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THE SOCK STORIES,

BY "AUNT FANNY'S" DAUGHTER.

NEIGHBOR NELLY SOCKS:

BEING

THE SIXTH AND LAST BOOK OF THE SERIES.

BY

"AUNT FANNY'S" DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHOR OF "THE LITTLE WHITE ANGEL."

NEW YORK:

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TO

MY DEAR FATHER,

TO WHOSE KINDLY AND CHARMING WAYS WITH THE

“LITTLE FOLK”

I OWE THE CHARACTER OF “NEIGHBOR OLDBIRD,”

THIS BOOK

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.



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NEIGHBOR NELLY.

IN THREE STORIES.



THE OLD BACHELOR'S STORY.

IN the city block where I live, there are just twenty-four houses on the other side of the street, and twenty-four on this side, six lamp posts, and eight ailanthus trees in green boxes. Oh, dear me, what a tiresome row! That's what I thought when I first came to lodge here; for, as I am an old bachelor, I don't want a whole

house to myself; but now, when I sit at my window and look out at the street, I find no end of things to amuse and interest me; particularly when the gas is lighted of an evening, and I can see a little way into the parlors of the opposite neighbors. I suppose they know that an old bachelor like Josiah Oldbird can do no harm by looking on at their evening amusements; so they do not pull the blinds down if they chance to see me, sitting lonely at my window, and willing to accept such crumbs of their society and happiness as I can glean over the way.

First, then, is the family at No. 7, three maiden sisters and a bachelor brother. As I don't in the least know

their names, I have dubbed them the Bluejays, because the three maiden sisters always wear blue merino gowns in winter, and blue muslin ones in summer; and because they are all so fond of singing that no family of birds could be more musical. They have a pet poodle and a pet squirrel, too. The poodle is very fat, and his hair sticks out so much all over him, that he looks perpetually astonished, as if he had just seen a spook. He always stands on the window sill, when the sash is raised of an afternoon, and glares into the street until he sees the bachelor brother coming. Then he achieves a series of frantic yells and bounces, until somebody comes to open the door and lets him out, when

he waddles to the front steps to meet his master, wagging his tail to that tremendous extent, that it looks like the shuttle of a steam power loom.

The squirrel is slim and sleek, and seems to enjoy life amazingly, he hops about so. When one of the Miss Blue-jays takes him in her arms, he won't stay there, but gets away, and walks all over her head and shoulders; and at last runs down her back and disappears.

Then, at No. 11, a very fat gentleman lives with his fat and pretty wife, and round dumpling of a baby. As I don't know him either, I call him Mr. Fatty, and he seems to be a "good-natured giant." I saw a little boy actually stop short to stare at him the

other day, when he was sitting out at his front door—he is such a regular roly-poly of a gentleman—but he only laughed good-temperedly, and never got vexed in the least. I don't advise



you to try this with all fat gentlemen though ; they might accidentally sit down on a chair—where you were—afterward, and that would be the last of you. This piece of advice, however, is a great secret between you and me !

He is so glad to meet the fat baby

when he comes home at night, that I can see him in the parlor first kissing it almost black and blue, and then tossing it up in the air until I feel as though its head must come bump against the ceiling, but it doesn't — and at last, carrying it off perched on his shoulder, and looking very much perturbed in its spirits.

But the pleasantest neighbors of all live exactly opposite, at No. 9. They take tea every evening in the back parlor; and as the front window shades are up, and only the back room lighted, I can always see them at their cheerful meal. The rooms are furnished in winter with dark red velvet carpets and furniture; with red damask curtains and red velvet paper

hangings. In summer they put up white curtains, and carpets and furniture have cool, cream-colored linen coverings, so that the parlors look cozy and charming at all seasons.

As for the family there is a papa and mamma, of course, and a dear little girl and boy. The little girl is about ten years old, I should think, with great, dark-blue eyes, and curling auburn hair. Her cheeks are as rosy as ripe peaches, and her teeth as white as so many pearls. Her nose does turn up at the end a little, to be sure; but that is rather saucy and becoming than otherwise; and she always looks so sweet tempered, and full of fun, too, when I see her of an evening, that I am sure she is as good as pie, and as

merry as a cricket! Her little brother, who is a year or two younger, looks very much like her, and their obedient and pretty behavior at table is something really beautiful to observe.

It is nearly a year now, since I moved into my lodging at "No. 10," and began to wonder what No. 9's name was; and now I must make haste and tell you how, only last June, I became acquainted with these dear little neighbors of mine.

One pleasant Friday morning, after breakfast, I put on my old-fashioned beaver hat, and taking my gold-headed cane in one hand and my market basket in the other, I trotted out to buy something nice for dinner; for,

you see, I am a particular old bachelor, and like to market for myself.

Just as I was coming down the steps, the door of No. 9 opened, and the little girl ran down *her* steps. She looked so bright and pretty in her cunning round straw hat with the blue ribbons, and white Marseilles cloak, carrying her satchel of books and lunch basket in her hand, that I could not help nodding to her. So she nodded to me, and then *I* nodded again and smiled, and we each walked along on our own side of the way. When we came to the corner I thought I would cross over and scrape some more acquaintance with my little neighbor. Now on the side of her satchel, I saw, when I came near her,

was printed in gold letters, "Nelly Lawson;" so I said, as cheerily as I could, in my old, quavering voice:

"Good morning, Neighbor Nelly!"

The little maiden looked up in my face in a shy fashion at first; but when she saw what a mild, gray-headed old bachelor had bade her good morning, she took courage, and answered, "Good morning, sir."

"So you are going to school this fine day?"

"Yes; I go to school, but brother Jimmy doesn't; he learns at home. I think he is going next year. Have you got a baby at your house? We have."

"No," said I, sighing; "I haven't got any baby; I am an old bachelor. Will you marry me?"

“Oh, I am too little,” she replied quite seriously. “You will have to wait until I grow up to you.”

I laughed, and asked her, “Don’t you want to go to market with me before you go to school? There is plenty of time.”

“No,” replied my little neighbor, firmly; “I can’t go anywheres that mamma does not know of.”

“That’s right!” I said. “Don’t do anything your mother would disapprove. Well, Neighbor Nelly, since you won’t go to market with me, I must go to school with you; and tell your mother that Neighbor Josiah Oldbird would like you to take a walk with him to-morrow; will you?”

“Oh yes! that would be real

nice!" said my little neighbor, with a joyous skip.

By this time we were walking along hand in hand; and soon, seeing my little neighbor look in at the window of the candy shop round the corner from our street, I thought I would take her in and buy her some candy. So in we marched, Nelly's great blue eyes dancing with pleased expectation, and stood close by the counter, waiting for our turn to come. There were a good many people in the candy shop, and we had to wait some time; so, to amuse ourselves, Neighbor Nelly and I turned round, and began looking at the funny folks near us.

There was one very fat old country woman, who seemed to be buying

“quarter or pound,” as she said, of every kind of candy in the shop. As soon as the papers were handed to her she began eating out of them, and before she left, I should think, she had eaten about two pounds of candy. Besides the old woman, there were a great many little children, who only wanted a penny’s worth each; but they hesitated so long whether to have “taffie” or “molasses,” a lemon-candy horse, or a cinnamon-candy trumpet, that they were the most troublesome customers of anybody. Then there were several older boys and girls; some, I am sorry to say, picking up a loose bit of candy every time the shopman turned away—as if that were not stealing; and finally,

there was Neighbor Nelly and I, who did none of these things, but just looked on, and waited until the shopman came to serve us.

I bought some lemon candy, as clear as a bit of yellow glass, and some pungent cinnamon, and delectable chocolate; and then I popped the papers into Neighbor Nelly's satchel, and we hurried on to school. We had not far to go now, and when we came to the house, my little new friend bid me good-by, and thanked me so sweetly, that I went away quite a happy old bachelor.

In the evening I was looking out of my window as usual, when I saw the servant girl come in to light the gas in the back parlor at No. 9, with

Neighbor Nelly and the little brother Jimmy behind her. While she was setting the tea table, the children came running to the window, and both nodded and smiled at me. Presently the little boy thrust both hands in his pockets, and held them up crammed full of candy. "Thank you, Mr. Old Bachelor!" he shouted; "we like you real well!"

That made me real happy; for I am not a crabbed old bachelor by any means. In a minute more their father came home; and as they all sat around the pleasant tea table, I hope they talked of their lonely old neighbor, who watched them from his window.

The next morning, as I was reading the paper, in came the servant and

gave me the funniest little note! It was addressed on the outside, "To my neighbor Oldbird," and ran thus:

"MY DEAR NEIGHBOR:

"Mamma says I may take a walk with you this morning, because you are a good old bachelor. Jimmy wants to go, and Gipsey. Gipsey is my dog. He is black and tan, and his tail curls round so, that papa says you might use it for a cork-screw. Jimmy and I mean to try some time. Gipsey likes to be on the seashore, and so does baby. We are going there next week—to Long Branch. I hope you will write me a letter when I am gone, and I am

Your affectionate

"NEIGHBOR NELLY.

