THE MADNESS OF PHILIP

BY

JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM

With
Illustrations
by
F. Y. CORY

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AND OTHER TALES OF CHILDHOOD

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JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM

Illustrated by F. Y. Cory

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To my Father
kindest of many kind critics
these stories are
dedicated

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THE MADNESS OF PHILIP

THE MADNESS OF PHILIP

HIS mother, being a woman of perception, realized early that something was wrong. Even before breakfast she found Philip trying to put his sister into the bolster case, checking her vivid denunciations by a judicious application of the pillow. After breakfast it was impossible to get him ready in time, as his rubbers had been hidden by a revengeful sister, and the bus was kept waiting fully five minutes, to the irritation of the driver, who made up the lost interval by a rapid pace.

"*Checking her vivid denunciations by a judicious application of the pillow.*"

This jolted the children about, and frightened the youngest ones, so that they arrived at the kindergarten bumped and breathless, and only too disposed to take offense at the first opportunity. This opportunity Philip supplied. As they swarmed out of the bus he irritated Joseph Zukoffsky by a flat contradiction of his pleased statement that he was to lead the line into the house.

"Oh, no, you ain't!" said Philip.

Joseph stared and reiterated his assertion Philip again denied it. He did nothing to prevent Joseph from assuming the head of the line, but his tone was most exasperating, and Joseph sat down on the lowest step of the bus and burst into angry tears — he was not a person of strong character.

Some of the more sympathetic children joined their tears to his, and the others disputed violently if vaguely; they lacked a clear idea of the difficulty, but that fact did not prevent eager partisanship. Two perplexed teachers quieted the outbreak and marshaled a wavering line, one innocently upholding Philip to the disgusted

group, "because he walks along so quietly," the other supporting Joseph, whose shoulders heaved convulsively as he burst out into irregular and startling sobs. It was felt that the day had begun inauspiciously.

They sat down on the hall floor and began to pull off their rubbers and mufflers. As Philip's eye fell to the level of his feet a disagreeable association stirred his thoughts, and in a moment it had taken definite form: his rubbers had been stolen and hidden! His under lip crept slowly out; a distinctly dangerous expression grew in his eyes; he looked balefully about him. Marantha Judd pirouetted across his field of vision, vainglorious in a new plaid apron with impracticable pockets. Her pigtails bobbed behind her. She had just placed her diminutive rubbers neatly parallel, and was attaching the one to the other with a tight little clothes-pin provided for the purpose.

Casually, and as if unconscious that Marantha was curiosity incarnate, Philip took his own clothes-pin and adjusted it to his nose. It gave

him an odd and, to Marantha, a distinguished appearance, and she inquired of him if the sensations he experienced were pleasurable. His answer expressed unconditional affirmation, and unclasping her clothes-pin Marantha snapped it

"Tore off the clothes-pin with a jerk."

vigorously over her own tip-tilted little feature. A sharp and uncompromising tweak was the result, and Marantha, shrieking, tore off the clothes-pin with a jerk that sent little Richard Willetts reeling against his neighbor. Out of the confusion — Richard was a timorous creature,

and fully convinced that the entire kindergarten meditated continual assault upon his small person — rose the chiding voice of Marantha :

" You are a bad, *bad* boy, Philup, you are ! "

To her tangled accusations the bewildered teacher paid scant heed.

" I can't see why all you little children find so much fault with Philip," she said reprovingly. " What if he did put his clothes-pin on his nose ? It was a foolish thing to do, but why need you do it ? *You* have made more trouble than he, Marantha, for you frightened little Richard ! "

Marantha's desperation was dreadful to witness. She realized that her vocabulary was hopelessly inadequate to her situation : she knew herself unable to present her case effectively, but she felt that she was the victim of a glaring injustice. Her chin quivered, she sank upon the stairs, and her tears were even as the tears of Joseph Zukoffsky.

The youngest assistant now appeared on the scene.

" Miss Hunt wants to know why you're so late

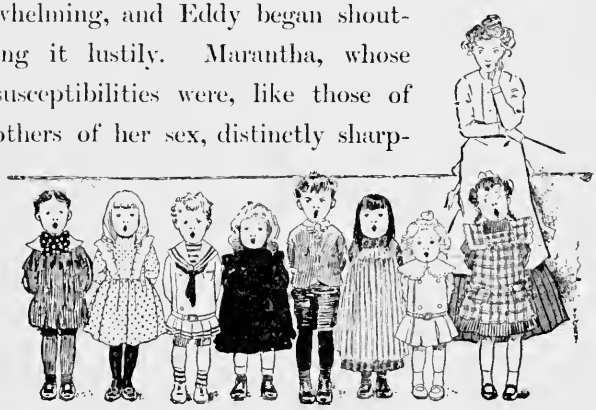
with them," she inquired. "She hopes nothing's the matter. Mrs. R. B. M. Smith is here to-day to visit the primary schools and kindergartens, and ——"

"Oh, goodness!" the attempted consolation of Marantha ceased abruptly. "I can't *bear* that woman! She's always read Stanley Hall's *last* article that proves that what he said before was wrong! Come along, Marantha, and don't be a foolish little girl any longer. We shall be late for the morning exercise."

Upstairs a large circle was forming under the critical scrutiny of a short, stout woman with crinkly, gray hair. They took their places, Marantha pink-nosed and mutinous, Joseph not yet recovered from a distressing tendency to burst out into gulping sobs—he was naturally pessimistic and treasured his grievances indefinitely. Philip's eyes were fixed upon the floor.

"Now what shall we sing?" inquired the principal briskly. "I think we will let Joseph choose, because he doesn't look very happy this bright morning. Perhaps we can cheer him up."

In a husky voice Joseph suggested "My heart is God's little garden." In reply to Miss Hunt's opening question Eddy Brown had proposed "Happy greeting to the rain," a sufficiently maudlin request, as there was absolutely no indication of that climatic condition, past, present, or future. Eddy possessed the not unusual combination of a weak mind and a strong voice, and though the piano prelude was that of Joseph's choice, the effect of a voice near him starting the well-known air of his own suggestion was overwhelming, and Eddy began shouting it lustily. Marantha, whose susceptibilities were, like those of others of her sex, distinctly sharp-



"Marantha . . . upheld Joseph with all her powers of heart and voice."

ened by suffering, knew well enough who was responsible for the rival chorus, and upheld Joseph with all her powers of heart and voice. The tunes in question were, like many of the kindergarten repertoire, somewhat similar, and a few seconds of chaotic discords amazed Mrs. R. B. M. Smith and vexed the teachers.

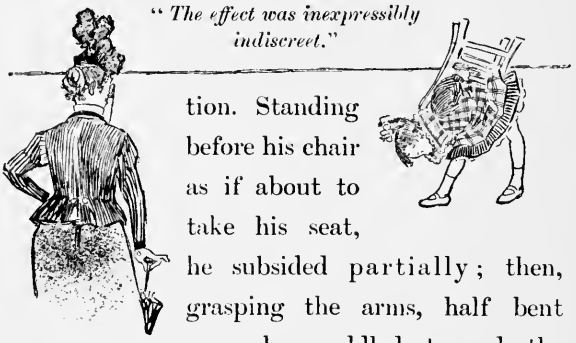
Now see on what slight thread events are strung! What she innocently supposed to be a misunderstanding of the song selected, influenced one of the teachers to announce the subsequent songs herself. This led Mrs. R. B. M. Smith to suppose that the teacher was selecting all the songs, thus depriving the children of the divine, not to say formative, privilege of individual choice. This opinion, in turn, led her to beckon one of the assistants to her and describe her own system of awakening and continuing, by a ceaseless series of questions, the interested coöperation of the child's intelligence. In order to do this, she added, the subjects of song and story must be more simple than was possible if complex historical incidents were used. She indicated her will-

ingness to relate to the children a model story of this order, calling the teachers' attention in advance to the almost incredible certainty that would characterize the children's anticipation of the events thus judiciously and psychologically selected.

The arm-chairs shortly to contain so much accurate anticipation were ranged neatly on both sides of the long room. Some malefic influence caused the officiating teacher to appoint Philip to lead one-half of the circle to the chairs and Marantha the other. More than one visitor had been wont to remark the unanimity with which this exercise was performed. Each child grasped his little chair by the arms, and holding it before him, carried it to its appointed place in the circle. So well had they learned this manœuver that the piano chords were sufficient monitors, and the three teachers, having seen the line safely started, gathered around their visitor to hear more of the theory.

Under what obsession Philip labored, with what malignant power he had made pact, is unknown.

He had no appearance of planning darkly: his actions seemed the result of instantaneous inspira-



"The effect was inexpressibly indiscreet."

tion. Standing before his chair as if about to take his seat, he subsided partially; then, grasping the arms, half bent over, he waddled toward the circle. This natural method of transportation commended itself in a twinkling to his line, and without the slightest disturbance or hesitation, they imitated him exactly. Experience should have taught Marantha the futility of following his example, but she was of an age when experience appeals but slightly; and determined to excel him, at the risk of falling at every step on her already injured nose, she bent over so far that the legs of her chair pointed almost directly upward. Her line followed her, and waddling,

shuffling, gnome-like, they made for the circle. It had all the effect of a carefully inculcated drill, and to Mrs. R. B. M. Smith the effect was inexpressibly indiscreet.

"Is it possible that you —" she inquired, pointing to the advancing children, many of whom promptly fell over backward under the sudden onslaught of the horrified teachers.

Miss Hunt colored angrily.

"Something is the matter with the school today," she said sharply. "I never knew them to behave so in my life! I can't see what's come over them! They *always* carry their chairs in front of them."

"I should hope so," responded the visitor placidly, "nothing could be worse for them than that angle."

"At least they're safe now," the youngest assistant whispered to her fellow-teacher, as the children sat decorously attentive in their chairs, their faces turned curiously toward the strange lady with the fascinating plumes in her bonnet.

"—— Nothing like animals to bring out the

protective instinct — feebler dependent on the stronger," she concluded rapidly, and then addressed the objects of these theories.

"Now, children, I'm going to tell you a nice story — you all like stories, I'm sure."

At just that moment little Richard Willetts sneezed loudly and unexpectedly to all, himself included, with the result that his ever-ready suspicion fixed upon his neighbor, Andrew Halloran, as the direct cause of the convulsion. Andrew's well-meant efforts to detach from Richard's vest the pocket-handkerchief securely fastened thereto by a large, black safety-pin strengthened the latter's conviction of intended assault and battery, and he squirmed out of the circle and made a dash for the hall — the first stage in an evident homeward expedition.

"*Sneezed loudly and unexpectedly.*"

This broke in upon the story, and even when it got under way again there was an atmosphere

"'Yesterday, children, as I came out of my yard, what do you think I saw?'"

of excitement quite unexplained by the tale itself.

"Yesterday, children, as I came out of my yard, *what* do you think I saw?" The elaborately concealed surprise in store was so obvious that Marantha rose to the occasion and suggested:

"An el'phunt!"

"Why, no! Why should I see an elephant in my yard? It wasn't *nearly* so big as that — it was a *little* thing!"

"A fish!" ventured Eddy Brown, whose eye fell upon the aquarium in the corner. The *raconteuse* smiled patiently.

"Why, no! How could a fish, a live fish, get in my front yard?"

"A dead fish?" persisted Eddy, who was never known to relinquish voluntarily an idea.

"It was a little kitten," said the story-teller, decidedly. "A little white kitten. She was standing right near a great big puddle of water. And what else do you think I saw?"

"Another kitten?" suggested Marantha conservatively.

"No, a big Newfoundland dog. He saw the little kitten near the water. Now cats don't like the water, do they? They don't like a wet place. What do they like?"

"Mice!" said Joseph Zukoffsky abruptly.

"Well, yes, they do; but there were no mice in my yard. I'm sure you know what I mean. If they don't like *water*, what do they like?"

"Milk!" cried Sarah Fuller confidently.

"They like a dry place," said Mrs. R. B. M. Smith.

"Now what do you suppose the dog did?" It may be that successive failures had disheartened the listeners; it may be that the very range presented alike to the dog and them for choice dazzled their imaginations. At any rate they made no answer.

"Nobody knows what the dog did?" repeated the story-teller encouragingly. "What would you do if you saw a little white kitten like that?"

Again a silence. Then Philip remarked gloomily:

"I'd pull its tail."

Even this might have been passed over had not the youngest assistant, who had not yet lost her sense of humor, giggled convulsively. This, though unnoticed by the visitor, was plainly observed by fully half the children, with the result that when Mrs. R. B. M. Smith inquired pathetically,

"And what do the rest of you think? I hope *you* are not so cruel as that little boy!" a jealous desire to share Philip's success prompted the quick response:

"*I'd* pull it, too!"

Miss Hunt was oblivious to the story, which finished somehow, the dog having done little, and the kitten, if anything, less. She was lost in a miserable wonder what was the matter with them? Alas! she could not know that the root of all

the evil was planted in the breast of Philip, the demon-ridden. His slightest effort was blessed with a success beyond his hopes. He had but to raise his finger, and his mates rallied all unconsciously to his support. Nor did he require thought; on the instant diabolical inspiration seized him, and his conception materialized almost before he had grasped it himself. The very children of light were made to minister unto him, as in the case of his next achievement.

With a feeling of absolute safety the teacher called upon Eddy Brown to lead the waiting circle in a game. Eddy was one of the stand-bys of the kindergarten. He was a little old for it, but being incapable of promotion owing to his inability to grasp the rudiments of primary work, he continued to adorn his present sphere. It would almost seem that Fröbel had Eddy Brown in mind in elaborating his educational schemes, for his development, according to kindergarten standards, was so absolutely normal as to verge on the extraordinary. He was never *ennuyé*, never cross, never disobedient. He never anticipated; he

never saw what you meant before you said it; he never upset the system by inventing anything whatsoever — the vice of the too active-minded. He was perennially surprised at the climaxes of the stories, passionately interested in the games; and clay balls and braided straw represented his wildest dissipations. He sat in his chair till he was told to rise, and remained standing till he was urged to take his seat. His voice, if somewhat off the key, was always prominent in song; his feet, if not always in time, were always in evidence when it was a question of marching.

To-day he took the middle of the ring and beamed cheerfully on them all as they swayed back and forth and sang to him:

Now Eddie *if you'll* teach *us*
A new *game to* play,
We'll watch *you and* try *to*
Do just *as you* say!

There was a slight poetic exaggeration in the idea of Eddy Brown's being able to teach anybody anything new, but this was felt by no one but the youngest assistant, who, recalling his

"'*Tripping lightly as we go.*'".

regular programme upon such occasions, smiled somewhat sardonically.

As she had expected, Eddy inclined to play "Tripping lightly as we go." His conception of the process implied in the song was a laborious jumping up on one toe and down on the other. This exercise he would keep up till the crack of doom if undiverted from it. When induced to stop, he signalled to Joseph Zukoffsky to take his place. Joseph, on being tunefully implored to produce something new in the way of a game, declared for "Did you ever see a laddie?" and the ring started in blithely:

Did you ever *see a* laddie, *a* laddie, *a* laddie;
Did you ever *see a* laddie, *do* this *way or* that?

After some seconds of consideration Joseph solemnly lifted his left heel from the floor and replaced it. This enthralling diversion occupied

the ring for a moment, and then Marantha was summoned. Though plump as a partridge, Marantha was born for the ballet.

"Did you *ever* see a *lassie*, a *lassie*, a *lassie*," sang the children as Marantha, arching her little instep and pointing her toe deliciously, kicked out to one side, almost as high as her waist, with a rhythmical precision good to see.

Her eyes sought Philip's, and with a coy little smile, she took his hand to lead him to the centre. Too many poets and novelists have analyzed the inevitable longing of woman to allure him who scorns her charms, the pathetic passion to attract

"*Marantha was born for the ballet.*"

where she has been brutally repulsed, to make it necessary for me to discuss her attempted endearments as Philip sulkily flung away her hand.

Just then somebody wanted a drink; and as one teacher led the thirsty child away, and the other turned her head to attract the pianist's attention and propose a new tune, Philip, who had not begun to set his model till the last moment, suddenly lifted his thumb to his nose, contracting and expanding his fingers in strict time.

Her rapid glance had shown the teacher a ring of children apparently tapping their noses, and only a horrified snort from Mrs. R. B. M. Smith and a murmured "*Heavens!*" from the returning assistant called her attention to the circle of children gravely assuming an attitude prescribed nowhere in Fröbel, nor, indeed, in any system, social or Delsartean.

Philip, now utterly abandoned to the spirit of successful deviltry that intoxicated him beyond control, danced up and down, inviting one, two, and three out of the demoralized ring to share his orgy. They pranced about wildly, shouting

snatches of song, pushing each other, deaf to the shocked remonstrance of the teachers, while in their midst, flushed and screaming, Philip and Marantha, satyr and bacchante, leaped high in the air.

"*Leaped high in the air.*"

In the door there suddenly appeared a woman in a checked apron with a shawl over her head. As the teachers pulled the ring-leaders apart, and the pianist, to a shocked murmur of remonstrance, played Träumerei with the soft pedal down, while a circle of flushed and palpitating "little birds" rocked themselves to sleep with occasional reminiscent giggles and twitters, the woman in the door advanced to a little bird whose chief interest, as he ruffled his gingham plumage, seemed to be to evade an obviously maternal call.

"Philup, ye bad boy, where's the carvin' knife?" she said angrily. This was too much for the youngest assistant, who went off into something very like hysteria, while the principal tried to explain the inevitable bad effect of shocks and slaps upon the delicate organization of the child.

"An' it's beggin' y'r pardon, Miss, but it's a rale imp o' Satan he'll be some days, like, an' I see it in his eye this marnin'! An imp o' Satan!"

The principal smiled deprecatingly. "We don't like to hear a child called that," she said, gently. "Philip has not been so good as usual this morning——"

"Ye may say so!" interrupted Philip's parent.

"Philup, ye bad boy, where's the carvin' knife?"

"An' whin it's that way he is, it's little good soft words 'll do, Miss. He gets it from his father. An' me not able to cut the mate fer his father's

dinner! He's a sly young one! It's a good spankin' he needs, Miss—an' he'll get it, too!"

"Take her into the hall with him. Tell her not to spank him. Tell her we'll punish him. We understand how to make him sorry," murmured the principal to the youngest assistant, as she turned to quiet the circle.

The youngest assistant conducted Philip's mother, and dragged Philip to the hall.

"Now, Philip, tell your mother where you hid the carving knife," she said invitingly. Philip made a break for the outer door. He was caught and reasoned with. Incidentally his naughtiness in leading the game was mentioned. His mother set her jaw and loosened her shawl.

"An' that's what ye did, ye bad boy? What did I say the last time I see ye at it? Dirty thrick! You come here to me, sir!"

Philip kicked violently and pinched the youngest assistant. Her lips assumed the set expression of the other woman's. The light of generations of Philistine mothers kindled in her eye. As Philip struggled silently but wildly, the voice

of Mrs. R. B. M. Smith, high and resonant, floated through the transom.

"And so we never strike a little child, Joseph, and you must never talk about it. His mother and Miss Ethel are going to *talk* with little Philip, and try to make him see ——"

Philip ducked under his mother's arm and almost gained the door. The youngest assistant caught him by his apron-string and towed him back. His mother looked around hastily, noticed a small door half open, and caught the youngest assistant's eye.

"Cellar?" she inquired.

The youngest assistant nodded, and as his mother lifted Philip bodily and made for the little door, it was opened for her and closed after her by the only other person in the hall.

His mother carried Philip to the coal-heap, and upon it she sat and spanked her son — spanked him systematically, and after an ancient method upon which civilization has been able to make few if any improvements. She had never read that excellent work, "Child Culture, or

"*It was opened for her and closed after her.*"

How shall we Train our Mothers?" (R. B. M. Smith).

Soon she led him in, subdued and remorseful, the demon expelled, to the principal.

"*Spanked him systematically.*"

"He'll throuble ye no more, Miss, an' the carvin' knife is underneath th' bolster av his bed—the bad 'un that he is!"

