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"The very first sentence interested her."

(See page 43)

MAG & MARGARET

A STORY *for* GIRLS

By MRS. G. R. ALDEN
("PANSY")

, pseud.
[illegible] Alden, Isabella (Macdonald)

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. CHASE EMERSON

LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON

PANSY

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"*Miss Ordway gave this to me,*" *she said.*
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"*Beside the cot she knelt.*"
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MAG & MARGARET

MAG AND MARGARET

I

"MERRY CHRISTMAS TO MAG"

"TELL Mag to run with this letter to the post-box, right away."

"Mag, I want the sitting-room dusted and put in order immediately; it is nearly time for Mr. Vance to call."

"Mag, just take a stitch in this glove for me in about a second; that is all the time I have to spare."

"I want Mag to come and clear out my closet-shelf so I can put those boxes in as soon as possible."

"Mrs. Perkins, can Mag run to the corner for some lemons right away? Norah is waiting for them."

The subject of all these calls that needed instant attention was a girl of thirteen, Mag Jessup, little maid of all work in the boarding-house of Mrs. Perkins. There was a time in her life, when she was called Margaret. I think her mother used that name when she first looked at her. Once, when she was a little bit of a girl, and went to a free kindergarten for a few weeks, the sweet-faced teacher called her "Maggie." But that was ever so long ago; centuries ago the thirteen-year-old girl thought. For years and *years* she had been called "Mag." So long indeed that she had almost forgotten the other names. Mag Jessup was an orphan. Her mother had died when she was a wee girl, too young to remember her. The father had been killed when she was five years old, and the family had scattered. Mag's sister Susan, only sixteen months younger than herself, had been adopted by a family whom Mag did not know even by name, and taken "away off." Mag herself was taken charge of by an aunt, who had lived only two or three

years after that time, and then there had come a new aunt, who had many children of her own to look after, and not much money to do it with, and when the uncle died, what more natural than that Mag, who was then ten years old, should have to earn her own living? It was about that time that Mrs. Perkins was looking for a little girl to answer her door-bell, and run of errands, and it was said by the aunt —who was really not an aunt at all—that here was just the place for Mag. So to Mrs. Perkins she went. In the spring, when the Perkins family went to the country, taking their boarding-house with them—or at least keeping boarders there—Mag went along to pick berries, and shell peas, and do a hundred other things for her board and clothes. When she returned to the city, she found that the aunt, with her family, had moved away. It came to pass, then, that the only home Mag Jessup had, was in Mrs. Perkins's boarding-house. As for her duties, one can get some idea of them by reading over again the paragraphs with which

this story began. She was to answer the door-bell, rub the silver, wash the knives and forks, set the tables, assist in waiting on one of them, keep the halls in order, dust and arrange the sitting-room, help the chambermaid with the beds and rooms, and be at the call of every boarder in the house to run of errands, sew on buttons, mend rips, and do anything else in the world that might be wanted. Can not you imagine that Mag lived a very busy and useful life?

As for what she knew, she could read and write. She could not quite remember how she learned. She knew a little of the multiplication table, and something about addition. She had learned a little geography during the one winter in which she went to the public school. The second winter, when she was nearly ten, there had been scarlet fever in, or about, her aunt's home during the entire season, and she had not been allowed to go to school. Since she had begun to earn her own living, of course school was out of the question. There had been some

talk of sending her during the winter months, and sometimes Mrs. Perkins looked at her in a troubled sort of way and said: "Just as soon as we get all the extras done, and are settled down for the winter, that child shall go to school." But never yet had the "extras" been all done. Mag herself had given up hope that they ever would be, and was earning her board and clothes as faithfully as she knew how. Her clothes were not many, and did not cost a great deal. She could not remember ever to have had any garment bought new for her in all her long life. Of course, it had been out of the question in her aunt's family, where there were many children to think about; and at Mrs. Perkins's there was Miss Kate, who was two years older than herself, and a good deal larger, and who grew rapidly and attended a good school; of course, she must have new clothes, and, of course, her old ones would make over for Mag, or, for that matter, do without making over. What did it matter if they were a little too long in the skirts and sleeves, and a trifle loose about

the waist? She would soon grow to them. So Mag was always trying to grow to clothes somewhat too large for her, and never accomplishing it. For the rest, she was a brown haired, brown-eyed girl, too thin to look pretty, and with "eyes too large for her face," so the few said who noticed her at all.

Do not imagine that Mag Jessup was an object of pity. Her clothes were always decently clean and whole; Mrs. Perkins wanted no "shabby-looking folks" about her; they were comfortable, too, so far as warmth was concerned. She had also wholesome food to eat, and enough of it; Mrs. Perkins starved nobody. To be sure, she locked away the cake and the sweetmeats—at least, the choice ones—before it was time for Mag to eat; but she did that for the other servants as well as for Mag. "One couldn't expect a woman who made her living by keeping boarders, to feed her servants on the same that she did people who paid eight and ten and twelve dollars a week." Besides, everybody knows that cake

and sweetmeats are not the best food for a pale-faced, growing girl. It is true that it was often said to Mag about her supper-time, "Here, child, take a bite and then run to the corner with this note," or "to the grocery with this order," or "to the drug store with this prescription; you can eat as you run." Nevertheless, Mag rarely went hungry, and was not often cold, except when she went to bed at night and got up in the morning. There was no means of warming the little fifth-story hall closet that held her cot; but there were clothes enough on her bed, when she was fairly under them, to stop the shivers after awhile; and so, in this, as in all other respects, Mag Jessup was a great deal better off than hundreds and thousands of children in the streets of great cities.

Nobody was unkind to her or meant to be. It is true they kept her busy from Monday morning until Monday morning again. They sent her toiling up three long flights of stairs after a pin, or a newspaper, as carelessly as they

would have sent a monkey or a kitten. Nobody ever seemed to remember that she might be tired, or sleepy, or busy about something important. What else could be expected? Was she not there to earn her living by doing errands, and odds and ends? I had almost said that nobody scolded her; but that would have been a mistake; Norah, the cook, scolded everybody that she dared. It seemed to be a part of her work. One would almost have supposed that her excellent pies, and delicious puddings, and delicate cake had to have sharp, cutting words for flavoring, so regularly were they used in the making. And who so convenient for scolding as Mag, whose duty it was, to be on hand when she summoned her, and to do her bidding?

Then there was Mrs. Perkins, with a large family on her hands, and some of them very "trying" people, and a hundred burdens of which others knew nothing, what more natural than that she should sometimes grow "nervous" and scold right and left? She could not

scold Norah, for she would have "given warning," and the head waiter was Norah's cousin, and the chambermaid her friend; of course, it would not do to blame them, whatever went wrong; it was really a necessity to vent her nerves on Mag. It is also undeniable that Miss Annie Perkins was sometimes in ill humor, and Miss Kate had many school irritations, and both of them had a habit of calling Mag a "lazy little thing!" or a "horrid poke!" or a "careless dunce!" whenever anything went wrong. But, despite these, and a hundred other drawbacks, Mag Jessup had much to be thankful for. Mrs. Perkins often told her so. Many were the children who went hungry to bed; who, in fact, had no beds to go to. They had drunken fathers and cruel mothers, who knocked them down, and kicked them, and turned them out in the cold; she should think of them, and be grateful.

Mag was grateful, in a way; and patient and painstaking; and always in doubt as to whether or not she earned enough to pay for

her board and clothes, and whether, as she grew older and would have to eat more, Mrs. Perkins could possibly afford to keep her.

It was drawing near Christmas time. The boarders at Mrs. Perkins's house talked incessantly, when they met, about the handkerchief-cases, and photograph-frames, and pin trays, and perfume-bags, and what not, that they were making or buying for Christmas gifts. Mag had to leave her knives, or her duster, twenty times in a day to run to the fancy counter of the great cheap store, to match "floss," or get a spool of pink silk, or another square of canvas. From morning until night she heard nothing but snatches of Christmas talk. The kitchen was full of it. Norah was "doing" a wonderful bit of crazy work that was to decorate her cousin's best-room sofa, and the chamber-maid told her that she had been saving up money for three months to buy an elegant present for her mother. Mag listened to it all in respectful silence. She had no money to save up, and no mother to save it for, and she never

had had a Christmas present in her life. Thirteen years old, and never a Christmas gift! You can scarcely believe that, but it is true. She did not go to Sunday school; the Perkins boarders liked their Sunday dinner at just about the hour for Sunday-school, and Mag could not be spared. She had gone when she was younger, a few Sundays, but had always, either on account of clothes, or illness, or carelessness, dropped out so long before Christmas-time that none of the gifts had sought her out. She wondered how it would seem to wake up in the morning and find a gift under her pillow, or on the stool beside her cot. She could not think how it would seem, but she laughed aloud over the idea.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mr. Frederick Ainsworth, looking at the open package in his lap in great disdain, "it isn't in the least what I thought it was, from the advertisement; not so large nor so nicely bound; it is nothing but paper covers. That won't do for Margaret. It is babyish, besides. I might have known that

from the title: 'Little Pillows!' Whatever possessed me to tell Ned to get it for me? How came I to forget Margaret, I wonder, when I was buying the other things? This won't do, anyhow. I must skip out this very evening and get something more suited to Miss Margaret. She would toss her yellow curls in disdain over a gift like this. I wonder what I will do with the thing?"

