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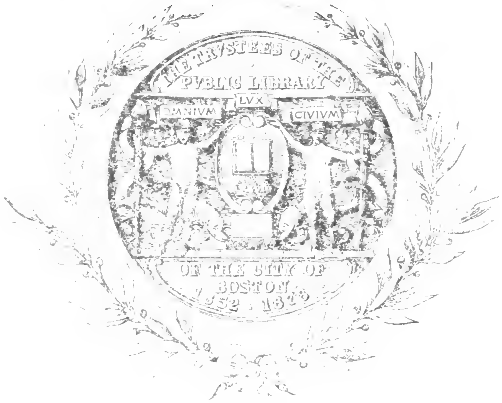

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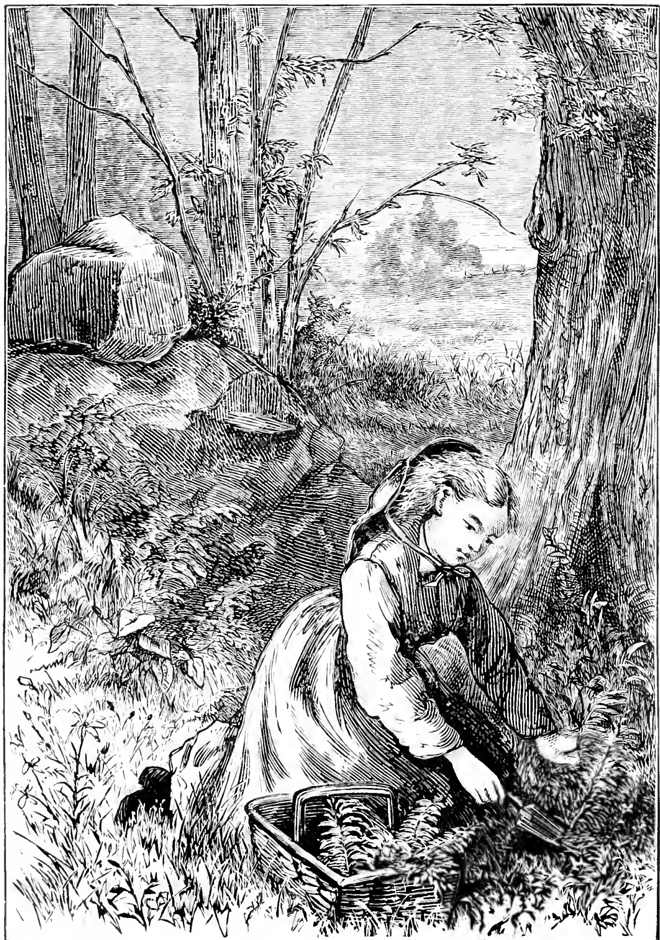

MARJORY KNEW A SUNNY NOOK WHERE SHE FELT SURE OF FINDING THEM IN BLOOM. — Page 41.

[FRONTISPIECE.]

HOW

MARJORY HELPED

By M. CAROLL.

A Prize Story.

SELECTED BY THE LADIES COMMISSION
ON SUNDAY SCHOOL BOOKS.

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS.

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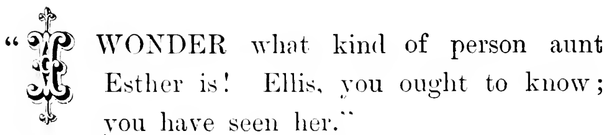
HOW MARJORY HELPED.

CHAPTER I.



"I WONDER what kind of person aunt Esther is! Ellis, you ought to know; you have seen her."

"But that was so long ago I forget all about her, except as a little woman with bright eyes. She can't be very young, for she is older than father."

"I hope she won't be always having nervous headaches, like Joe Green's aunt, so that a fellow can't whistle, or make one bit of noise about the house."

"That would be hard for you, Roger! Now we girls wouldn't mind the headache so much, but I do hope she isn't prim, and fussy, and precise. Mother says I am to take care of her room,—and, O, dear! I do hate dusting!"

"That is the queerest plan of mother's. It is to be hoped for both your sakes that she is not precise. I don't know which is more to be pitied, aunt Esther or Marjory." And Ellis shrugged her shoulders, glancing from her own neat person to Marjory's rough hair and tumbled apron. Marjory colored, but before she could speak, Roger broke in, —

"Don't be sharp, Ellis! If I were in aunt Esther's place, and had to choose, I know I'd rather have Madge than you to look after things. Why, with you, the poor woman wouldn't dare to drop a pin, or set a chair askew, or walk any way but by the pattern of the carpet. Ugh!" and the boy made a grimace that set all the party laughing, Ellis herself joining, though with a deprecatory —

"O, Roger!"

"Well!" went on Roger, as he drew himself out of his corner, and gathered up his books. "It seems that we don't know anything about aunt Esther, and I don't see any good of our wishing or hoping, especially when she is coming to-morrow, and we can see for ourselves."

"I know something about her," piped up a little voice. "I know she is a bear."

"A bear! Why, Jamie Dana, what makes you say such a thing as that? What do you mean?"

"Yes, a bear," said Jamie, emphatically, holding his ground. "Mother said so."

"O, Jamie!"

"It was the other day, after you had beer asking father so many questions about her, and, when you were gone out, mother said she would be a — some kind of a bear."

"O, you little goose!" cried motherly Sue, taking the little face in her hands to kiss it. "Was it a bugbear?"

"Yes," said Jamie, with great satisfaction, quite unmoved by the shout of laughter. "I telled you she was a bear!"

"Midget, you're growing too wise! It's time you went to bed. It is your turn to-night, Ellis."

"No, I want Marjory. Marjory will tell me stories," said Jamie, wisely giving up his intention of resisting the sentence of banishment for the better chance of gaining some amusement by the way.

"Madge, dear, that's a good girl! Do go up with him. Ellis has her composition to write, and I want to finish this patch."

Marjory hesitated, but Jamie's pleading "Be a good girl, Marjory," won her over.

"Kiss all round, and be off, then, for I've lots of lessons to learn."

As Jamie disappeared, the others drew their chairs around the great table, and settled to their evening's work.

All was quiet till Marjory came back, exclaiming, "At last Jamie lets me off! Now for work!"

But she did not seem to find it as easy to go quietly to work as the others had done. She rummaged the shelves, searched all over the table, and at last shook the table so, trying to look underneath, that Ellis looked up impatiently.

"What is the matter, Madge? Do be quiet!"

"But I can't find my Geography! I am sure I brought it home yesterday, and Miss Reed is *so* particular just now! O, dear!" And, in her efforts to look over the pile of Ellis's books, she upset them, hitting the inkstand, and spattering a drop of ink on Ellis's neat composition.

"O, Madge, how careless! I wish you would ever look at what you are doing. Now I must copy this all over again. It is too bad!"

"I'm real sorry," Marjory began; but as she glanced at the sheet her tone changed a little. "It isn't so *very* bad, El. You can just scratch off that speck, and nobody will know."

"Thank you! That isn't my way. I don't like scratched things. And I wanted this to be specially nice, and there isn't time to copy it to-night. It's too bad!"

Marjory looked uncomfortable, and Roger broke in. "Come now, Ellis, don't be grumpy! Peg has said she is sorry, and what more can she do? You do make such big mountains out of mole-hills!"

"Careful is better than sorry," said Ellis, and went grimly to work again, while Marjory, somewhat subdued, continued her search.

"Doesn't anybody know where my Geography is?"

"Of course," said Roger, now roused to what she was doing. "I saw it in the old willow this afternoon."

"To be sure! I had it there studying, when Judith called me to go on an errand. O, Roger, didn't you bring it home?"

"Not I. I supposed whoever put it there wanted it there."

"O, dear!" then desperately, "I must go down and get it."

"To-night! Why, Marjory, it's pitch dark. You can't go down through the meadow at this time of night."

"But, Sue, I *must* have my book. We recite the first thing in the morning."

As Marjory took down her hood, and went to the door, Sue whispered to Roger, "Couldn't you go for her?"

"O, nonsense! she'll never go. She will be frightened before she gets to the end of the yard. It won't do her any harm to miss her lesson once, and then she will remember." But Roger really meant to go for it, only he wanted a little coaxing.

As Marjory opened the door and stepped out, her heart sank a little. On a bright, quiet night she would not have minded a run through the meadow; but now, though it was not, as Sue had said, "pitch dark," the clouds hung thick and heavy, and only stray gleams of moonlight broke through the rifts. The wind had risen, and the black trees tossed and swayed, and the most familiar objects grew strange and weird. But Marjory was resolute, and she drew her cloak round her, and ran steadily along the footpath

through the field which sloped to the little brook, by the side of which stood the great half-decayed willow, which was a favorite haunt with the children.

It stood out against the gray sky with a fearful blackness and distinctness, and seemed to Marjory to be farther and farther away, as she ran on. In a few moments, however, she stood under it, and, catching the low, sweeping branches, swung herself up into the great hollow of the trunk. There lay the missing book, its light covers clear in the darkness. Marjory eagerly seized it, and turned to swing herself down, but stopped, held by the strangeness of the place and time.

The little brook over which the willow bent seemed to gurgle and plash louder than in the daytime; and the long, black shadows, flung over it by the fringe of bushes on its banks, offered shelter for any strange, wild things, or seemed themselves alive as they danced with the fitful moonlight. The dead pine at the corner of the meadow stood up gaunt and grim, while the swaying branches around her shivered and sighed with the wind.

For a moment Marjory stood, taking in the whole scene; then, getting down as best she

could, she started for the house. As soon as she had turned her back on all these things, which had had before a certain charm in their weirdness, they grew horrible and frightful, and she ran as fast as her feet could carry her to the house, while all the strange shadows, and shapes, and sounds seemed to pursue her.

Marjory had run many races, but never one more eagerly than that, and with intense relief she threw open the door into the bright, warm kitchen, where Judith, knitting by the fire, looked up with a start, and a "Deary me, child, I should think somebody was after you!"

Marjory laughed, for the familiar sights and sounds had brought back her courage; and stopping only to hang up her cloak, walked quietly into the room where the children were still at work. Her wind-tossed hair and bright cheeks would have told where she had been, even without the Geography, so that Sue's remark, "Why, Madge, did you really go to the willow?" was rather an exclamation than a question.

"I said I should," was Marjory's answer, as she looked for a place at the table, already piled with books.

"Well, you are plucky, Madge! If I had thought you really meant it, I would have gone for you," said Roger, making a place for her beside him.

"That's a poor compliment, but I'll thank you for the first half," laughed Marjory, taking the offered place, and secretly very proud of Roger's praise.

"You have got yourself in a fine tousle," said Ellis, folding her finished composition. "I wish you would try to keep your hair in order!"

"O, yours will do for the family, Nell dear, and I really haven't time for any such elegance now. I have only half an hour to study."

So the room was quiet again, except for the rustling of leaves and scratching of pens, till Judith opened the door.

"Here's Miss Smith's boy, Susan, and he says your mother is to stay there and watch to-night, and you are to send her the thick gray shawl, and not to sit up for your father, but leave everything comfortable for him."

And so the children went off to bed, with a little grumbling from Ellis that mother would not be at home to see that all was right in the

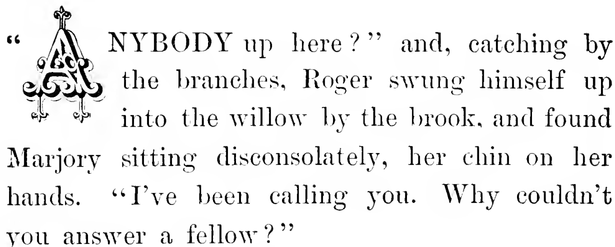
morning, and with some care from Sue that everything should be convenient for father.

But long after the other girls were asleep, Marjory lay thinking of her evening adventure; and, as she stood at the kitchen door the next morning, and looked off over the meadow, fresh, and green, and sunny, to the running brook and gently waving trees, she had a curious feeling of something else in it all, which only those people could know who went out to it in the darkness.

The aunt Esther, so much talked of, came the next day, and it did not take long for Roger to make up his mind that she was not at all like Joe Green's aunt. She was a small, slight person, with bright eyes, — such keen, clear eyes that it seemed they would not only see, but see through many things that came in their way, and that it would be of little use to try to hide anything they were in search of; but then the mouth shut firmly, and with a pleasant curve, that showed it would not tell all that it knew, nor repeat unkind nor disagreeable things without need. She won Marjory's heart by her remembrance of all the nooks, and her interest in all the details of the old farm, on which she

had lived when a girl, and which Marjory believed the most delightful place in the world. Indeed, they soon found so many things to talk about, that the work Marjory had dreaded so much — the "taking care of aunt Esther's room" — proved really a pleasure.

CHAPTER II.



"ANYBODY up here?" and, catching by the branches, Roger swung himself up into the willow by the brook, and found Marjory sitting disconsolately, her chin on her hands. "I've been calling you. Why couldn't you answer a fellow?"

"Too lazy," said Marjory, shortly.

Roger stretched himself out on the branches, and looked at her for a few minutes quietly, then said, more gently, —

"What's the matter, Madge?"

"I don't know," said Marjory desperately, dashing away the tears that would come into her eyes; "but I don't see what I was made for."

Roger attempted no answer to that, and after a minute's silence, Marjory went on, as if, now that she had begun, it was a comfort to talk it out to some one. "You see it has been what Judith calls a 'depravity day' all through. I thought,

if I got up early this morning, I should have time to run down to the brook and see the bridge you have been building; and then Ellis must needs wake and remind me of the rent in my dress, that mother said must be mended before I went to school. It was a horrid place, and it took every minute till breakfast; and then I went to aunt Esther's room, and she staid down to help mother; so I had to make the bed alone, and that takes twice as long; and I forgot that to-day was the day to change the sheets, and so I had to take it all to pieces again after it was made. And then there was the dusting, and O, Roger! I broke aunt Esther's green vase."

"Well, I thought you said that she didn't scold about broken things."

"She never scolds, and she was real good when I broke the little cologne-bottle, and said it didn't matter, though I know she cared more for it than for the vase. But then she knew I *couldn't* help that, and, I suppose, if I had really been careful and dusted slowly this morning, I shouldn't have knocked off the vase. I know she thought so, and I'd rather take the worst kind of scolding than have her just say, 'You

may throw the pieces away, Marjory, and I will finish the dusting.'

"Then there was just time to get to school, and I forgot that I took out my History yesterday to show Jamie the pictures; so I just caught up my strap and ran off; and then I hadn't any book in the class, and Miss Reed was more particular than ever to-day, and I had to lose marks for that. And then Willie Nickerson must needs hang his things close to the door, so that I hit his basket, and the handle of the wretched old thing broke, and down it came. There wasn't much in it to hurt, but Miss Reed scolded again, and I wished Willie Nickerson was in Guinea."

"Poor fellow!" said Roger. "He couldn't help it. The boys don't leave any place for him to hang his things but there, and I don't suppose he would carry that poor old basket, if he could get another."

"Well, he is a bother, any way. But that was not the worst, for all the things put me out so that I was real cross to Jamie this afternoon, and mother sent me away till I could be pleasant, and they were just beginning to read Guy Mannering."

And Marjory broke down here, for to be se

away by mother was the hardest punishment the children knew; and Marjory always enjoyed very much the Saturday afternoons, when they could all sit down together and sew while one read aloud.

Roger was quiet for a little while, and then said cheerily, "It was a pretty hard day! I don't see what you can do about it now, except let it go and begin fresh to-morrow. Come up with me now, won't you, and bring the cows home?"

"I don't know," said Marjory, brightening, but hesitating a little, "as mother meant that, when she said stay away from people."

"Perhaps," suggested Roger, "it will fit the other half. Don't you feel as if you could be pleasant?"

Marjory's answer was a challenge to catch her, as she sprang down from her perch and was off over the meadow. They had a merry race, and only stopped when they reached the pasture, and waited at the bars, while Duke, the big dog, which had taken his full share in the race, went off to hunt up the cows.

Leaning there on the bars, in the stillness of

the autumn afternoon, Marjory suddenly brought up again her question.

"But what do you suppose children were made for, Roger? It seems to me it would be ever so much easier if we were all born grown up."

"It wouldn't be half so jolly; I know that," rejoined Roger. "No bat and ball, nor coasting, nor snow-forts, nor chestnutting: ugh! I'd like well enough to be a man, but I like to be a boy first."

"O, I like well enough being a girl, but I don't see of what use children are. It would have been just as easy to make us grown up."

"I suppose,"—and Roger's voice sunk just a little,—"I suppose God makes children because He wants them."

Marjory looked off at the sunset for a while quietly, then she turned with a sudden flash,—

"Roger Dana, do you really suppose that God wants you and me *now?* Of course I suppose when we are grown up, real men and women, we shall find that there is something for us to do; but do you suppose He wants us *now?*"

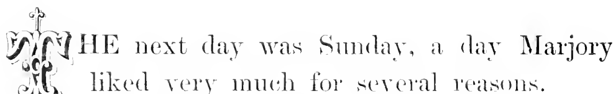
"I don't see what He made us for *now*, if He doesn't want us."

"Perhaps we are made to bother other people,"

said Marjory, half ruefully, half mischievously, as she remembered the day's experience: but she grew grave again, as she said, half under her breath, "How strange it is to think of, Roger! It is like the meadow in the night, full of so many things we don't think of in the daytime. But I wish I knew what He wants!"

It seemed that Roger had no answer for that. He let down the bars, and they waited while the grave cows leisurely made their way out, and then they walked silently behind, till Duke came up to claim his reward of praise for having done his work well, and they got into a frolic with him which lasted till they reached the house.

CHAPTER III.



THE next day was Sunday, a day Marjory liked very much for several reasons.

First of all, then, if ever, Dr. Dana was at home with his children. They could not be sure of him even then, for sick people must be taken care of even on Sunday; but, as Marjory said, there was a chance on that day, and other days they were sure not to have him.

Then, on that day the mother was at leisure to answer all the questions for which there had been no time in the week; and for all of them there was a quiet and leisure in the day that was good. "As if," Judith had said once, "they had been stewing all the week, and on Sunday were set away to cool."

Going to church was not the part of the day that Marjory liked best. The pews were high and straight, with curious little seats in the corners towards the preacher. It was only lately

that Jamie had been considered old enough to go to church, and Marjory, giving up her corner to him, had been promoted to a place on the long seat, where she could see the preacher. She liked her added dignity, but it had its disadvantages. She had taken it for granted that seeing and hearing went together, and, as in her corner she could not see the preacher, she had not thought it necessary to listen to him. Now, when she could see, she did not find it much easier to attend, and, after trying a few Sundays, decided that preaching was for grown folks. Some of the hymns she liked, and she listened to the prayer and the Bible lesson, especially if the latter were narrative; and then her thoughts wandered off to school and home, and only came back for the last hymn.

The Sunday after her "depravity-day" there was a stranger in the pulpit, and, as he read the hymn, Marjory decided that she knew he would be stupid, and it would not be of much use to listen to him.

The text was not attractive, and her eyes led her thoughts off, through the open window, to the broad field, where the sunlight was streaming over the grass, and the elm branches were

throwing flickering shadows; or beyond the field to the orchard, where she almost fancied she could see the bright, rosy apples that she knew were waiting to be gathered.

That reminded her that she must ask her mother to let her pick out the apples she should want for her birthday party the next day, and brought her thoughts back to the church; but she could not speak to her mother then; so she began to think over again the boys and girls who were to be invited; and, as her eyes went wandering round the church, they spied Willie Nickerson in a corner of the gallery. The sight of Willie brought up the memory of his basket, and with it all the troubles of the day before, and her talk with Roger, and the wonder again — what were children made for.

And just then she found that the preacher was talking to children — at least these were the first words she heard: —

"Now, of all the reasons any one can give, 'I don't want to' is the very worst. Indeed, it is no reason at all. Nobody, man, woman, or child, was ever put into the world to do what he or she *wanted to:* and the sooner you all learn that, the easier it will be for you. Perhaps you

will say that grown people do what they want to. I know that children are apt to say so; but think a minute. Do you really suppose that your mother *wants* to spend evening after evening mending and altering the clothes that you tear and outgrow so fast, or that your father *wants* to work all day in the shop or on the farm just to earn money to spend for you? Of course they could find many things a great deal pleasanter to do. And that is what 'I don't want to' really means. It means that it is not pleasant or easy. But, children, that is of no consequence. It is no matter at all what *you* want. The question is what God wants. And when you have found that out, then you know what is to be done; and it is because your father and mother have found it out that they are ready to spend their time cheerfully at the mending and the working, to help on God's plan of making strong, happy, good, and wise children.

"Remember, too, that if you work only for what you want, you are most likely to fail. You may want what is impossible, or what would not be good for you, or good for other people. You are not very wise nor very strong. But if you work for what God wants, and as God wants,

you must succeed. There may be delay and discouragement, but that will not dishearten you, for the end is sure. 'He always wins who sides with God.'"

And here the sermon ended. Marjory wished that she had listened to the whole of it, for then perhaps she might have learned what it was God wanted of her. She was sure that the preacher thought He did want children as well as grown people.

Roger's last exploit of the day before had been to hurt his foot, jumping from the barn loft. It was nothing very serious, but enough to lay him upon the sofa for the day, and, having tired himself with reading in the morning, he took advantage of Marjory's pity to claim her time and attention for most of the afternoon. As the twilight came on, aunt Esther joined them, and Sue and Ellis put aside their books and drew their chairs up for the talk that comes before the lamps are lighted.

"So Florence Mayhew has got home! Did you see her at meeting to-day?" said Sue.

"Yes, and how lovely her new suit is, and how perfectly her gloves fitted! I should like to be rich, and not have to think about my dress.

Of course I ought to be content, and all that, aunt Esther, but I should like it very much."

"You see, aunt Esther," broke in Roger, "Ellis made a visit to the Lorings, in the city last winter, and has not been quite happy with our ways since."

"Well," Ellis went on, too eager to state her case to deny the charge. "Don't you think it would be pleasant, aunt Esther, not to have to consider and plan, and to know that you could have what you want?"

"Very. Don't you suppose Florence Mayhew spent some thought on whether she would have a brown or a green suit, and how it should be made, and where she could find gloves just to match?"

"Why — yes," Ellis acknowledged, remembering the long discussions and arguments she had heard among the Loring girls. "But then she could choose, and there's some fun in that; and I have to make up my mind that I can't have the thing at all."

"What thing?"

"Just now it is a suit of that brown cashmere. It would take more than half as much again as a simple dress pattern, for it is no use

to have a suit unless it is trimmed, and mother says she can't afford it when my black sacque isn't worn out."

"I thought I heard Sue offer to give up her dress pattern to you."

"And you didn't suppose, aunt Esther, that I would be mean enough to take it, when Sue needs it as much as I!"

"Still I should say you had your choice, only, instead of green or brown, it is Sue's or yours, and apparently an easier thing to decide. You'll find there is always a choice of some kind, made by somebody."

"Now, aunt Esther, isn't that going a little too far? I don't suppose father chose not to be rich — did he?"

"Yes," said aunt Esther, quietly, "That is just what he did."

"Tell us how, please," put in Marjory.

"When your father was a young man, just starting to make his own way, he had two chances open to him; and he and I talked over his choice, as we talked over everything that we did or thought of doing in those days. And this was the way your father put the case: 'I can go up to Boston, and go into business there

with uncle Josiah. It is a good, honest business, and he is making money fast. If I do that I suppose I might be a rich man before very long. But I have begun to study my profession, and I like it. It is hard work, but it is useful work; and if I stay here I can take the brunt of it off father's hands as he grows too old for it. (You know your grandfather was a doctor too.) I shall never grow rich by it, but I can make a comfortable living, and I like the country and country-life; and I shall stay here."

"Hurrah for father, I say!" cried Roger. "I'm glad, for one, that we don't have to live cooped up in a city. And I don't see but we have money enough. We always have something to wear, even if Ellis does not get all the flounces she wants."

"O, you are a boy; you don't know anything about it. But, aunt Esther, there's something of right and wrong in both these cases, because father must have felt that he ought to consider grandfather, just as I ought to consider Sue," with a caress that stopped Sue's disclaimer. "Now, I would like the chance of choosing just by my own inclination."

"Well, my dear, if you want it I hope you will have it. But I think you will find it the hardest kind of choice, and will be very glad that the chances for it are few."

"But they do come sometimes. I am enjoying one just now,—the decision whether I will have three narrow ruffles or one wide one on my wine-colored delaine. There's no question of right or wrong about that," said Ellis, triumphantly.

"Who is to make the ruffles?" asked aunt Esther.

"I, of course. Mother said yesterday that it would take all her time, and Sue's too, to finish off the other work that must be done this fall."

"And how long will it take you to do them?"

"If they are done properly, bound top and bottom, and put on, two whole days."

"Such days as last Wednesday, for example?"

Ellis tried to remember.

"That was the day you were finishing your morning dress," said Sue. "Don't you remember? You tired your eyes sewing by lamp-light, and brought on a headache."

"You sent me round to tell Hatty Richards

you could not go with the botany class for specimens," said Marjory.

"You wouldn't stop to help me make a tail to my kite," put in Roger.

"I think I heard you tell your mother you could not look after Jamie, while she went to Mrs. Moore's," said aunt Esther.

"That's the day father came home so late, because you forgot to look after his lamps, as he asked you."

"O, dear!" cried Ellis, losing her temper as evidence grew more and more. "I don't see why you should make such a fuss about it! I should think I might have a day to myself if I chose."

"But the choice does seem to be a decided one. Three ruffles against health, knowledge, and the comfort of the family."

"But," said Ellis, falling back on her first stand-point, "that's just it. If I were rich I should not have to make such a choice."

"No. Then the choice would be connected with other people's health and comfort. More things to be considered, but no less need of choice."

"Well," said Ellis, after a few minutes' pause,

"it's no use talking. I do want my dresses to be real pretty and stylish."

"And God wants you to be healthy, and wise, and kind, but He gives you the choice, as He always does."

So the talk ended, as Jamie, having exhausted Judith's powers of entertainment, came in to be petted.

CHAPTER IV.

MONDAY was Marjory's birthday, and it was to be celebrated in several ways, which promised great delight.

First of all, she was that day to take possession of the little attic room, which was to be her own, and only hers. She had always shared the room with Sue and Ellis; and to have a room of her own had been her great ambition, and now it was to be gratified. It is true there was one drawback, which sometimes made Marjory hesitate in her eagerness.

The only room she could have was a small one, hardly larger than a closet, which had been partitioned off from the great unfinished attic, that filled the top of the house. Now this attic was a very delightful place to Marjory by daylight, but after dark she was rather shy of it. There were many dark corners, and it somehow seemed to her as if the things changed places, and got

where she did not expect them to be. And the boards in the floor would creak, no matter how softly she stepped. So, whenever she was sent up on an errand after dark, she hurried away as quickly as she could: and for a long time she would not ask for the room, because to get to it she would have to cross the whole length of the old garret. But then the little room seemed so very pleasant when she was once in it, and the thought of having it to herself grew so attractive, that one bright afternoon, as she stood at the top of the garret stairs, she said to herself, "Now, Marjory, you know you are a goose! There's nothing here to hurt you, and if you will be afraid, why, you must; for you are going to have that room if mother will let you, any way." And so it happened that this Monday she was to be put in possession of it.

She had been carefully shut out of the room for days before, while mysterious hammerings and strange noises within showed that the business of preparing it, and making it over from a lumber-room into a cosy bed-room, was going actively forward. Everything had been in order by Saturday night; and so, as soon as breakfast was over on Monday, the whole family escorted Miss Ma-

jory in grand dignity to the new territory. The younger members of the family would have been glad to go through the ceremony at daybreak, but the mother would not consent to that. They must have their breakfast in a quiet, regular way, and if they were once let loose, nobody could tell when she would get them together again.

The attic stairs were very narrow, and the procession was forced to move in single file; but, as Roger said, that made it all the longer; and never was sovereign coming to his kingdom more delighted than Marjory with her "own room." Not that it was in any way a remarkable room. Marjory herself, with her very limited knowledge of the outside world, had seen larger and finer ones. But this one had the special charm that it was all arranged just for her, and everything in it had some association with somebody that she loved. Her father had found time to whitewash the walls. Sue had made the white dimity curtain with green border, that was looped back from the window. Mother had covered with green patch the soap-box, that was to serve at once as seat and shoe-box. Ellis had contributed a pin-cushion. Roger had made the shelf for books, where Marjory found arranged her own treasures,

few, but very valuable to her, and among them a new green and gold Whittier from aunt Esther. The pretty moss-covered basket, that hung in the window, was also aunt Esther's work, and Jamie proudly told that he helped fill it with earth from the garden, and had given some of his money-plant to put in it.

And if the inside of the room was pleasant, the outlook was not less so. Leaning on the broad, low window-seat, Marjory saw first the swaying branches of the great elm, that threw dancing shadows into her room, and nodded and tapped at her window when the wind was high. On the very end of a branch hung the nest of a pair of golden-robins; and now, when the leaves were gone, you could see half a dozen other nests in the crooks and forks of the old tree, whose inhabitants made merry noise there in the summer mornings. And beyond the tree were the fields stretching down to the river, and beyond the river other patches of bright greens and browns, and clumps of trees, and rolling hills, and beyond all the mountain. Flushed with color in the morning, purple in the sunset, or dark and sombre in the twilight, Marjory thought, and rightly too,

that any one who had that to look at need not be discontened with her view.

So, altogether, she was sure that nobody ever had a more delightful room than this, and she shut her door on it with great content, a little earlier than usual, for the sake of a ride part of the way to school with father. Dr. Dana was not a man of many words, but Marjory was always sure of his sympathy, and it was a rare chance to get even a little time quite alone with him; so she made the most of it till they reached the corner where their ways separated.

As she got out of the chaise, the doctor said, "If any of your company this afternooon come from over the Bridge Road, tell them I will take them home. I am going up that way late in the day."

Marjory nodded and ran on her way. She had gained so much time by her ride, that she knew she could look up a clump of little innocents, her favorite wild flower, which aunt Esther called houstonias.

Aunt Esther had wished for some, and though it was late in the season, Marjory knew a sunny nook where she felt sure of finding them in bloom. She was right, and she took up a fine large clump, with delicate flowers and many buds

As she came back to the road, she saw, walking quickly down it, bag in hand, the preacher of the day before.

He joined her with a pleasant "Good morning," and the question where she had found such a clump of flowers at that season. Marjory explained that, though the Botany set the season for them from May to September, she could always find them in bloom in October, and often much later.

The gentleman said something more about them, but Marjory did not well know what, for a sudden thought had come to her, that made her draw her breath hard for a minute. Why should she not ask him the question that had been puzzling her? He ought to know. She remembered aunt Esther's advice once, "If you are in doubt about doing a thing, and it isn't wrong, do it." She was sure that this was not wrong, and there came a pause just then. Marjory flushed, and her voice dropped a little, but she looked him straight in the face.

"How can we know what God wants, sir?"

The question was abrupt, but the gentleman understood, as happily some people do understand, without explanations.

"Why, my child, how do you know what your mother wants of you?"

"Ask her," said Marjory, "or look and see."

"That is it. Look and see, and if you don't see, ask."

Marjory did not seem quite satisfied.

"What does your mother most often want you to do?"

"Take care of Jamie, or help Sue, or go of some errand to the neighbors."

"Exactly! Help and take care of your brothers and sisters, and go on errands to neighbors. You will find that is what God wants of you all your life long, beginning now. Shall I tell you of an errand that you can do now?" he said, with a smile, as Marjory still looked not quite content.

"Please."

"I am going home to a little girl who cannot go in search of flowers at all. She has to stay in her room almost all the time, and can see only what her friends bring her, for she lives in the city; but she is very fond of anything that comes from the country."

It did not need his look at the innocents to make Marjory understand.

"O, will you take them to her, and tell her,

please, that if she waters them well and keeps them in the sun, they will bloom for her all winter, perhaps. They have done it for me."

"They will do it for Annie if for anybody. Thank you!" with a bright smile. "Here's one errand done."

"But," said Marjory, hesitatingly, "that is such a little thing!"

"So are these; but, you see, God did them. Now, good by; here's the stage to take me up, and I think there is some work waiting for you, too."

Marjory shook hands, watched him mount on the coach, and then turned into the lane that led directly to the school-house. There she saw the meaning of her friend's last words, for sitting forlornly on the bank was Willie Nickerson. The poor lunch basket, of which Marjory had spoken so contemptuously, had been weakly repaired, after its last injuries, and now had given way again, and the contents — two slices of bread and an apple — had fallen into the mud.

Now it happened that Willie Nickerson was a boy whom Marjory did not like at all. She could not have told exactly why. He was harmless enough, but he was shy and weak, and never

seemed to care to take part in the boys' games, and Marjory liked a strong, bright boy like Roger, who was always ready for sport and fun. And then, though Willie's hands and face were always clean, his clothes were sometimes ragged, and Marjory was too much used to neatness at home not to notice such things. She had never thought all this out, or meant to be unkind to the boy. She had simply let him alone, thinking it not her business whether he had a good time or not. But this morning she could not pass him by so carelessly. Here was a chance to help. So she called to him cheerfully as she came up, —

"Why, Willie, what's the matter? Has the old basket given out again?"

"Yes," said Willie, ruefully; "it couldn't have done it in a worse place!" Which seemed true enough; the apple had gone deep in the mud, and the bits of bread were floating about in a dirty pool. Marjory took a view of the situation.

"Fish your apple out with a stick," she said, promptly. "You can wipe it on the grass. And it's no use looking at the bread; you must leave that for the birds. We shall have just time to get in before the bell rings."