"Now that Philip is good again—and you see

how quiet he was out in the hall; I told you he was thinking very hard—we'll all sing a song to show how glad we are, and he shall choose it. What would Philip like to sing?"

Philip murmured huskily that his heart was God's little garden, and there was more joy over him than over the two dozen that needed no repentance.

But the youngest assistant avoided Mrs. R. B. M. Smith's eye, for *she* had opened the cellar door!

"Murmured huskily that his heart was God's little garden."

A STUDY IN PIRACY

A STUDY IN PIRACY

IT might not have occurred to you to find the Head Captain terrible to look upon, had you seen him first without his uniform. There seems to be something essentially pacific in the effect of a broad turn-over gingham collar, a blue neck-ribbon, and a wide straw hat; and you might be pardoned for thinking him a rather mild person. But could you have encountered him in a black cambric mask with pinked edges, a broad sash of Turkey red wound tightly about his waist, and that wide collar *turned up* above his ears — the tie conspicuous for its absence — you might have sung another tune. His appearance was at such a time nothing short of menacing.

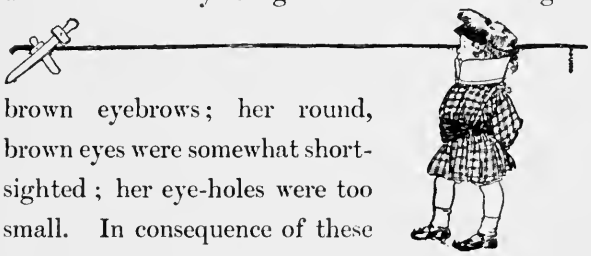
The Lieutenant was distinctly less impressive. His sash, though not so long as the Head Captain's, was forever coming untied and trailing behind him, and as he often retreated rapidly, he

stumbled and fell over it twice out of three times. This gave it a draggled and spiritless look. Moreover, he was not allowed to turn his collar up except on Saturdays, and the one his sister had made him from wrapping paper had an exotic, not to say amateur theatrical, effect that was far from convincing. The eye-holes in his mask, too, were much too large — showing, indeed, the greater part of both cheeks, each of which was provided with a deep dimple. Seen in the daytime, he was not — to speak confidentially — very awesome.

As for the Vicar — well, there were obstacles in the way of her presenting such an appearance as she would have liked. In the first place, there was not enough Turkey red to go evenly round, and to her disgust she had been obliged to put up with a scant three-quarters of a yard — not a wide strip at that. What was by courtesy called the Vicar's waist was not far from three-quarters of a yard in circumference, which fact compelled her to strain her sash tightly in order to be able to make even a small hard knot, to

say nothing of bows and ends. She had no collar of any kind — her frocks were gathered into bands at the neck — and she was not allowed to imitate the Lieutenant's; who, though generally speaking a mush of concession, held out very strongly for this outward and visible sign of a presumable inward and spiritual superiority. So the Vicar, in a wild attempt at masculinity, had privately borrowed a high linen collar of her uncle. The shirts in her uncle's drawer had printed inside them, "*wear a seventeen-and-a-half collar with this shirt*," so you will not be surprised to learn that the Vicar occasionally fell into the collar, so to speak, and found herself most effectually muzzled.

But the worst was her mask. Her hair came down in a heavy bang almost to her straight brown eyebrows; her round, brown eyes were somewhat short-sighted; her eye-holes were too small. In consequence of these facts, whenever it was desirable



The Vicar.

or necessary to see an inch before her nose she was obliged to push the mask up over her bang, when it waved straight out and up, and looked like some high priest's mitre.

Her title was due to her uncle, who, to do him justice, was as innocent of his influence in the matter as of the loss of his collar.

"When a person isn't the head of the Pirates, but is an officer just the same, and has some say about things, what do you call that?" she asked him abruptly one day. He was reading at the time, and not unnaturally understood her to say "the head of the parish."

"Why, that's called a vicar, I suppose you mean," he answered.

"A vicker! Does he have some say?"

"Some *say?*"

"Yes" — impatiently — "some say. He hasn't got to do the way the others tell him *all* the time, has he?"

"Oh, dear, no. Don't you know Mr. Wright, down at the chapel? He's called the vicar. He

really manages it, I think. Of course it's not like being the rector ——"

"Chapel? Is that the only kind of vicker, like Mr. Wright?"

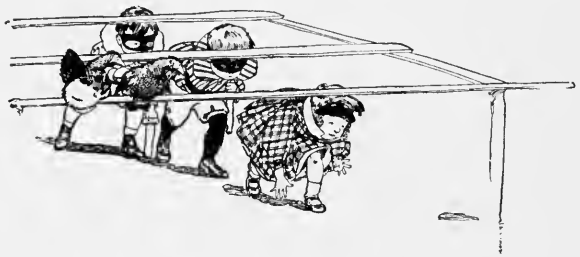
"Why, of course not, silly! There are lots of different kinds."

"Oh!" and she retired, practising the word. The others were much impressed by her cleverness in discovering such a fascinating title. It savored of *wicked* and *villain*, to begin with; and pursuing the advantage of their previous ignorance of it, she invented several privileges and perquisites of the office, which to deny would argue their lack of information on the subject, a thing she knew they would never own.

One of these was the right to summon the band, when the Head Captain had decided on an expedition, to any meeting-place she saw fit; and though in a great many ways her superiors found her a nuisance, the Lieutenant in particular objecting in a nagging, useless sort of way to most of her suggestions, they could not but admit

that her selection of mysterious, unsuspected *rendezvous* was often brilliantly original.

On one especial occasion, a warm afternoon late in June, when the houses and yards were all quiet, and the very dogs lay still in the shade, the Vicar led them softly to the chicken yard, mystified them by crawling through a broken



"*Crouching along beneath the perches.*"

glass frame into the covered roost, crouching along beneath the perches, and going out again by the legitimate door without stopping to speak. This effectually silenced the Lieutenant — the chicken house seemed an old ruse to him, and he was sniffing in preparation for the expression of his opinion. Out across the yard and twice around an enormous hogshead they walked sol-

emnly. Such a prelude must mean a great *finale*, and the Head Captain felt decidedly curious. The Vicar paused, made a short detour for the purpose of getting two empty boxes, piled them one on the other, and lightly swung herself into the cask. A loud thud announced her safe arrival at the bottom, and flushed with delight at the incomparable secrecy of the thing, the Head Captain followed her. The Lieutenant, grumbling as usual, and very nearly hanging himself in his sash, which caught on the edge, tumbled after, and standing close together in the great barrel they grinned consciously at each other.

The Head Captain broke the silence.

"Are we all here?" he demanded, his voice waking strange and hollow echoes.

"Yes!" replied the Vicar delightedly, bursting with pride.

"Aye, aye!" said the Lieutenant with careful formality.

"Then listen here!" the Head Captain spoke in a hoarse whisper. "This 'll be a diff'rent

way. This is going to be the real thing. To-day *we're going to steal!*"

The Vicar gasped. "Really steal?" she whispered.

"Steal what?" said the Lieutenant with a non-committal gruffness.

"I don't know till I get there," replied the Head Captain grandly. "Gold, I suppose, or treasures or something like that. Of course, if we're caught ——"

The Lieutenant sucked in his breath with a peculiar whistling noise — one of his most envied accomplishments — and ran his finger-nail with a grating sound around his side of the barrel.

"Jim Elder stole some apples from my father's barn, and my father licked him good," he suggested.

"Apples! Apples!" The Head Captain frowned terribly, adding with biting irony: "I s'pose Jim Elder's a Pirate! I s'pose he wears a uniform! I s'pose he knows the ways this gang knows! I s'pose he meets in a barrel like this! Huh?"

There was no answer, and the Head Captain settled his mask more firmly. "Come on!" he said.

They looked at the sharp edge of the hogshead; it was far away. They looked inquiringly at the Vicar; she dropped her eyes. Oh, Woman, in your hours of ease you can devise fine secret places, you can lead us to them, but can you bring us back to the outer world and the reality you seduced us from? There was an embarrassing pause. The seconds seemed hours. Would they die in this old, smelly barrel?

The Head Captain smiled to himself.

"I guess you kids never'd git out o' here unless I showed you how!" he remarked cheerfully.

"Forward! March!" He took the one step possible, and scowled because they did not follow him.

"Don't you see?" he said irritably. "When I say 'three,' fall over. Now, one—two—*three!*"

He pushed the Lieutenant and the Vicar against the side of the barrel, and precipitated himself against them. The barrel wavered, tot-

tered, and fell with a bang on its side, the subordinate officers jouncing and gasping, unhappy

"'*Now, one—two—three!*'"

cushions for their Head Captain, who crawled out over them, adjusted his collar, and strode off across the chicken yard. At the gate they caught up with him.

"Lieutenant!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Go straight ahead and watch out for us.

Whistle three times if the coast is clear. Beware of — of anything you see ! "

" Aye, aye, sir."

The Lieutenant slunk off, a peculiar caution in the slope of his shoulders and his long, noiseless stride. He rounded the barn and disappeared from sight. There was a moment of suspense. Suddenly he appeared again, his hand raised warningly.

" A peculiar caution in the slope of his shoulders."

" *Sst, sst !* " he hissed.

Promptly they skipped behind the wood-house door. In a moment a man's footsteps were audible; somebody was swinging by the barn, whistling as he went. He called out to the cook as he went by : " Pretty hot, ain't it ? Hey ! I say it's pretty hot ! "

He was gone. He had absolutely no idea of their presence. The first of the delicious thrills had begun. The Lieutenant, from his post behind the barn door, could have leaned out and touched him, but he had no idea. From that moment the scenery changed. The yard was enchanted ground, the buildings strange and doubtful, the stretches between haven and haven full of dangers.

Presently three soft whistles broke the silence. They glided out around the barn, and scaled the first fence. The Head Captain stopped to caution, the Lieutenant became hopelessly complicated in his sash, so the Vicar got over first. Though plump, she was light on her feet, and had been known to push the others over in her nervous haste ; she threw herself upon a solid board fence in an utterly reckless way, striking the top flat on her stomach, and sliding, slipping down the other side. Her method, thoroughly ridiculous and unscientific as it was, invariably succeeded, and she usually waited a few seconds for them after picking herself up. When one climbs after the

"She threw herself over a solid board fence in an utterly reckless way."

most approved fashion, employing as few separate motions as possible, making every one tell, the result of such slippery, panting scrambles as the Vicar's is particularly irritating. The success of the amateur is never pardonable.

"Which way, Head Captain?"

A dusty forefinger indicated the neighboring barn.

"Secret way or door?"

"Secret way."

They cast hurried glances about them: nobody

was in sight. At the corner of the barn the Lieutenant again performed scout duty, and his three whistles brought them to a back entrance hardly noticeable to the chance explorer of stable yards — a low door into a disused cow-house.

Softly they stole in, softly peeped into the barn. It lay placid and empty, smelling of leather and hay and horses, with barrels of grain all about, odd bits of harness, and tins of wagon grease, wisps of straw, and broken tools scattered over the floor. Broad bands of sunlight streaked everything. They crept through a lane of barrels, and mounted a rickety stair, heart in mouth. Who might be at the top?

A moment's pause, and then the Head Captain nodded.

"All right, men," he breathed.

They went carefully through the thick hay that strewed the upper floor, avoiding the cracks and pits that loosened boards and decayed planking offered the unwary foot. With unconscious directness the Lieutenant turned to the great pile of hay that usually marked the end of this expe-

dition, but the Head Captain frowned and passed by the short ladder that led to the summit. He pushed through an avenue of old machinery, crawled over two old sleighs and under a grindstone frame, and emerged into a dim, almost empty corner.

The heat of the hay was intense. The stuffy, dry smell of it filled their nostrils. Where the bright, wide ray of sunlight fell from the little window in the apex, the air was seen to be dancing and palpitating with millions of tiny particles that kept up a continuous churning motion. The perspiration dripped from the Vicar's round cheeks; she panted with the heat.

Walking on his tiptoes, the Head Captain sought the darkest depths of the corner, stumbling over an old covered chest. He stopped, he put his hand on the lid. The two attendant officers gasped. The Head Captain, with infinite caution, lifted that lid.

Suddenly a dull, echoing crash shook the floor. The Vicar squeaked in nervous terror. I say squeaked, because with grand presence of mind

the Lieutenant smothered her certain scream in the folds of his ever-ready sash, and only a faint

"Smothered her certain scream in the folds of his ever-ready sash."

chirp disturbed the deathly silence that followed the crash. The Head Captain's hand trembled, but he held the cover of the chest and waited. Again that hollow boom, followed by a rustling, as of hay being dragged down, and a champing, swallowing, gurgling sound.

"Nothin' but the horses," whispered the Lieutenant, removing his sash. "Shut up, now!"

The Vicar breathed again. The Head Captain bent over the chest.

"Oh! Oh! Oh, fellows! Look a-here!" His voice shook. His eyes stared wide. They crept nearer and caught big breaths.

There in the old chest, carelessly thrown together, uncovered, unprotected, lay a glittering wealth of strange gold and silver treasures. Knobs, cups, odd pierced, shallow saucers, countless rings as big as small cookies, plain bars of metal, heavy rods.

The Head Captain's eyes shone feverishly, he breathed quick.

"Here, here, here!" he whispered, and thrust his hands into the box. He ladled out a handful to the Vicar. For a moment she shrank away; and then, as a shallow, carved gold-colored thing touched her hand, her cheeks heated red, she seized it and hid it in her pocket.

"Gimme another," she begged softly, "gimme that shiny, little cup!"

If there had been any doubt as to the heavenly reality of the thing, it was all over now. No

more need the Head Captain's swelling words fill out the bare gaps of the actual state of the case. Here were the things — this was no pretend-game. Here was danger, here was crime, here was glittering wealth all unguarded, and no one knew but them!

They gloated over the chest; their hot fingers handled eagerly every ring and big chain. Only the Lieutenant, sucking in his breath, excitedly broke the ecstatic silence.

The Head Captain first mastered himself.

"Hm, that's enough — *from here!*" he commanded with dreadful implication. "Come on. They'll kill us if they catch us! Soft, now. Don't breathe so loud, Vicar!"

Off in a different direction he led them, having closed the box softly, and instead of making for the stairs, stopped before three square openings in the floor. He lay flat on his stomach and peered down one. It opened directly above the manger, and when he had cast down two armfuls of hay and measured the distance with his eye, they saw that he meant to drop through,

and realized that his blood was up, and heaven knew where he would stop that day.

The Vicar caught the idea before the Lieutenant, and with characteristic impatience, was through the second hole before the third member of the band had thrown down his first armful. Light as a cat she dropped, scrambled out of the manger, and as a step sounded in the outer barn, dragged the Lieutenant through in an agony of apprehension, stumbled across the great heap of stable refuse, and crouched, palpitating, behind the cow-house door.

The Head Captain, whom crises calmed and immediate danger heartened, himself crept back into the stable to gather from the sound of the steps the direction taken by the intruder.

He was talking to the horse.

"Want some dinner? I'll bet you do. Stealing hay, was you? That'll never do."

It was enough. Soon he would go upstairs to count over the treasures — who would ever have supposed that this simple-looking stableman had known for years of such a trove? — and then woe to the Pirates!

"Come on, you! Run for your life!" he shot at them, and they tore across the yard, over a back fence, and across a vacant lot, panting, stumbling, muttering to each other, the Vicar crying with excitement. The Lieutenant caught his foot in his sash and fell miserably, mistaking them for arms of the law, as they loyally turned back to pick him up, and fighting them with feeble punches. They dragged him through a hedge and took refuge in an old tool-house.

Slowly they got back breath. The delicious horror of pursuit was lifted from them. It appeared that they were safe.

"You goin' home, now?" said the Lieutenant huskily.

Home? Home? Was the fellow mad? The Head Captain vouchsafed no answer.

"Forward! March!"

He strode out of the tool-house and made for the barn. A large dog barked, and a voice called:

"Down, Danny, down!"

They returned hastily, and climbed laboriously

out of a little window on the other side of the tool-house, striking a bee-line for the adjoining property. The treasure jingled in their pockets as they ran stealthily into this barn. The last restraint was cast away, they were on new territory. A succession of back-yard cuts had resulted in their turning a corner, and had they gone openly and in the light of day out into the street, they would have found themselves in another part of the town. The Head Captain crept in through a low window. He was entirely wrapped up in his dreadful character. Blind to consequences, hardly looking to see if the others followed him, he worked his way over the sill and stared about him. Imagination was no longer necessary. No fine-spun trickery was needed to turn the too-familiar places into weird dens, the well-known barns into menacing danger-traps. Here all was new, untried, of endless possibilities.

It was a clean, spacious spot. Great shadowy, white-draped carriages stood along the sides; a smell of varnish and new leather prevailed. On the walls hung fascinating garden tools: quaint-

nosed watering-pots, coils of hose, a lawn fountain. All was still. The Head Captain strode across the floor, extending his hand with a majestic sweep.

"All these things — all of 'em — anything we want, we can take!" he muttered, but not to them. They could plainly see he was talking to himself. Rapt in wild dreams of unchecked depredation he stamped about, fingering the garden hose, prying behind the carriages, tossing his head and breathing hard.

"'*Anything we want we can take!*'"

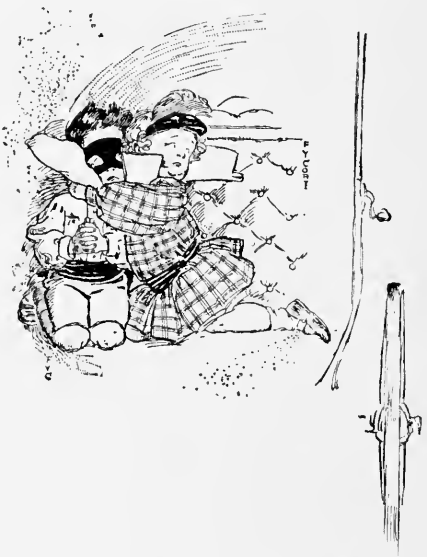
Suddenly came a step as of a man walking on gravel. It drew nearer, nearer. For one awful moment the Lieutenant seemed in danger of thinking himself a frightened little boy in a strange barn; he plucked at his sash nervously. The next instant two hands fell from opposite directions on his shoulders.

"Get into a carriage — quick, quick, quick!" hissed the Head

Captain, and he heard the Vicar panting as she shoved him under the flap of the sheet that draped a high-swung victoria. She was with him, huddled close beside him on the floor of the carriage, and it seemed hardly credible that the clatter of the Head Captain's hasty dive into the neighboring surrey could have failed to catch the ear of the man who entered the barn. But he heard nothing. He walked by them lazily, he paused and struck a match on the wheel of the victoria, and the smell of tobacco crept in under the sheet. It seemed to the Vicar that the thumping of her heart must shake the carriage. She dared not gasp for breath, but she knew she should burst if that man stood there much longer. It could not be possible that he wouldn't find them. Ah, how little he knew! Right under his very pipe lay those who could take away everything in his old barn if they chose. Perhaps the very surrey that now held that terrible Head Captain might be gone ere morning, he had such ambitions, such vaulting dreams.

Thump ! thump ! thump ! went her heart, and the Lieutenant's breath whistled through his teeth. Never in their lives had such straining excitement possessed their every nerve. Oh, go on, go on, or we shall scream !

He sauntered by, he opened some door at the rear. The latch all but clicked, when a hollow but unmistakable sneeze burst from the Head Captain's surrey. Immediately the door opened again. The man took a step back. All was deathly still, the echoes of their leader's fateful sneeze alone thrilled the hearts of his anguished followers.



"Humph!" "*She knew she should burst if that*

muttered a deep voice, "that's queer. Anybody out there?"

Silence. Silence that buzzed and hummed and roared in the Vicar's ears.

"Queer — I thought I heard. . . . Damn queer!" muttered the man. The Lieutenant shuddered. That was a word whose possibilities he hesitated to consider. Piracy is bad enough, heaven knows, but profanity is surely worse.

man stood there much longer."