"Mr. Frederick," said a quiet little voice at his elbow. "Here is a note I was to give you as soon as you came in."

"All right, Mag, pass it over." As he drew the neat little note from the envelope he caught a glimpse of Mag's large brown eyes and grave face, and said to himself: "What a serious-faced little mouse that is. I wonder if she ever laughs? She looks as though she did not know that Christmas was only three days off. Halloo! Why shouldn't I give the 'Little Pillows' to her? She wouldn't mind the paper cover. That's the very thing I'll do. Just so, my respected uncle; I shall be happy to eat my

Christmas dinner with you, since I can't eat it at home. Seems to me your invitation is awfully late, but never mind; better late than never. Now I must skip out and get Margaret something fine, certainly."

Frederick Ainsworth, or "Ainsworth," as the boys in school called him, or "Mr. Frederick," as Mag had been instructed to say, was one of Mrs. Perkins's boarders for the season. His father and mother lived in town, but had gone to Europe for a year, in search of health for the father; so the town house was closed, his sister was away at boarding-school, and he, being in his last year in High School, had been sent to Mrs. Perkins's as the most convenient boarding-house. A merry, happy-hearted young fellow of fifteen was Frederick Ainsworth. A boy who worked hard in school and on the ball ground or, in fact, wherever else he was. A clean, wholesome, genial boy; who had hosts of friends, and missed his mother so much that he covered his face with the bedclothes every night, to hide the tears that would

start at the thought of her; but he told himself cheerily every morning that father would be sure to get better fast, now that he was away from that horrid, confining business, and had mother with him all day long. Next year this time they would all be at home again, and as jolly as ever. Frederick had only been a member of Mrs. Perkins's family since the fall term opened, and knew very little of Mag save that she was always careful to dust his room neatly, and would run to the post-box with a letter quicker than he could do it himself. No thought of making her a present had entered his mind until he wondered what to do with the book called "Little Pillows" that he had made a mistake in getting for his pretty cousin, Margaret.

This was the way it came to pass that Mag Jessup had a Christmas present. If she lives to be a hundred, she will never forget the excitement of that bitterly cold Christmas morning in which she sat up suddenly, rubbed her eyes to make sure that she was awake, then

sprang out of bed, her face aglow with more than the cold air, and seized upon a package that lay on her stool! A package done up neatly in white paper, tied with a pink cord, and saying on its outside:

"Merry Christmas to Mag. From F. F. A."

A book! Actually, a whole clean book! Both covers on it, and a picture of green leaves and red berries on one side. And it was for her! She had a Christmas gift!

I am afraid you will almost want to cry when you hear it, but this was Mag Jessup's first book. Not even a First Reader of her very own had she ever possessed. Was there ever anything anywhere in the world so dear and precious? She hugged it, she kissed it, she wanted to cry over it; but sharply chid back the tears lest they should fall on the precious cover.

"Mag!" called a firm voice at the foot of the second flight of stairs. "Hurry up! there are twenty errands waiting to be done. You can't sleep all day, if it is Christmas. Merry Christmas, Mr. Jones." It was the same voice

in a different key; the chambermaid's voice, wishing "Mr. Jones," the porter, a merry Christmas. Ah! somebody had wished her the same. "Merry Christmas to Mag." Those were the very words. No Christmas chimes would ever sound sweeter. She had not the slightest idea who "F. F. A." was. By and by, when she had time to think, she would try the names of all the boarders and see if they would fit. Now she must hurry into her clothes, and run to do those twenty errands.

CHAPTER II

ETHEL

BY eleven o'clock the "twenty errands" and a hundred others were done, and Mag was ready for her Christmas. She had a delightful plan for the day. She had heard, by accident, that every boarder was going out to dinner. Surely this would make a great difference with the work; only Mrs. Perkins and her daughters at dinner. By three o'clock at the latest, possibly, if she was very smart, before that time, she could get away, and go down to the lovely lake where the skaters went, and watch them fly over the ice in the way she had heard about. Mag had never seen anybody skate; her life had been spent in a city. But this lovely artificial lake, where fine ladies went, could not be more than two miles from Mrs. Perkins's house, and she was sure she could walk that distance for

the sake of seeing the beautiful sight. Why, they actually built a bonfire on the shore and skated by the light of it! and had hot coffee, and chocolate, and candies, for the skaters to eat. It must be such fun! Mag's heart had been set on her plan for weeks. Alas for her! Mrs. Perkins had other plans.

"Have you finished the upstairs work, Mag, and dusted the parlors? Very well, then, you are through with work; I am going to give you a holiday. Not many girls have almost the whole of Christmas Day to amuse themselves in. My daughters and I are going to our old neighbor's on Claremont street to dinner; and, as the girls are going to the lake, afterwards, to skate, we shall not be at home until evening. None of the boarders will be back to tea. I have given Norah and the others the rest of the day; they are going out; so you will have the whole house to yourself; see how I trust you! And I'm not going to give you a bit of work, because it is Christmas. All you will have to do is to sit in the nice warm hall

and answer the door bell; and toward night open the furnace dampers so that the house will be warm, and have the tea kettle boiled, so you can make us a cup of tea when we get home. Your dinner, Norah has fixed all ready for you in the closet; a nice Christmas dinner. There is some cold chicken, and biscuits, and a dish of cranberry sauce, and a piece of mince-pie. Don't you wish the poor little street girls could have so good a Christmas dinner as that?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mag, but her face was grave, and her voice low and almost trembling. Could it be that Mag was ungrateful enough to be almost ready to cry? Oh, you don't know how her heart ached, and how long that Christmas Day suddenly seemed to her to grow. Alone in that great big house all day long; and to sit in the hall, which was always dark, and do nothing from morning until night! Not even the thought of the mince-pie and cranberry sauce could make such a prospect pleasant. She would rather go without a mouthful of dinner, if she could but put on her coat and hood and

skip away to see the skaters! But there would be no getting away.

"Now mind," Mrs. Perkins said, "that you don't leave the house for a single minute; there is a message of very great importance that I expect to have brought to-day; and, in any case, I don't care about having the house left alone; it isn't safe. It isn't every little girl I would trust; but I know you are to be depended upon."

This was a crumb of comfort; it had a pleasant sound to Mag. Mrs. Perkins was such a busy woman that she did not often take time to say merely pleasant words.

"Mag looks very sober," Kate Perkins said, as they were going down the steps a few minutes afterwards. "It is lonesome work, I suppose, to stay there all day with nothing to do. I should die of stupidity."

"So should I," said her older sister. "Mother, I think it would have been kinder to her to have given her some sewing to do, or work of some sort. It is awfully dull business

to sit and fold one's hands and wait for the door-bell to ring."

"I had nothing ready for her," said Mrs. Perkins. She stopped, however, on the lower step and seemed to be considering something. "I might let her sit in the back parlor," she said, doubtfully; "she doesn't meddle with things, at least that I have ever discovered; and there isn't anything there that she could hurt."

"I think you might let her sit in the front parlor," said Kate, "and watch the sleighs go by; that would be some comfort."

"Well," said Mrs. Perkins, "I will."

She stepped back and rang the bell. Mag answered it at once, surprised to have a caller so soon. She was hurriedly brushing away the trace of a tear.

Mrs. Perkins noticed it, and was glad she had come back.

"You may sit in the front parlor to-day, if you want to," she said, kindly. "There are plenty of people passing to look at. You may

throw open the south window blinds, and that will give you a good view. Don't sit in the yellow covered chair, it soils so easily; but you may draw the big willow rocker to the window, and have a nice time in it."

Mag's face brightened. "Thank you, ma'am," she said, speaking almost cheerfully, and Mrs. Perkins went away with a lighter heart.

To sit in the front parlor in one of the great rockers was a rare experience to Mag. Once, when she had been dusting that room, she had dropped for a single frightened minute into one of the big upholstered chairs, to see how it would feel; and that very minute Mrs. Perkins had opened the door and asked her sharply if she expected to earn her board and clothes by sitting in easy-chairs. Since that time Mag had not tried them; she had always the feeling that Mrs. Perkins stood with her hand on the door, and at any second might appear to chide her. What a thing it would be to sit in the parlor for almost a whole day! Not to sit there

guiltily, feeling that she was doing something wrong, but to be there by permission.

I do not think Mrs. Perkins had the least idea how much difference this small thing would make to her little maid.

Mag was really so cheery that she broke into a little fragment of song as she climbed the stairs to her own room. She was going after her Christmas present. It lay, wrapped in a bit of clean paper, carefully tucked under the old quilt that covered her cot. She had meant to take her chances at peeping through it at different times during this Christmas Day. She could not look long at a time, because the room was so bitterly cold; but now she remembered gleefully that she had a lovely parlor all to herself, and could sit in an easy-chair, like any lady, and rock and read. How delightful! Wasn't it almost better than to go even to the lake and watch the skaters?

She gathered the treasure close to her heart and ran down three flights of stairs, still humming the snatch of a song that she had caught

from Miss Kate. How beautiful the parlor looked! Mag, who had never been in any other, thought there could not be a finer one. In reality, it was simply a large boarding-house parlor, with the usual number of upholstered chairs, a sofa, and two or three tables. To Mag it seemed magnificent. The carpet, a good respectable body brussels, she thought the loveliest thing that feet ever trod.