Willie gathered up his books and the wreck of his basket.

"You can't use that any more. You'll have to bring your luncheon in your pocket."

For answer Willie pulled out the side of his trousers, showing that his pockets were sewed up.

"What's that for?"

"Aunt Crabb says I stuff them full of rubbish."

"Horrid old thing!" Marjory was very sympathetic now, knowing the grief it would be to Roger to miss that storehouse for his treasures. "Here, put your apple in my basket. I'll keep it till recess."

Willie had just time to pop it in as they went into school.

When she looked for him at recess, Marjory found him off in a quiet corner, working away with slate and pencil. The poor little apple that was his looked so very small for a hungry boy, that Marjory, after giving it to him, put down one of her own great rosy ones beside it.

"Here's a Baldwin; won't you take it? I've got more than I want."

"Thank you," said Willie, pleasantly, but, as it seemed, too busy for many words.

Marjory waited a minute.

"Why are you doing that now? You ought to play in recess."

"But I must get this sum done. I hadn't a bit of time to work it out yesterday afternoon, but I am sure I know how."

"Why didn't you do it in the evening? That's the time to study."

"Too dark."

"But don't you have any light, Willie Nickerson?"

"*I* don't. Aunt Crabb and Ann want all the candle to themselves. But I thought it all out after I went to bed, and I am sure I can do it if I have time."

"Well," said Marjory, laughing, "I won't bother you any more now, though if you do it you will go to the head, for not one of the rest of us can manage it." And she ran off to her companions, who were waiting for her to begin their game.

Willie did succeed in doing the puzzling sum, and Marjory knew that she felt more pleased at his success than she would have done the week before, but she did not stop to think why.

She took up two more clumps of houstonias on her way home, one for aunt Esther, the other to set in her own window "just to remind her."

And then came her party. She had had her choice how she would celebrate the day, and had decided in favor of a nutting party. It was always better fun out of doors than in the house, she said, and they had had no nutting frolic that season. By great good luck the teacher had, for her own convenience, decided on only one session for that day; so Marjory had the whole afternoon for her party. It had been arranged that they should take the old farm wagon, and Roger should drive. She had invited about a dozen of her special friends, and, going on from house to house, one after another was taken in, and they rattled along in high glee.

"Hullo!" cried one of the boys, as they turned a corner, beyond which was a long stretch of level road. "If there isn't Willie Nickerson. Hope you'll get home before morning, Nick!"

"I say, what'll you take for your basket?" called another, as the wagon overtook the boy, trudging along the dusty road, with the remains of his poor lunch basket swinging from his shoulder, and his books in his hand. He stepped aside and looked up at them. Marjory laid her hand on Roger's arm.

"Stop a minute," she said; and, as the wagon

stopped, "Won't you go nutting, Willie? There's room enough for one more."

Willie hesitated. He had just been thinking how pleasant Marjory had been that morning, and wishing everybody would be kind, and wondering, as he had done more than once before, how it would seem to have father and mother, and brothers and sisters, who cared for you, and did not think you were always in the way. He didn't see how children who had such love could be cross and teasing. If Marjory had been alone he would not have hesitated, but he was afraid of the boys, and, worst of all, he thought Roger would not like it, and of all the boys in the school Willie admired Roger Dana most. He was so strong and merry, and never seemed to be afraid of anything, or to care if Miss Reed was cross to him and blamed him about his lessons, which happened sometimes, for Roger was much better at play than at study.

Willie was right in thinking that Roger would not have invited him, but he was a good-natured boy, and catching sight of Willie's face as he looked up at him doubtfully, he said, —

"Throw in your books, and come on, Nick, if

you want to. It's Marjory's party, and she can invite anybody she wants."

The words were not very cordial, but it was all Willie hoped for, and he clambered in, and nestled into the place Marjory made for him beside her, and in a few minutes everybody had forgotten him.

Presently some one called from the back seat, "Where are we going, Roger?"

"To Blake's Woods."

"But a lot of the mill-boys are coming up there to-day; I heard them planning it yesterday," said another.

"O, dear!" cried the girls, and Roger drew up his reins with a long whistle of dismay.

"It'll never do to go there, then! What shall we do? We might go over to Coit's, but that's three miles the other way."

They looked at each other in silence for a minute. Nobody could think of anything. Then Willie Nickerson said, very meekly, —

"There's a good bit of woods on the other side of East Hill, half way up."

"That's so," said another boy. "That would be a jolly place, if nobody has been there."

"Nobody had been there yesterday," Willie

said, more confidently, and Roger turned his horse into that road.

And they did not forget Willie again. He had said the right thing at the right time, and then he had to be their guide when they struck off from the road into the woods. They had a rough climb for a little way, and then they came into the chestnut grove, and went busily to work. Much fun they made out of it, too, and the baskets were soon filled; and then, by clattering on a tin pail, Roger called them all together, and, bringing out a big basket, not yet uncovered, invited them to an afternoon lunch. Judith had certainly provided for them plentifully: there were great slices of bread and butter, and doughnuts, and gingerbread, and apples, and hard-boiled eggs.

"But, O, dear," whispered Roger to Marjory, as he distributed the pieces of apple pie, which had been kept for the end of the treat. "There isn't enough! Judith didn't count in Willie Nickerson."

"Never mind. Give him my piec ," Marjory answered, in the same tone. "I am sure he didn't have any dinner."

"Well, then, I'll go halves with you," said

Roger; and so nobody knew that there was not enough.

And then they put their baskets all together, ready to take down to the wagon, and scattered in twos and threes into the woods, in search of wood treasures. Marjory and Katy Marsh, coming back with their hands full of bright woodbine, almost stumbled over Willie, lying close under a fallen trunk. He whispered, "Hist!" as he heard their footsteps, but too late. They just caught sight of the bushy tail of a gray squirrel, as he scampered over the log, and up a tree close by.

"There, you've frightened him away," said Willie, half reproachfully, raising himself on one elbow to look at the girls.

"What are you doing?" asked Katy.

"Only watching Mr. Bunny lay up his winter store. I was lying still here, thinking, and he caught sight of the little pile of nuts I had made, and thought it a good chance to help himself. I strewed them along, and the last one he took was just there. Two more would have brought him close to me."

"But how could you keep still enough?" said Katy, whose greatest trial was keeping still.

"O, it's easy enough. There's lots here to look

at all the time. Do you know" (he looked up at Marjory, putting his question to her) "you can see ever so much better if you lie flat on your back?"

"No," said Marjory, laughing, and rather doubtful.

"O, I mean of some things — the sky, and the trees, and the mountain. Try it some time. But see here, now;" and he pushed aside some dead leaves beside him, and showed them a violet clump with two bright flowers.

"Will you have it?" he said, carefully loosening it from the earth around, and taking up the roots. He reached it up to Marjory.

"Thank you. It's another birthday present. Aren't birthdays nice!"

"I should think so. I never have any."

"Never have any!" cried both girls, in dismay.

"At least, now I don't; since I came to aunt Crabb's."

"Is she dreadful cross?" asked Katy, sympathetically.

"Not so very dreadful. She only wants me to keep out of the way."

Here more drumming on the tin pail, and the

boys' shouts, warned them that it was time for the party to start for home.

They had filled all their baskets and pails with nuts, and their hands with the bright autumn leaves. They even decked the old horse with some maple boughs, and they looked like a part of the wood itself, as they rode through the village.

One after another they left the girls and boys at their homes, and when all were gone but Willie, Marjory said, —

"Now drive home, Roger. Father will take Willie home when he drives over the Bridge Road."

Poor Willie would much rather have walked all the way home than have had to face any strangers; but he was not used to having his own way, so he said nothing, but shyly followed Roger and Marjory, as, scrambling out of the wagon at the farm-house door, and leaving the old horse to find his way to the barn, they hurried into the house with their baskets.

"O, such fun!" cried Marjory, as she pushed open the sitting-room door. "Just see our nuts;" and, with a triumphant shake, she upset half of them over the floor.

"Yes," cried Roger, "we did have high times;

and see, mother, I've brought you some leaves for your vases."

"And, O, aunt Esther, look at my violets!"

Willie stood in the doorway, looking on in surprise. He expected somebody would stop all the bustle and clatter, — for Roger and Marjory were talking at the same time, and as fast as possible, — and turn them "out of the way," at once. He had never known before a family of brothers and sisters who could make as much noise as they chose. He was even rather frightened when he found that some one was speaking to him; but it was only aunt Esther, who took the basket he had been holding all the time, and asked him to sit down.

Meantime Roger and Marjory kept on till Sue asked, quietly, "Aren't you hungry?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Roger, suddenly remembering; "Judith's lunch wasn't bad, but I'm ravenous again." And he made a raid into the kitchen, leaving Marjory to tell the story more at leisure. And explaining how it happened that they went to the East Hill instead of Blake's Woods reminded her of Willie. She turned quickly, ashamed of having forgotten him: but by this time he was quite at ease. For Jamie, overlooked by the rest of the family, had spied

the stranger, and after studying him for a minute or two, had boldly advanced, and presenting paper and pencil, had asked, as indeed he was in the habit of asking of every one who came within his reach, for a "picker." And Willie had carefully drawn for him what he eagerly recognized as a horse; and when to this were added a dog and a chicken, Jamie's heart was won, and Willie was sure of one friend in the family.

Aunt Esther, watching them for a minute, saw that all was right. Indeed, Jamie refused to be separated from his new friend, when they were called to supper, and ate his own bread and milk sitting close by Willie's side. It was curious how much courage Jamie's liking gave the boy. He even answered promptly and clearly some questions that Mrs. Dana asked him, and dared to laugh out loud at some of Roger's jokes; and when the doctor, looking in just as supper was over, called, "Any one here for me, Marjory?" and Marjory answered, "Yes, father, here's Willie Nickerson," it did not seem as bad as he had feared, especially after the doctor, looking down on him, said pleasantly, —

"Finish your doughnut, my boy, and then we must be going."

And when Roger really came to the door to say "good by" to him, and Marjory whispered, "There's a box of nuts under the seat, don't forget them," Willie's heart was so light that he quite forgot to be afraid of the doctor, and he never felt the cold of the long drive, he had so much to think about.

As Marjory drew her chair up to the table, for the studying that could not be put off even for a birthday, she whispered to Roger, —

"Wasn't it lucky that I asked Willie Nickerson to go? We shouldn't have thought of East Hill."

'Yes," answered Roger, "that was well enough. But I don't see what you want to take him up for. He's a regular muff, and the boys never will stop plaguing him."

"O, Roger," said Marjory, appealingly, — for she had really begun to consider Willie as belonging to her, — "he is not so very bad. It is a shame to tease him; and if you'll only try you can stop the boys. You know they'll do almost anything you say."

This pleased Roger, who knew it was true; but he only said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing. It won't do him any good to have you make a fuss

about him. The fellows won't think much of him if he has to have a girl fight his battles."

This, too, was true, and Marjory said meekly, —

"But I don't want to make a fuss about him. I only want him let alone now."

"I'll look out for that, then; but it's a queer kink of yours, any way."

And then he went to work at decimals, and Marjory plunged deep into the map of Central Asia.

CHAPTER V.

MARJORY felt very brave as she went up the attic stairs, candle in hand, that night; but when the door, swinging to behind her, blew out her light, and set the loose boards over her head rattling, and as she stepped on the attic floor it creaked dismally, her heart began to beat very fast. And when, in a dark corner, she caught sight of two bright sparks of light, she would really have run off with fright, if it had not been for shame, and, perhaps, the feeling that if she went back then she must give up her room altogether. Her courage must serve her now or never.

So, with a sudden start, she ran across the attic, and slamming her own door behind her, drew one long breath, and then felt very much ashamed. The room was so quiet and so safe, lighted by the bright moonlight that streamed into it, that it seemed silly to be afraid of anything.

"But," said Marjory to herself, as she began to grow braver, "I certainly did see two little lights there that I never saw before. What could they be?"

And just at the minute there came at the door behind her a little tap, and then a faint mew.

"O," cried Marjory, laughing out loud now, as she opened the door and let in a black and white kitten, "it's you — is it, Trotter? So it was your green eyes that I saw down by the chimney — was it? And did you want to come in and see your mistress? and was it lonesome out there in the poky attic? Well, Trot, you shall sleep in here to-night."

If Trotter suspected that somebody else might be lonesome, too, and that it was not wholly out of kindness to her that she was allowed to stay in the room, she never said anything about it. She only purred contentedly round Marjory's feet, and at last jumped on her shoulder, as she leaned down on the window-sill for one good look out of doors.

And after she had taken enough exercise, walking about on Marjory's back, and rubbing her soft, furry head against Marjory's cheeks, she nestled down on her arms. And they were both quiet for a time, till Marjory, rousing herself, said, —

"Well, Trotter, I think we've had a very good birthday. Very good indeed!"

Trotter, who was almost asleep, opened her eyes, and listened. "And I think it is a good plan to have a chestnutting for your company. It keeps them busy, so that they don't quarrel or get sulky."

Trotter winked, and just at that moment catching sight of the houstonias, which looked whiter than ever in their shadowy corner, made a sudden dash at them with her paw.

"O, Trot, you mustn't do that!" Marjory caught her just in time to save the flowers. "Now, Trot," very seriously, while Trotter became very meek, "look here! If you are going to come into this room you must learn to let things alone. I know it's dreadful hard to learn," with a sigh. "It took me ever so long. But then you must do it, Trot. And, most of all, you must not meddle with my little innocents, because, you know, those are to remind us. We've learned something, Trot, and, as grown people say, I guess we've practised it, to-day, a little — don't you? I suppose if we say 'Our Father,' it means that all people are brothers and sisters, though I don't think the Bible says much about sisters;

but I guess it means them all the same. O, Trot," — and she laughed out loud, — "what a lot of funny relations we have!"

Trot winked, and stretched herself with a great gape.

"Yes!" said Marjory, starting up. "It's time we went to bed, Trot. You shall sleep on the shoe-box;" and she spread her shawl over it, and Trot curled herself up on it, contentedly, and was soon fast asleep, paying no heed to Marjory's question. "Don't you wish we knew what they are doing down stairs?"

And Marjory was just following such a good example, when the door opened. This time it was the mother, who had come up to see if all was right.

"O, yes, mother, it's very nice," Marjory could say now, quite cheered by Trot's company, and this visit, that proved she was not so very far off from "down stairs." "And I've had a real good birthday."

As her mother kissed her, and turned to go, she caught sight of Trotter.

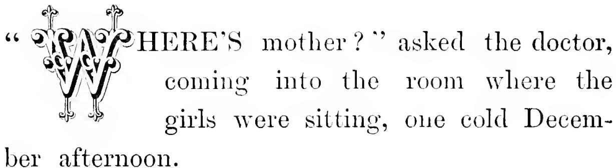
"Ah," she said, "you have company here."

"Yes," said Marjory, rather doubtfully, for Trotter had never been allowed to sleep in a

bedroom. But mothers understand many things without being told; and perhaps Mrs. Dana knew how lonesome it might be all alone, and how dark the attic seemed sometimes. Certainly she only said, "Why Trot, it's nice and warm here! Be sure and let her out in the morning, Marjory."

And Marjory went to sleep very happy.

CHAPTER VI.



“WHERE'S mother?” asked the doctor, coming into the room where the girls were sitting, one cold December afternoon.

“She has gone to Mrs. Ward's with some broth,” said Sue, drawing the arm-chair to the fire.

“No,” said the doctor. “I can't stop; but I have some work for you girls, and I don't want your mother to be bothered with it. She has plenty of winter pensioners to look out for now. I was coming through the back road from the Banks farm, and a woman called to me from a miserable hut that stands in the hollow there, and wanted me to look at her husband's leg. He broke it a day or two ago, and it looks badly, — very badly;” and the doctor stopped talking to think, as he was rather apt to do.

“Well,” Marjory asked, after a minute's

waiting, "you don't want us to set his leg, father?"

"No, Peggy." The doctor shook his head at her. "But I want you to provide some comforts — some necessaries — for his family. They did not beg, but the woman answered my questions plainly, and I found out that they really are half starved, and less than half clothed. Now, I'll look out for the first difficulty. I know more than one farmer who will help supply them; but for the clothing I want you. Here are five dollars, and I want the woman to have something warm to wear as soon as possible, and the half dozen children, more or less, — I did not count them, — to be out of danger of freezing. Put your Christmas presents aside for a while, girls, for this thing must be done quickly; and remember that your mother is not to be troubled about it. She has given away everything she could spare, I know."

The doctor drew on his gloves, and started, turning back at the door to answer Sue's question, —

"Can't we ask aunt Esther for help?"

"Yes; as much as she will give you;" and then he went.

"I think it would be better fun, Sue, to manage the thing all ourselves. Father must not mind if we do make some mistakes."

"But you see, Madge, this concerns other people, and the mistakes might make a good deal of difference to them. I am sure I don't know about buying cotton flannel to make up, and I don't suppose you do."

"That's true," granted Marjory; "and here comes aunt Esther to answer questions."

So Marjory told the story, and went on: —

"Now, aunt Esther, what shall we do? Of course, we must make a dress for the woman, and some flannel petticoats and night-gowns, I suppose, for the children; and then they will want stockings, and shoes, and cloaks, and hoods, and nobody knows what else. But where shall we begin?"

"I should think," said aunt Esther, as Marjory stopped, out of breath, "the first thing was to find out how many you have to provide for, and what they already have."

"Father said somewhere about half a dozen."

"That is too indefinite. You must know better than that."

"Then some one must go and see," said Sue;

"but it's too late this afternoon. Can you go to-morrow, Ellis?"

"No; I promised Annie Hale to show her the new stitch for her worsted work."

"I don't see why we can't go this afternoon," said Marjory, eager to begin work. "It *isn't* very late!"

"It would be dark before we got home, and you know mother doesn't like us to come over the back road late. That would be troubling her in the worst way."

"But, Sue, we must go to work soon!"

"Suppose that you and I go up there to-morrow afternoon early; and, aunt Esther, couldn't we buy some material to begin with? We know that there are at least two or three children."

"Yes," said aunt Esther. "If you choose I will go down with Ellis, when she goes to Annie Hale's, and we can make some purchases, so that you can start your work in the evening. And, Sue, you'd better notice particularly about the bedding. They may need something there."

"O, aunt Esther, won't you go and see them? You know so much more about such people than we do, and I don't know what to say!"

"Then, my dear, it is time you learned. And

I think this is quite too important a part of the work your father set to be made over to any one else. I am only to help, you know."

"Then we can do nothing more about it now."

"Except to decide who is to take charge of the money," said aunt Esther, glancing at the bills the doctor had laid on the table.

"O," said Marjory, "Ellis must be treasurer. She always knows where her things are; and then she will have it all ready for the shopping."

The compliment pleased Ellis, and she grew more gracious and interested, and for some time the girls were busy discussing what could and what could not be done.

Marjory was really interested, but nothing could be done till the next day; so she gave up thinking about it; and when, after dinner, Wednesday, Sue asked if she would be ready to start soon, her face fell.

"O, dear!" she said, "I forgot all about it, and I promised Katy Marsh to go and see her new book that her uncle has brought her!"

Ellis laughed a teasing laugh. "I thought Marjory would get over her hurry soon! She was so very eager to do something!"

Marjory colored quickly. "I care as much about it as *you* do now," she said.

"Nobody said you didn't," Ellis answered, coolly. "Only, *I* never pretended to be in such a driving hurry."

"O, please don't, Ellis," Sue said, earnestly; and then she turned to Marjory. "Never mind, Madge, I can go alone."

Marjory knew very well that Sue did not like to do anything alone, but she only said, —

"That's real good of you!" and ran off to her room. As she crossed the attic, Trotter came chasing after her. She stooped to take her up, and as she rubbed her ears, she said, "O, Trot, don't you think it's horrid that we can't do just what we want to, and not bother about it?"

Trotter purred and whisked her tail, but did not seem quite to satisfy her mistress.

"After all," she went on, "Sue can go just as well alone, and I promised Katy to come there. And it's real mean of Ellis. I'm sure she always does what she chooses!"

Trotter purred louder than ever, but Marjory did not seem to mind her. Instead of taking what she came for, and going down again, she crossed the room to her favorite thinking-place,

the low window-seat. The pot of houstonias still stood there with cheerful flowers and delicate buds. Marjory looked at them quietly for a few minutes; then she turned on the kitten, who was sitting on her shoulder.

"You good-for-nothing little thing!" she said, and the words did not sound cross, and Trotter quite brightened at the sound. "Don't you know very well that it is not of any consequence what you want? I've told you so ever so many times, Trot, and I'm ashamed of you. Because Sue is just as good as she can be, that is no reason why she should do all the work; and you know it don't make any difference to Katy, — at least not much. She can ask Jeannie Hastings to come in. Not that I like Jeannie very much myself, Trot; but then Katy does. So, Trot, you've just got to make up your mind that I shall go on an errand!"

And during this speech Trotter became quite frisky. She rubbed her head on Marjory's arm, and whisked her tail about in a most remarkable manner; and didn't seem to mind being scolded, if indeed she did not rather like it. Certainly she fared none the worse for it, and she chased

SHE CROSSED THE ROOM TO HER FAVORITE THINKING-PLACE.

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Marjory merrily down as she ran in search of Sue, who was just going out the gate.

"I'm going too," said Marjory, breathlessly; "and won't you go round by the hill-road, so that I can tell Katy?"

Sue was willing enough to do that, and Marjory, having begun to think again of the poor people, became so much interested, discussing plans, that the walk did not seem tedious, and she had no time to think of Katy's book.

In the quiet inland village where the Danas lived there were really no very poor people. The pensioners of whom the doctor had spoken were for the most part old or infirm people, who could get along comfortably in the summer, but needed a little care and help through the winter. So the girls had never seen such poverty as faced them when the door was opened to the wretched hut to which their father had directed them, and which they would hardly have believed inhabited, but for the thin wreath of smoke from the chimney.

The woman herself opened the door, and cordially invited them in. Her dress was worn and very thin, and the scanty bit of shawl that was over her shoulders half covered, too, a poor

little baby with wan face and great eyes. Three older children were crouching by the fire, and on a poor bed in the corner lay the man. He turned his face to the wall, as they went in, and said nothing. But when they said that they came from the doctor, the woman brightened a little, and there needed only a few questions to get the whole story.

They were English people, who had come to America to join a brother, who was doing well here. But when they reached New York they learned that he had gone west, and nothing more definite. They had tried to get along, and find work; but first the man was sick, and then his wife; and then they had come on to Boston, hoping still; but he could get no work there. He had been a gardener, and at last, in despair of finding anything to do about the city, they had wandered off into the country.

One by one they had been forced to sell the things they had brought with them from England; and now the husband had broken his leg, and the poor woman's courage had gone altogether.

"And the worst of it all, miss, was not having any one to speak to about it. I can't beg, but

it seemed as if I should feel better if I could only tell somebody."

Sue was very glad that, by aunt Esther's advice, they had brought a few things, old but warm, which could be of use at once; and she promised the woman more help before long. Marjory, who had not said much, had made good use of her eyes, and all the way home they were eagerly planning what should be done. They found that aunt Esther and Ellis had not been idle. They had bought flannel and cotton, and then the shopkeeper, hearing from their talk for whom it was meant, had put in a word of approval of the woman, who had once come to the village to get work, and he had employed her to do some cleaning, which she did well.

"I've been feeling as if I ought to have looked out for her, for she didn't look over and above spry then," he said, "and I'd like to do a little to help you on." So he added to their store a piece of stout dress-material.

He never could have sold it, Ellis said, it was so ugly, but it would be warm.

Then came the question about the making up of all these things.

"Have a bee!" suggested Marjory, with brilliancy. "I'll ask the school girls."

"O! Madge Dana! don't be ridiculous!" cried Ellis. "How do you suppose the things will be done if you turn in those girls on them?"

"Don't be contemptuous, Ellis!" retorted Marjory, good-naturedly. "*Those girls* can sew, — some of them, at least; and if we don't have some help, the poor children will freeze before their clothes are made."

"That's true, Ellis," Sue said. "I don't think Meg's idea is a bad one."

"Well!" Ellis yielded to force of numbers. "I'm glad I haven't got to wear the things, — that's all."

So it was agreed that a dozen of the girls should be asked to join them the next afternoon, after school, and Marjory made out the list. "Will you ask Florrie Mayhew, Ellis?" she said, mischievously; but Ellis scorned to answer.

The Mayhews were a family from the city, who, several years before, had bought a fine old place in the neighborhood, and had spent some part of every summer there since. But it had

been only two or three months at most; and Mr. Mayhew went up to town often on business, and Mrs. Mayhew was an invalid. and the house was almost always full of company from the city, and the country neighbors had known very little about the family, except what they learned from seeing them at meeting Sundays. The Danas had met Florence several times on sketching and botany excursions, and were so far acquainted as to exchange bows and a few pleasant words whenever they met; and now that the Mayhews were, it was said, to spend the whole winter in the neighborhood, Ellis had built several grand air-castles on the possibility of better acquaintance; but she certainly did not think that the best way to cultivate it was to invite Florence to a country sewing bee, though Marjory insisted that it would have, at least, the charm of novelty, and was the best thing they could offer.

But, to tell the truth, Marjory's urgency was more than half due to the love of teasing Ellis, for she was herself a little afraid of Miss Florence, and would not have invited her for anything.

So it would not be easy to tell which was the

more dismayed, Ellis or Marjory herself, when, just as the girls were fairly settled to their work, and had begun to keep time with merry chatter to the speed of their needles, Judith opened the door, and, without warning, showed in Florence Mayhew and a companion.

A sudden hush fell on the party. Ellis's first thought was, "Why couldn't Judith have shown them into the best parlor!" the next, "Then they would have heard the chatter. It's better as it is;" and she came forward cordially to meet them.

Florence had taken in the situation at a glance. "Ah!" she said, as she shook hands with Ellis, and introduced her friend, Molly Douglas, "you have a sewing bee! Is it really yours, Miss Ellis? because I shall quarrel with you for not inviting me. Don't you consider me enough of a neighbor, or haven't you any faith in my sewing?"

"It is more Marjory's bee than mine, — Marjory's and aunt Esther's;" and she introduced Florence to aunt Esther, who stood at the table, cutting.

"Then I appeal to you, Miss Dana. I may stay and try my hand, please? See!" trium-

phantly producing her thimble. "It must have been inspiration that made me put this in my pocket this afternoon."

And as aunt Esther nodded consent, she went on: "As for you, Molly, your eyes won't let you sew; but here's a stocking already set up, and I know you like to knit. How fine!"

And before Marjory well knew what was going on, Florence had laid aside her hat and sacque, had supplied herself with a piece of work, and found a place, and was chatting merrily with her neighbors; and the stiffness that had come over them all had melted away before her ease and cordiality. Presently it occurred to her to ask what was the object of the sewing; and Marjory told the story of poor Mrs. Brown very earnestly, forgetting herself in the telling. Florence asked a few questions about the woman's truthfulness, at which Marjory was inclined to be indignant, they seemed to her so cold and heartless. Florence saw it. "Excuse me," she said so pleasantly as to make Marjory ashamed, "but in the city we hear of so many cases where people are not what they seem! But these people must be very poor. I will speak

to mother about them. I think she will like to help them."

Then the talk drifted again, till Florence and Molly rose to go.

"But, girls," said Florence, looking at the pile of work, "you won't finish all this to-day."

"No, indeed!"

"Then you must have another bee. O, why won't you have it at our house? It is not too far — is it?" She turned to aunt Esther.

"I think not."

"Then some day next week?"

"It will have to be Wednesday, if any day," said Marjory, regardless of Ellis's signs. "That is our only spare afternoon."

"To be sure — next Wednesday, then. You must all come!"

"Wouldn't it be best to consult Mrs Mayhew first?" aunt Esther asked.

"I am sure mamma will like it," Florence answered, adding quietly. "But I will ask her about it; and, Marjory, if I let you know Monday, will you notify all the rest of the company? I don't know where you all live," she said, turning with a bright smile to the other girls, "but Marjory will see you at school."

So it was agreed, and then, as Florence buttoned her gloves, she said to Ellis, —

"O! I almost forgot my special errand this afternoon. It was to ask if you would go sketching with me some Saturday afternoon. It seems a queer time in the year for sketching, but Miss Bruce says we shall find capital practice of form in the bare trees. I know you sketch," she continued, as Ellis hesitated, "and it is so much pleasanter with company! I have always had my brother, and now he is at college I have only the little children, who are not bright at it."

"You can go," said Marjory, from the other side of Ellis. "I'll take that afternoon at home;" and so Ellis cordially accepted the invitation.

When Florence came on Monday morning to tell the girls of her mother's approval of her plan, she met Dr. Dana starting on his rounds, and had the chance to give him her father's message: Would it be convenient for him to call at the house some evening? Mr. Mayhew would like to see him about this man, Brown, who, Marjory said, had been a gardener. "Papa would have called on you about it," Florence

said apologetically, "but he could not tell when he should be likely to find you at home."

"I wish anybody could," laughed the doctor. "Certainly I will call and see him."

Then Florence explained to Marjory that the girls were to come early in the afternoon, and stay to tea, and the great sleigh would take them home in the evening. It would be moonlight, and capital sleighing. And especially Marjory and Ellis were to come early.

Marjory gave the invitation to the girls at school, and there was much discussion and talk that Wednesday morning about what each girl would wear, and at what time they should go. Marjory was so interested in it all, that she did not notice that her own special friend, Katy Marsh, had very little to say. But as they were walking home together, Marjory said,—

"Shall we call for you? It will be on our way."

"No," said Katy. "I can't go."

"Not go!" cried Marjory. "Why, you must go—of course you must. Why not?"

"Mother said last night that she couldn't get my new dress finished this week, and so I have only this blue thing."

Marjory was silent a minute before this difficulty, remembering how pleased she was that her own new dress was just finished. Then she said sturdily, —

"Well, wear that."

"Yes," said Katy, rather sharply; "that's very well for you to say, when you have a nice, new dress all ready, and a real pretty one too. But you know you would not like to wear your old school-dress, when all the girls will dress up, and will notice it." And then the two girls walked on silently till they reached Katy's gate. There Marjory stopped.

"You *must* go," she said; "and I'll tell you how we'll fix it. This dress of mine is just like yours, and mother said the other day that I had kept it much nicer than usual. I'm sure yours is just as good. I'll wear mine if you'll wear yours, and then nobody can say anything."

"O, Marjory!" cried Katy, with a quick flash of delight through the tears that she had been trying to keep back. "But it wouldn't be fair."

"What wouldn't be fair?" laughed Marjory. "To let me wear my own dress! Nonsense! You know we always try to dress alike. Now be sure and be ready when we come for you;"

and she ran off home with some misgivings as to what Ellis might say to her plan, but very happy at Katy's pleasure.

Sue pleaded a bad cold as an excuse for staying at home; so there were only Ellis and Marjory to go. Ellis had been flattered at being especially asked to come early, and she was surprised, when she came, all ready, into the sitting-room, to find Marjory drawing pictures for Jamie, with her school dress on.

"Why, Marjory Dana, aren't you ready yet?"

"Yes. It will only take a minute to put on my hat."

"But you are not going to wear that dress!" and, seeing by Marjory's face that that was what she meant to do, Ellis appealed to her mother. "Now, mother — "

But Marjory was beforehand with her. She knelt on the cricket before her mother, and looked up in her face.

"Now, mother dear," she said, coaxingly, "you know you said yesterday that this dress looked very well. This is only a sewing bee, after all, and there's no need of dressing up; and" — this she would not have said to Ellis — "I really

have a good reason for wanting to wear this dress."

Mrs. Dana smiled, but asked seriously, "Is the reason good enough to counterbalance Ellis's wishes, dear?"

Marjory nodded positively.

"Then, Ellis," Mrs. Dana said, pleasantly, "I think Marjory's argument is a good one. This dress is not really unsuitable, though the new one is much prettier: and if she has a good reason, I think she must be allowed to wear this."

"O, dear!" sighed Ellis; "I don't know what will become of Madge if she's let to have her own way always."

"Suppose you try and see, Ell," Marjory said with good-natured sauciness. "You don't know what heights I might attain under such circumstances."

"I should think depths, more than heights, might be expected," retorted Ellis. "But hurry now, or we shall be late."

At the door they met aunt Esther.

"O, dear!" said Marjory, with a sudden dread of going to a strange place, and among strange

people, "I wish I wasn't going! I know I shall not have a good time."

"Perhaps you can make somebody else have a good time," aunt Esther said, quietly; and Marjory laughed to herself as she ran down the path after Ellis. "That's aunt Esther's way of saying, It's no matter what *you* want."

Florence welcomed them cordially, and thanked them for coming in good season, saying that she depended on them to make the others feel at home. That reminded Marjory of aunt Esther's comment, and then she forgot herself for a while, remembering what kind of work each girl liked best, and supplying each with needle and thread.

Florence had expected more help from Ellis, but it was soon plain that many of the girls were quite as shy of her as of Florence herself. Ellis was known to be critical, and to say sharp things sometimes, and though the girls admired her more, they were by no means as much at ease with her as with Marjory, of whom nobody was the least afraid.

Florence herself was a charming hostess, with her merry fun, and her thoughtfulness, that let no one feel neglected, and Marjory seconded her so well that before tea-time the whole company

were in high glee. Mrs. Mayhew looked in on them at their work, congratulated and questioned, and quite won Marjory's heart by her interest and her promise to find some work for Mrs. Brown as soon as she should be able to leave her husband. For Marjory had by no means forgotten the first cause of all this excitement, and it was with great satisfaction that she folded up the finished garments, and made sure that she should have a good large bundle to carry to Mrs. Brown the next day.