"Saturday Morning."

You may believe how pleased I was with this dear little note, and I thought I would answer it. So I sat down at my writing desk, found a cunning little sheet of paper, with a flag on it, and commenced.

Now I happened to think, at that moment, of some very comical letters written by the great poet, Tom Hood, to his little friends on the seashore; and as they were ever so much funnier than anything I could have written, I copied one of them out, and sent it to my little new friend.

“MY DEAR NEIGHBOR NELLY:

“I am very glad you are to walk with me, and very sorry you are going away so soon. Do you like to be on

the seashore? I did, when I was a boy. I and my brother chucked hundreds of stones into the sea, when we were there, but we came away before we could fill it up. Then there is the fun of finding shiny pebbles and jelly fish on the beach. I used to think jelly fish were made of sea-calves' feet, and no flavoring. I suppose the mermaids eat them at their parties.

“Then there's fishing on the sea-side. I used to catch flat fish sometimes, with a long string line, it was like swimming a kite. If you go out in a surf boat, take care it does not “flounder” and get “squamped,” as some people say, instead of founder and swamped.

“Have you ever been bathed in

the sea? I was, and, dear me! how I kicked and screamed; or, at least, tried to scream, but the sea, ships and all, began to run into my mouth, and so I shut it up. Remember, when you are bathing, if you meet with a shark, the best way is to bite off his legs, if you can, before he walks away with yours; and pray, pray, pray take care of yourself in the sea, for in some places, they say, it has not even a bottom to go to.

“Could you bring me a little crab off the beach? If you would catch one for me, and teach it to shake hands without nipping and biting, it would make me quite happy, for I have not had any toys or playthings in a long time. It would be a good

plan to hire a little crab to teach the baby to crawl, if he can't walk yet. Bless him! But I must not write on him any more; he is so soft, and I have nothing but steel pens.

“Now good-by; give my love to everybody, and my compliments to all the rest, and believe me, up hill and down dale,

“Your affectionate neighbor,

“JOSIAH OLDBIRD.”

Then I put my letter in a flag envelope, sealed it up tight, and wrote on it, “To my dear Neighbor Nelly,” and had the maid take it to her.

Presently I could see two little figures flitting about in one of the upper chambers, and soon after all four

of us, Nelly, Jimmy, I, and Gipse, were in the street. Gipse was a "toy terrier" that ought to have belonged to "Commodore Nutt," the dwarf at "Barnum's," and ran along on three legs most of the time, with the fourth, and his cork-screw tail elevated in the air for joy at being allowed to join the party; while the children were all hop, skip, and jump, and kept tight hold of a hand of mine apiece, as though they were afraid of flying away if they let go. Meanwhile, I walked quietly along, with my market basket on my arm, a sober old bachelor. I expect the people who passed us in the street thought me a rather incongruous addition to such a frisky party; but then, you know, children

must caper about. Bless your heart! it would never do in the world to see children mincing solemnly along, like little old men and women; it would be as absurd as to have my Neighbor Nelly wearing her great-grandmother's coal-scuttle bonnet! The last idea struck me as so odd, that I drew a little picture of Neighbor Nelly in this guise when I got home, and here it is. How do you like it?



We thought we would go to market first. So we walked slowly down Fourth Avenue, and crossed over to the market where the Seventh Regiment armory is, opposite the Cooper Institute.

“My cousin is a Seventh Regimenter!” said Jimmy as we climbed up the iron steps; “he often let us look on at his company drills last winter, and afterward Nelly and I drilled in our yard. The big boy who comes to see the old ladies next door, looked over the fence and laughed at us, but we didn’t care; and we mean to fight for our country like everything when we are bigger; that is, I mean to, and Nelly would like to, but she’s only a girl, you know.”

“Only a girl!” repeated Nelly, tossing her long curls; “girls are a great deal of use, too; I mended all his stockings and all papa’s this week—think of that, neighbor Oldbird!”

“That was really splendid!” said I; and just then we entered the market.

The very first thing we met was a horrid big dog, that belonged to some butcher; and, bless me! how he began to show his great rows of teeth, and growl at Gipsej! Nelly gave a little scream, and tried to hide behind me; Jimmy valiantly flew at the big dog with my walking stick; and poor little Gipsej nearly stood on the end of his tail with fright, and squealed dismally. What a fuss we were all

in, to be sure! So at last, to quiet the disputants, I caught Gipsev up, and put him in my coat pocket, where he sat, looking out at the top, very much comforted.

Then we turned to the right, and went by the brightest and prettiest stall in the whole market. It was kept by a Frenchman, who, in his own language, would be called a "*charcutier*;" but Jimmy and Nell shouted out together "Oh, there's the *pig man!*" as loud as ever they could, and then stopped, blushing very much, because they were afraid the pork merchant heard them. I expect he did; for he looked very funny when we came close, and smoothing down his snowy apron with his fat hands,

said "Bonjour, mademoiselle!" and laughed good humoredly. "There was a great "head cheese" on the pig man's marble counter, moulded in the shape of a boar's head. The tusks were made of white carrots, the eyes of red jelly, and the sides of the dish it was on were beautifully ornamented with white roses, cut out of turnips, and parsley foliage. Then there were ever so many pork pies, with the most elegant wreaths of flowers on the top crust, comical little hams already cooked, and fat dumplings of sucking pigs, as pink as baby himself!

When we had looked about us a little, we concluded to buy a pork pie of the pig man; and while that was being nicely packed up in paper, out popped

Gipsey from my pocket, and stood triumphant on the counter, in the midst of the little pigs and savory pastries. I don't know what forays he would not have made upon them, if he had not been captured by the pig man, Jimmy, and me; but he did contrive to jump right into the very middle of another pork-pie! and then we had to pay for that, too; and wipe the gravy off Gipsey's feet and the ends of his tail and nose, and button him up tight in the market basket for half an hour, as a punishment for his naughtiness. As to the pie we had bought, Jimmy carried that, and Gipsey cut up so many antics inside the basket, that he nearly wriggled it out of my hand altogether.

After that we went on, and found, dear me! such a comfortable old market woman, who sold us a nice little chicken, and some fresh vegetables, and gave the children each a great handful of cherries; but we had to tell her to send them home, with our pie, because Gipsey had the basket in possession.

Then we walked into the street again, and when we had let Gipsey out of prison, concluded to leave the basket at my baker's, and take a walk in Broadway. Dear, dear me! what quantities of shop windows there were to stare into, and how we flattened our three noses, and spread our six hands all over every one of them, while we admired the splendid pic-

ture books, the stores of sugar plums, or the wonders of toys they contained! While we were occupied in this way, a little girl, poorly dressed, and lugging a large bundle of work in both arms, came along, and stopping beside us at the window of the most splendid toy shop, stood looking wistfully in.

Neighbor Nelly straightway twitched my hand, and whispered, "Oh look, Neighbor Oldbird! what a poor little girl! I don't suppose she ever saw a doll before in her life. How she must wish she had one!"

"Suppose we ask her?" I said.

"Will you ask?" she answered; "I don't like to."

"Nonsense! ask her yourself; she won't eat you, or Gipsey either;" for

Gipsey was sidling away between my feet, as if he were alarmed too; the saucy scamp!

Thereupon Nelly moved closer to the poor girl, and said, in a kind, little, timid voice, "Do you like dolls?"

"Yes, very much!" said the child, with a surprised look.

"Oh, so do I!" cried Nelly, rapturously. "I have lots of them at home; let me see, there's Jenny, and Willie, and old black Nanny, and—" she stopped short, seeing the other look wistfully at her, and then said, "Oh, I forgot! you have none, perhaps; would you like to have one?"

"Oh yes, miss!" said the child; "not so much for myself, though, as my little sister; she is sick, and can't

do anything, poor Clara! but I work, and help my mother!" she added, proudly.

"What does your mother do?" asked Jimmy.

"She makes shirts for the army; and I do all the button holes."

"I can't make a button hole," said Nelly, regretfully.

Here I proposed we should walk into the shop, and after we had looked all we wanted to at the pretty things, and the children, with screams of delight, had ridden in turn on a "spring rocking horse," that sent them flying half way to the top of the glass cases behind the counter, I gave Jimmy and Nelly each two shillings, and told them to buy whatever the little girl would

like best. The poor little thing's eyes sparkled with happiness when Nelly bought her the composition doll she chose out of a heap that were piled in a great basket, gorgeously dressed in pink mosquito netting, as I thought, but which Nelly informed me was a "tarletane;" and Jimmy laid out his money on a tiny bowl and pitcher of sprigged china ware, and an astonished china baby sitting in a bath, and looking as if it had turned on the hot water, and couldn't turn it off again.

