

What Two Children Did eBook

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Contents

What Two Children Did eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	14
Page 6.....	16
Page 7.....	18
Page 8.....	20
Page 9.....	22
Page 10.....	24
Page 11.....	26
Page 12.....	28
Page 13.....	30
Page 14.....	32
Page 15.....	34
Page 16.....	36
Page 17.....	38
Page 18.....	40
Page 19.....	42
Page 20.....	44
Page 21.....	46
Page 22.....	48



Page 23..... 50

Page 24..... 52

Page 25..... 54

Page 26..... 56

Page 27..... 58

Page 28..... 60

Page 29..... 63

Page 30..... 65

Page 31..... 67

Page 32..... 69

Page 33..... 71

Page 34..... 73

Page 35..... 75

Page 36..... 77

Page 37..... 79

Page 38..... 81

Page 39..... 83

Page 40..... 85

Page 41..... 87

Page 42..... 89

Page 43..... 91

Page 44..... 93

Page 45..... 95

Page 46..... 97

Page 47..... 99

Page 48..... 101



[Page 49..... 103](#)

[Page 50..... 105](#)

[Page 51..... 107](#)

[Page 52..... 109](#)

[Page 53..... 111](#)

[Page 54..... 113](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
What Two Children Did		1
ADVERTISEMENTS		50
		50
		51
		51
		52
		52
THE BUNGALOW BOYS.		53
Works of J.T. Trowbridge		53
		53
		53
Oliver Optic Books		54



Page 1

What Two Children Did

CHAPTER I On the Way

In the train we're watching
Outdoors speeding by:
Endless moving pictures,
Framed by earth and sky.

"Mistakes are very easy to make, I think," said Ethelwyn, with an uneasy look at her mother who sat opposite, thinking hard about something. The reason Ethelwyn knew her mother was thinking, was because at such times two little lines came and stood between her eyes, like sentinels.

"Do you think God made a mistake when He sent us here?" asked Beth.

They were in a Pullman car which was moving rapidly along in the darkness. Inside it was very bright and beautiful, and would have been most interesting to the children, had it not been for those two lines in their dear mother's face.

"She is thinking about the naughty things we have done," said Ethelwyn to Beth in a tragic tone, at the same time taking a mournful bite out of a large, sugary cookie. They had eaten steadily since starting, and any one who did not understand children, would have been alarmed at possible consequences.

On the seat between them there was a hospitable-looking basket with a handle over the middle and two covers that opened on either side of the handle. Underneath the covers and the napkins the children, entirely to their joy, had found sandwiches without limit. Some were cut round, others square, and all were without crust; inside they found minced chicken, creamy and delicious, also ham and a little mustard, and best of all were the small, brown squares with peanut butter between.

"It's like Christmas or a birthday, having these sandwiches," said Ethelwyn. "They're all different and all good, and each one seems better than the others."

Then they began on the cookies, and bit scallops out of the edges, while between times they thought about their last mistake and their mother's forehead lines.

Sitting up straight against the velvet cushioned seat, the two children looked about the same age; the two heads were nearly on a level, as were both pairs of feet stuck out straight in front of them; but Ethelwyn's came a little farther out than Beth's, and her golden head came a little farther up on the seat than Beth's dark one.



Just now there was a small cloud on their horizon. Although they found the interior of their palace car, the porter, and the passengers, fascinating, and the luncheon an endless feast, they both felt that before they slept they must straighten things out; hence their first question.

Mrs. Rayburn came back presently to a realizing consciousness of the two anxious faces opposite hers, and with a smile dismissed the sentinel lines.

“God never makes mistakes,” said she, with refreshing faith and emphasis. “It is we who do that.”

“I think,” said Beth, slowly pondering on this, “that the old surplus in the garden of Eden who bothered Adam and Eve has something to do with it.”



Page 2

“Serpent, child,” said Ethelwyn crushingly, beginning on cake.

“Surplus, I mean,” said Beth, getting out a piece of cake for herself. “I’d give a good deal, sister, if you wouldn’t always count your chickens before they’re hatched!” Whereupon she climbed down and went over to sit by her mother, where she glared indignantly at her sister. Her dear “bawheady” doll was in her arms.

This doll was so called because early in life he had lost his wig, and thereby developed a capability for being a baby, a bishop, or a boy. There was a fascinating hole on top of his head, thus making it possible to secrete things like medicine or food until they were fished out with a buttonhook or darning needle. He was fed on cake now, but was generally given crusts, when there were any, because Beth did not like them.

“Why did you ask that question?” asked their mother.

“We thought you looked as though we’d made you an awful lot of trouble,” said Ethelwyn, regarding the gorgeous ceiling of the car.

“Yes, you did, although I was not thinking of it just then; you ran away—”

“Walked, mother,” corrected Beth, “to the ’lectric car, with grandmother’s gold dollar, to go down to buy a trunk specially for our dolls—”

“It was fun, mother,” put in Ethelwyn, “only when we stood up and fussed to see who’d push the button to get off, the man slowed up so fast we both fell through a fat man’s newspaper into his lap and upon his toes. He was angry too, for he just said ‘ugh,’ when we asked him to excuse us, please. The trunk man gave us back four big silver nickels with the trunk; we put them inside, and you can have them, mother, to help heal your feelings.”

“Your mistake was in not asking—”

“We thought you’d better not be ’sturbed, ’cause ever since grandpa and brother died, you’ve thought such a lot, and looked so worried—”

“But I was more worried about you when I found you weren’t in the house or grounds; I thought you might be lost, and I was about telephoning to the police station about it, when you came, and there was just time to catch the train.”

Then Ethelwyn got down, and went over to squeeze in on the other side of her mother. She knelt on the cushions and patted the dear face until the little smile they loved, came out again, and drove the care lines away.

“Children are such a worry, mother,” she said in a funny, prim fashion, “that I should think you’d be sorry you ever bought us.”



“But we are going to be good from now on, so good you’ll nearly die laughing,” said Beth, getting up to pat her side of the face.

Their mother laughed now in a bright fashion they loved, and squeezed them up tightly.

“No, no, chickens,” she said, “I’m never sorry I bought you; you were bargains, both of you, but I’ve had much to think of, and plan for, in the last few months, and perhaps I’ve neglected you somewhat.”



Page 3

“Can you tell us 'bout things, mother?” asked Ethelwyn. “P'raps we could help some.”

“Yes, I am going to, but not now, for the porter wishes to make up our beds.”

“There are stickers in my eyes,” said Beth, yawning. “There's one more question I'd like to know about though,” she said as they moved across the aisle. “If God can't make mistakes, why does He let it be so easy for folks to?”

“That I don't just know,” said her mother, “but it's a good sign when we know they are mistakes.”

It was only a short time after this that they were all asleep in their curtained beds, and while it was still dark, and the children were too sleepy to realize much about it, they reached their destination and were driven to the seashore, cottage where they were to spend the summer.

CHAPTER II At the Shore

Underneath the washing waves
The requiem of the sea,
For those whose hopes are buried there,
Is tolling ceaselessly.

It was interesting to go to sleep in a Pullman car, and to wake up in a dainty room hung with rosebud chintz draperies, and with an altogether delightful air of coziness about it.

But there was something outside their room that, like a magnet, drew them out of bed. They climbed on chairs, and gazed eagerly out of the windows.

The house they were in, was on a hill. Pine trees grew near, and there below them and very near, was the great silvery blue sea, with the sunshine flashing on its tossing waves? The children gasped with delight.

“It's another door to Paradise,” said Ethelwyn.

“The gold place that shows where the sun sets is another one,” said Elizabeth. Then they heard their mother, who had come in quietly, and in a moment was cuddling them up in her arms.

“We've lost a lot of time, I'm afraid,” said Ethelwyn after they had given her a bear hug and a kiss.

“That ocean is the prettiest thing, mother. P'raps that's the way to Paradise where father and grandfather and brother have gone.”



“Yes,” said their mother, helping them into their clothes. “It is one of the ways.”

“Tell us about this place, please,” begged Ethelwyn, “and how we happened to come to such a de-lic-i-ous place. Will you have to work so hard, motherdy, here? And will the little lines come between your eyes?” Whereupon Elizabeth at once abandoned to their fate, her harness garters with their many buckles, and climbed up to see. Yes, the lines had gone, and she kissed the place to make sure before she climbed down again.

“Hoty potys is the twissedest things,” she remarked, worse tangled than ever.

“Hose supporters, dear child,” corrected Ethelwyn with the exasperating air that always roused Beth’s wrath.

“This cottage,” mother hastened to say, while she untangled the buckles with one hand and buttoned Ethelwyn’s waist with the other, “belongs to Mrs. Stevens and her daughter, Dorothy. I have known them for years. Recently they wrote asking me to bring you children and come to them for the summer; they, too, were lonely, and they knew that I needed rest, quiet, and time to plan for the future. There are few people living here but fisher folk—”



Page 4

“Christ's people?”

“Yes, like them in trade, at least. They are poor and need help—”

“Are we rich people now, and can we buy things for them?”

“Your grandfather left you a great deal of money, children, and you must learn to use it generously. It was his wish, and mine, that you should begin at once to think about such things before you learn to love money for its own sake, and what it will buy.”

“O, we don't care at all, do we, sister?” said Beth, stretching up on tiptoe to get her “bawheady” from the bureau. “We'd just as lief give it away as not, 'cause we've always you, mother dear.”

“Is the money more than grandmother's gold dollar?” asked Ethelwyn.

“Much more.”

“O, then we'll have fun spending it for folks; I'd like to. But, oh, I'm hungrier than I ever was before.”

“Me, too,” said Beth. “I feel a great big appeltite inside me.”

They decided at once that the dining-room also was charming, with its cheery open fire of snapping pine knots, for the air outside was chilly. Then, too, there was a parrot on a pole, who greeted them with, “Well, well, well, what's all this? Did you ever?”

Miss Dorothy Stevens had the kind of face that children take to at once. There never could be any question about Aunty Stevens, who laughed every time they said anything, and who on top of their excellent breakfast, brought them in some most delicious cookies—just the kind you would know she could make, sugary and melty, entirely perfect, in fact,—to take down on the beach for luncheon.

After breakfast was over they at once started for the beach. Sierra Nevada, their colored nurse, following them with small buckets, shovels, wraps, and cushions.

“Mother, this is the nicest place, and I love the Stevenses; but why are they sad around the eyes, and dressed in black, like you? Has their father gone to Paradise too?” asked Ethelwyn, as they walked along.

“Yes, dear. Besides, the young captain whom Dorothy was going to marry went away last year and, his ship was wrecked and he has never been heard from. So they fear he was drowned.”

“O, mother, can this pretty sea do that? What was it they were saying about a tide?”



Their mother tried to explain all she knew about the tides, and when she had finished, Ethelwyn said:

“I think it would be easier to remember to call it tied, and then untied.”

CHAPTER III Beth and Her Dolls

Dollie's poor mother is quite full of care,
As she who lived in a shoe,
For this child is tousled, this one undressed—
Mother has all she can do.
More dollies there are, than possible clothes,
Some of them must go to bed.
And some to be healed by mother with glue,
Lacking an arm or a head.
Then others, wearing the invalid's clothes,
Care not a fling or a jot
Nor know that to-morrow their own fate may be
The bed, or the mucilage pot.



Page 5

The first Sunday that the children were at the seashore was warm and beautiful.

Mrs. Rayburn and Mrs. Stevens went to church in the picturesque stone chapel built by a sea captain, as a memorial to his daughter who was drowned on the coast some years before this.

"We'll be really better girls to stay at home some of the church time," said Ethelwyn at breakfast, "we'll go this evening with Miss Dorothy."

"My dolls are needing a bath and their best clothes for Sunday-school," said Beth to Ethelwyn, who had decided to go down on the beach; "and I can do it all comfy and nice while you are gone."

So Ethelwyn and Vada went for a run on the beach, and mother Elizabeth, with a look of happy care on her face, and her beloved six dolls in her arms, came out on the porch, where she had already taken a basin of water, soap, a tiny sponge, and towels.

Directly she became aware of some one near her, and looking up saw a girl with dark eyes and short, straight hair watching the proceedings with much interest, her hands clasped behind her back.

"My name is Nan," said the visitor as soon as she caught Elizabeth's eye, "Who are you? Is this your house? We've just come, and mother is in bed with a headache, and father's gone to church, so I'm roaming around seeking something to devour—"

"Does that mean eat?" said Elizabeth, a scene in one of her picture books of lions devouring their prey coming into her mind.

"I think it's what my father calls a figure of speech. He's a minister—a clergyman, you know. We've come down here to board, and he's going to have the services in the Chapel of the Heavenly Rest. Mother's sick about always, so I have to roam around— Say, I know a game; let's baptize your children."

"They don't need it; they're not born in sin—"

"Everything is," emphatically. "Don't try to teach a minister's child things, for pity's sake. I'll do the baptizing. Come along."

The rainwater barrel, half sunken in the ground, was at one of the rear corners of the house.

"We are not allowed to play in that, I think," said Elizabeth uneasily.

"That doesn't mean me, I'm older'n you. Here, give me the doll without a wig."



Down went the beloved “bawheady” with a thud that carried desolation to Beth’s tender heart. Four others followed in quick succession before Beth could protest. Then clinging to Arabella, she started to run. Nan tried to run after her, but caught her foot on the barrel’s brim and straightway joined the five dolls. Elizabeth opened her mouth to shriek, when in an opportune moment, a young man appeared on the scene, and speedily fished out Miss Nan, who dripped and coughed and choked; inarticulate, but evidently wrathful sounds wrestled for utterance in her throat. At last she shook herself free.

“I’m perfectly degusted with this whole preformance,” she said as she went stalking off, dripping as she went.



Page 6

Then the young man laughed and laughed, until he became aware of Elizabeth wistfully staring at him.

“What is it?” he asked.

“My dolls. They’re baptized clear to the bottom; please get ’em out.”

“I’ll do it, if you will take this note to Miss Dorothy Stevens,” said the young man, at once throwing off his coat and pushing up his shirt sleeve. Beth, before she trotted off, saw that he had a blue anchor on his arm. When she came back, the rescued five lay stretched on the grass in a pathetic row, and she at once ran to her prostrate children.

“You are to go to the parlor and tell Miss Dorothy all about it,” she said, in passing, to their rescuer. “Your note made Miss Dorothy cry; and she was all white ’round her mouth. Thank you for the dolls,” she called as an afterthought.

So busy was she drying her afflicted family that it was some time after the others had reached home that ’Vada, wildly excited, came to find Elizabeth and to tell her that Miss Dorothy’s sweetheart had come back.

“From Paradise?” queried Beth, getting up at once and bristling all over with questions she wanted to ask him about that interesting place.

“Mighty nigh,” said ’Vada, rolling her eyes. “He was shipwrecked on the raging main, and hit on de head wid somefin that done knock all de sense out of him, so he’s pick up by some folks dat didn’t know ‘im, an’ he went cruisin’ aroun’, till he come to, and, by ’me by, back to see his sweetheart.”

Elizabeth went into the parlor later on, and stared so insistently at the young captain that her mother drew her gently to one side and whispered to her.

“But I’m anxious to see a sweetheart that has been in Paradise, mother,” she explained.

CHAPTER IV The Wedding

Bells ring,
Birds sing,
Every one is gay;
Hearts beat,
Chimes sweet,
On a bridal day.

It was one of the things for the children to remember always, that Miss Dorothy was married while they were there to help.



They helped so much in the matter of scraping all the cake and icing pans, stoning, and especially eating, raisins, that it was a wonder they were not ill.

