watering pot, and was looking with great satisfaction at the little rose-bush; which was somewhat

closely neighboured by a ragged bunch of four-o’clocks on one side and the overgrown balsams on the other; when Molly said suddenly and gruffly,

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"Now go 'long!"------

Daisy was startled, and turned to the creature who had spoken to see if she had heard and understood aright. No doubt of it. Molly was not looking at her, but her face was ungenial; and as Daisy hesitated she made a little gesture of dismissal with her hands. Daisy moved a step or two off, afraid of another shower of gravel upon her feet.

"I will come to-morrow and see how it looks"—she said gently.

Molly did not reply yes or no, but she repeated her gesture of dismissal, and Daisy thought it best and wisest to obey. She bid her a sweet "good bye," to which she got no answer, and mounted into her chaise again. There was a little disappointment in her heart; yet when she had time to think it all over she was encouraged too. The rose-tree was fairly planted; that would keep on speaking to Molly without the fear of a rebuff; and somehow Daisy's heart was warm towards the gruff old creature. How forlorn she had looked, sitting in the dirt, with her grum face!

"But perhaps she will wear a white robe in heaven!"—thought Daisy.

Seeing that the rose-tree had evidently won favour, Daisy judged she could not do better than attack Molly again on her weak side, which seemed to be the love of the beautiful!—in one line at least. But Daisy was not an impatient child; and she thought it good to see first what sort of treatment the rose-bush got, and not to press Molly too hard. So the next day she carried nothing with her; only went to pay a visit to the garden. Nothing was to be seen but the garden; Molly did not shew herself; and Daisy went in and looked at the rose. Much to her satisfaction, she saw that Molly had quite discarded the great bunch of four-o'clocks which had given the little rose tree no room on one side; they were actually pulled up and gone; and the rose looked out in fair space and sunshine where its coarse-growing neighbour had threatened to be very much in its way. An excellent sign. Molly clearly approved of the rose. Daisy saw with great pleasure that another bud was getting ready to open and already shewing red between the leaves of its green calyx; and she went home happy.

Next morning she went among the flower beds, and took a very careful survey of all the beauties there to see what best she might take for her next attack upon Molly. The beauties in flower were so very many and so very various and so delicious all to Daisy's eye, that she was a good deal puzzled. Red and purple and blue and white and yellow, the beds were gay and glorious. But Daisy reflected that anything which wanted skill in its culture or shelter from severities of season would disappoint Molly, because it would not get from her what would be necessary to its thriving. Some of the flowers in bloom, too, would not bear transplanting. Daisy did not know what to do. She took Logan into her confidence, so far as she could without mentioning names or circumstances.

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“Weel, Miss Daisy,” said the gardener, “if ye’re bent on being a Lady Flora to the poor creature, I’ll tell ye what ye’ll do—ye’ll just take her a scarlet geranium.”

“A geranium?” said Daisy.

“Ay. Just that.”

“But it would want to be in the greenhouse when winter comes.”

“Any place where it wouldn’t freeze,” said Logan. “You see, it’ll be in a pot e’en now, Miss Daisy—and you’ll keep it in the pot; and the pot you’ll sink in the ground till frost comes; and when the frost comes, it’ll just come up as it is and go intil the poor body’s house, and make a spot of summer for her in her house till summer comes again.”

“O Logan, that is an excellent thought!”

“Ay, Miss Daisy—I’m glad ye approve it.”

“And than she would have the flowers all winter.”

“Ay—if she served it justly.”

The only thing now was to choose the geranium. Daisy was some time about it, there were so many to choose from. At last she suited herself with a very splendid new kind called the “Jewess”—a compact little plant with a store of rich purple-red blossoms. Logan murmured as he took up the pot in which it was planted—“Less than the best will never serve ye, Miss Daisy”—but he did not grumble about it after all, and Daisy was content.

She was very content when she had got it in her pony chaise and was driving off, with the magnificent purple-red blossoms at her feet. How exquisitely those delicate petals were painted, and marked with dashes of red and purple deeper than the general colour. What rich clusters of blossoms. Daisy gave only half an eye to her driving; and it was not till she had almost reached Melbourne gate that she discovered her trowel had been forgotten. She sent her attendant back for it and waited.

Loupe was always willing to stand, lazy little fat fellow that he was; and Daisy was giving her undivided attention to the purple “Jewess,” with a sort of soft prayer going on all the while in her heart that her errand might be blessed; when she was suddenly interrupted.

“Why where are you going, Daisy?”

“Where have you been, Preston?” said Daisy as suddenly drawing up.

“Little Yankee!” said Preston. “Answer one question by another in that fashion? You mustn’t do it, Daisy. What are you doing?”

“Nothing. I am waiting.”

“What are you going to do, then?”

“I am going to drive.”

“Do you usually carry a pot of geraniums for company?”

“No, not usually,” said Daisy smiling at him.

“Well set out the pot of geraniums, and we will have a glorious ride, Daisy. I am going to the Fish’s, to see some of Alexander’s traps; and you shall go with me.”

“O Preston—I am sorry; I cannot.”

“Why?”

“I cannot this afternoon.”

“Yes, you can, my dear little Daisy. In fact you *must*. Consider—I shall be going away before very long, and then we cannot take rides together. Won’t you come?”

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“Not now—I cannot, Preston! I have got something to do first.”

“What?”

“Something which will take me an hour or two. After that I could go.”

“Scarcely, this afternoon. Daisy, it is a long drive to the Fish’s. And they have beautiful things there, which you would like to see, I know you would. Come! go with me—that’s my own little Daisy.”

Preston was on horseback, and looked very much in earnest. He looked very gay and handsome too, for he was well mounted and knew how to manage himself and his horse. He wanted to manage Daisy too; and that was difficult. Daisy would have been tempted, and would have gone with him at the first asking; but the thought of Molly and her forlornness, and the words warm at her heart—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you”—and a further sense that her visitations of Molly were an extraordinary thing and very likely to be hindered on short notice, kept her firm as a rock. She had an opportunity now in hand; she would not throw it away; not for any self-gratification. And to tell the truth, no sort of self-gratification could balance for a moment in Daisy’s mind the thought of Molly’s wearing a crown of gold in heaven. That crown of gold was before Daisy’s eyes; nothing else was worth a thought in comparison.

“Are you going to see that wretched old being?” said Preston at last.

“Yes.”

“Daisy—dear Daisy—I do not know what to do with you. Do you like, is it possible that you can like, dirt and vulgarity?”

“I don’t think I do,” Daisy said gently; “but Preston, I like the poor *people*.”

“You do!” said Preston. “Then it is manifest that you cannot like me.” And he dashed spurs into his horse and sprung away, with a grace and life that kept Daisy looking after him in admiration, and a plain mood of displeasure which cast its shadow all over her spirit.

“Here is the trowel, Miss Daisy.”

Her messenger had come back, and Daisy recalled to the business in hand took up her reins again and drove on; but she felt deeply grieved. Now and then her gauntleted hand even went up to her face to brush away a tear that had gathered. It was not exactly a new thing, nor was Daisy entirely surprised at the attempt to divert her from her purpose. She was wise enough to guess that Preston’s object had been more than the pleasure of her company; and she knew that all at home, unless possibly her father might be excepted, neither liked nor favoured her kindness to Molly and would rejoice to

interrupt the tokens of it. All were against her; and Daisy's hand, went up again and again. "It is good I am weak and not very well," she thought; "as soon as I grow strong mamma will not let me do this any more. I must do all I can now."

So she came to the cripple's gate; and by that time the tears were all gone.

Nobody was in the little courtyard; Daisy went in first to see how the rose looked. It was all safe and doing well. While she stood there before it, the cottage door opened and the poor inmate came out. She crawled down the walk on hands and knees till she got near Daisy, and then sat back to look at her.

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“What do you want?” she said, in a most uninviting and ungracious tone of voice.

“I came to see you,” said Daisy, venturing to let her eyes rest for the first time on those poor, restless, unloving eyes opposite her—“and I wanted to see the rose, and I have brought you another flower—if you will let me bring it in.”

Her words were sweet as honey. The woman looked at her, and answered again with the unintelligible grunt, of unbelieving wonder, which Daisy had heard once before. Daisy thought on the whole the safest way was not to talk but to fetch her beautiful “Jewess” flowers to speak for themselves. So she ran off and brought the pot and set it on the ground before Molly. It was a great attraction; Daisy could see that at once. The cripple sat back gazing at it. Daisy prudently waited till her eyes came round again from the flowers and rested on her little visiter’s face.

“Where shall I put it?” said Daisy. “Where would you like to have it go?”

Molly’s eyes presently followed hers, roaming over the little flower plot in search of room for the geranium, which did not appear; prince’s feather and marigolds so choked up the ground where balsams did not straggle over it. Molly looked as Daisy did at the possibilities of the case, looked again at the strange sweet little face which was so busy in her garden; and then made a sudden movement. With two or three motions of hands and knees she drew herself a few steps back to one of the exclusive bunches of balsams, and began with her two hands to root it up. Actually she was grubbing, might and main, at the ungainly stalks of the balsams, pulling them up as fast as she could and flinging them aside, careless where. Daisy came to help with her trowel, and together they worked, amicably enough but without a word, till the task was done. A great space was left clear, and Molly threw herself back in her wonted position for taking observations. Daisy wasted no time. In hopeful delight she went on to make a hole in the ground in which to sink the pot of geraniums. It was more of a job than she thought, and she dug away stoutly with her trowel for a good while before she had an excavation sufficient to hold the pot. Daisy got it in at last; smoothed the surface nicely all round it; disposed of the loose soil till the bed was trim and neat, as far as that was concerned; and then stood up and spoke. Warm,—how warm she was! her face was all one pink flush, but she did not feel it, she was so eager.

“There,” she said, “that will stand there nicely; and when the cold weather comes, you can take the pot up and take it into the house, just as it is; and if you do not let it freeze, it will have flowers for you in the winter.”

“Cold?” said Molly.

“Yes—by and by, when the cold weather comes, this must be taken up. The cold would kill it, if it was cold enough to freeze. It would have to go in the house. The rose can

stay out all winter if you like; but this must be kept warm. This is a geranium. And it will give you flowers in the winter."

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“J’anium?” said Molly.

“Yes. This is called the ’Jewess’—there are so many kinds that they have to be named. This is the ‘Jewess’ geranium.”

“Water?”—said Molly.

“Water? No, this does not need water, because the roots are in a pot, you know, and have not been disturbed. It will want water if rain don’t come, by and by.”

“What’s you?” was Molly’s next question, given with more directness.

“Me? I am Daisy Randolph. And I love flowers; and you love flowers. May I come and see you sometimes? Will you let me?”

Molly’s grunt this time was not unintelligible. It was queer, but there was certainly a tone of assent in it. She sat looking now at the “Jewess” blossoms and now at Daisy.

“And I love Jesus,” the child went on. “Do you love him?”

The grunt was of pure question, in answer to this speech. Molly did not understand. Daisy stooped down to face her on more equal terms.

“There is a great King up in heaven, who loves you, Molly. He loves you so well that he died for you. And if you love him, he will take you there when you die and give you a white robe and a crown of gold, and make you blessed.”

It is impossible to describe the simple earnestness of this speech. Daisy said it, not as a philosopher nor as even a preacher would have done; she said it as a child. As she had received, she gave. The utter certainty and sweetness of her faith and love went right from one pair of eyes to the other. Nevertheless, Molly’s answer was only a most ignorant and blank, “What?”—but it told of interest.

“Yes,” said Daisy. “Jesus loved us so well that he came and died for us—he shed his blood that we might be forgiven our sins. And now he is a Great King up in heaven; and he knows all we do and all we think; and if we love him he will make us good and take us to be with him, and give us white robes and crowns of gold up there. He can do anything, for he raised up dead people to life, when he was in the world.”

That was a master-stroke of Daisy’s. Molly’s answer was again a grunt of curiosity; and Daisy, crouching opposite to her, took up her speech and told her at length and in detail the whole story of Lazarus. And if Daisy was engaged with her subject, so certainly was Molly. She did not stir hand or foot; she sat listening movelessly to the story, which came with such loving truthfulness from the lips of her childish teacher. A teacher exactly fitted, however, to the scholar; Molly’s poor closed-up mind could best receive

any truth in the way a child's mind would offer it; but in this truth, the undoubting utterance of Daisy's love and belief won entrance for her words where another utterance might not. Faith is always catching.

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So Daisy told the wonderful story, and displayed the power and love and tenderness of the Lord with the affection of one who knew him *her* Lord, and almost with the zeal of an eye-witness of his work. It was almost to Daisy so; it seemed to her that she had beheld and heard the things she was telling over; for faith is the substance of things not seen; and the grief of the sisters, and their joy, and the love and tenderness of the Lord Jesus, were all to her not less real than they were to the actors in that far distant drama. Molly heard her throughout, with open mouth and marvelling eyes.

Neither of them had changed her position, and indeed Daisy had scarce finished talking, when she heard herself hailed from the road. She started. Preston was there on horseback, calling to her. Daisy got up and took up her trowel.

“Good bye,” she said, with a little sigh for the lost vision which Preston’s voice had interrupted—“I’ll come again, I hope.” And she ran out at the gate.

“It is time for you to go home, Daisy. I thought you did not know how late it is.”

Daisy mounted into her pony chaise silently.

“Have I interrupted something very agreeable?”

“You would not have thought it so,” said Daisy diplomatically.

“What were you doing, down there in the dirt?”

“Preston, if you please, I cannot talk to you nicely while you are so high and I am so low.”

Preston was certainly at some height above Daisy, being mounted up in his saddle on a pretty high horse, while the pony chaise was hung very near the ground. He had been beside her; but at her last words he laughed and set off at a good pace in advance, leaving the chaise to come along in Loupe’s manner. Daisy drove contentedly home through the afternoon sunlight, which laid bands of brightness across her road all the way home. They seemed bands of joy to Daisy.

Preston had gallopped ahead and was at the door ready to meet her. “What kept you so long at that dismal place?” he asked as he handed her out of the chaise.

“You were back very soon from the Fish place, I think,” said Daisy.

“Yes—Alexander was not at home; there was no use in my staying. But what were you doing all that while, Daisy?”

“It was not so very long,” said Daisy. “I did not think it was a long time. You must have deceived yourself.”

“But do you not mean to tell me what you were about? What *could* you do, at such a place?”

Daisy stood on the piazza, in all the light of the afternoon sunbeams, looking and feeling puzzled. How much was it worth while to try to tell Preston of her thoughts and wishes?

“What was the attraction, Daisy? only tell me that. Dirt and ignorance and rudeness and disorder—and you contented to be in the midst of it! Down in the dirt! What was the attraction?”

“She is very unhappy, Preston.”

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“I don’t believe it. Nonsense! All that is not misery to such people, unless you make it so by shewing them something different. Marble tables are not the thing for them, Daisy.”

“Marble tables!” echoed Daisy.

“Nor fuchsias and geraniums either. That old thing’s old flowers do just as well.”

Daisy was silent. She could have answered this. Preston went on.

“She won’t be any better with her garden full of roses and myrtles, than she is with her sunflowers now. What do you expect to do, little Daisy?”

“I know what I would like if I were in her place,” said Daisy.

“*You*,—but she is not you. She has not your tastes. Do you mean to carry her a silver cup and fork, Daisy? You would certainly like that, if you were in her place. Dear little Daisy, don’t you be a mad philosopher.”

But Daisy had not been thinking of silver cups and forks, and she was not misled by this argument.

“Daisy, do you see you have been under a mistake?”

“No, Preston,”—she said looking up at him.

“Daisy, do you think it is *right* for you to go into houses and among people where my uncle and aunt do not wish you to go? You know they do not wish it, though they have given consent perhaps because you were so set upon it.”

Daisy glanced behind her, at the windows of the library; for they were at the back entrance of the house; and then seizing Preston’s hand and saying, “Come with me,” she drew him down the steps and over the grass till she reached one of the garden seats under the trees, out of hearing of any one. There they sat down; Preston curious, Daisy serious and even doubtful.

“Preston”—she began with all her seriousness upon her,—“I wish I had the book here, but I will tell you. When the Lord Jesus comes again in glory, and all the angels with him, he will have all the people before him, and he will separate them into two sets. One will be on the right and one on the left. One set will be the people that belong to him, and the other set will be the people that do not belong to him. Then he will welcome the first set, and bless them, because they have done things to the poor and miserable such as they would have liked to have done to themselves. And he will say —’Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.’” Daisy’s eyes were full of water by this time.

“So you are working to gain heaven, Daisy?” said Preston, who did not know how to answer her.

“O no!” said the child. “I don’t mean that.”

“Yes, you do.”

“No,—that would be doing it for oneself, not for the Lord Jesus”—said Daisy gravely looking at Preston.

“Then I don’t see what you mean by your story.”

“I mean only, that Jesus likes to have us do to other people what we would want in their place.”

“Suppose you were in my aunt and uncle’s place—do you not think you would like to have a little daughter regard their wishes?”

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Daisy looked distressed.

“I think it is time to go in and get ready for dinner, Preston,” she said.

If she was distressed, Preston was displeased. They went in without any more words. But Daisy was not perplexed at all. She had not told Preston her innermost thought and hope—that Molly Skelton might learn the truth and be one of that blessed throng on the right hand in the Great Day; but the thought and hope were glowing at her heart; and she thought she must carry her Master’s message, if not positively forbidden, to all whom she could carry it to. Preston’s meditations were different.

“I have tried my best,” he said that evening when Daisy was gone to bed,—“and I have failed utterly. I tried my best—and all I got was a rebuke and a sermon.”

“A sermon!” said Mrs. Randolph.

“An excellent one, aunt Felicia. It was orderly, serious, and pointed.”

“And she went to that place?”

“Yes, ma’am. The sermon was afterwards.”

“What do you mean, Preston! Speak intelligibly.”

“Daisy did, ma’am. I am speaking sober truth, aunt Felicia.”

“What is her motive in going to that horrid place? can you understand?”

“Its disagreeableness, ma’am—so far as I can make out.”

“It is very singular,” said Mrs. Gary.

“It is very deplorable.” said Mrs. Randolph. “So at least it seems to me. There will be nothing in common soon between Daisy and her family.”

“Only that this kind of thing is apt to wear out, my dear. You have that comfort.”

“No comfort at all. You do not know Daisy. She is a persistent child. She has taken a dose of fanaticism enough to last her for years.”

“I am sure nevertheless that Dr. Sandford is right in his advice,” said Mr. Randolph;—-“both as a physician and as a philosopher. By far the best way is not to oppose Daisy, and take as little notice as possible of her new notions. They will fade out.”

“I do not believe it,” said the lady “I do not believe it in the least. If she had not your support, I would have an end of this folly in a month.”

“Indirect ways”—said Mrs. Gary—“indirect ways, my dear; those are your best chance. Draw off Daisy’s attention with other things. That is what I would do.”

And then the ladies put their heads together and concerted a scheme; Preston joining eagerly in the discussion, and becoming the manager-in-chief intrusted with its execution. Mr. Randolph heard, but he gave no help and made no suggestion. He let the ladies alone.

CHAPTER XII.

Daisy came down to breakfast the next morning, looking so very bright and innocent and fresh, that perhaps Mr. Randolph thought his wife and sister were taking unnecessary trouble upon themselves. At least Mrs. Randolph so interpreted his manner, as she saw him put his arm round Daisy and bend down his head to hers. The gay visitors were still at Melbourne, but they had not come down yet to breakfast that morning.

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“Did you go to see your old woman yesterday?” Mr. Randolph said.

“Yes, papa.”

“Did you enjoy your visit?”

“Very much, papa.”

Mrs. Randolph’s head made a motion of impatience, which however those two did not see.

“How was that, Daisy? I do not comprehend in this instance the sources of pleasure.”

“Papa”—said Daisy hesitating—“I think I *gave* pleasure.”

She could not explain to him much more, but Mr. Randolph at least understood that. He gave Daisy another kiss, which was not disapproving, the child felt. So her breakfast was extremely happy.

She had a new plan in her head now about Molly. She wanted to get established on the footing of a friend in that poor little house; and she thought she had better perhaps not confine her line of advance to the garden. After breakfast she sought the housekeeper’s room, and let Joanna know that she was in want of a nice little cake of some sort to carry to a poor creature who could make nor buy none. Daisy was a great favourite with Miss Underwood, especially ever since the night when she had been summoned in her night dress to tell the child about the words of the minister that day. Joanna never said “no” to Daisy if it was possible to say “yes;” nor considered anything a trouble that Daisy required. On this occasion, she promised that exactly what Daisy wanted should be in readiness by the afternoon; and having thus secured her arrangements Daisy went with a perfectly light heart to see what the morning was to bring forth.

“Daisy!” shouted Preston as she was going down the piazza steps,—“Daisy! where are you bound?”

“Out—” said Daisy, who was vaguely seeking the September sunshine.

“Well, ‘out’ is as good as anywhere. Wait till I get my hat. Come, Daisy!—we have business on hand.”

“What business?” said Daisy, as she was led along through the trees.

“Great business,” said Preston,—“only I shall want help, Daisy—I want a great deal of help. I cannot manage it alone. Wait till we get to a real good place for a talk.—Here, this will do. Now sit down.”

“How pretty it is to-day!” said Daisy.

For indeed the river opposite them looked a bright sheet of glass; and the hills were blue in the morning light, and the sunshine everywhere was delightsome. The beautiful trees of Melbourne waved overhead; American elms hung their branches towards the ground; lindens stood in masses of luxuriance; oaks and chestnuts spotted the rolling ground with their round heads; and English elms stood up great towers of green. The September sun on all this and on the well kept greensward; no wonder Daisy said it was pretty. But Preston was too full of his business.

“Now, Daisy, we have got a great deal to do!”

“Have we?” said Daisy.

“It is this. Aunt Felicia has determined that she will give a party in two or three weeks.”

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“A party! But I never have anything to do with parties—mamma’s parties—Preston.”

“No. But with this one I think you have.”

“How can I?” said Daisy. She was very pleasantly unconcerned as yet, and only enjoying the morning and Preston and the trees and the sunshine.

“Why, little Daisy, I have got to furnish part of the entertainment; and I can’t do it without you.”

Daisy looked now.

“Aunt Felicia wants me to get up some tableaux.”

“Some what?” said Daisy.

“Tableaux. Tableaux vivants. Pictures, Daisy; made with living people.”

“What do you mean, Preston?”

“Why we will choose some pictures, some of the prettiest pictures we can find; and then we will dress up people to represent all the figures, and place them just as the figures are grouped in the engraving; and then they look like a most beautiful large painted picture.”

“But pictures do not move?”

“No more do the people. They hold still and do not stir, any more than if they were not real.”

“I should think they would look like people though, and not like a picture,” said Daisy. “No matter how still you were to keep, I should never fancy you were painted.”

“No,” said Preston laughing; “but you do not understand. The room where the spectators are is darkened, and the lights for the picture are all set on one side, just as the light comes in the picture; and then it all looks just right. And the picture is seen behind a frame too, of the folding doors or something.”

Daisy sat looking at Preston, a little curious but not at all excited.

“So I shall want your help, Daisy.”

“About what?”

“First, to choose what pictures we will have. We must look over all the books of engravings in the house, and see what would do. Shall we go at it?”

Daisy consented. They repaired to the library and took position by a large portfolio of engravings.

"'Fortitude'! Capital!" cried Preston as he turned over the first sheet in the portfolio. "Capital, Daisy! That's for you. You would make an excellent 'Fortitude.'"

"I!—" said Daisy.

"Capital—couldn't be better. This is Sir Joshua Reynolds' 'Fortitude'—and you will do for it wonderfully well. You have half the look of it now. Only you must be a little more stern."

"Why must Fortitude look stern?" said Daisy.

"O, because she has hard work to do, I suppose."

"What is Fortitude, Preston?"

"O Daisy, Daisy! are you going through life like that? Why you'll turn all your play into work."

"Why?—But what *is* it?"

"Fortitude? Why it is, let me see,—it is the power of endurance."

"The power of bearing pain, Daisy," said Mr. Randolph, who was walking through the room.