In the evening they had some merry games, and when the party broke up, neither Marjory nor Katy had thought of their dresses after the first minute; only, as Katy said good night, she whispered, "I've had a real good time!" And when they were discussing the bee in the Danas' sitting-room, Ellis said, —

"And Katy Marsh and Marjory were the only girls that wore their school-dresses. Madge is so silly about dressing just like Katy!"

And Marjory blushed as she caught her mother's smile, that said she had no need to be told the "good reason."

CHAPTER VII.

ND soon, without any one quite knowing how, the Browns came to be considered Marjory's care. Sue, indeed, was willing to do all she could, and aunt Esther could be referred to for advice, and certainly did her full share of the sewing; but Sue was her mother's right hand, and very busy at home, and aunt Esther was lame that winter, and could not take long walks. From the beginning, Ellis had been indifferent; and, as the winter went on, her drawing and other engagements with Florence Mayhew took up much of her time. She did go up once or twice with Marjory; but the closeness and untidiness of the whole place shocked her so much that she was eager to get away as soon as possible. She could not even stay to hear the story to which Marjory listened,—how the baby was fractious with his teeth, and had kept his mother awake all night, and how Sally had

hurt her hand, and Jack had torn his trousers. Marjory promised some salve for the hand, and a patch for the trousers, and thought her father would look in and see the baby.

"How could you stay there!" cried Ellis, when she came out; "I thought I should faint; and I am sure I told her before she ought to air the room; and I should think she might keep clean!"

"But, Ellis, she has not wood enough for much fire, and she could not let in the cold air on those little children. And there are so many of them to keep clean! You might have stopped just to hear what she had to say for herself!"

"There's no excuse for not being clean!" That was one of Ellis's strong points. "And I don't see that all that we have done for them has made much difference. Of course, we should not let them starve; but I don't see the good of giving so much time to them. However, if you want to, it's no concern of mine."

Marjory might have said that she didn't want to; for there had been several times when she would much rather have spent her half-holidays in some other way. Mrs. Brown was not the most grateful or cheerful of poor people; and sometimes Marjory was as much inclined as Ellis to give up

all care about her. But she had one strong motive to keep on. This was really the first thing that her father had ever asked her to do as help in his work; the first time, that is, that she had had any responsibility; and she was very proud of it, very proud that he should think her able to help, and very anxious to prove that he was not mistaken.

It was true that the work had been given quite as much to Ellis as to Marjory; but then Ellis had no doubt that she could do it if she chose, only she thought her time better employed on other things. It did not occur to either of the girls, that, however little good Marjory might be doing the Browns, she was gaining for herself thoughtfulness and self-control; and the sight of other people's sufferings and poverty made her more contented in her own home, as the luxury of the Mayhews made Ellis more discontented.

Marjory was saved any need of answering Ellis's last speech by the sight of Roger, just starting on his sled for a coast down the long hill behind Mrs. Brown's hut. He stopped and offered them a ride. "O, come, Ellis; it's a capital coast!" cried Marjory. Ellis liked coasting; and, having made sure that nobody was looking on,

she took her place with Marjory on Roger's long sled, and away they went, coming out in fine style at the cross-road just as Florence Mayhew came up with Miss Bruce. Ellis was provoked enough at being caught so, and would have been glad not to see them; but that was impossible. She had to answer Miss Bruce's greeting, while Florrie, with a nod to her, turned to Marjory and Roger: —

"What a capital coast, and how finely you came down! Isn't it great fun?"

"Grand!" answered Marjory, her cheeks glowing, while Roger added, really to tease Ellis, —

"Don't you want to try?"

"Yes, thank you," said Florrie, promptly, "if I was not afraid of an upset. I always did want to coast."

"Try it with me," said Marjory, eagerly; and Roger added, "You're quite safe with Madge. She can coast with the best of us;" and before Ellis had got over her surprise, the three were half way up the hill. Roger started them carefully, and they came down at full speed, Marjory doing full justice to her reputation.

"It's good fun! Won't you try it, Miss Bruce?" asked Florence, as the sled stopped,

and she sprang up, drawing a long breath after the quick rush.

"No, thank you: though there was a time when I could coast as well as Marjory, I think."

"How I wish Paul was here! He would enjoy it. I hope you appreciate having your brother with you!" and Florence turned to Ellis and Marjory. Ellis hesitated. Without meaning to tell any falsehood, she would probably have assented cordially enough, if Roger had not been listening; but she remembered that she really interested herself very little in his ways or plans, indeed, often thought him a bother, and she knew he would not hesitate to say so.

But, fortunately, Marjory could answer at once. "O, yes, we have fine sport! But it's best of all coasting by moonlight. Why won't you try it with us some evening?" and Roger, quite won over by Florrie's cordiality, added,—

"There's a capital coast back of your barn. If you like, we'll bring up the sled some evening and try it."

"Thank you! Will you come soon — to-morrow, perhaps?"

So it was agreed: and then they separated, Marjory and Roger in high glee over the whole

affair; the more as Ellis had once been quite indignant with Madge for proposing to ask Florence to join them in some such frolic.

Roger told the story at home with great delight, and appealed to his mother to know what she thought of it.

"I am not surprised," she said, quietly. "Florence is too sensible a girl not to take all the pleasure that comes fairly in her way. If she can't have dancing and concerts, she will enjoy coasting."

And Ellis wondered if her mother meant any of that remark for her, and had an uncomfortable feeling that, whether meant or not, it would fit well. She knew that she was growing more and more discontented with home, and that so much of her time was taken up with her new friends, that she could not do her full share of what was to be done there. But she said to herself that it could not be for very long, and that she really ought to improve the opportunity; the time she took for the Mayhews was not much more than Marjory gave to the Browns, and it was much better spent.

Meantime, to two of the family, Ellis's and Marjory's new interests made more difference than

they thought. Sue was too unselfish and too much interested in whatever concerned other people not to be pleased with Ellis's enjoyment, and sympathetic with Marjory's plans, and she would not mind the extra work it threw on her. Indeed, she really cared about the Browns herself, and the success of the plans for their help had been due quite as much to her wisdom and prudence as to Marjory's energy. But Roger was not so used to forgetting himself, and he had always, till now, found Marjory ready at his call. And he grew indignant, and declared, more than once, that she was good for nothing now; she could not spare a minute from something to do for the Browns; and, for his part, he wished they were in Guinea. He was hardly fair; for, even if the unfortunate Browns had never been heard of, he would not have had Marjory as much to himself as usual this winter. She was learning to take her share, or some of it, in the house-work, and to be content with less play. But it must be owned that Marjory talked about the Browns more than was needful, or quite pleasant, and Roger grew cross about it.

It was after he had gone off in a huff, one

afternoon, that Marjory came into the room where her mother and aunt Esther sat at work.

"O, dear! I wish Roger wouldn't be so cross!"

"And what does Roger wish?" Mrs. Dana asked, quietly.

"Something hateful to the Browns! You see, he wanted me to go skating with him; but I told Mrs. Brown I would go up there this week, and here it is Friday, and I want to finish Sally's sacque to take up when I go."

"Does Sally really need the sacque to-day?"

"Why, no," hesitatingly; "she could wait till next week, but I want to finish it."

Mrs. Dana said nothing; and after a minute Marjory asked, —

"Do you think I ought to have gone with Roger, mother?"

"I think it is not strange that Roger should feel hurt that you have so little time to spare for him now. You say that Florence Mayhew was wishing so much that her brother was at home, and when you have Roger you can't find time for him."

"Why, I didn't think he cared so very much."

"Wouldn't you have cared if something had

taken up his time and thoughts for the last six weeks whenever you wanted him?"

"Yes," said Marjory decidedly: and then, after a long pause, "O, dear! I thought, when anybody set out to do right, she might keep on doing just as hard as she could. And helping the Browns is right."

"Poor Marjory!" Aunt Esther looked up with a smile. "Life would be much easier if your rule was the true one, and if there was only one right to do; but the trouble is, extremes are always dangerous."

"I see," said Marjory, after another pause, "Roger has some rights as well as other people; and," she added, more to herself, "if I hadn't just *wanted* to hurry Sally's sacque, I might have pleased him, too. Suppose I were to start now for Mrs. Brown's, and take my skates with me; and then I can come round by the pond, and have an hour with Roger, after all. How will that do, mother? I could take some doughnuts, and then we need not hurry home to supper."

"That is a better plan," Mrs. Dana said cheerily; and as Marjory ran off to get ready, she said, "I wish I was as sure of Ellis's finding out the right in these matters as Marjory. I could not

bear to stop Meg, she had taken hold so earnestly; but it has been hard for Roger."

"It will come out right, now," said aunt Esther; "Marjory can be trusted if she sees the way."

Marjory hurried off, eager now to make up for past neglect of Roger, and really glad to feel that she could have a good skate with him. Mrs. Brown was more cheery than usual, though the baby was still troublesome, and she knew that he needed fresh milk. Marjory listened and sympathized, and left the pail of nice soup that she had brought for the sick man, and then went on to the pond, planning on the way how she could provide for the baby's need. There was milk enough at home, but how could she get it to Mrs. Brown every day? None of the children were large enough to come for it so far in the bleak winter weather. She could not take it herself, and she did not like to ask Roger's help just now. She puzzled over it all the way, and it was not till she was within sight of the pond that she bethought her of Willie Nickerson. It would not be far out of his way, and she was pretty sure that he would do as much as that if she asked him; for Marjory

and Willie had been very good friends since the birthday party.

She had strapped on her skates in a sheltered spot and was out on the pond before Roger saw her; and then they had a merry time. There were many other boys and girls out, but as supper-time came they began to drop away, and Marjory and Roger agreed to go too, after once more going the length of the pond. As they wheeled, at the lower end, they came upon a knot of boys in eager talk.

"What's up?" cried Roger; and Marjory paused on her skates to listen, for she was a favorite with the boys, and in most of their secrets.

"I'll tell you," spoke up a bright-faced boy. "You see, we're kind of mad with old Joe Hackett. He's so dreadful mean he won't let us set any traps in his woods, or coast down the long hill, and we want to pay him up some way, and have some fun, too. I saw some wood just ready to be unloaded before his shed, as I came by, and we're planning to run it back for him a mile or two, on the off road, without notice. Won't the old fellow storm when he misses it to-morrow!"

"I'll tell you a better trick than that," said

Marjory, with a sudden thought; "You know Jim Brown was working for him when he broke his leg. I heard father ask Joe Hackett about his wages, and Joe said he might take it out in wood that was up in the Bates lot. He might have all he could get there, Joe said; and it sounded very generous, but he knew the man was flat on his back, and there was time enough to get off all he wanted himself."

"Hurrah!" cried the boy, who had first spoken, catching Marjory's meaning. "Let's pay old Joe's debts! Father will let us have our team without asking questions, and we can get off a couple of prime loads before Joe knows it. I say, Marjory, is there any shed to pile it in at Brown's?"

"No, but it will keep against the wall, and block up some of the cracks, too."

Then they separated, agreeing to meet as soon as the moon was up. And they carried out their plan successfully, with much fun to themselves, much amazement to the Browns, and much chagrin to old Joe, who had meant to pay his debt with a scant supply of brush-wood only. But he knew too well how unpopular he was to care to make a fuss about it, and the doctor, let into the

secret by Marjory and Roger, only advised them to be careful of taking such matters into their own hands too often.

"But, father," said Marjory, in excuse, "the boys were bent on doing some mischief, and I didn't see why some good shouldn't come of it, too."

More good came of it than she had planned, for from that time the boys considered the Browns as, in some sort, their charge; and many a time they came to Mrs. Brown's help, in chopping her wood and patching up some of the cracks of the old tumble-down hut, to make it a little less uncomfortable.

"I really believe," Marjory confided to Trotter, one day, — "I really believe that if we had asked Roger to do something for the Browns in the first place, instead of just talking about them, he would have liked them a great deal better. He isn't cross about them now."

Willie Nickerson, too, proved as ready to help as Marjory had hoped; and though Roger and Ellis laughed at her plan, and declared that Willie would surely forget the milk, or leave it beside the road in some of his wanderings, they were false prophets; and the baby throve well. And

Willie himself was much happier for just that little bit of help to somebody else. Miss Crabb only thought him in the way, and the boy was so used to think of himself as a trouble to somebody, that it was a new and very pleasant thing to find himself of use.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was an afternoon in March. People had begun to say that winter was almost over, that we could not have many more "cold snaps," and Marjory had even begun to think that soon she might look in some of the most sheltered nooks for traces of the wild flowers.

The morning had been bright, but, as the day wore on, gray clouds had risen, and as Marjory swung open the gate, a few flakes of snow were falling. The doctor was just stepping into his chaise, and she called to him, —

"May I go with you, father? I have nothing to do, and I haven't had a ride for so long!"

"It is going to snow," said Sue, coming to the door.

"That's nothing."

"Jump in, then," called the doctor.

"Wait a minute;" and Sue brought out a thick shawl. "If you don't need it, you needn't use

it," she laughed, as she tossed it into the chaise, and they drove off.

It was what Marjory called one "of her special comforts" to have a ride with her father. "It was so resting, and so many snarls got untangled." Not that they always talked much, though Marjory could chatter fast enough if she felt in the mood. But more often, as this afternoon, she sat quietly, noticing all the innumerable little changes of the country that she knew so well, and sure of sympathy if she wanted it.

And when the doctor went in to see his patients, some one would come out to chat with her, and exchange some of the village news; or talk about school and play, for at almost every house there was a child; or, at least, the house-dog would walk down and wag his tail in greeting; and, if the doctor staid very long, Max would look round at her knowingly, and nod his head in answer to her lecture on patience.

As it grew later the few flakes, which had seemed out on a frolic, were followed by hosts chasing each other headlong, till the air was full; and the wind rose, swirling them in eddies into Marjory's face, so that she was not sorry when the doctor said, —

"This is the last place this afternoon."

But he found a message there from Miss Crabb, asking him to come to her.

"It will be a windy drive," he said. "What do you say to my leaving you here, Marjory?"

"O, no; please don't, father. I am not afraid of the wind, and Sue's shawl will keep me warm and dry."

"Very well. I will bring you a hot stone for your feet, and I think you can keep comfortable."

He went back with some medicines, and presently returning, packed the stone under her feet, tucked her in warmly, and they started again.

At Miss Crabb's Marjory decided to go into the house, and see Willie Nickerson. She found him shivering over a feeble fire in the cheerless little room. It proved that Miss Crabb was really very ill, and the doctor staid some time. As he called to Marjory to get ready to start again, he asked the cousin, who was taking care of the sick woman, if there was anything else he could do.

"Nothing, except to take that boy away. It would be one less to look after, and my hands are full enough."

"Can you be ready in three minutes?" the doctor asked of Willie, who had heard all.

The boy ran off, and came back within the limited time with a little bundle in a handkerchief.

"That's right! Come, Marjory;" and the doctor packed them in, and was off again, this time really towards home.

It was now quite dark, except for the light the snow itself gave, and through the thick white mist it was almost impossible to distinguish anything; but as they came out from the little hollow in which Miss Crabb's house was sheltered, Marjory was startled by the violence of the wind, and the fierce force with which it shook the chaise and flung the snow about. The doctor drew his breath. "The wind has doubled in this last half hour," he said; "be sure you are well tucked in, Marjory."

And then Max plodded on doggedly, cheered by the doctor's voice. Marjory's stone had grown quite cold, for she had forgotten to heat it at Miss Crabb's, and the sharp wind stung her face, and crept in through the folds of the shawl, that she shared with Willie. She began to think with longing of the Abbots, Miss Crabb's nearest neighbors, though two miles away.

"Won't you stop at the Abbots' to get warm, father?"

"Perhaps."

"But," with a sudden thought, "can you get through the Cut?"

"I don't know."

Then, for the first time, Marjory began to be afraid; before, she had been only uncomfortable. The Cut was a narrow passage of the road just this side of the Abbots' house, and she remembered that it had sometimes been blocked by the snow till broken out by the neighbors. She strained her eyes to measure the drifts, and watched Max eagerly. The brave horse had done good work, but his strength was giving out. And at last he stopped, and no persuasions of the doctor could urge him on. The doctor got out and went forward a little way.

"Marjory," he said, coming back, — and Marjory thought how quiet his voice was, — "we are at the Cut, and the drift is too high for us to break through as we are. Can you wait with Willie in the shed here, while Max and I try to get to the Abbots' for help?"

"Yes, father."

There was a long, low shed, which had been put up sometime by workmen on the road, and left standing after the immediate need for it was

over. It was partially sheltered by high bushes, and though far from being weather-tight, it yet was a protection not to be despised. Marjory and Willie got under it, and the doctor brought the shawls and blanket.

"Now, Marjory," he said, "I think it has almost stopped snowing, though the wind blows the snow so here that it is hard to tell. But it may break away very soon. I shall take Max out of the chaise, and take one of the lanterns with me. The other I leave here. You must keep walking all the time till I come back, you and Willie. Will you remember?"

"Yes, father;" and Marjory put up her face for a kiss. "Good by;" and then she wrapped the shawl round Willie, and they began their walk.

As they walked up and down, they heard the doctor talking to Max, as he unharnessed him, and then the point of light that they knew meant the lantern began to move. They watched it out of sight, and then it seemed to Marjory that a terrible stillness fell over everything, and through it she could hear the shrieking of the wind, the groaning and cracking of the branches. This was worse than her terror of the meadow, for she could not turn her back on this and run. And

then she thought of home, and wondered if it was past supper time. Of course it was; and was mother growing anxious, and how many times had Sue been to the door to look?

And then she thought of her father, and the snow drifting higher and higher; and just as it seemed to her as if she must cry out, must do something, Willie whispered, —

"Are you afraid, Marjory?"

She caught the tremble in his voice, and it nerved her. She must not give up now, for here was somebody who needed help.

"Not very much, Willie;" she spoke as cheerfully as she could; "but don't let us think of it. Let us tell stories;" which was always Marjory's way of making time pass.

"But I can only think of stories of people lost in the snow!" said Willie piteously; and Marjory found that was very much her case.

"Let us sing, then," she said.

"What?"

"Hymns."

"That they sing in church?"

"Yes, and that we sing at home, Sunday evenings. You know some of them. We'll sing the one father likes so much."

"Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

"Why, Willie," she cried, almost stopping short in her walk, "that might be for us! I never thought much about the words before. Let us sing it again."

"Now," (as they finished it), "let us sing what mother likes."

"By day, by night, at home, abroad,
Still we are guarded by our God."

"That's for us, too," said Willie. "Let us sing it all through, Marjory."

And still keeping up their walk, the two children sang, —

"With grateful hearts the past we own;
The future, all to us unknown,
We to Thy guardian care commit,
And peaceful leave before Thy feet."

After they had sung this several times, Marjory said, —

"Now let us sing aunt Esther's favorite:" —

"Give to the winds thy fears;
Hope, and be undismayed.

Through night, and clouds, and storm,
He gently leads thy way.
Trust thou His love; so shall the night
Soon break in endless day."

"Why, Marjory, I did not know there were so many hymns for us! Do you suppose all these people were out in such a storm?"

"I suppose they were in something as bad, and it does not sound as if they were one bit afraid, — does it?"

"I think perhaps they had been afraid once. But, Marjory," he said, after a minute, as they turned in their walk, "are you sure He cares about us *now?*"

"Yes," Marjory said quickly. "I think so. Don't you remember a sermon, last year — "

"I don't listen much to sermons, and I *never* remember them," Willie interrupted rather hopelessly.

"I don't often, but this wasn't like most;" and then she told him what she had heard of it, and the talk she had the next day with the gentleman. She had found so many chances to help through the winter, that she had quite forgotten that Willie's was the first. But it pleased him very much.

"That's good," he said. "Perhaps I'll find a way to help somebody some time. Now sing more, Marjory. That's the best thing for us to do now."

So they kept on marching and singing. Once Willie proposed to stop and rest, but Marjory was firm by her orders.

"Father said we were to walk, Willie;" and so they kept on.

"But, see, there is the moon!" cried Willie, at last; "and, hark! I hear somebody calling. Shout, Marjory; there are the lanterns!"

Then, at last, Marjory stood still.

Relieved of the weight of the chaise and its contents, Max had taken courage, and, cheered by the doctor's voice, had at last broken through the high drift that closed the Cut. Then the way was comparatively easy to the Abbots', where the doctor found ready help. With fresh horses they had broken the way back, and it was a very little while before the children were safely housed.

The doctor decided to spend the rest of the night there, the more readily as he had found a patient needing his care. So he sent the children off to bed, saying he should sit up himself by the kitchen fire. Willie was soon stowed

away with some of the boys, and Marjory was installed in the spare room. She was tired enough, but the room was chill and desolate, and whenever she fell asleep, the fears that she had before kept down and away would come trooping up in dreams, and she would start up wide awake. So, at last, she dressed herself again, and crept down to the kitchen, startling her father, who was dozing by the fire.

"Please, father," she said, "I can't sleep up there; and I am *so* tired!" half afraid that he would send her back again.

But he only said, "Poor child!" and getting a shawl, wrapped her in it, and, taking her in his lap, sat down again in his low seat by the fire. Marjory nestled in her place, "just as if she were a little bit of a girl once more," she said to herself, and watched the shadows dancing by the flickering fire, and fell so fast asleep that she scarcely roused when, by and by, her father laid her on the settle, and went to look at his patient.

Early in the clear, bright morning they went home to the people who had been watching and waiting for them.

"Were you very anxious, mother?" Marjory asked, after their story had been told.

"Not very. You know your father does sometimes stay over night with a patient, and I thought he would take you in somewhere."

"The question was at one time whether we should ever get 'somewhere,'" said the doctor.

"Were you afraid, Marjory?" asked Roger.

"Yes," said Marjory quietly.

"Of course. You're a girl! I wish I had been there."

Marjory only smiled, not being so much inclined this morning as usual to resent any slur on her sex; but the doctor said, —

"I wish I were sure that, in the same place, you would be as brave as the girl who was with me."

Roger opened his eyes wide, but he could see no signs of joking in his father's face. He was half inclined to be indignant at what he thought a slur on his courage; but before he spoke, Sue asked, —

"What did you do, Meg, all the time father was gone?"

"We sung."

"Sung what, child?" cried Ellis.

"Hymns." Marjory did not care to explain.

"Well, that is good! Think of Marjory, who can't sing a bar right to save her life, taking to singing for amusement. I wish I had heard it!"

Ellis's own ear was very correct, and she was proud of it.

"I never heard singing that pleased me better," the doctor said, again very quietly. And this time it was Ellis who looked puzzled, for her father's was the only criticism that she thought worth considering in such matters, and he was apt to be very critical.

The immediate result of that night's adventure was, that Willie Nickerson staid at the Danas' for several weeks, and, indeed, came to consider that almost as much his home as Miss Crabb's. It was certainly the pleasanter place of the two, and there was always room enough for him, and a hearty welcome. He had won Jamie's heart by the patience with which he gave up his time to drawing pictures; and Jamie's mother loved him for it too. Roger patronized him, aunt Esther petted him, and even Ellis admitted that he was not as much in the way as most boys, and could keep still. He was never snubbed, and he had many chances of making himself useful, and it was

wonderful to see how his awkwardness and shyness dropped aside in so bright a home. He was always a little too quiet for Marjory, who could not understand how he could like to lie on the hill-side, and watch the shadows and the clouds, rather than to run races or set traps with Roger. But she left him to his own way, and he was happy.

CHAPTER IX.

"A LETTER," cried Roger, breaking in upon his mother and sisters, as they sat at their sewing, one afternoon, two years later. "A letter, mother, from Boston."

"From your uncle Henry," said Mrs. Dana. And without other comment she read it through, and, putting it in her pocket, took up her work again.

"O, mother, you don't mean that there is nothing in that of interest to any of us children. Why, I felt the news burn in my pocket as I came home!"

"There is something that concerns one of you very much, but I must talk it over with your father."

"Now, mother, that is cruel. You see you are preparing woful disappointment for at least three of us. Here's Madge, already sure that the news concerns her, and Ellis knows that she

is the most important person in the family. It is true that Sue never thinks of herself at all; so perhaps she will bear it; but I am convinced uncle Henry must be planning something for me, his eldest nephew."

"Let me set *your* mind at rest at once, then," said his mother, smiling. "The news concerns one of the girls, and," more seriously, "I must trust them to wait patiently, and without guessing, for a little while."

"I'm blighted! Take warning by me, Madge, and never hope. Only duty will sustain me now. Come, Duke; it's time to bring the cows home."

No more was said then about the letter; but it was hardly possible that the girls should not think about it. Roger was right in saying that Sue never expected anything for herself. Perhaps it was her shyness and desire to keep in the background that had made Ellis feel that she was best fitted to represent the family. Pretty, and self-possessed, and quick to understand the peculiarities of the people with whom she came in contact, she knew she was attractive; and, though she would have denied it if put into words, unconsciously she felt that she could make a better use of any advantages that were offered

than either of the others. Then she did so want to go to the city; and, regardless of her mother's warning against guessing, she began to wonder, after she and Sue had gone to their rooms at night, if it might not be an invitation for a visit. But Sue refused to discuss it. "We shall know soon enough, and wondering won't help it." Which Ellis had to confess was true.

Marjory never lay awake long for anything; so she had only time to wonder, drowsily, what uncle Henry could have written, and supposed that it concerned Ellis; and then she was fast asleep. So it was a surprise to all of them when, at breakfast, Mrs. Dana asked Marjory what she thought of spending a year in Boston, and going to school with her cousin Lilian. Marjory's answer, if she made any, was drowned in a general exclamation.

"So that is your news, mother," cried Roger. "No wonder it burnt in my pocket!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dana. "Your uncle writes that they are at last settled, as they hope, for some time, and that Lilian has a very pleasant school; and he proposes that one of the girls shall join her in her studies. It is too good an opportunity to lose; so, though we do not like to break up our

home, even for a time," — and her smile grew a little sad, — "yet we have decided that Marjory shall go, if she likes. What do you say, Marjory?"

Marjory's face had flushed at first with surprise and pleasure; but it grew quiet as her mother was speaking, and she answered rather slowly, —

"I'd like the studying, and the visiting; but a whole year away from home! O, mother! Couldn't I come home at all in the year?"

"Not once, Madge." And Roger drew his face down to a melancholy length. "I don't think you will be allowed the sight of one familiar face. Your only dependence will be letters, and we shall be too busy to write many of those. What are written will go astray. I am not sure you would be allowed to come home, even if, through homesickness, you wore yourself to a shadow."

"And Marjory is quite too brave for that," said the doctor, looking up from his coffee with a smile at Meg's rather sober face. "She is not going for pleasure, only, but for real work; and the year will go by fast enough, if she is to bring home to us all that we hope from its opportunities."

"I will do the best I can, father," said Meg, brightening at once. And so it was decided.

"How soon will she go?" asked practical Sue.

"In about a week. Your uncle proposes that she shall be there a few weeks before school begins, and so get accustomed to things by degrees; and he says her shopping can be done there with Lilian's. But some work must be done here. We shall be busy enough the next week."

"How will she go?" asked aunt Esther.

"Henry has been urging a visit from the doctor, and he thinks this would be a good time; so I hope Marjory will have her father's escort."

Then they scattered to their different ways. Ellis only had said nothing; but perhaps nobody noticed that but her mother.

The days of the next week seemed to Marjory to fly by; so much was to be done, so many charges given, so many "good bys" said; and Marjory had never realized before how many friends she had. She had to say good by to each of the school girls and boys, for Marjory was a favorite with her playfellows. She had to go over the hill to the Browns, and make arrangements for their comfort while she was away. She had to consider to whom she should intrust

her pet flowers, and to explain carefully to Trotter how impossible it was she should go, too. It must be confessed, Trotter seemed quite resigned to staying behind. But the last days at home really came. They brought a sad disappointment, for when the doctor came home to dinner, one day, he said that farmer Blake was very sick, and he could not leave him then. Either Marjory's journey must be postponed, or she must go alone. And, after some discussion, it was decided that she should go; since it was very uncertain when her father would be at liberty, and very desirable that she should be in Boston in season, and there would really be no difficulty. True, she would have to change cars, and spend two or three hours at a junction; but the conductor would take charge of her, and a book would pass away the time; and, sorry as Marjory was when she thought of leaving home, it was a relief to have no delay. As she went to her room the last night, she stopped at aunt Esther's door.

"Father says I am to come to you for travelling directions, aunt Esther; you are the traveller of the family. Every one else has given me some advice, which I am to mind carefully. Let me see. Sue begs I will be very prudent, and not

catch any dreadful cold. Ellis hopes I won't behave as if I had never seen anything before, and make them all ashamed of me. She says I have only to look and see what other people do; but, O, dear! I always forget that. Roger insists that I shall not grow prim and fussy, and threatens not to recognize me if I come home 'stuck up;' and Jamie begs I will look very hard to see any bears for him, and not be afraid of them. Now, what is your advice, aunt Esther?"

"It is nothing new," Miss Dana said, with a smile; "you will find it in Isaiah xxx. 15."

"I should not think of going to the Bible for a rule for travelling,"—Marjory took up the book that lay on the light-stand,—"but I might know you would." She found the passage, and read what of the verse was marked: "'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.' I like that, aunt Esther; but haven't you a little commentary?"

Roger had said once that aunt Esther's commentaries were a great deal better than any written in books.

"You must make your own commentary as you go along. And you will find the direction work as well for living as for that special bit

of living that we call travel. But don't try to get along with one half of it. That is wretched work, yet it is what many people do. They take the latter half; and then they are so sure of themselves and of their wisdom, and so certain that the Lord's ways are just their ways, and that the world cannot get along without their help, that they can never stop and be quiet a little while, and see just where and what they are, and if it is not possible that they may hinder rather than help, if they take hold before he calls; and thus they lose all the happiness that comes from looking on and learning to understand his work. Or else they take the first half, and then they are just content to sit down and do nothing; to say, 'The Lord does not want me, and I don't know what to do, and what is the use of trying? it does not make any difference;' and then they lose all strength and courage, and go to sleep and can't see. It is quietness *and* confidence that gives strength. And so you have your commentary, after all; but remember this is only the beginning. You will find plenty of illustrations as you go along."

Marjory found her room in the rather forlorn

state into which rooms fall at such times. She had put away some of her dearest treasures, and had given others as keepsakes. The walls looked bare, and the open trunk was dismal with its hint of the future. Even Trotter, who, though she had outgrown her kittenhood, still kept up her habit of sleeping in Marjory's room, seemed uneasy and restless, and, instead of curling herself quietly on her cushion, was wandering about, with once in a while a melancholy mew.

"O, dear!" said Marjory, sitting down on the floor, and letting Trot step into her lap. "I don't think it is nice at all! Do you, Trot? I wish I was going to stay at home! Just think how doleful it will be without mother, or Roger, or any of them. And then I don't know anything about those new people. Suppose Lilian should not like me! And suppose I shouldn't know how to behave! Ellis thinks I don't. And suppose I should grow grumpy, and cross, and horrid! I think I could, Trot; I do, really. Now, don't you wish Ellis was going, instead? I am pretty sure she wants to; and then I could stay at home forever. O, dear, Trot, it is horrid!"

Perhaps it was fortunate that at this moment

Mrs. Dana came in, for Trotter's power of sympathy and comfort seemed quite unequal to the occasion.

Mrs. Dana had fallen into the way of coming up at night, since Marjory had had this room to herself; and more than once Marjory had found the tangles of the day straightened out by a little quiet talk at bed time. Now Mrs. Dana insisted that, first of all, Marjory should finish her preparations for bed, while she packed some last things. And then she gave just a few minutes' talk about the future, reminding her of all that she might do, at home and at school, ending, —

"And, Marjory, dear, I know you are shy of meeting these new relatives, and somewhat afraid. But remember that it depends quite as much on yourself as on them whether you are soon at ease and happy with them. And, dear, I don't expect you to make people better, but I am sure you can make them happier. It needs a great deal of wisdom and tact to improve people, but it only needs hearty good will and thoughtfulness to please them."

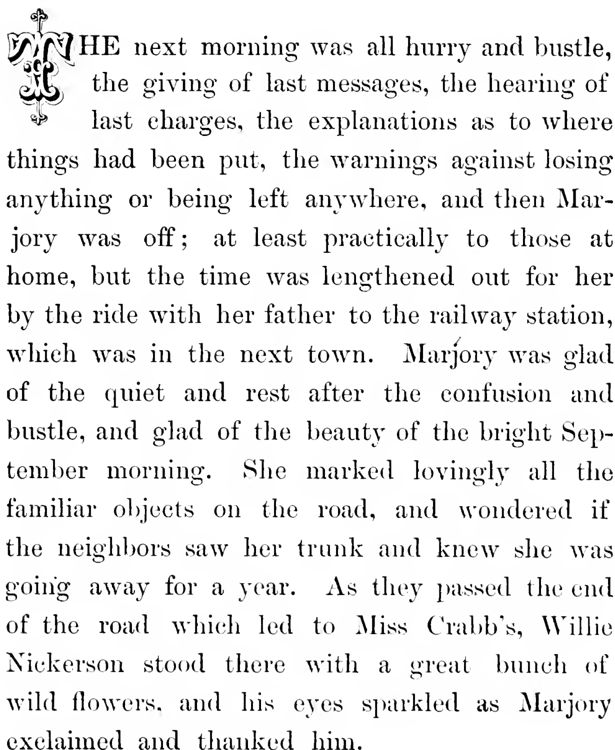
"But, O, mother, it will be so hard to keep right all alone!"