The morning on which the wedding was to take place dawned as bright and golden as could be desired.

It was a very simple, pretty wedding in the stone chapel, towards which, in the early morning, the bridal party walked. Nan, Ethelwyn, and Elizabeth went ahead, bearing flowers, and after them came Miss Dorothy in her white gown, clinging to the arm of her sailor lover.

Mrs. Stevens and the children's mother, together with a few friends, awaited them in the pretty church, and Nan's father married them. They then all went to the bride's home for breakfast, immediately after which, the young couple were going away for a year. This fact, and the mother's sad face impaired the appetites of the guests, with three noble exceptions. The trio at the end of the table ate with zest and unimpaired enthusiasm, of the good things that they fondly believed might never have reached their present point of perfection had it not been for their skill.



Page 7

“Should you think,” Elizabeth paused to say, in a somewhat muffled voice, entirely owing to plum cake and not grief, “that one of us is married too?”

“My father,” returned Nan loftily, “is not given to making mistakes of that kind. There weren’t husbands enough to go ’round anyway.”

“What is a husband?”

“You’ve been helping make one, child, and you ask that!”

So Elizabeth concluded it was a small portion of the refreshments that had escaped her notice.

Afterwards they went down to the harbor from which the bride and groom were to sail.

“Like the owl and the pussy cat,” said Ethelwyn, cheerfully.

As they kissed their friend good-bye, they placed around her neck a pretty chain, hanging from which was a medallion with their pictures painted on it.

“You can look at us when you get lonesome,” suggested Beth.

The last good-bye was said, and they drove sadly home in a fine, drenching rain that had suddenly fallen like a veil over their golden day.

Vada had started the open fires and they were cheerfully cracking, while Polly from her pole croaked crossly, “Shut up, do! Quit making all that fuss!”

Mrs. Rayburn took Aunty Stevens away with her, and by and by in the afternoon, they found her tucked up on the couch in their sitting-room looking somewhat happier.

“Aren’t you glad you have us, and specially mother?” asked Beth, kissing her.

There was only one answer possible to this, and it was given with such emphasis that Ethelwyn nodded and said, “That’s the way we feel. Mother knows how to fix things right better’n anybody, unless it should be God.”

“Let’s sing awhile, sister, while mother thinks of a story or two,” suggested Beth.

So they squatted in front of the grate and sang,

“Chick-a-dee-dee, chick-a-dee-dee,
I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

Then they sang what they called “Precious Julias,”



“Little children who love Mary Deemer.”

“Why,” Beth stopped to ask, “does it say Precious Julias when it’s ’bout Mary Deemer, sister?”

“Middle name, prob’ly,” answered Ethelwyn; “anyway that’s Mary Deemer,” pointing to a picture of Murillo’s “Magdalene,” “and the reason that she’s loved by children, is because she is pretty and good. If you are good, Elizabeth, people will love you.”

“I’m as good as you are, anyway,” began Beth wrathfully, when she saw Nan in the doorway.

“May I come in?” she asked, wistfully. “Mother has a headache, father’s gone fishing in a boat, and I’ve a toothpick in my side.”

“Come in, deary,” said Mrs. Rayburn, who felt an infinite pity for sturdy little Nan, with her invalid mother. “Bless me, what cold hands! What’s this thing you have in your side?” she continued, cuddling Nan up in her lap.

Nan breathed a contented breath. “O, it’s gone now. It’s a sharp, pointed thing that sticks me when I’m lonesome.”



Page 8

"We're having Sunday-school, the singing part, and you may come if you're good, and know a verse, and won't baptize the Sunday-school," said Beth, multiplying conditions rapidly.

"I know a verse that father says he thinks ought to be in the Bible," said Nan.

"Let's not have Sunday-school," she continued, snuggling down on Mrs. Rayburn's shoulder. "It's so nice here, and I want to tell you 'bout my dream I had the other night. Dreamed I went to heaven awhile, and when I came home I slid down fifty miles of live wire and sissed all the way down like a hot flatiron."

"There's a gold crack in the sky now that shows a little weenty bit of Heaven's floor, I think, right now," said Ethelwyn, going to the west window.

They all followed her, and sure enough there was the gold of the sky shining through the misty rain clouds.

"Now, if God and the angels would just peek out a minute, I'd be thankful," said Elizabeth.

CHAPTER V The New Way

It's—hard—to—work—
And easy to play;
I'll tell you what we've done,
We play our work
And work our play,
And all the hard is gone.

The children were always glad when Mrs. Flaharty came to wash, for she was never too busy to talk to them, nor to let them wash dolls' clothes in some of her suds, nor, in her own way, to converse, and to explain things to them.

One Monday morning the two were in the back yard with gingham aprons tied around their waists for trails, and with one of Aunty Stevens' bright saucepans which they put on their heads in turn. In this rig, they felt that their appearance left little to be desired.

They were having literary exercises while Mrs. Flaharty was hanging the white clothes on the line, and, by reason of her exceeding interest in the proceedings, she took her time about it too.

In the midst of Ethelwyn's recitation of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," she paused to say, after, "The eager children cry,"

"What do you s'pose the silly things cried for?"



“Cause they didn’t have any lamb, prob’ly,” promptly replied Elizabeth from the audience, where she sat surrounded by her dolls. “Hurry up, sister, it’s my turn.”

“Is it ager, children, you’re askin’ about?” asked Mrs. Flaharty, flopping out a sheet. “If you’d ever had the ager, what wid the pain in your bones an’ the faver in your blood, you’d be likely to cry—whin you had the stren’t’h.”

“Is it shaking ager?” asked Elizabeth doubtfully. “Oh, I didn’t know that. Come and sit down on the steps, Mrs. Flaharty, and I’ll tell a story I made up for this special ’casion.”

“It’s troo wid the white does I am, an’ I reckon I can sit and take me breath before I begin on the colored; besides, I’d have to be takin’ away the foine costumes ye has roun’ your waists, if I wint now.” So Mrs. Flaharty sat down ponderously.



Page 9

“I’ve a poem, too,” said Ethelwyn, taking her place in the audience, and Elizabeth began:

“Once there was a little boy whose father was cross to him, and kept him home all the while, and when he let him go anywhere, he said he ‘mustn’t’ and ‘don’t’ so much, it spoiled all his fun. Once the boy went in the woods where lived a fairy prince. ‘Go not near the fairy prince,’ had said the boy’s father so much that the boy thought he’d die if he did. So the fairy prince looked over the back fence and said, ‘Avast there,’ so the boy avasted as fast as he could. ‘I’m in trouble,’ said the fairy prince. ‘What about?’ said the boy. ‘I can walk only on one foot till somebody cuts off my little toe,’ said the prince.

“So the boy did it with his father’s razor, and it thundered and lightened, and his father came and scolded over the back fence, but the prince waved his magic cut toe; then they all banged and went up on a Fourth of July sky rocket, till the father fell off and bumped all his crossness out of him, and like birds of a fever, they all lived togever afterwards.”

“The saints be praised,” said Mrs. Flaharty, fanning herself with her apron.

Then Ethelwyn came forward. “This is my poem,” she said, bowing to the audience.

“A little girl lived way down East,
She rose and rose, like bread with yeast,
She rose above the tallest people,
And far above the highest steeple.
She kept right on till by and by
She took a peek into the sky—”

“Oh, what did she see?” asked Elizabeth, interested at once.

“That you can guess,” replied the poet with dignity. “Mother says she likes poems and pictures that you can put something into from your own something or other, I forget what—you let folks guess about it.”

“My sister is smart,” complacently remarked Elizabeth to Nan, who had just come over.

“So am I, then,” said Nan, not to be outdone. “I can make up beautiful poems.”

“Let’s hear one.”

So Nan came forward, bowed profoundly and began:

“I have a little kitty,
Who is so very pretty,



Tho' growing large and fat,
I fear she'll be a cat.
One day, my sakes, she saw a dog,
Her tail swelled up just like a log;
He barked, she spit,
She does not love dogs, not a bit."

"What color is she?" asked Ethelwyn.

"That is left for your guessing part," said Nan promptly.

Mrs. Flaharty now reluctantly arose.

"It's a trate to hear ye," she said, "but I mus' git troo, and go home. There's a spindlin' lad named Dick nex' door but wan to where I live, that can walk only wid a crutch an' not able to do that lately. He'd be cheered entoirely wid your rhymes an' tales."

"O, maybe mother'll take us to see him this afternoon. We'll ask her. She's intending to go down that way herself, I know, and she'll be so good to Dick; she just can't help it," said Ethelwyn, and at once they dashed off to see, leaving the saucepan crown rolling down the yard, and their gingham aprons lying on the steps.



Page 10

CHAPTER VI A Plan

It's nice to get gifts,
But better to give:
For giving leaves always a glow
That warms up a part
In every heart;
The joy of it never can go.

There was woe in Ethelwyn's heart and pain in her throat, and the woe was on account of the pain; for Elizabeth and her mother had gone to town to arrange things for Dick, who was to be taken to the hospital, where he was to undergo an operation that would, in all probability cure him. And now Ethelwyn, ever desirous of being at the head and front of things, had taken this wretched cold and could not go.

Very shortly after Mrs. Flaharty had told them about Dick, their mother had taken them to see him. His home was a long way from their cottage, where the fisher people lived, and the sights and smells in the hot summer air were hard to bear even for those who were well. Poor little Dick, lying day after day on his hard bed, with no care except what the kind-hearted washerwoman could give him, felt that life was an ill thing at best, and he was fast hastening out of it, with the assistance of ill nutrition and bad ventilation. Dick's own mother and father were dead, and his stepmother, a rough-looking creature, when she remembered him at all, looked upon him as a useless encumbrance, and by her neglect was making him very unhappy.

Ethelwyn and Elizabeth, quite unused to suffering of this sort, sat soberly by, during their first visit, and watched their mother bending tenderly over the feeble little invalid, and ministering to his needs.

In a week's time they had changed things marvelously. The stepmother had, for a sum that meant a great deal to her, relinquished all claim upon Dick, so he was placed in the care of a sewing woman, who, by reason of rheumatism in her fingers, could not sew any more; and she filled the starving sore spot in her childless heart with a loving devotion to Dick. The sum paid her for this care kept them both in comfort, and Dick, with flowers and birds about him, and with wholesome, dainty food, gradually lost his gaunt, hunted look and began to take a fresh hold of life.

The doctor attending him gave it as his opinion that in one of the city hospitals the little fellow might be cured, and it was to see about this that Elizabeth and her mother had gone to town.

The night before they were all in their sitting-room, talking it over. Aunty Stevens, who was greatly interested, had brought her knitting and joined them.



“It would be a lovely work,” said Mrs. Rayburn, thoughtfully looking at the fire, “to make a home for Dick and many such poor little weaklings, somewhere up on these heights where, with fresh air and good, well-cooked food, they could have a fighting chance for life.”

“There’s our money,” said Ethelwyn, cuddling her hand in her mother’s. “Let’s make one with it.”

“Would you like that?”

Page 11

“Yes, indeed we should,” they answered in a breath.

“But it would take a great deal of money, and instead of being very rich when you grow up, and being able to travel everywhere and have beautiful clothing and jewels, you might have to give up many things of that sort.”

“But,” said Elizabeth, climbing up into her mother’s lap, “isn’t doing things for poor children like Dick, better than that?”

“There’s no doubt about it,” said their mother, her eyes shining as she kissed the tops of the two round heads now cuddled on her shoulders, in what Beth called her “arm cuddles.”

“Well, we don’t mind then, do we, sister?”

“No indeed,” said sister promptly, kicking her foot out towards the fire. “Dresses are a bother, and always getting torn, and traveling makes you very tired, only the luncheon’s nice. But I’d lots rather build a home.”

“Let’s see,” said mother, “if you are as ready to give up something now. Elizabeth’s birthday is next week and Ethelwyn’s next month. I had thought we might take a short yachting trip,—all of us, Nan, Aunty Stevens—”

“O, mother,” they cried, turning around to hug her.

“Then there is a doll in town that can walk and talk. Beth, deary, you choke me so I can’t talk;—and a camera for sister. Would you mind giving up these things to help pay the hospital expenses, or to buy a wheel chair or some comfort for Dick?”

Down went the heads again, and dead silence reigned except for the crackling of the fire and the clicking of Aunty Stevens’ needles.

“May we go away and think it over?” said Ethelwyn soberly.

“Yes.”

So they slid down and disappeared to think it out alone, as they always did when obliged to settle questions for themselves. Ethelwyn went outdoors, and crawled into the hammock on the porch. The wind blew mistily from the sea and was heavy with dampness and cold, but the child paid no attention to that; she was so busy thinking. Surely, she thought, there was money enough for Dick and the others without giving up her camera and the sea trip. She had longed for a camera all summer. Nan had the use of her mother’s and had taken their pictures in all places and positions, and she did so wish for one. But then, there was poor Dick, how uncomfortable he had looked.



Elizabeth, meantime, went to the bedside of her beloved doll family. They were lying serene and placid, exactly as she had placed and tucked them in at bedtime, with her own motherly hand, and the memory of Dick lying racked with pain on the comfortless bed where she had first seen him, almost decided her at once. But a doll that could walk and talk, though, would be lovely.

“But then, darlings,” she said, after a little, “you might think I would love her better than you, and you are such dears, you don’t deserve that.”

So Beth kissed them all with fervor, her mind quite made up.



Page 12

While they were away, Aunty Stevens said, "Isn't that a pretty hard test?"

The children's mother shook her head thoughtfully at the dancing fire.

"I hope not," she said. "I don't wish them to do things now that they will repent of afterwards. But it seems to me that if they are trained now to be unselfish, they will always be so. Don't you think, dear Mrs. Stevens, that the whole trouble with the world is its selfishness?"

"No doubt at all about it," said the older woman, nodding emphatically over her flying needles.

"Then if the world is to be made better, and rid of this, which lies at the bottom of all the crime, sin and unhappiness, the younger ones of us will have to be taught to sacrifice, at least some luxuries, to help give less fortunate ones the necessities of life," said Mrs. Rayburn, getting interested, and talking fast and earnestly.

"How I hate the expression 'Look out for number one,' It's such teaching as this, that makes human beings so forgetful of others," she went on after a little pause, "and the modern socialist only seems to be trying to exchange one set of selfish, grasping rules for another of the same sort. So the world will go on, until the laws are again based on the teaching of our Lord, and Christian socialism will prevail."

"Yes, you are quite right, but what are you among so many?" asked Aunty Stevens, smiling across at her friend.

Mrs. Rayburn's cheeks flushed. "Yes, I know," she said. "I suppose it looks as though I alone were trying to reform the world; but I am not. I am only one little atom trying to teach still smaller atoms that they must do their share."

"Was it not in 'Bleak House' that that exceedingly unpleasant personage used to give away her children's pocket money? And the black looks she received from them when she was not looking, were something dreadful."

"Well," said Mrs. Rayburn, laughing, "I hope you don't think the cases are parallel."

"No indeed, I don't. I was trying to say, I think you are right because you go at it in the right way, and let them choose. Then, because they love and have perfect confidence in you, they will be pretty likely to choose the right way."

"People so often say, 'Let children have a good time,' but interpreted, from their point of view, a good time, means a selfish time. That is selfish enjoyment, but it might be good occasionally to put to the test the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive."



Elizabeth now came in with her baby doll in her arms. She soberly climbed up again into the blessed fold of her mother's arms.

"I'd just as lief Dick would have it as not, momsey, for I've my heart chock full of dolls now, and it will be so good to have Dick and others well and comfyble."

