Little Queen of Hearts

Ruth Ogden

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A LITTLE QUEEN OF HEARTS

An International Story

BY

RUTH OGDEN

Author of "A Loyal Little Red-Coat," "Courage" and "His Little Royal Highness"

WITH OVER FIFTY ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY

H. A. OGDEN

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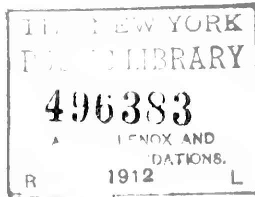

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A CONFIDENTIAL WORD.

A FEW years ago, when my first story saw the light, a little fellow, a stranger to me then, but who has since proved himself the truest of friends, wrote me a most welcome letter. He said, among other things: "I have read the book five times through. My nurse, Lily Jones, read the book to me twice, my mamma read the book to me once, and my Aunt Lizzie read the book to me twice, for I can only read in my reading-book." Now you can understand, I think, how I have wanted to keep that boy for a friend, together with the other children who have proved themselves friendly; and so realizing they were all growing older each year, I have tried in the books I have written since then to keep pace with them, that they might not perhaps outgrow me for a little while yet.

At the same time, my heart, in a way, is still with the little people who count their years by a single numeral; and so, if you please, I want to take them aside for a moment, and just whisper in their ears that, although "A Little Queen of Hearts" may seem a trifle too old for them at first, I have an idea they will not find that fault later on.

RUTH OGDEN.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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A Little Queen of Hearts

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A LITTLE QUEEN OF HEARTS.

CHAPTER I.

HAROLD AND TED HAVE IT OUT.

He was a thoroughly manly little fellow—nobody questioned that for a moment, not even Ted; and yet there he sat, his head bowed upon his folded arms, while now and then something very like a sob seemed to shake the well-knit figure and give the boyish head an undignified little bob. When at last he looked up, behold proof positive! There were tears not only in his eyes, but on the sleeve of his Eton jacket; and there was no longer any question but that Harold Harris, sturdy little Englishman though he was, had been having what is known on both sides of the water as a good, hard cry.

"How old was he?" asks Young America, a little mistrustful as to the right sort of stuff; but what does it matter how old he was, since this is certain, that he was not the boy to cry under any circumstances without abundant reason. It was evident now, however, that he was fast getting the better of himself. He sat up, and resting his head on one hand, reached with the other for the paper-knife, and began cutting queer little geometrical figures on the big silver-cornered blotter that half covered the table. It was evident too that his thoughts were not at all on what he was doing, and that the hard cry was being followed by a good, hard think. But this did not last long; Harold was simply trying to make up his mind, as the phrase goes, and that soon accomplished, he drew pen, paper and ink toward him and commenced writing a letter, with his head on one side and his lips tightly pursed together. Indeed, he never unpursed them until that same letter was sealed and directed and the stamp affixed with a very determined little air, as though firmly resolved that the thing he had done should brook no undoing. Then he slipped into his coat and hurried out to post it, and a few yards from the door he met Ted, who was just coming home.

"Hello, there!" cried Ted, coming to a halt with his hands in his pockets; "where are you going this time of night?"

"Out," replied Harold, starting off at a run, for it was wet and damp, and, to use England's English, "quite nasty." Ted gave a low whistle of surprise, Harold as a rule was such a civil fellow. But no matter. What did he care where he was going, and entering the house with a latch-key, he tossed his hat on to a hook and started upstairs, his thoughts already far afield from all that concerned his younger brother. Back they came again, however, as he reached the landing, and the old clock struck twelve. "So late as that?" he said to himself, and deciding to wait for Harold, he turned and went down again to the library. He hoped he should not have to wait long, for, since he was rather counting on a good night's rest, nothing more exciting seemed to offer. In the mean time, he would make himself as comfortable as possible on the library lounge. Indeed, to make himself as comfortable as possible had gradually grown to be the one thing worth striving for in the estimation of this young gentleman. A beautiful portrait of his mother hung over the library mantel, but it belonged to a closed chapter of his

life, and he had almost forgotten its existence. He had never dreamed this would be so; he had never meant it should be; but that did not alter the fact that, flattered and made much of ever since he went up to Oxford, he had somehow had little time to think of his mother, and, sorrier than that, little inclination. Death was such a desperately gloomy thing to contemplate! Besides, to keep thinking about it did not bring any one back. And yet, as much as in him lay, Ted had loved his mother, and been very proud of her too. It seemed hard that she should not have lived a great while longer. But then she had been so very sad sometimes, and life of course wasn't worth very much under those conditions. When it ceased to be awfully jolly, perhaps it was just as well to have done with it. For him, thank his stars! that unhappy period had not yet arrived. To be a Christ Church Senior, with plenty of money and plenty of friends and a head that easily mastered enough learning to make a good showing, left little to be desired, especially when already endowed with a handsome face and a physique that every man envied—at least, so thought Theodore Harris, and so thought and affirmed the half score of intimate friends who enjoyed many of the good things of this life through his bounty. It was a pity that there was not one among them with insight enough to gauge the complacent fellow aright, and at the same time with honesty enough to take him to task for the profitless life he was leading. But nobody did, and so on he fared, thoughtless and selfish, and so wholly absorbed in the present that even alone and at midnight, with his eyes resting full upon his mother's portrait, he had no thought to give it nor the worthier past that it stood for. Indeed, to judge from the discontented look on his face, his mind did not rise for a moment above the level of his annoyance at being kept waiting.

"Why don't the fellow come back?" he muttered angrily, realizing, as he heard the clock strike half-past twelve, that he had been actually inconvenienced for a whole half hour; and shortly after "the fellow did come back," the dearest little fellow in the world too, by the way, and shut to the big front door and locked it as he had done night after night during the last two years, while Ted was up at Oxford, and he had been living alone with the servants in the pretty little home there at Windsor.

"WHAT DID YOU DO IT FOR, ANYWAY?"

" Harold !" rang out an impatient voice.

" What, you there, Ted ?" with unconcealed gladness ; it seemed so cheery to have some one awake in the house.

" Yes ; of course I'm here. You didn't suppose I'd go to bed, did you, with you prowling the streets this time of night ?"

That is exactly what Harold had supposed, but he had the grace not to say so as he threw himself into a great easy-chair opposite Ted and clasped his hands behind his head in comfortable stay-awhile fashion, and as though quite ready to be agreeable if Ted would only let him.

" I went out for a walk and to post a letter," he said, after a moment, and with a perceptible little note of apology in his tone for his uncivil answer of the half hour before.

" It must have been important," said Ted, apparently amused at the thought of anything relating to that younger brother being in reality of any importance : " I should think though it possibly could have waited for the morning post."

" Yes, it could, but I couldn't." Surprised at this, Ted elevated his eyebrows.

" It was a letter to Uncle Fritz," Harold added.

" To Uncle Fritz !" with evident annoyance. " What in creation have you been writing to him about ?"

" I have asked him to come over with Aunt Louise and Marie-Celeste and make us a visit this summer." It took Ted a moment to recover from his astonishment ; then he answered curtly, " Well, you can just write him another letter and take it all back. Did it occur to you I might have other plans for this house for this summer ?"

" I thought you might perhaps propose to have some of your friends down here, same as last year," Harold answered frankly.

" Well, that's exactly what I do propose to do, and here you've gone ahead in this absurd fashion. What did you do it for, anyway ?" and Ted in his impatience got on to his feet and glared down at Harold as though he would like to have eaten him up.

Not a bit intimidated, Harold looked him straight in the face. " If you want to know what I did it for I'll tell you—I did it because I'm tired of the lonely life here. You haven't any more interest in me, Ted, than in a stick of wood ; so I'm going to take things into my own hands now and begin to enjoy life in my own way. This

little house is as much mine as yours, and I mean to have my turn this summer. I didn't like your friends last year, and took myself off. If you don't like mine this year you can do the same thing."

The role was such a new one for Harold to play that Ted stood utterly nonplussed. That Harold should deliberately assert himself in this way was such an unprecedented performance that he knew not what to say.

"What did you tell Uncle Fritz about me?" he asked presently. "I suppose you painted me as black as the ace of spades."

"I didn't say a word about you. I wrote him it was awfully lonely here the last two years, and that it seemed to grow worse instead of better, and that if they'd only come over for the summer, we'd do all in our power to make them have a pleasant time of it."

"Well, that is cool. Did you really say *we'd* do all in our power?"

"Of course I did. You like Uncle Fritz, don't you?"

"Of course I like him, but the cheek of it all," and Theodore strode over to the window to think matters over. It was a fine thing anyway in Harold, he admitted to himself, not to have run him down to Uncle Fritz. If he was angry enough to take matters into his own hands in this way, it was a wonder he stopped short of telling him the truth about himself—not that Ted for a moment faced that truth in any honest fashion; for he was a very good fellow still in his own estimation. He had simply not taken Harold into account—no one could have expected that he should; but now it seemed the boy was beginning to resent that state of affairs. There was some show of reason in it, too, and he rather admired his spirit. It was rather natural, perhaps, that he should want to have "his turn," as he said; very well, he should have it. For that matter, he would be rather glad himself to see something of Uncle Fritz. He had not really decided to ask any of the fellows down for the summer, though he had angrily made a declaration to that effect. Indeed, there was some talk of their going over the Continent together instead, which would be a deal more fun. All this while Harold sat motionless and silent.

"The mean part of it is, that you didn't tell me beforehand what you wanted to do," said Ted, as the upshot of the thinking.

"What I wanted to do has not made any difference to you this long time. Besides, you would have told me I couldn't do it."

"Of course I would" (for, as it often happens, it is easier to be reasonable in thinking than in speaking); "and I can tell you one thing, Harold, you'll be sick enough of your own bargain before it is over. What do you know about Marie-Celeste? Ten to one she's a spoiled, forward sort of youngster. American children are a handful always."

"I'll risk it," answered Harold; "and I only ask one thing of you, Ted, and that is that you'll be decent to them when they come."

"Like as not I won't be here."

Harold's face fell. It would seem such a breach of hospitality for Ted not to be at home, at least to welcome them. But, never mind, he could explain to Uncle Fritz, if he must, what an independent life Ted had led these last few years. He would hurt himself more than any one else by acting so ungraciously.

"Who's going to pay for things here at home, I'd like to know?" said Ted, after another few minutes of meditation. "There isn't enough of my allowance left now to tide me over to the first of the year, let alone running the house in fine style all summer."

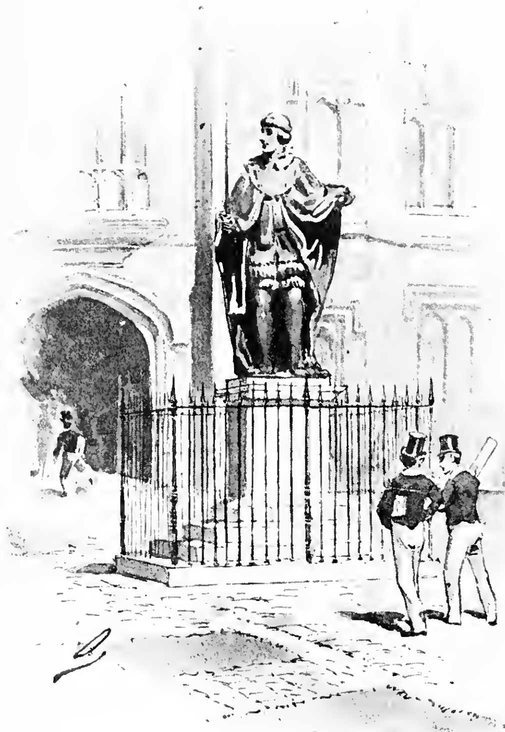
"You need not bother about that—there's enough of mine, and I can look after my own guests, which is more than you did for yours last year." It was a mean little thrust, perhaps, on Harold's part, but Ted deserved it, for Harold had paid his half of the heavy expenses of the previous summer without a murmur.

Be it said to Ted's honor that he appreciated the situation, and colored up to the roots of his hair.

"You know how to rub a thing in," he said, which was as wide of the truth as could be, for Harold had never alluded to the fact before, and made up his mind on the spot that he never would be mean enough to do it again. A little later the boys had said good-night to each other, and not in an altogether unkindly spirit either. Ted had not been as angry as Harold had expected, and Harold, sorry for his thrust about money matters, had wound up by being rather conciliatory, and he was happier, on the whole, than he had been any time for a twelvemonth. And so it happens with the children, as with grown folk, that sometimes when there is a climax in the heart the head rises to the emergency, and is able to think a possible way out from besetting difficulties.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD-MORNING, MR. HARTLEY.



It is one thing to extend an invitation. It is quite another to have it accepted. Harold realized this with a sigh as he woke the next morning. Still, hope was in the wind, where it had not been for a long time, and, what was more, the first suggestion of spring was in it too, and every one knows what a tonic that is; so the sigh, on the whole, did not have much of a show, and Harold set off for school with a heart that he hardly knew for lightness. Besides, Ted had taken quite civil leave of him before going back to Oxford, and had said he fancied he would be down again next Sunday, and that he would be on hand, like as not, if Uncle Fritz decided to come over—all of which, for any one who knew Ted as Harold knew him, was

graciousness itself, and made Harold wish he had not waited so long before taking matters into his own hands. And in addition to all this, the morning was fine enough to brace anybody up, no matter what their troubles. The Eton boys in their tall hats (atoning, as it were, for the extreme briefness of their jackets) and wide-rolling linen collars were skurrying through the streets as though they had the right of way, as indeed they have in dear old royal Windsor; and here and there the flowing gown of a colleger spread itself to the April wind and floated out behind, to all appearances as glad as any peacock to show what it could do in that direction. Indeed, who knows of a more inspiriting sight anywhere than Eton College on an April morning? The quaint old buildings seem to bask in the broad spring sunshine; the trees that dot the grass-bare turf where the Upper School fronts the street are already casting tiny leaf-shadows, and on the other side, where the garden slopes down to the Thames, many a little branch and bush begins to glow with color. Even the old bronze statue of Henry VI. in the outer quadrangle, with all its panoply of robes of state and globe and sceptre, appears to look a little more chipper than ever and a trifle more conscious of the distinction of being the "munificent founder" of so glorious an institution. No wonder the boys love the old place, and even the dingy recitation rooms, whose quaint, high desks and slippery benches are notched with the penknives of many a boy, whose name, as a man, has come to be known through the length and breadth of England. To Harold it was a matter of no small pride, I assure you, that his particular seat on the form during that spring term was the same that had once been Gladstone's—"the prettiest little boy," by the way, in the mind of his partial teacher, that ever went up to Eton. But all this, as you can plainly see, has nothing whatever to do with the title of this chapter, so it "behooves us," as the preachers used to say, to turn our back on Harold and the charms of the renowned old college, and our faces toward the ocean and a far-off land—far off, that is, as far as Windsor and the English are concerned, but very near and dear to the hearts of some of the rest of us. Of course it is the letter that is turning our thoughts that way at this particular moment. It is tied firmly in a packet within a great leather bag, and, having been just in time to catch the mail-train, is being spirited down to Queenstown, where

one of the great White Star steamers has been waiting full four long hours, so important are these reams upon reams of letters we and our English cousins keep sending one to the other across the water. Wind and tide favor the huge, swift ship, and early in the morning, the sixth day out, Fire Island light is sighted. It is a cloudless morning, the white sands of the South-shore beaches shine like silver in the sunlight, and the fresh sea breeze that is stirring holds its own the whole length of Long Island, and blows its purifying way into every street and alley of the vast city that lies at its farther end. A most uninteresting city, this city of Brooklyn, some people affirm ; even those of us who love it best cannot claim that it is great in anything but " bigness ;" but there are homes there we will match against homes the world over, not for show or for luxury, but for pure and transcendent comfort. It is only a corner of the wide-spreading city of which we are speaking, and a little corner at that, but the charm of it lies in the fact that many of the streets open right to the harbor, and that many of the houses, as well, command the same glorious view. To be sure, one has need to overlook, in quite too literal fashion, the warehouses that front the water below the bluff, and here and there an unsightly elevator, but why let the eye rest on these, with the dancing blue water beneath you, and the Jersey hills beyond, and beyond that again, like as not, a glorious sunset. To be sure, the houses that line these streets stand most of them shoulder to shoulder, in barbarous, city-like fashion, and with far too much sameness in their general make-up and plan. But that is neither here nor there ; we simply are claiming—we who love it—that it is a region of ideal homes. And more than this, there is a rare kindliness of spirit and an open-handed hospitality prevalent among the people. They are friends and neighbors in the best sense of the word ; too high-minded and preoccupied to be gossipy or prying, they are interested in each other's affairs with the interest that means a sharing of each other's joys and sorrows.

So much for the corner—let who will gainsay it—and more for a little maid who lives there, and who is none other, as you may have imagined, than Marie-Celeste, the little Queen-Pin of this story. And Marie-Celeste she is always. For some reason or other neither she nor the friend of her mother for whom she is called is ever known by any shorter title. Indeed, the two names have even

become to be written with a hyphen, and seemingly to belong to each other, and to be quite as inseparable as the three syllables of Dorothy or the four of Dorothea. At the time of our introduction to the little maid in question she has donned the prettiest of white embroidered dresses and a broad white sash (which she first tied in a great bow in front and then pulled round to where it belongs in the back), and has come down to the front steps to watch for somebody. She knows almost to a minute how long she will have to wait, for she heard the signal—three little, short, sharp whistles—about five minutes ago. She decides it is worth while to make herself comfortable, and also worth while, looking askance at the doubtful doormat, to bring a well-swept rug from within. Then she seats herself, and, clasping two fair little hands round one knee, just waits, letting eyes rove where they will and thoughts follow. That is a very pretty cage in the window across the way, but she feels sorry for the bird. People oughtn't to leave a canary hanging full in the sunshine on a warm day like this; and then she meditates awhile on the advantages of living on the side of the street that is shady in the afternoon. And now two or three gentlemen are coming by from the ferry, all of whom she knows by sight, for the short terrace where she lives is by no means a general thoroughfare, and just behind them is Mr. Eversley, May Eversley's father. She wishes he would look up, for she has a bow ready for him; but he doesn't, and she must needs defer her social proclivities yet a little while longer. And here comes a great yellow delivery wagon, with horses fine enough for a carriage and two men in livery. What a deafening noise it makes on the Belgian pavement! There! for a comfort it is going to stop for a minute at the next house. My! what a lot of bundles! And now the street is quite empty again, not a person on either side of the one, short block; but the whistle that has been ringing out more and more clearly at quite regular, three-minute intervals sounds very near indeed, and in another second a gray-suited individual, with soldier-like cap to match and a glitter of shining brass buttons, swings round the opposite corner, and makes a bee-line across the street. Our little friend is instantly on her feet, with one hand extended, and a "Good-afternoon, Mr. Hartley."

"The same to you, Marie-Celeste," replies the gray-coated newcomer, clasping the little, friendly hand in his.

"And how did it come out?" she asks in the next breath.

"It came out all right," and Mr. Hartley leaned back and rested both elbows on the rail behind him.

"I knew you would win," said Marie-Celeste complacently; "I felt perfectly sure of it, Chris."

"And what is more, Bradford came in second."

"You don't mean it!" for Bradford was assistant postman on the route that included the Terrace, and Marie-Celeste was naturally quite overwhelmed at the thought that both their men should have won. The winning in question had occurred at a foot-race the night before, an accomplishment somewhat in the line of the daily training of the average postman, and for which Christopher Hartley in particular had long shown a special aptitude.

"It was quite a big prize, wasn't it?" questioned Marie-Celeste, really longing to know the exact amount; but Mr. Hartley, not divining that, simply answered, his kind face radiant as a boy's, "The largest yet, Marie-Celeste—enough to take me home for two months this summer, and pay Bradford, besides, for doing double work while I'm gone. He can manage the route easily; the mails fall off more than half in the summer, you know."

"Well, isn't that splendid!" with a world of meaning in her inflection and a face every whit as radiant as Mr. Hartley's own. "And now won't you please tell me everything about the race, from the *start* to the *finish*," proud to show that she remembered the terms she had heard him use; and only too glad of the opportunity, Chris proceeded to give a graphic narrative of all the details of the exciting contest. Wide-eyed and interested, Marie-Celeste sat and listened, furtively scanning the street now and then for fear of interruption by some of the children of the neighborhood.

"Have you told any of the others?" she asked eagerly, when the story's end had been reached, and hoping in her heart of hearts that she was to have the pleasure of imparting news of such paramount importance to the neighborhood.

"Never a one; I dodged a crowd of them round the corner there for the sake of telling you first;" wherefrom it was easy to discover that Mr. Hartley had a somewhat partial regard for his earnest little listener. It was a decidedly partial regard, for that matter, and with reason. Had any other child friend along his route, no matter how

"The largest yet, Marie-Celeste."

friendly, questioned him day after day as to how he was getting on with his training for the race? Had any other among them promised to be on hand at the latest delivery on the afternoon succeeding it, so as to learn just what the issue had been, and at a time when he would be able to stop and tell about it? Would any one else in the world have thought of suggesting that he should give three short little whistles when he reached the Browns', in Remsen Street, so that she should know just how near he was? Surely no one; and it was just this surpassing interest in every living body, to the utter forgetting of all that concerned herself, that made Marie-Celeste different from other children, that made everybody love her, and that makes it worth while for me to try to tell this story of one summer in her blessed little life.

"Well, I'm just as glad as I can be," she said joyously when at last Mr. Hartley thought he had better be moving on, and thought at the same time, too, I venture, that it was something to have won that race, if only to have caused such gladness.

"You haven't any letters for us, have you?" she added, as he turned to go down the step and she caught sight of the leather bag swung across his shoulder.

"Why, yes, I have," diving into its depths, and angry at himself for his forgetfulness; "it's an important letter, too, I reckon; it's from England."

"Why, so it is!" her eyes fairly dancing with delight and surprise. "It's from Harold, and we haven't heard from him in ever so long; but oh, dear, it's for papa, isn't it, and he's out driving."

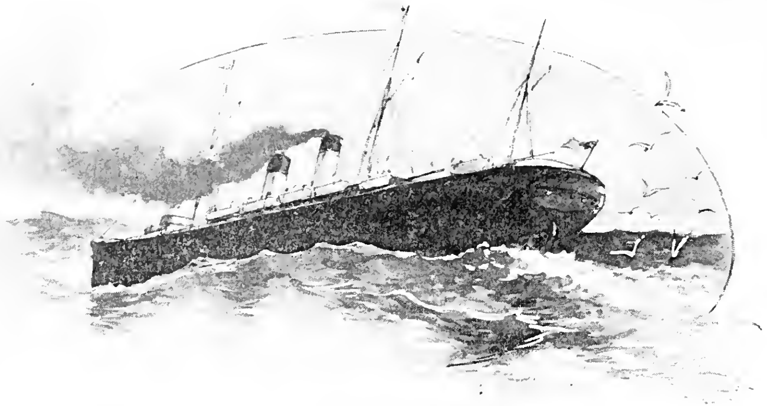
"You won't have very long to wait," said Chris, smiling at her impatience, "if you're expecting him home to dinner."

"But we're not, that's the bother of it. He and mamma are going to dine at the Crescent Club afterward, and I shall have to be sound asleep when they come home." Then she asked after a moment of serious cogitation, "Do you suppose, Chris, that any of the children along your route open their fathers' letters, when they are sure they're from their cousins?"

"I can't say about that," laughed Chris, as he went down the steps. "You know best; good-night, I'm off now."

"Good-night, Chris," rather absent-mindedly, and with eyes and thoughts still intent upon the letter. Would it be such a dreadful

thing to open it? It was so hard not to know right away what was in it. She had never seen this English Cousin Harold, but when they had exchanged photographs at Christmas-time he had sent such a beautiful letter that she had come to feel that they were the best of friends. But no, hard as it was, she felt certain it would really be best not to open it; so she would put the letter in her pocket, and when she went to bed she would slide it under her pillow, and then only take little cat-naps until her father and mother should come home, and she could tell them about it, and hear what was in it. But alas! for the little cat-naps; for the lights blinked brightly in the harbor, and the ferry-boats whistled and let off steam in deafening fashion, and the stars came out, and the moon came up, and papa and mamma came home, and chatted gayly besides, with the door wide open into her room, and yet Marie-Celeste never wakened, and Harold's important letter lay sealed and unread, and as flat as a fluffy head could press it until the light of another morning.



CHAPTER III.

ABOARD A WHITE STAR.

THERE was commotion in the Harris household, notwithstanding the very early hour—the sort of commotion which means that somebody is off for Europe, somebody who has preferred remaining at home, and rising as early as need be, to boarding the steamer the night before and spending it tied to a noisy dock. In this case there were three somebodies, and you can easily guess who; for there was that in Harold's letter that had made Mr. and Mrs. Harris feel they really ought to go if they could, and that moved Marie-Celeste to declare that go they must; that, in short, made the hearts of all three go out very warmly to the lonely little fellow across the water. And the best part of it all was that it had been the easiest thing in the world to arrange matters, and that a cable bore to Harold the glad word that they would come, so that he had not even to wait for a letter. And now the one week of preparation was over, and the carriage was at the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Harris were in it, and Marie-Celeste was taking effusive and affectionate leave of the maids, who were smiling and crying all in one,

after the manner of an Irish parting. And now even that is done with, and the carriage rolls off, and the wagon-load of steamer trunks and bags jogs after, and Mary and Bridget and Norah dry their eyes on their respective aprons, and go back to a general cleaning up to-day, and like as not to Coney Island to-morrow. And what if they do, thinks their mistress. Indeed, she is altogether willing that they should, for if there is ever a time when the contrasts in life will not be overlooked it is when you are on your way to the steamer. It seems so pitiful to see men and women on every hand plodding away at the same old, monotonous tasks, when ahead of you are all the delights of novelty, travel, and leisure. Oh! if only every one might have "his turn" in this world of ours; but since that is out of the question, let there at least be as much Coney Island for house-maids as is consistent with good morals and faithful discharge of their duties; at least so thought one dear little mistress, with more heart, perhaps, than discretion, but a heart, all the same, that won every one to her and made life in her household move with infinite smoothness.

"I wonder, mamma, if Harold will like us?" said Marie-Celeste, when the excitement of immediate departure had sufficiently subsided for her to find any words at all.

"It's a little late in the day, dear, for you to do any wondering on that score."

"Somehow, I hadn't thought until now how dreadful it would be if he didn't. He knows about you, though, papa. He knows you're all right—that's one comfort."

"And he takes my word for it that you are," said Mr. Harris; "so be sure you don't go back on me either of you. You will have to be on your good behavior every minute."

Marie-Celeste gave her mother a little significant look, which her mother answered as significantly, and which gave Mr. Harris to understand that good behavior would depend altogether upon circumstances.

"It would be just as bad," Marie-Celeste said thoughtfully, "if we didn't like Harold, wouldn't it? And there's Ted; we don't know much about him, do we?"

"Excuse me, my little daughter," said her father, laughing, "if I casually remark that young in years though you be, you are just like a woman. Who has said a word until now about any ifs in connec-

tion with this trip of ours? But no sooner are we actually off, scarce ten minutes from home, in fact, than the great, uncomfortable, intimidating creatures come trooping in from every quarter, and the particular one that comes to me is this, If you find you don't like it when you get there, don't forget where the blame lies. I remember a little maid who said that go to Cousin Harold she must, whether or no."

"So do I," with a little shrug of her shoulders; "but you can't help thinking about things, all the same. What is Ted like, papa?"

"Well, Ted's a handsome, overgrown, headstrong boy, I should say—at least, he was when I was in Windsor four years ago; but you see he's a young man by this time and quite another fellow probably."

"It is strange Harold didn't say anything about Ted in his letter," remarked Mrs. Harris.

"Oh, that was pure accident, I imagine! Ted must be all right, or Harold would have said something about it;" which was rather wide of the mark in "Uncle Fritz," as you and I happen to know.

"Overgrown and headstrong doesn't sound very nice," Marie-Celeste said slowly; "I'm really not a bit afraid about Harold—I love him already, but I don't feel sure about Ted, somehow." And if the truth be told, neither did Mr. Harris nor Mrs. Harris, nor anybody else, for that matter.

"Well, there's one thing, little girlie," said her father; "there are wonderful places in England, which I mean you shall see; and how long we stay in Windsor depends—"

"Entirely upon how they treat us," chimed in Mrs. Harris.

"Exactly; so it becomes us not to worry about any foolish little ifs." And worry they did not from that moment, not one of the happy trio, about anything under the sun, or over it, and they sailed away with bright and happy faces. Tears were for eyes that left nearest and dearest behind, not for those who took them with them; and yet a wistful look, that was often to be seen on Mrs. Harris's expressive face, deepened as the Majestic steamed down the harbor. And when they reached the point where the white stones of Greenwood look down on the water, she stole alone to the rail of the

"VERY MUCH DOWN-HILL INDEED."

deck, and the wistfulness turned to a mist that hid everything for a moment.

"Mamma is saying good-by to Jack and Louis," said Marie-Celeste softly, and her father pressed the little hand that lay in his, but did not answer.

Marie-Celeste was up betimes the next morning—that is, if betimes means bright and early, and, stopping for a few minutes on her way to indulge in a savory cup of arrowroot, which the stewardess had made ready for her, she passed on up the stairs and out on to the saloon deck, looking as fresh and sweet in her dress of sailor-blue as a fair little morning-glory. The pity was there was nobody there to see, for there's nothing like the bloom of the very early morning-glory.

The decks were still wet from their daily mopping, the folded steamer chairs were ranged five deep beneath the cabin windows, and nothing seemed to be quite in shape yet save her own tidy little self. She went forward as far as she could to the bow, and then turned her back toward everything, so as to see how it seemed to be *way out at sea*; and not being conscious of any remarkable sensations, was somewhat disappointed. "Out of sight of land" had always stood with Marie-Celeste for such an awe-inspiring condition of affairs that she expected to feel all sorts of chilly and creepy feelings when she fairly faced the thought; and yet here she stood, alone to all intents and purposes, and no land anywhere, and yet not so much as the suggestion of a chill or a creep. She turned round and looked at the ship, and smiled at the man at the wheel, and guessed she knew what the trouble was, and guessed right. She wasn't a bit afraid; that was the secret of her disappointment, if it could in truth be called a disappointment. It was such a beautiful, stanch, great ship, with its large masts and spars and network of interlacing halyards, that its wideness meant more to her just then than even the wideness of the sea; and she felt so safe and at home on it withal, that all the expected uncanny sensations had need to be postponed to some more favorable occasion. With this cherished illusion so soon disposed of, she decided to take a little turn on the deck. The steamer was pitching a good deal—"pitching horribly," some of the passengers below would have told you, but all the more fun for Marie-Celeste; and plunging her hand deep in her reefer

pocket, she set off at a swinging gait. Now it was all up-hill, and the wind blowing such a gale that she had need to bend way over, holding firmly to her sailor hat the while, to make any headway whatever; and now in a trice it was very much down-hill indeed, and the little knees had to be stiffly braced to prevent her ladyship from bowling along at a dangerously rapid pace. But it was all fun. She didn't see how people, inclusive of certain near relatives of her own, could be willing to keep their state-rooms after seven o'clock on such a glorious morning. She only wished she had some one to enjoy it with her; and a few minutes later the wish came true, and in such delightfully surprising fashion. Just as she was nearing the break in the saloon deck that grants an open sky space to the steerage, she discovered some one coming toward her on the deck of the second-class cabin—some one who looked familiar, notwithstanding the absence of gray coat and brass buttons.

"Why, Chris Hartley!" she cried, and standing stock-still from sheer surprise. At the sound of the cheery voice, a lady, who was so fortunate as to have a deck state-room, and so unfortunate as to sorely need it, peered out and tried to smile a good-morning to the happy little stranger outside her window. Marie-Celeste smiled back again, but at the sight of the white face realized in a flash why some people keep their state-rooms at sea in the early morning. But of course there was only the merest little suggestion of a sympathetic thought to spend on the poor, white lady, with Chris Hartley but just discovered, and after that one instant of transfixed surprise she sped toward him, both hands extended; and over the gate that divides the first from the second cabin they indulged in the heartiest shaking of hands possible, while hats for the moment were expected to look out for themselves. Indeed, there is no telling how long the hand-shaking might have lasted but that the hats proved untrustworthy in the stiff northern wind that was blowing, Chris catching his on the fly and Marie-Celeste's saved almost as narrowly.

"Did you know we were on board, Chris?" were the first words that formed themselves into a sentence after the "Well, *well*, WELL!" of their first meeting.

"Of course I knew, and so I chose this steamer on purpose."

"Who told you, Chris? You know I haven't seen you since the day you brought the English letter."

"Bridget told me the next morning how that you had had a letter that was going to take you all to England, and then in a day or two I learned you were going on the Majestic, and I hurried right over to the office and secured the last berth they had left in the second cabin. But now I'm here I'm thinking I'll not see much of you, after all," and Chris looked decidedly crestfallen.

"Why not, I should like to know?"

Chris glanced significantly at the gate between them.

"Oh!" beginning to understand; "don't they allow that to be opened?"

"No, they don't," and Chris colored up a little in spite of himself; "but of course it's all right. I couldn't afford to travel first class, and I don't belong there anyway."

"But you could easily get over that little gate," said Marie-Celeste mischievously, and yet soberly too, for she foresaw what innumerable good times would be interfered with if Chris must stay in one place and she in another.

"No," said Chris gravely, "that wouldn't do; but—"

"But what, Chris?"

"Oh, never mind! I guess we'll just have to have little talks right here when we can."

"Well, I guess we won't just have to have anything of the sort," making up her mind on the instant precisely what steps she would take. "I'll manage that; and now tell me, Chris, how you happen to be on this steamer at all. I thought you were going home this summer?"

"And where do you think home is?"

"Where?" far too eager to waste any time in mere thinking.

"In England, of course."

"Why, then, I suppose you're English," she said, with surprise and unconcealed disappointment.

"Why, then, I suppose I am," Chris answered; "but really, I don't see why you should mind, Marie-Celeste."

"Oh, I expected they would be different, the real English people—different from us. I had heard they were, and it isn't so interesting to have all the world alike."

"Well, I wouldn't give up hope quite yet," said Chris, very much amused; "you see, I'm not exactly real English, I've been

in the States so long;" and when Marie-Celeste came to think of it, there was some comfort in that.

Meantime, a number of passengers had come on to the decks of both cabins, and a few moments later the little buglers appeared simultaneously on both sides of the saloon, and the call for breakfast rang out on the still sea air.

"There's something English for you," said Chris.

"What do you mean?" with puzzled frown.

"Why, that's the English mess call,

> "'Officers' wives eat puddings and pies,
> Soldiers' wives eat skilly'

—those are the words that go to it."

"Why, so they do!" for the little buglers were obligingly repeating their strain, and Marie-Celeste discovered for herself that they fitted the notes exactly.

"What's 'skilly?'" she asked presently, as Chris expected she would.

"Well, it's a kind of stew that the soldiers' wives make. It's cheap and nourishing. We don't have anything just like it in America that I know of."

"Well, you are English, after all, Chris," with evident gratification; "there must be lots of more things you can tell me, and there's no end to the good times we'll have together; but I guess I'd better go now. I shouldn't wonder if mamma felt rather ill this rough morning—she isn't a very good sailor. Good-by, Chris; you'll come to the gate after breakfast?"

Chris promised, and watched the trim little figure till it disappeared; then he turned and paced the deck with a somewhat troubled look on his kind face. Somehow he had not given much thought to this subject of first and second class till on that first morning out, when he found the low iron gate imposing itself so resolutely between himself and his little friend; but then he realized at a bound how much there was in it. It might well happen that the father and mother, who were quite willing that their little daughter should have an occasional chat with the postman at home, would prefer not to recognize him in the role of a second-cabin passenger; and good Chris Hartley felt inclined to call

himself all manner of names for thoughtlessly allowing himself to be put in such a position. If Mr. Harris should forbid Marie-Celeste to see him, or should just calmly ignore the fact that he was on board at all, it would be pretty hard to bear. And so Chris suddenly found himself face to face with the class distinctions that seem inevitable in this social world of ours, and in a way that might turn all the bright anticipations for this voyage into the reality of a most disagreeable experience. Yes, there was no doubt about it, he had acted like a fool; and rather than run the chance of being "made to know his place," as the phrase has it, he believed he would have kept out of the way of Marie-Celeste all the way over if he had thought of it in time; but we, of course, believe nothing of the sort. How could he ever have had the heart to carry out such a doleful resolution, and what a pity if he had tried to! The truth was, Chris had too low an opinion of himself altogether. He had an idea, for instance, that he was a very plain-looking sort of a fellow, whereas there was something about him that made him distinctly noticeable everywhere he went. It was hard to tell just what it was—a brimming-over kindliness, I think, best describes it. It shone plain as day in his friendly eyes and hovered under his light mustache, and his head even seemed to be set on his shoulders in a most kindly fashion. But Chris himself was oblivious to all his charms, personal or otherwise, and in this modesty of his, and in many other ways as well, proved himself the gentleman; and the beauty of it was that Mr. Harris, being a true gentleman himself, had long ago recognized the article in his postman. It was a pity Chris should not have known this. It would have spared him a wretched hour or so that first morning at sea. Indeed, this *not knowing* is responsible for a great deal of this world's fret and worry, and yet *too much knowing* would be just as sorry a thing sometimes; so perhaps it would be as well for us to leave matters as they are for the present.

Meantime, Marie-Celeste had made her way to the bow, and to the doorway of a room there, which she had chanced to notice the afternoon before.

"Passengers are not allowed in here, are they?" she asked timidly.

"Not ordinarily," said the captain, looking up from a chart spread out on a table before him.

"Passengers are not allowed in here, are they?"

Marie-Celeste could not possibly discover whether the tone was encouraging or no, but in any case she had no words with which to continue, so awe-inspiring proved the blue coat, gold braid, and the other insignia of the captain's office. Besides, it had taken so much courage to nerve herself up to the mere asking of the question, that she found she had none in reserve, and stood transfixed in the doorway, her little face aflame with embarrassment. Now, if there is a class of men anywhere who believe in what we were speaking of a minute ago (that is, a man's knowing his place), they are the captains of the ocean steamers. It is of course nothing but the enforcement of this very rule that renders ocean travel the safe and comfortable thing it is, and that assures you, even in case of accident, that the strictest discipline will be preserved. Indeed, I have an idea that Captain Revell inclines to apply the same rule to every one aboard of his great steamer, to passengers as well as to officers and crew, and so perhaps regarded the advent of Marie-Celeste in the light of an intrusion. And when you come right down to it, there was that in his tone, when he answered her question, that made her feel that he thought she should not have ventured it.

"Passengers having special business are admitted at any time, however," added the captain, after what seemed an interminable silence, "and perhaps you have come on some special errand. If so, I should be glad to have you come in;" and the captain stood up and motioned Marie-Celeste to a seat on the other side of the table. I think he was beginning to discover what an unusually attractive little personage his visitor was, and to regret the moment's discomfiture he had caused her.

Marie-Celeste gave a very audible sigh of relief as she stepped up the two steps into the room, but she refused the proffered seat with the dignity of a little princess.

"No, I only want to stay for a moment," she said; "I am quite sure now I oughtn't to have interrupted you, and I know papa will be angry; but I had a favor to ask, and—"

"And what, my little friend?" said the captain, quite won over to whatever the favor might be.

"And you looked so kind I dared to speak to you."

"Kind, did I?" laughed the captain, immensely pleased. "Well,

then, you must sit down, else, you see, you'll keep me standing too, and tell me right away what the favor is, and I'll try to act up to the kindness for which you give me credit."

"Well, it's just this, Captain Revell: first, *could* you let me sometimes go over into the second-class cabin?"

"Certainly I could; but what for, may I ask?"

"To see Chris Hartley; he's a second-class passenger, and he's the postman in our street; but it wouldn't do, would it, to undo the gate for me?"

"No, hardly, I think."

"And it wouldn't do any better for me to climb over it, would it? I could do it easily."

"No, I'm afraid that wouldn't answer."

"Then, what are we going to do? There isn't any other way, I suppose," with very evident despair.

"Oh, yes, there is, and I'll show it to you myself."

Whereupon Marie-Celeste laid one little brown hand upon the captain's sleeve from an impulse of sheer gratitude, and the captain straightway laid a big brown hand atop of it.

"Now, that is what you wanted to ask first," he said; "I am anxious to know what comes second."

"No, I guess I won't bother you any more; I—"

"No, you shall not go till you have told me;" and the captain detained the little hand a prisoner beneath his own.

"Well, I was going to ask—you see, it is very much more interesting up here near the bow and the bridge and the crow's-nest—I was going to ask, if once in a while Chris could come over to the first cabin. You see, Chris doesn't know any one on board, excepting just me, and we're such good friends at home."

"Well, that's a little different," for the captain was puzzled to know how to answer, "and it's against the regulations; but it's very hard to refuse a little maid like you."

Mr. Harris was on a search for Marie-Celeste, and chancing to pass the captain's room, glanced in, and glancing in, beheld his little daughter, and heard these last words.

"Excuse me, Captain Revell," he said, touching his hat, and apparently much annoyed, "but I cannot imagine how my little daughter has found her way in here, or what favor she has made so

bold as to ask. I trust you will not suspend any of the ship's regulations on her account."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed the captain, "I shall be only too glad to do what I can."

"Oh, please don't bother any more about it—please don't," entreated Marie-Celeste; "I was afraid papa would not like it. We'll go now, won't we?" looking up at her father with a most woful and beseeching little face.