Again the latch clicked. After an artful pause the nose of the Head Captain appeared, inserted at an inquiring angle between the two sheets that draped the surrey. Cautiously

he swung himself down, cautiously he tiptoed toward the others.

"*Sst!* *Sst!* All safe!" he whispered. They scrambled out, and a glance at his reserved frown taught them that the recent sneeze must not be mentioned.

Like cats they crept up the stairs, and only the Head Captain's great presence of mind prevented their falling backward down the flight, for there on the hay before them lay a man stretched at full length, breathing heavily. His face was a deep red in color, and a strong, sweetish odor filled the loft. They turned about at the Head Captain's warning gesture, and waited while he stole fearfully up and examined the man. When he rejoined them there was a new triumph in his eyes, a greater exaltation in his hurried speech.

"Come here, Lieutenant!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"This is a dead pirate. He died defending — defending his life. He will be discovered if we leave him here."

This seemed eminently probable. The Lieu-

tenant looked alarmed. He took a step or two on the loft floor and returned, relieved.

"No, he ain't dead, either," he announced, "he's only as ——— "

"He is dead," repeated the Head Captain firmly. "Dead, I say. You shut up, will you? And we must bury him."

The Lieutenant looked sulky and chewed the end of his sash. To be so put down before the Vicar! It was hardly decent. And she, in her usual and irritating way, grasped the situation immediately.

"We must bury him right off," she whispered excitedly, "before that man gets up here."

"That man," added the Head Captain, "is a dreadful bad fellow, I tell you. If he was to catch us up here, I don't know — I don't know but he'd — here, come back, Lieutenant! Come back, I say!"

They stole up to the dead pirate, who had not the appearance attributed by popular imagination to those who have died nobly. The Lieutenant was frankly in the dark as to his superior officer's intentions.

"If you take him off to bury him he'll wake ——— "

"Hush your noise!" interrupted the Head Captain angrily.

The Vicar could not wait for any one else's initiative, but began feverishly pulling up handfuls of hay and piling them lightly over the dead pirate's boots. The Head Captain covered the man's body with two hastily snatched armfuls, and as the Vicar's courage gave out at this point, coolly laid a thin wisp directly over the red face. The pirate was buried. It gave one a thrill to see hardly a dim outline of his figure.

"Hats off, my men," whispered the Head Captain, hoarse with emotion, "and we will say a prayer. Lieutenant," with a noble renunciation in his expression, "*you* may say the prayer!"

The Lieutenant was touched, and melted from his sulky scorn.

"What'll I say? What'll I say?" he muttered excitedly. "Not 'Hollow be thy Name'? That's a long one."

"Now I lay ——" suggested the Vicar tremulously.

"Pshaw, no!" interrupted the Head Captain. "Not a baby thing like that! If you don't know one, Lieutenant, I'll make one up."

"No, I'll say one," urged the Lieutenant hastily. "I'll say one, Captain. I'll say my colick that I had yesterday. Wait up a second, till I remember it."

The heavy, regular breathing continued to come out from under the hay, where lay the martyred pirate. The hens in a near-by henyard cackled shrilly, the trilling of an indefatigable canary in the coachman's rooms rose and fell through the hot June air. Red and dripping with the heat, dusty and sprinkled with the hay, the outlaws stood, solemn and tense, starting at the least fancied sound from below.

The Lieutenant cleared his throat, shut his eyes tight to assist his memory, and began his burial service:

"*Almighty 'n' everlastin' God, who's given unto us, Thy servants, grace by the c'nfession of a*

true faith t' acknowledge th' glory of th' Eternal Trinity, and — and —— "

"*And in the power of the Divine Majesty ——* " prompted the Vicar ostentatiously.

" *Will* you keep still, Miss ? *Majesty to worship the Unity, we beseech Thee that Thou wouldst*

" '*Almighty 'n' everlastin' God.*' "

keep 's — keep 's steadfast, er, wouldst keep 's steadfast —— "

The Lieutenant paused helplessly.

" *In this faith,*" added the Vicar with triumph, dashing on with almost unintelligible rapidity, " *and evermore defend 's from all 'dver-*

sities, who livest 'n' reignest one God, world 'thout end. Amen!"

She took a necessary breath, and pushed back her mask still further from her tumbled bang.

The Head Captain was visibly impressed. It had never occurred to him to say a collect. The Lieutenant was not such a poor stick, after all.

Gravely he led the way down-stairs and climbed abstractedly through the little window. Something was evidently on his mind.

"The last time I saw that pirate," he began.

The Lieutenant tripped, and sat down abruptly.

"The — the last time you saw him?" he stammered.

"That's what I said," responded the Head Captain shortly. "The last time I saw him I didn't s'pose I'd have to bury him. He'd just got a lot of treasure and stuff and — *Sst! Sst!* For your lives!"

They scuttled off desperately. The ground was new to them, and had it not been for providential garbage barrels and outhouses, they could hardly have hoped to conceal themselves from the man

who was raking up the yard. To avoid him they dashed straight through his barn, and rounded a summer-house without perceiving a small tea-party going on there, till they ran through it, to their own sick terror, and the abject amazement of the tea-party. They tore through a hedge, panted a doubtful moment in a woodhouse, then took up

"Then took up their headlong flight."

their headlong flight with the vague, straining pace of crowded dreams. On, on, on. Slip behind that lilac clump — wait! *Sst! Sst!* Then get along! Oh, hurry, hurry! Pick up your sash! Whose *is* this yard? Never mind! hurry!

They dropped exhausted under their own pear tree.

"My, but that was a close shave! I thought they'd got us sure!" breathed the Head Captain.

"Wh-who were they?" asked the Lieutenant, round-eyed.

"Who were they? Who were they?" the Head Captain repeated scornfully. "The idea! I guess you'd find out who they were if they caught you once!"

The Lieutenant shot a sly glance at the Vicar. Did she know? You never could tell, she pretended so. She shivered at the Head Captain's implication.

"Yes, sirree, I guess you'd find out then," she assured him.

Suddenly the Head Captain's face fell. "The treasure!" he gasped. "It's gone!"

In dismay they turned out their pockets. All those vessels of gold and vessels of silver were lost — lost in that last mad rush. All but the shallow, gold-colored saucer in the Vicar's hand. They looked at it enviously, but honor kept them silent. To the Vicar belonged the spoils.

"I don't see what good they were, anyhow," began the Lieutenant morosely.

"'Good'?" mimicked the Head Captain, enraged. "'Good'? Why, didn't we *steal* 'em?"

Slowly they took off their uniforms and hid them under the back piazza. Slowly the occasion faded into the light of common day; objects lost their mystery, the barn and the tool-house imperceptibly divested themselves of all glamour. It was only the back yard.

The Head Captain and the Lieutenant threw themselves down under the pear tree again and fell into a doze. The Vicar, grasping her treasure, stumbled up the back stairs and took an informal nap on the landing. It must have been at this time that the gold-colored saucer slipped from her hand, for when she woke on the sofa in the upper hall, it was nowhere about.

The same hands that had transferred her to that more conventional resting-place, bathed and attired her for supper, and though two hours ago she would, as a pirate, have exulted in her guilty possession, somehow as a neat, small person in pink ribbons she felt shy at approaching the subject, and ate her custard in silence.

Some time during the hours of the next long morning, as she played quietly on the piazza, she caught her mother's voice, slightly raised to reach the cook's ear:

"Why, I suppose it is. I shouldn't wonder, Maggie. I suppose the child picked it up somewhere. Did you hear that, Fred, about Mr. Van Tuyl's

"*A neat, small person in pink ribbons.*"

best harness? All scattered through half the back yards on Winter Street. All those brass ornaments, and parts of the very side-lamps, too. Fortunately they found it all. Take that piece, Maggie, and give it to the man when you see him."

The Vicar sighed. Just then she felt, with the poet, that home-keeping hearts are happiest.

BOBBERT'S MERRY CHRISTMAS

"AND *that's* how I came to be born in a manger!" Bobbert concluded.

The baby nodded, her mouth a comprehending bud, her eyes big with interest.

"Nuv' 'tory! Tell Babe nuv' 'tory!" she demanded.

"So then the wise men came. They were shepherds. They came with their flocks-by-night ——"

"Huh?"

"Flocks-by-night, I say. It was something they had. They brought me some Frank's incense ——"

"Unka F'ank! *Goo-ood* Unka F'ank!"

"*Will* you keep still? I twasn't that Frank."

"*Warum nicht?*" inquired the baby, with a startling intelligibility. Her German, for some reason best known to herself, was as distinct as her English was garbled.

"Because it isn't, silly. Uncle Frank isn't a

wise man — he's a p'fessor in college. And they brought me —— "

"Look here, Bobbert, what on earth are you talking about?"

"I'm telling her all about Christmas, Uncle Frank." Bobbert removed the corner of the rug from the baby's mouth and handed her her silk rag doll. "Minna said to amuse her, and I was. About the manger I was telling —— "

"So I heard. But why do you cast it in that form precisely? You see, you weren't born in one, and — and — er — you really oughtn't to talk that way, don't you know."

"Why wasn't I?"

"Because you weren't."

"Well, where was I, then?"

"You were born in this house."

"Where in this house?"

"Where? Why, upstairs, I suppose."

"Are people always born upstairs?"

"Usually."

"Never born downstairs at all? Didn't you ever know anybody that was born down — "

"Oh, stop, Bobbert! Go on amusing your sister. You have a genius for pure idiocy. Where's your mother?"

Bobbert's face fell. The baby tore off a bit of her doll and swallowed it unrebuked — it was one of her swallowing days — and began wetting her finger and following in a smudgy outline the figures on the Kate Greenaway wall-paper, without one reprimand from her brother.

"'F I'm goin' to have a tree, I want to make it myself. They're all down in the lib'r'y, and I have to keep out. They've got a ladder in there, too. And they laugh all the time. I have to stay here with *her!* What's the good o' calling it my tree if I can't help? Aunt Helena says won't my eyes pop out when I see; but they won't."

("Hadn't she better keep the doll to play with and eat something else?")

"I think I might go in! Here, stop eating that, Baby! Let go! Somebody fell off the ladder, too, and there I was out in the hall! I don't believe they had the little back thing up

that keeps it from doubling up, sort of, that way it does, you know. Do you? I could 'a' told them about that. What's the good of a tree, anyway?"

("Do you think she improves the wall-paper with that border? Perhaps the color comes off.")

"Here, stop that! Don't suck your hand, Baby. Oh, goodness! I wish Minna was here. I'm not a nurse. I never made such a fuss when I was little, I know. If I had a tree for anybody, I'd let them have the fun of it. Wouldn't you?"

His audience looked uncertain. In his heart he felt that his nephew was right, but prudence restrained him, and he rose to go with a temporizing air. "Well, you know, it's usually done this way," he suggested. "It's supposed to be in the nature of a surprise. If you arranged the whole thing, there wouldn't be anybody to surprise, would there?"

Bobbert sniffed. "Oh, if you stay out, we could s'prise you, I s'pose," he said, somewhat cynically.

Bobbert's father and mother, bubbling over with delight and busyness and vague Christmas good feeling, ran about holding the same parcels, straightening the same red candle, pulling at the same rope of cranberries.

"Isn't it grand, Frank? This is really the best we've ever had. How are the children? Do they suspect anything?"

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"Isn't it grand, Frank? This is really the best we've ever had. How are the children? Do they suspect anything?"

"Nothing — nothing whatever," he assured her. "Bobbert thinks the odor of hemlock and popcorn is to be attributed to the window-boxes, and I have no doubt that he supposes you're conducting a funeral down here. It's so still and solemn."

"Oh, Frank, how absurd! Well, I suppose he does begin to suspect ——"

"My dear sister, your penetration does you credit. Bobbert is only nine, and he has only seen this performance nine times, so it would be odd if he should have any *exact* idea of what you are all doing, but he probably has a dim ——"

"Now, Frank, you are tiresome. Of course he knows, but how can he know the size of it? He

never saw one so big. And we never had so many candles — there are three boxes here. And look at this. What do you think Uncle Ritch. has sent him?"

One of the aunts waved at him a set of red, blue and yellow balls attached by elastic cords to a brightly colored stick.

"I suppose the dear old man thinks Bobbert is about two years old! Where have you put that Japanese juggler's outfit, Kate? See, Frank, that beautiful French puzzle! It's awfully interesting. I hope he'll like it. More candy? The idea! The child would die! Where's Father Robertson's bird-book, dear? I sha'n't dare let him take it alone; it's too exquisite. See, Frank, there are two hundred and fifty colored plates. Isn't it beautiful?"

Bobbert's uncle fell upon the book. "By George!" he said, "but that's a beauty! Rather wasted on Bobbert, isn't it? Doesn't know an ostrich from a canary, does he?"

"Well, that's what Father Robertson wants him to learn!" they cried in chorus.

He nodded doubtfully. "Pity he can't come in and help," he suggested, "he'd enjoy this rumpus."

They stared at him in consternation.

"Why, Francis Robertson, what are you thinking of? Have Bobbert help on his own tree? Are you crazy?"

"I suppose it wouldn't do," he admitted, "but you see that's just what a little fellow likes — all the noise and fuss and running about and the — smells," he added vaguely.

"The smells?" demanded Bobbert's mother.

"The hemlock and the candy and the *new* smell of all the things," he persisted.

"In short," said the fat one with the yellow mustache, looking up from a box of many-colored baubles with which he and Aunt Helena were playing in undisguised joy, "just what we like!"

"Precisely," remarked Uncle Frank.

"Really," said Aunt Kate, somewhat stiffly, "if Bobbert and Babe should help about the tree, I can't quite see whom we'd call in to see it this evening! What are we working so hard for — to please ourselves?"

"Oh, no! great heavens, no!" cried Uncle Frank.

Bobbert's father appeared with an armful of steel rails and cross-pieces. "What do you say to this, Robertson?" he called delightedly. "Jove! these are heavy. Three switches to the thing, and you ought to see the engine! There's a parlor-car, a smoker, and two passengers. See the tender? Jove! I call that pretty good. Ring the bell, Kate. Look at that piston-rod, Frank!"

They clustered about him excitedly.

"Father sent it round just now. Wouldn't tell what he paid for the thing. You clamp it down to the carpet — right through it goes. There are forty-two feet of railing — how's that? Four curves and three switches — regular thing, you know. We'll put it right through the library, across the hall, and loop it back in front of the conservatory. What do you say?"

"Won't he be delighted!" sighed the aunts.

"Can we get it down before evening?" said Bobbert's mother nervously.

"Well, I should say so!" The fat one with the yellow mustache seized an armful of rails and began to study the joinings; Bobbert's father and Uncle Christopher explained the switch-workings eagerly to each other; and Bobbert's mother flew about wondering how the rugs could stand it, and picturing Bobbert's joy as the train puffed out from the base of the tree.

"This is great!" Uncle Christopher cried, as the rails went down with wonderful celerity. "Haven't had such fun in an age! Half the fun's in getting it ready!"

The fat one with the mustache glanced up and caught Uncle Frank's eye.

"Perhaps he'd rather ——"

Bobbert's mother shook her head at them. "Now stop right there," she said merrily, "if you're going to suggest that he should come down and help! You don't seem to see my plan at all, Frank. I want this thing to be perfect — I want it all to burst on him at once. How can we put it down in the evening when we're all dressed? And there wouldn't be time, anyway.

Oh, Chris, you didn't get him that, too? See that lovely dog collar! And the chain, too! Now Don will look respectable. Just step up stairs, won't you, Frank, and keep Bob on that floor till supper? Minna will bring it to him up there. He'll see the rails, you see, if he comes down into the hall. Helena, if you and Mr. Ferris eat any more of that broken candy, you'll certainly be sick. No, I don't mean ill — I mean plain sick."

"Do you mean to say you're not going to let that child out into the dining-room? He'll be so disgusted there'll be no managing him."

Bobbert's mother looked plaintive. "I wish to heaven, Frank," she said, "that you had some children of your own! Perhaps you wouldn't be so ridiculous then. How on earth is it going to hurt Bobbert, to-night of all nights, to stay in the nursery a few hours, just so that we may all toil for his own particular amusement? Tell him a story, or something. We'll barely have time ——"

A burst of laughter interrupted her. Uncle

Christopher had wound up the train and started it on what extent of rail was already laid, to his own great comfort and the disgust of Bobbert's father and the fat one with the mustache, who shrieked at him to "stop it off," and nervously waved their hands at the engine as it hove down upon the unfinished curve at the hearth rug, while Aunt Helena waved a red flag wildly, and Aunt Kate began to pass round a hat for a purse for "the brave girl who risked her life so gallantly to save the train."

"'*What are they doing in the hall?*'"

He left them with a chuckle, and began to mount the stairs two steps at a time, just saving himself from falling upon a huddled group at the top of the flight.

"What *are* they doing in the hall?" Bobbert

demanded, abruptly, clutching the baby's skirts with one hand and supporting himself in a peering attitude with the other. "What makes 'em scream that way? Why do they say, 'Down brakes'? Is it a game? When Aunt Helena laughs and laughs that way, she us'ally cries afterward."

Uncle Frank towed them back into the nursery, and led the conversation storyward, but Bobbert was not to be beguiled.

"I'm tired of stories. I'd rather be downstairs," he yawned. "I know one thing — if I get another old carpenter's set, I'll sell it to-morrow for five cents. I hate 'em. All I want's a boat, and I can't have that. I don't see why I can't go out, if it *is* snowing. I never can do a single thing I want, anyway."

"You are a little cross," observed his uncle, surveying him critically, "but I don't know that I blame you. Minna's coming up soon."

"Well, she better." Bobbert scowled at the baby, who smiled sweetly back.

"You're bad," he said, shortly.

"'Oh, *nein*,' she smiled.
'Oh, *ja*,' he scowled."

"Oh, *nein*," she smiled.

"Oh, *ja*," he scowled. "You're always chewing the wrong thing. Look at your shoe, all wet! What'll Minna say?"

She screwed her face into wrinkles

and shook her head, wringing her hands with Minna's gesture. "*Pfui! pfui doch! 's ist abscheulich!*" she scolded.

"I don't believe you'll get a present at all," he continued.

"Babe get p'es't! Babe get big p'es't!"

"Not a one! Not a one!" he persisted.

Her eyes filled; she implored him earnestly.

"*P'ease*, Babe get big p'es't!"

"Not a ——"

"Stop teasing your sister, Bobbert. Of course she'll get a present. Why not?"

"Because she swore."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean what I say."

"When did she swear?"

"Day before yesterday night. She said she was going to be bad when she got up, and they kept at her to say she wouldn't and she said she would. She can be the worst you ever saw."

"Worse ever saw!" echoed the baby.

"And all day they were afraid she would be,

and she wasn't and she wasn't, and she wasn't. Not till she went to bed. And she said her prayers — that one she says, '*Herr Jesus, mild and* — something — *Du*' — and then she just looked right up at the ceiling and swore as hard as she could."

"'*Oh Lord! Good Heavens! Damn!*'"

"What in th — time did she say?"

"She said: 'O Lord! Good Heavens! Damn!'"

"Oh!"

"And she got her little hands mighty well slapped, too. She must never say it again, must you, Baby?"

The baby laughed impishly. There was no telling what more she knew.

At exactly half-past six the library doors flew open with a bang, the piano struck up a brilliant march and Minna escorted her charges pompously

down the stairs, the baby in white, with a bewildering number of pink bows, Bobbert in a blue sailor suit.

Around the gleaming tree stood a ring of aunts, uncles and grandparents, flushed and happy.

"Merry Christmas, Bobbert! Merry Christmas, Babe! How do you like it? Isn't it grand? See the angel? See the pop-corn? Don't look at the floor yet! (No, it isn't time so soon. Chris will start it.) Well, was it lovely, bless her little heart? *Wunderschön, liebchen, nicht wahr?*"

Bobbert smiled perfunctorily at the tree, blinked a little, leaped through the ring of bright-frocked relatives, and fell upon a red-faced, apologetic man standing with the group of delighted servants near the door.

"Hello David!" he cried. "When did you come back? Are you going to stay? Did you know I could swim? Will you tell me a story to-night?"