"I do not think Fortitude ought to look stern."

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“The old gentleman thought so. I suppose he knew. You must, anyhow,—like the picture.”

“But Preston, how could I look like that? My dresses are not made so.”

“I hope not!” said Preston laughing. “But Daisy, we’ll get some of aunt Felicia’s riggings and feathers and set you out in style.”

“But you can’t put feathers on my head like those,” said Daisy. “They wouldn’t stay on. And I don’t see why Fortitude should be dressed in feathers.”

“Why it is the crest of her helmet, Daisy! Fortitude must have something strong about her, somewhere, and I suppose her head is as good a place as any. We’ll make a helmet for you. And I will make Dolce lie down at your feet for the lion.”

“You couldn’t, Preston.”

“I could make him do anything.” Dolce was Preston’s dog; a great shaggy St. Bernard.

“Well!—” said Daisy with a half sigh.

“I think you’ll make a beautiful Fortitude. Now let us see what next. That is for one.”

“How many pictures do you want?” said Daisy.

“O a good many. Plenty, or it wouldn’t be worth taking all the trouble, and shutting the people up in a dark room. ’Alfred in the neat-herd’s cottage’—getting a scolding for his burnt cakes. How splendid that would be if we could get Dr. Sandford to be Alfred!”

“Who would be that scolding old woman?”

“No matter, because we can’t get Dr. Sandford. We are not to have grown folks at all. It is a pity Ransom is not here. We shall have to get Alexander Fish—or Hamilton! Hamilton will do. He’s a good looking fellow.”

“You would do a great deal better,” said Daisy. “And Alexander would not do at all. He has not a bit the look of a king about him.”

“I must be that old man with the bundle of sticks on his head,” said Preston, who was however immensely flattered.

“But his beard?” said Daisy.

“O I’ll put that on. A false beard is easy. You won’t know me, Daisy. That will be an excellent picture. See that girl blowing the burnt cakes and making her face into a full moon!”

“Will you have her in the picture?”

“Certainly! Most assuredly.”

“But, who will you get to do that, Preston?”

“Nora Dinwiddie, I reckon.”

“Will *she* come?”

“We shall want all we can get. All Mrs. Stanfield’s young ones, and Mrs. Fish’s and Linwood’s and everybody. Now Daisy, here you are! This is the very thing.”

“For what?” said Daisy.

“Don’t you see? For you. This is Queen Esther before Ahasuerus—you know the story?”

“O yes!—when he stretched out the golden sceptre to her. She is fainting, isn’t she?”

“Exactly. You can do that glorious, because you have always a pair of pale cheeks on hand.”

“I?”—said Daisy again. “Do you want me to be two things?”

“A dozen things, perhaps. You must be Queen Esther at any rate. Nobody but you.”

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“And who will be Ahasuerus?”

“I don’t know. Hamilton Rush, I reckon; he’s a nice fellow.”

“O Preston, why don’t you be Ahasuerus?”

“I am manager, you know, Daisy; it won’t do for the manager to take the best pieces for himself. Ahasuerus is one of the best. See how handsome the dress is—and the attitude, and everything.”

“I don’t see where you will find the dresses,” said Daisy. “All those are robes of silk and velvet and fur; and then the jewels, Preston!”

“Nonsense, Daisy. Aunt Felicia will let us take all her stores of satins and velvets and feathers and jewellery too. It won’t hurt them to be looked at.”

“I think,” said Daisy slowly,—“I think I will not be Queen Esther.”

“Why not? don’t you like her looks?”

“O yes. *That’s* no matter; but I would rather somebody else would be it.”

“Why, little Daisy? You are the one; nobody can be Esther but you.”

“I think I will not,” said Daisy thoughtfully.

“What’s the matter, Daisy? You *must*. I want you for Esther and nobody else. What is the objection?”

“I would rather not,” said Daisy. “I don’t know Hamilton Rush much.”

This was said with extreme demureness, and Preston bit his lips almost till the blood came to prevent the smile which would have startled Daisy.

“You won’t know him at all when he is dressed and with his crown on. It’s all a play. You can imagine he is the real old Persian king, who looked so fiercely on the beautiful Jewess when she ventured unsummoned into his presence.”

“I could not stand like that,” said Daisy.

“Yes, you could. That’s easy. You are fainting in the arms of your attendants.”

“Who will the attendants be?”

“I don’t know. Who do you think?”

“I think I would rather not be in this picture,—” said Daisy.

“Yes, you will. I want you. It is too good to be given to somebody else. It is one of the prettiest pictures we shall have, I reckon.”

“Then you must be the king.”

“Well—we will see,” said Preston. “What comes next? ’Canute and his courtiers.’ That won’t do, because we could not have the sea in.”

“Nor the horse,” said Daisy.

“Not very well.—What a stupid collection of portraits! Nothing but portraits.”—

“There are fortune tellers.”

“That won’t do—not interest enough. There! here’s one. ’Little Red Riding-hood.’ That will be beautiful for you, Daisy.”

“But Preston, I mustn’t be everything.”

“Plenty more things coming. You don’t like Red Riding-hood? Then we will give it to Nora or Ella.”

“O like it,” said Daisy. “I like it much better than Esther—unless you will play Ahasuerus.”

“Well I will put you down for both of ’em.”

“But who’s to be anything else?”

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“Lots. Here.—Splendid! ‘Marie Antoinette’ going from the revolutionary tribunal—that will be capital.”

“Who will take that?” said Daisy.

“Let me see. I think—I think, Daisy, it must be Theresa Stanfield. She is a clever girl, and it must be a clever girl to do this.”

“But she will not look as old as she ought.”

“Yes she will, when she is dressed. I know who will be our dresser, too; Mrs. Sandford.”

“Will she?” said Daisy.

“Yes. She knows how, I know. You and I must go and give invitations, Daisy.”

“Mamma will send the invitations.”

“Yes, of course, to the party; but we have got to beat up recruits and get contributions for the tableaux. You and I must do that. I engaged to take all the trouble of the thing from aunt Felicia.”

“Contributions, Preston?”

“Of people, Daisy. People for the tableaux. We must have all we can muster.”

“I can’t see how you will make Theresa Stanfield look like that.”

“*I* cannot,” said Preston laughing,—“but Mrs. Sandford will do part and Theresa herself will do the other part. She will bring her face round, you will see. The thing is, who will be that ugly old woman who is looking at the queen with such eyes of coarse fury—I think I shall have to be that old woman.”

“You, Preston!” And Daisy went off into a fit of amusement. “Can you make your eyes look with coarse fury?”

“You shall see. That’s a good part. I should not like to trust it to anybody else. Alexander and Hamilton Rush will have to be the Queen’s guards—how we want Ransom. Charley Linwood is too small. There’s George, though.”

“What does that woman look at the queen so for?”

“Wants to see her head come down—which it did soon after.”

“Her head come down?”—

“It had come down pretty well then, when the proud, beautiful queen was exposed to the looks and insults of the rabble. But they wanted to see it come down on the scaffold.”

“What had she been doing, to make them hate her?”

“She had been a queen;—and they had made up their minds that nobody ought to be queen, or anything else but rabble; so her head must come off. A great many other heads came off; for the same reason.”

“Preston, I don’t think the poor would hate that kind of thing so, if the rich people behaved right.”

“How do you think rich people ought to behave?” said Preston gravely, turning over the engravings.

Daisy’s old puzzle came back on her; she was silent.

“Common people always hate the uncommon, Daisy. Now what next?—Ah! here is what will do. This is beautiful.”

“What is it?”

“Portia and Bassanio. He has just got that letter, you know.”

“What letter?”

“Why, Antonio’s letter. O don’t you know the story? Bassanio was Antonio’s friend, and —O dear, it is a long story, Daisy. You must read it.”

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“But what is the picture about?”

“This. Bassanio has just this minute been married to Portia,—the loveliest lady in all the world; that he knew of; and now comes a letter, just that minute, telling him that his dear friend Antonio is in great danger of being cut to pieces through the wickedness of a fellow that he had borrowed money from. And the money had been borrowed for Bassanio, to set him up for his courtship—so no wonder he feels rather bad.”

“Does she know?”

“No; she is just asking what is the matter. That will be a capital picture.”

“But you couldn’t stand and look like that,” said Daisy.

“I shall not,” said Preston, “but Hamilton Rush will. I shall give it to him. And—let me see—for Portia—that Fish girl cannot do it, she is not clever enough. It will have to be Theresa Stanfield.”

“I should like to see anybody look like *that*,” said Daisy.

“Well, you will. We shall have to go to another book of engravings.—Hollo! here you are again, Daisy. This will do for you exactly. Exactly!”

“What is it?”

“Why Daisy, these are two old Puritans; young ones, I mean, of course; and they are very fond of each other, you know, but somehow they don’t know it. Or one of them don’t, and he has been goose enough to come to ask Priscilla if she will be his friend’s wife. Of course she is astonished at him.”

“She does not look astonished.”

“No, that is because she is a Puritan. She takes it all quietly, only she says she has an objection to be this other man’s wife. And then John finds what a fool he is. That’s capital. You shall be Priscilla; you will do it and look it beautifully.”

“I do not think I want to be Priscilla,”—said Daisy slowly.

“Yes, you do. You will. It will make such a beautiful picture. I reckon Alexander Fish will make a good John Alden—he has nice curly hair.”

“So have you,” said Daisy; “and longer than Alexander’s, and more like the picture.”

“I am manager, Daisy. That wouldn’t do.”

“I shall not be in that picture if Alexander is the other one,” said Daisy.

“Well—we will see. But Daisy, it is only playing pictures, you know. It will not be Daisy and Alexander Fish—not at all—it will be Priscilla and John Alden.”

“*I* should think it was Alexander Fish,” said Daisy.

Preston laughed.

“But Preston, what is that word you said just now?—what is a Puritan?”

“I don’t know. I think you are one. I do not know another.”

“You said these were Puritans?”

“Yes, so they were. They were very good people, Daisy, that liked wearing plain dresses. We shall have to have a stuff dress made for you—I reckon you have not one of anything like a Puritan cut.”

“Then how am I a Puritan, Preston?”

“Sure enough. I mean that you would be one, if you got a chance. How many pictures have we chosen out?—Six? That is not half enough.”

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The search went on, through other books and portfolios. There was good store of them in Mr. Randolph's library, and Daisy and Preston were very busy the whole morning till luncheon time. After Daisy's dinner, however, her mind took up its former subject of interest. She went to Joanna, and was furnished with a nice little sponge cake and a basket of sickle pears for Molly Skelton. Daisy forgot all about tableaux. This was something better. She ordered the pony chaise and got ready for driving.

"Hollo, Daisy!" said Preston as she came out upon the piazza;—"what now?"

"I am going out."

"With me."

"No, I have business, Preston."

"So have I; a business that cannot wait, either. We must go and drum up our people for the tableaux, Daisy. We haven't much time to prepare, and lots of things to do."

"What?"

"First, arrange about the parts everybody is to take; and then the dresses, and then practising."

"Practising what, Preston?"

"Why, the pictures! We cannot do them at a dash, all right; we must drill, until every one knows exactly how to stand and how to look, and can do it well."

"And must the people come here to practise?"

"Of course. Where the pictures and the dresses are, you know. Aunt Felicia is to give us her sewing woman for as much time as we want her; and Mrs. Sandford must be here to see about all that; and we must know immediately whom we can have, and get them to come. We must go this afternoon, Daisy."

"Must I?"

"Certainly. You know—or you would know if you were not a Puritan, little Daisy, that I cannot do the business alone. You are Miss Randolph."

"Did the Puritans not know much?" inquired Daisy.

"Nothing—about the ways of the world."

Daisy looked at the pony chaise, at the blue hills, at her basket of pears; and yielding to what seemed necessity, gave up Molly for that day. She went with Preston, he on horseback, she in her pony chaise, and a very long afternoon's work they made of it. And they did not get through the work, either. But by dint of hearing the thing talked over, and seeing the great interest excited among the young folks, Daisy's mind grew pretty full of the pictures before the day was ended. It was so incomprehensible, how Theresa Stanfield could ever bring her merry, arch face into the grave proud endurance of the deposed French queen; it was so puzzling to imagine Hamilton Rush, a fine, good-humoured fellow, something older than Preston, transformed into the grand and awful figure of Ahasuerus; and Nora was so eager to know what part *she* could take; and Mrs. Sandford entered into the scheme with such utter good nature and evident competence to manage it. Ella Stanfield's eyes grew very wide open; and Mrs. Fish was full of curiosity, and the Linwoods were tumultuous.

"We shall have to tame those fellows down," Preston remarked as he and Daisy rode away from this last place,—"or they will upset everything. Why cannot people teach people to take things quietly!"

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“How much that little one wanted to be Red Riding-hood,” said Daisy.

“Yes. Little Malapert!”

“You will let her, won’t you?”

“I reckon I won’t. You are to be Red Riding-hood—unless,—I don’t know; perhaps that would be a good one to give Nora Dinwiddie. I shall see.”

That day was gone. The next day there was a great overhauling, by Preston and his mother and Daisy, of the stores of finery which Mrs. Randolph put at their disposal. Mrs. Randolph herself would have nothing to do with the arrangements; she held aloof from the bustle attending them; but facilities and materials she gave with unsparing hand. Daisy was very much amused. Mrs. Gary and Preston had a good deal of consultation over the finery, having at the same time the engravings spread out before them. Such stores of satin and lace robes, and velvet mantles, and fur wrappings and garnishings, and silken scarfs, and varieties of adornment old and new, were gathered into one room and displayed, that it almost tired Daisy to look at them. Nevertheless she was amused. And she was amused still more, when later in the day, after luncheon, Mrs. Sandford arrived and was taken up into the tiring room, as Preston called it. Here she examined the pictures and made a careful survey of the articles with which she must work to produce the desired effects. Some of the work was easy. There was an old cardinal, of beautiful red cloth, which doubtless would make up Red Riding-hood with very little trouble. There were beautiful plumes for Fortitude’s head; and Daisy began to wonder how she would look with their stately grace waving over her. Mrs. Sandford tried it. She arranged the plume on Daisy’s head; and with a turn or two of a dark cashmere scarf imitated beautifully the classic folds of the drapery in the picture. Then she put Daisy in the attitude of the figure; and by that time Daisy felt so strange that her face was stern and grave enough to need no admonishing. Preston clapped his hands.

“If you will only look like that, Daisy, in the tableau!”

“Look how?” said Daisy.

“Mrs. Sandford, did you ever see anything so perfect?”

“It is excellent,” said that lady.

“If they will all do as well, we shall be encored. But there is no dress here for Bassanio, Mrs. Sandford.”

“You would hardly expect your mother’s or your aunt’s wardrobe to furnish that.”

“Hardly. But I am sure uncle Randolph’s wardrobe would not do any better. It will have to be made.”

“I think I have something at home that will do—something that was used once for a kindred purpose. I think I can dress Bassanio—as far as the slashings are concerned. The cap and plume we can manage here—and I dare say your uncle has some of those old-fashioned long silk hose.”

“Did papa ever wear such things?” said Daisy.

“Portia will be easy,” said Preston, looking round the room.

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“Who is to be Portia?”

“Theresa Stanfield, I believe.”

“That will do very well, I should think. She is fair—suppose we dress her in this purple brocade.”

“Was Portia married in purple?” said Preston.

Mrs. Sandford laughed a good deal. “Well”—she said—“white if you like; but Theresa will look most like Portia if she wears this brocade. I do not believe white is *de rigueur* in her case. You know, she went from the casket scene to the altar. If she was like me, she did not venture to anticipate good fortune by putting on a bridal dress till she knew she would want it.”

“Perhaps that is correct,” said Preston.

“How come you to know so much about the dresses?” said the lady. “That is commonly supposed to be woman’s function.”

“I am general manager, Mrs. Sandford, and obliged to act out of character.”

“You seem to understand yourself very well. Priscilla!—we have no dress for her.”

“It will have to be made.”

“Yes. Who is there to make it?”

The seamstress was now summoned, and the orders were given for Priscilla’s dress, to be made to fit Daisy. It was very amusing, the strait-cut brown gown, the plain broad vandyke of white muslin, and etceteras that Mrs. Sandford insisted on.

“She will look the part extremely well. But are you going to give her nothing but Fortitude and Prudence, Preston? is Daisy to do nothing gayer?”

“Yes ma’am—she is to be the queen of the Persian king here—what is his name? Ahasuerus! She is Esther.”

Daisy opened her lips to say no, but Preston got her into his arms and softly put his hand upon her mouth before she could speak the word. The action was so coaxing and affectionate, that Daisy stood still, silent, with his arms round her.

“Queen Esther!” said Mrs. Sandford. “That will tax the utmost of our resources. Mrs. Randolph will lend us some jewels, I hope, or we cannot represent that old Eastern court.”

“Mrs. Randolph will lend us anything—and everything,” said Preston.

“Then we can make a beautiful tableau. I think Esther must be in white.”

“Yes ma’am—it will lend to the fainting effect.”

“And we must make her brilliant with jewels; and dress her attendants in colours, so as to set her off; but Esther must be a spot of brilliancy. Ahasuerus rich and heavy. This will be your finest tableau, if it is done well.”

“Alfred will not be bad,” said Preston.

“In another line. Your part will be easy, Daisy—you must have a pair of strong-armed handmaidens. What do you want Nora for, Preston?”

“Could she be one of them, Mrs. Sandford?”

“Yes,—if she can be impressed with the seriousness of the occasion; but the maids of the queen ought to be wholly in distress for their mistress, you know. She could be one of the princes in the tower, very nicely.”

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“Yes, capitally,” said Preston. “And—Mrs. Sandford—wouldn’t she make a good John Alden?”

“Daisy for Priscilla! Excellent!” said Mrs. Sandford. “If the two could keep their gravity, which I very much doubt.”

“Daisy can keep anything,” said Preston. “I will tutor Nora.”

“Well, I will help you as much as I can,” said the lady, “But, my boy, this business takes time! I had no notion I had been here so long. I must run.”

CHAPTER XIII.

As she made her escape one way, so did Daisy by another. When Preston came back from attending Mrs. Sandford to her carriage he could find nothing of his little co-worker. Daisy was gone.

In all haste and with a little self-reproach for having forgotten it, she had ordered her pony chaise; and then examined into the condition of her stores. The sponge cake was somewhat dry; the sickle pears wanted looking over. Part of them were past ripe. Indeed so many of them, that Daisy found her basket was no longer properly full, when these were culled out. She went to Joanna. Miss Underwood, soon made that all right with some nice late peaches; and Daisy thought with herself that sponge cake was very good a little dry and would probably not find severe criticism at Molly’s house. She got away without encountering her cousin, much to her satisfaction.

Molly was not in her garden. That had happened before. Daisy went in, looked at the flowers, and waited. The rose tree was flourishing; the geranium was looking splendid; with nothing around either of them that in the least suited their neighbourhood. So Daisy thought. If all the other plants—the ragged balsams and “creeping Charley” and the rest—could have been rooted up, then the geranium, and the rose would have shewn well together. However, Molly did not doubtless feel this want of suitability; to her the tall sunflower was no question a treasure and a beautiful plant. Would Molly come out!

It seemed as if she would not. No stir, and the closed house door looking forbidding and unhopeful. Daisy waited, and waited, and walked up and down the bit of a path, from the gate quite to the house door; in hopes that the sound of her feet upon the walk might be heard within. Daisy’s feet did not make much noise; but however that were, there was no stir of a sound anywhere else. Daisy was patient; not the less the afternoon was passing away and pretty far gone already, and it was the first of October now. The light did not last as long as it did a few months ago. Daisy was late. She must go soon, if she did not see Molly; and to go without seeing her was no part of

Daisy's plan. Perhaps Molly was sick. At any rate, the child's footsteps paused at the door of the poor little house, and her fingers knocked. She had never been inside of it yet, and what she saw of the outside was not in the least inviting. The little windows, lined

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with paper curtains to keep out sunlight and curious eyes, looked dismal; the weatherboards were unpainted; the little porch broken. Daisy did not like such things. But she knocked without a bit of fear or hesitation, notwithstanding all this. She was charged with work to do; so she felt; it was no matter what she might meet in the discharge of it. She had her message to carry, and she was full of compassionate love to the creature whose lot in life was so unlike her own. Daisy went straight on in her business.

Her knock got no answer, and still got none though, it was repeated and made more noticeable. Not a sign of an answer. Daisy softly tried the door then to see if it would open. There was no difficulty in that; she pushed it gently and gently stepped in.

It looked just like what she expected, though Daisy had not got accustomed yet to the conditions of such rooms. Just now, she hardly saw anything but Molly. Her eye wandering over the strange place, was presently caught by the cripple, sitting crouching in a corner of the room. It was all miserably desolate. The paper shields kept out the light of the sunbeams; and though the place was tolerably clean, it had a close, musty, disagreeable, shut-up smell. But all Daisy thought of at first was the cripple. She went a little towards her.

“How do you do, Molly?” her little soft voice said. Molly looked glum, and spoke never a word.

“I have been waiting to see you,” Daisy said, advancing a step nearer—“and you did not come out. I was afraid you were sick.”

One of Molly’s grunts came here. Daisy could not tell what it meant.

“*Are* you sick, Molly?”

“It’s me and not you”—said the cripple morosely.

“O I am sorry!” said Daisy tenderly. “I want to bring in something for you—”

She ran away for her basket. Coming back, she left the door open to let in the sweet air and sun.

“What is the matter with you, Molly?”

The cripple made no answer, not even a grunt; her eyes were fastened on the basket. Daisy lifted the cover and brought out her cake, wrapped in paper. As she unwrapped it and came up to Molly, she saw what she had never seen before that minute,—a smile

on the cripple's grum face. It was not grum now; it was lighted up with a smile, as her eyes dilated over the cake.

"I'll have some tea!" she said.

Daisy put the cake on the table and delivered a peach into Molly's hand. But she lifted her hand to the table and laid the peach there.

"I'll have some tea."

"Are you sick, Molly?" said Daisy again; for in spite of this declaration and in spite of her evident pleasure, Molly did not move.

"I'm aching all through."

"What is the matter?"

"Aching's the matter—rheumatiz. I'll have some tea."

"It's nice and warm out in the sun," Daisy suggested.

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“Can’t get there,” said Molly. “Can’t stir. I’m all aches all over.”

“How can you get tea, then, Molly? Your fire is quite out.”

“Ache and get it—” said the cripple grumly.

Daisy could not stand that. She at first thought of calling her groom to make a fire; but reflected that would be a hazardous proceeding. Molly perhaps, and most probably, would not allow it. If she would allow *her*, it would be a great step gained. Daisy’s heart was so fall of compassion she could not but try. There was a little bit of an iron stove in the room, and a tea-kettle, small to match, stood upon it; both cold of course.

“Where is there some wood, Molly?” said Daisy over the stove;—“some wood and kindling? I’ll try if I can make the fire for you, if you will let me, please.”

“In there—” said the cripple pointing.

Daisy looked, and saw nothing but an inner door. Not liking to multiply questions, for fear of Molly’s patience, she ventured to open the door. There was a sort of shed room, where Daisy found stores of everything she wanted. Evidently the neighbours provided so far for the poor creature, who could not provide for herself. Kindling was there in plenty, and small wood stacked. Daisy got her arms fall and came back to the stove. By using her eyes carefully she found the matches without asking anything, and made the fire, slowly but nicely; Molly meanwhile having reached up for her despised peach was making her teeth meet in it with no evidence of disapprobation. The fire snapped and kindled and began immediately to warm up the little stove. Daisy took the kettle and went into the same lumber shed to look for water. But though an empty tin pail stood there, the water in it was no more than a spoonful. Nothing else held any. Daisy looked out. A worn path in the grass shewed the way to the place where Molly filled her water pail—a, little basin of a spring at some distance from the house. Daisy followed the path to the spring, filled her pail and then her kettle, wondering much how Molly ever could crawl to the place in rainy weather; and then she came in triumphant and set the tea-kettle on the stove.

“I am very sorry you are sick, Molly,” said Daisy anew.

Molly only grunted; but she had finished her peach and sat there licking her fingers.