"Yes, we will; but don't you think, Marie-Celeste, we would better ask the captain's pardon for intruding?"

"Not a bit of it," answered Captain Revell; "there's no pardon to be asked of anybody, and I shall hope to have a call from you both very soon again," he added cordially as his two visitors took their departure, and he settled back to his inspection of the chart.

"Don't say a word, papa, please, I don't want to cry here," and Marie-Celeste held her father's hand very tightly.

"But you want some breakfast, dear, don't you?" Marie-Celeste shook her head, but as she seemed to know perfectly well what she did want, he suffered her to lead him over the high sill that keeps the water from rushing indoors in rough weather, and past the main stairway, and into a far corner of the library. There she pushed him gently into one of the corner sofas, and seating herself in his lap, looked straight into his eyes.

"Papa," she said, with a little sob in her voice, "you are angry."

"I am annoyed, Marie-Celeste."

"You spoke pretty cross, papa; if you hadn't said 'my little daughter,' I should have cried right there—I know I should."

"Well, you are my little daughter always, you know, no matter what happens, and that's one reason I cannot bear to have you do anything that seems the least mite bold."

"Yes, you said something like that to the captain;" and as though she would have given all the world if he hadn't, "but I didn't mean to be bold really, only I felt so sorry for Chris;" and then she proceeded to tell, as coherently as her emotions would allow, of her unexpected encounter with her old friend, and how dreadful it would have been if they could not have seen anything of each other just because Chris was a second-cabin passenger, and of

how she had mustered all her courage and gone straight to the captain to see what could be done about it.

"And he said it would be quite against the regulations, did he?" said Mr. Harris, immediately becoming interested in the situation.

"Oh, no; he said I could go to see Chris in the second cabin—he'd easily manage that—and then he said he knew I had something more on my mind, and made me tell him, and that was whether Chris could come to the first cabin sometimes, so as to look off at the bow. Do you think it was so very, very bold to ask that when he said I could not go till I told him?"

"No; that puts it in a different light, Marie-Celeste."

"But I think—I think (for whatever her faults Marie-Celeste was fastidiously honest) the captain himself did not quite like it when I first spoke to him."

"He got over his not-liking very quickly, then," said her father, glad to be able to give a grain of comfort to his troubled little daughter, "but it would have been better to come to me first. It's one thing to be fearless and another thing to be—"

"I know, papa," putting her finger to her father's lips; "please don't say that dreadful word again; I'll remember;" and Mr. Harris, knowing that she would, gave the little girl on his knee a good, hard hug, and bundled her off for a word with her mamma, comfortably tucked up in a steamer-chair on deck, and then hurried her down to the saloon for the breakfast that she stood in sore need of after such an eventful morning.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIEND BY THE WAY.

"HARTLEY," called a cheery voice from somewhere forward. Chris was on his feet in an instant, and turning in the direction of the voice, discovered Mr. Harris and Captain Revell. It is astonishing how much can be couched in the ring of a word when one looks carefully to it; and the tone in which Mr. Harris called "Hartley" was enough to put Chris at his ease in an instant, and to make him hurry to the little gate with all fears as to his reception skurrying to the winds. Mr. Harris at once introduced him to Captain Revell, and Captain Revell as speedily informed him of the call with which Marie-Celeste had favored him and of her errand. "We are good friends, Marie-Celeste and I," said Hartley proudly, "and I was counting on seeing something of her on the way over, but I

understand now, of course, how it cannot be, and that we must content ourselves with a word now and then here at the gate, if Mr. Harris is willing."

"But you are mistaken, Hartley," said the captain cordially, for he took to the man the moment he saw him. "There is nothing to prevent your little friend from making you a visit whenever she likes. I have shown her the way myself through the passage below decks, and you are welcome to come forward in the same fashion whenever the bow has any attraction for you. As you are alone, you will hardly be missed from the second cabin, and it will be unnecessary to inform anyone of your special privileges;" and then the captain, who had an aversion to being thanked, moved hurriedly away before Chris had had a chance to put his gratitude into words.

"She's a fearless little body, that little daughter of ours," said Mr. Harris at the close of the long talk he and Chris had been having at the gate. "I sometimes wonder what we had better do about it. She arrives at decisions so quickly and acts so promptly and is so outspoken, that she'll get herself and all of us into serious trouble some day, I imagine."

"Never you fear, Mr. Harris," said Chris warmly; "that kind do more good than harm;" and Mr. Harris believed in his heart that Chris was right. On thinking it over, he wondered too if he had not been rather easily annoyed with Marie-Celeste that morning, and if, on the whole, she had not been more brave than bold in her call upon the captain. He would have been quite sure on that score had he known how the little heart had thumped and the little knees trembled as she made her way to the captain's room. But in any case he did not regret having put the little daughter on her guard. It would help rather than hinder that little woman's numerous projects should she learn to think twice before putting her quick resolves into action.

Meantime, Marie-Celeste herself had been making a new friend. A gentleman, entered on the passenger list as Mr. E. H. Belden, sat just at the entrance of the main stairway, a cigar poised in his left hand, a book balanced in his right; the book closed for the moment, with his forefinger marking the place, and his elbow resting on the arm of his steamer-chair. To all appearances, Mr. E. H. Belden was absorbed in meditation, and presumably in a line of

thought suggested by the book he had temporarily suspended reading—a line of thought, at any rate, that made him wholly oblivious to his surroundings. It was somewhat of a surprise, therefore, for him to find his book flying out of one hand with a momentum that swept the cigar out of the other; but he did not need to look far or long for an explanation. "Oh, I'm so sorry," gasped a breathless little body, as quickly as she could reverse engines and bring herself in front of the offended party. "It was very careless of me. I slipped because I tried to turn too short a corner. Please let me get the book for you," and she bounded to the spot where it had landed, while Mr. Belden, detecting a faint scorching odor, hastened to rescue the lighted cigar from the folds of a steamer rug lying on the next chair.

"I hope it hasn't strained the cover," said Marie-Celeste, looking the book over carefully before returning it. "They are a little too fine for steamer use, aren't they?" for it was a volume from the ship's library, and boasted a costly half-calf binding.

"Yes, rather too fine," attracted and pleased by the child's friendliness; "but you have not done it any harm, I think."

"There was no use in my being in such a hurry. I think I will make myself sit right down here a few moments for punishment."

"I would, by all means," said Mr. Belden, smiling at the inference to be drawn from the remark.

"I was only on my way to our state-room for a book," Marie-Celeste further explained. "It is called 'The Story of a Short Life.' Did you ever read it?"

"No, but I think I should like it, for I find life rather too stupidly long myself."

"Why, how is that?" Marie-Celeste exclaimed, as though nothing could possibly have more interest for her, as indeed, for the moment, nothing could.

"Oh, I fancy I cannot exactly make you understand how. I haven't very good health, that's one reason; and too much money, that's another; and not very much faith in human nature, for a third; besides, no one in the world that I care very much for; so you see I am in rather a bad plight." Marie-Celeste sat and stared at Mr. Belden, and Mr. Belden, all intent, closely watched the effect of this somewhat unusual declaration.

"What is your family motto?" she queried, after a moment's serious reflection.

"Why in Heaven do you ask that?" for Mr. Belden, who was not in the habit of talking to children, was not as wise as he might have been in his choice of words.

Marie-Celeste straightened up a little, as though to show she did not quite approve, and then she replied, with an air of childish dignity that was vastly amusing, "Because it was his family motto that helped Leonard (he's the boy in the story I spoke about) ever so much, and that taught him to be cheerful and contented, and it seems to me"—this last very slowly and thoughtfully—"that you are very much like Leonard, only grown up. I suppose, as you're English, you've surely got a family motto."

"How do you know I'm English?"

"Oh, because papa said, when you were walking on the deck last evening, that 'you were very English indeed.'"

"Well, do you think, on the whole, that your father meant to be complimentary?"

"I do not know exactly, but papa likes almost everything in England, and we have some English relatives whom we are very fond of. They live in Windsor, and we are going to spend the summer with them."

"In Windsor?" with evident surprise; "and what is their name, may I ask?"

"Harris, the same as ours;" for Marie-Celeste detected nothing unusual in the question.

"So?" and then, as Mr. Belden seemed suddenly to retire into himself and his own thoughts, she made a move to go.

"Oh, don't go yet; seems to me you ought to talk to me a while longer, if only for punishment, as you said."

"Oh, no, I didn't say quite that," for the first time appreciating the situation; "but anyhow I shall not bother about it, because you know what I meant."

"Of course I do," more touched than he would have cared to admit by her confiding friendliness; "but I want you to wait," he added, "while I try to answer your question about our family motto. I've never thought much about it, but it's 'Dwell as though about to depart,' or some cheerful stuff like that. It's the kind of a motto, you see,

to give one an unsettled sort of feeling, instead of making him contented."

"It's queer," said Marie-Celeste, "but I believe—yes, I'm sure that very motto stands at the head of one of the chapters in my book."

"Indeed? Why, then, I should like to read it. Will you have finished with it before the voyage is over?"

"Oh, I'm through with it now really. I'll get it for you right away," and suiting the action to the word, she was off one moment and back the next with the book in her hand.

"YOU SEE HE WASN'T A GOODY BOY AT ALL."

"Tell me a little what it's about, please," urged Mr. Belden, unwilling to let this new little friend give him the slip, and nothing loath, Marie-Celeste settled comfortably back in the steamer-chair beside him.

"You think it won't spoil it for you?" she asked, by way of preface.

"Not a bit of it;" and thus reassured, she launched out upon a detailed narration of Mrs. Ewing's beautiful story, graphically describ-

ing little Leonard's fortunes and trials, and his heroic self-mastery at the last.

"You see he wasn't a goody boy at all," she said, when all was told, "just brave and grand."

"I see," said Mr. Belden, which was quite true, notwithstanding a strange and wholly new sensation in his eyes. "And now if you will excuse me," he added, "I will go down to the smoking-room and commence the book at once."

Marie-Celeste was rather surprised to find herself left thus abruptly alone. Happily for her, however, she did not know how sadly akin to Leonard's had been some of Mr. Belden's experiences, or she would have flinched a little in the telling. It was the realization of this kinship of experience and yet of the widely different effect upon soul and character that had impelled him to take his sudden leave of Marie-Celeste, and then, pausing a moment at the smoking-room door, he went on and down to his state-room, for he had much to think over, and a long, long time he sat there, his elbows resting on his knees and his face buried in his hands.

CHAPTER V.

AND STILL ANOTHER.

ALTHOUGH a transcendent interest in grown-up people is one of the traits that make it worth while to tell this story of a summer in the life of little Marie-Celeste, yet she was none the less a friend of children of her own age, or over it or under it for that matter, provided they seemed to stand in want of a friend. Otherwise, it must be confessed, she concerned herself very little about them Born with a positive genius for spending and being spent, the claims and opportunities of ordinary child friendships seemed hardly to give her enough breathing room; and so it chanced that she passed very little time with the faultlessly dressed and somewhat overcared-for children of the steamer, who did not seem to need her, and a great deal of time with Chris and Mr. Belden, who did. Be it said to the credit of the latter gentleman that, after that first conversation with Marie-Celeste, he was far more careful in the way he talked with her, and Mr. Harris was quick to discover the fact, or the new friendship would have ended as unexpectedly for Mr. Bel-

den as it had begun. There was about Marie-Celeste at all times the same implicit childish confidence that unnerved the bold robber in " Editha's Burglar," and yet she herself was always quick to discover when this same confidence was being taken advantage of, and when she would best fly to cover. More than once she had shown in her contact with people an inerrancy of intuition (if my youngest readers will excuse two such big words) that had greatly gratified her father and mother, who had a theory of their own about the education of children, and gave her rather more rein than some would consider either safe or advisable. At the same time, every movement of the little daughter was carefully watched and every project followed up by a certain paternal relative, and never more so than during those days of steamer life, when so many hours were passed with the new friend and the postman. When with Chris it was forward clear to the bow to lean over the rail and see the magnificent prow cut the water ; or way to the stern, to watch the far-shining train, the screws churned into white foam behind them ; or an hour 'midships, where the ever-varying amusements with which the steerage passengers beguile the weary hours can be looked down upon from the saloon deck of either first or second cabin. Then, at five every clear day, afternoon tea with the captain, for which they had a standing invitation, and by means of which both she and Chris came to be on terms of wonderful intimacy with that august officer, so that they joked over the rare souchong and delicious little toasted cakes (the secret of whose making was kept close-guarded by the steward) with a familiarity that, to themselves at least, never ceased to be a wonder. With Mr. Belden everything was different. It was generally after an hour or so of prowling about with Chris, and when she was a little tired and in the mood for a quiet talk, that she would seek him out ; and, as a rule, she would find him comfortably tucked up in a steamer rug, with another awaiting her coming on a chair beside him. Then Chris, after carefully tucking her in, in most approved fashion, would be off, with a touch of his hat, and with profound gratitude in his heart for the strength of limb and muscle that made him regard Mr. Belden's inactive life in the light of a sorry burden. That the latter often so regarded himself was evident in the ever-deepening lines of weariness that seamed his pale and handsome face.

"Well, what have you and your good Chris been up to to-day?" would be invariably Mr. Belden's first question; and after Marie-Celeste had told the little or much there was to tell, they would as invariably drift round to talking about books, for they both loved them. One day it was "Little Lord Fauntleroy" and "Hans Brinker," and then Marie-Celeste "had the floor"; and the next it was "The Story of a Short Life," when honors were even, as they used to say in whist, because both had so lately read it. And then for three days together, during the hour for the daily chat, Marie-Celeste sat an entranced listener, while the wonderful story was told of beautiful little Isabel of Valois, the child-queen whom Richard of Bordeaux brought to England at the age of nine, and whose childish reign was so soon concluded. It had chanced that the book that had been brushed so summarily from Mr. Belden's hand when Marie-Celeste made his acquaintance had proved to be Dixon's "Royal Windsor;" and as soon as the terms of their friendship were unquestionably established, she made so bold as to ask many questions regarding its contents; for what could have more interest for a Windsor-bound little maiden than the story of the Royal Castle? And the best part of it was that the book happened to be the second volume, and therefore contained the history of Madame la Petite Reine, as the little French Isabel was called. Never proved fairy tale more charming than this true story as it fell from Mr. Belden's lips. Over and over he told it, adding each time some delightful new touch of detail, till at last Marie-Celeste knew it quite by heart, and rested therein contented.

But not all of their little daughter's time, that Mr. and Mrs. Harris were willing to spare to others, was spent with these grown-up friends of hers. On the second day out Chris had made a most interesting and pathetic discovery. A little sick bugler was stowed away in an undesirable second-cabin state-room that had remained unengaged; and Chris, noticing that a bowl of broth or some sort of nourishing food was carried thither three times a day, but that apart from this no one ever entered or left the state-room, questioned the steward, and as soon as he learned the facts, made his own way in, to the great delight of the lonely little fellow. Then the next morning he interested Mrs. Harris (who was proving a far better sailor than any one had dared to hope) in his new little *protégé*, and

after that, as a matter of course, Marie-Celeste and the little bugler became the best of friends.

"Donald," she said on her second visit, for the one preceding had naturally been limited to the ordinary themes of first acquaintance, "I wish you would tell me a little more about yourself. Mamma says you have been ill a long time in New York with a fever, but that now you are quite over it and are on your way home; and that's all we know."

"That's all there is," running one little white hand through his hair as he spoke, in an apparent effort to make himself more presentable.

"Oh, you're all right," said Marie-Celeste, smiling; "curly hair like yours looks better when it's mussed."

"Would you like me to come and straighten you up a bit?" called Chris, who had really established himself as Donald's nurse, and sat whittling in his own state-room just across the passage.

"No, Chris, he doesn't need you at all," Marie-Celeste volunteered; "he looks very fine as he is" (which gracious compliment brought a very becoming color to the little blanched face). "Besides, Chris, he is going to tell me something about himself—aren't you, Donald? Just what you choose, though, you know, because mamma said I must not seem to be inquisitive, and I'm not, Donald, really—just interested, that's all."

"What kind of things do you want to know?" as though quite willing to be communicative, but at a loss where to begin.

"Why, how you happened to be a bugler, and how you happened to be ill in New York, and where your home is?"

"No home," said Donald, laconically, and with an unconscious little sigh that went straight to Marie-Celeste's heart; "I was in the Foundling Hospital all my life till I came on the Majestic."

"Ill all your life!" exclaimed Marie-Celeste.

"Oh lands, no! I never was ill a day that I know of till that fever got hold of me."

"Then why did you stay in an hospital?"

"It was more what we call an asylum in America," explained Chris, who, as a permitted eavesdropper, felt at liberty to join in the conversation on occasion.

"It's a place," explained Donald, "where children are cared for who haven't any particular fathers or mothers."

"Oh!" said Marie-Celeste, but in a bewildered way, as though she could not quite take in the idea.

"It isn't very pleasant not knowing who you belong to, but it isn't such a bad place to stay. They keep things scrubbed up to the nines, and everything's as neat and well ordered as a ship. I think being trained that way was one thing that made me want to go to sea."

It was easy to see, from the grave look on Marie-Celeste's face, that she was still pondering the sad predicament of "no particular father or mother," but she asked, "Where was the hospital, Donald?"

"In London; and like as not if you go there you'll go out to see it. They always have lots of visitors on Sundays. They dress the girls up awful pretty in black dresses with short sleeves, and mitts that come way up over the elbow, like ladies' gloves at a party, and caps and kerchiefs folded crosswise round their shoulders, like this."

"You've seen a picture of them singing out of a book, haven't you?" called Chris, by way of illustration.

"Why, so I have," said Marie-Celeste; "we gave an artist-proof of it to our minister one Christmas."

"I've seen it too," continued Donald, wondering whether an artist-proof and a waterproof had anything in common; "but the girls aren't often so handsome as that; but I'll tell you when they do look pretty as a picture: that's on a clear Sunday morning, just about midway in the service, when the sun comes streaming through one of the choir windows in a great white shaft of light, I think they call it. It just goes slanting across the benches, and then the girls it happens to strike, no matter how homely they are, really look just beautiful, with their white caps and kerchiefs all lighted up in the sunshine. I used to think they put the girls on that side to show them off, for the boys just look pretty much as boys always do."

"But you have a home now, haven't you, Donald, that you're going to when we reach England?"

"No; I don't know where I'm going; I haven't decided," he

added, with studied indifference; for Donald preferred not to burden these new friends of his with his trials and perplexities. Likely as not he would be able to find some decent enough place in Liverpool, and he thought, if he managed very carefully, his savings might be made to hold out till he could put to sea again on his dear old Majestic.

"And now I'd like to know all about you," said Donald, by way of changing the subject; "there must be a deal more to tell when you've had your father and mother to help you remember things, than when you've had to do all the remembering yourself. Getting your start in a foundling hospital is sort of like being led into the world blindfold."

"Pretty old talk for a youngster," thought Chris; "but I suppose it comes along of his being alone half the time, with so much chance to think."

"Would you like me to commence at the very beginning," asked Marie-Celeste, "when I was just a mere scrap of a thing?" Donald nodded assent.

"Well, then, I was rather good-looking, if you don't mind, and a real sunshiny little body, papa says." Donald looked as though he could readily believe it, and Chris, in the retirement of his state-room, shook his head, as though he felt sure of it.

"But of course I soon got over that, and almost as soon as I was in short dresses I began to show I had quite a little will of my own, and then for two or three years they had a pretty hard time with me. I would have regular tantrums, and just kick and scream if I couldn't do just what I wanted to. I had two dear little brothers then, and I remember—yes, I remember this myself—how they used to amuse me and try to make me good. And sometimes they seemed very proud of me, and sometimes, Donald, I was proud of myself, too. Mamma used to dress me in white dresses with short sleeves that came just to my elbow, tied round with pink or blue ribbons, and a sash to match, tied on one side in front, and I knew it was pretty and stylish, and used to walk around with my head in the air, and people would laugh and say I was awfully cunning. Somehow or other I was rather spoiled, you see; but when I was only five years old Louis and Jack died, both in one week, of diphtheria, and mamma says from that week I have never given her any

real trouble. It seemed as though I remembered how Louis and Jack wanted me to be good, and so I did try very hard. And now I almost always think of them when I am getting into a temper, and if I get the best of it, I feel that they know and are glad."

"It must have been hard for your mother to do without them," said Donald a little awkwardly, but with his face full of sympathy.

"Very hard, Donald; and oh, how she used to cry; but mamma is very good and sweet, and is so thankful that she has papa and me left. You know, Jack and Louis used to say, 'Jesus, gentle Shepherd,' at bedtime every night, just as I do, and mamma says she thinks of them now, just as little lambs safe-folded by the dear Shepherd they used to pray to every night. I think it's that that makes her brave and bright."

"That's a beautiful way to think," said Donald warmly, and Chris thought so too, and stopped whittling.

"Have you no brothers or sisters now?" questioned Donald.

"No, none; so, you see, it would be a shame if I didn't try to be all the comfort I could; and now you know all there is about me."

"Why, no, I don't," said Donald, surprised, folding his hands behind his head by way of a change of position; "I don't know where you live, or where you are going, or how you came to know Mr. Hartley, or what you are going to do this summer;" whereupon Marie-Celeste straightway proceeded to give all the desired information, and more besides.

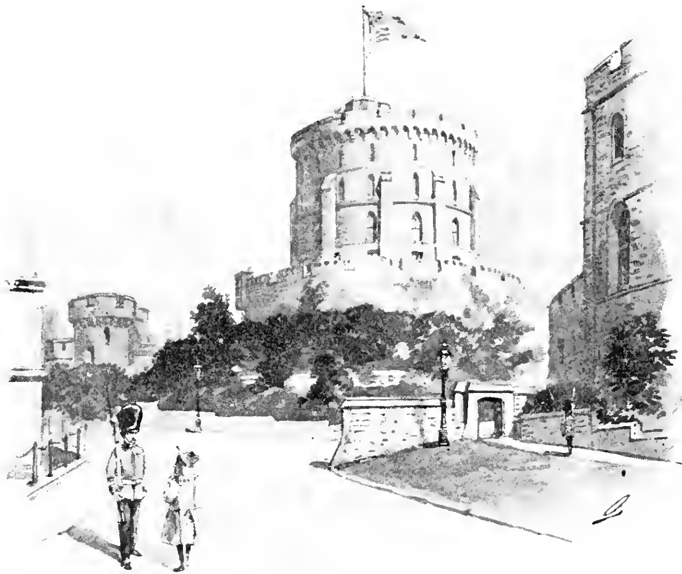
Watchful Chris thought he began to detect signs of weariness in Donald's occasional answers, and as soon as he felt sure of it he bundled Marie-Celeste off in a hurry, and pinning a shawl over the port-hole, left the little convalescent for a nap undisturbed in his darkened state-room.

And now you have at least an idea of how Marie-Celeste passed her time on the steamer, and you can understand how there might have been some people rather less glad than sorry when they felt the machinery stop at two o'clock one morning, and knew that the Queenstown passengers were being transferred to the tender, and that before sunset all the people aboard the great steamer would be separated to the four winds. Chris was sorry, because he had looked forward with so much pleasure to the voyage across with Marie-Celeste, and it had all so far exceeded his expectations.

Donald was sorry, because he never had met "such lovely people" as the Harrises and Mr. Hartley, and never expected to again, and I half believe Mr. Belden was sorriest of all. He was going right up to his club in London, to lead the same old loveless, self-centred life, and somehow the glimpse of something very different he had had through Marie-Celeste made it appear more vapid and colorless than ever. But the steamer did not mind how any of her passengers were feeling—she must make the best possible record, no matter who was glad or sorry; and on she steamed, past lonely and beautiful Holyhead, and then through the wide Irish Sea (that seems indeed a veritable ocean in its wideness), until land once more was sighted and the harbor reached, and the anchor dropped off the wonderful docks at Liverpool. And then, in a few moments, the tender that was to land them was bearing down upon them, and a handsome, eager-faced little fellow, in an Eton jacket, was standing as far forward as possible in her bow, and an older fellow, who resembled the younger one closely, was standing, I am happy to say, close beside him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CASTLE WONDERFUL.



It was marvellous what a change came over the pretty little house where Ted and Harold lived almost as soon as Aunt Lou, as they called Mrs. Harris, came to feel at home there. The servants were the same that had been with them at the time of their mother's death, and had been as faithful as they knew how to be, even when their patience had been well-nigh exhausted by "Mr. Theodore's" unreasonable demands of the previous summer; and, indeed, unreasonable had been no word for it. There are boys and girls everywhere who know, to their sorrow, what it means to have the big brother come home from college. How he does lord it over the rest of us! And if he chances to bring a new chum along with him, whom he rather wants to impress, then heigh-ho! for a hard time for everybody. He pays little or no heed at all to the ordinary

regulations of the household, and meals must wait for an hour, or be served in a jiffy, as best suits his humor or convenience. Of course there are some good fellows of whom this is not true at all, and even those of whom it is, as a rule, in time get over it; but meanwhile the mothers grow quite worn out sometimes, and the mischief fares on past mending. So much for our little protest against a tendency of college life. The bother of it is, it is not likely in the least to help matters. As for Ted, you can imagine the life he led those servants of his, with four college-men his guests for the summer, and no one to gainsay him. Early and late they were kept slaving away, with never a spark of consideration shown them, and nothing but the love they had borne their mistress and an occasional kind word from Harold, proving how he felt in the matter, had carried them through it. Still faithful as they had been, something had gone out of the house with its sweet little mistress, that had happily come in again with Aunt Lou, and Harold was quick to recognize it.

"Is it possible you've been here only a week?" he asked as they all sat together one evening in the library—that is, with the exception of Theodore, whose spring term still kept him at Oxford.

"Just a week to-day, Harold," said Aunt Lou, looking up from a great mass of crocheting, that would soon be a full-grown afghan; "I hope it hasn't seemed more like a month to you, dear."

"It has seemed as though mother was back—that's the way it has seemed, and it's been like a bit of heaven;" and if ever Mrs. Harris felt repaid for anything in her life, she felt repaid that moment for their journey across three thousand miles of water.

"I wonder what it is makes such a difference with a woman—that is, a lady—in the house?" Harold added. "I suppose you can't exactly understand it, but even the books, and things on that table there, have a different look since you came, Aunt Lou."

Aunt Lou crocheted away for dear life, and looked very happy, and Uncle Fritz laid aside his book, and announced wisely, "I can tell you what makes the difference if you want to know, Harold; it's the countless little touches here and there. You notice now and then, and you'll see that Aunt Lou is forever changing the position of something, if it's only a chair as she passes or the lowering of a window-shade by the fraction of an inch. It's a sort of intuitive—"

"It's just mamma's own self, that's what it is," interrupted Marie-

Celeste, since her father seemed to be at a loss for a word, and she put her two arms around her mother's neck, as much as to say, "Isn't a mother like mine the darlingest thing?" and then a little fellow, who didn't have any mother, quite unconsciously to himself, drew a great deep sigh, and Mrs. Harris gave her little daughter a furtive push from her. Marie-Celeste looked puzzled a moment, and then she understood.

"Remember, my little girl," Mrs. Harris had said to her more than once, "that there's nothing but sin itself has so many heavy hearts to answer for as thoughtlessness; and thoughtfulness, next to love, has lightened and brightened more hearts than anything else in the world;" and Marie-Celeste knew how thoughtless she had been to press home upon Harold in any way a keener sense of his own great loss. Resolved that it should never happen again, and annoyed at herself beside, Marie-Celeste moved away to the window on the other side of the room. There was somebody sitting at the window—somebody half asleep in a great arm-chair, and all but purring with contentment, and it was no one else than Donald, if you please. It had all come about so beautifully, that morning that Harold had come out to meet them on the tender, at Liverpool. It had taken nearly two hours to transfer the baggage after the steamer had come to anchor, and during that time Marie-Celeste had stolen away to have a last chat with Donald. He sat propped up in Mr. Belden's steamer-chair, whither two of the stewards had carried him, and lying out there in the open air, he seemed to look paler than ever.

"Who is your little white-faced friend?" Harold had asked at the first opportunity.

"Oh, that is Donald you heard mamma speak about!"

"Donald who?"

"Oh, I don't really know who, and nobody does! He is called Donald Brown. He was brought up in the Foundling Hospital, in London, and hasn't any particular father or mother."

"My! but that's hard; and he's been awfully ill, hasn't he?"

"Yes, for weeks and weeks in New York with a fever; and he hasn't gained a bit of strength on the voyage, either."

"He's going home, I suppose?"

"He's going somewhere, but I don't believe he knows where.

The steamer, he says, seems most like home to him. He's one of the cabin boys and buglers when he's well."

"I say," said Harold, "let's bring him home to Windsor!"

"Oh, could you?" cried Marie-Celeste, who had thought of the selfsame thing herself, but had not dared to suggest it.

"I wonder if Ted will mind?" as though thinking the matter over. "I think I'd better ask him; but I shall do it anyway, since this is my summer."

"Your summer?" but Harold had no time to explain, and hurried over to Ted, who was talking with Uncle Fritz and Aunt Lou, and who was gracious enough to say, "Do as you like, Harold;" and as that, you see, was just what Harold had meant to do, there was no trouble at all about it. And this was the beautiful way it had happened, and Donald was being built up and strengthened with all sorts of nourishing food, and was gaining strength every day.

"Donald," said Marie-Celeste, curling up on the window bench beside his chair, "just how do you feel this morning?"

"First-rate; better than any day yet," said Donald, who, by the way, never called Marie-Celeste by any name whatsoever—"Marie-Celeste" seemed quite too familiar, and "Miss Harris" was out of the question.

"Well, then, do you want to hear about *it* now?" she asked eagerly.

"You bet I do," and then Donald begged her pardon with a blush.

"It's quite a long story; are you sure you feel strong enough?"

"Sure;" and forthwith Marie-Celeste sailed away on the wings of a marvellous story. It had been a wonderful week, that first week at Windsor, and Marie-Celeste had tried to see it all with two pairs of eyes; for born little Englishman though Donald probably was, it had been only since he had actually come to Windsor that he knew anything whatever about it. Coming out in the train from London, the beautiful castle had first flashed upon our little party, through the perfect arch of the frequent English rainbow, and Donald had straightway asked, "Oh, what is that?" and Marie-Celeste had straightway replied, "Why, Donald, of course that's the castle!"

"Whose castle?"

"The *Queen of England's, Donald!*" as though such a lack of knowledge was simply incredible. So, you see, there was a vast amount of ignorance to be enlightened, and Marie-Celeste was fairly revelling at the prospect of being the one to do it.

"You know," she said, commencing in a low tone, so as not to disturb the others, and with the introductory long breath of the conventional story-teller, "we have been through the castle three times, so I really know a great deal about it, and it is very fortunate that the Queen happened to be in London, or we shouldn't have seen some of the rooms at all. In the first place, Donald, you know how the castle looks from the outside—the beautiful gray stone walls and the towers with the turrets everywhere you turn."

"What are turrets?" asked Donald, giving evidence at once of such an eager desire to acquire information as Marie-Celeste feared in the long run might prove rather annoying.

"Oh, I believe it's a round wall that goes like that on the top!" tracing an imaginary line in the air with one finger. "Well, you go in at one of the gates, and it's just as though you were in a little city of itself. There are roadways and sidewalks and street lamps, and a big church right in front of you, and people coming and going, just like a city. And there's a guard at the gate, and there are guards everywhere. They didn't look very fine, though, for every time they've had on their coats for fear of rain, and seemed all coat and gloves. You know how horrid white cotton gloves are?"

For the sake of agreement Donald nodded assent, but he should have thought himself that white gloves of any sort would have been quite imposing, and above all on a soldier.

"Well, the first place we went into was the Albert Chapel; and oh, Donald, but it's beautiful! There's a marble floor shaped in diamonds and circles, and there are such beautiful stained-glass windows, and under each window a picture of something from the Bible, and these pictures are made of different sorts of marble, somehow, and there's a great deal of gold in them, that makes them more beautiful still. But, best of all, because I love anything that has to do with real people, there is a portrait in marble right underneath each window of one of the Queen's children. They are raised, you know, from a flat background, not cut all round like a statue."

"In the first place, Donald."

"Yes, I understand," really very much interested; "but why do they call it the Albert Chapel?"

"I was just going to ask you if you knew," with an extremely patronizing air, which Donald noticed, but was quite too courteous to resent.

"It is called that because Albert was the name of the Queen's husband, the Prince Consort, and after his death the Queen built it to his memory. No, she didn't exactly build it, either. There was a king built it long ago for his tomb, and it has quite a history, I believe; but it was the Queen who made it beautiful as it is now. And underneath is a great big tomb, where ever so many royal people are buried—kings and queens and princes and princesses."

"Is Prince Albert buried there?"

"No; I was going to tell you he is buried in a mausoleum (very proud of the word) at Frogmore, just beyond the Long Walk, as they call it, where we drove you, you remember, day before yesterday."

"Well, I guess I shall always remember it; I never saw anything so lovely in my life. It looked just like a picture they used to have in a book called 'Pilgrim's Progress' at the hospital." Impatient of the interruption, Marie-Celeste shook her head, as much as to say, "Oh, yes, of course anybody knows about 'Pilgrim's Progress;'" but Donald, stopping merely to catch his breath, continued: "The name under it was Beulah Land, and it meant a sort of heaven; and the Long Walk looked to me as though it might be a straight road to Beulah Land." And older people than Donald have thought the selfsame thing, as they have looked down the same matchless avenue, with its wonderful far-reaching vista of branching elms, and its perfect driveway diminishing to a thread in the distance, with here and there a flock of grazing sheep roaming its ample grass-grown borders, and finding rich and abundant pasture.

"Yes, it does look like that," said Marie-Celeste. merely by way of politeness, and then at once resumed eagerly: "But although the Prince is not really buried in the chapel, there's a beautiful tomb to his memory right in front of the chancel. You must surely see it some day, Donald. The figure of the Prince lies right along the top of it, and he has on wonderful armor, and at his feet is a carved statue of his favorite hound. I think it was fine in them to put it there, don't you? It seems as though faithful dogs ought to be remem-

bered just as well as people. Then there's another beautiful tomb to Prince Leopold. He is really buried there, and he—but I suppose you'll be more interested in the castle even than in the chapel ;" and as Donald looked as though he thought he might, and as that was exactly the way he was expected to look, Marie-Celeste complacently continued: "Well, first you go up a flight of steps, and you find yourself in a sort of vestibule; and there's a splendid portrait of the architect there—the man who restored the old parts of the castle and added new parts to it and made it all beautiful as it is now; and from this vestibule you go on and on from one grand room to another. They call them the State Apartments; and they are stately, I can tell you, and some of them have very high-sounding names that I cannot remember. There are wonderful tapestries on the walls—pictures made in a loom somehow—and portraits everywhere of royal people. Then there's a room they call the Guard Room, where they have suits of ancient armor; and there's a great oak writing-table in it made from the wood of the old Arctic ship Resolute; and it tells in an inscription on it how she was abandoned by the English, and how she was found by an American whaling-ship captain three years afterwards, who got her free from the ice. And after that the American Government fitted her out and gave her to Her Majesty Queen Victoria as a token of friendship; and then, when she was broken up, a few years ago, they made the table out of the wood. Then there's a chair besides, that's made from an elm-tree that grew where the English beat Napoleon on the field of Waterloo; and in another part of the room, on a piece of a mast, there's a great colossal bust of Lord Nelson; and I'm ashamed to say I don't know anything about him, but we ought to, Donald."

"And what's more, we do," interrupted Donald, with a little mischievous smile of satisfaction; "I guess you can't find a sailor boy on land or sea too young to know about Lord Nelson. If you'd ever been to London you'd know something about him yourself, for one of the grandest squares there is called after the great battle he won at Trafalgar, and there's an ever-so-high column in the centre of it, with a statue of Lord Nelson on top of it. Oh, you ought to see Trafalgar Square, I can tell you!"

"And I shall, of course. No one would come to England without going up to London, would they? But I think you have told

me very little about Lord Nelson;" for Marie-Celeste was somewhat suspicious of Donald's ability in that direction. She soon found to her sorrow, however, that she was mistaken; for Donald forthwith launched forth into such a detailed account of Lord Nelson's history, from his voyage as a boy to the North Pole, to his last great, glorious battle, that the patience of that young lady, who was rather more eager at all times to impart information than to receive it, was sorely tried. Donald, nevertheless, was greatly advanced thereby in her estimation, since it seemed that marvellous ignorance in one direction was unquestionably offset by an astonishing amount of information in another.

"Well, I am rather glad to know about him," said Marie-Celeste at the first opportunity; "and now I'll go on with the castle, shall I?" And Donald, somewhat exhausted by his efforts, was altogether willing that she should.

"Let me see! Where was I? Oh, yes, I remember—the Guard Room. Well, the next room to that is the Banqueting Hall, a wonderful, great, big place, and the ceiling is covered with the crests of the Knights of the Garter. Do you know anything about the Knights of the Garter, Donald?"

Donald, looking utterly mystified, shook his head.

"I do, then," chimed in Harold, who had been listening to the latter part of the conversation; and over he came to the window, dragging his chair after him. "Those old Knights are great favorites of mine. Do you want me to tell you about them?"

"Yes," said Donald very cordially; and Marie-Celeste said "yes" as cordially as was possible, considering it meant she should again relinquish her province of story-teller; but Harold, wholly unconscious, proceeded.

"You see," he said, "you stumble across the Order of the Garter everywhere you turn here at Windsor, and so I've read up a good deal about them, and it's all just as interesting as any story you ever heard. The Order was founded—"

"What do you mean, 'The Order was founded?'" interrupted Donald, who was not going to have anything taken for granted.

"Oh, the Brotherhood of Knights! That is what an Order is, you know, and this one was founded way back in the fourteenth century, in the time of Edward the Third; and they say the way it

came to be called the Order of the Garter was this: That King Edward was dancing with the Countess of Salisbury, when she had the misfortune to lose her garter; and then as he stooped to pick it up, and saw every one smiling, he gallantly announced, 'that they should shortly see that garter advanced to so high an honor and renown as to account themselves happy to wear it.'"

"Oh, that was elegant!" cried Marie-Celeste; "that is just my idea of a Knight."

"Oh, they were truly elegant old fellows in ever so many ways, and they wore elegant clothes, I can tell you; and they do still, for that matter."

"Why, are there any Knights nowadays?" questioned Donald, incredulously.

"Why, of course there are; and it's a very high honor, indeed, to be made a Knight of the Garter."

"Made a Knight?" for Marie-Celeste had an idea that the article was born, not made.

"Why, of course, Marie-Celeste; that is, when a man is a great man to start with, and then does something to make himself greater, the Queen may reward him by permitting him to become a member of the Order, if there happens to be a vacancy; and there's nothing much finer can happen to a man than that."

"But there isn't any real garter business about it now, is there?" asked Donald.

"Indeed there is. To every new Knight made the Queen gives a dark blue velvet garter, and what's more, they are never to appear in public without them, unless booted for riding, and then they are allowed to wear a ribbon of blue silk under their left boot instead. And there's lots more that's awfully interesting about the Knights; and I tell you what, some day, when Donald's stronger, we'll go up to the castle and St. George's Chapel, and sort of spend the day with the Knights, looking at everything that belongs to them. But now you know something of what the crests on the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall mean, and the shields in the panels along the sides, that are waiting for the crests of the Knights that may hereafter be admitted into the Order. In fact, everything in that room has to do with the Knights. The Garter and the Cross of St. George are even woven into the pattern of the carpet."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Marie-Celeste; "I know very little, indeed, about St. George; and was there ever any place like Windsor for showing you how little you do know, anyway?"

"No, Marie-Celeste, there never was," chimed in Mrs. Harris; for both she and Mr. Harris had been listening with interest to Donald; "but you ought not to mind that as much as we older folks, who are expected to know a great deal more than you little people. Why, when we first went through the castle the other day with Canon Allyn, I was half afraid to open my lips, for fear of betraying some new ignorance."

"Well, I wouldn't be afraid any more; you know twice as much as most ladies;" for Harold was already the devoted champion of Aunt Lou, and lost no opportunity for proving his devotion.

"Now, go on with the castle, please," urged Donald, secretly hoping there would be no more interruptions.

"Oh, well," said Marie-Celeste with a sigh, as though becoming oppressed with the greatness of her undertaking; "besides the Banqueting Hall there's the Grand Reception-Room, with a beautiful plate-glass window forming almost all of one end of it, and there's the Waterloo Room, filled with portraits of officers who fought there, and then, in a place they call the Grand Vestibule, there's a splendid statue of the Queen. Everything's grand, you see, wherever you turn."

"Well, Queen or no, I'm sure I shouldn't like to have everything so tearing grand," said Donald, more expressively than elegantly.

"No, nor I; and the Queen doesn't really live in these grand rooms, either. You can only see her very own rooms from the outside, and you can only imagine what they are like; but they point out which is the drawing-room and which is her sitting-room, and they don't call them grand anything, for a comfort, so I suppose they're lovely and homelike, like other people's; but they do look out on a grand garden—the East Terrace they call it. You saw it the same day we drove down the Long Walk. You remember the bushes all trimmed up to a point, and the flower-beds and the statues, and the fountains playing in the centre. And near the Terrace, Donald, is the Photographer's Studio. Think of having a place all fitted up just to take the pictures of the Queen's own

family! That's kind of regal, isn't it? But the finest thing of all is the Royal Pantry. I would give a good deal to look in it. It is crammed full of all sorts of gold things and a gold dinner service of one hundred and fifty pieces."