Drawing the large willow rocker to the south window, she threw open the blinds, and nestled into the chair, with a little chuckle of satisfaction. It was the nicest Christmas Day she had ever known. How splendid it was in Mrs. Perkins to let her sit in this elegant parlor.

Then she opened her book. "Little Pillows." What a queer name. Could it be about pillows? Mag had a very little one on which to rest her head at night; she could not imagine anything very interesting to be said about it; still, there must be something, else a whole book of this kind would never have been written. Behold! it was a story. How delightfully it began: "A

little girl was away from home on a week's visit." That was the first sentence. For a little girl to have a home of her own was to Mag the most blessed of ideas. She wondered how the little girl could bear to leave it, even to make a visit. And she went to see an auntie, besides! Mag's experience with aunties had not led her to think this a desirable thing, but undoubtedly there was a difference in *aunties;* this one tucked the little girl into bed, and kissed her good night! And then she said: "Now I will give you a little pillow." How funny! After that Mag became absorbed. She read slowly through the description of these peculiar pillows; after completing the chapter, she began it again, and read more slowly still; stopping at the end of every sentence to take in the wonder of it.

It appeared that the pillows were not made of feathers, nor yet of excelsior like hers—they were made of *words!* A little word-pillow to be read every night at bed-time. To be read before she "knelt down to say her prayers!"

This sentence required long thinking. Mag said no prayers. Once, when she was a very little girl, she had been taught a prayer. It began with:

"Now I lay me down to sleep."

But she had not said it in ever so long; she was always so tired at night; and it was generally very cold, or else very warm, and saying over those words had never seemed to her to be interesting, so she had dropped them. But she might commence again; she sat long, trying to recall the exact words, and felt sure, at last, that she had them all. But she must wait until night to read her first "pillow." That seemed hard to Mag. She would rather have read it then, sitting so cosily in her easy-chair. But such a habit had she of doing exactly as she was told —what a grand habit that is, by the way—that it did not so much as occur to her to do differently now; she would wait until night. She read the story over again, with which the book began; read it until she felt as though she knew the little Ethel for whom the book was written,

and the wonderful "auntie" who had written it.

"I wish I did know her," she said, aloud. "I wish she was my friend, and would come to visit me. I wonder where she lives? I mean to play that she has come to spend the day with me. 'How do you do, Ethel? You can't think how glad I am to see you. Take a seat in the yellow chair.' It can't be wrong to have a *play*-girl sit in the yellow chair." This was Mag's afterthought. She considered it carefully, and decided that it could do no harm.

The idea of having a friend visit her took such possession of this lonely little girl's heart that she kept it with her all day. Persistently she talked to "Ethel." When she went downstairs to eat her Christmas dinner, Ethel went along, and had a generous share of the chicken and biscuit and the whole of the mince pie. She came back with her to the parlor, and was settled again in the yellow chair. When any unusually gay sleighload passed the window Mag would exclaim: "O Ethel! did you see those

perfectly sweet scarlet robes? Weren't they just *lovely?*" About four o'clock the bell rang; Mag hastened to answer it. Behold, it was her one acquaintance, Janie Jones, whose father kept the fruit stand where Mag often went with orders. Janie and she had nodded and smiled at each other, for several months, and had had bits of talk together, occasionally. Not often, for Janie went to school, and was only occasionally at her father's stand.

"O Mag!" she said, "I'm so glad you are here. Father is going to take me a sleighride out to the lake; he has the delivery sleigh, and he said I might have you go along. Hurry real fast, for father has got to be back in an hour."

"Oh my!" said Mag. And, "Oh dear! I can't. I'm all alone, and I mustn't leave the house."

"Lock it up," said Janie. "We'll be back in an hour."

But Mag resolutely shook her head; she had not even a thought of doing such a thing. Had

not Mrs. Perkins said she could trust her? Janie hurried away, and Mag went back to her rocking-chair with a sober face. If Ethel had not been there, she would have cried outright; no such lovely chance had ever before come to her.

The next bell was the basement one; Norah was the first to reach home. Mag's long, lonely day was over; but she went back to the parlor; she had been in the midst of an interesting conversation with Ethel. Presently Norah toiled up the stairs, carrying certain Christmas gifts that had come to her, to her own room. The front stairs were much easier to climb than the back ones; and since there was no one in the house, Norah chose them. Opposite the parlor door she stopped in astonishment. Mag's voice could be distinctly heard in eager conversation with somebody.

"Well, I never!" said Norah. "I wonder what the missus will say to that." When she came downstairs she boldly threw open the parlor door. There sat Mag alone.

"Well, young lady," she said, "has your company gone?"

"Yes," said Mag, with a foolish little laugh, "she has gone; she sat in that chair, Norah. She has been here all day."

At that moment the basement bell rang, and Norah vanished. An hour later she thought of Mag's visitor. Mrs. Perkins had just arrived, and was giving directions.

"Did you give Mag leave to sit in the parlor, ma'am, and have company?"

"Have company!" repeated Mrs. Perkins, aghast. "What company?"

"I don't know, ma'am; some girl who has been here all day, she says; sitting in the yellow chair. I heard them talking like everything; but I had my hands full, and when I emptied them and came back the girl was gone."

Said Mrs. Perkins: "Well of all things in this world! I did not think she knew a girl in this city. Whom can one trust?" Then she summoned Mag, and said this bewildering sentence:

"Mag, you may go upstairs to your room, and go to bed. Don't let me see or hear of you to-night. You will have no supper; if I had time to attend to you, I would do it this minute; but my hands are too full. I am more ashamed and disappointed in you than I can tell. After I had been so kind to you, too! Go out of my sight."

CHAPTER III

"A GIRL OUT OF A BOOK"

SUCH a poor little, bewildered, discouraged girl as it was who toiled slowly up three flights of stairs to her cold room! Supperless, too, when, in spite of her elegant cold dinner and her piece of pie, she felt very hungry. She had looked forward to that supper. It being Christmas night, perhaps she would be given a piece of cake, with raisins in. They had such cake sometimes for luncheon, and there was almost never any of it left for her; but now all the boarders were gone, and she might get a piece. This thought had been much in her mind for an hour; now her hopes were blasted. But the strangest and saddest part of it was that she could not understand the reason for such treatment. Certainly she had been faithful to her trust all day. What if she had left the house to care for itself, and gone sleigh-riding with

Janie? She might as well have done it; nothing worse than this could have happened to her if she had. Nevertheless, down in the bottom of Mag's heart was a warm little feeling of joy that she had done no such thing. Whatever Mrs. Perkins thought about her, her conscience told her she had done well that day; and one can not be entirely miserable whose conscience has no prick.

Cold as it was, Mag, as soon as she had slipped off her clothes, wrapped the little old shawl about her which served as part of her bed-clothing, and sat down by her speck of a lamp to read "Little Pillows." The very first sentence held her; she felt that she needed it.

"'Come unto me.' What kind, sweet words for your pillow to-night! Jesus says them to you." Could that possibly be true? Why should Jesus think of her? How did he know about her? But then there came a memory of a Bible verse she had once learned: "Thou God seest me." The teacher for that day had assured her that God could see her all the time; in the night

and the darkness as well as in the daytime. There was another verse, repeated during that same lesson: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." They frightened her a little, those Bible verses; she had tried to forget them and never quite could. Failing in that, she had tried in her humble, blundering way to act as well as she could, in the hope that God would not notice her much if she did nothing very wrong. If Mrs. Perkins had but known it, this was really what had kept her little maid so faithful that, up to the present day, the mistress had believed that she could trust her.

But Jesus was the Son of God, and the one in whose name all prayer was offered; Mag knew that much; and, if he had actually called her, she ought to come to him. People should run the minute they are called. Mrs. Perkins had taught her that. How could she do it? And how could she be sure that the words were meant for her?

As if in answer to this question, came the very next sentence: "How am I to know?

Well, they are for every one that is weary and heavy laden. Do you not know what it is to be weary sometimes? Perhaps you know what it is to feel almost tired of trying to be good." Behold, here was Mag's very thought! Had she not told herself, while coming up the stairs, that she almost wished she had gone with Janie? How wonderful! It must be true that God saw her all the time, and heard her thoughts. She read on, breathlessly, forgetting that she was cold. Read through the entire portion for the evening; read some of the words over two or three times, especially these:

"Suppose your mother and you were in a dark room together and she said: 'Come to me!' You would not stop to say: 'I would come if I could see you.' You would say: 'I am coming, mother.' And you would feel your way across the room to her side. Jesus calls you now, this very night. He is here, in this very room. Will you not say, 'I am coming, Lord Jesus,' and ask him to stretch out his hand and help you to come?"

When Mag had read these words for the third time the tears were rolling down her cheeks. She felt such a sense of loneliness and longing as I suppose few girls of her age would feel, unless their lives were as lonely as hers had been. She did not fully understand the thought, but certainly it seemed to mean that Jesus wanted her, loved her, waited for her. Down dropped the book from her cold little fingers, her hands were clasped and she said aloud: "I am coming, Lord Jesus; stretch out your hand and help me to come."