Then we trundled Gipsev about a little in a wicker wagon we found, and put him in the patent baby-jumper to take an airing; and at last, when we had teased him till he barked like one of the toy poodles on the shelves, we

took ourselves off, and sent the poor child on her way rejoicing.

But it was getting late, and time to trot home, before His Majesty the Sun roasted us all like so many eggs. Our street is always shady and cool, it seems to me, and we were glad enough to find ourselves once more on its pavement. I invited Nelly and Jimmy and Gipsev all to take lunch with me, and didn't we have fun! We eat the pork pie, and stuffed Gipsev with lumps of sugar, and discovered a pot of raspberry jam in the closet, and ornamented ourselves with red rims round our mouths, digging it out; and sliced, and buttered, and disposed of almost half a loaf of French bread,

and hardly stopped laughing, chattering, and barking a single minute.

And then, after all this was over, my little neighbors bid me good-by, and Gipsey barked at me and poked his cold nose into my hand, which meant "Good-by and thank you," all the same, and the three went home as merry as crickets.

I could not see much of my little neighbors before they went away the next Tuesday, but I was invited to take tea at No. 9 the very last evening; and then, what should I find out but that Nelly's mamma was the daughter of an old friend of mine whom I had not seen for years! So we felt quite like relations right away. Just as tea was over, lo and behold!

there was a tremendous hullabaloo on the back piazza, and when we poked our heads out of the window to see what the matter was, there was Gipsej high and dry on the back of Miss Bluejay's fat poodle — having squeezed through the railing which separated the two piazzas—with the squirrel, which had come to the rescue of his friend, hanging on to his tail! and all three setting up a squeal of remonstrance. Gipsej's plight was so extremely well deserved, that we wouldn't go to his rescue; but at last, with a tremendous twist, he snatched away his cork-screw tail, and ran to hide himself and his injured feelings under the sofa in the front room. How we laughed at him! and how

Nelly tried to make him come out and be lump-sugared into good humor, but he wouldn't; so, to make up, we coaxed the fat poodle, which had been staring in at the performance and sniffing satisfaction, to sit up and beg for us until we gave him the lump of sugar. Then Mrs. Lawson sat down to the piano, and began playing a funny little hornpipe tune that sounded just like a banjo; and, to our astonishment, the fat poodle developed another accomplishment; for, getting on his hind legs, he gravely hopped up and down on the piazza, keeping time to the music, until we nearly died of laughter.

You may fancy, after all these comical doings, that we managed to

spend a merry evening, and when I at last bid my neighbors good night, it was no longer with the feeling that I was a lonely old bachelor.

I did find the street pretty lonely though, after they had gone, next day, with two great big trunks strapped on behind the carriage, a middling sized trunk hoisted up in front, and several small carpet bags, and tiny tawny bundles and baskets in every place where room could be found. I fancy Gipsej was in one of the baskets, by the way it bounced and wriggled about in Neighbor Nelly's lap; but I don't know; I only saw it from my window, whence I waved an adieu to them as they rolled away.

A few days after they had gone, I thought I would amuse myself, in their absence, by trying to find out if any of the other neighbors knew anything about my neighbor, Nelly. I succeeded in learning what two of them knew, and they shall tell it for themselves in the stories that follow, and which I have written out. And now, if any other dear little children have been pleased with me, in what I have told of my walks and talks with Neighbor Nelly, just let them come to No. 10, and meet the hearty greeting and loving welcome of the

OLD BACHELOR!

THE BIG BOY'S STORY.

You want me to tell you what I know about the pretty little girl next door? Well, I'm ready to begin, if you won't mind my talk; I'm only a boy, you know, and can't use fine words—that's all humbug.

My name is Tom Halstead. I am nephew to the Miss Brandlaws, who live at No. 7. The idea of calling my darling old friskies "The Bluejays!" (If you don't give me that Australian post stamp I saw in your desk, I'll tell

'em, too!) However, to go on with my story.

One morning last winter, just at the end of the Christmas holidays, while I was on a visit there, I didn't know what on earth to do with myself. So I caught Poddles (that's the poodle), dressed him up in Aunt Elsie's nightcap, tied a life preserver round him, and put him in the portable shower-bath, just for fun; it didn't hurt him a bit, and—would you believe it? the hateful thing hopped out, squealing murder, shook himself all over the carpet, scratched off the nightcap, and danced round the room with it in a fury, till it was in perfect rags.

Up rushed Aunt Elsie, and was so

horrified when she saw the carpet and her cap in such a mess, and "darling doggie" all "wetsey-petsey," that she locked me up in my room for the rest of the day on bread and water! and there was gingerbread, with raisins in it, baking down stairs!! Horrid!!!

Of course I couldn't spend my time sucking my thumbs; so, like a sensible fellow, I set myself to find some better employment, and soon a grand idea came into my head. I had just finished reading a jolly old-fashioned novel I found in Uncle Herbert's room, called "The Castle Spectre: a Tale of Spain;" where a goose of a lover, such a spooney! had scrambled down from the top of a castle, hang-

ing on to his bedclothes. *Now*, don't you see it? Perhaps not, so I'll explain.

My bedroom is the third floor, back room, always; and you know that piazza at the back of the house? Well, what did I do, but twitch off *my* bed-cover—nice white one it was, too—tie it to the bedpost, and let the end hang out of the window. Then I scrambled out, and slid down the wall like a streak of lightning! You can't think what jolly fun it was!

There was lots of amusement in the yard; twelve cats on the fence to plague, and no end of snow to make balls and pelt the cook with; beside, the gingerbread was just baked, and I got a *brown corner!* So! there!

while I was eating it, and it was so hot that it almost sizzled, all at once I heard a lot of noise in the next yard. Some boys seemed to be having a drill there; so I ran up the steps leading from the piazza to the ground, and looked over the fence. But lor now! what do you think? one of the boys was a girl! She had on long india-rubber boots, and I called out, "Go it, Boots!"

Then the little boy that was with her, who seemed to be her brother, looked so mad at me! and, really and truly, I couldn't help plaguing them a little. I know you think I was real mean; but if you had seen how funny they looked, in paper cocked hats, with turkey tails for feathers, and the

little boy thumping a big tin saucepan for a drum, you would have laughed, too; so you needn't look so provoked, Neighbor Oldbird!

“Gee up, awkward squad!” I said; “double quick halt on the right flank! Ha-ahup!”

But the little girl only laughed good humoredly, and said: “Jimmy and I belong to the Seventh Regiment, and drill in the last fashion. Don't you want to come and learn the Lefferts Tactics?”

Wasn't she a nice little thing! Never got mad or anything, but just gave me back as good as I sent. I declare, I fell right smack in love with her that minute, and I don't care a fig now for the girl I met in dancing

school, upon my word I don't; so I rushed back into the kitchen, coaxed the cook to give me two more hunks of gingerbread, and called out, "Won't you have some cake?"

They came running up on the pizza like lamplighters; and while they were eating the gingerbread, *I* was eating something I got especially for myself at the same time. Did you ever try it? You have a great big sour apple, as cold as it can be, and a tremendous pickled pepper, as hot as it can be; then you take first a bite of the pepper, and nearly burn all the skin off your throat, and then a bite of the apple to cool it again; and so on. It's gorgeous, I tell you!

Presently the little boy (whose

name, as I said, was Jimmy), stopped his eating to ask me, "Do you live in New York?"

"No, I live at White Plains. I go to the Military Academy there; don't you want me to show you some drill?"

"Oh, Cousin Charley is going to teach us some time. He belongs to the Seventh Regiment. We love to be soldiers, though, and we know a boy, Freddy Jourdain his name is, who got up a whole regiment, and has parades, and went into camp, and everything."

"We have a camp at White Plains," I told them. "Do you ever go there in summer, Miss ——" here I stopped rather awkwardly, not knowing what her name was.

“Oh, I’m not ‘Miss’ anybody;” she said; “I’m Nelly; but we go to the seashore in summer ’most always.”

“Can’t you dress up in your uniform, and show us how you look at school?” said Jimmy.

“Yes, if you like;” here I remembered that the key of my room was in Aunt Elsie’s pocket, and had to say, “but I can’t get into my room now; I was locked in, and Aunt Elsie has the key.”

“How do you come to be here, then?” said Nelly; “why, dear me, just look at the counterpane hanging out of the window; how funny!”

“Why, that’s the way I got out!” I said; and so I told them all about

“The Castle Spectre,” and “Lord Alonzo Algernon” Spooneyman, and we got into such a perfect *gig* of laughter, that we nearly rode off in it! (Now, don’t say that’s not a good joke, or I’ll not tell another word of my story.)

Just then out came Poddles, looking as surprised as ever; and Nelly exclaimed, “Oh, there’s that funny old dog! what do you call him?”

“His name is Poddles!” said I; “I christened him.”

“What a queer name!” said Jimmy; “let’s take him into our house and see what Gipsev and he will do!”

“Good!” said I. So, without remembering that plaguey white spread, I cut over the piazza railings with

Poddles under one arm, and we all three rushed up stairs together.