Ethelwyn came a moment later.

"It's all right, mother," she said, also climbing up to her place. "I can make pictures with a pencil more easily than I can bear to think that Dick needs my camera money, I'll be glad to do it, mother."



Page 13

But Ethelwyn's voice was hoarse, and the next morning she was not well enough to go to town.

CHAPTER VII The Secret

Such fun to have a secret!
To tell one too is fun.
But then there is no secret
That's known to more than one.

Ethelwyn had intended to have a most unhappy day, so after her mother and Beth went, she lay face down in the hammock with a very damp ball of a handkerchief squeezed up tightly against her eyes. But by and by she heard Aunty Stevens calling her. "Here I am," she answered, at once sitting up.

"Do you feel well enough to help me make some apple pies?" Ethelwyn rolled out of the hammock, and ran into the kitchen in a trice.

"O if you only knew how I love to cook, Aunty Stevens," she cried. "And nobody will hardly ever let me. I can make the bestest cookies if any one else just makes the dough. So if you don't feel just prezactly well, you can sit in the rocking-chair, and I will do it all."

"Thank you, deary, but I'm feeling pretty well to-day, so we will work together. Let me tie this apron around you."

Then Aunty Stevens brought out the dearest little moulding-board and rolling-pin, and drew out of a corner a small table.

"O isn't everything about this just too cunning? Did these used to be Miss Dorothy's?" said Ethelwyn in a rapture, Mrs. Stevens nodded.

"Here's your dough, dear. Now roll it out to fit this little plate."

This took time, for it persisted in rolling out long and slim, and not at all the shape of the plate, but at last it was fitted in.

"Now what comes?" said the little cook, lifting a red and floury face.

"A thick layer of these apples—no, just a layer of sugar and flour—then the crust won't soak. Now the apples. Sugar them well. Put any of these spices on that you wish."

"I like the taste of cinnamon, and spice-oil, but nutmegs are so cunning to grate. I b'lieve I'll put 'em all in," said Ethelwyn, critically studying the spice shakers.



“Now dot the apples over with butter, a dash of cold water, and a sprinkle of flour. Now roll out your top crust. Cut little slits for it to breathe through; pinch the two crusts together, after you have wet your finger and thumb in cold water. There! now it is ready to go in the oven.”

“O isn’t it sweet?” said Ethelwyn. “Nobody can cook like you, Aunty Stevens. Nobody. I think it’s a great—great accomplishment.”

“Thank you, dear. Now sit down, and when I have cleaned up things a little, we’ll go out on the west porch, and I am going to tell you something. I have saved it for a secret for the little girl who couldn’t go to town to-day, but who gave up her birthday presents for the sake of others.”

“O goody,” said Ethelwyn, beaming with joy. “Next to cooking, I love to hear secrets. And would you mind telling me a thing or two, I have been thinking about lately? I have been meaning to ask mother about it. You know in church we say we believe in the resurrection of the body. Well, what do you s’pose,” leaning forward impressively—“becomes of the bodies the cannibals eat?”



Page 14

“Well, Ethelwyn,” said Mrs. Stevens with a gasp. “I suppose it’s no harder than to resurrect them from anywhere else.”

“O yes, I should think so,” said Ethelwyn earnestly, “because they’d get dreadfully mixed up in themselves. But never mind. I suppose the Lord can manage it.”

Aunty Stevens and she then went out on the porch that faced the sea.

“O now I’m going to hear the secret,” said Ethelwyn, sitting down on the arm of the chair. “And my own pie is in the oven baking. Aren’t we having a good time, Aunty Stevens?”

“Yes, we are,” said Aunty Stevens, hugging her. “And now I am going to tell you. I’m afraid, deary, that I have been a very selfish woman. When my husband died, I felt as though I had nothing to live for but Dorothy, and when she too went away, I felt that there was no use in living. The other evening when I heard you all planning for others, it occurred to me to be ashamed, for here is this house, and I am all alone in it. Why it’s the very thing for a children’s rest and training school.”

“O Aunty Stevens,” said Ethelwyn, getting up close to hug and kiss her.

“I can give the cottage, and I can manage it, and your money can fit it up, and hire teachers.”

“Yes, sir,” said Ethelwyn, wildly excited. “You can teach them to make pies like mine—”

“Yes, they can be taught to do all sorts of things about a house—”

“And Dick?”

“He shall be the first one.”

“And his ’dopted aunt?”

“Yes, indeed. She can help in many ways.”

“O this is lots better than going to town. I just wish I could tell mother and Beth. Seems to me I can’t possibly wait.”

“I see Nan coming. Suppose ’Vada should take you two down to have your luncheon on the beach.”

“The pie, too?”

“Yes, and other things, if your throat is better, so you can go.”



“O it’s all well, cured with joy, I guess. Anyway mother said I might go outdoors, you know. It was the noise and smoke in town she thought would hurt me.”

So they went off on their picnic, and did not come home until time to dress for the train that was to bring back Mrs. Rayburn and Beth.

“Well Ethelwyn,” said Aunty Stevens, meeting her, “how was the picnic?”

“The picnic as far as the pie, and other eating were concerned, was perfect, but Nan was a trial sometimes,” said Ethelwyn, sighing deeply; “she said she couldn’t possibly go home, ’count of her mother having a headache as usual, and she was as cross as a bear. I had my hands pretty full with that child. She does not give in to me like my sister—I will say that.” And Ethelwyn again sighed deeply, as she walked into the house for her bath and toilet.

When the train stopped, and Elizabeth appeared, Ethelwyn and she rushed at each other, and both began to talk at once.

“I’ve a secret that will make your eyes stick out—then I made a pie—”



Page 15

“I saw the doctor that makes bone people. There was one for a sign at the pittalhos where we were—”

“Hospital, child.”

“And he was undressed, even from out of his skin; you could, see clear through him. I was scared, because I thought that the doctor would make mother and me into one, but he was nice and said he’d cure Dick. We saw his bed all white—”

“Wait till you know the secret. I saved you a piece of pie—Nan wanted it—”

“I rode up in an alligator—”

“Elevator.”

“And a man at the pittalhos said, ‘where did I get those dimple holes,’ and I said prob’ly they wasn’t fat enough to stuff it all—he laughed though at that.”

And so they chattered on until they reached home.

CHAPTER VIII The Reward

To help the sorry, hungry poor,
Or ease a burdened one,
Begins to bring the answer, when
We pray “Thy Kingdom come.”

It all unfolded like a beautiful flower, and every one was interested in getting ready the Children’s Rest and Summer Training School, which was to be the name of the cottage. In the midst of it all, Mrs. Stevens one day received from Japan a long and happy letter from Dorothy and her husband; and a mysterious box, which was smuggled away for the birthday, came for the children.

Dick was getting better every minute, and was looking forward with eager delight to the time when he should go to the Rest, well and strong.

In the Rayburn sitting-room one evening, the children were looking over a portfolio of photographs.

Aunty Stevens as usual was knitting, and laughing with them over the pictures.

Ethelwyn was showing them, for she had seen them before.

“This is Beethoven,” she announced, holding up one of the great masters. “He isn’t very pretty, but I s’pose he made up in being clever.”



“He is sort of kind-looking,” said Beth, who always liked to say something nice about every one.

“He is better than pretty,” said Ethelwyn. “He’s a very good musician. He can play the piano.”

“Where does he live?”

“Paradise, I think. Mebbe not, though.”

“I’m sorry for his folks.”

“This is Handel.”

“What of?” and Nan got up to look.

“Not a dipper-handle, but a man of that name. He could play too.”

“He looks kind of like a woman—look at his hair.”

“That is his wig.”

“Was he a bawheady?” and Beth got up to look more closely at the man who was afflicted like her beloved doll.

“I s’pose he must have been. But it doesn’t show like your doll’s,” said Nan.

“This is a bust of Diana.”

“Where is she busted?”

“All but her head and shoulders.”

“Who did it?”

“A man I guess. This is the ‘Kiss of Judas.’”

“Oh, isn’t Judas mean-looking?”



Page 16

"Looks like a bug thief." This from Beth.

"Burglar, child," said Nan.

"Bug thief is what I meant," said Beth with dignity, for she didn't propose to be corrected by Nan or sister. Then she walked over to her mother. "Are you very old, mother?" she asked. "I've been meaning to ask. Are you a hundred, or eleven, or is that your size shoe?"

"Elizabeth Rayburn!" said Ethelwyn, dropping the photographs and coming over to her mother, followed by Nan. "Our mother isn't old at all!"

"No I know she isn't, only she must be toler'ibly old, to know so much goodness."

"I'm just old enough to love you," said their mother, laughing and hugging them all three at once in a way she had.

"I've some money in the bank," said Nan presently. "I've been thinking what I'd buy for the Rest, and I've 'bout decided on a feeble chair."

"Goodness me! I shall never sit in it, if it's feeble, Nan," said Aunty Stevens, laughing.

"No, *for* the feeble," corrected Nan. "I want my mother to give something too; she has some money, and I believe if she would give it for my brother's sake, she would feel better and wouldn't cry so much. Perhaps she will."

"We are all going to church to-morrow, 'cause your father is going to preach about the Rest,—pray over it too, and mother's going to sing the offertory, two verses, if the sermon's too long, and three if it isn't. You tell your father that, for singing is much more interesting than preaching any day."

"Ethelwyn!"

"Why it is, mother."

"I'll tell father, but he is likely to go on a long time when he is once started," said Nan.

"If I don't go to sleep, I'll be sure to wiggle," said Beth.

But they all went to sleep.

Ethelwyn sat in the choir seats close to her mother; while Elizabeth sat below with Aunty Stevens. Nan sat quite near them and sweetly smiled at Elizabeth.



“How do you feel?” she asked in a shrill whisper. “Wiggly? I told father not to preach very long, but there is no telling. Mother has some gum drops for me if I wiggle.”

“Don’t you think you will then?” asked Beth.

But Nan’s mother stopped further disclosures by turning her daughter around, and setting her down with emphasis on the other side of her.

Fortunately they all three fell asleep in the early part of the sermon and did not wake up until Mrs. Rayburn began to sing. At the first note Ethelwyn slipped down, and stood with her hand in her mother’s. Then Elizabeth eluded Aunty Stevens’s vigilant eye, slipped out of the seat and walked up and stood on the other side, her head raised looking into her mother’s face, and to their great delight the three verses were sung.

CHAPTER IX Once a Year

Birth days,
Earth days,
Seem very few;
Year days,
Dear days,
When life is new.



Page 17

By constant and hard work, the house was ready for occupancy on Ethelwyn's birthday.

Two or three days before it was finished, Nan's mother came over, the melancholy look on her face somewhat lifted. She brought with her the deed of the land adjoining the cottage and sloping down to the sea. This land she at once undertook to have equipped for a playground with swings, tennis courts, a ball ground and all the things that delight young hearts.

"It is for Philip," she said simply. "I have put his money into it, and perhaps, by looking a little after homeless, suffering children, I can forget my own heartache."

"You have chosen the very best way to do so," said Mrs. Rayburn.

Nan's "feeble" chair came the night before the opening, and all three of the children christened it, by getting in, and wheeling it over the shining floors at a high rate of speed, thereby proving it to be anything but feeble.

The morning train brought a bevy of pale-faced, joyless-looking waifs.

At first they were stiff and shy, but under the vigorous leadership of Nan, Ethelwyn, and Beth, they were soon organized into a Rough Riders Company, and slid down the banisters, and shot out into the playground with shrill yells of delight.

Dick was general, for he was not yet strong enough to run, so he sat in his wheel-chair, and directed the others.

"We made him general, for generals never have anything to do but boss others; they are never killed or anything," explained Nan.

A doctor from the hospital had sent down a wagon and goat team. There were bicycles and a hobby-horse, and boats safely fastened; so they rode, ran, trotted, or sat in the boats, all the happy day.

Two things were almost forgotten in all the excitement. One was, that this was Ethelwyn's birthday, and the other, that they had to go away the next day.

In the evening, however, there was a birthday cake, with eight candles on it. Then they had the fun of opening the box from Japan.

There was a whole family of quaint dolls for Elizabeth, labeled by Dorothy's husband, "Heathen dolls: never baptized."

"Nor never will be, by Nan," said Elizabeth, fondly hugging them to her, and fixing guilty Nan with a steadfast glance.



There was the cunningest watch for Ethelwyn about the size of a quarter of a dollar.

“It’s a live one, though,” said its owner proudly, shaking it and holding it up to her ear.

There was a parasol and a sash for Nan, and three Japanese costumes complete for the “three little maids from school.” These, they at once put on. Then they all went out on the lawn, and hung Japanese lanterns in the trees, and Nan’s father set off the fireworks, which were also in the box; so the day closed in a blaze of glory.

At last they were in the sitting-room again.

The adopted children clean and dressed in white gowns were asleep in their dainty iron beds, and dreaming of happiness past, and to come.



Page 18

Nan, her father, and mother, and Mrs. Stevens came in for a last word.

"I shall put on mourning to-morrow," announced Nan in a melancholy voice, "for I shall be a widow. What makes you go away, Mrs. Rayburn?"

"School and business call us to town, Nan, but we shall come every summer, and spend Christmas here, too, I hope."

"This has been the best birthday I ever spent or ever expect to," said Ethelwyn with the air of having spent at least fifty. "It is such a good idea to give things away instead of always getting them, but if you can do both, as happened this time, it covers everything."

Then they were all quiet for a little while, until Mrs. Rayburn went to the piano, and touching the keys, sang softly:

"And does thy day seem dark,
All turned to rain?
Seek thou one out whose life
Is filled with pain.
Put out a hand to help
This greater need,
And lo! within thy life
The sun will shine indeed."

CHAPTER X Beth's Birthday

The space between our birthdays seems to grow apace,
When we're young they loiter; when we're old they race.

It began with a bad time; and so did the next day, as things sometimes do, even though they turn out all right at the end, like a rainy morning that clears off into a blue and gold afternoon. Ethelwyn and Beth did not fall out very often, but then they didn't have a birthday very often, nor Christmas, nor any other of the days when the land flows with ice cream and candy, and is bounded on the next day by crossness and pitfalls.

That was one reason.

That day early they had decided never to be bad again, never; "because," said Ethelwyn, "it is very troublesome getting good again, and makes mother feel bad."

"Uh huh," said Beth.

They were not up yet, and the door leading into their mother's room was open.



This was their “present” birthday, but they had not yet begun on their presents. For fear you shouldn’t understand this, I will tell you Beth’s way of explaining it.

“Sister and me is twin children two years all but a month apart, and on the first birthday which comes in July, we have presents, and on the second, in August, we have a party, or a trip away, or something, and we have all the month to choose in.”

They generally chose thirty different things. Their mother nearly always let them have the last one, but once or twice, as when they wanted to go up in an air ship, she compromised on a steam launch on the river, as safer, and nearer at hand.

This morning being “present” morning, they were glad to see the sunshine darting in at their window, and to hear the birds singing outside something like this—

“Wake up, children: the day is new.
It’s full of joy for dears like you.”

So they woke up laughing, at least Ethelwyn did, and told Beth what the birds sang; but Beth was sleepy and uttered her usual “Uh huh.”



Page 19

“You are a very lazy child,” said Ethelwyn in a superior tone, “and are not thinking about your presents at all, nor the making of good revolutions.”

“What’s them?” asked Beth, still with her eyes shut.

“Something you need to make very much, for you are not too good a child, I’m sorry to say. Mother explained about people making things like that at New Year’s, and birthdays, and so I’ve been thinking of some specially for you—”

“I can make my own,” said Beth, fully awake now, “and I can help make yours when it comes to that, I guess.”