“Would you like to see Dr. Sandford? I could tell him.”

“No!”—said the poor thing decidedly.

“I’ll pray to the Lord Jesus to make you well.”

“Humph?”—said Molly, questioning.

“You know, he can do everything. He can make you well; and I hope he will.”

“He won’t make me well—” said Molly.

“He will make you happy, if you will pray to him.”

“Happy!” said Molly; as if it were a yet more impossible thing.

“O yes. Jesus makes everybody happy that loves him. He makes them good too, Molly; he forgives all their sins that they have done; and in heaven he will give them white robes to wear, and they will not do wrong things nor have any pain any more.”

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One of Molly's grunts came now; she did not understand this or could not believe. Daisy looked on, pitiful and very much perplexed.

"Molly, you have a great Friend in heaven," said the child; "don't you know it? Jesus loves you."

"H—n?"—said Molly again.

"Don't you know what he did, for you and me and everybody?"

Molly's head gave sign of ignorance. So Daisy sat down and told her. She told her the story at length; she painted the love of the few disciples, the enmity of the world, the things that infinite tenderness had done and borne for those who hated goodness and would not obey God. Molly listened, and Daisy talked; bow, she did not know nor Molly neither; but the good news was told in that poor little house; the unspeakable gift was made known. Seeing Molly's fixed eyes and rapt attention, Daisy went on at length and told all. The cripple's gaze never stirred all the while, nor stirred when the story came to an end. She still stared at Daisy. Well she might.

"Now Molly," said the child, "I have got a message for you."

"H—n?" said Molly, more softly.

"It is from the Lord Jesus. It is in his book. It is a message. The message is, that if you will believe in him and be his child, he will forgive you and love you; and then you will go to be with him in heaven."

"Me?" said Molly.

"Yes," said Daisy, nodding her little head with her eyes full of tears. "Yes, you will. Jesus will take you there, and you will wear a white robe and a crown of gold, and be with him."

Daisy paused, and Molly looked at her. How much of the truth got fair entrance into her mind, Daisy could not tell. But after a few minutes of pause, seeing that Daisy's lips did not open, Molly opened hers and bade her "Go on."

"I am afraid I haven't time to-day," said Daisy. "I'll bring my book next time and read you the words. Can you read, Molly?"

"Read? no!"—

Whether Molly knew what reading was, may be questioned.

“Molly,” said Daisy lowering her tone in her eagerness,—“would you like to learn to read yourself?—then, when I am not here, you could see it all in the book. Wouldn’t you like it?”

“Where’s books?” said the cripple.

“I will bring the book. And now I must go.”

For Daisy knew that a good while had passed; she did not know how long it was. Before going, however, she went to see about the fire in the stove. It was burnt down to a few coals; and the kettle was boiling. Daisy could not leave it so. She fetched more wood and put in, with a little more kindling; and then, leaving it all right, she was going to bid Molly good-bye, when she saw that the poor cripple’s head had sunk down on her arms. She looked in that position so forlorn, so lonely and miserable, that Daisy’s heart misgave her. She drew near.

“Molly—” said her sweet little voice, “would you like your tea now? the water is boiling.”

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Molly signified that she would.

“Would you like to have me make it?” said Daisy doubtfully, quite afraid of venturing too far or too fast. But she need not have been afraid. Molly only pointed with her finger to a wall cupboard and said as before,—“In there.”

The way was clear for Daisy, time or no time. She went to the cupboard. It was not hard to find the few things which Molly had in constant use. The tea-pot was there, and a paper of tea. Daisy made the tea, with a good deal of pleasure and wonder; set it to draw, and brought out Molly’s cup and saucer and plate and knife and spoon. A little sugar she found too; not much. She put these things on the low table which was made to fit Molly’s condition. She could have it before her as she sat on the floor.

“I don’t see any milk for your tea, Molly.”

“Milk? no. It’s all gone,” said Molly.

“I am sorry. You’ll have to take your tea without milk then. Here it is. I hope it is good.”

Daisy poured out a cup, set the sugar beside it, and cut slices of sponge cake. She was greatly pleased at being allowed to do it. Molly took it as a very natural thing, and Daisy sat down to enjoy the occasion a few minutes longer, and also to give such attentions as she could.

“Won’t you have some?” said Molly.

“No, I thank you. Mamma does not let me drink tea, except when I am sick.”

Molly had discharged her conscience, and gave herself now to her own enjoyment. One cup of tea was a mere circumstance; Daisy filled and refilled it; Molly swallowed the tea as if cupfuls had been mouthfuls. It was a subject of question to Daisy whether the poor creature had had any other meal that day; so eager she was, and so difficult to satisfy with the sponge cake. Slice after slice; and Daisy cut more, and put a tiny fresh pinch of tea into the tea-pot, and waited upon her with inexpressible tenderness and zeal. Molly exhausted the tea-pot and left but a small remnant of the cake. Daisy was struck with a sudden fear that she might have been neglected and really want things to eat. How could she find out?

“Where shall I put this, Molly?” she said, taking the plate with the morsel of cake. “Where does it go?”

“In there—” said Molly.

“Here?—or here?” touching the two doors of the cupboard.

“’Tother one.”

So Daisy opened the other door of the cupboard, just what she wanted to do. And there she saw indeed some remnants of food, but nothing more than remnants; a piece of dry bread and a cold muffin, with a small bit of boiled pork. Daisy took but a glance, and came away. The plate and cup and saucer she set in their place; bid good-bye to Molly, and ran out.

Time indeed! The sun was sending long slant bright beams against the cottage-windows and over the pony chaise, and the groom had got the pony’s head turned for home, evidently under the impression that Daisy was staying a long time. A little fearful of consequences if she got home after sundown, Daisy gathered up her reins and signified to Loupe that he was expected to move with some spirit.

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But Daisy was very happy. She was thoroughly at home now with Molly; she was fairly admitted within the house and welcome there; and already she had given comfort. She had almost done as Nora said; as near as possible she had taken tea with Molly. Besides, Daisy had found out what more to do for her. She thought of that poor cupboard with mixed feelings; not pity only; for next day she would bring supplies that were really needed. Some nice bread and butter—Daisy had seen no sign of butter,—-and some meat. Molly needed a friend to look after her wants, and Daisy now had the freedom of the house and could do it; and joyfully she resolved that she would do it, so long as her own stay at Melbourne should be prolonged. What if her getting home late should bring on a command that would put a stop to all this!

But nobody was on the piazza or in the library when she got home. Daisy went safely to her own room. There was June all ready to dress her; and making good speed, that business was finished and Daisy ready to go down to the dinner-table at the usual time.

CHAPTER XIV.

She was a little afraid of questions at the dinner-table; but it happened that the older people were interested about some matter of their own and she was not noticed at all. Except in a quiet way by Mr. Randolph, who picked out nuts for her; and Daisy took them and thought joyfully of carrying a testament to Molly's cottage and teaching her to read it. If she could do but that—Daisy thought she would be happy.

The evening was spent by her and Preston over engravings again. Some new ones were added to the stock already chosen for tableaux; and Preston debated with her very eagerly the various questions of characters and dresses. Daisy did not care how he arranged them, provided she only was not called upon to be Priscilla to Alexander Fish, or Esther to Hamilton Rush. "I will not, Preston—" she insisted quietly; and Preston was in difficulty; for as he truly said, it would not do to give himself all the best pieces.

The next day, after luncheon, a general conclave assembled, of all the young people, to determine the respective parts and hold a little rehearsal by way of beginning. Mrs. Sandford was there too, but no other grown person was admitted. Preston had certainly a troublesome and delicate office in his capacity of manager.

"What are you going to give me, Preston?" said Mrs. Stanfield's lively daughter, Theresa.

"You must be Portia."

"Portia? let me see—O that's lovely! How will you dress me, Mrs. Sandford? I must be very splendid—I have just been married, and I am worth any amount of splendour. Who's to be Bassanio?—"

“George Linwood, I think. He must have dark hair, you know.”

“What are wigs good for?” said Theresa. “But he has nothing to do but to hold the letter and throw himself backward—he’s surprised, you know, and people don’t stand straight when they are surprised. Only that, and to look at Portia. I guess he can do it. Once fix him and he’ll stay—that’s one thing. How will you dress Portia, Mrs. Sandford? Ah, let me dress her!”

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“Not at all; you must be amenable to authority. Miss Stanfield, like everybody else.”

“But what will you put on her, Mrs. Sandford? The dress is Portia.”

“No, by no means; you must look with a very delicate expression, Miss Theresa. Your face will be the picture.”

“My face will depend on my dress, I know. What will it be, Mrs. Sandford?”

“I will give you a very heavy and rich purple brocade.”

“Jewels?”

“Of course. Mrs. Randolph lets us have whatever we want.”

“That will do!” said Theresa, clapping her hands softly. “I am made up. What are you going to do with Frederica?”

“She has a great part. She must be Marie Antoinette going from the revolutionary tribunal.”

“De la Roche’s picture!” said Theresa.

“She’s not dressed at all”—remarked Frederica coldly looking at the engraving.

“Marie Antoinette needed no dress, you know,” Theresa answered.

“But she isn’t handsome there.”

“You will be standing for her,” said Mrs. Sandford. “The attitude is very striking, in its proud, indignant impassiveness. You will do that well. I must dress your hair carefully, but you have just the right hair and plenty of it.”

“Don’t she flatter her!” whispered Theresa to Preston;—then aloud, “How will you make up the rest of the tableau, Preston?”

“I am going to be that old cross-eyed woman—Alexander will be one of the guards—-George Linwood another, I think. Hamilton Rush must shake his fist at the queen over my head; and Theresa, you must be this nice little French girl, looking at her unfortunate sovereign with weeping eyes. Can you get a tear on your cheek?”

“Might take an uncommon strong spoonful of mustard—” said Theresa—“I suppose that would do it. But you are not going to let the spectators come so near as to see drops of tears, I hope?”

“No matter—your eyes and whole expression would be affected by the mustard; it would tell, even at a distance.”

When they got through laughing, some one asked, “What is Daisy to be?”

“O, she is to be Priscilla here—I thought nobody but Daisy would care about being a Puritan; but it is her chosen character.”

“It’ll be a pretty tableau,” said Theresa.

“And what am I to be, Preston?” said Nora.

“You are to be several things. You and Ella must be the two young princes in the tower.”

“What tower?” said Nora.

There was another general laugh, and then Daisy, who was well at home in English history, pulled her little friend aside to whisper to her the story and shew her the picture.

“What are those men going to do?” said Nora.

“They are going to kill the little princes. They have got a featherbed or something there, and they are going to smother them while they are asleep.”

“But I don’t want the featherbed on top of me!” said Nora.

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“No, no,—it is not to come down on you; but that is the picture; they will hold it just so; it will not come down.”

“But suppose they should let it fall?”

“They will not let it fall. The picture is to have it held just so, as if they were going to smother the poor little princes the next minute.”

“I think it is a horrid picture!” said Nora.

“But it will only last a little while. All you will have to do will be to make believe you are asleep.”

“I don’t want to make believe I am asleep. I would rather have my eyes open. What else am I going to be, Daisy?”

“Preston will tell. I believe—you are to be one of Queen Esther’s women, to hold her up when she fainted, you know.”

“Let me see. Where is it?”

Daisy obtained the picture. Nora examined it critically.

“I would like to be the king, he is so handsome. Who will be the queen?”

“I don’t know yet,” said Daisy.

“Are you going to have any part where you will be dressed up?”

“We shall have to be dressed for them all. We cannot wear our own dresses, you know; it would not be a picture.”

“But, I mean, are you going to be dressed up with nice things?—not like this.”

“This will be dressed up,” said Daisy; “she will be very nicely dressed—to be one of the queen’s ladies, you know.”

“Daisy! Daisy!—” was now called from the larger group of counsel-takers, Daisy and Nora having separated themselves for their private discourse. “Daisy! look here—come here! see what you are to be. You are to be an angel.”

“You are to be an angel, Daisy,” Theresa repeated,—“with wonderful wings made of gauze on a light frame of whalebone.”

Daisy came near, looking very attentive; if she felt any more she did not shew it in her face.

“Daisy, you will do it delightfully,” said Mrs. Sandford. “Come and look. It is this beautiful picture of the Game of Life.”

“What is it, ma’am?” said Daisy.

“These two figures, you see, are playing a game of chess. The stake they are playing for, is this young man’s soul; he is one of the players, and this other player is the evil one. The arch-fiend thinks he has got a good move; the young man is very serious but perplexed; and there stands his guardian angel watching how the game will go.”

Daisy looked at the picture in silence of astonishment. It seemed to her impossible that anybody could play at such a subject as that.

“Whom will you have for the fiend, Preston?” the lady went on.

“I will do it myself, ma’am, I think.”

Daisy’s “Oh no, Preston!”—brought down such a shower of laughter on all sides, that she retreated into herself a little further than ever. They pursued the subject for a while, discussing the parts and the making of the angel’s wings; deciding that Daisy would do excellently well for the angel and would look the part remarkably.

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“She has a good deal that sort of expression in ordinary times,” said Mrs. Sandford—-“without the sadness; and that she can assume, I day say.”

“I would rather not do it—” Daisy was heard to say very gently but very soberly. There was another laugh.

“Do what, Daisy? assume a look of sadness?” said Preston.

“I would rather not be the angel.”

“Nobody else could do it so well,” said Mrs. Sandford. “You are the very one to do it. It will be admirable.”

“*I* should like to be the angel—” murmured Nora, low enough to have no one’s attention but Daisy’s. The rest were agreeing that the picture would be excellent and had just the right performers assigned to it. Daisy was puzzled. It seemed to her that Nora had a general desire for everything.

“Ella will be one of the princes in the tower,” Preston went on. “Nora will be Red Riding-Hood.”

“I won’t be Red Riding Hood—” said Nora.

“Why not? Hoity, toity!”

“It isn’t pretty. And it has no pretty dress.”

“Why, it is beautiful,” said Mrs. Sandford; “and the dress is to be made with an exquisite red cashmere cardinal of Mrs. Randolph’s. You will make the best Red Riding-Hood here. Though Daisy would be more like the lamb the wolf was after,”—continued the lady appealing to the manager; “and you might change. Who is to be queen Esther? Nora would do that well—with her black eyes and hair—she is more of a Jewess than any other of them.”

“Esther is fainting,” said Preston. “Daisy’s paleness will suit that best. Nora could not look faint.”

“Yes, I could,” said that damsel promptly.

“You shall blow the cakes that Alfred has let burn,” said Preston. “Capital! Look here, Nora. You shall be that girl taking up the burnt cakes and blowing to cool them; and you may look as fierce as you like. You will get great applause if you do that part well. Eloise is going to be the scolding old woman. She and I divide the old women between us.”

“Too bad, Preston!” said Mrs. Sandford laughing. “What else are you going to be?”

“I am going to be one of those fellows coming to murder the little princes.”

“Who is Bassanio?”

“Hamilton says he will undertake that. George declines.”

“Suppose we do some work, instead of so much talking,” said the former person; who had hitherto been a very quiet spectator and listener. “Let us have a little practice. We shall want a good deal before we get through.”

All agreed; agreed also that something in the shape of artistic draperies was needed for the practice. “It helps”—as Hamilton Rush remarked. So Daisy went to desire the attendance of June with all the scarfs, mantles and shawls which, could be gathered together. As Daisy went, she thought that she did not wish Nora to be queen Esther; she was glad Preston was firm about that.

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The practising of Bassanio and Portia was so very amusing that she fairly forgot herself in laughter. So did everybody else; except Mrs. Sandford, who was intent upon draperies, and Preston whose hands held a burden of responsibility. Hamilton was a quiet fellow enough in ordinary; but now nobody was more ready for all the life of the play. He threw himself back into an attitude of irresolution and perplexity, with the letter in his hand which had brought the fatal news; that is, it was the make-believe letter, though it was in reality only the New York Evening Post. And Daisy thought his attitude was very absurd; but they all declared it was admirable and exactly copied from the engraving. He threw himself into all this in a moment, and was Bassanio at once; but Theresa was much too well disposed to laugh to imitate his example. And then they all laughed at Theresa, who instead of looking grave and inquiring, as Portia should, at her lord's unusual action and appearance, flung herself into position and out of position with a mirthfulness of behaviour wholly inconsistent with the character she was to personify. How they all laughed!

"What is it, Daisy?" whispered Nora.

"Why, he has got a letter,"—said Daisy.

"Is that newspaper the letter?"

"Make believe it is," said Daisy.

"But what are they doing!"

"Why, this man, Bassanio, has just got a letter that says his dearest friend is going to be killed, because he owes money that he cannot pay; and as the money was borrowed for his own sake, of course he feels very badly about it."

"But people are not killed because they cannot pay money," said Nora. "I have seen people come to papa for money, and they didn't do anything to him because he hadn't it."

"No, but—those were different times," said Daisy—"and Bassanio lived in a different country. His friend owed money to a dreadful man, who was going to cut out two pounds of his flesh to pay for it. So of course that would kill him."

"O, look at Theresa now!" said Nora.

The young lady had brought her muscles into order; and being clever enough in her merry way, she had taken the look of the character and was giving it admirably. It was hardly Theresa; her moveable face was composed to such an expression of simple inquiry and interest and affectionate concern. The spectators applauded eagerly; but Nora whispered,

“What does she look like that, for?”

“Why, it’s the picture,” said Daisy. “But what does she *look* so for?”

“She is Bassanio’s wife—they have just got married; and she looks so because he looks so, I suppose. She does not know what is in the letter.”

“Is he going to tell her?”

“Not in the picture—” said Daisy, feeling a little amused at Nora’s simplicity. “He did tell her in the story.”

“But why don’t we have all the story?” insisted Nora.

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“O, these are only pictures, you know; that is all; people dressed up to look like pictures.”

“They don’t look like pictures a bit, *I* think,” said Nora; “they look just like people.”

Daisy thought so too, but had some faith in Preston’s and Mrs. Sandford’s powers of transforming and mystifying the present very natural appearance of the performers. However, she was beginning to be of the opinion that it was good fun even now.

“Now, Daisy,—come, we must practise putting *you* in position,” said Mrs. Sandford. “We will take something easy first—what shall it be?—Come! we will try Priscilla’s courtship. Where is your John Alden, Preston?”

Preston quietly moved forward Alexander Fish and seated him. Daisy began to grow warm with trepidation.

“You must let your hair grow, Sandie—and comb out your long curls into your neck; so,—do you see? And you will have to have a dress as much as Priscilla. This tableau will be all in the dress, Mrs. Sandford.”

“We will have it. That is easy.”

“Now, Alexander, look here, at the picture. Take that attitude as nearly as you can, and I will stroke you into order.—That is pretty well,—lean over a little more with that elbow on your knee,—you must be very much in earnest.”

“What am I doing?” said Alexander, breaking from his prescribed attitude to turn round and face the company.

“You are making love to Priscilla; but the joke is, you have been persuaded to do it for somebody else, when all the time you would like to do it for yourself.”

“I wouldn’t be such a gumph as that!” muttered Alexander as he fell back into position. “Who am I, to begin with?”

“A highly respectable old Puritan. The lady was surprised at him and he came to his senses, but that is not in the picture. Now Daisy—take that chair—a little nearer;—you are to have your hand on your spinning wheel, you know; I have got a dear little old spinning wheel at home for you, that was used by my grandmother. You must look at Alexander a little severely, for he is doing what you did not expect of him, and you think he ought to know better. That attitude is very good. But you must look at him, Daisy! Don’t let your eyes go down.”

There was a decided disposition to laugh among the company looking on, which might have been fatal to the Puritan picture had not Preston and Mrs. Sandford energetically

crushed it. Happily Daisy was too much occupied with the difficulty of her own immediate situation to discover how the bystanders were affected; she did not know what was the effect of her pink little cheeks and very demure down-cast eyes. In fact Daisy had gone to take her place in the picture with something scarcely less than horror; only induced to do it, by her greater horror of making a fuss and so shewing the feeling which she knew would be laughed at if shewn. She shewed it now, poor child; how could she help it? she shewed it by her unusually tinged cheeks and by her persistent down-looking eyes. It was very difficult indeed to help it; for if she ventured to look at Alexander she caught impertinent little winks,—most unlike John Alden or any Puritan,—which he could execute with impunity because his face was mostly turned from the audience; but which Daisy took in full.

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“Lift your eyes, Daisy! your eyes! Priscilla was too much astonished not to look at her lover. You may be even a little indignant, if you choose. I am certain she was.”

Poor Daisy—it was a piece of the fortitude that belonged to her—thus urged, did raise her eyes and bent upon her winking coadjutor a look so severe in its childish distaste and disapproval that there was a unanimous shout of applause. “Capital, Daisy!—-capital!” cried Preston. “If you only look it like that, we shall do admirably. It will be a tableau indeed. There, get up—you shall not practise any more just now.”

“It will be very fine,” said Mrs. Sandford.

“Daisy, I did not think you were such an actress,” said Theresa.

“It would have overset *me*, if I had been John Alden—” remarked Hamilton Rush.

Daisy withdrew into the background as fast as possible, and as far as possible from Alexander.

“Do you like to do it, Daisy?” whispered Nora.

“No.”

“Are you going to have a handsome dress for that?”

“No.”

“What sort, then?”

“Like the picture.”

“Well—what is that?”

“Brown, with a white vandyke.”

“Vandyke? what is a vandyke?”

“Hush,” said Daisy; “let us look.”

Frederica Fish was to personify Lady Jane Grey, at the moment when the nobles of her family and party knelt before her to offer her the crown. As Frederica was a fair, handsome girl, without much animation, this part suited her; she had only to be dressed and sit still. Mrs. Sandford threw some rich draperies round her figure, and twisted a silk scarf about the back of her head; and the children exclaimed at the effect produced. That was to be a rich picture, for of course the kneeling nobles were to be in

costly and picturesque attire; and a crown was to be borne on a cushion before them. A book did duty for it just now, on a couch pillow.

“That is what I should like—” said Nora. “I want to be dressed and look so.”

“You will be dressed to be one of the queen’s women in Esther and Ahasuerus, you know.”

“But the queen will be dressed more—won’t she?”

“Yes, I suppose she will.”

“I should like to be the queen; that is what I should like to be.”

Daisy made no answer. She thought she would rather Nora should *not* be the queen.

“Doesn’t she look beautiful?” Nora went on, referring again to Frederica.

Which Frederica did. The tableau was quite pretty, even partially dressed and in this off hand way as it was.

Next Mrs. Sandford insisted on dressing Daisy as Fortitude. She had seen perhaps a little of the child’s discomposure, and wished to make her forget it. In this tableau Daisy would be quite alone; so she was not displeased to let the lady do what she chose with her. She stood patiently, while Mrs. Sandford wound a long shawl skilfully around her, bringing it into beautiful folds like those in Sir Joshua Reynolds’ painting; then she put a boy’s cap, turned the wrong way, on her head, to do duty for a helmet, and fixed a nodding plume of feathers in it. Daisy then was placed in the attitude of the picture, and the whole little assembly shouted with delight.

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“It will do, Mrs. Sandford,” said Preston.

“Isn’t it pretty?” said the lady.

“And Daisy does it admirably,” said Theresa. “You are a fairy at dressing, Mrs. Sandford; your fingers are better than a fairy’s wand. I wish you were my godmother; I shouldn’t despair to ride yet in a coach and six. There are plenty of pumpkins in a field near our house—and plenty of rats in the house itself. O, Mrs. Sandford! let us have Cinderella!”

“What, for a tableau?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You must ask the manager. I do not know anything about that.”

Preston and Theresa and Hamilton and Alexander now went into an eager discussion of this question, and before it was settled the party discovered that it was time to break up.

CHAPTER XV.

“Well Daisy,” said Mr. Randolph that evening, “how do you like your new play that you are all so busy about?”

“I like it pretty well, papa.”

“Only pretty well! Is that the most you can say of it? I understood that it was supposed to be an amusement of a much more positive character.”

“Papa, it is amusing—but it has its disagreeablenesses.”

“Has it? What can they be? Or has everything pleasant its dark side?”

“I don’t know, papa.”