After a few minutes she dropped on her knees and said the same words again. Did Jesus hear her? Did he stretch out his hand? Do you suppose one ever called to him in earnest and waited for his answer that he did not hear? "While they are yet speaking, I will hear." God said that long ago of those who called, and God does not change. He is always the same. Never mind whether or not Mag understood it. She understood that she was strangely comforted. She did not seem to be

lonely now, or even cold. She crept into bed and drew the clothes about her, and hugged her little book to her heart, and kissed it once, twice, three times. After a minute she said aloud:

"Good-night, Ethel." Her imaginary friend seemed to be with her still. Another minute of silence, then she said softly, reverently: "Good-night, Jesus; I am glad you called me. I will try to do just as you say." Then she dropped into the sweetest, quietest sleep, and knew nothing more until the chambermaid's voice called to know if she was going to sleep all day.

That Christmas evening, after Mag had been sent to bed, Mrs. Perkins sat with her two daughters, and drank her tea and ate her delicate sandwiches and cake with raisins in, and talked over the events of the day, especially Mag and her company.

"I don't know who it could be," Mrs. Perkins said. "She doesn't know anybody."

"Oh, she knows people enough, probably," said Miss Annie, "street acquaintances; they

always make them. It was very likely some horrid little Irish youngster who may have brought smallpox or vermin into the house. I thought this morning, when Kate wanted you to let her sit in the parlor, that it was quite a risk to run."

"And she sat in the yellow chair, too!" said Mrs. Perkins, still thinking of the company. "The child had the boldness to tell Norah so, after I had cautioned her about that very chair! I must say I am disappointed in her. She has always seemed to take pains to do exactly as she was told."

"I don't believe she had any one very dreadful here," said Kate Perkins. "I think you might have let her have some supper on Christmas night. I'm sure I should have had some company if I had had to stay in the house all day. It was too bad to send her to bed."

"It was light enough punishment for a disobedient little girl," said Mrs. Perkins, firmly; "and, Kate, I don't wish you to encourage her by any such talk. To stay in a pleasant house

all day and have a good dinner isn't so hard a lot, I am sure. I won't have little Irish girls, nor any other kind, hanging around here visiting her; you may be sure of that. And I'll find out to-morrow morning who was here, and all about it."

Then came Norah to say that the steak had not been sent for breakfast, and Mrs. Perkins, grumbling a little over the way in which people kept their promises, said she supposed she must go to the corner market and select something to take its place.

The market was next to Mr. Jones's fruit-stand. That busy man was just closing his stalls for the night as Mrs. Perkins passed.

"You and I have to work on Christmas Day as well as any other," she said to him cheerily; for Mr. Jones was a man who always gave her good fruit and full measure, and she respected him.

"Yes," he said, with his good-natured laugh. "Christmas Day is first-rate for my trade; people need an extra quantity of fruit to celebrate

with. But I got off for an hour or two this afternoon; long enough to take my children for a sleigh-ride. That's a nice little girl you've got at your house, ma'am; an uncommon kind of girl, I should think."

"Do you mean Mag?" asked Mrs. Perkins, her face darkening. "What do you know about her?"

"Not much, to be sure," said Mr. Jones; "but my Janie has taken kind of a notion to her, and nothing would do this afternoon but she must ask her to go on the sleigh-ride. I like to have my youngsters think of other people when they can as well as not; so, as we had an extra seat, and weren't to be gone but an hour or so, I gave her leave to go and get her. And the little thing wouldn't leave the house! My Janie isn't used to seeing empty houses taken care of, and she wanted her to lock it up and come along; but the child wouldn't stir a step; she said you trusted her, and she wasn't going to do it. I call that quite a temptation for a little mite like

her; there are some that wouldn't have resisted it."

"Did your little girl go in?" asked Mrs. Perkins, thinking of the "company" who sat in the yellow chair.

"Oh, no; she wasn't gone ten minutes; you see the sleigh was waiting for her, and she clipped it as hard as she could. But she was real disappointed; she says Mag has never had a sleigh-ride."

Then Mrs. Perkins went home more bewildered than ever. Who could the company have been? And if Mag could not help her coming in, why should she have taken her to the parlor and put her into the yellow chair?

She waited, the next morning, until breakfast was over, and the dinner well under way, before she summoned Mag to her room.

"Now, young woman," she said severely, "I want an account of yesterday's doings; Norah says you told her you had company all day, and she sat, whoever she was, in the yel-

low chair. I thought you knew that I did not allow company, especially when I was away; and the last thing I did, after giving you leave to be in the parlor, was to warn you about that yellow chair! Just explain, if you can, what such actions mean."

Her voice grew sterner with every word, because no one certainly could have looked more like a culprit than Mag, whose face was very red, and who dropped her eyes and twisted the strings of her work-apron with nervous fingers.

"If you please," she said tremblingly, as the cold voice ceased, "I didn't mean any harm, and I thought she could not hurt the yellow chair; because she was only a girl out of a book."

"A girl out of a book!" repeated Mrs. Perkins, staring at her as though she thought her insane.

"Yes'm, a *play*-girl. I made believe she was there, and talked to her, and pretended she answered me. There wasn't anybody there at all, all day. But I talked for her and me, too, so

as not to be so lonesome; and Norah heard me; but I didn't mean any harm. And I let her sit in the yellow chair because it was the prettiest one in the room, and she looked so pretty in it, because her dress was white and yellow; I mean I pretended it was; and I wanted to give her the best place, for I knew she couldn't hurt it."

"Well!" said Mrs. Perkins, "I am beat! if ever I heard such nonsense in my life! Where did you get such notions as that?"

"The child isn't more than half-witted, I believe," she said afterwards, explaining to her daughters. "It seems that young Ainsworth gave her a book for Christmas—a queer present to choose for an ignorant little thing like her—and there is a story in it about a girl named Ethel, so what did she do but pretend that Ethel came to spend the day with her! and she seated her in the yellow chair, and took her down to dinner, and I don't know what not! Part of the time she talked exactly as though the creature was flesh and blood; but it is quite plain that it is only her imagination."

"I think it was real cute in her," said Kate Perkins. She repeated the story until the boarders got hold of it; and some of them laughed a good deal, and took to asking how her friend Ethel was, until the poor little girl felt almost ashamed to meet them. No one of them was more amused than Mr. Fred Ainsworth; he laughed himself hoarse when Kate Perkins described the parlor scene, and the occupant of the yellow chair who was dressed in white and yellow on Christmas Day!

"I hope it was a woolen dress," he said, bursting into a fresh laugh over the thought, "else she would have frozen. What a queer little mouse it is! I wonder if she keeps up the notion? It must be great fun to have an intimate friend that one can summon whenever wanted, and banish the minute one tires of her." But to himself he said, with a compassionate smile: "Poor lonesome little chick! that tells a long story of desolation. Perhaps she misses her mother. I appreciate her feelings. I wonder if there is anything a homesick chap like me could do to make her less lonesome?"

CHAPTER IV

"I'LL DO MY VERY BEST"

THE holidays were over; Mrs. Perkins's boarders were all back in their places, and the work-a-day world was as busy as ever. Mag Jessup was dusting the books on Mr. Frederick Ainsworth's shelves. It was late in the afternoon, but this extra bit of work had had to wait until a hundred other things were done; so Mr. Ainsworth had come in from afternoon recitations and caught her at it.

"Never mind me," he had said, as he sat down to his table and drew a book towards him, "you won't disturb me." So the dusting had gone on. Mag had made in the course of her work a delightful discovery. Many of the books she had opened as she dusted them and glanced at the fly-leaf. She found written there sometimes, "Frederick Forest Ainsworth"; some-

times merely "F. F. A." The very initials that had come to her with her dear "Little Pillows!" She had suspected it before; now she was sure of it. Mr. Frederick was the one who had given her a Christmas present! She ought to thank him, and wanted to; but could not decide how to do it, and was dreadfully afraid of disturbing him. Suddenly he helped her out.

"Well, Mag," he said, leaning back in his study-chair, "what kind of a Christmas had you?"

"Oh! a lovely one, Mr. Frederick; and I've wanted to thank you ever since; nobody ever gave me one before, and it was so very, very good of you; and, of course, I didn't expect anything, but, oh, I love it so!"

Mr. Frederick wheeled about in his chair and looked at her quizzically. "Do you think that is a very clear remark?" he asked. "What am I expected to understand from it? Nobody ever gave you a Christmas before, do you say? And do you possibly imagine that I manufactured this Christmas Day for your benefit?"

Mag laughed; she knew he was making fun of her; but his voice was so pleasant that she did not mind.

"Why, I mean the 'Little Pillows,'" she said. "I 'most thought you gave it to me all the while; but now I am sure, because I have found 'F. F. A.'s' all over your books."

"I gave you some little pillows! What an idea! Where did you suppose I would get pillows to give away? Are they made of feathers?"

"No, sir," said Mag, gleefully. "Don't you remember the dear little book? That is its name. And I never had a book of my very own before, and so"——

But Mr. Frederick interrupted her.

"What is that? Never had a book before! You don't mean that, of course, Mag. What about your spelling-books, and geographies, and all those? Do you mean you never had a story-book of your own? Though, if I remember those 'Little Pillows' at all I should say there wasn't much story about them."