David, whose only fault was too great an at-

tachment to the cup that cheered him too frequently, and who had been devoted to Bobbert, coughed deprecatingly and explained: "Only dropped in for the tree, Mr. Bob, your papa havin' asked me in with the rest. And a fine tree it is, I'm sure. I expect most o' them presents will be for you, Mr. Bob?"

David prefixed the title of respect in public, but his private relations with Bobbert had been anything but formal.

Aunt Kate, dancing with impatience, had begun to detach the presents from the lower boughs, and soon they were piling up around him.

"Master Robertson Wheeler. Master Robertson Wheeler — oh, Bobbert, that's a whopping fine present. Miss Dorothea Wheeler. *Siehst du, mein süsses Kind?* Master Robertson Wheeler. See what Uncle Ritch. sent you, Bob! He forgot how you had grown!"

They were laughing, explaining, thanking, eating, all at once.

"And the candy, mother'll keep till to-morrow. Now, Bob, see! Under the tree!"

The engine rattled proudly forth. The uncles and aunts fell upon it.

"There! I told you it wasn't oiled enough! See, where the smoke-stack joins on! Will she take the curve by the rug? See, Bobbert, how the switches work! Real switches! Father! Here, this way, Father Robertson! Mr. Ferris is going to work the switch. Isn't it wonderful, Bobbert? It's from Grandpa Wheeler. Thank him. It goes through the hall. Oh, Kate, you can't work that switch, can you? See Aunt Kate work the switch, dear."

Bobbert watched it curiously. He ran forward to the third switch.

"Want to see how it goes, Bob? Here, I'll work it for you. It's a little catchy at first. Yes indeed, Mr. Robertson, we had more fun than a little getting this ready, I assure you. Quite complete, isn't it?"

Uncle Christopher began to juggle with the Japanese outfit, to the intense delight of the servants. The aunties and Mr. Ferris played with the engine explaining its mechanism to the won-

dering grandfathers. Grandma Wheeler marvelled at the French dissecting puzzle. Bobbert's mother happily guarding the candy, laughed at the baby, who, harnessed into the dog collar, pranced along before her father, waving the colored balls in the air, a woolly lamb under her free arm. The merry moments passed.

Suddenly Grandfather Wheeler looked up from the bird-book, which he was sharing with Uncle Frank. "But where is Robertson, Jr.?" he inquired mildly.

They stared. "Why, right here," they said. But he was not right there.

Uncle Frank looked about comprehensively at the relatives and smiled a superior smile. Then his eye fell on the bird-book in his lap, and the smile changed its quality.

He glanced at the ring of servants. "And where is David?" he added. Suddenly he sprang to his feet. "Come on!" he said. "We'll find him. Don't make a noise — walk softly, now."

And still holding the presents, they trooped

after him through the hall, Bobbert's mother close to the leader, the aunties and Mr. Ferris at the end of the line. Through the dining-room, through the wide pantry, through the hall, and up to the kitchen door they tip-toed.

Uncle Frank paused a moment, nodded, and made room for Bobbert's father, while the grandfathers crowded up and the aunties peeped under and over.

On the floor before the well-swept kitchen hearth sat David; beside him, a little space away, squatted Bobbert, a long black hockey-stick in his hand. Between them were arranged large pieces of coal from the hod — arranged in what appeared to be nine-pin patterns.

"I shall attack from the right at daybreak. You'll see what the Mosquito Fleet can do, Mr. David! Your clumsy old Spanish ships can't move quick enough! Can they?"

"Wait and see, Bob, my boy!"

"This coal makes dandy ships — don't it? A lot of coal would be a fine present — wouldn't it? They use wood upstairs, and I don't believe I

could get hold of any. Are you enjoying yourself, David?"

"You bet I am, Bob. Put your flagship in line."

"Well, I will. She was out for — for repairs. When I go skating, David, I'll never use any other hockey-stick. I wanted a black one next to a boat. You were lovely to give it to me. I'll be big enough for a boat next year, I hope."

"Well, now it's daybreak. Lieutenant, are you ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Begin the fight!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The coal flew about thick and fast, the commanders shuffled the lumps into place, cheering and encouraging their officers and crews. Ship after ship sank, to rise no more, in a clatter of coal on the hearth.

Under cover of the noise Uncle Frank led them away, silent, through the empty rooms, to where the deserted Christmas tree sheltered only

Minna, cooing German cradle-songs to her sleeping baby.

"Now look here," he said. "Let's be sensible, dear people. We'll go on enjoying our presents and sports — and let Bobbert enjoy his. Why not, eh?"

THE HEART OF A CHILD

THE HEART OF A CHILD

THE sun-glare lies on the road and the field and the house. The beetles buzz and buzz, and the hens chuckle drowsily, half sunk in the gray dust. There are only three little white clouds in all the warm blue sky. It is quite still, except for the hens and the beetles and the occasional flap of the collie's tail on the warm flags. No one passes up or down the road. It is the hot noon sleep of the country in August.

Suddenly comes the grating sound of something dragged over the floor, and the door opens. The Child pushes out with a little wooden rocking-chair and a great tin pan heaped with unshelled peas. She stands the chair carefully in the coolest patch of shade and squeezes her plump little body between the curved arms. Her blue-checked apron is tied by the waistband around her neck — it is a grown woman's apron, and covers her and the chair, which is far too small for her, now.

But one cannot be always eight years old, and when one is eleven shall one relinquish without a pang the birthday gifts of one's childhood?

She lays the pan beside her and puts a handful of peas into her blue-checked lap. She presses her brown little thumb against the sharp green edge and drags it down the pod. Out patter the little green balls, and rattle into the pan. Truly, a pleasant sound! Like the rain on the roof. When she was very little and slept with her mother, she woke once in the night, and it was raining hard. The thunder frightened her, and her mother comforted her and sang her to sleep in the bed. And when the lightning flashed and all the room was bright and dreadful, her mother told her to keep her eyes shut and then the flashes would not trouble her. So she screwed her eyes hard together and held her mother's hand and drifted off to sleep.

That was so long ago! But whenever anything rattles and patters she shuts her eyes quickly, and sees for a moment the dark room and the square white counterpane, and hears her mother

singing "Mary of Argyle." She wonders if when we die and go to heaven we are reminded by little sights and sounds of what we used to do on earth. Of course, we shall do only pleasant things there, but they might remind us of the pleasant things here — the pasture in the early morning, when it is so still and cool and almost strange; the barn, full of sweet piles of hay, musical with pigeons, checkered with amber sunlight, a fairy palace on whose fragrant divans one sits with sultans and slave girls, and listens to Sindbad and Aladdin; the shady porch, where cool white milk and dark shiny gingerbread wait the weary, berry-stained wanderer. In the brown book in the parlor is a poem about a little girl who used to "take her little porringer and eat her supper there." The Child feels like that little girl when she eats in the porch.

There is another little girl in the brown book — "Sweet Lucy Gray." She thinks of Lucy when she comes home alone at dusk, and quickens her steps.

For some maintain unto this day
She is a living child ——

How frightened she would be! Not that the Child has been foolishly taught to fear. Only that she is imaginative, and knows enough to be afraid.

In that poem there is mention of one "minster-clock." What may that be? She connects it hazily with the watch that the minister takes out before the sermon. But that could never strike. If she could have one wish in all her life she knows what it would be. A beautiful gold watch all chased with figures and a cherry-colored ribbon tied into the handle. Then she would put it into her waist — but her dresses open in the back! The disadvantages of youth are obvious enough, in all conscience, without that last pathetic touch. When can she have a separate waist and skirt?

Suppose she should die before she grows old enough to attain this glory? People have died when they were young — much younger than she. The little Waters girl died, and she was only nine. The Child went to the funeral, but not with her mother. She slipped into the kitchen and listened at the door. When she told her mother that she had gone her mother looked at her so strangely.

"Why did you want to go?" she said. The Child could not tell.

"It made me cry," she answered, "but I felt good, too. I want her to tell my brother that I am pretty well, and that I hope he is the same, when she gets to heaven. Do you suppose she will get there by to-night?"

They talked about her conduct on that occasion so strangely and so long that she never spoke any more with them about death or the life after it. But she thought about these things.

She wondered whether Mary Waters remembered the secret place they made together in a hollow gate-post. Mary Waters had a way of sometimes telling things not quite as they really were. Did she do so now? Or had she told enough lies to send her to hell? For liars inherit hell. It is not that this fact has been impressed upon her mind by others, but she has read it in the Bible and heard it read.

There are strange things in the Bible. One is commanded to refrain from doing so many things that one never would do anyway. But those

things must have been done by the Israelites and the Pharisees and the Hittites and the Publicans. Then did God mean that the Americans must keep the same laws? But Americans were free and equal. They threw over the tea, and with a wild whoop — wait! let us pretend!

This is Boston. It is still and quiet. Night is dark all around. Soft and stealthy come footsteps — the Indians! They gather from the shadows of the trees and houses, they wave their tomahawks exultantly, they glide to the wharf. In their path stands a little girl in a blue-checked apron. She falls upon her knees in terror.

"Save me!" she cries. The chief laughs a horrid laugh; he raises his tomahawk — the dog barks loud and the Child nearly drops the peas in her lap, so frightened she is.

"I thought they were real! I thought they were coming!" she whispers to herself.

Let us think of pleasant things! Peas are so small if you count them by ones! If people considered whenever they gobbled peas so quickly that every one had to be shelled by one poor,

tired little girl! But no, they eat them without a thought of how she sat in the little tight chair and rattled them into the pan. If they were only rich enough to leave the chair and the peas and the farm and go to a city! What city? Oh, New York or Boston or Persia. In Persia the days are full of richness and the nights are Arabian. Along the streets walk veiled and lovely women — does it matter that to the Child their veils are of the dull blue cotton that wreathes her mother's hat? By all the Persian monarchs, no! — driving black dogs and white hinds, followed by turbaned slaves and glaring eunuchs, with misty genii hovering in the background. They enter a frowning portal — but let us pretend!

This is Persia. The streets are narrow; the people jostle and crowd to one side a little girl in a blue-checked apron. She walks along unknown, unnoticed. Wait! Who is this? It is a slave in a turban with a scimitar flashing with jewels. He bows low.

"I am bidden to tell you that your presence

is desired by my master, lovely maiden!" The lovely maiden looks haughtily at him.

"I will follow you, Slave," she says. They go on to a low narrow door. The slave says a magic word and the door swings open. Through a long passage and a great hall they go. There bursts upon them a radiance of light. Flowers fill the air with an unearthly fragrance. Golden goblets and ruby pitchers stand on silver salvers with "dried fruit, cakes, and sweetmeats, which give an appetite for drinking." Lovely slave girls lead the maiden to the bath, and attire her in rich and costly robes. They seat her in a golden chair and give her a bowl of seed-pearls to string. (These are the pearls.) She lifts her lovely head and says in a voice of silver music, "Where is your master?"

"Lady," says one of the slaves, bowing low, "he comes." She hears the feet of the approaching prince; she dares not raise her eyes. How will he look? What gift will he bring? She sinks her hands deep in the pearls. Ah, what is that? A great sweet-bough drops in the pan.

"Your gran'ma wants them peas!" says the prince in genial rebuke. Alas! And did Haroun-al-Raschid speak through his nose?

The Child stares at him, dazed.

"These — these are pearls!" she says. "I am

"These are the pearls."

stringing them for my girdle! Does your Highness desire that I should wear this — this *carbuncle?*"

His Highness laughs loud and long.

"It's a sweet-bough," he chuckles, "and I guess you better eat it right up, now." One moment of wavering: shall awful wrath come upon this desecrator of the soul's best rites, or good

fellowship and feasting be given him? She scowls, she shrugs her aproned shoulders, she glances from beneath her lashes, she smiles.

"I'll give you half," she announces. After all, it is hardly probable that the prince would have helped her shell the peas. And William Searles will, if he *is* only the chore-boy. Vain hope!

"I got to drive the chickens 'round back," he demurs. "I can't spend my time shellin' peas. Your gran'ma says if you don't get 'em done pretty soon you can't go over to Miss Salome's this afternoon. She says you're a dreadful slow child!"

This is the last straw. The Child rises with what would indeed be a freezing dignity were it not that with her rises the birthday-chair. "William," she begins. But more suddenly than is consistent with her tone she sinks back. William sits upon the grass shaking with laughter.

"You looked so awful funny, so awful funny!" he gasps. The Child hangs for a moment between tears and laughter. Then she accepts the situation and laughs as merrily as the chore-boy

"I was pretending I was a princess," she explains. "I ——"

"Ho!" rejoins William, "you ain't like a princess! You don't look like the ones you tell about, anyway! Why" — as she glares at him over the apron, "your hair's red, red! An' your eyes are kind o' green, they are! An' you're just jam-packed full o' freckles! I guess I know well enough how they look, and you ain't like 'em!"

The tears stand in her eyes, but she will not let them fall.

"I don't care, William Searles," she says bravely, "I may *look* freckled, but I don't *feel so!* And it's better to know how they look than —" But no! She is an honest Child, with all her imaginings. She knows that it is better to look like them than to know about them: better for the maiden and the prince, at least. William waits for the sentence. She begins again.

"William Searles," she says solemnly, "wouldn't you rather I could *tell* you about those princesses than *look* like them?" William's eyes sparkle greedily.

"You bet!" he replies with fervor. The Child sighs with relief.

"All right," she says, "then don't complain."

She is alone again, and only William's faint and fainter invitations to the chickens break the silence. The peas fly into the pan. Suppose she should be kept from Miss Salome's! But no, that shall not be. She looks ahead to the happy afternoon, singing as she works.

And now, and now the time has come. The dishes are wiped, the cat fed, and the fennel picked for the long sermon to-morrow. She, her very self, in her new dotted lawn walks carefully up the hill to the big house, terraced and gravel-pathed. She knocks timidly at the brass ring and the tall colored butler lets her in. He is the only indoor man-servant she has ever seen, and she reverences him greatly. He smiles condescendingly at her, as he smiles not upon all the country people.

"If Miss will walk up," he says. She goes up the soft-carpeted stairs into the upstairs drawing-room. She draws a long breath of happiness and

wonder ever new, and makes her little courtesy to Miss Salome.

Out of the dim delicious dusk of the room come slowly the familiar treasures : the high polished desk, the great piano, the marvelous service of Delft that fills a monstrous sideboard in the distance, the chairs, all silk and satin and shining wood, the great pictures in gilt frames. In the largest chair sits Miss Salome. Will the Child ever tire of looking at her pale lined face, her silver high-dressed hair, her beautiful hands sparkling with rings, her haughty mouth, her tired, troubled eyes? She must have been almost as lovely as the Princess Angelica, once. But she smiles so seldom. She puts out her hand.

"And what has happened since last Saturday?" she says.

The Child laughs for pure joy. To talk, to describe, to venture at analysis, to ask the why and wherefore, to illustrate by gesture as vivid as her speech — these things are her happiness. To be suffered this joy in snatches is much, to have it demanded, and for one whole afternoon! Here

is no one to reprove, no one to blame the idle hands, no one to question the propriety of mimicry, or to insist on her sitting in her little chair.

Miss Salome watches her flitting about the dusky parlor, her reddish gold hair gleaming now against the Delft blue, now against the polished mahogany desk. She tells of the chickens that lost their mother. She wanders about clucking for her brood and cooing over the returned prodigals. She walks across the room as William does — her slouching gait, open mouth, drawling voice, irresistibly perfect. She describes the shooting star that seemed to her like a lost spirit, gone to sorrow and the earth.

"It made me think of 'Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen!'" she says solemnly. "I wonder how that star felt, Miss Salome?"

There is a long pause. The lady sighs.

Then, "You may read, if you like," she says at last.

The Child's face flushes for joy. She runs to the book-cases and brings out a small brown

book. She fingers lovingly the tree-calf that covers the precious pages, and opens them before she finds her chair. She curls up on a great satin ottoman and smooths the leaves. Where is the farm? Where the peas? Where William? They are less than shadows, more unreal than dreams. Her voice trembles as she begins:

"'And now, your Highness permitting, I shall relate to your Majesty one of the most surprising adventures ever known to your Majesty—'" Ah, it is good to have been a child and perfectly happy.

What do children know of life, she thinks, who play with tops and dogs and kittens? There are books in the world. And they own all lands and seas and peoples, who own those printed leaves. Even Miss Salome does not know as much as the books. Even Miss Salome cannot say such curious wonderful things. Why is Miss Salome so good to her? In heaven, will they see each other? "In my Father's house are many mansions." Suppose she should be put in Miss Salome's? Will the "Arabian Nights" be

there? When she lifts her eyes from the book they fall on an immense peacock-feather fan. It glows on the wall, and the eyes dilate and tremble and satisfy her hungry little soul with the color she loves. On a small table near her stands a sandal-wood cabinet. Its faint sweet smell mingles with the spices and gums of the tale, and should a Genius spring from the cover and bow to the ground before them, she would not be surprised.

With a sigh of pleasure she releases the princess and outwits the evil spirit.

"'And now if your Majesty would care to listen to the story of the Fisherman ——'"

"That is enough," says Miss Salome. "Are you tired?" The Child's eyes answer her.

"Then sing to me."

"What shall I sing?" says the Child. "'Lord Lovell'"?

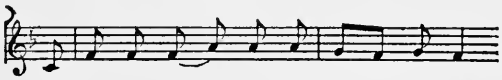
"If you like," answers Miss Salome.

The Child rises and stands before the great chair. Her face is raised and serious. She knows only ballads, but to her they are opera

and symphony in one. She clasps her hands and begins:

Lord Lovell he stood at his castle gate,
A-combing his milk-white steed,
When out came Lady Nancy Bell,
To wish her lover good spee-ee-eed,
To wish her lover good speed.

Her voice rings true as a bell. Miss Salome smiles at the eager little face.



"Now where are you going, Lord Lovell?" she said,
"Now where are you going?" said she.
"I'm going away, dear Nancy Bell,
Strange countries for to see-ye-ye,
Strange countries for to see!"

She carries them through fateful verses and unconsciously softens and saddens her voice at the woful ending, where

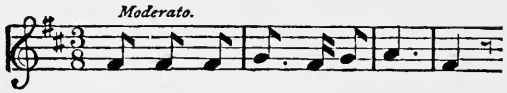
They buried the lady in the nave of the church,
They buried the lord in the choir,
And out of her bosom there grew a red rose,
And out of her lover's a brier-ier-ier,
And out of her lover's a brier.

Miss Salome applauds vigorously.

"One more," she begs.

The Child's heart grows big with happiness. That she should love it so, and yet with it pleasure others! It is too much joy. She will make a special prayer to-night and thank God, as does her grandmother, for unexpected bounty.

"I will sing, 'Come with thy lute,'" she says. It is a quaint, old-fashioned tune, and her voice rises and falls, and reaches for the notes with an almost pathetic feeling for their beauty:



Come with thy lute to the fountain,
Sing me a song of the mountain,
Sing of the happy and free: —

She looks at the lovely lady in the white satin gown in the great gold frame before her. How beautiful she must have been! She died when she was very young. Her husband shot himself with grief for her. She might have sung that

song to him — who knows? The Child chokes and swallows her tears at the end of the song, and when she looks at Miss Salome she sees that her eyes, too, are full of tears.

"Oh, I have made you cry! I am sorry — so sorry!"

Miss Salome wipes her eyes.

"If I make my guests unhappy, they will not care to come again," she says. "Ring for Peter, dear child." So the Child taps the bell, and Peter comes gravely in with the beautiful silver tray, and in a flutter of delight the Child forgets the song and the picture. Miss Salome cuts the dark frosted cake, and dishes into glass plates the candied ginger, floating in syrup, and pours out cups of real tea. And the Fairy Princess is served with a banquet worthy of her dreams. Oh, to be at last in Miss Salome's mansion!

The clock chimes for half-past five. Heaven is over. She brushes the crumbs to a little heap on her gilt-rimmed plate.

"I must go now, I think," she says with obvious effort. Her hostess smiles.

"But you will come next week?" she asks. And the Child's face lights up.