They had such a famous play room, with a splendid swing, and a teetertorter, and ten-pins, and I don't know what beside; and there was the nastiest little dog! but you know him, that "toy-terrier" of theirs. Poddles looked a greater fright than ever beside him; so, to pay him off, we put that wretched Pod into a basket, tied it fast to the swing, and swung him up to the ceiling. It frightened him half to death, and serve him right, for being so ugly! after which he and Gipsey went to sleep in a big rocking chair, as friendly as possible. Then I gave Nelly a splendid swing, "ran under," and cracked my cocoanut three

times, beside making my arms ache like everything; but I didn't care, she was such a dear little thing.

Afterward Jimmy went and got a great plateful of rosy apples; and just as we were eating them, and having such fun, up came one of our girls, and said that "Miss Brandlaw wanted Master Tom right home!" Wasn't it hateful? But, of course, I had to go; so I bundled Poddles under my arm again, bid them good-by, and walked off with Mary; but I poked her ribs and set Poddles at her all the way, which was some comfort.

I expected a scolding when I came home, and I didn't have one—oh no! Aunt Elsie wanted to know where I thought I should die when I went to

—(no, I believe it was the other way, but never mind)—if I hung best bed spreads out of the window, and left my room without permission? besides informing me that she should write to ma', and have me sent for. Finally, she marched me up stairs again; and when I said I *must* have something to do to keep me out of mischief, she gave me a Sunday school book to read, and took herself off.

Of course you will say I was dreadfully wicked not to like the Sunday school book, but I couldn't. It was so full of hard names and long words, and was all about sanctification and justification and regeneration, and how was I to understand a word of it? I love Bible stories, but I don't

think there is a boy or girl who *understands hard doctrines*. Do you, Neighbor Oldbird?

I pretty soon gave up that employment, and amused myself instead with pelting the cats on the fence with a few marbles, and trying on my uniform, to see how I looked in it; until Aunt Elsie relented, I suppose, for she came up and asked me through the keyhole if I was sorry, and wouldn't do any more. You can fancy what my answer was, and after dinner I got permission to go out and play on the sidewalk.

Neighbor Nelly and Jimmy joined me there pretty soon, and we had such fun playing "tag" and driving hoop. It wasn't hoop *time*, to be

sure, but that was no matter. Then, when we were tired of that, we all sat down together on the upper step of No. 9, and began talking about their school and mine, and what we learned.

“Do you ever learn pieces of poetry?” asked Nelly. “My teacher, Miss Backboard, always gives the girls each a piece of poetry every Friday; so we call that poetry day.”

“I used to learn pieces too,” I said; “but I don’t care much for poetry unless it’s funny.”

“Tell us a funny piece,” said Jimmy.

“Ah yes, do!” added Nelly; and, of course, when a *lady* asked me I had to, though I felt pretty bashful; so I began.

A DAY OF MISHAPS.

(AS TOLD BY BOBBY BREAKWINDOW, A SCHOOLBOY.)

Oh dear! was there ever anybody so
unlucky as I am,

From General ——, who lost that bat-
tle t'other day, all the way back
to Priam!

Come, sit down—do, and let me tell you
all about it, and what's the matter;
Perhaps it will do me good to have a
nice, comfortable, miserable chat-
ter.

To begin, then. This morning I woke,
and thought I was up with the sun.
So never hurried myself; but dressed
slow, and came down, to find
breakfast all done,

And nothing left for me but one cold
slapjack, and all the chicken gone,
Unless, to be sure, I could have eaten
the drumsticks, and one perfectly
clean breast bone!

And, of course, I had to make haste,
for it was nine o'clock and
after,

And the master had offered a prize to
the earliest boy—and here was I
beaten by even lazy Tommy Shaf-
ter!

But it was no use to fret, so I snatched
up my satchel, and would have
been off in a minute,

When lo and behold! my geography
was gone; and though we hunted
the house, it was plain it wasn't
in it,

Till at last I remembered that yesterday I had gone after school to the dog pound,

And then been fishing with Fred Lee ;
so, probably, it was at the bottom
of the frog pond !

Well, off to school I went, and came
in after every schoolmate ;

So, to pay me off, the schoolmaster
and all the boys called me Bobby
Toolate !

But that wasn't all ; for the class was
just up for spelling,

And I didn't know the lesson, and
Tommy Shafter prompted me to
spell boots *butes* ; and that's all I
got for telling,

Besides going to the foot of the class,
and having to get the lesson over ;

I tell you what! a hand-organ monkey's life, compared to a school-boy's, is perfect rolling in clover!

And I wish I was a monkey, if I did get beaten—yes, that I do—

In a red coat all over spangles, and blue trowsers, and a long tail behind to come through!

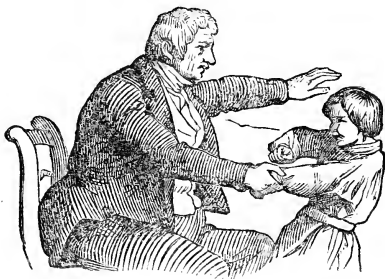
Well, thank goodness, it's over: but that's not the half of my pother:

For the very minute I got out of school, Tommy Shafter began to plague and bother.

And wanted me to ride on the gate with him that goes in to his grandfather Chowser's:

So I did: but there's spikes on the top of that gate: and, confound it, I went to work and tore my trowsers!

Just then along came Miss Kitty
Snow, and didn't I look dashing,
And that hateful Tommy Shafter
bawled out "How are you, trow-
sers?" and jumped down and
walked off with her; but just see
if I don't give him a thrashing!
To pay him off for what he did and
more too; for, when I came home
weeping and wailing,
Pa boxed my ears, and said I was such
a bad boy I shouldn't go with him
now out sailing;





BOBBY AND ROVER.

So I had the pleasure of seeing the
rockaway drive up to the door,
And pa and ma getting in, and sister
Tilly, and brother Sam, and ever
so many more,

All looking so happy and gay, and not
caring a bit for poor Bobby,

Just as if I *wanted* to get into scrapes,
and mischief and bad conduct
were quite my hobby!

Then off they whirled; and as I was
left alone, I thought I might as
well be up and doing.

Oh, good gracious, why didn't I sit
still? but how could I tell what
was brewing?

So I went to the stable to see our big
dog Rover, and thought I would
take him out with me;

When, just as I had slipped his chain, he broke loose, and ran, I don't know where! and, I'm sure, pa will never forgive me!

For he thought so much of Rover. Oh, dear me, what shall I do?

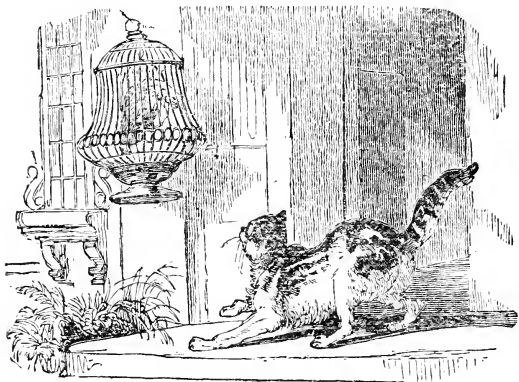
If it would be any use in the world, I really think I should begin to boohoo!

The stable boy told me not to take him; but I should like to see myself minding him *rather*;

And of course, out of revenge, he'll just go and make the worst of it to father.

Well, one would think that was enough; but when I came back to the house, oh jolly!

There was our big cat just making a spring at sister Tilda's pretty polly!



And in my haste to save the bird I
threw the poker at the cat and
killed her!

And got myself in for a scolding from
ma, and no great thanks from Tilda.

It's six o'clock now; so, I suppose,
they'll soon be home as cross as
any Tartar,

To give it to me for being such a bad
boy, though I'm sure I'm a regu-
lar martyr;

Don't you think so now, after all that
I've just been telling?

No breakfast, no geography, late at
school, tore my trowsers, kept at
home, lost the dog, killed the
cat, and didn't know my spelling!

I think the best thing I can do is to
go to bed, put my head under the
clothes,

And in a good, comfortable sleep try
to forget all my sorrows and my
woes;

But you may be sure, after this, I
shall not neglect to take warning,
And begin to-morrow all right, with-
out any sort of fail, by getting
up early in the morning!

“There!” said I, when I had fin-
ished, and it quite wore my tongue

thin to repeat such a long piece of poetry. "What do you think of *that* for a story?"

"I think it is real funny," said Nelly, laughing; "I wish I knew something to tell."

"I can say a funny piece!" shouted Jimmy.

"Well, say it, then," we two—Nelly and I—put in.

Up he jumped right off, struck a funny attitude, and began:

"The boy stood on the burning deck,
Peeling potatoes by the peck!
The flames rolled on and scorched his shins,
As he stood peeling potato skins!
'Oh pa!' he cried, 'the flames is hot,
Come, put the potatoes in the pot!'
But his father, alas! ne'er came to sup,
So the flames rolled on and frizzled him up!"