"No," said Mag, shaking her head gravely; "I mean just what I said. I never had a book of my very own before; never in my life. I looked over with Trudie Wallace in reading, and I borrowed Jimmie Smith's speller, and geographies I got chances at when I could. This is my very first book."

Frederick Ainsworth had ceased to laugh, or even smile. He was utterly amazed. To reach the age that Mag probably had, and own no books, was to him bewildering.

"Upon my word!" he murmured at last, rather to himself than to Mag. Then a new thought struck him.

"But of course you have a Bible?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Mag; "my aunt had a big one with pictures in it; and sometimes on Sunday we looked at it; but I haven't got one of my own; no, indeed! Why, it is a very big book."

Mr. Frederick stared at her, saying nothing. His astonishment was too great for words. He thought that everybody had Bibles. His own

lay at that moment on a bracket shelf too high for Mag to reach, covered with dust. He had not looked at it for weeks; never mind, he should consider himself a heathen if he had no Bible. Perhaps this little girl was no better than a heathen. He continued to look at her with a curious, troubled gaze.

"Don't you go to Sunday-school?" he asked her suddenly; another theory of his was that everybody of Mag's size ought to go to Sunday-school; he used to when he was a little fellow.

"Oh, no," said Mag, who had returned to her dusting, and, therefore, was not embarrassed by the great eyes gazing at her. "I went when I was a little girl"—pray, what was she now!—"but Mrs. Perkins can not spare me; all the Sunday-schools near here are just at dinner time, and I have to help wait on table on Sundays."

"And you don't go to day school, either, I suppose? How old are you, Mag?"

"Thirteen last month."

"Bless me!" said her questioner with a start of amazement; but he completed his sentence with a whistle. Had he put it into words it would have been something like this: "Thirteen! I did not think you were ten yet, upon my honor. What a little runt you are!" Memories of having told his cousin Margaret about a small specimen aged nine or so, who dusted his room, and ran of errands, returned to him.

"You ought to go to school." This was what he interrupted the whistling to say with some emphasis.

"I can't," said Mag, gravely shaking that small brown head of hers. "I can't ever go, it isn't likely. I'm not like other girls who have fathers and mothers and homes; I have to earn my living."

Fred Ainsworth felt a curious sensation in his throat; almost as he felt sometimes at night when the lights were out, and he especially missed his mother. What a little mouse it was to be talking about "earning her living," and explaining so gravely that she was "not like

other girls!" It was a great shame, however; something ought to be done for her.

"But, see here!" he burst forth with such energy that Mag was startled and dropped her duster. "You are not going to stay a little girl always, you know; and when you get to be a woman you can earn your living ten times easier if you have an education. You ought to be studying, at least; even if you can not go regularly to school. You know how to read, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" she explained. That was why she had liked "Little Pillows" so much. She read one of the "Pillows" every night. "And, oh, Mr. Frederick," she continued eagerly, afraid lest she might be interrupted, and this golden opportunity pass, never to return, "would you mind explaining something to me? It is about praying. You remember in the Book it says: 'Ask what I shall give thee.' I mean God said that to King Solomon, and the Book says that God is the same now, and will give people what they ask for, if it is

good for them, and then the little verse at the end of the 'Pillow' says:

> 'Thou art coming to a King,
> Large petitions with thee bring;
> For his grace and power are such
> None can ever ask too much.'

Now, what I wanted to know was whether it means all sorts of things. I know I can ask God to take care of me, and help me to be faithful, and to remember all the errands, and not to be cross to Miss Annie, or to Norah, or anybody; and I do ask him every night and morning; and it helps, oh, you can't think how much! But I mean other things; things that you want, just *dreadfully,* you know; and are sure you can't get. Would it be right to pray about them? I haven't got any mother, Mr. Frederick, to ask things of; and I thought you wouldn't mind, since you had been so very kind, and given me the dear book."

Did she add that, because young Ainsworth hesitated, and felt his face growing red under her earnest gaze? In truth, he was very much

embarrassed. It was the first time in his life that anybody had come to him asking questions about prayer, and he felt that not even Mag herself could know less about it than he did. But it was monstrous to let her think that he was too important to answer her questions. He made haste to say something.

"I don't believe I'm up on such subjects much, Mag; they don't teach them at our school. However, I believe you are quite safe in praying for anything you choose. Whether you will get it or not is another question; but there certainly can be no harm in asking."

"That was what I thought," Mag said, her face in a glow of satisfaction. "You see, it tells in the other places about how very much Jesus loves us, and what he did to save us, and how he watches us all night as well as all day, and I thought perhaps he would like to have us just speak out plain and ask for what we wanted very much, and then leave it with him to decide whether or not to give it to us."

"Exactly," said Frederick; "that is common

sense." Then, having felt that he had given some very good advice, curiosity got the better of his embarrassment, and he added:

"Would you mind telling me what 'other thing' it is that you want to ask for?"

"Oh, there are ever so many," said Mag, her face flushing again; "but one, the one I want most of anything in the world, just now, besides the things that I knew I had a right to ask for, is to go to a meeting that there is away down at the square. They have it every Sunday evening, Janie Jones says, and her father takes her; and they sing, just lovely! And girls and boys, as well as men and women, talk and pray. If I could go to that meeting and hear such things, it would seem almost like going to heaven for a little while. I know I can't go; but it makes me feel happy to think I can pray about it; because after I ask, and don't get it, why then I know it wouldn't be best for me, don't I?"

"I suppose so," said Frederick, dryly. This was an entirely new line of talk for him. Moreover, he was all but dumb with astonishment

over this remarkable choice, from all the places there were to go to in this world. He knew of the meeting down at the square on which her hopes were centered. More than once he had received an invitation to attend it, and had not had the slightest idea of ever doing so. Yet here was a little girl who had almost nothing, and looked upon this very commonplace corner as "like heaven!" Why on earth didn't the midget go if she wanted to? The meeting wasn't until seven o'clock; surely her work for the day must be over by that time.

"I should think you might answer your own prayer," he said, giving voice to his thoughts. "Why don't you skip off to the square on Sunday evenings if you want to? You have only to push open the door and crowd in with the rest; seats are free down there, and everybody goes who likes."

But Mag had evidently canvassed the entire matter. She shook her head and gravely explained that Mrs. Perkins would by no means allow her to skip away. She did not believe in

little girls going out on the street alone, Sunday evenings, nor any other. And Mag had been distinctly told never to say anything more about it.

"Well," said Frederick, reflectively, "the street isn't a very good place for little girls, of course."

Then he resolved to flee to some subject which he better understood.

"I'll tell you what, Mag, if I were you I would set about that education that you ought to get. You should be studying, every day; history, you know, and all such things. I had no idea you were so old. It is a shame! Don't you have a little time every day that you might spend in studying?"

Mag reflected, and finally explained that sometimes she sat for ten minutes at a time in the front hall with nothing to do but wait for the bell to ring; and that, moreover, there was a little while nearly every day when she would not be called upon for almost half an hour. Then there were evenings, of course; but Mrs.

Perkins only gave her a little bit of a hand lamp that would not burn long, and did not like her to sit up in the cold.

"I should think not!" said Frederick, with a shrug of his shoulders. "So you read 'Little Pillows' every night in the cold, do you? Well! let's see what book we can find that would fit into those wonderful spare minutes in the hall. You never studied arithmetic, I suppose? I'm afraid we couldn't do much at that, in the hall. History, though, might be managed."

He arose as he spoke, and went toward the well-filled rows of shelves that Mag had been industriously working over while she talked. He ran his eyes rapidly over the titles, a curious smile on his face the while. What was he about, any way? This was almost as new business for him as giving lessons on prayer. What would the fellows in his class say if they could see him hunting through his library for a suitable text-book for a little girl!

"This is the very thing!" he said at last, tri-

umphantly; "at least, I hope you will like it; I did, I remember, when I was a little chap." Mr. Frederick was not three years older than Mag; but nobody, least of all himself, could have realized such a thing. It seemed to him at least a dozen years ago that he had enjoyed Dickens's "Child's History of England." Why would it not be the book for Mag?

"To be sure," he said, smiling, as he handed the book to her. "A true American ought to hunt out a history of the United States to give you first, I suppose; but I haven't one to my name that isn't stupid; so we'll try this."

He might as well have talked in Greek to Mag. He had very little realization, even yet, of her dense ignorance. England and the United States were both unknown countries to her. For all she knew, either, or both, might mean some street in that very city. But she received the book with a kind of awe, mingled with ecstacy, and listened eagerly to the young teacher's directions.

"It isn't a story-book, you understand.

What it tells about all happened. You are not simply to read it, but study it. Spend those extra ten minutes on it, hundreds and thousands of them, you know, until you get some notion of what the book says. That will be a start toward the education that you are to get. You understand, don't you, that I want you to get an education?"

"Yes, sir," she said earnestly, her face perfectly grave, although there was a whimsical look on his face, "and I'll do my very best."

Then, with the book clasped in both hands, she hurried away to answer a sharp call from Norah.

She did not know why "Mr. Frederick" burst into a ringing laugh, nor did she hear him say:

"Well! Frederick Forrest Ainsworth, upon my word, this is a new departure for you!"