"Oh, yes! I'll surely come next week, *surely*," she replies with emphasis. So she goes around to Miss Salome's chair, and the beautiful ringed hand raises her face and strokes her little freckled cheek.

"Good-by, my Sunshine!" she says. The Child catches the hand in a rush of loving worship and kisses it.

"I will never be cross to William Searles again, never!" she cries. "I will be good to everybody — even to stupid people!" Miss Salome pinches her cheek and laughs.

And the Child goes out and down the steps of the terrace, rapt, wondering, lifted to a height of love and admiration that keeps her little soul to its sweetest, highest pitch for — ah, measure not the time, I beg you! The children who are older, how long do the glow and the flush remain with them? They can only say, "There will be another!" and wait for it as well and patiently as may be.

The Child goes back to the life of everyday, and embroiders its dull web with eyes of peacocks and sifts into it the scent of sandal-wood, and sets it weaving to the tune of ballads, quaint and sweet. Yet she has taken into another's web, unknowing, a tiny scarlet thread of happiness, that weaves through the tarnished cloth of silver and blesses the pattern as it grows. And the Master of the Looms has planned it all.

ARDELIA IN ARCADY

ARDELIA IN ARCADY

WHEN first the young lady from the College Settlement dragged Ardelia from her degradation — she was sitting on a dirty pavement and throwing assorted refuse at an unconscious policeman — like many of her companions in misery, she totally failed to realize the pit from which she was digged. It had never occurred to her that her situation was anything less than refined, and though, like most of us, she had

"Throwing assorted refuse."

failed to come up to her wildest ideals of happiness, in that respect she differed very little from the young lady who rescued her.

"Come here, little girl," said the young lady invitingly. "Wouldn't you like to come with me and have a nice, cool bath?"

"Naw," said Ardelia, in tones rivaling the bath in coolness.

"You wouldn't? Well, wouldn't you like some bread and butter and jam?"

"Wha's jam?" said Ardelia conservatively.

"Why, it's — er — marmalade," the young lady explained. "All sweet, you know."

"Naw!" and Ardelia turned away and fingered the refuse with an air of finality that caused the young lady to sigh with vexation.

"I thought you might like to go on a picnic," she said helplessly. "I thought all little girls liked ——"

"Picnic? When?" cried Ardelia, moved instantly to interest. "I'm goin'!"

She brushed the garbage from her dress — Ardelia was of that emancipated order of women

who disapprove of the senseless multiplication of feminine garments, and wore, herself, but one — and regarded her rescuer impatiently.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "I'm all ready. Hump along!"

"We'll go and ask your mother first, won't we?" suggested the young lady, a little bewildered at this sudden change of attitude.

"Jagged," Ardelia returned laconically. "She'd lift y'r face off yer! Is it the Dago picnic?"

The young lady shuddered, and seizing the hand which she imagined to have had least to do with the refuse, she led Ardelia away — the first stage of her journey to Arcady.

Ardelia's origin, like that of the civilization of ancient Egypt, was shrouded in mystery. At the age of two months she had been handed to a policeman by a scared-looking boy, who said vaguely that he found her in the park under a bench. The policeman had added her to the other foundling waiting that day at headquarters, and carried them to the matron of the institution devoted to their interest. Around the other baby's neck

was a medal of the Blessed Virgin, and a slip of paper pinned to her flannel petticoat labeled her Mary Katharine. The impartial order of the institution therefore delivered Ardelia, who was wholly unlabeled, to the Protestant fold, and one of the scrubbing-women named her.

Later she had taken up her residence with Mrs. Michael Fahey, who had consented to add to her precarious income by this means, and at the age of four she became the official nurse of Master John Sullivan Fahey. A terribly hot August, unlimited cold tea, and a habit of playing in the gutter in the noon glare proved too much for her charge, and he died on his third birthday. The ride to the funeral was the most exciting event of Ardelia's life. For years she dated from it. Mrs. Fahey had so long regarded her as one of the family, that though her occupation was gone, and her board was no longer paid, she was whipped as regularly and cursed as comprehensively, in her foster-mother's periodical sprees, as if they had been closely related.

What time she could spare from helping Mrs.

Fahey in her somewhat casual household labor, and running errands to tell that lady's perennially hopeful employers that her mother wasn't feeling well to-day, but would it do if she came to-morrow, Ardelia spent in playing up and down the street with a band of little girls, or, in the very hottest days, sitting drowsy and vindictive at the head of a flight of stone steps that led into a down-stairs saloon. The damp, flat, beer-sweetened air that rushed out as the men pushed open the swing-doors was cool and refreshing to her; she was in a position to observe any possible customers at the three push-carts in her line of vision, and could rouse a flagging interest in life by listening to any one of the altercations that resounded from the tenements night and day. Drays clattered incessantly over the pavement, peddlers shouted, sharp gongs punctuated the steadier din. A policeman was almost always in sight, and one of them, Mr. Halloran, had more than once given her a penny for lemonade. In the room above her head an Italian band practised every evening, and then Ardelia was perfectly

happy, for she loved music. Often before the band began, a hurdy-gurdy would station itself at the corner, and Ardelia and the other little girls would dance about, singly and in pairs, shouting the tunes they knew, rejoicing in the comparative coolness and the generally care-free atmosphere. Ardelia was the lightest-footed of them all; her hands held her skirts out almost gracefully, her thin little legs flew highest. Sometimes the saloon-keeper — they called him "Old Dutchy" — would nod approval as Ardelia skipped and pranced, and beckon her to him mysteriously.

"You trow your legs goot," he would say. "We shall see you already dancing, no? Here is an olluf; eat her."

And Ardelia, who loved olives to distraction, would nibble off small, sour, salty mouthfuls and suck the pit luxuriously while she listened to the Italian band.

Except for Mrs. Fahey's errands, which never carried her far off the street, Ardelia had never left it in her life, and her journey to the Settle-

ment-house was one of interest to her. She was a silent child, but for occasional fits of gabbling and chattering with the little girls in the street; and though she did not understand why the young lady from the Settlement should cry when she introduced her to two other ladies, nor why so many messages should be left for her mother, and so many local and general baths administered, she said very little. She was not accustomed to question fate, and when it sent her two fried eggs — she refused to eat them boiled — for her breakfast, she quietly placed them in the credit column as opposed to the baths, and held her peace.

Later, arrayed in starched and creaking garments which had been made for a slightly smaller child, she was transported to the station, and for the first time introduced to a railroad car. She sat stiffly on the red plush seat with furtive eyes and sucked-in lips, while the young lady talked reassuringly of daisies and cows and green grass. As Ardelia had never seen any of these things, it is hardly surprising that she was somewhat unen-

thusiastic; but the young lady was disappointed by this lack of ardor. She was so thoroughly convinced of the essential right of every child to a healthy country life, that she was almost disposed to blame Ardelia for not sharing her eminently creditable conviction.

"You can roll in the daisies, my dear, and pick all you want — all!" she urged eagerly. But no answering gleam woke in Ardelia's eyes.

"Aw right," she answered guardedly, and stared into her lap.

"Look out, dear, and see the fields and houses — see that handsome dog, and see the little pond!"

Ardelia shot a quick glance at the blurring green that dizzied her as it rushed by; the train was a fast express making up for lost time. Then with a scowl she resumed the contemplation of her starched gingham lap. The swelteringly hot day, and the rapid, unaccustomed motion combined to afflict her with a strange internal anticipation of future woe. Once last summer, when she ate the liquid dregs of the ice-

cream man's great tin, and fell asleep in the room where her mother was frying onions, she had experienced this same foreboding, and the climax of that dreadful day lingered yet in her memory. So she set her teeth and waited with stoical resignation for the end, while the young lady babbled of green fields, and wondered why the child should be so sullen. Finally she laid it to homesickness, and recovered her faith in human nature.

At last they stopped. The young lady seized her hand, and led her through the narrow aisle, down the steep steps, across the little country-station platform, and Ardelia was in Arcady.

A bare-legged boy in blue overalls and a wide straw hat then drove them many miles along a hot, dusty road, that wound endlessly through the parched country fields. To the young lady's remark that they needed rain sadly, he replied, "Yep!" and held his peace for the following hour. Occasionally they passed another horse, but for the most part the only sight or sound of life was afforded by the hens clucking angrily as

the travelers drove them from their dust baths in the powdery road. Released from her horror of foreboding, Ardelia took a more apparent interest in her situation, and would perhaps have spoken if her chaperone had opened conversation; but the young lady was weary of such efforts, disposed to a headache from the blinding heat, and altogether inclined to silence. At last they turned into a driveway, and drew up before a gray wooden house. Ardelia, cramped with sitting still, for she had not altered her position since she was placed stiffly on the seat between her fellow-passengers, was lifted down and escorted up the shingle-walk to the porch. A spare, dark-eyed woman in a checked apron advanced to meet them.

"Terrible hot to-day, ain't it?" she sighed. "I'm real glad to see you, Miss Forsythe. Won't you cool off a little before you go on? This is the little girl, I s'pose. I guess it's pretty cool to what *she's* accustomed to, ain't it, Delia?"

"No, I thank you, Mrs. Slater, I'll go right on to the house. Now, Ardelia, here you are in the

country. I'm staying with my friend in a big white house about a quarter of a mile farther on. You can't see it from here, but if you want anything you can just walk over. Day after to-morrow is the picnic I told you about. You'll see me then, any way. Now run right out in the grass and pick all the daisies you want. Don't be afraid; no one will drive you off *this* grass!"

"'*Huh?*'"

The force of this was lost on Ardelia, who had never been driven off any grass whatever, but she gathered that she was expected to walk out into the thick, rank growth of the unmowed side yard, and strode downward obediently, turning when in the exact center of the plot, for further orders.

"Now pick them! Pick the daisies!" cried Miss Forsythe excitedly. "I want to see you."

Ardelia looked blank.

"Huh?" she said.

"Gather them. Get a bunch. Oh, you poor child! Mrs. Slater, she doesn't know how!" Miss Forsythe was deeply moved and illustrated by picking imaginary daisies on the porch. Ardelia's quick eyes followed her gestures, and stooping, she scooped the heads from three daisies and started back with them, staring distrustfully into the depths of the thick clinging grass as she pushed through it. Miss Forsythe gasped.

"No, no, dear! Pull them up! Take the stem, too," she explained. "Pick the whole flower!"

Ardelia bent over again, tugged at a thick-stemmed clover, brought it up by the roots, recovered her balance with difficulty, and assaulted a neighboring daisy. On this she cut her hands, and sucking off the blood angrily, she grabbed a handful of coarse grass, and plowing through the tangled mass about her feet, laid the spoils awkwardly on the young lady's lap.

Miss Forsythe stared at the dirty, trailing roots that stained her linen skirt and sighed.

"Thank you, dear," she said politely, "but I

meant them for you. I meant you to have a bunch. Don't you want them?"

"Naw!" said Ardelia decidedly, nursing her cut hand and stepping with relief on the smooth floor of the porch.

Miss Forsythe's eyes brightened suddenly.

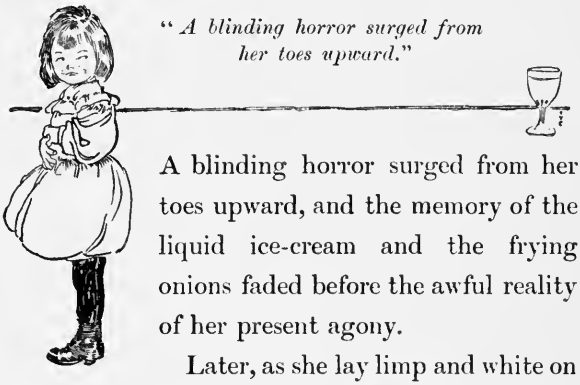
"I know what you want," she cried, "you're thirsty! Mrs. Slater, won't you get us some of your good, creamy milk? Don't you want a drink, Ardelia?"

Ardelia nodded. She felt very tired, and the glare of the sun seemed reflected from everything into her dazed eyes. When Mrs. Slater appeared with the foaming yellow glasses she wound her nervous little hands about the stem of the goblet and began a deep draught. She did not like it, it was hard to swallow, and instinct warned her not to go on with it; but all the thirst of a long morning — Ardelia was used to drinking frequently — urged her on, and its icy coldness enabled her to finish the glass. She handed it back with a deep sigh. The young lady clapped her hands.

"There!" she cried. "Now, how do you like

real milk, Ardelia? I declare, you look like another child already! You can have all you want every day — why, what's the matter?"

For Ardelia was growing ghastly pale before them; her eyes turned inward, her lips tightened.



"A blinding horror surged from her toes upward."

A blinding horror surged from her toes upward, and the memory of the liquid ice-cream and the frying onions faded before the awful reality of her present agony.

Later, as she lay limp and white on the slippery hair-cloth sofa in Mrs. Slater's musty parlor, she heard them discussing her situation.

"There was a lot of Fresh Air children over at Mis' Simms's," her hostess explained, "and they 'most all of 'em said the milk was too strong — did you ever! Two or three of 'em was sick, like this one, but they got to love it in a little while. She will, too."

Ardelia shook her head feebly. She had learned her lesson. If success, as we are told, consists not in omitting to make mistakes, but in omitting to make the same one twice, Ardelia's treatment of the milk question was eminently successful.

After a while Miss Forsythe went away, and at her urgent suggestion Ardelia came out and sat on the porch under the shade of a black umbrella. She sat motionless, staring into the grass, lost in the rapture of content that follows such a crisis as her recent misery, forgetful of all her earthly woes in the blessed certainty of her present calm. In a few minutes she was asleep.

When she awoke she was in a strange place. Outside the umbrella all was dusk and shadow. Only a square white mist filled the place of the barn, the tall trees loomed vaguely toward the dark sky, the stars were few. As she gazed in half-terror about her, a strange jangling came nearer and nearer, and a great animal with swinging sides, panting terribly, ran clumsily by, followed by a bare-legged boy, whose thudding feet sounded loud on the beaten path. Ardelia shrank

against the wall with a cry that brought Mrs. Slater to her side.

"There, there, Delia, it's only a cow. She won't hurt you. She gives the milk — " Ardelia shuddered—" and the butter, too. Here's some bread and butter for you. We've had our supper, but I thought the sleep would do you more good."

Still shaken by the shock of that panting, hairy beast, Ardelia put out her hand for the bread and butter, and ate it greedily. Then she stretched her cramped limbs and looked over the umbrella. On the porch sat a bearded man in shirt-sleeves and stocking feet, his head thrown back against his chair, his mouth open. He snored audibly. Tipped back in another chair, his feet raised and pressed against one of the supports of the porch roof, sat a younger man. He was not asleep, for he was smoking a pipe, but he was as motionless as the other. Curled up on the steps was the boy who had brought them from the station. Occasionally he patted a mongrel collie beside him, and yawning, stretched himself, but he did not speak.

"That's Mr. Slater," said the woman softly, "and the young man is my oldest son, William. Henry brought you up with the team. They're out in the field all day, and they get pretty tired. It gets nice an' cool out here by evenin', don't it?"

She leaned back and rocked silently to and fro, and Ardelia waited for the events of the evening. There were none. She wondered why the gas was not lit in all that shadowy darkness, why the people didn't come along. She felt scared and lonely. Now that her stomach was filled, and her nerves refreshed by her long sleep, she was in a condition to realize that aside from all bodily discomfort she was sad — very sad. A new, unknown depression weighed her down. It grew steadily, something was happening, something constant and mournful — what? Suddenly she knew. It was a steady, recurrent noise, a buzzing, monotonous click. Now it rose, now it fell, accentuating the silence dense about it.

"*Zig-a-zig! Zig-a-zig!*" then a rest.

"*Zig-a-zig! Zig-a-zig-a-zig!*"

She looked restlessly at Mrs. Slater. "Wha's 'at?" she said.

"That? Oh, those are katydids. I s'pose you never heard 'em, that's a fact. Kind o' cozy, I think. Don't you like 'em?"

"Naw," said Ardelia.

Another long silence intervened. The rocking-chair swayed back and forth, and Mr. Slater snored. Little bright eyes glowed and disappeared, now high, now low, against the dark. It will never be known whether Ardelia thought them defective gaslights or the flashing, changing electric signs that add color to the night advertisements of her native city, for contrary to all fictional precedent, she did not inquire with interest what they were. She did not care, in fact.

After half an hour of the katydids William spoke.

"Nick Damon's helpin' in the south lot t'day," he observed.

"Was he?" asked his mother, pausing a moment in her rocking.

"Yep."

Again he smoked, and the monotonous clamor was uninterrupted.

"*Zig-a-zig! Zig-zig! Zig-a-zig-a-zig!*"

Slowly, against the background of this machine-like clicking, there grew other sounds, weird, unhappy, far away.

"*Wheep, wheep, wheep!*"

This was a high, thin crying.

"*Buroom! Brrroom! broom!*"

This was low and resonant and solemn. Ardelia scowled.

"Wha's 'at?" she asked again.

"That's the frogs. Bull-frogs and peepers. Never heard them, either, did ye? Well, that's what they are."

William took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Come here, sissy, 'n I'll tell y' a story," he said lazily.

Ardelia obeyed, and glancing timorously at the shadows, slipped around to his side.

"Onc't they was an ol' feller comin' 'long cross-lots, late at night, an' he come to a pond, an' he kinder stopped up an' says to himself,

'Wonder how deep th' ol' pond is, anyhow?' He was just a leetle — well, he'd had a drop too much, y' see ——"

"Had a what?" interrupted Ardelia.

"He was sort o' rollin' 'round — he didn't know just what he *was* doin' ——"

"Oh! Jagged!" said Ardelia comprehendingly.

"I guess so. An' he heard a voice singin' out, 'Knee *deep!* Knee *deep!* Knee *deep!*'"

William gave a startling imitation of the peepers: his voice was a high, shrill wail.

"'Oh, well,' s' he, 'f it's just knee deep I'll wade through,' an' he starts in.

"Just then he hears a big feller singin' out, 'Better go *rrrround!* Better go *rrround! better-goround!*'"

William rolled out a vibrating bass note that startled the bull-frogs themselves.

"'Lord!' says he, 'is it s'deep's that? Well, I'll go round, then.' 'N' off he starts to walk around.

"'*Knee deep! Knee deep! Knee deep!*' says the peepers.

"An' there it was. Soon's he'd start to do one thing, they'd tell him another. Make up his mind he couldn't, so he stands there still, they do say, askin' 'em every night which he better do."

"Stands where?" Ardelia looked fearfully behind her.

"Oh, I d'know. Out in that swamp, mebbe."

Again he smoked, and the younger boy chuckled.

Time passed by. To Ardelia it might have been minutes, hours, or generations. An unspeakable boredom, an *ennui* that struck to the roots of her soul, possessed her. Her muscles twitched from nervousness. Her feet ached and burned in the stiff boots.

Suddenly Mr. Slater coughed and arose. "Well, guess I'll be gettin' to bed," he said. "Come on, boys. Hello, little girl! Come to visit with us, hey? Mind you don't pick poison vine."

He shuffled into the house, and the boys followed him in silence. Mrs. Slater led Ardelia

upstairs into a little hot room, and told her to get into bed quick, for the lamp drew the mosquitoes.

Ardelia kicked off her shoes and approached the bed distrustfully. It sank down with her weight and smelled hot and queer. Rolling off, she stretched herself on the floor, and lay there disconsolately. Sharp, quick stabs from the swarming mosquitoes stung her to rage; she tossed about, slapping at them with exclamations that would have shocked Mrs. Slater. The eternal chatter of the katydids maddened her. She could not sleep. Across the swamp came the wail of the peepers.

"*Knee-deep! Knee-deep! Knee-deep!*"

At home the hurdy-gurdy was playing, the women were gossiping on every step, the lights were everywhere — the blessed fearless gas-lights — the little girls were dancing in the breeze that drew in from the East River, Old Dutchy was giving Maggie Kelly an olive; — Ardelia slapped viciously at a mosquito on her hot cheek, heard a great June bug flopping into the room through

the loosely waving netting, and burst into tears of pain and fright, wrapping her head tightly in her gingham skirt.

