
MAY FLOWER SERIES
FOR GIRLS

50

Olive
from
Nevada

In Amity Court. Page 26.

THE

CHILDREN OF AMITY COURT.

BY

LOUISE M. THURSTON,

AUTHOR OF "HOW CHARLEY ROBERTS BECAME A MAN," "HOW EVA ROBERTS GAINED HER EDUCATION," "HOME IN THE WEST."

"There are gains for all our losses,
There are balms for all our pain;
But, when youth, the dream, departs,
It takes something from our hearts,
And it never comes again.

"Something beautiful is vanished,
And we sigh for it in vain:
We behold it everywhere,—
On the earth and in the air,
But it never comes again."

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
10 MILK STREET

Affectionately Dedicated

TO

ANDREW CHAMBRÉ CAMPBELL.

CONTENTS.

THE CHILDREN OF AMITY COURT.

CHAPTER I.

HANNAH CRAIG.

JAMES CRAIG'S barber-shop in Campfields was closed. It had been closed for a week. There was a strip of black crape hanging from the door-knob, and another from the striped pole. Inside the shop the yellow shades cast a subdued light. Everything was set in a solemn sort of order. There was not a brush or a razor awry in its place; and a gloomy silence reigned where but few weeks since were plenty of lounging talkers, plenty of news and gossip retailed, and plenty of business done.

Beyond the shop were the little parlor and kitchen of James's home. But these too showed an unwonted stillness and an unnatural order. The parlor was a bedroom as well. A plump, ruddy-faced boy lay asleep in a large crib, and on the pillow of the other

bed a cloud of fine black hair shaded the delicate and strangely womanly face of a little girl.

In a low rocker by the table sat the mother and widow. She had been putting a few needful stitches into a little garment for Jemmy, and now leaned back wearily, and rocked slowly and thoughtfully to and fro. Her mood was restless. The sorrow and anxiety that had filled the past week had settled into a steady purpose. She could no longer stay here, and she had now decided what was wisest to be done. In the city she had many acquaintances, and could there find plenty of such work as she could best do. In Campfields was little opportunity for her to earn a livelihood. She must go to New York. Hannah was an excellent laundress. Many wealthy families who had known her in the ten long years she had been Mrs. Roberts' nurse for Eva, would perhaps yet remember her. From them she hoped to secure employment. At any rate, the effort should be made, and the sooner the better. So she had set to-morrow as the day to leave her home, go to New York, and see what could be done. The children should go with her. They had never seen the city, and there had been too much of gloom over their young lives in the past weeks of their father's sickness and death. She could leave them at the house of her old friend, Jane Cook, who was nurse for Mrs. True's Minnie when she was at Mrs. Roberts'. Jane

Cook was married now, and lived in a decent house in the lower part of the city. The children would have a fine day, watching the passers from Jane's window.

These plans had all been made a day or two ago. Hannah was only dreamily thinking them over and approving them as she sat rocking so slowly. Lines of care had come into her face in the last few years. She was also troubled with a growing deafness, and the effort to hear had added to its anxious expression. But she was resting now. Her mind went back to those years — happy years before her marriage — when she served in the grand house of Mrs. Roberts in New York City, when she took care of Eva, who, like her own Nora, never made any trouble, and there was only pleasure in the care. It was two years since Charley and Eva Roberts had come out to see her before going away to the West. How she wished there was one of all the Roberts family in New York City now, to whom she could go for advice and assistance! But they were all far away. So, with a sigh, Hannah arose, laid away her work, and began to prepare for the night.

As she moved about the room, the little black head stirred. A pair of soft black eyes peeped through the long lashes, and watched her movements. Hannah was not long in observing it, and smiled down at them as she turned towards the bed.

"What is the matter, mamma? You looked as if you wanted to cry," said Nora.

"Did I?" replied Hannah, absently. "I was thinking."

"What were you thinking about? Papa?"

"No, not just then. I was wishing Miss Eva were in New York, so I could go and talk with her. It would be such a comfort!"

"Perhaps she is there."

"No. She went away to Chicago."

"But that was a long, long time ago. She may have come back now."

"No. She has not come back."

"Why? Isn't she ever coming back?"

"I don't know."

"She will come back to see you, sometime."

"O, no! She would never come all the way for that."

"Well, then, to see other folks. Aren't there lots of folks in New York she knows and will want to see?"

"Yes, of course. Perhaps she will come sometime." And Hannah was somehow comforted by the thought, as she often before had been by the kind child-thoughts of little Nora. "If I could only find the card they left with their address on it, I think I would write to Miss Eva. But it is lost."

"I'm afraid Jemmy got it," gravely suggested Nora.

Jemmy did so much mischief, he generally had the credit of all that was done or suspected. But now he slept unconsciously through the charge.

"I remember her, mamma," resumed Nora, after a dreamy silence. "Miss Eva was just like the picture of an angel in my story-book, that I got for speaking a piece in Sunday school. She had just such pretty, shining, yellow hair curling all down her neck and shoulders, — only the angel's hair was n't curled nicely, and hers was, — and just such dear, pleasant blue eyes. I was a little girl then. It was ever so long ago."

Hannah smiled; then she said, "Miss Eva was about the best-behaved little girl I ever knew."

"If I am very good, mamma, shall I ever grow to look like her? — like an angel, I mean?" asked Nora, eagerly.

"Yes, I think you will. You often remind me of her," replied Hannah, as she smoothed the jet-black hair over the pillow, and kissed her little girl.

"I don't see how I can," said Nora, slowly, holding up her hair to the light and looking through it. "I don't look at all like her, and my hair has n't turned yellow a bit."

"You can never make your hair yellow or your eyes blue," said Hannah; "but being good will bring the lovingness and kindness up into your face as it is in Eva's."

Nora was not satisfied. She lay, holding up her hair and gazing at it with a sad and thoughtful face. Hannah saw it, and the tears came into her eyes. This thoughtful, earnest child-woman was the greatest blessing and comfort of her life. She loved her with a respect, as well as strength, which few mothers mingle in their parental affections.

Tears were gathering in Nora's dark eyes too.

"Angels never have black hair," she said, slowly and softly, with a quiver of her rosy lips. She was afraid her dark locks might shut her out of angelhood forever.

"I don't believe that," said Hannah, quietly.

"Don't you?"

"No. It's nonsense."

"What is nonsense?"

"That angels should not be as likely to have dark hair as light. Angels are only people."

"Is that all?" asked Nora, in astonishment.

"Yes. Your papa is an angel now."

"I know it," said Nora, in a hushed voice.

"But his hair is n't yellow," Hannah continued, coming to the bedside again.

"Unless — unless he has changed it," suggested Nora.

"If he has, I suppose you can," replied the mother, smiling to see the light come back to Nora's face, as she said, in a tone of relief, —

"So I can."

Then Hannah put out the light, and soon both were asleep.

Jemmy made sure of their being wide awake early next morning. Going to the city was an event in his life only to be compared with one other, and that was the circus which had been in town last summer, and to which he had been taken, as a great treat, by Lester Gree. Jemmy had reckoned by it ever since. Everything happened either before or after the circus, in his calendar.

Breakfast was soon over, and everything in the kitchen had once more assumed the prim order of the previous evening. If Hannah found work, she meant to move her furniture soon. But while a doubt remained, she would leave her home as it was, that she might retreat thither if necessary. She packed a few needful clothes in a large valise, for she might be gone some days, if Jane could keep her. Then all, at last, was ready. Nora and Jemmy, in their little best suits of buff linen, were two as neat and pretty children as were often seen. Hannah, too, plainly attired in black, had quite the air of a lady, as she stepped out from the door of her home, and turned the key. For the first time in many years. that key went into her pocket instead of under the blind.

Mr. Beeler, the grocer, was passing as she came through the little side yard to the street.

"Ah! you are starting?" he said.

"Yes, sir. I was coming to bring you the key," she replied.

"All right. I 'll do the best I can," he said, "and I hope by the time you return, I shall have found a man to take the lease of the shop off your hands."

"Thank you hearty sir," said Hannah, gratefully; "but I shall perhaps come back to-night. Perhaps not for two or three days. I can't tell till I get there, and find out how things are."

"No, of course not. Well, whether you come back to-night or three months hence, you will find all safe here and ready for you; and always plenty of old friends in Campfields to greet you. I don't know what Lester Gree will do, without your children to play with." And Mr. Beeler patted Nora's pink cheeks.

"Everybody has been very kind, I am sure, sir, ever since the day that Mrs. Gree came down to help me when Mrs. Roberts died, till now. I wish I could see my way clear to stay here, for such good neighbors."

"Perhaps you will find better ones in the city," replied Mr. Beeler, cheerily; "at any rate, let us hope so." And, with a friendly hand-shake, and good-by, Mr. Beeler left her.

"Come, Jemmy," said Hannah.

A very jovial laugh was Jemmy's only reply. He

was at the moment in hot pursuit of an uncommonly stout and fleet grasshopper.

"Jemmy, mamma's waiting," called Nora.

Jemmy sprang at the grasshopper and came down unsuccessfully, plump on his clean linen knees, in a very damp and disreputable portion of the street-gutter. Sir Grasshopper settled his chin in his neck-cloth and contemplated his downfall with serenity from a neighboring succory-stem.

"I'll 'ave 'im now!" cried the undaunted sportsman, scrambling to his feet.

Hannah hastened towards him with more energy than patience. Jemmy opened his mouth with a scream of defiance, and ran. Hannah could not make a spectacle of herself by pursuing, and stopped, vexed and dismayed. Nora grasped her mother's hand.

"If you'll walk along, mamma, I'll bring him. He'll come with me."

It was not the first time Nora had helped her mother to conciliate and persuade this difficult little scion of humanity. And Nora's successes had long ago proved her judgment and ability. Hannah yielded, and walked on. Nora stood still by the roadside, and in a very few moments, by her quietness and quickness, had captured a fine specimen of the grasshopper family.

"I've got one, Jemmy! See if it is the one you were after."

Jemmy believed in Nora as he did in no one else. She never deceived him. Though greatly surprised at such a sudden capture, he came at once to see. She opened her hand a crack for him to peep, and there sat the grasshopper, with a look of surprised solemnity.

"I should n't wonder but 'e 's the very one," announced Jemmy, oracularly. "Looks like 'im. 'Ow did you catch 'im so quick?"

"I was careful not to scare him."

"I don't know but I believe the one I saw was a *leetle* bigger. Let me see again."

Jemmy looked again, and the grasshopper very naturally jumped for the open crack of his prison. Jemmy started back with blinking eyes.

"Let 's hurry and show him to mamma before he gets away!" said Nora.

Jemmy was eager enough to do that, and they soon overtook Hannah.

It was a bright sunny morning, and on the piazza, all around the little station, stood groups of men going into the city. The coming train was already in sight, and Hannah had just time to secure her ticket before it came to a stop alongside the platform. When they were fairly moving, Jemmy, with dilated eyes and his ruddy little face close to the window, held his breath with delight, at the whizzing panorama before him. All

the way he kept shouting, above the din of the cars, to Nora close at his side, to look at the cows, houses, streets, and people as they flew along. Once a frightened horse caught their attention. Then a row of boys, on a fence, who waved their caps and cheered the passing train. Everything was wonderful, exciting, and delightful to the children. But to Hannah, as the cars bore her nearer the city she had once known so well, a strange dread took possession of her. There came an unaccountable sinking at her heart. The hope that had buoyed her up heretofore seemed forsaking her in the time of greatest need. She longed to be safely back in Campfields.

Meanwhile the cars flew swiftly on, and entered the city, and her busy day must begin. The first thing was to take the children to Jane Cook's; then she could go about freely to arrange other matters. This first task was, however, a hard one. It was a long walk. Coaches and horse-cars would not much shorten it, and she could not afford a carriage. She took the plump valise in one hand, and vigorously grasped Jemmy's wrist with the other. Nora walked as his guard on the other side, and held his other hand. It made a convenient form of infantry troop for the anxious mother, but was anything but satisfactory to the eager, inquiring eyes of Jemmy. Always something he wanted to see was hidden by mother's dress, or Nora's broad-brimmed

summer hat. He stretched his neck first one way, then another. Innumerable things he wanted to see a second time, he missed after the first glimpse. Only the continual appearance of new wonders prevented him from screaming with vexation at losing sight so rapidly of old ones. He sprang forward to see the last of an advertising wagon, around Hannah and the valise. He lagged a step to gaze at a baby in a basement window they were passing. But Hannah had a good grip on his little wrist, and she never relaxed it for any strain that came upon it, — perhaps the struggles only tightened it. Nora's attention was divided between Jemmy's talk, her care over him, and her own interest in the busy city streets. The noise seemed to stun her, but Jemmy liked it. It gave him an opportunity for the full exercise of his excellent lungs.

Hannah walked on, her eyes wandering about for familiar buildings and landmarks. She had just found one, and started to cross the street.

"My shoe's untied!" suddenly cried Jemmy, hanging back.

"Never mind," said Hannah, looking up and down the street, and seeing that now was a good time to cross.

"I step on it! I shall tumble down!" shouted Jemmy.

Nora stooped and tucked in the straggling string.

Hannah watched her, then clutching the valise and Jemmy, stepped from the sidewalk. Jemmy gave one scream of objection and fright. Hannah pushed on, half dragging him with her. Jemmy struggled, and wrested away his hand just as something struck Hannah, and she fell. Jemmy went racing down the sidewalk. Nora followed, not daring to lose sight of him. Hannah lay senseless and alone, in the street, in the track of a runaway horse.

Of course a crowd instantly gathered. As her valise seemed to show her a stranger in the city, and as no one knew anything about her, the police placed her in the empty wagon that had done the mischief, — as the runaway horse, quickly captured, was being led back, — and bore her away. Five minutes afterwards the crowd had again dispersed; the street was as busy as ever; and no trace remained of the accident, unless one had the curiosity to inspect the paving in one spot, where a few spatters of blood had stained the stones.

CHAPTER II.

AMITY COURT.

STUMBLING on a broken brick, Jemmy fell over upon a doorstep, and there he lifted up his voice, and wept as only Jemmy could weep. In truth, the child was in a terrible fright, and his previous excitement strengthened and intensified it. His quick eyes and ears had seen and heard the approaching danger, though his speech was too slow to tell of it, and his blind efforts to escape it had been only disregarded as one of his many unfounded objections to doing as his mother desired. Nora was quickly beside him. She threw herself down, panting, upon the doorstep, and lifted his flushed face into her arms.

"What *is* the matter, Jemmy? There, hush now, and tell Nora, won't you?"

Jemmy only nestled closer to her, and sobbed bitterly, though more quietly. When at length he was almost still, with only occasional long fluttering breaths to tell of the pain that had torn his little heart, Nora said, —

"Now we'll go and find mamma." She had been wondering that her mother had not, before now, come to find them. But Jemmy broke into a bitter wail at this suggestion.

"O, I don't want to! She'll be all smashed hup. Oo-oo!"

"Hush, hush, Jemmy! don't cry any more. Mamma will be waiting for us, and not know where we are."

"No, she won't! The great wild 'orse was coming, and 'e ran over 'er! Oo!" moaned Jemmy, for he had seen his mother fall, while Nora, in looking after him, had not. She remembered now the clatter and rush of a flying horse and wagon, and her bright cheeks paled at the thought that her mamma could scarcely have got out of the way of it. But she answered, in her usual trusting, cheery way, —

"Perhaps not. I guess mamma got out of the way."

"No, she didn't! I saw 'er fall down, and the 'orse — Ooo!"

"You did? Then perhaps she is hurt somehow, so she can't come to look for us. We must go and find her. And then we will carry the valise for her, won't we? Do you believe you can carry half of it?"

"Yes!" cried Jemmy, stoutly. "Hi could carry the 'ole of it!" And his face lighted up with the prospect of testing his strength.

So Nora rose, and hand in hand they walked back

along the busy sidewalk towards the spot where they had lost their mother. They walked a long way; they looked carefully and earnestly at every woman they met. But nowhere could they find their mother.

"I think we must have come by the place," said Nora. "Let 's go back."

They went back far down the long sidewalk again Still with no success.

"I wish I knew just where it was," said Nora, stopping to gaze anxiously across the street.

"What are you looking for, little girl?" asked a passer.

"Looking for mother," replied Nora. "She is right along here somewhere looking for us."

The stranger said, "O, well, you 'll soon find her then," and went on.

Others spoke to the two little wanderers, and receiving the same answer, passed on. The children grew very tired, and looking down a quiet court, Jemmy said, —

"Let 's go in there and sit down; I 'm *so* tired!"

There was no passing of carriages here, for the court led nowhere. Across the end was a broken fence, and beyond it was the river. The sun lay blistering hot down the length of the court, but there was beginning to grow a narrow ribbon of shadow on one side. The houses were huddled against one another, — houses

of all sizes, heights, and styles, for it had once been a respectable and desirable place of residence. Here and there were blocks of decent brick, — the old settlers, — and crowded in between were shabby wooden buildings. It was in the doorway of one of these that Nora and Jemmy sat down to rest. Jemmy pillowed his brown head on Nora's lap, and, quickly putting aside all care and anxiety, he fell asleep, safe and happy in little Nora's protecting arms. It was not so easy for Nora to forget her trouble. Yet, sitting so still, lulled by the quiet breathings of Jemmy on her lap, the soothing influence did at last overcome her excitement, and, resting her head on the lintel beside her, she too slept.

Few people were astir in the court, and those few were too well accustomed to the sight of stray children to notice these. Biddy Crowley, coming home from her day's wash, said, "La sakes, now where did they come from, the darlints?" as she stepped over Jemmy to enter the door. But she did not waken them to inquire.

The shadow had stretched across the court, and was creeping, tier by tier, up the windows of the opposite houses, when Jemmy awoke. He sat up and gazed about in wonder. The movement awoke Nora, and for a moment the two children stared about and at each other in silence. Then memory returned, and Nora sighed. But Jemmy was quite recruited by his sleep,

and, seeing some children of his own size playing in a gutter opposite, cried, —

"Let's go over there, and play a while with them. Till mamma comes, you know," he added, as he saw doubt in Nora's face.

"She won't find us," said Nora.

"Yes, she will. There's the street, just out there, and when she goes by she'll look right down here and know us by our linen clothes!" And Jemmy sprang up and started Yet the strangeness and newness of the city threw a shade of coyness over his usually confident air, and he turned, half-way across, to wait for Nora, and take her hand.

They walked over and stood by the group, — three nondescript, half-clothed children, who were piling up chips and bits of rubbish into an edifice of some inches in height. The builders took no notice of the little strangers who stood by looking on. They pretended not to be conscious of their presence. Nora was trying to find some pleasant word or way of beginning talk with them. But Jemmy could not wait; and just as the edifice towered to a proud height, he put out his foot, and with a little poke knocked it all down. He did not mean to be rude or ill-tempered. It had always been his way, when he had built up his block houses, to have the fun of seeing them tumble down. Indeed, to him the destruction seemed often the best part of

the play. Not so ran the faith of the little Amity Courters. A yell of anger arose from the younger ones. But the larger boy seized a handful of slimy dirt from the gutter, and flung it full in Jemmy's face. Jemmy's mouth being open for a laugh, some of the dirt went in. This indignity was felt to be a maddening outrage. Little Jemmy was never so angry before. Quicker than Nora could stop him, he sprang like a tiger at the boy, pounding and shaking him in an utterly unscientific, but very hearty manner. The other children cheered. A fight was a species of entertainment with which they were quite familiar. More children rushed out to see it. Then, as their native seemed getting the worst of it at the hands of the stranger, a bigger boy came to his assistance.

Nora had been trying from the first to pull Jemmy away from his aggressive onset, but it must be confessed that she redoubled her exertions when she found him the sufferer. Then he would gladly have yielded to her efforts to disengage him, but the big boy held him with one hand while he struck him with the other. Nora began to cry, and at last, in desperation, wrapped both arms about Jemmy, bowed her head over him, and let the blows fall on her own shoulders.

A quick patter of bare feet came down the sidewalk.

"Hi, Bili! rare fellow! *Can* lick a little girl, can't ye?"

The blows ceased, and Bill turned, panting and angry, on the new-comer. But instead of commencing a new fight, he said, in a shamed voice, —

"I was n't licking the girl. 'T was the boy that was pitching into little Pat Crowley."

"What boy?" And crouching, with his hands on his knees, and a shrewd, puckering smile about his droll mouth, Ned peeped under Nora's arms to get a view of Jemmy. "Sure enough! There *is* one, I declare! The girl is rather small to be a match for you, but the boy is so *dreadful* little, I did n't see him at all!"

"They are strangers, anyway," retorted Bill. "Look at their good clothes."

Nora led Jemmy to a quiet doorway, where he sobbed a long time, partly perhaps with fright and pain, but probably a great deal more from unappeased anger. A terrible heart-sinking had come upon both the children. It was hunger. But the excitement and anxiety of the day made them unconscious what ailed them.

Boys came trooping into the court now, group after group, many munching cakes or doughnuts as they came. Grown men and women came into it also, some carrying little empty tin pails, some a saw, some an axe, some picks; many were quite empty-handed. As the sun went down, Amity Court seemed to wake up. Every house was full of life. The open windows each framed a group of frowsy heads, and dozens of loung-

ing inhabitants swarmed upon the doorsteps and filled the narrow sidewalks. The houses were like ant-hills. Coarse voices called back and forth in the gathering dusk; games of tag and tease occupied the street. And the evening shadows drew closer their kind curtain over the half-clothed people who loitered about, resting from the day's toil, and the dirty, pinched-up children who raced and shouted at their play.

Nora and Jemmy were obliged to leave the doorway where they had sought refuge. The owners wanted it. They stood by the corner of a narrow passage that led through into the back yards. They stood till they could stand no longer; then they sat down upon the pavement. Plenty of tired women were sitting on the sidewalk about them, so it seemed quite in fashion for them to do so too. In the darkness their good clothes did not mark them as strangers. No one noticed or spoke to them. Sitting there, again sleep came to their relief, and the hum of the voices about them only lulled them more deeply in its embrace.

The chill of midnight awoke Nora. The court was empty, and still as death. She could not stay there on the cold stones any longer. She half roused Jemmy; and, leading him to the wooden steps of one of the shabbiest houses, they crept up into the doorway, and soon were again asleep.

Jemmy was early awake in the morning, but no ear-

lier than many others in Amity Court. The houses showed signs of movements within, but there was no such running over at doors and windows as last night. The men with dinner-pails and tools were going, one by one or in groups, out of the court to their day's work. Then went the boys, chatting and chaffing together. Nora saw Bill and Ned among them, but they were not together. Ned was with a smaller boy, to whom he was talking earnestly; Bill was playing rudely with a party of rougher boys. Nora tried to hide, with Jemmy, under the open lid of the hatchway of a cellar. She could not bear to be seen and mocked for good clothes again. At last the men and boys seemed all gone, and the children crept out of their hiding-place. They felt very weak and faint; their heads were dizzy and light with fasting. Jemmy was ready to cry with a sort of dumb misery he could not explain. But his eye caught the water sparkling across the end of the court.

"I want to go and see the water!" he said, in forlornest accents.

Nora led him where he could look through the broken fence, and see, far out on the river, steamers and sail-boats gliding to and fro. The novel sight interested him for a while. Nora, too, enjoyed it, but soon something nearer called her attention. A large boy had come up from a little slanting path by the river with a hand-cart, and left it before the door of the great brick

house next the water. He went in and up the stairs, which Nora could see, as the door stood wide open. That was the fashion with all the doors in Amity Court. Soon he came down with a huge sack, very full and plump, on his back. And behind him came a girl not quite so large, and she too had a full sack on her back. Both sacks were placed in the hand-cart. They seemed not very heavy, though so very big. Then the boy and girl went back, and soon returned with two more sacks, which they also piled on the little hand-cart. The boy brought down one more, and then the cart was heaped so full that he had to tie a rope over the bags to keep them from rolling off. Nora could not help coming nearer. She liked to see them fill the cart, and to hear their kind and cheery voices. She hardly knew why, but it was because these were pleasant-looking and well-behaved children, and that could not be said of most of the residents of Amity Court.

"All right, Tom! Now throw me the other end," said the girl, who was hidden behind the piled cart, trying to fasten the rope over it.

"Now it will ride," said Tom, giving the load a shake to test it.

Just then Jemmy turned, and missed Nora from his side. With a scream he looked about for her, and she quickly ran to him.

"Come and see what a load Tom has got," she said,

pointing to the cart which was just beginning to move away.

Jemmy stared with wide eyes, and Nora stood with him watching it going out of the court. The little girl who had helped load it also stood on the sidewalk watching it.

Then she turned, and saw the two little strangers. She smiled at them pleasantly. It was the first bit of encouragement the children had found. Instinctively they moved towards her.

"Please, could you give us something to eat? We are very hungry," said Nora.

"Are you? Why, yes, we can spare you a breakfast," replied the pleasant-faced little girl. "Come upstairs, and I'll get it for you."

CHAPTER III.

THE BIRDS' NEST.

IT was not merely up one flight, nor two, that the pleasant-faced girl led Nora and Jemmy. But at the top of the fourth she paused, and did not go up any more stairs, for the excellent reason that there were no more. Just overhead, the sun shone in upon the little cramped upper hall through a skylight in the roof. A door that stood ajar she pushed open, and the children followed her into a long, low room that reached quite across the house, and had windows front and back, as well as two at the side looking directly out on the shining river. There were two beds in the room, — one tucked away in a corner on the floor, the other dignified with a cot-frame of ample dimensions. In the latter was a movement as they entered. A little body, bolstered up to a sitting posture, leaned forward to catch the first glimpse of the strangers, whose unfamiliar footsteps had been noted far down the long flights of stairs.

"Here is company to breakfast, Harry," said the

hostess, going to a cupboard between the chimney and one of the front corners of the long room.

"We don't have company very often, and I'm glad to see you," said Harry, feeling, with a child's quick instinct, a sort of kinship with Nora, and reaching a puny little hand to shake hands with her.

Nora came to the bedside, and gave her hand shyly, saying, —

"We are not company. We lost our mother, and — why, I suppose we are just beggars." Then, as the force of this dreadful name came over her, Nora suddenly sat down on the floor, in a great clutter of rags that were strewed around Harry's bed, and began to cry.

"O, don't!" said Harry, in a heart-broken voice, leaning over the bedside to look down with pitying eyes upon her. "Bess, do come and take her!"

Bess turned from setting out some bread and baker's cakes, and came quickly. But Jemmy, whose first moments on entering had been busy with a severe survey of the new premises, caught Nora's last words, and, looking down, saw her crying. With one shriek of terrified sorrow, he flung himself down beside her, and wailed forth his despair, at sight of Nora — his stronghold of comfort and refuge — in tears, in a series of the most woful moans that ever greeted mortal ear. Bess stopped half-way to Nora, startled by this new

outbreak. But the emergency instantly hushed Nora's grief. Brushing back her own tears, she raised Jemmy in her arms, and soothingly told him that they were going to have something to eat now, and "wouldn't it taste good?" Jemmy looked up in her face, and, finding her no longer crying, consented to accept consolation and — breakfast.

Bess Canton little knew how much of a charity she was undertaking when she agreed to give these two hungry little strangers a breakfast. It was a twenty-four hours' fast that they were breaking; and many a piece of bread and many a baker's cake it required to make quite good so long a fast, and utterly destroy their healthy appetites. But Bess was not thinking of that.

"You were very hungry, weren't you?" she said, watching them with kindly eyes, as they ate so eagerly.

"Yes, indeed," said Nora.

"I never was so 'ungry 'fore in *hall* my life," vouchsafed Jemmy, with his mouth full of doughnut.

"Tell me where you came from," was the next query.

"Campfields," said Nora.

"It's way off — long way — we came in cars," ejaculated Jemmy.

"But you said you lost your mother. When was that?"

"Yesterday — walking along that street," replied

Nora, indicating the other end of the court with a wave of her hand. "Jemmy ran away, and I ran after him, and when we went back —"

"No, first the great wild 'orse came," interrupted Jemmy; "I saw 'im, and mamma did n't, and Nora did n't. So hi ran away, and Nora ran too, but mamma stayed, and was all runded over."

"When we went back," continued Nora, "we could n't find her."

"Are you sure you went back to the same place?" asked Bess.

"We went all along the street," said Nora; "we could n't tell just the place, but we must have gone by it, and we could n't see mother anywhere; but I think she will come by and by. She 'll be looking for us, you know."

"Yes," assented Bess, gravely. But in her heart she thought that probably the children's mother would never again come to look for them.

When Nora and Jemmy had finished their breakfast, Bess put away the few fragments that remained, and tied on her hat hurriedly.

"Now, I must go down to help Tom," she said; "and I shall have to run, I guess. You can stay here, if you like, till I come back. It is very pleasant to look out of the window at the ships. Would you like to stay?"

Bess looked at Nora for an answer. Nora looked at Jemmy. As neither replied, Bess said to Jemmy, —

"Would you like to stay here and watch the ships on the river till I come back?"

"Yes," acquiesced Jemmy, climbing on a chair at one of the south windows overlooking the water. He was in just that condition of good humor that is agreeable to any and every proposition, and that often comes, as in this case, from a thorough internal physical satisfaction.

So it was agreed that they should remain. But the arrangement was not made without reference to Harry's wish. Bess's eyes had sought his when the meal was ended, and read their desire to retain this new company that had drifted in upon them. It was to Nora, not Jemmy, that the wish had reference. But the two were not to be distinguished, and Harry already endured Jemmy for Nora's sake, in these first few moments of their acquaintance.

Jemmy was very quiet at the window, after Bess had gone. He was tired His unusual sleeping accommodations must answer for that. Then all his young strength and vitality were at present employed to digest his hearty breakfast. Nora, drawn by the gentle ways and indescribable attractions of the little boy in bed, approached, and sat down on the foot of the cot. She did not speak. She did not know what to say. But

she liked to watch him, for two reasons. He was very much after the pattern of the angel in her story-book at home To be sure, the angel's hair was long and streaming, and his was cut short, as a boy's should be. But his was of the golden yellow color that always suggested heaven and glory to her childish mind; and it rolled itself up into rings all around his fair pale face. His eyes were very blue and bright, as soft and gentle as angels' eyes should be, but somehow too sad. Nora did not think this all out. She only felt a vague, dumb happiness in looking at him, and an idea of angels was mixed up in her mind with her idea of him.