Donald's eyes opened as wide at this as extreme drowsiness would let them, so that it was easy to discover that the little convalescent was growing pretty tired.

"Well, you must just see it all for yourself some day," Marie-Celeste wisely concluded; "and you had better go to bed now, Donald."

CHAPTER VII.

"AND NOW GOOD-MORNING."

Never in all this world was there a happier little host than Harold Harris when he found how kindly his guests from across the water were taking to the life at Windsor; but who would not have taken kindly to it, I should like to know? The Queen herself, in her great castle on the hill, could not have planned more for the comfort of her guests than did Harold in his little castle beneath it; and, indeed, this name of Little Castle had somehow attached itself to the pretty stone house, with its round tower and moat-shaped terrace.

It had been an idle bachelor's fancy to build after this unique fashion some ten years before; but when Harold's mother had come seeking a home in Windsor, he was already tired of it, and she found the house was "To be let," provided desirable tenants could be found; and "desirable" the little widow proved in the eyes of the discriminating agent. "None more so," he thought complacently

when he called for the first quarter's rent, and saw what a gem of a place she had made it. All the contents of the house in London, which after her husband's death had seemed too sad a place to live in, had been brought into the ivy-covered little castle, and under her transforming touch it had soon become as cheery and cosey as possible. But it was not enough for Harold that he was able to invite his friends into such an attractive home. A room in the top story, with a fine north light, was fitted up as a studio for Uncle Fritz, who, though a business man by circumstance, was an artist through and through. For Aunt Lou an up-stairs sitting-room was converted into a little study; for although Aunt Lou herself was rather loath to confess it, it was nevertheless somewhat generally known that she was very fond of writing stories for children. For Marie-Celeste there seemed nothing in particular that could be done, save to make her own little room as inviting as could be. To accomplish this, Harold conferred with a friend of Ted's, Canon Allyn's daughter. Miss Allyn, who had been a great favorite of Harold's mother, was only too glad to have him turn to her, and entered into all the preparations with an enthusiasm that was very delightful. She suggested, among other things, a valance and curtains for the little brass bedstead, already purchased, and then went herself and selected a soft, white material and superintended their making. At her suggestion, too, the couch and chairs were upholstered with a pretty flower-patterned cretonne, and some lovely white-framed etchings were hung upon the tinted walls. Then, by grace of his own idea of fitness, Harold had added to the other furnishings a Dresden china toilet-set, and in this he was perhaps far wiser than he knew, for is there anything so well calculated to captivate at sight the heart of a dainty little maiden as the mysterious round-topped boxes that compose the dainty outfit of the ideal dressing-table? Then, to crown it all, a pair of ponies and a basket-phaeton had been purchased for the exclusive use of the guests that were to be. Of course, all this meant money; but with the exception of the previous summer, when Theodore's guests had cost him such a pretty penny, Harold had conscientiously lived a good way inside his income, so that there was a reserve fund to draw on, on demand. As I said, then, who would not have taken kindly to the life at Windsor under such conditions, and have lost no time in stowing themselves

happily away in the special niche prepared for them? So Mr. Harris painted as for dear life in all weathers, indoors or out, as the fancy struck him, and Mrs. Harris turned her leisure to account for a bit of writing now and then, and in between times they drove hither and thither in the basket-phaeton, and, one by one, took in all the sights of old and delightful Windsor. And Marie-Celeste did likewise, as far as the driving and sight-seeing were concerned; but having no greater responsibility than the arrangement of the Dresden boxes on the little dressing-table, wandered about at her own sweet will, in the hours while Harold was at school and when every one else was busy. And the place to which she wandered most often was to St. George's Chapel, which at the time of her talk with Donald she had not yet had the good fortune to visit. But with Marie-Celeste, as with some of the rest of us, to know St. George's was to love it, and she had soon gained a standing permission to go there whenever she liked; and that was very often—so often, in fact, that any one who saw her one lovely May morning tripping down the walk from the Little Castle, as though bent upon some special errand, could easily have guessed her destination. It was a matter of five minutes to reach the corner of High Street, and of three minutes more to climb Castle Hill; then a smile to the guard who happened to be on duty at the gate, and she was within the castle walls. And once there she stopped to take it all in, for it had never seemed so beautiful before; and then in a moment she knew what new touch had been added to the scene. The sun had shone as brilliantly, and the gray round tower, with its grass-grown terraces, had stood out as clearly against the blue of the English sky, but never before—for Marie-Celeste, that is—had those terraces been abloom with great masses of lilacs. Two days had come and gone since her last visit, and the showers and sunshine intervening had flashed the myriad tiny buds of every cluster into full and transcendent bloom. No wonder the child held her breath, spellbound from sheer delight, and no wonder, too, that the spell lost its power to hold her the moment she spied a darling, new little friend of hers standing in the chapel doorway. "And—and now good-morning," rang out a cheery little voice as she had hastened up the path.

"Good-morning, Albert," answered Marie-Celeste, smiling at the expected, "and now," with which, by way of getting the best of

a tendency to stutter, Albert was accustomed to preface many of his remarks; "I thought I should find you here," she added; "and *have* you seen the lilacs, Albert?"

"Yes; and our bushes are out too," with an emphatic little nod of the head, as much as to say, that the Queen's lilacs were not specially privileged in that direction.

"Is your sister going to play this morning?" asked Marie-Celeste, with an eagerness on her face that gave place to intense satisfaction as Albert answered, "Yes; she's tomin' in a little while;" since to have Miss Allyn at the organ during these visits of hers to the chapel was just the most delightful thing that could possibly happen for Marie-Celeste. "And now let's have a little chat," said Albert, seating himself on the step, and making room for Marie-Celeste beside him.

"And what shall we talk about?"

"The weather;" for with Albert this topic was always of paramount importance. "And first, I'll see what kind of a day we are going to have;" and suiting the action to the word, he stepped off a little distance to take an observation. He was always the embodiment of dainty freshness, this little four-year-old Albert, and thanks to his mother's preference, boyish percale dresses still kept the Lilliputian trousers of the period at bay. He was a cunning little object as he strode a few feet down the path, his hat on the back of his golden curls, a soft, red silk sash knotted soldier-like at his side, and his hands folded behind him, in evident and precise imitation of some older observer of the elements. His observations, however, were so exceedingly cursory and so impartially comprehensive, including the path at his feet every whit as carefully as the sky above him, that Marie-Celeste had difficulty in preserving proper decorum.

"We are going to have a fine day," Albert asserted, resuming his seat on the steps, and with the authority of one who knows; and the matter of the weather being thus satisfactorily disposed of, Marie-Celeste made so bold as to introduce another subject; and as it chanced to meet with Albert's approval, they chatted merrily together for ever so long. Meantime, a party of tourists, with Marshall's familiar pink guide-book open in the hands of one of them, had been surveying the chapel at a distance, and now, after a

word or two with the children on the doorstep, made their way within.

"Is Mr. Brooke in the chapel, Albert?" asked Marie-Celeste.

"Yes," sighed Albert; for he knew that his answer meant an end to their chat; for whenever during these visits of hers a party of tourists were so fortunate as to secure the services of the verger, Mr. Brooke, Marie-Celeste invariably followed in their train, listen-

"'WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A FINE DAY,' ALBERT ASSERTED."

ing to every word as it fell from the good old man's lips. She already knew many of the monument inscriptions by heart, but that made no difference; for her the old chapel possessed a never-ending fascination, and she rarely crossed the threshold of the choir—which was a beautiful chapel in itself—without an actual thrill of pleasure. So, as Albert had expected, this morning proved no exception, and he was unceremoniously left to communion with his

own thoughts upon the doorstep ; but it did not prove a long separation. In their tour of the chapel the travellers from across the water had but reached the wonderful cenotaph of the Princess Charlotte, when a sweet single chord from the great organ broke upon the air, as though the player simply wanted to make sure that the instrument would respond when the time came. But in that single chord lay a summons for Marie-Celeste and for Albert ; at least, they chose so to regard it, and meeting at the foot of the organ-loft stairway, they climbed it hand-in-hand.

"So here you are!" said a very sweet-looking young lady, turning to greet the children from her seat on the organ-bench. "Seems to me I would have waited for more of an invitation than that, just that one chord."

"You needn't mind 'bout inwiting us ever, Dorothy," said Albert, climbing on to a cushioned bench at his sister's side, "'cause we'd tome anyhow, wouldn't we, Marie-Celeste?"

"Yes, Albert, I think we would ; but you really don't mind having us, do you, Miss Allyn?"

"No, I *really* don't," in imitation of Marie-Celeste's frequent use of the word. "In fact, I rather like to have two such every-day little specimens near me here in this chapel, where so many great people lie buried ; and now I shall not say another word, because I want to have a good practice."

"But you'll—" and then Marie-Celeste thought perhaps she had better not ask it.

"Stop in time for your favorites," laughed Miss Allyn, finishing the sentence. "Yes, of course I will. Perhaps you'd like them now, you and Albert?"

"No, no, Dorothy," said Albert firmly ; "we want to think they are tomin', and not dat dey're over." And as Marie-Celeste was evidently of the same mind, that settled the matter. Then for the first time the tone of the organ rang out full and strong ; and the visitors in the chapel below looked up with rapt faces to the gallery, as though for them, as for Marie-Celeste, the sweet music seemed to lend the last perfecting touch to the holy enchantment of the place. For over an hour, with scarce an interruption, Miss Allyn played on and on, and Marie-Celeste never stirred from the choirmaster's chair, in which she sat absorbed and entranced. Albert, it

must be confessed, had made more than one mysterious *sortie* down the gallery stairs, as though bent on an important errand which had just occurred to him; but in each case he brought up in rather aimless fashion in some remote corner of the chapel; so it was easy to comprehend that the only real purpose in view was to give his restless little four-year-old self the benefit of a change. He was absent on the third of these little excursions of his, and was surreptitiously amusing his audacious little self by seeing how it seemed to sit in the Queen's own stall, when hark!—yes, that was going to be "The Roseate Hues," and with a bound that came near bringing the royal draperies with him he was out of the stall in a trice and fairly scrambling up the organ stairs.

"Bedin aden; it isn't fair; bedin aden, Dorothy, *please*," he urged with all the breath hurrying and excitement had left him; and Dorothy, at sight of his anxious, entreating face, resolved to "begin again," first bringing the interrupted measure to a close with a brief concluding improvisation of her own. Albert understood, and brooked the momentary delay as best he could, but he confided to Marie-Celeste, in highly audible whisper, that he didn't see why Dorothy couldn't stop short off in the middle of a piece if she chose to: he could, anyway—he knew he could.

"Perhaps," said Marie-Celeste, far wiser than she knew, "you couldn't if you were really a great musician." And then instantly both children stood still and motionless, for there was the familiar melody again.

"De roseate hoos of early dawn," hummed Albert in a cunning, to-himself sort of way,

> De biteness of de day,
> De kimson of de sunset sky,
> How fast dey fade away,"

and then the same verse through again and still again, as Dorothy was good enough to repeat the brief, sweet strain for his special delectation. It is doubtful if Albert appreciated the pathos of the lines. It was the rose hue of the sunrise and the crimson of the sunset, wedded to the lovely melody of the refrain, that brought such rapture of delight to his color-loving soul.

And now it was Marie-Celeste's turn, and the martial strain of

"The Son of God goes forth to war" woke the old chapel echoes. Three times, as for Albert, the air was played effectively through, and then Miss Allyn slipped down from the organ-bench and into the nearest chair.

"DE ROSEATE HOOS OF EARLY DAWN."

"I wish I had strength just once," she said, "to play as long as I should like to."

"Then you'd never stop, Dorothy, not even at the ends," said

Albert, looking comically doleful at the mere prospect of such an undesirable state of affairs.

"I remember Mr. Belden told me on the steamer," said Marie-Celeste, with the air of one who settles down for a good talk with a familiar friend, "of some musician who heard some one strike two or three chords and then suddenly stop, and after that he could not get a wink of sleep till he jumped out of bed and rushed to his piano and struck the chord that belonged at the end of the others."

"Yes; that was Handel, I think," said Miss Allyn.

"Handel!" repeated Marie-Celeste; "I want to remember that name and everything else besides, if I can, that Mr. Belden told me."

"Who was this Mr. Belden, Marie-Celeste?"

"Oh, he was the queerest English gentleman—an English gentleman that I met on the steamer. I don't think many people liked him—he said himself they didn't, anyway; but I liked him, and we grew to be great friends, and we had a long chat together almost every day."

"What about?" asked Albert eagerly, since chats were just in his line.

"Oh, often about books, and a great deal about the castle here, for he seemed to know all about it. Besides, he was reading a book called 'Royal Windsor,' and that was how I came to know him, because I knocked it out of his hands accidentally, and then I had to ask him to excuse me, and that's the way we commenced to be friends. After that he told me a great deal about what he had been reading. And did you ever hear, Albert, about a little French girl who was made Queen of England, and came to live in the castle when she was only eight years old, and who used to come to this very chapel?"

"No, never," with eyes as big as saucers.

"Well, some day, Albert, I'll tell you all about her, and some other things that happened right here in St. George's. You know about her, don't you, Miss Allyn?"

"Yes, a little—Madame La Petite Reine, I believe they called her; but tell me more, Marie-Celeste, about your steamer friend. He must, as you say, have been a queer sort of a person to tell you people didn't like him."

"I guess it was true, though. He seemed kind of a selfish man,

and looked so cross until you came to know him, that I was really very much frightened the day I knocked the book out of his hand. He isn't ever very well, and he has to keep travelling about for his health. I think that's one reason he looks cross; but he's very handsome, and papa says very aristocratic."

"I would rader hear about de little Queen," remarked Albert demurely.

"Hush, dear!" said Dorothy; "I want to hear more about this Mr. —— did you say his name was Belden, Marie-Celeste? Are you sure it was Belden?"

"Yes, sure; I have it at home in the printed list of passengers. And another queer thing about him"—for there was real pleasure in enlarging on a subject in which her listener took such undisguised interest—"was that he told me one day that he had too much money. That was funny, wasn't it? And he said he thought life was very stupid. He just seemed all out of sorts with everything, and I got him to read the 'Story of a Short Life;' I thought it would do him good, and I'm sure it did."

"I don't know about that story, either," said Albert aggressively, and as though such constant allusion to very interesting things was really more than could be patiently endured; but he found to his sorrow that his gentle protest seemed to make no impression whatsoever.

"I fancy it was Mr. Belden, too," continued Marie-Celeste, as though wholly unconscious of any interruption, "who asked them to sing 'The Son of God goes forth to war' at the service in the saloon Sunday morning. I think anybody who reads the 'Story of a Short Life' must love that hymn, don't you? That's the reason I'm fond of it. Whenever I hear it I seem to see the soldiers in the church at Asholt and the V. C. out on the door-step, singing the beautiful words loud and clear, so that dear little Leonard would hear; and then the hand pulling down the curtain at the barrack master's window, so that the V. C. knew at once that the little fellow had gone to heaven at last."

"Yes, it's a beautiful story," said Miss Allyn thoughtfully. But meantime, matters had reached a climax in little Albert's heaving breast. If nothing was to be explained, there was no use staying any longer, and he summarily took his departure; and but for his childish

reverence for the sacred place would doubtless have stamped his indignant way down the steps of the spiral stairway. Miss Allyn smiled significantly and rose to follow.

"From all you have told me, Marie-Celeste, your friend might well be Theodore's uncle," said Miss Allyn, as they made their way down the stairs; "he and Harold have an uncle—their mother's brother—a Mr. Harold Selden, who was very much the sort of man you describe."

"Oh, no; I'm sure that couldn't be, Miss Allyn! Because I talked about Harold often, so that he would have known and told me, and he would have told me, too, if his name had not been Belden, you know."

Miss Allyn was not so sure of that; but Albert was mounting the wall of the terrace, to which he had led the way, in rather dangerous fashion, and Miss Allyn hurrying to lift the little fellow to a safer level, the conversation ended abruptly.

"Isn't it beautiful!" she said, as Marie-Celeste joined her, at the same time lending a hand toward a less ambitious bit of climbing with which Albert was fain to content himself.

Marie-Celeste looked away over the tops of the fine old trees that just reach to the terraces from the steep decline of the slopes below, way to the lovely meadows, and then turned to look up at the castle, leaning comfortably against the wall at her back.

"Yes," she said seriously; "I can't find any words for it all"—her face fairly aglow with enthusiasm as she spoke—"everything is so perfectly lovely: the views, and the towers, and the castle itself, and the chapels, and the wonderful Long Walk, so that it seems as though I was just dreaming it all, even to the little room Harold has fitted up so beautifully for me."

"I was sure it would look very prettily when it was finished," said Miss Allyn complacently.

"Why, did you see it?"

"Why, of course I did! Hasn't Harold told you that I selected the curtains, and the valance, and the hangings, and went with him to buy the set for the toilette-table?"

"Oh, yes, of course he did. I don't know what I was thinking of. You used to know Aunt Grace very well, didn't you?"

"Yes; and loved her with all my heart; and I used to spend a great deal of time at the dear Little Castle."

"Do you know much about Ted, Miss Allyn?"

"No, not much, dear—not nowadays; but why do you ask?"

"Oh, because—well, I suppose I ought not to say it, but we're awfully disappointed in Ted. He wasn't ever half so nice as Harold, was he?"

"Oh, yes, he was—just as nice every bit; though we English people think that word nice of yours is so very queer. You have heard, haven't you"—for Miss Allyn was quite willing to change the subject—"of the Englishman who said to a young girl whom he met on the steamer, 'You Americans use *nice* so much, I think it's a nasty word;' and of how she turned and archly said, 'And do you think *nasty* is a nice word?'"

"Dood for her," said Albert, thankful that the conversation had once more grown intelligible.

"But nobody thinks Ted is so nice now, do they?" for Marie-Celeste preferred to keep to the main point.

"No, I'm afraid not; but they would if he would let them, I'm sure, for he had the makings of a splendid fellow in him."

"He used to be Dorothy's best friend, didn't he, Dorothy?"

"Yes, he did, Albert, and I miss him very much. He and Harry are great friends still. Harry's my big brother, Marie-Celeste."

"Why doesn't he tom to see us now, Dorothy?" Albert questioned.

"He's tired of us, perhaps;" and Marie-Celeste, looking up at Miss Allyn's sweet face, wondered how that could be, and then asked very seriously, "Do you know what has changed him, Miss Allyn?"

"Oh, yes, it is easy enough to tell: Oxford and popularity and more money than is good for him, like your friend, Mr. Belden. It takes pretty strong stuff to withstand that combination."

"Well, I know one thing," said Marie-Celeste, "and that is that he isn't at all nice to Harold, and that he comes home very seldom, and is very high and mighty when he does come."

"High and mighty?" queried Albert, with a whimsical little smile. "That must be a funny way to be;" and then Miss Allyn, more impressed than ever with the doubtful propriety of discussing

Mr. Theodore Harris's shortcomings under existing conditions, looked at her watch, and discovering it was time to go home, asked Marie-Celeste to come with them to luncheon.

"No, not to-day, thank you. Mamma will be sending to look me up if I don't hurry home myself. So, good-bye ; good-bye, Albert (with a kiss, which the fast-maturing little fellow was half inclined to resent), and thank you ever so much for the music. Shall you play on Thursday, Miss Allyn?"

"Yes; at this same time, probably."

"Then I shall surely come."

"So s'all I," chimed in a little voice with even firmer determination.

The Little Nuneham Cottage.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOMETHING OF A SCRAPE.

It certainly would seem a very unceremonious proceeding to escort a little party across the great, wide sea, and then follow the fortunes of some of the group, to the utter exclusion of others; so if you please we will just take a look right away at the snug little English cottage to which Chris Hartley hurried the same April morning that he reluctantly took leave of Marie-Celeste at the steamer. The cottage itself is just such a dear little place as you find nowhere else save in England. It is straw-thatched, and thatch and walls alike are mellow with the same soft gray of time and weather. The cottage stands close to the river Thames, on the outskirts of the town of Nuneham. In front is an even hawthorn hedge, that reaches round to the back as well, and encloses a quaint little kitchen garden. Beyond the hedge lies a pasture

meadow, where a flock of sheep are grazing, and encircling the meadow another hedge, less closely clipped, and so making bold to riot here and there in a snowy wealth of hawthorn blossom. A fine Alderney cow, with coat as well cared for as the gray mare's in the stable, is also enjoying the sweet grass of the meadow, and the shining milk, pans ranged beneath the kitchen window bear witness to the generous service she renders. Within the little cottage all is as prim and dainty and neat as without, for the sweet-faced old housewife gives as close heed to the household as the "gudeman" of the house to the flock and the cow and the hedgerows. And this was the home to which Chris had come—to the grandparents who had cared for his orphaned boyhood, and whom he never would have left but for the more certain prospect of well-paid work across the water. And now five years have gone by, and having grown strong and manly, meantime, through his contact with the world, Chris is back on his first home visit, and you may be sure he has not come empty-handed. For the grandfather there is a new wallet with twenty five-pound notes laid between its leather-scented covers, and for the grandmother a labor-saving gift that will never cease to be a marvel—a wonder-working churn that turns Bess's milk to butter in just twelve seconds over a minute. And best of all, Chris himself is just the same thoughtful fellow he left them, and at once settles down to a general supervision of the farm, that leaves the old man free to smoke his brier-wood pipe and read the news from morning till night, if he cares to.

"You are spoiling us, Chris," old Mrs. Hartley would say every time Chris chanced to be within hearing distance, when she brought the golden butter to the surface from the depths of the uncanny churn; and Chris as invariably remarking, "There is no fear of that, granny dear," would look as pleased and surprised as though she had not known she could count upon every word of his answer. And now, you see, you have an idea of the quiet, eventless life Chris led on this home visit until one evening in the latter part of June, when something happened. The lane that ran past the meadow and up to the Hartley cottage branched out from the road that led directly to Nuneham from Oxford, and in fine weather there was much driving out that way, so that toward evening Chris would sometimes take a seat on a low gate-post that marked the entrance to the

lane and watch the people as they passed. There were always more or less college men among them, driving in stylish drags behind spirited horses or in shabby livery turn-outs, according to their station in life, or rather the condition of their pocket-books. And so it chanced that Chris noticed on this particular June evening—as, in fact, no one could help noticing—a very merry party who rolled by in a dog-cart. They were far too merry, in fact, and so noisy that teams in front of them were glad to make way for them, and those they met most desirous to give them a wide berth. It was evident, however, that the young fellow who held the reins knew perfectly well what he was about, and how to handle his horses, so that no danger was actually to be feared in that direction. But what was true at five o'clock in the afternoon was not true a few hours later, and any one who had seen the same party turn their faces toward home, after a rollicking supper and no end of good cheer at Holly-tree Inn, would have prophesied disaster before they reached it. Wondering if they would make their return trip in safety, Chris himself happened to favor them with his last waking thought, ere he fell asleep in his little room under the eaves—a cosey little room that still was bright even at ten o'clock with the glow of the long English twilight. It was this last conscious thought, no doubt, that made him quick to waken two hours later, when a low, penetrating "Helloa there!" broke the stillness. Springing to the window, he was able to discern two or three men supporting some heavy burden and standing in front of the cottage.

"Be as still as possible, please," he said in a loud whisper, mindful of the old people; "I will be down in a moment;" and instantly recalling the party he had seen drive past to Nuneham, there seemed no need to ask who they were or what had happened.

But expeditious as Chris had been, Mrs. Hartley, in gray wrapper and frilled night-cap, was at the door before him.

"Some mishap on the road, Chris," she said, her hand trembling on the bolt.

"Yes, sure, granny; but you'd best let me open the door."

"We've had an ugly accident," said one of the men, as the light from within fell upon them; and then as Chris held the door wide open they pressed into the little sitting-room with their gruesome burden.

"Put him here," Chris directed, clearing the way toward a low box-lounge. "He may be badly hurt," he added, but speaking roughly, as though even his pity could scarce conceal his disgust that men should ever allow themselves to get into such a sorry plight.

"We couldn't tell out there in the dark," answered the only one in the party who seemed to have his wits about him. The other two had at once made their way to the nearest chairs, and with steps so unsteady that Chris wondered how they had been able to lend any aid whatsoever.

"Was he unconscious when you got to him?" he asked, unfastening the clothing at the injured man's throat.

"Yes; he hasn't seemed to know anything from the first. It looks almost as though he might be dying, doesn't it?" and the young fellow stood gazing helplessly down at his friend, the very picture of despair.

"No; I don't think it's as bad as that. You've been run away with, of course," for the whole party were covered with mud and dirt from head to foot, and there was evidence of two or three ugly cuts and bruises among them.

"Yes," said the other; "it was a clean upset, and Ted here was driving, so that the reins got tangled about him, and he was dragged full a hundred yards or so. If the horses hadn't succeeded in breaking away from the trap the moment that it went over, I should have been killed surely, for it fell on top of me in some way, and as it was, I could scarcely get from under it;" and the young fellow's blanched face grew a shade whiter as he realized how narrow had been his escape. Meanwhile, with a little maid to hold the light, Mrs. Hartley searched through a tiny corner cupboard for a flask that had been carefully stowed away behind some larger bottles, and then poured a generous share of its contents into a glass held in readiness in the little maid's other hand.

"You give it to him, Chris," she said. not daring to trust her shaking hands; and raising the poor fellow's head, Chris pressed the glass to his lips. As he swallowed the brandy his eyes opened for a moment, but there was no sign of returning consciousness.

"Now, the next thing," said Chris, "is to get a doctor, and I'll have to drive into Nuneham for him. Do you suppose one of your

friends there can help me harness?" but one of the friends was already asleep, and the attitude of the other showed that no assistance was to be looked for in that direction.

"What's to be done with them, mother?" asked old Mr. Hartley, who, enveloped in an old-fashioned, large-patterned dressing-gown, had arrived rather tardily upon the scene, and had stood for several seconds glaring down at the two disgraceful specimens.

"Martha is making the guest-room ready," replied Mrs. Hartley, showing she was not too old to think ahead in an emergency, and yet drawing a deep sigh with the next breath at the thought of that best spare-room being put to so ignoble a service. Chris had himself been thinking it was rather a serious question to know how to dispose of them, and was glad to have Mrs. Hartley herself suggest the way.

"Thank goodness you've got your senses left," said Chris, turning to the young fellow, who really seemed anxious to render every possible service; "and if we get them into the room there you can put them to bed, can't you? while I go for the doctor;" and in a voice scarcely audible from mortification the young fellow replied that he thought he could; so after some difficulty in making them understand the move impending, the two men were successfully landed in the best spare-room.

"You'll need this," said Chris, pushing a clothes-brush and a whisk-broom on to a chair, "and you'll find plenty of water on the stand yonder;" then he came out and closed the door, to the infinite and audible relief of the serving-maid Martha. Indeed but for the all too serious side of the whole affair, it would have been amusing to watch that little maid. So great was her horror, either by education or intuition, of the state of inebriety, that the moment she surmised that at least two of these midnight visitors were bordering on the same, she could conceive of no means strong enough to express her disapproval. Every time she had come anywhere near them she had gathered her skirts about her as though in fear of actual contamination, and with her pretty head high in the air, as she moved away, would look askance over her shoulder as though not at all sure even then of being at a safe distance. Indeed, Chris himself could not quite suppress a smile as he saw the relief expressed in every line of Martha's face at the click of the closing door. Mean-

while, Mrs. Hartley had taken her station at the side of the senseless fellow on the couch and, her old face tense with anxiety, was rubbing the ice-cold hands.

"And now the doctor, Chris, as quick as ever you can," she said gravely; and Chris, realizing the need for haste, was out of the house before she had finished the sentence, and the gray mare made better time that night into Nuneham than for many a year before.

"NOW, DON'T YOU GET FLUSTERED, MOTHER."

"How did it happen, mother?" asked Mr. Hartley, after a long interval in which no word had been spoken.

"I have not heard yet, Peter; but I don't believe we had better talk. He seems to be growing uneasy. Oh, I do wish Chris would come!"

"Now, don't you get flustered, mother—*don't* get flustered," bending over the freshly lighted fire and spreading his hands to its blaze.

"You've done splendid, so far. T'ain't likely a strong-looking fellow like that's going to go under easy."

"There's no tellin', Peter—there's no tellin'; strength don't count for much if one's head is hurt past mending."

Just then the door of the spare-room opened, and the young man, closing it gently after him, was just in time to hear the last words.

"Oh, you don't think it's so bad as that?" he said in an almost agonized whisper, as he came to the side of the couch.

"There's no tellin'," repeated Mrs. Hartley very seriously; and then as she looked up and saw, now that dust and grime and the stains from two or three slight cuts were removed, that the face above was a good face, after all, her heart went out in sympathy, and she added gently, "but we'll hope for the best, dear—we'll hope for the best. Chris must come with the doctor very soon now;" whereupon, for some reason or other, the poor fellow broke down utterly, and sinking into the nearest chair, buried his face in his hands.

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness," said Mr. Hartley solemnly, turning over the back-log of the fire and shaking his head gravely from side to side.

"I doubt if that's what the young man's needing just now, father," remarked Mrs. Hartley dryly; and although evidently resenting the implied reproof, Mr. Hartley wisely determined to keep his own counsel; and for many minutes thereafter the heavy breathing of the men asleep in the next room and the crackling of the wood upon the andirons were the only sounds that broke the silence. Now and then Martha came in with a cloth freshly wet with cold water from the well—for Mrs. Hartley suspected some form of injury to the brain—and then slipped as noiselessly out again. At last the sound of wheels in the lane without, and then for the first time the young man raised his face from his hands and hurried to meet the doctor. As they came in together he was apparently explaining just how the accident had happened, and the doctor's face looked grave with apprehension.

"What is your friend's name?" he asked as he reached the lounge.

"Theodore—Morris," after a second's hesitation. Convinced that he had not given an honest answer, the doctor looked keenly into his face a moment; "and yours?" he added.

"Allyn, sir," returning his glance as keenly, and then not

another word was spoken, while the doctor carefully looked his patient over. Close beside him stood Mrs. Hartley, trying to read his conclusions in advance, and Martha stood just beyond, eager to render the slightest service, while Chris, with steady hand, held the light now high, now low, according to the signal from the doctor.

"It is a case, doubtless, of concussion of the brain," he said at last; "just how serious I cannot at once determine, but, first thing, Mrs. Hartley, we must get this poor fellow to bed."

"It will have to be in my little spare-bedroom, then, doctor; my best room is already appropriated. Bring clean linen from the chest quickly, Martha;" and hurrying into the little room, mistress and maid soon had everything in readiness for the unexpected guest.

Tenderly and carefully they lifted and then carried the unconscious man, and as they laid him gently down in the cool bed he drew a long, deep breath, as though in some vague way appreciative of a grateful change. Then one thing and another was done at the doctor's bidding, until at last there was need of nothing further, and old Mrs. Hartley, first sending the little maid to her room above stairs, crept off to bed, more utterly worn out and exhausted than for many a weary day. Chris threw himself on the living-room lounge, and was soon fast asleep, and the doctor, sitting near the bed, and where he could closely watch his patient, motioned young Allyn to draw a chair close to his side.

"Now, my friend," he said, "I want you to tell me the real name of your friend here, for I am convinced you have not done so, and then I want you to give me a true account of this whole deplorable affair. It will not disturb him in the least if you keep your voice carefully lowered."

Young Allyn did not answer for several seconds. He sat leaning way forward in the chair he had drawn to the doctor's side, his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his tightly clasped hands. He was evidently thinking hard, and it was easy to read the play of intense emotion on his face.

"Dr. Arnold," he said finally, as though he had slowly thought his way out to a decision, "my friend's name is Theodore Harris, but it is the first time he has ever been mixed up in anything of this sort, and should he get over it, I wanted to spare him the mortification

of its being known if I could. Do you think he is so much hurt that his family—that his brother—ought to be sent for?"

"We can't tell about that to-night. The opiate I have given him will account for this heavy sleep. Everything will depend upon how he comes out of it in the morning."

"And if it does prove not as serious as you feared"—trying to steady a voice that trembled in spite of him—"what then?"

"Two or three weeks of careful nursing."

"Will they let us stay here, do you think?"

"They'll have to for a while. It would be out of the question to move him."

"Oh, but it's a crying shame, this whole business!" and young Allyn, leaning back in his chair, looked the picture of anger and chagrin.

"You seem like a self-respecting fellow," said the doctor, scrutinizing him closely; "perhaps it is your first time, too."

"Yes, it does happen to be;" but, as though there was little or no credit in that, "There is some excuse for Ted—he is younger than I and easily led; but for me there is none whatever."

"You ought to know," said the doctor dryly. "And your friends in the room yonder, are they at all responsible for this first time of yours and young Harris's? Come, Mr. Allyn, don't wait for me to question you. If you are as anxious as you claim to hush this affair up, you must make a clean breast of things with me. I can, of course, be of service to you in the matter."

"Really, Dr. Arnold, there is not much to tell beyond what you already know. We belong up at Oxford, of course, and Harris here has plenty of money and plenty of friends—not always the best, I am sorry to say. The two men in the other room there are known around town as jolly good fellows; neither of them are college men, but they have dogged Harris's footsteps ever since they came to know him, a year or so ago, and have done all in their power to drag him down. To-night they have come pretty near making an end of both of us. I've warned Harris against them time and again, but when they planned this afternoon to drive up to Nuneham in Harris's trap for a champagne supper, I took to the scheme, and I hadn't the moral courage to decline myself or to persuade Ted to do so."

"How do you and Harris happen to be in Oxford anyway, now that the term is over?" queried the doctor.

"We thought we were having too good a time to go home."

"And you have found out your mistake?"

"Yes, sir;" and the pain and mortification on young Allyn's face assured the doctor that the lesson of the hour was being well taken to heart.

"Where does Harris live, Mr. Allyn?"

"We both live at Windsor, sir; Harris has a younger brother, but no father or mother; and if Ted only gets over this, he need never know anything about it. We were going to start on a long driving trip to-morrow; so we're not expected up at Windsor, and Ted's the kind of fellow, Dr. Arnold, that if he found out that people knew about a scrape like this, I believe he'd grow perfectly reckless, and there wouldn't be any such thing as saving him;" and there was such suppressed earnestness in the young fellow's voice that no one could have doubted his sincerity for a moment.

"But the accident to-night, just how did that happen?"

"I think—yes, I'm sure—Ted had taken a little too much; but we would have gotten home all right but for"—nodding in the direction of Mrs. Hartley's best room. "There was no doing anything with them, and finally one of them tried to get the reins from Ted, and then the horses, that need to be carefully handled at best, broke into a clean run. Where they are now, land knows!"

"Mr. Allyn," said Dr. Arnold, after several minutes of suspense, "if Mr. Harris's condition proves not to be serious I will do what I can to shield you both."

"Oh, don't bother about me," as though he honestly felt he was not worth it.

"Yes, I will bother about you, for since you told me you live at Windsor, I begin to suspect you are Canon Allyn's son."

"The more's the pity, Dr. Arnold."

"The more's the reason for my doing all in my power to give both of you another chance But we won't talk any more. Now wrap yourself in that comforter Chris has laid in the chair for you, and try and get a little sleep."

All this while poor wayward Ted, whose name you must have guessed almost from the first, was lying wholly oblivious to everything about him, muttering now and then a few delirious, incoherent words, and yet by degrees subsiding into a gentle, regular breathing that the professional ear was quick to detect, and that was full of good omen for the waking in the morning.

CHAPTER IX.

GETTING OUT OF IT.

The Little Maid, Martha.

A whole chapter just with grown-up people, and not a very pleasant chapter at that! For one, I had a deal rather be with certain little friends of ours up at Windsor, but we cannot go yet a while; and having seen the little Berkshire cottage turned inside out, as it were, there is nothing for it but to wait and see it put to rights again. Besides, when all is said, Ted is Harold's brother, so that, scapegrace or no, we ought not to deliberately turn our backs, at a time too when matters have reached a crisis, and one wonders how they will go with him. But fortunately they went far better than even the doctor dared to hope, and with the morning came consciousness, and all the dazed bewilderment as well, of one who finds himself in wholly new surroundings, with no idea whatever of how he came there. Everybody was early astir in the cottage, and quite ready to forget

the anxiety and excitement of the night in the doctor's glad assurance that the young gentleman certainly was not "done for." As for the other young gentlemen, who had been allowed to sleep off their indisposition in Mrs. Hartley's best room, it was agreed between the doctor and Harry Allyn that the sooner they took their departure the better. Breakfast for two was therefore first made ready, and the young fellows, who had gotten up and dressed—somewhat against their will, it must be confessed—finally took their seats at the places set for them. Martha, who had no notion of waiting on such sorry customers, was careful to place everything within arm's reach on the table and then to disappear, and the meal was eaten in silence, with no one in the room save the doctor, who kept pacing up and down in a manner that was intended to expedite their departure. The two fellows seemed to realize that they were considered responsible for the whole unhappy affair; indeed, the doctor had told them so pretty plainly, and they were themselves rather anxious to be off and away from such an accusing and uncomfortable atmosphere.

"I suppose the old lady ought to be paid something," said one of them, pushing back his chair.

"You can't very well pay for such trouble as you have given," said the doctor curtly. "It might not be out of the way though for you to thank Mrs. Hartley for the night's shelter and your breakfast;" but Mrs. Hartley was nowhere to be found—indeed, to all appearances the cottage was quite deserted; and, accompanied by the doctor, they made their way out of the house and down the lane. Not a word was spoken until they reached the road, and then Dr. Arnold, stopping squarely in front of them, said: "I have one thing to say to you two fellows, and that is this—that you are not to tell a living soul of last night's adventure. You have deliberately set about to entrap and disgrace two men vastly your superiors, but so far as in me lies I am going to do all in my power to free them from your clutches and save them from the scandal of this thing, and if I hear of its becoming known through you I'll—"

"There isn't any use in your threatening us like that," interrupted the older, his heavy face glowing angrily. "We'll tell as much or as little as we like."

"Hadden," said the doctor sternly, "I know more of your his-

tory than you think. You were mixed up in a more shameful scrape than this not long ago up at Nuneham, and if you and your friend here do not keep close-mouthed about this whole affair, I will tell some of the Oxford officials just what I know as sure as my name is Joseph Arnold. Does that alter the case any?"

"Yes, rather," drawled the other with cool effrontery; and knowing he had scotched his man, the doctor turned on his heel, and the two men started off in the direction of the Nuneham station, neither sadder nor wiser, it is to be feared, for the lesson of the night's experience. No sooner had these two unwelcome guests vanished from the precincts of the little cottage than Mrs. Hartley reappeared from some mysterious corner and Martha from another, and preparations were at once put forward for the most inviting breakfast the little house could command. Notwithstanding the wretched company in which they had been found, Mrs. Hartley was confident that her remaining guests were surely "gentlemen;" and as, in addition to this, no one through all the countryside was as widely loved and honored as Dr. Arnold, was not there occasion for elaborate preparation? All this, of course, involved considerable delay, which Chris and the doctor would have gladly foregone; but it gave Harry Allyn a sorely coveted opportunity for an early talk with Mrs. Hartley.

"Is your mistress in the kitchen?" he asked of Martha, who was arranging some sweet peas in a celery glass as a decoration for the table.

"Yes, Mr. Allyn," very respectfully, for in the mind of the little maid, as in the mind of all the others, there was the conviction that this Mr. Allyn had very little in common with the company in which he had been found. "Shall I call her for you?" she added.

"Would there be any harm in my going in there?" as though he were entreating a favor of a queen.

"Not a bit in the world, Mr. Allyn;" and thus reassured Harry at once made his way into the sunny and spotless little kitchen.

Mrs. Hartley was so preoccupied in giving the final stirring to a golden mixture in a great yellow bowl that she did not hear Harry as he came toward her, and so gave a little start when he spoke.

"Martha told me it would be all right," he explained.

The Sunny and Spotless Little Kitchen.

"Oh, yes, certainly," quickly recovering herself; "you'll excuse me if I go right on."

"You never can know, Mrs. Hartley," he said, taking his stand at the end of the table, and leaning a little wearily against the wall at his back, "how mortified I am about what has happened, and how sorry that we should have put you to all this trouble; and the bother of it is, Mrs. Hartley, it isn't over yet. The doctor says Ted will not be able to get about for two or three weeks at least. Do you think"—a world of entreaty in his voice—"you can ever manage to keep him as long as that?"

"Yes—I think—I can," but very slowly and thoughtfully, as though half afraid of promising more than she could perform.

"It will be a great care for you, Mrs. Hartley."

"There's no denying that, Mr. Allyn; I doubt if I could get along with it but for Chris being home this summer. Has Mr. Harris any folks?"

"No father or mother, only a younger brother, and I want him never to know about last night's business if I can help it."

"I am glad you're ashamed of it, Mr. Allyn. It's the best sort of a sign, sir."

"Ashamed!" sighed Harry; and Mrs. Hartley, looking at the white face, with the great dark circles under eyes that during the night had known no wink of sleep, felt sorry in her heart of hearts that she had uttered a single word that would seem to imply reproof.

"Of course you will let us pay you liberally for the expense we shall put you to, but I cannot bear to speak of money in connection with something that can never be paid for at all, in any true sense."

"The board will not come amiss;" and then, straightening herself up a little, "though we have no need of being beholden to anybody."

"That is very evident, Mrs. Hartley, and makes it all the kinder for you to take us in. Does Mr. Hartley know," he asked after a pause, "that Ted ought not to be moved? Will he be willing that he should stay?" for Harry stood in considerable awe of the master of the house, who, it could not be denied, was conducting himself through this whole affair with no little austerity of deportment.