In the morning Miss Forsythe came over to inquire after her charge's health, accompanied by another young lady.

"How do you do, my dear?" said the new lady kindly. "How terribly the mosquitoes have stung you! What makes you stay in the house, and miss the beautiful fresh air? See that great plot of daisies — does she know that she can pick all she wants, poor little thing? I suppose she never had a chance! Come out with me, Ardelia, and let's see which can pick the biggest bunch."

And Ardelia, fortified by ham and eggs, went stolidly forth into the grass and silently attacked the daisies.

In the middle of her bunch the new young lady paused. "Why, Ethel, she isn't barefoot!" she cried. "Come here, Ardelia, and take off your shoes and stockings directly. Shoes and stockings in the country! *Now* you'll know what com-

fort is," as she unlaced the boots rapidly on the porch.

"Oh, she's been barefoot in the city," explained Miss Forsythe, "but this will be different, of course."

And so it was, but not in the sense she intended. To patter about bare-legged on the clear, safe pavement, was one thing; to venture unprotected into that waving, tripping tangle was another. She stepped cautiously upon the short grass near the house, and with jaw set and narrowed lids felt her way into the higher growth. The ladies clapped their hands at her happiness and freedom. Suddenly she stopped, she shrieked, she clawed the air with outspread fingers. Her face was gray with terror.

"Oh, gee! Oh, gee!" she screamed.

"What is it, Ardelia, what is it?" they cried lifting up their skirts in sympathy, "a snake?"

Mrs. Slater rushed out, seized Ardelia, half rigid with fear, and carried her to the porch. They elicited from her as she sat with her feet tucked

under her and one hand convulsively clutching Mrs. Slater's apron that something had rustled by her "down at the bottom," that it was slippery, that she had stepped on it, and wanted to go home.

"Toad," explained Mrs. Slater briefly. "Only a little hop-toad, Delia, that wouldn't harm a baby, let alone a big girl nine years old, like you."

But Ardelia, chattering with nervousness, wept for her shoes, and sat high and dry in a rocking-chair for the rest of the morning.

"She's a queer child," Mrs. Slater confided to the young ladies. "Not a drop of anything will she drink but cold tea. It don't seem reasonable to give it to her all day, and I won't do it, so she has to wait till meals. She makes a face if I say milk, and the water tastes slippery, she says, and salty-like. She won't touch it. I tell her its good well water, but she just shakes her head. She's stubborn's a bronze mule, that child. Just mopes around. 'S morning she asked me when did the parades go by. I told her there wa'n't

any but the circus, an' that had been already. I tried to cheer her up, sort of, with that Fresh Air picnic of yours to-morrow, Miss Forsythe, and s'she, 'Oh, the Dago picnic,' s'she, 'will they have Tony's band?'

"She don't seem to take any int'rest in th' farm, like those Fresh Air children, either. I showed her the hens an' the eggs, an' she said it was a lie about the hens layin' 'em. 'What d'you take me for?' s'she. The idea! Then Henry milked the cow, to show her — she wouldn't believe that, either — and with the milk streamin' down before her, what do you s'pose she said? 'You put it in!' s'she. I never should 'a' believed that, Miss Forsythe, if I hadn't heard it."

"Oh, she'll get over it," said Miss Forsythe easily, "just wait a few days. Good-by, Ardelia, eat a good supper."

But this Ardelia did not do. She gazed fascinated at Mr. Slater, who loaded his fork with cold green peas, shot them into his mouth, and before disposing of them ultimately added to them half

a slice of rye bread and a great gulp of tea in one breath, repeating this operation at regular intervals in voracious silence. She regarded William, who consumed eight large molasses cookies and three glasses of frothy milk, as a mere afterthought to the meal, gulping furiously. He never spoke. Henry she dared not look at, for he burst into laughter whenever she did, and cried out, "You put it in! You put it in!" which irritated her exceedingly. But she knew that he was biting great round bites out of countless slices of buttered bread, and in utter silence. Now Ardelia had never in her life eaten in silence. Mrs. Fahey, when eating, gossiped and fought alternately with Mr. Fahey's old, half-blind mother; her son Danny, in a state of chronic dismissal from his various "jobs," sang, whistled and performed clog dances under the table during the meal; their neighbor across the narrow hall shrieked her comments, friendly or otherwise; and all around and above and below resounded the busy noise of the crowded, clattering city street. It was the breath in her nostrils, the excitement of her ner-

vous little life, and this cold-blooded stoking took away her appetite, never large.

Through the open door the buzz of the katydids was beginning tentatively. In the intervals of William's gulps a faint bass note warned them from the swamp:

"*Better go rrround! Better go round!*"

Mrs. Slater filled their plates in silence. Henry slapped a mosquito and chuckled interiorly at some reminiscence. A cow-bell jangled sadly out of the gathering dusk.

Ardelia's nerves strained and snapped. Her eyes grew wild.

"Fer Gawd's sake, *talk!*" she cried sharply. "Are youse dumbies?"

The morning dawned fresh and fair; the trees and the brown turf smelled sweet, the homely barnyard noises brought a smile to Miss Forsythe's sympathetic face, as she waited for Ardelia to join her in a drive to the station. But Ardelia did not smile. Her eyes ached with the great green glare, the strange scattered objects, the long

unaccustomed vistas. Her cramped feet wearied for the smooth pavements, her ears hungered for the dear familiar din. She scowled at the winding, empty road; she shrieked at the passing oxen.

At the station Miss Forsythe shook her limp little hand.

"Good-by, dear," she said. "I'll bring the other little children back with me. You'll enjoy that. Good-by."

"I'm comin', too," said Ardelia.

"Why — no, dear — you wait for us. You'd only turn around and come right back, you know," urged Miss Forsythe, secretly touched by this devotion to herself.

"Come back nothin'," said Ardelia doggedly. "I'm goin' home."

"Why — why, Ardelia! Don't you really like it?"

"Naw, it's too hot."

Miss Forsythe stared.

"But Ardelia, you don't want to go back to that horrible smelly street? Not truly?"

"Betcher life I do!" said Ardelia.

The train steamed in; Miss Forsythe mounted the steps uneasily, Ardelia clinging to her hand.

"It's so lovely and quiet," the young lady pleaded.

Ardelia shuddered. Again she seemed to hear that fiendish, mournful wailing:

"*Knee deep! Knee deep! Knee deep!*"

"It smells so good, Ardelia! All the green things!"

Good! that hot, rustling breeze of noonday, that damp and empty evening wind!

They rode in silence. But the jar and jolt of the engine made music in Ardelia's ears; the crying of the hot babies, the familiar jargon of the newsboy:

"N'Yawk moyning paypers! Woyld! Joy nal!" were a breath from home to her little cockney heart.

They pushed through the great station, they climbed the steps of the elevated track, they jingled on a cross-town car. And at a familiar corner Ardelia slipped loose her hand, uttered a

grunt of joy, and Miss Forsythe looked for her in vain. She was gone.

But late in the evening, when the great city turned out to breathe, and sat with opened shirt and loosened bodice on the dirty steps; when the hurdy-gurdy executed brassy scales and the lights flared in endless sparkling rows; when the trolley gongs at the corner pierced the air, and feet tapped cheerfully down the cool stone steps of the beer-shop, Ardelia, bare-footed and abandoned, nibbling at a section of bologna sausage, secure in the hope of an olive to come, cake-walked insolently with a band of little girls behind a severe policeman, mocking his stolid gait, to the delight of Old Dutchy, who beamed approvingly at her prancings.

"Ja, ja, you trow out your feet goot. Some day we pay to see you, no? You like to get back already?"

Ardelia performed an audacious *pas seul* and reached for her olive.

"Ja, danky shun, Dutchy," she said airily, and as the hurdy-gurdy moved away, and the oboe of

the Italian band began to run up and down the scale, she sank upon her cool step, stretched her toes and sighed.

"Gee!" she murmured, "N'Yawk's the place!"

EDGAR, THE CHOIR BOY UNCELESTIAL

EDGAR, THE CHOIR BOY UNCELESTIAL

YOU all know how they look in the pictures — enlarged photogravures, mostly: they have appealing violet eyes and drooping mouths and oval faces. They tip their heads back and to the side, and there is usually a broad beam of light falling across their little official nighties. People frame them in Flemish oak and hang them over the piano, and little girls long to resemble them.

But Edgar was not that kind. So greatly did he differ, in fact, that even the choirmaster, who ought to have known better, was deceived, and discovered him with difficulty. When that gentleman confronted them in the parish house, a mob of suspicious little boys, shoving, growling, snickering, and otherwise fulfilling their natures, he promptly selected Tim Mullaly, who possessed to an amazing degree the violet eyes and the

drooping mouth and the oval face, as his first soprano. The choirmaster was young in years and his profession.

But Tim refused to sing the scale alone, and as the others scorned to accompany him in this ex-

"But Tim refused to sing the scale alone."

ercise, Mr. Fellowes, determinedly patient, suggested in the hilarious "come-on-boys!" fashion consecrated to childhood by adults, that they should all join in some popular melody, to limber them up and dispel their uneasiness.

"What shall we sing?" he called out breezily, from the piano-stool, faintly indicating a "rag-time" rhythm with his left hand, still facing them as he searched the forbidding countenances before him for a gleam of friendship.

After all, they were human boys, and they could all sing after a fashion, or they would not have been induced by relatives who had read the qualifications for choir membership to attend this trying function.

"'Hot time!'" burst from one of the youngsters.

"All right!" and the inviting melody drew them in; soon they were shouting lustily. Raucous altos, nasal sopranos, fatal attempts to compass a bass — at any rate, they were started. The verse was over, the chorus had begun, when a sudden sound sent the choirmaster's heart to his throat, his hands left the keys. Into the medley of coarse, boyish shouting dropped a silvery thread of purest song, a very bird-note. For a moment it flowed on the level of the chorus, then suddenly, with an indescribable leap, a slurring

rush, it rose to an octave above and led them all. The choirmaster twirled around on the stool.

"Who's that? Which boy is singing up there?" he demanded excitedly. There was no reply. They grinned consciously at each other; one could imagine them all guilty.

"Come, come, boys! Don't be silly — who was it?"

Silence, of the most sepulchral sort. Mr. Fellowes shrugged his shoulders, swung round again, and started the second verse. They dashed through it noisily; he picked out here and there a sweet little treble, one real alto. But his ears were pricked for something better, and presently it came. The rhythm was too enticing.

"*Please, oh, please, oh, don't you let me fall* ——"

"By George, he's a human blackbird!"

"*You're all mine, an' I love you best of all* ——"

"That's high C!"

"*An' you mus' be my man, 'r I'll have no man at all* ——"

The choirmaster burst into a joyous if somewhat reedy tenor.

"*There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night!*"

He whirled about, still singing, and caught the ecstatic, dreamy gaze of Tim Mullaly.

"It's you!" he cried, pouncing on him. Tim giggled feebly.

"Yessir," he said.

"Now sing this scale, and I'll give you five cents."

An envious sigh quavered through the parish hall.

Tim threw back his head and opened his drooping mouth.

"*Do, re* ——"

There was a flash of blue gingham, a snarl of rage, a sound as of fifty pounds of small boy suddenly seated on the floor.

"Where's yer fi' cents?" a new voice inquired easily.

The choirmaster perceived with amazement that the owner of the voice, a freckled boy with an excessively *retroussé* nose, was sitting on the prostrate Tim.

"What is the meaning of this? Get up!" he said sternly. "What's your name? I can't have any of this sort of thing in my choir!"

The freckled boy did not rise. In fact, he seated himself more comfortably on Master Mullaly, and demanded again :

" Where's yer fi' cents? "

The choirmaster stepped forward and seized the offender's collar. As his fingers tightened, the

" ' *Where's yer fi' cents?* ' "

captive burst into the chorus of the moment before — it was the blackbird voice! So obstinate was the choirmaster's first impression that he looked instinctively at the fallen Tim to catch the notes, but Tim was struggling meekly but firmly for breath, and this free trilling came from above him. The choirmaster relaxed his hold.

"It was you all the time!" he said in a stupor of surprise.

"Yep," replied the singer, "it was me. Did yer think it was him?" with a slight jounce to indicate his victim.

"Get up, won't you, and sing me something else," the choirmaster urged. The boy rose promptly.

"What'll I sing?" he returned amicably. There had been a different tone in the choirmaster's voice.

"Happy Home! Happy Home!" the crowd demanded. They had stood to one side in the most neutral manner during the brief struggle that had laid Tim low, and listened respectfully to the brief colloquy that followed. It was evident that past experience had suggested this attitude on their part.

The choirmaster looked relieved. He had no narrow prejudices, but he realized that a hymn like "My Happy Home" comes with good effect from the parish-hall windows.

"Where's your mouth organ?" demanded the

" 'I'd leave my yappy yome fer you, Oo-oo-oo-oo!' "

freckled one of a larger boy in the crowd. The latter promptly produced the instrument in question, cuddled it in both hands a moment after the fashion of the virtuoso, and drew forth the jerky and complex series of strains peculiar to it. It was evidently a prelude — a tune vaguely familiar to the choirmaster. Suddenly the boy's voice burst into this sombre background:

" I'd leave my yappy yome fer you,
Oo-oo-oo-oo!"

The choirmaster sighed ecstatically. A voice so tender, so soft, so rich in appealing inflections he had never heard. The repeated vowels cooed, they caressed, they allured.

" You're the nices' man n' I ever knoo,
Oo-oo-oo-oo!"

If you remember how Madame Melba cooes, "Edgardo! Edgardo-o-o!" when she sings the mad scene from "Lucia," you will have an idea

of the liquid, slipping notes of that snub-nosed, freckled boy.

"What's your name?" asked the choirmaster respectfully.

It appeared at first to be Egg-nog, but resolved into Edgar Ogden under careful cross-examination, and its owner agreed to attend three weekly rehearsals and two Sunday services for the princely salary of twenty-five cents a week, the same to be increased in proportion to his progress.

Subsequent efforts proved that it was utterly hopeless to attempt to teach him to read music. When Tim Mullaly and the stupidest alto in the United States — as the choirmaster assured him — could stumble through what was considerately known as a duet at sight, and that was the work of many months, Edgar was still learning his solos by ear. It was wasted effort to insist, and the choirmaster spent long hours and nearly wore his forefinger to the bone, fixing in his pupil's mind the succession of notes in anthems and *Te Deums*. Once learned, however, he never

"As a matter of fact, they looked, most of them, at Tim."

forgot them, and Mr. Fellowes thrilled with pride as the silver stream of his voice flowed higher, higher, above the organ, beyond the choir at his side, till the people in the church sighed and craned their necks to look at the wonderful boy.

As a matter of fact, they looked, most of them, at Tim Mullaly, who, fresh from his Saturday bath, in his little cassock and cotta, realized the dreams of the most exigent lithographer. He stood next to Edgar, and owing to a certain weakness of mind invariably followed with his lips the entire libretto, so to speak, of the work in hand. As his appealing expression and violet eyes were undetachable, he had all the effect of the soloist, and received most of the credit from that vast majority who fail to distinguish one little boy, like one Chinaman, from another, unless he pos-

sesses some such salient feature as Tim's pleading gaze.

This little apprehension was mercifully unsuspected by Edgar, otherwise it is to be feared that the services of a physician would have been required in the Mullaly household. Not that Edgar had any professional pride in his voice. He possessed, according to his own ideas, many more valuable and decorative qualities. His power of song was entirely hereditary, and came to him from his father, who was of English descent. The elder Mr. Ogden, whom rumor reported to run frequent risks of being bitten like a serpent and stung like an adder at the last, had mounted to a dizzy height in the Knights of Pythias entirely through his voice, a sweet and powerful tenor, and was accustomed to spend the greater part of his time in committing to memory and practising dramatic songs of a highly moral variety with choruses on this order:

"'*You lie! I saw you steal that ace!*'
A crashing blow right in the face —
A pistol shot and death's disgrace
Was in that pack of cards!"

At the proper point, a friend in another room would shoot off a blank cartridge to a stormy accompaniment on the Pythian piano, and the Knights would become so appreciative that the soloist, to borrow a classical phrase, rarely got home until morning. What time Mr. Ogden found himself able to spare from getting up his repertoire was judiciously employed in borrowing money for the purchase of new articles of regalia, for with the Pythians to rise was to shine.

His elder son Samuel, familiarly known as Squealer, inherited both his father's tendencies, and was in great demand among the saloons and pool-rooms, where he sang ballads of a tender and moral nature, dealing mostly with the Home, and the sanctity of the family relation in general. One of these in especial, in which Squealer assumed a hortatory attitude and besought an imaginary parent to "take her back, Dad," adding in a melting baritone,

"*She's my mother and your wife!*"

so affected a certain bar-room *habitué*, whose habit of chasing his family through the tenement

with a carving-knife had led them to move out of town, that he had been known to lay his head on the bar and weep audibly.

It was a moot point among his friends as to which was Squealer's real *chef d'œuvre*, the song just mentioned or another which ran,

> "*You'll only have one mother, boy,*
> *You can't treat her too well!*"

Very often after singing this Squealer would become too affected to endure the thought of what the song described as "the old home, empty now," and would repair to some scene which drew less heavily on the emotions, thus assuring a sleepless if wrathful night to Mrs. Ogden, and fluent altercation on his return to the old home.

Mrs. Ogden was not musical herself, and devoted most of her energies to fine laundry work, a less emotional but more lucrative occupation. Edgar's professional duties interested her chiefly by reason of the weekly salary, now grown to fifty cents, of which one-tenth was allowed him for his private purse, the remainder being applied

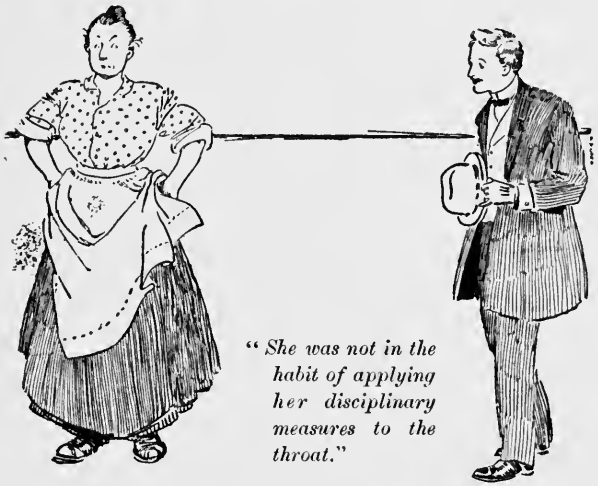
to the very obvious necessities of the household. His consequent position as wage-earner was firmly established, and his mother, though she cherished a natural contempt for the mental calibre of any young man who considered Edgar's

"Shiny storm rubbers were urged upon the artist's reluctant feet."

voice worth fifty cents a week, saw to it that so remunerative an organ received all the consideration it deserved.

To Mr. Ogden's undisguised horror, two new suits of under flannels were purchased at the be-

ginning of the winter, and shiny storm rubbers were urged upon the artist's reluctant feet on every slushy day. The most unconvincing cough was rewarded with black licorice, purchased from the general household fund, and when Edgar had



"She was not in the habit of applying her disciplinary measures to the throat."

the measles, the Prince of Wales, to use Mr. Ogden's irritated phrase, might have been glad to taste the mutton broth and cocoa that fattened that impident kid.

Nor was her system limited to this soft indul-

gence, as the occasion of one of the choirmaster's visits proved. Fearful lest the purpose of his call should become evident too abruptly, he began by one of his customary eulogies of his first soprano's voice. She received his enthusiasm coldly, indicated forcibly her own lack of musical ability, and boasted, with a pride inexplicable to one who has not been accustomed to consider this gift synonymous with penitentiary qualifications, that she could not carry a tune. On his mentioning somewhat diffidently that Edgar's fines for tardiness, absence, etc., must in the nature of things make appreciable inroads upon his salary, the interview assumed a different aspect.