"It would be; but you will never be alone,

dear. Don't forget that. And remember, if you want help you must ask for it. I have packed in with your Bible a little book of hymns, that I think you will like. I don't know how your time will be arranged at your uncle's. That you will have to decide by the family habits. But I am sure that you will be able to get five or ten minutes to yourself every day. Take it in the morning, if you can, and read something in your Bible, — not too much; just one verse will often be enough. Then stop and think a minute if you are glad and thankful, or sorry or anxious about anything, or if you want any help; and tell God of it, just as you would tell me. Don't think anything too small, dear, to speak about. And then, if you read some verses of a hymn to go with you through the day, you may make mistakes and blunders, but you can't go far out of the way, and you will never feel alone. Remember, whatever happens, God loves you."

And then, with a good-night kiss, and "God bless you," Mrs Dana went away, and Marjory fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.



THE next morning was all hurry and bustle, the giving of last messages, the hearing of last charges, the explanations as to where things had been put, the warnings against losing anything or being left anywhere, and then Marjory was off; at least practically to those at home, but the time was lengthened out for her by the ride with her father to the railway station, which was in the next town. Marjory was glad of the quiet and rest after the confusion and bustle, and glad of the beauty of the bright September morning. She marked lovingly all the familiar objects on the road, and wondered if the neighbors saw her trunk and knew she was going away for a year. As they passed the end of the road which led to Miss Crabb's, Willie Nickerson stood there with a great bunch of wild flowers, and his eyes sparkled as Marjory exclaimed and thanked him.

As they drove on, the doctor said, "That boy will be a credit to you yet, Marjory. There's the making of a man in him; though I can't say," with a comical glance at the great bunch of flowers, "that he has chosen the most portable keepsake."

"Never mind," said Marjory cheerily; "he did the best he could, and if only they will not all wilt, I shall enjoy them very much!"

All the arrangements of the railway had the interest of novelty to Marjory, who watched carefully the buying of her ticket and checking of her baggage; and then there was just time for her to be comfortably seated in the car, on the shady side, with her flowers carefully sprinkled and wrapped in a newspaper, and her bag beside her. "But remember, Marjory, if the car is full, somebody will want that spare seat," charged her father; and then he introduced her to the conductor, who promised to see that she got out at the junction; and then the bell rang, and the doctor gave her a last kiss, and a firm shake of the hand, and was gone, with the final charge, "Take good care of — other people."

"I will," said Marjory, catching a parting nod, as the train started, and thinking, "That is just

like father; but I don't think there will be a chance to do much for other people here."

Then all Marjory's attention was given for a time to the country through which they were going so quickly. But presently her eyes began to tire of the constant changes, and she came back for amusement to the car and its occupants.

It happened to be an accommodation train, and her travelling companions changed often. For some time she had her seat all to herself; but presently a stout woman settled herself comfortably beside her, if indeed any one could be called comfortable who was so extremely uneasy. She inquired where Marjory came from, and where she was going, and if she knew anything about the road, and could she tell if they were near Newbury. Finding that Marjory could not help her, she turned to her neighbors behind and before, and seemed to put no faith in the conductor's assurance, that she had more than an hour yet to ride. "Well," she said, "you see I did get carried out of the way once, and a dreadful time I had of it;" and then followed the whole story, to which Marjory listened patiently. After her came a stolid-looking man, who dropped into the seat, and, pulling his hat over

his eyes, fell into a broken nap, lurching this way and that with the motion of the train, and recovering himself with a sudden jerk, till Marjory thought he would certainly break his neck, and was much relieved when the conductor roused him just in time to put him off at his destination before the train started on.

"So," thought Marjory, "each of those people has taken only half of aunt Esther's text." And then there came into the seat in front a woman with a baby in her arms, and a little child dragging by her side. She seemed too tired herself to pay any attention to the child, and the little thing pulled himself up on the seat, and peered at Marjory over the top.

Now Marjory was fond of children, and used to them, too; but there was nothing attractive about this one. She looked at his tousled hair, his sticky fingers and face, his apron daubed with candy, and grimy with the dust of the road, and she turned away impatiently. "Why will not people keep their children clean!"

The child, finding no entertainment from outside, began to fret and whine, at which Marjory did not much wonder, when the woman took

from her bag a stick of candy to quiet him, saying, "There! now I shall not give you another bit; you've had four sticks already."

For a while the child was quiet; but, the candy gone, he began to fret again; and then the baby woke, and became noisy indeed. It screamed and sobbed, till Marjory, seeing the glum looks of the rest of the passengers, could not help pitying the poor mother, who was doing her best to hush it. And when the older child, getting no attention, began to climb about again, all at once Marjory remembered her mother's charge, "You can't improve people, but you can please them." The dirty face was surely no reason why the child should not be amused. Marjory found a pair of scissors in the neat little sewing-case that Sue had slipped into her bag, and from a stray bit of paper, she began what was an unfailing amusement to Jamie, the cutting out of animals. The child, shy at first, yielded to the charms of a wonderful horse, and was soon supplied with a whole Noah's Ark of creatures, and, indeed, with some to which it was doubtful if any name given by Noah would apply. But that did not trouble him; and when, paper failing, an end came to the supply, the little fellow settled himself calmly

in his corner, and arranged and re-arranged them, till the motion and the heat were too much for him, and he fell asleep, still holding fast a horse in one hand and a monkey in the other.

Marjory turned again to the outside world. It was all so new to her that she wished they might go slower, and enjoy it more. She would have liked to look in at some of the pleasant farm-houses, that stood so quietly in the shadow of the great trees on the hill-slopes, or to paddle with the children in the pool where the ducks were swimming, and where the lazy cows, standing up to their knees in the cool water, looked out with solemn eyes at the rush and clatter of the train. She would have liked a chat, at least a word and a nod, with the girl who was feeding her chickens in the barn-yard, or with the other child, of whom she caught just a glimpse, in the doorway on a village street by which they rushed. Best of all, she would have liked a stroll in the woods, into which presently they came, where, even as early in the season as that, an occasional flaming bush gave a hint of all the glories that were to be.

And she was much interested in all the little

adventures at the way stations, in all the arrivals and departures. She was anxious that the old people should get safely off, and that none of the young people should forget any of their packages or wraps. She made to herself stories about them all, and enjoyed all the fun and all the earnestness of the welcomes, and sympathized with those who had no one to greet them. It is very likely that she made many mistakes, and gave her sympathy where it was not needed; but it is certain that all these interests made her journey pass pleasantly.

At the junction, a dismal place, the conductor established her as comfortably as possible in the waiting-room, told her carefully at what time and from what direction her train was to come, asked the station-master to look out for her, and then shook hands and was off in his train; and Marjory felt that the last link with home was cut. But it was worse than useless to think about that; so she tried to find some amusement in the people around her. That failed, for they were evidently only trying to while away the time; and the two most common, and, as it seemed, successful ways were eating and reading. So Marjory ate her lun-

cheon, and then took out her book, which proved interesting enough to occupy her for the rest of the time, with occasional breaks, when the arrival of some train brought in a bevy of fresh travellers, and there was a bustle and chatter.

At last the train for which she was waiting came. Marjory found herself hurried in, bags and parcels stowed away, and the train in motion again; and she had the comfortable feeling that she would have no other change to make till she should arrive in Boston.

Among the people in the first train she had been much interested in two, who sat a few seats in front of her, and whose faces she could see in the narrow strip of glass at the end of the car. They were a young lady and a girl, whose face showed her to be about Marjory's age, though from her size Marjory would have thought her much younger. But in some movement Marjory had caught sight of a crutch, and that told the whole story. Marjory had liked to watch them, because of the lady's quiet care and tenderness, and the young girl's cheerfulness, and interest in what was going on around. In the bustle of getting out at the junction she had lost sight of them, and she had looked for them in

vain in the waiting-room; but now she found them still before her.

This was an express train, and ran on rapidly, dashing recklessly, as it seemed to Marjory, by the little villages on its route. But suddenly there was a sharp whistle, a break-up, and a stir among the passengers. Most of the men got out, but returned in a minute as the train began to back slowly to the station it had just passed. From the bits of talk Marjory gathered that there was some obstacle on the track, and that they would be detained. That possibility had not occurred to her before, and she began to think rather anxiously what she should do. All were too busy with their own affairs, when the train stopped, for her to hope for any attention; and noticing that the lady and young girl sat still, Marjory said to herself, "Now comes the first part of aunt Esther's text. I'll be quiet and see." The conductor came and spoke to the lady, who nodded and waited till all the other passengers had left the car. Then, as he came back, she gathered together her wraps, evidently meaning to get out. "This must be the time for 'confidence,'" said Marjory; and she took up her bag and strap, just as the conductor,

turning, beckoned to her, and then helped the lady. Following them out, Marjory noticed that the lady had dropped her small hand-bag, and she added it to her own bundles, and went quietly on behind them. The young girl suffered from the motion, and moved with difficulty; and when at last they had seated her on a bit of mossy log that stood just beside the platform, she looked pale and faint.

"I will give you some cologne," said the lady, and then missed her bag. But Marjory was close at hand. The lady thanked her only with a smile as she took out the bottle, and busied herself for a time with the invalid; but when the fresh air and the quiet had done their work, and the color came back to the young girl's face, she turned again to Marjory, who, having put down her parcels, had stood quietly a little on one side.

"Thank you," she said. "Are you alone, and going to Boston?"

"Yes," said Marjory.

"Then perhaps we might join forces, and be the better for it all round. What do you say?"

"Thank you. I should like it."

"Will you stay, then, with Annie a few minutes, while I go into the station, and learn what I can about our detention here?"

"Why don't you ask some of these people?" suggested Annie.

"Better go to headquarters. You won't mind staying here a while, dear? It is much pleasanter than in the waiting-room."

"O, no, not when I have company;" and Annie looked up brightly at Marjory, and tried to move to give her room beside her. But Marjory stopped her, and climbing to a higher perch, where she could shade her companion from the warm September sun, spread her shawl over her lap, and invited her to try that for a back.

The lady was gone more than a few minutes, and the girls had time to learn much about each other before she returned. Gathering up the parcels, she gave them to a small boy she had brought with her, and said, cheerily, "It seems that the engine of the freight train, which was a few hours before us, ran off the track, and is now blocking our way, and we shall be detained here three or four hours. It is a long way to the inn; so I have persuaded a pleasant

country woman to take us into her house, which is near. Let the boy take your things too, my dear," she added, specially to Marjory; "and if you will give Annie an arm, I think she will be able to move along slowly."

Fortunately, it was, as she had said, but a very short way to the pleasant little house, where the kindly woman stood waiting in the doorway; but Annie was quite tired out when they reached it. Their first care was to make her comfortable with pillows and shawls on the stiff hair-cloth sofa, where her aunt charged her to lie still and be very quiet.

"But first, aunt Emily, let me tell you. This is Marjory Dana, Lilian Lindsay's cousin. She is to spend the winter in Boston, and go to Miss Lee's school with our Allie. Think of that!"

"I think very well of it, and I am glad to be introduced to Miss Marjory in proper form," said aunt Emily, laughing. "You go to sleep, puss, while Marjory and I transact some business, and then we shall all be ready for the early dinner which our hostess has promised us here, instead of the late one we expected at home."

Annie shut her eyes, and nestled among her pillows contentedly; and Marjory, not knowing at

all what she was to do, went out with aunt Emily, as, for want of another name, she was forced to think of her.

"I am going," said the lady, as she stepped into the street, "to telegraph to my brother, so that he need not be anxious about our delay, and may meet us in the evening; and I suppose you would like to do the same thing. Are you to go directly to Judge Lindsay's? And have you his address?"

"Yes," said Marjory hesitatingly.

Aunt Emily mistook the hesitation. "Would you rather not send word?"

"O, no," said Marjory, eagerly. "They ought to know. But I don't know anything about a telegraphic message."

The truth was that, though Marjory knew well enough the operation of the telegraph, she had always looked upon a message as some kind of a secret and mysterious thing, only to be used by those who understood it.

"O," said aunt Emily cheerily, "I will see to that for you. It is only desirable to use as few words as possible. What do you want to tell them?"

"That I am detained by an accident, and shall be four hours late."

"Strike off the first three words, and you have just the ten allowed you. But do they know you started alone?"

"Yes."

"Then they may be anxious about your comfort. Let us see if we can't give them more information in the same space. If they were sure you had found company, they would be better pleased. And the accident does not matter, so long as they know that you are safe. 'Delayed four hours. Safe, and with Miss Strong.' That is within limits, and you might even add Emily, to make the Strong more definite. Judge Lindsay knows me by name."

Marjory approved, and Miss Strong made out her own message. "Of course," she said, as they came out from the little office, — where Marjory had puzzled herself trying to make any meaning out of the "tick, tick" of the instrument, — "of course, you could send a longer message at double price, but it is best to be short, when so many people want to send. That is the way we do here," she added, with a little laugh. "But I remember a message sent to me by telegraph, at

Berlin, through a German gentleman, stating that 'Miss Mann regretted that she was prevented by indisposition from joining her friends that day, but hoped to do so the next.' I think a Yankee boy would have put it, — 'Sick. Will come to-morrow.' "

That business disposed of, Miss Strong proposed that they should take a walk through the little village.

"We shall be sure to find something worth looking at, and at least we shall get some fresh air and an appetite," she said.

They found Annie quite rested when they returned, and while dinner was preparing, she proposed that aunt Emily should show her what they had seen, enjoying Marjory's look of amazement at the request. Miss Strong took out pencil and paper, and, explaining or describing as she went on, quickly sketched, first, the solemn little girl, whom they had found sitting in a doorway, and watching the harnessing of a horse, as if the safety of the whole work depended on her personal care; then the colt that had tossed his head at them over the bars of his pleasant field; then the matronly hen that had clucked her brood of downy chickens out of their way, and the arro-

gant turkey that had gobbled at them. She drew, too, the church spire that rose above the trees at the end of the village street, and the little foot-bridge that crossed the stream.

"You see," said Annie, in answer to Marjory's look of wonder, "I have to stay at home so much, that I have trained the rest of the family to see for me. You can't imagine how much I get in that way. I have four or five pairs of eyes."

"But do they all draw?"

"O, no. Aunt Emily and uncle Alick are the only ones who illustrate for me, but Allie's descriptions are perfect, and Fred's are so funny. Aunt Emily, I think I must take possession of Marjory's eyes too. I used to wish for somebody who had never been in the city, to see all the little things that city people won't notice. What do you say, Marjory? Shall it be a bargain?"

"Be careful, Marjory," cautioned aunt Emily. "Once committed, there will be no escape."

"But I don't know how to describe!"

"You know how to see, and that is half the battle. O, you need not open your eyes so wide. Couldn't I watch you in the looking-glass, and didn't I know that you were seeing so many things to which the other people shut their eyes?"

Now came the summons to dinner, to which even Annie came with hearty appetite, and did full justice to the broiled chicken and the inviting apple tart with flaky pastry braided over the top. Once more settled in their room, with yet two hours to wait, Annie exclaimed, —

"Now, aunt Emily, how did you happen to find this place, of all in the village, and how did you know or guess that the woman would not give us horrid pastry and some kind of soggy stew? Aunt Emily has a wonderful way, Marjory, of getting just the right things at the right places."

"It was a very simple way, in this case," retorted Miss Strong. "First I used my eyes, and saw that the outside — the house and garden — looked trim and neat; then I had confidence enough in human nature to try if the owner would not be willing to help us; and when I saw her I knew she did not live on heavy bread or indigestible pastry, but I took the precaution to name what I would like for dinner. You see, Marjory, Annie has a wonderful way of admiring her friends."

"It is a very reasonable way, you dear old aunt," cried Annie, giving her a hug as she stooped over her to arrange her pillows. "Now

go off to your beloved book, and Marjory and I will have a chat all to ourselves, while I tell her about the city and her school. You see, Madge, I know all about the school girls, for Allie tells me everything; so you needn't think to have any secrets."

"O, do tell me something about the girls, and about Miss Lee herself," begged Marjory.

Annie laughed, catching her aunt's glance. "Aunt Emily is afraid I shall tell too much, and give you some of my prejudices, — but I won't. I dare say they are all nice girls, though of course I like some better than others, and I hope you will take to my favorites. You must like my sister Allie."

"Is she like you?"

"Not a bit! She is strong and merry, brimful of fun, and thoroughly good-natured. And when she undertakes anything, she goes straight on to the end. Then there is Florence Mayhew."

"I know her a little."

"That is good, for she is stanch, and bright too in her way. Florence does not make many mistakes. Then there is Molly Douglas, who is always making blunders; but nobody minds them, and half the time she does not know it herself:

and May Norris, who is Allie's special friend. But she is very quiet; it will take you a long while to know her. And there is Isabel Gresham, who came last year; and your cousin, Lilian Lindsay. Did you ever see Lilian?"

"I never saw her, and I don't know a thing about her, except that when she was a little girl she was not strong at all, and did not go to school."

"If you like beauty, you will like to look at your cousin Lilian. There are other girls at school who are pretty, — Florrie Mayhew, for instance, and our Allie; but Lilian is really beautiful. I like to just lie and watch her, when she comes to see Allie. It would be entertainment enough if she said nothing; and she does not say very much, though you never think she could not if she chose. Indeed, Allie says she might be first in other things beside beauty, only she does not care to. I don't think she cares very much for anything. Now, perhaps I ought not to have said that, for how can I know, when I see her so little? And I am sure she must be lovable, or all the girls would not so readily make her first among them. Isabel Gresham tried to

rival her, but I believe she is content now to be Lilian's devoted friend."

Here Annie stopped herself a moment, and then went on.

"But Miss Lee is just splendid. She knows everything, and she teaches it beautifully. And she knows how to help you, so that you don't feel like a doll, but a living being. I would rather be like Miss Lee than any one else, except," — and Annie dropped her voice, with a loving glance at the figure in the window, — "except aunt Emily."

And so they chatted and rested, till it was time to take up their journey again. Snugly ensconced again in her corner, and rushing on in the gathering twilight, Marjory had a chance to think how long it seemed since she left home, and how quickly she, usually so shy of strangers, had come to feel at ease with these new friends. And then her thoughts ran on to the end, and she could not help wishing that she was to go with Annie and Miss Strong, instead of to people whom she did not know. And then Marjory began to grow blue. She was tired with the journey and the unusual excitement. Her companions had both fallen asleep; but Marjory could not do that, and

she began to fancy all manner of things that might happen, at home and in Boston, in the year that was to come. The thought of aunt Esther's motto broke in upon a picture of fancied misery which had really brought tears to her eyes. She gave herself a little shake of indignation, and blushed in the darkness, saying, half aloud, "I am ashamed of you, Marjory Dana; this is not confidence."

"What, are we here?" cried Annie, starting at the sound. "Almost; there are the city lights."

And then again there were bustle and confusion, — people rousing and shaking themselves, and getting down their parcels, and folding their shawls. As the train ran into the station, Annie cried, "There is uncle Alick!" and in a minute a gentleman made his way to them. His face seemed to Marjory strangely familiar, but she had no time to think about it. She got her things together, and helped Miss Strong, who had said, "Keep with us," as she followed Annie, in her uncle's arms, out of the car. There other friends met them with greeting and inquiry, and Marjory, standing quietly on one side, and scanning each passer-by in the hope it might be her uncle, was beginning to feel forlorn indeed, when a boy,

whom she had noticed before, stepped up, and lifting his cap, said, "Is this Miss Dana?"

Hardly recognizing herself by that formal title, Marjory said, "Yes;" and he continued, —

"Uncle Lindsay got your message, but had an engagement this evening, and sent me to meet you in his stead. Lilian is expecting you at the house. Let me take your bag, and we will go to the carriage."

Miss Strong turned. "O, your friends have found you, Marjory! Good night, then. I shall come and see you soon."

"Good night," said Annie. "Remember you are to come to me before long."

And then Marjory followed her guide out to the carriage. He handed her in and gave her check to the driver, standing himself by the horses till the man returned. He stood full in the light of the street lamp, and Marjory had a chance to study his looks. He seemed about Roger's age, but looked very unlike him; and at first Marjory thought him very ugly, noticing a large mouth, very deep-set eyes, and a most irregular nose. But in spite of all it was a pleasant face, and Marjory, seeing how straight and alert he stood, decided, in her quick way, that she should

like him. But who could he be! She did not remember to have heard of any boy in the family.

She had not long to wonder, for the driver soon came back with her trunk, and the boy got into the carriage. As they started from the station, he turned to her with a bright smile.

"Now that there is nothing else to do, I may introduce myself. My name is Frank Marshall; but I don't suppose that tells you much. Mrs. Lindsay is my aunt, and the judge has invited me to spend the winter here, and go on with my studies. The chance came just at the right time for me, for my sister Janet had decided to go to Europe as a governess, and I want to make myself a thoroughly good engineer, and then I shall have a home for her some time. Janet and I have had only each other for a long time, and we can't stay apart very long. Have you any brothers?"

Marjory answered the abrupt question promptly.

"Two; a little one, and one just about as old as you, I should think."

"Then you are not afraid of boys!"

Marjory laughed merrily. "I should think not."

"And you can laugh! How jolly! I beg your pardon," catching Marjory's amazed look. "I don't mean, of course, that nobody laughs here,

but they do it in such a quiet, proper way,—at least I am sure Lilian could laugh if she chose, but I think it is too much trouble. And you see she and aunt Lindsay don't know anything about boys; and I am sure I am a weight on their minds, and I shock them awfully sometimes, but they don't like to say so. Now, if Janet were here, she would keep me straight. Suppose we make a bargain. Won't you take me in hand a little? I'm dreadfully stupid, but I can do as I'm told. I don't like hints, but right down straight talk I can stand."

"But," said Marjory, with wide-open eyes, "I don't know anything about city ways, and you have been here, at least, a little while."

"I'll trust a girl to find out in a day what it will take a boy a month to see. Is it a bargain?"

"I haven't heard your side of it yet," she said, demurely.

"To be sure! Why, I am to do all I can for you; run your errands, take you sight-seeing,—and that is something in Boston,—and tease you just a little sometimes."

"Agreed, with that last clause common to both sides," said Marjory, with a laugh, giving him her hand as the carriage stopped.

Lilian was waiting for them in the broad hall. She greeted Marjory cordially, and led her up stairs at once, only stopping to say to the tall black man, who had opened the door, —

"We will have tea at once, in the little room, Pluto."

Marjory followed, wondering if she should ever have courage to give an order to so grand a person.

Lilian opened the door to a cosy sitting-room, which indeed looked luxurious to Marjory, with its pretty centre-table, and shaded lamp, two comfortable arm-chairs, and broad sofa.

"This is our own room," she said, "which we are to use for sitting-room and study; and the bed-rooms open off it. Mamma says she will not, at least for the present, put any limit to our sitting up here and talking; but when we go to bed, we are to sleep. And she hopes you will not feel lonesome, because we can both leave our doors open into this room."

Lilian spoke half apologetically, not knowing the relief she was giving to Marjory, whose great dread, never put into words, had been, that she would have to share her room with a stranger, and have no place to herself. It did not take

long to freshen herself a little, and get rid of the dust of travel. As they went down stairs again, Lilian said, "Mamma was sorry for the engagement that takes both her and papa away this evening. If it had not been for your delay, she would have had time to welcome you before she went. Weren't you afraid to come on alone?"

"No," said Marjory; "there was no danger."

"I am not sure that would be any reason for me;" and Lilian laughed so lightly that Marjory understood how Frank hardly thought it a laugh at all.

They found him waiting for them in the tea-room, with the newspaper parcel, which Marjory, after guarding carefully during the journey, had forgotten in the carriage.

"O, my poor wild flowers!" she cried, "how wilted they are by the journey! but they will be fresh again to-morrow, if I put them in water,—at least, some of them."

"Now," said Frank, "you don't pretend to care for such weeds as those! Don't you know that only camellias and tea-roses, green-house flowers,—exotics, Isabel Gresham would say,—are fit to be admired, or even looked at?"

"I don't know anything about *them*," said Marjory, sturdily, her color rising a little; "but whatever they are, they cannot prevent my gentians and cardinals from being beautiful."

"He is only teasing you, Marjory," interrupted Lilian. "Only this morning he was laughing at me because I did not know arethusas, and hepatica, and blood-root. There, I have got the names right at least, Frank. But you are hardly fair; you might wait till to-morrow morning before you begin to tease Marjory."

"I only want to see if she is a genuine country girl. Now, Marjory, what do you want most to see here at Boston?"

"Bunker Hill," answered Marjory, promptly.

"Good for you! I told Lilian so, this morning, but she would not believe me."

"But what do you want to go there for? There is nothing but a green hill and a high monument. Now, if we had any real old relics, — if we could explore ruined castles, and discover Roman roads, — that might be interesting; though I am not sure but it would be tiresome in the end."

"If you can't have what you want, take what you can get," suggested Frank.

"Besides," said Marjory, "I care a good deal more about what people did so near our own time, —the people to whom we really belong. I remember how an old aunt of mother's used to tell us about once living in Charlestown; and how her father came home and told them the town was on fire, and they must take what they could and go away; and how he got them to some place near by, where they would be safe; and how they watched the town burning, and waited, while he went back to the house to get some milk for the baby — that was my grandmother; — and how he was taken prisoner by the British troops; and how the general let him go, when he told him his errand; and how, after the fight was over, her brothers, who had been in it, came and found them. I have always been proud of belonging to those people, and I want to see the place."

"But your people were beaten, Marjory."

"So much the better for them, that they could turn defeat into victory. I did not mean to get excited," added Marjory, catching Frank's amused look, "but I am proud of it, and I do like the story of our Revolution."

"You are all right," returned Frank, adding,

"You do not look like Janet, but you reminded me of her then."

And Marjory already knew enough of the boy to be sure that was a compliment.

"I am glad," said Lilian, when they were again in their own room, "that you are not afraid of boys. You have brothers of your own; but, you see, mamma and I do not know much about them; and papa has no time to spare; and I fancy Frank has not had a very good time. But I am sure you are good-natured, and will help him along."

"Well," thought Marjory, as she settled herself comfortably in bed, "it seems there is somebody here to be helped too. 'Helping your brothers and sisters, and doing errands.' He said it was what I should always be wanted for. And I don't suppose I can be very lonesome if God wants me here."

So Marjory came into her new home. The next morning she met her uncle and aunt. Mrs. Lindsay won her at once by her cordial greeting and kindly inquiries about her journey. As for the judge, Marjory thought she might be afraid of him, if he were to take any special notice of her; but after the first quiet recog-

nition, and inquiry about her father and mother, he seemed to forget her entirely. She was almost sure that he took no notice of what was going on; but once, when Frank was explaining that he was to show her all the sights, the judge looked up at him, —

"Are you quite sure that you are a safe guide, my boy?"

"I shall only take her where I would take Janet," Frank answered promptly.

Then Marjory saw that her uncle's face could be very pleasant, as he said, —

"You couldn't have a better rule. I think you may trust him, Marjory."

And as the party round the breakfast table broke up, and Marjory was going up stairs with Lilian, the judge laid his hand on her shoulder, turning her round till she faced him squarely.

"Well," he said, "do you like your home here as well as you expected?"

"Yes, sir, a great deal better." And then Marjory blushed deeply at the awkwardness of her answer; but Mrs. Lindsay came to her aid, saying pleasantly, "That is good! I think you were a brave girl to come among strangers from such a houseful. But I am sure we shall not be strangers long."

CHAPTER XI.

"DEAR MOTHER: You know I promised my first letter to Roger, and I hope he got the one I sent off last week. I told him all about the journey and my arrival here; so you know how fortunate I was. Please tell aunt Esther that Miss Strong says she did not guess that it was my first journey, and I think it was because I had her text. Everything seemed so strange at first here, I thought I should never get used to the ways; but now it seems more natural. I begin to know what Ellis used to mean by the luxury of being rich. Everything is so very comfortable! Lilian says her father will not have anything for show: so the house is not as fine as some, but it is just as comfortable as it can be. Wouldn't Judith think it fine not to have to carry water up or down stairs, and not to have any lamps to fill and trim? And then everything seems to go

on so smoothly, and there is somebody to do everything. Aunt Lindsay's maid is always ready to do any mending for Lilian or me. I don't ask her often, but Lilian says, after school begins, I shall be glad enough of help. What would you say if your Marjory should come home really lazy? But I don't think there is much danger yet, and Frank's teasing would be likely to save me from it, if nothing else. I wrote about Frank before. He is as great a tease as Roger, and as good-natured. (I hope old Roger will appreciate both of these compliments.) He took me out to Bunker Hill, one day last week, and he knew a good deal about the battle. That was nice; but, O, dear! it was so hard to make it seem real. And last Wednesday we went to the Museum, and spent the whole afternoon among the curiosities there. Ellis will laugh at that, for I remember, when I asked if she went, she said it was not fashionable. I don't care — it was real good fun. Tell Jamie I saw some bears, but they were not live ones; so I was not afraid. The nearest thing to a live bear that I have seen is Pluto, the black servant here; and I am a little afraid of him. He is very good-natured, but he is so big and

so black, and he goes about so quietly, and he waits on you with such an air, and says 'Miss Dana' so gravely that I always feel as if I ought to be ashamed ever to be called Marjory.

But I think Ellis frightened me more than she need about behaving. People here are more quiet, perhaps, and I don't think they talk quite as much about their own affairs, because they have so many other things to think of. But I think they are just as kind, and they would not mind any little mistakes. I haven't been a bit more frightened at meeting strangers here than at home, since the first.

The people that I know best outside of the family are the Strongs. Annie's mother is dead, you know, and aunt Emily, who was with her in the cars, keeps the house. And it is such a funny old house! It is right in among all the bustle of the city, only you turn a corner, and come to it — a big, old house. And it seems just to suit the people that live in it, and is cosy and odd. It is not like the new Boston houses, that are all just alike, with great square rooms, or long, narrow ones. This has funny little entries and dark corners, and two steps up and two steps down all about it.

School begins next week, and I have seen Miss Lee, and I think she is splendid. This is not one of my 'hasty judgments,' as Ellis would say, for, though I have seen her only once, I have heard about her from Lilian and Allie Strong.

I am going out with Lilian, and I want to mail this; so now I must stop. It's a long letter, but it is not a bit satisfactory. I do so want sometimes a good long talk. But I am contented, and I am going to work very hard. Give my love to everybody at home, and tell Sue I have not had one cold yet; and O, please tell Willie Nickerson some of his flowers kept fresh a long while. Annie Strong loves wild flowers. I saw some growing in her room the other day. Now, really, good by; with lots of love to you all, and a kiss for father.

From your loving

MARJORY."

There was more of a story about Annie's flowers than Marjory had written. Looking at the plants in the window one afternoon, Marjory had noticed and spoken of a little hanging pot that had just a root of herb-Robert, and some houstonias in bloom.

"Yes," said Annie, "those are my own pet flowers, and I always contrive to have some innocents in blossom. I had them first two or three years ago, when I was not nearly as strong as I am now, and had to lie on my couch all the time. Uncle Alick was always bringing home things to me; and then he travelled about a good deal, preaching in different towns. And one day he brought home a bunch of these, that he said a little girl sent me, with the message that if I watered them and put them in the sun, they would flourish. I had always been most sorry about wild flowers, that they wilted so soon; and so I was very happy to find some that would keep. And since then I always have some. Fred and Allie make a point of getting me fresh roots in the fall. I wish, sometimes, that I could let the little girl know how great a kindness she did for me; but uncle Alick did not know her name, and he has never been to the village since, I believe."

It was dusk, and nobody noticed how Marjory's face flushed at Annie's story. She had felt very sure before that Annie's uncle Alick was the gentleman whose sermon she remembered so well, but he had not recognized her.

Now she was quite certain, and very happy about it; but that was not the time to explain to Annie, so she said nothing; and the next minute Allie came in.

"O, Annie," she said, "I have seen Miss — What's-her-name?"

"Miles," quietly suggested Annie.

"And," continued Allie, with a nod, "she will finish your thingamy — "

"Sack."

"By Saturday. And then I went to the — you know — Adirondack."

"Athenæum," again suggested Annie.

"Just so; and could not get your book."

Fred, looking up from his writing at the table, caught sight of Marjory's puzzled face, and said, gravely, —

"Miss Marjory, you may not have had explained to you a peculiarity of Allison's conversation; that she never says what she means."

"It is quite true," said Allie, joining in Marjory's laugh. "I am much like Mrs. Nickleby, and if I said lobsters, I meant oysters. Haven't you ever heard of the theory of two parts to the brain? Now, you see, the side of mine where words and names are has somehow got into great

confusion; and when I want to match an idea with its name, I have to take whatever comes. I do generally come as near right as the first letter."

"It results from that," observed Fred, "that Allie frequently leaves off the last of her sentence entirely, and you can please yourself about it. It lends a spice of novelty to her conversation, but it does not tend to that extreme accuracy that might be desirable."

"Don't slander me, Fred. You will make Miss Dana believe me a heathen."

"Pray, Allie, why are you so very formal with Marjory?"

"Well, the truth is I am possessed to call her Peggoty, and that would be too bad."

"Not half so bad as Miss Dana, by which I find it hard to know myself."

"Will you really let me call you Peggy? Thank you. It is a great comfort to come to such good old names as Peggy and Molly after Isabels, and Florences, and Lilians. And so we girls are all to take tea with you to-morrow, that you may not begin school with strangers!"

"Yes. Are you sure you can come, Annie?"

"I've had my outing this summer," answered Annie, cheerily, "and I am housed for the season,

for it is rather dangerous for me to try experiments, and I want to keep just as well as I am. You will all have to come here to see me."