Harry was older than Nora, though no larger. He was very busy all the time, as he sat up in bed; and this was the second reason she found so much interest in watching him. A long bag, twice as long as any that Tom had carried away on the cart, — indeed, a bag made by ripping out the bottom of one like those, and sewing the sides on the top of another, — was beside him, standing on the floor, its top within easy reach of his little arms The bag was stuffed full of rags of all sizes, shapes, and colors. Harry was sorting them. He threw the white rags on one side his bed, and the colored ones on the other. Sometimes he found very pretty bits of calico or dress goods; but generally the rags were old and faded, sometimes not at all clean or nice to handle. Harry only hurried over such patches

in his rag-bag, and Bess took care in filling it to put in as little as possible of the disagreeable kind. Soon Nora saw how he divided them, and began to help. They spoke little, but a silent sympathy was growing up between them, expressed chiefly by pleasant glances from their bright eyes. Nora pitied Harry, and wanted to help him because he had to stay in bed, and loved him because he had an angel face. Harry pitied Nora because she looked so sad and had lost her mother, as had the Canton children not long since; and he loved her, too, for the tender care she showed for Jemmy. Little Jemmy, meanwhile, at the window was so unreasonably quiet that Nora turned to look, and found his head sunk upon the sill, in the glaring sunshine, his round eyes fast closed in sleep.

"Jemmy's gone to sleep. I'm glad; he must be so tired," she said to Harry.

"He might lie on the other bed. The sun is too hot for him there," said Harry.

So Nora, half waking him, led him to the bed in the corner, where he soon was comfortably sleeping.

Then Harry and Nora began to talk gradually more and more. Harry first told how they earned money by picking over the rags. Tom went out with the hand-cart and collected them first. Some he picked up in back streets and alleys, and at the back-doors of factories; those were the dirty ones. Some were given him for

taking them away, but those were not worth much, and some he bought for a cent or two a pound Then he and Bess would sort them, — there were different kinds of sorting to be done. He did only the sorting of colored from white cotton rags. Bess picked out the silk, the leather, and the paper. When they were sorted, Tom took them away again, and sold them at the best places for good prices.

"Mother always had a rag-bag," said Nora.

But Harry was shy of talking about her mother. It seemed as if it must be a painful subject. He did not realize how far from Nora's mind was any fear of never finding her mother again. He had seen the grave look in Bess's face, and understood it. He said nothing of Nora's mother, just as Nora said nothing of his being in bed, because she felt sure it was something dreadful that kept him there. He was evidently not sick. His clear bright eyes, his cheerful smile, the busy work of his fair little hands, all proved that no pain was in his small body, no fever dimmed and wasted his life Yet only from his waist up did he seem alive He leaned forward, or rested back upon his pillows. He worked briskly with hands and arms; his head and face moved and lighted up with quick, keen interest. But as stationary as a rose in its garden patch, or a flower upon a tree, was little Harry Canton in his wide cot-bed.

Nora told him, in return for his story about the rags, how she and Jemmy used to play with mud-turtles in Campfields brook, and turn them on their backs to see them "beg"; but how they always took care to turn them back again, right side up, before leaving them, because Lester Gree had told them that the poor turtles could never turn over themselves, and would die so, if left on their backs. Harry listened with interest, yet his pale face saddened slightly as he said, —

"We used to live in the country when father was a minister."

"Was your father a minister?" asked Nora, in some awe at conversing so familiarly with the child of such a dignitary.

"Yes; but it was ever so long ago, when I was very little, — no bigger than Jemmy."

Nora was rather relieved at this explanation, and Harry went on to give more of his history.

"Father was sick, very sick, for a long time. We came to the city to see a doctor here. It was a wonderful doctor who could cure everything and everybody. But he did not cure my father. I did n't know much about it then. Sometimes, since, I have heard Tom and Bess speak of those times when we first came to the city. We lived in a better house, had more rooms, and we did not work — we little ones; but mother did, — she was always at work. Then father died. That was

long ago, — two or three years, I guess. Pretty soon after that we moved into another house where we had fewer rooms. Then into another, where we had only two rooms. Last summer we came here. But it is pretty cold here in the winter. In the summer it does very well. I heard Tom say that we must get away from here before winter comes again, or we shall all freeze."

"Don't you have a fire in the winter?" asked Nora, with her earnest little face full of interest.

"O, yes, all we can. But it costs lots of money, and it does n't warm the room any. The wind blows in so at the cracks in winter! Mother used to sit close to the chimney there, with her feet to the fire and the sunshine on her back, and then she said she was very comfortable. But sometimes there was not any sunshine, and the snow sifted in through the roof, and made it damp and chilly. Then mother would cough all day long. But she kept on sewing just the same. 'T was then that she thought about the rag business, and sent Bess out when it was pleasant to gather all she could find. For a long while Bess would come with such *little* lots. But by and by she learned where to go to find them, and what places had them to sell or give away, and then some days she used to get more than she could bring home at one load. Then mother said we must have a hand-cart. She took off her ring, — it

was a beauty, — and told Tom to go and turn it into a hand-cart. That sounds like fairy-tale ways of doing, I know; but I suppose Tom only sold the ring, and bought the hand-cart with the money. That was when spring was coming, I know, because, after the hand-cart was bought, mother let me sort rags. She would not let me before, because they were so cold to handle; she was afraid I might take cold from them and be sick."

Nora was silent when Harry seemed to have made an end of his recital. There were many things she would have liked to know, but she forbore to ask. They sorted a long time in silence, till a great yawn from Nora drew Harry's attention.

"You are tired. Where did you sleep last night?"

"On the sidewalk and some doorsteps."

"You did? Could you sleep there?"

"We had n't anywhere to go, you know. I did n't sleep as sound as I do in bed."

"Of course not," cried Harry, with a merry smile. "Now I 'll tell you what you must do. Go and lie down on that bed with Jemmy, and have a good nap till Bess and Tom come back."

Nora hesitated; but Harry insisted, and she at last consented. With her head upon the pillow, she fixed her gentle black eyes on Harry's sunny head, and let the pleasant vision be her last as the white lids slowly slipped down, and Nora fell into a comfortable and restful slumber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BIRDS IN COUNCIL.

"I WOULD as soon as you, Bess, if we only could," said Tom Canton, rummaging rapidly in the great heaps of rags he had tumbled from some large sacks, upon the floor under the rear windows of the long room.

Bess was setting out an afternoon meal between the front windows at the farther end of their house. She made no answer, save by a little sigh, and a mournful glance towards the bed upon the floor, where lay Nora and Jemmy, still asleep.

"You see," continued Tom, "everything is changing with the war. We do but barely manage to live now. I don't see how we shall make out to do that when winter comes. And prices are going up, and rags are scarce and high. Sometimes, Bess, I am afraid we shall starve, ourselves. So how can we take those two children in? They can sleep here, of course, but we cannot possibly feed and clothe them; so it is better

they should go where they can be better cared for. They are too young to be put to work."

Bess only sighed again, but this time the sigh was taken up, and echoed from the small cot-bed, where Harry, wearied with his work, lay back upon his pillows, pale and still. Bess heard it as well as Tom. Both glanced towards him, and then went silently on with their work.

"Ned's coming!" said Harry, in a glad, soft voice, a moment later.

The door opened and closed, admitting a figure so full of life drollery, and shrewdness in every line and motion, as to suggest wonder how it could have entered without a heralding of boisterous noise. Harry raised his face with a welcoming smile, Ned took it between two rough, grimy little paws, and grinned into it cheerfully. Anybody but Ned would have kissed it.

"Business is just snapping," was Ned's first remark; and, thrusting his hands into the two pockets of his baggy pantaloons, he rattled the cents therein, then put down a wad of very dirty little green rags upon the dinner-table.

"See there! And the evening trade not begun yet! Thought perhaps you'd like some before night, so I ran home with it."

Bess looked across to Tom. Tom was busy, and kept his eyes on his work. She gave one happy smile to the

generous provider who brought home his gains so freely. Ned grinned back, but it was a grin of more sober and thoughtful a character than the one he had bestowed on Harry. His gray eyes showed an earnest, kind light. His white, even teeth slipped back behind the shrewd lips, and hid quite out of sight. His glance of hearty good-will for the moment outdazzled the great brown patches of freckle on the stubbed, turned-up nose, and the smaller, fainter ones upon his tough young cheeks. For that moment Ned Canton's plain face was quite lovable. Then the mischief and the swagger came back.

"Pretty soon, Bess, I'll support the whole family of you. Tom can go into a counting-room, and we can all live like the gentlefolks we are."

"All but the newsboy who has to pay the bills," said Tom. "You will not grow very wealthy at your trade. I never heard of any one who did."

"Well, there's a first time to everything," returned Ned, with his hand luxuriating among the jingling coppers in his pocket.

"But you see Bess and I are earning less now than before the war. The war is killing our business."

"Is it? It is the making of mine. There was a battle yesterday, and the papers go to-day as fast as I can make change."

"I shall have to find something else to do. In a

week there will be no more rag-picking for me. It will take more capital to carry on the trade than we can raise."

"O, how do you know? Perhaps I can," replied Ned, with a cheerful look, not without suggestion of a mystery somewhere in his most interior thought. But Tom asked no questions. It was a very common look with Ned when he was hunting for an idea.

"Besides," continued Tom, "here are two children who have drifted in on Bess, and she wants to keep them with us. But they are too little to do anything. Look at them!"

Ned's eyes grew round. He walked down the long room and looked at Nora and Jemmy, flung down so wearily on his own couch,—Nora's arm thrown across Jemmy as if to protect him even in sleep. For a moment he looked. Then he whistled, very long and very low, not to wake them. Then the pucker slipped out of his lips, and his customary grin took its place.

"If that isn't the little chap I saw fighting in the court! Only he did n't get on well at it, and so the girl stepped in and took it herself. *She's* a brick—that little girl. Come, now, *she* could sell papers. There's room for new-comers in the business. She could sell for me, and I could get stock for her. Come now, Tom, what's better than that?"

"Do you suppose she would like it? I should so like

to have her stay!" said Harry, gently. But Tom made no reply.

"It would be hard, rough work. You ought not to put her into it," said Bess, gravely.

"I'll agree she shall get a living; that is, pay for the feeding of herself and the boy. When it comes to clothes,—she must beg some, I suppose," Ned added, in a lower tone, "if she can't buy them."

"What do you say, Tom?" asked Bess.

"Hullo!" cried Ned, dropping into his former droll attitude, hands on his knees and chin raised, his keen eyes and inquisitive nose taking on an air of interested inquiry. Little Nora was sitting up on the bed, and her soft, dark eyes were raised in strong entreaty to the unconscious face of Tom, who stood as arbiter of her fate.

"Please do let us stay," she pleaded; "it's so nice here, and so near for mother to find us! I'll do anything you say, and so will Jemmy, won't you?" she broke off, as Jemmy rolled over his sleepy red face at sound of her voice.

"Ye-es," with both fists in his eyes, Jemmy replied.

"We'll be very good."

Tom glanced up and smiled at her. Bess saw it, and answered for him.

"Tom would like you to stay, as well as I, if we can manage to get enough to eat."

"O, we won't eat much!" cried Nora. And Bess smiled, remembering the breakfast. "Just till mother comes, you know." The smile faded, and Bess turned away her face.

"Come now, Bess, if we are going to have anything to eat, I want mine now!" cried Ned.

"It is all ready," was the reply.

Bess carried some of the bread and buns to Harry. Tom left his rags, and began to wash his hands. There were not chairs enough for all, so Ned stood up, and Jemmy shared Nora's. Thus they made a cheerful meal, enlivened by some droll stories, of which Ned had always a stock on hand. When they had finished, which was soon, he turned suddenly to Nora.

"Come, now, I want you to go with me and sell papers for the evening's trade. 'T will be brisk to-night."

Nora looked up in his face with startled eyes, that needed no words of surprise or inquiry.

"You said you 'd do anything we said, and you see you 'll have to earn as much as you eat, you and the little chap."

"But I don't know how!" stammered Nora.

"O, I 'll show you, easy 'nough. Come!"

Nora took up her little straw hat, and put on Jemmy's.

"He can't go," succinctly stated Ned.

Nora obediently took off the hat from Jemmy's head.

"Yes, hi will go too!" screamed Jemmy, with great emphasis.

A puzzled look crossed Nora's face. She had always yielded to Jemmy's imperative will, but now she felt there was some one else to be considered. The two influences balanced, and produced momentary inaction.

"No, you won't, my man," said Ned, who was accustomed to being considered something of a ruler among small boys "Come, now, stay here like a good boy, and we 'll come back by and by."

"Hi say I will go!" shouted Jemmy; and, seizing his hat, he put it on again.

"But, Jemmy," began Nora, softly, "I am afraid you might get lost from me, and then what should I do?"

"Find me," concisely replied the young lord of creation.

"But supposing I could n't, any more than we know where to find mother?"

"Hi 'll keep close hold of you," said Jemmy, in a conciliatory tone.

"But you 'd better stay at home," put in Ned.

"But Hi won't! 'T ain't 'ome, nor nothing like it."

"Come," said Ned, twitching Nora's sleeve for a strategic exit.

But Jemmy was too quick, and caught her other arm.

"Could n't he go?" falteringly asked Nora, torn by the two.

"You 'd lose him just as certain as he did," said Ned. "Or else you 'd be so busy looking after him, you would n't sell the papers."

"Take one of the sack-ropes and tie them together," suggested Bess.

Ned grinned. He picked up one of the ropes that were used to tie the sack-mouths, and saying, tersely, "Come on, then," led the way down-stairs. Nora and Jemmy quickly followed, and soon their steps were lost to little Harry's listening ears.

Bess had cleared the table, and cleaned the few plates. She was busy now making the bed for Harry. She had first taken up the pale, thin child in her motherly arms, and, wrapping an old shawl about him, given him to Tom. It was a regular morning and afternoon duty with them, — a relic of the old home-days, when they felt they had a real home. Tom sat down in the one low rocker, that had been the mother's chair, and holding Harry in his arms as gently and tenderly as had that mother, rocked softly and slowly the little burden. It rested the child from his weary bed. It was the happiest part of his day, — those two half-hours when Tom and Bess took turns to hold and rock him. When the bed was thrown open and tossed up for an airing, Bess came and sat beside them.

"Do you suppose I shall ever grow any bigger?" said Harry, softly.

"O, yes!" Tom answered, cheerfully. "I can remember when you were not half so large as now, — out at Briarwood.

"But I haven't grown any since I came into the city."

"Not so much, I suppose. None of us have. If we were only rich enough to go back to Briarwood, you would begin to grow," said Bess.

"Well, we shan't go," said Harry, with a mournful sort of resignation.

"But you will grow some, here."

"I don't want to; because then I shall get too big to be rocked. And how shall I ever bear it to lie in bed all the time, and be too big to be taken up and rocked?"

"O, is that it?" said Bess, with brightened face. "We'll always rock you, if you grow as big as Tom."

"You could n't."

"Yes, I could. I could rock Tom now."

"Not if he took his feet up?" cried Harry, laughter creeping up in his blue eyes and delicate face.

"Yes, indeed! Let me take him now, Tom; it 's my turn"

"I 'm not tired," said Tom.

"O, I did n't suppose you were," replied Bess; "I never am. But you can have him while I am spreading up the bed, so I want him now."

Tom yielded the rocker and his burden; Bess rocked, and meanwhile sang a little song their mother taught them long ago. And Harry smiled sweetly, as the motion and the music lulled the weariness from his poor little body.

"I didn't do much to-day. See!" he said, pointing to the rags he had sorted, when Bess had returned him to Tom's care. "Seems to me I don't do nearly so much in a day as when I first began."

"There's no need you should now. We shall have very few more rags to sort," replied Tom.

"And what will you do then?"

"O, something else. I don't know exactly what, yet," Tom said, absently.

The fresh bed stood ready, but Tom and Harry lingered yet some time, talking pleasantly of many little things. Then Harry was laid back upon the snowy sheets, — the other bed boasted no such luxury, — and Tom took up his hat.

"I am going again, Bess," he said; "come and help me."

Bess followed him down the many stairs, saying, — "Where are you going now? I thought you could get no more to-day."

In the open doorway Tom sat down, and Bess sat down beside him. The afternoon sun shone slanting on the river, and sparkled up into Amity Court. She

lifted her earnest, kindly face to his; but Tom turned a look of helpless trouble in reply. He had hid it from Harry, but now he must pour out all his anxiety and despair for Bess to soothe and brighten.

"If we had, say, fifty dollars, we could go on, and make money perhaps. But as it is, we must give up."

"For want of money?" said Bess, with a faint smile. "What a pity we are not rich rag-pickers!"

"It *is* a pity, and no laughing either," Tom replied, gloomily. "I was just beginning to see how to make both ends meet, and perhaps save a few dollars towards winter. I thought it would all go on smoothly and safely, now I had got started."

"And did you mean to be always a rag-picker?" asked Bess, gravely.

"Of course not!" was the indignant reply.

"Then now 's the time to do something better."

"But what?"

"Well, I don't know yet what But when we can't do the old way, there 's always a new way, — generally a better way, — only we must try hard, and seek bravely in order to find it. I believe that just because you can't pick rags any more, you will find something better to do."

"I wish I did," said Tom, gloomily.

"Try."

"But I don't *know* anything about it, nor do you."

"God does," replied Bess, softly; "and if we try, we shall find out."

"Somehow, seems as if—" hesitated Tom, "I should feel better if I knew myself."

A puzzled little smile came on Bess's face. "Of course," she said, "or there would n't be anything to make you try. Have you been to see Cobden & Co. again?" she asked, suddenly.

"No."

"You said Mr. Saunders promised you the next chance."

"Yes; and I went every week, till New-year's; and I've been every month since till—" Tom stopped short.

"Why not go again now?"

"I suppose I shall, some day. But it won't do any good. I have n't any hope there. Mr. Saunders is only the 'Co'; he is n't Mr. Cobden nor Mr. Waters. If it had been the nice old gentleman who lost his pocket-book and was helped out of a street row by me, it would perhaps have amounted to something for me; for his word is law there. Or if Mr. Waters had taken a fancy to me, he could have put me into a good place. But, you see, I don't think Mr. Saunders *can*."

"You can go and try."

"Of course."

"Well; go to-day, won't you?"

"What for?"

"Why, just to make a beginning. 'To-day is the very best day we have,' mother used to say."

"Yes; but if I put it off, I keep the chance. After I go, and get 'No' for an answer, it is lost."

"Then you do hope a little, after all," cried Bess, merrily, as Tom moved away up the court.

CHAPTER V.

COBDEN AND CO.

MR. COBDEN'S white hair was too utterly snowy to have grown any whiter in the last five years. His full, round, red face was just as round and as red. Something of the old strength and energy of manner had perhaps slipped away from him. The firm lines of his mouth and chin were a little relaxed. His step was more feeble, and his stout walking-stick had grown to be a friend for use rather than for amusement. He came late to the counting-room, as was his custom. He lingered for a few words with Mr. Saunders at the desk in the outer office. Then he went on, to the business parlor beyond.

There, at a handsome desk, sat Mr. Waters, the practical head of the firm, deep in a pile of papers that were spread before him. His crisp black hair, with its irrepressible kink, was tossed and tumbled by the worrying of his nervous finger. His black brows were bent in a most unpromising scowl. His black eyes glowered in an anxious, gloomy manner.

Mr. Cobden entered in the blandest humor. Putting down his heavy gold-headed stick, and rubbing his hands gently and cheerfully, he tottered up to his nephew's chair. Mr. Waters wheeled suddenly about, at his approach, and shoved the papers aside. The gloomy scowl would linger; but he placed a chair for his uncle, and greeted him carelessly, as is the wont between business men who meet daily.

"That's a good thing — a good thing — of Saunders!" began the old man. "We shall make a cool twenty thousand by it. He's developing a talent for business. Keeps his eyes open like a wide-awake man. Can't imagine how he managed to get such a bargain."

"Yes; Saunders seems to have made a pretty neat thing of that agreement," replied Mr. Waters, abstractedly.

"Saunders is going to make a smart business man. Whoever the goose is that has agreed to import him a bill of goods at such prices must get badly bitten. But we can afford it if he can; hey, Dick?"

"Ye-es," with an absent shuffle of his papers.

"Another year we must settle new terms for Saunders. His services will be worth more. We must allow him something handsome; hey, Dick? Don't you think he ought to share more equally with us?"

"How much capital does he represent?"

"Well, not much, not much, I admit. Very few thousand, I know. But it's all he has got, you see. And that's just what we put in! Hey, Dick?"

Mr. Waters laughed. It was an uncomfortable and rather a disagreeable laugh. But it answered every purpose as well as a better one. Mr. Cobden laughed too, in a pleased, simple-hearted manner; and perceiving that his nephew was preoccupied and distraught, walked away to his own desk at the other side of the room, and sat down there.

Very few books or papers cumbered Mr. Cobden's desk. What few belonged there were not in so frequent use as to prevent their being kept in excellent and orderly arrangement. Mr. Cobden sat down, and looked at them in rapt contemplation. He was trying to think of something to do with them. He had years ago given up all active participation in the business of the firm which in his earlier manhood he had founded and fostered. But he loved to watch its growth and prosperity. He loved to hear of all its interests, risks, and good fortune. It was the darling of his heart; and for its sake, having no children of his own, he had adopted his nephew, Richard Waters, and made him his own successor, to take the helm that he knew himself no longer able to hold. But his whole life was still in and for the firm. It grieved him sometimes that there was nothing he could do for it. It grieved

him now, as he sat staring blankly at his own private books and papers. How dusty they were for want of constant use? They might at least be dusted, and so look as if they were in busy requisition. But it was not his business to dust the office, and he did not know where to find the feather-brush.

"Where 's Louis?" he inquired of Mr. Saunders, putting his head through the door into the outer office.

"Don't know. He has n't come."

"Not come!" And Mr. Cobden brought his whole portly person through the door, and went up to Mr. Saunders' desk. "Not come!" consulting his watch. "Why, 't is twelve o'clock!"

"I know it. I 'm afraid he is sick."

"Well, but if he is sick, you know, he may not come for a week."

Mr. Saunders was reading a letter, and did not immediately reply.

"Everything is getting dusty and dirty," pursued Mr. Cobden, fretfully. "You must get some one else at once. The place is n't fit to live in to-day." And he kicked under the table a wad of crumpled paper that had escaped the waste-basket.

"Patrick swept out this morning," quietly replied Mr. Saunders, laying down the letter he had finished reading.

"My desk is so dusty I can't touch it," grumbled

the old man again, displaying a grimy cuff that had leaned too closely upon the objectionable piece of furniture.

Mr. Saunders smiled merrily. When he was not too busy, Mr. Cobden's fretfulness was apt to be an amusement to him. If busy, it was an intolerable annoyance, and required all his patience and self-control to restrain hasty and angry replies. Now, however, he was not very busy, and on account of the success of his last project was in the best of humor; so he walked into the parlor, took the feather-brush from its peg in the closet, and neatly and carefully dusted off every inch of Mr. Cobden's desk and chair. His condescension was even so extensive, that, having begun, he went on and dusted all the furniture of the handsomely appointed room.

Meanwhile, Mr. Waters sat gloomily bowed over his desk, his eyes gazing blankly, his face black and drawn, and his whole consciousness absent from what transpired around him; and Mr. Cobden indulged in little disconnected phrases of talk, in whiffs, as he stumped up and down the room with his cane.

"Boys ought to be regular — reliable. *I* always was when — boy. Times changed. Louis LeGrange was never just the boy for this place. Unstiddy. Off a day here and a day there. Tidy boy. Well-behaved. But unstiddy."

"He has been sick, you know," suggested Mr Saunders.

"No business to be sick. I'm never sick. Get another boy — to-morrow — to-day. One that'll stick stiddy to business."

Mr. Saunders had finished dusting, and returned to his desk. But the duty of getting a new boy was by no means on his mind. Patrick could sweep out. One of the clerks could dust and tidy up sufficiently to satisfy fussy old Mr. Cobden; and there was little need of a boy.

A rustle of soft silks startled the business ears that heard that sound but seldom in these grim precincts. In at the open door of the office swept the sheeny, sibilant robes, and on through the doorway of the office parlor. Mr. Waters heard, and the slight sound woke him from the revery which more obtrusive interruptions had failed to break.

Mrs. Waters sailed across the office parlor, wearing her sweetest smile, and stood behind her husband's chair.

The crisp, black hair and frowning brows became alert, but Mr. Waters did not raise his eyes or turn his head. He had seized a pen, at the first warning rustle of her approaching silks, and was now so intent in copying a bill that happened to lie before him, that he

seemed utterly incapable of noticing anything that might transpire.

"I told you I would come down, Richard, and so I have," she said, in amiable accents.

Mr. Waters raised his head and looked at her, with an angry glance in his black eyes that suggested anything but pleasure at her fidelity to the promise, or strong mutual affection between the man and wife thus placed, for the moment, face to face.

But the lady feigned unconsciousness of whatever might be disagreeable in the reception she met, and continued, —

"Ma and Ria have been over to see me this morning; and ma thinks it will hardly cost so much as I said. Perhaps a hundred or two less. And if it is n't convenient for you to furnish the two hundred I want today, ma will let me have it, and you can repay her in a few days."

Another flash from the black eyes. Mr. Waters rose, and walked once or twice across the floor. Then he passed hastily through the outer office. But he stopped at the warehouse door. Outside was Mr Meredith's elegant carriage, and in it sat Mrs. Meredith and her beautiful widowed daughter. Mrs. Meredith nodded, and shook her little delicately gloved hand at him merrily, as she greeted him. Mr. Waters returned the "Good-morning" gruffly.

"You must n't keep Sophy long!" she said. "We are waiting, you see."

"She had not told me that," he said, with a more gracious bow for the fair young widow who had shrunk back into the corner and her crapes at his approach. "I must go out on an errand for her; but I'll be back in a few minutes."

Then he hastened down the sidewalk. He had only thought, at first, to escape from his wife; now he thought no more of that. There was no escape. Mrs. Waters wanted two hundred dollars to spend in preliminary repairing and enlarging her costly wardrobe for a summer trip among the watering-places with her mother. Mr. Waters wanted all the money he could command, for some business ventures of his own. Such little contretemps frequently occurred between them, owing to an utter want of unity in their interests. Generally Mr. Waters was master of the situation. To-day Mrs. Meredith was arrayed with her daughter against him; and he was vanquished. Ten minutes later he re-entered the counting-room, silently laid the required money before his wife, and turned his back upon her Mr. Waters cultivated taciturnity in all his family relations. He considered it dignified to do so. Perhaps he admired the virtue more because it was one in which his wife was sadly deficient.

The more angry Mrs. Waters was, the faster she

talked; the more angry Mr. Waters was, the more utterly and implacably silent he became. It would be hard to decide which method was the more irritating and exasperating to the other.

Mrs. Waters gathered up the money into her pocket-book, and with a very cheery good-morning, addressed airily towards the square shoulders of her inattentive spouse, who was watching the evolutions of a flock of pigeons on the rear slope of an opposite roof, she swept out to the carriage, and was driven away.

When she was gone, Mr. Waters left the window and again sat down at his desk, with the old frown on his brow. He had not addressed one word to his wife, nor did he, for hours, speak to any one. He was busily poring over plans and expedients in the business world that formed the chief arena of his life.

Tom Canton came bravely up the warehouse steps, but he stopped at the door of the counting-room. He missed a face he had learned to look eagerly for, — one that had always a smile for him. It was that of Louis LeGrange. He was not there. Louis had heard Tom's frequent applications, had pitied his many disappointments, and once had followed him to the door to offer his sympathy and say how glad he should be if they only *would* take Tom, for he was sure he would be a pleasant work-fellow. It had cheered Tom's heart wonderfully, though he knew the boy was a friend who

could have no power to aid him. To-day he missed those great, clear eyes that had always looked out from the fair, delicate face with pleasant welcome for him. He stood, hat in hand, just inside the door. A clerk looked up, and asked his errand.

"I came in to see if there was work enough to need another boy here," said Tom, slowly, all the time wondering where Louis was.

"There is a boy wanted, I believe; is n't there, Mr. Saunders?" said the clerk.

"Call to-morrow, and I 'll see," was the curt reply, without turning the head.

Tom was astonished, hurt; but surely Mr. Saunders did not know it was he. Mr. Saunders had promised him, last winter, the next chance there was in the warehouse. Tom came forward, and stood before Mr. Saunders' desk.

"Is there a place for a boy now?"

"O, it 's you, is it?" said Mr. Saunders, a little less ungraciously. "Well, I can't tell exactly, to-day. Louis has n't come, but he may be here to-morrow."

"O, I don't want to take away Louis's place!" cried Tom, full of generosity for his friend.

"No, of course not," quickly assented Mr. Saunders. "And so, you see, I don't like to make any talk about it, now — that is, until I hear from him."

"What 's that? What 's that?" cried Mr. Cobden,

suddenly, as his white head and rosy face popped out from the office-parlor. "No keeping places for lads that are n't stiddy at their work. Who is this lad? Some one you know?"

"No," said Mr. Saunders. Then seeing the angry color flash into Tom's face at this denial of him, he hastily added, "Not exactly what *you* would call an acquaintance, — knowing all his lineage back for three or four generations, — but I know him personally a little."

"Well, what do you know of him?" interrogated the old man.

"I know nothing against him, except that he is poor," replied Mr. Saunders, with a laugh.

"Might be cured — might be cured!" cried Mr. Cobden, laughing heartily. "Was poor myself once. Got over it, though. Come to-morrow morning in good season, lad, and have the office swept and dusted, and put in good shape. I hate an untidy office. Mind now! At half-past seven, sharp! I like a lad that's smart and lively."

"Louis will probably be here to-morrow," coolly suggested Mr. Saunders.

"Can't help it — can't help it! Should have been here to-day! Mind and be on hand!" And warningly shaking his heavy stick at him, Mr. Cobden retreated to the inner office.

Tom bowed assent, but still hardly knew whether to consider himself engaged to work for the firm or not. He stood irresolute; when Mr. Saunders, who had ignored his presence the moment Mr. Cobden was gone, suddenly turned on him, saying, —

"Did n't you understand Mr. Cobden to hire you for to-morrow? He does n't want anything of you to-day."