Wiping her hands on her apron, Mrs. Ogden assured the choirmaster that if Edgar wasn't earning his wages she'd attend to that part of it, all right. So intent was her expression that he felt obliged to put in a plea for gentleness, on the ground that such a delicate mechanism as the human throat could not be too carefully treated. Mrs. Ogden assured him that she was not in the habit of applying her disciplinary

measures to the throat, and the audience was at an end. The day happened to be Saturday, and at the evening rehearsal it seemed to the choirmaster that things had never gone so smoothly. After all, he thought, it needed a mother to reason with the boys — he had made several calls of the same nature that week — a mother knew best how to influence them. And he was abundantly justified in his conclusions.

"*A mild and stolid youth.*"

On Sunday afternoon Edgar marched into the church, impassive and uninteresting to the outward vision, with Tim beside him, rapt and effective. Edgar stared vacantly into space, his feet marked the time at the proper distance from the crucifer, a mild and stolid youth, who could never understand why it was that just as he turned the corner

and began to climb the steps to the choir-stalls his cassock should suddenly tighten below the knees and almost throw him. Edgar's partner in the column could have informed him, but prudence rendered him uncommunicative.

"The brightest hopes we cherish here,
How fast they tire and faint!"

Edgar's brows met, he took a longer stride in reaching for his B flat, and the crucifer grasped his pole nervously and broke step a moment — his cassock had caught again.

"How many a spot defiles the robe
That wraps an earthly saint!"

"He sings like an angel," the rector mused. "How clumsy that Waters boy is!"

Once through with the Psalter, which he loathed because he was not always certain of his pointing, and could not endure Tim's look of horror at his occasional slips, Edgar, having hunched his shoulders at just the angle to prevent the tenor behind him from looking across into the transept, and ostentatiously opened his service at

the *Nunc dimittis*, so that Tim might by his innocent nudging and indications of his own *Magnificat* page call a frown and a fine from the choirmaster, devoted himself to a study of the rose-window over the transept.

The decoration of this window was a standing subject of quarrel between him and the first alto, Howard Potter. Edgar had advanced the somewhat untenable proposition that the various figures in the stained-glass windows represented the successive rectors and choirmasters of St. Mark's. Howard had objected that the dedications under the windows referred (as he had discovered by adroit questions that gave his informants no idea whatever of what he was driving at) to persons who had never held office of any kind in the church.

Edgar had then fallen back on the theory that the figures were portraits of the persons whom the windows commemorated. Howard triumphantly queried why, then, should the legend, "Sacred to the memory of Walter, beloved husband of Mary Bird Ferris," appear under a tall woman in dark

green glass with a most feminine amount of hair and a long red sash? Edgar was staggered, but suddenly recalled his father's glowing account of a costume ball given by the Knights of Pythias, in which many of the Knights appeared in women's clothes, one in particular, the proprietor of a fish market, having rented a long and flowing wig the better to deceive his fellow-Knights and their delighted guests. This had impressed Edgar as intensely humorous; he greatly enjoyed picturing the scene to his imagination, and he strengthened his wavering infallibility by declaring that the beloved husband of Mary Bird Ferris was beyond doubt a Pythian in costume.

This had silenced Howard for a week, but one afternoon at evensong, just before the electric bell sounded in the robing-room to summon them to the hall, he had rapidly inquired in a hissing whisper, "Who that white puppy carryin' the flag in the round window on the side, where the bird was, was a picture of?"

The bird was the lectern-eagle, and neither of the antagonists had ever seen a lamb. Edgar

had recognized the fact that it was a poorly drawn puppy, and he did not believe that it could possibly have balanced in one crooked-up knee and at that perilous angle any such banner as the artist had given it. It was also crushingly apparent to him that no Knight of Pythias, with all the

"'*Who that white puppy carryin' the flag . . . was.*'"

assistance in the world, could transform himself into such a woolly, curly, four-legged object as that.

Then why should the brass plate beneath it declare that this rose-window was placed in "loving memory of Alice Helen Worden, who departed this life June nineteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety"? That was no name for a puppy, to

begin with. The whole affair irritated Edgar exceedingly. He saw no explanation whatever. He perceived that he should have to fight the first alto. This was not only a great responsibility in itself, but the necessity of evading the parental eye added to the nervous strain, and the consciousness that on this particular Sunday afternoon Mr. Ogden occupied one of the rear pews, with the idea of seeing how he behaved during service, and subsequently accompanying him home, so weighed upon the spirits of the first soprano that William Waters accomplished the choir steps, in the recessional, without a stumble.

Throughout the service Edgar was as one in a dream. His vision was turned inward, and he even forgot his effective trick of frightening the choirmaster into cold chills by looking vacantly uncertain of the proper moment to take up the choir's share of the responses. The fact that he invariably came in at the precise beat had never fortified Mr. Fellowes against that nervous shudder as he saw his first soprano's mouth open hesitatingly two seconds before the time. To-day he

was spared all anxiety. Edgar's voice and Tim's eyes were the perfection of tuneful devotion.

"*And blèss thine in-hèr-i-tànce!*"

they implored softly. Neither of them had the remotest idea what inheritance meant — they would have besought as willingly a blessing for irrelevance or inelegance; but to the assistant clergyman, whose nervous scratching of his nose, while waiting for the alms-basin to reach him, was to Edgar and Tim as definite and eagerly awaited a part of the service as any other detail, the slow-syllabled Gregorian cadence brought the word in a sudden new light and he made it the text for a sermon so successful as to get him, a little later, a parish of his own. This leads us to many interesting conclusions, musical and other.

The rector noticed with pleasure the seedy-looking man in the back of the church: he was just then smarting a little under the accusation of "aristocratic tendencies": a body of conservatives had never approved of the boy-choir. He hoped to get the man into the Brotherhood of St.

Andrew, if he were allied to no other organization.

Mr. Ogden, as we know, was on business of his own — business that kept him glaring fixedly in the rector's direction, which encouraged that good man still further. It is to be doubted if the Brotherhood would have appealed to him, however. Not that he would have been hindered by any narrow sectarian tendencies. Mrs. Ogden, who did up the shirt-waists of the Presbyterian minister's daughter, was by her presented regularly with a missionary bank in the form of a *papier-maché* cottage with a chimney imitating red brick; and Edgar, employing a Napoleonic strategy, triumphantly attended the Methodist Christmas festivals and the Baptist Sunday-school picnics, the latter society offering a merry-go-round on a larger scale, the former providing the infant faithful with more practicable presents and larger candy-bags. Squealer, moreover, had sung "The Holy City" more than once for the Congregational Christian Endeavor Society, so that Mr. Ogden felt, with a certain justice, that his

church connection did him credit on the whole, and excused himself from any undue energy in that direction.

He watched his son keenly, but Edgar's ecclesiastical demeanor was without a flaw. Moreover, his plans were gradually maturing. He sang *Amen* at proper intervals and by a process of unconscious cerebration managed to get between the organist and the tenor, who depended on Mr. Fellowes to mark the time for him with his left hand, and in consequence of being unable to see him, bungled his offertory solo; but his thoughts were otherwhere. He had decided to slip out of the south transept door, thus eluding parental pursuit, and fight Howard Potter in his own back yard before he slept. He would practise upon his victim a recent scientific acquisition proudly styled by him "the upper-cut," which he had learned from an acquaintance at the cost of ten cents and three sugar-cookies.

At this point the anthem-prelude drew him to his feet. He had saved his voice, according to directions, for his solo, and in the waiting hush

every word flowed, soft and pure, to the end of the church.

"*Mercy and truth, mercy and truth, mercy* —" Ah, that exquisite soft swoop downward! The organ rippled on contentedly, a continuation of Edgar's flutelike tones — "*and truth are me-et together!*" There was all the richness of a woman's voice, all the passionless clearness of a boy's, all the morning innocence of a child's.

It occurred to him suddenly that the north transept would be safer — it was on the side farthest from home.

"*Righteousness and peace, righteousness and peace have kissèd each other!*"

He wondered if Howard had learned the upper-cut since their last encounter.

Tim's face was as the face of an angel; a long slanting ray from the rose-window fell across his curls.

"*Have kissèd each other*," Edgar sighed softly. "*Have kissèd each other* —" the caressing tones melted into the organ's, whispered once more, "*each other*," and died lingeringly. A long

breath, an audible "Ah-h-h!" drifted through the church. The choirmaster kicked his feet together under the organ for joy. He little knew that at that very moment the future of his vested choir was swinging lightly in the balance.

But such was the fact. Fate, who links together events seemingly isolated, smoothed Edgar's way to his fight, but allowed him to be beaten. If this had not happened, his wrath would not have vented itself in hectoring a bad-tempered bass at the Wednesday rehearsal, by scampering in front of him and mimicking with wonderful accuracy his gruff, staccato voice.

"*He taketh up the isles — as a ver-ry — little thing!*" mocked Edgar.

"Shut up!" growled the bass.

"*A ver-ry lit-tle thing!*" Edgar continued malignantly, slipping across his victim's path.

"Oh, all right, young feller!" called the bass, enraged at the grins and applause of the other men, "all right! Just you wait till Sunday, that's all!" If Edgar had not teased him so, he

" ' *You're going to be bounced, that's what.*' "

would not have added: "I know what'll happen then, if you don't."

"What?" Edgar inquired derisively, catching up with him.

"You're going to be bounced, that's what," said the bass irritably.

"Aw, come off! I ain't either!"

"Well, you ought to be, the whole pack of you," the bass continued decidedly. "Bag and baggage! And a good riddance, too. No choir-boy camping-out *this* summer!"

Edgar dropped behind and mused. "Who told yer?" he called.

"Ask Fellowes — and if he don't lick you, I will!" retorted the bass, making a quick grab, which Edgar easily evaded.

He summoned his mates immediately; the question was laid before them. Had they heard that they were to be bounced? Did they believe that the two weeks' camping-out, the object of all their endurance and loyalty, the prize of their high calling, was to be discontinued? Tim was deputed to inquire on Saturday afternoon. He returned disconsolate; they shoved each other significantly.

"What'd he say? What'd he say?"

"He says mos' prob'ly not. Says it costs too much. Says maybe a pienic ——"

"Aw! old chump! Goin' to bounce us, too?"

"I dunno. I guess so. I didn't ask him that. I just says to him, 'Aw, say, Mr. Fellowes, ain't us boys goin' campin'?' An' he says, 'I guess

"'*Well, I bet he don't bounce me!*'"

not this year, Tim, mos' prob'ly. Maybe a picnic ——"

"Well, I bet he don't bounce me! I betcher that, I betcher, now!"

Edgar strutted before them. They regarded him with interest.

"Whatcher goin' to do?" they asked respectfully.

"What'll I do? I'll — I'll bounce myself!" he called over his shoulder, as he strode home.

His moody air during supper convinced Mr. Ogden that something was up. Ever since he had discovered Edgar's demand for an additional ten cents a Sunday, on the ground that his mother thought him worth more, and his later daring strike for five cents further salary, which the choirmaster had innocently considered abundantly justified and paid out of his own pocket, Mr. Ogden, who, having heard rumors of wild dissipations in the peanut and rootbeer line, had pounced upon his son returning plethoric from pay day, and promptly annexed the extra fifteen cents, was convinced of the necessity of surveillance for this wily wage-earner, and formed the habit of escorting him regularly on pay nights, alone at first, later assisted by Mrs. Ogden, who accompanied the family group as a self-constituted and final auditor. It has frequently been remarked that a great grief may bind together once disunited members of a family; it is extremely improbable that any affliction whatever could have produced among

the Ogdens such a gratifying *esprit de corps* as resulted from their unfeigned interest in pay day. But when Mr. Ogden had shadowed his son to no more secluded and dangerous spot than the church-yard, and saw him in earnest conclave with his attentive mates, he went, relieved, about his own business, reassured by the words "campin' out" and "Sunday afternoon," that he caught from behind a convenient tombstone. He was utterly unconscious that the scene he had left was far more menacing to his household than even the most disfiguring fight of his warlike son's varied repertoire. But so it was. Haranguing, promising, taunting, threatening, Edgar led them, finally subdued, into one of the most satisfactory rehearsals of the year.

They waited till quarter of eleven on Sunday, and finally the men marched in alone, somewhat conscious and ill at ease, followed by a red-faced, determined rector, and a puzzled visiting clergyman. They sang "*O happy band of pilgrims*," but it was remarked by the wondering congrega-

tion that they did not look happy themselves. There was no music but the hymns, which, as they had been altered to well-known numbers,

"And made a speech that will adorn the parish annals for many a year."

were chanted lustily by the inhabitants of the pews, thus winning the sincere admiration of the visiting clergyman.

"Really, such well-trained congregational sing-

ing is quite rare," he remarked afterward to the rector, and was somewhat surprised at the short answer: "It shall certainly never occur again."

It had gone hard with the vested choir but for Mrs. Ogden. Mr. Fellowes pleaded in vain; in vain the Ladies' Auxiliary passed resolutions; the rector was firm. It was only when Mrs. Ogden swept in upon him in his study, a chastened, still apprehensive boy under one arm, followed by half a dozen women similarly equipped, and made a speech that will adorn the parish annals for many a year, that he yielded, respectfully convinced.

Edgar had met his Waterloo, and lived, so to speak, under a consequent military surveillance, with much of his prestige gone, his pay docked for a month, and the certainty of approaching warm weather, when it would be impossible to take cold, and nothing but a summons to the choir invisible could excuse him from rehearsals here, to render the future all too clear to him. In the words of the processional,

" His tongue could never tire
Of singing with the choir."

To-day, if you should attend evensong at St. Mark's, you will beyond a doubt be delighted with a silver voice that appears to proceed from a violet-eyed boy with a sweet expression.

"*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord!*" the voice declares melodiously, but it is doubtful if its owner is in a thankful frame of mind. He would in all probability prefer to be with his brother Samuel, who is at present touring the West triumphantly with a Methodist revivalist, rendering "*Where is my wandering boy to-night?*" to weeping congregations for ten dollars a week and his traveling expenses. And even this success leaves Squealer dissatisfied; he would far rather be in his father's position — first tenor in the Denman Thompson Old Homestead Quartette — and sing "The Palms" behind the scenes, when the stereopticon vision of the repentant prodigal thrills the audience.

It would seem that your artistic temperament

is doomed to discontent. Whereas Mrs. Ogden, who cannot carry a tune, is perfectly satisfied with fine laundry work.

"Perfectly satisfied with fine laundry work."

THE LITTLE GOD AND DICKY

"WHERE are you going?" said somebody, as he slunk out toward the hat-rack.

"Oh, out," he returned, with what a vaudeville artist would call a good imitation of a person wishing to appear blamelessly forgetful of something he remembered quite distinctly.

"Well, see that you don't stay long. Remember what it is this afternoon."

He turned like a stag at bay.

"*What* is it this afternoon?" he demanded viciously.

"You know very well."

"*What?*"

"See that you're here, that's all. You've got to get dressed."

"I will not go to that old dancing-

"He turned like a stag at bay."

school again, and I tell you that I won't, and I won't. And I won't!"

"Now, Dick, don't begin that all over again. It's so silly of you. You've got to go."

"Why?"

"Because it's the thing to do."

"Why?"

"Because you must learn to dance."

"Why?"

"Every nice boy learns."

"Why?"

"That will do, Richard. Go and find your pumps. Now, get right up from the floor, and if you scratch the Morris chair I shall speak to your father. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Get right up — you must expect to be hurt, if you pull so. Come, Richard! Now, stop crying — a great boy like you! I am sorry I hurt your elbow, but you know very well you aren't crying for that at all. Come along!"

His sister flitted by the door in an engaging *déshabillé*, her accordeon-pleated skirt held carefully from the floor, her hair in two glistening

blue-knotted pigtails. A trail of rose-scented soap floated through the hall.

"Hurry up, Dick, or we'll be late," she called back sweetly, secure in the knowledge that if such virtuous accents maddened him still further, no one could blame her. His rage justified her faith.

"Oh, you shut up, will you!" he snarled.

She looked meek, and listened to his deprivation of dessert for the rest of the week with an air of love for the sinner and hatred for the sin that deceived even her older sister, who was dressing her.

"Secure in the knowledge that if such virtuous accents maddened him still further, no one could blame her."

A desperately patient monologue from the next room indicated the course of events there.

"Your necktie is on the bed. No, I don't know where the blue one is — it doesn't matter; that is just as good. Yes, it is. No,

you can *not*. You will have to wear one. Because no one ever goes without. I don't know why.

"Many a boy would be thankful and glad to have silk stockings. Nonsense — your legs are

"'*Stop your scowling, for goodness' sake, Dick.*'"

warm enough. I don't believe you. Now, Richard, how perfectly ridiculous! There is no left and right to stockings. You have no time to change. Shoes are a different thing. Well, hurry up, then. Because they are made so, I suppose. I don't know why.

"Brush it more on that side — no, you can't

go to the barber's. You went last week. It looks perfectly well. I cut it? Why, I don't know how to trim hair. Anyway, there isn't time now. It will have to do. Stop your scowling, for goodness' sake, Dick. Have you a handkerchief? It makes no difference, you must carry one. You *ought* to want to use it. Well, you should. Yes, they always do, whether they have colds or not. I don't know why.

"Your Golden Text! The idea! No, you cannot. You can learn that Sunday before church. This is not the time to learn Golden Texts. I never saw such a child. Now take your pumps and find the plush bag. Why not? Put them right with Ruth's. That's what the bag was made for. Well, how do you want to carry them? Why, I never heard of anything so silly! You will knot the strings. I don't care if they do carry skates that way — skates are not slippers. You'd lose them. Very well, then, only hurry up. I should think you'd be ashamed to have them dangling around your neck that way. Because people never *do* carry them so. I don't know why.

"Now, here's your coat. Well, I can't help it, you have no time to hunt for them. Put your hands in your pockets — it's not far. And mind you don't run for Ruth every time. You don't take any pains with her, and you hustle her about, Miss Dorothy says. Take another little girl. Yes, you must. I shall speak to your father if you answer me in that way, Richard. Men don't dance with their sisters. Because they don't. I don't know why."

He slammed the door till the piazza shook, and strode along beside his scandalized sister, the pumps flopping noisily on his shoulders. She tripped along contentedly — she liked to go. The personality capable of extracting pleasure from the hour before them baffled his comprehension, and he scowled fiercely at her, rubbing his silk stockings together at every step, to enjoy the strange smooth sensation thus produced. This gave him a bow-legged gait that distressed his sister beyond words.

"I think you might stop. Everybody's looking at you! Please stop, Dick Pendleton; you're

a mean old thing. I should think you'd be ashamed to carry your slippers that way. If you jump in that wet place and spatter me I shall tell papa — you *will* care, when I tell him, just the same! You're just as bad as you can be. I shan't speak with you to-day!"

"Going daintily and dutifully to dancing-school."

She pursed up her lips and maintained a determined silence. He rubbed his legs together with renewed emphasis. Acquaintances met them and passed, unconscious of anything but the sweet picture of a sister and a brother and a plush bag going daintily and dutifully to dancing-school; but his heart was hot at the injustice of the world and the hypocritical cant of girls, and

her thoughts were busy with her indictment of him before the family tribunal — she hoped he would be sent to bed. Life is full and running over with just such rosy deceits.

He jumped over the threshold of the long room and aimed his cap at the head of a boy he knew, who was standing on one foot to put on a slipper. This destroyed his friend's balance, and a cheering scuffle followed. Life assumed a more hopeful aspect. In the other dressing-room his sister had fluttered into a whispering, giggling, many-colored throng; buzzing and chuckling with the rest, she adjusted her slippers, and perked out her bows, her braids quivering with sociability.

A shrill whistle called them out in two crowding bunches to the polished floor.

Hoping against hope, he had clung to the beautiful thought that Miss Dorothy would be sick, that she had missed her train — but no! there she was, with her shiny high-heeled slippers, her pink skirt that pulled out like a fan, and her silver whistle on a chain. The little clicking castanets that rang out so sharply were in her hand beyond a doubt.

"Ready, children! Spread out. Take your lines. First position. Now!"

The large man at the piano, who always looked half asleep, thundered out the first bars of the latest waltz, and the business began.