"Never you fear," answered Mrs. Hartley, with a significant

smile that was very becoming to the dear old face ; "I think I can manage Mr. Hartley."

By this time the contents of the yellow bowl were not only in the oven, but sending out of it the most savory of odors ; and a few moments later the little household sat down to such a delicious breakfast as the doctor and Harry repeatedly declared they never before had eaten ; so that Mrs. Hartley sat proud and radiant behind the plated coffee-urn, and Martha passed the Sally Lunn with indescribable complacency. Indeed, there was reaction on every side from the night of anxiety and foreboding. Even Mr. Hartley could not hold out against the general atmosphere of good cheer, and falling into a friendly discussion with the doctor, forgot to wear for a while a certain uncompromising look, intended to impress Mr. Allyn with the simple enormity of his transgression. But happily Harry Allyn needed no such impressing. It was impossible for any one to regard this adventure in any graver light than he, and yet, strange to say, he was happier than he had been for many a day. It had taken a pretty terrible experience to bring him to his senses; perhaps nothing less terrible would have answered ; but he saw plainly enough now what a down-hill road he and Ted had been travelling, and with the realization came the decision to "right about face," and with the decision an old-time sensation began to assert itself, and there lay the secret of the happiness. It is an intangible, uplifting something, that sensation that men call self-respect, and when they lose it they seem to lose the capacity for any happiness worth the name, and when they cannot be persuaded to make an effort to get it back again, there seems to be little enough that they're good for. Harry, however, with grateful heart found himself ready for the effort, and, fully aware at last of how much he had been risking, was resolved that regain his self-respect he would, let it cost what it might. He only hoped, from the bottom of his heart, that Ted would come to see matters in the same honest light, and be ready to make the same effort.

Soon after breakfast the doctor took his departure, and then Harry had a quiet little talk with Ted.

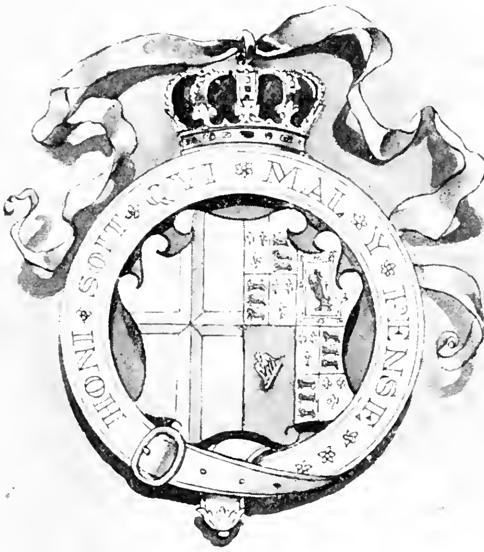
"You're not to speak a word, old man," he said, as he stood beside the bed ; "the doctor says so ; but there are one or two things he is willing I should say to you. In the first place, Ted, we've

had a very narrow escape, and we've no one to blame but ourselves. And the truth is, Ted, we've been a pair of incomparable fools, you and I, and if we don't take this lesson to heart, there's no hope for either of us. In the second place, we can't be too thankful we've fallen into the hands of these good people here. You couldn't be better cared for anywhere, and the best of it is, no one need know where you are, and they need never hear of this disgraceful adventure up at Windsor. Indeed, for the sake of shielding you, I have told the Hartleys that your name is Morris, and it rests with you to tell them your right name some day if you choose; but the doctor knows the truth about things—he had to know." A look of inexpressible relief had been stealing over Ted's face, and he started to make some reply, but Harry shook his head in most determined fashion, and was off before the words could get themselves into line. Ted found, too, that his brain responded very slowly to any sort of demand upon it, and was willing enough to be spared the exertion.

A little later Harry set off for Oxford, to bring certain necessities for Ted and himself down to Nuneham, for he meant to take up his abode at the inn, so that he would be near the Hartleys, and be able to render every possible service to them and to Ted. Before he started, however, he underwent quite an ordeal. Feeling he had no right to assume that Ted would stay until he had that permission from Mr. Hartley personally, he sought him out, where he was at work in a corner of the meadow, and the result, as he had anticipated, was a very plain talk—so unsparingly and pointedly plain that Harry winced a good deal in the process, and once or twice came near resenting a mode of procedure that seemed very much akin to knocking a fellow when he's down. But, after all, what did he not deserve, and as Mr. Hartley said, among other things, that he was not the man to turn a body out of his house, and that Mr. Morris was welcome to stay, he felt he ought to be able to bear with the rest, no matter how humiliating and, in a measure, unmerited. Mrs. Hartley, standing in the kitchen door, imagined from Harry's flushed face, as well as from life-long acquaintance with Mr. Hartley's temperament, that he had been pretty severely dealt with, and so said as he passed, "My gude man's a gude man, though, Mr. Allyn;" and Harry, amused at the loyalty to her husband and kindliness to him combined in the speech, had the grace to answer, "Indeed I believe you, Mrs. Hartley."

CHAPTER X.

A KNIGHT-OF-THE-GARTER PARTY.



"And now," as Albert would say, here we are, for a comfort, back at Windsor, and just in time, too, for there is something special on hand. And somebody else is just in time as well—somebody who was not expected, and who, I fear, is not wanted. Marie-Celeste, seated in the library window, and busy in transferring some great luscious strawberries from a plate on the seat beside her to a basket in her lap, is the first to discover a familiar little figure turning in at the gate. "Bother!" she exclaims, her pretty face all of a scowl.

"What's the matter?" asks Harold, who is on his knees on the floor, trying to make some very stiff wrapping-paper accommodate itself to the edges and corners of a generous box of luncheon, and is quite too preoccupied to look up.

"Bother enough! Who do you suppose is coming up the path as large as life? Albert, if you please, and he's all alone, and that means that Margaret has left him at the corner, and that he has come *to spend the day.*"

"Bother I say too," exclaims Harold; "we can't send him home, and with Aunt Lou up in London, there's no one to leave him with here, and of course we can't take him. Oh, why did he happen to come to-day!"

But the truth of it was that Albert had not happened to come at all. His visit had been deliberately planned for precisely this hour. Could any one suppose for a moment, that he could hear all the beautiful plans for a Knight-of-the-Garter day discussed in his presence, and never make an effort to have a hand in it? To be sure, the children had tried to keep the date a close-guarded secret, but Albert had got wind of it, all the same; and here he was, bright and fresh as the day itself, marching up the path, his little blue sacque folded carefully over one arm, and an inviting luncheon hamper swinging from the other. Fortunately, considering the ungracious mood of the two children in the library, his first encounter chanced to be with Donald, who, arrayed in the white and blue of his summer sailor-suit, was bending over the pansy bed, gathering a few "beauties" into a bunch for Marie-Celeste; and so absorbed in his task was he that he did not hear Albert's tread upon the walk. "Why, where did you come from?" he said, looking up surprised.

"Of course you knowed where I tum from, Donald," Albert replied in his literal fashion; "but where do you s'pose I'm doin'?"

"To London Town," laughed Donald, to whom it had not occurred to regard Albert's arrival as likely to interfere with the day's programme.

"No; I'm doin' on your Knight-of-de-Garter party."

"Well, that's cool," whispered Marie-Celeste, concealed by the curtain, and yet near enough to hear all that was said through the open window.

"Who asked you?" queried Donald.

"Dat's de only trouble, Donald; dey didn't ask me," his little face growing sorely worried as he spoke; "but I guess it was a mistake, don't you?"

"I shouldn't wonder," for the little fellow's aggrieved look was really piteous to see; "but how did you get permission to go, Albert?"

"Oh, I jus' told mamma you were all doin', and I jus' begged and begged till she said I could do too; and, Donald, I didn't

zackly tell her I wasn't invited, 'cause I knowed it must be a mistake."

"Bless his heart!" whispered Harold, who was also listening by this time under screen of the curtain.

"The cunning thing!" said Marie-Celeste; and so it was easy to see that two hard hearts were slowly but surely relenting.

"Perhaps dey tought I was too little, but I'm not, Donald, really; I can walk all day an' carry my own coat an' basket. Besides, I don't believe Harold will ever have anudder Knight-of-de-Garter day, do you?"

"No; now's your chance, I guess," said Donald kindly, slipping a great purple and yellow pansy into one of the buttonholes of Albert's little frilled shirt as he spoke.

"Where are de children, anyway?" asked Albert, wonderfully reassured by Donald's courteous reception; "won't you fin' dem for me, please, Donald, and tell dem I won't be a bedder, nor ask queshuns, and I'll jus' eat my own lunch and—"

At this the hard hearts relented altogether, and Harold rushed out and gave Albert a toss in the air that was very threatening to the eggs in the luncheon basket; and as soon as he was on *terra firma* again Marie-Celeste gave him a good hard hug, and both begged his pardon half a dozen times over for ever assuming for a moment that he was "too little," and intimated that they felt very small indeed themselves to think they had been so unfeeling as to plan not to include him in the expedition. And so matters were beautifully adjusted, and the Knight-of-the-Garter party set out with Harold Harris, student and devoted admirer of the grand old knighthood, filling the important *rôle* of interpreter and guide. And where did they go first but to the castle, preferring to save until the last, because the best, the choir of St. George's, where the banners of the knights are hung and where the knights are duly installed. On the way Harold held forth, Marie-Celeste and Donald walking one on either side of him, and Albert, determined not to miss a word, trotting along at a sort of sidewise angle just in front, and yet careful to keep well out of the way, too, for fear of the remotest chance of "boddering."

"Now to begin," said Harold, "you know a knight at first was just a young man who had proved himself strong enough and brave

enough to wear armor and be a soldier, and after that there came to be orders of knights. You remember I told you the other day what an order was, and how the Order of the Knights of the Garter happened to be started." Yes, they remembered that, but no one remembered that poor little Albert had not been present on that occasion, and so knew nothing whatever about it; but Albert, so very thankful in his heart that he had been allowed to come at all, did not dare to make mention of the same.

"Where are we going first?" asked Marie-Celeste, who, unlike poor Albert, felt herself at perfect liberty to ask every question that occurred to her.

"To the Banqueting Hall, because it has more to do with the knights than any other room in the castle."

"Oh, yes, that's where they have the Garter and the Cross of St. George woven even into the pattern of the carpet! And what about St. George—who was he?"

"Nobody knows, Marie-Celeste. He is supposed to have been a soldier in the Roman Army, and to have killed a monstrous dragon that no one else could overcome, and at last, after being dreadfully tortured for his faith in Christianity, he is also supposed to have died a martyr's death."

"'Is supposed' isn't very satisfactory, Harold."

"No, it isn't; but it can't be helped. Indeed, they knew so little about him way back even in the fifth century, that one of the popes, when he made up a list of the saints, said 'he was one of those whose names are justly reverenced among men, but whose actions are known only to God.'"

"You talk just like a book," remarked Donald, to whom Harold, with his knowledge of men and things, was a never-ceasing wonder.

"And good reason why, for I got it out of a book. Don't you remember I told you I'd studied up about it?"

"Oh, yes," as though thankful there was some sort of explanation for such uncanny erudition.

"But how does this St. George come to be mixed up with the Knights of the Garter?" asked Marie-Celeste.

"This is the way of it. You know what the Crusades were?" Marie-Celeste nodded yes, but intimating, with a significant glance in the direction of Donald and Albert, that probably they did not, Harold took the hint, and began over again.

"Well, ever so many years ago great armies of men went out from England to try and get possession of the Holy Land, and each time an army went out they called it a crusade, and on the first one the leader of the army prayed to St. George to help him, and as he was very successful, that made St. George's name very famous. Then afterward Richard Cœur de Lion, when he went to the Holy Land, put himself under St. George's protection, and from that time he became the patron saint of England, and that means, Albert" (for Albert looked the question he longed to ask), "that England regarded him as the saint who would help her most and be her special guardian."

"Yes," said Marie-Celeste, since Harold apparently considered he had come to a natural pause in the narrative; "but you haven't told us what St. George and the Knights of the Garter have to do with each other."

"So I haven't; well, all the connection that I know of is, that every year a feast in honor of St. George was ordered to be kept as a holiday, and that the Order of the Garter was founded on that day—St. George's Day—and that so the Cross of St. George and

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the Garter of the Knights came to be a sort of double emblem for the order."

By this time the children had reached the Norman Gate, and crossing the quadrangle, Harold led the way into the State apartments, and being well known to most of the guides of the castle, was allowed, with his little party, to pass on unattended, and to make his way straight to the Grand Banqueting Hall. From the moment they entered the castle, Donald was of no use as far as receiving instruction was concerned. This being his first visit to any castle whatever, he was far too much astonished and overawed by everything he saw to be able to think of applying his mind to mere historical detail.

Let Harold hold forth as eloquently as he chose about this old knight or that old armor, for him there might never be another visit to this wonderful place, and he was going to see it all in his own way. Harold and Marie-Celeste were at first very much disgusted at his utter disregard of the object of their visit, but disgust gradually gave way to amusement, and the tale of the chivalrous old knights was even suspended for awhile, that they might watch the little fellow's peculiar methods of letting nothing escape him. Gazing in rapt wonder, he moved from one point to another, wholly absorbed in his surroundings, and oblivious to the presence of any one beside himself. Now he was standing in admiration before the great oak chair of State beneath the organ gallery, and now nothing loath he mounts the steps that lead to it and runs a finger along the curves of its elaborate carving, and then, with a most reverent air, touches the embroidered cross and garter with which it is decorated. All this is making very free with State belongings, and one of the guides, in charge of a small party of visitors, starts toward him in a decidedly menacing manner; but Harold intercepts him and explains, and the guide, himself much amused, decides to leave unmolested this gallant little tar of Her Majesty's. And now Donald seeks out a corner of the room and deliberately stretches himself on the floor, clasping his hands under the back of his head. This is done the better to take in the elaborate ceiling, decorated as it is with the armorial bearings of the knights of five centuries, and now, with arm upraised and extended finger, he is entering into some mathematical calculation of his own in connection with the

banners that hang just beneath the ceiling. And now what does the boy do but suddenly exchange his vertical position for one quite the reverse, and turn all his attention to the carpet; for did not Harold say it was woven in some special way on purpose? Yes, sure enough! here is the Cross of St. George in the centre of each little panel, and here—crossing to the edge of the room—the beautiful circle of the garter worked into the design of the border. Oh, but it is a wonderful place! and there are probably other rooms just as wonderful; so a little closer look at the brass shields and the helmets, and the portraits of the sovereigns ranged along one side, and then, wholly unsuspicious of any disapproval, he walks over to the children and remarks "that now he would like to see the other rooms, please." His delight in it all, and naïve unconsciousness of anything unusual in his behavior, are altogether irresistible, and Harold and Marie-Celeste, after a whispered conference, decide to suspend Knight-of-the-Garter reminiscences for the time being, and make the tour of the castle with him. Albert, who has found much of Harold's narration quite beyond him, but has "never let on" for one moment, hails the announcement with great inward rejoicing, and the little quartette make their way to the Guard Chamber, as the place next in interest. In every room Donald brings his own peculiar methods of investigation to bear, not in the least minding a good deal of mirthful laughter at his expense on the part of Harold and Marie-Celeste; and Albert, feeling privileged to join in the general merriment, though evidently half the time without in anywise appreciating the situation, only helps on the jollity of things. Then when at noon, by special permission of a very lenient guardsman, the children establish themselves for luncheon on a terrace beneath the shade of the Round Tower, Marie-Celeste and Albert and Harold agree that they had never had such fun—never!

"Well, you may call it fun," says Donald, quite willing that they should, "but I call it something better than that. The grandest time I ever had, that's what I call it."

But all the sights were not seen yet, and for the members of the little party who still adhered to the Knight-of-the-Garter research the best was yet to come, in St. George's Chapel. Entering at the door at the south front and crossing to the centre, the children passed directly into the choir, which is really a chapel in itself, and

to them of special interest, because the very place where the ceremony of installing the knights is performed. Harold led the way to the farther end, and they took their seats on the steps of the chancel. Behind them the light fell softly through the stained glass of the window over the altar; above them waved the knights' silken banners, and just below each banner hung the sword, mantle, and helmet of the knight whose crest it bore, mounted against a background of elaborate carving. It was of course the spot of spots for any one who, like Harold, had been initiated into all the mysteries by being present at an installation, and he did justice to the occasion. By this time even Donald, whose powers of endurance were not yet of the strongest, was content to sit by, an apparent listener; but much that Harold had to tell having little interest for him, he resorted to that little trick to which some discriminating ears readily lend themselves, of listening to what appealed to him and letting the rest go. With Albert matters were reversed. He had completely lapsed from his humble estate of the morning, when he felt in duty bound to at least pretend to be an attentive listener, and when they reached the chapel, already such a familiar place to him, he no longer even tried to keep up appearances. A great big collie belonging to the verger, Mr. Brown, sometimes made so bold as to steal in "unbeknownst" and curl up on the cool marble in a dark corner of the choir, and Albert, who knew the corner well, at once slipped away in the hope of finding him.

Yes, there he was in the old place—dear, audacious old Timothy, stretched close along the wall in the deep shadow of the Queen's own stall, as though well aware that it was the one spot where he might reasonably expect to escape observation.

"Hush, Timothy," said Albert, approaching him on tiptoe; but the warning was quite unnecessary. Nothing was farther from Timothy's thoughts than to make any disturbance whatever—why should he? Were they not the best of friends, he and that blessed little Albert? so he never raised his head from where it rested upon his outstretched paws, only looked up with that gaze of implicit confidence peculiar to the kind eyes of the Laverick setter, and which made Albert lose not a second in spreading his little coat out beneath him, throwing his two arms around Timothy's neck, and pillowing his head on his beautiful silky coat. Now, it is not

granted to Laverick setters to purr in pussy's demonstrative fashion, but they have a subdued little grateful purr of their own, distinctly audible to an ear placed as close as Albert's chanced to be, and Timothy at once indulged in the same. Outwardly, however, not a sound was to be heard. Only the experienced eye and ear

"HUSH, TIMOTHY."

could appreciate how intense were the depths of his canine satisfaction.

"We've had an awful good time this morning, Timothy," Albert confided in a whisper; "we've been all over the castle, learning 'bout Knights of the Garter. Harold knows an awful lot about 'em, but I'm tired of 'em, an' I don't care to hear any more. I'd rather stay here wid you, Timothy. There, please move that paw a little—that's it; now, Timothy, keep very still! Please, please don't snap for that fly, or they'll hear you; still! still, Timothy, while I stroke your head like this, till, till—"and the subject was dropped indefinitely.

"Now, if there are any questions you would like to ask?" said Harold, for, dear as was the subject to him, he really could think of nothing more to tell.

"Indeed there are," said Marie-Celeste, who had conscientiously

tried not to interrupt, though there were a dozen lines along which she desired information.

"First, will you tell me if they ever let the ladies have any part in all the feasting and good times you have told about?"

"Oh, yes! There was a time when the wives of the knights were called Ladies of the Society of the Garter, and they used to be allowed to wear violet-colored or white cloth robes 'furred,' as one old book says, and embroidered with garters. The number of garters depended on their rank. But in the reign of King Henry the Eighth, for some reason that branch of the order was given up. By the way, Henry the Eighth is buried just yonder," pointing a few feet away. "There's a royal vault right under those tiles, and Charles the First, whose head Cromwell cut off, is buried there too."

"You don't mean it!" for Donald was all attention the second there was anything so thrilling as cut-off heads in the wind.

"Now, there's another thing I'd like to know," said Marie-Celeste, "and that is, how long do they let a knight's banner hang there? because when a new knight is made his banner has to be put up somewhere."

"Yes, of course; and so when a man dies they take away everything except the brass plate at the back of the stall that belonged to him, and that has his name on and all his titles."

"I like the American way of not having any titles," said Donald; "seems to me they're an awful fuss and bother. Of course *you* don't believe in them, Marie-Celeste."

"Well, I don't exactly care for the titles and such a ridiculous lot of letters coming after one's name, but I should think it would be nice to know who your greatest grandfather was, and that he was a gentleman into the bargain, for that's what some of the titles mean, you know. They've come down from father to son for centuries."

"I'd be satisfied just to know who my own father was," said Donald with a sigh, and Marie-Celeste wished she had not said anything to bring that sad fact to mind.

"Did you say, Harold," she asked, by way of quickly changing the subject, "that Edward the Third, who founded the Order of the Garter, built this chapel?"

"No; but I said that the chapel that he did build and dedicated

to St. George stood right where this choir is now. This chapel was commenced a hundred years later, and the old one torn down."

"Well," said Donald, getting onto his feet, "one way and another I've learned a great deal to-day—just about as much as I can hold, seems to me."

"Yes, I'm tired, too," Marie-Celeste admitted; "but we're ever so much obliged, it's been very interesting; but look here, Donald, before we go, I want to show you something," and she led the way to a stall of one of the knights.

"See," said Marie-Celeste, pushing the seat of the stall from beneath, so that it folded up against the back, thereby bringing to view a queer little wooden projection about six inches wide.

"Now, Donald, will you believe that is all the seat the old knights used to have in these stalls? They've preserved them in this way just as a curiosity. Things are more comfortable for them now, you see, but in the old times they were afraid the knights would go to sleep during the service, and so made them uncomfortable to keep them awake."

"Not a bad idea," mused Donald, as though he had more than once in his life experienced a similar temptation.

"Well, I think it was, then," said Marie-Celeste decidedly. "This church is enough in itself to keep a man awake if he has any thoughts to think, no matter how dull the sermon might happen to be; but then I know"—with an insinuating shrug of the shoulders—"some men, and boys too I suppose, never do have any thoughts to think. If they're not eating or being amused, sleep's the only thing for them."

There was a whimsical little look in Donald's face, which an American street gamin would have interpreted as "what are you giving us?" He did not say anything, however; and just then Harold, who had strolled on by himself, came toward them, his face aglow with merriment. "I believe"—speaking to Donald—"you said you'd like to see a live Knight of the Garter; now come right along quickly and I'll show you one."

What could he mean? Donald and Marie-Celeste elbowed each other in their haste to discover, and in the next moment sure enough there he was right before them. He was only a little knight, to be sure, not over four, and sound asleep at that, with one arm thrown

around a big dog, who was also sound asleep. A knight he was, however, beyond all dispute, for there was the unmistakable blue garter plainly visible, and in exactly the right place, too, on the left leg just below the knee. He had not meant that any one should know it, such a modest little knight was he; but alas! the weakness of drowsiness had overtaken the valiant little fellow, and in the disorder thereon attendant the shapely little limb had thrust itself forth from the folds of the protecting kilt, and there was the garter plainly visible to the most casual passer-by.

"Yes, will you believe it?" said Marie-Celeste, stooping down for closer inspection, "'Honi soit qui mal y pense,' as large as life in gold letters running all round it—just as near the real thing as possible."

Donald and Harold were on the eve of laughing outright, but Marie-Celeste, detecting a suspicious blinking in the long curling lashes of the eyelids, kept them still by an imperative gesture.

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen," she said, imitating exactly old Brown's tone and accent when showing visitors through the chapel, "this is a monument erected to the memory of a knight who was killed in battle, together with his noble palfrey. It represents him as he was found, one arm around the neck of his faithful charger" (at this the knight's lips also betrayed a certain uncontrollable twitching). "The smile upon his face is considered one of the chief charms of the statue; but the way that we know that he is a knight—in fact, the only way—is by this blue garter around his knee." At this the little limb was suddenly drawn up, that the tell-tale garter might be hid from view; and then, able to stand it no longer, Albert looked up entreatingly to the children above him, and blushingly explained, "Dorothy made it for me, just for a bit of fun, you know;" and then sure to a certainty that he never, never would hear the end of that blue garter, buried his blushes in Timothy's long silky coat, and rued the hour when Dorothy had so merrily abetted his desire for this particular "bit of fun."

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT CAME OF A LETTER.

BEHIND HAROLD'S CHESTNUT PONIES.

"I AM convinced this is not the best sort of life for Donald. It would be vastly better for him to have something to do."

"But surely he is not yet in a condition to go to sea again, and it is next to impossible to find any temporary position for him in Windsor."

Mr. and Mrs. Harris were out for a drive behind Harold's chestnut ponies, and, as usual, when something important had need to be talked over, the ponies did pretty much as they liked, and that meant, I am ashamed to say (for they were quite too young to so much as think of being lazy), keeping up the merest pretence of a trot for a while, and then subsiding into a walk altogether. Mr. and Mrs. Harris, apparently none the wiser, talked on and on, and the ponies put their heads together, as though actually conferring as to the advisability of stopping to graze a little while by the way.

"You see, this sort of life is too luxurious for the fellow," argued Mr. Harris. "It was well enough while he needed care and nursing, but the boy has always had to rough it, and he'll have to rough it again; and I think we're unfitting him for it."

"But what can we do? It is better for him to be idle here with us, it seems to me, than in some ordinary lodging-house, where things, to be sure, are not by any means luxurious, but where a boy who is not at work meets with so many temptations."

"I wonder if it would not be a good idea to write Chris Hartley? He told me his grandfather has a snug little place and several head of stock, and, like as not, Donald would make himself of use, or, at any rate, Chris could keep him occupied in some way, and we could pay his board for him there. He won't be strong enough to put to sea before September, that's certain."

"That's a splendid idea, Fritz; you always seem to be able to construct some sort of a highroad out of every difficulty;" and Mr. Harris said, "Thank you, madam," with an affectation of profound gratitude; but for all that he was none the less truly grateful. We are a little too apt, most of us, to assume too much with our nearest and dearest—to take for granted that they know all the thoughts of our heart, and so seldom put our praise of them into words. But what a mistake! Is there anything so precious in all this world as the openly expressed admiration of the people we really love? No matter how one pretends to receive it, it makes one feel very happy at heart all the same, and humble and grateful as well. You'll forgive this bit of what the critics call moralizing—it is all the outcome of that remark of Mrs. Harris's; nothing was further from my thoughts until she put it into my head by giving Mr. Harris that unexpected little compliment. It was the truth, however. He did have a genius for overcoming difficulties, instead of being overcome by them; and the particular difficulty of what had best be none with Donald being temporarily settled, they proceeded to give themselves wholly to the pleasure of the drive. They readjusted things in the comfortable little phaeton and tucked the lap-robe about them in trimmer fashion, and then the ponies, feeling a tightening grasp on the lines, and intuitively conscious of a whip poised at an easily descending angle, wisely saw fit to make up for lost time. Along the perfect English road they scampered, and out to Virginia Water, at the merriest pace, and then home again at a better pace still, so alluring to their pony imaginations were the box stalls and oats that lay in that direction. They only wished so much time did not have to be wasted after they reached

there. How thoughtless it was to walk a pony, who had just come in from a long drive, up and down a lane for half an hour, just for the sake of giving a groom a little exercise! They did protest with their heels now and then, but that only meant a closer, more uncomfortable grip on the halter, and made matters rather worse than better. And so what wonder, with all this fuss and senseless bother, that Mr. Harris had written and mailed a letter to Mr. Christopher Hartley before the ponies had gotten so much as their noses within their own box stalls! As for the letter, you would have thought it harmless enough could you have looked over Mr. Harris's shoulder as he wrote it. It simply related the facts about Donald, and asked if old Mr. and Mrs. Hartley would not be good enough to take him to board for the rest of the summer, and if Chris would not contrive to keep him occupied about the farm in some way that should not overtax his newly gained strength. That was all there was in it, and yet can you not surmise how even that letter was calculated to work great consternation in the mind of some one in the little thatched cottage—some one who never saw the letter itself, and who did not so much as know of its existence until it had been read and re-read and thought over and answered, but who when one day he was made acquainted with its contents felt as weak as a kitten for hours afterward? He happened to be lying on the lounge in the living-room at the time, the same lounge to which he had been carried more dead than alive apparently, just four weeks before. He looked very pale and white still, but the doctor said he was getting on as fast as could be expected, only Ted—for of course it is Ted we are talking about—wished he might have been expected to get on just five times faster. He had had a great deal of time to think during the first part of his illness—in fact, he had had nothing else to do, for the doctor would not let him use his eyes—and he had made up his mind that when he was himself once more he was going to begin life all over again, and naturally he was anxious to get to work. There was that in his face, however, that showed plainly enough that he had begun already, though he did not in the least suspect it; an earnest, thoughtful look that even bluff old Mr. Hartley was quick to detect.

"Seems like, to look at our new lodger, that he's mendin' in more ways than one," he had said to his wife as they walked to the

parish church on a sunshiny Sunday morning, the second after Ted's accident. "There's a kind of a light in his eye, as though he was meditatin' turnin' over a new leaf when he gets a chance."

"He's turned it already, I'm thinking, Thomas," answered Mrs. Hartley, with a woman's clearer discernment.

And it was on that same Sunday morning, just two weeks before, that Ted had made a discovery. Chris had staid home from church to take care of him, Harry Allyn, who had constituted himself Ted's

"When are you going back, Chris?"

nurse, having gone for a day or two up to Oxford, where some matters needed his attention. Ted was still in bed at the time, but tired enough of it, and glad to draw Chris into conversation.

"It is queer to think of you as in the employ of 'Uncle Sam,'" said Ted, who by this time had come to be on most friendly terms with Chris.

"I look as though I belonged right here, don't I?" said Chris, glancing down at his English suit of homespun. "But you ought to see me in my gray uniform and brass buttons. Really, Mr. Morris,

fond as I am of the old people here, I often wish I were back at work again. It seems like my own country over there now, and I've grown to love it."

"When are you going back, Chris?"

"I don't know exactly—somewhere about the first of October. Same steamer, if I can manage it, with Marie-Celeste."

"Marie-Celeste!" exclaimed Ted; and then, bethinking himself, he asked quite casually, "Who is Marie-Celeste, I should like to know?"

"Well, she's just a dear child, Mr. Morris—a little American of twelve or thereabouts—but there isn't a little girl in all England can hold a candle to her."

"Can it be possible there are two little American Marie-Celestes in England this summer?" thought Ted; and then, trying with all his might not to betray his excitement, he asked further, "How did you come to know her, Chris?"

"She's on my route, Mr. Morris. Along of my being fond of children, I know all of the boys and girls pretty well at the houses where I call; but Marie-Celeste is different from the rest. She just takes your heart by storm, with her confiding, little trusting ways and her interest in you. Here's a picture of her, that her mother let her give me last Christmas," and Chris began a search through many papers in his wallet for the cherished photograph. Meantime, Ted realized how weak he was, that such a matter as this should put him into a tremble; and later, when Chris gave him the photograph, he could only manage by the greatest effort to keep his hand from shaking as he held it, but the picture settled matters. From beneath the curve of a wide-brimmed hat looked forth the familiar face of his own little cousin, Marie-Celeste, and the color rushed up into his forehead.

"I guess I'm tiring you with talking so much," said Chris; "I'll tell you all about her some other time;" and Ted, replying, "Well, somehow or other, I do seem to get exhausted precious easily," turned over and closed his eyes.

"A nap 'll do wonders for you, Mr. Morris;" and lowering the shades at the two ivy-grown windows, and adjusting the screen that stood near the bed, Chris left the room. But a nap, as often happens, would not do anything at all for poor Ted just then. It did

not have the ghost of a chance, in fact. How could it with so many queer thoughts and sensations chasing each other pell-mell through his mind. Wouldn't Chris be surprised, he thought, if he knew that Marie-Celeste was his own cousin, and living that moment in Ted's own home was one of the precious company from whom he was anxious to keep all knowledge of this worst and last scrape. But he felt like a fraud, lying there in the Hartleys' dear little cottage, and letting them think him another man altogether from the fellow he really was. Indeed, he experienced the same sensation every time any one called him by the name of Morris, which had been the first name to occur to Harry Allyn, in his desire to shield his friend on the night of the accident. "And yet," argued Ted, "I'm doing it to save the folks at home the disgrace of it, and Harry and Dr. Arnold seem to think it all right; and yet, I declare if I know myself what to think. And what a remarkable thing it is that I should have fallen right into the hands of this old friend of Marie-Celeste's! Like as not my secret will out some day in spite of me. It would have been out at once if Chris had not been so considerate as to keep himself out of the way, so that we did not meet that morning on the steamer. I wonder if I ought not to tell just Chris, anyway; but somehow or other I do not seem to have strength enough even to make up my mind, and I'll give up trying for the present;" and so, ceasing to make any effort whatever, the little nap that would not come for the asking stole quietly in and laid its blessed touch of oblivion upon poor, troubled Ted. Now, this discovery of Ted's, that Chris was a friend of Marie-Celeste, and the perplexing state of mind that followed, had transpired, you understand, two weeks previous to this particular chapter, and Ted, you remember, is lying on the chintz-covered lounge in the living-room, having gained strength enough in the mean time to walk from his bed to the lounge unaided. Mr. Hartley is reading his morning paper, sitting in the shade just outside the cottage door, with his chair tipped back against the shingles. Now and then, as he comes across anything he thinks will interest Ted, he lets the chair drop on to all-fours, shifts his position so as to bring himself into line with the door, and reads the article or paragraph aloud. Ted, amused, and grateful as well at the manner in which the old keeper has gradually softened toward him, always listens attentively, and courteously

feigns interest, when he finds he cannot command the real article. Mrs. Hartley, still busy about her morning household duties, occasionally flits in and out of the room, and Ted's eyes follow her devotedly every moment that she is there. He has grown to love the dear

"AND EMPTIES THE CONTENTS OF THE LITTLE HARTLEY MAIL-BAG UPON THE TABLE."

old grandmother with the whole of his wayward heart, and she seems to him the embodiment of all that is calm and loving and benignant. Indeed, it were difficult to tell how much of the blessed change that has been gradually coming over Ted is due to her noble, placid face. He has sufficient knowledge of human nature to realize that nothing

but years and years of noblest thinking and doing will bring that look into a face, and he finds his soul fairly bowing down before her. On one of these busy flittings of Mrs. Hartley's, Ted has detained her for a moment, to ask some trifling question, and just as she is about to make a reply, Chris, returning from his daily ride into Nuneham for the mail, swings into the room with his breezy, postman-like air, and empties the contents of the little Hartley mail-bag upon the table.

"It's all settled, granny dear," he says, as he picks out two letters and hands them to Ted; "I've had a letter from Marie-Celeste and one from Mr. Harris, and he'll be down to-morrow on the three-o'clock train."

"My goodness!" mutters Ted under his breath, staring at Chris a moment in blank astonishment, and then straightway pretends to be all absorbed in his own mail. One or two college bills, forwarded by Harry Allyn from Oxford, were all there was to it, for, alas! there were no home letters for Ted in these days of self-imposed exile from kith and kin. The bills, however, gave him a chance to pull himself together, as he made a ruse of carefully examining them, while his heart thumped like a trip-hammer at the thought of Uncle Fritz coming down to Nuneham and finding him stranded there, helpless, good-for-nothing fellow that he felt himself to be.

"You say you saw a great deal of him on the steamer, Chris?" said Mrs. Hartley, who had seated herself in the nearest chair, awaiting the budget of news that Chris always endeavored to bring out from Nuneham, for the enlivening of the old people.

"Yes, granny, a great deal. I really don't know how he would have managed but for me."

"That's cool," thought Ted; "I'm sure Uncle Fritz seems quite able to take care of himself."

"And he's a good-looking little fellow, is he, Chris?"

"Good-looking and good-natured, granny dear; you'll take to him right from the start."

Well, this was passing comprehension! Uncle Fritz a good-looking, good-natured little fellow; and forgetting everything else in his amazement, Ted turned from Chris to Mrs. Hartley, and back again to Chris, in hopeless bewilderment, while they, wholly

unobservant, continued to converse in what seemed to him most idiotic fashion.

They talked about his illness, and of how kind Marie-Celeste and her Cousin Harold had been to him, and of what wonders they hoped Nuneham would do for him, and of how, for his own sake, they must continue to keep him busy in little matters about the farm.

"Really," said Ted at last, able to stand it no longer, and looking pathetically toward Chris, "I don't mean to be inquisitive, but do I understand you that the father of your friend, Marie-Celeste, is coming here to your cottage to recruit from some illness, and that you plan to entertain him by putting him to work on the farm?"

If either Chris or Mrs. Hartley had been close observers of human nature, they would have been almost alarmed at the expression on Ted's face. It was as though he felt himself in some way impelled to ask a question which proclaimed him a pitiful lunatic on the face of it.

"Oh, dear, no!" laughed Chris; "I—"

"Well, that's exactly what you said," interrupted Ted. "You said you had a letter from Marie-Celeste and one from her father, and that he'd be down on the three-o'clock train to-morrow." Ted spoke petulantly, feeling it was inexcusable to scare a fellow half to death in that manner.

"Well, *he*, Mr. Morris," ascribing Ted's petulance to the nervousness of slow convalescence, "happens to mean a little sailor boy who crossed on the steamer with us, and about whom Mr. Harris and I have been corresponding. It was funny enough that you should have applied all I have said to a man like Mr. Harris."

Ted did not think it so very funny, and his face showing it, Chris continued in a half-apologetic tone, "I ought to have told you about him, Mr. Morris, and I thought I had;" and then, by the way of making amends, Chris proceeded to narrate all the details of Donald's various experiences in a way that was somewhat of a bore to one who knew it all as Ted did.

"Well," he thought, when he was finally left to himself once more, "'it's out of the frying-pan and into the fire,' or something very much like it. Of course I'll have to take Donald into my confidence;

but like as not he'll come suddenly upon me, and blurt out just who I am before I get a chance to give him a point or two. There's no doubt about it, 'the way of the transgressor *is* hard'—very hard indeed ;" and with a grim sort of smile on his face, Ted gathered his dressing-gown about him, and with rather shaky steps sought the seclusion of his own little room.

CHAPTER XII.

DONALD'S NEW QUARTERS.

A Repentant Little Queen.

The day for Donald's departure had arrived—that is, to the extent that the sun, rising clear and bright at four o'clock, shone alike upon the big castle on the hill and the little one beneath it. In the big castle, let us hope, since we may not know, that even crowned heads were resting easily, and that the level rays were powerless at that early hour to waken them to that sense of great uneasiness supposed to be inseparable from the lot of the "nobly born."

But alas! I for one know to a certainty that in the little castle there was rebellion almost amounting to mutiny, and that one curly, uncrowned head, that need not have had a care in all the world, was tossing uneasily on its pillow. It was behaving, indeed, like the most unruly little head imaginable, and obstinately refusing to accept a course of action which heads far older and wiser than the little

head in question had agreed upon as in every way desirable. Indeed, the little queen, whose realm was the hearts of her nearest and dearest, would have been obliged to abdicate, for a while at least, I fancy, had she not chosen before nightfall of that same day to bury her head in the lap of her very most loyal subject, and with tears and sobs confess to her extreme unreasonableness and avow her determination not soon again to be overtaken by such a sorry state of mind and temper. Even Donald stared at Marie-Celeste in grieved and reproving wonder, and yet to all appearances it was all for Donald's sake, this defiant, protesting attitude of hers, and Donald knew it. The trouble was that Marie-Celeste did not see or would not see either rhyme or reason in Donald's being sent down to Nuneham. She gave full rein to a certain "little member," and working herself up to the highest pitch of excitement, gave vent in very aggressive fashion to such sentiments as these. For her part, she thought it was a downright shame to send a little fellow, who was just getting over a fever, away to work himself to death on an old farm, where he would surely be ill again before a week was over. And then it seemed so mean not to be willing to pay his expenses outright for just one summer, till he should be able to go to sea, instead of making him go to work and earn money in the mean time.

For her part, too, when somebody (which was Harold) stood ready only too gladly to pay Donald's way on the trip they were to take through the Lake Country, and was just longing to invite him, she thought it was *cruelly unkind* in somebody else (which was her father) to say he did not think best that he should be invited. If she were Harold, she just believed she would go right ahead as she thought best herself. She should think he had a right to do what he chose with his own without so much as asking "by your leave" of anybody.

And this unqueenly state of mind lasted, I am sorry to say, for three whole days together, to the dire distress of the truest hearts in her kingdom. And all this while the wilful little queen was trying to convince herself that it was really for Donald's sake, when the truth was that the long walks with Donald, when Harold—who was making up some necessary back work at college—was not at her service, were what she was determined not to give up, and the reading aloud

in the evenings, when Donald was such a delightful listener; and, in fact, the hundred and one little amusing things that Donald was continually doing, and that made the days go by in such happy, merry fashion.

If only at the outset some good little fairy might have held a magic mirror close to her defiant little mind, and she could have seen "selfishness" written large, right straight across all her motives, there perhaps need never have been this dark chapter in her reign. But lacking the fairies, some of us have to learn a good many things from experience; and though hard enough in the learning, the lessons are worth their weight in gold. Even queens have to go to the same school, and it is a blessed thing for everybody when its lessons are learned *by heart* and in a way to be always remembered.

But at sunset on the fourth day Marie-Celeste relented, and coming into the house with a white flag of truce at her eyes, threw herself at the feet of her dearest subject, and burying her head, as I have already hinted, in the lap of the same, capitulated body and soul.

Donald was gone. They had seen him off at the station—Harold and she—and Donald, never allowing himself for a moment to regard this whole affair in any light but the true one, kept a stiff upper lip to the last, and smiled the cheeriest good-by as the guard banged the carriage-door and the train glided out from the depot. Before he jumped on the train, however, he had whispered, as the last of many entreaties: "I know it's all for my sake, Marie-Celeste, but all the same, it's an awful grind on me the way you're acting; and if you don't come to see it so pretty soon, your father and mother will wish they had never let you do anything for me. Honor bright, Marie-Celeste, you're not fair to them or to me at all. Please give in as soon as you go home, and say you're sorry, because you are—you *know* you are." And it was the "yes, I am" in Marie-Celeste's eyes, though her lips still firmly pressed each other, that made Donald's heart a thousand-fold lighter. And so, as you have read, Marie-Celeste did really give in, without so much as a mental reservation, and other hearts than Donald's were wondrously lightened, and there was joy throughout all the kingdom that the queen had come to her senses.