Tom hastily bowed and retired. But it was all too strange and surprising for him to realize, until after he had talked it over with Bess, and accustomed his mind to it by hearing the glad congratulations of his brothers.

Louis LeGrange did not come next morning, but Mr. Saunders contrived to intimate to Tom that he was only employed temporarily till Louis should return. Mr. Cobden, however, in the office-parlor, praised Tom's quick readiness, and said, "Keep on and improve, my lad, and you shall find a good place here. Remember you are on trial now — on trial; and your prospects all depend on yourself."

Tom, counting Mr. Cobden a more influential patron than Mr. Saunders, was accordingly encouraged, and felt secure in his position. But he did sometimes wonder what had become of Louis LeGrange.

CHAPTER VI.

BRISK BUSINESS.

NED stopped on the front steps and tied the rope around Jemmy's waist, knotting it firmly behind. Jemmy essayed remonstrance, but Ned coolly told him that no rope meant not going, while Nora suggested, "Perhaps we shall find mamma somewhere in the street." Thus persuaded, Jemmy submitted, and they walked up the court, Nora holding Jemmy by the hand, while Ned ostensibly "carried the rope," — carried it, however, with a good, firm grip that would not have yielded to any sudden strain. Ned had already seen enough of Jemmy's peculiarly enterprising disposition to be on his guard against surprises.

It was some distance to the newspaper office, and Jemmy saw a great many interesting and curious objects that challenged investigation. But in some remarkable way he had already come to stand in considerable awe of Ned, — a boy who could stop a fight by mere word of mouth, without fisty emphasis, who seemed

to have command of unlimited resources, and carried unimagined riches of nickels in his trowser-pockets. Jemmy had submitted to him with unusual docility, as soon as the chink of desirable pennies proved to him Ned's wonderful ability. Thus it was that, notwithstanding the temptations of the way, the little party reached the newspaper office without any serious accident, or even sharp skirmishing.

Ned quickly secured a large package of the evening papers, and they again started forth. In a doorway Ned divided the papers, counting carefully the number he gave to Nora.

"Here are twenty papers to begin with," he said, "and now I'll give you a dollar in pennies to make change. Three from ten are how many?" he asked, suddenly.

"What?" queried Nora anxiously, holding Jemmy's wrist firmly while he squirmed to catch sight of a tall man in scarlet uniform, who happened to be passing.

"Whew!" whistled Ned. "I never thought about the arithmetic. Supposed, of course, you could make change"

"Perhaps I can," ventured Nora. "How do you make it?"

Ned laughed. "Not till you can count."

"I can count," protested Nora.

"Let's hear," ordered Ned, with attention.

Nora counted rapidly till Ned stopped her in the fifties.

"How far can you go on in that way?" he asked.

"To a hundred."

"Well, the papers are three cents apiece. Now if a man gave you a ten-cent scrip, what should you do?"

"Why — ask him if he had n't got three cents," hesitated Nora.

Ned laughed again. "You never traded much," he said, with a shade of disappointment following the laugh. "Supposing he had n't got the three cents, — if he had, he would have given them to you in the first place, — could n't you give him back pennies enough to make up for what he gave you too much?"

"O, yes," said Nora, brightening. "Jemmy, don't pull so!"

"How many?" asked Ned.

Nora picked up the end of Jemmy's rope and handed it to Ned. Then she took a handful of the pennies Ned had put in her pocket, counted out ten, and put the surplus back, took three into the other hand, and after rapidly counting the remainder, announced the change to be seven cents.

Ned looked on through this somewhat complicated performance, though Nora both moved and counted rapidly, with rather a doubtful face

"I don't know whether they will care to stop for all that," he said, slowly.

"Then they would n't get the seven cents," said Nora, wonderingly.

Ned laughed again. "No, so they would n't. I guess you 'll manage somehow," he added, with brightening face. Then he proceeded to give some instructions, taking care to fix in her mind the amount of change to be made from a five, ten, and twenty-five cent piece, saying she would hardly have occasion to change anything else. He tied Jemmy with rather a short rope to the iron clamp of the shutter of a large show-window, Nora meanwhile calling his attention to the beauties therein displayed. Ned also pointed out to Nora the tall building opposite with a colored sign, the two adjacent corners, and the flag on a neighboring roof. Bidding her keep near the place and offer a paper to every man who passed, Ned moved away, promising to return soon and see how she got on.

"Nora, see! O, Nora, there's a hand-organ!" shrieked Jemmy, struggling vainly with his rope.

"Get out the way, youngster!" said a gruff, but not unkind voice, as a burly man shoved Jemmy and his tether back into the doorway. Then Nora ran back from her curbstone to say, —

"You must n't call me, Jemmy, because I shall be so busy I can't hear you; and you must n't stretch the rope across the sidewalk, or the people will fall over it. Sit down here on the step, and watch all the

people, and see if you can find mamma. I have to ask the men to buy papers, so I don't see the women. You must keep watch of them. Now, be a good boy, Jemmy, won't you?"

"Ye-es," was the grave reply, the blue eyes of the speaker fixed on the passing throng.

"Paper, sir? Paper, sir? Have a paper sir?"

It was not at all like the usual shrill tones of news-venders. One after another stopped, with a smile for the timid little face and voice, and produced the requisite pennies to purchase of the news-girl. She changed fives and tens successfully many times, though somewhat to the amusement of the waiting customer. The afternoon was waning; the sidewalk became crowded. Ned had been twice to look at her, and supply her with more papers. He was stationed some two blocks lower down the street. Jemmy would get into frequent dilemmas with his tether, impatience, and excitement; but Nora managed to keep him tolerably contented, and yet have time for her work. She scarcely dared look up into the faces. Seeing so many strange ones frightened her; and some of them were anything but pleasant or sunshiny. So she kept her timid, black eyes on the pavement, and offered her papers before each pair of advancing legs. One hand that took a paper offered in payment a half-dollar.

Nora looked at it aghast. She had utterly forgotten

how it was she was to change the twenty-five cent piece, — and this she saw had a fifty on it, and so perhaps was n't a twenty-five cent piece at all. Puzzled and frightened, she lifted a pleading face to her customer.

"Can't you change it?" he asked, kindly.

"No, sir; I don't know how," she said, sadly.

"O, is that all? Let me see your change, and I 'll show you how."

Nora took out a handful of scrip, pennies, and postage-stamps from her pocket, and held it up in both hands for the gentleman's inspection. As she did so she looked up once more into his face. There was a smile on it, half of amusement and half of kindness; his hair peeped in soft, brown waves from beneath a light, straw hat; beard, thin and brown, shaded his mouth and chin; and a pair of gentle, deep, brown eyes were looking quietly down on the mass of dirty cash offered for his choice. Nora was glad when the dainty-gloved fingers selected the cleanest piece. It seemed appropriate. Then he went on turning it over gingerly, and picking out other pieces. Nora stood quietly, her papers tucked under her arm, her little summer hat fallen back on her shoulders, and the fine black hair in a frizzy cloud around her flushed face, jostled often by the passers, both hands upstretched with the change, and her mind full of wonder at the number of pieces it took to make change for fifty cents. A

sudden shriek from Jemmy sent a cringe of dread over the poor little girl. What had happened now there was no knowing. She jammed the change back in her pocket, and, followed by her customer, rushed away in season to catch a glimpse of Jemmy's red and distorted face over the shoulder of a tall policeman, who was carrying him off bodily.

"O, please — please, sir!" cried Nora, catching the stern officer by the skirt of his dark blue coat, "don't carry him off! He's my Jemmy," she added, in reply to his look of surprise. "He'll be good, sir, he'll be very good, if you'll *only* put him down. I'll take care of him."

"Can't have him tied there across the sidewalk," said the officer, decidedly. "I've chucked him back into that doorway three times this afternoon already. I ought to have carried him away before now."

"But he won't go out of the doorway again; will you, Jemmy?"

"No," was the cowed answer. Jemmy had ceased his tempest of expostulation when Nora came to the rescue, and was now sniffling mildly, and wiping his face on his sleeve.

The officer looked about in perplexity. It was his duty to keep the streets clear, but he did n't like to be cruel.

"You had better take your brother home," he said to Nora.

"So I will — very soon. But I don't know the way, — till Ned comes for me."

"He will hardly make any more trouble to-night," said Mortimer Salsby, with a pleasant smile in mouth and eyes, as he stood, still holding his newly-bought paper in one hand, and some bits of money in the other.

"Well, we'll see," replied officer Staut, doubtfully, as he put Jemmy on his feet again, and twisted his tether round his waist, with a laugh.

"I want two cents more," said Mr. Salsby to Nora.

"Confound two cents! You won't break if we go without 'em!" exclaimed another gentleman, who, Nora now first noticed, was waiting for Mr. Salsby.

But Mr. Salsby vouchsafed no reply to the snappish words, and having received the two cents explained to Nora that two twenty-fives made fifty, and then slowly counted over the change to her. Nora listened attentively, for she knew she must learn.

"Thank you, sir," she said, looking up with pleased face, and thinking how kind he was, and that no one else had spoken a single word to her. To be sure, he would not, if she could have changed his money. But Nora did not think of that.

"It is new work for you, I see," the gentleman said.

"Yes, sir; I never did it till to-day. But I'll soon learn; and Jemmy 'll be good when he gets used to it."

Jemmy had kept tight hold of Nora's dress, ever since the policeman set him on his feet again.

Mr. Salsby took a silver quarter from his vest-pocket, saying, —

"There 's a luck-penny for your first day. I 'll hope to buy papers of you again sometime."

"Not if it takes her so long to make change," growled Mr. Waters, as they walked away, leaving Nora overcome with gratitude, and a rush of tears that had somehow come crowding into her eyes, though she had not the least desire to cry. "Women never do have any idea of money."

Mr. Salsby looked gravely in his companion's face. "Then you call her a woman?"

"She will be if she grows up," was the careless reply, and Mr. Salsby's eyes wandered disappointedly away. "They are all alike — women," contemptuously added Mr. Waters, with an angry, discontented cloud in his sharp eyes.

"I think if your acquaintance had been more extended, you would be of a different mind. It does not follow that no woman knows the value of money because some do not."

"They are all alike. Mrs. Meredith, Mrs. Donaldson, and my wife," muttered Mr. Waters. "All Merediths, and all alike, the whole family."

"Nonsense!" was the half-earnest, half-laughing

exclamation. "There is marked difference in the character of the ladies you have seen fit to introduce. A family similarity of course there is, but it is of the Roberts family, please observe, not the Meredith."

Mr. Waters stopped short in his walk for a moment, as if it were a new thought to him, then went moodily on.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Waters?" resumed Mr. Salsby, more cheerily.

"Well, I am savage, I admit. I have just planned a fine new branch for the business, and we want to introduce it immediately; and as things stand now, our capital is all in, and we must negotiate a loan somewhere before we can enlarge as we want to. I hate to work on borrowed capital. We should aim to pay it off, fast as possible. But we must begin so. I would not favor undertaking it, if it was n't going to be a specially good thing. Have n't you got a few spare thousand to invest at a big per cent?"

"You know my property is all in real estate."

"You might sell some. This would pay better."

"No, I would rather not do that. Why don't you put off enlarging for the present, while everything is so high? When the war is over, such a change will come easier."

"Ah, but now is just the time to make it go! By and by will be too late."

They had reached the door of Mr. Waters' handsome house, and with a few words of farewell, parted.

Meanwhile Nora still stood in her place, offering her papers, and selling many to the passers on the now teeming sidewalk.

"Stay close by me," she said earnestly to Jemmy. And Jemmy seemed to have no disposition to disobey.

The crowd jostled and hurried by. The sale of papers slackened; Nora looked about, and found no Jemmy at her side. It was perhaps five minutes since she last felt him pull at her dress, and lean close against her to avoid being brushed away by the hurrying people. Nora looked up and down the sidewalk, dodging in and out among the passers. But no Jemmy could she find. She called, but her voice seemed to go only a few inches from her, and served merely to fix many wondering eyes on herself. When she had searched as far as she dared to go from her post, and found no trace of him, she stepped in an agony of terror within the doorway where he had first been placed. She was growing very tired; and the heat, weariness, and fear were too much for her to bear. There was nothing to be done but wait for Ned. She dared not go away. And how long it seemed since Ned had brought her the last papers! Dropping her head in her hands upon her lap, the sobs came choking in her throat, and would not be crowded back.

"Here he is, Nora; don't cry," said Ned's cheerful voice; and Nora looked up to see Jemmy standing beside her, with a decidedly crestfallen and disgusted air.

Jemmy had been tempted by a monkey, riding home on a hand-organ. He followed it only a few steps. Seeing this, the organ-grinder asked if he would like to feed the monkey. Of course, Jemmy would like nothing better. The man said, "If you will go along to a place where I can set down the organ, you shall feed the monkey with a cake." And Jemmy went. At first very willingly; but when they had crossed a street he began to hesitate, and the organ grinder took hold of his wrist just as everybody else always did. Then it was that a pair of sharp eyes spied him out, and Ned's salutation, more energetic than complimentary, sounded in his ears.

"Here, you little rat! what are you running off with that monkey for?"

The organ-grinder obsequiously explained, that he was going to let him see the monkey eat his supper. Perhaps he would not have yielded up his captive so readily, were it not for Officer Staut who stood near, looking sternly on.

"Come, we 'll go home now," said Ned. "It is time this young traveller was asleep, — and you too."

Snug in the twilight of the "birds' nest," they told

their adventures and counted their money. Jemmy could with difficulty keep awake till his supper was eaten.

Tom was there too, with his good news; and joy and happiness prevailed.

"This has been such a nice day!" said Harry, turning his blue eyes from one to another with loving looks, — each one a caress. "I wish things would happen, and people come here every day."

"If people came every day, there would have to be people going away too," said Bess, "and that would not be so pleasant."

"I'm so glad Nora can stay," replied Harry, softly.

Nora went timidly and kissed him good-night. A third bed had been arranged on the floor. A curtain that hung against the wall was stretched across, dividing the room. Ned was soon asleep beside Jemmy. Tom took what had before been Bess's place in Harry's cot; while Bess and Nora made themselves as comfortable as they could in the new bed curtained off in a corner. Tired out, but all very happy, they slept soundly till the sun peeped in with the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

PLANS.

"QUEER work for a girl," said Tom Canton, looking dubiously after the retreating figures of Ned and Nora as they went softly out, taking Jemmy with them, early the next morning.

Tom and Bess were moving quietly about without shoes, for Harry was not yet awake. The little invalid was generally wakeful all the first part of the night, and found his best sleep after one or two o'clock in the morning.

Ned's business required an early start, and the children had all learned the gentleness that tender care of a weaker dear one never fails to impart. So Harry slept softly, while Tom noiselessly sorted their last sack of rags, and Bess sat mending some of Ned's sadly worn clothes. At Tom's words she looked up with a troubled glance, but did not speak.

At length Harry moved, lifted his arms with a weary little yawn, and said "Good-morning" pleasantly.

"Had a good sleep?" asked Bess, with a bright smile of morning welcome.

"Yes Has Ned been long gone?"

"Half an hour."

"And Nora?"

"She went with him."

"I think we had better send them to the asylum," said Tom.

"O, don't!" said Harry.

And Bess added, "Not yet."

"It will be only putting it off," said Tom, "for in the end we shall have to take them there when we go ourselves."

"O, no!" cried Bess, heartily. "How can you say so, Tom, when you have just got work yourself, and we shall all do better than ever, soon?"

"Don't you know that I may be turned off any day from my new place? I have not a particle of confidence in that Saunders, and I know he does n't want me to stay. Even if I stay, my pay will be little more than I have been earning, and you will have nothing at all to do."

"You are greatly mistaken, Tom Canton, if you think I am going to do nothing," replied Bess, warmly.

"You 'll have to do that till you get *something* to do," retorted Tom, gloomily.

"Of course. And getting something is just what I am going about."

"The getting is neither pleasant nor profitable, only the doing pays."

Bess laughed uneasily. "You have got up wrong side out this morning."

Tom looked up with a forced smile, that instantly gave place to his former expression of grave concern. "Perhaps so; but really, Bess, things don't look quite clear to me, if they have mended a little. I would as lief starve quickly from having *nothing* to eat, as by inches for never having enough."

"O, Tom, how can you?" cried Bess, glancing anxiously at Harry, whom she did not like to have hear such discouraging talk.

"Well, I'll hold my tongue."

"And I've been thinking, Tom, of how to arrange things. I have a plan already. I can sell papers with Ned and Nora. Ned says there can't be too many in that business since the war."

"You're too old," said Tom, decidedly.

"Too old? Why, you sold papers till six months ago! and I'm only just thirteen. I'm not too old at thirteen, if you were not at fifteen."

"You're a girl," oracularly pronounced Tom.

Bess colored painfully, and was silent. She felt for some reason too much shamed by this simple statement

to dare open her mouth further. Yet *why*, she could not imagine. Neither could Harry, and he asked, —

"What of that?"

Tom glanced up, but did not at once reply. The truth was, he did not know how.

"Girls have to eat all the same," pursued Harry, thoughtfully, "and sometimes they have to earn what they eat."

"Which is a great pity," said Tom, earnestly.

"I don't think so," said Bess, quietly.

A long silence followed. Harry broke it.

"Tom, why don't you tell us just why you don't want Bess to sell papers?"

"I have told you."

"Being a girl is no reason."

"Yes, it is; because newsboys lead a rough life; they swear, and do and say all manner of coarse, low things!"

"Well, *you* didn't; and you don't suppose Bess would?"

"No, but I don't want her to see and know anything about it."

"Well, Tom, I shouldn't," said Bess. "I don't believe they would ever be rude to me, because I should never be rude to them, and because — well, perhaps because I am a girl!"

"Of course they wouldn't be rude to you, but you would see and hear coarse, profane talk."

"Really, Tom, I had no thought of associating with newsboys any more than I have before. Having two brothers in the business, I could n't help some acquaintance with that dreadful race. I presume there are other good boys who sell papers. And I make my friends, not for their happening to be in the same work, but because they are worth having for friends."

"Then there 's the exposure in the street, all day."

"O, I was used to that when I went for rags! We can't have such storms as last winter."

"I did n't mean that. But pushing round among strangers all day long. Suppose some one should carry you off?"

Bess laughed out heartily. "Why, Tom Canton, what an absurd idea! Nobody could, unless I were fool enough to follow a monkey or some such thing, as Jemmy did. And you *know* I have sense enough to attend to my business, and call a policeman if any one hinders me."

"Tom 's cross about something this morning," said Harry, consolingly.

"I 'm sorry he is so set against it," Bess said, gravely, "because there is really nothing else I can find to do just now. I 've thought over everything, and so, I shall have to sell papers." It was very

quietly and softly said, but there was firm resolve under the gentleness.

"I shall be very much displeased, Bess, if you do," said Tom, with authority.

Bess dropped her work in her lap, and rocked in the mother's low rocker, silently, with her eyes gazing straight forward as if they would look far down the dim future. But there was no doubt in their clear depths, no wavering about the still, grave mouth.

"Don't be cross, Tom," pleaded Harry. "I'm sure Bess would n't do anything that was n't best to be done."

But Tom made no reply as he hurried on with his work, anxious to finish and sell these last rags before he began the day's work at his new place.

"And Tom," persisted Harry, turning his pure, pale little face upon the pillow, "what 's the use of all this fussing about boys' work and girls' work? There is n't really any difference, except what you think into it yourself."

Tom raised his head, and looked thoughtfully at the delicate face turned towards him.

"You know, when we were little, we all used to play and talk and think the same, and Bess was just like the rest of us, — we never thought of telling her she was a girl. And I know she thinks and feels just as you do now. And there is n't really any difference, only in your *thinking* about it."

It was Tom's turn to blush now. Bess rose, and began setting out Harry's breakfast. Tom stuffed the sorted rags into their several sacks. Harry had hit a deeper truth than he himself quite understood.

Bess came and took him in her arms to the table for his breakfast. Tom shouldered his sacks, and carried them down-stairs. He would not return till night. Bess and Harry were left alone for the day. After breakfast, Harry was laid in his bed till Bess had put away his dishes. Then she took him up, and rocked him for half an hour.

"I've got a plan too, Bess," Harry said, as he rested a flushed cheek on her shoulder, and half closed his eyes in the languor of painless weakness.

"Where did you get it?" asked Bess, with assumed asperity and a very contradictory smile.

"O, don't go to being 'very much displeased,'" returned Harry, with a comic counterfeit of Tom's manner.

"What is it?" said Bess.

"I remember a story you read to me once, of a boy who was sick, and who earned money by carving pretty things out of wood,— brackets, frames, and such things. And I was thinking perhaps I could learn to do some such thing."

Harry paused, and Bess rocked silently.

"Are you 'very much displeased'?" he asked, with

an earnest voice, that belied the effort for pleasantry in the words.

"No, Harry, of course not. I was only thinking how we could manage it. You would need a nice knife and then some wood. But first you would need practice, and you could have that with Tom's old knife — he could get it sharpened for you — and any soft pine we could pick up for you where there is a building going up. Then you want nice wood when you have learned."

"And I want pencil and paper to draw the figures I will carve. I love dearly to draw figures."

"Yes," assented Bess, still thinking, as she rocked slowly.

"Meg 's coming," said Harry, as, far down the long stairs, were heard slow, irregular footsteps ascending.

"So she is," Bess answered, listening.

"Poor Meg!" Harry added, his face softening with pity.

The door opened. It was poor Meg indeed. She came in a couple of steps, and halted, hesitating.

"Come in, Meg," said Bess, pleasantly.

Meg shut the door and moved towards a chair. She was certainly the forlornest creature that could be seen in much searching. No one knew who she was or whence she came. She happened. The oldest inhabitant of Amity Court remembered her as a six-year-old

child, who lived in the court. But she never belonged particularly to any one. When she was hungry, no one refused her a crust. In one way or another, also, she had always contrived to have a gown to cover her, though she had little else. In whatsoever house night found her, there she was allowed to sleep. Every one pitied her. Meg paid for the favors she received, by many a small service gladly rendered. She was even more grateful for an opportunity to be useful, than for the daily bread that was pitifully, though kindly, given.

Meg was dimly conscious that she was not quite as other folks. Wherein lay the difference she could not divine. That there was a difference she felt, no less keenly because vaguely, in a hundred little incidents of every day; and the feeling went eating through her heart, in a blind pain, all day long.

"What are you doing to-day, Meg?" asked Bess.

"Nothing," she answered, with listless vacancy. "Do you know of anything?" she asked, suddenly, brightening with the hope.

"No, Meg. I'm sorry. I don't even know what to do myself."

"I shall have something for you to do by and by, Meg," said Harry.

"Will you? What is 't? Something I can?" were the eager questions, as Meg bent forward on her chair, — she never sat *in* a chair, but roosted awkwardly on

the edge of it. Her faded eyes brightened as they gazed hungrily out from her pinched and sallow face. Her wide mouth widened yet more for a smile.

"I 'll lay you down on the other bed, Harry," said Bess, "while I make yours."

"O! could n't I?" cried Meg, suddenly, springing forward, with her long, thin arms outstretched. "I 'd *like* to hold him."

"Only Tom and I hold him," said Bess, walking on towards the other bed.

The truth was, "Amity Meg" was not altogether an inviting person for such a service. How could she be? Still, the look of bitter pain that came crushing down over her hopeless old-young face went to the heart of both Bess and Harry. Bess stayed her steps, and looked down into Harry's eyes. Harry said, —

"I 'd rather Meg held me."

The smile of delight on that wan, simple face repaid the boy for his own sacrifice, as the ready arms cradled him gently as a mother's, and carried him back to the rocker.

Bess made the bed, while Harry explained to Meg his plan of carving, and asked her to bring him bits of soft pine wood from the refuse of carpenters at some new building. Harry found his nurse not only less disagreeable than he expected, but quite soothing and comforting. When Bess was ready to

go out for her slender marketing, Harry chose to remain with Meg, instead of going again into his bed. They made a curious picture, — the castaway, "Amity Meg," and the delicate, crippled Harry Canton. The vacant, simple, staring look had quite gone out of Meg's face, — it always went when she took a child in her arms. The sharp angularity of her features seemed softened in the tenderness that flooded them. The dull eyes were love-lighted. The long arms lost their awkward listlessness, and became elastic and gentle. Even the harsh brush of unkempt hair, rusty and uneven, fell like a kind curtain to conceal defects.

Hugged to the hollow chest of this sad representative of a city's refuse population, lay the fair, sweet face of Harry Canton. Beaming with gentle pleasure in the rest afforded his weary little body, happy in knowing that Meg was as glad as himself, Harry's blue eyes shone softly, and his sweet lips wore a smile that delighted Meg, and was not more pure and lovely than Meg's own, though the face was so strangely unlike.

Bess stopped in the doorway to look at them when she returned. She could not help smiling, too, as she saw them so happy together.

"Now, I'll go back to my bed," said Harry; and Meg put him tenderly down.

"You look better than when you came in, Meg," said Bess.

Meg stood up, squared out her sharp elbows akimbo, and sighed, —

"I was n't feeling just right to-day," she answered, slowly, the old vacant look creeping back to her face. "But seemed as if I got over it while I had him."

"Are you sick?" asked Bess, anxiously.

"I don't know," was the simple reply; "do *you* think I am?"

"Seems to me you don't look quite as usual." And Bess scanned her face with perhaps a shade more keenness than sympathy.

Meg went and looked out the window. The sun was gleaming brightly on the river. She turned away and sat down again.

"Sometimes it 's a snapping in my head, and sometimes it 's a heaviness in my legs," she said, "but I often has pains that nobody asks about, and they go off, by and by."

"Poor Meg! I suppose you do," said Bess, with a heart full of sudden pity.

"I 'm going to borrow Biddy Crowley's Mikey, and take him out for a walk," Meg answered, hastily.

"You do love babies, don't you, Meg?"

"Yes, 'm, they never pities me." And with the words, Meg was gone. They heard her heavy tramp down the many stairs, and then on the sidewalk outside.

CHAPTER VIII.

"AMITY MEG."

IT was high noon in Amity Court. The sun blazed up and down its dirty length, and gleamed back from the still surface of the sluggish river. Meg walked slowly up the scorching pavement, but the heat sickened her. The throbbing pain came back to her thin temples, and her eyes grew blind in the glare. She sat down on a doorstep, and longed to crawl away where no one could see her, and where she might try to forget herself and her misery. She rose and staggered down a deserted cellarway. It was cool and shady there. Her head felt better, though she shivered with the damp chill of the place. On the dusty boards of the floor she lay down. She had found the solitude she craved, and it was grateful to her. Meg was but an untaught animal, with a few glimmerings of something human and higher. So, like an animal wounded or suffering, she stole away alone to stolidly endure the strange misery she could not understand. Meg seemed

to have slept there on the mouldy floor of the old cellar. Thrown down in a careless, awkward abandon, the rough hair falling over her homely, yearning face, the vacant eyes closed, the simple unthinking head pillowed on her bony arms, Meg found herself, hours afterwards, slowly rousing from a sort of stupor. She dragged herself to her feet, and looked up the open cellarway. The sun had slid far down the afternoon side of the sky.

"Biddy Crowley will let me take the baby now," Meg thought. "It was too hot before."

The pain was almost gone from Meg's head, but it felt light and dizzy.

"It must be hungry I am," she said aloud, as she steadied her steps by the brick walls of the house. "I 'll ask Biddy for a bit of bread just to put strength into me."

Biddy Crowley was busy, and baby was crying. It was very hot in her stifled room, where she was obliged to have a fire to iron. She was but too glad that baby should be taken out, and every one knew that "Amity Meg" was a most trusty nurse. She willingly gave her the bit of bread she asked, and even added a mouthful of meat for a relish. Meg took Baby Crowley on one arm, and her repast in the other hand, and walked up the court to the street to "look at the horses." She had to sit down on a step, for her limbs were weak, and

Baby Crowley was a plump round little fellow, of active disposition, who kicked and crowed heartily as soon as he was outside the house. Meg tried to eat the bread and meat, but she did not feel hungry. The first mouthful sufficed, and the meat proved anything but a relish; the very smell of it sickened her. A little dog came sniffing and begging for it, and Meg fed him. It amused baby much more than eating it herself would have done, so Meg was satisfied.

Finally Baby grew tired, or restful perhaps, with the fresher out-door air, and the pleasant change of scene after a day in his mother's cramped, hot kitchen. His round face dropped on Meg's arm, his bright eyes grew hazy, and the white lids came sliding slowly over them. Baby Crowley was asleep, and Meg rocked him softly with a swaying motion of her long arms and lank body.

Strangers passing stopped to pity. One offered a few pennies, which Meg took thankfully, and slipped away in her ragged pocket. But it was pity — always pity. Only a baby could feel and understand the one sweet spot in poor Meg's heart, and *love* her for it. Only a baby never saw the dirt and squalor, never noticed her awkward splay hands and feet, her long, lank limbs, her unkempt hair and vacant face; but did see the humble, holy light that came trembling up into those dull eyes, hopeless, pleading with the one prayer "Let me love you." Babies always granted it. Babies

always went freely into Meg's yearning arms. Babies graciously suffered her love. If they never returned it adequately, they at least appreciated it. Not the most irate screamer in Amity Court but would silence his elocution for Meg's persuasion, and condescend to smile into her asking eyes. Meg was scarcely sixteen, but she might have been thirty-five, with that disheartened face and poverty-aged body. She was only half-witted "Amity Meg."

Baby Crowley woke and began to dance and play. Meg walked up the street with him. But the plump child was very heavy, — heavier than was ever a baby before to Meg's willing arms. She did not care to sit down again. The air seemed close and hot. Down the court she could see hazy clouds dimming the sun. There was a cool breath from the river. Meg went through the court, and looked over the water. She crept slowly and faintly along the zigzag path that went sliding sidewise down the river-bank, and stood on the brink. It was a muddy, oozy shore; the water dragged sluggishly along, black and still.

Farther down, a small boat was tied to a post driven in the bank. Meg determined to get into the boat. There she could sit and rock Baby, and play in the water for his amusement. It was easy work to draw the boat ashore, and Meg stepped in. It was of no consequence that she wet her stockingless feet and

spattered her dingy gown. They were cooler to her burning skin for the water, and could not look more shabby. Little cared "Amity Meg" for shabbiness.