Their eyes were fixed solemnly on Miss Dorothy's pointed shoes. They slipped and slid and

"A line of toes rose gradually."

crossed their legs and arched their pudgy insteps; the boys breathed hard over their gleaming collars. On the right side of the hall thirty hands held out their diminutive skirts at an alluring angle. On the left, neat black legs pattered diligently through mystic evolutions.

The chords rolled out slower, with dramatic

pauses between; sharp clicks of the castanets rang through the hall; a line of toes rose gradually towards the horizontal, whirled more or less steadily about, crossed behind, bent low, bowed, and with a flutter of skirts resumed the first position.

A little breeze of laughing admiration circled the row of mothers and aunts.

"Isn't that too cunning! Just like a little ballet! Aren't they graceful, really, now!"

"*One*, two, three! *One*, two, three! Slide, slide, cross; *one*, two, three!"

There are those who find pleasure in the aimless intricacies of the dance; self-respecting men even have been known voluntarily to frequent assemblies devoted to this nerve-racking attitudinizing futility. Among such, however, you shall seek in vain in future years for Richard Carr Pendleton.

"*One*, two, three! *Reverse*, two, three!" If you want your heels clipped, step back inadvertently into Master Pendleton's domain. No matter how pure your purposes, you will illustrate

the inevitable doom of the transgressor against nature's immutable limitations; you will be severely nipped. And it will be just — he is triumphantly following the rules.

The whistle shrilled.

"Ready for the two-step, children!"

A mild tolerance grew on him. If dancing must be, better the two-step than anything else. It is not an alluring dance, your two-step; it does not require temperament. Any one with a firm intention of keeping the time and a strong arm can drag a girl through it very acceptably. It was Dicky's custom to hurl himself at the colored bunch nearest him, seize a Sabine, so to speak, and plunge into the dance. He had his eye on Louise Hetherington, a large, plump girl, with a tremendous braid of hair. She was a size too big for the class, but everybody liked to dance with her, for she knew how, and piloted her diminutive partners with great skill. But she had been snapped up by the six-year-old Harold, and was even now guiding his infant steps around the hall.

Dicky skirted the row of mothers and aunts cautiously. Heaven send Miss Dorothy was not looking at him! She seemed to have eyes in the back of her head, that woman.

"Oh, look! Did you ever see anything so sweet!" said somebody. Involuntarily he turned. There in a corner, all by herself, a little girl was gravely performing a dance. He stared at her curiously. For the first time, free from all personal connection with them, he discovered that those motions were pretty.

She was ethereally slender, brown eyed, brown haired, brown skinned. A little fluffy white dress spread fan-shaped above her knees; her ankles were bird-like. The foot on which she poised seemed hardly to rest on the ground; the other, pointed outward, hovered easily — now here, now there. Her eyes were serious, her hair hung loose. She swayed lightly; one little gloved hand held out her skirt, the other marked the time. Her performance was an apotheosis of the two-step: that metronomic dance would not have recognized itself under her treatment.

"Thethelia," she lisped.

Dicky admired. But the admiration of his sex is notoriously fatal to the art that attracts it. He advanced and bowed jerkily, grasped one of the loops of her sash in the back, stamped gently a moment to get the time, and the artist sank into the partner, the pirouette grew coarse to sympathize with clay.

"Don't they do it well, though! See those little things near the door!" he caught as they went by, and his heart swelled with pride.

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly after the dance.

"Thethelia," she lisped, and shook her hair over her cheek. She was very shy.

"Mine's Richard Carr Pendleton. My father's a lawyer. What's yours?"

"I—I don't know!" she gasped, obviously considering flight.

He chuckled delightedly. Was ever such

engaging idiocy? She didn't know. Well, well!

"Pooh!" he said grandly, "I guess you know. Don't you, really?"

She looked hopelessly at her fan, and shook her head. Suddenly a light dawned in her big eyes.

"Maybe I know," she murmured. "I gueth I know. He — he'th a really thtate!"

"A really state? That isn't anything — nothing at all. A really state?" he frowned at her judicially. Her lip quivered; she turned and ran away.

"Here, come back!" he called, but she was gone.

"Ready for the cotillion, children!" and Miss Dorothy, her arms full of long, colored ribbons, was upon him.

There was a rumbling chord from the piano, a mad rush for the head of the line. A rosy blonde, with big, china-blue eyes, dragged her protesting sailor-suited partner to the front, and glared triumphantly at the roly-poly couple behind her. They stared at each other desperately — they had had their dreams of precedence — and suddenly,

as the robbers stood far apart and swung their arms carelessly high, the roly-poly couple crouched down, slipped between them, and emerged at the head of the procession!

The march began. Dicky, linked to a tomboy in white duck, who whistled the march correctly as she swung along, had fought for a place behind his late partner, and as they clambered into adjacent chairs he nudged her violently and whispered, "I'm going to choose you!"

She smiled shyly.

"All right," she said.

Miss Dorothy approached with the favors. A violent hissing and snapping of fingers burst out from the line. They wriggled on their chairs. Miss Dorothy paused, threateningly.

"Perhaps we had better not have any cotillion," she said sternly. "If I hear another hiss —" There was a dead silence.

Dicky sat primly, looking at the ceiling. As he had expected, a broad violet streamer fell in his lap. He leaped to the floor, seized Cecelia by her skirt, hustled the tomboy, as in duty bound,

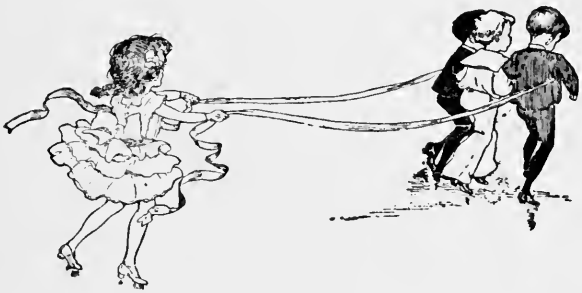
within the purple leash, and beckoned to the next girl in the row. They arranged themselves three abreast, and he drove them, to the inspiring two-step, across the room, in line with two other drivers similarly equipped. On the return trip they were confronted by three bands of prancing little boys, perilously realistic in their interpretation of the pretty figure, and as they met in the middle, with a scramble of adjustment, the steeds paired off neatly, and the flushed drivers, more or less entangled in their long ribbons, accomplished an ultimate two-step.

"Now, you choose me," he commanded, as they scrambled into the chairs. Again she smiled, again she hid her cheek with her hair.

"All right," she said again.

In vain Louise Hetherington made signs to him; in vain the rosy blonde snapped her fingers — he was blind and deaf. He slipped into the broad blue ribbon she held out to him at arm's length, and cantered cheerfully before her, her slave forever. How lightly she floated on behind them! Not like that tomboy Frances, who clucked at

her team as if they were horses, and nearly ran them down; nor like that silly, fat, yellow-curled Gladys, who bubbled with laughter and hung back on the satin reins until her team nearly fell over. Cecelia swam like thistledown in their wake, and slipped the ribbon over their heads with all the effect of a scarf dance.



"How lightly she floated on behind them!"

"That will do for to-day," said Miss Dorothy, gathering up the ribbons, and they surged into the dressing-rooms, to be buttoned up and pulled out of draughts and trundled home.

She was swathed carefully in a wadded silk jacket, and then enveloped in a hooded Mother Hubbard cloak; she looked like an angelic

brownie. Dicky ran up to her as a woman led her out to a coupé at the curb, and tugged at the ribbon of her cloak.

"Where do you live? Say, where do you?" he demanded.

Her hair was under the hood, but she hid her face behind the woman.

"I — I don't know," she said softly. The woman laughed.

"Why, yes, you do, Cissy," she reproved. "Tell him directly, now."

She put one tiny finger in her mouth.

"I — I gueth I live on Chethnut Thtreet," she called as the door slammed and shut her in.

His sister amicably offered him half the plush bag to carry, and opened a running criticism of the afternoon.

"Did you ever see anybody act like that Frannie Leach? She's awfully rough. Miss Dorothy spoke to her twice — wasn't that dreadful? What made you dance all the time with Cissy Weston? She's an awful baby — a regular 'fraid-cat! We girls tease her just as easy — do you like her?"

"She's the prettiest one there!" he said.

His sister stared at him.

"Why, Dick Pendleton, she is not! She's so little — she's not half so pretty as Agnes, or — or lots of the girls. She's such a baby. She puts her finger in her mouth if anybody says anything at all. If you ask her a single thing she does like this: 'I don't know, I don't know!'"

He smiled scornfully. Did he not know how she did it? Had he not seen that adorable finger, those appealing eyes?

"And she can't talk plain! She lisps — truly she does!"

Heavens! Was ever a girl so thick-headed as that sister of his! Brains, technical knowledge, experience of the world, these he had never looked to find in her; but perceptions, feminine intuitions — were they lacking, too?

Poor deluded sex! What shall emancipation, what shall higher education profit you that cannot even now discern what charm has entangled your brothers and husbands?

"She puts her finger in her mouth! She can't

talk plain!" Alas, my sisters, it was Helen's finger that toppled over Troy, and Diane de Poitiers stammered!

He listened calmly to his sister's account of his infatuation and its causelessness.

"Why, she's a nice little girl," said his aunt, smiling, "but, really, she can't be called exactly pretty. There is something rather attractive about her eyes."

In this wise may Mark Antony's aunt have dismissed the very Serpent of old Nile herself!

"I should like," he said to his mother the next day, "to go and see her."

"Well, you can go with me to-morrow, perhaps, when I call on Mrs. Weston," she assented.

"What? Why, of course not! Men don't go calling in pumps. Your best shoes will do. Are you crazy? A straw hat in February! You will wear your middy cap. Now don't argue the matter, Richard, or you can't go at all."

Seated opposite her on a hassock, their mothers chatting across the room, his assurance withered away. There was nothing whatever to say,

"Seated opposite her on a hassock."

and he said it, adequately perhaps, but with a sense of deepening embarrassment. She took refuge behind her hair, and they stared uncomfortably at each other.

"And he has never condescended to have anything to do with little girls before, so we are much impressed."

Oh, why did not the hassock yawn beneath him and swallow him up! To discuss him as if he were a piece of furniture! Laugh away! The crackling of thorns under a pot. . . .

Day before yesterday he had been so easily *grand seigneur*, so tolerantly charmed: to-day he wished he had not come. Why didn't she speak? If only they were out of doors; in a room with pictures and cushions a man is at such a disadvantage.

"If you'll come over to my house, I'll show you the biggest rat-hole you ever saw — it's in the stable!" he said desperately. It was a good deal to do for a girl, but she was worth it.

"Oh! Oh!" she breathed, and her eyes widened.

"Maybe you can see the rat — he doesn't often come out, though," he added honestly.

She shuddered and twisted her fingers violently.

"No! No!" she whispered revoltedly. "I — I hate ratths! I dreamed about one! I had to have the gath lit! Oh, no!"

Frightened at this long speech, she looked obstinately in her lap, though he tried persistently to catch her eye and smile.

Their mothers' voices rose and fell; they chattered meaninglessly. Ladies talked and talked: they never did anything to speak of, they only talked.

She would not look at him: at his wits' ends, he played his highest card. If she were of mortal flesh and blood, this would interest her.

"Look here! Do you know what Boston bull pups are? Do you?"

She nodded vigorously.

"Well, you know their tails?"

She nodded uncertainly.

"You know they're just little stumps?"

"Oh, yeth!" she beamed at him. "My Uncle Harry'th got a bulldog. Hith name ith Eli. He liketh me."

"Well, see here! Do you know how they make their tails short? *A man bites 'em off!* A fellow told me ——"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" She shuddered off the hassock, and rushed to her mother, gasping with horror.

"He thayth — he thayth —" words failed her. Broken sobs of "Eli! Oh, Eli!" filled the parlor. He was dazed, terrified. What had happened? What had he done? He was shuffled disgracefully from the room; apologies rose above her sobbing; the door closed behind Dicky and his mother.

Waves of rebuke rolled over his troubled spirit.

"Of all dreadful things to say to a poor, nervous little girl! I am too mortified. Richard, how do you learn such dreadful, dreadful things? It's not true."

"But, mamma, it *is!* It truly is. When they are little a man bites them off. Peter told me so. He puts his mouth right down ——"

"Richard! Not another word! You are disgusting — perfectly disgusting. You trouble me very much."

He retired to the clothes-tree in the side yard — there were no junipers there — and cursed his gods. To have made her cry! They thought he didn't care, but oh, he did! He felt as if he had eaten a cold, gray stone that weighed down his stomach. The cat slunk by, but he threw nothing at her, and his neighbor's St. Bernard puppy rolled inquiringly into the hedge, stuck there, and thrashed about helplessly, but he said nothing to frighten it. He thought of supper — they had spoken of cinnamon rolls and little yellow custards — but without the usual thrill. What was the matter? Was he going to be

sick? There seemed no outlook to life — one thing was as good as another. He regarded going to bed with a dull acquiescence. As well that as anything else. It might be eight o'clock now for all he cared.

At night his mother came and sat for a moment on the side of the bed.

"Papa doesn't want you to feel too bad, dear," she said. "He knows that you never meant to frighten Cecelia so. You know that little girls are very different from little boys in some ways. Things that seem — er — amusing to you, seem very cruel to them. To-morrow would you like to send her some flowers and write her a little note, and tell her how sorry you are?"

He could not speak, but he seized his mother's hand and kissed it up to her lace ruffle. The cold, gray stone melted away from his stomach; again the future stretched rosily vague before him. In happy dreams he did the honors of the rat-hole to a sweet, shy guest.

In the morning he applied himself to his note of apology; his sister ruled the lines on a beauti-

ful sheet of paper with a curly gold "P" at the top, and he bent to his task with extended tongue and lines between his eyes. Hitherto his mother had been his only correspondent. He carried her the note with a sense of justifiable pride.

"It's spelled all right," he said, "because every word I didn't know I asked Bess, and she told me."

My dear Cecelia:

I am going to send you some flowrs. I am sory they bite them of but they do. I hope you did not hafto lite the gas. we are all well and haveing a good time. with much love I am your loving son.

RICHARD CARR PENDLETON.

"Bess did the periods, but I remembered the large I's myself," he added comfortably. "Is it all right?"

His mother left the room abruptly, and he, supposing it to be one of her many suddenly-remembered errands, was mercifully unconscious of any connection between himself and the roars of laughter that came from his father's study.

"Just as it is, mind you, Lizzie, just as it is!" his father called after her as she came out again; and though she insisted that it was too absurd, and that something was the matter with her children, she was sure, nevertheless she kissed him with no particular occasion, and held her peace nobly when he selected a hideous purple blossom with spotty leaves, assisted by the interested florist.

His offering was acceptable, and if, on the renewal of an acquaintance destined to grow into a gratifying intimacy, he learned from bitter experience that more than one subject was tabooed, that more than one sudden emotion must expect no answering sympathy, how was he to evade the tribulations of his kind? This cup was prepared for them from the beginning. If earthly bliss were flawless, should we concern ourselves at all with heaven?

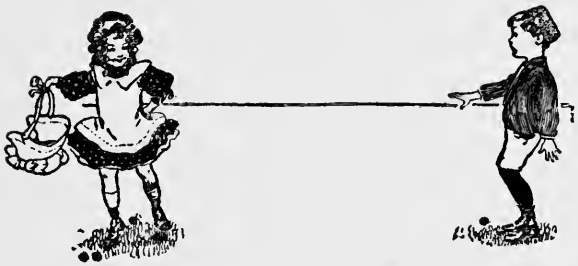
That day she met him on her walk, and smiling almost fearlessly, offered him a camel animal cracker! True, the most obvious projection was bitten off, and that process is the best part

of animal crackers; but then, she was only seven! It is not an age to which one looks for the most brilliant altruism.

He gave her in return a long-cherished cane-top of polished wood, cut in the shape of a grey-hound's head, with eyes of orange-colored glass. She seemed almost to appreciate it. He had been offered a white mouse for it more than once.

For two long months the Little God led him along the primrose way. The poor fellow thought it was the main road; he had yet to learn it was but a by-path. But the Little God was not through with him.

Her brother, an uninteresting fellow at first, had improved on acquaintance, and though he scoffed at Dicky's devotion to his sister — thinking her a great baby — he had come to consider him a friend. One day, late in April, he led Dick out to a deserted corner of the grounds, and for the sum of a small red top and a blue glass eye that had been a doll's most winning feature, consented to impart to him a song of such delicious badness that it had to be sung in secret.



" ' *Yelly belly, yelly belly.*' "

He had just learned it himself, and the knowledge of it admitted one to a sort of club, whose members were bound together by the vicious syllables. Dicky was pleasantly uncertain of its meaning, but it contained words that custom has banished from the family circle. They crooned it fearfully, with faces averted from the house, and an exhilarating sense of dissipation.

" *Yellow belly, yellow belly, come an' take a swim!*
Yes, by golly, when the tide comes in!"

As he slipped back to the house alone, practising it furtively and foretasting the joys of imparting it to Peter, the stableman, Cecelia appeared suddenly from behind a large tree. She was all smiles — she was not afraid of him any

more. Dancing lightly on one foot, she waved her bonnet and began to sing, bubbling with laughter. Horror! What did he hear?

"Yelly belly, yelly belly, comin' take a thwim!
Yith, by ——"

"Oh, stop! Cissy, stop it! You mustn't sing that!" he cried wildly.

She looked elfish.

"Why not? Dicky thingth it," she said with a happy smile.

She had a heavenly habit, left from babyhood, of referring to her interlocutor and occasionally to herself in the third person.

"But girls mustn't sing it," he warned her sternly. "Don't you dare to — it's a secret."

She danced farther away.

"Dicky thingth it. Thithy thingth it!" she persisted, and as he scowled she pursed her lips again.

"Yelly belly, yelly belly ——"

"I won't sing it! I won't!" he cried desperately. "I won't if you'll keep still! So there! I tell you I won't!"

She stopped, amused at his emotion. All ignorant of his sacrifice, all careless of his heroic defense of her, she only knew that she could tease him in an entirely new way.

And the Little God, knowing that Dicky would keep his word, and that Peter would never get the chance for the scandalized admiration once in store for him, strutted proudly away and polished up his chains. His victim was secure.

Her brother, on learning the facts, suggested slapping her well — good heavens! — and having nothing more to do with her, for a mean, sneaking tattle-tale. Here was an opportunity to break his bonds. But to those who have served the Little God it will be no surprise to learn that it was on that very evening that he made his famous proposal to the assembled family, namely, that he and Cecelia should be really engaged like her Uncle Harry and Miss Merriam, and in a little while marry and set up housekeeping in the guest chamber.

"That's what Miss Merriam is going to do," he explained, "and Cissy's grandma is sorry, too;

it doesn't leave her any place for company but the hall bedroom. But they've got to have the room, she s'poses."

"That will do, Richard! You are not to repeat everything you hear. And I am afraid I need the guest chamber. What should we do when Aunt Nannie comes?"

"Oh, Cissy could have her crib right in the room. She wouldn't mind Aunt Nanny," he replied superbly. "She always sleeps in a crib, and she always will. A bed scares her — she's afraid she'll fall out. I could sleep on the couch, like Christmas time!"

But in the manner of age the wide world over, they merely urged him to wait. There was plenty of time. Time! and she might be living in the house with them!

It was that very night that he reached the top of the wave, and justified the Little God's selection.

He came down to breakfast rapt and quiet. He salted his oatmeal by mistake and never knew the difference. His sister laughed derisively, and

explained his folly to him as he swallowed the last spoonful, but he only smiled kindly at her. After his egg he spoke.

"I dreamed that it was dancing-school. And I went. And I was the only fellow there. And what do you think? *All the little girls were Cecelia!*"

They gasped.

"You don't suppose he'll be a poet, do you, Ritch.? Or a genius, or anything?" his mother inquired anxiously.

"Lord, no!" his father returned. "I should say he was more likely to be a Mormon!"

Dick knew nothing of either class. But the Little God knew very well what he was, and was at that moment making out his diploma.

The End