“What makes the shadows in this instance?”

It seemed not just easy for Daisy to tell, for her father saw that she looked puzzled how to answer.

“Papa, I think it is because people do not behave perfectly well.”

It was quite impossible for Mr. Randolph to help bursting into a laugh at this; but he put his arms round Daisy and kissed her very affectionately at the same time.

“How does their ill behaviour affect your pleasure, Daisy?”

“Papa—you know I have to play with them.”

“Yes, I understand that. What do they do?”

“It isn’t *they*, papa. It is only Alexander Fish—or at least it is he most.”

“What does *he* do?”

“Papa—we are in a tableau together.”

“Yes. You and he?”

“Yes, papa. And it is very disagreeable.”

“Pray how, Daisy?” said Mr. Randolph, commanding his features with some difficulty. “What is the tableau?”

“Papa, you know the story of Priscilla?”

“I do not think I do. What Priscilla?”

“Priscilla and John Alden. It is in a book of engravings.”

“O!—the courtship of Miles Standish?”

“Miles Standish was his friend, papa.”

“Yes, I know now. And are you Priscilla?”

“Yes, papa.”

“And who is Miles Standish?”

“O, nobody; he is not in the picture; it is John Alden.”

“I think I remember. Who is John Alden, then?”

“Papa, they have put Alexander Fish in, because he has long curling hair; but I think Preston’s hair would do a great deal better.”

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“Preston is under some obligation to the others, I suppose, because he is manager. But how does Alexander Fish abuse his privileges?”

“Papa,” said Daisy unwillingly,—“his face is turned away from the other people, so that nobody can see it but me;—and he winks.”

Daisy brought out the last word with an accession of gravity impossible fully to describe. Mr. Randolph’s mouth twitched; he bent his head down upon Daisy’s, that she might not see it.

“That is very rude of him, Daisy,” he said.

“Papa,” said Daisy, who did not relish the subject, and chose a departure,—“what is a *Puritan*?”

“A Puritan!”

“Yes, papa. What is it? Priscilla was a Puritan.”

“That was a name given to a class of people in England a long time ago.”

“What did it mean?”

“They were a stiff set of people, Daisy; good enough people in their way, no doubt, but very absurd in it also.”

“What did they do, papa?”

“Concluded to do without whatever is graceful and beautiful and pleasant, in dress or arts or manners. The more disagreeable they made life, they thought it was the better.”

“Why were they called that name? Were they purer than other people?”

“I believe they thought themselves so.”

“I think they look nice in the picture,” said Daisy meditatively. “Are there any Puritans now, papa?”

“There are people that are called Puritans. It is a term apt to be applied to people that are stiff in their religion.”

“Papa,” said Daisy when an interval of five minutes had passed,—“I do not see how people can be stiff in their religion.”

“Don’t you. Why not?”

“Papa, I do not see how it can be *stiff*, to love God and do what he says.”

“No—” said Mr. Randolph; “but people can be stiff in ways of their own devising.”

“Ways that are not in the Bible, papa?”

“Well—yes.”

“But papa, it cannot be *stiff*, to do what God says we must do?”

“No,—of course not,” said Mr. Randolph getting up.

He left her, and Daisy sat meditating; then with a glad heart ran off and ordered her pony chaise. If tableaux were to be the order of the day every afternoon, she must go to see Molly in the morning. This time she had a good deal to carry and to get ready. Molly was in want of bread. A nice little loaf, fresh baked, was supplied by Joanna, along with some cold rolls.

“She will like those, I dare say,” said Daisy. “I dare say she never saw rolls in her life before. Now she wants some meat, Joanna. There was nothing but a little end of cold pork on the dish in her cupboard.”

“Why I wonder who cooks for the poor wretch?” said Joanna.

“I think she cooks for herself, because she has a stove, and I saw iron things and pots to cook with. But she can’t do much, Joanna, and I don’t believe she knows how.”

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“Sick, is she too?” said Joanna.

“Sick with rheumatism, so that she did not like to stir.”

“I guess I must go take a look at her; but maybe she mightn’t let me. Well, Miss Daisy, the way will be for you to tell me what she wants, if you can find out. She must have neighbours, though, that take care of her.”

“We are her neighbours,” said Daisy.

Joanna looked, a look of great complacency and some wonder, at the child; and packed forthwith into Daisy’s basket the half of a cold chicken and a broken peach pie. A bottle of milk Daisy particularly desired, and a little butter; and she set off at last, happier than a queen—Esther or any other—to go to Molly with her supplies.

She found not much improvement in the state of affairs. Molly was gathered up on her hearth near the stove, in which she had made a fire; but it did not appear, for all that Daisy could see, that anything else had been done or any breakfast eaten that morning. The cripple seemed to be in a down-hearted and hopeless state of mind; and no great wonder.

“Molly, would you like another cup of tea?” said her little friend.

“Yes, it’s in there. You fix it,”—said the poor woman, pointing as before to the cupboard, and evidently comforted by Daisy’s presence and proposal. Daisy could hear it in the tone of her voice. So, greatly pleased herself, Daisy went to work in Molly’s house just as if she was at home. She fetched water in the kettle again and made up the fire. While that was getting ready, she set the table for breakfast. The only table that Molly could use was a piece of board nailed on a chair. On this Daisy put her plate and cup and saucer, and with secret glee arranged the cold chicken and loaf of bread. For the cupboard, as she saw, was as empty as she had found it two days before. What Molly had lived on in the mean time was simply a mystery to Daisy. To be sure, the end of cold pork was gone, the remains of the cake had disappeared, and nothing was left of the peaches but the stones. The tea-kettle did not boil for a time; and Daisy looked uneasily at Molly’s cup and saucer and plate meanwhile. They had not been washed, Daisy could not guess for how long; certainly no water had touched them since the tea of two nights ago, for the cake crumbs and peach stones told the tale. Daisy looked at them with a great feeling of discomfort. She could not bear to see them so; they ought to be washed; but Daisy disliked the idea of touching them for that purpose more than I can make you understand. In all matters of nicety and cleanliness Daisy was notional; nothing suited her but the most fastidious particularity. It had been a trial to her to bring those unwashed things from the cupboard. Now she sat and looked at them; uneasily debating what she should do. It was not comfortable, that Molly should take her breakfast off them as they were; and Molly was miserable herself and would do nothing

to mend matters. And then—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you,”—As soon as that came fairly into Daisy’s head, she knew what she ought to be about. Not without an inward sigh, she gathered up the pieces again.

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“What you going to do?” said Molly.

“I’ll bring them back,” said Daisy. “I will be ready directly. The water is not boiling yet.”

For she saw that Molly was jealously eager for the hoped-for cup of tea. She carried the things out into the shed, and there looked in vain for any dish or vessel to wash them in. How could it be that Molly managed? Daisy was fain to fetch a little bowl of water and wash the crockery with her fingers, and then fetch another bowl of water to rinse it. There was no napkin to be seen. She left the things to drain as they could, and went to the spring to wash her own fingers; rejoicing in the purifying properties of the sweet element. All this took some time, but Daisy carried in her clean dishes with a satisfied heart.

“It’s bi’lin’,—” said Molly as soon as she entered.

So the little kettle was. Daisy made tea, and prepared Molly’s table with a little piece of butter and the bottle of milk. And no little girl making an entertainment for herself with tiny china cups and tea-set, ever had such satisfaction in it. Twenty dinners at home could not have given Daisy so much pleasure, as she had now to see the poor cripple look at her unwonted luxuries and then to see her taste them. Yet Molly said almost nothing; but the grunt of new expression with which she set down the bottle of milk the first time, went all through and through Daisy’s heart with delight. Molly drank tea and spread her bread with butter, and Daisy noticed her turning over her slice of bread to examine the texture of it; and a quieter, soothed, less miserable look, spread itself over her wrinkled features. They were not wrinkled with age; yet it was a lined and seamed face generally, from the working of unhappy and morose feelings.

“Ain’t it good!—” was Molly’s single word of comment as she finished her meal. Then she sat back and watched Daisy putting all the things nicely away. She looked hard at her.

“What you fetch them things here for?” she broke out suddenly. “H—n?”

The grunt with which her question concluded was so earnest in its demand of an answer, that Daisy stopped.

“Why I like to do it, Molly,” she said. Then seeing the intent eyes with which the poor creature was examining her, Daisy added,—“I like to do it; because Jesus loves you.”

“H—n?”—said Molly, very much at a loss what this might mean, and very eager to know. Daisy stood still, with the bread in her hands.

“Don’t you know, Molly?” she said. “He does. It is Jesus, that I told you about. He loves you, and he came and died for you, that he might make you good and save you from your sins; and he loves you now, up in heaven.”

“What’s that?” said Molly.

“Heaven? that is where God lives, and the angels, and good people.”

“There ain’t none,” said Molly.

“What?”

“There ain’t no good people.”

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“O yes, there are. When they are washed in Jesus’ blood, then they are good. He will take away all their sins.”

Molly was silent for a moment and Daisy resumed her work of putting things away; but as she took the peach pie in her hands Molly burst out again.

“What you bring them things here for?”

Daisy stopped again.

“I think it is because Jesus is my king,” she said, “and I love him. And I love what he loves, and so I love you, Molly.”

Daisy looked very childish and very wise, as she said this; but over Molly’s face there came a great softening change. The wrinkles seemed to disappear; she gazed at Daisy steadily as if trying to find out what it all meant: and when the eyes presently were cast down, Daisy almost thought there was a little moisture about them. She had no further interruption in her work. The dishes were all put away, and then she brought her book. Daisy had her Bible with her this time, that she might give Molly more than her own words. And Molly she found as ready to listen as could be desired. And she was persistent in desiring to hear only of that incredible Friend of whom Daisy had told her. That name she wanted; wherever that name came in, Molly sat silent and attentive; if the narrative lost it, she immediately quickened Daisy’s memory to the knowledge of the fact that nothing else would do. At last Daisy proposed that Molly herself should learn to read. Molly stared very hopelessly at first; but after getting more accustomed to the idea and hearing from Daisy that it was by no means an impossible thing, and further that if she could learn to read, the Bible would be forthcoming for her own use, she took up the notion with an eagerness far exceeding all that Daisy had hoped for. She said very little about it; nevertheless it was plain that a root of hope had struck down into the creature’s heart. Daisy taught her two letters, A and B, and then was obliged to go home.

It was quite time, for little Daisy was tired. She was not accustomed to making fires and boiling kettles, neither to setting tables and washing dishes. Yet it was not merely, nor so much, the bodily exertion she had made, as the mind work. The excitement both of pleasure and responsibility and eager desire. Altogether, Daisy was tired; and sat back in her chaise letting the reins hang languidly in her hands and Loupe go how he would. But Loupe judged it was best to get home and have some refreshment, so he bestirred himself. Daisy had time to lie down a little while before her dinner; nevertheless she was languid and pale, and disposed to take all the rest of the day very quietly.

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The rest of the day was of course devoted to the tableaux. The little company had got warmed to the subject pretty well at the first meeting; they all came together this fine afternoon with spirits in tone for business. And Daisy, though she was tired, presently found her own interest drawn in. She was not called upon immediately to take any active part; she perched herself in the corner of a couch and looked on and listened. Thither came Nora Dinwiddie, too much excited to sit down, and stood by Daisy's elbow. They had been practising "Alfred in the neat-herd's cottage;" Nora had been called upon to be the girl blowing the burnt cakes; she had done it, and everybody had laughed, but the little lady was not pleased.

"I know I look horrid!" she said to Daisy,—"puffing out my cheeks till they are like a pair of soapbubbles!"

"But soapbubbles are not that colour," said Daisy. "Your cheeks didn't look like soapbubbles."

"Yes, they did. They looked horrid, I know."

"But the picture is so," urged Daisy quietly. "You want to be like the picture."

"No I don't. Not that picture. I would like to be something handsome. I don't like that picture."

Daisy was silent, and Nora pouted.

"What are you going to be, Daisy?" said Ella Stanfield.

"I am going to be Priscilla. No, I don't know whether I am or not; but I am going to be Fortitude, I believe."

"That's pretty," said Ella. "What else? O, you are going to be the angel, aren't you? I wonder if that will be pretty. It will be queer. Nora, shall you like to be one of the little princes in the Tower? with that featherbed coming over us? But we shall not see it, I suppose, because our eyes have got to be shut; but I shall be afraid every minute they will let it fall on us."

"My eyes won't be shut," said Nora.

"O, they must. You know, the little princes were asleep, when the men came to kill them. Your eyes must be shut and you must be asleep. O, what are they doing to Theresa?"

"Dressing her—" said Daisy.

"What is she going to be?"

“Portia—” said Daisy.

“Isn’t that beautiful!—” said Nora with a deep breath. “O, what a splen—did dress! How rich-looking it is. What a lovely purple. O, how beautiful Theresa is in it. O—! Isn’t that splen—did?”

A very prolonged, though low, breath of admiring wonder testified to the impressive power, upon the children at least, of Theresa’s new habiliments. The purple brocade was upon her; its full draperies swept the ground in gorgeous colouring; a necklace of cameos was bound with great effect upon her hair; and on the arms, which were half bare, Mrs. Sandford was clasping gold and glittering jewels. Theresa threw herself slightly back in her prescribed attitude, laid her arms lightly across each other, and turned her head with a very saucy air towards the companion figure, supposed to be Bassanio. All the others laughed and clapped her.

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“Not that, Theresa, not that; you have got the wrong picture. You are going with the Prince of Arragon now, to the caskets; and you ought to be anxiously asking Bassanio about his letter.”

Theresa changed attitude and expression on the instant; bent slightly forward, lost her sauciness, and laid her hand upon Bassanio’s arm with a grave, tender look of inquiry. They all shouted again.

“Bravo, Theresa! capital!” said Preston.

“Hamilton, can you act up to that?” said Mrs. Sandford.

“Wait till I get my robes on, ma’am. I can make believe a great deal easier when I am under the persuasion that it is not me—Hamilton Rush.”

“I’d like to see Frederica do as well as that,” said Alexander Fish, in a fit of brotherly concern.

“Let us try her—” said good-natured Mrs. Sandford. Mrs. Sandford certainly was good-natured, for she had all the dressing to do. She did it well, and very patiently.

“There,” said Nora, when Ella had left the couch to go to her sister,—“that is what I like. Didn’t she look beautiful, Daisy?”

“Her dress looked beautiful—” said Daisy.

“Well, of course; and that made *her* look beautiful. Daisy, I wish I could have a nice part. I would like to be the queen in that fainting picture.”

“You are going to be in that picture.”

“But, I mean, I would like to be the queen. She will have the best dress, won’t she?”

“I suppose she will be the most dressed,” said Daisy.

“I don’t want to be one of the women—I want to be the queen. Hamilton Rush said I would be the best one for it, because she was a Jewess; and I am the only one that has got black eyes and hair.”

“But her eyes will not be seen,” said Daisy. “She is fainting. When people faint, they keep their eyes shut.”

“Yes, but I am the only one that has got black hair. That will shew. Her hair ought to be black.”

“Why will not other hair do just as well?” said Daisy.

“Why, because she was a Jewess.”

“Do Jewesses always have black hair?”

“Of course they *ought* to have black hair,” said Nora; “or Hamilton Rush would not have said that. And my hair is black.”

Daisy was silent. She said nothing to this proposition. The children were both silenced for a little while the practising for “Marie Antoinette” was going on. The principal part in this was taken by Frederica, who was the beauty of the company. A few touches of Mrs. Sandford’s skilful hands transformed her appearance wonderfully. She put on an old-fashioned straight gown, which hung in limp folds around her; and Mrs. Sandford arranged a white handkerchief over her breast, tying it in the very same careless loose knot represented in the picture; but her management of Frederica’s hair was the best thing. Its soft fair luxuriance was, no one could tell how, made to assume the half dressed, half undressed air of the head in Delaroche’s picture; and Frederica looked the part well.

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“She should throw her head a little more back,”—whispered Hamilton Rush to the manager;—“her head or her shoulders. She is not quite indignant enough.”

“That handkerchief in her hand is not right—” said Preston in a responding whisper. “You see to it—while I get into disguise.”

“That handkerchief, Mrs. Sandford—” Hamilton, said softly.

“Yes. Frederica, your hand with the pocket-handkerchief,—it is not quite the thing.”

“Why not?”

“You hold it like a New York lady.”

“How *should* I hold it?”

“Like a French queen, whose Austrian fingers may hold anything any way.” This was Hamilton’s dictum.

“But how *do* I hold it?”

“You have picked it up in the middle, and shew all the flower work in the corners.”

“You hold it too daintily, Frederica,” said Theresa. “You must grasp it—grasp it loosely—but as the distinguished critic who has last spoken has observed.”

Frederica dropped her handkerchief, and picked it up again exactly as she had it before.

“Try again—” said Mrs. Sandford. “Grasp it, as Theresa says. Never mind how you are taking it up.”

“Must I throw it down again?”

“If you please.”

“Take it up any way but in the middle,” said Hamilton.

Down went the handkerchief on a chair, and then Frederica’s fingers took it up, delicately, and with a little shake displayed as before what Hamilton called the flowers in the corners. It was the same thing. They all smiled.

“She can’t hold a handkerchief any but the one way—I don’t believe,” said her brother Alexander.

“Isn’t it right?” said Frederica.

“Perfect, I presume, for Madison Square or Fifth Avenue—but not exactly for a revolutionary tribunal,” said Hamilton.

“What is the difference?”

“Ah, that is exactly what it is so hard to get at. Hello! Preston—is it Preston? Can’t be better, Preston. Admirable! admirable!”

“Well, Preston, I do not know you!” said Mrs. Sandford.

Was it Preston? Daisy could hardly believe her ears. Her eyes certainly-told her another story. Was it Preston? in the guise and with the face of an extremely ugly old woman—vicious and malignant,—who taking post near the deposed queen, peered into her face with spiteful curiosity and exultation. Not a trace of likeness to Preston could Daisy see. She half rose up to look at him in her astonishment. But the voice soon declared that it was no other than her cousin.

“Come,”—said he, while they were all shouting,—“fall in. You Hamilton,—and Theresa, —come and take your positions.”

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Hamilton, with a glance at the picture, went behind Preston; and putting on a savage expression, thrust his clenched fist out threateningly towards the dignified figure of Frederica; while Theresa, stealing up into the group, put her hands upon a chair back to steady herself and bent towards the queen a look of mournful sympathy and reverence, that in the veritable scene and time represented would undoubtedly have cost the young lady her life. The performers were good; the picture was admirable. There was hardly anybody left to look when George Linwood and Alexander had taken post as the queen's guards; and to say truth they did not in their present state of undisguised individuality add much to the effect; but Mrs. Sandford declared the tableau was very fine, and could be made perfect.

The question of Cinderella came up then; and there was a good deal of talk. Finally it was decided that little Ella should be Cinderella, and Eloise the fairy godmother, and Jane Linwood and Nora the wicked sisters. A little practising was tried, to get them in order. Then Esther was called for. Daisy submitted.

Hamilton Rush was made magnificent and kingly by a superb velvet mantle and turbaned crown—the latter not perfect, but improvised for the occasion. For a sceptre he held out a long wooden ruler this time; but Preston promised a better one should be provided. The wooden ruler was certainly not quite in keeping with the king's state, or the queen's. Daisy was robed in a white satin dress of her mother's; much too long, of course, but that added to the rich effect; it lay in folds upon the floor. Her head was covered with a rose-coloured silken scarf wound artistically round it and the ends floating away; and upon this drapery diamonds were bound, that sparkled very regally over Daisy's forehead. But this was only the beginning. A zone of brilliants at her waist made the white satin dazzling and gathered its folds together; bracelets of every colour and of great beauty loaded Daisy's little arms; till she was, what Mrs. Sandford had said Esther must be, a spot of brilliancy. Her two maids, Nora and Jane Linwood, at this time were not robed in any other than their ordinary attire; perhaps that was one reason why their maintenance of their characters was not quite so perfect as that of the principal two. Hamilton stretched forward his wooden sceptre to the queen with benignant haste and dignity. Daisy, only too glad to shrink away, closed her eyes and lay back in the arms of her attendants in a manner that was really very satisfactory. But the attendants themselves were not in order.

"Jane, you must not laugh—" said her brother.

"I ain't laughing!"

"Yes, but you were."

"The queen is fainting, you know," said Mrs. Sandford. "You are one of her maids, and you are very much distressed about it."

“I am not distressed a bit. I don’t care.”

“Nora, do not forget that you are another attendant. Your business is with your mistress. You must be looking into her face, to see if she is really faint or if you can perceive signs of mending. You must look very anxious.”

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But Nora looked very cross; and as Jane persisted in giggling, the success of that picture was not quite excellent this time.

“Nora is the most like a Jewess—” Theresa remarked.

“O, Nora will make a very good maid of honour by and by,” Mrs. Sandford replied.

But Nora had her own thoughts.

“Daisy, how shall I be dressed?” she inquired, when Daisy was disrobed of her magnificence and at leisure to talk.

“I don’t know. O, in some nice way,” said Daisy, getting into her corner of the couch again.

“Yes, but shall I—shall Jane and I have bracelets, and a girdle, and something on our heads too?”

“No, I suppose not. The queen of course is most dressed, Nora; you know she must be.”

“I should like to have *one* dress,” said Nora. “I am not anything at all. All the fun is in the dress. You are to have four dresses.”

“Well, so are you to have four.”

“No, I am not. What four?”

“This one, you know; and Red Riding-hood—and the Princes in the Tower—and Cinderella.”

“I am to be only one of the ugly sisters in Cinderella—I don’t believe aunt Frances will give her much of a dress; and I hate Red Riding-hood; and the Princes in the Tower are not to be dressed at all. They are covered up with the bed-clothes.”

“Nora,” said Daisy softly,—“would you like to be dressed as John Alden?”

“As *what?*” said Nora, in no very accommodating tone of voice.

“John Alden—that Puritan picture, you know, with the spinning wheel. I am to be Priscilla.”

“A boy! Do you think I would be dressed like a boy?” cried Nora in dudgeon. And Daisy thought *she* would not, if the question were asked her; and had nothing more to answer.

So the practising went on, with good success on the whole. The little company met every other day; and dresses were making, and postures were studied, and costumes were considered and re-considered. Portia and Bassanio got to be perfect. So did Alfred in the neat-herd's cottage—very nearly. Nora, however she grumbled, blew her cakes energetically; Preston and Eloise made a capital old man and woman, she with a mutch cap and he with a bundle of sticks on his head; while Alexander Fish with his long hair and rather handsome face sat very well at the table hearing his rebuke for letting the cakes burn. Alexander was to have a six-foot bow in hand, which he and Hamilton were getting ready: and meanwhile practised with an umbrella. But the tableau was very good. Most of the others went very well. Still Daisy was greatly tried by John Alden's behaviour, and continued to look so severe in the picture as to draw out shouts of approving laughter from the company, who did not know that Alexander Fish was to be thanked for it. And Nora was difficult to train in Queen Esther. She wore obstinately a look of displeased concern for herself, and no concern at all for her fainting mistress. Which on the whole rather impaired the unity of the action, and the harmony of the general effect.

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“How is your task proceeding?” Mrs. Randolph asked one evening when Mrs. Sandford was staying to tea.

“Excellently well. We shall make a good thing, I confidently expect.”

“Hamilton is a good actor,” said Preston.

“And Master Gary also,” said Mrs. Sandford. “Your old French wife is perfect, Preston.”

“Much obliged, ma’am.”

“Not to me. My dressing has nothing to do with that. But Preston, what shall we do with Frederica’s handkerchief? She can *not* hold it—right.”

“Like a queen—” said Preston. “I do not know—unless we could scare her out of her propriety. A good fright would do it, I think. But then the expression would not suit. How is the Game, Mrs. Sandford?”

“Perfect! admirable! You and Hamilton do it excellently—and Daisy is a veritable angel.”

“How does *she* like it all?” Mrs. Randolph inquired.

“Aunt Felicia, she is as much engaged as anybody.”

“And plays as well,” added Mrs. Sandford.

“She has found out to-day, aunt Felicia,” Preston went on, speaking rather low, “that she ought to have a string of red stones round her head instead of white ones.”