The boat rocked pleasantly; and splashing the water with one hand pleased Baby Crowley to his utter content. A cool breeze came stealing over the river, and the gathering clouds obscured the sun. Meg would have liked to lie down in the bottom of the sloppy boat, and sleep again. But she could not leave baby; so she rocked and splashed, and amused her own weary heart with watching the bright smile come and go in the little face, the earnest stare, the growing laugh, all so sweetly unconscious and so happy with only her — only "poor Amity Meg" — to please him.

The clouds came drifting up thicker and faster over the sun and the sky. The breeze grew fresher and stronger. Meg shivered. Raw chills went creeping down her back, and hot flashes like flame shot up into her temples. Her head throbbed again, and her eyes scarce saw the baby that lay rolling on her lap.

"It is too cold," she murmured. "Baby will sneeze."

She moved to the bow, and pulled at the rope to draw the boat nearer shore. The rope was but loosely tied, and the knot would bear no such strain as this. It slipped, and the heavy rope fell in the water.

Meg was quick in danger. She laid baby down on

the boat's bare ribs, and jumped out into the water. It was not deep, but the slimy, yielding bottom was poor footing in which to stand and shove the boat ashore. The craft proved contrary, and showed a decided preference for going down stream, though the still water scarcely seemed to have a current. At last the bows were grounded. Meg lifted Baby in her arms. Her knees tottered; she caught the boat with one hand to steady herself, for she could not stand alone. Her dizzied head swam with the swimming water. She took one step, holding the boat-side fast. It was not four feet to the river's edge, but she could not gain it. The boat veered round; its bows had drifted and were free again. Meg gathered all her strength, bracing her feet in the muddy river-bed, and threw the baby high upon the shore. He cried, of course, but more with fright than hurt, for the wet bank was a harmless landing-place. With the effort, Meg toppled over in the stream. Covered with mud she scrambled up, and feebly clutched the boat's stern as it drifted past. She had untied it, she must drag it back and tie it, was her dim idea of duty, as she held it by the edge. But first she brushed aside the wet and draggled hair to see where baby was.

Dirty, doubtless, but quite safe, lay Baby Crowley, well up the bank. He was staring now, with big, round eyes at Meg staggering to hold the tugging boat that would drift down the river. The love-light flickered

up in Meg's eyes once more. Baby saw it, and smiled back. Meg tried to speak, to call to him; but the voice would not come. She only waved her hand, nodded her head, and smiled — "Amity Meg's" own simple but loving smile — to answer Baby Crowley's. Then she turned to the struggling boat to drag it shoreward. But the treacherous mud gave way beneath her. She stumbled. The headstrong boat wrested itself from her hands, and went dancing mockingly away. Meg looked after it with pained wonder as it went. Then she turned to baby. Again the mute smile passed between these two dumb creatures, — their smile the one sure, though faint, token of their humanity. Then the dizzying water eddied through her blinded eyes; the uncertain footing grew more doubtful; the long arms stretched once more towards baby, as the shaking knees bent, and "Amity Meg" sank in the shallow slimy river, and rose no more.

An hour later, distracted Biddy Crowley found her baby crawling in the mud by the river-side. Three days after, Amity Meg's mud-smeared face was recognized in the dead-house. Its vacant look quite gone, it wore only the same child-like smile that gleamed across it when she turned it last on Baby Crowley by the river, and stretched her arms to take him.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HAPPENED TO JEMMY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the misfortunes of Jemmy's first day, he was firm in his determination to go again with Nora, when next she went to sell papers. Nora had so vividly depicted to him the terrible results of being picked up by the police, or led away by "monkey-men," as Jemmy called the organ-grinders, that he was greatly impressed, and gave tokens of a wholesome fear of separation from her, and the strong desire to keep always within range of her protection. The novel sights of city streets were losing their crazing influence upon him, and he found it possible, amid their excitement, to exercise some thought of what became of himself. The conviction of the necessity for this care and consideration, — which were faculties he had never before had occasion to use, — since Nora could not exercise them for him, was the successful incentive to this great exertion, and produced a very gratifying change in his behavior. He became

so faithful a follower of Nora's movements, that she gradually lost the worrying anxiety with which she had been always tortured when he was with her; and at the end of a week she could even enjoy his company as heartily as she used in quiet old Campfields, when they played together by the sleepy village street. Meanwhile thoughtful little Nora was already learning the way about the city. She had never yet gone alone from Amity Court to the newspaper offices, but she often went out to meet Ned as he returned with his load of papers. It saved her a long walk, if he got the papers and brought them up the city for her. In the upper streets of New York Nora could go about without fear of being lost; for Tom had instructed her, if perplexed, to ask a policeman for Amity Court. Though in great awe of policemen, Nora had once had resort to this plan, and found herself so near home, that had she used her own eyes wisely, and been familiar with the principal buildings near, she could not have failed to know where it was herself.

There was one favorite field of business with Nora. It consisted of two or three long quiet streets, with stately houses on either side, freshly-washed sidewalks, and clean, well-swept, and sprinkled middles, — an occasional tree shading a patch of the stones or a few windows of a neighboring house. Here, between eight and nine in the morning, was a constant stream of fine-

looking, well-dressed men passing out to the avenue on their way down town. Almost every one of them would buy a paper, if asked. It was just what they wanted to read in the coach or car. Nora liked the quiet of these streets. She had never learned to call her papers, like the newsboys, and this peculiarity specially fitted her for such localities. Residents of these streets liked to have their papers brought by a quiet-mannered, unobtrusive little gi l. Nora kept near the avenue end of the street; and as, one by one, she saw them coming, on one side or the other, she hastened up with her papers Sometimes they came so fast she could not meet them all, and would send Jemmy trotting across with a paper in his hand to a regular customer while she was busy on the o'her sidewalk. Jemmy liked that, and always came back proud as a king, with the pennies clutched fast in his little fist Sometimes nurses came out with the little children of these comfortable-seeming gentlemen, and walked slowly up and down the sunny sidewalks, leading by the hand or pushing in baby-carriages the little ones. Then Jemmy looked with longing eyes. He did so want to play with these little boys and girls not so big as he! But the nurses always acted as non-conductors and repelled his shy advances towards a nearer view of the often too white little faces in their dainty laces, snowy robes, and tasteful costumes. If the pampered babies looked long-

ingly towards the sunburned plumpness of Jemmy Craig, their carriages were straightway faced about upon a totally different view, and they saw only pavements, flagging, stone walls, and cast-iron fences. Jemmy made no progress towards acquaintance with any of them.

It was a sultry afternoon. Ned had just brought up the evening edition. Nora stood on the curbstone of the great avenue selling her papers busily Jemmy wandered up and down, keeping her always in sight, watching the passing crowds, in which spectacle, however, he no longer found the fascination it had at first presented. An incessant panorama inevitably palls on the taste, — even the panorama of city life, on the eagerness of a country child. Jemmy had found a rather dirty piece of wrapping-paper blowing about, and was trying to fold it up to make a soldier's cap, as Ned had taught him. Suddenly a chirping little voice said, close by his side, —

"I know you."

Jemmy looked up in surprise. At his elbow stood one of the rich children from the quiet street where Nora sold papers in the morning. She was much smaller than Jemmy, but looked older. She had curling black hair that was now sadly degenerated from its usual smooth neatness. Her sharp gray-blue eyes had a wise old look. And her dainty white dress, with blue

ribbons and wonderful blue boots, such as Jemmy had never seen before, were simply miraculous, and stamped her as undoubtedly of curious and fairy origin. But Jemmy only answered coolly, —

"Yes, I know you."

"What are you making?" asked Miss Blue-boots, with condescending interest.

"Soldier-cap," was the preoccupied reply.

"Wish I had some paper to make one, too."

"Come and see my cubby-house," suddenly Jemmy said, throwing down the dirty paper-cap and springing to his feet.

The little blue boots followed him to the next corner, where he crept under a half dozen steps, and peeped out at her from enshrouding darkness with a face beaming with delight.

"Come in here! Plenty of room," said he, hospitably, crowding himself up closely against the farther side.

Little Blue-boots looked at her white dress, and stood irresolute. Then she lifted her dress gingerly, and saying, —

"It won't show if I do dirty my under-skirt," she stepped in and sat down by Jemmy.

Jemmy's face shone all over for a moment, but his tongue was tied with pleasure. Then he suddenly remembered that he could not see Nora, nor could she

see him. He stood up, bent double under the stairs, and began stepping over the blue boots to get out.

"Where are you going?" she asked, angrily, at this seeming faithlessness of sudden desertion.

"I must tell Nora; wait, and I'll come right back."

"If you don't, you won't find me here," said Blue-boots, decidedly. "I can't stay but a few minutes, anyway."

Jemmy found Nora, and told her he was going to play under the steps, and she must remember and not go away and leave him. Nora promised, with a smile; it was so pleasant for her that he thought to come and tell her, she wanted to kiss him for it, but refrained lest he should prove too much occupied otherwise, and object. Jemmy did not stop to mention little Miss Blue-boots under the steps, but hurried back to find her calmly digging a hole in the dirt with a chip, and seemingly indifferent as to whether he ever appeared again or not.

"Where's your mother?" asked Jemmy.

"Gone out in the carriage with Grandma and Auntie."

"Why doesn't she ever let me speak to you in the morning?"

"She? You never saw my mamma That's only the nurse!"

"O!" replied Jemmy, with a very indistinct idea of what a nurse was. "Is she cross?"

"Rather. Everybody is, you know, except Auntie. I never heard her cross, but I suppose she is sometimes."

"Nora is n't ever cross, nor Bess; sometimes Tom is, and Ned. Harry never is," was Jemmy's audible inventory of his acquaintance, in reply.

"Who are they? Have you got so many brothers and sisters?"

"No — Yes — some of them," answered Jemmy, rather puzzled to sort them out.

"You must have nice times playing! Does your mamma let you all go in the street to play alone?"

"Our mamma — Nora's and my mamma got runded all over in the street; and the rest have n't got any — never had any."

Little Blue-boots laughed rather doubtfully; but on second thought, Jemmy's earnestness seemed convincing, for she replied, —

"I shou'd think it would be grand fun. Where do you live?"

"Amity Court," said Jemmy, with parrot-like promptness. That answer had been carefully impressed on his mind.

"I don't know where that is"

"Nor I either," was the grave coincidence.

The little girl laughed again She had not a very pleasant laugh, but Jemmy did not much mind that, it

was so nice to see those blue boots, with their toes standing straight up before his eyes! He reached out one chubby brown hand to touch them.

"Don't! You'll spot them. I have to be so careful; every drop of water spots 'em," explained the owner, in half-apology for her ill-nature.

And Jemmy stared at the little fairy lady in hopeless wonder.

"Let's play something," she said, suddenly.

"Yes, let's," returned Jemmy, amiably.

"I'm a rich lady and live here; and you are my servant. You must clean up here for me, it is very dirty. Get some more paper, and carpet the ground for me to sit down."

Jemmy accepted his condition of servitude with extreme docility, and began at once to hoe out the corners with a chip. Little Blue-boots edged round out of the way of his house-cleaning with gracious condescension, and gave orders with great freedom; but not always with gracious consideration or sweetness. It was delightful to Jemmy to have some one of his own age to play with, and especially some one in a white dress and blue boots, and it did n't so much matter if she was rather cross and exacting.

When he had hoed out all the corners with the chip, he proceeded to scrape the refuse into the street.

"Here's some paper." And he drew out a small and very dirty piece from his gathered rubbish.

"'T is n't big enough," decided Blue-boots. Indeed, it was but a few inches and very dingy.

But Jemmy discovered a faint semblance of a picture on it, and so tucked it in his little pocket for investigation at some future moment of greater leisure.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Blue-boots.

"Look at it, by and by. There 's a picture. I can rub the dirt off." And Jemmy diligently scooped up the rubbish in both hands, and went and threw it in the gutter.

"Your hands are dirtier than ever," said Blue-boots, with a glance of disgust, as he returned.

"I 'm going to wash 'em," said Jemmy; and he disappeared.

There was a pump not out of sight of Nora, in a tiny park, and thither Jemmy ran and scrubbed his fat, brown hands with great good-will and little science, for they were not much cleaner after all.

"Nora, I want a paper," he said, in his most aggressive tone, because he knew he was asking a great thing, and expected objection

"A paper! What for?" asked Nora, kindly. Jemmy was behaving so well, she wished she could give him one.

"Just to *spread*, you know," spreading out his little fists.

Nora laughed. "Here 's an old one the others came wrapped in ; that will do, won't it?"

"Yes," murmured Jemmy, in a flutter of suppressed delight.

Begging Miss Blue-boots to step out for a moment, he proceeded to spread the paper nicely. It was just large enough to cover the ground under the steps, and it made *such* a clean, nice little house.

"Now you can come in," he cried, creeping to the farther side.

But while Jemmy was on his hands and knees, with his head in the hole and his little heels only visible outside, Officer Staut, pacing slowly by, was attracted by the singular and very inappropriate apparition of little Blue-boots, bonnetless and alone, standing on the jostled sidewalk of the great avenue. When Jemmy turned to call her, he saw, through the opening that formed their door, a cringe of dread and terror pass over little Blue-boots' face and form, and he saw, too, a great hand holding her shoulder.

"Where did you come from, little girl?" asked the officer, kindly.

The little runaway wriggled out of his grasp, and turned to look sharply into his face before answering. But she saw there so much grave authority that she only said, sulkily, —

"Home."

"Why did n't you put on your hat, to keep the sun off?"

"Did n't want to. 'T was shady in front of the house, and I 'm going right back there in a minute."

"Come, now, and I 'll go with you. Some one may be frightened and think you are lost."

"I ain't ready to go now." And Blue-boots stepped coolly into Jemmy's cubby-house, and sat down on the rustling newspapers.

Officer Staut looked puzzled. He had seen the child on the avenue an hour ago, when a man was asking the way of him. He meant to have taken care of her then, but when he turned to find her she had disappeared.

"Come," said he, more decidedly; "you have been here a long while, and it is time you went home. Will you come with me, or shall I pick you up and carry you?"

"You 'd better go," advised Jemmy. "He almost carried me off, once."

Thus instructed, little Blue-boots crept out and Jemmy crawled after.

"Hulloa!" laughed Officer Staut. "So you are here too."

Jemmy shook in his shoes, but stood very straight and brave — and silent.

"Now where do you live?" asked the officer, holding the little girl's arm firmly in his strong grasp.

"Down there," pointing. "I'd rather go alone," she said, struggling to be free.

"You might not find it alone. What's the street and number?"

"*I* don't know," she answered, lifting a little face of disgusted indignation at the expectation of her being acquainted with such plebeian information.

"O, you don't? Then unless you know the way to go there, I shall have to take you to the police-station. What's your name?" was his sudden question, as a last resort.

But Blue-boots had twisted the end of her sash round into her mouth, and was sulkily silent.

Jemmy was horror-struck at the mention of the police-station, and rushed with a sudden scream towards Nora.

"Don't let him! Don't let him! O, Nora, don't!"

"What is it, Jemmy?" anxiously inquired Nora, reaching an arm to receive him, while she handed a purchased paper to a passer with the other hand.

"He's going to — the great man — carry her off. Don't let him!" And he pointed amid a tempest of sobs to where little Blue-boots still struggled fitfully and angrily with the policeman.

Officer Staut stood regarding Nora. He had often noticed her, as he paced his beat. He had always a kindly turn towards children. He knew that Jemmy

came and went with her, no more barricading the sidewalk with a tether. He had seen her motherly care of him, and earnest attention to her rather unusual business, and placed her high in his approbation as an uncommonly reliable child He now advanced towards her, leading the little girl. Jemmy retreated behind Nora, clinging to her dress, and crying "Don't, don't!" in agonized tones.

"Do you know anything about this little girl?" asked the officer of Nora.

"No, sir," answered Nora, trembling a little herself, she did not know why.

"I shall have to take her to the station if I can't find out where she lives. Can't you tell me the street and number?" he added, more persuasively, to the child.

"I know," cried Jemmy, explosively, from under Nora's elbow.

Officer Staut looked doubtful.

"Where is it?" asked Nora.

"Down, where you went this morning."

"Where the penny was lost?"

"Yes," he answered, joyfully, with brightened face.

"That was C—— Street," said Nora.

"Suppose you let me take this little man along with me," said Officer Staut. "I'll bring him back again, all safe, when we have found the house."

But Jemmy objected. It was only after long coax-

ing from Nora, and repeated protestation from Officer Staut that nothing should harm him, and he should be brought safely back to Nora, that he was at last persuaded to go

Little Blue-boots, who had never ventured out without an attendant, or been taught any self-reliance, had no idea of locality, and scarcely knew the familiar street from any other when they entered it. But Jemmy, accustomed, though so lately, to look about him with observant eyes, recognized the place at once.

He could have found the very crack in the bricks where the truant penny was lost, and easily pointed out the house where he had seen little Blue-boots with the nurse and a wee baby come down the steps for a walk that very morning. He knew the place by the flowering-bush in the narrow grass plat, and the little dogs' heads grinning on the posts of the cast-iron railings.

"Waters," said Officer Staut, as they stood on the steps after he had rung the bell.

"That's my pa's name," snapped little Blue-boots. It was the first word she had spoken.

"Why did n't you tell me so before?"

But the door was opened and the runaway darted in, and vanished in the dusk of the richly-furnished hall.

Her disappearance made it a little awkward for Officer Staut about explaining his errand to the liveried

footman, who stood expectant with well-bred surprise tempered by respect for his badge.

Before his story was stated, even in his succinct manner, a mellifluous voice called over the dim stairway, —

"Tell the man to come in, Thompson. We must see him."

The footman immediately extended a pressing invitation to enter, and Officer Staut stepped into the hall and sat down, with little Jemmy keeping remarkably fast hold of one of his big fingers and staring very hard out of his round eyes. Such soft carpets, such wide high stairs, such smooth white tables, Jemmy never saw before! There was a gorgeousness — increased, in the vague dusk of the house, by his own alert imagination — that exceeded the wildest tales Nora had ever read or told to him of fairy-land or heaven. It made him hold his breath and Officer Staut's finger with corresponding intensity; and his wondering admiration of little Blueboots, who *lived* among such surroundings, grew big to painfulness. But when three magnificent ladies, in rustling sweeping dresses, with unnaturally beautiful faces, soft voices, and gracious manner, came floating down the broad stairs, one of them leading little Blueboots and looking very much displeased at her, Jemmy's eyes could be no bigger or rounder; his stout little heart forgot all about beating, and his lungs did not feel the want of air for some minutes.

CHAPTER X.

JEMMY'S LUCK.

"TELL us how you found our darling little Bella," said the foremost and oldest of the three ladies, with a smile so sweet that Jemmy thought she must be an angel, not having learned that too much sweetness is as bad as too little. "We had only just returned from driving, and were quite distracted at finding she had run away."

Officer Staut briefly stated that he had found her playing on the avenue with this little boy, whereat Jemmy put a finger in his mouth, and looked bashful for the first time in his life.

"Bella, how could you?" exclaimed Bella's mother, giving her a little shake by the arm, and looking, if possible, more displeased than before.

Officer Staut proceeded to state that it was by Jemmy's aid that he had been able to bring her home, as only he could tell where she lived.

"He's a nice little boy," said softly the third lady,

who was dressed all in black, and had a very lovely face, with timid, gentle eyes. And Bella's auntie came around to Jemmy's side and asked his name.

"Jemmy Craig," he said, with bated breath.

"Some low creature!" said Mrs. Waters, with a toss of her head, — a head heavy with the most elaborate of coiffures, composed of innumerable rolls, braids, puffs, and curls of richly-tinted brown hair.

"He was a good boy to show the way home for Bella," said Mrs. Meredith, with gracious condescension. "You'd better give him something, Sophy. One does n't like to be in debt to such people."

Jemmy's eyes sparkled for a moment. He thought nothing less delightful than such candy as he had seen in show-windows could be the gift of these grand ladies in this elegant house.

Mrs. Waters was busy eliciting further particulars from Officer Staut and Bella.

The pretty auntie had taken a chair, and brought Jemmy to her side.

"Where do you live?" was her first question.

"Amity Court," was the ready answer.

"I'm sure I don't know where that is," she said. "Do your father and mother live there?"

"No."

"Whom do you live with?"

"Tom Canton, and Bess and Ned and Harry. Nora lives there too."

"Are these your brothers and sisters?"

"Only Nora."

"And do they — these Cantons — live with their father and mother?"

"No; they did n't have any."

"And I suppose you have n't any, either?"

"Not just now. They packed up my father in a great long box, and mother got runded hall over in the street. Don't know *when* they 'll come back."

"But who takes care of all these children?"

"Nobody."

"But where do you get food and clothes?"

"O, we earn that, selling papers, — Nora does, and I help."

Mrs. Donaldson looked tenderly at the brave, sturdy little fellow who had answered all her questions so readily, smoothed his rough brown hair with one of her jewelled white hands, and sighed softly. She was wishing that she had not been left quite childless in her widowhood, and thinking, while so many children were motherless, why need she be always childless? Could she not take some of these little ones who needed her as much as she felt she needed them; and thus try, in her small range, to right some of the world's cruel wrong? But she could not say it. There were hampering circumstances that hemmed in the rich widow, free and untrammelled as she seemed, crushed her

truer, better longings, and forced her into a life she would not herself have chosen. So she only stroked Jemmy Craig's rough hair, and sighed.

"Are you the auntie?" ventured Jemmy.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Donaldson, with a smile. "Why?"

"She told me you were n't ever cross, like the rest."

A funny surprise passed over Mrs. Donaldson's handsome face, and she could scarcely avoid a little laugh.

"And you have always plenty to eat, — these boys and girls you tell me of?" she resumed, with a judicious change of subject.

"Ye-es," replied Jemmy, absently. He was staring at a deer's head of remarkably life-like appearance on the wall. Its bright eyes, open mouth, and lolling tongue fascinated him.

"And are they all as nice children as you?" she pursued.

"Ye-es — all but Harry. *He* don't ever get out of bed. Don't know *what* ails him."

"Does n't he? Is he a nice, pleasant, pretty boy?"

"Ye-es, he 's nice, like you, — clean and pretty."

Mrs. Donaldson had to laugh out at this sally, and Mrs. Meredith turned quickly at the unusual sound.

"What is it?" she asked, eagerly.

"He says I am clean and pretty," repeated she,

laughing again. It was a very pleasant, low, rippling laugh, and Jemmy liked it; but a dim idea of absurdity in the statement, as she gave it, made him exclaim, —

"No! I said Harry was."

"Come!" said Officer Staut, "your sister will think I am not going to bring you back." And offering one of his big fingers again, he bowed respectfully, and before Jemmy had time for one thorough farewell look, he was in the street. The great door of the wonderful house was closed, and all its beauty and marvels were vanished forever from his eager eyes. It was small consolation to hold in his hand a bit of green paper that Officer Staut said was a "quarter," and which Jemmy dimly remembered, in the last dazed moment, little Blue-boots' mamma had given him, with the same displeased look with which she regarded Bella.

It was all a fairy-like dream to Jemmy, from the moment of his entering to his leaving the grand home of little Bella. The strange sights, the rich furnishings, the beautiful ladies, all were painted indelibly in the pages of his young memory. Wondering dumbly, he trotted along, holding Officer Staut's finger, till he reached the avenue, and found Nora again.

It was shady on the avenue, when Jemmy returned to Nora. He sat down on the curbstone, close by a lamp-post, and meditated for a long time on the strange events of the afternoon. There were some straws

from a passing wagon of goods blown against the curb. Jemmy began to play with them. Nora brought him half the doughnut she was eating; the rind of a banana formed quite an accession to his limited stock of toys. He was growing skilful in eliciting much amusement from small means. It occurred to his ingenious mind to make a house like Bella's. The straws were placed as boundary lines, and a strip of banana rind formed the stairs; a chip represented the white-topped, shining table; a sprig of weed stuck into a crack was the deer's head. Then bits of the banana rind would do for the chairs and sofa that stood in the spacious hall. It was quite elaborately laid out, and Jemmy was lost in study over the plan, when an unthinking foot was coming down in the midst of it. Jemmy almost forgot that a man was probably intimately connected with that foot. He saw only the imminent destruction of his elaborate ground-plan of Bella's grand hall. He caught the foot, just above the ancle, in both arms, and guided it outside his limited territory. Of course he almost tripped up a certain well-dressed gentleman by this manœuvre, but he never raised his head. Too intent upon his work to notice anything not therewith connected, when once the threatening foot was removed, he went quietly on arranging and contemplating the plan.

Mr. Salsby regained his equilibrium as well as he

could, and stood regarding the ruddy, busy, little fellow with an amused smile in his pleasant eyes and hiding in his brown beard.

"What is that?" he asked, at length.

Jemmy, never dreaming that any one could be accosting him, pursued his occupation without vouchsafing any reply. The grave, earnest air and abstracted attention only amused Mr. Salsby still more, and, standing by the lamp-post, he watched the child's play for some minutes.

Suddenly Jemmy observed the two feet emulating the black post itself in stationary repose, and glanced hastily along up to the face. He could not remember where he had seen it before, though he had a dim idea that it was familiar.

"What are you making?" asked the gentleman again.

"A house," said Jemmy, looking down at it.

Mr. Salsby's imagination was hardly equal to seeing the resemblance. He regarded Jemmy as the chief curiosity. But as he still remained, instead of going away, as the child naturally expected of him, Jemmy proceeded to an explanation, —

"'Ere's the front door That's the stairs, and that's the sofa. 'Ere 's the white table, with a smooth, shining top; and these are chairs. That's the way it is at Bella's."

"At Bella's?" repeated Mr. Salsby.

"Her name 's Bella Waters, and she lives in a great *'andsome* 'ouse. I've been there."

"So you go to see Bella Waters?" said the gentleman, a funny twinkle coming in his eyes, as he thought of all Mrs. Waters' natural objection to such a playmate for her Bella.

"No; I did n't go to see her," said Jemmy, substituting short straws for the banana rind, as more accurately representing the staircase.

"What is your name, my little man?"

Jemmy looked up. He liked to be called a "little man," because he had observed that it was invariably a token of approbation. So he gave his name with great dignity, and added, "She came to see me."

"Paper, sir?" And Mr. Salsby turned to see Nora Craig's fair little face raised to him with offered news. Instantly he remembered her, and Jemmy's former danger of capture by the policeman. He produced the requisite pennies, and took a paper.

"And this is your sister?" he asked.

As Jemmy did not answer, Nora said, "Yes, sir."

"How do you get along selling papers? Do you like it as well as ever?"

"It does very well. I get lots of money by it. But I have kept the piece you gave me. Ned told me to carry it for luck."

"Ah!"

"But she lets me wear it!" cried Jemmy, proudly, pulling at a string around his neck, and bringing up the shining bit of silver, strung upon it by a hole punched therein.

"Then I'm afraid the luck will be yours," said the gentleman.

"Paper, sir?" said Nora, as a man stopped near her. And Mr. Salsby turned as if to go away; but he came back again.

"Who is Ned?" he asked of Jemmy.

Jemmy stared a moment, and then answered, "Newsboy?"

"But Ned who?"

"O, Ned Canton."

"And where do you live?"

Jemmy thought everybody was asking where he lived to-day. But he gave the answer dutifully.

Nora had returned meanwhile, and she added, —

"We live with Tom Canton and Bess. We all live together, because there is n't any one else to live with. But Jemmy and I are only staying there till our mother comes back. We've lost her somewhere, but she'll come for us by and by."

"So you live in Amity Court? And do you all sell papers and earn a living by it?"

"O, no; only Ned and I do that. Tom is doing

something else in an office, I believe, — I don't know just what, — Jemmy and Harry can't do anything, and Bess says she is going to sell papers if she can't find anything else to do."

"Six of you?" exclaimed Mr. Salsby, in surprise.

"Tom said we might stay with them if we could earn enough," explained Nora, not quite knowing what she was expected to say.

"And do you have a nice house to live in?"

"It's a very large room and looks out on the river. It is up top of the house, you see."

"I must go down and see how it is," said Mr. Salsby, more to himself than to Nora, as he walked away.

The interruption had spoiled Jemmy's interest in his play. He swept the gathered straws out of their mystic arrangement into the street again. He stared vacantly about him, and was glad when Ned came to say they could go home.

But at home his mood changed. He was eager to tell to Bess and Harry all the wonderful events of this most remarkable day, and he dwelt long on the wonderful dress and house of little Bella Waters, the beautiful ladies, and the strange coincidence that Bella had said everybody was cross except the pretty auntie who had talked with him. To Harry the recital was as good as a story-book. He listened with deepest interest, and

asked many questions which it delighted Jemmy to answer. Nora gave a full account of the man who had twice manifested so kindly an interest in them, and startled Bess by the announcement that he was coming to see them, for he had said so.

"He could n't mean it," Bess said, as if reassuring herself from her dread of a strange visitor.

"Perhaps he 'll help us," said Harry, hopefully. "I 'll tell him how I want to carve pretty things and earn something, and he may want to buy some if he is rich."

Meanwhile Jemmy sat still and demure, in the last lingering light of the late sunset that shone faintly in at the window overlooking the river. He was gravely examining the bit of paper with a picture on it that he had found under the steps. The dirt was easily brushed off; Jemmy did it with his jacket-sleeve, which was very convenient. It had once been of some bright hue, that was not yet quite all faded out A colored picture was a treasure Jemmy had not dreamed of possessing. There was a man's head, and on the other side a very much larger picture; so complicated was this side that by the waning light Jemmy could not make it out at all. There were a great many curious letters and little pictures crowded upon this wonderful bit of paper. It was quite the most remarkable thing Jemmy had ever seen.

"Come, Jemmy, let 's go to bed," said Nora. "I'm so tired."

"Wish I could see what's on here," said Jemmy, with sleepy moderation.

"Come," said Nora, beginning to unbutton his little jacket.

"I 'll take it to bed, and then I 'll see it in the morning," Jemmy said.

"Yes." And Nora lifted him down from the chair on which he had been standing.

As she did so her eye fell on the valued paper.

"Why, Jemmy, where did you get that?"

"Under the steps where I played house with the little girl," answered Jemmy, with a yawn.

"Let me see it. I believe it 's money. Bess, come and see."

Bess came, and opened wide her bright eyes as she looked. And then the tears came into them, as she exclaimed joyfully, —

"O, Nora! it 's a ten dollar bill!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE LADIES.