CHAPTER V

" RAISINS "

THE month of January was not yet past when trouble in a new form came to poor Mag Jessup. It began with a bowl of raisins. I suppose if Mag lives to be an old woman she will never forget how she felt on that Saturday toward the last of January when the sun suddenly seemed to stop shining.

She had been unusually happy that morning. Nothing had ever seemed sweeter to her than the " Little Pillow " on which she had gone to sleep the night before. A new boarder had come, and on her finger had sparkled a diamond ring. Mag had heard not only Norah, but Mrs. Perkins and her daughters talking about it, and Kate Perkins had said that one of the girls at school told her the lady used to be very rich, and had " no end of jewels." Now it so

happened that Mag was very fond of jewels; when she walked along the street and met a lady wearing a beautiful pin, she almost *had* to move slowly so as to gaze at it as long as possible. Sometimes she dreamed of being very rich—one of her day dreams, I mean—and always among the first things that she bought with her money were beautiful rings, and pins set with jewels. She had gone upstairs that evening with her mind full of the beautiful lady, and the hope that she would be able some day to see her jewelry. Wasn't it strange that when she opened her "Little Pillows" the reading for the evening should be, "My jewels"?

Of course, after that, she read each word with even unusual care. It was all about God's jewels; she almost held her breath for joy and wonder when she learned what they were.

"If you fear the Lord and think upon his name, you are one of his jewels, and all that you are going to read about them is for you," so the book read; and Mag stopped, her eyes

shining and her cheeks very red, and hugged the little book closer as she said aloud: "Oh, it *does* mean me! I think about him and fear him and love him."

Then she read on.

"God has found and chosen his jewels, and he will never lose them. Every one of them is kept safe in the casket of his everlasting love. He does not mean to hide them away and be ashamed of them—the day is coming when he will make them up—when they will all be gathered together in his treasury, and shine together in his glorious crown; and not one will be forgotten or overlooked or lost."

After that, Mag could pray as she had not prayed before. She knelt down with a strange sense of value upon her. She was not simply little Mag Jessup with nobody in particular to love her, and nothing to be very glad about. She was one of the Lord's jewels, and he was going to take care of her and never lose her. All the following morning, the thought was strong within her that God loved her very

much. That same little " Pillow " she had read the night before closed with a verse of a hymn:

" Sought and chosen, cleansed and polished,
Purchased with transcendent cost,
Kept in his own royal casket,
Never, never, to be lost."

Mag made a little tune for it, and went about her dressing, singing it cheerily. Even in the kitchen she sang it softly, until Norah, who had extra work, and felt hurried and cross, told her to stop her " everlasting humming and 'tend to her work."

There seemed to be extra duties for every one that day; at least, Mag had never been kept busier; and the door-bell rang continually, interrupting everything she tried to do. Several times she was scolded for slowness when she might have explained, if anybody had given her a chance, that the bell had rung seven times since she began to rub the spoons and forks. At last Norah summoned her to the little room off the kitchen, where bread and pies and cakes were always made. This is the way she called her:

"Mag Jessup, if you haven't got them spoons done yet, it is time you had! I want this cake stirred. Be quick about it now; I never did see such a slowcoach as you are! you don't earn your salt. What Mis' Perkins bothers with you for, instead of getting a smart, capable girl as she ought to do, beats me. Take hold of that cake-spoon; not with that hand, little stupid! the other; and stir it the same way all the time. Mind you don't change at all; it will be as tough as leather if you do. I've got to go and see to my chickens, and a dozen other things; folks in this house always have to do six things at once; and I want that cake stirred every minute till I come back."

She was gone a long time; the heavy mixture in the large yellow bowl was faithfully stirred by Mag's small brown hand; always the same way, although her hand ached, and she realized what a rest it would have been to have made the spoon go the other way. Then she wondered why it was that cake stirred "the other way" became heavy. She never for a moment

doubted the statement, for Norah was a fine cook, and, of course, knew everything about her work. If this were one of her good-natured days—and she occasionally had them—Mag would have resolved to ask for a reason for this strange state of things; but none knew better than she that Norah must be asked no unnecessary questions on this day. Her hand began to ache very hard, and she was wondering nervously what she would do if the door bell rang; would it make the cake "as tough as leather" for her to leave it long enough to answer the bell? when at last Norah appeared again. What was Mag's astonishment over her first sentence.

"Well, now, Mag Jessup, I think you've done it! If you don't catch it this time, then my name isn't Norah McGinty! A whole bowl full, and heaping at that, and now there is hardly half of them left. Do you think I have nothing to do but stone raisins for you to steal, you little thieving wretch!"

A vigorous shake from Norah's strong arm

emphasized this last; Mag, when released, fairly staggered under its force; but she spoke quickly and with unusual energy.

"I haven't touched a raisin, Norah. I never thought of such a thing; why, you know I wouldn't! I've just stirred the cake every minute."

"Oh, yes," said Norah; "you've just stirred the cake every minute, of course; and the raisins jumped up and tumbled themselves out of the window, I suppose! That's a likely story, isn't it? Don't you think you see Mrs. Perkins believing it? You're a jewel of a girl, you are! Stuff your mouth full of raisins the minute a body's back is turned; and had to take stoned ones at that. Little ninny! Why, didn't you know you would be found out?"

If she had not used that word "jewel" no one can be sure what poor Mag would have said, for she felt herself growing very angry indeed. But to be called a "jewel of a girl" saved her. Yes, she was a jewel; Norah did not know, nor Mrs. Perkins, nor anybody, but

she was the Lord's own jewel, precious in his sight, and he would take care of her. But, why, oh, *why*, did he let Norah suspect her of stealing raisins? She kept her lips tightly closed. It was no use to tell Norah again that she had not touched the fruit, and she must not say anything else. Her very silence seemed to anger Norah.

"Do get out of my sight!" she said spitefully. "Little whining hypocrite! been muttering a hymn all the morning! You'll sing out of the other side of your mouth before night, or I'll miss my guess. If Mrs. Perkins doesn't make you sick, I should think the raisins would. How you must have stuffed to get all them down while I was gone!"

Poor Mag waited for no more. She went back to the knives that were not quite finished, but all the brightness had gone out of her heart. There was trouble in store for her. Mrs. Perkins had laid down strict commands against her servants "nibbling" anything. Especially solemn had her teachings been to Mag in this

respect, probably because she was so much younger than the others. The girl had been assured that taking things from her mistress without leave was nothing more nor less than stealing, and the lowest, meanest kind of stealing at that. And now to be accused of stealing raisins! If it had been bread, poor Mag thought that she would not have felt so humiliated. Norah had called her a hypocrite. Mag did not know what the word meant; she said it over and over, resolving to look in the big book where Mr. Frederick had told her all words were, the first time she had a chance, and find out. It had something to do with her hymn, it would seem. And thus reminded of the hymn, the forlorn little girl, who did not feel like singing, said over softly:

"Kept in his own royal casket,
Never, never to be lost!"

Ought she to be entirely miserable, after all?

"What is all this I hear of you, Mag!"

It was several hours later, and Mag had begun to dust and put in order the upper hall,

when Mrs. Perkins's voice cold and stern, summoned her to judgment.

" How came you to meddle with Norah's raisins, after all that has been said to you about touching other people's things? Is it possible you did not know that you were stealing from me! "

All that poor Mag could do was to repeat earnestly that indeed, *indeed,* she had not touched a raisin, but had stirred the cake every minute. Mrs. Perkins's face grew sterner.

" Did you see the bowl of raisins when you first went in the work-room? " she asked.

Mag, considering, explained that before she went in there to work, Norah had called her to bring a spoon, and that then she had noticed the raisins, but that when she went back to stir the cake she had not noticed or thought of them at all.

" And how full did you think the bowl was when you saw it? " asked Mrs. Perkins.

Poor Mag hesitated, and her face flushed painfully; she knew her answer would condemn

herself, but the truth must be told. With a faltering tongue she admitted that she noticed that the bowl was very full, and wondered while she stood there if Norah could put on another raisin without making them spill over.

Mrs. Perkins looked her keen rebuke. "You see how it is, you wicked child; your own words prove your guilt. You own that the bowl was full to overflowing, and you know that you were the only person in the room, and that the bowl was only half full when Norah came back, yet you dare to tell me that you did not touch a raisin! That is simply adding falsehood to the sin of stealing. And that last makes it a great deal worse, because a greedy child might even be tempted to steal raisins, perhaps; but to steal them, and then lie about it, shows a depth of wickedness that I must say I did not expect in you. Now, what is to be done, do you suppose? My raisins are gone, of course; there is no help for that. But what am I to do about it? Here is a house full of boarders at your mercy. A girl who will help herself in

this way to other people's things is never safe to have around. I suppose I must warn them all that we have a thief in the house, and they must lock up their possessions when she appears. That will be very pleasant for us all, won't it?"

Poor Mag's already burning face showed a deeper crimson. She believed that nothing more terrible than this could ever happen to her. To be branded all over the house as a thief; to be railed at by Norah, and sneered at by the other servants; to have the boarders looking at her and telling one another that they must be careful lest she should steal their things; above all, to have Mr. Frederick told such a tale as that! She felt that she could not bear it.