“Did you ever hear anything so ridiculous as that?” cried Nelly. “Poor Casabianca! I used to cry over him dreadfully; but I shall never think of him now without laughing. Where did you learn that, Jimmy?”

“Oh, Harry Agnew told it to me; he said he repeated it one day in school, when the master asked him if he could say a piece of poetry, and everybody burst out laughing. The master laughed too; so he couldn't put anybody down for a bad mark, though Harry was afraid he would.”

“That was almost equal to the trick we played at school,” said I. “We wanted the doctor to give us a holiday, but he didn't seem to see it; so when we were called up for our

reading after recess, we were told to read Montgomery's poem called 'Questions to Birds and their Answers.' One of the verses is about the swallow, and reads thus :

“ ‘Swallow, why homeward turned thy joyful wing?’
‘In a far land I heard the voice of spring ;
I found myself that moment on the way,
My wings, my wings, they had not power to stay.’

—but we changed it as though the doctor was asking us a question and we were answering—this way :

“ ‘Boys ! why are you forever on the wing,
Wanting a holiday for everything?’
‘From you we are so glad to get away,
Our legs, our legs, they will not let us stay.’”

How we all laughed over this; it was real true, too; and pretty soon

after, as it was getting dark, I bid them good-by and ran home.

Next morning, what should Aunt Elsie and Aunt Ruth (Aunt Priscilla was away on a visit) take into their heads, but that they hadn't had any fun house-cleaning—(I suppose they must think it's fun, or they wouldn't do it so often)—for ever so long; so nothing would suit them but to set the whole house in an uproar as quick as possible. Of course, I was in the way, whether I stayed in the garret or the kitchen; knocked down three pails and a scrubbing brush every time I went down stairs, nearly drowned Poddles in hot soapsuds, splashed myself all over with whitewash trying to "do" the kitchen ceiling (on my own

account, when nobody was by), until I looked as if I had been out in a snowstorm, and watering the windows outside with the long hosepipe, until every one of them was dripping *inside* like a waterfall.

Now, Neighbor Nelly and Jimmy had been looking out of their parlor window, and advising me which were the best parts of our windows to play on, when, all of a sudden, Nelly said:

“Why, Tom, it doesn't half clean the panes to do them that way; they ought to be washed with soap and hot water. Suppose we try it? Only think!” she went on, “how much your aunties would be obliged to us if we were to find out a new way to

make windows clean, ever so much better than the old one!"

"Splendid!" said I and Jimmy together. "Come, let's try it right away!"

With that, Nelly and Jimmy came into our house, and into the front basement; Aunt Elsie and Aunt Ruth were both up stairs; so we had the two lower stories all to ourselves.

As Nelly was afraid of spoiling her frock, I dived into the cook's dresser drawer, where she keeps her own table covers and clean dish cloths, and fished out a great big brown roller-towel, which we pinned round her neck, making her look in front as if she was tied up in a potato sack, with only her head left out. Then Jimmy

and I took off our nice jackets, rolled up our shirt sleeves, lugged in three big yellow dishes full of hot water, spilling plenty on the way, found a long bar of brown soap, and helped ourselves to three more of Bridget's clean towels; and then we all three began scrubbing away at the windows!

Such fun as we had! We put on the greatest lot of soap, and paid away with both hands, so as to make them good and *clean*, laughing and talking all the time; and when we thought the water had been used enough, or, rather when it was nearly all spilt, we took up our yellow bowls and marched into the kitchen for more.

Our boiler, you must know, is a tin affair, like a large soup kettle without the handle, and has a faucet in front to draw the water off. We put it on the middle of the range, and keep it always full and boiling; and now, instead of filling our dishes right away, we began playing the kitchen was a steamboat, and the water heater the boiler, just ready to burst; so, of course, it was necessary to let off steam, which we did by drawing a little water at a time from the faucet into one of our yellow dishes, and tilting it back again as soon as the dish was full, beside "tooting," as loud as we could, to represent the commotion going on to perfection. We were soon so busy over this, that we forgot all

about the front basement windows for ever so long, until we heard Aunt Elsie calling out, "Tom! Tom! where are you?"

"Here I am, Aunt Elsie! come right along! Here we all are, washing the windows for you as nice as anything!"

Down marched Aunt Elsie, short order; and the minute she came into the basement we heard her give an "O——h!" about a quarter of a mile long. We all rushed to ask what was the matter; and such a pickle as the windows were in you never did see. The soap was in streaks, and smears, and lumps all over the panes, making them look as if somebody had spilt a lot of hasty pudding on them,

and it had stuck fast. Of course, as we left them so long, the soap had hardened on; and poor Nelly, frightened half out of her wits, began to cry. That put me up, I can tell you; I was determined Aunt Elsie shouldn't scold her; so I begged her not to be angry with anybody but me, for it wasn't their fault at all.

“And I must say you are old enough to know better, Tom,” said my aunt, looking at me reproachfully over the tops of her spectacles; “and as a punishment, you must get all the soap off the window before you have any dinner. The children had better go home.”

But now, what do you think that darling of a Nelly, and Jimmy did?

They declared I shouldn't do it all alone by myself, but they would stay and help me; so, after Aunt Elsie had been coaxed to let us, we filled our dishes again, and went to work as busy as bees. It was pretty hard work getting the soap off, but we made a joke of it, and by the time the windows were fairly polished up, as bright as new pins, we were in a perfect frolic. I expect Nelly's bright eyes had something to do with it, for Aunt Elsie, after we had finished, and come shouting to her with our faces as red as fire, and considerable brown soap on us in spots, said, "we were famous workpeople," and gave us New Year's cookies, and almonds, and raisins for lunch. I had a Philopœna among my

nuts, which I ate with Nelly; and pretty soon after they went home.

I did hope she would catch me on the Philopœna, because I had something that I meant to give her all along; and this would be a famous chance. It was a nest of little boxes, made of plaid papier-maché, about a dozen, one inside the other; and when you came to the very last, and had opened that, there was a gold thimble and scissors, and a little gold bodkin, a needlecase full of tiny needles, and a puncher, just big enough for the queen of the fairies; I won it at a raffle on Christmas Eve, and kept it to give to some little girl, for, of course, it wasn't any use to me; what could I do with a thimble and needles? Sure enough,

when I looked out of the back parlor window next morning, Neighbor Nelly looked out of *her* window, said with a saucy smile, "Good morning, Mr. Tom—Philopœna!" and popped back again.

"Good!" I said. So, after breakfast, I asked Aunt Elsie for a nice sheet of paper and a new pen, and then I ran up to my own room, and sat down to write a little note to my neighbor. I'm sure, that showed how much I liked her, if anything could, for I'd rather do a sum in compound fractions, or a French exercise, than write a note. It quite gives me the toothache; but at last I wrote something very pretty, as, I'm sure, you will say when I repeat it to you. This is what I said:

“MY DEAR MISS NELLY :

“I hope you will accept the little present I send you for a Philopœna, because I like you very much. I am real glad you caught me, for perhaps this will remind you of me when I go back to school. I hope the needles will sew all the holes in your clothes, that the thimble will keep you from pricking your pretty little finger, and that

“If you loves I as I loves you,
The scissors won't cut our love in two.

“Good-by.

“From your affectionate friend

“TOM.”

Then I packed up the boxes and the letter in nice white paper, and coaxed Mary to take it in right away ;

and you can't tell how many pretty, smiling thanks I had in return.

But you think I am making my story too long, Neighbor Oldbird? Well, perhaps I am, but there seems to be so much to tell about Nelly, and the nice times we had together, that I don't know when to stop. I am 'most through now.

The day I sent her the Philopœna present was the last of my stay in town; and after I had packed up my clothes ready to start (with a gorgeous plum cake and two jars of raspberry jam in a box, which my dear old Friskies gave me,—they always do make everything of me, in spite of their lectures), I went to Uncle Herbert's room to bid him good-by, for I

knew I should not see him again before I started, and he made me the best present of all. It was a dear little watch and chain; for he said, as I was nearly fifteen, I was quite old enough to take care of one. Wasn't that kind of him?

Well, dear me, I don't want to say good-by a bit, and I did not then; but, of course, it had to come, and I shook hands with my dear little friends, only wishing to goodness that I lived in New York.

We promised about twenty-five times apiece always to be friends; and then I kissed Aunt Elsie and Aunt Ruth, pulled Poddles' ears for good-by, and pranced off all alone; of course, boys that have watches are

plenty big enough to go from New York to White Plains by themselves. I suppose we always shall stay there, for papa is abominably fond of the country; but just wait until I am a man, and see if I don't come to live in New York, and marry Neighbor Nelly, if she will have me. Mind you keep that last remark a secret, now, Neighbor Oldbird! That's all there is about it.

THE FAT GENTLEMAN'S STORY.