Meantime, Donald's train made good time to Nuneham; and there was Chris at the station waiting with open arms to receive

Mrs. Hartley welcomes Donald.

him, and, what was more, he took Donald into them in a way that nipped in the bud those queer little misgivings that spring up unbidden when one chances to be leaving old scenes for new. And then when they reached the cottage, there stood dear old Mrs. Hartley, looking the picture of motherliness in her snow-white cap and kerchief; and the welcome that she gave Donald made him feel beyond all doubting that he had but exchanged one dear home for another; and that meant worlds to a boy who had come to know for the first time what a dear place home might be.

In the hour that intervened between Donald's arrival and supper he had had a chat with Mr. Hartley, in which the old keeper had taken to the boy immensely; had made friends with Martha, as she showed him to the little room under the eaves and helped him to stow away the contents of his sailor chest, and had won his way straight to Mrs. Hartley's heart, who was but a woman, after all, and gratified by the undisguised admiration in his frank, honest eyes. There remained only one inmate of the cottage yet to be encountered—the gentleman about whom Chris had told him, and who had met with the driving accident a few weeks back; but the gentleman in question had his own ideas as to the time and place when that dreaded encounter was to be gotten through with, and Donald was not to be favored with an interview that evening.

"If it's not too much bother, Mrs. Hartley," Ted had said, "I'll have my supper here in my room to-night. I think for a first drive Harry took me a little too far this afternoon."

"I was afraid of that—afraid of that," said Mrs. Hartley, looking at Ted with the deepest solicitude, so that Ted felt like a fraud, for though tired indeed from the drive, he had quite strength enough to take his seat at the table with the rest but for the presence of that new and undesired guest, Donald.

"Your sailor-boy arrived all right?" asked Ted, partly by way of diverting conversation from himself and partly because there was the possibility of meeting him to be provided against.

"Yes, indeed," her face lighting up as she spoke; "and he seems the most attractive little fellow. I want you should meet him after—"

"Not to-night, I think, Mrs. Hartley, if you don't mind. I'll just see Harry a few moments when he comes and turn in very

early. The little sailor-boy will keep all right till morning, won't he?"

Deeply annoyed that Ted's strength should have been so apparently overtaxed, Mrs. Hartley paid no attention to this last remark.

"I shall take Mr. Allyn to task when he comes to-night," she said severely (that is, for her); "he should have known better; but if I leave you now perhaps you'll get a good sleep before ever it's time for your supper;" and then as she went out Ted drew a long sigh, and had half a mind to call the dear old lady back and take her right into his confidence. But no; on the whole, he thought he would wait and once more consult Harry, and, besides, he was really too tired to enter upon any explanations just then.

"Why, where's Ted?" asked Harry Allyn with real concern, as at his usual hour he brought up at the doorway of the little cottage and peered into the room beyond. The evening meal over, the old couple were seated on the settle just outside the door, and Mrs. Hartley made room for Harry between them.

"You've quite used Mr. Morris up!" she said reprovingly; "you ought not to have gone so far; all these weeks of nursing ought to have taught you better than that, Mr. Allyn."

"Why, Mrs. Hartley!" for from any one so mild this was indeed censure. "Really I think you are a little hard on me. It was Ted's own fault. I wanted to turn back two or three times, and Ted wouldn't hear of it."

"You should have turned, all the same. Invalids never know what is best for them."

"Well, how used up is he?" asked Harry with a sigh, more concerned at the thought of harm done to Ted even than at Mrs. Hartley's disapproval. "It is an awful pity if he's going to have a regular set-back."

"Oh, it's not so bad as that, I fancy;" for sooner or later, Mrs. Hartley always felt self-reproachful, no matter how justly she had taken any one to task; "but Mr. Morris wants to see you for a few moments, so you can go in and judge for yourself."

"So, you're a wreck," said Harry, entering Ted's room and closing the door gently after him.

"Well, I'm pretty tired, but I'm here for a reason, you know."

"Oh!" evidently relieved; "I thought possibly that was it; you didn't get any chance, then, to have a word with Donald?"

"No; there didn't seem to be any way to manage, so I just kept my room. Some day soon I'm going to tell them here all about myself, but I want to do it in my own time and way, and not seem pushed to it because of Donald's coming, and as though I only told because I thought I couldn't keep them longer from knowing."

"Look here, Ted, I'll manage this thing for you," said Harry, after a few moments' silence. "I'll drop in to breakfast in the morning, and I'll contrive somehow to get the boy in here for a word with you as soon as he shows his face below stairs."

"Agreed," answered Ted.

"Well, then, good-night, and do you get a good rest, so that Mrs. Hartley will not think me wholly unfit in future to act as guardian on your drives."

True to his word, bright and early the next morning Harry unbolted the outer door of the inn at Nuneham, where no one was yet stirring, and started for his two-mile walk to the Hartleys'. It was a glorious July morning, the air clear as a bell, and a bird here and there carolling with all the abandon of June in the hedgerows.

One after the other he passed the typical little English farms that skirt the roadway, seeming in their trim perfection and miniature proportions more like toys to unaccustomed eyes.

It was only half-past six by the time he reached the Hartleys', and Donald, as good fortune would have it, had just come downstairs and was standing right in the doorway. Donald, who had been absent on a tour of the farm with Chris when Harry was at the house the night before, at once surmised who the new-comer was, but gazed in blank amazement, none the less, as Harry, calling him by name, commanded him rather imperatively to stay just where he was for a moment. Then opening Ted's door, Harry said in a loud whisper:

"He's just outside here, and there's no one else within gun-shot; shall I bring him in?"

"Yes," sighed Ted, since the thing was inevitable.

No sooner said than done. Donald found himself in the stranger's room and with his face aflame with the strangeness and suddenness of the manner of his introduction. But behold! he was no

stranger. In bed though Ted was, and pale and white from his illness, one glance was sufficient, and Donald stood transfixed, his hands on his hips in sailor fashion and absolutely speechless.

"You know me, Donald?" said Ted, raising himself on one elbow.

"Yes, sir," getting the words out with difficulty; "you're Mr. —"

"Yes, but stop right where you are, for you're not to mention here who I am. Do you think you can keep a secret?"

"If I choose I can;" for this was a very queer proceeding, and he was not going to be led blindfold.

"Well, then, will you please be good enough to choose to keep it till matters can be explained to you?"

"When will that be?" in a business-like way that was rather amusing.

"Till we can go for a walk after breakfast, and I can enlighten you," said Harry.

"And you mean that now, just for a little while, I am not to let the Hartleys know that we've met before?" but as though he did not in the least take to the idea.

"Exactly," said Ted.

"Well, of course I can't refuse to do that much; but up at Windsor, you know, they think you are off on a driving trip, and are wondering that you don't write."

"There's nothing to wonder at in that," Ted answered a little sadly; "Harold knows I've never been in the habit of writing, or of doing some other things, for that matter, that might perhaps have been expected of me."

"Yes, I know," was Donald's frank answer; "it's an awful pity."

"'Nough said, my young friend," remarked Harry, and fearing what next might follow, marched him out of the room with a "Now be on your guard, young man, and be sure and remember your promise."

CHAPTER XIII.

MADAME LA GRANDE REINE.

THEY had spent a most interesting hour at the Royal Mews, and, rare good fortune, the best was yet to come. They means Mr. Harris and Marie-Celeste and Albert, and the Royal Mews—since to the average little American the words doubtless are wholly unintelligible — means the royal stables. Mr. Harris and Marie-Celeste had called by appointment in the phaeton for Albert, and then leaving the ponies in the care of a groom at the entrance to the stable courtyard, in company with another groom they had visited the royal horses. The place as a whole was rather disappointing to our little party. Harold, who had been all through the stables of the Duke of Westminster at Eton Hall, had described something much finer than this—imposing buildings surrounding a courtyard paved with bevel-edged squares of stone, with not so much as a whisp of hay or straw to be seen anywhere, and in the centre a noble statue of a high-spirited horse, rearing and pulling hard at the bridle, held in the hand of a stalwart groom, who seems fully equal to the occasion. Here

there was nothing of the sort, and yet these were the Queen's stables. Ah, well! these were old and the Duke's were new, and perhaps the royal family were trying to avoid extravagance, and that was of course very commendable. But what seemed lacking in elegance of appointment was made up in the number of horses; and happening to enter one of the courtyards just as three of the court carriages were about to be driven out of it, the children were intensely interested. Marie-Celeste opened her eyes wide for wonder at the novel sight of a coach and four, but with no reins anywhere about the harness, and not so much as the suggestion of a seat for the coachman. The mystery of how they were to be driven was solved in a moment, however, when a faultlessly equipped groom threw himself astride of one of the leaders, and the stablemen, standing at the bridles of the four-in-hand, at one and the same moment let go their hold, and sprang quickly out of the way. It was very inspiring and exciting to see the three coaches, that were to convey some royal guests to the depot, leave the courtyard one after the other, the horses in each case prancing in wildest fashion and perfectly free, apparently, with the exception of the one mounted leader, to do any outlandish thing that they chose.

"I don't see that there's anything at all to keep them from running away," pondered Marie-Celeste gravely, "or how they ever manage them at all."

"But dey do," said well-informed Albert; "I've seen dem often. Dat cuttin' up is jus' for fun at de start. Dey're trained to behave jus' of dere own selves without any driver, and when dey get out on de road dey always do behave;" and then in the moment's pause that followed, Marie-Celeste, remembering certain recent performances of her own, wondered if her father wished that a certain little girl, of whom he had some knowledge, more closely resembled these royal ponies, who, once trained to behave, according to Albert, never dreamed of taking the bit in their teeth or of kicking over the traces.

But the best that was yet to come was something of a highly exclusive and highly privileged order—something in which even Mr. Harris could have no part. From the moment that Albert had climbed into the phaeton at his own door he had held a small square envelope firmly in one hand. Mr. Harris had advised him to put it in his pocket or to consign it to him for safer keeping but to no

avail. Albert considered the grip of his own right hand the safest place by far for the valuable little square of cardboard, and which was nothing else than the open sesame to the Queen's own garden, called the East Terrace, and to which the general public only occasionally were admitted. Exception, in this instance, had been made for Marie-Celeste and Albert. It had all been managed in

"AND SUCH A GARDEN AS IT PROVED!"

some way by Albert's father, Canon Allyn, apropos of Albert's having repeated a remark of Marie-Celeste's, "that she should be happy as a queen herself if just once she could be allowed to walk in that garden." Whether the powers that rule the entrance to the same came to the conclusion that to a little girl of twelve and a little boy of four the term of general public could not honestly be applied,

or whether all rules of procedure and precedence were magnanimously waived in their favor, certain it is that the little card in question bore the incredible inscription : "Admit Master Albert Allyn and his little friend, Miss Marie-Celeste Harris, to the East Terrace between the hours of twelve and three on Thursday. By order of ——"

And this was Thursday, and by Mr. Harris's watch, long ago carefully adjusted to English time, it was precisely five minutes to twelve. The skies were blue above them and a delightful little breeze was blowing out of the west; so that everything was just as it should be when two pairs of eager little feet were to be allowed to tread the paths of the Queen's own garden. And such a garden as it proved! with its fountains and statues and vases, and the orangery on one side, and on the other three sides a beautiful sloping lawn, ascending from the level of the garden to the gray stone wall at the outer edge of the terrace; and to think that here they were actually walking about in this beautiful garden, instead of merely peering through the fretwork of the iron gate, as some other little children with envious eyes were doing that very moment. Marie-Celeste was so impressed with the greatness of the privilege accorded them, that for the first five minutes or so she kept Albert's hand tight in her own, and spoke never a word save a whispered "yes" or "no" to Albert's questions. But to Albert, who had been born beneath the castle walls, it must be confessed royalty was less awe-inspiring, and to walk about hand in hand in that stately fashion and talk in suppressed whispers was not his idea of the way to enjoy the Queen's garden.

Finally he resolved to take matters into his own hands by suddenly slipping away from Marie-Celeste's grasp; and then drawing off a little, and folding both hands behind his back, as though neither of them were to be longer at anybody's disposal, he said aggressively: "And—and now what are you afraid of, Marie-Celeste? Do you sink somebody's goin' to soot you from de top of one of de towers if you speak out loud?"

"Why no, of course not," with a little nervous laugh; "really, I didn't know I was just whispering; but it seems such a wonderful place to me, as much for what has happened here as for what is here now."

Albert looked at Marie-Celeste a little whimsically, and then said dryly: "Well, I don' know much about what's happened here, and

I s'ouldn't sink jus' an American little girl would know so very much eider."

"Perhaps not," said Marie-Celeste, half angry at Albert's insinuation; "but 's'ouldn't sink' or no, I could tell you a good deal if I chose to about one little queen who lived here—"

"Oh, yes, I remember. You did promise to tell me 'bout her some day. Right here, where she used to live, would be a good place, Marie-Celeste."

"Yes, it would," but in a tone as though nothing was farther from her thought than the telling of it. She would show this presuming little Albert that "jus' American little girls" were not to be so easily conciliated.

Albert looked crestfallen, but hoped still to win by strategy.

"She was a little French girl, wasn't she?" he asked, quite casually.

"Yes, she was."

"Do you s'pose she used to play in this garden?"

"I'm sure I don't know," with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

"Her name was Isabel, wasn't it?"

"Yes, her name was Isabel."

"And she was only nine when she was a queen."

"Only nine."

Albert gave Marie-Celeste a look which said as plainly as words: "That jus' American little girls could be awful mean," and evidently deciding it would be best to leave that kind of a girl to herself, turned on his heel and walked straight off toward the castle with a consequential air, and as though bent on reporting such unseemly conduct to Her Majesty in person.

Marie-Celeste looked after him a moment with a most amused smile, and then growing to feel more at home amid royal surroundings, turned to investigate the little miniature elephants that flank the steps leading down from the eastern terrace. Then she wandered on, making a partial circuit of the garden, stopping here and there to gaze at some statue that struck her fancy or to touch with reverend hand the rich carving of the vases, and finally bringing up at the fountain in the centre.

Meantime, what had not that audacious Albert ventured! The

rapid and indignant pace at which he had sought to put as much space as possible between the offending Marie-Celeste and himself had brought him in a trice to the foot of the double flight of steps that ascend from the garden to the terrace. And what more natural, when you find yourself at the foot of a flight of steps, than to walk up them, no matter if the place does chance to be Windsor Castle; and then if at the top you find an open door confronting you, what more natural than to walk in, particularly if there happens to be no one to say you nay, and you have half a mind, besides, to seek an audience of the Queen, and report the ungracious conduct of an ungracious little American, who has been unworthily permitted to tread the paths of the royal garden. A few moments later he was bounding down the stone stairway, flying toward Marie-Celeste with the breathless announcement: "She wants us to come in."

"Who?" screamed Marie-Celeste, half stiff with fright; "not the Queen?"

"No," called Albert, who was not to be delayed by explanations, and was already half-way back to the steps again; "the Queen's mother."

"The Queen's mother!" thought Marie-Celeste; "she must be very old." But this was time for action rather than thought.

"Please wait for me, Albert;" for Albert had scaled the stairs, and in another second would be out of sight; and for a wonder, Albert waited—touched, perhaps, by the entreaty in her voice, and perceptibly enjoying the turn of affairs that left him master of the situation.

"Did the Queen's mother come out and ask you to come in?" whispered Marie-Celeste, detaining Albert by main force, while she straightened his necktie and gave his hopelessly frowsy curls a rearranging touch.

"No, I went in and asked her to tome out; nes I did, really," in refutation of the astonished incredulity on Marie-Celeste's face. "The door was open, an' I jus' walked in, an' I dess dey sought I was jus' a little prince or somethin', cause nobody said anythin' to me till I tame to the room where de Queen's mother was; an' I asked her wouldn't she tome out in de garden an' see you; an' she said no, she did not feel able to walk very much, but for me to go

an' bring my little friend in;" and nothing could, by any possibility, have been more patronizing than the tone in which Albert uttered the words "my little friend." And this was all the light that was ever thrown on Albert's unsolicited *entrée* into Windsor Castle. If he met with a rebuff from any quarter or had to push his way in the face of any difficulties, he has never owned up to them.

Be that as it may, a very sweet-faced lady met them at the door as they entered, and saying reassuringly, "Come this way, children," led them through a corridor resplendent with statues and portraits, and thence by a wide folding-door into a large room, with windows looking out over the Long Walk and away to the grand old Windsor Forest.

Albert, who had already become familiar with the appointments of this apartment, stepped at once to the table, near which an elderly lady was sitting, and laying his sailor-hat, nothing loath, atop of a miniature of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, announced cavalierly, "And—and now, this is my little American friend, Marie-Celeste."

"How do you do, dear?" said the lady, extending her hand, which Marie-Celeste, her cheeks aflame with the unexpected abruptness of Albert's introduction, took in hers, in a pretty deferential sort of way, as though fully conscious of the dignity of her surroundings. Albert, on the other hand, apparently as much at home in the Queen's private sitting-room as anywhere else in the world, had worked himself way back into a deep-seated, gilded armchair, so that his dusty little feet stuck straight out into the air before him. Meanwhile, the sweet-faced lady had drawn a little *tête-à-tête* sofa nearer the table, and invited Marie-Celeste to take a seat beside her, and then there followed a few general remarks as to the warmth of the weather and the beauty of the garden, etc., while Marie-Celeste gazed in unconcealed admiration at everything about her.

"It is very beautiful," she said in the first pause of the conversation, "to be allowed to see the inside of this part of the castle, but I am afraid it was very rude in Albert to walk right in the way he did."

"Very rude?" Indeed! Albert's eyes flashed, and there is no telling what rejoinder he might have made but that the sweet-faced lady gave him no opportunity.

"Oh, that's all right," she said cordially; "Albert told us he was Canon Allyn's little boy, and that made us very glad to see him, for the Queen has a very high regard for Canon Allyn; and then when he told us he thought you would like to come in too, the Queen sent for you."

"That was very kind of the Queen," said Marie-Celeste gratefully, while Albert looked mystified, for he was not at all aware of the Queen's having had any part in the transaction; but he thought it was a good time to gain a little useful information.

"I suppose de Queen is always very busy," he said, addressing the young lady, "and never has any time jus'—jus' to sit around like dis?"

The young lady hesitated a moment before she answered, and glanced toward the Queen, for the elderly lady was none other, if you please, than Victoria herself, though it never entered the children's heads for one moment to suspect it. A Queen in black silk and a lace cap! Why, the thing was simply incredible. Albert had not passed the statue on Castle Hill almost every day since he learned to walk for nothing. He guessed he knew how a queen ought to look in her robes of velvet and ermine, and with characteristic self-sufficiency had at once settled it in his venturesome little mind that this was the Queen's mother; and Marie-Celeste, presuming he knew whereof he spoke, simply took him at his word. And so both the children almost at once betraying their utter unconsciousness of the Queen's presence, the Queen and her companion were naturally greatly amused, and by an interchange of glances decided not to enlighten their unsuspecting little visitors.

"Her Majesty," said Miss Belmore, the lady-in-waiting, after hesitating a moment, not knowing how to answer, "has of course many things to occupy her mind, but still she often spends a quiet hour or so in this very room."

"Oh, does she?" for this fact at once added a new lustre to everything for Marie-Celeste; "where does she generally sit?"

"Generally where I am sitting," answered the Queen.

"And—and I know jus' how she looks sitting dere," said Albert; "she has a beautiful crown on her head and a long kind of veil coming down from de crown, and a kind of gold stick in her hand dat papa says is called a—a—"

THE STATUE ON CASTLE HILL.

"Sceptre," suggested Marie-Celeste, coming to the rescue; "and then she wears"—for Marie-Celeste had studied the statue too—"a beautiful broad ribbon coming from one shoulder, crosswise this way to her belt, doesn't she?"

"Yes, sometimes," said Miss Belmore.

"And on it she wears the badge of the Order of the Garter, doesn't she?"

"Yes, that is right, too; but what do two little people like you know about the Order of the Garter?"

"We know all dere is," said Albert grandly; "we had a Knight-of-the-Garter day las' week;" and then recalling the matter of the foolish little garter, his face grew crimson, and he begged Marie-Celeste not to tell.

"What do you mean by a Knight-of-the-Garter day?" said the Queen, smiling at Albert's embarrassment and keenly enjoying the novelty of the situation.

"Why, it was a day," Marie-Celeste explained, "when we came to the castle here and went into the different rooms and then into St. George's Chapel, and Harold Harris, my cousin, who lives here, and who has read up a great deal about the knights, told us all he knew about them. But there is one thing," added Marie-Celeste, changing the subject, because unwilling that so important an occasion should be to any extent devoted to any mere narrating of their own childish doings, "I would very much like to know, and that is, if Victoria is ever called Madame La Grande Reine?"

"Why no, my dear, I don't know that she is," said Her Majesty; "but what a little French woman you seem to be." At this Albert rudely clapped one little hand over his mouth, as though to keep from laughing outright. Marie-Celeste a little French woman! Why he didn't believe she knew more than a dozen French words to her name.

"But why do you ask if she is ever called by that title?" continued the Queen.

"Oh, because on the steamer coming over I learned all about the Queen whom they used to call Madame La Petite Reine."

"What are you saying, Marie-Celeste?" said Albert impetuously; "I don't understan' you at all;" for not for one single moment was this conversation in the Queen's own sitting-room to rise above the level of his comprehension, if it lay in his power to prevent it.

"I am talking about the little French Queen, Isabel."

"Oh!" greatly relieved that the matter could be so easily explained; and then he added, turning beseechingly to Her Majesty,

"Won't you please make her tell it? Se always says se knows a great deal about her, but se never tells what se knows."

It was Marie-Celeste's turn to color up now, and she looked at Albert, considering for a moment in what way she should proceed to annihilate him, when Her Majesty happily put to rout all such revengeful intentions. "I should love to talk with you about the little Isabel," she said, "for I know all about her too, and there are some things here in the castle that used to belong to her that I should be glad to have you see. It seems to me you two little people will have to remain to luncheon, and afterward we will have a good talk about the little French Isabel."

"Oh, thank you," said Marie-Celeste, "but I don't believe we can," the idea of actually sitting down to the royal table being almost too overpowering.

"Oh, nes we can, too," said Albert, "if you sink the Queen won't mind."

"On the contrary," said Her Majesty, with difficulty concealing her amusement, "I am confident she will be most glad to have you entertained at the castle; and now, Miss Belmore, will you summon Ainslee, that she may show our little friends through the private apartments?"

Ainslee proved to be a motherly-looking, middle-aged woman with a bunch of keys hanging from her ample girdle. After she had received a word or two of direction from Miss Belmore, the children set off under her guidance, with unconcealed delight on their faces at the prospect of seeing with their own eyes these mysterious apartments, and with a deep-seated hope in each quick-beating heart that in all the full regalia of crown and sceptre and ermine they might somewhere encounter the marvellous Queen.

Meantime, imagine the astonishment of the inmates of the Little Castle to have a finely mounted groom, in the royal livery of the big Castle, ride up to their door, and with that indescribable condescension inherent in even the most ordinary of grooms, hand in a communication, which on being opened imparted the rather astounding information "That Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, having accidentally made the acquaintance of the little visitors to the East Terrace, had invited them to remain for luncheon at the Castle, and would see that they reached home safely under proper escort later

in the afternoon." The note also mentioned that similar word had been sent by special messenger to Canon Allyn.

"Gad, but they're lucky!" said Harold: and then he sent for his pony and started off for a long gallop, hoping thereby to get the better of certain absurdly jealous feelings that would not down at his bidding.

CHAPTER XIV.

MADAME LA PETITE REINE.

FORMIDABLE BABETTE.

OH, the wonder, for Marie-Celeste, of that tour through the private apartments! As for Albert, it is to be doubted if he quite rose to the occasion. Nothing could be more awe-inspiring or majestic than the picture of the Queen he had formed in his mind; but as they were shown from room to room and failed to encounter her, his interest began to flag a little. There were apartments more grand than these, with which he was already familiar, in the other part of the Castle; and when Ainslee hurried them past two or three rooms with the explanation that some of the royal family were in them, he felt somehow that they were being deprived of the very object of their visit. Of course the Queen was in one of them, and he thought

Ainslee might at least have told them which one, even though they were not to be permitted to have a sight of her. But with Marie-Celeste it was very different, She stood in worshipful admiration before all the royal belongings, and when permitted to gaze into one or two of the bedrooms where royalty actually put itself to bed, behind beautiful embroidered draperies, her sense of the privilege accorded her fairly made her hold her breath. At last, when Ainslee announced that they had made the tour of all the private apartments, they were ushered into a little boudoir where a maid waited in readiness to assist them in making their toilettes for luncheon. The maid, however, standing stiff and straight, with a towel thrown over her arm and a whisk-broom in hand ready to attack them, looked so very formidable that Marie-Celeste begged Ainslee not to leave them; and Ainslee, herself appreciating the overbearing self-importance of the maid Babette, was good enough to accede to her request. And then followed such a freshening of toilette as was fairly humiliating in its thoroughness. The trying feature of the proceeding lay in the fact that they were in no way taken into the confidence of the party officiating, or told what move was impending. Side by side they were thrust on to a little low seat, and their shoes and pumps being quickly removed, were consigned to the keeping of a condescending boots, who, summoned by the touch of an electric bell, carried them away at arm's length. Marie-Celeste was never more thankful in her life than that every button was on, and that Albert's little patent leathers were just as good as new; in fact, that nothing could be urged against those little articles of foot-wear save the grievous offence of dust from the royal garden. Their faces and hands were scrubbed with wholly unnecessary vigor, and in Albert's case even ears, and then both children were thrust on to the little low seat again, and drawing a stool in front of them, Babette laid an elaborate manicure set open upon her lap, and gave her whole mind to the shaping and polishing of their nails—a process in which Albert took great interest, and which was accomplished, it must be confessed, most dexterously and with great expedition.

"You have beautiful nails, child," said Babette, the instant she took Marie-Celeste's extended hands in hers; and this compliment from so high and experienced an authority made Marie-Celeste at

once feel repaid for all the dainty care her mother had always insisted upon. At last the little toilettes were completed, even to the reformation of Albert's curls around an ivory curling stick; and with embroidered dress and well-starched kilt none the worse for the decorous experiences of the morning, they emerged from the little boudoir as "spick and span" as from the depths of the traditional bandbox. Luncheon being served, they found a most imposing butler awaiting them in the hallway, and therefore were obliged, but with evident reluctance, to turn their backs on Ainslee. When they reached the dining-room, Miss Belmore was already seated at the table, ready to receive them; but as places were set for only three, two little hearts were again doomed to disappointment, for two little minds, without any sort of consultation, had separately arrived at the conclusion that all that elaborate preparation could certainly mean nothing less than luncheon with Her Majesty in person. Otherwise it is to be doubted if they would have put up half so civilly with the uncompromising treatment they had received at Babette's hands. Their disappointment, however, could not long hold out against the odds of their immediate surroundings. The butlers—for there were two of them—could not have seemed more anxious to please or more obsequious to a veritable little prince and princess; the luncheon was delicious, and no one could possibly have been more kind and friendly than Miss Belmore. Therefore it happened that to their own surprise they became almost at once at their ease, and Albert chattered away in such a cunning, irresistible fashion that the royal dining-room rang with the merriest peals of laughter.

"And—and now," said Albert, when the luncheon at last was concluded, and having clearly in mind the talk about the little Queen that was to follow, "where sall we find de old lady?"

"We shall find her in the sitting-room, Albert," said Miss Belmore, her kind gray eyes dancing with the amusement which she was making such an effort to conceal. So it was quite plain that these little uninvited visitors to Windsor Castle were mistaking Her Majesty for Her Majesty's mother! She wondered for the moment if she ought not to tell them of their absurd mistake; and yet no—she hardly had the right to do that either; for had not a little conference with Her Majesty resulted in the conclusion that

they would not disillusionize their little guests if they could help it? If possible they should leave the Castle as they entered it—the Queen of England still the dream-queen of their imagination, regal and stately always, and perennially arrayed in crown, ermine and jewels, and all the royal insignia of her office. They, at any rate, would not be the ones to acquaint them with the fact that even queens sometimes grow to be grandmothers, taking more comfort in rocking-chairs than thrones, vastly preferring lace caps to crowns, and behaving in general like other dear grandmothers the world over. And, in the mean time, what a pleasure to talk familiarly with these same bright little visitors, who more likely than not would have retired into speechless embarrassment had any one ventured the announcement that the great Queen of England was none other than the friendly "old lady" with whom they were taking all the liberties of commonplace, every-day acquaintance! And so, happily, no doubt, for their ease of mind, no one felt called upon to make the announcement.

"Have you been here ever since?" asked Albert, the moment they reached the sitting-room and descried the Queen in the same chair in which they had left her.

"Ever since," answered Her Majesty.

"And haven't you had any luncheon?" in a tone of real concern, and going close to her side, so that he leaned against her knee.

"Oh, yes, I have had my luncheon served right here, to save me the trouble of moving; and now I am ready and waiting to have our talk about little Isabel de Valois."

"Did these belong to her?" asked Marie-Celeste, standing in open-eyed wonder before a mosaic table, which had been cleared to make room for a quaint collection of foreign-looking, childish possessions—a mandolin, a well-worn little missal, a remarkable doll, a necklace or two, numerous little childish trinkets, and thrown over a chair, standing close to the table, a little gown of white silk and exquisite embroidery, yellow and limp with age, but none the less dainty and lovely.

"Yes, all of them," answered the Queen, keenly enjoying the child's undisguised pleasure.

Albert, who preferred that everything should be done decently and in order, placed a chair for Marie-Celeste on the other side of

the Queen's little table, and then seated himself on the gilded sofa beside Miss Belmore, in such a comfortable, snuggling-up way that Miss Belmore had to put one arm right round him and give him a sound little kiss by way of punishment, which Albert was courteous enough not to resent, notwithstanding he considered that sort of treatment somewhat humiliating for a boy of four.

"Now tome, please, Marie-Celeste," he pleaded; "let's hear about de tings before we look at dem;" and Marie-Celeste, feeling that they were all waiting for her, reluctantly did as she was bid, and dropped into the chair Albert had placed for her.

"And now," said Albert modestly, considering himself master of ceremonies, "please have Marie-Celeste tell what she knows first," for the suspicious little reprobate was keenly anxious to put her boasted knowledge to the test.

"Yes, I should love to hear the story as she has heard it," answered the Queen. "Will you tell it to us, Marie-Celeste?" And Marie-Celeste, nothing loath, and willing at last to substantiate her claims in the ears of doubting Albert, rested a hand comfortably on either arm of her chair, and commenced, preceding her narration with the request, "You will correct me, won't you, if you find I do not tell it right?" to which Her Majesty smilingly acceded, first asking Miss Belmore to hand her a little jewelled miniature case from among the other treasures on the table.

"Well, this little queen," began Marie-Celeste, "was the child of a French king, and she was born in the Louvre, the King's palace in Paris, and she was born in a very troubled time—such a troubled time, that her father, the King, went crazy; and then the little Isabel spent most of her time in the Hotel de St. Pol, on the Seine, that belonged to one of her father's ambassadors."

"I wonder that you remember such a queer name as St. Pol and such a long word as ambassadors," said Miss Belmore incredulously.

"Oh, I have tried very hard to remember all the names, because you can't tell the story very clearly without them. Besides, I wrote them all down in my journal one day on the steamer, and because I was coming here to Windsor to-day, I read them over only last night."

"You haven't tol' us de name of de king den," said Albert.

"The king was Charles the Sixth of France," explained the Queen, who was not going to have her little story-teller disconcerted if she could help it; but Marie-Celeste confessed with perfect honesty, "I am afraid I had forgotten that name;" and Albert felt ashamed of himself, and confided in a whisper to Miss Belmore "dat he dessed he wouldn't be so mean aden."

"Well," continued Marie-Celeste, pausing thoughtfully a moment to think out the order of the story, "at that time and all the time in those days there was war between France and England, and the French wanted to have peace; and so the ambassador, St. Pol, who had married the sister of King Richard in England, went to Richard and told him if he would sign a truce with France Charles would give him his daughter Isabel for his queen, and with a larger dowry than was ever given to a royal bride." (Albert was becoming too deeply impressed with the extent of Marie-Celeste's knowledge to venture the question as to what a dowry might be.) "And King Richard agreed to that; but it must just have been because he thought it would be a wise thing to do, for Isabel was only eight years old, and it would be so many years before she could really reign as a queen at all. But that's the way with kings and queens; they always have to do the things that's wise, no matter how they may feel about it, don't they?" for Marie-Celeste, to whom even the motives of royal conduct were of deepest interest, felt one could hardly ask for a more reliable source of information than the Queen's own mother.

"It is certainly true," said Her Majesty a little gravely, "that the rulers of a great country like England have often to set aside their own preferences; but these are better times than those in which the little Isabel lived, and the idea of a king marrying a little girl of eight, no matter for what reason, would hardly be tolerated now, you know."

"Oh, is that so?" with a look of real surprise, for Marie-Celeste's idea of royalty had come to her largely through her knowledge of the little Isabel; and her childish mind did not readily lend itself to the thought that royalty, as well as everything else in the world, was subject to change and possible improvement. Indeed, she did not care to realize anything of the sort, choosing, rather, to think of the Windsor of Isabel's time as much the same as the Windsor of

Victoria's, and she would have been not a little grieved and surprised had any one insisted on pointing out to her in how many, many ways the old differed from the new.

"But the beauty of it was," she continued, after meditating a moment over the Queen's answer, "that little Isabel was really a darling, and that the King called her 'his dear little sister,' and

"THE KING CALLED HER HIS DEAR LITTLE SISTER, AND REALLY LOVED HER."

really loved her; because sometimes kings and queens do not love each other at all."

"And sometimes they do;" and Her Majesty spoke so seriously, and with such a depth of earnestness, that Marie-Celeste, and Albert too, for that matter, looked up at her in wondering silence.

"But go on with the story, dear," the Queen added; "we shall make but slow progress if we allow too many interruptions."

"Well, it wasn't a bit strange that the King loved her, for even the King's men who were sent to bring her to England thought she was perfectly lovely, and indeed she was a most unusual little girl. They say that her father was very foolish, but good, and that her mother was wicked, but clever, and that the little Isabel was like her father for goodness and her mother for cleverness. And they say, too, that she was never twice alike; that sometimes she was grave and sedate as could be, and sometimes she was full of fun and frolic, but always so sweet and good and innocent that she was like a bright little star in those dark times, for there was war between England and France, and they say only the children can be light-hearted in war time."

"Have you any idea, Marie-Celeste, how this little Isabel looked?" asked the Queen, keeping the little jewelled case close covered in her hand.

"Oh, yes; I think I know exactly. She was fair, but her eyes were black, with dark lashes curling over them, for her grandmother was an Italian, you know; and her head was put on her shoulders in a pretty sort of way, and she had a cunning, sweet look on her face that just made people love her."

"Would you like to see her picture?" and the Queen, attempting to open the case she held in her hand, both the children were instantly bending over it.

"Se looks jus' as Marie-Celeste said," remarked Albert proudly, his sceptical spirit of the morning wholly transformed into one of profound admiration; and Marie-Celeste, asking that she might hold the case in her own hand, and gazing entranced upon the dear little face looking out at her, said joyfully, "Yes, she does look as I said, doesn't she?" Then she reverently laid the miniature back upon the Queen's lap, as though counting it quite too precious to be long out of royal keeping. "It seems to me now I can just see," she said, gazing fondly down at the picture where it lay, "the way she looked that day when the King's men went to bring her to England. One of them dropped on one knee and said, 'Madame, if God pleases, you shall be our Queen and lady;' and then she made a little courtesy like this, and answered without a word from anybody, 'Sir, if it please God and my lord and father, I shall be most happy, for I am told the Queen of England is a very great lady.'" Nothing could have

been prettier than the wholly unconscious way in which Marie-Celeste impersonated the grandeur and dignity of the little Isabel, courtesy and all; so that the Queen said admiringly, "My dear, you are a real

little queen yourself, and your kingdom must lie in the hearts of all who know you;" and Albert, anxious at once to acquit himself as most loyal of her subjects, shook his head emphatically and remarked, "Marie-Celeste is a daisy, and she ought to live in a castle jus' as fine

as anybody;" and then, to prove the wealth of his devotion, he threw his two arms around her waist, which was as high as he could reach, in most uncourtly fashion.

"Hush, Albert," said Marie-Celeste, blushingly pushing him from her, for this demonstration was as embarrassing as unexpected; "please go and sit down by Miss Belmore, for we are not half through, are we?" looking toward the Queen for confirmation of the fact.

"Why, no indeed! Little Isabel isn't even married yet, Albert;" and Albert climbed back, just as he had intended to do, to his seat beside Miss Belmore, but with the most supercilious smile on his little face, as though he, to whom story-telling was the most delightful thing in the world, did not know whether a story was finished or not. But no matter, he did not mind being misunderstood, even by the Queen's mother, if Marie-Celeste would only go on; and Marie-Celeste, as eager to talk as her listeners to hear, went on.

"And so it came about that they took the little Isabel to England, and Madame de Coucy, a lady whom Isabel dearly loved, came with her to be her governess; and next to Madame de Coucy, Isabel loved Simonette. Simonette was a poor little slave brought to France from one of the crusades, and I suppose they grew more fond of each other every day, because when they came to England both were so far away from their old home. On the way to England Richard came to meet the little Isabel at Calais, in France, and then she was escorted to London in fine style, and after that all her queen's fixings were taken off and she was brought here to this very Castle, that was to be her home, and everybody called her Madame La Petite Reine." Albert would have given a good deal to know what those French words meant, and wished he had not made such a row when his mother had once suggested a French bonne; but he would not betray his ignorance for anything, and Marie-Celeste was allowed to proceed uninterrupted.

"And here in this dear old Castle La Petite Reine had a beautiful time. She used to study with Madame de Coucy in the mornings and go for walks among the flowers out in the garden there in the afternoon, and way beyond it too sometimes, and Richard would often come down from London for a visit, and he taught her English courtly ways and to play the mandolin" (Albert looked significantly

toward the quaint mandolin, with a faded blue ribbon attached to it, that was lying among the other treasures on the table); "and when the King could not come for a regular visit, he would just ride down for a word and kiss. And so the time went by, and sometimes Isabel would go to hear the canons preach in St. George's, and sometimes she would watch the knights riding in the tilt-yard from one of the Castle windows; only sometimes, when one knight hurt another with his spear or tumbled him from his horse, so that he was carried away stunned and bleeding, she saw more than she wanted to see, and would not go near those windows again for days. And then at last there came a sad time for Isabel, for the King had decided he must go himself and take charge of his army, which was trying to put down an insurrection in Ireland. But before he rode away from Windsor Castle, he said he would have a great tournament in the tilt-yard in honor of St. George, and he had a beautiful green uniform made, and he was to carry the Queen's device of a little white falcon, and Isabel and her maids were to be present and give the crown to whichever knight should be victorious. But very few came to the tournament, for there were very few who really cared for the King, and it was all a failure, and the Castle seemed a very sad place for La Petite Reine, because the King was going away."

"And now," said Albert, appealing to the Queen, for he felt that quite too much was being taken for granted, "will you please tell me what is a tilt-yard? and what it was dat de knignts would not tome to? and what was dat little white ting of the Queen's dat de King carried?" and impatiently as Marie-Celeste brooked the interruption, there was nothing for it but to wait while Her Majesty explained that the tilt-yard was a sort of riding-school for the knights, where they practised for the tournaments, and that the tournaments were occasions when the knights, spear in hand, came together to ride against each other, with a great many people looking on, and when the one who unseated all those who rode against him won the prize. As for the little white thing of Isabel's, that was a falcon—that is, a pretty live white bird, which was Isabel's device or emblem; and when the King carried that he showed how he delighted to honor his own little child-queen.

"I would be glad if you would go on and tell the rest," said

Marie-Celeste; "all that happened afterward was so doleful I do not like to tell it."

"Well, let me think," said Her Majesty. "I doubt if I can get all that followed quite straight;" and then there was silence for a few moments.

"Will *somebody* please go on," remarked Albert, when he thought there had been quite enough time for thinking. The shadows were lengthening out there in the garden, and oh if they should have to go home before the story was done!

And then "somebody"—that is, the Queen—(who, as you know, was a good deal more of a *somebody* than Albert gave her credit for)—endeavored at once to allay the little fellow's impatience.

"I remember," she said, "how sad was the parting between the King and the little Queen! How he walked with her, hand in hand, from the Castle into the lower ward, at the head of a long procession of royal servants, and then into St. George's Chapel for a farewell service, and how they kneeled down before the altar, side by side, while the choir sang very sweetly. And then how he lifted the little Queen in his arms, for to him she was just a darling little sister, and kissed her over and over again, while she sobbed and sobbed, and begged him not to leave her all alone. After that he led her into the deanery—those are rooms set aside for different uses in connection with the chapel—and there he gave her a royal box of candies, and sat down and ate some with her, and tried to joke with her, and sipped a little wine, and then another long farewell, and he was gone, never to see the little Queen again."