Mrs. Randolph smiled.

“She was quite right,” said Mrs. Sandford. “It was a matter of colour, and she was quite right. She was dressed for Queen Esther, and I made her look at herself to take the effect; and she suggested, very modestly, that stones of some colour would do better than diamonds round her head. So I substituted some very magnificent rubies of yours, Mrs. Randolph; quite to Daisy’s justification.”

“Doesn’t she make a magnificent little ‘Fortitude,’ though!” said Eloise.

“The angel will be the best,” said Mrs. Sandford. “She looks so naturally troubled. But we have got a good band of workers. Theresa Stanfield is very clever.”

“It will do Daisy a world of good,” said Mrs. Gary.

CHAPTER XVI.

All this while Daisy's days were divided. Silks and jewels and pictures and practising, in one part; in the other part, the old cripple Molly Skelton, and her basket of bread and fruit, and her reading in the Bible. For Daisy attended as regularly to the one as to the other set of interests, and more frequently; for the practising party met only three times a week, but Daisy went to Molly every day.

Molly was not sick now. Daisy's good offices in the material line were confined to supplying her with nice bread and butter and fruit and milk, with many varieties beside. But in that day or two of rheumatic pains, when Molly had been waited upon by the dainty little handmaiden who came in spotless frocks and trim little black shoes to make her fire and prepare her tea, Daisy's tenderness and care had completely won Molly's heart. She was a real angel in that poor house; no vision of one. Molly welcomed her so, looked at her

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so, and would perhaps have obeyed her as readily. But Daisy offered no words that required obedience, except those she read out of the Book; and Molly listened to them as if it had been the voice of an angel. She was learning to read herself; really learning: making advances every day that shewed diligent interest; and the interest was fed by those words she daily listened to out of the same book. Daisy had got a large-print Testament for her at Crum Elbow; and a new life had begun for the cripple. The rose-bush and the geranium flourished brilliantly, for the frosts had not come yet; and they were a good setting forth of how things were going in the house.

One lovely October afternoon, when air and sky were a breath and vision of delight, after a morning spent in dressing and practising, Daisy went to Molly. She went directly after luncheon. She had given Molly her lesson; and then Daisy sat with a sober little face, her finger between the leaves of the Bible, before beginning her accustomed reading. Molly eyed her wistfully.

“About the crowns and the white dresses,” she suggested.

“Shall I read about those?” said Daisy. And Molly nodded. And with her little face exceedingly grave and humble, Daisy read the seventh chapter of the Revelation, and then the twenty-first chapter, and the twenty-second; and then she sat with her finger between the leaves as before, looking out of the window.

“Will they all be sealed?” said Molly, breaking the silence.

“Yes.”

“What is that?”

“I don’t know exactly. It will be a mark of all the people that love Jesus.”

“A mark in their foreheads?”

“Yes, it says so.”

“What mark?”

“I don’t know, Molly; it says, ‘His name shall be in their foreheads.’” And Daisy’s eyes became full of tears.

“How will that be?”

“I don’t know, Molly; it don’t tell. I suppose that everybody that looks at them will know in a minute that they belong to Jesus.”

Daisy's hand went up and brushed across her eyes; and then did it again.

"Do they belong to him?" asked Molly.

"O yes! Here it is—don't you remember?—'they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

"So they are white, then?" said Molly.

"Yes. And his mark is on them."

"I wish," said the cripple slowly and thoughtfully,—"I wish 'twas on me. I do!"

I do not think Daisy could speak at this. She shut her book and got up and looked at Molly, who had put her head down on her folded arms; and then she opened Molly's Testament and pressed her arm to make her look. Still Daisy did not speak; she had laid her finger under some of the words she had been reading; but when Molly raised her head she remembered the sense of them could not be taken by the poor woman's eyes. So Daisy read them, looking with great tenderness in the cripple's face—

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"'I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.' That is what it says, Molly."

"Who says?"

"Why Jesus says it. He came and died to buy the life for us—and now he will give it to us, he says, if we want it."

"What life?" said Molly vaguely.

"Why *that*, Molly; that which you were wishing for. He will forgive us, and make us good, and set his mark upon us; and then we shall wear those robes that are made white in his blood, and be with him in heaven. And that is life."

"You and me?" said Molly.

"O yes! Molly—anybody. It says 'whosoever is athirst.'"

"Where's the words?" said Molly.

Daisy shewed her; and Molly made a deep mark in the paper under them with her nail; so deep as to signify that she meant to have them for present study or future reference or both. Then, as Molly seemed to have said her say, Daisy said no more and went away.

It was still not late in the afternoon; and Daisy drove on, past the Melbourne gates, and turned the corner into the road which led to Crum Elbow. The air was as clear as October could have it; and soft, neither warm nor cold; and the roads were perfect; and here and there a few yellow and red maple leaves, and in many places a brown stubble field, told that autumn was come. It was as pleasant a day for drive as could possibly be; and yet Daisy's face was more intent upon her pony's ears than upon any other visible thing. She drove on towards Crum Elbow, but before she reached it she turned another corner, and drew up before Juanita's house.

It was not the first visit she had made here since going home; though Daisy had in truth not come often nor stayed long. All the more glad were Juanita and she to see each other now. Daisy took off her flat and sat down on the old chintz couch, with a face of content. Yet it was grave content; not joyous at all. So Juanita's keen eyes saw, through all the talking which went on. Daisy and she had a great deal to say to each other; and among other things the story of Molly came in and was enlarged upon; though Daisy left most of her own doings to be guessed at. She did not tell them more than she could well help. However, talk went on a good while, and still when it paused Daisy's face looked thoughtful and careful. So Juanita saw.

"Is my love quite well?"

“O yes, Juanita. I am quite well. I think I am getting strong, a little.”

Juanita’s thanksgiving was earnest. Daisy looked very sober.

“Juanita, I have been wanting to talk to you.”

Now they had been talking a good deal; but this, the black woman saw, was not what Daisy meant.

“What is it, my love?”

“I don’t know, Juanita. I think I am puzzled.”

The fine face of Mrs. Benoit looked gravely attentive, and a little anxiously watchful of Daisy’s.

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“The best way will be to tell you. Juanita, they are—I mean, we are—playing pictures at home.”

“What is that, Miss Daisy?”

“Why, they take pictures—pictures in books, you know—and dress up people like the people in the pictures, and make them stand so or sit so, and look so, as the people in the pictures do; and so they make a picture of living people.”

“Yes, Miss Daisy.”

“They are playing pictures at home. I mean, we are. Mamma is going to give a great party next week; and the pictures are to be all made and shewn at the party. There are twelve pictures; and they will be part of the entertainment. There is to be a gauze stretched over the door of the library, and the pictures are to be seen behind the gauze.”

“And does Miss Daisy like the play?” the black woman inquired, not lightly.

“Yes, Juanita—I like some things about it. It is very amusing. There are some things I do not like.”

“Did Miss Daisy wish to talk to me about those things she not like?”

“I don’t, know, Juanita—no, I think not. Not about those things. But I do not exactly know about myself.”

“What Miss Daisy not know about herself?”

“I do not know exactly—whether it is right.”

“Whether what be right, my love?”

Daisy was silent at first, and looked puzzled.

“Juanita—I mean—I don’t know whether *I* am right.”

“Will my love tell what she mean?”

“It is hard, Juanita. But—I don’t think I am quite right. I want you to tell me what to do.”

Daisy’s little face looked perplexed and wise. And sorry.

“What troubles my love?”

“I do not know how it was, Juanita—I did not care at all about it at first; and then I began to care about it a little—and now—”

“What does my love care about?”

“About being dressed, Juanita; and wearing mamma’s jewels, and looking like a picture.”

“Will Miss Daisy tell Juanita better what she mean?”

“Why, you know, Juanita,” said the child wistfully, “they dress up the people to look like the pictures; and they have put me in some very pretty pictures; and in one I am to be beautifully dressed to look like Queen Esther—with mamma’s jewels all over me. And there is another little girl who would like to have that part,—and I do not want to give it to her.”

Juanita sat silent, looking grave and anxious. Her lips moved, but she said nothing that could be heard.

“And Juanita,” the child went on—“I think, somehow, I like to look better than other people,—and to have handsomer dresses than other people,—in the pictures, you know.”

Still Juanita was silent.

“Is it right, Juanita?”

“Miss Daisy pardon me. Who Miss Daisy think be so pleased to see her in the beautiful dress in the picture?”

“Juanita—it was not that I meant. I was not thinking so much of *that*. Mamma would like it, I suppose, and papa;—but I like it myself.”

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Juanita was silent again.

“Is it right, Juanita?”

“Why do Miss Daisy think it not right?”

Daisy looked undecided and perplexed.

“Juanita—I wasn’t quite sure.”

“Miss Daisy like to play in these pictures?”

“Yes, Juanita—and I like—Juanita, I like it!”

“And another little girl, Miss Daisy say, like it too?”

“Yes, I think they all do. But there is a little girl that wants to take my part.”

“And who Miss Daisy want to please?”

Daisy hesitated, and her eyes reddened; she sat a minute still; then looked up very wistfully.

“Juanita, I think I want to please myself.”

“Jesus please not himself”—said the black woman.

Daisy made no answer to that. She bent over and hid her little head in Mrs. Benoit’s lap. And tears undoubtedly came, though they were quiet tears. The black woman’s hand went tenderly over the little round head.

“And he say to his lambs—’Follow me.’”

“Juanita”—Daisy spoke without raising her head—“I want to please him most.”

“How Miss Daisy think she do that?”

Daisy’s tears now, for some reason, came evidently, and abundantly. She wept more freely in Juanita’s lap than she would have done before father or mother. The black woman let her alone, and there was silent counsel-taking between Daisy and her tears for some time.

“Speak to me, Juanita”—she said at last.

“What my love want me to say?”

“It has been all wrong, hasn’t it, Juanita? O have I, Juanita?”

“What, my love?”

“I know I have,” said Daisy. “I knew it was not right before.”

There was yet again a silence; a tearful silence on one part. Then Daisy raised her head, looking very meek.

“Juanita, what ought I to do?”

“What my love said,” the black woman replied very tenderly. “Please the Lord.”

“Yes; but I mean, how shall I do that?”

“Jesus please not himself; and he say, ‘Follow me.’”

“Juanita, I believe I began to want to please myself very soon after all this picture work and dressing began.”

“Then it not please the Lord,” said Juanita decidedly.

“I know,” said Daisy; “and it has been growing worse and worse. But Juanita, I shall have to finish the play now—I cannot help it. How shall I keep good? Can I?”

“My love knows the Good Shepherd carry his lamb in his bosom, if she let him. He is called Jesus, for he save his people from their sins.”

Daisy’s face was very lowly; and very touching was the way she bent her little head and passed her hand across her eyes. It was the gesture of penitent gentleness.

“Tell me some more, Juanita.”

“Let the Lord speak,” said the black woman turning over her well used Bible. “See, Miss Daisy—’Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own—’”

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“I was puffed up,” said Daisy, “because I was to wear those beautiful things. I will let Nora wear them. I was seeking my own, all the time, Juanita. I didn’t know it.”

“See, Miss Daisy—’That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.’”

“Is there any *harm* in those pretty things, Juanita? They are so pretty!”

“I don’t know, Miss Daisy; the Lord say he not pleased with them; and the Lord knows.”

“I suppose,” said Daisy——but what Daisy supposed was never told. It was lost in thought.

“My love see here what please the Lord—’the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.’”

Daisy lifted her little face and kissed the fine olive cheek of her friend.

“I know now, Juanita,” she said with her accustomed placidness. “I didn’t know what was the matter with me. I shall have to play in the pictures—I cannot help it now—but I will let Nora be Queen Esther.”

It was quite late by this time and Daisy after a little more talk went home; a talk which filled the child’s heart with comfort. Daisy went home quite herself again, and looked as happy and busy as a bee when she got there.

“Daisy! what late doings!” exclaimed her father. “Out all the afternoon and practising all the morning—Where have you been?”

“I have been visiting, papa.”

“Pray whom?”

“Molly, papa—and Juanita,” Daisy said, not very willingly, for Mrs. Randolph was within hearing.

“A happy selection!” said she. “Go and get ready for dinner, Daisy.”

“Have you been all the afternoon at those two places, Daisy?” asked her father, within whose arms she stood.

“Yes, papa.”

He let her go; and a significant look passed between him and his wife.

“A little too much of a good thing,” said Mr. Randolph.

“It will be too much, soon,” the lady answered.

Nevertheless Daisy for the present was safe, thanks to her friend Dr. Sandford; and she passed on up stairs with a spirit as light as a bird. And after she was dressed, till it was time for her to go in to the dinner-table, all that while a little figure was kneeling at the open window and a little round head was bowed upon the sill. And after that, there was no cloud upon Daisy’s face at all.

In the drawing-room, when they were taking tea, Daisy carried her cup of milk and cake to a chair close by Preston.

“Well, Daisy, what now?”

“I want to talk to you about the pictures, Preston.”

“We did finely to-day, Daisy! If only I could get the cramp out of Frederica’s fingers.”

“Cramp!” said Daisy.

“Yes. She picks up that handkerchief of hers as if her hand was a bird’s claw. I can’t get a blue jay or a canary out of my head when I see her. Did you ever see a bird scratch its eye with its claw, Daisy?”

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“Yes.”

“Well, that is what she puts me in mind of. That handkerchief kills Marie Antoinette, dead. And she won’t take advice—or she can’t. It is a pity you hadn’t it to do; you would hold it right queenly. You do Esther capitally. I don’t believe a Northern girl can manage that sort of thing.”

Daisy sipped her milk and eat crumbs of cake for a minute without making any answer.

“Preston, I am going to let Nora be Queen Esther.”

“What!” said Preston.

“I am going to let Nora be Queen Esther.”

“Nora! Not if I know it,” said Preston.

“Yes, but I am. I would like it better. And Nora would like to be Queen Esther, I know.”

“I dare say she would! Like it! Of course. No, Daisy; Queen Esther is yours and nobody’s else. What has put that into your head?”

“Preston, I think Nora would like it; and you know, they said she was most like a Jewess of all of us; I think it would be proper to give it to her.”

“I shall not do it. We will be improper for once.”

“But I am going to do it, Preston.”

“Daisy, you have not liberty. I am the manager. What has come over you? You played Esther beautifully only this morning. What is the matter?”

“I have been thinking about it,” said Daisy; “and I have concluded I would rather give it to Nora.”

Preston was abundantly vexed, for he knew by the signs that Daisy had made up her mind; and he was beginning to know that his little cousin was exceedingly hard to move when once she was fully set on a thing. He debated within himself an appeal to authority; but on the whole dismissed that thought. It was best not to disgust Daisy with the whole affair; and he hoped coaxing might yet do the work. But Daisy was too quick for him.

“Nora,” she said at the next meeting, “if you like, I will change with you in the fainting picture. You shall be the queen, and I will be one of the women.”

“Shall I be the queen?” said Nora.

“Yes, if you like.”

“But why don’t you want to do it?”

“I would rather you would, if you like it.”

“Well, I’ll do it,” said Nora; “but Daisy, shall I have all the dress you were going to wear?”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“Because, if I don’t, I won’t. I must have just exactly what you were going to wear.”

“Why you will of course, I suppose,” said Daisy, a good deal astonished.

“Every bit,” said Nora. “Shall I have that same white satin gown?”

“Yes, I suppose so. Of course you will. It is only you and I that change; not the dress.”

“And shall I have the ornaments too?”

“Just the same, I suppose; unless Mrs. Sandford thinks that something else will look better.”

“I won’t have anything else. I want that same splendid necklace for my girdle—shall I?”

“I suppose so, Nora.”

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“You say ‘I suppose so’ to everything. I want to *know*. Shall I have that same pink silk thing over my hair?”

“That scarf? yes.”

“And the red necklace on it? and the bracelets? and the gold and diamonds round my neck? I won’t be Esther if I don’t have the dress.”

“I suppose you will have the dress,” said Daisy; “of course you will. But if you say you do not want to be Esther, they will make me do it.”

A hint that closed Nora’s mouth. She did not say she did not want to be Esther. Mrs. Sandford was astonished at the change of performers; but Daisy’s resignation was so simply made and naturally, and Nora’s acceptance was so manifestly glad, that nobody could very well offer any hindrance. The change was made; but Preston would not suffer Daisy to be one of the attendants. He left her out of the picture altogether and put Jane Linwood in Nora’s vacated place. Daisy was content; and now the practising and the arrangements went on prospering.

There was a good deal of preparation to be made, besides what the mantua-maker could do. Mr. Stilton was called into the library for a great consultation; and then he went to work. The library was the place chosen for the tableaux; the spectators to be gathered into the drawing-room, and the pictures displayed just within the wide door of communication between the two rooms. On the library side of this door Mr. Stilton laid down a platform, slightly raised and covered with green baize cloth, and behind the platform a frame-work was raised and hung with green baize to serve as a proper background for the pictures. A flower stand was brought in from the greenhouse and placed at one side, out of sight from the drawing-room; for the purpose, as Preston informed Daisy, of holding the lights. All these details were under his management, and he managed, Daisy thought, very ably indeed. Meantime the dresses were got ready. Fortitude’s helmet was constructed of pasteboard and gilt paper; and Nora said it looked just as if it were solid gold. The crown of Ahasuerus, and Alfred’s six-foot bow were also made; and a beautiful old brown spinning wheel was brought from Mrs. Sandford’s house for Priscilla. Priscilla’s brown dress was put together, and her white vandyke starched. And the various mantles and robes of velvet and silk which were to be used, were in some way accommodated to the needs of the young wearers. All was done well, and Preston was satisfied; except with Daisy.

Not that Daisy did not enter into the amusement of what was going forward; for perhaps nobody took so much real share in it. Even Mr. Stilton’s operations interested her. But she was not engrossed at all. She was not different from her usual self. All the glory of the tableaux had not dazzled her, so far as Preston could see. And daily, every morning, she stepped into that little pony chaise with a basket and drove off—Preston was at the pains to find out—to spend a couple of

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hours with Molly Skelton. Preston sighed with impatience. And then in the very act of dressing and practising for the pictures, Daisy was provokingly cool and disengaged. She did her part very well, but seemed just as much interested in other people's parts and as much pleased with other people's adornment. Queen Esther in particular was Daisy's care, since she had given up the character; and without putting herself forward she had once or twice made a suggestion to Mrs. Sandford, of something that she either thought would please Nora or that she felt called for by her own tastes; and in each case Mrs. Sandford declared the suggestion had been an improvement.

But with a pleasure much greater and keener, Daisy had seen the pot containing the 'Jewess' geranium taken up out of the ground, and set, with all the glory of its purple-red blossoms, in Molly's poor little room. There it stood, on a deal table, a spot of beauty and refinement, all alone to witness for the existence of such things on the earth. And heeded by Molly as well as by Daisy. Daisy knew that. And all the pleasure of all the tableaux put together could give nothing to Daisy equal to her joy when Molly first began to read. That day, when letters began really to be put together into words to Molly's comprehension, Daisy came home a proud child. Or rather, for pride is a bad word, she came home with a heart swelling with hope and exultation; hope and exultation that looked forward confidently to the glory to be revealed.

CHAPTER XVII.

The great day came, and the evening of the day; and June dressed Daisy for the party. This was a simple dressing, however, of a white cambrick frock; no finery, seeing that Daisy was to put on and off various things in the course of the evening. But Daisy felt a little afraid of herself. The perfected arrangements and preparations of the last few days had, she feared, got into her head a little; and when June had done and was sent away, Daisy kneeled down by her bedside and prayed a good while that God would help her not to please herself and keep her from caring about dress and appearance and people's flatteries. And then she got up and looked very wistfully at some words of the Lord Jesus which Juanita had shewed her first and which she found marked by Mr. Dinwiddie's pencil. "The Father hath not left me alone; *for I do always those things that please him*."

Daisy was beginning to learn, that to please God, is not always to seek one's own gratification or that of the world. She looked steadily at the words of that Friend in heaven whom she loved and wished to obey; and then it seemed to Daisy that she cared nothing at all about anything but pleasing him.

"Miss Daisy—" said June,—"Miss Nora is come."

Away went Daisy, with a bound, to the dressing-room; and carried Nora off, as soon as she was unwrapped from her mufflings, to see the preparations in the library.

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“What is all that for?” said Nora.

“O, that is to shew the pictures nicely. They will look a great deal better than if all the room and the books could be seen behind them.”

“Why?”

“I suppose they will look more like pictures. By and by all those lights on the stand will be lighted. And we shall dress in the library, you know,—nobody will be in it,—and in the room on the other side of the hall. All the things are brought down there.”

“Daisy,” said Nora looking at the imposing green baize screen, “aren’t you afraid?”

“Are you?” said Daisy.

“Yes—I am afraid I shall not do something right, or laugh, or something.”

“O, but you must not laugh. That would spoil the picture. And Mrs. Sandford and Preston will make everything else right. Come and see the crown for Ahasuerus!”

So they ran across the hall to the room of fancy dresses. Here Ella presently joined them with her sister, and indeed so many others of the performers that Preston ordered them all out. He was afraid of mischief, he said. They trooped back to the library.

“When are they going to begin?” said Nora.

“I don’t know. O, by and by. I suppose we shall have tea and coffee first. People at a party must get through that.”

To await this proceeding, and indeed to share in it, the little company adjourned to the drawing-room. It was filling fast. All the neighbourhood had been asked, and all the neighbourhood were very glad to come, and here they were, pouring in. Now the neighbourhood meant all the nice people within ten miles south and within ten miles north; and all that could be found short of some seven or eight miles east. There was one family that had even come from the other side of the river. And all these people made Melbourne House pretty full. Happily it was a very fine night.

Daisy was standing by the table, for the little folks had tea at a table, looking with a face of innocent pleasure at the scene and the gathering groups of people, when a hand laid gentle hold of her and she found herself drawn within the doctor’s arm and brought up to his side. Her face brightened.

“What is going on, Daisy?”

“Preston has been getting up some tableaux, Dr. Sandford, to be done by the young people.”

“Are you one of the young people?”

“They have got me in,” said Daisy.

“Misled by your appearance? What are you going to play, Daisy?”

Daisy ran off to a table and brought him a little bill of the performances. The doctor ran his eye over it.

“I shall know what it means, I suppose, when I see the pictures. What is this ‘Game of Life?’”

“It is Retsch’s engraving,” Daisy answered, as sedately as if she had been forty years old.

“Retsch! yes, I know him—but what does the thing mean?”

“It is supposed to be the devil playing with a young man—for his soul,” Daisy said very gravely.

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“Who plays the devil?”

“Preston does.”

“And who is to be the angel?”

“I am to be the angel,” said Daisy.

“Very judicious. How do you like this new play, Daisy?”

“It is very amusing. I like to see the pictures.”

“Not to be in them?”

“I think not, Dr. Sandford.”

“Daisy, what else are you doing, besides playing tableaux, all these days?”

“I drive about a good deal,” said Daisy. Then looking up at her friend with an entirely new expression, a light shining in her eye and a subdued sweetness coming into her smile, she added—

“Molly is learning to read, Dr. Sandford.”

“Molly!” said the doctor.

“Yes. You advised me to ask leave to go to see her, and I did, and I got it.”

Daisy’s words were a little undertone; the look that went with them the doctor never forgot as long as he lived. His questions about the festivities she had answered with a placid, pleased face; pleased that he should ask her; but a soft irradiation of joy had beamed upon the fact that the poor cripple was making a great step upwards in the scale of human life. The doctor had not forgotten his share in the permission Daisy had received, which he thought he saw she suspected. Unconsciously his arm closed upon the little figure it held and brought her nearer to him; but his questions were somehow stopped. And Daisy offered no more; she stood quite still, till a movement at the table seemed to call for her. She put her hand upon the doctor’s arm, as a sign that it must hold her no longer, and sprang away.

And soon now all the young people went back again to the library. Mrs. Sandford came with them to serve in her arduous capacity of dresser. June attended to give her help.