MRS. DONALDSON was very silent and thoughtful next day. In vain her mother discoursed variedly upon such topics as were her wont, — the weather, what to wear, and the coming journey.

Mrs. Donaldson answered absently or not at all, till Mrs. Meredith caught the infection, and was silent also.

Thus the forenoon wore along, till Mrs. Donaldson said abruptly, —

"Where is the need of my going to the water with you and Sophy?"

"Why, where'd be the pleasure, if you did n't?" exclaimed her astonished mother.

"I think I could make myself quite as happy to stay at home with father."

"But it would spoil our trip — Sophy's and mine. Don't go to making a nun of yourself, Ria. You are a young woman yet, not twenty-five, and as handsome as

ever you were ; and I am not going to let you mew yourself up, and settle down to caps and knitting-work."

"You know tatting is the only knitting I ever learned," returned the younger lady, with a faint smile, "and I shall not need caps for some time, my hair is so good. But, ma, I dread going into society again. Seems as if it would be so much better if I should keep another year of mourning."

"Nonsense! why you are growing older every year, child! Do you remember that? You'll never be any younger or more beautiful than you are now. 'Make your hay while the sun shines,' my dear."

Mrs. Donaldson rose and walked away to the window, with a pained look on her fair, gentle face. She had been indulging in day-dreams this morning. She had been thinking of the little boy she saw yesterday, who had no parents, and needed just such care as she longed to give. More and more had grown in her heart the wish to take some orphan child, and give it the care that would, she knew, prove, like mercy, —

"Twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

If only her mother and sister would go without her on their proposed trip to the watering-places this summer, how easily could she, while left at home with her kind father, talk over with him her feelings and wishes ; and, with his approbation and support, which she felt

could be readily gained, might she not find a motherless child for her childless heart that had been aching with overburdening mother-love ever since her own dead baby was laid in her arms two years ago?

But to be freed from this journey, — that was the difficult part of the plan. Her mother would not give her up. Mrs. Meredith's fascinations of airy graces and insinuating sweetness were beginning to set uneasily over her too customary frown and pettishness. Mrs. Waters had not yet found her sharp ways softened or toned by the roughness of her married life to pleasing address. Alone the two ladies were scarcely attractive, would elicit little attention ; but as the escort of the rich widow from Scotland, who, besides being mistress of vaguely untold wealth, was possessed of unusual personal attractions in beauty and sweetness, their position would be quite different. Mrs. Meredith was shrewd enough to see all this, and would not for a moment hear of losing her widowed daughter's companionship.

So Mrs. Donaldson sat down again, and relapsed into silence. It was almost as hard now, after the few years in her husband's ancestral home, where life-long servants took from her every care and duty, as it had been in her girlhood, for her to oppose her own will to that of any one else, or to instigate any sort of proceedings for the furtherance of her own views unapproved and unencouraged by the approbation of her

parents. She was sadly unequal to laying out and consummating well-wrought plans for a given purpose. Enterprise was farthest from Mrs. Donaldson's catalogue of virtues. Still she sat, and dreamed of the ruddy, earnest, little man, and longed to see again his bright eyes, and hear his cool, decided answers.

One thing Mrs. Donaldson had learned since her girlhood, — to sometimes take prompt actions with her impulses. They seldom led her into error, and often opened a way she could not before devise to her desired end. Now she started up suddenly and pulled the bell, saying, —

"I am going to ride."

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Meredith.

"Wherever my fancy leads me," she answered, merrily, as she tripped away to prepare herself.

When she returned to the little morning parlor in which they had been sitting, Mrs. Meredith had also put on a riding costume, and was chatting in very lively manner with Mrs. Waters, who had just come.

"I thought I should like a drive too, Ria, dear," said Mrs. Meredith; "and Sophy says she will go, so there will be a pleasant party of us."

"Yes, that's very kind of you," replied Mrs. Donaldson, absently, after she had welcomed her sister. As she had planned the ride with the hope of going alone, and the intention of visiting Amity Court, she

was scarcely so much charmed with the arrangement as she wished to appear. But she would not interfere with their plans, and so followed them into the carriage with her usual docility.

"Which way?" asked the footman, as he closed the door.

Mrs. Donaldson expected her companions would have some choice, so did not give the order.

"Where is it?" cried Mrs. Meredith, gayly, turning to her; "where does your fancy lead you, Madame Fanciful?"

Finding the decision thus suddenly thrust upon herself, Mrs. Donaldson said hastily, "Amity Court," more because she had no time to frame a different plan, than because she really cared to drive there with her present company.

"Where is Amity Court?" asked Mrs. Waters.

"I don't exactly know," Mrs. Donaldson replied, timidly.

But it seemed the driver did; for he was driving rapidly on, and the wheels, spinning merrily, soon turned into the narrow limits of that poverty-haunted place. The horses halted.

"Which house, marm?" asked the footman at the door.

"You 'll have to ask some one where the Canton children live," said Mrs. Donaldson, with some hesitation.

It was an hour past noon, and the children were all at home, except Tom, for their noonday rest.

"There are some strangers coming," said Harry, to whose patient, listening ears every footstep of the house was familiar.

Ned cut short his interesting story of a little lost dog that had figured in to-day's adventures, and all the children held their heads statue-like to listen for so long that they looked like a group of frightened rabbits with sensitive ears erect.

The approaching tread of strangely gentle feet, accompanied with the faint rustle of voluminous robes, was a long time in reaching the upper landing just outside their door. But there at last it stopped, and a timid knock startled the silent and astonished children.

Bess opened the door, and politely asked her elegant visitors to enter. There was a little stiffness about their entrance. When Mrs. Donaldson had declared her intention of going to see the Cantons, Mrs. Meredith had bestowed all manner of contempt on the idea. Yet she persisted not only in carrying it out, but also in leaving the carriage and accompanying her daughter on the visit. She was anxious to see where she went and what she did She could not have her falling into any foolish extravagance for some low creatures, or, worse yet, getting personally interested in orphan

children, in this miserable portion of the city, and perhaps driving here alone to visit them. She could not sufficiently congratulate herself on having come out to-day with Mrs. Donaldson for the ride. If there was stiffness, awkwardness, embarrassment, so much the better. Mrs. Meredith meant to be as awe-inspiring as she could; and, to do her justice, she certainly knew how to exercise a strong repellent power if she chose.

Bess, who welcomed very prettily Mrs. Donaldson's sweet face, felt chilled and crushed most unpleasantly by the haughty gaze and manner of the other two ladies. Jemmy, recognizing at once the "pretty auntie" of Bella Waters, was smitten with a wave of hospitality, and, leaving his dinner, he walked straight to her, holding out his hand. But he said nothing. He tried to think what it was his mother used to say when friends came that she was glad to see. He wanted very much to say something, but the words would not come. So he only stood with his brown little hand clasped in her daintily gloved one, staring up into her lovely face with a bright smile of welcome. Meanwhile, Bess had placed chairs for the other ladies, and they had settled their ample dresses, and sat proudly upright, regarding the surroundings with a disdainful air.

"So this is your home?" asked Mrs. Donaldson,

as she took the chair Bess offered, and looked into Jemmy's admiring eyes.

"Ye-es; I live here just now, awhile," he answered, slowly. Then catching Nora's hand, and leading her forward, he said, "This is Nora."

"Nora Canton, is it?"

"Nora Craig," cried Jemmy, quickly.

"He 's my brother," explained Nora.

"O, yes!"

"And this is Bess," pursued Jemmy, taking her by the hand to draw her towards the lady.

Bess, embarrassed by the other ladies, who were looking coolly around the room, made a timid courtesy, and retired to a chair by the table.

"And that's Ned, and that's Harry in the bed," Jemmy said, hastily pointing and enumerating.

Having finished doing the honors of this rapid introduction, Jemmy became suddenly aware of the Gorgon gaze of Bella's mamma, and relapsed into a most unnatural shyness.

"Is Harry sick?" asked Mrs. Donaldson.

Jemmy was staring straight in the face of Mrs. Waters, who, already out-stared by him, had transferred her regards to the most disreputable looking one of the family, in baggy trowsers, grimy hands, shaggy, uncut and not over-well combed hair, and freckled, homely face, — Ned, the newsboy. Ned's appearance never did

him any great credit, and he was, if possible, more unprepossessing than usual to-day, owing to recent accidents to his clothes. But notwithstanding these disadvantages, Ned bore the ordeal of her scrutiny with admirable indifference, even bestowing a grin of approval on her own elegant attire, which suited his taste exactly, and mentally resolving that his wife should have just such a suit sometime, when he got rich.

"No, marm," said Bess, in answer to Mrs. Donaldson's kind inquiry concerning Harry. "He is quite well."

"I always thought he was sick!" exclaimed Jemmy, bounding suddenly to the bedside, where little Harry sat, propped up on his pillows, the coverlet drawn upon his lap, and his threadbare jacket made from one of his father's old coats of fine broadcloth, buttoned neatly to his chin, where a narrow white collar relieved his pale face. Harry was always dressed more nicely than the others. There was nothing to soil or even wear his clothes, and his sensitive, transparent skin seemed fitted only for finer fabrics.

"Why don't you get up, then? You shan't lie in bed if you're not sick!" And Jemmy tore aside the coverlet and caught Harry around the waist. A white spasm of dread crossed Harry's face.

Jemmy started suddenly back with dumb horror in

his round eyes, and ran to Nora. Burying his face in her lap, he gave vent to a series of mournful cries, as if he would never be comforted.

"What is the matter, Jemmy?" asked Nora, tenderly.

"O! he has n't — he has n't *got any legs!* Oo-oo-oo!"

Nora knew it, and tried to calm Jemmy.

Harry turned away his face, and tears of shame and pain rolled down his pale cheeks, while Bess sheltered him with herself from the astonished gaze of the ladies, and said gentle, loving words of comfort. Even Mrs. Meredith relaxed a little her severe elegance, and said "Poor boy!" in her silvery accents. But Mrs. Waters was simply annoyed, and showed it plainly.

The painful moment brought Ned into prominence. He felt the need of a diversion of thought, and was ready to furnish it. Mrs. Donaldson was trying to aid Nora in pacifying Jemmy. Mrs. Meredith had ventured a word in commiseration for Harry. Mrs. Waters alone sat erect and unsympathetic.

Stepping from his corner, where he had not relinquished sly bites of his lunch, spite of the august company, Ned addressed her as being the most formidable of the party, and also the least occupied with any interest in the turn which affairs had taken.

"Please, marm, I like your dress very much. I don't

see one like it, or half so handsome, from one year's end to another."

"I don't know how you should be likely to," replied Mrs. Waters, with a toss of her head and contemptuous curl of her lip.

"O, we of the newspaper-perambulating corps see almost everything. We see lots of grandeur sometimes, — but the grandeur never sees us, of course."

Mrs. Waters made no reply, unless another toss of her head were such.

"It 's very sad about Harry," said Mrs. Meredith. "So young! How did he lose his limbs?"

A little pain cramp came in Ned's face, as he answered, bravely, though in a lower tone, that Harry might not hear, —

"He never had any. Born so."

Words failed even Mrs. Meredith. She tried to express sympathy, pity, regret, in her face, but horrified surprise would predominate. Even Mrs. Waters looked astonished.

Ned did not like the prevailing sentiment. It hurt the Cantons, always, to be forced to acknowledge that Harry was so terribly different from other folks. They knew so well that in many ways he was infinitely better and lovelier than average humanity, that they shrank from common pity and commiseration.

"I 'm sorry you took the trouble to come up all these

stairs to make us a visit," Ned began aggressively, and speaking pointedly to Mrs. Meredith and Mrs. Waters, with his back to Mrs. Donaldson, that she might not be included in the remark. "I don't think you had any special call to, and you might ha' known you'd find something to shock such fine feelings as yours are."

"Mrs. Donaldson is ready to go now, I presume," said Mrs. Meredith, turning to her daughter, who was still bending over Jemmy. With Nora's help the little fellow had been diverted from his agonized frame of mind, and was regaining his usual equilibrium.

"It was I who wanted to come here to see you," said Mrs. Donaldson to Ned, in a doubtful voice. "But I am sorry if you think it was taking too great a liberty; I know I was not invited."

"I didn't say *you*," Ned answered, confused with this application of his words. "You came because you wanted to, and *of course* we are glad to see *such* company. But these ladies never wanted to come, and now they — they — "

Ned stopped, at a loss to express his objection or complaint against the fine ladies who were already nearly out of the room.

"May I come again, if I will come alone?" asked Mrs. Donaldson, in a low tone.

Ned was growing very uncomfortable in his embar-

rassment. But good feeling overcame shame, and he said, earnestly, —

"Please, — you *know* I did n't mean you. You are kind and good, and we could n't help being glad if you should come."

Mrs. Donaldson smiled half sadly, yet she was happy — a tearful kind of happiness — that she had succeeded in making one hearty friend.

"Then I shall come again, sometime." Will you be glad to see me?" she asked, as she bent over Harry, and took his fair, thin hand in hers.

"O, yes, marm!" said he; "but I think you 'd better not bring the others. They would not enjoy coming, and — we don't," he added, hesitatingly.

Mrs. Donaldson smiled. "I 'll remember," she said; and shaking hands kindly with each one, she followed the sound of the retreating robes of the rest of the party.

"What ever induced you to want to go to such a place?" exclaimed Mrs. Meredith, in her usual languid tones, when they were once more seated in the carriage, and whirling away to more pleasant scenes.

"Ria seems to have some low tastes," observed Mrs. Waters; "I suppose she learned them in Scotland, visiting the tenantry. It is quite the fashion there to play Lady Bountiful and cultivate tender interest in the poor, is n't it? You 'll find it is n't so stylish here."

"I'm sure this experience will cure you of ever trying it again," said Mrs. Meredith. "You will see that our poor are not at all like tidy, decent peasantry. It is natural they should not be. Because here in a free country, nobody has any business to be poor. Only the shiftless, miserable, idle classes are so; the better, more decent, and industrious people can live very comfortably without help. Charity, in New York, is only encouragement to idleness."

Mrs. Donaldson did not reply.

"There's an elegant turnout," said Mrs. Waters. And so the conversation drifted away to the more common topics of style, fashion, and the coming summer journey.

Mrs. Donaldson was silent, but not convinced. She could not argue the subject; but she remembered that, even were her mother's hard theory true, these were only children. Six orphans, trying to earn a living with their scanty knowledge and opportunity; four of them toiling to support one, a cripple, and one scarce more than a baby, besides themselves. The anxious motherliness of Bess and Nora, the brave earnestness of shrewd, wide-awake Ned, the newsboy, all touched her hungry heart, and made her long to see them again, when no adverse influence should prevent her entering, as heartily and kindly as she felt, into the story of their life and plans. She longed to help them, but she

did not yet see how it could be done. Meanwhile she resolved to talk with her father about them, and to come soon to see them again, taking care that no one should accompany her.

But it was not easy to carry out any plan so directly at variance with the whole tenor of Mrs. Meredith's life and occupations. There was always plenty of more fashionable employment for Mrs. Donaldson, and scarcely an hour in the day was free from her mother's demands upon her company. Thus it was many long weeks before she again saw any of these children of Amity Court.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LANDLORD.

"I AM so glad we have the rent ready!" said Bess, as she rocked Harry, one very warm morning. All the other children were away at their work, for even little Jemmy was becoming quite useful in selling papers, and added no mean amount to the day's receipts.

"It was good of Jemmy to give up his money so readily," was Harry's reply.

"Yes," said Bess, laughingly; "it seemed almost like cheating him, he had so little idea of what ten dollars is worth! But what else could we do?"

"I think he understood it," said Harry. "Nora and I explained to him that it would pay the rent and buy a nice Sunday dinner for all of us, and leave enough to buy him a little wheelbarrow to hold Nora's papers, too, which was what he chose instead of the drum, at last, — though he did want the drum very much."

"What did he know about rent?" said Bess, laughing.

"We told him, and he understood. Why, Bess, Jemmy is n't stupid, and rent is not very hard to understand."

"Well, no, I suppose not; but I had never heard of it when I was at his age."

"I think children can understand the same things grown folks can; and I should think folks would tell them all about their affairs. It must be a great deal pleasanter. When I was little," said Harry, with a sigh, "and used to lie all day with nothing to think about, but some little story you read for me, it was dreadfully hard. You know how fussy and cross I was, and how I used to moan and cry. 'T was n't because I ached, as folks thought. 'T was only because I had n't anything to think of that interested me. After father was sick, and we came to the city, and I heard all about the trouble, somehow I was n't nearly so unhappy. Mother used to try to hide things from me, but I would n't let her. She thought it was hard to tell me trouble, but it was not half so hard as not having anything to think about. Truly, Bess, the happy part of my life has been since the trouble came, — especially since I picked rags, and knew I was helping."

"When I get so I can carve," resumed Harry, after a pause, in which Bess still rocked softly, but held him more closely and lovingly, "I shall be so glad! I drew a design to-day, but it was too fine for me to carve.

To-day I mean to try and cut something just to be getting used to handling the knife and the wood. But I am dreadfully lazy to-day, — seems as if I 'd like to have you rock me all day. I suppose it is because it is so hot."

"I wish this room was n't so hot," said Bess, looking anxiously at the wide uncurtained and blindless windows, where the sun's straight rays beat steadily in from his first rise in the morning till his last blink at night.

"There are some men walking about the house. They may come up here. You 'd better put me back in bed," said Harry.

"Perhaps it 's the landlord," suggested Bess, as she laid him comfortably and tenderly on the cot. "It is time for him."

"It is n't his step," answered Harry. "But then he may have sent another man."

The footsteps continued to tramp about the house, now on one floor, then on another, till at last they reached the upper landing, and there was a knock at the door of the Cantons' room.

Two gentlemen stood outside and bowed, as Bess opened the door. Neither of them was the landlord's agent who had collected the rents ever since the Cantons had lived in Amity Court.

"Good-morning, good-morning!" said quickly the elder of the two, a bustling, nervous, little old man who

stepped back with a deferential flourish, to allow the other gentleman to enter first.

"This is the landlord, come to look after his tenements and tenants," he continued, following hastily into the room, and himself placing a chair for Mr. Salsby, before Bess had time to do so. "Not every landlord would take so much trouble. Now, this seems a good, large, airy room, sir. One could n't want a better tenement than this, I 'm sure."

Mr. Salsby smiled roguishly as he remarked, "I can't tell how I should like it till I have lived here."

"O, for yourself, sir, I did n't mean, of course."

Mr. Salsby turned his chair to Bess, who had retreated and sat down on Harry's bed, wondering what all this visit might mean, and rejoicing more and more, in her heart, that she had the rent ready. The landlord could not be intending to send them out, for they had always paid it promptly each month.

"How do you like the room?" Mr. Salsby asked of her.

"Very well, sir. It *is* large and airy. We like that, — but it does get very hot here, days, in summer."

"Yes, I perceive that," said the landlord, smiling, and wiping his forehead with a dainty handkerchief. "Mr. Jenks, do you observe any change in temperature between this and the cellar of the block, where we began our survey?"

"Well — yes, sir —yes," replied Mr. Jenks, in quick, jerky tones "But you can't expect — no one can expect — a garret to be as cool as a cellar in summer."

"Not quite, I suppose," returned Mr. Salsby, with a calmness very noticeable in its contrast with Mr. Jenks. "What do you say, little lady; what do you think would improve your tenement?"

"We used to have blinds at home, sir," replied Bess, timidly.

The answer showed so plainly that "at home" had been something better than her present surroundings, that Mr. Salsby was interested.

"Then you shall have blinds here," he answered, quickly. "Now will you tell me what is your name, and where was your home before you came here?"

Bess replied with a short sketch of the family history, and the loss of their parents, ending with a summing-up of their present condition.

"So we all live here, and have paid our rent every month. I have it ready to-day. Tom has got a place in an office now. Ned and Nora sell papers, and Jemmy helps, though he is only five years old, — but he is large of his age, and seems older. Harry is learning to carve and will earn something again, as soon as he can, and I am going to work very soon. I go out part of the day now."

"What do you do?"

Bess did not like to confess that she sold papers, after all that Tom had said. She could not help a blush and look of shame.

"She sells papers, like Nora," said Harry, quietly. And Bess was relieved to observe that the gentleman seemed to have none of Tom's objections to the work.

"Very good tenants; very good indeed, I should think," observed Mr. Jenks, suddenly blowing his nose, with his usual impetuosity.

Mr. Salsby sat gloomily silent, thinking that had the room been comfortably tight and warm last winter, these children might not now be motherless. Such a sharp pain of remorse came over him, as he thought of the terrible result of what was certainly his remissness, and for which he spared himself no jot of blame, that he could not answer, and only sat looking sadly and thoughtfully down at the floor.

"Here is the rent, sir," Bess said, offering the money.

Mr. Salsby looked up quickly. His voice was wanting, or he would have bid her keep it. But Mr. Jenks hastened to take the money, and proceeded to fumble the papers of his pocket-book, till he found a signed receipt for it.

"It is all right. I am Mr. Salsby's agent. I am to have the care of these tenements in future; I shall collect the rents and make any repairs necessary. All complaints, requests for blinds, and so forth," he said

with a laugh, "will be addressed to me, and," he added, with a respectful bow to the landlord, "with your sanction, promptly carried out."

"I shall not fail to look at the buildings myself also, Mr. Jenks," said the landlord.

"No need, not the least need; and, excuse me, but if you have an agent, it is best to trust him, you know."

"I do trust you," was the polite reply; "but," with a smile, "I shall also take care that you shall not forget anything. My former agent had a very poor memory. He often forgot my orders. I shall go and look for myself, to be sure that you do not forget."

The little old man bowed hastily, and replied, "Certainly, sir, certainly," with great conciliation.

Bess was wondering whether the agent would prove as kind as the landlord, and very glad to know that Mr. Salsby intended to keep watch of his tenants for himself, in future.

Meanwhile there was a sound of coming steps on the stairs, and voices, too, were heard. Ned came scampering up, — not noisily, for he was barefooted, and very lightfooted also, — and hitting the door a thud with his heel to open it, he rolled himself in like a wheel, arms and legs for spokes, in a very unique and scientific method of somersault It was a trick he had learned to amuse baby Harry in his careless youth, and had not

practised since graver duties had devolved upon him. He ceased revolving, and stood erect before Harry's bed, but also before two strange gentlemen. Moreover, this unusual method of progress being somewhat at variance with attraction of gravitation, the pennies forsook his baggy pockets, while his heels were uppermost, and went earthward in a shower, rolling merrily away into corners, under beds and chairs, as if themselves intent on a good game of "hide-and-seek."

Ned stood astonished and abashed, as Nora and Jemmy pushed in at the half-open door. The uneasiest of grins spread on his queer little face, and diving his hands into his nearly empty pockets, he muttered, —

"I forgot all about the coppers."

Ned's object being, however, to amuse Harry, the effort must be considered an eminent success. Harry laughed and laughed, till he had to hold with both hands the sides of his curly head, it ached so Jemmy and Nora ran to pick up the pennies, laughing gayly at the fun. Even the two gentlemen could not resist the absurdity of the entrance; and poor Bess, puzzled and frightened, was glad to follow their good-natured example and laugh with them. Then she hastened to introduce to them Ned, as her brother, the newsboy. She said it proudly, with a look of honest trust and admiration at the droll, kind-hearted, keen-witted little fellow,

that both gentlemen could not but see, and rate Ned therefore the higher in their opinion.

"Bess had the money for you to-day, sir, all right, I believe," said Ned, in a business tone, not quite certain to which gentleman the remark should be addressed.

"Yes, all right, quite right," quickly replied Mr. Jenks, running his fingers through his thin gray hair, and wondering how much longer Mr. Salsby was going to sit broiling in this hot attic. "I gave her the receipt."

"And there shall be blinds added to keep out this terrible sun," said Mr Salsby. "Do not forget, Mr. Jenks, and have them on as soon as possible; not another day without them. Then you will find it a comfortable tenement, I hope" he added, turning to Ned.

"Yes, sir; for summer."

"Yes, I understand; I will have it made snug and warm before another winter. It cannot be really habitable in cold weather. I will have that done also, in due season."

"Thank you, sir," cried Ned and Bess together.

"And what is the matter with your sick brother?" asked Mr. Salsby. "Has he been sick long?"

"He is not sick, sir, but crippled," replied Bess.

"I 'll tell yer," said Jemmy, tugging at his coat skirt, to call his eyes down to himself.

"Hush, Jemmy," said Nora; adding, in a whisper,

"Harry won't like it." And Jemmy forbore the delight of giving information to the gentleman.

"Seems to me he does not look well," said the landlord, kindly, taking Harry's hand in his, as he stood by the bedside. "His face is flushed, his eyes are hazy, and his hand is very hot."

"Aren't you well, Harry?" asked Bess, tenderly, bending over him and smoothing away the light curly hair from his burning face.

"O, yes, I 'm well," said Harry, freeing his hand from Mr. Salsby's to draw it across his eyes, "only it is so hot here, it makes my head ache. It will go when the sun goes down, and the cool night comes on. We have fine, cool nights here, sir," Harry continued, to Mr. Salsby; "the wind blows in fresh from the river and away out at sea. We can hear the water lap and plash all the time. I like the place for that reason — and for many others, and I shall be glad if we can stay here next winter and have it comfortable."

"You shall have it comfortable, little man," said Mr. Salsby. "And, Mr. Jenks, don't forget to have the blinds put up to-night, or to-morrow morning early."

"They 'll need painting, sir," suggested Mr. Jenks, wiping off his face, which was growing quite rosy.

"Find some already painted. Or have them put up without," said the landlord, impatiently.

Mr. Jenks stared, opened his mouth to say that would be shiftless and wasteful, but shut it again in silence.

Nora had picked up the last of the pennies, and brought them to Ned.

"And you have introduced the innovation of letting girls sell papers, with boys?" said Mr. Salsby, smiling roguishly upon Ned, as he was returning the specie Nora brought to his pockets.

"Not exactly," replied Ned. "Nora sells papers, but she does n't keep round with us boys at all, and I 've given out distinctly that I 'll lick the first fellow that does n't let her alone, and leave her a clear field and fair chance. They know me; and so they don't run her. She has her haunts and sells there; and they just go somewhere else"

Bess looked up, astonished. So did Harry. Nora, having been privately instructed by Ned concerning this arrangement long ago, only said simply, as if reporting to Ned, —

"They have all kept away, and behaved well."

"The threat must be very effectual, if it frightens all the newsboys of the city into respectful submission," said Mr. Salsby, not very much pleased with the story.

Ned laughed good-humoredly. "O, I only said that; it 's all talk, — an emphatic way of making a request.

They understood it, and you would, if — if you were much acquainted with newsboys, sir," Ned ended, making up in respectfulness of tone for the words, and looking up in Mr Salsby's face with bright, honest eyes. "I never had a fight with a newsboy but once since I've been in the trade, and then the rest all said it was right; and if I could n't have won without, they would have helped me. But it was better I should beat him alone, if I could, of course; and I did." And Ned turned away, a little ashamed of what seemed like telling of his own exploits.

"I shall look in here to see you again," said Mr. Salsby, "and I hope the blinds will take all the flush out of Harry's cheeks."

"I hope so, too," echoed Bess.

"And if you get out of work, or into any trouble, very likely I can help you in some way." And with a departing bow, the gentlemen went out and down the stairs.

"Very fine children; quite remarkable, altogether," said Mr. Jenks, as they regained the sidewalk.

"Decidedly my most interesting tenants," said Mr. Salsby, with a pleasant smile, remembering some of the other rooms they had visited, the slatternly house-keeping, and coarse, rough occupants, with many complaints, tardy rent, and bad manners.

"Those children, I 'll wager now, will get on better

than half the grown people do around here. Because they seem to know how to plan and provide."

"They come of good family, and have evidently had some schooling in the cares of life already."

"O, yes. No doubt, no doubt!"

Nora sat perched on the foot of Harry's cot. "Was n't he nice, Bess?" she asked.

"Yes."

"He's the same one who was so kind to me, and gave me the silver piece that Jemmy wears. I think he is the nicest gentleman I ever saw."

"It's jolly having such a good landlord," said prosaic Ned. "The other was a sharp, rough one."

"Ah, but he was the agent. It is the same landlord," said Bess; "he has only changed his agent, and I did not like Mr. Jenks so very much."

"Nor I, either," said Harry.

"But he says he is coming himself to see that everything is right," said Nora. "He will do as he promises. He said the other day, in the street, that he must come here — but I did n't suppose he would. And now he has."

"He came to look after his houses, not after us," pronounced Ned.

"But he is looking after us — the blinds, you know," said Bess.

"We have n't got 'em yet," said Ned, quietly and

doubtfully, "but I hope we shall have 'em," he added, seeing Harry's face sadden at his doubt.

"I am sure we shall," said Bess.

"I wonder," began Nora, slowly, — "I wonder if he *would* know anything about Eva Roberts." And she sighed deeply. "I did so want to ask those ladies, the pretty one, I mean, if she knew her. Somehow I thought perhaps she might, for Miss Eva was very fine and dressed beautifully, like them. But Jemmy cried so I could n't get a chance, and then I forgot it just as she went away. I remembered her again to-day, when I saw the gentleman. But I suppose he would n't know her. If I could only find her, perhaps she would help us to find mamma."

"The lady said she was coming again, and then you can ask her," said Harry.

"I certainly will," said Nora.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE LESS.

"SEE what I have found!" said Nora, pushing open the door, one hot afternoon, and pouring out a pile of little blocks and chips of soft pine wood upon Harry's bed. "There are lots of 'em, and Jemmy has filled his barrow with them."

The bits and ends of mouldings had suggested to the children Harry's carving; and feeling sure, from the curious shapes of these, that the material must be suitable, they hastened to bring home a large quantity.

"They are nice," said Harry, sitting up to turn them over and feel them, "and they do smell so fresh and — and — woody — O, I'd like to see the country again!" And Harry's longing eyes seemed looking straight through the walls of their attic room, over the broad, slow river, to where cool, flickering breezes toyed with innumerable merry green leaves, and nobody talked but the squirrels and crickets.

"Shall I bring your knife?" cried Nora, joyfully.

"Yes, I'll try what I can do, but I can never cut so smooth as this is, you know. This is machine work."

"How do you know?"