"Which died?" asked Albert, in a hoarse whisper.

"Oh, neither of them died, dear; only as soon as Richard returned from Ireland he was taken prisoner by the English nobles and compelled to resign his crown, and so was never able to come back to claim his Castle or his little bride. But for all that Richard fared no worse than he deserved, for though he was kind and good to little Isabel, he was false and cruel to almost every one beside. Indeed, he was false to little Isabel too, for while he was still at Windsor he gave orders to have Madame de Coucy, whom Isabel loved as her own mother, dismissed and sent back to France soon after he should have gone, and he was not honest enough to tell little Isabel of the plan. But, as the old chronicles say,

'Madame de Coucy was a woman of spirit,' and when the time came refused to go. 'Holding her office from the King of France, she owned no master but the King of France;' and although driven from the Castle, she remained at Windsor, and succeeded in keeping up some connection with the little Queen. And now the misfortunes of the poor little Isabel followed thick and fast. The partings from Richard and her governess Madame de Coucy, had thrown the child into a fever, and Richard's uncle, the Duke of York, in whose care she had been left, was at his wit's ends to know what to do. Meantime, Henry Bolingbroke, a nephew of Richard's, and a brave prince, had landed in England, and the people, who loved him, were ready to receive him and make him King in Richard's place. And now the Duke of York, fearing that Windsor was no longer a safe place for the little Queen, moved her to a castle called Wallingford, which had been built only for defence, and was stronger than Windsor. But it was all to no purpose. Everything gave way before the march of Henry Bolingbroke and his army. Windsor surrendered to a blast of trumpets, and a few days later the little Queen was yielded up a captive into Henry's hands, and was carried with faithful Simonette, her Saracen maid, to the Castle of Ledes; but Ledes, fortunately, proved to be a beautiful castle, with a large garden, and she was not treated harshly or unkindly. Madame de Coucy, meanwhile, started for France post-haste, and was the first to carry the news to the court of Charles that Madame Isabel had been captured and dethroned, and then you may be sure all France was up in arms, as they say, in a moment, threatening to avenge La Petite Reine. But, notwithstanding the threats of the French, nothing could be done at once to release the little Queen, and so it was a comfort to know that all this while Henry was caring for her welfare most kindly."

At this point in the story the Queen, fearing that the long page from history might prove wearying to even so eager a little listener as Albert, suggested to Miss Belmore to bring some of the treasures from the table that they might have a closer look at them.

"And was this her very own?" asked Marie-Celeste, handling the mandolin with reverent touch—"the very one on which Richard taught her to play?"

"Yes," said Miss Belmore; "and this pretty dress"—holding up

"'And was this her ver[illegible] own?' asked Marie-Celeste, handling the mandolin with reverent touch."

the little short-waisted gown of lace and satin—" was the one she wore that day Richard took his last leave of her in the deanery of St. George's Chapel."

"Only to think," Marie-Celeste said solemnly, "that I should hold in my own hands things that belonged to the little Isabel! Mr. Belden never guessed when he told me all about her on the steamer such a wonder would come to pass. I wish he could know about it some day."

"But who has kept all dese old tings so long, and how old are dey anyway?" asked more practical Albert, inspecting with curious, critical gaze a little necklace of hammered gold and silver which Miss Belmore had dropped into his lap as one of the few treasures his rather inquisitive touch would not damage.

"The keepers of the wardrobe, one after another, have cared for them carefully, Albert, for nearly five hundred years," Miss Belmore explained; "and it is only by a special order from the Queen that they can ever be taken out of the precious chest where they are stored for a single moment, except twice a year or so, to be cleaned and brushed."

"And did the Queen give a special order for us to-day?" asked Marie-Celeste, more impressed than ever with the greatness of their privileges.

"Certainly, my dear."

"Well, de Queen's a daisy too, den," ventured Albert, who, alas! was no respecter of persons.

"Hush, Albert," said Marie-Celeste, blushing, but very thankful that Miss Belmore and the Queen's mother seemed more amused than shocked; and then she added, amid deeper blushes, "Oh, will you please tell Her Majesty for me that I never could thank her enough, never?"

"Well, what happened to her next?" asked Albert, for there was no telling when the story would ever go on again, if Marie-Celeste was allowed to indulge too freely in these sentimental flights of hers.

Her Majesty waited a moment, hoping Marie-Celeste would take up the thread of the story, which she did almost unconsciously.

"Oh, she had a dreadful time, Albert. Richard left her in the care of a man named Huntington, and I don't believe there ever

was a man so bad as he. Why, when Henry Bolingbroke was made king he had pardoned this Huntington, though he had been as untrue to Henry as he could be, because he was his sister's husband. But no sooner was he pardoned than he laid a deep plot with some other men as wicked as himself to overpower the King. As part of the plan, they were going to surprise Windsor Castle; and Huntington, if you will believe it, hoped to murder the four sons of Henry with his own hand; and they did march on Windsor Castle, but not before Henry and his sons had heard of the dreadful plan and ridden safely away. But Huntington could not believe that they had gone, and they searched everywhere in the castle here for them, and he was so angry at not finding them, that he let his soldiers in and they stove in doors and tore down curtains and cut up furniture and carried off silver, so that in five hours the castle was ruined."

"Is that true?" whispered Albert to Miss Belmore. It seemed so incredible that Windsor Castle, with its present state and grandeur, could ever have been in such a sorry plight.

"Only too true, dear. There would be many more priceless treasures in the castle to-day but for the untold mischief of that terrible morning."

Marie-Celeste waited with a decidedly martyr-like air till this inexcusable whispering was through with, chiming in again at the first opportunity. "And then what did the wretch do but hurry to little Isabel, and tell her that he had freed Richard from the Tower, and that he would soon be king again; so that Isabel was glad to go with Huntington. But it was all a lie, for Huntington simply wanted to have Isabel for his own prisoner instead of Henry Bolingbroke's. And so the poor little thing was right in Huntington's camp, among his rough soldiers; and what was worse, as soon as Huntington found himself in a tight place, and had to fly for his life, he deserted her, and Henry Bolingbroke's men came and carried her up to London, and then she was Henry's prisoner once more. But Huntington got what he deserved at last" (and the smile of grim satisfaction with which Marie-Celeste adorned the statement showed how simply enormous to even her childish mind seemed the crimes of the fiendish Huntington), "for after he deserted Isabel he fell into the hands of some peasants, who knew what a

wretch he was, and who took him and drove a chopper through his neck, and so made an end of him. And then what did King Henry do but decide that it would be a good thing for England to keep friends with France, if that were possible; and so he said, 'The Pope shall say Isabel is no longer the wife of Richard, and I will marry her to my son Harry.' Of course everybody thought that would suit little Isabel well enough, for Harry was tall and handsome, just Isabel's age, and would make a fine man some day; but Isabel would not hear of such a thing. She still loved the weak, bad man, older than her own father, who had fed her on sugar-plums, called her his little sister, fingered her mandolin, and sung with her at morning mass. Then besides her own feeling, the French themselves did not seem to want to be friendly with England, or to have Isabel stay here; and so at last she was sent back to her own people, and she died at Blois in France, when she was only twenty years old."

"And—and now I think dat's a very sad an' interestin' story;" and Albert, pondering over the remarkable tale, shook his head gravely from side to side.

"And the saddest part," said Her Majesty, "is that there would probably have been no Joan of Arc nor Agincourt nor siege of Rouen if only the little Isabel had chanced to fancy the little Prince Hal."

Agincourt and the siege of Rouen were only names to the children's ears. But there was time for no more questions; the flower garden was almost all in shadow now, and besides it had occurred even to Albert that the "old lady" might be growing a little tired.

"We have had a beautiful time," said Marie-Celeste, with a sigh, as though unable to give full expression to her appreciation; "but I hope we haven't stayed too long;" and then, as though reluctant to take final leave of the little Isabel, she added: "Don't you think it is more comfortable just to be one of the people, and be a regular little girl, and grow up always near your mother, like other children?"

"Yes; there must be some nice things about belonging to the people," Her Majesty replied, smiling; "but then, you know that poor little Isabel's history was very unusual, and that many little princes and princesses have grown up near their mothers, as you

and Albert have, and have been just regular little children for ever so many years."

"Dat's good," said Albert, apparently immensely relieved to have his fears as to the general fate of princes and princesses removed.

Meantime, Miss Belmore had brought their hats, and after a most friendly parting with their kindly hostess and her lady-in-waiting, the children were conducted to another doorway from the

"We are in one of the Queen's own carriages."

one by which they had entered. There one of the court carriages, with a gallant outrider, stood in waiting, and the footman, after receiving directions as to the whereabouts of the Little Castle, sprang to his place, and they were off.

"To think, Albert," said Marie-Celeste, turning on Albert the moment the door was closed, and seizing his little wrist by way of emphasis, "we are in one of the Queen's own carriages, and we've been spending the day—spending the day, Albert, in Windsor Castle."

"Nes," said Albert complacently; "we must do aden."

There was time for scarcely more than this before the carriage wheeled up at Canon Allyn's, and Albert was safely landed at his own door, and another three minutes brought it to the Little Castle.

Harold, conjecturing that the children might be sent home in this courtly fashion, was on hand on the steps to receive the favored recipients of royal hospitality.

"I suppose you feel too high and mighty to speak to a fellow," he said. "I don't believe you'll ever get over it, Marie-Celeste."

"Well, we have had a magnificent day"—allowing herself to be detained for a moment, notwithstanding her eagerness to rush straight to the bosom of her family—"we spent the whole afternoon with the Queen's mother."

"The Queen's mother! Marie-Celeste, she's been dead ever so many years."

"Who was she, then?" almost angrily; "she was an old lady."

"The Queen herself, of course."

"The Queen an old lady?"

"Why not? She has a host of grandchildren."

"But she wore no crown, Harold."

"Oh, you goosey, of course not! She does not put her crown on once in an age. Who told you she was the Queen's mother?"

"Only Albert, Harold;" and then realizing at a bound Albert's positive genius for jumping to wrong conclusions, Marie-Celeste leaned against the door from very weakness.

"Marie-Celeste," said Harold, who, like other boys, was rather inclined to rub a thing in, "it's the very best joke I have heard in all my life."

"You are very unkind, Harold," answered Marie-Celeste accusingly. "It is the most mortifying thing that ever happened, if she really was the Queen;" and then, trying to gather a little new courage, she added, "but I am not going to believe it till I have to. There must be a mistake somewhere. The lady we saw is not one bit like the pictures or the statues;" and yet all the time Marie-Celeste felt that she was clinging to a forlorn hope. During their stay at the castle there had been an occasional exchange of glances between their royal hostess and Miss Belmore and a frequent

amused look in their eyes, which she had been at a loss to account for; but this would explain it all. Ah, yes! she knew almost to a certainty that their long talk about Petite Reine of other days had been with none other than La Grande Reine of to-day, and the crimes of the dreadful Huntington seemed hardly worse, for the moment, than that of that most audacious Albert!

CHAPTER XV.

A DARING SUGGESTION.

It was a close foggy morning in London, and Mr. Everett Belden, having breakfasted a whole hour earlier than usual, stood gazing out upon the street from one of the windows of the Reform Club. It is two months now since we let him go his lonely way from the steamer; and this may surprise you, for what with the doings up at Windsor and the complications in the cottage at Nuneham, you may not have kept any track of the time. None the less is it true that in all this while we have not given so much as a thought to Mr. Belden or to aught that concerns him; and for all I know it is just as well. The little "buttons" who keeps guard during the day at the door of the Reform Club and the smartly liveried Irishman who takes his place at night would both tell you

that Mr. Belden has come in and out all the while with great regularity, having his saddle horse brought around at precisely the same hour every clear morning, and going out for a walk at precisely the same hour every afternoon. There is no evidence that in all these weeks he has been of the least real use to anybody, or that, notwithstanding his recent encounter with a little girl who had set him thinking rather seriously for a time, he had in any way altered or modified his selfish way of living. They are creatures of habit these self-centred old bachelors, and it takes a great deal to start them out along any new line of action, and doubly so when, like Mr. Belden, they do not know what it is to feel buoyantly well and strong. And so to all outward appearances there was no change whatever in this particular old bachelor, and the little sermon Marie-Celeste had unconsciously preached on the steamer and the reading of the "Story of a Short Life" had only given him a glimpse of what a noble thing life might be, without awakening any real determination to make his own life noble. But outward appearances, as often happens, are not by any means the infallible things the world would have us believe, and deep down in Mr. Belden's heart had dropped a little seed of unrest that made itself felt that sultry August morning; not but that his heart was all unrest for that matter, for there is no restlessness in the world like the restlessness of doing nothing; but this little seed was of a new and different character, and with such power of growth in it that, tiny though it was, it finally compelled Mr. Belden to take it into account.

"How queer it is," he said to himself, "that I should feel constrained in this way to run out to Windsor! Land knows! I have no desire to come to be on intimate terms of acquaintance with Evelyn's boys; and what would be the satisfaction of prowling around just to see where they live? Their father gave me up after that time he spoke his mind so freely about my aimless life—as he was pleased to call it—and there is no reason whatever why I should bother myself about my sister's children, since she, poor thing! is dead and gone, and they have enough of this world's goods to make them comfortable. But I would give—yes, I would give a great deal for another glimpse of that child Marie-Celeste—for another talk with her, too, before she goes sailing back to the States, if only that were possible without my coming in contact with any

of the rest of the household. Well, there seems to be nothing for it but to go to Windsor to-day, for it looks as though I should not get the best of this state of mind till I do." Then he turned from the window, put on his coat, which was lying in readiness beside him, strolled out from the club, called for a hansom, directing the driver to take him to the station, and never for one minute admitted to himself that he had risen a whole hour earlier in order to do this very thing, or that he was acting on any stronger impulse than that of a passing fancy, born of the midsummer day, and desire for a little variety. So, out to Windsor he went, and choosing from among the carriages at the depot one that was manned by a respectable-looking old party, took his place on the front seat beside him, remarking that he had simply come down to see the town, and would first like to drive about for an hour.

The driver, judging from Mr. Belden's faultless attire and distinguished bearing, had rated him at once as one of those high and mighty Londoners, and had expected that he would of course entrench himself on the back seat of the little turnout and, preserving a dignified silence, condescendingly allow himself to be driven about and to be very much bored into the bargain—all of which, it must be confessed, would have been more in keeping with Mr. Belden's usual manner of conducting himself. To-day, however, he had an axe to grind, and the friendly intercourse of the front seat would prove more conducive to the end in view.

"Ever been 'ere before?" questioned the coachman, ready to prove himself friendly with the friendly.

"I was at Eton half a term when a boy, but I didn't take to the old place, and cut and run away the first chance."

'And 'aven't you 'ad any schoolin' since, sir?"

"Oh, yes; I tutored awhile at home—just enough to wriggle my way into Cambridge; and I studied just enough there to get my degree—no more, I can tell you. I have been one of those fellows who didn't believe in taking unnecessary trouble."

"You look it," said the man honestly.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Belden, thinking he was willing to face the music.

"Well, you 'ave a lazy, listless sort of look—begging your pardon,

sir—like most of those men who loaf their lives away at the clubs up in London."

Mr. Belden naturally felt irritated at the fellow's blunt honesty, but there was no sense in resenting a state of affairs which he had deliberately brought down upon himself.

"You look the perfect gentleman, all the same," added the man; and endeavoring to extract a grain of comfort from this last remark, Mr. Belden thought best to change the subject.

"Do you happen to know," he asked quite casually, "of any people here in Windsor named Harris?"

"Oh, yes, sir; there are two young gentlemen named 'Arris, whose mother died two years back, living in the Little Castle. Do you know them, sir?"

"I know of them."

"Would you like to call there, sir?"

"No; I'd rather like to see the house, though."

"It's a 'alf a mile back, sir, near the big Castle. We can take it in on our way 'ome."

"No; turn round; if it's all the same to you we'll go there now;" and this last a little gruffly; for one has to be a good deal of a philosopher to continue on the friendliest of terms with a man that has just informed you that you look listless and lazy.

The driver was rather surprised at Mr. Belden's changed mood, but the little carriage was turned round promptly in obedience to orders, and the old horse whipped into a canter.

"Don't do that," said Mr. Belden sharply; "there's no need to hurry;" and the horse was instantly jerked down to a pace more in accordance with his own ideas of comfort and propriety.

"Tell me what you know about these Harris boys," said Mr. Belden imperiously.

"I'm not in the way to know much, sir"—preferring to be civil at any cost than to lose the probable extra shilling "the young un is an Eton boy, and the older one studies up to Hoxford. The old un's a tough un, they say, but he seems a decent enough sort of fellow."

"Does the young one live alone here at Windsor?"

"Don't know about that, sir; but I've 'eard they 'ave some com-

pany from the States this summer. That's the house yonder, with the pretty terrace and the tower. They calls it the Little Castle."

Mr. Belden looked in the direction indicated, and—could he believe his eyes!—was there not a familiar little figure coming leisurely down the path from the Little Castle, which when it reached the gate in the hedgerow turned in the same direction as they were driving?

"Whip up," ordered Mr. Belden impatiently, for he wanted to be a little more sure in the matter. Yes, it was certainly Marie-Celeste. There was no mistaking the free, quick step nor the alert bearing.

"Stop!" commanded Mr. Belden, and the carriage came to a standstill with paralyzing abruptness. "Now, turn your wheel and let me out. There's your money."

Instantly perceiving that he had been generously compensated, the man smiled an appreciative "Thank you," and then watched Mr. Belden stride up the street, with the conclusion that he was "a little off;" but the more "off" the better, he thought, if it meant three half-crowns for a drive of a quarter of an hour.

Marie-Celeste walked briskly on up the hill, and Mr. Belden would have given three half-crowns more with a will to any one who could have told him where she was going. He would prefer to come across her more by accident apparently than by running to catch up with her, and when so near, too, to the Little Castle as to suggest that he had probably come to Windsor purposely to see her. If she should happen to turn in at some house, he decided he would try to intercept her before she rang the bell, so that they might have at least a few moments' chat, but otherwise he would bide his time a little while and see what came of it. She had a sort of portfolio under her arm; it was not unlikely she was going to some lesson or other, and if so, alas! where would the chat come in? But, as you and I happen to know, nothing was farther from Marie-Celeste's thought that happy summer, withal she was learning so much, than any idea of lessons, and on she went till she vanished from sight through one of the castle gates. Then Mr. Belden quickened his steps, and arrived at the inner side of the same gate just in time to see her disappear within St. George's Chapel.

"Which way did that little girl go?" he asked of the sexton, who was vigorously burnishing a brass memorial tablet just within the doorway of the chapel.

"Do you mean Marie-Celeste, sir?"

"Yes;" but naturally wondering that the man should know her name.

"DO YOU MEAN MARIE CELESTE SIR?"

"You are likely to find her right in there, sir," indicating the direction by a nod of his head. "She was coming in some day to copy off part of the inscription from the Prince Imperial's tomb."

So this old sexton and Marie-Celeste were evidently on the best of terms, and the child, with her genius for making friends, was probably in the confidence of half of Windsor by this time; and Mr. Belden selfishly wished she would not be so indiscriminate in her friendships.

The "right in there" of the sexton evidently referred to Braye Chapel, within a few feet of the door by which he had entered; and glancing in through the open-work carving of the partition enclosing it, he discovered Marie-Celeste seated on a cushion on the floor, her back against the wall, busily writing away on the portfolio on her lap.

Mr. Belden moved noiselessly to the doorway, and stood unobserved, looking down upon her for several seconds, until glancing up for the next sentence in the inscription, she suddenly beheld him.

"Why, Mr. Belden!" she cried, transfixed with surprise; "how long have you been there, and wherever did you come from?"

"I have been here about a minute, I should say, and I ran out from London this morning to take a look at old Windsor, and, you see, I have had the good fortune, as I half hoped I should, to run across my little steamer friend."

"But you wouldn't have come down to Windsor without coming to see me, Mr. Belden?" and Marie-Celeste, suddenly realizing that her position was not the most dignified in the world, shut the portfolio together and stood up to receive him in more courteous fashion.

"Well, to be quite honest, Marie-Celeste," for the half-truths of conventional acquaintance did not enter into this friendship, "I think I might; I'm nothing of a hand at calling, you know, but I'm awfully glad, I can tell you, to have met you just in this way, only you mustn't let me interrupt you. You keep right on with your copying, and I'll wander about till you've finished."

"Oh, I had so much rather show you the chapel," Marie-Celeste said eagerly. "I can finish the copying any time, and I know about it almost as well as the vergers themselves—*will* you let me?" evidently afraid that he would express a preference for a professional guide.

"Well, I can't imagine anything more delightful;" for which cordial endorsement Marie-Celeste blushed her thanks.

"Well," she said, very much impressed with the dignity of the opportunity afforded her, "suppose we commence right here with this monument to the Prince Imperial. Of course you will have to let me tell you which are my favorites, and this is one of them. Somehow it seems to me the very saddest monument in all the

chapel; but I think it was beautiful in Queen Victoria to have it placed here out of sympathy for the poor French Empress, who had lost everything—husband and kingdom, and, last of all, this brave son; for I think he must have been brave, don't you, Mr. Belden? The same sort of bravery that Leonard—you remember the 'Story of a Short Life,' don't you?"

"I do, indeed."

"Well, I mean the same sort of bravery that Leonard would have shown if he had lived to grow up, as he so longed to do, to be a soldier like the Prince. And yet Leonard was just as brave in his own way, wasn't he? It was the prayer that the Prince wrote in his mass-book that I was copying; it is very beautiful, isn't it?"

There was no need for Mr. Belden to do aught but look and listen, and drop a word of assent now and then, when Marie-Celeste saw fit to impart her information in a somewhat interrogative form; and in this way they went on from monument to monument, giving of course but a passing glance to many and stopping longest, by tacit agreement, at those which had some special charm or attraction for Marie-Celeste.

"This is one of my greatest favorites," she exclaimed enthusiastically, as they came to the late Dean Wellesley's monument, in the north aisle; and she stood in rapt admiration looking down at the beautiful recumbent figure. "Isn't that a glorious face, Mr. Belden?" she said in an earnest, low voice; "and I love what it says about him here on the side—'*Trained* in a school of duty and honor'—because his face bears it out, Mr. Belden. It shows, I think, how noble he must have been through and through all his life long."

"What a little hero-worshipper you are, Marie-Celeste," said Mr. Belden, looking kindly and thoughtfully down at her glowing face.

"Well," replied Marie-Celeste as thoughtfully, "I don't see how anybody can help being a hero-worshipper, and doing all they can to be heroes themselves."

"Well, some people do, Marie-Celeste—I have helped it all my life somehow."

"Yes; I remember you told me something like that on the steamer; but it's a great pity, and it seems to me—"

"What seems to you?" for Marie-Celeste hesitated.

"Are you sure you will not mind, for I only mean to be friendly?"

"Surely I will not mind."

"Well, then, it seems to me I would try to be a hero at one great jump, to make up for all the lost time."

"And how would you manage it, Marie-Celeste?"

"I believe I would begin to think out some beautiful thing to do with my money before I died."

"There is a great deal in what you say, dear child," Mr. Belden replied earnestly, "and I will think about it; and yet, do you know, I would not have let anybody else in the world make that suggestion to me;" but significant as this last remark was intended to be, Marie-Celeste, to Mr. Belden's surprise, paid little heed to it; for what difference did that make, so long as, without taking offence, he had allowed her to tell him what was for his own good?

"Isn't this a beautiful inscription?" she said, pausing for a moment before the monument of George V., the last king of Hanover. "They say he was blind, and that after his death his kingdom became just a part of Germany, and that is the reason they wrote here, 'Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved,' and, 'In thy light shall he see light.'"

And so the tour of the chapel was at last made; and although his little guide had omitted much historical detail that the professional would have furnished, she had put in with telling force many little points of her own.

When they reached the doorway of the chapel, Mr. Belden stood watch in hand, for he had decided he would take the two-o'clock train back to London, while Marie-Celeste ran on telling how Donald had gone to stay with Chris at Nuneham, and various other matters about Ted and Harold that were of more interest to Mr. Belden than she had any idea of. Finally, in breathless, excited fashion, she told of the visit to the Queen she and Albert had made, and of how she had handled with her own hands treasures that had belonged to Madame La Petite Reine. Of course it seemed almost incredible, but then the "incredible" was coming to seem rather a part of Marie-Celeste's make-up in Mr. Belden's mind. At last, when he felt that he must not delay another moment, he took leave of her, saying as he went, "Well, as usual you have set me thinking,

my little friend," but as though he were grateful for the same; and Marie-Celeste, turning back to finish the copying of the Prince Imperial's prayer, wondered in her practical little way if anything would come of the thinking, and if so, if she would ever happen to hear what it was; and yet at the same time not a little sceptical as to any tangible result whatsoever.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIE-CELESTE'S DISCOVERY.

DOROTHY.

EVERYTHING was ready for the start, but no one knew how much that meant as well as Harold and Uncle Fritz, for they had thought of nothing else for three whole weeks together. The others would find out by degrees what a delightful thing it was to have had everything so carefully arranged and well thought out beforehand. The start was to be for the English Lake Country, and the being ready meant that everything that could by any possibility be needed on a month's driving tour had been carefully stowed away somewhere. It was a select little party of six—Uncle Fritz and Aunt Lou, Marie-Celeste, Miss Allyn, Harold and Mr. Farwell, a young American artist whom Uncle Fritz had come to know. Mr. Farwell was invited, if the truth be told, more to fill up than for any other reason; for three in a row is the invariable rule for an English break, unless you are willing to be shaken about rather more than is by any means agreeable. The back seat was reserved for the two grooms, and a bundle of wraps and rugs strapped to the cushion between them showed that they at any rate recognized the desirability of not having too much room at their disposal. The break that was brought into requisition belonged to

Theodore, and was simply appropriated by Harold, for there was no saying "by your leave" to a fellow who went driving through the country himself without even taking the pains to enlighten you as to his whereabouts.

"Who knows but we shall meet him somewhere?" thought Harold, knowing that Ted's trip was also to be through the English Lakes; "and if we do, I'll give him another piece of my mind, for he's been more than rude to Aunt Lou and Uncle Fritz, never putting himself out the least bit for them. Oh, if Ted were only a different sort of fellow! He ought to be the sixth one in this party instead of Mr. Farwell. But, heigho! it would be a shame to let Ted spoil this trip for me, and I'm not going to think of him again—that is, if I can help it—unless we happen to meet."

Harold was indulging in this meditation as he stood waiting by the break for the rest of the party, for thinking comes very easy when one has nothing to do; but wise are the folk, big or little, who, like Harold, resolve to banish uncomfortable thoughts from the mind when convinced that thinking is not in the least likely to better them.

Of course, as you may imagine, there was one little heart sadly rebellious and envious over the setting out of this happy party. "Not quite big enough to fill up," was the chief excuse given; but the little Knight of the Garter knew full well that he was considered too small every way to be for one moment taken into the calculation. Oh, what would he not have given if only his arrival in this world might have been timed in closer proximity to Harold's and Marie-Celeste's—it was such an insupportable thing to be seven long years behind! But, all the same, his time would come, and his litt e envious heart secretly cherished the revengeful hope that he, in turn, might have the grim satisfaction of informing other young hopefuls that their extreme youth and diminutive proportions excluded them from participating in this or that pleasure to which his riper age entitled him, all of which unknightly and most unchristian sentiments we trust will be put to rout when he comes to years of discretion. But this aside about Albert has been merely by way of parenthesis while the party from the Little Castle are mounting the steps to the break, and stowing themselves away in their places. Uncle Fritz, who had spent all his boyhood on a New England farm near Franconia, and

taken many a trip on a White Mountain coach by the side of an indulgent driver, had early mastered the secret of competent four-in-hand driving, and was therefore first to take his seat on the driver's almost perpendicular cushion. Next to him sat Harold, who could also manage the four-in-hand whenever Uncle Fritz thought best to resign in his favor, and next to Harold, Marie-Celeste, grateful for the arrangement that accorded to her a seat on the outside edge. On the middle seat Aunt Lou sat alone in solemn grandeur, but only until they could cover the little distance to the White Hart Inn to take aboard Mr. Farwell, and then wheel round to Canon Allyn's for Dorothy.

Dorothy Allyn was standing in the doorway ready and expectant, and looking as pretty as a picture in a gray costume and a hat with a wide-rolling brim, that in her case was vastly becoming. Albert's disconsolate face was pressed close to a window-pane, which was as near as he cared to come to such a joyous company. Marie-Celeste declared she could almost see the lump in the poor little fellow's throat, and the recollection of the utter hopelessness of the teary brown eyes lingered rather sadly for a while in the memory of all of the party.

But who could long be grave at the outset of so promising an expedition! The idea of a leisurely driving trip through the lovely Lake Country, stopping here and there, as the spirit moved them, at the comfortable little inns and hotels that abound in the region, had been such a supremely delightful idea, even in mere anticipation, that now that they were actually off enthusiasm knew no bounds, and mirth was literally unconfined. Not that any very remarkable things were said, but one can laugh very easily, you know, and at almost nothing, when one's heart is light as a feather and the "goose hangs high," as the queer old saying has it.

And yet for all that, to all those happy hearts there might have been added one extra touch still of lightness. Mr. Farwell was no doubt a most desirable addition, and all were delighted that he could come; but the place belonged by rights to Ted—wilful, wandering, selfish Ted, who might have added so much to their pleasure if he had not chosen to turn his back upon them all and prefer any company in the world, apparently, to that of kith and kin and old friends at Windsor. The thought and half hope that they might meet him

somewhere on the trip was in every mind but one. Dorothy knew better. Dorothy knew a great deal, in fact, for her brother Harry had made one surreptitious visit home; that is, he had arrived by night and left again by night, and no one outside of his own family had been a bit the wiser. And during that visit Harry, under pledge of perfect secrecy on the pait of his mother and Dorothy, had told them everything.

"You see, the reason why I want you to keep so dark about it all," Harry had explained, "is because of Ted. I believe the fellow's just as ashamed of this last year at Oxford as I am, but you know, Dorothy, as well as I do (as, alas! Dorothy did know to her sorrow), that Ted's awfully touchy and sensitive, and it takes a very little thing to turn him one way or the other. Well, now, let Harold, who is pretty well out of the notion of Ted already, come to hear of this last scrape, and, youngster as he is, I believe he'd throw him over; and Ted, you know, wouldn't stand any nonsense of that sort and would tell Harold 'to go his own way and welcome,' and who knows what the upshot of that would be! If Ted does not feel he must make an effort to lead a different sort of life for Harold's sake, he may come to the conclusion that the thing's not worth trying. You see, you can't feel sure about a fellow's good resolutions till you have had a chance to test them, and Ted's haven't had to stand any strain as yet."

Now, to know all this was naturally a great comfort to Harry's mother and sister, for they had of course been not a little anxious on Harry's own account at the way things seemed to be going; but there was one thing they were content not to know for a while—for the reason that Harry strongly urged it—and that was where he and Ted were staying. There need be no difficulty on this account about their writing, because letters could be forwarded promptly from Oxford, whereas if they were able to say where Harry was, then Ted would have to be accounted for, too, and there was no telling where that would end. Now, this narration is simply by way of telling you how Dorothy had come to know that there was no sort of use in hoping to come across the two seniors, who, like themselves, were supposed to be enjoying all the delights of driving through the English Lake Country.

It had been decided that Oxford was to be the first stopping-

place of the driving party, and quite a stop it was to be. Mr. and Mrs. Harris and Mr. Farwell had never been there, and they planned to spend at least two days prowling about the dear old colleges. But Marie-Celeste and Harold had a scheme on foot in comparison with which all the colleges put together could not offer the least attraction. They were to be permitted to go down early Saturday

"HE WAS JUST A DARLING."

morning to Nuneham, take Chris and Donald by surprise, and spend the whole day with them. Why, that plan in itself was worth all the rest of the trip; and when Mr. Harris, to whom the idea had first occurred, suggested it, Marie-Celeste had put her two arms round her father's neck, declaring "he was just a darling;" and yet, when you come to think of it, he was the very same old cur-

mudgeon of a papa, and not one whit altered either, who had been so soundly berated for insisting that it would be better for Donald to have some easy work to do than to idle away the whole summer. Ah, well! the little Queen had deeply repented that sorry episode; and endeavoring ourselves to forget it, let us agree never again so much as to allude to it.

So down to Nuneham they went bright and early Saturday morning, and, feeling fine as a lark, or as two larks, to speak more correctly, they preferred doing the walking themselves over the mile and a half out from Nuneham to engaging a most unpromising horse attached to a little carry-all to do it for them. They would at least seem to be getting over the ground at a faster rate, and be able to work off considerable superfluous energy into the bargain. And it was really marvellous how soon they reached their destination. Far too excited to converse by the way, every breath was reserved for the exertion of walking, and so it happened that they made almost the best time on record. And when they reached the cottage, or rather the little lane that runs down between the hedgerows, who did they see at once but Chris himself, busy at work in the garden, and Donald, hoe in hand, close beside him, cutting vigorously at the weeds round some hop-vines, and both working away with such a will and such a farmer-like air that it looked as though both had mistaken their calling. But working with a will sometimes means nothing more than determination to do one's duty; and from what we happen to know, Chris would much have preferred setting cheerily forth on his round in Uncle Sam's far-away city, and Donald was probably dreaming of the blue boundless sea and the steamer ploughing its way in the teeth of a driving nor'easter. But wherever their thoughts may have been, they instantly both stopped thinking, for first they heard the familiar bugle-call of the steamer ring out on the air in the clearest sort of a whistle; and then—could they believe their eyes?—there stood Marie-Celeste and Harold right before them on the other side of the hawthorn.

"Well, I never!" cried Chris, and in one bound was over the hedgerow.

"My eyes!" was Donald's surprised exclamation, and then he took to his heels and ran to the cottage as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Mr. Harris," he panted, with what little breath his run had left

him, "your brother has come—he's just out in the lane there with Marie-Celeste, and they'll both be right in here in a minute."

' What stuff you are talking, Donald," for Ted could not believe his ears.

" It's the truth, sir, and you've only a minute, unless you want to see him;" but it was so very plain that Ted didn't want to see him, that Donald, who more fully took in the need for haste, pressed Ted's hat and cane into his hand, and then throwing open one of the shutters of the back windows of his room, helped him to make the best possible time getting through it. It was rather heroic treatment for a convalescent, who was barely equal as yet to even commonplace modes of proceeding, but there was nothing else to be done if the secret was still to be kept.

" Go down to the big apple-tree in the corner of the meadow," directed Donald, half under his breath, " and, look here! you had better take this with you," dragging a steamer rug from the couch, and flinging it out after him, " and I'll come down just as soon as ever I can and let you know how things are going;" and then Donald drew the shutters noiselessly to and sped back to the lane at as tight a run as he had left it. All this was accomplished in less time than it takes to tell it, and Donald found the children still chatting with Chris in the lane. Chris, having instantly surmised the object of Donald's disappearance, determined that he should have all the time needed; and nothing was easier, under conditions that called naturally for so many explanations, than to engage the children in such an absorbing conversation on the spot as to make no move toward the cottage; but the ring of Donald's feet on the path was the signal that it was safe to lead the way in that direction.

" Well, you are glad to see a fellow," said Harold, "to take to your heels and run in that fashion the moment you spied us."

" There was something I suddenly remembered that I had to see to that very minute," stammered Donald, shaking hands with Marie-Celeste and Harold at one and the same moment; " but you may just believe I'm glad to see you;" and the warmth of Donald's welcome fully atoned for the few moments of unexplained delay.

" Did you tell Granny they had come, Donald?" asked Chris, his face fairly beaming at the thought of being able to actually introduce Marie-Celeste to the dear old grandmother.

"No; I stopped for nothing more than I just had to," said Donald honestly; but Mrs. Hartley, who had been busy in the kitchen wing of the little cottage, and had not heard the commotion in Ted's room, but had happened to catch sight of Donald's flying heels, had come out to see what the matter was.

"Why, you don't tell me this is Marie-Celeste?" she said, putting one hand on Marie-Celeste's shoulder and looking gladly down at the sunny, upturned face. "Why, do you know," she said, shaking hands with Harold as she spoke, "you have succeeded, I am sure, in giving Chris the very best surprise in all his life."

"That they have, Granny," said Chris warmly; "and they're not going back till late this afternoon, and we're going to make a beautiful day of it."

And a beautiful day of it they made; and early in the afternoon Marie-Celeste made something beautiful besides, quite on her own account—nothing else than the discovery which gives its name to this chapter, and which happened to be a beautiful discovery, because it was the means of making somebody take new heart and see things in general in a newer and truer light.

They had been together the entire morning—all the little household, with the exception of the gentleman who, Donald had explained, had met with the accident, and who had gone off for the day. Donald had previously whispered to Mrs. Hartley that Ted was down under the big apple-tree, not feeling much like talking or caring to meet their unexpected company. You see, Donald, having been taken so unreservedly into Ted's confidence, had turned into a thorough diplomat, and had determined to aid and abet his plans in every possible way. Indeed, from what he himself knew of Harold's intense nature, he felt very sure that it would be far wiser and safer that he should never know of all that had happened—not, at any rate, unless Ted, having had a chance to prove the strength of his new resolutions, chose some day himself to tell him. Harold was so proud and Ted was so proud they simply mustn't come together yet awhile if it could in any way be helped. But we must not let this little aside about Donald's attitude toward the whole affair take another moment of our thoughts, for more important and vastly more interesting matters are awaiting our attention.

Of course it goes without saying with those of us who have come

to know Mrs. Hartley, that as regal a little dinner was served for the guests from Royal Windsor as the larder of the cottage could afford; but to Martha was due all the praise of actual performance. Mrs. Hartley simply took her knitting, and sat the entire morning right in the midst of the little party just outside the cottage-door.

"You must manage somehow," she had said seriously to Martha; "I must see all I can of Chris's little Marie-Celeste to-day, for you know it is hardly likely, Martha, that I shall ever see her again."

"I'm quite sure I can manage, Mrs. Hartley," the little maid said proudly, confident that her long apprenticeship had made her fully equal to the occasion, and inwardly rejoicing in the full sense of responsibility.

At the exact hour agreed upon as the best time for dinner, the little maid, turned cook and waitress, announced the meal as ready, and her reward came in the children's demonstrative approval. "Never tasted anything so delicious" was on their lips repeatedly; and Marie-Celeste having told, to the supreme delight of all who listened, the story of her visit to the Queen, even went so far as to declare that she was enjoying it more than the luncheon in the Castle. Mrs. Hartley said, "Oh, my dear!" in a most deprecating way; but there was no gainsaying the evident sincerity of the declaration.

"Perhaps it's because I feel a little more at home in a cottage," Marie-Celeste explained; "and then, besides," looking affectionately toward Chris, "it's so fine to be with old friends, you know;" and Chris shook his head and glanced toward his grandmother as much as to say, "Well, now, Granny dear, did you ever see such a darling?" "Granny dear" shook her head as much as to say, "No, Chris, I never did;" and Marie-Celeste, daintily preoccupied with a drum-stick, was fortunately none the wiser for this exchange of open admiration.

At the conclusion of dinner Chris took the boys off to a neighboring farm to show them some wonderful Jersey cattle that were expected to take the prize at a coming county fair; but Marie-Celeste, preferring Mrs. Hartley's society, decided to remain at home. No sooner were they gone, however, than Mrs. Hartley, arriving at the decision that she knew better than Mr. Harris himself what was best for him, and that it would doubtless do him good to meet this bright

little girl, entered immediately into a bit of diplomacy on her own account.

'Marie-Celeste," she said, "will you do a little favor for me? Will you run and ask Martha if one of the cup-custards was left over from dinner?"

"Martha says yes, Mrs. Hartley."

"Well, then, will you ask her to give it to you on a little tray, and a piece of sponge-cake besides, well powdered with sugar?"

"Here it is, Mrs. Hartley," carefully bringing the laden tray, and looking every whit as pretty as the picture of La Chocolatière, and not unlike her in her pose and gentle dignity.

"And now do you think you could carry it to somebody way down under the apple-tree that you can just see the top of from here?"

"Surely I could," her pretty face glowing with the pleasure of the errand, "but I should like to know who the somebody is."

"Of course you would. Well, it's the gentleman, Mr. Morris, who met with the accident, and who's been staying with us these six weeks."

"Oh, all right, then;" and Marie-Celeste tripped away, at the same time taking care not to stumble, to the apple-tree down in the meadow. But since this chapter is growing rather long, and you have already surmised what it was that Marie-Celeste discovered, it may be as well to stop a moment, draw a long breath, and take another chapter to tell about it.

CHAPTER XVII.

INTO TED'S CONFIDENCE.

"MARIE-CELESTE!" gasped Ted, letting his book fall from his hands.

"Cousin Ted!" gasped Marie-Celeste; and flop went the cup-custard over on one side, and then rolled off of the tray altogether. Perhaps you think gasped is a pretty strong word; but when you are fairly taken off your feet with surprise, you can't for the very first moment do much better with words than gasp them.

"Where did you come from, Marie-Celeste?" Ted demanded almost roughly, and as though she had no right in the world to come from any place whatsoever.

"How do you come to be here, Cousin Theodore?" parrying question with question, and drawing her little figure to its full height, in resentment of the tone in which Ted had spoken.

"Oh, you need not make any pretence," Ted said sarcastically. "Donald has been mean enough to go back on me, and you know all there is to tell. I can see through the whole thing, cup-custard, sponge-cake and all, and Harold'll be down here in a moment to help lord it over the prodigal."