“Well,” said Ethelwyn, “I have been thinking of a few for you to begin with. One is, never to be late for breakfast, and not to be selfish about getting the bath first, and never wanting to give up when your sister wants you to—”

“You can make your own, while I’m getting my bath first now,” said Beth, sliding out of bed. “I’m anxious to see my presents.”

Ethelwyn, speechless with rage, hastened her departure with a push, and then fell asleep until the breakfast bell rang. How mortified she felt after what she had said to Beth! Sierra Nevada hurried her through her bath and toilet as quickly as she could, but she would be late for breakfast anyway. When she came into the dining-room, her mother kissed her gravely, but she was not allowed to look at her presents until after she had eaten. She felt very miserable at the shrieks of delight from Beth, who was dancing around her doll house, with its two floors beautifully furnished, and dolls of every size, shape, and color living in it.

No wonder the oatmeal and the muffins lost their flavor!

But Ethelwyn effervesced quickly, and as quickly subsided. Presently she was glad again, for there were books, candy, games, a walking doll from Paris that could talk as well, and a camera from Aunty Stevens. The camera, she told her mother, she had been longing for for years and years.

Uncle Tom sent each of them some candy, and a five dollar gold piece, with a note intimating that they were to spend it as they liked. Then there were two bicycles from Uncle Bob, some more candy, a pony, and some home-made molasses candy from their grandmother. The pony was a real live pony, and Joe, a dear friend of theirs, from a near-by livery stable was to take care of it.

“I feel thankful that we are a large family of relatives,” said Beth, after a long and speechless period of rapture.



Their mother, being a wise woman, put away some of the candy, all but grandmother's molasses, and a box or two for friends. Then came little Nora, the niece of their dressmaker, Mrs. O'Neal, with a quart of pecans, for the birthday. She went home with a box of candy, and told her little sister Katie about it.

"O I wanted to go too," wailed Katie.

"You were asleep, dear, when I went, but I told them the nuts were from you, too."

"But I wanted to hear them say, 'thank you!' Take me now."



Page 20

"I have to go down town for auntie. But she'll let you go."

"Yes, indeed," said their busy aunt when asked.

So Katie went up-stairs to make herself tidy.

"It's mesilf wants to take a 'silvernear,'" she said as she scrubbed herself; and then in an evil moment, she beheld a small plate with a bunny on it, which Nora owned and loved.

"It's just the thing," thought Katie, "and kind of partly mine because it's in our room."

So she took it with her when she went, and it burned her little hand like fire.

Ethelwyn and Beth were preparing a tea party in the doll house.

"O Katie, how nice!" said Ethelwyn. "We'll put it in the tea party. We were coming over to get you and Nora to come; there are some beautiful iced cakes coming up in a minute."

"I can't stay," said Katie feebly, "I feel kind of sick inside."

So saying she rushed home, but it was no use; poor Katie's conscience grew worse all the time, and presently she came back.

"I—I—know you won't like me any more," she said, red and miserable, "but it's Nora's plate I gave you, and I'm no better than a thafe."

But Ethelwyn and Beth put their arms around her, and comforted her dear little sore heart.

"I know just how you feel," said Ethelwyn. "I took mother's gold dragon stick-pin for my dolly's blanket one day, because I was in a hurry, and lost it of course, and felt so mizzable, as if nothing could ever be nice again. Now take the plate and go and get Nora, dear, and we'll have the best tea party."

And they did, and the guests had each another box of candy for their "silvernears," besides, but Ethelwyn and Beth ate far too much, and that's the reason their next day good time began by being a bad time too.

CHAPTER XI The Day After

In the lovely playtime, life seems always gay.
In the sober worktime, sometimes it grows gray.



Mother was superintending the strawberry jam in the kitchen, giving orders to the grocery boy, and paying Mrs. O'Neal for sewing, all at once.

You can't do this unless you are a mother, but mothers can do almost everything at once.

"It's a fortunate thing that the Bible says everybody mustn't work on Sunday. It says man-servant, maid-servant, cattle, stranger within thy gates, but nothing at all about mothers, though, because they positively have to," said Ethelwyn, after a profound season of thought in the hammock.

"When our mother rests, she darns stockings," said Beth, who was dressing her doll near by.

"Not on Sunday, child!" said Ethelwyn scandalized.

"Well nobody said she did, I guess. She tells us Bible stories then. I always think they sound so pretty, against her Sunday clothes," said Beth.

"Pooh!" said Ethelwyn who was cross. She was going down to the grocery presently on her wheel to get some eggs, but she was putting it off as long as she could.



Page 21

She started after awhile, and unluckily had the groceryman tie the eggs on the wheel. She came along safely, until within view of Beth lying comfortably in the hammock; then with a desire to show off, she spurted, or tried to, and her wheel ran off the walk, and tipped her off upon the grass on top of two dozen eggs!

Her mother picked her up, and after stilling Beth's laughter, and her crying, washed her, and put her in the hammock, all in so short a time that only a yellow stain on the grass showed that a tragedy had happened.

Then mother went back to her jam.

Beth snickered at intervals, however, though Ethelwyn sternly bade her be quiet.

"You were so yellow and funny, sister," said Beth, giggling.

Ethelwyn opened her mouth for a reply that would do justice to the subject, when Bobby, their next door neighbor came along. "Hullo, Bobby," they cried.

"Hullo," said Bobby at once.

"Come in and see our birthday presents," said Ethelwyn, and Bobby at once trotted up the walk.

He was a round-faced little chap, with small freckles on his button of a nose.

His family had just moved into town from a farm.

"Where have you been, Bobby?" asked Ethelwyn as they went towards the house.

"I went down to the grocery for mother; I thought I knew the way but I got mixed up, and stopped under a lamp-post, to think. Pretty soon a woman came along and put a white letter in a box; so I thought I'd save trouble if I put mother's grocery list in, and I did. A man in gray clothes came along, and unlocked it, and took the letters all out. I told him 'bout my list, and he laughed, and gave it to me, and asked me if I didn't know 'bout letter boxes? I didn't, so he told me, and took me along with him down town."

"Sister—" began Beth, giggling, "went to the grocery—"

"Let's play in the house," said Ethelwyn frowning at Beth. "You can stay awhile, can't you, Bobby?"

"I guess I'd better ask, first," said Bobby. He trotted home and soon came back with his face shining from soap and water, and his hair brushed straight up so that it looked like a halo around the full moon.



Then Nan, the minister's daughter, came in. She had also come to live in their town and was the same funny, outspoken Nan, as always.

"It's a very convenient thing that I know you children," she had said, "for it's a great trouble to have to find out, and learn to know everybody in a town."

They were playing games in the nursery, when mother came up-stairs, having finished the jam, ordered the groceries, and paid Mrs. O'Neal.

She was going to combine resting and mending, as usual, so she came to the nursery, just as they were beginning a temperance lecture.

Bobby was selling tickets, and mother cheerfully paid a penny, and sat in her low rocker near the window.

Nan had chosen to be lecturer, so Ethelwyn, Beth, and Bobby made a somewhat reluctant and highly critical audience. Besides, there were the dolls in various uncomfortable attitudes, but very amiable nevertheless.



Page 22

And to them all, Nan now came forward and made a profound bow.

“My subject is Temperance, ladies and gentlemen,” she began, “and I hope you’ll pay attention, because it’s a true subject, as well as a useful one.

“I wish men wouldn’t get drunk. It’s dreadful smelly even going by a saloon, so I don’t see how they can. I think it would be very nice if pleecemen would think once in a while about stopping such things as drunkers, but they probably like to have saloons around for themselves. A nice thing would be, to have ladies, like your mother and me, for pleecemen. Then we’d scrub things up, and pour things out, till you couldn’t smell or taste a thing. But men are meaner than women”—Bobby looked dubious—“some men aren’t though”—he looked relieved. “The reason we are so nice and ’spectable, is because my father is a minister, and doesn’t dare do disgraceful things, and your mother doesn’t get time. So we should be thankful, instead of wishing we had a candy store in the family, and being sorry we have to set examples for other kids. No! No! No! children, I mean. That’s all, and I hope you won’t forget all I’ve told you.”

“Let’s play church now,” said Ethelwyn promptly, “and I choose to be preacher, because I know about Moses and Abiram. The choir will please sing Billy Boy.”

So they put on nightgowns for surplices.

“What can I do?” said Beth, who was tired of always being an audience.

“Take up the collection,” said Ethelwyn, “we need some more pennies.”

“The sermon, beloved,” said Ethelwyn after the singing, and a little preliminary ritual, “is about Moses and Abiram, who both wanted to be boss of the temple.

“‘I will be boss,’ said Moses.

“‘Not much,’ said Abiram, standing on his tippest toes.

“Then they fit, and I’ve forgotten which one whipped, ’cause we haven’t got that far yet; anyway it’s lunch time, so do hurry and take up the collection.”

CHAPTER XII Sunday

No matter how bad we are through the week,
When Sunday comes ’round we grow very meek.

“I hope, Beth,” said Ethelwyn, who always woke up first, “you will remember to-day is Sunday, and not quarrel with your sister,” But Beth cuddled down in the pillows and refused to answer a word. After a while, Ethelwyn, watching the sunbeams dancing on



the pink wall, went to sleep herself, and opened her eyes only when her mother kissed her awake.

Sierra Nevada, being a devout Roman Catholic, always went to early mass on Sunday mornings, and their mother gave them their baths, to their great delight and comfort. The bath was all ready for them now, crystal clear with the jolly sunbeams dancing on its silver disk.

“We’ll get a sunshine bath,” said Beth, trying to catch the golden drops.

“Inside and outside,” said mother smiling.

“You look so pretty, motherdy,” said Ethelwyn approvingly, “So much prettier than black, cross old ‘Vada, who always rolls her eyes at me and says, ‘Miss Effel, you is de troublesomest chile dat ebba was bown.’ You have sense, and in that blue gown, white apron, and cap, you are pretty. You get prettier all the time you are getting old, mother. You’ll be a beautiful angel when you are very old.”



Page 23

“Thank you,” said her mother laughing. “Come on now, do you know your verse?”

“I did,” said Ethelwyn, “but the verse hasn’t any sense: it’s about St. Peter’s wife’s mother being sick with the fever—”

“And St. Peter cut off the priest’s right ear, and then he went out and crew bitterly,” said Beth, jumping up and down to see how high she could splash.

“Elizabeth!” said her mother, going off into spasms of laughter. “You are a heathen! Can’t you ever get things right? I will say, though, I think the verses they select for infant classes are anything but suitable, but for pity’s sake don’t say the one you told me, you will disgrace me. I will hear you after breakfast.”

But Aunt Mandy the cook was sick with the toothache, which she called a “plum mizzery” in her face, and mother was so busy, that Vada, who had returned and was more solemn than ever, dressed them and took them to Sunday-school.

The infant class sat on seats that began close to the floor, and gradually rose to the top of the room. Ethelwyn and Nan sat high up, while Beth was a little way below. Bobby sat near her, and had grinned all over his round face when she came in.

“I’ve brought my white mouse in my pocket; I’m going to stay for church, and I get lonesome,” he whispered.

“Uh huh,” said Beth nodding, “I’ve brought my paper dolls.” But sister punched her in the back with her parasol to be quiet, and just then the teacher asked her verse.

Beth thought hard. “Mother said I mustn’t tell you about the priest crewing about his cut off ear,” she said thoughtfully, “but I know another verse about St. Peter, it’s easier to remember than the other one, ’cause it’s poetry.”

“Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a wife and couldn’t keep her—”

“Next!” said the teacher with a face red, and then she coughed.

The next was Bobby, who cheerfully took up the refrain, where Beth left off.

“—Put her in a pumpkin shell, and there he kept her very well,”

he concluded promptly.

The older pupils, with two scandalized exceptions,—Ethelwyn and Nan—laughed, and the younger ones turned around and looked interested. The teacher coughed again and changed the subject.



But the adventures of Bobby and Beth were by no means over, for when they came out into the large room where the hundreds of scholars sat, the infant class was marshaled up into the choir seats to sing “Precious Julias” as Beth still called it. The upright of the front seat was standing unfastened from the floor, waiting for repairs, but no one knew it, Beth and Bobby least of all. They, and six other infants pressed close up against it, and sang with all their might.

Unfortunately they pressed too hard on the loose back. All at once it went over, and eight unfortunate infants sprawled flat on their faces, hats rolling off, and books tumbling down.



Page 24

Everybody stopped singing to laugh, but it changed to little shrieks of dismay, as a poor frightened white mouse, thrown out of Bobby's pocket by the shock, went running down the aisle.

Bobby ran after it in hot pursuit.

Beth followed loyally, for she had seen where it went.

They caught the trembling little creature at the door, and then they looked at each other.

"Let's go home," said Bobby.

"Uh huh, let's," said Beth.

They met Beth's mother on the way to church. "We'll stay at home to-day, mother," said Beth, "we've had just all we can stand."

So they went home and played church in the front yard, until Ethelwyn and Nan came home just before the sermon.

Those young ladies had fully intended solemnly to lecture the two at home, but it was very pleasant under the trees, with the birds, and Bobby and Beth singing lustily, so they joined in, and Ethelwyn then preached. "I choose to," she said, "because I went to an awfully dry lecture on art or clothes or something, with mother. I slept some, 'cause it was almost as hard to understand as a sermon, but when I was awake I heard a good deal that will do you good.

"Clothes," she went on after this introduction, "will ruin your health if you don't look out, and study statoos and things for some kind of line, clothes-line, I guess. So when you see a lot of white statoos—which aren't as interesting as the circus but more good for learning, which is always the way in this life—learnified things are likely to be dry—you'll learn something. But I went to sleep before I found out what or why statoos is the thing to study; but they are so cold-looking, from being undressed, that I think it would be a kind act to make pajamas for them, and trousers for our dolls so they will live longer—"

"I will not," said Beth firmly, from the congregation. "It wouldn't be fun to have all boy dolls, and you know it, sister, and besides wasn't Billy Boy the first doll we broke after Christmas? and he's up-stairs now waiting for his funeral."

"O, let's have it now," said Nan, who didn't like sermons unless she preached them.

"No, here's mother and we'll have to have dinner now, so we will have the funeral tomorrow," said Ethelwyn.

CHAPTER XIII The Four Together



Begins with a funeral and ends with a feast.
Sorrow is drowned for this time at least.

It fell out that there were *two* doll funerals the next day.

Beth lost Ariminta, her composition doll, and she went down into the garden early to find her. She looked in Bose's kennel, but it wasn't there; then she saw a robin in the path digging worms, and he looked so wise that she followed him to the early harvest apple-tree, and sure enough! there was Ariminta on a lower branch where she had put her the night before. She was very wet, for it had rained, and her wig was quite soaked off. So, filled with remorse, Beth went after the glue-pot.



Page 25

"I never knew such a mean mother as I am," she said, "I haven't any thinkery at all, worth mentioning. If your grandmother, my dear, should leave me out, till my hair soaked off—say, sister," she broke off suddenly to ask—"what keeps our hair on?"

Ethelwyn never at a loss for an answer, said promptly, "Dust, child"

"I haven't any," said Beth, feeling her short brown curls cautiously for fear they would come off.

"It's small in small persons, and big in big persons," said Ethelwyn, with a patient air of having given much thought to the subject.

"Ho!" said Beth. "Well if Ariminta's going to be dry for Billy Boy's funeral, I'll have to dry her in the oven."