"Because I know no knife could cut it so smoothly, and no hand so true and even. It isn't such figures as these that I want to make, but lace-work patterns, or leaves and vines, like those we find in the woods. God does not try to make his tree-trunks and his vine-stems all polished off smooth. He likes the roughness, and the room to grow and change. And I like it best, too." And with the words Harry drew a long sigh.

All the last week he had been longing for the cool airs of the woods, and the sweet, still life of the country. Perhaps it was only the bitter heat of his attic room, and the scorching glare of sunshine on the river reflected upon the whitewashed rafters over his head. The blinds had not yet come, and the summer's heat was unabated. Sometimes, as he lay there alone, the hot roof seemed to come down slowly nearer and nearer to his flushed face, and the sun filtered through it, as through gauze. Sometimes he wished the roof and walls were torn away. It would be cooler out in the sun's fiercest rays, where a breath of air could yet play unfettered. The thin roof only sifted out the air and let in all the heat. Then his head ached all the time. That was the heat, too

But he took his knife, and sat up, when Nora brought

the blocks. Jemmy tumbled the contents of his barrow into a corner, when, with considerable difficulty and Nora's help, he had got them up-stairs. Then the two children went back to their work, and Harry was again left alone. He found the thinnest piece of the wood, and sketching with pencil the vague outline of a vine upon a trellis, he began to carve. It was hard work. There seemed to be no strength in his slender hands, and his arms ached to his shoulders with the effort. He had to stop often to rest them. Still he toiled on, sometimes clasping a hand over his forehead where the throbbing pain blinded his eyes, and blurred the delicate tracery of his pencil. Busied with his work, and the struggle with pain and weakness, he did not hear a light step on the stairs, till Mr. Salsby, clad all in the coolest of white linen, stood within the room.

"No blinds yet!" were his first words "I'll go down and see Mr. Jenks at once; it is two days since they were to be put up. So you are alone to-day."

"Yes, sir," said Harry, with a glad smile, "I 'most always am. They have to go away to work, you know."

"And are you better to-day?"

"I guess so, but — it 's so hot, you see," he added.

"Yes, terrible!" replied Mr. Salsby, glancing frowningly at the windows. "And you are not so well?"

"My head aches more. I suppose that 's the heat. And my eyes, — sometimes I can't see. I've been

trying to work a little, but the heat has taken away all my strength."

"I'm afraid you had n't much to begin with," said the landlord, sadly. "What do you want to make you comfortable?"

"I should like, — if it would n't be too much trouble, sir," Harry stammered, "for you to pour me a cup of water. There 's some in the pitcher."

Mr. Salsby laughed, and went with alacrity. The simplicity of the request seemed out of all comparison with Harry's hesitancy about asking it.

"But this is warm water. I 'll get some fresher," said Mr. Salsby.

"O, no!" cried Harry. But the gentleman was gone; and after a time returned with not only cool water, but lemons and sugar, from which he compounded the most delicious drink Harry had ever tasted. Then Mr. Salsby proceeded to use a whole pailful of water in sprinkling the floor of the room, till it mitigated the scorch of the air, and seemed even to excite faint breezes through the windows and door.

"Now I am going to send up those blinds," said the landlord, gayly, with a very bright and happy smile on his handsome face. "And I shall come again early to-morrow morning, to see if they are here. I hope you will be feeling better by that time.

Good-bye." And he shook hands with Harry as he went away.

But the smile, so gay and happy, died away, as he felt the feverish heat of that tiny palm, and saw the painful gaze of the blue eyes, dull and hazy with suffering. He did order the blinds; and so peremptorily, that they were, with much noise and clatter in the Canton household, put on early the next morning. He did more; for before visiting his tenants next day, he secured the company of a doctor, who was to see what could be done for little crippled Harry, and give him any relief possible. The patient, feeble, suffering little fellow woke a great interest in the kind landlord's heart. Such a child was hardly fit for this world, and could not long inhabit it; but whatever could be done by science and care to make comfortable and easy his short stay, Mortimer Salsby resolved should be done for little Harry Canton. To separate him from his brothers and sister, he saw would be only the cruelest kindness. Whatever was done must be done without breaking the little family that clung together so strongly, now that only the orphaned little ones remained. But a better tenement could certainly be found for them, better work for Bess, perhaps; and many delicacies for a sick child's appetite, and many hints for care and nursing from a doctor's knowledge and skill, his purse could supply. There were many calls on the time and

attention of this wealthy young landlord, but he did not forget Harry. He was now, for the first time, beginning to feel the responsibility involved in his wide possessions, and by personal care and interest for his tenants he was trying to faithfully serve in the stewardship of wealth.

One by one the children came home for their dinner, till all but Tom, who never came at noon, were gathered in the long room. Then Harry told about his visitor, and all were pleased and grateful for his kindness, and delighted with the sprinkled floor, which had done much to relieve the oppressive, smothering heat of the place Even Ned felt convinced now that the blinds would be soon hung, and the room screened from the sun's glare. They brought more water and again drenched the drying boards, while Bess rocked Harry in her loving arms as long as she could stay from the "evening trade."

"I'll go down for the new editions now," said Ned, as soon as he had finished his lunch and brought more water. Nora and Jemmy were splashing the floor, and finding great fun in the operation. "Don't fail to meet me half an hour hence." And Ned scampered down the stairs and was gone.

'How cool and fresh it seems!" said Bess, as the damp floor began to steam.

"I wish I had some on my face and hands," said Harry.

"Why, so you shall," cried Bess; and soon she was bathing tenderly the hot cheeks and burning palms.

But the half hour was soon over, and all three must go to meet Ned Harry was laid lovingly back on his couch, and left once more alone in the long, low, tiresome attic.

Next morning the Cantons were later than usual in starting for the day's work. The excitement of Mr. Jenks' appearance with two men and a set of window-blinds delayed them. The blinds were nicely painted a cool green, and after considerable tramping and talking, sorting of hinges and driving of screws, they were finally hung and the room pleasantly darkened by them. The mellow light was sweetly refreshing to Harry's dazzled, aching eyes. When the floor was brushed clean of dusty footprints from the departed workmen, and once more freshly sprinkled, there was an air of shady comfort in the room, to which it had long been a stranger. Nora and Jemmy hastened away to meet Ned, after the sprinkling was ended This exercise had at once become their most delightful recreation. Bess shook out the coverlet of the cot, and took up Harry for the accustomed rocking.

It was while he sat wearily in the rocker alone, and Bess was preparing the bed, that Mr. Salsby and another gentleman came gently up and knocked at the half-open door. Mr. Salsby carried a large bundle,

which he at once deposited on the table, and then returning, inquired earnestly and kindly for Harry's health. The morning was just as warm as had been every one for many days past. But Harry thought the changes in the room had eased his head and he should be quite well if he were only a little stronger. Bess came and took him back to the bed, where sitting up against the pillows he was more like "other folks," as she always wished him to appear.

"This looks more as it ought," said Mr. Salsby, glancing about, and observing that his device of sprinkling had been caught up and followed by the children.

"The blinds make it very pleasant," said Bess; "and it seems a great deal cooler."

"But it *isn't*, much," replied Mr. Salsby, with a laugh. He said no more, for he had not yet found a suitable place to which to move the children; and, until he should find that, it was worse than useless to encourage discontent with their present home.

Meanwhile the strange gentleman was regarding Harry with glances of keen inquiry, but he said nothing to him until Mr. Salsby should open the way.

"Yesterday," the landlord said, "I found Harry alone, and he seemed in so much pain and distress, that I have brought this gentleman, Dr. Menchen, to

see him to-day, hoping he can tell us something else to do to make him more comfortable and happy."

"O, you don't think — it 's very kind of you, sir — but you don't think Harry is sick, do you?" cried Bess.

"I hope not," replied Mr. Salsby, soothingly; "but he has suffered more than he would tell from the heat."

"I 'm so sorry!" murmured Bess.

"But I'm better to-day," Harry said, flushing up painfully, as the doctor came to the bedside and took his wrist gently in his professional fingers.

"Do you have much appetite?" asked Dr. Menchen.

"Sometimes," replied Harry, indefinitely.

"He never eats much," said Bess. "And he has not wanted anything at all for three days back; but I made him eat, just to please me; for I knew he would get so weak if he did n't."

Mr. Salsby went to his bundle on the table, and opening it, produced tempting oranges, bananas, and a pineapple.

"Will something of this sort bring an appetite?" he asked, offering one of the fairest oranges.

Harry's face brightened.

"O, yes!" he answered.

Mr. Salsby deftly prepared it, rolling it first in his hands, then cutting out with the point of a knife a small round hole at the top, where Harry's lips were soon busy applying the powers of suction.

The doctor sat by looking on, now and then asking a few more questions. But his presence did not interfere with Harry's pleasure in the orange, nor with Bess's delight in seeing him eat it.

"It is so very good of you, sir, to bring him fruit," said Bess, the tears gathering in her eyes. "We can never thank you enough."

"Don't try," said the landlord, gravely; and, rising, he walked away to the window. He could not forget the story of the poor mother of these children, shivering her feeble life out in this cold garret, while he was away pleasuring among his friends at the West, whom a little care and oversight of his houses would perhaps have saved to them for many years.

"You don't think him sick, do you, Doctor?" Bess asked of the physician.

"I will tell you the truth, little woman," the doctor replied, looking kindly into her face, "and it is not so very bad after all. He seems to me to have the scarlet fever. Has he been exposed to it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. No, — have you, Harry?"

"No, I don't know — unless, — do you suppose Meg had scarlet fever? She was sick, you know."

Bess grew pale, and looked up anxiously in the doctor's face.

"Never mind," said Dr. Menchen, cheerily. "Everybody has scarlet fever once, and then it's over with.

We will try and bring him safely through it, and perhaps afterwards we can find something else to do for him. We will try".

Bess was cheered, and even Harry smiled, though the tears dimmed his eyes, and his lips twitched bitterly.

"I'm always sick and good for nothing!" he said, with choking voice.

"O, Harry!" sobbed Bess.

"I'm sorry," Harry said, repentantly.

It was his one only complaint. He had never spoken of his headache and weariness. And afterward he only lay quite still, enduring, but never murmuring at the suffering that must be borne.

Dr. Menchen gave directions, and wrote a prescription, which Mr. Salsby afterwards had put up, and himself brought to the sick child and administered his first dose. The gentlemen went away, both promising to come again next day. Bess went out to her duty of selling newspapers, with slow step, hating the work, and longing to stay by Harry's bedside. But the work must be done, or the family purse would be quite too low for the family expenses.

Bess had been able to relieve the doctor's anxiety somewhat by telling him that the older children had all been through the scarlet fever many years ago, when Harry, a puny, sickly baby was carefully screened from taking it. But as she went down the avenue she

remembered Nora and Jemmy. What should be done with them? And was it not already too late to do anything? for they must already have had the opportunity of taking the fever. She saw Nora at her post, and going to her, said, —

"There 's been a doctor to see Harry. The landlord brought him. And he says Harry is going to have the scarlet fever."

Nora looked up earnestly in Bess's grave face, and said, —

"Is he much sick? Jemmy and I had it, a while ago, — last summer, I think, — and we were scarcely sick abed at all."

"Then you have had it!" exclaimed Bess, with great relief.

"Yes, we 've had it," replied Nora.

"It was you and Jemmy that made me anxious. All of us have had it. But Harry was very little then, and was kept away from us so he need not take it."

"Is he much sick?" asked Nora again.

"He does not seem so, now. I thought nothing but the heat ailed him. Harry thinks he took it of 'Amity Meg'"

"Jemmy says the Crowley baby is sick. I guess that 's the fever, too," said Nora.

Bess sold papers with heavy, anxious heart that day, and as soon as she saw the crowd thinning and

the best of the day over, she hastened back to the little boy at home.

Harry looked brightly up to greet her; but his face was burning, his eyes drooped quickly into a dull, unseeing languor, and his faint breath was short and quick, between his parched lips. He had not eaten the oranges or bananas Bess left beside his bed within reach. He said he was better, his head did not ache so sharply, and was only dull and heavy; "getting well," he called it. He took one or two sips of the fresh orange Bess offered, but seemed too languid to raise it himself to his lips, and only lay very quiet, with always a reassuring smile when Bess bent tenderly to look into his face, and the cheery answer, "getting better, getting quite well," for every anxious question.

Both Mr. Salsby and the doctor came, next day. They said little; there was little to be said or done.

"The fever must run," Dr. Meuchen told Bess, "and it is already some days along. He has been more ill than you knew. But we will do all we can to make him comfortable, and hope it may be a light run. That is all we can do."

Bess stayed at home after that, and waited on Harry with everything her loving heart could devise for his ease and comfort. Harry thanked her with a smile, but he seldom spoke. It seemed too much exertion. All day long he lay motionless and silent, with sometimes only a

little, very little, faint fluttering sigh. He took the orange juice or pineapple syrup that Bess brought to his lips, and returned the same patient, grateful smile. But the light in his eyes grew more rare, and his smiles more faint.

On the third day the doctor sat long by his side, and when he went away Mr. Salsby went with him. Half an hour later Mr. Salsby looked in once more. Harry lay just as before. Tom had come home, and was sitting on the bed's edge gently fanning the sultry air about the little still face. Mr. Salsby beckoned Bess aside, and asked, hesitatingly, —

"Shall you watch with him?"

"To-night?" she asked, a breathless fear stopping her heart-beats suddenly.

"Have you done so? Shall you to-night?"

"We have not yet. We sleep so near, and I wake very quickly. It would be easy for him to just speak to me, and I should hear and come at once."

"Yes, easy, I know; but he might not do it, — might not know there was any need."

"*Is* there any need?" asked Bess.

"There might be. But we cannot tell."

"And you think he may die?"

"It is possible," said Mortimer Salsby, gently, "and possible not, but you want to be forewarned. You do not want, if it should come, he should be alone to bear the dread without a word of cheer."

"Must I tell him?" whispered Bess, her face bowed in her hands, but every sound stifled lest it reach other ears.

"You know him best. Which would he prefer?"

Bess stood silent and trembling.

"Shall I come in, by and by, later in the evening, and stay with you a part of the night?"

"If you would —" Bess murmured, wiping the tears from her face, and preparing to take her place again by Harry's bed. "Will you please, sir, take Tom down-stairs and tell him?"

"If you wish."

"I can't, for we can't both leave Harry. Tell Ned and Tom both, please."

Down by the silent river, Mortimer Salsby told the boys that their little crippled brother perhaps was dying, — might not live to see another morning; up-stairs, Nora and Jemmy went quietly asleep as usual; Bess sat alone as watcher by Harry's side. The boys came back. Ned lay down to sleep, after a very loving and tender good-night. Only Tom and Bess sat in the long, low garret where one feeble candle, placed upon the floor, cast unnatural shadows rather than gave light. At half-past ten Mr. Salsby softly entered. He bowed silently, glanced at the bed and at the two sad-faced watchers, and asked no question, spoke no word, but sat down by one of the front windows and remained there, motionless as the rest.

An hour later Harry moved. Bess was beside him, and Tom came also.

"What is it?" Harry asked, wonderingly.

"What is what?" returned Tom.

"Something strange," he murmured, "you don't go to bed. The candle 's on the floor. There 's some one over there by the window. Who is it?

"It is the kind landlord, at the window," whispered Bess. "He came in to see how you are. And Tom and I are sitting up."

"For me?" he asked, quickly.

"Why, yes, for a while," Bess answered.

"It is just as you did for mother," Harry said, thoughtfully. "Am I so sick?"

"Not so sick as mother was, we hope," Tom replied, quickly.

"Bess!" — Harry turned his faint eyes full on Bess's face, — "is it, perhaps, dying?"

Bess smoothed the bright rings from off his temples, and could not answer.

"Tell me, Bess," he pleaded.

"Per—haps," she whispered, slowly.

The bright smile that had been for days almost a stranger to Harry's face came suddenly back. He heaved a little sigh and whispered, —

"Don't be sorry, Bess, Tom; don't any of you — for I 'm so glad! Father and mother are waiting for me,

and it will be so much happier than lying here any longer."

Bess kissed his forehead, and the tears fell on his face.

"O, don't!" he begged.

Tom knelt by the bed and laid his cheek on Harry's hand. Long they lingered silently.

At last Harry sighed faintly. He was weary. Tom and Bess shook the pillows, placed him gently on them, and went back to their sad, breathless watching.

Hours passed. Often they looked, to be quite sure that feeble breath still flickered to and fro across the parted lips. The gray of morning was dimming the candle's shadows, when the long watch ended. Mr. Salsby rose and came to the bedside. The fixed half-open eyes saw nothing; the nerveless hands were cold; and no more the life-breath floated through the peaceful, smiling lips.

Just when it was, not one of them could tell; but Harry's soul had passed away to join his waiting parents in that new world, where weariness and life-long trouble cease, and our best life begins afresh.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOUIS LEGRANGE.

THE sitting-room was small, with only two back windows; but it was not only neat and clean, it was also cheery and tasteful, though few ornaments were afforded.

There was little of the habitual worship of comfort so common in American homes. No rocking-chair, no lounge, not even an easy-chair was to be seen. But a few straight-backed, slender-framed seats, with cushions of blue damask, were placed here and there, in convenient carelessness. The carpet, though worn and faded, was of a soft, brown shade that harmonized well with the chairs. Some books were in a little case on the wall. The table was heaped with sewing, beneath which peeped corners of newspapers. It was hard to tell the station of the occupants, by the furnishing of the room. So many things were wanting that are deemed first necessities, and so many things were there that the poor seldom have.

Off the little sitting-room opened a bed-chamber scarcely larger than a closet, but it held a bed and toilet bureau. The wardrobe stood in the sitting-room.

It was afternoon. The early sun had long since left these east windows. One blind was already open a crack to give light to the footprints of a hurrying needle. A lady sat by the window very busy at her work. It was a brilliant stuff, and her needle set fine stitches of gay embroidery, such as only deft and delicate fingers, guided by an artist's eye and judgment, could produce. The lady was neither old nor young To-day, as her head bent more earnestly over the work, and little wrinkles of troubled thought gathered on her smooth, clear brow, she was older than her wont. But her face could brighten quickly into youth, and her trim, alert figure, her cheery, heartsome ways, gave a merry, almost girlish, appearance to a woman already past the halfway stage of life.

There was a rustle from the little bedroom, and out through its half-open door came a pale, slight boy of about thirteen. He moved languidly, and soon sat down near his mother.

"Do you feel like sitting up awhile?" asked Mrs. LeGrange, with a glance of loving welcome.

"I am much stronger to-day," replied Louis, bravely.

"I think you do look better."

"And I want to go down to the office."

"Not to-day."

"Yes, to-day. I am so afraid Cobden & Co. will put another boy in my place."

"Didn't the gentleman say he would keep it for you?"

"O, yes, for a day or two. But now it is three weeks or more, and he cannot keep it much longer. Let me go to-day, mother dear; I'll not be gone long."

"You have not yet eaten anything sufficiently strengthening for such a walk. Wait till to-morrow, and I will have a bit of nice beefsteak for your breakfast, and then perhaps you can find strength for it"

Louis was silent, and acquiesced with a little sigh.

"I don't know what we shall do if I lose my place," he said, some minutes later, resting his elbows on the table's edge.

"But you won't lose it," returned his mother, cheerily. "And now I must tell you what my letter said."

"Your letter; have you had a letter?"

"Yes; there was one this morning from your Uncle Victor. He is coming to America by the next steamer; he may be here almost as soon as his letter."

"O, mother, will he help us?"

"It will be a great blessing to have him near us, for counsel and sympathy at least. If you lose your place, he may know what to advise, in order to get another. But since the failure that was marked in the last French

paper, he must be as poor as we, and can never take you into business like his son, as used to be our hope."

"What else did the letter say?"

"Nothing. It was evidently written just in the hurry and excitement of starting."

Louis went back, and lay down in the little bedroom. He did not yet sit up all day, though the fever had passed away after only a slight attack. He was not a robust boy; perhaps for that reason sickness dealt lightly with him.

Soon he heard his mother's light steps moving briskly about, and before many minutes she called him.

"Do you feel like coming to tea, Louis?"

He came directly, and took the chair beside the little tea-tray, where was set out their delicate though frugal supper.

At that moment there was a knock at the door of the room, and instantly thereupon it was opened, and an unmistakably Irish voice, proceeding from the outside chaos of a dark entry, said:—

"There's a gintleman down-stairs inquiring for Mrs. LeGrange; will he walk up?"

"Did he send his card?"

"An' he did n't, thin; but he said as his name was LeGrange, too, I 'm thinking."

Mrs. LeGrange brushed past Bridget in the entry, and hastened down the stairs. In the hall stood a man

of very foreign appearance, whom she greeted with a gentle, airy cordiality, and at once invited up to the little sitting-room. There Louis was quick to recognize the Uncle Victor whom he had found so kind a friend five years ago, when they passed the last year of his father's life in France.

"But you are changed, you are ill," said the lady, gazing anxiously at the pale, drawn face displayed in the clearer light of her little parlor.

"It was a rough voyage," he replied. "I have suffered much on the way, and am not yet myself, I find." And he leaned a heavy elbow upon the table.

"Go and lie down on Louis's bed while I pour you a cup of tea; that will refresh and revive you. Go, that 's a good brother, and I 'll soon nurse you back to your health."

"I thought I should be all right when once I was on land again," he said, as the white spasm again crossed his face; and, rising, he followed Mrs. LeGrange to the bedroom, and submitted to be treated as an invalid.

Louis brought the tea, and his uncle tasted it; but he could not eat the delicate bit of supper that accompanied it. He was too ill to talk; and the many questions Mrs. LeGrange longed to ask were silenced, and postponed till a better day. But the next day saw him no better, nor many after it.

Louis LeGrange went to see Cobden & Co., in the

faint hope that the place he had vacated abruptly when his sudden sickness prostrated him, might be yet open to him. Mr. Saunders had promised to keep it for him in case of his absence from sickness, but then that was for occasional days; and this absence had been for weeks. He was not so much surprised, as discouraged, on entering the warehouse, to find Tom Canton employed at what had formerly been his work.

Tom was sweeping the outer office when Louis appeared. Mr. Saunders and the firm had not yet come in. The two clerks were opening their desks, and arranging books and papers for the day's work.

"So you are here?" said Louis LeGrange, stopping in the doorway.

"Yes, and you are come back for your place?" returned Tom, dubiously.

The two boys stood for a moment regarding each other. It was rather an awkward meeting. Louis was bitterly disappointed at losing his position, and Tom felt as if he ought to relinquish it to him, yet knew not what else to do himself.

"Wait a minute till I 've done sweeping," Tom said. When it was finished, Tom came and stood by Louis. "Have you been sick?" he asked, noting the pale face and thin hands.

"Yes. I have just come out for the first time. How long have you been here?"

"Three or four weeks. I happened to come in the very first day you were absent."

"And you were engaged at once?" Louis asked, reproachfully.

"I was told to come the next day, — Mr. Cobden engaged me; Mr. Saunders did not seem to like it; I don't think he has ever been pleased to have me here"

Louis looked a little relieved. "Mr. Saunders promised to keep the place for me," he explained, "and so I had hoped he would."

"O, he did try to," exclaimed Tom, in his turn relieved with the idea that Mr. Saunders was actuated by no dislike or aversion for himself. "He said all he could for you, but Mr. Cobden would have me come."

"Well, I'm glad for you," Louis said kindly, though sadly. "It is a good place. Mr. Saunders is a little queer sometimes, but if you do just as he says and ask no questions, he will like you and be kind to you."

"I have never thought he liked me," Tom said, looking inquiringly down into Louis's face.

Louis was not only two or three years younger than Tom, but also a great deal smaller. His delicacy and child-like appearance were only the more noticeable beside Tom's stalwart growth and manly air, as he returned a wondering look to Tom's glance.

"I'm sure I don't know," Louis said. "Has he ever scolded you?"

"No," replied Tom.

"Then you must be mistaken," Louis said, as he rose to go. "There's no use in my waiting."

"Yes," cried Tom. "I'm only on trial. They may want to have you back again."

"You did n't tell me you were on trial."

"I supposed you would know it. Here comes Mr. Saunders already."

Mr. Saunders entered with a hurried, absorbed air, nodded carelessly to the clerks, but bestowed no notice on Tom. Seeing Louis, he suddenly exclaimed, pleasantly:—

"So you are come back! I am glad of that. Been sick all this time?"

"Yes, sir," answered Louis, timidly.

"We've had a boy here while you were gone; but you'll be on hand now, I suppose?"

"After to-day, sir, I think I could," said Louis; "but I am not so strong yet as I used to be."

"O, never mind; we can favor you a little and you'll soon come right."

Tom had never before heard Mr. Saunders speak so cordially, though he was sometimes very deferential and polite to Mr. Cobden. He wondered what made the difference between himself and Louis, and why Mr. Saunders so disliked him and so favored Louis.

"Thank you, sir," Louis said. "Shall I come to-morrow?"

"Yes; come early, and have everything extra neat and tidy, or the old gentleman may not be glad to see you." And with a laugh Mr. Saunders turned to his books.

Louis looked longingly at Tom, and lingered. "Please, sir, will Tom stay too?" he asked, loth to take his own good-fortune at Tom's cost.

"Tom?" said Mr. Saunders. "No; his time will be out when you come back. He only came while you were away."

"What's that? What's that?" cried a testy voice.

Mr. Saunders turned suddenly. Old Mr. Cobden stood in the doorway, heated, panting, and excited, with a very red face and a very purple nose.

"What's that about Tom? I like Tom. He stays here. Who's this? Louis LeGrange? Where have you been all this time? Why don't you stick to business if you undertake it?" And the old gentleman stopped, quite out of breath, and taking off his broad-brimmed summer hat, wiped his streaming forehead with a large, white silk handkerchief.

Louis was evidently very much afraid of old Mr. Cobden. He shrank from the brusque, explosive talk that Tom overlooked and forgot in the real kind-heartedness that lay behind it. He cast down his eyes, and spoke scarcely above a whisper, as he replied, —

"I have been sick, sir."

"Look as if you were now," was the rather unsympathetic rejoinder. "I'm sorry for you, lad, but Tom is here now, and he has done well, worked stiddy and faithful, not off and on as you were, and Tom stays. You must look out for some other place, and take care to fill it better when you get it."

Mr. Cobden passed on into the office parlor. Louis dropped his face in his hands, and the tears would come. He was weak, and had borne his disappointment bravely, but the harsh words, so undeserved, were more than he could endure. The tears grew to sobs, and he sank back in the chair he had quitted when Mr. Cobden addressed him.

Every one was silent. The scratching of the clerks' pens was plainly audible. Tom stood with pitying face turned to Louis. He longed to go and comfort him, and would have done so had he not been seated so near Mr. Saunders. An intense mutual antipathy seemed growing between these two. Mr. Saunders sat like a statue for a few minutes; then taking out his pocket-book, he extracted therefrom a ten-dollar bill, and crumpling it in his hand, returned the book to his pocket.

"Here, Louis, I 'm sorry. Take this to last till you get a new place, and send to me for a character if you like," he said, quietly, as he tucked the bill into Louis's

hand. Then he returned to his work, and did not again look up.

Louis gazed in surprise at the money, and profusely thanked him. Tom thought it was a large amount; Mr. Saunders was certainly a generous, kind-hearted man.

"Good-by, Louis," Tom said, following him out at the door. "I'm glad Mr. Saunders gave you that, and I wish you had your place again, I'm sure, since you suit him so much better than I can. I hope you will soon find another as good. It will be a great help to you to be able to refer to him."

"Yes, and the money is so welcome; for mother is almost at her last dollar, and Uncle Victor is come and is very sick. I don't know what I shall do, if I cannot soon get work."

"Come and tell me, when you do," said Tom.

"If I can. But why not come and see me some time? I shall be so glad to see you, and especially if I don't get work, and am feeling sad and discouraged."

"So I will," Tom answered, heartily.

Louis told him where he lived, and the two boys parted kindly at the door of the building, just as Mr. Waters made his rather tardy appearance for the day.

Louis walked slowly and feebly homeward. He felt too weak to hasten, nor did the news he brought have any tendency to quicken his pace. He remembered

that his sickness had already diminished his mother's slender resources. He had been so longing for the time when he should be able to go to work again! He feared his mother often worked late at night. He thought she looked worn and weary, her step had less of its accustomed spring, her talk less of sparkle and merriment. Mother is getting tired, he thought, as he noted the forced cheerfulness after he had told her his story.

It was long ere he found work.

The pretty embroidery got less and less attention for the next week after the arrival of Louis's uncle. And in the moments when there was opportunity for it, the tiny care-wrinkles came more thickly in the smooth forehead of the little hostess. Where she had looked for aid, for strength, and counsel, she found none; but only a care she hardly dared assume, and an added burden of labor and expense for her already worn frame and almost exhausted purse. The light burned late each night in Mrs. LeGrange's parlor, and the nimble little needle flew fast under its flickering rays. Early as the summer's early sunrise, too, was that busy bit of bright steel at work. Still she tried bravely to keep cheerful. When her own money and the ten dollars from Mr. Saunders was all gone, she knew not what to do. But as her blithe needle flew and her busy thoughts kept time to it, she remembered the sick man's pocket-

book, which fell upon the floor one day as she was about to hang up his coat in the wardrobe.

"Victor," she said, timidly, but cheerily still, "my money is all gone. Have you any?"

From beneath his pillow he drew out the pocket-book, and handed it to her, saying, faintly, "There 's plenty."

It looked plenty certainly, but the bills seemed all small ones. She took ten dollars, and thankfully returned the book.

"When that 's gone, come again," he said, in the same husky, unnatural voice of fever and pain.

But as the weeks rolled by, Victor LeGrange began to mend. Slowly the wasting of disease gave place to return of blooming health. And the small bills were not quite all abstracted from the pocket-book he so freely offered for the family use. So the roses began also to return to the bright face of Mrs. LeGrange. Her guest could sit up, and tell her pleasant tales of his travels, and his hopes for the new life in America.

"Was it the failure that decided you to come here?" she asked, one day.

"What failure?"

Mrs. LeGrange took from her work-basket a tiny scrap she had cut from the paper, that announced the failure of the business in which she well knew all his property had been placed.

"O, no," he answered, carelessly; "but I had luck

there. I had withdrawn in order to come here, only one week before the failure."