I'm in love with Neighbor Nelly,
 Though I know she's only ten ;
While I am five and forty,
 And the *married-est* of men.
I've a wife as fat as butter,
 And a baby—such a boy !
With the plumpest checks and shoul-
 ders,
 Who's his father's dearest joy.

Though a Square toes and a Buffer,
 Still I've sunshine in my heart ;
Still I'm found of tops and marbles,
 Can appreciate a tart.

I can love my Neighbor Nelly,
Just as though I were a boy,
And would hand her cakes and apples,
From my depths of corduroy.

She is tall, and growing taller ;
She is vigorous of limb ;
(You should see her playing soldiers
With her little brother Jim !)
She has eyes as blue as damsons ;
She has pounds of auburn curls ;
She regrets the game of leapfrog
Is prohibited to girls.

I adore my Neighbor Nelly,
I invite her in to tea,
And I let her nurse the baby
Her delightful ways to see.

Such a darling bud of woman !

Yet remote from any teens ;
I have learnt from Neighbor Nelly
What the girls' doll instinct means.

Oh ! to see her with the baby !

(He adores her more than I) ;
How she choruses his crowing,
How she hushes every cry !
How she loves to pit his dimples
With her light forefinger deep ;
How she boasts, as one in triumph,
When she gets him off to sleep !

We must part, my Neighbor Nelly,
For the summers quickly flee ;
And the middle-aged admirer
Must, too soon, supplanted be.

Yet, as jealous as a mother,
A suspicious, cankered churl,
I look vainly for the setting,
To be worthy such a pearl!

NOTE.—This charming little gem is not original, being gleaned from the pages of Putnam's Magazine. As it was there published anonymously, the author is unable to make any further acknowledgment.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE THREE STORIES.

BY THE OLD BACHELOR.

WHEN I had finished copying out the stories of the Big Boy and the Fat Gentleman last summer, the thought struck me that, as I had been in town all the warm bright June weather, it would do my health a great deal of good to take a trip to Long Branch. Of course, it was not to see Neighbor Nelly—certainly not.

So, the very next Saturday afternoon I dusted up my valise, and put some nice cool summer clothes in it,

and a great paper of candy, which I meant for my little neighbors, in case I should see them by accident! Somebody had told me that the Mansion House was the best hotel to stop at. Shall I tell you why? Because there was a party there, of a papa and mamma, a dear little girl and boy, and a remarkably nice little toy terrier, which would put me in mind very much of some friends of mine called Lawson. In fact, this family was called Lawson, too, and the younger members were christened Nelly and Jimmy! Comical, wasn't it?

If you have never been to Long Branch, you can't think what a pleasant sail it is down the Bay in the "Thomas Collyer," and how much I

enjoyed my trip. The pleasant shores of Long and Staten Islands (*I* used to live on Staten Island, and had some comical times there, which I mean to write out one of these days) looked as verdant and beautiful as ever; the sea was as blue as a bluebottle fly, and the sun as light as a cork! As I looked at the great, rolling waves, I laughed to myself, thinking what nice times we were going to have in bathing; ducking under them, when they came roaring along the shore after us, as if they meant to gobble us up, and bouncing out again when they had passed, all dripping and laughing, and ready for the next one to play the same trick on us. Sometimes, to be sure, the waves play too rough, and

knock you off your feet without "by your leave;" or a little crab will walk up and bite your toes, just by way of welcoming you to Long Branch; but nobody minds it. Bless you!—that only makes it more fun to go in bathing!

Well, the boat stopped at the pier, which extends a quarter of a mile from the shore, putting one in mind of a long crab's claw stuck out for "shake hands" by old Neptune; and I jumped into the cars and was bounced and rattled along to Long Branch. As it was Saturday afternoon, a great crowd of people were going there with me, and, deary me! when *I* came to the Mansion House, there wasn't any room left for me! Wasn't it too bad? Just

when I had fixed to have such a nice time with my dear little friends! It would never do to go away, however, so I said: "Well, never mind, Mr. Mansion House—that is, Mr. Neighbor Nelly—dear me!—Mr. Laird, I can do without a room; and at night you can put me to sleep in the pigeon house, or the hen coop, or under the counter of the office, or up the chimney, I don't care which; but go away I can't!"

Now, I expect, Mr. Laird must have known I had come to see Neighbor Nelly, and what a disappointment it would be not to get in; for after a consultation with his bookkeeper, he told me he could give me a room after all! and I was so glad, that I offered

him my snuff box immediately, which is a favor I only grant to very nice people!

So up stairs I hurried, to get ready for tea, in high good humor, and, would you believe it, when I came down again, whose table should I be put to sit at, but Neighbor Nelly's? Oh, how surprised and pleased she was to see me! and Jimmy and his father and mother were just as glad. There was famous "clam chowder" for tea, and such great big blackberries, that we really had to make two bites of them! not to mention the quantities of other good things; and after tea we strolled out on the bluff, which overlooks the ocean. There are three pretty little summer houses before the

Mansion House, and in one of these we took our seats. Gipsev had come scampering up to me in delighted recognition as we left the dining room, barking and wagging his tail, until I should think both his tail and his bark would have been quite out of joint.

“Oh, Neighbor Oldbird, I’m so glad you have come,” began Nelly, eagerly; “we have been having such fun, and, now you are here, it will be nicer than ever.”

“Do you and Jimmy go in bathing?” I asked.

“I guess we do!” cried Jimmy. “We rush into the water first of anybody, and go out real deep, when we have hold of the ropes. Some great big boys are as afraid as anything!

But we like to have the waves go over our heads."

"Talking about big boys," said I, looking wonderfully sly, "I made the acquaintance of a big boy in our street, not long ago, who knows a certain little lady very well; and likes her very well, too!"

"Oh, I know!" chimed both the children; "it's Tom Halstead. Isn't it?"

"Yes; he told me something funny about you, too; I did not know you could wash windows before, Neighbor Nelly."

My little neighbor laughed and blushed comically when I said that, and then Jimmy said:

"He's a first rate fellow, I tell you.

He sent us a letter the other day, and what do you think? he's coming here!"

"Coming here!" I exclaimed; "my stars! I shall be quite thrown in the shade when such a nice friend makes his appearance. I think I shall have to go home again Monday, and I did mean to stay till Wednesday," and I made up a dismal face, and pretended to be quite heart-broken.

"No, indeed, Neighbor Oldbird! we shall always like you the best!" cried Nelly, catching both my hands in hers. "He is a very nice boy, to be sure, but we like *you* just as much as if you were our bachelor uncle."

"Then I move to be called Uncle Josiah directly!" I said, laughing;

“so, my dear niece and nephew, don't you think it would be a good plan for us to go down on that nice yellow sand there, and look at the waves?”

The children were delighted with this plan, so we all three walked to the steep wooden steps that lead from the bluff to the beach below, and were soon on the sands. Gipsev came racing after as usual, and in his haste to join us, ran so fast down the steps, that he couldn't stop himself, but had to bring up on the sand past the water mark, looking comically astonished. To put a finishing touch to his misfortunes, a great big wave came tumbling in just then, and over poor Gipsev it went! sousing him head and ears! It frightened him so much that

he rushed dripping wet to Neighbor Nelly, and jumped into her lap, squealing dismally. Such a perfect shower-bath of cold salt water as rained all over her pretty muslin dress, and trim little gaiters and stockings! We had to shake her well, and put Gipsey to bed on a sandhill near us, where he went to sleep, and, I hope, forgot his miseries.

Perhaps you don't know it, but the sand is a famous place to write your name. You go as near the retreating wave as you dare, and then, with a walking stick or an umbrella, or your finger, if nothing better is to be had, write your name, or draw a hideous spook on the wet sand. You have to be quick about it, too; for just as you

are putting the finishing touches to the work, another great billow is sure to come tearing at you, with a wide, deep hollow of emerald green, and foaming crest, looking like molten silver in the moonlight. Crash! it falls on the beach; and a long rush of foam slides up the sand as you scamper out of reach, not always without a wet shoe or two. Now the water has all run back, but where is the writing? The sand is smooth once more, and ready, like a great blackboard, to be marked on anew. So the sea is always clearing your writing book for you, and giving you a chance to begin again and see how long it will last!

I should think we wrote "Nelly," "Jimmy," and "Neighbor Oldbird,"

about fifty times each on the sand, with my walking stick; and then we "hung Jeff. Davis on a sour apple tree," and depicted him with Old Spookey coming after him, and told the Atlantic Ocean, "We like blue fish," and "We're going in bathing Monday," and never succeeded in keeping one of our achievements more than half a minute.

We stayed down on the delightful beach until nearly half-past nine; and, dear me, what a heap of sand we got in our shoes! It was quite wonderful how it contrived to work its way in; but there it was, making us lift up our feet as heavily as though we had cannon balls tied to our ankles.