But alas! for Beth's "thinkery not worth mentioning!" In her haste to get back to prepare herself and family for the funeral, she forgot to tell Aunt Mandy, who was going to make cake, and so started a fire in the stove. When she opened the oven door to put in the cake, she took out Ariminta's remains, and that is why there were two subjects for a funeral instead of one.

Beth was exceedingly sorry, and wept a few real tears over Ariminta.

"I'm a double widow, and a orphing to-day," she said, "and I don't reserve a single child to my name!"

Nan and Bobby came to the funeral, and Bobby chose to be undertaker, while Nan insisted on preaching the sermon.

"You preached yesterday," she said to Ethelwyn, who also wished to.

"And you did the day before—"

"I think I ought to," said Beth, "because it's my fam'ly."

"That's why you shouldn't, child," said Nan. "Would my father enjoy preaching my funeral sermon, do you think?" she asked triumphantly. And while they were doubtfully considering this, she began the service.

Beth attired in Aunt Mandy's large black shawl was very warm and mournful.

The family, especially Billy Boy's widow, were wrapped in black calico swaddling garments, and looked more stiff than ever, but still smiling.



The remains were in cigar boxes, all but Billy's wig and eyes which Beth had thoughtfully saved for another doll.

"I am sorry I have to preach this sad sermon," said Nan.

"Might have let me, then," said a voice from the congregation.

"The mourners will please keep quiet," said the preacher sternly, "and if the widow and orphans wouldn't grin so, I'd be glad. You'd better be thinking about how you'd feel to be buried, and you are likely to be in this family," she continued with an offensive accent on *this*.

"Let's hurry up, I'm hot," said the chief mourner.

So they went down and buried the boxes, singing "Billy Boy" as a requiem. Bose watched their departure with interest, and dug up both boxes without delay.

Bobby and Nan were invited to stay to lunch, and they accepted with cheerful alacrity.

"I asked mother, for fear you'd ask me if I could stay, and she said yes indeed I *could*, and she'd be glad to have me," said Nan. Bobby yelled his request over the fence, and was told he could stay too.

Page 26

They had strawberry jam, hot biscuit, fried chicken, and little frosted spice cakes, for which Mandy was famous.

“Just supposing your mother and mine had said no, about this luncheon,” said Nan to Bobby. “I never could have gotten over the loss of these cakes.”

“You’ve eaten four. I’m glad Mandy made a good many,” said Beth calmly.

“Why Beth!” said her mother horrified.

“Yessum, she has,” continued Beth. “I’ve passed them four times, and she took one every time. I’ve had five!” she concluded.

In the afternoon the postman brought them a letter from their Cousin Gladys, who was in Paris with her father and mother. So they all gathered around mother to hear it.

“DEAR E. AND B.,” it began.

“This is a silly city.

“They talk like babies. No one can understand them. I’d like them better if they’d talk plain American.

“Their stoves look like granddaddy long legs; they are funny boxes, and when you are cold, they wheel them into your room, and stick the pipe in the hole, and by and by wheel them out. We live in an artist’s house on a street that means Asses street, and our front room is a saloon but not a drinking one, and it runs right through the up-stairs to the skylight. You have to pay for that. Think of charging for daylight! We went to a bird show and I saw a cockatoo sitting on a pole asleep. ‘Scratch its back with your parasol, Gladys,’ said mother, so I did, and it opened one eye when I stopped, and said, ‘Encore,’ I was put out to think even the birds didn’t talk American, but when I said so, mother laughed but I don’t see why.

“Write and tell me all the news. No more now from

“Your cousin,

“GLADYS.”

“O, it’s thundering!” said Bobby when the letter was finished.

Beth at once climbed into her mother’s lap, as if for protection.

“Are you afraid of a shower, Beth?” asked Nan.



“No,—not—a shower,” said Beth, “only I don’t like it when it goes over such a bump!”

Mother kissed her and sent the others up-stairs to get ready for a show.

“Get up a good one and I’ll pay five cents admission,” she said.

“Oh I’ll go too,” said Beth, “p’raps when I am busy I won’t notice the noise.”

By and by they called Mrs. Rayburn, and she went up-stairs with her sewing, and dropped her nickel into a box, because the whole force was in the show. They were getting ready in the next room, from which was heard much giggling.

Presently the door opened, and in walked Ethelwyn draped in a green denim closet door curtain, and bobbing up and down at every step.

“What is this?” said mother.

“You have to guess, it’s a guessing show.”

Then came Beth in her Japanese costume, fanning vigorously.

Nan followed in a Turkey red calico wrapper, beloved of Vada’s heart. She tumbled down every two or three steps, which might have been the fault of the wrapper, or part of the show.



Page 27

Last of all was Bobby, very hot and sweaty, in a moth-ball smelling fur rug, and ringing a bell.

"It looks like the four seasons," said mother.

"O mother, but you are smart," said Ethelwyn; "we thought you couldn't possibly guess, so we were going to charge you another nickel!" she continued in a disappointed voice.

"I will pay it for guessing," said mother, laughing.

"I'm spring, all dressed in green, and I spring when I walk," said Ethelwyn beginning again.

"I'm summer," said Beth fanning.

"And I'm fall," said Nan, tumbling down, "that hurts the worst," she added with pride.

"I'm Christmas," said Bobby, "and I know now why it doesn't come in summer. My! I'm hot!" he continued, mopping his brow.

"I'm Fourth of July," said Beth.

"And I'm Thanksgiving and turkey—"

"There isn't a thing but April fool in spring, I do believe," said Ethelwyn, disgusted.

"Decoration Day, Arbor Day, and May Day," said mother. "It was a fine show, and the sun is out. You may go down now, and buy peanuts with your money."

CHAPTER XIV The Wedding and the Visit

Out in the country, God's flowers bravely grow.
And all the dusty wayside is edged with golden glow;

They were up in the nursery the next morning, having a wedding. A doll had opportunely lost her wig, and that always meant a good deal of excitement for the wigless one, for she was at once put to bed, and given medicine through the opening on top of the head, or made into a boy doll.

This last happened now; poor cracked and dead Billy Boy's wig was jauntily glued on the wigless head, and the late Janet became Lord Jimmy, and was in the process of being wedded to Arabella, the walking, talking doll from Paris.

They were propped up in the doll house, and Beth was marrying them.



“Lord Jimmy,” she said, “wilt thou marry Arabella and nobody else and be her quilt in time of trouble—?”

“A quilt!” said Ethelwyn. “What’s that?”

“A comfort then,” said Beth with dignity, “or something like that. Anyway I wish you wouldn’t talk in the middle of the wedding—and give her clothes, and things to eat, eh? Make him nod ‘yes,’ sister.” So Ethelwyn, reaching out an energetic hand, clutched the bridegroom by the waist and made him bow so low, that his freshly-glued wig came off.

“O, for goodness sake, sister,” said Beth, in an exasperated tone, “I never knew any one that could upset things like you—”

But their mother was heard calling them, in a way that meant something nice, so the poor bald-headed bridegroom and his wig were left at the feet of the haughty Arabella, who stared rigidly at the landscape outside, and tried not to see him.

“We are going to drive out to Grandmother Van Stark’s to spend the day, and perhaps a little longer,” said mother.



Page 28

“Oh won’t that be the nicest thing!” they cried in a breath. “Who can go on the pony?”

“Ethelwyn may ride out, and Beth back,” said mother.

“I’ve always been so thankful to think you weren’t born a *no* and *don’t* mother,” said Ethelwyn, hugging her. “Are we going right away?”

“Right away.”

Sure enough there was Joe leading Ninkum, their own pony. Mother and Beth were to go in the phaeton.

All the way out they played games with the trees and flowers. Ethelwyn rode alongside the phaeton.

They counted the spots they passed that were purple with thistles, and they were many. Others were pink and white with clover and daisies. Their mother told them the story of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, when they drove down the lane bordered with golden Spanish needles.

But they enjoyed the missing word game the most, because it was new.

“It’s your turn to make up a game, mother,” said Beth.

“I will give you lines that rhyme, only I will leave off the last word, after the first line,” said mother, “and you must guess what that word is.”

“There was a man rode to the mill.
The road ran steeply up the—”

“Hill,” cried Beth.

“Yes; now let sister guess the next.”

He stopped beside a flowing—”

“Rill?” asked Ethelwyn, after thinking awhile.

“Yes.”

“This horse was dry, so drank his—”

“Fill.”

“Along there came a girl named—”



“Jill.”

“He wished that his was Jack, not—”

“Will.”

“For people sometimes called him—”

“Bill.”

“This really was a bitter—”

“Pill.”

“And made him feel both vexed and—”

“Ill.” Mother had to tell them that, because they both guessed sick.

“He brought his gun along to—”

“Kill.”

“A bird to give to Jill a—”

“Quill?” Ethelwyn guessed after a long time.

“They lingered long, they lingered—”

“Till,” and again mother had to tell them this.

“The sun went down and all was—”

“Still.”

They had both missed one, so they each had to pay a forfeit or get up a game.

But they were now within sight of Grandmother Van Stark’s fine old colonial house, and there on the porch stood grandmother herself, who had seen them coming, so had come out to meet them.

“Oh isn’t our grandmother pretty though?” said Ethelwyn, as they turned in at the circular driveway. She had snow white hair, dark eyes and a very stately carriage.

She welcomed them warmly, and invited them into the grand old hall with its white staircase and mahogany rail.

Modern children seemed almost out of place in this old-time house.

“I always seem to think you need short-waisted frocks, and drooping hats like Sir Joshua Reynolds’s, and the Gainsborough pictures,” said their mother laughing.



Page 29

“O may we go up to the attic and dress up?” begged Ethelwyn.

“After while,” said grandmother. “It is luncheon time now. I am glad you came to-day, my daughter, for Nancy, the housemaid, has gone home for a week’s rest, and there is a meeting of the women of the church this afternoon to arrange about a rummage sale, and a loan exhibition, and they are rather depending upon me to contribute to both; but as Nancy is away, I cannot well leave for I am a little overtired with more duties than usual. So I have made a list of things that I will lend, and give. I should like you to take it down.”

“Yes, mother, I will, but what about the children—?”

“O mother, please let me stay,” begged Beth. “I will take excellent care of grandmother, and I will take Nancy’s place, so grandmother can lie down; I know how, I’ve watched Nancy lots of times. You can take sister.”

This was the final arrangement, and soon after luncheon they drove away to town. Grandmother disappeared up the beautiful staircase after shutting the blind doors, and shading the hall from the afternoon sun.

Then Beth arrayed in a red sweeping cap, instead of Nancy’s white one, which she and cook failed to find, and armed with a huge silver salver for cards, instead of Nancy’s small one, took up her position in the hall, on the bottom stair, to await visitors: but the hall was full of slumberous shadows, with sunshine flecks dancing down from the blind doors to the polished floor. It is not strange, therefore, that by and by the red sweeping cap began to droop over the silver salver, until finally they all settled down together, and the new parlor maid was sound asleep, to the music of the tall old clock in the corner of the hall back under the stairway.

Then some one came up the walk, and rapped briskly with the end of his riding whip on the blind doors.

The parlor maid suddenly awoke, stumbled to the door, and fumbled with the fastenings, but it was no use, she couldn’t open them; thereupon she turned the slats and looked through at the young clergyman standing there.

The red cap nodded affably.

“Could you climb in through the window, s’pose?” she asked.

This was such a new and startling novelty at the Van Stark homestead, that the visitor laughed, while the parlor maid patiently waited for his decision.



He had shone in athletics at his college, so when he stopped laughing, he put his hands on the stone window-sill leading into the library, and vaulted in so lightly and easily, that Beth was delighted to think she had thought of it.

She then went back to adjust her sweeping cap, which had dropped off, and to pick up the salver, which she had put down to free her hands.

“Put your card there,” she instructed him, bobbing her head towards the exact centre of the salver, and thereby completely covering one eye with that abominably big and wobbly cap.



Page 30

The reverend gentleman gravely complied, whereupon the maid swung herself around, but with caution, somewhat after the manner of a boat carrying too much sail.

After Mrs. Van Stark had come down, the parlor maid reappeared without her badges of office, and was duly presented to the rector of the church, who made no sign, save a twinkle of his eye, of having met her in another, and humbler capacity, but shook hands and talked to her without that insufferable air of patronage which elder people at times seem to delight to bestow upon their juniors.

As he was taking his leave, he explained that he was going down into the grove for a little while to read and to take pictures.

As he went out, they met, coming in, an old lady whom Grandmother Van Stark greeted with rare cordiality, kissing her on both cheeks and calling her Tildy Ann. She called grandmother Jane Somerset, and explained that her son, going to town, had brought her that far on his way, and would call for her on his return.

She had brought her knitting in a beautiful silk bag, and explained that she was making a long purse of black silk and steel beads, for the sale at the church.

Beth brought grandmother's bag down to her, and grandmother produced silk stockings that she was knitting for the same purpose.

They sat down for a comfortable chat, and Beth, feeling that it was too prehistoric an atmosphere for her, by and by stole up-stairs to the attic and went on a rummage for old clothes in which to dress up.

She found an old figured silk gown, with short sleeves. By much rolling up and pinning, she made the skirt the right length. Then she pulled out an old green silk calash and set it on her head. This she felt was a finishing touch, so she softly crept down the stairs and past the old ladies, who had entirely forgotten her, and out on the lawn; then she walked down the circular driveway and out into the road, where presently the clergyman, striding along to where his pony was tied, overtook her.

He looked with astonishment at the quaint little figure in the silk frock, but when the disguised parlor maid looked out from the depths of the great bonnet, he went off into peals of laughter again.

"You seem to laugh a great deal," said Beth.

He at once stopped and said:

"It is a weakness of mine, and now let me beg a favor of you. Will you come back to the porch, and sit in a Chippendale chair, and let me take your picture for the sale at the church?"



“Yes, I don’t mind at all,” said Beth promptly, turning around and putting her hand in his. “You see Mrs. Tildy Ann and grandmother were having such a long-way-back time, I had to dress up to match everything.”

“I see,” said the minister. “But she may presently miss you and be worried.”

“O that’s so,” said Beth. “Let’s hurry. I promised to take care of grandmother,” she added, in a remorseful tone.



Page 31

But nothing had happened, and the picture proved a great success, many of them being sold at the fair.

"I don't like it much," said Beth, when she saw one, "for it reminds me of how I forgot to take care of my Grandmother Van Stork."

"It will do you good, I trust," said her mother.

"It'll improve my thinkery, I hope," said Beth.

CHAPTER XV The Lost Invitation

A heartache when the heart is young,
Seems quite too big to bear;
But when it ends in laughter,
Away goes every care.

When they started to return the next day, Beth in triumph mounted Ninkum. She had a little difficulty in turning around to wave a farewell to dear grandmother on the porch, because the pony took this opportune time to munch the grass at the road-side, and Beth nearly went over his head.

"Dear me, Ninkum, you are very rude," she said, much vexed. "You try to spill me off, besides making Grandmother Van Stark feel as though you didn't have enough to eat while you were visiting her!"

There was another disturbing feature also, and that was sister, whose countenance kept peering above the phaeton top, and who shouted exceedingly unwelcome advice, until silenced and firmly seated by the maternal command.

However, these were small things, compared with the bliss of galloping down the smooth road, bordered by flowers and green fields.

"I am very fond of wild flowers," said Ethelwyn by and by, "because they come right from God's garden, and they keep things so cheerful and bright out in the country."

"I remember some verses about wild flowers and woods that a friend of mine wrote," said mother, "and I intend sometime to put some of them to music."