"There is no place I like to go to as well as Mrs. Lindsay's," — this was Allie — "Lilian does understand the art of entertaining people in her own house without any fuss."

"She says that her mother does not want her to have parties now; there is time enough for that after she has left school. I don't think Lilian cares much. She says the bother of a party is that you must invite a lot of people that you don't want."

"I wonder if Lilian Lindsay ever will care much about anything! If she does she will be sure to have it."

Marjory had found herself, more than once, wondering about the same thing. She recognized the charm of the perfect good temper with which Lilian let her plans be interrupted, and her time frittered away by any one who chose; but she wondered, sometimes, whether it was kindliness or merely indifference. Lilian seemed to her to avoid more completely than any one else whom she knew, that necessity of choice that aunt Esther said came to everybody.

Marjory had looked forward with a good deal of interest, and with some fear, too, to what, in her own mind, she still called "the party," spite of Lilian's disclaimer. The girls were to come to tea, and some of their brothers in the evening. It happened that Marjory had seen each one of the girls, in one way or another, except Isabel Gresham, on whose account, indeed, the party had been put off till the last minute. Isabel was Lilian's special friend, and she had been out of town till the Tuesday before. When the other girls came, Marjory got into hapless confusion over May, and Molly, and Ruth, and Emma; and then, listening while they all talked together, sorted them out again, and had become sure that Molly was short and merry, and May was tall and quiet, and Emma was noisy, and Ruth was plain, when Isabel Gresham came in. No one had described her, and Marjory knew she had no reason for expecting to see such a very different person. Isabel was not noticeably pretty, but she was graceful, with perfect self-possession. She was, perhaps, a very little more dressed than the other girls, and she came in with a slight rustle, that attracted attention. She was very cordial, with some question or remark for

each of the girls, whom she had not seen since her return.

"And this is your cousin, Miss Dana, Lilian? I hope you will appreciate my self-denial when I say we must be good friends, Miss Dana; for I am strongly tempted to look on you as a rival. I have enjoyed Lilian's company too much to be quite willing to lose any of it, as I must now."

"I hope not," said Marjory, cordially. "I think Lilian's heart is large enough to shelter several friends."

"Thank you; but you know *one* must have the first place; but I am sure I may trust Lilian not to forget her old friends, however charming the new ones may be."

And thus the talk became general. Marjory had been a little inclined to stand aside and look on, but she found, very soon, that Frank, who had affected to put a bold face on the matter, was really somewhat daunted, for it was his first experience, she knew, as well as hers. She remembered her agreement that she was to help him over the rough places, and contrived to draw him and Molly Douglas into a pleasant talk, seeing, plainly enough, that Molly was afraid of

no boy or girl, man or woman. And later in the evening she found him talking with Alice and Fred Strong.

"Yes," he was saying eagerly, as she came up, "after a few weeks of school, you will all be in need of some out-door air, and then we can make such an excursion as you say. I promised to show Marjory the sights; but so far we have found enough to do in the city."

"What is that about Marjory?" she said, joining them.

"It is a secret; but I was saying I could not take you anywhere, you are so troublesome. Listeners never hear any good of themselves."

"Not if they listen to you, as I have learned already." And then Marjory turned off to Florence Mayhew.

As Marjory lay awake thinking it all over, after they had gone, she saw how truly Annie Strong had said that Lilian knew how to entertain people. It had all been done very quietly; but she could see how carefully Lilian had watched, and how well she knew for what each one cared. "She is lovely," Marjory said to herself, thinking how Lilian had made sure that she should have some pleasant talk with each one of the girls,

and how she had taken pains to introduce Frank. "I don't wonder that Isabel Gresham loves her; but I wish she would not talk as if she must lose by my coming. I will take good care that she shall not have any reason for saying so; and I think I won't say anything about her till I know her better. Perhaps I shall like her very much." But she forgot her resolution when, the next morning, Frank, discussing the company of the night previous, asked what she thought of Isabel Gresham.

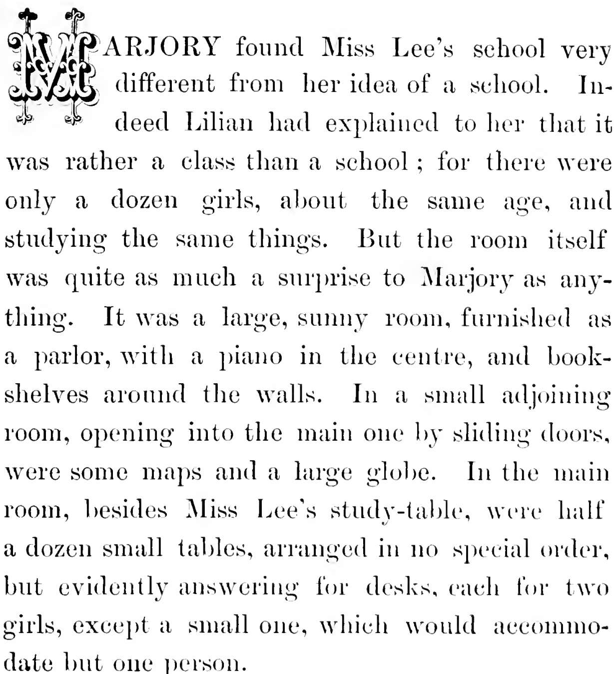
"I think she has a little too much — varnish," said Marjory, hesitating for a comparison. "I wish she would not be quite so pleasant. It don't seem as if it went way through."

"You have hit it exactly," cried Frank. "You would have thought she was the bosom friend of each one of those girls, though with a special little niche for Lilian. She always provokes me!"

"But it is natural to some people to be good-tempered and pleasant," said Lilian calmly.

"That's true, as Frank and I know by observation, if not by experience." And Marjory gave her a caress that pointed her words. "I really have no right to criticise your friend, Lilian, for I have hardly seen her yet."

CHAPTER XII.



MARJORY found Miss Lee's school very different from her idea of a school. Indeed Lilian had explained to her that it was rather a class than a school; for there were only a dozen girls, about the same age, and studying the same things. But the room itself was quite as much a surprise to Marjory as anything. It was a large, sunny room, furnished as a parlor, with a piano in the centre, and bookshelves around the walls. In a small adjoining room, opening into the main one by sliding doors, were some maps and a large globe. In the main room, besides Miss Lee's study-table, were half a dozen small tables, arranged in no special order, but evidently answering for desks, each for two girls, except a small one, which would accommodate but one person.

Miss Lee, whom, as we have heard, Marjory had seen and liked, met them cordially, made sure

that Marjory knew her schoolmates, and introduced to them a quiet girl, whom Marjory had noticed, when they entered, as Miss Mary Cone.

"We shall spend this morning in laying out the plan of our winter's work," said Miss Lee, after the morning devotions, — part of a chapter and a short prayer. "You will sit where you choose to-day, and I dare say you will want to make some changes during the week. After that, you know I think it would be better not to change much."

Marjory had overheard Isabel, when they met at the door, say to Lilian, —

"I suppose now I must give up my usual seat, Lilian, dear. There is no one else I care to sit by in school. I shall take the single desk."

Marjory did not hear Lilian's answer, for Florence spoke to her at that moment, but she made up her mind to be beforehand with Isabel in securing the single seat. As it happened, neither of them had the chance, for the new scholar, whom none of the girls seemed to know, had quietly taken possession of it. Lilian beckoned Marjory to the seat with her, and Isabel sat near, with Ruth Richards. And then the business of the school began, and Marjory's time and thoughts were fully occupied. She liked study,

or rather, perhaps, she liked the knowledge that comes by study, and what she knew she knew thoroughly; so, though she found herself, in some things, behind her present companions, she set herself cheerfully to work to overtake them.

The girls all walked home together, and Marjory, falling back to ask Allie Strong something about Annie, did not notice what the others were talking about till Isabel's voice attracted Allison's attention.

"Well, I think it is a shame!"

"What is so dreadful, Isabel?" Allie asked.

"Why, do you know who our new scholar is?"

"I know who one new scholar is," with a merry glance at Marjory.

"Of course," a little stiffly; "we all know Miss Dana, and are glad to. She is Lilian's cousin; but Miss Mary Cone," with scornful emphasis, "is just the girl that takes care of Miss Lee's room!"

"Well," said Allie, coolly, "she takes good care of it. Did you see anything out of order?"

"It is not my business to look after the room," returned Isabel scornfully. "I dare say she understands that well enough. But I do think Miss Lee has no right to bring such people into school. I thought it was a select school."

Marjory's brown eyes opened wide, and she glanced at the other girls. Only Ruth and Emma, the youngest of the girls, were before her, and they seemed inclined to agree with Isabel, though they said nothing.

But Florrie's voice sounded behind her. "I suppose any one can leave if she doesn't like her company. Miss Lee would have no difficulty in filling the place. And as the school is Miss Lee's, she has a right to take what scholars she chooses."

"I am glad you like such company," said Isabel, a little annoyed at Florrie's opposition. "For my part I don't care about being forced to associate with charity people. For all I know, her mother may be a washerwoman. What do you say, Lilian?"

Now Lilian had the reputation among the girls of being rather exclusive, and on that Isabel counted. She answered in her usual quiet way, —

"I don't see the use of making such a fuss about it. Of course Miss Lee has a right to take what scholars she chooses, and I don't see why we need care. I don't believe Mary will trouble us, and why should we mind her?"

Lilian's verdict hardly satisfied Isabel, but she

did not choose to find fault with it. "Just so," she said; "we need not have anything to do with her. She has had sense enough to take the single seat, and so we can avoid her."

"We can do no such thing," broke in Allison, with spirit, "and you have no right to twist what Lilian said into any such meaning. If we go to Miss Lee's school, we are bound to be civil to the other scholars, whoever they may be, and more than civil, too. We like Marjory Dana not because she is Lilian's cousin (no offence to you, Lilian,) but because she is a bright, pleasant girl; and if we have the same reason we shall like Mary Cone, no matter who her relatives are. By the way, Isabel, do you *know* her mother to be a washerwoman?"

"I don't know anything about her," Isabel said, loftily.

"Then, if I were you, I would not say anything, though it is no harm to her if she is As for her being 'charity,' if she earns her own schooling, I think she is less dependent on charity than we, whose fathers pay for ours."

"Well, Allie, that is a new view of things," laughed Molly Douglas. "But I think you are right; and to judge by the way in which Mary

Cone took to her books to-day, some of us may find it hard to keep our places."

And here the girls scattered in different directions, only Isabel walking on with Marjory and Lilian.

"You have not said anything, Miss Marjory. But probably you have not had to think about such things;" this from Isabel, condescendingly. "People in the country do not have to consider their position so much."

"No," said Marjory simply. "I remember Jem Hastings would not sit by Willie Nickerson because he had a patch on his knee; but then Jem always was a little goose, and the other children only laughed at him."

Isabel colored and looked sharply at Marjory, but thought it best only to change the conversation to something about which Marjory knew nothing. But Marjory was perplexed and grieved. She did not care about Isabel's opinion at all, but she was already fond and proud of Lilian, and she did not like her taking such ground. "True," she said to herself, "the other girls knew Lilian as well as she did, and knew that she never got excited, as Allie did; and they knew Allie was right when she said that Isabel had no right to twist Lilian's

speech to suit her side; yet Marjory could not make it anything but a very indifferent speech, and she was too decided herself, in thought and word, to be content with that. And Lilian had not really disavowed sympathy with Isabel, though she had not expressed it. The subject was not alluded to again till the girls were going to bed. Then Marjory broke a silence with the abrupt question, —

"Do you think Isabel was right, Lilian?"

"No," said Lilian plainly.

"I wish you had said so."

"Why? Everybody was against her, and I don't see that it really makes much difference."

"Not to you girls; but to Mary Cone: I should not like to go to a school where the other girls felt to me as Isabel does to her."

"I can't help Isabel's feeling."

"But you could perhaps help Ruth and Emma thinking her right. I am sure that Florence and Allie, by speaking out, made some difference to them."

"If I had cared as much as Allie Strong, I suppose I should have spoken as she did; but I don't. And we are not bound to look after

all the other scholars. I don't want Mary Cone to do anything for me."

"Of course you don't, because all the girls know you and like you."

"Well, if she waits long enough, they will know and like her, probably."

"But," persisted Marjory, "you might make it easier waiting."

"No. Why should I meddle? How do I know that she would not rather be let alone?"

"But if you don't help, you harm her. You can't stand quite clear of the whole thing, Lilian, because if you don't put yourself on one side, you will be counted on the other."

"And you see that is just what I complain of. If everybody had been true to my principle in the beginning, and just let Mary Cone alone, there would have been no sides, and we should not by this time be tired of the sound of her name. Come, let us go to sleep and forget her."

And Marjory knew it was no use to try to carry on the discussion longer; but she went to sleep determined to do what she could, though she did not know what it might be, for Mary Cone.

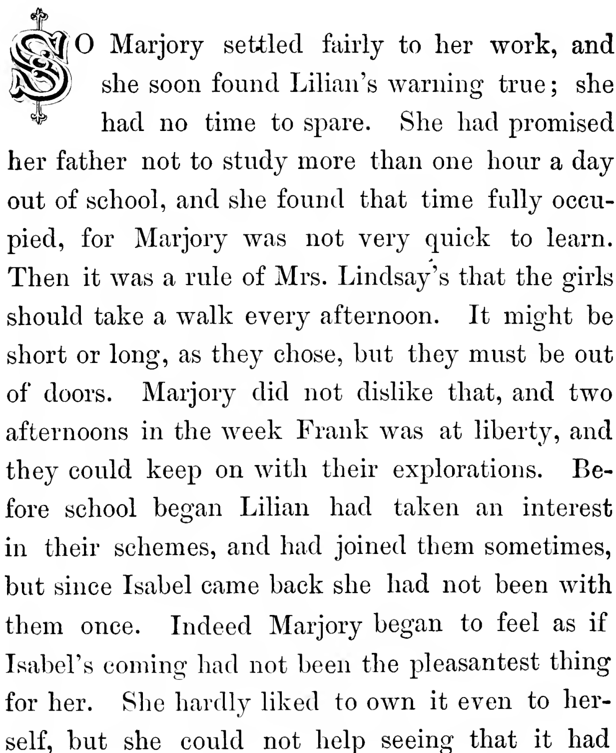
But the next morning, as the girls were taking their seats, Florence Mayhew said quite simply,

and clearly enough for all the girls to hear her, turning to Mary, —

"Molly Douglas and I have so many things to talk about, that if we sit together we never get on with our lessons, and we have agreed to try a little separation this term. Would you mind changing seats with me?"

And that brought Mary right in among the other girls, and though Isabel Gresham shrugged her shoulders a little, there was no further thought of avoiding her.

CHAPTER XIII.



SO Marjory settled fairly to her work, and she soon found Lilian's warning true; she had no time to spare. She had promised her father not to study more than one hour a day out of school, and she found that time fully occupied, for Marjory was not very quick to learn. Then it was a rule of Mrs. Lindsay's that the girls should take a walk every afternoon. It might be short or long, as they chose, but they must be out of doors. Marjory did not dislike that, and two afternoons in the week Frank was at liberty, and they could keep on with their explorations. Before school began Lilian had taken an interest in their schemes, and had joined them sometimes, but since Isabel came back she had not been with them once. Indeed Marjory began to feel as if Isabel's coming had not been the pleasantest thing for her. She hardly liked to own it even to herself, but she could not help seeing that it had

made a difference. She was not jealous, or apt to think herself slighted; but she did feel that she had not her fair share of Lilian's time and attention. She would willingly have shared both with Isabel, but now it seemed that she had not the chance. It was true that when she had proposed to give up her seat at school to Isabel, Lilian had said at once, "No, not unless you would rather. I can see enough of Isabel out of school." And it was true, too, that Lilian never made her feel that she was in the way. Indeed, Marjory thought sometimes that Lilian would rather like to have her stay; but Isabel had a way of either ignoring her altogether, and talking of things about which Marjory knew nothing, or else of being so extremely polite that it was even more provoking.

It would be, "Ah, Marjory, I really must steal Lilian for a little while; you won't mind — will you?" or, "Lilian, dear, don't you think your cousin could spare you to me this afternoon? I want you so much." And then she was very apt to have some errand in the afternoon, some call or shopping to do, and Lilian must go with her. "And it's no use asking you to go too, Marjory. I know you hate shopping;" or, "It is so stupid for

three people! I am sorry it is not something entertaining."

At first Marjory had tried not to notice it, and to persuade herself that she was mistaken, or that it was only Isabel's way, and she must not think anything of it. But she was too really honest with herself, as well as with other people, to be satisfied so. She knew that Isabel was rude, and that Lilian was inconsiderate; and trying to shut her eyes to it, or say it was not so, would not lessen the pain. But as she sat thinking it over one rainy afternoon, when she had left Isabel and Lilian up stairs and had come down to the study, she remembered something her mother had once said. It was long ago, when Roger, in his rough boy's play, had struck her so hard a blow that some one of the family interfered. "O, it did not hurt," Marjory had cried, eager to save him from blame, though the tears stood in her eyes.

"Don't say that, child," her mother had said. "Say he did not mean to hurt, or, if he did, you will forgive him; but don't try to be generous by telling a lie."

And so now Marjory said to herself, "Well, it is true Isabel is unkind sometimes, and Lilian does not think. But I will try not to have it

make any difference. I dare say I annoy them sometimes. And I will try not to be in Isabel's way, and if Lilian ever wants me, she has only to say so. And I don't believe I had better talk about it with anybody." — For Marjory had shrewdly noticed that if Frank and she ever got into a talk about Isabel, whom Frank heartily disliked, she was sure to find her the more disagreeable afterwards.

And she was glad she had made up her mind, when, a little later, Frank put his head in at the study door, and, finding her there, came to the other side of the fire, asking, —

"Where's Lilian?"

"Up stairs."

"With Isabel Gresham?"

"Yes."

"Why can't Isabel stay at home?" with a desperate poke at the fire. "I should think that she might know better than to come here, and drive you out of your room!"

"Who told you that she had driven me out of my room?" laughed Marjory. "How do you know that I did not come down here foreseeing how agreeable you would be when you came home, and prepared to enjoy it?"

"Don't make fun of me, or I won't tell you some news I have that will please you."

"Make fun of you by saying you would be agreeable! And when you begin by proving me a true prophet! Go on, now, and tell me your good news!"

"What do you say to an afternoon out of town with the Strongs?"

"But I thought we had done up all the out-of-town things."

"O, this is not a sight-seeing. They want to get some roots for Annie's wooden bowl, and Fred says they know some capital places. We could take our lunch and get home in time for a late dinner. Fred and Allie will go, and May Norris and her brother, and we hoped for Lilian; but I suppose she will have some engagement with Isabel Gresham; or else we must invite her, and we don't want her."

"When do you mean to go?"

"Next Saturday. We all have the whole of Saturday, you know; so we can start as early as we choose."

"What should you say to Isabel's going out of town, then, to spend Sunday?"

"Too good to be true."

"Now, Frank, haven't I told you nothing is too good to be true. At any rate, that is not, for I heard Isabel say so this afternoon."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, checking himself as Marjory gave a warning glance at the desk at the further end of the room, where the judge sat writing. "Here comes Lilian! Now, Lilian, what do you say to a picnic?"

"That they are usually very stupid things;" and Lilian seated herself quietly on the cricket by the fire.

"Of course the big poky ones are, where you never go where you want to, or get what you like, and where it always rains before you get home. But I mean a little special picnic, without muss or fuss."

"O!" Lilian began to understand. "You mean some particular picnic, that you have on hand. Explain your whole plan, and then I'll answer questions. I hate to talk in the dark, — figuratively, of course," she added, as Frank, with a vigorous blow on the smouldering mass of coal, broke it into a bright blaze. "Who and where?"

"Allie and Fred Strong, May and Dick Norris, Marjory, you, and I. Marjory says Isabel is going out of town Saturday. For place, I don't know

exactly, but Fred will take care of that, and he is to be trusted."

"Do say you'll go, Lilian," put in Marjory.

"O, yes; I'll go. Didn't I promise to join your next excursion? I began to think you never meant to have another. But a picnic always means some eating. What shall I tell the cook to give us?"

"O," said Frank, "this is none of your fashionable cake and confectionery picnics. It's just a plain country one,—bread and cheese."

"Wouldn't you have a few cookies, if you could get them?"

"And if I might suggest, I'd allow a little chocolate for those who do not like cheese."

"Well they both begin with C, so it does not make any difference, as Allie would say. Then, remember, girls, you are not to be taken up with anything else next Saturday."

And so it was agreed. Lilian was pleased that, as was plainly the case, they both wanted her to go, and Frank and Marjory were delighted that she consented so readily.

Saturday proved a perfect October day; one of the days when the mere living out of doors is genuine enjoyment. Marjory, thoroughly in tune

with all the freshness of sky, and air, and sunshine, felt a sudden shock of pity, as she looked at Annie Strong, lying on her sofa, and hopelessly cut off from such enjoyments. "I wish you were going with us," she whispered, as she stooped to kiss her, when the party were ready to start.

"Why, so I am," said Annie cheerily, "and with seven pairs of eyes instead of only one pair? Remember, every one of you is to see or find something for me."

They had a half hour's ride in the cars, and then Fred led them off through fields, and over a few walls, in a way that quite bewildered Lilian, but was evidently entirely satisfactory to himself. At last he turned them into a field through which a little brown brook ran between bending bushes, and where the quick eyes of some of the party soon began to find the tiny green clumps of houstonia leaves, which were to furnish Annie with treasures for the winter. They stored their baskets under a convenient rock, and went vigorously to work; at least some of them did. May was near-sighted, and she had come specially for ferns; so she sat down contentedly to wait for a while; and Lilian strayed off at first, without much purpose, by the brook, saying indeed, laughingly,

that it was a shame to dig up the poor little flowers; why could they not be let alone?

"Why, they will like it, child," said Allie gayly. "They shall be well taken care of, and you will see how they will blossom all winter. Just see all the buds in this clump."

"And see this bunch all out," cried Marjory; "and there are some just at your feet, Lilian."

And before she knew it, Lilian was as eager in the search as any of them, and grew very skilful in finding the hidden buds, and very learned as to which clumps to take up.

It did not take long to get all that they wanted there; and then the boys, who had been exploring, led them on to where great rocks were covered with nodding ferns, and soft, green masses of columbines clustered in corners, and the many-colored leaves of the herb-Robert shot out from the clefts into which the roots had run, and made bright spots in the shade. Here they spread their luncheon, making quite an imposing appearance, with the aid of a huge napkin furnished by Allie. Lilian was a little shy of the big black ants which once in a while came wandering about in a bewildered way, or skurried along in headlong haste; but Frank reminded her of her advice to him,

"Always adapt yourself to those with whom you are;" and as the ants and beetles were really at home there, why not tolerate them?

They made their lunch gay with fun, which, if it was not very witty, served all the purpose of the best wit in making them happy and merry; and when all was eaten, — coming out, as Allie said, "All right for a picnic, nothing left and nobody hungry," — the boys proposed a scramble to the top of the near hill, with promises of all manner of wonderful things. But Marjory laughed at them, and Allie assured them they would get nothing but tumbles, and Lilian professed herself quite too comfortable where she was to be tempted away, and May said nothing, but sat quiet; and so the boys went off and left them, promising not to be gone long.

"How perfect this is!" said Lilian presently, lazily turning a little to get a still wider stretch of the blue sky. "How good it would be to live so always!"

"O, Lilian!" cried Allie, from her nook in the rocks. "It's good enough for a breathing-space in the midst of other things, but it would be intolerable by itself. Think of doing nothing but lying round all day."

"Well," returned Lilian, with her low, clear laugh, "the thought does not shock me much. I don't see why people always want to be doing something or going somewhere!"

"But," said Marjory practically, "you would grow dreadfully tired; the hummocks would stick into your back, and the sun would get round till he shone in your face. No, you would not like it, Lilian."

"And, besides, you couldn't be here if other people had been satisfied with such as this; if Christopher had not wanted to go farther, and — Anderson — faster."

"Suppose you call him Stephenson, Allie."

"As you choose. The steam-engine man I mean, of course."

"Perhaps it would not have been so bad to be an Indian maiden," persisted Lilian; "living in the woods with no bother of society or dress."

"Don't you believe that," retorted Marjory. "You would be considering about the braiding of your moccasons, and whether you should have blue or green feathers in your hair."

"O, I would be strong-minded, and not care for feathers."

"You can be that now, if you choose," suggested May. "It is so like you, Lilian."

"Don't be sarcastic, young woman!" tossing a great fern leaf at her. "But admitting that it is best to be doing something sometimes (these hummocks do grow hard), how can one know what to do? How do you find it out, Allie?"

"You don't find it. It is right there in your way, and so you do it."

"*You* do; but suppose that *I* don't."

"What things do you mean?"

Lilian laughed. "That's Marjory. She never will allow of generalities. Well, Peggy, take this example: You saw that woman at the concert, yesterday afternoon, just in front of me. It was warm, and she was uncomfortable, and had made a fan of her programme. I saw it, and I wondered if she would perhaps like a fan; but then I thought that perhaps it would grow cooler, and perhaps she would not care to have a stranger offer it to her, and perhaps she would not understand me. And then Allie handed over her fan quietly, and the woman was happy for the rest of the afternoon. And I don't suppose Allie ever thought of any one of my doubts."

"Why," said Allie simply, "the woman want-

ed a fan, and I had one, — that was all. Why shouldn't I have given it to her?"

"Precisely. But," after a minute's pause, "doesn't it ever occur to you or Marjory, who would have done the same thing, to think how it will look."

Marjory looked rather puzzled, but Allie said, the color rising in her face for a moment, "Yes, I know what you mean, and I used to care sometimes, but uncle Alick said once that that was just selfishness; that if you could help anybody else, that was the thing you were to do, and not to think of yourself at all; and then he quoted Mrs. Browning, —

> "We are wrong always, when we think too much
> Of what we think or are."

"But what do you mean by 'look'?" said Marjory, still puzzled.

"As if you wanted to show off, or make a fuss."

"But how can you stop to think of that in such little things?"

"*You* can't," said Lilian dryly. "What is it, May?" seeing something in May's face."

"Only that I think Marjory has lived more

among realities. I mean that the sky, and the trees, and the hills seem just what they are; but you can't judge of houses, and dresses, and such made things by the outside; you learn to go behind and inside if you can, and so you get into the habit of looking for something else than you see."

"That is true," said Lilian; and then going back to the discussion; "but even if you see the thing, and don't care how it 'looks,' I don't see how you know *how* to do it. There are so many different people in the world, and they have so many different ways; and everybody does not like to be helped."

"Now," objected Allie, "I think everybody does like to be helped, though some people have dreadful crotchety ways about it; at least there are only exceptions enough to prove the rule. But it is queer to hear you say that, Lilian, when you do understand entertaining people so well."

"Ah! that is a very different thing. If mamma or I invite any one to the house, of course it is my business to entertain them, and I have had a good chance to learn; for you know nobody does it better than mamma. And there is a fascination in finding people out, and making the shy people feel at home, and the awkward people at ease."

"I think there is the same charm in finding out people's peculiarities and likings in all ways, and seeing how you can fit in and help without jar."

"And," began Marjory, but stopped.

"And what, Madge?"

"I was thinking that aunt Esther would say it is all our Father's house, and we have our part to do to make it pleasant."

Lilian lay silent, but in a few minutes May said, —

"We have not yet settled how you know *what* to do. I never think of a thing, but instantly I doubt if it is the best thing."

"Then I try and see, and remember for next time."

"But you make dreadful blunders so."

"And you learn what you want to know."

"I don't like to make blunders," said Lilian.

"I said that to aunt Esther once, and she said that then I might make up my mind never to succeed in anything; for I could not expect to be one of those very rare people who do everything right the first time."

"O, dear!" laughed Lilian; "I see you won't leave me one bit of ground to stand on; but," falling back to the first subject of discussion, "I still

think some people do ever so much harm by their everlasting work."

"Like Mrs. Manning's Bridget. Mrs. Manning hired her fresh from the old country, and established her in the kitchen, with many charges that she was to clean up everything and have it in order when she came home. Bridget was quicker than she thought, and having set the kitchen to rights, she looked round for something more to do, and fate led her to the study, where Mr. Manning had been busy all the morning making notes for a scientific article. When poor Mr. Manning came home, in dismay he called up Bridget and asked who had been in his study.

"'Shure and it's meself,' said Bridget, beaming blandly. 'Didn't the misthress tell me to clane everything up? and so I've just been afther washing out your glass bottle that was all full of dirty water, and I burnt up all the bits of old paper that were lying round the table; and now, shure, I think it's a fit place for a gintleman to take his aise in.'"

"Nevertheless," said Allie, springing up, as the laugh subsided, "I like that girl. She did *something*, and she will know better what to do next time. But if I 'take my aise' much longer, Annie

will not have all that she wants." And they went vigorously to work again, the boys soon joining them, and it was dusk when they reached home, laden with ferns and roots to set out, tired but triumphant, and all ready to agree to Fred's proposal that they should try again in a fortnight.

"Who would have thought," said Allie, as she told over the whole day's adventures to Annie, "that what we have been used to call exclusiveness and indifference in Lilian Lindsay is half shyness?"

"Good night, Marjory," said Lilian. "What a good time we've had! and how bright Alice Strong is!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"IT seems to me, Helen," said Judge Lindsay, one evening, when they were alone together, Lilian being with Isabel, and Marjory and Frank at the Strongs', — "it seems to me very much as if you had provided a companion for Frank, instead of Lilian."

"It looks something like it, I confess," laughed his wife; "and I might have done a worse thing, Henry. It would have been hard for Frank this winter, with no one more used to boys than we are; but Roger was evidently Marjory's chief companion at home, and Frank goes to her just as he would to Janet, with all his interests, and she sympathizes, and helps him on. For Marjory is a wise little person."

"I thought Lilian had sense enough to find that out, instead of being taken up with such a girl as Isabel."

"After all, I do not think Lilian is as much

fascinated by Isabel as it seems. I am sure there are other girls at the school whom she would like better, but it happened that they two were the last comers, and the others had paired off already, as girls are apt to do. It suits Isabel that they shall be good friends, and she has tact, and has taken advantage of Lilian's indolence to make herself useful. But I think Lilian is beginning to see how it shuts her off from the other girls, for Isabel has contrived to give the impression that she belongs specially to her. She is very fond of Marjory, and I am sure she cannot help seeing the difference between the two girls."

"It is only the difference between reality and pretence, which would seem plain enough."

"But you must not expect too much of Lilian. Remember Isabel can be very attractive; and I don't really know of any definite thing to object to in her. So I have thought it best to let Lilian judge for herself. I think the fact that Isabel is not a favorite with the other girls is one reason that Lilian stands by her."

"Only don't let Marjory suffer."

"If I thought there were danger, I should certainly try to interfere; but while she has the Strongs and Frank she will not be lonesome,

and she is herself so careful not to interfere with Isabel, that I think Lilian must notice it.

"I am a good deal interested in a decision of Marjory's just now," continued Mrs. Lindsay. "Of course she will need some winter dresses; so when Lilian was choosing hers, I advised Marjory to do the same, and suggested two; but she hesitated; so I told her we need not decide then. But I spoke to her about it afterwards, and told her that of course, as she was staying with us this season, we wanted to provide for her as we did for Lilian. She is a genuine New Englander, Henry, and she began to say she did not know as her mother would like it. But when I reminded her that she would not refuse help from Roger, if he had what she had not, she admitted that. Still she hesitated, and I found she did not feel quite right to spend so much money on herself. So I told her she should have the amount that we spend for Lilian's dress, and should decide for herself about the spending of it."

"Why, Helen, she will save it all for home, and make a perfect guy of herself."

"I think not, at least, I hope not; and I did not think it was fair to the child to make her

uncomfortable, as she would be in the other case. And I have not shut myself off from advising."

If Mrs. Lindsay was in doubt about Marjory's decision, she herself was still more so. She had never before had such a matter to decide; for at home the question of dress had always been settled for her, usually by the making over of something belonging to Sue or Ellis. She looked over her store, and had to admit that her school dress was already worn, and would hardly answer for the winter's wear; and the silk, that had been made over from one of Sue's, looked very scant and plain beside the new fashions.

Though she liked to wear pretty things, Marjory was not very fond of dress; and, if she had felt, as she had always done at home, that there was no more money to be spent for her, she would have been content. But, as she said to herself, that was not the question. The money was hers, to be spent in some way. She had already, as it were, accepted it by admitting her aunt's argument about herself and Roger; and she knew it would really be a help at home to have nothing to pay for her. But what should she do with it? Why, she thought, why should she not do as Lilian did — spend it for dress, for

which it was intended, and have no bother about it? It would be very pleasant to have just what she liked, and no trouble. But then the money would buy so many things that she would like for the folks at home! And between the buts she wavered, going over the arguments first on one side and then on the other, and finding many reasons on both sides; yet, as soon as she was almost decided to the one course, feeling suddenly all the attractions of the other; till, getting up to look again at her old dresses, she caught sight of the clump of innocents, the trophies of her last Saturday's excursion, which still bloomed in her sunny window. They said to her what they had said many times since her birthday, which seemed now so long ago, "It is no matter what you like." "Well," said Marjory, "let us see if it is any easier to decide without that. Certainly mother would like to have me dress to suit uncle and aunt Lindsay while I am here, and Ellis would say I ought. I remember how indignant she was with the Lorings, when they wore silks and furbelows out into the hay-field, and what a lecture she delivered to us on dressing suitably. And dressing suitably means, I suppose, not making your-

self remarkable by any peculiarities. I know aunt Lindsay would not say anything, but I am sure she thought it would be better to have the new dresses. As for uncle Henry, he always seems to know if Lilian has anything out of the way, and notices it; and I heard him speak to Frank yesterday about clean wristbands; so I suppose he would know if I wore a patched or faded dress. Indeed, I am sure, the more I think of it, that they all know and like pretty, neat, nice things; and since I have come here to stay with them, I ought to suit them if I can. And it is not taking anything from the folks at home — anything that they have now. Then I will have the two dresses. But I wish it did not take so much money to have them made;" and she thought with dismay of the bill for Lilian's last dress, sent home from Madame Perrôt's.