But it was getting late, and high

time for small people to be off to bed; so, with a shake of the hand from one of my little neighbors, and a "good kiss" from the other, I don't say *which*, Gipsy was waked up, and they all trotted off together.

Next morning was Sunday, and a beautiful sunshiny day. The first thing I did when I woke up, was to pop my head out of the window and take a look at the ocean. There it was, as beautiful as ever, and now I found out a funny thing about Long Branch that I hadn't noticed the evening before. "Why," said I, "is it possible I am in the country? Where are the trees?" They were nowhere to be seen, not so much as a bush; while the flowers were represented

by everybody's bathing dresses hanging over all the fences, and on ever so many clothes-lines besides, to dry. The fact is, that the Atlantic Ocean is determined to let nothing be admired but itself; so it will not permit a tree to grow any nearer its shores than half a mile. So all the foliage there consists of the direful old bathing dresses, flapping in the wind and looking like so many scarecrows put up to frighten off the fishhawks.

In the morning we went to the cunning little Episcopal church, and listened to the earnest teachings of the noble young rector, who is working so bravely in his Master's cause with such poor earthly reward. That he is laying up treasure where "neither

moth nor rust doth corrupt," we cannot but believe. We did not like to leave the quiet little church for the great noisy hotels, in one of which, as we passed it, they were *playing billiards*. Oh! what an occupation for God's holy day! I cannot believe they were Christians who were playing, but I know I wanted to go and beg them to stop.

In the afternoon it clouded up, and began to rain very hard; so we could not go to church, and as it was very little like Sunday in the crowded hall and parlor, Mrs. Lawson proposed we should all come and sit in her room, which opened on one of the upper piazzas. So we established ourselves here, where it was quiet and cool,

very glad to escape from the bustle down stairs.

“Suppose you were to repeat that pretty German hymn I gave you the other day,” said her mother to Nelly. “Perhaps Mr. Oldbird would like to hear it.”

“Yes, that I should,” I said; so Nelly began the beautiful verses called—

“ALL THERE.”

“Nothing is lost; the treasures which the ocean
Hath taken to itself in ages fled,
The lives that rest beneath its ceaseless motion
Until ‘the sea shall render up its dead:’

“The dew drops that the warm bright sunshine drieth,
The cloud that melts away in summer air,
The bud that lifteth its sweet head—and dieth,
They are not lost—GOD keeps them in his care.

“ Nothing is lost ; the anguish of the mourner,
 And bitter tears that fall like solemn rain,
 Are safely stored within the heavenly garner,
 Till Christ shall come unto his own again.

“ And our beloved ones that Death doth gather
 To their calm, dreamless sleep beneath the tomb,
 Like tender flowers, are cherished by the Father
 In the celestial fields of Heaven to bloom.

“ Nothing is lost ; oh, let the promise cheer us ;
 By God himself to weary mortals given ;
 Our darling ones shall soon again be near us,
 Our hopes shall bloom, un fadingly, in Heaven.”

“ I think that is the best hymn I know,” added Nelly, when she had finished. “ Now, what shall we do ? ”

“ Let’s play church ! ” suggested Jimmy.

“ Oh yes ! that’s the very thing ! ” said Nelly. “ Suppose we ask Kitty and Robby Morris to come in.”

So Kitty and Robby were found, and consented to join the play, which straightway began; mamma and I looking on, though we made believe not to be taking notice, for fear of disturbing the little visitors.

Robby, who was a dear little fellow, only five years old, with long golden curls and great blue eyes, was the minister, at his own special request. The children dressed him in a long white sack of Mrs. Lawson's by way of a gown, and gave him a small table for a pulpit. The others, with Gipsev, and a large gray cat, the property of Robby and Kitty, which marched in after them, were the congregation, sitting on the edge of the bed, to be like the long church pew.

The minister took for his text, "Little children, love one another," and his sermon was such a dear, funny little discourse, that I must write it down for you.

"Now, my dear peoples," he said, "I hope, whenever you feel like karrelling,* or being as cross as bears, you will 'member what the Bible says 'bout loving one another. Gipsey fighted my tat to-day, and pulled some of her fur out; but he's only a dog, and I readed in my Dr. Watts—

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
 For God has made 'em so;
 Let bears and lions growl and fight,
 For 'tis their nature too.
 But, children, *you s'ould never* let
 Your angry *pass'ons* rise!
 Your little hands were *never* made
 To sc'atch each other's eyes."

* Quarrelling.

——so I was not mad at him, 'cause he didn't *know* he ought to love pussy.

“I *s'apped* nurse the other day, 'cause she made me come out of the water before I wanted to, and *that* was *very* naughty; I begged her pardon, though, and gave her a piece of my *tandy*, that papa had brought me. Now, my dear peoples, I think that is long enough. S'pose we sing, 'I want to be an angel.'”

Wasn't that a cunning little sermon? It put me in mind of how I used to play church in my childhood, long ago; when my young brother, dear little Davy, would stand on a chair, while I sat on my stool at his feet, and preach a sermon something



PLAYING CHURCH.

like Robby's. Darling Davy! I fancied I could see his sweet face and earnest eyes looking down at me, from his happy home in heaven that Sunday afternoon; for he closed those dark eyes on this weary earth many long years since, and I never think of him now but as standing on the chair in our father's study (with, perhaps, mother looking in, unknown to him), and preaching from some simple text that we knew and loved, in quaint, yet childish words. Ah, well! perhaps it was better so, than that he should have lived to be a gray-headed old bachelor like "brother Jose!"

So the children all sang the hymn, and that was the end of church. We passed the rest of the afternoon telling

Bible stories, and repeating hymns, and after tea it was clear once more, and dry enough to go out on the bluff.

You may be sure, we were all in famous spirits Monday morning, and ready for any sort of a frolic. Who could help being good humored with such company as my little neighbors? Mr. Lawson left us in the first train for the city; but, to make up, who should have come down in the early morning boat, but Tom Halstead and Miss Elsie Bluejay—or Brandlaw, I ought to say, since I know her name now; and they drove straight up to the Mansion House, of course—who wouldn't, when Neighbor Nelly was there? The children received Tom with shouts of joy; and he looked so

handsome and happy, and his great black eyes sparkled so with good humor and fun, that I felt quite ready to admit him into my circle of little people that I knew and loved. Neighbor Nelly and he were an admirable contrast in point of appearance, and I shouldn't be surprised if the last remark made to me in strict confidence, by my friend Tom in his account of her, should come true some day.

I wish I could sketch a little picture of our party as we clustered together on the piazza, to show what manner of people we were then ; and another, of our appearance in the water afterward. Ten o'clock was the hour for bathing that morning ; so we each armed ourselves with our

bathing clothes and a prodigious towel, like the main sail of a fishing smack, and rushed down to the beach; that is, the younger members; Aunt Elsie, Mrs. Lawson, and I walked soberly along. Then we popped into separate bathing houses, still looking like respectable and responsible members of society, and popped out five minutes afterward—scarecrows! spooks! animated rag-bags! with the last vestige of our gentility and good looks departed.

Aunt Elsie had taken leave of a most beautiful brown “front” and fourteen luxuriant curls, the absence of which gave her an appearance very like a staid bald-headed owl; particularly as she would keep on her very

round spectacles, and wore a pair of extremely long-fingered green cotton gloves. The long ends of the glove fingers, waving about in the water, were not unlike the owl's claws; while her gray woollen bathing dress might have passed for a new sort of flannel feathers. A mortified blue sun-bonnet, with all the canes out, was perched lop-sided on her head, and she wore a pair of bathing shoes, like brown poultices. The rest of us were just as bad, though; I was an ogre in green flannel, Tom and Jimmy monkeys in red, Mrs. Lawson tolerably lady-like in blue, with white tape trimmings, and Neighbor Nelly a ridiculous little old jumping Jenny in white, with gorgeous red facings; and

all in hats that defied our best friends to know us in.

How we laughed at each other, and then made haste over the sand, which was so hot that it nearly scorched our feet, and plumped into the nice cool ocean, where ever so many other frights were already hopping about.

Now for a rush into the deep water! here comes a big wave! down, down now! and over our heads it went! dousing us as it had Gipsev the Saturday night, only we didn't squeal.

Presently, some people who had come from the next hotel, began dancing the "Lancers" in the water, ducking under instead of bowing, and

seeming to have such a good time, that nothing would suit the children but that they must begin dancing, too; in consequence of which a wave twice as high as usual came roaring up, and carried Neighbor Nelly right off her feet. Under the water she went, and for an instant we were quite frightened; but presently up she popped laughing, and trying to squeeze the salt water out of her eyes.

However, that put a stop to the dancing; and here let me tell you, that surf bathing is always a pretty venturesome thing to attempt, unless you grasp the ropes firmly, or have hold of some older and stronger person's hand.

There was one gentleman flourish-

ing about near us, who seemed bent upon trying how many odd things he could do in the water. Presently we saw him going down head first, and then his feet coming up in the air like a duck's! It looked so comical to see any one besides a duck standing upside down in the water, that we all burst out laughing, and just then along came another billow, and treated us each to a mouthful of salt water!