"O say one, mother," said Ethelwyn, who loved verses. So Mrs. Rayburn began:

"I know a quiet place,
Where a spring comes gurgling out,
And the shadowed leaves like lace
Fall on the ground about.



“A tempting grapevine swing
Is swung from the near-by trees,
And life is a dreamful thing
Lulled by the birds and bees.

“Flowers at the great trees’ feet
Are sheltered quite from harm;
For above the blossoms sweet,
The oak holds forth his arm.

“Perhaps if I lie quite still,
I may hear far down below,
The first and joyous thrill
Of things, when they start to grow.”

“I’ve wondered if they do get out of the seed with a little cracky pop,” said Ethelwyn.

“What, sister?” asked Beth, coming up on Ninkum.

“Flowers and things.”

“I’ve wondered how things know how to make themselves flowers, and not potatoes, or something like that,” said Beth; “but I suppose God tells them.”

“And I’ve often thought what was it that makes part of them stalk and leaves, and then all at once end in a flower,” said Ethelwyn. Then, after a moment’s silence, she proposed, “Let’s have another game.”



Page 32

“Yes, mother, you think of one.”

“I was thinking of one this morning,” said mother, “for I thought likely you would be asking me to make up one, though it isn’t my turn.”

“O, but motherdy, you are so much smarter than we are!” said Ethelwyn.

“That is one way to get out of it,” said mother, laughing. “Well, I will tell you a story, and leave a blank occasionally, which you must fill up with the name of a tree.

“There were two little girls who dressed exactly alike, and, as they were very near the same age, it was difficult to tell which was the—”

“Elder?” said Ethelwyn, after a hard think.

“Yes.”

“I didn’t really know there was such a tree, but I had heard something like it, and thought there wasn’t a younger tree.”

“One of the little girls was named Louise and the other Minerva, and people grew to calling them by their initials, which together made—”

“Elm,” said Beth.

“They were very good children, and people used to say what a nice—”

“Pear,” they both said at once.

“They were. They had cheeks like a—”

“Peach.”

“It was spring, and they were invited to a sugaring off party, and they saw the men tap the trees to make—”

“Maple sugar,” cried Beth, who knew that, if she knew anything.

“So, when they went home, they tapped a tree in the front yard, and invited a party to come and eat maple sugar; but they tapped the wrong tree, and their father was vexed, saying, ‘I ought to take a —— to ——’”

But mother had to tell them these words for they had never heard of birch, or of yew. “I wonder if you will be ——”

“Evergreen,” said Ethelwyn, after a little prompting.



“All your life.’ ‘I thought,’ said one, ‘that maple sugar parties were very ——”

“Pop’lar? (mother had to tell them this also), ‘at this time of year.”

“—— laughed their father.”

“Haw, haw,” said Ethelwyn, who had been thinking of the tree under which they played at home.

“I’ll have to take you to the seashore to play on the ——”

“Beech,” said Beth in triumph.

“Then he lighted a cigar and knocked off the ——”

“Ash,” said Ethelwyn.

“And walked down street, whistling a song from ‘Mikado.’ Tit ——”

“Willow,” they both cried at once, for they knew that song as well as the tree.

“You have done well,” said mother, “but you each have two fines to pay, and it really is your turn next time; so you must remember to think up a game. But here we are at home, and there is ‘Vada coming out to meet us.”

“O, ‘Vada, what has happened since we went away?” said Ethelwyn, climbing out.

“Mista Bobby gwine to give a party this ebenin’; it’s his birthday, and his uncle brought him some fiah works like those you all had las’ yeah,” said ‘Vada.



Page 33

“O goody! did he invite us?”

“Nome, not to say invite. But he’s been in to see if you all was expected home.”

“O, it won’t matter,” said Beth easily; “we’ll go anyway. Of course he knew we would come.”

When Nan came over, she brought her invitation with her. It was very formally enclosed in a small envelope, and informed his friend that Bobby would be at home on that very evening.

This struck Beth as very silly.

“Of course he’ll be at home if he’s going to give a party! Just as though he’d be anywhere else!” she remarked.

They wished to go over immediately and tell Bobby that they were home and all ready to be invited, but their mother would not allow this.

“He will come over by and by,” she said. But the day went by and no invitation came, although great preparations were going on, as they could see, for they kept very near the window that looked out on Bobby’s lawn. A slow drizzling rain was falling, or they would probably have been much nearer. But Bobby was evidently very busy getting ready. They caught only flying glimpses of him, and their hearts grew heavy within their breasts.

“O dear! I shall never, never get over this, never!” said Beth, swallowing the lump in her throat.

“I wouldn’t have thought Bobby could have done it,” said Ethelwyn, also swallowing.

After their bath, they begged for their best slippers, silk stockings, and embroidered petticoats, and on having their hair done in their dress-up-and-go-away-from-home style. “Because,” said Ethelwyn, “something may happen yet to make him think of us.”

So mother let them have on what they liked, for she was very sorry for them.

In the evening, after dinner, when the electric lights came flashing out, it was worse, because, still standing forlornly by the window, they saw the orchestra come, with their instruments, and presently the sounds of music came floating up to them. Then the ice cream man came, and Beth, who had almost melted to tears at the sight of the orchestra, shed them openly when the ice cream went around the side of the house. Having no handkerchief, she wiped her eyes on Soosana, her big rag doll. She always loved Soosana when she was unhappy, for she was so squeezey and felt so comfortable.



“I hope Bobby will be sorry when he has time to think about it,” she remarked in a subdued tone.

“Look at that!” said Ethelwyn in such a hopeful voice that Beth at once emerged from her eclipse behind Soosana, and looked with all her eyes.

There was Bobby, resplendent in a new suit and slippers with shining buckles, running across the lawn.

Ethelwyn and Beth at once pushed up the window, in order to meet him half-way.

“Do you want us, Bobby?” called Beth encouragingly.

“Yes; why on earth don’t you come?” cried Bobby. “We are all ready to dance and Nan and everybody but you, are there, and I wouldn’t let ’em begin till you came, so hurry up.”



Page 34

“We will,” they cried in a breath, “and we would have come a long time ago if you only hadn’t forgotten to invite us till so late. What made you, Bobby?”

“Why I didn’t!” said Bobby in a surprised tone. “I took your invitation over to your front door and—and—your bell is pretty high up—”

“Yes, I can’t reach it at all,” said Beth breathlessly; “go on.”

“So I shoved it under the door—”

Ethelwyn disappeared like a flash, and, sure enough, under the carpet’s edge she could see sticking out the little white corner of the envelope. She knelt down and pulled it out, then ran back.

“We’ll come right over in a minute, Bobby,” she called happily. “We’re pretty nearly all dressed for fear you’d remember you had forgotten—”

“All right, hurry up,” called up Bobby.

Down on the floor went Soosana, all damp with tears, but she still smiled broadly at the ceiling in the dark. She probably did not, if the truth were known, quite enjoy being used as a handkerchief, but she felt it was her mission in this life to act as comforter, and so she bore it with cheerfulness. The next morning she was told by happy, though sleepy, Beth that it was a “beyond party, with fireworks, and ice cream, and dancing, and games, and souvenirs. I should never have been so happy again, Soosana, if I had missed going, I know,” she concluded, kissing Soosana with such fervor, that she put a dent in that portion of her doll’s head where she had been kissed; but this time Soosana was sure she did not care.

CHAPTER XVI The Mail and Ethelwyn’s Visit

Good-bye, speed by
Days till we meet again.
Hearts’ ease, ne’er cease,
Keep free from fret or pain.

There had come an interesting mail that morning, for it began with another letter from Cousin Gladys, who was in London now for the winter, and there was also one from Aunt Stevens and from Grandmother Van Stark. While the two children ate their oatmeal and cream, they read their cousin’s letter. This was it:

“DEAR COUSINS:

“We have seen the Coronation, and my eyes ached, there was so much to see and do. It was worse than a circus with six rings.



“The King is not pretty, but I suppose that won’t hinder him from being good, and nurse is always saying, ‘Pretty is that pretty does, Miss Gladys.’ I think she thinks that the two hardly ever go together. The dear Queen is pretty, however, and so young-looking and sweet that even nurse has to give in about her.”I will tell you all about it when we come home, but it tires me now even to think about it. One morning I begged to go back to the hotel and rest, and nurse was so disappointed that I told her she could go out and I would stay alone. I dug around in my trunk and got rather homesick, looking at the things I had at home.



Page 35

I found some jacks but no ball, so I thought I would go down to a near-by shop, and buy one. I slipped down and out, before I had time to think about mother making me promise not to go anywhere alone. I turned a corner or two, but didn't find the right kind of a shop. It was cloudy, and sort of foggy, and crowds and crowds of people were pushing along. I knew all at once that I was lost, and I began to feel a lump in my throat, bigger than any ball you ever saw, and just then I saw a tall man coming towards me. I saw only his legs, but they looked so Americanish that I rushed up, and said, 'Please take me to the L—— Hotel,' He stopped at once and said, 'Well, I certainly will; I am going there myself.' He was a minister from New York. He laughed when I told him about the jacks, and then he talked to me in such a nice way about going out alone, that it made a great impression on me. I found mother and nurse in such a state when I got back. I was kissed and then put to bed to eat my supper, but the minister came to call in the evening, and when I had promised never to do such a thing again, they let me get up. He was so nice, and brought me a ball. I play jacks every day now, and think of America and nice 'things like that. I shall be glad to get there again.

"Yours truly,

"GLADYS.

"P.S.—I can probably beat you at jacks when I get back, I practice so much."

"I'll get mine out to-day," said Ethelwyn, "and we'll see whether she can or not. When will she come home, mother?"

But mother was reading Aunty Stevens's letter, and did not hear.

"The Home is getting on beautifully," she said presently. "There are ten pale little children out there now. Dick is quite well and strong again, and helps with the work in every way. They are very anxious that we shall come on this summer."

"O let's; for my birthday," said Ethelwyn. "Can't we, mother?"

"I will see. But Grandmother Van Stark would like one of you to come out and stay with her for a few days. Peter is coming in this afternoon and will take one of you out."

"O me!" they cried at once.

"Let's pull straws," suggested Ethelwyn; so she ran to find the broom. It was she who drew the longest straw, and Beth drew a long breath, saying with cheerful philosophy, "Well, I am thankful not to leave mother. I'd prob'ly cry in the night, and worry dear grandmother." So every one was satisfied, and Ethelwyn, dimpling delightfully under



her broad white pique hat, bade them good-bye, and took her place beside Peter in the roomy old phaeton.

“Are you any relation of St. Peter’s?” she asked politely, after they were well on the way.

“Nobody ever thought so,” said Peter, looking down at her with a twinkle in his eye.

“Well, I didn’t know,” she said. “I thought I’d like to ask you some questions about him if you were. We have had a good deal about him at Sunday-school lately. I’m studying my lessons nowadays for a prize; they are going to give a sacrilegious picture to the child that knows her verses the best by Easter, and I think maybe I’ll get it, for I’m only about next to the worst now.”



Page 36

“How many are there of you?”

“O, a lot; but if I do get it, I shall ask for a goat and cart instead. We have plenty of pictures at home, but we are much in need of a goat and cart.”

Peter had a peculiar habit, Ethelwyn afterwards told her grandmother, of shaking after she had talked to him awhile, and gurgling down in his throat. She felt sorry for him. “He was prob'ly not feeling well; maybe what Aunt Mandy calls chilling,” she said.

She found grandmother making pumpkin pies, for the minister and his wife were coming to dinner the next day. Grandmother was famous for making pumpkin pies, and never allowed any one else to make them.

“It’s my grandmother’s recipe,” she said, and Ethelwyn nearly fell off her chair trying to imagine grandmother’s grandmother.

“I shouldn’t suppose they would have been discovered then,” she said, after a struggle. “Pumpkin pies don’t go out of style like clothes, do they, grandmother?”

“Mine never have,” said grandmother proudly. “I suppose Mandy never makes pumpkin pies.”

“Yes she does, but they don’t grow in yellow watermelons; they live in tin cans.”

“Pooh!” said grandmother, “they can’t hold a candle to these.”

“No, but why would they want to?”

“Hand me that japanned box with the spices, please, dear. Now you’ll see the advantage of doing this sort of thing yourself; here are mustard and pepper boxes in this other japanned box, but I know just where they always stand, so I could get up in the night and make no mistake.”

Just then grandmother was called away from the kitchen.

“Don’t meddle and get into mischief, will you, deary?” she said. And Ethelwyn promised.

She intended to keep her word, but while she was smelling the spices, it struck her that it would be a good joke to season the pies from the other box. “Like an April fool,” she thought; so she took a spoon and measured in a liberal supply of mustard and red pepper; then she went out into the yard.



It was fortunate that the minister and his new wife were not coming until the next day. Ethelwyn, however, spent a very unhappy afternoon. That night she woke up sobbing, and crawled into grandmother's big bed.

"What's the matter, child?" said grandmother, sitting up in bed with a start. "Are you sick?"

"Yes, grandmother, awful! You'll never like me again, I know." And then she told her about the pumpkin pies.

"Well, child, I am thankful you told me," said grandmother with a sigh, "for when you are as old as I am, and have a reputation for doing things, it goes hard to make a failure of them, and I should have been much mortified. Fortunately there are plenty of pie shells, and there is more pumpkin steamed, so that I can season and put them together in the morning. But I am glad, dear child, that your conscience wouldn't let you sleep comfortably until you had told; be careful, however, never again to break your word. Remember the Van Starks' watchword, 'Love, Truth, and Honor.' Now cuddle down here and go to sleep."



Page 37

Ethelwyn, feeling much relieved, slept in the canopy bed with grandmother, until long past daylight. When she came down-stairs, the great golden pies were coming out of the oven, and the minister and his wife violated propriety and made Grandmother Van Stark proud and happy by eating two pieces each.

CHAPTER XVII Out at Grandmother's

Grandmother's house, I tell you most emphatic,
Is full of good times from cellar to the attic.

There came to Grandmother Van Stark's one day, a forlorn black tramp kitten, mewing dismally.

Ethelwyn, who loved kittens devotedly, was melted to the verge of tears by his wailing appeals in a minor key; so she cuddled him and fed him on Lady Babby's creamy, foamy milk. In the intervals of eating, however, he still wailed like a lost soul.

"The critter don't stop crying long enough to catch a mouse," said cook, eyeing the disconsolate bundle of grief with strong disfavor.

"He almost did this morning, Hannah," said Ethelwyn in his defense. "I saw him watching a hole, and he's so little yet, I grabbed him away. Besides, I don't like mice myself, and I was so afraid I'd see one or two."

"No danger; his bawling will keep them away," said Hannah, grimly.

"O, well then, his crying is some good, after all," returned Ethelwyn, triumphantly. "That's a good deal nicer than killing the poor little things."

"Humph!" said Hannah.

But Grandmother Van Stark had given orders that Johnny Bear—so named from one of Ernest Thompson-Seton's illustrations, which Ethelwyn thought he resembled—was to be treated tenderly and fed often, because Ethelwyn loved him, and she herself loved to feed hungry people and animals.

But one morning there was a great commotion over the discovery that a mouse had been in Grandmother Van Stark's room.

"This is a chance for Johnny Bear to make a reputation as a mouser," said grandmother. "We will take him up-stairs to-night and he shall have a chance to catch that mouse."

"O grandmother, I'm sure he will," said Ethelwyn, earnestly; so she talked to him that afternoon about it.