Mrs. Perkins looked at the crimson cheeks and downcast eyes, and watched two great tears roll slowly down the small, pale face, and felt really sorry for the culprit. After all, she was a little girl who had never been properly trained in her early childhood; and all chil-

dren loved sweets; but, of course, she could not have her pilfering things. It was just as well to frighten her thoroughly. She would let her think for awhile that everybody in the house would know of her disgrace. But the slow tears were too much for Mrs. Perkins's heart. After a few minutes of solemn silence she began again:

"I'll tell you what I will do; it is the first time you have been caught in such a disgraceful act, and, therefore, if you will confess to me that you took the raisins, and tell me you are sorry for having told a wicked lie, I will forgive you; and the boarders shall know nothing about it. That will give you a chance to show by your actions that you are truly sorry."

Then Mrs. Perkins waited for Mag's grateful thanks. She felt that she was being very kind indeed; kinder, possibly, than she ought; her conscience even pricked her a little, because, of course, a child ought to be punished in some way for telling a downright lie; but then Mag's miserable face showed that she was being pun-

ished; and it must have been a sudden temptation, for Mrs. Perkins recalled instances which seemed to prove that Mag was generally truthful. For this once she would err on the side of kindness and forgive her outright as soon as she confessed her sin. But Mag stood silent and downcast, the slow tears still falling, one after another, on her brown hand.

" Well," said Mrs. Perkins, a trifle sharply again, " have you nothing to say to such kindness? It isn't every one, let me tell you, who would waste so much time on a naughty little girl; Saturday at that, and all kinds of work waiting for me. If you are going to confess what you have done, and say you are sorry, you would better be about it; I shall not wait all day, I promise you."

Thus urged, Mag lifted tearful eyes to her mistress's face, and spoke slowly, tremulously:

" I thank you very much, ma'am; but I can not confess it, for I did not do it. I never touched a single raisin."

Mrs. Perkins made a gesture of impatience.

"Stop!" she said; "I don't want to hear any more. You are too much for me, I declare! Quite skillful at lying, it seems; and I confess I did not suspect it. Very well, since you choose to take the consequences, I will decide what to do with you. Meantime, you may go back to the kitchen. Let the upstairs work alone; I will tell Norah to keep you busy, and to keep an eye on you at the same time, to see that you do not steal anything else."

Oh, the weariness and misery crowded into that short January day! Nobody could have persuaded Mag that it was a short day. It seemed to her at times that the hour would never come when she could creep away to her attic room and cry. Norah found no difficulty at all in keeping her busy, and, being tried by many things, found it a relief to use her tongue in all sorts of stinging ways on Mag. When the door-bell rang she was directed to see to it that she did not make away with any of the things on the hat-rack. When she was sent upstairs with a cup of beef tea for the invalid

boarder, she was warned not to make a mistake and drink it herself! In these and a hundred other ingenious ways her supposed sin was kept constantly before her. The climax was reached just after tea, when Mr. Frederick Ainsworth returned to the dining-room to ask Norah if the evening postman had come yet.

"I don't know, I am sure," answered Norah. "Mag says he has, but we can't believe anything *she* says."

Mr. Frederick turned back in amazement, and gazed first at Norah and then at poor Mag, as though he could not have heard aright. It was too much for the poor little girl; she burst into a perfect storm of tears and ran past him into the kitchen.

CHAPTER VI

"A CRUMB OF COMFORT"

IT was three days since the raisins had been lost. Sorrowful days they had been to poor Mag, though Mrs. Perkins was really trying to treat her as though nothing had happened. This was because Mr. Frederick Ainsworth had inquired into matters, and earnestly urged that she should be so treated.

"I suppose the poor little mouse never had a raisin in her life until she came here," he said; "and all children are wild after sweet things."

Mrs. Perkins was soothed by his hint that since she had taken her in charge the child had had raisins, and admitted that, without doubt, her life had been a hard one until she came to them.

"And I'm not one to grudge a child a raisin or two, Mr. Frederick," she explained. "If she had asked me for them, she would probably

have got some; but, of course, I can't have her pilfering things. She never used to seem to touch anything; I'll say that for her; but there must always be a first time. Still, since it is a first time, if she had confessed to me, I should have said no more about it; and I told her so. It is the obstinacy that she is showing"——

"Oh, well," interrupted Mr. Frederick, "I understand that; she was scared into saying that she didn't touch them; and then she was too scared to take it back. When I was a little fellow mother took me to visit at my uncle's. He was a stern old man unused to children, and one morning he pounced upon me so for touching his ink-stand that before I knew what I was saying, I declared that I didn't. And I stuck to it, through thick and thin, though the ink was all over me. My mother said it was the first falsehood she ever knew me to tell. I was simply frightened into it, you see, by my uncle's manner. I suppose Norah may have done the same sort of thing with poor Mag."

Mrs. Perkins owned that it might be so; admitted that Norah had a sharp tongue, at best; and agreed to treat Mag quite as usual for a few days, and see if she would come to her senses.

It is probable that she tried to act quite as usual, but the little girl felt the difference. As for Norah, she made no attempt to hide her scorn of a girl who would "steal stoned raisins!" She seemed to consider the sin much increased by the fact that the raisins were stoned. All day Mag's work had been chiefly in the kitchen; she had not been sent upstairs to the boarders' rooms, and she knew that this must be because Mrs. Perkins would not trust her there. It was a little crumb of comfort to be sent, just at nightfall, to replenish the grate in Mr. Frederick's room, even though Mrs. Perkins herself had added a warning to the effect that she should not meddle with any of his things.

Mag fed the fire until the room was in a cheerful blaze; then she lighted the gas, and

made all things comfortable for Mr. Frederick's appearance. His was a downstairs room, opening from the front hall. He had himself given her permission to wait there, instead of in the hall, for the door-bell, when she wanted to look at any of his books. Her duties were now done, until she should be summoned for something else, and there might be time before a bell called her to look into Mr. Frederick's big dictionary for that word "hypocrite," which had, for some reason, stung her more than any other of Norah's stinging words. Mr. Frederick had himself taught her how to find the words. She bent over the book, a sad little face, for the three days had been hard ones to her, and she could see no reason why this sort of life should not go on forever. The small brown finger moved slowly down the column of many words. "Hypochondriac, hypochondriasis, hypocistis!" how many words there were that she had never heard of. Ah! here it was: "Hypocrite!" She bent lower and read every word of the fine print with painful care. "One who

feigns to be what he is not; one who has the form of godliness without the power, or who assumes an appearance of piety and virtue when he is destitute of true religion." Then, a little lower down: "One who assumes a false appearance."

Poor Mag! she did not know much more about it than she had before. The words were, some of them, so large and so new to her that they did not convey any meaning. She read the first sentence again and again. If she had been familiar with that word "feigns," she might have caught the idea. As it was, she was very much puzzled. Why should Norah have called her a hypocrite? Was it because she thought she had told a lie? Yet what had that to do with the hymn Norah had heard her singing? So engaged was she that she did not hear the front door open, nor the sound of Mr. Frederick's footsteps until he stood almost beside her. Then she started violently, the blood flaming into her little brown face. For three days she had shunned Mr. Frederick in every

possible way; her humiliation at the thought that she had been described to him as a thief and a liar was terrible. She felt that she could never look fairly into his face again.

"What is going on here?" he said in quite the old, cheery way. "Have you come to a word in your history that you do not understand?"

"No, sir," said Mag, timidly; "I was looking for the meaning of a word that Norah uses."

"Norah! I have a fancy that she may use some words not to be found in my dictionary. Did you discover it?"

"Yes, sir, it is there; but"——

"But what?" asked young Ainsworth kindly, as he sat down in the large rocking-chair that Mag had drawn up ready for him, and held out his hand for the dictionary. "Show it to me, will you? and tell me all about it. Dictionary meanings are hard to understand, sometimes. Could you make it out?"

"No, sir; I don't think I know the words it uses."

She had moved toward him and was pointing, with a finger that trembled, at the word in question.

"Hypocrite!" he said in a surprised tone; then he laughed. "So Norah has been calling some one a hypocrite, has she? Not you, I hope?"

"Yes, sir, me." Mag's voice as well as eyes were full of tears.

"You don't say so! What did you do to make her use such large words?"

"I don't know at all; I can't understand what it means. I don't know that first word—that 'feigns.'"

"'Feigns'? Let me see. Oh, well, Mag, it means about the same as 'pretends,' or 'makes believe.' You certainly know how to make believe things. Don't you?" he was looking at her with an amused smile now. He was thinking of the parlor visitor who sat in the yellow chair.

"Oh, yes, sir," said Mag, her cheeks aflame; and she bent over and read the sentence once more with this new light thrown on it.

"One who makes believe to be what he is not." Did Norah mean that she was making believe tell the truth? Yes, that must be it; though how did it fit her hymn-singing? Mr. Frederick studied the troubled, puzzled face.

"Are things getting clearer?" he asked. "Suppose you tell me all about it?"

"I—I was—was singing a hymn," stammered Mag. "I mean I had been, just before, and she said I was a hypocrite."

"That's very clear! What was the hymn? I didn't know you could sing, Mag. What were the words?"

"Do you mean all of them, sir?"

"Yes, a verse of it. I want to understand how the word 'hypocrite' fitted it."