"And you lost nothing?" exclaimed the little woman, color coming and going brightly in her cheeks, and tears welling into her eyes.

"I lost nothing," he answered. Then, seeing her silence and emotion, he added, "Did you think I had come here a ruined man?"

"I thought — I did think you were poor, Victor, and I so hated to be using your money; but I could not earn enough myself, and I could not let you suffer while you had plenty to provide for yourself."

"You took little enough, I am sure," replied Victor LeGrange. "Some time we must make a truer settlement."

So it happened that Louis LeGrange needed no more to look for a place. His uncle was already engaged with a large importing house, and Louis, under his direction, was soon employed by the same firm. It was easy work, too, compared with that for Cobden & Co. Victor LeGrange took a quiet house in a pleasanter part of the city, and Mrs. LeGrange made it a very snug and pretty little home. So it was that when Tom Canton went to see Louis he could not find him; and Louis's surprise, delight, and excitement at the new and happy turn affairs had taken for him, were so great, that it was many weeks before he thought to go and see Tom.

CHAPTER XV.

BEING A GIRL.

BESS still sold papers. At first she did not much mind the change of work, rather liked being out-of-doors, seeing so many people, speaking with this and that customer, though it was only a word about the paper. But almost every one asked her some question if only to hear her speak. Sometimes it was "What papers?" sometimes "Which edition?" or "What's new to-night?" and Bess answered always with simple politeness, and a clear voice, whose cheery tones reassured herself and pleased every one. Still, Tom was no more satisfied with her work than at first. He would, any time, have hailed the opportunity for some more quiet employment, but the difficulty was to find any which she could attempt, and still remain with her brothers. For some time the care of Harry kept her at home many hours of the day, Ned supplying her with papers or taking off her hands what remained unsold when she needed to return to

him. But when Harry's sweet face was forever gone from the pillows of the cot-bed in the long, low attic, and nothing necessitated going home from morning to night, the arrangements of the Canton children were changed. They no longer came together for the noon-time. A bun or a doughnut bought and eaten in the street formed their lunch, and sufficed them till night. Although the landlord had kindly befriended them by attending to the last sad duties for little Harry, and even defrayed the chief expenses, yet they found that, notwithstanding the flourishing condition of the newspaper trade, and the large force of their numbers therein employed, the gains were hardly equal to their expectations. Ned still made good receipts each day. Nora and Jemmy brought in about half as much; but poor Bess found her little sum of daily earnings rather diminished than increased as she continued her work. She had hoped for a steady waxing of her profits, but they seemed on a steady wane instead. She did not dare tell Tom. She wondered wherein lay the cause. Even Nora and Jemmy did better than she. To add to her discomfort, she became also aware of a growing dislike — even disgust — for the occupation. Was it that her class of customers was changing, or was it only that she was growing to dislike them? But it seemed to poor, discouraged, heart-sick Bess, that the men who bought of her were very coarse and

repulsive. Or was it only that she hated selling papers because she made no better success at it? She cast about in her mind for something else to do. It was evident she did not earn her own share of the family expenses. Something more and better she must do She longed to ask Tom's advice and aid; but she knew he was not a genius at devising and pointing out new ways, and besides, a sense of shame in confessing that she had begun to believe he was right, and selling papers was very unpleasant work for a girl, deterred her from confiding in him.

Ned, springing in and out of horse-cars and omnibuses, jumping hither and yon, wherever there seemed chance of a customer, alert, active, quick-witted, — Ned the newsboy could sell in a day almost twice as many papers as the other three. Nora was more aided by her tender years, and Jemmy's presence and enterprise than she knew. These two went always in company, and together managed to do a very tolerable day's work But Bess had always to set out alone. Ned was out of the question as a companion; and she knew that to accompany Nora would be only to take trade out of her hands, and would really be no gain to the general good. So Bess wandered away rather aimlessly. She wanted to find some quiet streets like those where Nora sold in the mornings. But Nora had found all but two in that part of the city; and in

those two was posted a child, — a mere bit, scarce six years old, — who was supplied with the news, and attempting to sell. Bess felt herself too large a girl to enter into competition, and relinquished the field. If she sought any of the busy corners, a crowd of boys in the same avocation was sure to be there congregated. True, Ned had pre-empted a claim for her, as for Nora, on one block of the avenue; but no one could live on that alone. Indeed, Bess found herself at great disadvantage with both Ned and Nora. She could not emulate Ned's activity and impudence. Nor yet did her almost full-grown appearance awake the kindly interest that so generally greeted Nora. The very newsboys, who would give way to such a little girl as Nora, were inclined to push their own claims, quite indifferent to Bess and her success. Failures did not stimulate, they discouraged Bess. As day by day she sadly counted up and acknowledged to Ned her petty cash, not only did her face become grieved and troubled, but her heart sank with a terrible self-depreciation and mortification. It was just as Tom had said, "Girls couldn't sell papers."

The little that Bess earned was better than nothing; so she still went out daily. She hated the busy, bustling streets, she hated the glare of the hot sunshine, the restless tread of the endless crowd, the stare of

strange eyes, the sound of strange voices. She started out each morning with a shrinking dread; she lingered all day and offered her news with a hopeless anticipation of refusal, and the little pain-droop in the corners of her mouth deepened as the day wore on; till at last the dusk of evening released her, and she hastened homeward with a sense of relief and a heart lighter for the moment than since she woke at early day-break. Such days could not continue. Whether Bess would have set out with equal vigor to make some change, had her work proved as profitable as she expected, is perhaps doubtful. She might have endured the pain for the sake of the aid she could bring to her brothers. But as things were, there was no possible motive to continue, save only till other employment could be found.

It was a sultry, though cloudy forenoon. Bess stood in her usual place on the avenue; her hat had fallen back upon her shoulders, her papers lay unsold in the folio under her arm, her face was growing to its too common expression of hopeless disappointment and pain. Ned ran to her from some blocks above, and claimed more than half her bundle.

"Give them to me. I can sell them. There's a rush, up at the hotel; people coming by the coachful and the papers go like lightning." And off ran Ned, leaving Bess lighter at heart, as also in the package under her arm.

Then her own papers began to go more readily, as if her brightened face made better sales. Only two or three remained. She counted them with a pleased smile, thinking "when these are gone I'll go home till it is time for afternoon editions." And looking up she found another customer at her side offering the pennies in one hand, while he tried to draw out a paper with the other. Bess glanced up with surprised delight, saying to herself "only two more."

The man noticed her smile; and, flattering himself that it was somewhat of a personal compliment, lingered a moment, saying, —

"You are nearly sold out."

"Yes," Bess replied, checking the words "I am so glad," that were ready to follow.

She did not like the man's face. It was fat and coarse and disagreeable. Sometimes it seemed to Bess that everybody looked just so, there was such a predominance of such faces in the city.

"You do a pretty good business?"

Bess opened her mouth to explain; but remembering that the disposal of her papers to Ned would make too long a story, said nothing.

"Like it?" continued the man, folding up the paper very small to put it in his breast-pocket.

"Not much."

"Sorry!" he returned, with a lazy laugh. "I'll

come round and buy of you to-morrow." And suddenly chucking Bess under the chin, with the added words "little girl" to excuse the familiarity, and another laugh, he turned away.

Bess stood straight and still, and her dark eyes shot some very angry glances, and then slowly filled with tears. She took out her handkerchief to stop them, but used it to rub her insulted little chin instead.

"I will go home," she thought Indeed, she could scarcely keep from crying then and there.

"Papers?" asked a voice; and looking up, Bess saw a round, red face indeed, but, though not lacking flesh, it was a very different one from the other. A rim of white hair was just inside the brim of the broad, low-crowned hat, and a gold-headed cane was sticking out pompously from under his arm.

Bess dashed away her tears, and drew out another paper.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" asked the old gentleman, so kindly that Bess longed to tell him all her troubles.

"O, I wish I could find something to do besides selling papers!" she exclaimed, passionately.

"Do you? Well, to be sure, to be sure," he added, suddenly, remembering that hers might not be either a pleasant or an easy life, especially if, as seemed likely, she had known something better.

Standing a moment, looking at her thoughtfully, he seemed at last to come to a conclusion of his cogitations satisfactory to himself.

"Come with me! I'm going down town. I'll see what can be found for you. I'll see; no harm in trying. You're willing to work, I hope?"

"O, yes," answered Bess, eagerly.

Then the old gentleman called an omnibus, put Bess in, and entered after her. Bess could not tell what made her so light-hearted. She liked the old gentleman, he had such a kind, earnest face, and spoke so cheerily; and she felt quite sure he was going to do something very kind for her, though her wildest imaginations failed to suggest what, further than that it was work of some kind, doubtless pleasanter than selling papers, and probably quite as remunerative. It could not well be less of either.

When the old gentleman got out, Bess followed, and he led her in at the door of a large warehouse, and stopped before the desk of a small, dark, nervous little man.

"Is n't there room for a new hand in the making-up room?" asked the old gentleman.

"I don't know, sir. Sands, the foreman, can tell you."

To Sands, the foreman, the old gentleman went, with Bess in a state of breathless wonder. It was a large

carpet warehouse through which they were passing. Mr. Sands spoke through a tube, and soon a young woman appeared.

"Here is a new hand at making up," said Mr. Sands. "Put her on that small, cheap hall-carpet that is ordered for to-morrow."

The young woman bowed, and turned to lead Bess away.

"She 'll have fifty cents a day for the first week," said the old gentleman, "paid each night. Afterwards, increase as she improves. You are on trial, remember, — on trial. If you do well, you 'll have a good place."

So Bess knew the old gentleman belonged to the establishment, and she would be likely to see him again. She was glad of that. She felt as if he would take care of her, and keep her out of all future trouble.

In the sewing-room she found some twenty young women and girls at work. Two men were measuring and cutting carpets at one end of the room, which was large, low, and very hot. The woman who had led her up many stairs to this room, asked her if she could sew well, to which Bess was very glad to reply in the affirmative. She was then placed on a low chair, beside a small and, Bess thought, very ugly carpet, and instructed how to sew together the parts that formed a most curious figure, and was supposed to represent the floor-area of a hall in a gothic cottage.

Bess came home when the day's work ended, in gayest spirits. She had not been so happy since their mother was with them. As she tripped lightly along, her eyes full of happy light, and the hateful old folio, with its one remaining paper, rolled up under her arm, Tom overtook her. She could not wait, and hastened to tell him her good fortune. Tom was glad with her, though a little puzzled at her delight.

"Fifty cents a day is not such a princely sum," he ventured to remark, when they were at home, and Bess was setting out a supper of the bread and milk they had bought.

"No, but it is as much as I have been earning, and it is to be increased."

"I 'm afraid sewing carpets is hard work."

"Of course it is!" replied Bess, with a cheery laugh, straightening her tired back.

"And not nearly so pleasant as selling papers."

"O, Tom! anything is better than that."

"What made you do it, then?"

"For money, of course."

"But I thought you liked it."

"Why, Tom, how could you?"

"If you did n't like it, what made you insist upon doing it?"

"Because I could find nothing else to do, and we *must* have money."

"We could have got along; I would never have let you, if I had known."

"Then you should have found something better for me to do."

"But if I could n't?"

"I know. That 's why I had to sell papers. It is easy to find fault, but not always so easy to suggest improvements. And you know I *must* do *something*."

"And you really did n't want to do it?"

"Probably I hated it as badly as you could for me, after I came to know what noisy, unpleasant work it was. I certainly did n't need your telling me I 'was a girl' to make me gladly choose something more fit for a girl, if I could have found any such."

"Bess, I 'll never tell you you are a girl again, as long as I live!" said Tom, putting his arms round her neck with a sudden hug, and a suspicious mistiness in his eyes.

"You need n't," Bess answered, gravely, "for I 've found it out for myself," with a mortifying recollection of her disagreeable morning customer, whom she had omitted to mention.

Then thrusting the water-pitcher into Tom's hands, she cried, —

"There, run for some water! I hear Ned and the children coming up-stairs."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. SAUNDERS'S OPERATIONS.

TOM and Bess walked down together to their work next day. Their ways seemed to coincide remarkably. When Tom stopped at the door of Cobden & Co.'s warehouse, Bess exclaimed, —

"Now, I've only to run round to that narrow alley, and go in at a back door."

Tom looked astonished. "Show me," he said, moving on in the direction indicated. They turned the corner, and stopped at a side door that was used by all the carpet girls last night, and that Bess knew was to be open at seven for their return in the morning.

"Why, Bess, you are at work for Cobden & Co., too. It must have been Mr. Cobden who brought you here."

Bess laughed out merrily, and Tom's face shone with delight at the discovery.

"Is n't it nice?" she said.

"The very jolliest thing in the world; we 'll lunch together," was Tom's practical reply.

Tom went back to the front door, which he opened with his key, and was soon very busy about his usual work. It seemed as if the very knowledge that Bess was in the building made the day shorter and work easier to him. At noon he took the lunch he had provided for himself, and went up into the "making-up room" to eat it with her. It was very pleasant for both of them. Bess told him at night that she thought the foreman was more kindly to her, and the woman who acted as overseer and director did not hurry her so much, after she knew she was Tom's sister. And Tom was sure that old Mr. Cobden was quite delighted on learning that he was a brother of the girl he had sent to work in the "making-up room" yesterday. The brother and sister seemed so happy in the slight companionship their work allowed, that every one grew to like them, as if reflecting the affection they felt for each other. Even Mr. Saunders was slowly receiving Tom into his favor, and treated him with far more kindliness than formerly.

But Mr. Saunders was often anxious and abstracted now. His first successful venture brought the effort for another, and care and trouble accompanied.

"When will the next shipment arrive?" asked Mr. Waters one day, suddenly, of Mr. Saunders.

The junior partner started. "Not just at present," he answered, with embarrassment. "It is due, I know, but accidents may delay it."

"You know all about it, I'll warrant," put in old Mr. Cobden. "Shrewd man, you are, Saunders. Let us hope there will be no accidents. It would be remarkably convenient if it were here now. One of our old customers is on from California, and we might sell him a fine bill of goods if those new styles were only in. But he won't return under a day or two longer, and they may come."

Mr. Saunders pricked his ears with a peculiarly keen attention at this piece of news. But he said nothing, till Mr. Cobden was about leaving in the afternoon.

"I may not be in as early as usual to-morrow morning. I thought I'd speak of it that you need not be wondering."

"O, very well, very well; very good of you to mention it."

"Next morning Mr. Saunders was very late. After what he had said, no one would have been surprised, were it not for what happened before he came. It was about eleven; Mr. Cobden and Mr. Waters were seated at their desks. The office parlor was quiet as a country meadow, which was nothing unusual, when no callers were present. A knock at the door was quickly followed by the entrance of a thin, shabbily-dressed man, who proceeded at once to the desk of the elder gentleman.

"Mr. Cobden, I presume?" he said.

Mr. Cobden nodded.

"Member of the firm?" was the next question, with a backward wave towards Mr. Waters.

The old gentleman nodded again, and began to assume an expression of inquiry.

"Then I will proceed at once to business. You are aware that smuggling is considered contrary to law in almost any country. So I am here to tell you that, confiscation being the penalty on such goods, your last cargo of carpets that was landed last night from the steamer "Tom Thumb," out on the Connecticut coast, will not reach you. The whole amount was secured after it was loaded into wagons for transportation to you."

"It is an outrageous lie!" thundered Mr. Cobden. "There has never been a stroke or a thought of smuggling in this firm!"

"Were n't you expecting a cargo at this time?"

"Not a smuggled cargo!"

The custom-house officer looked puzzled and discomfited. He produced from his breast-pocket a wide, flat leather case of papers, and, taking out the first one, handed it to Mr. Cobden.

"Will you take oath that that is not the bill of lading of your cargo?"

"I'll take oath that anything is not that is smuggled," he replied, without looking at the offered paper.

Mr. Waters rose, and came behind the officer's chair.

"Had n't you better look at the paper?" he suggested to his uncle.

"No! I won't look at anything that 's brought here to prove against me a thing I never did — never thought of doing. It 's all an outrageous lie!"

But over the stranger's shoulder Mr. Waters caught a glimpse of familiar items, which he himself had stipulated should be in Mr. Saunders's next order for shipment.

"Let us hear your story," said Mr. Waters, more civilly. "My uncle is justly indignant, for certainly unlawful trade is not the intention of this firm; but whether his indignation is rightly directed upon you remians to be proved."

Mr. Cobden fidgeted in his chair, and turned his back half round upon the two, at this conciliatory speech. But he listened and did not interpose.

"I have told my story once already," said the stranger, rather testily. "The little steamer 'Tom Thumb' last night landed a small cargo in a lonely spot on the Connecticut shore. The goods were brought in boats, and put aboard wagons which were directed to unload at store-rooms, No. 14 South L—— Street. The same man who superintended the landing, returned to the city by rail, and is to be on hand to see to the storing here. Having these items sent on by telegraph, it was easy to ascertain that the designated rooms belong

to the firm of Cobden & Co. We have waited only for the arrival of our detective with this bill of goods. The teams are on the road, but will reach a different destination from your elegant warehouse. Sorry, gentlemen," he said, smiling serenely, "but it is our unpleasant duty to interfere with all these little operations in contraband goods."

Mr. Cobden, irritated past endurance by this last tantalizing speech, rose hastily, and with angry glare at the suave gentleman, began pacing furiously up and down the room, stamping his stout cane heavily at every step. Mr Waters remained cool and immovable.

"It may be, as you say, that a cargo of goods for the firm was unlawfully landed last night, but *we* were quite ignorant of the transaction, and should not have suffered it had we known it."

"Of course," replied the gentlemanly official, quickly. "I was sure of that. Firms never do sanction such transactions. I never knew one in all my experience—which has been quite large — I never knew *one* that was not utterly ignorant of all such transactions, and bitterly opposed to them from the first. O, I knew *you* would not uphold the act, but yet as it happens, singularly enough, that you are so intimately associated in the operation that you will be sure to be the parties who lose by it, I came in to tell you what had become of your goods."

Even this did not move Mr. Waters. Mr. Cobden stayed his angry footseps behind the stranger's chair and half lifted his cane; but he softly put it down again and walked as before. Mr. Waters continued, —

"We have intrusted some of our buying to our confidential head clerk. It seems we have been more confidential than he has, for he has never fully explained to us how it was that he could procure goods at remarkably low rates."

"Then this has been going on for some time?" suddenly flashed forth the sharp official.

Mr. Waters' black eyes sparkled, and he remained silent, an ominous token with him.

Mr. Cobden planted himself squarely before the stranger.

"Now, sir, I presume your business is about finished here."

"Very nearly, sir. I would like a reply as to how many such cargoes you have received."

"We don't know; and, if we did, you can't compel any man to testify against himself. We wish you good-day, sir."

The gentleman rose, feeling that exit was growing momentarily more desirable, if not necessary, and, with a bow, retired.

Mr. Cobden threw himself into his chair, and breathed hard. Mr. Waters withdrew to his own place, and

both sat silent for more than an hour. At last Mr. Cobden raised his head suddenly.

"Will Saunders come back?" he asked.

"Why not?" returned Mr. Waters.

And again silence reigned for an hour, at which time Mr. Saunders himself entered. It had been the bitterest day of all his life. There was nothing he valued more than the honorable position he had held for a year past in the firm of Cobden & Co.

It was in a weak moment that the opportunity of smuggling in some goods had been presented to him, and, dazzled with the wealth it promised, and perhaps also a little with the danger, he had undertaken to carry out the suggestion and cheat the government, though he was far too honest to have done the same with an individual. "Our country," beyond the mere land of it, sometimes comes to represent something mythical; and our government a fabrication that should ever protect and aid its citizens, claiming nothing of them in return.

Mr. Saunders believed that though the goods were lost, there was no possibility of an exposure of the firm to the opprobrium of the transaction. The bales bore no name. He was glad of this, and ready to take the whole blame of the matter, but to bear the whole loss was a harder thing to do. Coming in, he sat down before Mr. Cobden, and told his story. Doing so, the

full meanness of the operation seemed to appear to him, for the first time, as he was obliged to see it through the eyes of other men. Sometimes such a view makes a bitter difference in the appearance of one's own conduct. The anger had already died in old Mr. Cobden's heart; it had bubbled over and spent itself, and now he felt only pity for the young man, who, in a time of temptation, had failed. Not so Mr. Waters. His indignation had been bottled in silence, and was as incorrigible as in its first nascent strength. It was a startling surprise to Mr. Saunders, when he had finished his recital and expressed his contrition, to be answered by the stinging tones of Mr. Waters, —

"We have heard these business items once this morning, from the custom-house officer. We did not know your personal sentiments. It is gratifying that you do not intend to continue in these smuggling operations, though it probably would not in future so much affect *us*, as heretofore."

"There, there! Dick," cried old Mr. Cobden, "don't go on in that way. There 's the very devil in you when you are mad."

"But he said the 'custom-house officer'!" stammered Mr. Saunders.

"Yes, he has been here to notify us of the facts," returned Mr. Cobden, with mild regret and true kindness.

"Then I will at least set you right there," said Mr. Saunders, and he hastily left the parlor. It was a relief to him to escape for a while from the crushing influence of Mr. Waters' presence, and he wanted to think how he could further repair the wrong he had done his employers. But it is not an easy matter to right a wrong that falls only on character. When once the idea had gained ground in the minds of custom-house officers that Cobden & Co. had been engaged in smuggling, it was next to impossible to eradicate it. After long argument and free confession that he himself had alone been concerned in the shameful matter which the firm had never known or suspected, he was still obliged to return feeling that he had not yet succeeded in restoring his employers to the honorable consideration they had always held. He felt that the consequences of his greedy effort for gain were far more wide and lasting than he had ever dreamed they could be; and, worse yet, they fell not where they honestly belonged, on himself, but on those who had been his kindest friends

When he again entered the office-parlor, Mr. Waters had been called away. This was a great relief. He could talk far more easily with Mr. Cobden alone, for he knew the old gentleman felt kindly towards him spite of his evil-doing. No one could be more severe and fretful for small delinquencies than old Mr. Cobden;

but he carried, under all his sharpness, a charitable heart, and in a real emergency was unexpectedly generous.

"I am at your service, sir," Mr. Saunders said, standing before him, hat in hand, with even more penitence than he had felt before. "I have been to the custom-house and set you right there, as far as telling the truth could do so. If you would like to go over the books with me I will run over them, and leave them so they can be readily understood by whoever takes them."

Mr. Cobden put on his gold-bowed glasses, and stared hard into Mr. Saunders's face.

"What now?" he asked, slowly. "Are n't your books right?"

"I believe so," was the modest reply.

"I believe so, too," returned the old gentleman. "I believe, too, that you mean to keep them so. Don't disappoint me; that's all."

Mr. Saunders stood irresolute. Then he answered slowly, "I do mean to keep them so. Sometime before I die, I hope to pay back all the loss I have caused you, but it will take years to do that; and of course you do not want to retain me in your employ. It would be too much like countenancing what I have done."

"Nonsense!" cried the old man, eagerly. "You will stay in your old place, do your old work, and be

the best man we have in the building yet. Don't let me hear a word about leaving. You know we could n't supply your place under three years' instruction of some other man. Let this matter be a lesson to you, and then we shall want no better man than you. There, go!" And he turned about in his chair, presenting only his broad, round shoulders.

But Mr. Saunders lingered. Such generosity was more utterly crushing than Mr. Waters' anger, or any amount of upbraiding. Anger, reproaches, he had merited; but to be reminded of his value to the firm, and retained in his old place just as before, was a new kind of punishment. His hands trembled, and could hardly retain their hold of the summer straw hat. Under his yellow beard his lips twitched and quivered, and great tears came slowly creeping into his astonished eyes.

"You are too kind," he murmured, "and Mr. Waters — may not — "

"Mr. Waters always agrees with what I judge best," returned Mr. Cobden, with sudden loftiness. "It is all right; now go."

Mr. Saunders seized the little round red hand of the old gentleman, and gave it one hearty wring that told more than many words, saying, —

"You shall never repent it, neither you nor Mr. Waters."

Then he went into the outer office, and took his place at his desk. Before that day was ended, Tom Canton felt the change in Mr. Saunders's voice and manner. All the old arbitrary ways left him. He was busy as ever, but more kindly. He set about saving up from his generous salary the requisite sum to repay to the firm the loss he had occasioned it. Ten years afterwards the payment was made, but old Mr. Cobden was not then living to receive it; and in all those years the firm did not find in its employment a more faithful, devoted, and withal kindly man, than Mr. Saunders.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RECOGNITION.

"HOW nice Jemmy looks in his new suit," Nora said to Bess, as they were preparing for their early morning exodus.

"Yes," said Bess, "he looks as nice as when he first came here."

"That was so long ago," Jemmy remarked, with his chin at an unnatural elevation, giving his voice a choking sound, for Nora was buttoning his jacket at the neck.

"How long is it?" asked Nora.

"Six weeks," said Tom.

"And don't we earn enough?" asked Nora.

"O, yes," said Bess, cheerily.

"We manage to get along, with the new work Bess and I have now, and Mr. Salsby's letting us put off paying the rent till next month," said Tom, more anxiously. "But it is going to be hard work to have the two months' rent ready, when next month comes."

"We shall manage it," Bess said, hopefully; and Tom half smiled at her certainty about it. "I must get Biddy Crowley to wash your dress next, Nora," Bess continued; "Jemmy's looks so nice."

"Yes, do," said Jemmy.

Tom looked grave, but said nothing; washing seemed to him so expensive.

"I wish you had a clean dress, too," Jemmy said, as they walked along to meet Ned. "Then mamma would know you; but you never looked like that when *she* took care of us."

"I should know her," said Nora. But the thought grieved her notwithstanding. She felt ashamed of her soiled and tumbled little dress, and remembered, with a sad heaviness of heart, how fresh and nice it had been when she first put it on, to go to New York, the morning that she left Campfields. It seemed a year ago, instead of six weeks. Was her mother never coming to find them? And thinking such things, little Nora grew so sad she could have cried. But she drove away the sad thoughts, saying, —

"Come, Jemmy, let's run a little way."

The run soon ended. It was too warm. Besides, Nora put her hand to her head, and noticed, for the first time, that there was a heavy pain in her temples. "It will go away, by and by," she thought, and went about her usual work. The day grew hotter and more sultry.

People did not seem to want the papers. It was hot enough for noon, long before noon came. The two children were glad to creep into a shady spot, and sit down for their luncheon. Nora smoothed down her dress with an air of disgust, and sighed.

"You must have it done to-night," announced Jemmy, gravely; for Biddy Crowley washed and ironed the children's clothes at night, as they had but one suit apiece. "It is ever so long since it was washed."

"It was clean for Harry's funeral," Nora said, softly.

"Yes, so was mine." And then the sad reminiscence left them in silence.

As the noon wore on, the sun's rays grew fainter and disappeared. Soft breezes of cooler air now and then stole through the city streets. People began to look anxiously upward as they hurried along. The cars and omnibuses were crowded. The first, fresh breaths of cooler air became cold gusts, and swept up the fine dust of the streets into thick clouds. Men held on their hats and buttoned their linen coats; women clasped closer their flying draperies, and bent their heads to meet the blast. Nora and Jemmy crept away to a sheltered doorway, and waited very still and quiet. From their covert they watched the more care-laden ones who had nice clothes to save, or a long way to go. But the two children had no troubles. They were safe from the

drench of the shower, and they enjoyed the fresh breath of the clouds and the funny sights of the street.

By and by the rain came; first, a few astonished drops, plump on the dry, hot sidewalk; then a gust brought a flock of them; then a lull, and another patter of great drops. Two or three times this farce was enacted, and then down came the shower, pelting and dashing, splashing against the pavements, and washing down the spouts and gutters. O, it was a delicious rain! It was hard to keep Jemmy out of it; it smelt so fresh and felt so good, he longed to stand outside and let it rain on him. Even he was a martyr to good clothes. Nora could not let him spoil the clean suit Biddy had just washed for him. The washing had cost too much.

At last the shower was over; the sun came smiling out upon the drenched city, that seemed to smile merrily back from its glistening stones, rippling streams, and shining roofs. The air was fresh and cool. People came tripping daintily out of their temporary shelters; and Nora and Jemmy went back to their work of selling papers. Ned had brought the evening editions just before the storm came. But now nobody wanted them. It grew very discouraging.

"Let's go somewhere else," said Jemmy.

"I'm sure I don't know where," Nora replied, with a weary little sigh.

"Down to the station where the cars come in, is a good place," Jemmy suggested.

"Well," slowly acquiesced Nora.

It was very busy at the station. The rain made no difference there. Trains came and went all the same, and plenty of people came and went in them. Nora found many customers for the evening papers. Jemmy, too, was very useful in making sales. He scampered all about the dim, cavernous place, across the tracks and through the outward bound trains, to Nora's constant anxiety. Out on the surrounding porch stood groups of reunited friends, or parties looking for carriages Innumerable coaches were drawn up there. Private equipages of all degrees of grandeur, and the various styles of city vehicles for conveying passengers. In among them Jemmy dodged, or up and down amid the waiting people on the platform. It was just what he liked, and he was having his fill. He was very successful. Every one seemed willing to buy of the clean, bright, little fellow. A gentleman at a carriage window beckoned. Jemmy brought him a paper, and, turning to go back by a different route, he leaped across a dirty puddle, arms extended, papers in one hand and pennies in the other. But as he sprang, a treacherous stone gave way, his foot slipped, and down came Jemmy full length in the mud.

Jemmy was past his old habit of screaming. It had disappeared since he had been received as partner in

the paper-trade with Nora. Perhaps he recognized the incompatibility of the demonstration with the dignity of his position; perhaps the dignified position prevented the desire to express his feelings in that way, or abolished the feelings. However it had come about, certain it is that Jemmy no longer lifted up his voice in bitter wailing on every adequate occasion. One shout, as a sort of signal to Nora, and Jemmy began picking himself out of the mud like a brave little fellow. Nora flew to his side, but could only gaze in blank dismay at the sheeted blackness of the little clean linen suit. It was too bad!

"We must go straight home, Jemmy!" she said, sadly and gravely.

The gentleman in the carriage looked back, pityingly. The carriage stopped again, unable to get out of the press of other travel. Nora looked up at it, and stood as if suddenly chilled to a statue. For there were two faces at the windows, and the other was that of a very fair, sweet lady, with blue eyes full of kindness, and a wealth of golden curls turned over a comb, peeping from under the lace of her bonnet and veil.