"If I were at home now, it could be done in the house; but here — no, I have not any time. But it cannot be that every one pays so much. I will ask Annie Strong about it, and I need not decide till Saturday. Then I will talk it over with aunt Lindsay, and settle it all. I am glad I have got so far. To be sure, I might have written and asked mother, but it is too

bad to bother her; and one of the last things she said was, 'You will have to decide a good many questions for yourself, Marjory, that you have been used to leaving to other people: but you can always ask your aunt's advice, and if you do the best you know, you need not mind mistakes.' O, dear! that's the dressing bell!"

As Marjory sprang up, Lilian came in. "Why, Madge, what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Only thinking."

"Thinking!" laughed Lilian. "I have heard of 'putting on your thinking cap;' and if that operation is apt to produce such results as this, I advise you to get one immediately."

She turned her round before the mirror which hung over the mantel, and Marjory was forced to laugh herself; for, in the eagerness of her discussion with herself, she had fallen into an old habit of running her fingers into her hair, and the result was certainly peculiar.

"Pray, is the confusion on the outside to be taken as a type of the state of the inside of your head? What could be the troublesome subject?"

"Dress."

"Dress! Now, Marjory Dana, you are the

last person of whom I should have thought that!"

"How do you decide it, Lilian?"

"I? Why, I just think what I want, and how it shall be made."

Marjory laughed. "And I have been thinking what other people wanted, and how it shouldn't be made."

"I think, from results, my way is best," with a comical look at Marjory's hair.

"Time will prove." And Marjory ran off to be ready for dinner.

Marjory got the solution of her difficulty in an unexpected way. Since Florrie Mayhew's bright move had thrown Mary Cone among the other girls at school, there had been no attempt to avoid her. She was taken cordially in, and by her quiet self-possession and friendliness had made a place for herself. Out of school the girls seldom if ever saw her; but Marjory had once gone to her house on an errand for Miss Lee, and when she found, on Friday, that she had brought Mary's books by mistake, she determined to make that the end of her afternoon walk, and return them. But at the door she met Mary, who, also finding out the mistake,

had been beforehand with her in setting it right. She exchanged the straps, and, leaving hers behind, went out with Mary, saying, "If you are going home, I'll walk with you part way. Have you hunted out that reference that Miss Lee gave us?"

Then came a discussion of school matters, interrupted by Mary's saying, "Excuse me, I have to stop here on an errand. I shall only be a few minutes."

"Then I'll wait for you, if you like."

When Mary came out again, she said, "It is too bad to have kept you waiting so long; but I had to get particular directions about a dress my sister is making for Mrs. Lyman, and she was not at leisure at first."

"Then your sister makes dresses?"

"Yes." (Mary wondered a little at the earnestness of the question.) "She used to work for Mme. Perrôt, but grandmother needs to have her at home now."

"And does she have plenty of work?"

"I suppose she could do more. You know ladies like to employ a fashionable dress-maker, and they are shy of trying any new person; but Miss Lee has given her a good deal of work,

and Mrs. Lyman, too. I am sure her work is as good as Mme. Perrôt's, though of course she cannot charge as much."

"I asked," said Marjory, frankly, "because I want to have some dresses made, and I do not want to pay so very much; and I don't want them all fussed and furbelowed. Do you think your sister could make them for me?"

"O, yes. I am almost sure she could. Won't you come in now and see?"

But Marjory bethought herself that it would be best to ask her aunt's advice, before taking any further steps, and declined Mary's invitation for that time.

She unfolded her scheme to her aunt that evening.

"You'd better not try experiments," said Lilian, sitting by. "Your things will look like frights"

"Miss Lee's dresses are not frightful," argued Marjory, "and if I want my things as simple as possible, they cannot be very horrible, though they may not be as stylish as Mme. Perrôt's; and 'nothing venture, nothing have.' You can't tell in what beautiful raiment I may appear, in consequence of my new dress-maker."

"I would rather 'let well enough alone.'"

"So would I, if it were 'well enough.' But seriously, aunt Helen, don't you think I might venture to let her try on one dress?"

"I think it a very good plan. If you like, we will go to-morrow to see about it, and I shall be very glad if you have discovered some one who can do such work well at a reasonable price."

"That is all just like Marjory," laughed Lilian. "I might have known Mary Cone from now till doomsday, and I should never have learned what her sister did!"

"I don't know that that is much to your credit, my dear!"

"No, mamma? I begin to suspect myself that it may not be."

It was not the first thing concerning herself and other people that Lilian had begun to suspect since she had come to know Marjory, though thus far she had kept her suspicions much to herself.

It was curious how different, both by temperament and education, the two girls were. An only child in one of the most comfortable of homes, it was perhaps only natural that Lilian should have very little thought of her relations to other people, of her need of them, or power to help them. Her

mother's health had for several years obliged her to avoid the northern winters, and Lilian had always been her companion, so that she had never been to school with any regularity until within the last year. Intellectually this was no disadvantage to her, for her mother had taken care that she should be thoroughly taught, and she herself was quick and very fond of reading. The constant casual intercourse with strangers which travelling made necessary, had so far overcome her natural shyness, as to give her a quiet self-possession, which passed for pride. But she was not proud, only reserved and for the most part indifferent, perfectly ready to do a kindness if she saw it in her way, but never thinking to look for it. That she could fill her part socially was proved by her entertaining company, as Allison Strong said, perfectly. But, as Lilian herself had said, that was an exceptional case, and though she enjoyed it occasionally, she liked much better to be left to herself and her books, and never was so entirely happy as in the enjoyment of some old poem or curious story. And so far as other people were concerned, she had said quite honestly to Marjory, "Why should she trouble herself about them? she did not want anything of them,

and why should she think they wanted anything of her?"

Marjory, on the contrary, had started in life as one of a family, in which the comfort of the whole could only be secured by each one doing his or her share of the common daily work; where it was only possible that all should go on smoothly for all, by the steady practice of thoughtfulness and considerateness by each. She had learned, almost unconsciously, how much strength comes from giving and taking. And the lesson reached beyond the family, for in that country-neighborhood all cases of want came in the doctor's way, and met prompt help as far as he could give it. A trouble at a neighbor's was a thing to be sympathized with and thought over, and if there came any stress in their own house, somebody was always ready to come to the rescue. To be sure, one result of this was, that everybody knew everybody's business; but Marjory, growing up in the midst of it, was not troubled by that, and her natural shyness kept her from meddling.

So by a very different process Marjory had reached much the same result as Lilian. While Lilian was self-possessed because she felt that nobody cared specially about her, Marjory was

self-possessed because she felt that they did, or at least would care if she needed it.

And, while Lilian was content to stay quietly in her place, taking what came in her way, and a little doubtful of any new project, Marjory was wide awake to any new interest, reaching out by this or that sympathy, or curiosity, in every direction. And, as Lilian was quite clear-sighted enough to see, the result of this was, that in the few months that she had lived in Boston, she had made herself better acquainted with the advantages and opportunities of the city than Lilian herself, though it was her native place. It was Marjory who had hunted up, at the Public Library, the illustrated books, which, when found, Lilian had so thoroughly enjoyed. And it was Marjory who knew most of the antiquities of the city, and the places of historical interest in the neighborhood.

But if Marjory reached out, Lilian held firm. In the many interests that Marjory was sure to have on hand, some were apt to slip aside for a time, but anything that Lilian undertook was carried out to the end. And so, while Marjory was apt to decide rather hastily, and then to reconsider, — to be fairly committed to one thing,

and then find something else might have been better, — Lilian, slower to decide, and looking at the case on all sides at first, very seldom changed her mind, and if, in the end, it was proved that she was wrong, she only said, "I did the best I could."

In their taste for books they were as different as in everything else. Marjory did not care for reading just for reading itself. She did like the information that she got from books. So she preferred books of travel and histories. She liked a good, bright story sometimes, but she never, of her own accord, took up a volume of poetry, unless, indeed, it might be Scott's. Lilian had discovered, however, that though Marjory never read poetry herself, she did not dislike to hear it read aloud; and being herself an excellent reader, she had fallen into the habit of picking out anything that she much liked, to read aloud; so that, as Marjory said, she got the cream of it, and did not have to wade through the rest.

So, in spite, or perhaps because of the difference between them, they had become fast friends. Lilian's unruffled temper, her self-possession, even her indolence and indifference, had a kind of teasing charm for Marjory, all alive with animation about little matters; while her own eager interest

was a never failing amusement to Lilian, who, moreover, could not but see and admire the steady purpose of doing right and helping others, which lay behind all Marjory's fancies and enthusiasm.

And this was, perhaps, more noticeable from contrast with Lilian's other friend, Isabel Gresham. Mrs. Lindsay was quite right in thinking that this friendship was not of Lilian's seeking. It was mainly the result of circumstances and of Isabel's efforts. Growing up so much by herself, it was quite a new thing for Lilian to come among a party of girls used to working together. They welcomed her pleasantly, but she would have been lonely, feeling how at home they all were where she came in as a stranger, if it had not been for Isabel Gresham, a new scholar like herself, who had been given a seat with her. Lilian was really shy, and hardly knew how to receive the girls' advances cordially , but Isabel, who had had more than one experience of the kind, fitted to her place most easily, and, for a time at least, seemed to have won the favor of all the girls, and specially of Lilian. She was quick to learn Lilian's likes and dislikes, and very ready to adapt herself to them ; and she had a way of deferring to her opinion and accepting her views, which

might have flattered even an older person. It was all done quietly enough, for it was easy to see that Lilian would dislike any "fuss," and she herself hardly realized how much she had come to depend on Isabel. She only knew that if Isabel was there her books were sure to be in order, and her favorite chair in her place.

At first, indeed, it seemed, as has been said, that Isabel must be a favorite with all the girls, she fitted so readily to their ways, and seemed so good-natured about little things. But school girls are quick to see through any pretence, and it was not long before some of them began to notice that Isabel's good-humor never led her to really put herself out, and that her habit of agreeing with everybody made the real fact of any matter, as told by her, a little doubtful.

It happened one day that some of the girls, being early at school, began a game of ball. They were cautious enough, at first, but growing excited as the game went on, Allie Strong, playing against Lilian, had thrown the ball higher than usual. It went beyond Lilian's reach, struck the edge of the book-case behind her, and bounding up, lodged in a basket held by a little plaster Cupid. For a second the figure swayed with the

shock, and then toppled over, and the head and basket together rolled upon the floor. The girls looked on in dismay.

"Now," cried Allie desperately, "of course it was I who threw that ball! Well, I wish Miss Lee would come! I wonder what she will say!"

"Why should she say anything?" asked Isabel. "She does not look up there once in a fortnight. She would never know if the whole thing were put out of the way."

"Thank you," said Allie shortly. "I am not in the habit of telling lies, or acting them." Allie never chose her words, but took whatever came uppermost.

"I was playing with you, Allie, and I proposed the game; so the blame is half mine. Let me tell Miss Lee, please."

Isabel colored as Lilian spoke, but she had only time to say, "I thought you could take a joke, Allie Strong!" when Miss Lee came in.

"Do you believe Isabel meant that in fun?" Florence asked of Allie, as they walked home from school.

"Not a bit. She said so because she saw that Lilian would not agree with her. And if she did, I don't like that kind of fun."

Isabel was too bright to make the same mistake twice. She never repeated the joke, but the girls felt, without being quite able to explain it, that a new and uncomfortable element had come into the school. There were more tiffs and school-girl quarrels than ever before, and almost always they could be traced to some careless speech, repeated, with slight variation, by Isabel. She was usually on good terms with both parties, and as much surprised as any one by the result.

And by degrees the girls began quietly to avoid her, and if anything disagreeable was reported, to ask, "Did Isabel tell you that?"

As Allie said, there was always some truth in what Isabel said; but it was not often the whole truth, and almost always there was something more than the truth. "And for my part," she added, "I don't think half a loaf is better than no bread. I'd rather have a good downright lie, than a 'misrepresentation.'"

This feeling of the other girls, which Isabel was quick enough to see, and probably to understand, made it still more for her advantage to be on good terms with Lilian; and it came to be a matter of course that any spare ticket to concert or matinée, which Lilian might have, was offered to Isabel.

It would seem that Marjory's coming might have made a difference in the matter; but that was not the case. At least, if there was any special attraction, Marjory was very likely to have another engagement, or not to care to go. Lilian never knew how adroitly Isabel contrived to hint to Marjory her great desire to see such and such a thing, or Lilian's having promised "long ago" to go with her this time; for Isabel knew that Marjory was too proud to stand in the way, or to bring about any explanations.

But Marjory would tell the truth if necessary.

"Here are two tickets for the Symphony Concerts," the Judge had said one morning at breakfast, before Marjory came down.

Lilian looked up. "O, thank you, papa. I believe Marjory does not care to go; so I have asked Isabel."

At that moment Marjory came into the room.

"How is this, Marjory?" said Mrs. Lindsay. "Aren't you rather hasty in deciding against the Symphony Concert? You can hardly have heard one."

Marjory looked surprised. "What do you mean, aunt Helen? I don't know anything about the concerts."

Mrs. Lindsay looked at Lilian.

"Why," said Lilian, with evident surprise, "Isabel told me that you thought them stupid and tiresome."

"Since I have never been to one, I could scarcely have said that," said Marjory; and then, recollecting, "O, Allie and Florrie were talking about them one day, and Allie told how long they were, and said she should like them better half the length. And I think I said that I did not often care to listen to music for an hour and a half."

Lilian looked annoyed, and the Judge said, —

"Perhaps it would be a safe rule to go to head-quarters for information another time. Your friend Isabel does not seem quite trustworthy."

Lilian said nothing, and Marjory had no chance to ask her for an explanation afterwards, for she went out as soon as breakfast was over, only saying, "I will be at school in time, but I have an errand to do first." She came in after the girls had taken their seats, and put down on Marjory's desk a ticket to the concert, saying, "It is next ours. You will go — won't you?"

Isabel was wise enough to ask no explanations of the change of plan that included Marjory in

their party, and Lilian said nothing. But a few such cases, where, with the best will, it was impossible to excuse or explain such mistakes, made her feel, before the winter was half through, that Isabel's friendship would not be worth the price paid for it, if it was to keep her away from Marjory and the other girls.

And so she found that her favorite plan of "letting things alone" would not do; but, as aunt Esther would say, she must choose one way or the other. She might let herself be engrossed by Isabel, or she might make some decided effort to share her time with Marjory. Though she was somewhat piqued by the way in which Marjory had seemed to fall in with the present plan, and give up all claim on her to Isabel, yet she was really too sensible, and too quick to see all that was meant by Isabel's manner to Marjory, not to feel that the matter really lay with her to decide. Even if there had been no question about Marjory, she would probably have found out her mistake about Isabel, for Lilian's best quality was her genuine truthfulness. She had from the first been impatient with Isabel's habit of agreeing with any opinion of anybody, but she had chosen to think that it was the natural conse-

quence of wishing to please people. Now she could not help seeing that while Marjory was by far the most in earnest in consulting other people's comfort or pleasure, she was not at all likely to change her opinions to please anybody. She might not force them on any one's attention, but she held them firmly, and showed her good nature by keeping on friendly terms with people who differed from her. Lilian, however, was not the girl to make a fuss about anything, and the result of her thinking showed itself in very quiet ways. Without quite knowing how it happened, Marjory found her more often at leisure to join her in reading or walking, and Isabel learned that if she wanted to enjoy her company she must share it with Marjory; but Lilian herself was surprised to find how much of an effort was necessary to have her own way. It was a proof how much she loved Marjory, that she was willing to make it

CHAPTER XV.

"NOW, Marjory, stay with me this evening," Annie Strong begged, as Marjory came in, just at dusk. "Aunt Emily and Allie are going to the concert, and I was wishing for you. They will know, at home, where you are, and Frank will come round for you."

"No," Marjory said; "Frank has an engagement this evening with some of the boys."

As she said it she caught a quick glance pass between Fred and Annie; but Fred only said, "I shall be at leisure after nine, Miss Marjory, and glad to see you home. And, unless you stay, Annie will be alone, for I have a hard pull at study this evening, and can't bestow on her the delights of my society."

So Marjory staid for a long, quiet evening with Annie, such as they both enjoyed much, but did not often have. For Annie Strong, lying on her lounge day after day, hardly moving from one room

to another through the long winter months, and, apparently, so shut off from all outside interests, had contrived to reach out by so many feelers of interest and sympathy into the lives of all the people around her, that there was no room in the house so much frequented as hers ; no spot where you were so sure to find some one who had come to tell of some special interest, or discuss some special difficulty. The children came to her about their play and their quarrels ; the boys and girls about their games, and their parties, and their studies ; and, as Allie said, there was no one who knew so much about what was going on everywhere as Annie, who never went anywhere. Having no need, indeed no possibility, of hurry herself, she could always give time and attention to each one who wanted it ; and then, as Fred said, she never said, "I told you so," or "Why didn't you do something else?" She just made the best of any scrape, and if she did not feel wise enough to advise, she could always sympathize.

And so, because there were so many chances against it, Marjory was always very glad when she could have Annie all to herself. The friendship between the two girls, begun on the journey, had grown into a close intimacy. It was real

rest to Marjory to get out, at times, of the bustle and whirl of the city life, to which she was so unaccustomed, into Annie's quiet. And on Annie's part, the freshness and zest which Marjory brought to all the simplest and commonest things of the city were very entertaining and enlivening.

And here Marjory could always speak out what was in her mind, without fear of misunderstanding, and without need of explaining more than she chose, yet with the certainty of sympathy. She could not do so with Allison, because Allie was apt to take up violently one side or the other of any matter, and so her judgment was not quite to be depended on; and she could not do so with Lilian, because Lilian might be quite indifferent, and, though she might not mean to show it, Marjory would feel it.

And then what was told to Annie never went any farther. She just kept all the little scraps of confidence safe, if you should ever want to refer to them again, but never to be handed over to anybody else.

It was not that there was any special thing that Marjory wanted to discuss this evening. She was tired, a little overstrained with study, a little blue, without knowing why, and she wanted

the rest and quiet. She had been thinking of home, and from thinking the step was natural, in Annie's company, to talking; and she brightened into a long discussion of their home life, the merry country winters, and the bright springs, with blossoms and wild flowers; and then, because the time had come, she told Annie how it was that she had sent her the innocents so long ago. And Annie's delight and surprise were good to see.

"It only proves what uncle Alick says, that the world is not very big. We all come round together in it. But how did it happen that he did not know you? And he said 'a little girl.'"

"O, I have grown in two years," laughed Marjory. "And why should he remember me? He only saw me that once."

"Why didn't you tell me before?" questioned Annie, presently.

"Because I never had just the chance, alone."

"I understand; but I may tell uncle Alick?"

"Yes," said Marjory, after a minute's hesitation, "if you choose."

"He has wondered so often with me about my little girl! I always knew I had a special right to you, Marjory, and this proves it — the right

of discovery, you see. But you don't know" (her voice dropping a little) "how much good the flowers did me. They came in a black time, when I had almost lost courage, and they were my comfort all through it. You see, uncle Alick had told me something about your talk, and it was a help to think that somebody else was asking the same questions, and trying to find out the same things as I."

Marjory looked at her in surprise. She could not imagine that Annie, of so much importance and help to so many people, could ever have wondered what her life was for; and the surprise broke out in words.

"But *you* could never have doubted about yourself, Annie."

"No," said Annie, taking the words in quite a different meaning from her own. "It would seem as if it were plain enough; but then I had not made up my mind to be sick, in this way, always. I wanted not just to hear and talk, but to be and do. But I have got over that," with a sunny smile. "I don't believe I would change with any of you."

"O, Fred," as he opened the door, "have you

come to give us some of that society which you describe as so delightful ? "

" If you are unappreciative I'll go back again. This sister of mine is growing dreadfully important, Miss Marjory," as, obeying her gesture, he seated himself at the head of her lounge, and bent over her. " It's amazing how great her authority is ! I have half a mind to set up a rival establishment here ; perhaps an easy chair, by way of variety, and see if I can't be interesting and have my own way."

" Don't flatter yourself that you will succeed, old fellow. It is not your style. But be a good boy, and tell us what has happened to you to-day."

And then they sat for half an hour talking of all kinds of things, till Marjory started for home. As Fred walked with her, he said, rather abruptly, —

" I saw that you noticed my look at Annie when you spoke of Frank's engagement. I don't want to tell tales out of school, and I should not speak now if I weren't afraid you thought I meant more than I really did. It was only that I had just been saying to Annie that I was afraid Frank had fallen in with some rather fast boys, and was neglecting school a little."

"What do you mean by *fast?*" Marjory asked.

"O, rather apt to spend more money than is good for them on suppers and such things. I don't know anything worse about any of the set, except Ben Burgess. And I don't really believe there is any danger of their getting Frank to go very far in such things, only, you see, the worst of it is, they take a fellow off from lessons, and I thought Frank was anxious to get on well."

"Yes, he was, and I know he has not studied as well lately. What can be done?"

"Nothing now," Fred said promptly. "It is no use lecturing a fellow about his friends unless you can pin him on some definite thing. If he likes them already, he will stand by them all the closer for talk. But if you let him alone, he will find them out for himself. We will try to be as entertaining as they; and we will succeed in the end," he added cheerily, catching sight of Marjory's anxious face. "You won't say anything to him?" he asked, as they stood at Judge Lindsay's door.

"No, I shall not speak first; but I am glad you told me this."

And Fred confided to Annie, that night, that he

believed Marjory knew a thing or two about boys, and if anybody could bring Frank out right, she would. "At any rate, she won't nag him."

Marjory had noticed, as she said, that Frank was much less at home of late, and less merry and light-hearted when there than usual; and after this talk with Fred Strong, she was not surprised when, late one afternoon, coming into the study where she was sitting alone, he threw himself on the great bear-skin at her feet, and said, grimly, propping his head on his hands, as he looked into the fire, —

"I wish I had never come to Boston."

"Why?" Marjory asked, very quietly.

"Because I've got into an awful scrape," turning himself to look up into her face.

But she did not look startled or shocked, and she only said, still quietly, —

"How?"

"This how! I have spent all the money that," with a quick gulp, "I meant for Janet, and I am way behind in my lessons. Don't you think that's a pretty story for six months in the city?"

It was, certainly, worse than she had expected, but she did not care to show it then.

"Tell me all about it, if you don't mind."

"Mind! But I think I must tell somebody, Marjory." And gathering himself up on the rug, and still gazing into the fire, Frank told his story. It was simple enough. These boys, bright, jolly fellows, as he described them, had made friends with him at school, and finding that he knew very little about the city, had offered to show him some of its ways and amusements — an offer he was willing enough to accept.

"Now, don't imagine, Marjory, that we went to gambling and drinking, and all such things. But they have proposed my going to the theatre with them once in a while, and then having a supper afterwards; and Burgess said he knew where we could get one cheap; and sometimes some of the boys would take a turn at billiards or bowling. And I suppose they call things cheap that I call dear, for when I asked Downing something about the account, and he showed me my share of it to-day, it rather staggered me.

"Why, you see, Marjory," — and he dropped the light tone in which he had been speaking for one of real earnestness, — "Janet and I have each a little money. I wanted her to take it all, but she wouldn't, and then I thought I would

save up all but what I needed for my clothes each year, and send something to her at New Year's. It would have been little enough any way, for the clothes cost more than I supposed here, and now it has all, and more than all, gone for this confounded fun! — That is bad enough," he went on, after a minute's pause, "but Janet did not know my plan, and won't mind. It's worse that I've got behind so at school. Somehow the other fellows contrive to keep up, perhaps because they have always been used to it; but I can't play half the night, and be fresh for work in the morning."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Marjory, who had listened without interrupting him, only showing her sympathy in her face.

"I don't know;" and Frank dropped back again, listlessly. Marjory sat quiet a minute, and then said, —

"I should think the first thing would be to let the boys know that you can't join them in any more such fun."

"It seems kind of mean to back out now, when I know they count on me for the winter."

"But, Frank, did you promise to join them in that way?"

"No, I didn't, though Dunning seemed to think so."

"And did you really have such very good times?"

"No," said Frank, honestly; "it was not as good fun as going to the theatre with you and Lilian, and I don't know billiards. I liked the bowling, sometimes. I suppose," he added, after thinking a minute, "I might just drop off, and say nothing about it."

"You might," said Marjory, doubtfully. "It seems to me the more honest way would be to tell them plainly that you can't join them any more, especially if you think they really count on you."

"But, you see, Marjory,"—he drew himself up again, and spoke quickly,—"it seems dreadful priggish to go lecturing them about money and studies. A fellow don't like to set up to be so awful good."

"Don't lecture. Tell them the facts, and if they want reasons, give them. As to the seeming," she added, after a few minutes' pause, "you were laughing at Lilian the other day for caring what the girls thought about her dress."

"It's a very different thing," Frank said, rather hotly.

"Perhaps it is," said Marjory quietly. "But I don't see the difference. Both are caring for looks. You know," she went on more warmly, "it is only common honesty not to run into debts which you know you can't pay: and what is the use of spending your time at school unless you study. Who are the other boys? and how do they get along? Do they all have money enough?"

"There's Burgess, and Dunning, and Forbes, and Marsh, and Tucker, and Harris, and Crief. As for studying, they don't stand very high; but I suppose they are more used to the thing than I, for they manage to get through. And I don't know anything about their money, except Crief. I guess he has money enough, and to spare."

"Who is he?"

"Tom Crief? He is a new fellow; but though he doesn't belong in Boston, he has lived in cities. He's awful shy and quiet with strangers, but, I tell you, he is jolly. Just the brightest fellow I ever knew!"

"And Fred Strong is not one of them? Nor Dick Norris?"

"I guess the boys did not ask them. Burgess said they were too priggish."

"If priggish is like Fred Strong, I don't think it is a bad thing."

Frank made no answer, knowing in his heart that Marjory was quite right. He only dropped back to his old position on the rug. At that moment he had no thoughts to spare for Fred Strong. At last Marjory asked, —

"What do you think Janet would say?"

"Janet!" Frank spoke impatiently. "She would say just as you do. You are as much alike as two peas."

Marjory laughed a little, low laugh. "In spite of your uncomplimentary tone, I am proud to have you say that."

"Well you may be," with the earnestness with which he always spoke of Janet. "Any one might be proud to be compared to her. I am proud of my sister!"

"We must take care that she may be proud of her brother," said Marjory softly.

"She shall be," cried Frank, springing up "You are right, Marjory; I must cut adrift from this whole concern and start afresh, and I'll do

it to-morrow. The fellows may say what they choose."

Frank looked equal to anything just then, as he squared his shoulders, and threw his head back; but he darkened again in a minute, as he said, —

"But then there's that hateful debt! I don't see but I shall have to ask the fellows to wait a while till the Judge pays me over what he has on hand for this half year, — and that won't be enough. What a fool I was not to ask about it before!"

"You might tell uncle Henry, and ask him to advance it to you on the next year."

"Well," said Frank, with a long, low whistle, "you do take a fellow's breath away! Tell the Judge! Why, Marjory, the first and only advice he has given me, was not to run in debt. And now you want me to go and tell him I've done it! It will be bad enough asking him for all the money, when he knows I meant to save some of it for Janet. He'll think I'm a smart fellow, to fizzle at the first go off."

"But, Frank, you must be in debt for a time to somebody, and, if I were you, I'd rather it were uncle Henry than those boys."

"O, they won't be hard on me."

"But you won't find it half as easy to 'cut adrift,' as you say, if they have that rope to hold you by. I don't want to find fault with your friends, Frank, but I don't think they have been very considerate, so far. They might have guessed that *you* wouldn't want to spend so much money, if *they* didn't care. I am sure it would be better to be quite free of them."

"But I can't do that," Frank said desperately. "Think what it is, Marjory! The Judge has been so good and kind, and I know he expects a great deal of me. There's no man for whose good opinion I care as much as for Judge Lindsay's. And now you want me to go and tell him what will make him despise me!"

"No," said Marjory. "Now you are exaggerating. It was only a mistake you made, Frank. You did not mean to do anything wrong. We knew of your going to the theatre and the sleigh-rides. You did not conceal anything; but, don't you see, it will be concealing now, and you will feel uneasy and mean about it. Besides," she went on steadily, "if there is any shame about it, it must be in the doing, not in the telling. Uncle Henry may think you weak and foolish

now, but I am sure he would rather help you to start again, knowing that, than have you try to make him think you what you are not. Do tell him, Frank! I know you will feel easier."

"I can't do it, Marjory. Really I can't. It's easy enough for you to say tell, but you don't know how sharp and stern the Judge can be. I heard him once talking to a man who had done something wrong, and I thought then if there was any chance of his speaking so to me, I should cut. And after all, it's only asking Burgess to wait a while. How I hate the whole thing!" He had dropped back on the rug, and now he rolled over, burying his face in his hands. Marjory sat silent for a time, looking into the fire.

"Suppose I lend you the money," she said at last.

"You!" The boy stared at her in blank surprise.

"Yes. Aunt Helen asked me yesterday if I did not want the money I had saved on my dresses. It is more than I thought, and, with what you will have, may make enough to pay all off."

"O," said Frank, dryly "it's the money you were going to spend in presents for the folks at home."

Marjory said nothing.

"And you propose to rob them to pay my debts?"

"I cannot rob them of what they never had," she said steadily, making an effort at a smile, though she knew how much she had counted on those presents. "And if you could pay the boys, you can pay me, some time. Do take it, Frank! I would do anything to have you quite free of this whole business."

He had sprung up again as she spoke, and she started at the sudden ring in his voice, as he looked down at her.

"Thank you! I may be a coward and a sneak. I believe I have proved myself both this afternoon; but I am glad there is one thing I am not mean enough to do! Marjory, how could you think I would take your money! But all the same," with a sudden change again, "it's mighty good of you to offer it,—and if you care as much as that,—I'll tell the Judge to-night."

Almost as he spoke the door opened, and Judge Lindsay came in.

"What are you two doing here in the dark?" he said, catching sight of the two figures. "Tell-

ing secrets by firelight? I must beg for a share of the fire, if not of the secrets, for it is bitter cold out of doors."

As he stood before the fire, rubbing his hands, it was clear that he was in a more than usually genial mood. That made the work he had to do still harder, if possible, for Frank; but he would not give himself time to think about it. Marjory had made a motion to go away, as the Judge came in, but Frank stopped her with a quick gesture, and she sat down again. Then he spoke without preface or explanation: —

"I have done what you told me not to do, sir. I have got into debt."

"So!"

Marjory, watching the Judge's face by the flickering fire-light, could read nothing there. It was quiet, as usual; but it seemed to her very long — though it was perhaps half a minute — before he spoke again.

"How did it happen?"

Frank told his story as shortly as possible, without comment or apology.

"And what do you propose to do?"

Marjory was almost angry that the Judge spoke so coolly, almost indifferently.

"Ask you, sir, to advance the money on my next half, so that I can pay up, and tell the boys I can't join them any more."

"Won't they trust you any longer?"

"I haven't asked them, sir. I would rather — Marjory thought I'd better — ask you first."

"And this is the money you were going to save for Janet?"

"Yes, sir:" he stopped a minute, and then broke out, almost with a sob, "I did want it for her, uncle Lindsay. I meant it when I planned it so, and I would never have joined the boys at all, if I had had any idea it would be as bad as this. But I know Janet would say I ought to be honest before I am generous."

The judge turned and held out his hand to him.

"My boy, you've got a pretty tough lesson here; but if you learn all you can from it, I think you won't find it a dear one. You can hardly expect to go through life without making mistakes; but if you will correct them all as promptly and as thoroughly as this, Janet will have more reason to be proud of her brother than if you sent her a bushel of presents. You shall have the money to-morrow. And remem-

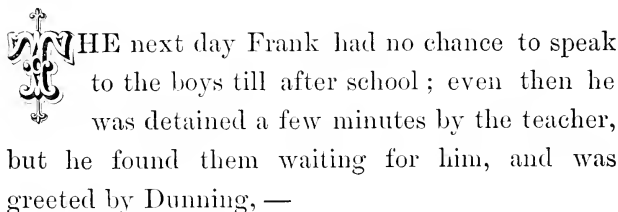
ber, Frank, whenever you choose to invite any of your boys here to dinner, or to spend the evening, your aunt and I shall be glad to see them; and I am sure that Marjory and Lilian will do their best to entertain them."

He walked away as Pluto came in to light the gas, but turned back to say, "Thank you for telling me of this so promptly. Don't forget that I am always glad to help you, if I can."

He had not noticed Marjory in all the talk, and she was too happy in the result to need even Frank's whispered "Thank *you* for all that. O, Marjory, I am so glad!" But as she stopped beside the Judge to say good night, he held out his hand to her.

"Let us hope," he said so that she only could hear, "that when Roger needs an adviser, he will find one as wise as Frank has found to-day."

CHAPTER XVI.



THE next day Frank had no chance to speak to the boys till after school; even then he was detained a few minutes by the teacher, but he found them waiting for him, and was greeted by Dunning, —

"Well, Marshall, what do you say to a sleigh-ride to-night? Bright moonlight and capital team."