It had rained in the afternoon,—a cold drizzly rain, so Nancy had lighted a little snapping wood-fire in Grandmother Van Stark's sitting-room. Into this opened the sleeping room in which was Ethelwyn's small bed, and the big mahogany tester bed, where Grandmother Van Stark had slept for more years than Ethelwyn could imagine.

Ethelwyn put Johnny Bear and his basket in front of the grate. It was so "comfy" that he stopped yawling at once and began to purr.

"How does middle night look, Nancy?" said Ethelwyn, as she lay in her little brass bed, watching the dancing shadows on the wall.

"Like any other time, only stiller," replied Nancy. "Go to sleep now, Miss Ethelwyn."

So Ethelwyn presently fell asleep and woke up with a little start just as the clock was striking twelve.



Page 38

Johnny Bear was stirring around uneasily in the other room. He had been very still; his stomach was full, and his body warm, so that there really was no possible excuse for making a noise. In fact, there was a faint scratching in the closet that concentrated his attention, and froze him into a statue of silence.

Presently he pounced, and a little shriek, piteous and faint, told the story. Then Johnny Bear played ball with his victim, and ran up and down the room as gaily as if he had never known what it was to cry.

But all at once something went wrong; a crackle in the grate sent a glowing coal over the fender and on the rug, where it smoldered and smoked, and then ran out a little tongue of flame. So Johnny Bear began to mew again loudly and uneasily, the clock struck twelve, and Ethelwyn awoke.

“Hush, Johnny Bear, dear,” she said softly from the other room; “you’ll wake up grandmother.”

But grandmother was awake, and lifted her head just in time to see the tongue of fire.

She was over the side of the bed in a minute, and, snatching up a pitcher of water, dashed it over the rug.

Ethelwyn jumped up too and snatched Johnny Bear in her arms.

“I don’t think twelve o’clock at night looks stiller, do you, grandmother?” she asked.

“Aren’t you glad Johnny Bear came to live with us, and—oh! oh!” he cried, for she had stepped on a soft little mouse, lying quite still now on the floor.

“O Johnny, how could you?” she said sorrowfully, quite forgetting her instructions to him in the afternoon.

“But he is brave, isn’t he, grandmother?”

“Very,” said grandmother, “and he shall have a saucer of cream in the morning. But come now, chicken; I’ve put out the fire, and covered the other, so I think we can sleep in peace.”

So they both went to sleep, and Johnny Bear from that time on wept no more.

The next morning, Ethelwyn joyfully told Hannah and Peter all about it. Their praise was unstinted enough to suit even her swelling heart, and she proudly took the saucer of cream to Johnny, saying, “There, darling, everybody loves you now, even Peter and Hannah and Nancy, because you did your duty so nobly. I knew you would, so I loved you all the time.”



“Miss Ethelwyn,” said Nancy, appearing, “there are callers in the drawing-room, and your grandmother wishes you to come in.”

Ethelwyn went in, and was presented to several of the ladies of the church, who had come to see about a reception to be given to the clergyman and his new young wife. It was, Ethelwyn found with joy, to be given at Grandmother Van Stark’s.

“O may I stay up?” she begged, and grandmother, who always found it hard to deny her grandchildren anything, said she might. When evening came, Ethelwyn dressed in her best white frock, a little later than the hour when she usually went to bed, came down the staircase with grandmother, who was more stately and lovely than ever? In her black velvet gown, with the great portrait brooch of Grandfather Van Stark, surrounded by diamonds, in the beautiful old lace around her neck.



Page 39

Grandmother was permitted to sit while receiving the guests. Between her chair and where the clergyman and his wife stood, Ethelwyn slipped her own little rocker, and sat there, highly interested in the streams of people that came by.

"It's like a funeral," she announced during a slight lull.

Grandmother and the clergyman looked around startled.

"Why, child, what do you know about funerals?" asked grandmother, while the clergyman, of course, laughed.

"Vada took me and Beth once to a big mercession, and we went into a big church and the folks all went up and looked at somebody, just like to-night. 'Vada said it was a big gun's funeral, just like you and your wife, you know," she concluded cheerfully, nodding to the clergyman.

"Well of all things—" began grandmother, but a new lot of people coming in demanded her attention.

The clergyman and his wife, laughing heartily, shook hands with the new people, and Ethelwyn was rather indignant to hear her remark repeated several times.

"I'm not going to say anything more," she thought, "they always laugh so."

She sat very quiet, indeed, until by and by the lights and the pink, blue, and white gowns danced together in a rainbow, and then she knew nothing at all about the rest of it, nor that the minister himself carried her up-stairs and put her in Nancy's care.

But the first thing of which she thought in the morning, was the refreshments, in which she had been so vitally interested the day before; so she came very soberly down-stairs to a late breakfast.

"Well, chicken," said grandmother, "how did you like the reception?"

"Not very much," said Ethelwyn. "I'm so ashamed to think I didn't get any ice cream—"

"There's some saved for you; and I think I see your mother and Beth coming in the gate, I was so sorry they couldn't come last night."

"I do believe they *are* coming," said Ethelwyn, standing on tiptoes, "and, yes, see, they have Bobby and Nan with them, to help take me home!"

There was a wild triple shriek from the surrey, followed by three small forms climbing rapidly down. They were proudly escorted by Ethelwyn to see Johnny Bear, the



chickens, Peter, Hannah, and Nancy, all before mother was fairly in the house and the surrey in the barn.

They ate the reception refreshments with such zeal that grandmother said, "Well there! I was wondering what we would do with all the things that were left, but I needn't have worried."

"No, the mothers are the only ones that need worry,—over the after results," said Mrs. Ray burn, laughing.

They started home in the afternoon, all standing on the surrey steps and seats to wave a farewell to dear Grandmother Van Stark as long as they could see her.

Of course they played games going home, and this time Ethelwyn had really made up one.



Page 40

"I'll say the first and last letter of something in the surrey or that we can see, and then whoever guesses it can give two letters." So she gave "m—r," and Beth guessed mother at once; then Beth gave "h—s," and Bobby disgraced himself by guessing horse, but he was warm, because it really was harness, and Nan guessed it. Then she gave "f—s," and that took them a long time, because it didn't sound at all like flowers, but Bobby finally guessed it, and then he gave them "g—s," which mother guessed as girls.

"You tell us a story, motherdy," said Ethelwyn, cuddling up close. "I just love to hear you talk, I haven't heard you for so long."

"Were you homesick for me?"

"Not ezactly," said Ethelwyn, "but I had a lonesome spot for you all whenever I thought about it."

Ethelwyn always pronounced the word "exactly" wrong. Her mother liked to hear her say it, however, and one or two more; "for they will grow out of baby-hood all too fast," she said.

"I went over to see Miss Helen Gray yesterday," said Mrs. Rayburn, "and she told me some funny stories about Polly, her parrot. You know she is really a very remarkable bird. Ever since Miss Helen has lived alone, she and Polly have been great friends, and it seems as though Polly really understands things she says to her. She bought her in New Orleans, where she boarded next door to the Cathedral. So Polly soon learned to intone the service, not the words, but exactly the intonation.

"One day Miss Helen, who allowed her all sorts of liberties, let her out, but first she made her tell where she lived. '1013 H— Street,' Polly said. 'Will you be good and not get lost?' 'Yep,' said Polly, so she went out, and Miss Helen heard her talking in the yard. A lady came along beautifully dressed.

"'La, how fine,' said Polly.

"The lady looked around angrily, thinking it was a boy.

"'Didn't see me, did you?' said Polly, and then the woman saw the funny little green bird on the lawn and she petted and complimented her until Polly felt very much puffed up.

"Miss Helen went in for a few minutes, though, and when she came out, Polly was gone, stolen probably by some one that slipped up behind her.

"Poor Miss Helen grieved and grieved over her, and offered great rewards, but to no avail. In about a year she went to Florida, and one day, going by a bird fancier's that



she knew, the man invited her to come in, saying that he had a lot of new parrots to show her.

“O I wonder: if Polly is there!’ she said, and told him about her.

“‘No, I haven’t any that know as much as that,’ said he; ‘but there is one who looks as if she understood things, but she won’t, or can’t, talk.’

“So Miss Helen went in, and there, sure enough, was her poor Polly huddled up sulkily in a cage.

“‘Polly,’ called Helen, and Polly started and came to the front of the cage.



Page 41

“Helen, Helen,’ she called, going perfectly wild; ‘1013 H—— Street. I’ll be good! Yep! Yep! Yep!’ and then she began to intone the service.

“The bird fancier was astonished enough.

“I bought her and some six others from two sailors,’ he said, ‘but I never dreamed she could talk!’

“Miss Helen paid him a big price and went off with Polly on her finger chattering like one mad.”

“O I’d love to see her,” cried Beth.

“Well go over there some day. Here we are at home.”

“I’m glad,” said Ethelwyn. “It’s nice to go away, but it’s nicer to come back.”

CHAPTER XVIII How They Bought a Baby

Spend your money
Speed you, honey,
Quick as you can fly
Up the street,
Toys and sweet
Money burns to buy.

And all this time they had saved their birthday money!

It was accidental, for they had in the multitude of other events and presents, forgotten they had it until one morning, in emptying their banks for “peanut” nickles, with a dexterity born of long practice, they discovered the two gold coins, for they each had been given one, of course, and they rushed off at once to show them.

“Haven’t we saved this money, though?” they said, full of pride, and then they straightway sat down to make plans for spending it.

“Let’s each buy a puppy for a parting gift to Bobby and Nan,” suggested Ethelwyn, as she and Beth were soon going away to visit the Home.

“Yes, sir, let’s,” said Beth. “They dearly love Bose, and Mr. Smithers, our vegetable man, has six and will sell us two, I know.”

Mr. Smithers said he would be charmed—or words to that effect—to sell them two Newfoundland puppies at five dollars each, and they struck a bargain at once.



It was easier to do because mother had gone to town on business and was to be away all day.

Mr. Smithers promised to bring them in that afternoon, and they went off to wait until then with what patience they could muster.

They met Joe on their way to the barn, and noticed that his usual ruddy countenance was grave and pale.

“My sister is sick,” he explained, “and she’s getting no better.”

“Why don’t you tell mother?” asked Ethelwyn.

“O it’s everything your mother’s done for us this summer, without bothering her more,” he said. “I’m going to try to get my sister up in the country, but—I can’t yet awhile.”

“Will it cost very much, Joe?”

“No, not much, but there’s so many of us to feed and clothe that we never have any money left for anything else.”

“Mother will help, I know,” said Ethelwyn, and they went up to the house, pondering deeply.

“Those horrid puppies! I wish we’d never heard of them,” said Ethelwyn. “Then we could give Dick the money. What did you think about them for?”



Page 42

"You did yourself."

"No, I didn't. Anyway, let's watch for Mr. Smithers at the back garden gate, and tell him not to bring them."

So they went down through the garden, and, looking over the gate, they saw a very sulky little colored girl carrying a long limp bundle of yellow calico, with a round woolly head protruding at the top.

"O that cunning baby I Where'd you get him?" they cried both at once, opening the gate to look at him.

The sulky nurse shifted the bundle to her other shoulder.

"Allus had him, mos'," she said; "him or 'nuther one, perzactly like him, to lug roun' while ma's washin'."

"Don't you like to play with him?" asked Ethelwyn in a shocked tone.

"No, I don't," was the emphatic reply; "nor you wouldn't needa, ef you had it to do contin'ul."

"Why, you can play he's a doll."

"He's showin' off now, but when he gits to bawlin', you ain't a gwine to make no mistake 'bout his bein' nuffin' 'tal but a cry-baby," she continued, preparing to move on.

"Would you sell him?" asked Beth eagerly.

"Yessum, I sholy would," said his sister with a gleam of interest; "we ain't a gwine to miss him, wid six mo'! I'll sell him easy fo' a dolla'."

There was a hurried consultation between Beth and Ethelwyn.

"It's cheaper, and would leave nine dollars for Joe. Bobby could keep him one day, and Nan the next, or we could get something else for one of them. I think Nan would like him the best."

"We will buy him," said Ethelwyn, at the end of the consultation.

There was a moment of hesitation, and then the yellow bundle went into Ethelwyn's outstretched arms.

Beth went off to get the money. She ran breathlessly down the street to get the change, she was so afraid the girl would change her mind and take back the baby.



There was no doubt but that the girl was in rather a dubious state of mind over it, but the silver dollar clinched her resolution, and she walked firmly off, without a backward glance in the direction of the gurgling Samuel Saul, which was the alliterical name of the yellow bundle.

Ethelwyn and Beth, after a further consultation, took him to the attic. They considered it providential that Sierra Nevada was assisting in the laundry, and that the coast was therefore free from all observers.

Samuel Saul was rocked in the cradle in which the ancestors of the children, as well as themselves, had been rocked, and he, well contented with the motion and not ill pleased with his surroundings, presently fell into a delicious slumber.

“Rockabye baby on the tree top,” came from the open attic window, and floated down to Joe currying Ninkum, and to 'Vada, Mandy, and Aunt Sophie in the laundry.

Joe smiled at the cheerful refrain, and 'Vada, sure that they were in no mischief, mopped her dripping brow, and went on with her work.



Page 43

Watching Samuel Saul's peaceful slumbers grew a little monotonous after a while, so Beth descended to the kitchen for a plate of cookies and a glass of water, and leaving this substantial luncheon beside their sleeping charge, they went down-stairs and for a while played on the piano with more strength than anything else. After that they took more cookies and went over to play with Bobby.

Bobby, making a chicken yard out of wire netting, was delighted to have assistance, and they telephoned for Nan, who speedily joined them.

"Mother's gone to town to-day to see your grandfather, who owns a bank, Bobby," said Ethelwyn.

"I expect it's on account of his losing a whole lot of money," rejoined Bobby, standing on tiptoe on a box to pound in a nail.

"Where did he lose it? Were there holes in his pockets?" asked Beth, unrolling the wire at Bobby's order.

"On change," said Bobby, with his mouth full of nails.

"Our money is in your grandfather's bank, and the Home money and Grandmother Van Stark's. I hope he hasn't lost anybody's but his own," said Ethelwyn anxiously.

"You're not very polite," said Nan.

"Well I do, but if he lost only change, prob'ly it's his own, and mother's gone to give him some more."

"Pooh!" said Bobby, "it's not—"

But before he could say anything more, excited voices were heard, and four black and shining faces appeared over the top of the fence, while a guilty eye looked through a knot-hole farther down.

"Has you all seen anything of a low down black pickaninny which is los'?" This remark came from 'Vada.

"Which is *stole*," corrected a mountain of flesh, quivering with wrath.

"Is it Samuel Saul?" asked Ethelwyn.

"It is so; will you projus him?" asked the mountain.

"He's in the attic asleep; his sister sold him to us for a present to Bobby and Nan—"



“O let’s see him,” cried Nan, with lively interest.

“You all is gwine to leab him alone—” began the mountain, when Mandy turned ponderously in her direction.

“Will you, Martha Jane Jenkins, please kindly rec’lect dat you is ‘sociatin’ wid quality now, an’ take a good care how you talk, though sholy it may be de fus time dat you has ebber been in good sassity—”

“Dat is sholy de trufe w’en I has been wid you,” said Martha Jane Jenkins, wrathfully.

But now from the open attic windows were heard such piercing shrieks that they all with one consent turned in that direction.

“Americky, you go bring me you brudda,” instructed Martha, cuffing soundly the girl with the guilty eye.

Presently America and the children returned with the wailing Samuel Saul to the place where Mandy, ‘Vada, and Aunt Sophie were standing, loftily ignoring the angry mother and making caustic remarks calculated to add to her discomfort.