"What do you mean, Ted?" for she really did not understand all he said. "Donald hasn't told me anything, nor Harold, nor anybody. They've all gone off to see some cows somewhere, and Mrs. Hartley asked me if I would not take this little tray down to Mr. Morris, the gentleman who had met with the accident," and Marie-Celeste gave a comprehensive glance through the little orchard, as though still expecting to discover the real object of her search under some neighboring tree.

"I am the gentleman who met with the accident," said Ted, smiling in spite of himself, "and my name is supposed to be Morris."

The smile relieved matters somewhat, and Marie-Celeste, setting the little tray on the ground, picked up the cup-custard, which had suffered nothing by its fall, and putting it back in its place on the tray, took a seat in the corner of the rug, to which Ted motioned her, and then clasping her two hands round her knees, asked in a tone of most earnest inquiry, "Now tell me, Cousin Theodore, why do you do things like this?"

"You mean, why do I let myself be thrown out of my trap in a runaway accident, and then be foolish enough to let myself be almost killed into the bargain?"

"Have you really had an accident, Ted?" with a solicitude that went straight to Ted's heart.

"Yes, considerable of an accident. I fancy it would have done for me, Marie-Celeste, if I had not fallen into the hands of these good people here."

"But oh, Ted," why didn't you send us word? Mamma and I would have come down and taken care of you every moment;" and she spoke as though they would have just loved to do it.

"Marie-Celeste, you are a dear child;" and Ted, who was hungering at last for the love of kith and kin, could not keep his eyes from growing a little misty. He realized, too, how he had done absolutely nothing to warrant this little affectionate outburst, and felt sorely humiliated—a sensation which had been very common to poor Ted of late.

"How did the accident happen?" asked Marie-Celeste; and touched by his grave face, she moved a little farther up on the rug.

"Oh, by being a fool, as usual! We were off on a lark, four of us, and I got into a fix so that I couldn't manage the horses, and—"

"Ted, do you mean"—and then Marie-Celeste hesitated—"do you mean that you really took so much wine that you did not know what you were about?" for she wanted to understand the whole matter clearly, no matter how shocking it might prove.

"Yes, that was it, Marie-Celeste;" but the child little guessed how the high-strung fellow winced under the confession, and how his self-disgust never reached quite such high-water mark as at that moment.

"Well, go on," said Marie-Celeste in a tone of utter hopelessness; and then she added, with the air of a little grandmother, "don't keep anything back, Ted; I would rather know all there is."

"Well, that's about all there is, Marie-Celeste, and it's enough, isn't it? I was caught under the trap as it went over, and they picked me up as good as dead and carried me into the Hartleys."

"But you told us all at Windsor you were going on a driving trip with Mr. Allyn."

"So I was before the accident."

Marie-Celeste paused a moment to straighten things out in her mind; then she asked, "But why, Ted, did you tell them your name was Morris?"

"Harry Allyn did that. He knew I would feel awfully mortified, and he wanted Harold never to know."

"He never shall," Marie-Celeste said slowly, giving her full endorsement to that part of the proceeding, and Ted inwardly pronounced her a dearer child than ever.

"Where is Harry Allyn now?"

"He stops up at the hotel at Nuneham, and comes down to look after me ever day."

"Do his people know?"

"They know about the accident, but not where we are staying."

"Oh, well, that makes me understand why Miss Allyn said she hardly believed we would meet you on this driving trip. All the rest of us were hoping we would. Miss Allyn would have hoped so, too, if she had not known, I suppose."

"Well, I don't suppose anything of the kind," said Ted, "but what's this about your driving trip, Marie-Celeste?"

"Oh, we're on your break, Ted—Harold couldn't write to ask for it, you know, because we didn't know where you were, and we're

stopping at Oxford now; but we left papa and mamma and Miss Dorothy and Mr. Farwell for to-day, because Harold and I preferred coming down here to surprise Chris and Donald to seeing all the colleges in the world."

"Who is Mr. Farwell?"

"Oh, he's a very nice young artist, a friend of papa's."

"And he is taking a driving trip on my break, is he?" said Ted demurely, and not appearing exactly to fancy the idea.

"Why, of course, as he's in our party, Ted."

"Yes, I understand; and now, Marie-Celeste, you are going to help me keep my secret, are you? But you know you're not to tell anybody for a while, not even your father and mother; do you think you can do it?"

"I will surely do it, Cousin Theodore, if you will do something for me; will you promise me you will?"

"If I can, little cousin;" for who could withstand the entreaty in the earnest childish voice?

"Will you come home, Cousin Theodore, as soon as ever you can?"

"What's the use, Marie-Celeste? Nobody cares for me there any more, I've been such a selfish, ungracious fellow this long while."

"We all care for you, Ted, really, very much—papa and mamma and Harold and I."

"Well, that's very kind indeed of you; but then I suppose, as you're my relations, it's only Christian for you to care a little."

"But people care who are not your relations—Miss Dorothy Allyn cares, and Albert."

"How do you happen to know that."

"Oh, because one day after Miss Allyn had been playing the organ in St. George's—and oh! doesn't she play beautifully!—we talked a little while on the Castle terrace, and we talked about you, and I asked her if you were ever so nice as Harold, because we couldn't help being a little disappointed in you, Cousin Ted, and she said yes, that you used to be every bit as nice, and if you had not been spoiled up at Oxford you would have turned out all right. She didn't say just those words, you know, but that was the meaning."

Ted was silent for a few moments, and when at last he spoke he said slowly, "Yes, I will come home, Marie-Celeste, as soon as I can; I promise."

"Thank you, very much," as though Ted had done her the greatest personal favor; and then, seeming to feel that their talk had come to a natural end, she asked quite casually, "Will you have the cus-

"Yes, I will come home, Marie-Celeste, as soon as I can."

tard now?" and Ted remarking quite as casually, "Yes, thank you, I will," she lifted the tray carefully into his lap. "Don't take very long to eat it, please," she urged, "for fear Mrs. Hartley should won-

der why I do not come back;" and Ted obeyed orders with an alacrity rather menacing to his digestive powers.

"What shall I say to Mrs. Hartley?" Marie-Celeste asked with a puzzled frown.

"Say everything, Marie-Celeste; tell her all about me. Explain to Donald first, and get him to take Harold off somewhere, and then tell all the others—Mr. and Mrs. Hartley and Chris and Martha. It is not that I lack the courage to tell them myself, it's only that it will be easier for them to learn it from you, you have such an innocent way of going straight to the heart of a matter. Besides, how could they hear it better than from my good little angel?"

"Your good little angel! Oh, you don't know me, Cousin Ted! I'm anything but an angel. I was bad as I could be for three whole days together a few weeks ago—you ask Donald! Listen! they are calling me up at the cottage. Take that last spoonful of custard quickly, please; it's good for you. Good-by, now," printing a hearty little kiss on his grateful face, "and remember your promise;" and then, carefully lifting the tray, she sped back to the cottage, cheerily calling, "Yes, I'm coming," to Donald, who was on his way to meet her.

"Marie-Celeste, what have you done?" and Donald's face looked the picture of despair as he came toward her; nevertheless, he was gallant enough to relieve her of the tray, with its empty dishes.

"You mean about my finding out about Cousin Ted?"

Donald simply nodded yes; he had no heart for words.

"Well, I couldn't help it, Donald; Mrs. Hartley asked me to carry some custard and sponge-cake to the gentleman under the apple-tree —was it my fault that the gentleman happened to be Ted, I'd like to know?" for never were there more accusing eyes than Donald's.

"Oh, no; not your fault, but it's a pity to have the whole thing spoiled. We've kept the secret so carefully."

"And do you think it can't be a secret any longer because I happen to be in it?"

That was exactly what Donald felt sure of, but he contrived to say, "I didn't suppose you'd see the need of its being kept—I'm glad if you do;" but there was no real gladness evident, for Donald's tone was hopeless in the extreme.

"All the same, you don't think I'll keep it, Donald," her little face really grieved. "You think because I'm a girl that I'll tell mamma,

and then before I know it somebody else," and therein Marie-Celeste proved herself a veritable little mind-reader. "Well, now, Donald, you'll see! and perhaps you'll come to understand girls better this summer, and have more respect for them in the future."

Donald took his lecture very meekly, knowing well that he deserved it, but still doubtful of Marie-Celeste's boasted ability in the secret-keeping line.

"NEVER WAS FAIRY TALE LISTENED TO WITH MORE RAPT ATTENTION THAN MARIE CELESTE'S NARRATION."

"Cousin Ted has more confidence in me than you, Donald," still exercising her mind-reading proclivities. "He's asked me to tell the Hartleys all about him this very day. He doesn't want any unnecessary secrets kept any longer, and you're to take Harold off somewhere while I tell them."

"It seems to me Ted ought to tell them himself," said Donald, shaking his head in disapproval; for you see he really feared that

Ted lacked the necessary courage, although he could understand how much it must mean to him to have the Hartleys realize that he had such a good friend as Marie-Celeste at court. But Donald afterward exonerated Ted from any lack of courage, and was of course delighted when he found that she had pleaded his cause so eloquently as to convince even the old keeper that Ted was fully justified in the course he had thought best to pursue.

Never was fairy tale listened to with more rapt attention than Marie-Celeste's narration of the ups and downs of Ted's life as she knew them, and never was heart more gladly grateful than hers when she realized that these good friends were more than willing, for the sake of the end in view, to condone the deception practised upon them. It is such a fine thing when people show themselves fair-minded and reasonable under circumstances that put their fair-mindedness to so much of a test.

"Well, well, well, it's a queer world," said old Mr. Hartley, resting his elbows on his knees, and drawing circles and squares with his cane on the gravel beneath the old settle—"it's so remarkable that Mr. Morris (for he could not drop the name at once) should have fallen right into our hands here. Seems to me as though God never changed any of the real laws of things, but as though He ordered the working of them together for good in a very wonderful way, just as the Scripture says He do;" and a good many other people, who have not lived in this world more than half as long as old Mr. Hartley, are willing to go the whole length of this statement, and to defend it, if need be, with page after page from their own experience.

It was just at this point in the conversation that Donald and Harold came upon the scene, and hearing all of Mr. Hartley's last remark, Donald felt sure that the old keeper, of whom he, as well as Ted and Harry Allyn, stood in not a little awe, was not going to take offence at the new turn affairs had taken; while Harold, to whom it sounded as though they had been having a somewhat prosy sermon, rather congratulated himself that Donald had carried him off to see a neighbor's kennels down the river. But now there was time for little more than good-bys, and Chris, who had slipped away to harness Jennie, was at the door; and with farewells as hearty as though they had been friends for a lifetime, Harold and Marie-Celeste climbed into the Saxon wagon, and amid much demonstration on every side

were off for the Nuneham station; but Harold wondered that Donald did not drive into Nuneham with them, and said so.

"I suppose," said Marie-Celeste, addressing Chris with a knowing look in her eyes, "he has things to attend to about the farm this time in the afternoon?"

"Yes, he has," answered Chris, with a look just as knowing, for both were well aware that as soon as their backs were turned Donald would fly to Ted's rescue from his overlong quarantine down under the apple-tree, and all the significant glances went on right under Harold's eyes, with never a suspicion on his part. Indeed, Chris and Marie-Celeste, just for the fun of it, indulged in some decidedly pointed remarks, relying (and in Harold's case with considerable risk) upon the literalness of the average boy of sixteen to let their real meaning escape him.

"Custard and sponge-cake is not very staying," said Ted, after Donald had told him the good news of how kindly the Hartleys had received Marie-Celeste's surprising revelations, and they were on their way to the cottage.

"Why, you haven't had any dinner, Mr. Harris?" a paralyzing recollection coming over him.

"Who promised to bring it to me, Donald?"

"Oh, Mr. Harris, it's all my fault! Martha gave it to me just before our own dinner was ready, and I set it on the feed-box a moment, while I shook down some hay for Jennie in the barn, and Chris called me, and that was the last I thought of it, and it must be there now."

But Donald was mistaken; one of a litter of rather young setter puppies, but with the sense of scent well developed, had scaled the sides of the low feed-box, and now lay on its side by the empty plate, feeling somewhat the worse for its foraging expedition.

"But dinners are not so reviving as good news, Donald," said Ted excusingly; and indeed, notwithstanding diminished rations, he felt wonderfully toned up both in mind and body, now that the good friends in the cottage knew just who he was and there was no longer need for any sort of duplicity.

With all Ted's faults he was as open as the day, and the part which Harry and discretion and the Doctor had mapped out for him to play had been harder than you can imagine.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RATHER A BOOKISH CHAPTER.

The old belfry clock was striking eight as Harold and Marie-Celeste put in an appearance at the lodgings where the little party were staying in Oxford, and of course there was a great deal to be told; but alas! too, for Marie-Celeste so much that must not be told, under any circumstances. If you think it easy to be sole possessor of a piece of news that would rejoice the hearts of your nearest and dearest, and yet for extreme precaution's sake have given your promise on no account to divulge it, why then all that can be said is that you were never in Marie-Celeste's shoes. If it had been an uncomfortable piece of news it would have been vastly easier. There ought to be no pleasure at all in conveying bad news to people, though here and there, it must be confessed, one sometimes meets individuals who seem to rejoice in any news whatsoever, and the more startling and surprising the better.

But Marie-Celeste succeeded in getting through the first few hours without telling: the two hours with Harold on the train, a very trying half hour when she was all alone with her mother, and another trying half hour the next morning, when she was sitting in the breakfast-room with Dorothy; and after that the worst was over, so many delightful things came along to claim every one's thought and atten-

tion. And one of the most delightful things of all—at least in the children's estimation—came with that Sunday afternoon in Oxford, and Dorothy was the one to be thanked for it.

It seemed that in one of the colleges somebody lived who Marie-Celeste would have given more to see, next to the Queen (and, as you know, she had seen her without the asking), than any one else in England, and that was the man who calls himself Lewis Carroll, and who has written those incomparable books, "Through the Looking-Glass" and "Alice in Wonderland." If it is possible that any little friend of these stories of mine has never happened to have read them, then let me urge you at once to give Aunt Bess or Uncle Jack no rest till both are in your keeping, with your name written very legibly across the fly-leaf of each, so that you can keep them for your very own till you've no more use for any books whatsoever. And while you are about it, why not put in a plea for Kingsley's "Water Babies," too, which is of the same beautiful dreamland type; and please do not think for a moment that you are too old for any of the three. Why, some one I know, who is well on to forty, just revels in those same three books, and, for that matter, there are some things in them that you cannot fully take in even then. And in this connection perhaps it is fair to tell you, in case you do not happen to know it already, that it is twenty years and more since these books were written; but then of course you are sensible enough to see that that is ever so much more to their credit. Indeed, it was just because they were written so long ago that the visit of which I am about to tell you came to pass. Twenty years before Dorothy's father had been rector of a church there in Oxford, and though Dorothy was only two years old at that time, and her brother Harry but a year and a half older, they had been great pets, babies though they were, with the author of "Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass," and Mr. Dodgson—for that is Lewis Carroll's real name—had been in and out of Canon Allyn's house almost every day in the week. And what was true of Canon Allyn's house was true of many another house in Oxford where there were children; and so you see it was because of this old-time intimacy with Lewis Carroll that Dorothy had made bold to write and ask if she might bring Harold and Marie-Celeste to call upon him. But for some reason or other Mr. Dodgson no longer cares to see as much of the little people as formerly; in fact,

he rather runs away from them when they seek him out; and when he received Dorothy's letter, what did he do but write her that he was very sorry to say that he would not be at home on the afternoon in question, but that if it would be any pleasure to her little friends to see his rooms, she might bring them there and welcome, and that he would leave some old photographs that he thought would interest them ready to her hand in a portfolio on the writing-table.

And so they were not to see "Lewis Carroll," which was of course considerable of a disappointment to Marie-Celeste and Harold, and to Dorothy as well; but all the same the recollection of that Sunday afternoon in Oxford will doubtless long hold its place among the most delightful memories of their lives.

It was only two o'clock when they set out, and a walk up the beautiful High Street, past the spires and domes, brick windows and massive gateways of the old churches and colleges that line it, and then a turn at the corner of Aldgate Street, soon brought them to Christ Church. Mr. Carroll's rooms—for he prefers doubtless to be Mr. Carroll to those of us who know him only through his books—were of course the first object of interest, and Dorothy, who remembered where they were from a more fortunate visit of a few years before, when they had not been obliged, as to-day, to count without their host, led the way through the Entrance Gateway, well worthy of its old name of "The Faire Gate."

Over this entrance looms the beautiful tower containing Great Tom, an old, old bell that tolls a curfew of one hundred and one strokes every night as a signal for the closing of the college. And Great Tom looks down on one of those quadrangles which at Christ Church, as indeed at all the colleges, forms one of the most attractive features. In many cases the walls of the buildings which surround the quadrangles on the four sides are almost hid beneath a luxurious growth of English ivy, while from April to December the lawns that carpet them are green with the wonderful depth of color peculiar to lawns that have been cultivated for centuries.

The windows of Mr. Carroll's rooms open on the "Ton Quad," as it is called, because of the nearness to Great Tom, and they found the janitor, who had been informed of their coming, ready to unlock the door for them.

"Do you think we have driven Mr. Dodgson away by planning

to come here this afternoon?" asked Dorothy, feeling that this invasion of a man's room in his absence bordered on intrusion, and hesitating to step over the threshold.

"Like as not, mum," replied the old janitor honestly, "he's grown that averse to mingling much with folk, be they big or little."

"But he wrote me very cordially to come, only that he had an engagement and would not be at home."

"Then he probably told you the truth, mum. He often goes off on a ten-mile tramp of a Sunday afternoon with one of the professors. He left word that he'd not be home till six, mum, so you needn't be thinking of leaving till half-past five, mum;" and so it was plainly evident that Lewis Carroll wanted to run no risk of seeing them at either end of their visit, and Dorothy could not help feeling a little piqued.

"I am sorry Mr. Dodgson is so much afraid of meeting us," she said with a sigh; "we used to live in Oxford, and he was a good friend of mine when I was a child. It seems strange he ceases to care for his little friends as soon as they are grown up."

"You must leave an old bachelor to his foibles, mum. It seems as though they must have them of one sort or another. I'm a bachelor myself, mum, and have me own little peculiarities, they tell me, mum."

"Oh, Miss Dorothy, please look here! These are the photographs Mr. Carroll wrote you about!" called Marie-Celeste, for she and Harold had had no misgivings whatever about making their way into a room to which they had been granted privileged entrance; and after a reconnoitring tour round its borders had naturally brought up at the portfolio, to which their attention had been specially directed in Mr. Carroll's note.

"The door has a spring lock, mum," explained the janitor; "will you kindly make sure to close it on leaving?" and with this parting injunction he left them to their own devices.

It seems that in the old days, when Lewis Carroll loved to play host to the children, they would often come to take afternoon tea in his lodgings, and then likely as not, if the light were good, he would spirit them into a room fitted up for the purpose and take their pictures; and then, if they promised to be good and not to bother, they might follow him into the queer-smelling little room where he

made the pictures come out, and they would be permitted to have a look at the dripping glass plate, from which they could seldom make head nor tail, held up against the dark-room's lantern for inspection. But, all the same, their faith in the result was supreme; for what could a wizard not do who could weave fairy-tales so wonderfully as not to have them seem like fairy-tales at all. And so this portfolio, extended to its uttermost, was literally stuffed with pictures;

"And the Harry Allyn of those days was wonderfully like the Albert Allyn of these."

and what did they discover, to their surprised delight, lying right on the top of the pile, but three or four unmistakable photographs of Harry and Dorothy Allyn, which had evidently been placed there by design. Dorothy was pleased at this little attention, and partly forgave Mr. Carroll his antipathy to renewing old friendships.

The pictures themselves were as funny as could be, and the Harry Allyn of those days was wonderfully like the Albert Allyn of

these; so that a council was held on the spot, and the resolution carried that they would leave a little note on Mr. Carroll's table, humbly begging for one of the pictures, that they might have the pleasure of showing them to interested parties at Windsor.

The inspection of the photographs once over, the little party settled themselves to "taking the little sitting-room in," as they said, and there was little, you may be sure, that escaped them.

The curious old fire-irons were noted, the subjects of the pictures on the walls, the books on the shelves, and a remarkable paper-knife and quaint old inkstand upon the table.

Marie-Celeste, to whom this visit meant more than to Harold and Dorothy, even made so bold as to glance through an intervening portière to the bachelor bedroom beyond; and yet you must know that there was not a vestige of prying curiosity in this investigating mood of hers. The next thing, and sometimes a better thing than knowing your favorite author, is to know how and where he lives; and it was a matter of supreme delight to Marie-Celeste that henceforth when she should open Lewis Carroll's books she should be able to picture him working away here in his study, and just as he really looked, too, for by chance or accident a full-length photograph stood on the mantel, which Dorothy, from her visit a few years before, was able to pronounce an excellent likeness, and very characteristic.

"I would like to be able to say I had sat exactly where 'Alice' was written," said Marie-Celeste, slipping into the chair at the writing-table. "Do you think I could honestly?"

"Well, both table and chair look old enough," Dorothy considerately replied; "but I don't believe books like those are written much in regular places at all. It seems as though 'Alice' must at least have been made up out on the river, even if there were not three little pairs of childish hands to steer and guide the boat, as the verses at the beginning would have us believe."

"Oh, but I do believe there were, Miss Dorothy!" said Marie-Celeste warmly; "don't you remember it says,

> "'All in the golden afternoon
> Full leisurely we glide,
> For both our oars with little skill
> By little arms are plied,
> While little hands make vain pretence
> Our wanderings to guide.'"

And then in another verse in just so many words, 'Thus grew the tale of Wonderland.' Oh, yes, I choose to believe everything in those two books."

"Well, I don't blame you," laughed Dorothy, "for everything is told as a matter of course, and it seems the most natural thing in the world for a rabbit to carry white gloves, and for little girls to seek advice of caterpillars."

"Well, the parts I used to like best were the verses;" for Harold, after the manner of the genus who pride themselves on early outgrowing many of the best things of life, relegated the books to the days of his early childhood; "the stories themselves always seemed more meant for girls than for boys."

"Now, excuse me, Harold," said Marie-Celeste, bristling up a little, "but I don't see why you boys are so afraid of peeping into what you call a girl's book. Of course there are books that tell only about girls that you wouldn't like. To tell the truth, I don't care much for them myself; but if a book ever happens to have a kind of girlish name to it, that settles it at once. Now, suppose it were possible for any one to write a story about me; I presume they would have to give a sort of girl's name to the story; but would that mean that it was all about girls? Well, I guess not;" and Marie-Celeste laughed as she realized how wide such an estimate would fall of the mark. "Chris would be in it, of course, and you and Donald and—" and Marie-Celeste was going to say Ted, but checked herself in time to make an exchange for Mr. Belden—"and Albert. Why, gracious, Harold, come to think of it, I haven't a girl friend this summer—only Miss Dorothy here, if she will excuse me."

"And it's a pity about me, isn't it, Marie-Celeste," said Dorothy slyly, "for the author might feel that as I am your friend he ought to put me in somewhere, and that would make it a little more about girls, you see, and probably spoil the story."

"Oh, Miss Dorothy, you know what I mean; it isn't that I don't like girls, it's only that a book like 'Alice' ought to have just as much interest for boys as girls;" for all Marie-Celeste had in mind was the defence of the imputation that Lewis Carroll's books were "just girls' books." "If all the remarkable things in those two stories," she continued, "had happened to a 'Jack' instead of an 'Alice,' I should have loved it just as much, I am sure."

"Oh, well, you needn't be quite so hard on me," Harold replied, improving the first opportunity to put in a word, and very much amused at Marie-Celeste's little tirade. "I fancy, on the whole, you don't know much more about 'Alice's' adventures than I do."

This last remark Marie-Celeste chose to regard as a challenge, and then followed such a rehearsal of Alice's varied experiences as would have done Lewis Carroll's heart good to hear. Both eager to show how much they remembered, the moment either paused for the fraction of a second, the other would take it up, and so the whole ground was pretty well gone over. Harold's principal achievement lay in "The Walrus and the Carpenter," and Marie-Celeste's in the recitation of "Jabberwocky" from "Through the Looking-Glass;" for not only was she able to slip its almost unpronounceable words quite easily from her tongue, but she remembered the explanation of them given by Humpty Dumpty, when Alice appeals to him a little later on in the story, and he modestly informs her that he can explain all the poems that ever were invented, "and a good many beside that haven't been invented just yet."

"It's getting near four o'clock," said Dorothy, feeling at last that she must interrupt the flow of conversation, no matter how interesting; "let us write the note asking for the picture, and then see something of the rest of the college."

So the note was written and left conspicuously upon the writing-table; and then with one long farewell glance about them, and a flower stolen from a vase by Marie-Celeste and laid between the leaves of her prayer-book, they turned their backs on all they would ever be permitted to know of Lewis Carroll, and the door with the spring lock swung to behind them.

It had been part of the plan to attend the five-o'clock service in Christ Church Cathedral; and after spending a half hour or so in wandering through the cloisters and gaining something of an idea of the college as a whole, they went early into the cathedral, that they might also stroll for a while through the beautiful old church whose history dates as far back as the middle of the eighth century. At five o'clock promptly the beautiful choral service began, and the sweet music and the earnest spirit of the service seemed to round out to a fitting close that always to be remembered Sunday afternoon in Oxford.

CHAPTER XIX.

DONALD TURNS VALET.

You might not care much for it, but to me it would be a delight to follow our friends on Ted's break as they rolled merrily out from town on the bright Monday morning succeeding their two days' stay at Oxford, and to keep with them all the way; not that anything momentous or wildly exciting happened on the trip, only that if it were possible to put all its charm onto paper, there is no question but you would enjoy it. Somebody has put it onto paper, however, and very successfully, too; so that I should advïse you, in case a driving trip through the English Lake Country does not soon happen to come your way, to look between the covers of "The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton," as soon as you grow a bit older, and see if you do not discover the charm of it for yourself. But whether we would or no, we have not the time just now to bowl quietly along in leisurely fashion through that lovely region of hills and lakes. Besides the party on the break are quite sufficient to themselves, while down at Nuneham there is a fellow who would be thankful enough for any advice that we could give him.

"What had I better do?" is the question that Ted is turning over and over in his mind, for the time has come for Ted to do something,

and there are more difficulties confronting him than any one has an idea of. He has not even taken Harry Allyn fully into his confidence, so proud is this same foolish Ted. Besides, Harry Allyn, who, as you know, is in dead earnest about his "new leaf," is up at Oxford delving away, midsummer though it is, at some back work that was sadly neglected in the spring term, and has actual need to be made up.

Finally Ted, who finds himself simply reasoning in a circle, decides to lay the whole matter before Donald; for Donald, boy that he is, has opinions of his own which he does not fear to express, and, what is more, Ted in desperation feels that he simply must turn to somebody. And so it comes about that at the close of an August afternoon, when Ted has the house to himself (Chris having taken the old keeper and his wife off for a drive), that he calls to Donald, who, coming up from a day's work in the kitchen garden, is on his way to put his tools away in the barn.

"Well, what is it, Mr. Harris?" leaving rake and hoe against the cottage shingles and slipping into the chair nearest the door, out of regard for Mrs. Hartley's clean-swept carpet.

"It's just this, Donald. I'm in a fix, and I want you to help me out."

"A new fix, Mr. Harris?" with a long breath, as though he thought there had really been rather too much of that sort of thing already.

"No, an old one, Donald, and I fancy you know enough of my record these last four years to imagine what it is."

"I shouldn't wonder if you're in debt," for Ted had hinted as much once or twice to Donald.

"Exactly, head over heels in debt;" and although Ted's words were light enough, his manner was very serious.

"And you want me to help you out?" said Donald, remembering the three or four sovereigns knotted up sailor fashion in a handkerchief with a few other treasures, and representing all his worldly store.

"No, I'm not going to take any savings of yours," said Ted, imagining that Donald might so have understood him; "but I want to put the case to you, and have you tell me what to do;" and Donald listened attentively while Ted "put his case" plainly and without any mental reservations whatever.

"It's a terrible big sum," said Donald, when all was told, "but you say you have money enough to pay it several times over if you could only get at it."

"Exactly; but I can't get at it any more than though it didn't belong to me—not till I'm twenty-five, and that's two years off. You see, my father thought he had given me a generous income, and he had—rather too generous for my good, it seems."

"I suppose the people you owe it to would wait two years if they felt sure they would get the money then;" for Donald, with the wisdom of an older head, was trying to look at the matter from all sides.

"No, Donald, that wouldn't do. They're trades-people, most of them, and they've waited longer than they can afford to already. I must manage to borrow the money somewhere—but where, that's the question."

"Couldn't Harold help you a little?"

"Not to any extent. Harold can't touch his money any more than I; besides, Harold is not to know," and Ted spoke decidedly, as though in that direction his mind was fully made up, and he needed advice from no one.

"Aren't there men up in London who make a business of lending money?" for Donald hadn't knocked about the world without gaining some knowledge of men and affairs.

"Yes, there are, but I want to keep this thing just as quiet as possible. I do wish I had some friend to turn to."

"Mr. Harris," said Donald, looking Ted squarely in the face, "it's an awful pity about you; there is no sense at all in your going on the way you have. When a fellow has a home and friends and money, there isn't any excuse for that sort of thing. Seems to me it would be so easy then to keep straight."

Ted winced a little under Donald's frankness, knowing all that lay beneath it. It had sometimes been very difficult for the boy there before him, to whom home and money had been always lacking, and friends as well until within these last few weeks, to live up to the best that he knew. No boy puts to sea, as Donald had done, without coming face to face with some sore temptations, but his whole look and bearing showed how manfully he had resisted them, and the earnest honesty of his eyes preached a sermon as they met Ted's.

"It is an awful pity," said Ted, echoing Donald's words, and

hating his own record more than any one else could hate it; "but all that is left me is to try and mend matters. The only comfort is

"WHY DON'T YOU GO UP TO LONDON AND HUNT HIM UP?"

that I've come to my senses at last. A great many never do, you know."

"Mr. Harris," said Donald, who had been listening to Ted and doing his own thinking at one and the same time, "there was an Englishman came over on the steamer with us, who grew to be great friends with Marie-Celeste, and Marie-Celeste told me all about him one of those afternoons when I was too weak to do anything but lie in my berth, and she tried to entertain me. She said he was a bachelor, and rich as could be, and she thought the best thing that could happen to him would be to do somebody a good turn with his money. If you feel that you want to keep this matter sort of quiet, just between gentleman and gentleman (which was a phrase Donald had heard Mr. Harris use, and was glad to be able to appropriate), why don't you go up to London and hunt him up? He lives at one of the big clubs. You could easily find him. His name was Belden."

At this Ted gave a start of surprise, as did Miss Dorothy Allyn when Marie-Celeste made the same announcement the day of their talk in St. George's Chapel. And then Ted asked, as had she: "Are you sure it was Belden? You see, Donald," he continued, "I've an old bachelor uncle whose name is Selden—my mother's brother—and who answers to your description to a dot—a surly old customer, who would do little enough for me, or any one else, I imagine."

"No; it was Belden sure. Everybody called him Mr. Belden, and it was so on the passenger list; I've got one in my chest upstairs; I'll bring it, and you can see for yourself."

"Donald," said Ted, when, the list having been produced, he felt that the balance of evidence was not in favor of Mr. Belden and Mr. Selden being one and the same, "that is a happy thought of yours, and up to London I will go."

"You oughtn't to go alone, Mr. Harris; you're not strong enough for that yet."

"I wonder if Chris would let you turn valet for me and go too."

"I'd give a great deal to see London again," said Donald enthusiastically.

"Would wages have to be taken into account?" laughed Ted; "you know the state of my finances, Donald."

"Board and expenses—that is all, sir;" and so the serious talk ended with this bit of pleasantry; and Ted realizing that he had not been disappointed in feeling that Donald would somehow be able to help

him, found himself entering into the new scheme with rather more hope than circumstances would seem to justify.

It was by no means a cheery announcement to the household in the little thatched cottage when Ted told them that evening, that two days later he must gather his belongings together and turn his back on the home and the friends that had formed his little world during all the long weeks of convalescence; and then when he asked if Donald might perhaps be permitted to go up to London with him, Mrs. Hartley felt that all the brightness of the summer was fast slipping away. No one could appreciate what new life had opened up for the old couple with the coming of Chris and Ted and Donald, and now two were proposing to go at once, and only five weeks more, and Chris would be bidding them farewell on his way to the Majestic down at Liverpool, and on which it had been arranged that Donald at the same time should once more put to sea. So no wonder that at first they all declared that the boy could not be spared; but the more they thought of it the more they felt that Ted really needed him. As a result, a telegram was finally sent to Mr. Harris, which caught the driving party at Windemere, asking if he would approve of Donald's going up to London with a convalescent gentleman who greatly needed his services. The telegram was signed Christopher Hartley; and Mr. Harris, concluding that Donald and Chris were quite able to decide what was best in the matter, telegraphed back, "No objection, of course, if you think it advisable;" and its welcome message brought more joy to the hearts of Ted and Donald than they could graciously give expression to in the face of Mr. and Mrs. Hartley's regret at their departure.

It was astonishing with what celerity Donald had seemed to merge the sailor-boy in the farm-hand, and now in turn the farm-hand in the valet. He brushed away at Ted's clothes as vigorously as though that had been his calling from his youth up, and stowed away his belongings in the boxes that Harry Allyn had sent down from Oxford with an economy of space that was truly amazing. And now at last there was no more to be done, and Mrs. Hartley bade her boys God-speed with lips that from trembling could hardly frame the blessing, and on which face—Ted's or Donald's—loving gratitude found deeper expression it would have been difficult to have told. The old keeper pressed Ted's hands, and actually said something

about feeling he had been a little hard on him at first; and then turning to Donald, made him promise to count Nuneham as his home ever afterward, and run down for a Sunday between voyages whenever he could manage it; and the words were about the most precious that had ever fallen on Donald's ears.

The hotel to which the two travellers betook themselves in London was a modest one, as befitted their circumstances. Ted, however, who, in spite of himself, had still considerable regard for appearances, could not resist the temptation of investing—though Donald urgently protested against such extravagance—in a suit of clothes, somewhat less conspicuous than the nautical blue jersey and wide-flapping trousers of Donald's Sunday best, and better adapted to his new calling.

"Now, Donald," said Ted, who found himself relying on Donald's advice in truly remarkable fashion, "what's to be the first step in the programme? Shall we try to look up your Mr. Belden in the London Directory?"

"As you say, sir," said Donald, who was amusing himself and Ted as well by endeavoring to acquit himself as the most respectful of valets. So forth they fared together, for the little hostelry was by far too unpretentious to boast a city directory; but the morning was so fine, notwithstanding mid-August weather, that they were tempted to stroll on and on, deferring a little, by tacit consent, the immediate object of their expedition. Along the Thames embankment they strolled from their quarters up near Blackfriar's Bridge, past the Savoy Hotel, and keeping near the river until, reaching Northumberland Avenue, they turned in the direction of Trafalgar Square.

"Mr. Harris," said Donald, attracted by a sign over a doorway, when they had gone a few squares farther on, "I believe this is Mr. Belden's club. Marie-Celeste told me its name once, and I'm almost sure this is it." Whereupon Ted straightway found himself feeling very much dismayed at the announcement, and his heart misgave him, as hearts have a way of doing when the time has come for mere intention to take the more definite form of action. The object of this search of theirs seemed all at once to Ted the most ridiculous thing imaginable. The idea of expecting that a stranger, to whom his only introduction was that of a cabin-boy of the White

Star Line, would be likely to take an interest in him to the extent of making him a loan of a large sum of money at rather a low rate of interest; and then Ted realized what some of us have realized before, that all he had practically to build upon was Marie-Celeste's remark to Donald, "that she felt very sure that the best thing that could happen to this same rich Mr. Belden would be to do a good turn to somebody;" and Ted once more scored himself a fool to have seriously considered the thing for a moment. But it was too late now to retreat, for Donald was having an animated talk with the buttons of the door of the Reform Club; and Ted, who stood just out of earshot, was the victim of all sorts of uncomfortable sensations as to what the result might be.

"It looks," said Donald, coming down the steps and back to Ted, with a puzzled frown on his face, "as though there really might be a mistake somewhere. I am perfectly sure this is the name of the club, and the buttons says they have a Mr. Selden, but no Mr. Belden."

"Donald," said Ted almost savagely "let us walk away just as quickly as possible. There is no doubt about it now. The man you mean is my uncle, and I wouldn't put myself in his way for all the world. Can't you walk faster, Donald?" But meantime, the uncle in question was hastening to put himself in Ted's way with all possible speed, or rather in Donald's, which, as it happened, was one and the same thing. It seemed that Mr. Selden (circumstances permitting, it is better to call people by their real names) had discovered Donald from the dining-room window just as he was descending the steps, and recognizing him instantly flung his napkin onto the table, and hurrying from the room seized his hat from the rack as he passed.

"Bring that boy back!" was his breathless order to the buttons; but the door being open, he rushed through it himself, deciding that the matter was too important to be delegated to any one less interested than himself.

"Donald," he called, overtaking him at last, a whole square away—"Donald, were you looking for me?"

Donald turned, and the next moment was shaking hands warmly with Mr. Selden, his face fairly beaming with glad surprise; but Ted stood by, the picture of hopeless despair. His first absurd impulse had been to run, for though first impulses are magnificent things as

a rule, they do sometimes suggest the most outlandish performances. His second, which was fortunately the one upon which he acted, was to stand and see the thing through, giving himself over to his fate with an air of most woebegone resignation to whatever might be in store for him.

"Who is your friend?" said Mr. Selden, politely lifting his hat to Ted; for his own greeting over, poor Donald was at his wit's end, not knowing whether Ted would wish to be introduced or no. What was his relief, then, when Ted, lifting his hat politely in return, said: "You don't recognize me then, Uncle Everett?"

"Why, yes I do, Theodore;" for although it was years since he had seen him, the momentarily uncovered head had at once established his identity; "but how do you and Donald happen to be in each other's company? Marie-Celeste told me Donald was on a farm down in Oxfordshire, and that you—well, that nobody knew where you were exactly."

"It's rather a long story," said Theodore slowly; and then remembering his uncle's stolid indifference to things in general, he added coldly, "I doubt if it would have much interest for you."

Mr. Selden understood the case perfectly, knowing that his former record with Ted would justify his speaking in this fashion; but he only said: "All the same, I would like to know about it. Will you come back to the club with me?"

The eyes of the valet waited upon his master, but they said very plainly, "Do let us go;" and the master, after hesitating a moment, accepted this most unexpected of invitations.

CHAPTER XX.

DOROTHY CALLS MARIE-CELESTE TO ACCOUNT.

"MARIE - CELESTE, here is a letter for you, and it is the third one you have received under cover of direction to me; and, if I am not mistaken, I recognize the handwriting on this one; I believe it is from Theodore Harris."

Marie-Celeste, with a meek little "thank you," simply took the letter from Dorothy's extended hand.

"And, Marie-Celeste," Dorothy continued, "you are not showing them to your mother. They come enclosed in these envelopes, and that is so that she shall not know that you receive them, I suppose."

"Yes, Miss Dorothy," but with her mind quite intent on the letter, and therefore rather absent-mindedly.

"Well, then, do you know, I believe I shall tell her."

"Oh, Miss Dorothy," with all the absent-mindedness gone in a minute, and with gravest reproach in the dark brown eyes, "you wouldn't—you wouldn't do that!"

"Why, my dear child, I almost feel as though I ought to; it is such an uncommon thing for a little girl of twelve to be in surreptitious correspondence with at least three different people, for there

has been a different hand on every letter. It seems wrong to me to be helping on such a mysterious proceeding, with no idea whatever of what it all means."

"Miss Dorothy," said Marie-Celeste, "I am in a great big secret, that's all, but I do wish—I do wish very much that you were in it too," which was indeed the truth, for this not being able to talk over matters with anybody was almost more than she could longer endure.

"Well, don't you believe it would do to take me in, then?" said Dorothy rather entreatingly. "I confess I would like to know what Theodore Harris is writing to you about; and besides it doesn't seem fair to put too much upon a little girl like you. You seem to be thinking so hard so much of the time."

"They are pretty nice thoughts, though," Marie-Celeste replied, "as you'll see when I tell you, because I've about decided to tell you. I think it's right, too, and I don't believe they'll mind, and I am going up to the house to bring the other two letters and read them to you. It will make you happier than anything you ever heard;" and Marie-Celeste spoke truer than she knew.

Meanwhile, Dorothy sat gazing out over beautiful Lake Coniston, wondering if she were really doing the right thing in persuading Marie-Celeste to confide in her, and unable to arrive at any decision. She was sitting on a little rustic seat down by the water's edge, which Marie-Celeste, with her passion for exploring new surroundings, had discovered the evening before, almost immediately upon their arrival at the Waterhead Hotel. It was here that Dorothy had counted on finding Marie-Celeste, and it was here that she was left alone with her thoughts while Marie-Celeste ran off on her self-imposed errand. It was a beautiful little sheet of water that lay there at her feet, with its densely wooded banks and its wilderness still uninvaded by civilization; and just across the lake the setting sun was crimsoning the chimneys and pointed gables of the only house upon that farther bank. It is this home that lends its own special interest to the little lake, for it is the home of that grand old idealist, Ruskin. It is just such a home as you would know that wise philosopher would choose, far from the haunts of men and all the devastating improvements of the age. A grand place, too, to work, you think; and then you recall with a sigh that the light of that glorious mind has well-nigh gone out, 'neath the weight of physical weariness and infirmity,

and then the solitary home begins to look a little like a prison in your eyes, as you realize how glad its inmate would be to exchange it for the Palace of that King whose divine intent for the world he has so marvellously interpreted for us all in the days when soul was still master of hand and brain.