“Now what are we going to do?” whispered Nora in breathless excitement. “What is to be the first picture? O Daisy, I wish you would get them to have my picture last of all.”

“Why, Nora?”

“O because. I think it ought to come last. Aren’t you afraid? Whew! lam.”

“No, I don’t think I am.”

“But won’t you want to laugh?”

“Why?” Daisy. “No, I do not think I shall want to laugh.”

“I shall be too frightened to laugh,” said Jane Linwood.

“I don’t see, Daisy, how you will manage those queer wings of yours,” Nora resumed.

“I have not got to manage them at all. I have only to keep still.”

“I can’t think how they will look,” said Nora. “They don’t seem to me much like wings. I think they will look very funny.”

“Hush, children—run away; you are not wanted here. Go into the drawing-room—and I will ring this hand bell when I want you.”

“What comes first, aunt Sandford?”

“Run away! you will see.”

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So the younger ones repaired to the drawing-room, for what seemed a weary time of waiting. Nora expressed her entire disapprobation of being shut out from all the fun of the dressing; she wanted to see that. She then declared that it would be impossible to shew all the twelve pictures that evening, if it took so long to get ready for one. However, the time was past at length; the signal was given; the lights in the drawing-room were put down, till the room was very shadowy indeed; and then, amid the breathless hush of expectation, the curtain that hung over the doorway of the library was drawn back.

The children thought it was fairy-land.

Frederica Fish sat there facing the company, quaintly dressed in antique costume; and before her knelt on one knee two grand-looking personages, very richly attired, presenting a gilt crown upon a satin cushion. Lady Jane Grey and the lords who came to offer her the kingdom The draperies were exceedingly well executed and did Mrs. Sandford great credit. They were the picture.

“Isn’t she *beau*-tiful!” Nora exclaimed under her breath.

“Isn’t it like a picture!” said Daisy.

“How funnily those boys kneel and twist themselves round!” said Jane. “Who are they?”

“Daisy, wouldn’t you like to be dressed every day like that?” said Nora.

“I don’t think it would be convenient,” said Daisy. “I think a white frock is nicer.”

“O but it makes people look so handsome! Frederica looks like—she is a real beauty! I should like to be dressed so. Daisy, don’t you suppose queens and ladies, like those in the pictures, *are* always dressed so?”

“I suppose they put on nightgowns when they go to bed,” said Ella Stanfield soberly. “They can’t *always* be dressed so.”

“O but, I mean, when they are up. And I dare say they wear beautiful nightgowns—-Daisy, don’t you think they do? I dare say they have splendid lace and ribands; and you can make a white dress very handsome, if you put plenty of lace and ribands.”

“O it’s gone!” exclaimed Jane and Ella. The curtain had fallen. The company clapped their hands and cheered.

“What’s that for?” said Nora.

“That means that they like it, I suppose,” said Daisy. “You will have to go now, Nora, I know. Little Red Riding-Hood comes next. Come—we’ll all go.”

“Horrid Little Red Riding-Hood!” said Nora. “I hate that picture!”

“Why do you hate it?”

“Because!—It is nothing but a red hood.”

Mrs. Sandford’s bell sounded.

“O Daisy!” said Nora as they went, “won’t you get them to leave Esther to the last? They will do whatever you ask them. Do!”

“Why, Nora?”

“O because!—”

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What Nora's "because" meant, Daisy did not know; that it had reference to some supposed advantage of place, was pretty certain. Daisy stood thinking about it while she saw Nora dressed, and then ran into the drawing-room to take the effect of the tableau. The curtain was withdrawn; Daisy was astonished; she had no idea that Nora could be so changed by a little arrangement of lights and dress. The picture was exceeding pretty. Nora's black hair and bright cheeks peeped out from under the shadowing red cardinal, which draped her arms also—Mrs. Sandford had mysteriously managed it. She had got over her hatred of the part, for she looked pleased and pleasant; and the little basket in her hand and the short petticoat and neat little feet completed a tidy Red Riding-Hood. The applause was loud. "Lovely!" the ladies said. "What a sweet little thing! how beautiful she looks!" Nora did not smile, for that would have hurt her picture; but she stood with swelling complacency and unchanging red cheeks as long as the company were pleased to look at her.

"Who is that, Daisy?" asked her father, near whom Daisy had stationed herself.

"It is Nora Dinwiddie, papa."

"She is a pretty little girl. When does your turn come?"

"I do not know, papa."

"Not know! Why I thought all this was your affair."

"O no, papa; it is Preston's affair."

Off ran Daisy however when the curtain fell, or rather when it was drawn, to see the getting ready of the next tableau. There was something of a tableau on hand already. June stood holding up a small featherbed, and two little figures in white nightgowns were flying round, looking and laughing at two exceedingly fierce, bearded, moustached, black-browed individuals, on whose heads Mrs. Sandford was setting some odd-looking hats.

"Who are those, Nora?" said Daisy to Little Red Riding-Hood.

"Daisy, did you like it? did I stand well?"

"Yes, I liked it very much; it was nice. Nora, who are those two?"

"Why one of 'em is Preston—I don't know who the other is. Daisy, did you ask about Esther?"

Could it be possible that Preston had so transformed himself? Daisy could hardly see that it was he. His fellow she did not recognize at all. It was big George Linwood.

“Now are the little princes ready?” said Preston. “Because we will finish up this business.”

“O you won’t let the featherbed come down on us?” cried Jane Linwood.

“If you don’t be quiet and keep still, I will,” said Preston. “Let only your eye wink or your mouth move to smile—and you are an unlucky prince! I am a man without mercy.”

“And I am another,” said George. “I say, old fellow, I suppose I’m all right for that French pikeman now, hey? After this smothering business is attended to.”

“You think the trade is the thing, and the costume a matter of indifference?” said Preston. “In the matter of morals I dare say you are right;—in tableaux before spectators it’s not exactly so. Here June—hand on your big pillow there—”

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Mrs. Sandford was laughing at him, and in fact there was a good deal of hilarity and some romping before the actors in the tableau could be settled in their places.

“Don’t keep us long,” said Preston. “I never knew before what an uninteresting thing a featherbed is—when you are obliged to hold it in your arms. Everything in its place, I find. I used to have a good opinion of them.”

Daisy ran back to the drawing-room, and was utterly struck with wonder at the picture over which all this fun had been held. It was beautiful, she thought. The two children lay so naturally asleep, one little bare foot peeping out from under the coverings; and the grim faces that scowled at them over the featherbed with those strange hats overshadowing, made such a contrast; and they were all so breathlessly still, and the lights and shadows were so good; Daisy was disposed to give her verdict that there never was a play like this play. The “Princes in the Tower” was greatly applauded.

“Have you asked about my picture?” said Nora, who stood beside Daisy.

“No, I have not had a chance.”

“Do, Daisy! I want that to be the last.”

Daisy thought she was unreasonable. Why should Nora have the best place, if it was the best. She was not pleased with her.

The next picture was Marie Antoinette; and that drew down the house. Frederica Fish had nothing to do but to stand as she was put, and Mrs. Sandford had seen to it that she stood right; another person might have done more in the picture, but that was all that could be got from Frederica. Her face was coldly impassive; she could come no nearer to the expression of the indignant queen. But Preston’s old woman, and Theresa’s pretty young French girl; one looking as he had said, with eyes of coarse fury, the other all melting with tenderness and reverent sympathy; they were so excellent that the company were delighted. Frederica’s handkerchief, it is true, hung daintily in her fingers, shewing all the four embroidered corners; Mrs. Sandford had not seen it till it was just too late; and Preston declared afterwards the “fury” in his face was real and not feigned as he glared at her. But the company overlooked the handkerchief in favour of the other parts of the picture; and its success was perfect.

“Alfred in the neat-herd’s cottage” followed next, and would have been as good; only that Nora, whose business it was to blow her cheeks into a full moon condition over the burnt cakes, would not keep her gravity; but the full cheeks gave way every now and then in a broad grin which quite destroyed the effect. Preston could not see this, but Daisy took her friend to task after it was over. Nora declared she could not help it.

“You don’t know how it felt, Daisy, to keep my cheeks puffed out in that way. I couldn’t do it; and whenever I let them go, then I couldn’t help laughing. O, Daisy! is my picture to be the last?”

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“I will see, as soon as I can, Nora.” Daisy said gravely. It was her own turn now, and while Mrs. Sandford was dressing her she had no very good chance to speak of Esther. How wonderfully Mrs. Sandford arranged the folds of one or two long scarfs, to imitate Sir Joshua Reynolds’ draperies. Preston declared it was beautiful, and so did Hamilton Rush; and when the little helmet with its plumes was set on Daisy’s head, Mrs. Sandford smiled and Preston clapped his hands. They had still a little trouble to get Dolce into position. Dolce was to enact the lion, emblem of courage and strength, lying at Fortitude’s feet. He was a sensible dog, but knowing nothing about playing pictures, naturally, did not immediately understand why it should be required of him to lie down there, on that platform of green baize, with his nose on his paws. However, more sensible than some animals of higher order are apt to be, he submitted patiently to the duty of obedience where he did not understand; and laid down accordingly his shaggy length at Daisy’s feet.

The curtain was drawn aside, and the company shouted with delight. No picture had been so good yet as this one. The little grave figure, the helmet with its nodding plumes in mock stateliness; the attitude, one finger just resting on the pedestal of the broken column, (an ottoman did duty for it) as if to shew that Fortitude stood alone, and the shaggy St. Bernard at her feet, all made in truth an extremely pretty spectacle. You could see the faintest tinge of a smile of pleasure on the lips of both Mr. and Mrs. Randolph; they were silent, but all the rest of the people cheered and openly declared their delight. Daisy stood like a rock. *Her* mouth never gave way; not even when Dolce, conceiving that all this cheering called upon him to do something, rose up and looking right into Daisy’s face wagged his tail in the blandest manner of congratulation. Daisy did not wince; and an energetic “Down, Dolce, down!”—brought the St. Bernard to his position again, in the very meekness of strength; and then the people clapped for Daisy and the dog together. At last the curtain fell.

[Illustration]

“Well, that will do,” said Mrs. Sandford.

“Dolce—you rascal!” said Preston, as the great creature was now wagging his tail in honour of his master,—“how came you to forget your business in that style, sir?”

“I do not think it really hindered the effect at all, Preston,” said Mrs. Sandford. “Daisy kept her countenance so well.”

“Yes,—if Fortitude had smiled!—” said Theresa, “Mrs. Sandford, is it out of character for Fortitude to smile?”

“It would be out of character for Portia, just at this crisis—so take care of her.”

“What made them make such a great noise, Daisy?” said Nora while Daisy was getting undressed.

“I suppose they liked the picture,” said Daisy.

“But they made a great deal more noise than they did for anybody else,” said Nora.

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“I suppose they liked the picture better than they liked any of the others,” said Ella Stanfield. “I know they did, for I was in the other room. Come, let’s go see this picture!”

“Not you, Daisy,” said Mrs. Sandford as the children were running off—“I want you. Priscilla comes next.”

So Daisy had to stay and be dressed for Priscilla. She missed Portia and Bassanio. It was not much missed, for her little heart began to be beating with excitement; and she wished very much that Priscilla might be as much liked as Fortitude. The dressing was an easy matter, for the costume had been prepared for her and a gown and vandyke made on purpose. Would Alexander dare to wink this time, she wondered? And then she remembered, to her great joy, that he could not; because his face would be in full view of the people behind the scenes in the library. The little brown spinning-wheel was brought on the platform; a heap of flax at which Priscilla is supposed to have been working, was piled together in front of it; and she and Alexander took their places. The curtain was drawn aside, and a cry of pleasure from the company testified to the picturesque prettiness of the representation. It was according to the fact, that Priscilla should be looking in John Alden’s face; it was just at the moment when she is supposed to be rebuking him for bringing to her his friend’s suit and petition. Thinking herself safe, and wishing to have the picture as good as possible, Daisy had ventured to direct her eyes upon the face of Alexander Fish, who personified the Puritan suitor. To her horror, Alexander, wholly untouched by the poetry of the occasion and unawed by its hazards, dared to execute a succession of most barefaced and disagreeable winks right at Priscilla’s eyes. Poor Daisy could not stand this. Forgetting her character and the picture and everything, her eyes went down; her eyelids drooped over them; and the expression of grave displeasure would have done for a yet more dissatisfied mood of mind than Priscilla is supposed to have known at the time. The company could not stand this, either; and there burst out a hearty chorus of laughter and cheers together, which greatly mortified Daisy. The curtain was drawn, and she had to face the laughing comments of the people in the library. They were unmerciful, she thought. Daisy grew very pink in the face.

Cinderella was the next picture, in which she had also to play. Dresses were changed in haste; but meanwhile Daisy began to think about herself. Was she all right? Mortified at the breaking of her picture; angry at Alexander; eager to get back praise enough to make amends for this loss;—whom was little Daisy trying to please? Where was the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit now? was it on?

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They had after all given her place in the Cinderella tableau; she was one of the two wicked sisters; and she looked dissatisfied enough for the character. She wanted to get away to be alone for two minutes; but she had this part to fill first. It is very hard to play when one's heart is heavy. Daisy could not go on so. She could not bear it. Without waiting till June could undress her, she slipped away, the moment the curtain was drawn, and ran across the hall to the dressing room. People were coming and going everywhere; and Daisy went out upon the piazza. There, in a dark spot, she kneeled down and prayed; that this terrible spirit of pleasing herself might be put away from her. She had but a minute; she knew she must be back again immediately; but she knew too it takes but a minute for ever so little a prayer to go all the way to heaven; and the answer does not take any longer to come, if it pleases God. Daisy was very much in earnest, and quite well knew all that. She went back to the library feeling humbled and ashamed, but quiet. The library was all in commotion.

Nora was begging that Esther might be put off till the last. Mrs. Sandford and Preston objected. They chose that it should come next.

"Here is Priscilla," said Hamilton Rush,—"I beg pardon! it is Cinderella's wicked sister—I don't know what *her* name was. Let us have your vote, my angel; I will address you in your prospective character; will you put on your wings at once? Or shall we get done with the terrestrial first? What do you say?—I hope you are going to make Miss Stanfield the queen, Mrs. Sandford; she has done one part so well that I should like to see her in another."

"Why, you are going to be Ahasuerus yourself!" said the lady.

"Am I?" said Hamilton; who it must be noticed had not met for the practisings as often as the other people, being held not to need them. "Then I must respectfully be allowed to choose my own queen. I vote for Miss Theresa."

"It is a capital idea," said Preston.

"I think so too," said Mrs. Sandford. "Theresa, my dear, I wonder we did not think before of something so much to our advantage; but these children seemed to have got the picture into their own hands. You will do it far better. Come! let me robe you."

"I would rather be Vashti," murmured Theresa. "I don't like submissive characters. Mrs. Sandford, Vashti is far more in my line. Go off, boys, and get ready! What a pity we didn't think of having Vashti, Mrs. Sandford."

However, Theresa made no objection to be dressed for Esther.

"Who will be your supporters? Ella is too short. Jane and Nora?—Where is Nora!"

Nora was in the furthest corner of the room, seated in gloom.

“Nora!—”

“I am not going to play any more—” said Nora.

“You must come and be one of the queen’s women—I want you for that.”

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“I am not going to play—” repeated Nora; but nobody heard except Daisy. “I am Esther myself! nobody else has any right to be it. I have practised it, and I know how to do it; and I am Esther myself. Nobody else has any right to be Esther!”

Daisy stood by in dismay. She did not know what comfort to bring to this distress.

“I won’t play at all!” said Nora. “If I can’t be Esther I won’t be anything. You have all the good things, Daisy! you have all the prettiest pictures; and I might have had just this one. Just Esther. I just wanted to be Esther! It’s mean.”

“Why you’ve been plenty of things I think,” said Jane Linwood, coming near this corner of gloom.

“I haven’t! I have been that hateful prince in the tower and Cinderella’s ugly sister—only hateful things.”

“But you were Little Red Riding-Hood.”

“Red Riding-Hood!” exclaimed Nora in unspeakable disdain. “Red Riding-Hood was nothing at all but a red cloak! and Daisy wore feathers, and had the dog—”

And the vision of Queen Esther’s jewels and satin gown and mantle here overcame Nora’s dignity if not her wrath: she began to cry.

“But won’t you come and be one of the queen’s maids? *they* will be very nicely dressed too,” Daisy ventured gently.

“No!—I won’t be anybody’s maid, I tell you,” sobbed the disconsolate child.

“Bring her along, Daisy,” Mrs. Sandford called from the other side of the room.—“I am almost ready for her.”

Daisy made another vain effort to bring Nora to reason, and then went sorrowfully to Mrs. Sandford. She thought tableaux were on the whole a somewhat troublesome amusement.

“Will I do, Mrs. Sandford?” she said. “Nora does not want to play.”

“In dudgeon, hey?” said the lady. “I expected as much. Well Daisy—I will take you. I might perch you up on a foot-cushion to give you a little more altitude. However—I don’t know but it will do. Theresa will be letting down her own height.”

“I think I am letting myself down altogether, Mrs. Sandford, in allowing Ahasuerus to pick me out in that lordly style. But never mind—I shan’t touch his sceptre any way. Boys, boys!—are you ready?”

“Splendid, Theresa!” said Preston as he came in. “Splendid! You are the very thing.”

“I am diamonds and satin, you mean. I thank you. I know that is what I am at present.”

“You look the character,” said Hamilton.

Theresa made him a mock little courtesy. It was admirably done. It was the slightest gesture of supercilious disdain—excellent pantomime. The boys laughed and shouted, for Theresa’s satin and diamonds gave effect to her acting, and she was a good actor.

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This picture had been delayed so long, that at last hearing the shout of applause behind the scenes, the audience began to call for their share. In haste, but not the less effectively, Theresa and the rest threw themselves into attitude and the curtain was pulled aside. Daisy wished she could have been in the drawing-room, to see the picture; she knew it must be beautiful; but she was supporting one jewelled arm of Queen Esther and obliged by her duty to look only at the Queen's face. Daisy thought even that was a good deal to look at, it was so magnificently surrounded with decoration: but at the same time she was troubled about Nora and sorry for her own foolishness, so that her own face was abundantly in character for the grave concern that sat upon it. This picture met with, great favour. The people in the library were in much glee after it was over; all but Daisy and Nora.

"It is all spoiled!" said the latter. "The evening has been hateful. I wish I hadn't come."

"O Nora! don't say that," Daisy urged. "The pictures are almost over now; and then we shall have supper."

"I don't want supper! I only wanted to be Queen Esther and you said I might. It was the prettiest picture of the whole lot."

"But I couldn't help it, Nora."

"I could have done it just as well as Theresa! She didn't look handsome a bit."

"O Nora, I think she did—for a picture."

"She didn't a bit; the things she had on looked handsome."

Daisy was called away. Her last dressing was to be done now, and the one of which Daisy was most doubtful. She was to stand for the angel in the "Game of Life." Other people had no doubt about it. Mrs. Sandford was sure that the angel's wings would make a good representation, which Daisy was slow to believe; near by, they looked so very like gauze and pasteboard! They were arranged, at any rate, to appear as if they grew out of her shoulders; she was arrayed in flowing white draperies over her own little cambrick frock; and then she was ready. Hamilton came in. He was to be the young man in the picture. Daisy liked his appearance well. But when Preston followed him, she felt unspeakably shocked. Preston was well got up, in one respect; he looked frightful. He wore a black mask, ugly but not grotesque; and his whole figure was more like the devil in the picture than Daisy had imagined it could be. She did not like the whole business at all. There was no getting out of it now; the picture must be given; so the performers were placed.

Hamilton and Preston sat on two sides of a chess-board, and behind them the little angel stood watching the game. Mrs. Sandford was right. By a skilful placing and

shielding of the lamps, the lights were thrown broadly where they ought to be, on faces and draperies, leaving the gauze wings of the angel in such obscurity that they just shewed as it was desired they should. The effect was extremely good, and

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even artistic. The little angel herself was not in full light; it was through a shade of gloom that her grave face of concern looked down upon the game on the chess-board. Truly Daisy looked concerned and grave. She thought she did not like to play such things as this. One of the figures below her was so very wicked and devilish in its look; and Hamilton leaned over the pieces on the board with so well-given an expression of doubt and perplexity,—his adversary's watch was so intent,—and the meaning of the whole was so sorrowfully deep; that Daisy gazed unconsciously most like a guardian angel who might see with sorrow the evil one getting the better over a soul of his care. For it was real to Daisy. She knew that the devil does in truth try to bewitch and wile people out of doing right into doing wrong. She knew that he tries to get the mastery of them; that he rejoices every time to sees them make a "false move;" that he is a great cunning enemy, all the worse because we cannot see him, striving to draw people to their ruin; and she thought that it was far too serious and dreadful a thing to be made a *play* of. She wondered if guardian angels did really watch over poor tempted souls and try to help them. And all this brought upon Daisy's face a shade of awe, and sorrow, and fear, which was strangely in keeping with her character as an angel, and very singular in its effect on the picture. The expressions of pleasure and admiration which had burst from the company in the drawing-room at the first sight of it, gradually stilled and ceased; and it was amid a profound and curious silence and hush that the curtain was at length drawn upon the picture. There were some people among the spectators not altogether satisfied in their minds.

"How remarkable!" was the first word that came from anybody's lips in the darkened drawing-room.

"Very remarkable!" somebody else said. "Did you ever see such acting?"

"It has all been good," said a gentleman, Mr. Sandford; "but this *was* remarkable."

"Thanks, I suppose you know to whose management," said the soft voice of the lady of the house.

"Management is a good thing," said the gentleman; "but there was more than management here, Mrs. Randolph. It was uncommon, upon my word! I suppose my wife came in for the wings, but where did the *face* come from?"

"Daisy," said Mr. Randolph as he found his little daughter by his side again,—"are you here?"

"Yes, papa."

Her father put his arm round her, as if to assure himself there were no wings in the case.

“How do you like playing pictures?”

“I think I do not like them very much—” Daisy said sedately, nestling up to her father’s side.

“Not? How is that? Your performance has been much approved.”

Daisy said nothing. Mr. Randolph thought he felt a slight tremor in the little frame.

“Do you understand the allegory of this last tableau, Daisy?” Dr. Sandford asked.

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“I do not know what an allegory is, Dr. Sandford.”

“What is the meaning of the representation, then, as you think of it?”

“This last picture?”

“Yes.”

“It is a trial of skill, Dr. Sandford.”

The room was still darkened, and the glance of intelligence and amusement that passed between her friend and her father, their own eyes could scarcely catch. Daisy did not see it. But she had spoken diplomatically. She did not want to come any nearer the subject of the picture in talking with Dr. Sandford. His mind was different, and he went on.

“What is the trial of skill about, Daisy?”

The child hesitated, and then said, speaking low and most unchildlike—

“It is about a human soul.”

“And what do you understand are the powers at work—or at play?”

“It is not play,” said Daisy.

“Answer Dr. Sandford, Daisy,” said her father.

“Papa,” said the child, “it isn’t play. The devil tries to make people do wrong—and if they try to do right, then there is a—”

“A what?”

“I don’t know—a fight, papa.”

Mr. Randolph again felt a tremor, a nervous trembling, pass over Daisy.

“You do not suppose, my darling,” he said softly, “that such a fight goes on with anything like this horrible figure that your cousin Preston has made himself?”

“I do not suppose he looks like that, papa.”

“I do not think there is such a personage at all, Daisy. I am sure you need not trouble your little head with thinking about it.”

Daisy made no answer.

“There is a struggle always going on, no doubt, between good and evil; but we cannot paint good and evil without imagining shapes for them.”

“But papa,—” said Daisy, and stopped. It was no place or time for talking about the matter, though her father spoke low. She did not want even Dr. Sandford to hear.

“What is it, Daisy?”

“Yes,” said the doctor, “I should like to know what the argument is.”

“Papa,” said Daisy, awesomely,—“there is a *place* prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Mr. Randolph was silent now. But he felt again that Daisy was nervously excited, by the quiver that passed over her little frame.

“So you think, Daisy,” said the doctor leaning towards her,—“that the white and the black spirits have a fight over the people of this world?”