In the capacious arms of his mother, Samuel Saul ceased his repining and contentedly gurgled again. As the united ones went off, Martha Jane Jenkins with her head in the air and America remorsefully weeping in the rear, Ethelwyn said, “Well, our dollar’s gone, and our baby too, and I thought we had made such a bargain. I don’t know what Mr. Smithers will say.”



Page 44

“And poor Joe too,” said Beth.

“There comes Mr. Smithers now,” exclaimed Bobby.

“Yes an’ I ain’t got your puppies either, for when I got home I found my boy had sold two and given away two, so there wasn’t any left but what we wanted to keep.”

“Well, I’m thankful,” said Ethelwyn; “for we bought a baby instead, only its mother took it back, and we just had to use the rest of the money for something else. Thank you, Mr. Smithers.”

“You’re entirely welcome,” responded he.

CHAPTER XIX Bobby’s Grandfather

And now let’s be glad,
While everything’s bright.
Days that are sunny
Are shadowed by night.

That evening there was considerable news to tell mother when she came from town, and she both laughed and lectured them a little over the baby episode. After the children told her what Bobby had said about his grandfather losing money, they asked anxiously, “Oh mother, did he lose anything of ours?”

For the first time in a long while the two straight worry lines came back between mother’s eyes, and the children immediately climbed in her lap to kiss them away.

“I can’t tell yet, dearest ones,” she said after a while. “I have been very foolish to leave so much of our money in one bank, I am afraid, but I had such faith, too much, perhaps, and I fear—”

It was very comforting to have their dear warm cheeks against her own, and courage, almost vanquished during this trying day, came back. After awhile she laughed with them again, and told them stories until bedtime, promising them also that Joe’s sister would be sent to the Home as soon as she was able.

The next morning, however, the lines came back, and the children, seeing them, resolved that they would write Bobby’s grandfather a letter.

“If there’s anything I’m glad of, it’s that I know how to write,” said Ethelwyn. “It was very hard to learn.”

They went up-stairs to the nursery where their own small desks were and taking some of their beloved Kate Green a way paper with pictures of quaint little children on it, after



much trouble, ink, and many sheets of paper, as well as consultations with Bobby and Nan, they finished and posted a very small envelope to Bobby's grandfather, whose address they obtained from Bobby.

Bobby's grandfather, on coming down the next morning to the bank, found this communication among the official-looking matter on the desk. The picture in the corner of the envelope was surrounded by these words:

“Little Fanny wears a hat,
Like her ancient granny;
Tommy's hoop was—think of that—
Given him by Fanny.”

The poke-bonneted pair with Tommy and his hoop looked curiously out of place among their official surroundings.

The lines of worry were thickly sown in the banker's face, and as there were no round, rosy-cheeked children in his silent home to kiss them away, they stayed and grew deeper each day. He half smiled, however, as he picked up the Greenaway envelope and curiously broke the seal. This is what he read:



Page 45

“DEAR BOBBY’S GRANDFATHER,

“We live next door to Bobby, who is quite often a nice boy, though he wishes us to say always, and we are sorry to learn that you are losing change money, for your sake, and for fear you’ll go on and lose ours, Grandmother Van Stark’s and the Home’s. Ours doesn’t matter so much as the others, for we have \$9.00 left of our birthday money, and it’s lasted so long that it will prob’ly go on lasting, specially if we forget it, or unless we buy more babies, which we shan’t do now because of not being able; but dear grandmother without money would be awful, and the Home not to have money for the poor little city children that are sick would be awful, too. Please, please don’t lose that, and we will pray for you and love you hard all the days of our life. Amen.

“As there is no more paper in our boxes on account of spoiling so much we will say good-bye.

“ETHELWYN, BETH, NAN, and BOBBY.

“P.S.—The first one she wrote it.

“P.S.—My mother said because she had faith in you was why you have our money, and so have we.”

When the banker had finished this somewhat remarkable epistle, of which the children had been so proud, there were tears in his eyes, although his mouth was smiling, and the lines of worry did not seem so deep nor so stern.

He pushed his other mail aside unread, and sat for a long time thinking. Presently he called for his stenographer, and dictated telegram after telegram, the import of which made that impassive person start and glance up in amazement several times. Then, seizing a sheet of paper, the banker started to write a letter for himself.

“DEAR CHILDREN, (it began)

“Do not worry. I shall not lose one penny of yours, nor Grandmother Van Stark’s, nor the blessed Home’s, nor any one’s, I hope, but my own, and not enough of that to hurt; at any rate, I shall still have enough, I think, to buy a railroad ticket to Bobby’s house. So tell him that I wish he’d tell his mother to have a good supper to-morrow night, and you children must plan it and all come and eat with me.

“Yours, with love,

“BOBBY’S GRANDFATHER.

“P.S.—Be sure to have plenty of candy for supper.”



The excitement and the joy that this letter produced were something startling. Away went the worry lines from Mrs. Rayburn's dear face, and back came the laughter the children loved. In Bobby's house they planned a most wonderful menu of fried chicken, candy, cake, and ice cream. Mandy baked spice cakes at Nan's and Bobby's special request, and nobody thought anything whatever about indigestion or after effects; for where everybody laughs and is happy, there is no need to fear indigestion.

The children went to the station to meet the guest, and, when the train came in, greeted him with shouts of welcome, and, proudly surrounding him, marched down the street like a royal procession.



Page 46

There would not be words enough to describe the feast that followed at Bobby's house. All the children wished to sit next to his grandfather, so that he had to change places at every course (all of which had candy interludes) and thus that mighty matter was accomplished to the entire satisfaction of the children.

And after supper Bobby's grandfather played games with them and soon lost his worry lines, probably on the floor where he was playing horse or bear. No one picked them up, so it isn't positively known where he lost them. When Ethelwyn and Beth suddenly bethought themselves that they were to go with their mother to the Home the next day, to take Joe's sister there, it was at once decided that Bobby and Nan should go too, for one beautiful outing before school should begin.

"And we will need it," said Bobby, with a deep sigh over the arduous educational duties before him.

Then Bobby's grandfather brought out some curious knobby-looking bundles from his valise, and while the children shut their eyes, he hid the packages and then turned the children loose to find them. There was a great outfit of Kate Greenaway writing paper for Ethelwyn; a black doll-baby apiece for Beth and Nan; and a watch with a leather fob and jockey cap attachments for his namesake, Bobby. There were also a book and a game for each one. While they were playing with their gifts, Mrs. Rayburn and Bobby's grandfather talked apart, and it was a happy talk, as Ethelwyn and Beth could see when they came up to where they were sitting.

When at last it was time to say good-night, Ethelwyn and Beth had a surprise for Bobby's grandfather. It was four silver dollars. "Two of our dollars are gone to help take Joe's sister to the Home," Beth explained, "but this is for you on account of your losing the change money. It's from us all, instead of good-bye presents we were going to get for Nan and Bobby. They said they'd rather."

Bobby's grandfather hesitated just a little and was about to make a gesture of refusal, when, seeing their mother shake her head, he kissed the children's red cheeks and said, with a shake in his voice, "You dear children, I'll keep these and your letter, as long as I live, so as not to forget your faith in me."

CHAPTER XX The Visit to the Home

On the train we ran through rain,
Then out in sun and blue;
And all the trees bent down and raced,
And all the houses too.

Somehow, that night, after the children were all in bed, and the grown people were talking over the next day's journey, it seemed to Bobby's grandfather that he too would



like to go along, and he said he could not for the life of him see why Bobby's mother should not go too, and also Nan's father and mother if they wished.

Well, it was short notice, but by telegraphing, telephoning and telling by mouth they arranged it; and the next morning quite an imposing party boarded the Eastbound Limited, and took possession of the drawing-room car, for Bobby's grandfather never did things on a niggardly plan.



Page 47

He and Bobby's mother were seated on one side, and Nan's mother (her father could not leave) and Mrs. Rayburn were across from them, while Nan, Ethelwyn, Beth, and Bobby appeared and disappeared, like meteors, in the most unexpected places. Joe's sister was not well enough that day to accompany them, so it was arranged that her brother should bring her as soon as she felt better.

If I have, by the use of the word "grandfather," given you an idea of decrepitude and old age, in the case of Bobby's grandfather, I wish at once to change that idea.

He was a very erect and handsome man, with a white mustache indeed, but with a firm mouth underneath that gave no sign of diminished force.

He had always told Mrs. Rayburn that he thought it was very foolish for her to give such large sums of money for charity.

"It's not right," he now repeated, twirling his mustache. The morning paper lay across his knees, and, as he spoke, with an air of finality and disapproval, he picked it up.

"What isn't right, grandfather?" asked Bobby, suddenly appearing on the back of his chair, and encircling his grandfather's neck with a pair of sturdy legs.

His grandfather drew him down by one leg into his lap.

"Giving all your money away to people who don't appreciate it," he explained.

"How do you know they don't?" asked Bobby.

"Because, sir, people don't appreciate what is given to them, as much as they do what they earn."

Bobby pondered over this.

"I like my Christmas presents better than the money I get for chopping kindling," he replied at length; "because the Christmas money is more, for one thing."

"And more certain," put in his mother, laughing; "the kindling money isn't always earned."

"Are you talking about the Home money?" asked Ethelwyn, looking over the back of the chair in front of them.

"Yes."



“But we like to give it, and so will you, when you see how nice it is, and Dick and Aunty Stevens and the best cookies that she can make. What’s the good of keeping money? We can always buy more down at your bank,” she concluded easily.

“You may not always think so, young lady, nor take such wide views of things. When you grow up, you may wish you had more money,” said the banker, laughing.

“Does keeping money make folks happy?” inquired Beth, suddenly popping up.

The lines in grandfather’s face deepened, and there came over it a look of care.

“Not always, child, I must confess,” he said at length.

“Besides, my father says not to lay up treasure for roth and must to corrupt!” put in Nan, coming to the surface. At this, they all shouted, much to Nan’s discomfiture.

For awhile the banker looked out on the showery landscape, then he turned to the children’s mother.

“Perhaps you are right, Mrs. Rayburn,” he said gently. “The world is all too selfish;” and he sighed as he said it.



Page 48

“It is indeed,” came the emphatic answer. “There is no crime, there is no sin, that has not for its basis selfishness. It is the evil part of life, and the Christ life that ought to be man’s pattern, is the type of unselfishness.”

“Well,” said the banker, taking up his paper, “I am open to conviction.”

The sun was shining when they arrived at the pretty station, and they all stopped on the platform to listen a moment to the organ note of the sea. As they waited, a wagon drove up, and a young fellow jumped out and ran towards them.

“It’s—it’s—Dick! Dick who used to walk on crutches!” cried Ethelwyn, fairly rubbing her eyes in astonishment.

There were no signs of lameness now in this tall youth, and his face was radiant with happiness. He could not speak for a moment, as he shook hands with those whom he knew, and of whom he had almost constantly thought with heartfelt gratitude.

“My sakes! Aren’t you mended up well, though?” said Beth, walking around him admiringly.

They all laughed at this, of course, and Dick was then introduced to Bobby’s mother, his grandfather, and Bobby himself.

“Dick is the first patient of the Home,” said Mrs. Rayburn, “and he does it credit. He is Mrs. Stevens’s right-hand man now. Where and how is dear Mrs. Stevens?”

“She is well but could not leave to come to the train,” said Dick. “She can hardly wait to see you, though.”

“I do sincerely trust she has baked a bushel of cookies,” said Ethelwyn, as they climbed into the wagon.

The approach to the Home was very beautiful. The sun was going down in a blaze of glory, and the wagon wound around the hill road to where the cottage, gay with flags and striped awnings, crowned its summit.

Then, above the roar of the sea and the clatter of hoofs, came the sound of children’s voices calling from the broad piazza,

“Welcome home! Welcome home!”

Then a child’s voice sang,

“To give sad children’s hearts a joy,
To give the weary rest,



To give to those who need it sore,
This makes a life most blest.”

As Bobby’s grandfather helped the grown people out of the wagon—the children had climbed down without waiting for help—he cleared his throat once or twice.

“I’m nearer conviction than I was,” he said.

As she hurried towards the porch, Mrs. Rayburn smiled to herself.

Nan’s mother waited, and walked up with Bobby’s grandfather. Over her had come a great and happy change; her eyes were now full of earnest light, and she had forgotten her headaches and other small ills.

She now looked up into the banker’s face.

“After all, life to be beautiful and to reach rightly towards eternity should be helpful, and self-forgetful; do you not think so?” she said. “I was long learning the two great commandments, which embody the whole decalogue, and I probably never should have learned them if it had not been for these blessed children, and their mother.”



Page 49

“H—m, h—m,” said the banker.

On the porch were twenty children. In forty eyes the new light of happiness was dawning. At the beginning, many of them had been hopeless and even evil, but now it was all different, for they had found out that they could laugh.

Aunty Stevens herself, full of laughter and bubbling over with joy at seeing her friends again, surrounded by the shouting children, made them more than welcome.

Bobby’s grandfather was armed with a huge box, which he had mysteriously guarded all day; he now set it down upon the porch.

“If you children don’t make this box lighter at once, I shall have no use for you,” he declared. And they all, scenting candy with infallible instinct, fell upon it with rapture.

They had tea on the lawn, that evening, and, after a consultation with Mrs. Stevens, Bobby’s grandfather sent a message over the telephone that was followed very shortly by a man with ice cream and a huge cake. When eight o’clock came, one of the teachers began to play a march on the piano in the hall. At once the children fell into line, marking time with their feet, and singing,

“Good-night, good-night,
Children and blossoms who sleep all the night,
Always will wake up happy and bright,
Good-night, good-night!”

As they sang, they marched away to bed. The others followed them in.

The boys’ dormitories were in a building on one side of the lawn, and the girls’ on the other, while the babies’ nursery was in the main building.

The spirit of the Home was helpfulness, so each child aided some one else in getting ready for the night. When they were in their white night-gowns, they all dropped upon their knees, and one of the teachers said a short prayer after which they all joined with her in the Lord’s Prayer.

When the guests came down into Aunty Stevens’s sitting-room where the open fire was dancing—for the evening was a trifle chilly—Bobby’s grandfather put a few questions to Mrs. Stevens.

“When the children are thievish and given to bad language and lying, what do you do?” he asked.

“In some way they seem to shed those things, as a worm does its cocoon, after they are here for a while,” she answered. “In the light of loving care, the sunny child nature



comes out—it cannot help it, any more than a rose can help blooming in the sun; and, with the other children who have been here from the first to regulate things, we do not have much trouble. They are too young to stay vicious, and when they go away they are well enough grounded in good habits not to forget them, we hope, and to go on helping others.”

“Do you have to refuse many applicants?”

“Yes, that is one trouble. We ought to be able to take at least fifty children, and we need an infirmary; but those things will come in time.”

Bobby’s grandfather opened his mouth to speak, just as Bobby himself climbed into his lap with a question trembling on his lips.



Page 50

“Well, sir?” inquired his grandfather.

“May I have some of the money you’re going to leave me, to give now, just as Ethelwyn and Beth did?” asked Bobby.

“How do you know I’m going to leave you any, you young freebooter?”

“Well, I s’posed you would; most people would think so, ’cause I’m named for you, and you always said you liked me,” remarked Bobby, somewhat embarrassed.

His grandfather patted him comfortingly on the back.

“Yes, Bobby, I do like you, and all the better for your request. We’ll build the infirmary, and maybe more. I am open to conviction no more,” he added, looking towards Mrs. Rayburn, “for I *am* convicted and I hope converted.”

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