By this time we had been in long enough for one day, for you should always remember to come out before you feel chilled, and so we waded to the shore, looking more outlandish than ever, now the bathing dresses were all soaked, and hurried into the houses to get dry and dressed.

Surf bathing is a famous thing to give you an appetite ; and I don't wonder Mr. Laird provides so bountiful and well cooked a dinner, when I think of the famishing five hundred people that were to be fed the day I was there, and every day beside. The "Charge of the Light Brigade" was nothing to the charge we made upon the dishes ; and as the dining room is sensibly arranged with tables accommodating about a dozen people each, we all sat together ; and had such a merry time that two or three cross old dames looked sharply at our party, very curious to know what all the laughing was about. Our small friend Gipsey was the cause of it, partly, for he posted himself beside each of our

chairs in turn, and made such surprising and despairing hops and skips after bits of chicken held up beyond his reach, that he very nearly turned a somerset each time.

We rewarded his patience at last by giving him some bones, which he crunched under the table with perfect satisfaction, while we were discussing the ice cream and other good things.

In the afternoon I was sitting reading the paper on the upper piazza, and the children were amusing themselves in their own fashion near me. Nelly, with another little girl, whose name seemed to be "Baby," for they never called her anything else, were manufacturing a resplendent doll's dress

for a waxen angel in a white spencer—or whatever those muslin concerns are called, which the ladies wear with colored skirts nowadays, and a black velvet pointed belt; while the boys, with their arms fraternally entwined, were interchanging confidences on the important subjects of “My peg top,” “Don’t you think thirty-eight cents is a tremendous price for kites?” “How many glass agates have you got?” and so on—when Tom, looking very mischievous, suddenly lifted up dolly by the toe of her shoe, and asked, “Why, Nelly, what’s the matter with this doll; has she got the spinal complaint?”

“No, you goose,” said Nelly, laughing. “What makes you ask that?”

“Because she has on a supporter,” said Tom, with perfect gravity, pointing to the velvet belt. “Poor thing! why don’t you take her in bathing? It would do her health good, I’m sure; she looks fearfully pale.”

“Ah, make him put her down, Nelly,” said Baby; “he’ll break her if he goes on so;” for Tom was now amusing himself by balancing dolly on her head in his hand, making a great display of embroidered trowsers and hoop petticoats; and now, catching her by both hands, he suddenly swung her over the railing. “This is the way she ought to be ducked under the waves!” he added. Nelly sprang forward at the same moment with an “Oh, Tom! please!” and caught his

arm rather suddenly. His hold relaxed at the same moment, and crash! down tumbled poor dolly on the ground below, breaking one of her wax arms completely off, and making a fearful cavity in her forehead, which killed her completely! that is, I should think so. I never heard of any one who survived fracture of the skull. Did you?

Poor Nelly! She tried hard not to mind it; but dolly's head was one too many for her, and the tears came rolling quickly down her cheeks as she gazed at the unfortunate waxen damsel below, with quivering lip. Tom turned red and white alternately in silence for a moment, and then began pouring forth apologies and regrets.

He called himself all the imps that ever were heard of for being so careless ; he offered to go to New York that very day to buy another doll, and have his hair well pulled beside, if she only would forgive him, and say she didn't think he had done it on purpose ; and, in short, we had quite a little scene ; when, fortunately, there occurred to me a pleasant means of diverting the minds of the party from the accident that had happened. So I laid down my paper, as though I had not been listening, and said :

“ Well, little people, I believe I have discovered all the news there is ; so what do you say to coming to a party I am thinking of giving in my room ? ”

“A party!” cried the children, dropping the subject of the doll to look at me; “why, we should like that very much. What sort of a party is it?”

“A reading party,” I answered. “I have some papers I have been thinking of reading to you, to get your opinion of them before I put them in a book; and I shouldn’t be surprised if there was a paper of candy in my drawer besides.”

“Why, do you write books?” asked Baby, opening her bright eyes very wide indeed, as if to be certain what a real live author looked like.

“To be sure I do,” I said, laughing. “Funny stories, and sad ones, too; and some that are every word

of them true, and others that are told me by my friends; and you shall tell me whether they are true or not."

So we all made haste into my room—not the same I had when I first came, but one on the front piazza, near Neighbor Nelly's. The papers I meant were my own, Tom's, and the Fat Gentleman's stories, which I had brought down with me, to look over and correct. The candy I had bought for Nelly and Jimmy, as I told you, and forgotten all about to that moment. Little Robby came trotting along just then, so we asked him to be of the party; and Mrs. Lawson, looking out to see why we were in such a bustle, made up the company.

I wish you could have been at Our

Party that afternoon. We made a cosey little group, I assure you. Mrs. Lawson sat by the table with her sewing; Tom established himself close to my chair, and Nelly nestled by my other side. Baby and Jimmy sat on hassocks, contrived from carpet bags, at my feet; dear little Robby was lifted to my knee, and the reading began. Oh, the laughter, and comical wonder, and blushes, when my little neighbors found the stories were about them! Nelly burst out with "Oh, Neighbor Oldbird!" and hid her face on my shoulder every time there was some special praise of herself. Tom turned perfectly crimson when we came to his story, and was in and out of his seat twenty times, begging me to stop,

during its progress, his splendid black eyes glancing appealingly at me and Nelly by turns. I wouldn't spare him a single word, however; and when I came to his declaration at the end, concerning Nelly, there was a general shout of laughter.

“There's an eligible offer for you, Miss Nell,” I said solemnly. “You'd better take it into consideration!” and so on, until Mrs. Lawson begged me to stop. She did not like to have ideas about marriage put into the children's heads; and I, when I reflected, was very sorry I had been so thoughtless. Tom bore my teasing manfully; but Nelly's face was rather grave, as if she did not like such remarks to be made about her; so I hurried on

to the Fat Gentleman's story, and brought up at the end, and then handed round the candy, amid general approbation.

How we all passed that evening together on the beach, and had a wildly happy time; how we went in bathing the next day, and the next; and how, on Wednesday afternoon, I bid a most reluctant good-by to my little neighbors, I have not room to tell. I want to write how gladly we met again in the city in the fall; how Tom did come to live in New York, and favored us with his company as often as possible; how we chanced again on the little girl whom we had met in the toy shop, and found her living in a wretched tenement house

in Cherry street, whence Mr. Lawson and I, with some other friends, removed them in haste, and established them in a nice little thread-needle store on one of the business avenues not far from our street; but all this would take too long.

I must say, though, what a blessed change it has been for them, particularly for poor little crippled Clara, who never fails to greet us with a smile when we go there to see her, as she sits in her comfortable arm-chair by the window, with her pet spaniel "Dandy" beside her. She is always contented and cheerful, in spite of the sharp pain that often racks her slender limbs; and as I look on her pale face, which is so plainly not long for

this earth, and think that now her suffering life will end amid comfort and peace, I whisper to myself with a heart full of love, "All this through thy sweet influence, dear

"NEIGHBOR NELLY!"

CONCLUSION.

AND that was the end of the famous Sock Stories, which had afforded George and Helen so much amusement during nearly three months; for it took all that time for Aunt Fanny's daughter to write, and the children to read them all. They could not tell which they liked the best; for it so happened that the "Funny Little Socks" made their appearance just at the time when some dear little cousins of theirs, only four or five years old, had come to spend a week or two with them, which made baby stories

doubly welcome ; and I don't know what the good and delightful gentleman to whom the fifth book is dedicated will say about it, when he sees his name at the front ; but it was thought very appropriate by Helen's papa ; as the very best story in the book is all about philosophers, grave and gay.

One thing in particular I am most happy to record ; and that is, that the good habits which keeping mamma's little code of rules had engendered, were not broken off at the close of the readings ; but instead, were formed more lastingly with every week ; until now every one who knows George and Helen says, the first thing, " What good children they are !

and yet, they never have to be whipped, or shut up in a dark closet to make them so." No! they are good from a higher motive than the dread of punishment; for they are inspired with the sincere desire to make their dear mother as happy as they can; and it would not surprise me at all if Santa Claus, who is a very discerning old gentleman, were to put something very nice indeed in both socks and stockings this Christmas—in spite of the hard times!

And now, one last word, before Aunt Fanny's daughter bids you good-bye, little reader. She hopes and prays, in all sincerity, that she has succeeded not only in amusing you, but in giving you some lessons which will sink into

your hearts for your real good. And if in the shadowy train of personages who have moved before you in these Sock Stories, there is one who has pleased you especially, from Colonel Freddy and little tender-hearted Greta, to Little Mother and the Old Bachelor, Neighbor Nelly, with her bright eyes and merry ways, or Gipsy, of the cork-screw tail and yap! yap! bark, the knowledge of this fact will give *her* what she wishes for you all, a very

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