Daisy hesitated, struggled, quivered, with the feeling and the excitement which were upon her, tried for self-command and words to answer. Mr. Randolph saw it all and did not hurry her, though she hesitated a good deal.

“You think they have a quarrel for us?” repeated the doctor.

“I don’t know, Dr. Sandford—” Daisy answered in a strangely tender and sober voice. It was strange to her two hearers.

“But you believe in the white spirits, I suppose, as well as in the other branch of the connection?”

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“Papa,” said Daisy, her feeling breaking a little through her composure so much as to bring a sort of cry into her voice—“there is joy among the angels of heaven whenever anybody grows good!—”

She had turned to her father as she spoke and threw her arms round his neck, hiding her face, with a clinging action that told somewhat of that which was at work in her mind. Mr. Randolph perhaps guessed at it. He said nothing; he held her close to his breast; and the curtain drew at that moment for the last tableau. Daisy did not see it, and Mr. Randolph did not think of it; though people said it was very good, it was only the head and shoulders of Theresa Stanfield as an old country schoolmistress, seen behind a picture frame, with her uplifted finger and a bundle of rods. Theresa was so transformed that nobody would have known her; and while the company laughed and applauded, Daisy came back to her usual self; and slid out of her father’s arms when the show was over, all ready for supper and Nora Dinwiddie.

There was a grand supper, and everybody was full of pleasure and complimentary speeches and discussion and praise of the tableaux. That was among the elder portion of the company. The four or five children were not disposed to such absolute harmony. Grapes and ices and numberless other good things were well enjoyed, no doubt; but amidst them all a spirit of criticism was rife.

“Daisy, your wings didn’t look a bit like real wings—” said Jane Linwood.

“No,” echoed Nora, “I guess they didn’t. They were like—let me see what they were like! They were like the wings of a windmill.”

“No, they weren’t!” said Ella. “I was in the drawing-room—and they didn’t look like a windmill a bit. They looked queer, but pretty.”

“Queer, but pretty!” repeated Nora.

“Yes, they did,” said Ella. “And you laughed when you were Red Riding-hood, Nora Dinwiddie.”

“I didn’t laugh a bit!”

“It is no matter if you did laugh, Nora,” said Daisy;—“you got grave again, and the picture was very nice.”

“I didn’t laugh!” said Nora; “and if I did, everybody else did. I don’t think the pictures I saw were at all like pictures—they were just like a parcel of people dressed up.”

Some gay paper mottoes made a diversion and stopped the little mouths for a time; and then the people went away.

“Well Daisy,” said Mrs. Gary,—“how do you like this new entertainment?”

“The pictures? I think they were very pretty, aunt Gary.”

“How happened it that somebody else wore my diamonds?” said her mother,—“and not you. I thought you were to be dressed for Queen Esther?”

“Yes, mamma, so I was at first; and then it was thought best—”

“Not by me,” said Preston. “It was no doing of mine. Daisy was to have been Esther, and she herself declared off—backed out of it, and left me to do as best I could.”

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“What was that for, Daisy?” said Mrs. Gary. “You would have made an excellent Esther.”

“What was that for, Daisy?” said Mrs. Randolph. “Did you not like to be Esther?”

“Yes, mamma—I liked it at one time.”

“And why not at another time?”

“I found out that somebody else would like it too, mamma; and I thought——”

Mrs. Randolph broke out with a contemptuous expression of displeasure.

“You thought you would put yourself in a corner! You were not manager, Daisy; and you must remember something is due to the one that is. You have no right to please yourself.”

“Come here, Daisy,” said her father, “and bid me good night. I dare say you were trying to please somebody else. Tell mamma she must remember the old fable, and excuse you.”

“What fable, Mr. Randolph?” the lady inquired, as Daisy left the room.

“The one in which the old Grecian told the difficulty of pleasing more people than one or two at once.”

“Daisy is ruined!” said Mrs. Randolph.

“I do not see how it appears.”

“She has not entered into this thing at all as we hoped she would—not at all as a child should.”

“She looked a hundred years old, in the Game of Life,” said Mrs. Gary. “I never saw such a representation in my life. You would have said she was a real guardian angel of somebody, who was playing his game not to please her.”

“I am glad it is over!” said Mrs. Randolph. “I am tired of it all.” And she walked off. So did Mr. Randolph, but as he went he was thinking of Daisy’s voice and her words—-“There is joy among the angels of heaven whenever anybody grows good.”

CHAPTER XIX.

It was growing late in the fall now. Mrs. Randolph began to talk of moving to the city for the winter. Mr. Randolph more than half hinted that he would like as well to stay where he was. But his wife said that for Daisy's sake they must quit Melbourne, and try what new scenes, and lessons, and dancing school would do for her. "Not improve the colour in her cheeks, I am afraid," said Mr. Randolph; but however he did not oppose, and Mrs. Randolph made her arrangements.

It was yet but a day or two after the tableaux, when something happened to disturb her plans. Mr. Randolph was out riding with her, one fine October morning, when his horse became unruly in consequence of a stone hitting him; a chance stone thrown from a careless hand. The animal was restive, took the stone very much in dudgeon, ran, and carrying his rider under a tree, Mr. Randolph's forehead was struck by a low-lying limb and he was thrown off. The blow was severe; he was stunned; and had not yet recovered his senses when they brought him back to Melbourne. Mrs. Randolph was in a state almost as much beyond self-management. Daisy was out of the house. Mrs. Gary had left Melbourne; and till the doctor arrived Mrs. Randolph was nearly distracted.

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He came; and though his fine face took no gloom upon it and his blue eye was as usual impenetrable, the eyes that anxiously watched him were not satisfied. Dr. Sandford said nothing; and Mrs. Randolph had self-control sufficient not to question him, while he made his examinations and applied his remedies. But the remedies, though severe, were a good while in bringing back any token of consciousness. It came at last, faintly. The doctor summoned Mrs. Randolph out of the room then and ordered that his patient should be kept in the most absolute and profound quiet. No disturbance or excitement must be permitted to come near him.

“How long, doctor?”

“I beg your pardon, Mrs. Randolph?—”

“How long will it be before he is better?”

“I cannot say that. Any excitement or disturbance would much delay it. Let him hear nothing and see nothing—except you, and some attendant that he is accustomed to.”

“O doctor, can’t you stay till he is better?”

“I will return again very soon, Mrs. Randolph. There is nothing to be done at present for which I am needed.”

“But you will come back as soon as you can?”

“Certainly!”

“And O, Dr. Sandford, cannot you take Daisy away?”

“Where is she?”

“I don’t know—she is not come home. Do take her away!”

The doctor went thoughtfully down stairs, and checking his first movement to go out of the front door, turned to the library. Nobody was there; but he heard voices, and passed out upon the piazza. Daisy’s pony chaise stood at the foot of the steps; she herself had just alighted. Preston was there too, and it was his voice the doctor had first heard, in anxious entreaty.

“Come, Daisy!—it’s capital down at the river; and I want to shew you something.”

“I think I am tired now, Preston. I’ll go another time,” said Daisy.

“Daisy, I want you now. Come! come!—I want you to go now, this minute.”

“But I do not feel like a walk, Preston. I can’t go till I have had my dinner.”

Preston looked imploringly at the doctor, towards whom Daisy was now mounting the steps. It is safe to say that the doctor would willingly have been spared his present task.

“Where have you been now, Daisy?” he said.

Daisy’s face brightened into its usual smile at sight of him. “I have been to Crum Elbow, Dr. Sandford.”

“Suppose you go a little further and have luncheon with Mrs. Sandford and me? It will not take us long to get to it.”

“Does mamma say so, Dr. Sandford?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will be ready in a moment.”

“Where are you going?” said her friend stopping her.

“Only up stairs for a minute. I will be ready in two minutes, Dr. Sandford.”

“Stop,” said the doctor, still detaining her. “I would rather not have you go up stairs. Your father is not quite well, and I want him kept quiet.”

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What a shadow came over Daisy's sunshine.

"Papa not well! What is the matter?"

"He does not feel quite like himself, and I wish him left in perfect repose."

"What is the matter with him, Dr. Sandford?"

Daisy's words were quiet, but the doctor saw the gathering woe on her cheek; the roused suspicion. This would not do to go on.

"He has had a little accident, Daisy; nothing that you need distress yourself about; but I wish him to be quite quiet for a little."

Daisy said nothing now, but the speech of her silent face was so eloquent that the doctor found it expedient to go on.

"He was riding this morning; his horse took him under the low bough of a tree, and his head got a severe blow. That is all the matter."

"Was papa *thrown*?" said Daisy under her breath.

"I believe he was. Any horseman might be unseated by such a thing."

Daisy again was mute, and again the doctor found himself obliged to answer the agony of her eyes.

"I do not think he is in much, if any, pain, Daisy; but I want him to be still for a while. I think that is good for him; and it would not be good that you should disturb him. Your mother is there, and that is enough."

Daisy stood quite still for a few minutes. Then making an effort to withdraw herself from the doctor's arm she said,

"I will not go into the room—I will not make any noise."

"Stop! Daisy, you must not go up stairs. Not this morning."

She stood still again, grew white and trembled.

"As soon as I think it will do him good to see you, I will let you into his room. Now, shall we send June up for anything you want?"

"I think, Dr. Sandford," said Daisy struggling for steadiness, "I will not go away from home."

Her words were inexpressibly tender and sorrowful. The doctor was unrelenting.

“Your mother desired it.”

“Did mamma——?”

“Yes; she wished me to carry you home with me. Come, Daisy! It is hard, but it is less hard after all than it would be for you to wander about here; and much better.”

Daisy in her extremity sunk her head on the doctor’s shoulder, and so remained, motionless, for more minutes than he had to spare. Yet he was still too, and waited. Then he spoke to her again.

“I will go,” said Daisy.

“You wanted something first?”

“I did not want anything but to change my gloves. It is no matter.”

Very glad to have gained his point, the doctor went off with his charge; drove her very fast to his own home, and there left her in Mrs. Sandford’s care; while he drove off furiously again to see another patient before he returned to Melbourne.

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It was a long day after that to Daisy; and so it was to Mrs. Sandford. Nora Dinwiddie was no longer with her; there was nobody to be a distraction or a pleasure to the grave little child who went about with such a weird stillness or sat motionless with such unchildlike quiet. Mrs. Sandford did not know what to do; but indeed nothing could be done with Daisy. She could not be amused or happy; she did not wish Nora were there; she could only keep patient and wait, and wait, with a sore, straining heart, while the hours passed and Dr. Sandford did not come and she had no tidings. Was she patient? It seemed to Daisy that her heart would burst with impatience; or rather with its eager longing to know how things were at home and to get some relief. The hours of the day went by, and no relief came. Dr. Sandford did not return. Daisy took it as no good omen.

It was hard to sit at the dinner-table and have Mr. and Mrs. Sandford shewing her kindness, while her heart was breaking. It was hard to be quiet and still and answer politely and make no trouble for her entertainers. It was hard; but Daisy did it. It was hard to eat too; and that Daisy could not do. It was impossible.

“Mustn’t be cast down,” said Mr. Sandford. He was one of the people who look as if they never could be. Black whiskers and a round face sometimes have that kind of look. “Mustn’t be cast down! No need. Everybody gets a tumble from horseback once or twice in his life. I’ve had it seven times. Not pleasant; but it don’t hurt you much, nine times in ten.”

“Hush, Mr. Sandford,” said his wife. “Daisy cannot feel about it just as you do.”

“Never been thrown yet herself, eh! Give her one of those peaches, my dear—she will like that better than meats to-day. Eat one of my red-cheeked peaches, Daisy; and tell me whether you have any so good at Melbourne. I don’t believe it.”

Daisy peeled her peach. It was all she could bear to do. She peeled it carefully and slowly; there never was a peach so long in paring; for it was hardly more than finished when they rose from table. She had tried to taste it too; that was all; the taste never reached her consciousness. Mrs. Sandford knew better than her husband, and let her alone.

Daisy could think of nothing now but to watch for the doctor; and to do it with the most comfort and the best chance she placed herself on the steps of the piazza, sitting down on the uppermost step. It was a fair evening; warm and mild; and Mrs. Sandford sitting in her drawing-room with the windows open was but a few feet from Daisy and could observe her. She did so very often, with a sorrowful eye. Daisy’s attitude bespoke her intentness; the child’s heart was wound up to such a pitch of expectation that eye and ear were for nothing else. She sat bending both upon the road by which she looked for the doctor to come; her little figure did not stir; her head rested slightly on her hand with a droop that spoke of weariness or of weakness. So she sat looking down the road,

and the sweet October light was all over her and all around her. Mrs. Sandford watched her, till the light lost its brightness and grew fair and faint, and then began to grow dim. Daisy sat still, and Mrs. Sandford looked at her, till a step within the room drew her attention on that side.

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“Why there you are!” said the lady—“come the other way. What news?”

“I have no news.”

“Yes, but how is Mr. Randolph?” The lady had dropped her voice very low.

“He is sensible.”

“Sensible!” Mrs. Sandford said with a startled look; but then drawing the doctor silently to her side she pointed to the watching, anxious little figure there on the steps. It did not need that Dr. Sandford should speak her name. Daisy had perfectly well heard and understood the words that had passed; and now she rose up slowly and came towards the doctor who stepped out to meet her.

“Well, Daisy—have you been looking for me?” he said. But something in the little upturned face admonished him that no light words could be borne. He sat down and took her hand.

“Your father looks better than he did this morning; but he feels badly yet after his fall.”

Daisy looked at him and was silent a moment.

“Will they send for me home?”

“Not to-night, I think. Mrs. Randolph thought better that you should stay here. Can’t you do it contentedly?”

Daisy made no audible answer; her lip quivered a very little; it did not belie the singular patience which sat upon her brow. Her hand lay yet in the doctor’s; he held it a little closer and drew the child affectionately to his side, keeping her there while he talked with Mrs. Sandford upon other subjects; for he said no more about Melbourne. Still while he talked he kept his arm round Daisy, and when tea was brought he hardly let her go. But tea was not much more to Daisy than dinner had been; and when Mrs. Sandford offered to shew her to her room if she desired it, Daisy accepted the offer at once.

Mrs. Sandford herself wished to supply the place of June, and would have done everything for her little guest if she could have been permitted. Daisy negatived all such proposals. She could do everything for herself, she said; she wanted no help. A bag of things had been packed for her by June and brought in the doctor’s gig. Daisy was somehow sorry to see them; they looked like preparations for staying.

“We will send for June to-morrow, Daisy, if your mamma will leave you still with me.”

“O, I shall go home to-morrow—I hope,” said Daisy. “I hope—” she repeated humbly.

“Yes, I hope so,” said Mrs. Sandford. She kissed Daisy and went away. It was all Daisy wanted, to be alone. The October night was mild; she went to the window; one of the windows, which looked out upon the grass and trees of the courtyard, now lighted by a faint moon. Daisy sunk down on her knees there; the sky and the stars were more homelike than anything else; and she felt so strange, so miserable, as her little heart had never known anything like before. She knew well enough what it all meant, her mother’s sending her away from home, her father’s not being able to bear any disturbance. Speak as lightly, look as calmly as they would, she

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knew what was the meaning underneath people's faces and voices. Her father had been very much hurt; quite well Daisy was assured of that. He was too ill to see her, or too ill for her mother to like her to see him. Daisy knelt down; she remembered she had a Father in heaven, but it seemed at first as if she was too broken hearted to pray. Yet down there through the still moonlight she remembered his eye could see her and she knew he had not forgotten his little child. Daisy never heard her door open; but it did once, and some time after it did again.

"I do not know what to do—" said Mrs. Sandford down stairs. There the lamps made a second bright day; and the two gentlemen were busy over the table with newspapers and books. Both of them looked up, at the sound of her perplexed voice.

"That child,—" said Mrs. Sandford. "She is not in bed yet."

The lady stood by the table; she had just come from Daisy's room.

"What is she doing?" her husband asked.

"I don't know. She is kneeling by the open window. She was there an hour ago, and she is there yet. She has not moved since."

"She has fallen asleep—" suggested Mr. Sandford. "I should say, wake her up."

"She is too wide awake now. She is lifting her little face to the sky, in a way that breaks my heart. And there she has been, this hour and more."

"Have some supper directly, and call her down,—" was the second suggestion of the master of the house. "It will be supper-time soon. Here—it's some time after nine."

"Grant, what is the matter with Mr. Randolph? Is it very serious?"

"Mrs. Randolph thinks so, I believe. Have you spoken to Daisy?"

"No, and I cannot. Unless I had good news to carry to her."

"Where is she?" said the doctor getting up.

"In the room next to yours."

So Mrs. Sandford sat down and the doctor went up stairs. The next thing he stood behind Daisy at her window. She was not gazing into the sky now; the little round head lay on her arms on the window-sill.

“What is going on here?” said a soft voice behind her.

“O! Dr. Sandford—” said the child jumping up. She turned and faced her friend, with a face so wistful and searching, so patient, yet so strained with its self-restraint and fear, that the doctor felt it was something serious with which he had to do. He did not attempt a light tone before that little face; he felt that it would not pass.

“I came up to see *you*” he said. “I have nothing new to tell, Daisy. What are you about?”

“Dr. Sandford,” said the child, “won’t you tell me a little?”

The inquiry was piteous. For some reason or other, the doctor did not answer it with a put-off, nor with flattering words, as doctors are so apt to do. Perhaps it was not his habit, but certainly in other respects he was not too good a man to do it. He sat down and let the moonlight show Daisy his face.

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“Daisy,” he said, “your father was stunned by his blow, and needs to be kept in perfect quiet for a time, until he is quite over it. People after such a fall often do; but I do not know that any other consequences whatever will follow.”

“He was stunned—” repeated Daisy.

“Yes.”

The child did not say any more, yet her eyes of searching eagerness plainly asked for fuller information. They were not content nor at rest.

“Can’t you have patience and hope for other tidings to-morrow?”

“May I?—” said Daisy.

“May you? Certainly. It was your mother’s wish to send you here—not mine. It was not needful; though if you could be content, I think it would be well.”

She looked a little relieved; very little.

“Now what are you doing? Am I to have two patients on my hand in your family?”

“No, sir.”

“What are you doing then, up so late? Watching the stars?”

“No, sir.”

“I am your physician—you know you must tell me everything. What were you about, Daisy?”

“Dr. Sandford,” said Daisy, in difficulty how to speak,—“I was seeking comfort.”

And with the word, somehow, Daisy’s self-restraint failed; her head went down on the doctor’s shoulder; and when she lifted it up there were two or three tears that needed to be brushed away. No more; but the doctor felt the slight little frame tremble.

“Did you find comfort, Daisy?” he said kindly. “I ask as your physician; because if you are using wrong measures for that end I shall forbid them. What were you doing to get comfort?”

“I did not want to go to sleep, sir.”

“Daisy, I am going to carry you down to have some supper.”

“O, I do not want any, Dr. Sandford!”

“Are you ready to go down?”

“No sir—in a minute,—I only want to brush my hair.”

“Brush it, then.”

Which Daisy did; then coming to her friend with a face as smoothly in order as the little round head, she repeated humbly,

“I do not want anything, Dr. Sandford.”

“Shall I carry you down?”

“O no, sir.”

“Come then. One way or the other. And Daisy, when we are down stairs, and when you come up again, you must obey my orders.”

The supper-table was laid. Mrs. Sandford expressed delight at seeing Daisy come in, but it would maybe have been of little avail had her kindness been the only force at work. It was not. The doctor prescribed peaches and bread, and gave Daisy grapes and a little bit of cold chicken; and was very kind and very imperative too; and Daisy did not dare nor like to disobey him. She eat the supper, which tasted good when he made her eat it; and then was dismissed up stairs to bed, with orders to go straight to sleep. And Daisy did as she was told.

CHAPTER XX.

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The doctor's horse was before the door, and Daisy was on the piazza. The doctor came out, ready for his day's work.

"Do you want me to do anything for you at Melbourne, Daisy?"

"Cannot I go home to-day, Dr. Sandford?"

"I do not know. Supposing that you be still kept in banishment—what then?"

Daisy struggled with herself—succeeded, and spoke calmly.

"I should like to have Loupe sent, Dr. Sandford, if you please."

"Loupe? what is that? What is Loupe, Daisy?"

"My pony, sir. My pony chaise."

"Oh!—Not to drive to Melbourne?"

Daisy met the doctor's blue eye full, and answered with guileless submission. "No, sir."

"I will send Loupe. By the way—Daisy, have you business on hand?"

"Yes, sir."

"So much that you can do none for me?"

"O no, sir. I have not a great deal of business. What may I do, Dr. Sandford?"

"Can you go to Crum Elbow?"

"Yes, sir. I have got to go there."

"All right, then. Daisy, there is a poor family down by the railway that were burnt out a night or two ago; they have lost everything. The neighbours will have to supply them with a few things. Will you go to the village and buy clothing for two little children, six and seven years old? One is a girl, the other a boy."

The doctor took out his pocket-book and began to look over bank bills.

"Dresses, do you mean, Dr. Sandford?—and a boy's dress?"

"I mean, everything they need to put on—dresses and petticoats, and jacket and trowsers, and a shirt or two for the boy. Here is money, Daisy; spend whatever you find needful."

“But, Dr. Sandford—”

“Well?”

“I don’t believe Mr. Lamb keeps those things ready made.”

“I am sure he does not. Buy the stuff, Daisy—all the stuff—we will see about getting it made afterwards. You can consult my sister, Mrs. Sandford, about quantities and all that; or I dare say the storekeeper can tell you.”

So away went the doctor. Daisy felt in great need of consulting somebody; but Mrs. Sandford was busy, and so engaged that there was no chance for several hours. Not indeed before the pony chaise came; and Daisy resolved then to wait no longer, but to do some other business first.

The news that she eagerly asked for from Melbourne was not much when she got it. Sam knew little; he believed Mr. Randolph was better, he said; but his tone of voice was not very encouraging, and Daisy drove off to Juanita’s cottage. There was one person, she knew, who could feel with her; and she went with a sort of eagerness up the grassy pathway from the road to the cottage door, to get that sympathy.

Juanita was within, busy at some ironing. The work fell from her hands and the iron was set down with an expression of pleasure as she saw Daisy come in. The next minute her tone changed and her look.

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“What ails my love?”

“Juanita—” said Daisy standing still and pale by the ironing table, “—haven’t you heard? Papa—”

“What, Miss Daisy?”

“Papa—he was knocked off his horse yesterday—*and they won’t let me see him!*”

So far Daisy’s power of composure went, and no further. With that last word her voice failed. She threw her arms around Juanita, and hiding her face in her gown, burst into such tears as Daisy rarely shed at all; very rarely under any one’s observation. Juanita, very much startled, sat down and drew the child into her arms, so far as she could; for Daisy had sunk on her knees, and with her face in Juanita’s lap was weeping all her heart out. Mrs. Benoit hardly knew how to ask questions.

“Why must not Miss Daisy see her papa?”

“I don’t know!—I suppose—he’s not well enough.”

Juanita breathed more freely.

“Let us pray for him, Miss Daisy.”

“O yes, Juanita, do!—”

There was an intensity of meaning in these words and in Daisy’s hurried assuming of another place and posture to leave Juanita free to kneel too, that almost took away the black woman’s power of speech. She read what was breaking the child’s heart; she knew what for was that suppressed cry of longing. For a moment Juanita was silent. But she had long known not only trouble but the refuge from trouble; and to that refuge she now went, and carried Daisy. As one goes who has often been there; who has many a time proved it a sure refuge; who knows it sure and safe and unfailing. So she prayed; while Daisy’s sobs at first were excessive, and then by degrees calmed and quieted and ceased. They were quite still before Juanita finished; and when they rose up from their knees Daisy’s face was composed again. Then, she came and stood with her hand on Juanita’s shoulder, both of them silent; till Daisy put her lips to the fine olive-dark cheek of the old woman and kissed it. Juanita drew her into her arms, and Daisy sat there, nestling and tired.

“Can Miss Daisy trust the Lord?”

“Trust him,—how. Juanita?”

“That he do no harm to his little child?”