But there was no room in Dorothy's mind just then for musings either on nature or Ruskin, and it is to be feared that the dancing blue of the water and the purple shadows on the hills and golden glow of the sunset made little impression on her wholly preoccupied mind. What could Theodore Harris be writing to Marie-Celeste about, and who could the other two letters be from? Those were the absorbing questions of the hour; and at last Marie-Celeste is back again on the little seat beside her, ready to unlock her precious secrets, and with the three mysterious letters spread, one upon the other, open in her lap.

"Now, think a moment, Marie-Celeste," said Dorothy seriously; "are you sure it is perfectly right to tell me?"

"But you said you'd tell my mother if I didn't," laughed Marie-Celeste.

"Oh, no, dear! I didn't put it quite like that. I only wondered if, perhaps, it was not my duty. But I know from what you have already told me that everything is all right. You see, I did not quite like to have a hand in anything so very unusual without being taken just a little into your confidence. You remember, when the other letters came, you scampered off in most excited fashion to read them all by yourself somewhere, and then never opened your lips about them afterward, so that I could not help feeling that it was a very queer proceeding, and that I really ought to look into it."

"Yes, I understand perfectly, Miss Dorothy; and Ted says right here at the end of his letter: 'Tell Miss Allyn all about things if you think best.'" And of course that settled matters beautifully, quieting the last little suggestion of a compunction on Dorothy's part.

"Now, the best way to tell you," Marie-Celeste began, "will be to read the letters. This first one is from Donald. 'London, August 20th'"—

"London, Marie-Celeste!"

"Wait, Miss Dorothy; it will explain itself," smiling with delight at the pleasant surprises contained in those three precious letters.

"'London, August 20th. My dear friend' (you know, Donald has to begin that way, because he didn't like to say Marie-Celeste, and so never called me anything), 'you will be surprised to find I am in London, and, what is more, that I have come up to London as a valet for a gentleman, and the gentleman, let me tell you, is your cousin, Mr. Harris. You know we grew to be good friends all those weeks together down at the Hartleys', at Nuneham!'"

"Do you mean to say," interrupted Dorothy—for the letter was not explaining things quite as fully as might be desired—"that Donald has actually been staying in the same cottage with Theodore?"

"You knew about Ted's accident, didn't you, Miss Dorothy? Ted said you did, that your brother had told you."

"Yes, I knew about that, but I do not know where it happened or where he has been staying all these weeks."

"You've heard me talk about Chris, our postman, haven't you, who came over on the steamer with us?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, if you will believe it, it was just by his grandfather's cottage, just outside of Nuneham, where the accident happened, and they're the people who've been caring for him; and then when Donald went down there to work on the farm, of course he discovered him; and then when I went down the other day from Oxford, I discovered him too, and poor Ted's had a very hard time to keep his secret."

"But Harold was with you, Marie-Celeste," said Dorothy eagerly; "does he know, too?"

"No, Harold doesn't know; it's all on his account that there's any secret about it now; you know Ted wants to prove to Harold that he means to do the right thing before he lets him know the worst there is about him. He means to tell him everything some day." And then Marie-Celeste proceeded to narrate at length her unexpected encounter with Ted under the apple-tree, so that Dorothy gradually came to a clear comprehension of how matters stood, and Marie-Celeste was free once more to let Donald speak for himself.

"'And what we came up to London for,' continued the letter, 'was to see a gentleman about some business matters; and the gentleman we wanted to see was Mr. Belden—your rich old bachelor

friend you know—and who did he prove to be but a Mr. Selden, Mr. Theodore's own uncle? His name was printed Belden by mistake on the passenger list, and when Mr. Selden made friends with you that first day out, and found out that you were going to visit his nephews at Windsor, he didn't tell any one it was wrong, because he didn't want you or your father or mother to know who he was.' "

"What did I tell you, Marie-Celeste," interrupted Dorothy with a little air of superiority, "that time you told me about him in St. George's? I knew it must be the same man."

"But, Miss Dorothy, ever since this letter came I've been wondering why he didn't want us to know who he was."

"Because he has chosen for ever so long not to have anything to do with any of his relations, for fear they'd bother him, I suppose."

"Well, he's gotten over that," said Marie-Celeste; "you'll see when I read his letter." And Dorothy looked as though she thought wonders would never end, which was exactly the way Marie-Celeste wanted her to look, and would have been vastly disappointed if she had not.

"'Land knows,' read Marie-Celeste, resuming the letter, 'why he wanted to be so mum about things; that's his own affair, of course; but he's been awfully good to us, and he has fixed up some matters that were bothering your cousin a great deal just beautifully. All the same, he doesn't look a bit well, Marie-Celeste, and he's a sad sort of man. It seems as though he had something on his mind, but he's not going to let anybody know what it is—that isn't his way. We've been in London now nearly a week, stopping in lodgings in the same house with Mr. Selden. We've had to stay because of the business matters, but to-morrow we are going down to Oxford to see to some things there, and then in a day or two home to the Little Castle. You see, I've been able to make myself real useful to Mr. Harris, because, you know, he's not overstrong yet, and accustomed, besides, to having a valet—which is what I happen to be at present; but it's not going to be for long, and between us, Marie-Celeste, I'm not sorry. I half believe that father of mine, that I don't know anything about, must have been a sea-captain. There are times when it's all I can do to keep from running away from everything and putting to sea again as fast as ever I can on any old tub that'll take me; but, of course, I really wouldn't do anything so

mean; and all told, I have had a beautiful summer. Chris has decided to go back to the States on the Majestic, sailing the first of October, and I'm to take my old place on that trip, too. It seems as though you all ought to be on board with us. Couldn't you get your father to bring it about somehow? Whew, what a long letter I have written!—the longest in my life, and I never wrote more than half a dozen, anyway. Don't stay away too long. It's going to be rather lonely at Windsor without you all, and there isn't so very much time left now. Won't Mr. Harold be surprised to find his brother in the Little Castle ready to receive him! Mr. Theodore's getting to be a brick, I can tell you. Good-by. As long as your people are not to know what's in this letter, Mr. Harris tells me to put it in an envelope addressed to Miss Allyn.

"'Yours truly,

"'DONALD.'"

"So much for Donald;" and Marie-Celeste, pausing to catch her breath, hesitated to which of the other two letters to give the preference. "I think I'll read Theodore's next, Miss Dorothy, because it's the latest, but really Donald's the most interesting of the three. This letter, is from Windsor, and it was written only yesterday morning. It is dated 'The Little Castle.' 'Dear little Coz,' it says, 'here I am, you see, and I assure you I have kept my promise to the letter, and have come home as soon as ever I could.'"

"Why were you so anxious to make him promise that?" asked Miss Dorothy wonderingly.

"Why, because home's the best place for him; don't you think so? He has not been there half enough these last few years, and, besides, that's where he belongs—"

"But having the Little Castle all to himself probably does not seem home-like," suggested Dorothy sympathetically.

"Yes, that's just what he says," laughed Marie-Celeste; so that Dorothy thought her a trifle hard-hearted. "And now I'll begin over again. 'Dear little Coz, here I am, you see, and I assure you I have kept my promise to the letter, and have come home as soon as ever I could; but home doesn't seem a very cheery sort of place when all your relatives are off on a lark, and on your own brake at that, and you must fain content yourself with the companionship of your valet. He's a fine little valet, however, Marie-Celeste,

"I THINK I'LL READ THEODORE'S NEXT."

and he tells me that he has stolen my thunder in a long letter he wrote you from London; so you know all about my going in search of your friend, Mr. Belden, and finding in his place my uncle, Mr. Selden. Well, this letter is just to tell you what I told you once before, you remember, and that is, that you are my good little angel, no matter how bad you may have been "for three whole days together," and to ask you not to forget that there is rather a lonely fellow here at Windsor, who hopes you are having a good time, but who honestly thinks that the sooner you come home the better. Tell Miss Dorothy all about things if you think best, but don't paint me any blacker than you feel you really have to.

"'Yours faithfully,

"'THEODORE.'"

"Well, I haven't painted him very black, have I?" said Marie-Celeste complacently; but Dorothy was far too absorbed in her own thoughts to make any answer, and Marie-Celeste looked at her a little curiously, wondering what was going on in her mind.

"Perhaps you'd rather be left to yourself?" she added half mischievously, after a minute or more of unbroken silence.

'Oh, no; you didn't paint him black at all;" for Dorothy was able instantly to bring her thoughts back and say what was expected of her.

"This other letter," explained Marie-Celeste, looking askance at the note in her hand, "is rather spooney; I don't believe I had better read it."

"Mr. Selden write a spooney letter! that's impossible!" exclaimed Dorothy, who thought 'she knew her man,' as the saying goes; whereupon Marie-Celeste, of course, straightway read the letter in order to prove her premises.

"'REFORM CLUB, LONDON, August 20.

"'They tell me, dear Marie-Celeste (and they means, of course, your Cousin Theodore and Donald), that you are taking a driving tour through the English lakes, and that if I should address a letter to you, care of Miss Dorothy Allyn, no one would be any the wiser; and that's just what I've done, you see, as, for reasons of his own, your Cousin Theodore seems to prefer it. You know already that this

same Cousin Theodore has been up here in London several days with me, and as a result we have had many a long talk together; but you do not know, perhaps, that we came to the conclusion that your coming to England this summer had been just the best thing that could have happened to both of us. Likely as not you do not exactly understand how that can be, and it is as well, perhaps, that you should not; only take my word for it, that it is true, and ask no questions. This much, however, I will tell you. Ted said to me one day, "I can tell you one thing, Uncle Everett, it was a talk I had with that dear child under an apple-tree, down at Nuneham, that made me feel that some people whom I care a great deal for still had faith in me, and it was she who gave me courage by what she told me to go home as fast as ever I could get there;" and then, Marie-Celeste, what do you suppose I said to him? Well, I just told him that that same dear child had preached me two blessed sermons—one on the deck of the Majestic and the other exactly where a sermon should be preached, beneath the roof of dear old St. George's, and that what there was left of my life was going to be set in a new key.

"'This letter will not make you proud, Marie-Celeste, I know, only very grateful, and one day I believe you will understand better than it is possible for you now to understand to-day how even in this world the prophecy comes true sometimes that "a little child shall lead them."

"'You must write and tell me when you are going home, for somehow or other I must contrive to see you before you go, and what is more, I mean to seek out a chance for a good talk with your father and mother. "'Yours faithfully,

"'EVERETT BELDEN.'"

"And you call that a spooney letter! Marie-Celeste, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," and Dorothy tried to look the reproach she felt the occasion called for.

"I only meant, Miss Dorothy, that it said some nice things about me."

"Oh, is that all? Well, then, I'll forgive you; but that is not what people usually mean by spooney;" and Dorothy putting her arm about Marie-Celeste, they strolled up to the house to-

gether. "And you understand—don't you, dear?—that I did not mean to force your confidence in any way, only it did seem so mysterious?"

"Oh, yes, I understand perfectly; and you understand too, Miss Dorothy, how I would have told you about it long ago, if I thought I coul ;" and everything at last being mutually understood, there was happily no need for further explanations.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SMALLEST CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

For some reason or other the spirits of our driving party seemed steadily rising. It was simply impossible to put anybody out of humor, no matter what happened. Everything was lovely and just as it should be, even to the pelting showers that came down with such swift suddenness as to almost soak them through before they could get under cover of waterproofs and umbrellas, and then a moment after left them stranded in brilliant sunshine, fairly steaming within the rubber coats which, with much difficulty, had but just been adjusted. Indeed, every day seemed more full of enjoyment than the one that preceded it and to call for more enthusiasm. If any one had asked Mr. Harris, for instance, how he accounted for this, he would probably have laughed good-naturedly at the question, and answered: "Why, easily enough! How could it be otherwise with this glorious weather, this beautiful country, and our jolly little party!" But the real secret of what made the party so jolly was, in fact, quite beyond Mr. Harris's ability to divine. The

real secret lay with Marie-Celeste and Dorothy in the good news that had been committed to their keeping; and, strange to say, it seemed to mean as much to Dorothy, who was no relation of Theodore's, as to Marie-Celeste, who was. As a result, they were both brimming over with fun and merriment; and as there is, fortunately, nothing in the world more contagious than good spirits, the other members of the party were equally merry without in the least knowing why. Even Mr. Farwell, who had simply been invited to fill up and because he was a friend of Mr. Harris's, fell under the spell, and bloomed out in a most surprising and delightful manner, and by the time the first week was over felt as though he had known them all all his life, and, indeed, very much regretted that such was not in truth the case.

From the Waterhead Hotel, at Coniston, the plan had been laid to retrace their way a few miles over the same road by which they had come from Windermere, make a stop for two or three hours at the Rothay Hotel, and then drive on to Keswick that same afternoon. But just as they were rolling into Grasmere, the off-leader, with the total depravity peculiar to animal nature, struck the only stone visible within a hundred yards on that perfect roadway, laming himself instantly and in most pronounced fashion. This chanced to be the first mishap; but then could you really call an accident a mishap that simply necessitated a three-days' stay in the beautiful Wordsworth district? Our sunshiny little party, at any rate, chose not so to regard it, and scoured the whole lovely region on foot, reading Wordsworth's poetry in their halts by the roadside, and growing familiar with every foot of the lanes he so dearly loved. Not content with their morning spent in the Grasmere Church, and beside his grave in the little churchyard without, they even made their way to Wordsworth's old home—beautiful Rydal Mount—hoping, on the strength of a card of introduction to the gentleman residing there, to possibly be allowed to see the house. The gentleman, however, when they presented themselves at his door, politely bowed them out instead of in, and they were fain to content themselves with the lesser privilege of inspecting the prettily terraced garden.

When, after the three days' rest, the off-leader had been coaxed into proper driving condition, they started off once more, but rather late in the afternoon, planning to take things in quite leisurely fash-

ion, out of regard for the same off-leader, and depending upon the wonderful English twilight to bring them into Keswick before ten o'clock. It happened to be a local holiday in Cumberland, and as a result here and there they encountered a solitary specimen of humanity prone upon his back or his face, just as it chanced, by the roadside, or, not quite so badly off as that, reeling along to wherever home might be in that apparently houseless region. At six o'clock, on one of the highest points on the road that leads to Keswick, they stopped at the Nag's Head, a typical roadside inn, for supper, the sounds of revelry in whose tap-room at once accounted for the sorry customers they had met upon the road before they reached it. It was exceedingly interesting to the American contingent of the party to gain a little insight into the life of the English "navvies;" and they passed the little tap-room, reeking with smoke and smelling of pipes and beer mugs, rather more often than circumstances would warrant, for the sake of looking in on the jolly fellows, and catching a sentence or so of their almost unintelligible dialect. A truce to all this, however, for fear you should imagine, and with reason, that even at this late stage I am going to fare so wide of my province of story-teller as to conduct you in guide-book fashion through the counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland. But, nevertheless, up to this same Nag's Head Inn we simply had to come, because some one else, in whom we have an interest, is coming there too as fast as a good road-horse can carry him. It seems that opposite the Nag's Head Inn the Church of England has built a tiny edifice, and as though to apologize for the apparent unreasonableness of building any church there whatsoever, they have made a most miniature affair of it. A placard suspended within proclaims the fact that it is the smallest church in all England, and beneath it a contribution-box, of dimensions out of all proportion to the surroundings, invites spare shillings for the maintenance of the lonely little parish.

The peculiar isolation of the place appeals to the average tourist in most pathetic fashion, and no sooner have our friends of the driving party crowded within the diminutive door than Mr. Harris, hat in hand, commences to take up a collection, with a view to making a radical addition to the contents of the roomy contribution-box. Just as he is concluding the exercise of this truly churchly function, and Marie-Celeste is dropping her very last sixpence into the depths

of the appealing hat, the little doorway is suddenly darkened—as it has need to be when any one comes through it—and in the next second Ted is standing in their midst. The collection goes sliding on to the floor, to be re-collected at leisure, and everybody, with the exception of Mr. Farwell, is trying to seize Ted's hand at once. Precedence, however, is given to the claims of Marie-Celeste, and the upturned face is greeted with the most prodigious kiss.

"I thought we should happen to meet you somewhere on this trip," said Mr. Harris, when things had subsided enough for an attempt at conversation, groping the while on all-fours, and with Harold's help, for the fugitive shillings on the floor.

"Well, you can hardly call it happening to meet, when I've been riding since early this morning to catch you. I expected to overtake you at Grasmere, but found you were well on your way to Keswick by the time I reached it."

"Well, where did you come from, anyhow, old fellow?" asked Harold, pleased beyond measure that Ted had seen fit to follow them up in this fashion. He could not imagine whatever had suddenly brought it about, after all the neglect of the summer; but that did not in the least diminish his delight.

"I came from home, Harold," Ted replied; "I went back there two weeks ago, but it was so lonely I couldn't stand it, and so when I found out through the Allyns about where you were, I came post-haste after you. Besides, you know, when I discovered that my brake had been walked off with in a rather cool fashion, I concluded I had some rights in the case, and came to look after them. I see it's been terribly abused," glancing in the direction of the brake, which, minus the horses, stood in front of the inn across the narrow road; "it was as good as new when you started."

But these last remarks, so like the old Ted, but for the fact that he was not in the least in earnest, were hardly listened to at all by Harold. He was thinking his own glad thoughts. Five weeks yet till the Harrises would sail for home! Ted would have a chance to redeem himself in that time and make up for all his coldness and neglect; and the joy of it all was that it looked as though he was going to try to do it.

"Half crown, please, for being permitted to join the party," said Mr. Harris, presenting the hat to Ted, after making sure that none

of the coins were still missing; and Ted, though wholly bent on practising close economy, felt the circumstances justified the outlay, and did as he was bid.

There was only one person to whom Ted's coming was not a source of unalloyed pleasure. The addition of a seventh member to the party made it necessary that some one should occupy the vacant back seat on the brake between the grooms, and Mr. Farwell was gentleman enough to insist upon being allowed to take his regular turn in the matter. He would not have minded this much, however, only that, being endowed with average qualities of discernment, he soon realized he had been obliged to take a back seat in more senses than one. Dorothy continued to be most polite and friendly, but that Ted filled the role of an old and privileged friend was at once evident on the face of things, and Mr. Farwell endeavored to accept the situation with the best grace possible, and succeeded, be it said to his credit, remarkably well.

Mr. and Mrs. Harris were soon taken into Ted's confidence—the very next day, in fact, as they were sitting in the garden of the hotel at Keswick—and listened as raptly to his narration of all that had happened these last few weeks as the little circle outside the cottage door had listened to Marie-Celeste. Ted, however, made no excuses for himself, whereas Marie-Celeste's account was full of them; and so one narration was naturally far less plausible than the other. The one fact that seemed to Mr. and Mrs. Harris to defy credulity was that Ted should have fallen into the hands of the Hartleys, for in what other little cottage in all England could such a transformation have been wrought? Where else could he have been brought into such close touch with all the old home interests as he had been there, first through Chris and afterward through Donald and Marie-Celeste, and where else could he have come to see so clearly that he had been wilfully trampling upon all that is truest and best in life?

"Fritz," said Mrs. Harris that evening, as in company with Marie-Celeste they were strolling home from an hour spent in the little churchyard where the great poet Southey is buried, "I think it is beautiful to realize what a grand part Providence plays in the world."

"Providence!" said Marie-Celeste thoughtfully; "really, I do not know just what people mean by Providence."

"The word is from the Latin," said her father, who, with most college men, liked to bring his knowledge of derivations to the front now and then, "and the dictionary, I think, would tell you that it means God's thoughtful care for everything created."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Harris, "only it seems to me that people are often in too much of a hurry to make use of the word, for you can't be certain until you are able to look back upon a thing whether it was surely of God's ordering or man's short-sighted scheming. Still I am inclined to believe, even at this stage of the proceeding, that our coming over here this summer has indeed been a beautiful providence;" and a few weeks later, for good and sufficient reasons, there was not a shadow of doubt on that score left in the mind of any one.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LITTLE CASTLE'S NEW INMATES.

"Here I am, dear."

Nothing could have exceeded the air of importance with which Albert was striding along the streets of Windsor, and notwithstanding the shortness of his legs, his *valet de chambre*, in the shape of a newly acquired French nurse, had difficulty in keeping up with him. The fact was, Albert was intrusted with a most important piece of information—the bearer of a message that had cleared his own mental horizon from so much as the vestige of a cloud, and which he felt sure would bring equal joy to the others for whom it was intended. The destination toward which he steered, without deviation to right or left, and with great regard for economy of time and space at corners and crossings, was the Little Castle, and he marched up the path from terrace to terrace, and rang the bell with all the complacency of a drum-major.

It was expected, of course, that faithful old Margaret, who was master in chief of affairs in the Little Castle, would, as usual, in the

absence of the family, answer the bell, and the message intended for her was half way over Albert's lips before he took in the fact that the individual who had opened the door bore about as close resemblance to Margaret as the tower of the Little Castle to its door-mat.

"Why—why, who are you?" asked Albert as soon as he could check the impassioned utterance of his message, and instantly demanded in the next breath, "and—and where is Margaret?"

"Here I am, dear," said Margaret, coming toward him as rapidly as an extra touch of rheumatism would permit, "and I suppose you wonder who this is who has let you in?"

"Nes," said Albert, whose anxiety as to who this intruder might be was somewhat allayed by Margaret's appearance on the scene.

"Well, this is Mr. Everett Selden, Harold's uncle, who has come down from London to make us a little visit," Margaret explained.

"Oh, dat's all right den!" favoring Mr. Selden with a benignant smile; "and—and now, Margaret, I came round to tell you dat dey are coming home on Saturday. We've had a letter from Dorothy dis morning, and dey sent me down to tell you." (Margaret fortunately was considerate enough not to take the wind out of the little fellow's sails by informing him that they had had letters of their own that morning.) "And, Margaret, dey will get here in time for luncheon, and I would have a very good luncheon, Margaret, and everything all b'ight and shiny."

"Just as you say, Master Albert," making a little curtsey to this self-appointed master, and with difficulty restricting her emotions to a smile.

Meanwhile, Mr. Selden stood on one side immensely entertained, for he had previously had no idea that executive ability ever made a showing at quite such an early age.

"And now," said Albert, free to turn his attention to less important matters, "did you open the door for me because you saw a little boy coming up the terrace?"

"Yes, that was the way of it," Mr. Selden replied.

"But you did not know what little boy I was?"

"Oh, yes, I did; Marie-Celeste told me about you one day when I had a good talk with her in St. George's."

"Elaine," said Albert, turning abruptly to the French nurse, "I

would like to talk to Harold's uncle, and I would like to stay to luncheon—I often stay to luncheon, don't I, Margaret?" Margaret's answer was that he often did, and Mr. Selden's assurance that nothing would give him greater pleasure at once settled the matter, and Elaine was compelled to return without her charge, but entrusted with the message to Albert's mamma that Mr. Selden would himself bring him home early in the afternoon.

"I remember that Marie-Celeste told me," said Mr. Selden, placing a comfortable chair for Albert opposite his own, near the open window, "that you were very fond of a good talk now and then; and I'm very glad of that, because there isn't anything else that I could do to amuse you."

"Why isn't there?" said Albert, noting Mr. Selden's dressing-gown, and impressed with his semi-invalid air; "aren't you strong enough to do anything but talk?"

"No, I'm not so badly off as that yet, Albert; but you see I've lived alone so long that I haven't much of an idea how to amuse little boys."

"Why did you tome down here when ev'rybody was away?" for Albert felt that the case needed to be still further investigated; "were you inwited?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I was invited! Harold's brother Ted invited me—urged me, I may say, to come whenever I chose, and to stay as long as I liked."

"How long do you sink you will like to stay?"

"I think I would like to stay always."

"Always till you die?"

"Yes, I think I should—that is, if you don't mind, Albert;" for Albert's sense of proprietorship in the Little Castle was very evident.

"Oh, no, I'll not mind—perhaps we'll grow to be friends, and often have long talks. Marie-Celeste said you had long talks on the steamer—that was how she came to know you so well."

"Yes, we did have beautiful talks on the steamer, but the very best one of all was in St. George's Chapel, a month or so ago."

"Nes, I know," as though there was little of interest to Marie-Celeste that was not sooner or later confided to him. "Did she tell you dat time, Mr. Selden, 'bout our Knight-of-de-Garter day?"

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"And 'bout dis?" groping in the side-pocket of his sacque, and producing a little circle of blue ribbon.

"I can't quite make out what it is, Albert," said Mr. Selden, peering anxiously at the rather indistinguishable little object.

"Well, dat's what it is;" and drawing up his kilt and the trouser leg underneath, Albert slipped the garter over his foot and up to its right place, just above the knee. This brought the gold lettering partly into view, and enabled Mr. Selden to grasp the situation.

"Oh, I see," he said; "you made believe you were a little Knight of the Garter yourself."

"Nes; just for a bit of fun, I made believe I was a little knight all dat day; but of course I didn't tell anybody, only Dorothy, who made it for me. But do you know," very confidentially, "dat I felled asleep in de church beside Timothy, so dat de garter showed, and den de children teased me awfully 'bout it, and Marie-Celeste calls me her little knight now almost always. But you won't ever tell dat I told you why she calls me dat, will you?"

"No, I promise, Albert;" and Margaret coming in just then to announce luncheon, the blue garter was surreptitiously removed and left for the time being on the library table, and was not thought of again by its rightful owner. Mr. Selden, finding it there later in the afternoon, slipped it into his pocket, with an idea of the use he might some time make of it.

For the next three days, to Mr. Selden's delight and amusement, Albert was a constant visitor at the Little Castle, and when Saturday came he put in an appearance at a prematurely early hour, for fear, by any chance, the driving party should reach home before the time appointed; and as that was exactly what they did do, he congratulated himself very highly for his extraordinary forethought. Not but what he had full three hours to spare, only the Allyns, who were invited to luncheon at the Castle, failing to reach there before the arrival of the brake, he felt that nothing but his own timely precaution had spared him a similar disappointment.

"Dat sounds like dem," said Albert for about the fiftieth time to Mr. Selden.

"Hardly, I think;" but humoring Albert to the extent of stepping out on to the door-step; "it is a whole hour ahead of time yet."

"DAT SOUNDS LIKE DEM."

But Albert was right, and a moment later the four-in-hand wheeled up at the gate, and the glorious driving trip was over.

"Who can that possibly be with Albert?" queried Harold, naturally mystified at the appearance of a gentleman, in the easy costume of house coat and slippers, standing complacently in the doorway of the Little Castle.

"It's Uncle Everett, that's who it is;" and clambering down the side of the coach, Ted was up the path, and had him cordially by the hand in less than a minute.

"Well, this beats all," said Harold to himself; "what is going to happen next, I wonder?" But he had the graciousness to defer his own greeting to Uncle Everett until he assisted Aunt Lou and Dorothy and Marie-Celeste to dismount, by aid of the brake's steps, and which much practice, by the way, enabled them to accomplish very skilfully.

Albert, you may be sure, was standing as close as possible to the foot of the steps, and tumbled curls and rumpled collar soon bore witness to an exceedingly hearty exchange of greetings. But the beauty of it was, that everybody seemed to have every whit as glad a welcome for Uncle Everett as Ted himself; and for Mr. and Mrs. Harris the surprise was in store of finding that Marie-Celeste's steamer friend and Uncle Everett were one and the same person; but surprises being the order of the day just then, everybody was coming to take them quite as a matter of course. Mr. Selden soon sought out an opportunity to tell why he had been so ungracious as not to reveal his identity on the steamer, though he felt naturally that his explanation did not reflect very much to his credit, as was indeed the truth; but Mr. and Mrs. Harris were not the people to bear a grudge against anybody if it could by any reasonable possibility be dispensed with, and of course other explanations were called for. Uncle Everett's presence had to be explained to Harold, and Ted told him all about their week together in London, but not yet about the borrowed money. That confession, together with all the rest, would be made a little later on, when Harold and he should have gotten a little nearer still to each other.

Well, it was a merry luncheon they had in the Little Castle, but after luncheon the situation grew rather serious and pathetic. They had had such a good time together for four happy weeks, it seemed

hard each to have to go his own way and realize that all the good times were over; and, happily, even Mr. Farwell felt very sorry, too, notwithstanding he had been obliged to concede rather more than was altogether agreeable after Ted made his advent among them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOR LOVE OF MARIE-CELESTE.

Among the letters that Mr. Harris found awaiting him was one from Chris, telling him that he and Donald were booked for the Majestic, sailing from Liverpool the first of October. "All right," said Mr. Harris to himself; "we go, too, then, if we can;" which was somewhat of a question, considering the crowded state of autumn ocean travel. But good fortune still favored our little party, and Mr. Harris's telegram reached Liverpool just in time to secure state-rooms which, within the same hour, had been relinquished. So there was only one month more before them now, and one week of that Mr. and Mrs. Harris and Marie-Celeste were to spend in London. But the household in the Little Castle tried to make it a happy month—as happy as they could, that is, with the cloud of coming separation hanging over them. There was another cloud, too, that broadened and deepened as the month drew near its close; Uncle Everett was far from well. Just at first he had entered into the excursions and driving to which much of the time had been

given over, but latterly he had preferred to stay at home, and now for a week he had been confined to his room. All the while, however, he was utterly uncomplaining, seeming to be bent upon making up for all the fretful moodiness of the selfish old bachelor days up in London. And so the first of October came round, finding him still in his room, and there was no help for it but for the Harrises to take leave of him there.

Everybody tried to make the farewells as cheery as possible, and Mr. Selden promised to visit the States later in the fall if he grew stronger. " If not," he said, " I'll see you all when you come over next spring to Ted's wedding"—for that was another beautiful outcome of the summer. Ted was to be married at the close of his senior year, and the Little Castle was again to have a dear little mistress—a mistress as like to Dorothy as you can possibly imagine.

When, at last, the moment had come for turning their backs on the Little Castle, two carriages were waiting at the door, for quite a party were going up to see them off at Liverpool—Ted and Dorothy and Harry Allyn and Albert, but not Harold. His good-byes were said at the station, as it was planned they should be; and then dismissing the carriages, he hurried home as fast as ever he could and straight up to his Uncle Everett's room.

" Why, Harold, boy, what does this mean?" glancing from his easy-chair toward the clock on the mantel; " can it be the train has gone without you?" and Uncle Everett's face could not possibly have looked more troubled.

" I meant it should," for Harold had " tied up," as he called it, to Uncle Everett with all his heart these last four weeks, and he was not going to leave him alone and half ill in his room for even twenty-four hours, if he could help it.

" Oh, Harold, you ought not to have done it!" but Uncle Everett showed how deeply he was touched by this strong mark of devotion; and Harold, drawing up a chair, sat silent for a few moments. The house had seemed so terribly bereft and lonely as he had come up through it, that he found he had hardly the heart to talk. And yet what had he stayed at home for if not to be, if possible, of some cheer and comfort? But there was no use in making an effort to talk about anything but exactly what was uppermost.

" We're going to miss them a great deal, Uncle Everett," he said

at last, "and it will be a comfort to get right to work at the studying"—for it was high time that he and Ted were back at work again, for both had had to be excused from the opening days of the term. "All the same, I shall manage to spare you, Uncle Everett, for your visit to the States when you get stronger;" for it was understood now that Uncle Everett's permanent home was to be within the walls of the Little Castle.

Mr. Selden sat thoughtfully a moment looking into the air before him, and then arriving at a decision, he turned in his chair toward Harold: "It may not be kind," he said quietly, "to tell you of it just now, when your heart is already heavy enough; but, Harold, I shall never be any stronger. The doctors told me what I had already suspected a month ago up in London."

"Never be any stronger!" exclaimed Harold, almost defiantly and almost overcome with intensity of feeling. "Well, I don't believe it, Uncle Everett, and they had no right to tell you that; it takes away half a man's chances."

"I made them tell me, Harold, I had so many things to arrange, and it is because they told me that I came post-haste down here to Windsor while you were all still away, for I felt, whenever it happened, I wanted to die in the Little Castle, in a place I could call home, if for only a little while. But, Harold, I cannot bear to sadden you. It may be I shall live ever so much longer than they think, and get the best of the doctors. I only wanted you to understand that you wouldn't get rid of me for any visit."

Harold tried to smile, but the situation was too serious.

"The reason I've told you now, Harold, is because we may not have such another good chance for a talk; and the reason I have told you at all is because there is something more I want to tell you. I have been wondering naturally what I should do with my money, and I've decided to leave a fourth of it to you and a fourth to Ted. Yes, I know you don't need it, but you are my sister's children, and I want to do just this with it. But the other half, Harold—what do you suppose I am going to do with that?" his pale face glowing at the thought.

"What, Uncle Everett?" Harold's interest to learn relieving for the moment the overmastering ache at his heart.

"I am going to build a Home down in Sussex—that's where

your mother and I were born, you know—and a lady up in London—a lady, mind you, Harold, but who has lost husband and children and everything else in the world, is going to take care of it for me. Then as soon as it is ready all the institutions for children in London are to be told about it, and whenever a little girl comes along who seems to be too fine, in the best sense of the word, for the life of the ordinary institution, down she is to go to Cranford, to be cared for in the Home; and it is to be a home, Harold, prettily furnished, with rooms for ten children, and everything as dainty as can be. You see, you can only keep it home-like if you limit it to rather a small number. And then when it comes to be well known with its family of dear little daughters, I hope that, once in a while, people who have had little children and lost them, and people who have never had them at all, and now and then a maiden lady, or even an old bachelor, will come down there and carry off one or more of the little girls, to bring them up as their own in their own homes, and so room will be made for others."

"Uncle Everett, that's the most beautiful"—

"Wait a moment, Harold, for it isn't all told yet. In the living-room of the Home I am going to have a beautiful open fireplace (for of course there won't be any parlor)—the most beautiful that can be made—and right above the tiles and under the ledge of the mantel I am going to have the legend, in gold letters, that will shine even in the twilight, 'For love of Marie-Celeste;'" and then Mr. Selden paused to see how the idea seemed to strike him.

"Excuse me for a moment, Uncle Everett," for when boys' hearts grow too full, they prefer to go off by themselves, and it is not a bad plan, by the way. "I was a goose," he said, coming back in a few moments, and putting his arm lovingly along the back of Uncle Everett's chair; "but, you see, it was one thing coming right on the top of another so," knowing that Uncle Everett understood. "Isn't there more to tell now?"

"No, only this, Harold, and that is, that the orders are all given, and that whether I live or die, the Home will be ready by next autumn;" and who would have imagined, to look at the light in the two faces, that they were really standing face to face with the grave, mysterious thought of death.

* * * * * * * *

The Majestic is lying, with all steam up, out in the Mersey. Chris is leaning over the ship's side, and Donald, again in sailor rig, is close beside him; for Ted had dispensed with Donald's services when he decided to follow up the driving party, and he had at once hurried back to Nuneham to help Chris, who was trying to get

"ARE YOU MISS MARIE CELESTE HARRIS?"

everything into shape for the old people before leaving. The tender, with its second and last load of passengers, is bearing down on the steamer, and now they can distinguish the Harrises and Albert—of whom Chris has heard so much—mounted on Theodore's shoulder. Marie-Celeste holds in her two hands a generous bouquet, which was handed to her just as she stepped aboard of the tender. Its roses

are bound together with a little blue garter, which she was quick to recognize, and she knows very well she has need to thank Uncle Selden for this priceless souvenir of that happy Knight-of-the-Garter party.

Foremost among the number to leave the tender is a man in livery, which some of the passengers have at once identified as none other than that worn by the servants of the Queen.

"Whom do you want, may I ask?" questions Donald politely, since the man, once aboard, seems hesitating which way to turn. Inclined at first to resent the interference, the man stares at Donald a moment, and then, possibly conciliated by the semi-official aspect of his sailor costume, condescends to reply:

"I have these," motioning toward the articles in his hands, "for one of the passengers—Miss Marie-Celeste Harris."

"Here she is, then," answers Donald, for the Harrises have that moment come aboard.

"Are you Miss Marie-Celeste Harris?" asks the man, taken aback by the suddenness of her advent on the scene.

"Yes, I am," Marie-Celeste replies in a voice all but inaudible with surprise.

"Then the Queen's compliments, miss, and a *bon voyage;*" and grandiloquently delivering himself of this little speech, he presses two packages into her hands and retreats to the tender before she has at all had time to take it in. Marie-Celeste stands a moment, the observed of all observers, and especially of those who have overheard the message. Then our little party, moving off a short distance by themselves, crowd close about her in breathless excitement while the papers are removed from a glorious bunch of orchids. There is a card attached that reads,

For the Little Queen of Hearts,

FROM

Madame La Grande Reine.

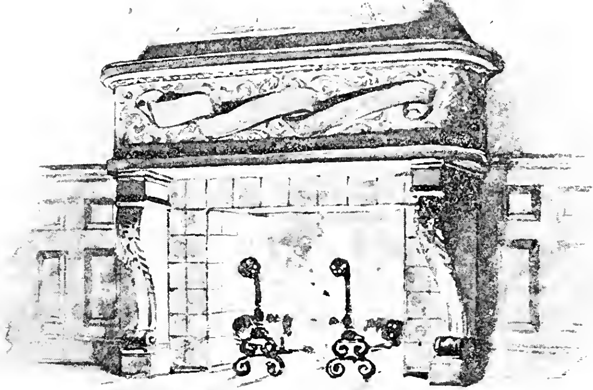
The other package proves to be a tiny velvet box, containing a

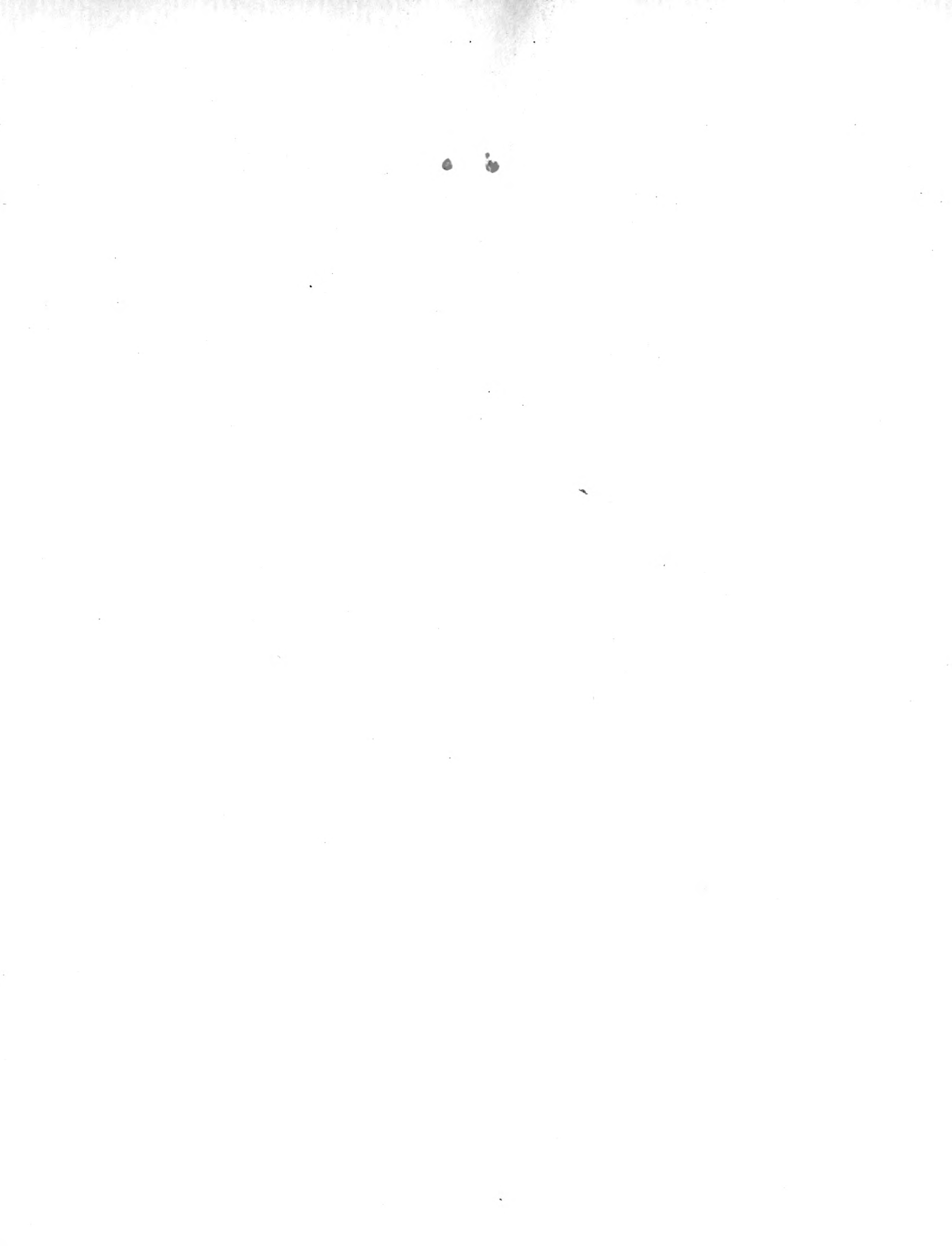
curious, quaint necklace, and this bears the inscription on one of its ends of faded ribbon,

For the Little Queen of Hearts,

FROM

Madame La Petite Reine.





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