Nora left Jemmy, and walked up to the carriage side as if a magnet drew her there.

"Please — do you know Miss Eva Roberts?" she asked, for the lady's face seemed almost exactly like the one she could just remember as that of the Miss

Eva who had come to see her mother in Campfields so long ago.

"There is n't any such person now," answered the gentleman, quickly.

And Nora looked at him in surprise. But there was a roguish twinkle in his eyes that seemed to be very much amused at something.

"What is it you want?" asked the lady, kindly. "I am Eva Roberts."

"O!" cried Nora, looking up in delight. But somehow sobs would come, and burying her face in her hands, she felt laughter and tears struggle for mastery of her face.

"Open the door, Frank, and let me talk with her," said the lady.

And soon Nora was sitting inside the coach, drying her tears, and hushing her joyful sobs to be able to speak; while Jemmy stood by the door scraping off the mud, to be fit to get into the carriage also. As he had fallen on his face, he thought he might sit on the cushions without injuring them.

"Now tell me what you wanted to see Eva Roberts for," the lady asked, when the driver had been ordered to wait.

"Because we 've lost our mother; it 's ever so many weeks now. We can't find her, and we thought perhaps you could. She was wanting to see you."

"But who is your mother? What is your name?"

"Nora Craig, and that's Jemmy."

"Nora Craig!" cried the fair lady in delight; and before the astonished Nora could wink, Mrs. True had taken her little brown chin in her gloved hand and kissed her.

That brought the tears again.

"And you remember us? and you'll help us find mother?" Nora said, brokenly, fighting bravely to keep from crying, and let the smiles come without any quivers at her lips

"Certainly I will."

"Isn't it an omen of good luck, or something of that sort, to be met in this way by children, on the way to a new home?" asked the smiling gentleman, with more seriousness in his pleasant eyes.

"I don't know; perhaps so," replied the young wife, with a happy look on her face, as she reached a hand to help Jemmy in, and told him to sit beside Mr. True. "It seems so to me; I am so glad to see them! You must tell me all about it, where you live, and how you lost your mother, so we can find her."

"We live in Amity Court," said Jemmy.

"Then we had better drive there first, and leave this young man a-soak," laughed Frank True.

"O, dear! what ever shall I do with him? Don't touch against the gentleman, Jemmy, or against the side

of the carriage," said Nora, with a care-worn air that quite touched the motherly heart of our old friend Eva Roberts.

As they rode, Nora explained how Jemmy's suit had been washed and ironed last night, and she was hoping to have hers clean to-morrow, — she had saved money for it, — but now Jemmy's must be washed again. And Eva True told Nora she had just come from Chicago with her husband, and was to live in New York. She had been travelling a long time and could not stop to-day to hear all her story, but she would come to-morrow, at noon, after she had been home, and was rested, and able to help them find their mother. She kissed both the children at parting, and Frank True gave Nora a dollar-bill, saying, —

"That will make both your little suits clean before to-morrow, won't it?"

"O, yes!" cried Nora, joyfully.

Then they stood on the steps and watched the carriage drive away, and caught a last look at the sweet face of their new friend, as it turned the corner. When even the two trunks on the rack behind had disappeared, and the rumble of the wheels was lost amid that of myriad others, Nora and Jemmy turned and went upstairs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RESTORATION.

THERE were twelve little narrow cot-beds in one room. The frames were all of iron, and painted green. The coverlets were all white, and tucked snugly in at the sides. In some of the beds lay pale and weary women, who seemed to enjoy the peace and quiet of the place. On others, patients tired, though dressed, were lying on the outside, being not yet able to sit up all day. Other cots were smooth and neat as when first spread up for the day. By one of these sat a pale, thin woman with an anxious face. On the floor before and around her lay many things that she was busily putting into a valise. One or two garments were evidently her own; but then there were little night-gowns and a clean light suit for a little boy. But no children were to be seen at the hospital. Where were the owners of those little garments she folded so tenderly away in the great valise? Alas! that was the question that had haunted the half-crazed mind of the longing mother

these many weeks. No sooner had the surgeon replaced the bones of her injured head, and consciousness returned, than Hannah Craig's first painful breath framed the question, —

"Where are my children?"

No one knew. Not one of those who nursed her tenderly all these weeks, could find the slightest clew of the little ones that the poor woman pined for, in a helpless agony, every day. There was nothing but to get well, and then go herself to seek for them. So Hannah set about getting well. She was a sturdy, healthy woman, and the bones in her broken limbs soon knit firmly together; but the wounded head was a more serious affair. Her anxiety did not help the matter, and it was a long, slow piece of work for both doctor and patient, before the fractured skull and tender brain beneath were so healed that the kind physician pronounced it safe for her to leave the hospital.

But the time had come at last; and the few possessions that had been brought with her to the hospital, Hannah eagerly put into the valise once more, and prepared, with an anxious sort of joy, to go forth on the search she so longed to begin, yet dreaded, lest it fail. She was still weak. The carriage that before she could not afford, must be afforded now. She drove to Jane Cook's, where she left her valise and told her story, to the great wonder and kind sympathy

of her old friend. Then she went out on foot. First the police-station was visited, but no such lost children had been found and reported there. Then she went to the street where the accident had occurred. She walked back and forth in an aimless way, and made some inquiries at one or two poor little stores near the spot where she had lost them. But no one knew. How should any one remember for two whole months, if he had known at the time? The unusual exertion wearied Hannah out of all proportion to the distance she walked. The discouragement wearied her yet more. She must return to Jane's for this day, and try again to-morrow. But how to try? She did not know what more she could do; and it seemed very hopeless walking up and down these great busy city streets, with their hurrying, indifferent throngs, that seemed to have swept away and swallowed up forever her children.

As she thought thus, walking feebly down the wide sidewalk of the avenue, Hannah felt a dizzying faintness come over her. She had eaten nothing since her breakfast at the hospital and it was now far past noon. She sat down in a doorstep till the faintness should pass away. People stared at her as they passed. She was too well-dressed and lady-like in appearance to be sitting there. One woman asked if she was sick.

"No; only a little weak and faint. It will be gone

in a moment," said Hannah. And with a glance of kindly sympathy the woman moved reluctantly on.

The policeman kept an eye on her, as he paced back and forth. The newsboys on the curbstone noticed her, and a man in the store brought her a glass of water. The water refreshed her, and she said, thankfully, —

"I shall be all right in a moment with that," as she returned the glass.

Ned watched her from the farther side of the walk. He was sorry for her; and then, too, the face troubled him, for it seemed as if he had somewhere seen it before.

"See the paper, marm, while you rest?" he said, thrusting a copy into her hand, more from a desire to do something kindly for her, than because she was likely to want it.

Hannah took it mechanically, with a faint "Thank you." She held it, but did not try to read it. The dizziness came back for a moment, and she rested her head on her hand. As the blur passed away from her eyes, and she found herself staring fixedly at the tightly-clenched paper, a name seemed to form itself before her bewildered sight. She rubbed her eyes, and feared she was again becoming delirious. Yet there it was, her own name, printed in the paper. What could it mean? Slowly the surprise brought back her scattered senses, and she read the notice: —

HANNAH CRAIG

can learn something of her children by calling at No. 25 F—— Street.

How the paper danced again before her eyes! But it was joy, and not despair, now, and her strength seemed returning.

She fumbled nervously in her pocket for pennies to pay the newsboy; but Ned only answered, heartily, —

"Keep it, marm; that's what I gave it to you for. I only wished it was something that would do you good."

"It has done me good, then, young man; for it has told me just what I wanted to know. And I thank you a hundred times for putting it into my hand! I should never have thought of buying a paper."

"Is there anything else I can do for you, marm?" said Ned, feeling an interest in the strange, yet familiar face, that he could not himself explain or understand.

"I shall have to go in a carriage," said Hannah, "for I find I can't walk." And she took hold of the lamp-post to steady herself, as the dreadful faintness seemed returning. "Will you be so kind as to fetch one for me?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Ned, who would like no fun better than such an errand. "Come into this store and sit down, and I'll have a carriage here in five minutes."

Eva Roberts, who was now Mrs. Frank True, did

not forget her promise to the children, and the next day at the appointed hour she was toiling up the long flights of stairs to the home of the Canton children. Nora and Jemmy were awaiting her, and eagerly told their little story. The lady's face grew grave as she listened, but she would not tell them of the fear she felt lest their mother should never again be found and restored to them.

"But, come, I must take you home with me now," she said. "We will talk the matter all over, and see what can be done."

"O, I knew you 'd help us, and make everything come out right, if only we could find you!" Nora cried, joyfully. "But we did n't know where to find you; and mother said you were away in Chicago to live, and might not come back for a long time. But I always remembered you."

"Did you?" said Eva, smiling. "I have been living in Chicago for two years past; but now I have come back to New York to stay. Come, get your hats, and we will go."

"Hullo!" was Jemmy's sudden and joyful exclamation. He had been very quiet during Mrs. True's visit; for he did not at all remember her, and he was trying to decide how he should like her. But now an old friend appeared, and he dropped the difficult problem to run forward and welcome him.

The others turned, and saw the landlord standing in the doorway.

Mrs. True rose and held out her hand to him, with a merry little laugh.

"Well, this is very odd!" she said.

"So I think," he replied, drawing a chair and sitting down, with one of Jemmy's plump little hands clasped in his. "When did you arrive?"

"Only yesterday. These children met me the very first thing. They are the children of my old nurse, Hannah Craig."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Salsby, looking at the children with new interest.

"I am going to take them home with me, and see what can be done for them. They seem to be drifting about in a very helpless condition."

"She is going to find our mother," said Nora, confidently.

"I am going to try," replied Mrs. True.

"But, if you please," said Nora, "I don't like to go off without telling Ned. He will be wondering, and think something has happened to us."

"Write on a card, and leave it here," suggested Mr. Salsby; and as Mrs. True had none with her, he produced one, and wrote the needed information, placing it conspicuously in the middle of the table, where Bess could not fail to see it.

"But tell me how I came to find you here?" asked Mrs. True, as she and Mr. Salsby rose to go.

"He 's the landlord; did n't you know?" Jemmy volunteered.

"I found this family of children — the Cantons — here in one of my houses, where they had suffered through a long, cold winter, and lost their mother, perhaps in consequence of the ill-kept and unrepaired condition of the building; and I felt I owed them a debt that I have not yet been, shall never be able to pay. I have concluded to make this room tight and comfortable, put into it sufficient suitable and convenient furniture, and look after them carefully myself that they come to no want this winter. In that way they can keep together, and have a home of their own for a while longer. Then before another year is past, they must be better provided for in some way. I can't tell yet how to do it. Tom will do very well where he is; but Bess and Ned must be put to school. I feel as if the mother who died in this cold, cheerless attic of mine, last winter, had left to me the duty of providing for her children. One — the little invalid and cripple — has died this summer. He has gone to better care than earth could afford him. But the rest — are mine." Tears stood in the kind, brown eyes of the young landlord, as he told the conviction that had come upon him, on

the night when he watched by little Harry. He held Jemmy's hand closer; and Jemmy, no way resenting the tightened clasp, as used to be his wont, half unconsciously with his round, brown fingers smoothed softly the slender, long, white hand of the fine gentleman.

Tears were in Mrs. True's eyes, too. She wanted to speak to him, — to say how she appreciated and sympathized in his resolve. But the words did not come, so she only looked up with a grave and gentle smile, as she tied on Nora's hat.

"And these two seem to be mine," she said, as she took Nora's hand.

"Until we find mother," answered Nora.

At the outer door Mr. Salsby bade them good-morning, and Mrs. True with the two children walked rapidly away to F—— Street, where in a pleasant house was her new home.

The children's story was again rehearsed when Mr. True came home to dinner, and he promised to institute inquiries at the police-stations concerning what became of the woman who was run over in Kirk Street nearly two months ago, and also to put a notice in the papers. Still, to both the prospect looked very discouraging that they should ever hear more than that Hannah was dead and long since buried in the stranger's lot in some distant church-yard.

Nora and Jemmy remained with Mrs. True, and the

more willingly as little Nora was greatly worn down with the hard work and anxiety she had undergone for so long. Now that she felt it lifted from her, she sank into a sort of listless languor from which it was difficult to arouse her. She lay quietly on the sofa. She complained of no pain or sickness, but her eyes were constantly closed in a light doze, and she cared little to look up, speak, or even to rise and eat at the regular meal-times. Mrs. True felt anxious about her all day long. Jemmy, however, was wide awake and full of delight at his new position. He declared the house was almost as grand as that of Bella Waters, and revelled exceedingly in the dignity of living in one so nearly like hers.

It was late in the afternoon of the second day that a carriage stopped before the door, and the tidy little servant-girl announced a lady down-stairs.

"What name?" asked Mrs. True.

"She only sent up the newspaper for you to read that," replied the girl, presenting the paper and pointing out the advertisement for Hannah Craig.

Mrs. True turned white with surprise and pleasure. She stopped a moment irresolute. But she would run no risk of disappointing the children, so she went down alone to see what the news might be.

In the parlor she started with shocked wonder at the thin, worn, almost haggard face of Hannah Craig.

No less astonished was Hannah to see, in place of the strange grand lady she expected, her own Eva Roberts.

"Miss Eva!" she cried, and then she laughed and sobbed together. This first glad surprise prepared her for more good news.

"Hannah, you poör, poor Hannah! What has happened to you?" murmured Mrs. True, taking her weeping old nurse in her arms, and putting her tenderly back in a chair, while she gently loosened the strings, and removed her bonnet.

"First, please, where are the children?" asked Hannah, brokenly, as she wiped her face, and tried to calm her shaken nerves.

"Up-stairs, all well and safe. I'll call them."

"Yes, do!"

In a moment more, Nora had sprung into her mother's arms, and Jemmy was rolling on the floor at her feet in an ecstasy of rejoicing that found appropriate vent in shouts of laughter. Jemmy laughed, but little Nora could only weep, while the joyful mother, weak with her long sickness, her weary day's search and disappointments, and her fasting, wept and laughed together in an incoherent manner. Mrs. True observed it, and guessed the weakness that produced it. Gently she drew the children up and soothed them, finding time meanwhile to ring, and order a cup of tea and lunch for her guest, as she insisted Hannah should be. The

carriage was dismissed, a messenger sent for the valise from Jane Cook's house, with a little note of explanation from Mrs. True; and, after the lunch, Hannah was persuaded to lie down and rest, with the children still beside her. She could not bear to have them out of her sight. Her eager eyes feasted on their bright happy faces, but Mrs. True insisted on deferring the story of their adventures till to-morrow. All the languor and listlessness seemed to go out of Nora with her mother's return.

"I knew you would come. I knew we should find you," she said, over and over, returning her mother's eager, happy gaze with one almost the same.

Hannah Craig was really better than she seemed. The day's exertion and trial had been too much for her; but its happy ending, with the added rest and quiet Mrs. True gladly afforded her, soon restored her strength. Taking her children with her, she spent a day or two with Jane Cook. But before she started on the business of seeking opportunities for laundry-work, Mrs. True learned all her plan and gladly volunteered to see what she could do for her. It was little, perhaps; but she could at least talk with her aunt Meredith, and no one had more of such work than she, though she was seldom willing to put out any of it. But Mrs. Meredith remembered Hannah, and might make a change in her favor. Mrs. Donaldson was quite exultant when she

found that little Jemmy Craig was one so well deserving of the interest she had felt in him. But there was no occasion now for her to think of adopting him.

Mrs. Meredith and her daughters were on the eve of departure for their long-projected journey, when Eva True called to talk about Hannah, and were in great distress at having just discovered the cook to be dishonest. They did not like to go away and leave her in the house as they had intended; yet there was no time to find another. And just here Hannah proved what Mrs. Meredith unhesitatingly pronounced a "God-send." She could plainly see "the hand of Providence" in the chance that relieved her of her trouble and promoted her intended journey. Hannah was faithful and reliable. She should come and take the cook's place; keep the house open and in order for Mr. Meredith, and ready against her return.

Eva went home and made the proposal to Hannah. The tears and smiles came over Hannah's face, as she said, —

"Well, now, it would be happy-like to be working in the old house again; but I should miss seeing your face, Miss Eva, sadly."

"O, I shall run over and see how you are getting along, very often," was the reply.

"And I would n't like to stay after the lady comes back, you know," stipulated Hannah.

"Of course not; I don't think she will want you to do that. But it will give you a chance to find rooms for yourself, and I think there 'll be no trouble about your finding work."

So Hannah agreed to keep the familiar house, now Mrs. Meredith's, open and in order while the ladies were away.

Mr. Salsby, calling on Mrs. True and inquiring for the children, heard the story of their mother, and later proved a most efficient friend in securing for her the work she wanted.

It was nearly sunset, ten long weeks from the bright June morning when Hannah Craig and her children left their quiet home to go to New York. Mr. Beeler had just locked the door of the little barber-shop, and bowed farewell to a man who walked away down the street. Mr. Beeler passed on, and, stopping a moment, looked up gravely at the house-door that had so long been closed. He sighed and shook his head, saying, half aloud, —

"I hope it 's all right. The man is good, and will be a sure tenant. She wanted it let; but why does n't she write?"

He started at a tug upon his coat-skirt. Jemmy Craig's round face laughed up into his, as he cried, —

"How d' you do, Mr. Beeler?"

And there was Hannah, with Nora, hurrying towards

him. He looked all sorts of anxious inquiries, as he shook their hands warmly; but he asked no questions, and took them all away home with him to supper. There his soft-voiced, sad-eyed daughter, Ceely, come only a few weeks ago from Chicago, gave them a kindly welcome, and a warm tea which greatly refreshed Hannah, and was certainly well patronized by the children.

Hannah insisted on returning to her own house for the night; and, the long pleasant summer evening favoring her, she opened and aired it, and had begun to feel quite at home in it once more before she fell asleep.

Mr. Beeler had found a desirable customer to take the lease of the place which Hannah could no longer use to advantage. A few days later, and the change was made. Hannah cleared her house, packed away her furniture, and went back to the city, where Mrs. Meredith had impatiently waited for her two days beyond the appointed time for their departure. When the summer days were over, and the ladies returned, Mr. Salsby had repaired and refitted in tidy, comfortable fashion the end house in Amity Court; and on the first floor were just the right kind of two rooms for Hannah Craig. The Cantons were made quite comfortable in their attic; and though they worked busily all winter, Bess left the carpet-room, and had

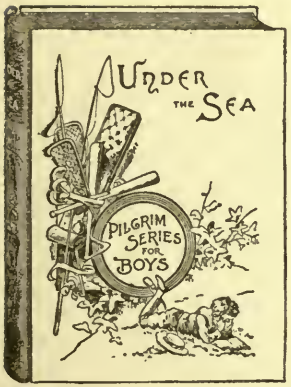
work supplied at home. Part of it was sewing, and part was helping Hannah iron, for which she had her pay by the hour, and at which she soon became almost as expert and dainty with delicate fabrics as her teacher, Hannah, herself.

Mr. Salsby did not rest when he had repaired the end house of Amity Court. He went on refitting all the buildings he owned there. When it was half done, the other landlords of the Court, seeing how the condition and character of the tenants rose with the improvements, followed the good example, and Amity Court grew to have quite a different appearance.

"It's fine days we've fallen on, when the landlords will right up the houses for us," said Biddy Crowley, as she surveyed with delight her enlarged and well-appointed kitchen. "An' it's all those childer, too."

And throughout the place, every cheered and pleased tenant of a neatly-kept house firmly believes to this day that the new and sadly-needed improvements all came at first through those six clean, industrious, well-behaved children of Amity Court.

PILGRIM SERIES FOR BOYS



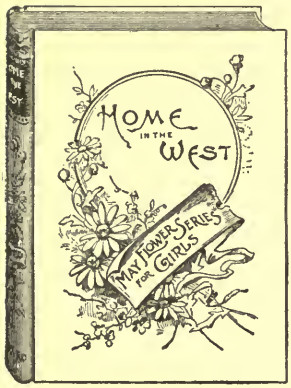
These are genuinely good stories written by authors of established reputation, who appreciate the wants and tastes of young people, and selected for this series with great care. In all the books of the series the spirit is manly, sincere, and moral. There is enough of incident and adventure to make them lively and interesting, while the principles of truthfulness, integrity, and self-reliance are quietly inculcated. In a word, they are such books as parents would wish their children to read.

EACH VOLUME COMPLETE IN ITSELF UNIFORM CLOTH BINDING NEW AND ATTRACTIVE DIES ILLUSTRATED Price 75 cents each

1. ALEXIS THE RUNAWAY By Rosa Abbott
2. ABEL GREY A Story for Boys
3. BURNING PRAIRIE or Johnstone's Farm By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
4. BILLY GRIMES' FAVORITE By May Mannering
5. CROOK STRAIGHTENED By Mrs. Martha E. Berry
6. CROOKED AND STRAIGHT By Mrs. Martha E. Berry
7. CLIMBING THE ROPE By May Mannering
8. COUNTRY LIFE
9. GOLDEN RULE or Herbert By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
10. GOOD LUCK By Paul Cobden
11. HOW CHARLIE ROBERTS BECAME A MAN By Miss Louise C. Thurston
12. HOME IN THE WEST By Miss Louise C. Thurston
13. HOLIDAYS AT CHESTNUT HILL By Cousin Mary
14. JACK OF ALL TRADES By Rosa Abbott
15. KARL KEIGLER or the Fortunes of a Foundling
16. SALT-WATER DICK By May Mannering
17. SMUGGLER'S CAVE or Ennisfellen By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
18. LITTLE SPANIARD By May Mannering
19. TOMMY HICKUP By Rosa Abbott
20. THE CHARM A Book for Boys and Girls
21. TURNING WHEEL By Paul Cobden
22. UNDER THE SEA or Eric By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
23. YOUNG DETECTIVE By Rosa Abbott
24. WALTER SEYTON A Story of Rural Life in Virginia
25. WORTH, NOT WEALTH

LEE and SHEPARD Publishers BOSTON

MAYFLOWER SERIES FOR GIRLS



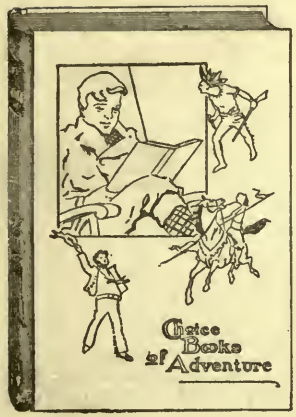
A series of books of sterling worth for girls, by well-known and popular authors, inculcating principles of truth and honor through bright and interesting narratives full of life, action, and interest, and decidedly wholesome and instructive.

EACH VOLUME COMPLETE IN ITSELF UNIFORM CLOTH BINDING NEW ATTRACTIVE DIES ILLUSTRATED Price 75 cents each

1. ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS By Kate J. Neely
2. ANGEL CHILDREN or Stories from Cloud Land By Charlotte M. Higgins.
3. BIRDS OF A FEATHER By Mrs. M. E. Bradley
4. CELESTA a Girl's Book By Mrs. Martha E. Berry
5. CHILDREN OF AMITY COURT By Louise C. Thurston
6. CRUISE OF THE DASHAWAY or Katie Putnam's Voyage By May Mannering
7. DAISY or the Fairy Spectacles
8. FINE FEATHERS DO NOT MAKE FINE BIRDS By Kate J. Neely
9. GREAT ROSY DIAMOND By Ann Augusta Carter
10. GOING ON A MISSION By Paul Cobden
11. HANDSOME IS THAT HANDSOME DOES By Mrs. M. E. Bradley
12. HOW EVA ROBERTS GAINED HER EDUCATION By Louise C. Thurston
13. LITTLE MAID OF OXBOW By May Mannering
14. LITTLE BLOSSOM'S REWARD By Emily Hare
15. THOUSAND A YEAR By Mrs. M. E. Bruce
16. MAY COVERLY A Story for Girls
17. MINNIE or the Little Woman
18. NETTIE'S TRIAL By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
19. ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER By Kate J. Neely
20. PINKS AND BLUES or the Orphan Asylum By Mrs. Rosa Abbott Parker
21. SHIPWRECKED GIRL or Adele By Mrs. S. B. C. Samuels
22. TAKE A PEEP By Paul Cobden
23. UPSIDE DOWN or Will and Work By Rosa Abbott Parker
24. VIOLET a Fairy Story
25. WRONG CONFESSED IS HALF REDRESSED By Mrs. M. E. Bradley

LEE and SHEPARD Publishers BOSTON

CHOICE BOOKS OF ADVENTURE



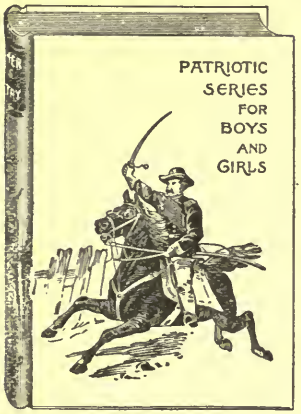
A series of carefully selected books of adventure in all parts of the world. There is something here for every boy and girl, the series containing adventures on the sea, among the Indians, in exploration, camping out, hunting, fishing, etc., by well-known authors, including Kingston, Farrar, Cozzens, Morecamp, and others.

UNIFORM CLOTH BINDING NEW AND ATTRACTIVE DIES ILLUSTRATED Price per volume $1.00

1. ANTHONY WAYMOUTH or the Adventures of a Gentleman By W. H. K. Kingston
2. AFRICAN CRUSOES or the Adventures of Carlos and Antonio By Mrs. R. Lee
3. ARCTIC CRUSOE A Tale of the Polar Sea By P. B. St. John
4. AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS Translated from the French of Jules Verne By George M. Towle
5. AUSTRALIAN CRUSOES or the Adventures of an English Settler in the Wilds of Australia By Charles Rowcroft
6. AUSTRALIAN WANDERERS or the Adventures of Captain Spencer By Mrs. R. Lee
7. CROSSING THE QUICKSANDS or the Veritable Adventures of Hal and Ned By Samuel W. Cozzens
8. CRUISE OF THE FROLIC A Sea Story By W. H. K. Kingston
9. DOWN THE WEST BRANCH or Camps and Tramps around Katahdin By Capt. Charles A. J. Farrar
10. EASTWARD, Ho! or Adventures at Rangeley Lakes By Capt. Charles A. J. Farrar
11. LIVE BOYS or Charley and Nasho in Texas By A. Morecamp
12. LIVE BOYS IN THE BLACK HILLS or The Young Texan Gold Hunters By Arthur Morecamp
13. PRAIRIE CRUSOE Adventures in the Far West
14. TWELVE NIGHTS IN A HUNTER'S CAMP By Rev. W. Barrows
15. UP THE NORTH BRANCH a Summer's Outing By Capt. Charles A. J. Farrar
16. WRECK OF THE CHANCELLOR AND MARTIN PAZ Translated from the French of Jules Verne By George M. Towle
17. WINTER IN THE ICE: DR. OX'S EXPERIMENT Translated from the French of Jules Verne By George M. Towle
18. WILLIS THE PILOT A Sequel to Swiss Family Robinson
19. WHALES WE CAUGHT, AND HOW WE DID IT By William H. Macy
20. WILD SCENES OF A HUNTER'S LIFE By John Frost, LL.D.
21. WILD WOODS LIFE By Capt. Charles A. J. Farrar
22. YARNS OF AN OLD MARINER By Mary Cowden Clarke
23. YOUNG CRUSOE Adventures of a Shipwrecked Boy By Dr. Harley
24. YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS By Samuel W. Cozzens
25. YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS or the Wild Riders of the Plains By Samuel W. Cozzens

LEE and SHEPARD Publishers BOSTON

PATRIOTIC SERIES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS



"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime."

The volumes included in this series tend to inculcate the spirit of patriotism and good citizenship. The boys and girls of to-day are here made acquainted with the lives and characters of many noble men and women of this and other countries. The information is pleasantly and vividly imparted in the form of popular biography as well as fiction by well-known and popular writers.

UNIFORM CLOTH BINDING NEW AND ATTRACTIVE DIES ILLUSTRATED Price per volume $1.00

1. BOBBIN BOY The Early Life of Gen. N. P. Banks
2. BORDER BOY A Popular Life of Daniel Boone By W. H. Bogart
3. DARING DEEDS OF THE REVOLUTION By Henry C. Watson
4. DORA DARLING or the Daughter of the Regiment By Jane G. Austin
5. DORA DARLING AND LITTLE SUNSHINE By Jane G. Austin
6. FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY A Popular Life of George Washington By Henry C. Watson
7. FRIEND OF WASHINGTON A Popular Life of General Lafayette By Henry C. Watson
8. GREAT MEN AND GALLANT DEEDS By J. G. Edgar
9. GREAT PEACEMAKER A Popular Life of William Penn By Henry C. Watson
10. GREAT EXPOUNDER Young Folks' Life of Daniel Webster
11. GOOD AND GREAT MEN Their Brave Deeds and Works By John Frost, LL.D.
12. LITTLE CORPORAL Young Folks' Life of Napoleon Bonaparte By John Frost LL.D.
13. MILL BOY OF THE SLASHES Life of Henry Clay By John Frost
14. NOBLE DEEDS OF AMERICAN WOMEN Edited by J. Clement
15. OLD BELL OF INDEPENDENCE By Henry C. Watson
16. OLD HICKORY Life of Andrew Jackson By John Frost
17. OLD ROUGH AND READY Young Folks' Life of Gen. Zachary Taylor By John Frost, LL.D.
18. PIONEER MOTHERS OF THE WEST Daring and Heroic Deeds of American Women By John Frost, LL.D.
19. PRINTER BOY or How Ben Franklin made his Mark
20. POOR RICHARD'S STORY A Popular Life of Ben Franklin By Henry C. Watson
21. PAUL AND PERSIS or the Revolutionary Struggle in the Mohawk Valley By Mary E. Brush
22. QUAKER AMONG THE INDIANS By Thomas C. Battey
23. SWAMP FOX Life of Gen. Francis Marion By John Frost
24. WOMEN OF WORTH, WHOM THE WORLD LOVES TO HONOR
25. YOUNG INVINCIBLES or Patriotism at Home By I. H. Anderson

LEE and SHEPARD Publishers BOSTON