"I can't go."

"O, now, do contrive it some way. All the rest of us have agreed to it; and, you see, we can't put it off, for it may thaw any day."

"No, you needn't put it off for me. The truth is, boys, I can't keep on with this sort of thing. It costs too much; and, besides, I can't keep fresh for work, too."

"O, Marshall, don't you turn prig!" cried Harris. "There are plenty of them round. And we've counted on you for the whole winter. It

just makes an even number. You aren't going to be mean enough to back out now!"

Frank colored. "I don't want to be mean, but I can't join you. Perhaps you city fellows can keep up this kind of thing, but I can't."

"Come, old fellow," said Burgess, speaking for the first time. "We understand all that talk. So the Judge has found you out — has he? Never mind; we'll keep darker next time; and, as for the money, there's no hurry about that. We can make old Sykes wait."

Frank turned on him proudly. "I never meant to do anything that needed to be hid; so I can't have been 'found out.' And if it is mean to back out, as you say, it must be meaner to run into debts I don't see any chance of paying."

Burgess looked at him, dropped his half patronizing tone, and said, sharply, —

"Then, perhaps, if you are so very honest, you will pay up now."

How glad Frank was to be able to say, "Certainly. You said twenty-two dollars, I believe, Dunning. There it is. But I hope you fellows don't mean to quarrel with me because I can't keep with you in this."

He glanced round; but only Burgess spoke —

"We don't want anything to do with prigs and sneaks."

Frank turned on him; but before he could speak, Crief, who had been standing by, silent, laid his hand on his shoulder. "Marshall is right," he said, "and I am glad he has had the pluck to speak out. He speaks only for himself; but you know as well as I do, that we can't afford to keep up this thing any better than he. There is not one of us who hasn't gone backward, these last two months, in school."

"Hang school," growled Burgess; "I don't mean to let school keep me from having a good time."

"As you please," Crief said, coolly; "but you must count me out of your good times in future. Dunning, I'll pay you to-morrow."

And slipping his arm through Frank's, he walked off with him, before anything more could be said.

The group that they had left looked after them in dismay. The result of Frank's action had amazed them all. It was bad enough to lose him, for his good humor had made him a great favorite; but to have him take with him Crief, on whom they had learned to depend for their fun and wit, —

without whom, as they had again and again agreed, no "lark" could be perfect, — that was too much. And, besides, they knew in their hearts that he and Frank were quite right in what they had said. Burgess saw that his party was in danger of breaking up.

"Never mind those muffs!" he cried. "Crief will change his mind before long, and we're better off without Marshall than with him, if he takes to preaching. We shall make just a cosy party for to-night, boys, and we'll have a gay time with Marshall's money."

Frank himself was not a little surprised at the turn the matter had taken. He certainly had not expected Crief, of all the boys, to join him, and he walked on with him in silence till Crief said, —

"Well, Marshall, what are you going to do with yourself, now?"

"Make myself study a little more, I hope."

"Yes, but at other times — for amusement?"

"O, there is plenty to do. My cousins are always wanting me for something at home."

"Ah! You're lucky if you have a home!"

"Haven't you?"

"No. Only the Parker House. That doesn't sound much like it! Father and I are boarding

there this winter, and he's away most of the time. In fact, I don't know but I might as well have gone with the boys, after all. I don't very well know why I broke with them, except that I couldn't stand seeing Burgess bully you, when you were right, after all."

"If I was right, then you wouldn't as well go with them."

"But it's so stupid for a fellow having nothing to do but study evenings!"

"Why won't you come round to our house? They would all be glad to see you," Frank said cordially, remembering the Judge's charge.

"Who are they? Any other boys?"

"No. Only two girls."

Frank laughed aloud at Crief's face.

"My dear fellow! I couldn't face them for the world. I never had anything to do with girls. Why, of course," he added, as if suddenly remembering, "I have bowed to them, and said, 'How do you do?' at a party, and, 'It's a pleasant evening,' when, as likely as not, it was raining hard; but anything more — O, no! It's good of you, old fellow, but it won't do!"

"Then you never had a sister?" said Frank pityingly.

"Never. I had a brother once." Crief's voice changed. "If he were here I shouldn't be lonesome. Dear old Ned! I believe it was because you reminded me of him a little, and talked like him, that I took your part to-day."

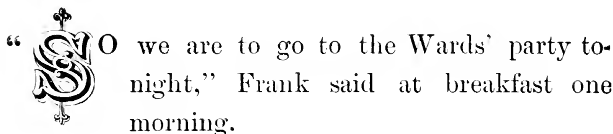
"If you're afraid to come to our house, may I come and see you?" said Frank, after a minute's pause.

"Will you, old fellow? Thank you. Will you come to-night? You'll find me at No. 39. And, I say, Marshall," as they reached the corner where their roads separated, "bring round your geometry, and we'll go over that work together."

And this was the beginning of a pretty close friendship between the two boys. They were enough unlike to suit each other. Frank's bright cheerfulness kept Crief from being moody, and Crief's quiet wit lighted up many things that would else have seemed to Frank very tame and stupid. Lessons proved more interesting when they worked them up together, and it was not very long before Frank had regained his place at school. Burgess and his party made one or two attempts to win them back, but soon found it of no use. Frank was on friendly terms with almost all the boys, but Crief was still shy, though

pleasant. He had but little to do with the other boys, and utterly refused all Frank's invitations to dinner or tea, with the chance of making the acquaintance of the girls.

CHAPTER XVII.



“SO we are to go to the Wards' party to-night,” Frank said at breakfast one morning.

“Yes, all of us,” said Lilian. “The Wards always invite old and young people together, and this is to be a specially intellectual entertainment. I suppose there will be some dancing, but it is chiefly to lionize the great Eastern traveller, Mr. Bopp.”

“How stupid it must be for him! I don't know which would be worse, to be entertained or entertainer. Think of having to go over the same old story to every new person.”

“But if he has seen so much, he must have something to talk about,” suggested Marjory; “and if people really care to hear about it, I should think he might like to talk. As for entertaining him, it would be worse to have some one who had no interest in anything. I do admire

any one who can carry on a conversation with a stranger."

"It is well for you to say that," laughed Lilian, "when I heard you talking so glibly to M. Michaud, last Monday, and in French, too. I should not have dared to open my lips to him."

"That's the advantage of knowing very little," retorted Marjory. "You would have been thinking about your tenses and genders; but I knew I should not get them right, no matter how much I thought; so I went right on, and he was too polite to laugh at me. And as for talking, he really wanted to know something about how people lived in the country here, and that I could tell him. I don't call that conversation"

"Pray what is your definition of conversation, Marjory?" asked the Judge.

"Why, it is talking when you have not anything to say."

"Excellent," said the judge, while Lilian and Frank applauded. "I am afraid you would agree with a lady I once knew, whom some one was pitying for her deafness. 'You must miss so much conversation!' said her friend. 'O,' she said, 'if conversation is not any more entertaining now

than it was when I could hear, I don't think I have lost much.'"

"I don't see," Marjory said, as Lilian and she went up stairs, "why people need have big parties. Little ones, where you can talk to people, are good; so are big ones when you are enough at home to be quiet and look on. But when you are part of the company!" She finished her sentence with a shrug.

"Never mind. You will contrive to have a good time. I should not wonder if you had a good talk with Mr. Bopp himself."

"There's that comfort, — I shall not have to entertain him!"

The prospect of Marjory's having a good time did not seem very great at first. She was introduced to half a dozen people in the first half hour, with whom she talked first of the weather, and the last concert, and the eclipse, and then of the concert, and the eclipse, and the weather; amusing herself with the different changes which could be rung on these three notes, until she was quite bewildered as to whether the eclipse was very choice, and the weather total, and the concert stormy, or the concert total, and the eclipse stormy. Then she found herself quite

alone for a time, as far as any one to talk with was concerned, and at leisure to watch the company. None of her own party were in sight just then, and she amused herself trying to decide which was the celebrated Mr. Bopp, and selected a tall, independent looking man, who was walking about in an easy way, which seemed to Marjory quite characteristic of a man who had been everywhere. She noticed several people speak to him, and imagined what they might be saying, and did not even see Frank, who said, as he came up eagerly, "I thought I never should be free to come in search of you. Now, let us make the most of this time. I want to show you a portfolio of photographs that I have discovered."

He gave her his arm, and they made their way to a small side room where were music and pictures. It was almost deserted just then, and Frank placed a chair for Marjory, and wheeled the stand before her. As he was opening the portfolio, she exclaimed, "O, I have seen the great traveller! Isn't he handsome?"

"Don't be sarcastic," was Frank's rather puzzling answer; but she had no time to ask what he meant, for he put before her at the moment a large photograph of one of the Scotch lakes, and

SHE MOVED ASIDE, THAT HE MIGHT JOIN HER AT THE PORTFOLIO.

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she had no more thought except for what was before her. They had looked at perhaps half a dozen pictures, and Marjory felt as if she had much enjoyment before her, when Isabel Gresham looked into the room.

"O, Mr. Marshall," she said, coming in eagerly, as she caught sight of them, "do you know where Lilian is?"

"I left her in the front parlor," said Frank rather stiffly.

"So far off as that?" Isabel grew pathetic. "I shall never be able to find her through this crowd. Would you mind taking me to her?" for she saw that Frank was not likely to take any hints. "Marjory will excuse you for a few minutes, I am sure."

"Certainly," said Marjory quickly, with a meaning look at Frank, being very much afraid he would be rude enough to refuse. "I am not afraid to be left alone for a while."

Isabel could not stop then to decide whether Marjory meant to be sarcastic. She walked off with Frank, doing her best to be agreeable, and quite ignoring his coolness.

So Marjory was left alone again, and this time in no very pleasant mood. She knew that Isabel

could easily have waited till chance brought Lilian again in her way, and, indeed, that she was not so very timid that she could not have gone in search of her alone. And now Frank might have to stay away nobody knew how long. But she could only make the best of it, and look at the pictures alone. Several people had strolled into the room while they sat there ; but Marjory, glancing round, saw that she knew none of them, and was soon absorbed in the portfolio. Chancing to look up again after a while, she caught the eye of a boy, who was lazily leaning against a pedestal behind her, and looking wistfully at the photographs from that distance. He was so plainly alone, and rather forlorn, as Marjory had found herself once that evening, and her instinct was so quick to help any one, that, almost involuntarily, she made a little gesture of invitation, and moved aside, that he might join her at the portfolio. He came up shyly, but eagerly, exclaiming, "What a capital view of Paris!"

"Is it Paris?" questioned Marjory. "There is no name with it."

"It must be Paris," he answered decidedly. "See, here are the bridges and Notre Dame; and this must be the Conciergerie. Here is the rest

of it," — taking up another photograph, — "the Tuileries and the Champs Elysée."

"You have been there?" questioned Marjory.

"No; but I am going some time."

Marjory turned back among the photographs.

"Is this Edinboro'? There is no name."

"Yes, surely. There is the castle; and here is the companion to that — Arthur's Seat and Holyrood."

"Holyrood! Mary Stuart's Holyrood?"

"Yes; and Walter Scott's Arthur's Seat. I think that is better worth looking at. I wish I could see the Canongate and the old Tolbooth, but I can't pick it out among all these buildings."

So they went on turning over the pictures, Marjory's companion eagerly recognizing one thing after another, pointing out to her the quaintness of the old German towns, and holding forth at some length on the different styles of building, and she catching the spirit of his interest, and listening and questioning intelligently. At last, after some really vivid description of a part of old Rome, she said, —

"But you must have been there."

He laughed. "Ah, if you had been laid up for half a year with nothing to amuse you but

a set of old guide-books and a jumble of pictures and maps, you would not wonder that I grew interested enough then to read up a good deal since; and it was a pet scheme of mine once to go to Rome."

"You have given it up?"

"Yes," he answered, so shortly that Marjory feared that she had seemed inquisitive, and turned back to the pictures. He took up the next one.

"This is beyond me," he said. "I should think it must be Constantinople."

"Well guessed," said a voice behind him; and the boy stepped aside to make room for a small, pock-marked gentleman, who had stopped to look over his shoulder. Marjory had noticed him as one of a group who had been talking together in the room.

"Don't move," he spoke, in a quick, sharp way, stepping at the same time into the vacant space. "See, here is the Mosque of St. Sophia; but this photograph gives you no idea of the beauty of the city as you come up to it. And ah! here is Beyrout; and here, this must be Bethany."

The boy asked some question about the houses, which looked so dreary and uninhabitable, and

the gentleman explained so good-humoredly that Marjory grew bold enough to ask about the country around, and got in return a glowing description of the flowers of that region, and some little details that made it all very real; and then some other people coming up, joined in the talk, and presently Marjory, catching sight of Frank in the doorway, slipped out of the circle, and joined him; followed, somewhat to her surprise, by her friend of the photographs.

"So," said Frank, holding out his hand to the boy as he came up, — "so you two people have found each other out."

"I am afraid that is true of only one of us," the boy answered, while Marjory looked bewildered. "Will you introduce me?"

"Now, Marjory, didn't you really know that this was Tom Crief?" Frank certainly performed the duty in a most off-hand way.

"How should I?" said Marjory, wanting to add, "He is not in the least like your description," but wisely refraining.

"How did you know Marjory?" Frank turned on Crief.

"I didn't. I never suspected her till she recognized you."

"And you two people have actually been talking to each other for half an hour, without knowing it! How jolly, when I never could get Crief to let me introduce him."

"I am sorry on Mr. Crief's account," Marjory said demurely, being in fact rather indignant with him for keeping Frank so much to himself. "Don't disturb yourself, I beg. You see I still live."

"But the joke is too good," broke in Frank. "The next thing you will be telling me, Marjory, that you don't know who that gentleman is that you were talking to so earnestly."

"Well, I don't! I only know he is good-natured and entertaining."

"Now, Marjory Dana, that is too much! Didn't you tell me that you had seen Mr. Bopp? and don't you know him when you see him a second time?"

"That! — that man the great traveller? O, Frank! why, he don't put on airs a bit."

"Of course not. Great men never do," said Frank, with great wisdom.

Just then Lilian and Isabel came up. Frank introduced Crief before he had time to escape, and with rather more formality than before, and

then told the story of Marjory's talk with Mr. Bopp.

"I told you so," Lilian said merrily. "O Marjory, you have stolen a march on all of us."

"Quite an adventure," laughed Isabel in turn. "I don't wonder Marjory boasts that she is not afraid of being left alone."

"Marjory never boasts," Frank broke out, indignantly; and Lilian said, dropping Isabel's arm, "But Marjory shall not be in danger of being left alone again. Don't you want an ice, Meg? I know a nice, quiet corner, where Frank will bring us some. I kept Isabel there as long as I could, but she declared herself tired of it at last. It is just what you would enjoy, for there you can watch people."

At the moment Fred Strong came up with Allie in search of Isabel, who was engaged to him for the next dance. Lilian told Marjory's adventure.

"Yes," said Allie Strong, "of course that would happen to Marjory; she comes off with flying colors. Now listen to my story. I found myself introduced to a gentleman whose name I could not possibly understand; indeed I had not the faintest idea what it was. And then I was

left to talk to him. He made a few innocent remarks, and then it came my turn. And as ill luck would have it, I just caught the sound of the waltz from the music room. That was not quite so hackneyed a subject as the weather; so I attacked it, and enlarged on the ability of the player, and all that; of course, only saying safe, commonplace things, because I really did not know much about it. My companion smiled and assented; and then imagine my horror, when Mrs. Ward sailed up and said to him, 'Herr Werner, I want to introduce you to Mrs. Smith.' I found I had been talking music to the finest pianist in the country, and vowed never to open my mouth again to a stranger, as long — as I could help it."

Then Fred and Isabel went off to their dance, and the other three girls ensconced themselves in Lilian's corner, and enjoyed the ices which Frank brought to them. Crief had slipped away as the Strongs joined them.

Presently Isabel came back to them, just as Allie was saying, —

"How came you to know Tom Crief? Fred says he is dreadfully shy of girls — and boys, too, for that matter."

Lilian appealed to Marjory to know how it happened, and Marjory told her story simply enough.

"Then you had not been introduced to him?" Isabel said.

"I did not even know who he was; but he seemed forlorn, and as much interested in the pictures as I."

"O!" It was a very innocent word, but the tone brought the color into Marjory's cheek.

"Was there anything wrong in what I did?" she asked, turning to Lilian.

"Certainly not. I think it was the most courteous thing you could do."

"Of course there was no harm," Isabel said, patronizingly. "But Lilian would not have done it."

"Probably not. I am sorry to say I should most likely not have thought of it; but that does not prevent my admiring it in Marjory."

Isabel did not think it prudent to continue the discussion. She began to see clearly that she need not hope to monopolize Lilian any longer; but she did not choose to quarrel with any of them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was a dull winter evening. Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay were dining out, Frank and Tom Crief were busy up stairs, and Marjory and Lilian sat by the fire in the drawing-room.

"How stupid we are!" said Marjory, just stifling a gape. "I wish Frank would come down!"

"It's ridiculous of Tom Crief," Lilian added, with as much vexation in her voice as was often heard, "to keep Frank all to himself so, and pretend to be afraid of us girls. I will pay him for it some time if I have the chance."

And then they sat quiet for a time, till Marjory suddenly asked, "Don't you want to play something? some music, I mean."

"I don't think I do," said Lilian lazily, just moving a little to make herself more comfortable in her lounging-chair.

"O, I am quite sure you want to — are really dying to. Do, please!"

"What are you up to now, Marjory Dana? Some mischief, I know." And she leaned forward to look full in Marjory's eyes, that sparkled in the fire-light, though the rest of her face was quiet enough.

"Why, I want to hear some music. And I happen to remember that Frank says that is the one thing Crief can't resist. It wouldn't be quite the thing for us to make an inroad on them, when they are supposed to be studying in Frank's room; but it is almost time for them to come down."

"O–h," returned Lilian, drawing the little monosyllable out meditatively. "Yes, ma'am, I see! You want me to play Circe."

"I don't care what you play, so that you do it well," Marjory answered saucily. "I want to study the effect of music."

And then she curled herself contentedly in the corner of the sofa, as Lilian ran her fingers over the keys.

Lilian had not only the benefit of careful training and constant practice, so that her fingers would do what she wanted of them, but a real love of music; and as she played, the two girls

quite forgot the object with which she began, till the boys' voices were heard on the stairs.

Lilian was just then playing a little odd thing of Schumann's; and as it caught Crief's ear, he stopped in his talk.

"Hush," he said; "how good that is! who is playing?"

"My cousin Lilian."

"I wish she would play it again," Crief said, half to himself, as Lilian came to the end of the piece.

"Why, of course she will. Lilian is always willing to play." And Frank walked in through the door which Marjory had set half open.

"Play that again — will you, please, Lilian? Crief wants to hear the whole of it."

However shy Tom Crief might be, he was polite; and now there was nothing for him to do but to follow Frank into the room. He did not find it so very dreadful, after all. The gas was turned quite low, but the dancing fire-light made it easy to see who was in the room, without making any one painfully prominent. Marjory looked up from her corner of the sofa with a pleasant "good evening," as if his coming were a matter of course; and Lilian, only bowing, began the

music again. As she finished the piece, she turned to Crief with some criticism of the style, just as Frank broke out to Marjory, —

"How came you in the dark here? I thought you were famous for light, Marjory. Shall I turn up the gas?"

"No," said Marjory, rather eagerly. "Lilian can play without her notes, and I would rather have it dark now."

"Just as you choose," good-naturedly. "But there's no knowing what freaks you girls will take. Only last night you couldn't have too much light!"

Marjory only laughed for answer, as Lilian, saying, "You know this, perhaps?" began to play again. And it proved that Crief really did know a good deal about music, and, in the intervals of Lilian's playing, grew quite eager in discussion. Marjory and Frank joined in occasionally, and none of them knew how fast the time went, till Frank asked for a favorite piece. "Do let Crief hear it," he said.

"Not to-night," said Lilian. "I'd like to be quite fresh for that. I will play that to Mr. Crief some other evening, if he likes."

"Well," said Frank, "this is the first time

I ever knew you own to being tired at the piano."

And Crief, suddenly aware of how long he had staid, took up his cap. "I beg your pardon," he said, becoming stiff again. "I think I must have tired you; but it is so long since I have had a chance to talk of music!"

"I think my cousin must have enjoyed it as much as you," Marjory said. "Frank and I like it, but we don't know much about it."

And then Crief went, and as soon as he was fairly off, Frank rushed back, exclaiming,—

"It's just the luckiest thing that you happened to play, and to leave the door open this evening, Lilian;" and then he stopped, amazed at the sudden burst of laughter from the girls. "What's up now?"

"O, you dear old goose!" Marjory said, when she could speak. "Then, my dear boy, why didn't you have sense enough to see how lucky it was that the gas was low. As if Tom Crief would have staid in the room five minutes, or ever found his tongue, if there had been a blaze of light!"

Frank blew a long whistle. "So, that's the

way you manage! Well, it was cute of you, any way, and it worked well."

"No thanks to you, my child. Why must you do your best to frighten him by making him think he had tired Lilian, when all she wanted was to give him some excuse for coming in again? O, Frank, how could you!"

"Never mind. You know it is not safe ever to count on me to understand your ways; but I don't believe I have done any harm this time. Crief really did enjoy it, and it was good to see him straighten up, and his eyes flash as he talked. I tell you what, girls, you've done a real good thing. I know he is awful blue sometimes, and the music will help him. He will be willing enough to come again."

Which proved to be true. Crief fell easily into a habit of stopping at the drawing-room door on his way out of the house; and soon it was really safe to have the gas high enough to read new music. And then it was found that Crief himself played the violin and sang quite well. And when, one evening, Allison and Fred Strong happened in and took part in the singing, and Frank, being coaxed to try, furnished a passable tenor, it was a natural thing to agree to try some part

songs; and before long it became a matter of course to meet at one or the other house one or two evenings of each week for music. So, almost before he knew it, Crief found himself quite at home with all the party, and furnishing his full share of the entertainment.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARJORY'S dress-making plan worked wonderfully well. It proved that Bessie Cone brought to her work, not only thorough training and care, but real taste; and Lilian was obliged to own that Marjory's dresses were by no means "dowdy."

"But it is all your good luck," she persisted.

"Good luck lies under the hair," retorted Marjory. "Any way, I have found a good and reasonable dress-maker, and something more than that, too. The last time that I went to try on my dress, Bessie was out, and they let me go into the sitting-room to wait; and there I saw the loveliest old grandmother that ever lived!"

"You are a connoisseur on grandmothers, then?"

"I know what is lovely when I see it, my dear, and I saw it then. Madame Gérard is lovely. When I am old I am going to dress just as she

does, in a black dress, with a nice lace folded smoothly round the neck, and such a perfect white cap! But, O, dear! I don't know who could do it up for me! I could not help speaking about it to Mary afterwards, and she said that Bessie always did up their grandmother's cap. That was one thing she was very particular about. O, Lilian, I wish you could have seen her! She looked just like a picture, with her smooth hair, and her bright, clear eyes, and the little pot of mignonette and the white rose-bush beside her on the sunny window-seat. The room was plain enough, but it seemed to need nothing since she was there. She was fitting some work when I went in, and before her were two or three little Irish children, learning to sew. Mary says her grandmother believes in every girl's knowing how to sew; and, since all the sisters were too busy to have time to teach in a sewing-school, she had said they might have two or three children come in once a week, and she would help teach them there. I asked Mary if they picked out clean children,—for I could not imagine anything untidy coming near the old lady,—and she said they let none in who had not clean faces and hands; and then they kept calico aprons for them

BEFORE HER WERE TWO OR THREE LITTLE IRISH CHILDREN LEARNING TO SEW. — Page 264.

to put on while they staid. I asked her if they weren't unruly sometimes; but she says they admire the grandmother so much, that a word from her will quiet them.

"But wasn't I frightened when she spoke to me in French! for you see she is a French woman, and the girls speak nothing but French at home, and that accounts for Mary's pronunciation, that we have wondered at in school."

"Go on," said Lilian, as Marjory stopped in her story. "Of course you learned their whole history. With such a wonderful grandmother, some of the descendants should be remarkable. How large is the family?"

"No," said Marjory. "I didn't learn all, but I could see a good deal. They must be poor, comparatively. There are only the three granddaughters. Aimée, the eldest, draws for engraving, and does copying when she can get it. She is the housekeeper, too, I think. Bessie has her dress-making, and Mary — Marie they call her at home — means to be a teacher. Meantime, she helps both Aimée and Bessie in her spare time. But not one of the three is as lovely as the grandmother!" she added, enthusiastically.

"I foresee," laughed Lilian. "She is a fairy,

and has cast a spell on you. Some day we shall find you transformed, or carried away bodily."

"And meantime, lest she send me to France, I will improve the chance of practising my French, if I can get my courage to the point of beginning."

Bewitched or not, it was certain Marjory found time to spend an hour or two every week with the Cones. At first she was very shy of the French, but Madame Gérard was so sure to begin some very interesting subject, and so entirely puzzled by any explanation, or opinion, attempted in English, that Marjory soon found herself driven to try French; and she was led on so kindly, and all her mistakes corrected so courteously, without even a smile, except when the blunder was so ludicrous that even she herself could see the fun of it, that all the awkwardness was soon gone.

"But I don't see," she said one day to Mary, as they walked home, "I don't see how your grandmother can have lived here so long without learning English."

"My dear child," laughed Mary, "she knows English, and can speak it as well as you, if she chooses; but she does not choose. Nobody can be so deaf, and dumb, and blind, as grandmother.

I never knew her to say a disagreeable thing about anybody. And it's not for want of chances, either. And as for seeing, she never will see anything unpleasant, unless it can be helped. Then she sees both it and the remedy quick enough. But I think it really provokes Bessie, sometimes, that she cannot be made to look on the dark side of anything. Why, Aimée says that when she broke her hip, and knew that she would have to give up the active life she had led, and to be confined to just one place most of the time, instead of going about the house, up and down, as she always liked to do,—when, then, Aimée said to her, 'O, grandmother, if we could only go back one week and begin again!' grandmother just smiled up at her, and said, cheerily, 'My dear child, I don't want to go back at all. It is all right as it is.' And though we know, and she confesses, that she enjoyed all the pretty and nice things that she was used to when she was young, yet we can't make her regret them. She will insist that she has no more than time to enjoy what is left, and she will not fret about anything."

And from this Marjory understood something of the cheerfulness that had sometimes surprised

her, in Mary's home. Living in the luxury of her uncle's house, she had unconsciously come to think many things, if not really necessary, yet very desirable. She knew very well that she should not have thought of needing them at home; but then, she said to herself that living in the country was different, and for the city, one needed a great deal. Yet here were people living in the city on what Marjory would have thought, even for the country, very narrow means, and living very happily. As she came to know them better, she saw how the most careful economy was practised in every detail of their life. She had thought herself careful, but her care was wastefulness beside theirs. And she could not pride herself on her cheerfulness when she saw that with them it was a matter of course. And she could not but see that they were as intelligent, as good, and even as happy, as anybody in her uncle Lindsay's house. Indeed, she sometimes thought that they enjoyed more in any new possession than the people who had only to wish for it and buy it. There was so much interest and sympathy in the discussing about it; in the deciding which kind was cheapest and best; so much fun in plans and devices to get along without it; and so much

satisfaction and comfort when it was once really in the house. Marjory did not know till long afterwards how much she had learned there; but, meantime, she enjoyed her new friends very much, and, without knowing it, brought in a bit of brightness and sympathy that was very pleasant to the Cones, who had very few acquaintances.

CHAPTER XX.

"DEAR MOTHER: . . . I am getting fairly to work now. I like the school and the girls, — most of them, — and you need not be afraid of my working too hard. Aunt Helen takes care of that. And now I feel at home in Boston, and can find my way about alone, if there is any need. But I don't think I'd like to live in a city, at least if all cities have as many poor people in them as this has; and aunt Helen says that often there are more. She has explained to me that there are societies to help them, and ever so much done for them, and I know she herself is very kind. She has a number of old people that she takes care of, and sends Rosa to see, and she lets Rosa use her spare time in making clothes for them. Rosa, you know, is the seamstress, and her father and little blind sister live among the poor people; so she knows all about them. But aunt is not

willing that Lilian or I should go much among them for fear of our catching some disease. And I did not wonder, after going once with Rosa, just to see how they lived. They are crowded all together so, and the poor little children have no place to play in but the street. I know now what aunt Esther meant when she said there were worse ways of being poor than wanting money. I thought the Brown children had a hard time, but they had lots of room, and flowers, and grass, and sky. And these children are so ragged and dirty! But I have found out one little way to help. I told you about my school-mate Mary Cone, and her sister Bessie, the dress-maker, and her lovely French grandmother. The other day, when I went to see Mary, I found half a dozen little ragged girls there. Mary teaches them, instead of having a class in one of the sewing schools, and I am sure that I can find time to go and help her once a week.

Ellis will laugh at the idea of my teaching sewing, but it isn't hemstitching or fine tucking that these children need to learn. And I am sure I know more than they do.

And there's another thing that I don't think is quite so fine about living in the city, as at

first. Aunt Helen's servants were very good, and everything went on smoothly; but last month the cook was married, and then the parlor girl wanted to go back to Ireland to see her friends, and then the chamber girl thought there was too much work; and part of the time we had only Pluto, for Rosa's father 'took ill,' and she had to go to him.

We had our dinners sent in from Parker's, and we got along as easily as we could; but, O, dear! there was so much to do, and so much running up and down stairs. Uncle Lindsay laughs, and says it will do us good and make us more considerate of servants, when we have them; but I think I'd rather live in a house that did not need them, for we have had fearful times getting any that would suit; and spite of his laughing, I know he does not like to have his breakfasts spoiled, and find his study table covered with dust, and all the things askew in his dressing-room. For uncle Lindsay is particular. I am afraid I shock him sometimes, for I cannot learn to be as exact and nice as Lilian. It is so stupid to have to stop and put everything just in its place, when there is so much to do. But I mean to improve very much; for I must tell you a

compliment that I had, — through uncle Lindsay, too, — and it is something to have him repeat such a thing. He met M. Guiot, our French teacher, one day, and spoke to him about us girls; and M. Guiot asked if I was his niece, and said my mother must be a most estimable lady! Now, mother dear, I never thought before, that people could judge anything of you by what I might do, and it frightens me a little. It is not fair, for there are so many things in which they would be mistaken; but I mean to try hard, after this, not to do you discredit. And I would set to work this minute to clear up my drawers, if it were not time for me to go to the sewing at Mary's.

Good by. Your loving MARJORY."

Marjory was quite right about the annoyance her carelessness caused. At home, where she was not expected to wear gloves more than once a week, and where, if she did not find her own hat she could as well have Sue's, she had never realized the inconvenience of mislaying her things, or of letting rips and tears go unmended. There was indeed no need of doing so now, for Rosa was always ready to do any sewing; but Marjory

had resolved to do everything for herself, and so leave more time for Rosa to sew for the poor people. But the right time for the mending did not often come, and so it happened that more than once she had caught her uncle Lindsay's quick glance at her ripped gloves or tumbled collar, and each time she had resolved that it should not happen again.

The very evening of the day on which the letter was written, the whole family were to go to the theatre, to Booth's benefit, and Marjory had been looking forward to it very eagerly. She had meant to have everything ready to wear before she went off for the afternoon; but some company came in to lunch, with whom she had to talk for a while, and then there was just time for the letter before starting for Mary's. She staid there a few minutes longer than usual, leaving herself, by a nice calculation, just ten minutes' margin before dinner, if she walked home quickly. But alas! she met Isabel Gresham on the way, who must needs stop her to ask some question, and so Marjory entered the house just as the dinner bell was ringing. She knew that it annoyed her uncle to have any one excused from the table; so she sat with what patience she

could through dinner, which had never seemed so long, and ran off as soon as possible, just catching her uncle's words — "Be quick, girls; we haven't much time to spare."

It took Lilian only a few minutes to put on her wraps, and then she looked in at Marjory's door, to find her impatiently turning over the contents of her upper bureau drawer, and making confusion worse confounded indeed.

Lilian looked for a minute, and then said, quietly, "Can I help you?"

"O, dear!" cried Marjory, desperately; "I am looking for the mate of this glove. It must be here somewhere!" And she made another plunge into the medley before her. "I meant to wear the brown pair, but one of them is ripped. Will you look, Lilian, while I change my boots?" These are too muddy to wear. Now, where is my button-hook? I had it here this morning!"

"Take mine," suggested Lilian, and Marjory worked away busily for a minute; when snap went a button across the room, and then another.

"Why couldn't they have held on just twenty-four hours longer!" cried Marjory, sticking a pin into the gaping place. "Thanks, dear, though

I'm afraid these gloves look rather soiled, after all. Now, will you get down my best hat?"

As Lilian took it out of the box, Marjory exclaimed, "O! I meant to curl that feather again, and put on a fresh piece of ribbon. That is so spotted by the rain."

The poor hat did indeed look as if it needed some care; the feather hung limp and straight, and the once fresh ribbon was crumpled. Marjory had quite forgotten that she had put it away in that condition. She looked at it ruefully, and then glanced round the room at the heaped-up drawer, the soiled gloves, and buttonless boots; and then, as Lilian asked, "Couldn't you wear your other hat?" she said, very quietly, —

"No. I must stay at home. Please don't wait for me any longer, but just tell them that I cannot go; and don't make a fuss about it, please."