“O it isn’t *me*, Juanita—” Daisy said with a very tender and sad accent.

“When Joseph—my love knows the story—when he was sold away from his father and home, to be servant of strangers far off—maybe he thought it was hard times. But the Lord meant it for good, and the father and the child came together again, in a happy day.”

Daisy rose up, or rather raised her head, and looked steadily in her friend’s face as if to see what this might mean.

“The Lord knoweth them that trust in him,” said the black woman.

Daisy’s head went down again; and there was a long silence. It was broken at last by Juanita’s offering her some refreshment; and then Daisy started up to the business on hand. She explained to Juanita where she was staying, and what she had that morning to do. Meanwhile Juanita made her take some bread and milk.

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“So how much must I get, Juanita? can you tell me? how much for two little frocks, and two little petticoats, and one suit of boy’s clothes?”

“My love knows, it must be accordin’ to the stuff. If the stuff narrow, she want more; if wide, she want less.”

“Then you cannot tell me;—and Mrs. Sandford could not either. And I cannot tell. What shall I do?”

“Mrs. Sandford maybe get the things for Miss Daisy.”

“No, she must not. Dr. Sandford wants me to do it. I must get them, Juanita.”

“Hm! Suppose I put up my irons and walk round to the village—and Miss Daisy go in her shay.”

“To the store!” cried Daisy. “O yes, Juanita; get ready, and I will take you with me. Then you can tell me all about it.”

Juanita demurred and objected to this proposal, but Daisy was greatly pleased and would have it so. Mrs. Benoit put up her ironing work, and arrayed her head in a new clean bright handkerchief, wonderfully put on; she was ready then; and Sam grinned to see the tall fine figure of the old coloured woman sitting in the pony chaise by the side of his little mistress. It was as good to Daisy as anything could have been that day. They drove into Crum Elbow, went to the store; and there she and Juanita had a pretty large morning’s business in choosing the various goods Dr. Sandford had desired Daisy to get. Daisy got excited over it. Calico for a little frock, and muslin for the underclothes, and stuff for the boy’s jacket and trowsers and shirt; Juanita knew the quantities necessary, and Daisy had only the trouble of choice and judgment of various kinds. But that was a great responsibility, seeing she was doing it for Dr. Sandford. It took a good while. Then Daisy drove Juanita home again, gave her another kiss, and with her carriage load of dry goods and a tired and hungry little body went home to Mrs. Sandford’s.

It was then pretty late in the day, and the doctor not come in. Daisy dressed, and went down to the drawing-room to wait for him. Not long this time. There was a certain air of calm strength about Dr. Sandford’s face and cool blue eye, that Daisy loved; she felt she loved it now, as she saw him come in; she trusted him. He spoke first to his brother and sister; then came where Daisy was standing, sat down on the sofa and placed her beside him.

“I have no bad news for you, Daisy,” he said kindly,—“and not the good news neither that you are looking for. Your father is no worse, though it will require several days to let

him recover from the immediate effects of his accident. The quieter he is meanwhile the better."

"And mamma—she said—?"

"She said—yes, you have guessed it; she would like to have you remain here for a few days longer. She thinks you are better under my care than under hers."

"Under *my* care, I think it is," said Mrs. Sandford.

"Can you bear it, Daisy?"

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She looked up meekly and answered, “Yes, Dr. Sandford.” So meekly that the doctor’s eye took special note of her.

“Have you been to Crum Elbow to-day?”

“Yes, sir. I got all the things.”

“All of them?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What reward shall I give you?”

She had been speaking with a sad meekness, a sober self restraint, unlike her years. If Dr. Sandford meant to break it up, which I think he did, he had partial success. Daisy looked up and smiled at him. But yet it was a meek smile, and sad even in its composed denial of any notion of reward. Not satisfactory to the doctor.

“I always repay anybody that does me any service,” he went on.

“Ought one always to do that?” said Daisy.

“What is your judgment?”

“I think *everybody* could not.”

“Why not?”

“Some people have nothing to pay with,—for things that are done for them.”

“I do not believe that.”

“*Some* people, Dr. Sandford?”

“Whom do you know in that condition—for instance?”

“Why, I—for instance.”

“You! What cannot you pay for?”

“A great many things,” said Daisy slowly. “Hardly any thing. I am only a child.”

“How is it about Molly Skelton? Does she pay you for the various attentions she receives from you?”

“Pay me, Dr. Sandford! I do not want pay.”

“You are very unlike me, then,” said the doctor; “that is all I have to say.”

“Why Dr. Sandford, what pay could she give me?”

“Don’t you get any, then?”

“Why no, sir,” said Daisy, eagerly answering the doctor’s blue eye. “Except—yes, of course, I get a sort of pay; but Molly does not—yes she *does* give it to me; but I mean, she does not mean to pay me.”

The doctor smiled, one of those rare pleasant smiles, that shewed his white teeth in a way that Daisy liked; it was only a glimmer.

“What sort of pay is that?—which she gives, and does not mean to give, and you take and do not ask for?”

“O!—*that* sort of pay!” said Daisy. “Is it *that* sort you mean, Dr. Sandford?”

“That is one sort.”

“But I mean, is it the sort that you always give, you say?”

“Always, when people deserve it. And then, do you not think it is natural to wish to give them, if you can, some other sort of pay?”

“I think it is,” said Daisy sedately.

“I am glad you do not disapprove of it.”

“But I do not think people *want* that other kind of pay. Dr. Sandford.”

“Perhaps not. I suppose it is a selfish gratification of oneself to give it.”

Daisy looked so earnestly and so curiously at him, as if to see what all this was about, that the doctor must have had good command of his lips not to smile again.

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They went in to dinner just then and the conversation stopped. But though not talked to, Daisy was looked after; and when she had forgotten all about dinner and was thinking mournfully of what was going on at home, a slice of roast beef or a nice peach would come on her plate with a word from the doctor—“You are to eat that, Daisy”—and though he said no more, somehow Daisy always chose to obey him. At last they went into the drawing-room again and were drinking coffee. Daisy was somewhat comforted; she thought Dr. Sandford did not act as if there were anything very dreadful the matter at home.

“Daisy,” said the doctor, “you have done work for me to-day—would you object to be paid?”

Daisy looked up smiling; it depended on what the pay might be, she thought; but she said nothing.

“Would it be violently against your principles?”

“I do not want pay, Dr. Sandford.”

“Not if I were to offer to give you a sight of those little baskets on the frond of the *Marchantia*?”

Daisy’s face all changed; but she said in the quietest manner, “Can you do that, Dr. Sandford?”

“Come with me.”

He held out his hand, which Daisy willingly took, and they went up stairs together. Just short of her room the doctor stopped, and turned into his own. This was a very plain apartment; there was no beauty of furniture, though it struck Daisy there was a great deal of something. There were boxes, and cabinets, and shelves full of books and boxes, and bookcases, and one or two tables. Yet it was not a pretty-looking room, like the others in Mrs. Sandford’s house. Daisy was a little disappointed. The doctor however gave her a chair, and then brought one of the unlikely deal boxes to the table and opened it. Daisy forgot everything. There appeared a polished, very odd brass machine, which the doctor took out and spent some time in adjusting. Daisy patiently looked on.

“Do you know what this is, Daisy?”

“No, sir.”

“It is a microscope. And looking through this, you will see what you could not see with your two eyes alone; there are some strong magnifying glasses here—and I found to-

day some plants of Marchantia growing in a sheltered place. Here is one of the baskets for you—"

"Is it on that bit of green leaf?"

"Yes, but you can see nothing there. Try this view."

[Illustration]

He stood back and helped Daisy to take a kneeling position in her chair, so that her eye could reach the eye-piece of the microscope. Daisy looked, took her eye away to give a wondering glance of inquiry at her friend's face, and then applied it to the microscope again; a pink hue of delight actually spreading over her poor little pale cheeks. It was so beautiful, so wonderful. Again Daisy took her eye away to examine out of the glass the coarse little bit of green leaf that lay upon the stand; and looked back at the show in the microscope with a bewitched mind. It seemed as if she could never weary of looking from one to the other. The doctor bade her take her own time, and Daisy took a good deal.

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“What stuffs did you buy this morning?” the doctor asked. Daisy drew back from the microscope.

“I got all you told me, sir?”

“Exactly. I forget what that was.”

“I bought a little piece of red and green linsey-woolsey for a frock for the little girl—and some brown strong stuff for the boy’s suit; and then white muslin to make things for the girl, and blue check for the boy’s shirt.”

“Just right. Did your money hold out?”

“O I had three dollars and two shillings left, Dr. Sandford. Two shillings and sixpence, I believe.”

“You did well.” The doctor was arranging something else in the microscope. He had taken out the bit of liverwort.

“I had Juanita to help me,” said Daisy.

“How do you suppose I am going to get all those things made up?” said the doctor.

“Won’t Mrs. Sandford attend to it?”

“Mrs. Sandford has her own contribution to attend to. I do not wish to give her mine too.”

“Cannot the children’s mother make the things?”

The doctor’s lip curled in funny fashion.

“They have no mother, I think. There is an old aunt, or grandmother, or something, that does *not* take care of the children. I shall not trust the business certainly to her.”

Daisy wondered a little that Mrs. Sandford, who was so good-natured, could not do what was needful; but she said nothing.

“I think I shall turn over the whole thing in charge to you, Daisy?”

“But, Dr. Sandford, what can *I* do?”

“Drive down with me to-morrow and see how big the children are, and then have the things made.”

“But I am afraid I do not know enough.”

“I dare say you can find out. *I* do not know enough—that is very certain; and I have other things to attend to besides overseeing mantua-makers.”

“Our seamstress could do it,—if I could see her.”

“Very well, then some other seamstress can. Now, Daisy—you may look at this.”

“What a beautiful thing! But what is it, Dr. Sandford?”

“What does it look like?”

“It does not look like anything that I ever saw.”

“It is a scale from a butterfly’s wing.”

“Why, it is as large as a small butterfly,” said Daisy.

The doctor shewed her where the little scale lay, so little that she could hardly see it out of the glass; and Daisy went back to the contemplation of its magnified beauty with immense admiration. Then her friend let her see the eye of a bee, and the tongue of a fly, and divers other wonders, which kept Daisy busy until an hour which was late for her. Busy and delightfully amused.

CHAPTER XXI.

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One day passed after another, and Daisy looked longingly for her summons home, and still she did not receive it. Her fears and agonies were somewhat quieted; because Dr. Sandford assured her that her father was getting better; but he never said that her father was well, or that he had not been very ill. Daisy knew that the matter had been very serious that had prevented her being at Melbourne all these days. Her imaginings of evil were doubtful and dim; but it seemed to her that her father himself would have commanded her presence in all ordinary circumstances; and a doubt like an ice-wind sometimes swept over her little spirit, whether he could be too ill to know of her absence! No word that could, be said would entirely comfort Daisy while this state of things lasted; and it was very well for her that she had a wise and energetic friend watching over her welfare, in the meanwhile. If business could keep her from pining and hinder her from too much imagining, Dr. Sandford took care that she had it. He contrived that she should indeed oversee the making of the dresses for the poor children, and it was a very great charge for Daisy. A great responsibility; it lay on her mind for days, and gave occasion for a number of drives to Crum Elbow and to Juanita's cottage. Then at evening, after hearing her report progress, the doctor would take Daisy up to his room, and shew her many a wonder and beauty that little Daisy had never dreamed of before; and the friendship between the two grew closer than ever.

"Grant, you are a good fellow!" said Mrs. Sandford one night. "I do not know what I should do with that child, if it were not for you."

"You would do nothing. She would not be here if it were not for me."

"I do not suppose, however, that your care for her is dictated by a conscientious regard for that fact. It is good of you."

"She is my patient, Mrs. Sandford."

"Yes, yes; *im*patient would be the word with some young men."

"I am glad you do not class me with such young men."

"Well, no child ever gave less cause for impatience, I will say that. Nor had more. Poor child! How she looks at you every day when you come home! But I suppose you doctors get hard hearts."

Dr. Sandford's lips curled a little into one of the smiles that Daisy liked, but he said nothing.

Daisy did look hard at her friend those days, but it was only when he came home. So she was not expecting anything the next morning when he said to her,

"Daisy—will you take a ride with me?"

Daisy looked up. The doctor was sitting by the breakfast-table, poring over a newspaper. Breakfast was done, and Daisy herself busy with a book. So she only answered,

“If you please, Dr. Sandford.”

“Where shall we go?”

Daisy looked surprised. “I supposed you had business, sir.”

“So I have. I am going to visit a patient. Perhaps you would like to make the visit with me.”

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“To one of your patients, Dr. Sandford?”

“Yes, one. Not more than one. But I think that one would like to see you.”

A light came into Daisy’s face, and colour started upon her cheeks, almost painfully.

“Dr. Sandford—do you mean—”

“I think so, Daisy,” said her friend quietly. “It will do no harm,—if you are a good child.”

He was so quiet, that it stilled Daisy’s feeling, which else might have been impetuous. There was danger of that, as the child’s eye and cheek bore witness. But she only said, “I’ll get ready, Dr. Sandford—” and went off in orderly style till she reached the hall and was out of sight. Then Daisy’s feet made haste up the stairs. In three minutes she was back again, with her hat and gloves in her hand.

The doctor threw down his newspaper and drew her up to him.

“Daisy, can you be quiet?”

“I think so, Dr. Sandford.”

“I think so too; therefore I tell you beforehand that I wish it. Your father has not fully recovered his strength yet; and it would not be good for him to be excited. You will be very glad to see him, and he will be very glad to see you; that is quite enough; and it would be too much, if you were to shew him *how* glad you are.”

Daisy said nothing, but she thought within herself she could not do that!

“Can you command yourself, Daisy?”

“I will try, Dr. Sandford.”

“You *must* do it—for my sake,” added the doctor.

“Dr. Sandford,” said Daisy, “was that what you meant?”

“When?”

“When you said, if I was a good child?”

“It must have been that I meant, I think. I could have said it in no other connection.”

“The pony-chaise, ma’am, for Miss Randolph—” said a servant at the door.

“The chaise may go away again, Daisy, I suppose,” said Mrs. Sandford. “You will not want it.”

“Yes, she will,” said the doctor,—“to drive to Melbourne. Go, Daisy, since you are ready; I will follow you. That little waddling fellow can be overtaken without any great difficulty.”

“Do you want me to drive slowly, sir?”

“Not at all,” said the doctor; “only drive well, for I shall come and see.”

If ever a little pride in her driving accomplishments had lodged in Daisy’s mind, she certainly did not feel it that afternoon. She drove without knowing very well how she drove; she did not think of Dr. Sandford’s criticism, or admiration; what she thought of, was the miles of the road to Melbourne.

They were not very many, and unconsciously the eager spirit in Daisy’s fingers made itself known to Loupe’s understanding, through the medium of the reins. He travelled better than usual, so that they were not more than half way from Melbourne when the doctor’s gig overtook them. And then Loupe went better yet.

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“Remember, Daisy, and keep quiet—” said the doctor as he took her out of the chaise. Daisy trembled, but she followed him steadily through the hall and up the stairs and into her father’s room. Then she went before him, yet even then she went with a moderated step, and stood by her father’s couch at last silent and breathless. Breathless with the very effort she made to keep silent and quiet. With excitement too; for Mr. Randolph was looking feeble and pale, more than Daisy had ever seen him, and it frightened her. He was not in bed but on a sofa and as Daisy came to his side he put out his arm and drew his little daughter close to him. Without a word at first and Daisy stooped her lips to his, and then stood hiding her face on his shoulder; perfectly quiet, though trembling with contained emotion, and not daring to say anything lest she should say too much.

“Daisy,” said her father,—“Daisy,—do you know I have been ill?”

There was a little, little tone of surprise or disappointment in the voice. Daisy felt it, knew it, but what could she do? She was afraid to speak to say anything. She turned her face a little to Dr. Sandford; he saw an agony struggling in the eye that appealed to him. This was not what he wanted.

“She knows it almost too well,” he said, coming to the rescue; “I have been her gaoler all these days; a severe one.”

“Are you glad to see me, Daisy?” said Mr. Randolph.

Daisy half raised herself, half glanced at his face, and turning from him threw herself upon Dr. Sandford’s arm with a cry and gave way to a deep passion of weeping. Deep and still; her sobs could not but be heard, but they were kept under as much as the heaving of that little breast could bear. Mr. Randolph’s pale face flashed; and the doctor saw that his precautions had been too good.

“Why Daisy!” he said lightly, “is this your self-command?”

“Let me have her—” said Mr. Randolph. “Self-command is a good thing, doctor; but people may have too much of it.”

And getting hold of Daisy’s hand, which the doctor brought within his reach, he again drew the sobbing child to his breast and folded her close in both his arms. The sobs were very soon hushed; but during all the rest of the doctor’s visit and through all the conversation that took place, Daisy and her father never changed their position. The conversation indeed was not much, being confined to a few quiet questions and answers and remarks; and then Dr. Sandford took his departure, leaving Daisy very unconscious of his movements. He only waved his hand to Mr. Randolph, with a smile at Daisy who did not see him.

“Daisy—my darling—” said Mr. Randolph, when he was gone.

“Papa!—” came in a whisper.

“What is the matter?”

Daisy lifted her face from its resting place and kissed, with kisses that were like velvet, first one side of her father’s mouth and then the other.

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“Papa—Dr. Sandford told me I must keep quiet.”

“Well, you shall,” said Mr. Randolph. “That is right enough. You shall keep quiet, and I will go to sleep.”

So he did. But he did not loose his hold of Daisy; and she lay, still as happiness could make her, with her head upon his breast. She knew, she was conscious, that he must be very feeble yet, to go to sleep in that way; but she was with him again, and in his arms, and her heart was so full of joy that it could do nothing but overflow in silent thanksgivings and prayers. Daisy would not have stirred till he did, no matter how long it might have been; but there came an interruption. A door opened, and Mrs. Randolph appeared on the threshold, and so soon as she saw Daisy beckoned her to come to another room. Mr. Randolph’s arms had relaxed their hold somewhat, and Daisy obeyed the signal and left him.

Her mother wanted then to know all the story of her days at Mrs. Sandford’s; and Daisy had a good deal to tell. That is, Mrs. Randolph’s questionings made it so. Daisy herself would not have had it a long story. Then, she must see June, and Joanna; and then came dinner. It was not till the afternoon was well passed that the call came for her to go to her father again. Daisy had watched and waited for it; her mother had forbidden her to go in without it. At last she was sent for, and Daisy sprang away.

Mrs. Randolph was there.

“No noise!—remember,” she said, lifting her finger as Daisy came in. Daisy came near slowly. Her father held out his hand to her, and folded her in his arms again.

“You are such a noisy child!” he said,—“your mother does wisely to warn you.”

“She is an excitable child,”—said Mrs. Randolph;—“and I think you want warning too.”

“We will keep each other quiet,” said Mr. Randolph.

The lady looked on, with what seemed a doubtful eye. Nobody watched it. Her husband’s eyes were often closed; Daisy’s little head lay on his breast, quiet enough, unless when she moved it to give soft noiseless kisses to her father’s cheek. They remained so a good while, with scarce any word spoken; and Mrs. Randolph was busy at her tetting. The light faded; the evening drew on.

“It is time for Daisy’s tea.” It was the first thing that broke a long silence.

“She and I will have it together,” said Mr. Randolph.

“Will that be best for you, Mr. Randolph?”

“I hope so.”

“I doubt it.”

“Most things in this world are doubtful,” said Mr. Randolph; “but we will try.”

“Will you choose to have tea now, then?”

“Now?—no.”

“This is Daisy’s time.”

“Very well. She must wait for my time.”

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Not a word did Daisy say; only little alternate throbs of joy and fear, as her father or her mother spoke, passed through her heart. Mrs. Randolph gave it up; and there was another hour of quiet, very sweet to Daisy. Then lights were brought, and again Mrs. Randolph proposed, to have the tea served; but again Mr. Randolph negatived her proposal; and things remained as they were. At last Mrs. Randolph was summoned to preside at the tea-table down stairs; for even now there were one or two guests at Melbourne. Then there was a stir in the room up stairs. The tray came with Mr. Randolph's supper; and Daisy had the delight of sharing it and of being his attendant in chief. He let her do what she would; and without being unquiet, Daisy and her father enjoyed themselves over that entertainment.

"Now I think I could bear a little reading," said Mr. Randolph, as he laid his head back on his couch.

"What, papa?" said Daisy, a sudden hope starting into some dark corner of her heart, almost without her knowing it.

"What?—what you please."

"Shall I read what, I like, papa?"

"Yes. If I do not like it, I will tell you."

Daisy ran away and flew through the rooms to her own, and there hastily sought her Bible. She could not wait to get another; she took her own and ran back softly with it. Her father's languid eye watched the little white figure coming towards him, book in hand; the gentle eager step, the slight flush on the cheek; till she took her seat beside him.

"What have you got there, Daisy?" he asked.

"Papa—my Bible."

"Well—what are you going to read?"

"I don't know, papa—" said Daisy doubtfully. What would come next?

"Do you remember your picture, the 'Game of Life'?"

"Yes, papa."

"Do you remember your talk about good and evil spirits?"

"Yes, sir."

“Find me the grounds of your philosophy.”

Daisy thought what that might mean, and guessed at it. She turned to the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, a favourite chapter, and read the parable of the sheep and the goats. The servant had withdrawn; Daisy and her father were alone. There was a moment’s pause when she had done.

“Is that all?” said Mr. Randolph.

“That is all of *this*, papa.”

“There is nothing there about the rejoicings of the good spirits,”—said Mr. Randolph.

Daisy’s fingers trembled, she hardly knew why, as she turned over the leaves to find the place. Her father watched her.

“Are you sure it is there, Daisy?”

“O yes, papa—it is in the story of the man with a hundred sheep—I will find it directly.”

So she did, and read the parable in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. Her father listened with shut eyes, while the child’s voice gave the words in a sort of sweet clear gravity.

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"'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with, me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'"

There Daisy stopped, and there was silence. Presently her father opened his eyes. He saw that hers were full, but they were not looking at her book, neither at him; they were gazing away at the light, with an intent, very serious expression.

"Daisy!—" said her father.

She came back instantly to a sweet happy look at him.

"What were you studying?"

"Papa!—I was thinking—"

"What were you thinking?"

"I was thinking, papa," said Daisy unwillingly,—"how strange it is that anybody should try to *hide himself from God*."

She started a little and rose up, for her mother stood on the other side of the light now. Mrs. Randolph's voice was a note belonging to another chord.

"Daisy, it is your bedtime."

"Yes, mamma."

Mr. Randolph made no attempt to hinder his wife's arrangements this time. Daisy exchanged a very tender good-night with him and then went away. But she went away very happy. She thought she saw good days coming.

There were good days that followed that one, for a while. Daisy's readings and sweet companionship with her father were constant, and grew sweeter as he grew stronger.

But the strengthening process was not rapid. About a fortnight had passed, when Mrs. Sandford one day made enquiry about it of her brother-in-law.

“Slow work—” said the doctor.

“He will get over it, won’t he?”

“I hope he will.”

“But cannot anything be done for him, Grant?”

“He is going to do the best thing. He is going to Europe.”

“To Europe!—This winter?”

“Now, in a few weeks, or less.”

“It will be good for your pet Daisy.”

“Doubtfully—” said the doctor with a very complicated expression of face; but he was taking off his boot at the moment, and maybe it pinched him. “She will not go.”

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“Not go! Daisy! Does not her mother go?”

“Yes.”

“And not Daisy? Why not Daisy?”

“She gives so much trouble—” said the doctor.

“Trouble!—I thought her parents were so fond of her.”

“Mr. Randolph is unequal to any agitation; and Mrs. Randolph regulates everything.”

“But wouldn’t it be good for Daisy?”

“I think so.”

“Poor child! What will they do with her?”

“Send her to a Southern plantation, under care of a governess, as I understand.”

“It will half kill Daisy,” said Mrs. Sandford.

“It takes a great deal to kill people,” said the doctor.

“I do not know how to believe you,” said the lady. “Is it all fixed and settled. Grant?”

“They leave Melbourne next week.”

THE END.