Lilian hesitated a minute, looking at her; but she was one of those delightful people who know when to say nothing. She saw that Marjory meant just what she said, and so, only stopping to kiss her, she went down, with a sober face, to the hall where Frank was drumming a tune on the banisters, as he waited.

"Hullo! Isn't Marjory ready yet?" he cried.

And then Marjory heard Lilian's low voice in reply; and then Frank again, — "I'll wait and go later with her;" and then her uncle and Lilian again; and then the front door shut after them. They had all gone.

As soon as Marjory was sure that they were fairly out of the house, she sat down and cried heartily. Not that she was sorry for her decision, or would have changed it; but she had so counted on the evening's pleasure, that to have to give it up by her own fault was very hard.

"O, dear!" she said, talking to herself, in her old fashion. "It seemed such a little thing just not to mend a pair of gloves, or fasten the buttons to my boots. Why couldn't I have done it in time! And I know Lilian and Frank wanted me to go, and they won't enjoy it quite as much without me. O, dear!" But she did not cry long.

"No, Peggy," she said, "this won't do. You'd much better go to work to set things to rights, and not cry for spilled milk;" and vigorously to work she went. She sorted out the pairs of gloves, and put aside those that needed mending, or were too much soiled for further

wear. She smoothed out the crumpled ribbons and collars.

Hidden things came to light as her clearing up went on, and she was quite surprised to find how many treasures she had when she reached the bottom of her drawer — the knife that she thought was lost, pencils that had been half used, forgotten memoranda for Roger's benefit, and two or three unanswered letters.

The drawer fairly in order, there were the buttons to be sewed on the boots, and the hat to be renovated; and by the time that was done it was half past nine, and Marjory had worked herself into quite a cheerful mood, and looked round with great satisfaction on the work she had done. But she knew that the victory was only half gained, unless she could be sure that the same thing would not happen again. And as she stood thinking, her eye fell on the books upon her dressing table, — the Bible and Hymn Book, — and she remembered, with sudden shame, that since she had begun on these new schemes, she had not always found time for her morning reading, and sometimes for days together her books had been unopened.

"That is it, I believe," she said, slowly. "I

have begun in a hurry, and then the whole day has been hurry. It's the old thing; one right must not crowd out another right. And, first of all, I must *be* right. I believe I forgot the first half of aunt Esther's text. Now I'll try to remember that the home rights come first, and if there is not time to do any others, why, I suppose God can find somebody else for them."

Then she looked at the clock again. It was still some time before the family would be home. They must be now at the most interesting part of the performance. But it would never do to think of that. She must keep busy. So she armed herself with the bothersome French translation, which she had been keeping for a time when she felt like hard work, and settled herself comfortably in the study, not paying much attention to the falling rain, which had begun early in the evening after the family had started.

She was working away very busily, when there came a sharp ring at the door, and the maid brought her an envelope addressed to Judge Lindsay. Marjory saw at a glance that it was a telegraphic message, and tore it open in haste, trembling lest it should be ill news from her home. It was dated Ballardvale, and ran, "John

Hastings badly injured. Let his mother come at once."

Marjory's first feeling was, of course, of great relief; but then came the thought of what the message meant. Her uncle had said, only a few days before, that Hastings was doing very well in his new place in the machine-shop, and his mother was very happy about him. How sad it would be for her! But how was she to know it? And here Marjory realized that there was something for her to do. But she did not know where Mrs. Hastings lived. Yet surely it would not do to wait till her uncle came home. The performance would be long, and she knew that the only chance for Mrs. Hastings to get to her son that night lay in her taking the train which would leave the city immediately after the theatre closed. She must send Pluto to the theatre with the message; and she rang for him.

The maid answered the bell, and said that Pluto had gone to bed with rheumatism. "Indeed, miss, he has been groaning all the afternoon, and he had hard work to get up stairs; but I believe he is better now; at least he is asleep, for I heard him snoring as I came by his door!"

Marjory thought of the rain, and of all the

trouble and work that Pluto had had lately, and felt that she ought not to send him out at such a time. Her aunt had said, only that day, "I am really afraid Pluto will be sick, unless he is very careful."

And at dinner Judge Lindsay had reminded them that they would have to walk home from the theatre, for Barrett, the coachman, had been promised a holiday to go to his daughter's wedding.

"Then," Marjory thought, desperately, "I believe I must send the cook."

But on inquiry it proved that cook had just stepped out for a few minutes, and Mary did not know where she had gone. Marjory felt that time was precious. She explained quickly to the maid what was the matter, and asked if she could take the message to the theatre.

"All alone, miss! Ah, sure, I don't know anything about the place, and I wouldn't dare go there alone."

Marjory was in despair. Should she send for help to the neighbors? But there was no one whom she knew well, and to explain would take so much time. She thought longingly of the Strongs, but they were not near. And then she

thought, why should she not go herself with Mary. It would not be pleasant, certainly. She did not know but her uncle would disapprove of any such thing. But she thought, "This is not like the gloves. I must help Mrs. Hastings if I can."

For a minute she thought of sending for a carriage, but that would take time; and she remembered hearing her uncle complain that a carriage was never ready at the nearest stable. No; she would do promptly what was to be done; and in less time than it has taken to tell it, she had made up her mind, and begun her preparations. Mary was willing enough to go with her, and Marjory gave herself no time to think further, but started at once.

As they opened the door, the blustering wind drove the sleet and cold rain in their faces, and the flickering street lamps threw dim, grotesque shadows down the street. Mary drew back, little liking the expedition, and Marjory hesitated for a minute. She had not realized how the weather had changed since the afternoon.

But it could make no difference. She thought, "If it were Roger! His mother must go to him." And drawing her arm through Mary's,

she went on. The great trees on the Common threw their arms about in the wind, and looked so grim and ghastly, that Marjory thought it best not to take the shortest way across, but to go round by Park Street. They met no one, not even a policeman, till they turned the corner. There a drunken man, staggering along, lurched towards them as he passed, with some muttered words, and the girls almost screamed, but hurried on, while he looked stupidly after them, propping himself against the fence.

Marjory was not used to the Mason Street entrance to the theatre, so hurried on down Winter Street, just forced to stop at the corner for a minute's fight with the wind, and then chased down the street by the dancing shadows.

So far as protection or courage went, Marjory got but little from her companion. The girl imagined enemies lurking in all the dark doorways and shadows, and hurried on as if pursued. She would indeed have run home, only she dared not go alone.

But Marjory's mind had but one thought. "If it were Roger or mother!" And she pressed straight on, frightened enough, but never dreaming of giving up.

At last they reached the theatre entrance, and then Marjory did not know which was worse, the darkness and chill through which they had come, or the glare and interminable length of the brightly-lighted passage. But at the inner door her troubles ended. She found there an usher, and, remembering the numbers of her uncle's seats, — she had studied out their situation with Frank, — could easily send for him.

He came in a moment, looking somewhat surprised, and without any words she handed him the message. He glanced over it, and turned to her.

"How did you come?"

"We walked."

Mr. Lindsay turned to the usher. "Will you be good enough to call a carriage for me?" Then to Marjory: "Wait a minute here." He went back to his seat, and, returning with his overcoat, gave Marjory his arm to the entrance, handed her and the servant into the carriage, and directing the driver to Myrtle Street, took his seat beside her.

"We will go directly to Mrs. Hastings," he said, looking at his watch, as the carriage drove on. "While she is getting ready, the carriage

can take you home, and bring me back my great shawl and travelling-bag. You will find them in my dressing-room. There will be time to catch the train." Then, looking more closely at Marjory, "Are you wet?"

"Not much."

"Be sure and put on dry clothes; and — you will sit up till the folks come home?

Marjory nodded.

"Tell your aunt I will come or telegraph to-morrow by noon."

"Do you think," Marjory asked hesitatingly, "he is very dangerously hurt?"

"I am afraid so. It is well you lost no time."

That was all, till they stopped at Mrs. Hastings's door. The Judge sprang out, gave a few directions to the driver, and turned back to charge Marjory again about the shawl, and to give her a warm shake of the hand with his "good by," which sent her home very happy, for she was sure he did not disapprove of what she had done.

CHAPTER XXI.

IT was true, as Marjory said, that though she did not know much of music, she liked it a great deal. And, best of all, she liked the times when they met at the Strongs', and she could sit by Annie's sofa, getting bits of talk with her in the intervals of the songs, and admiring Lilian.

By right of her real superiority in music, Lilian naturally took the lead, and Marjory was never tired of watching how skilfully she did it, adapting her accompaniments, correcting mistakes, and suggesting improvements, with so much courtesy and interest, that all took it in good part. She had really got her little company into quite good training, and of late they had grown ambitious, and had undertaken the music of a little operetta, and at last, after many difficulties, had distributed the parts, and made some progress in learning the music.

Their enthusiasm was at its height, when, one evening, Isabel Gresham quietly said that she could not practise with them any more. She was to have company for a week or two, and then she should be busy, and, on the whole, it would be better not count on her.

Now, Isabel had undertaken one of the principal parts, and though careless about her singing, and not very willing to be criticised, she had really a good voice, and to have her fail them was a serious matter. If she wanted to make her importance felt, she had chosen her time well.

"Can't you bring your company with you?" asked Allie Strong, always unwilling to meet a misfortune without some effort to prevent it.

Isabel did not think she could. Practising was very stupid. "You might ask Florrie or Emma," she suggested, after a pause, in which everybody tried in vain to think of any expedient.

"Nonsense!" Allison answered sharply. "You know we asked Florrie before you: but she is too busy at home this winter, and she wasn't willing to begin and then disappoint us. And Emma has no voice at all. It's too bad!"

There was another pause, and then Isabel said graciously, "Perhaps I could practise once in a

while. If it is going to make so much difference to you, I'll try sometimes."

"No," said Lilian, who till then had said nothing, after her first exclamation of surprise, "I don't think that would do. To sing that part one should know it thoroughly."

Isabel's face fell. She had not really meant to give up the singing. But she had been more annoyed than she cared to show, by some of Lilian's criticisms. She knew that there had been some difficulty in getting any one to take her part; and she thought herself of too much importance to be spared, even if she did not choose to be quite as obliging or careful as the others. But for once she counted too much on Lilian's good nature.

"Do you think," the latter went on, turning to Marjory, "that Mary Cone would undertake it?"

Marjory had already thought of Mary, but hesitated about suggesting her. "I am sure she would like it, if you think she can do it."

"O, yes!" said Lilian, promptly. "Her voice is pleasant, and she sang those French songs very nicely. But," she added, turning to the boys, who stood round the piano, "she is not so fortu-

nate as to have either brother or cousin. May I say, if we ask her, that she may always be sure of an escort home?"

"Certainly," said Fred Strong, speaking for them all. "There need not be the least trouble about that."

"Then if you all agree, Marjory and I will ask her to-morrow, and we can go right on with our practising, if she will join us."

As they walked home, Frank said, with a chuckle, "I don't think Isabel Gresham is altogether pleased with this evening's work. We got a substitute too easily. And wasn't it good of Lilian to suggest Mary Cone herself?"

Crief laughed. "I have been wondering whose patience would give out first, Miss Isabel's at being corrected, or Miss Lilian's at the need of doing it. I don't believe we have lost anything."

"I am sure," said Marjory, "Mary Cone will have gained something, for she needs the chance of such practising."

Crief was right. Mary more than supplied Isabel's place, and, after most energetic practising, the little operetta was given, with great satisfaction to all concerned; first at the Strongs', for Annie's benefit, and then, at Marjory's sug-

gestion, at the Cones', so that Mme. Gérard could enjoy it.

Marjory herself took no part in it; but what with prompting, arranging dresses, finding music, and being at the call of everybody who needed help, she felt herself quite as much a part of the whole, and enjoyed it quite as much as any of the performers.

Though Mme. Gérard's inability to understand English seemed to be no obstacle to her enjoying the operetta, it proved insuperable when, after the performance, the young people came to talk with her, and they soon became very merry over their French blunders. It ended in her suggesting that they should come one evening in the week to talk or read French, which they were all glad to do; for, as Marjory triumphantly affirmed, the lovely grandmother had bewitched them all. Allie Strong always insisted that she learned more French from those talks than from all the school lessons, and Lilian added that she had learned something better than French, — how lovely it might be to grow old. As for the boys of the party, it was pleasant to see how all the courtesy that was in them came out at the call of the gracious old lady, who treated them all as gen

tlemen, and how they kept the wine-glass, which served as a vase for her little table, always supplied with a rose-bud, a bit of mignonette or heliotrope, or, as the spring came on, with a handful of wild flowers.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARJORY folded her letter from home one day with a sigh, that made Frank ask if anything was wrong there.

"No. Not wrong exactly, at least not at home. Father writes that Roger has taken to study in good earnest at last, and he hopes to make a doctor of him yet. That is good, for I know that father has been hoping for that. But I was thinking of Willie Nickerson. Father says he is not strong enough for farm-work, and his aunt has almost decided to put him with a shoemaker. Roger says Willie feels dreadfully about it. He would be miserable, sitting at a bench all day, for he does so love to be out of doors. Last summer there was a Mr. Evarts, an artist, who was sketching about the village, and Willie was with him all the time. Roger says Willie is perfectly happy with pencil or paints, and he thinks hoped to be an artist too, for Mr. Evarts told

him if he could ever come to the city, he would teach him. Now he will have to give that up, and I don't believe it will be good for him to sit all day at work."

"Who is Willie Nickerson?" Judge Lindsay asked; and then Marjory told something about him; how much he had been at their house, and how they all liked him.

A few days afterwards the Judge said one evenning, "Marjory, I saw Mr. Evarts to-day, about your friend, Willie Nickerson. Evarts is not a very enthusiastic man, but he says there is the making of something more than an ordinary artist in the boy. And he is not only willing, but really eager to teach him, if by any arrangement he can live here in the city. Now, do you know of anybody who would pay his board for him while he is studying?"

"I don't," Marjory said demurely, "unless Judge Lindsay would;" for she had learned by this time that her uncle always meant more than he said, and, moreover, that there was nothing he liked better than to help people who wanted to help themselves.

The Judge did not look unwilling, but he said, "I must have some security first that

he will use his opportunities, and, besides, that his aunt will consent."

"O, Miss Crabb will consent to anything that takes him out of the way. And I am sure he is persevering and industrious at what he likes. But why not write to father, uncle Lindsay?"

"Very good. But where are you going to put him if you get him here, Marjory? He's hardly likely to know where to find a boarding-place, and a good deal of the success of the experiment would depend on that."

Marjory thought a few moments. "I have it! Bessie Cone said the other day that they had some spare rooms, and would like very well some quiet boarder. It will be helping two ways then, uncle Lindsay. He couldn't have a better home, and I know he would not be troublesome."

"Very well. I will write to your father, and you shall make inquiries of Mme. Gérard, and if we both get favorable answers, you may write to Willie Nickerson next week, and let him come on at once, for Evarts is eager to set him at work. But remember, Marjory, I take him on your recommendation."

Marjory laughed. "They always called him

my boy at home, but I never expected to help him like this. I am not afraid for him."

Later in the evening, Crief, who had heard the whole talk, said to Marjory, —

"I wish, Miss Marjory, you would help me as well as Willie Nickerson."

Marjory looked up inquiringly.

"Do you think Mme. Gérard would let me board there? You see," answering Marjory's look of surprise, "my father sails for Europe next month, and I don't want to stay after that at the Parker House. I don't think I should make much trouble; but of course I know," as Marjory hesitated, "that there might be various reasons why they would not like to have me. So I wanted you to ask, for they wouldn't mind telling you."

Marjory smiled at the deprecatory tone, which was so different from the off-hand way he usually put on to hide his shyness.

"I think they would like to have you," she said simply; "I was not thinking of that, but wondering why you did not go to Europe, too."

"Father gave me the choice, but I've got some tough work to do before I earn my vacation. I don't want to take my play first. Then you

think there is a chance for me, and you will ask?"

"Certainly, and I hope they will say, yes. It will be such a good thing for Willie, too, to have you to help him there."

Crief laughed, with a little shrug of his shoulders. "I am not sure that helping is quite as much in my line as in yours, Miss Marjory, but I might try it for variety."

"O, I can't leave it to chance. I shall have to make a bargain with you. I will do my best for you, if you will promise to think of Willie sometimes, and make him feel a little more at home."

"Agreed!"

"But," said Marjory, remembering Frank's stories of the luxury in which Crief was living, and the abundance of money he had to spend; "are you sure you would like living there?"

"Why shouldn't I like, Miss Marjory? I can't think of anything."

"Why," — Marjory hesitated. "Their house is small. They don't live as you have been used to, and they couldn't, even with boarders."

"O, I see. But I wouldn't insist on turtle-soup or strawberries every day; and I really haven't

been in the habit of occupying more than one room at a time! Seriously," — and there was a shade of annoyance in his tone, — "I hope you don't think me such a fool as that! What is good enough for Mme. Gérard is surely good enough for me!"

Both answers proved favorable, and the next week saw the boys established in their new quarters.

Frank made much fun of Crief, who, having been so much afraid of girls, was now going to live with three; but Tom asserted that he never said he was afraid of them; he only did not know anything about them. And he was going to live with an old lady. "I can tell you, anybody might be glad of the chance."

"Well," Frank said doubtfully, "you'll find it very different from living at the Parker House."

"I hope so," was all Crief's answer.

As for Willie, if Marjory had had any doubts about the plan, they must have been driven away by his entire happiness. He was even too happy to be very shy, and got over the introductions and first interviews better than she had dared to

hope. And he went to his work with hearty earnestness.

"I never saw such a fellow!" Crief said. "He don't even seem to think of doing anything else. As long as he can have paper and pencil, food and drink are nothing to him. He scorns such superfluities of life. In fact, Miss Marjory, I shall have to go back on my promise. Looking after that boy is too much for me. Why, I should turn into another 'Fat Boy.' I don't consider myself very active, but it would take a sloth to keep an eye on him. Here, my boy,"—catching Willie by the arm, as he passed them,—"come and give an account of yourself. Tell Miss Marjory what time it was when I found you at work in the dusk yesterday!"

"Really, Marjory, I did't think it was so late," Willie said apologetically. "And I had such a good study!"

"Bah!" said Crief. "He is too ambitious by far. Having heard of an artist without hands, he wishes to become one without eyes. But now, remember, my child, no more of that. Miss Marjory has given me authority to take that matter in hand, and force on you such an amount of air

and exercise as I see fit, and I mean to prove worthy of her confidence."

He was as good as his word. Willie's mild expostulations and entreaties were of no use. Crief would drag him away from his work whenever he found him looking pale or tired. And then, finding that the boy really did not know how to amuse himself, he would invent all manner of occupations and amusements, till Willie had to confess that he enjoyed it.

"Crief," Frank asked one night, "what has become of your blues? I haven't seen anything of them for this long while."

Crief turned with a look of surprise. "Really, I haven't had time to think about them. I must have left them at the hotel when I packed up. Let us hope the poor fellow who came after me has not taken to them!"

With the spring days the old out-of-door excursions were taken up again, but with the addition of Crief and Willie to the regular party. For Crief and Frank were still almost inseparable, —"Python and Darius," Allie Strong had called them once in a sudden outburst of classical knowledge. And Willie was still considered under

Marjory's protection, though he soon made a place for himself among them. His knowledge of the habits of all the plants of wood or field in his old home did good service now, and made him a valuable addition to the party.

Frequently Mary Cone would join them, or Florence Mayhew and her brother, and once Isabel Gresham went; but she found the grass damp, and the stones hard, and the walk long, and the whole thing "odd," and nobody suggested asking her a second time.

And on one memorable occasion Annie Strong made one of the party. It was Lilian's day, for they had fallen into the way of taking turns in planning the excursions. Lilian had made a pretence of great secrecy about her plans, refusing all suggestions or offers of assistance. And at the last moment, she put the party under Frank's guidance, promising to meet them on the ground. Crief, too, sent word by Willie that he would come later. The girls protested, but Lilian had escaped them, and Frank certainly knew the way; and by a combination of steam car, horse car, and walking, took them to the place Lilian had chosen. It was an open hill-side, shaded by a few broad trees, and sloping to a sunny meadow,

which promised many treasures; while from above there was a glimpse of the sea. It was new ground for all of them, and while they were rejoicing in it the Lindsay carriage came up with Annie, Lilian, and Crief.

Lilian had kept her plan a secret, partly for fear of the disappointment to them all, if, at the last moment, Annie should not be well enough to go. And with aunt Emily's help, it had been arranged so that even Fred and Allie suspected nothing. Only Lilian had taken Crief into her confidence in the choice of the ground.

The triumph was complete. The whole party devoted themselves to Annie's comfort. They found a place warm enough to be dry, and shady enough to be cool: they brought shawls; they emptied botany-boxes of the treasures gathered on the way; they brought out the lunch, and insisted on her having the best of everything, till she laughingly protested that she could eat no more, and begged them all to forget her for a while, and do just as they would if she were not there.

And then, lunch over, some of them settled to their sketching, and some went exploring; while Lilian, declaring herself too lazy for either em-

ployment, made herself comfortable against the sloping trunk of an old tree, with the last new poem, glancing up now and then at Annie, who lay and watched the sky and the sea with an enjoyment that none of the others, who had not been shut up in the house for weeks, could even guess at.

It was towards the end of the afternoon, which had been as perfect as afternoon could be, that Marjory came upon the first clump she had found that year of her favorite innocents. She had taken it up carefully, and was looking at it lovingly, thinking of Annie, when Crief came up.

"I wonder why you are so fond of those flowers, Miss Marjory," he said. "They are not so much more beautiful than some others we find, but I think they mean more to you."

"Yes," Marjory said; and then, because he seemed to listen, she told him something of what they did mean to her. "You see I can't help loving them, they have helped me so much."

"I see," Crief said; and then added, more to himself than to her, "so that is the reason you have done ten times as much as any of us this winter, and never seemed to mind it."

"No," Marjory said, looking up in some sur-

prise, and answering as if it were a question. "But it might be, you know,—if one never forgot."

"I wonder if Willie Nickerson heard that sermon," Crief said, after a pause. "Because I fancy he has taken to acting on it."

"O, I hope so," Marjory said eagerly, answering really the last part of the remark. "It seems to me sometimes as if it might be very lonesome for him without any brother or sister, and hardly remembering his father and mother. But he can't be lonesome long with that to think of."

She did not think, as she spoke, how much Crief's case was like Willie's, but he did. He knew the loneliness better than she could guess it; and more than once he had wondered at the almost unconscious bravery with which Willie faced it. He began to see now where the courage might come from.

"So," he said, "you really believe that God cares for *you?*"

"I know it," she answered, steadily.

"Because Mr. Strong says so?"

"Because I have tried."

They stood silent a few minutes, each think-

ing; and then Crief said, hesitatingly, "But I find trying to do right pretty hard work. Don't you ever get discouraged, and willing to give up, after you have 'forgotten'?"

"How can I — for long?" she said, with a bright, quick smile, "when God doesn't? He is always giving me a fresh chance. And if one looks too long at the failure, one misses seeing the chances. I think that is one good of the night; it makes a break for you, and the morning starts you on a fresh day."

Frank's voice called them to rest by Annie for a while before starting for home. As they turned, Crief said, "The 'housies' will mean something to me now. I have got *my* sermon."

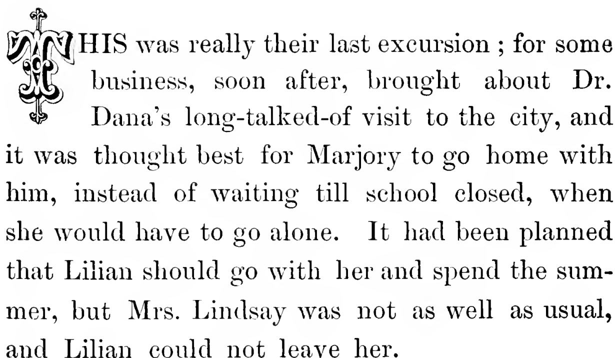
Marjory blushed now; she had not thought of preaching. Indeed, she wondered, when she thought about it, how she came to say so much, and asked Lilian that night why people talked so differently out of doors.

Lilian laughed. "Have you been doing that? Because I had the best talk I ever had in my life with Annie Strong to-day."

"O, Lilian, it was so good that you thought to plan for Annie."

Lilian stooped to give her one of her rare kisses, as she said, "Good night, little goose!" adding to herself, as she turned away, "I never should have thought of it if it hadn't been for you; but you would not believe it if I said so."

CHAPTER XXIII.



THIS was really their last excursion ; for some business, soon after, brought about Dr. Dana's long-talked-of visit to the city, and it was thought best for Marjory to go home with him, instead of waiting till school closed, when she would have to go alone. It had been planned that Lilian should go with her and spend the summer, but Mrs. Lindsay was not as well as usual, and Lilian could not leave her.

It was a great disappointment to Marjory, who had counted on Lilian's company, and made many plans for the summer. But she forgot it for a time in the excitement of being at home once more, of distributing all the presents she had brought, of talking of all that had happened, of going to all the old familiar places, and making it "seem as if she had never been away."

It was not till after a week or two, when the excitement of her coming home had gone by, and

the family had settled back into the regular habits, that had been somewhat disturbed by her arrival, that she had a chance to realize how different her life of a year past had been, and how much of a change it had made in her. And the discovery did not seem to be a happy one. She had been thinking of it one afternoon, as she stood listlessly drumming on the window frame, and listening to the dreary plash of the rain, that had been falling all day from the dull, gray sky. As she turned away she caught aunt Esther's eye. Pushing out the low cricket, that used to be her favorite seat, she dropped on it at aunt Esther's feet, and answered the look.

"Well, aunt Esther, I can't help it! I am ashamed of myself, but I don't know what to do!"

"Help what, dear? Tell me just what the matter is."

"The matter is just this: I am glad to be at home, aunt Esther; and, of course, I do love the folks here. But, somehow, it seems as if there wasn't any special place for me now. And I can't help the rooms seeming small and old-fashioned. I didn't think I cared much about it; but I believe I did learn to enjoy the comfort at uncle Lindsay's. And there does not seem to be any-

body to do anything with here. Sue and Ellis are always busy, and Roger is at his studies. And he don't care much about what I've been doing. He said, this morning, he was tired of hearing about it. And Katy Marsh goes with some other girls, now. And I am too ashamed of myself to say anything to mother about it," she added, ruefully. "You must help me, aunt Esther."

Aunt Esther paused for a minute, thinking if Marjory felt so, how it would have been with Ellis. Then she said,—

"Try to help yourself, Marjory. And to begin with, don't be too hard in judging yourself. No one ought to expect to change from one kind of life to another without any jar. It is a matter of course that you have learned to see things differently; and it is quite true that our rooms are small, and the furniture old-fashioned, and the luxuries, at least, much fewer than at your uncle's. The question is not about that, but whether you have found that size, or style, or even luxury, has much to do with happiness."

Marjory remembered Mme. Gérard, and the Cones, and Tom Crief, and smiled an answer that aunt Esther understood.

"For the rest," she said, "I don't know any

better rule than the old one: Forget yourself, and help other folks."

"But that's it! They don't seem to need help."

"I suppose," aunt Esther said, with a little smile that took the sting out of her words, "that you did seem to be of more importance in your uncle's family than here. It is partly the difference between a small family and a large one. But if they don't need you, it seems pretty clear that you need them. And I don't believe, indeed, that Sue would be very sorry to have some of the housework taken off her hands, and a little more leisure left her. Perhaps then she might enjoy some of your books."

Marjory blushed. She had thought of that once, had even offered to help; but she knew she had not urged it, and had really been glad to have Sue say that she had time enough. It wasn't work that Marjory liked, and she said to herself that Sue didn't mind.

"Then, if Roger does not care for what you like, suppose you take some interest in what he likes. I know he has missed you more than a little, Marjory, and is very glad to have you home again, though, in his gruff boy's way, he may not care to show it. And I think he listened with a good

deal of interest to your stories at first. Perhaps, however, he might like a little variety."

And Marjory blushed again, remembering how many times she had said, "in Boston," or "at uncle Lindsay's."

"And if it is stupid keeping up your French alone, why not ask some of the girls to read with you? I heard Katy say, before you came home, that she had been studying hard all winter, so as not to be too far behind you. And, Marjory, most of all, you can help your father and mother, if you prove to them that they did not make a mistake when they let you go away, hoping it would fit you all the better to enjoy home."

Marjory had dropped her head on her arms, crossed on aunt Esther's lap, and she sat quiet for a few minutes. When she looked up the discontent was gone.

"I see," she said, "and I'll try. I know it was just conceit and selfishness at the bottom of it all, and I was making believe it was something better. Thank you, aunt Esther. But I hope father and mother didn't see."

"Where's Marjory?" cried Roger, bursting into

the sitting-room late one afternoon of the next winter.

"At Katy Marsh's, I guess," Sue answered. "She went over the hill to the Browns', and was going to stop to read on her way back."

Roger fidgeted a few minutes. "I'll go and meet her," he said; and as he went out, Sue laughed.

"What would Roger do without Marjory! He must talk everything over with her before he really enjoys it."

He met Marjory at the Marshs' gate. As he took her empty basket he said, "Aren't you later than usual?"

"Yes. We were so near the end of our book we couldn't bear not to finish it. It's a real nice way to keep up our French."

"Well, leave your French now a little while, Meg, and listen to me." And then Roger began to unfold a scheme in which he was very much interested, and Marjory listened, and sympathized, and discussed, till they reached home.

"Here, Madge," called the doctor, driving up a minute later. "Here's a package from Boston."

"Then there's a letter, too. That's good! It's Frank's direction, and it feels like books," Mar-

jory continued, feeling of the corner and studying the writing.

"O, cut it open, Peggy! Here," — and in a minute Roger's knife had done the work.

"Yes, here are two French books, just in time for Katy and me. And here's the book of essays we were wishing for, Sue! How good that will be for the winter evenings! And, Jamie, here's a box of pencils Willie has sent you. And here's my letter."

As Marjory finished the letter, reading bits of it aloud, Sue said, "How many friends you made! How did you do it?" For to shy Sue a new acquaintance was a fearful thing.

"I didn't do it," laughed Marjory. "It did itself. I couldn't help liking them."

"I think," said Jamie, solemnly, looking up from the brilliant picture he had already begun, "it was a very good thing that you went to Boston, Marjory."

"It was good for more than one of us," Ellis said. "We've got so many new ideas!"

"It seems as if I knew Boston already," said Sue, "and had had quite an outlook into the world. I think I like it better than going myself."

"Yes," Roger said. "It's all very well that you went, Peggy — since you have come back."

"But I should think it would seem so quiet here! Don't you really ever wish yourself back there, Marjory?" asked Ellis.

"No," Marjory said promptly and honestly. "Boston was good, but home is better."

"Certain, sure, Marjory?" the doctor said, smiling across at her from the arm-chair, in which he was improving his rare leisure.

"Certain, sure, father," Marjory answered, coming round to him. "Did you doubt it?" she asked, as the others went on talking among themselves.

"I was afraid you weren't quite sure of it yourself at one time."

"So," Marjory thought, "father and mother did see it, after all. But I've found out now," she said earnestly. "I'm quite sure this is the very best place for me."

That same evening, the usual company of boys and girls were together in the Strongs' parlor. Lilian had brought a letter from Marjory, and as she finished reading it, Allie exclaimed, "O, dear! it is too bad that we can't have Marjory here again this winter. We want her so much."

"Perhaps some other people want her, too," Annie said. "I think we were fortunate to have her for one winter."

"Just think what a difference it made. Why, I don't believe, even by going to school together, Lilian and Mary and I ever would have found out each other's many delightful qualities, if it hadn't been for Marjory."

"I sometimes think I should never have found out anything," Lilian said. "Certainly we never should have known Mary's grandmother without Marjory."

"Then it seems that but for Miss Marjory I should not have had my present home," said Crief.

"More than that, my boy! It's very doubtful if you would ever have made one of this present delightful company if it hadn't been for Marjory." And then Frank told how "it happened" that Crief heard Lilian's music.

"It wasn't fair! I wouldn't have thought it of her!" Crief said, with pretended indignation. "But I think I must forgive even that."

"And where do you think I should have been but for Marjory?" Willie Nickerson said, earnestly. "Pegging away at shoes, I suppose."

"Well," said Frank, "you all might have

worked together some way. But I think I owe Marjory more than any of you. She did me the favor of making me heartily ashamed of myself once, and I don't think I've quite recovered from it yet."

"Don't flatter yourself," Crief rejoined dryly, "that you were the only person for whom she did that service!"

"Don't you think we're making rather a fearful person of Miss Marjory?" Fred Strong said. "What do you suppose she would say to all this?"

"Say?" laughed Allison. "She would say we were all talking nonsense — that she only helped a little. She just did what she could."

"Yes," Annie said gently, with a touch of seriousness in her tone that reminded them of other associations with the words, "She did what she could."

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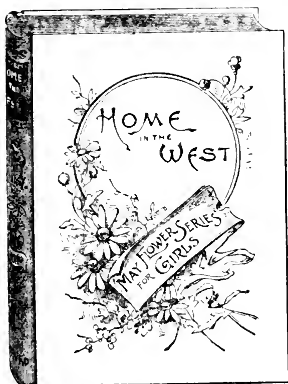

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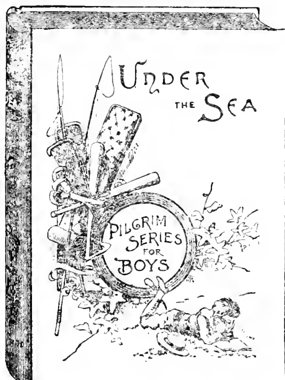

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