Thus urged, Mag in low tones that, despite her effort at self-control, trembled a little, repeated her precious words:

"Sought and chosen, cleansed and polished,
Purchased with transcendent cost,
Kept in his own royal casket,
Never, never to be lost."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the audience, when the timid little voice ceased. "I should say there were some words in that as large as those in the dictionary. Do you understand it?"

"Oh, yes, sir; well, not all the words; but the reading that came first made them plain. It is a 'Little Pillow,' you know, sir, and it is about jewels; God's jewels; and I'm one; he keeps us and never loses one; and by and by he will send for me"——

Mag's voice broke entirely at that. The lonely little girl had at times such a longing to be sent for as Mr. Fred Ainsworth would have found it hard to understand. He remained silent for a minute or two then cleared his throat suspiciously as he said:

"So Norah thought because you sang that hymn you were a hypocrite! Well, I don't

agree with her. She was probably mistaken."

But Mag's cheeks flamed into color again, Mr. Frederick did not understand. Norah had reasons for thinking that she was making believe what she was not; and, to be true to her, he must be told the whole story. It was exactly what he wanted. He meant to catch her with guile.

"I see!" he said, nodding gravely. "I don't wonder you were frightened at being spoken to in just that way; but, Mag, let me ask you, wouldn't it be the wise and honest thing now for you to go quietly to Mrs. Perkins and explain to her how Norah frightened you into it, and tell her you are sorry you took the raisins, and don't mean to do so any more? She won't be hard on you; and I don't think she will let Norah bother you about it after that. Besides, that will prove to Norah that you don't mean to be a hypocrite; don't you see?"

He waited eagerly for her answer. He believed himself to have been very wise. He had

not accused the poor little ignorant thing, and so frightened her into deeper sin, but had just taken it for granted that she had swallowed the raisins, and that there was a chance for her to be forgiven and start afresh. There was no lighting up of the sorrowful little face, and the great brown eyes that were raised to his were full of sadness, not to say reproach.

"I can't do that, Mr. Frederick," she said simply, "because it wouldn't be the truth. You don't think I would tell a lie, do you? I didn't do that before I knew that God cared about me at all; and, of course, I couldn't after I found that out. I didn't touch a raisin; not a raisin! That is what makes it so hard. I don't hardly see how they can believe me; because the bowl was full—I saw it; and it wasn't more than half full when Norah came back; and there wasn't anybody in the room but me; and yet I never so much as touched them!"

The door-bell rang while she was getting off these earnest sentences, and Mag had to run. Frederick Ainsworth looked after her with a

curious, tender light in his eyes and a smile on his face.

"I believe you," he said earnestly. "You didn't so much as touch one; I'd stake my honor on it. Poor little mouse! I wish I could prove your innocence in some way."

Then he remembered that he had not thought to ask her how the history of England was getting on; and watched for her to come back; but the door-bell kept ringing and ringing; and presently the dinner-bell rang, and he saw no more of Mag that night.

He did not know how much his kind words and pleasant, friendly manner had comforted her. But if the poor little girl had known what seas of trouble were preparing to roll over her the very next day, she would hardly have gone to her bed with such a thankful feeling at her heart over the thought that Mr. Frederick had looked as though he did truly believe what she said.

Before ten o'clock the next morning all the comfort to be got from this thought was gone.

Mrs. Perkins, in her haste to have the morning work done, had either forgotten that she did not mean to send Mag to the boarders' rooms, or else she had decided that it was unnecessary to give herself any more trouble in order to teach the child a lesson. The truth was that Mrs. Perkins, although she believed that Mag had eaten her raisins, had no more fear of her touching the belongings of the boarders than she had of doing it herself.

"All youngsters will help themselves to things to eat," she said to her oldest daughter, "and, for that matter, folks that are old enough to know better will do the same; I never had a servant in my life that I didn't have to watch about such things; they don't call it stealing; but as for Mag taking money, or ribbons, or anything of that kind, I don't believe she would for the world. I told her I wouldn't trust her in the rooms; but that was to give her a good scare, and teach her a lesson."

Before Mag had finished her breakfast Mrs. Perkins came to her with orders.

"Mag, Miss Ordway wants her room done up while she is gone to the corner on an errand; and Jane is never going to get around in that time. You rush right up and make the bed, and dust, and put things straight. It doesn't need much, for there was thorough work done there yesterday. Fly around now so as to be out of her way; she wants to get at her painting early."

Mag went with a grateful heart. In spite of raisins she was to be trusted; and in Miss Ordway's room, too. Miss Ordway was the new boarder who was said to have such lovely jewels. Mag had caught a glimpse of her room once since she came, and had found it hung with the loveliest little paintings! She had heard a boarder say that they were Miss Ordway's own work. What if she should some day actually see her making a flower!

Her small brown fingers worked nimbly that morning. The bed was carefully made, the room dusted, the shades drawn to just the right height, the open grate fire made to glow, and

the perfection of neatness reigned, when Miss Ordway returned, just as Mag, duster and hearth-brush in hand, was ready to depart.

"So this is the fairy who has done my room so nicely," said Miss Ordway, looking about her with a pleased air. "You look small and weak for such work, child; but you do it much better than Jane did the other day. I think I shall have to ask Mrs. Perkins to let you be my little maid. Jane is a clumsy creature to have among paint-brushes. I see you have not meddled with those; that is right. Do you like flowers? Come here and I'll show you some pansies that are almost alive."

She threw a light covering from an easel that stood in the corner with a placard pinned on it saying "Not to be touched!" and brought to view some of the loveliest yellow and lavender pansies that Mag believed the world contained. The little scream of delight quickly suppressed for fear it was not proper, and the clasping of her small brown hands in silent ecstasy, seemed to please Miss Ordway.

"You like them, don't you?" she asked. "I thought you would. You shall see them grow. It is great fun to sit in a room in mid-winter and watch flowers grow; did you know it? Would you like to do my room every morning? Then we'll ask Mrs. Perkins to make that arrangement." That was at fifteen minutes past nine. While the kitchen clock was striking ten, Mag was summoned in Mrs. Perkins's sharpest tone, through the speaking-tube, to "come this instant to Miss Ordway's room!"

CHAPTER VII

A SEA OF TROUBLE

"WHAT have you done with that ring?" This was the first bewildering sentence that Mrs. Perkins hurled at Mag, her eyes glaring the while as though they would burn her.

Mag could only repeat in a frightened way the single word: "Ring!"

"Yes, ring. Miss Ordway's diamond ring, that she left on her bureau, and that has disappeared, and not a soul except you has been in the room since it was put there. If I had only sent Jane, as I ought to have done, instead of trusting you!"

"O Mrs. Perkins!" said Mag: "indeed, indeed!" and then, the full measure of her sorrow and danger overwhelming her, the little girl burst into a perfect storm of tears.

"There is no use in your crying and howl-

ing," declared Mrs. Perkins, too angry now to try to control herself; "tell me just where you have hid that ring,—you haven't had time to make away with it, that is some comfort,—and then off to prison you go as fast as a policeman can take you. Miserable little thief that you are! to go and *steal,* after all that I have done for you."

"Mrs. Perkins," said Miss Ordway, coming forward, "let me talk to the child, please. She is so frightened that she can not say anything. My poor little girl"—she bent over Mag as she spoke, and even laid a hand on the trembling little arm—a kind hand—"I can not think that you meant to take the ring; perhaps you were only looking at it when I startled you by coming in; and then you slipped it into your pocket until you could have a chance to put it back. Isn't that it? Let me tell you about the ring. It cost a great deal of money, but that is not its greatest value. It was given to me by my dear, dear mother just before she died. I was to wear it always for her sake; and I do

not often have it off my finger. I would not lose it for anything that I have in the world; and I know you would not keep me from having it, would you?"

Mag was crying bitterly all the while, but her sobs grew less heavy while she listened to the low, gentle words. The moment Miss Ordway stopped, she burst forth:

"I wouldn't have taken away your ring for anything in the world. I don't steal; Mrs. Perkins thinks I do, but I don't. And I didn't see your ring, Miss Ordway. I saw it shining on your finger once, but I mean I did not see it in this room."

"Don't waste any more words with her, Miss Ordway," said Mrs. Perkins, in her hardest tone. "The child is evidently a skillful little liar, as well as thief. It serves me right; I ought not to have trusted her. She stole raisins from me the other day and told an up-and-down falsehood about it; but I confess I didn't think she would take anything but things to eat. I will send for a policeman, and we'll

have her things searched and find your ring, unless she has swallowed it as she did the raisins. She will have to be sent to the House of Correction, or some other house! I can not harbor such a creature any longer, I know that. I've done my best to teach her what was right; and I give you my word for it, Miss Ordway, I never suspected her of taking so much as a pin until the other night, or I wouldn't have had her around."

"And you say she has been with you for three years?" said Miss Ordway. "It doesn't seem probable that she should begin so suddenly to be untrustworthy, does it? Isn't there some other way of accounting for the ring's disappearance?"

"Why, I don't know what way, I am sure," said Mrs. Perkins. "You say you left it on your bureau, and to my certain knowledge there hasn't a soul been in your room this morning but Mag. Jane was downstairs doing a very particular piece of work, and, when you stopped and said you wanted your room early, I

told Mag to come right up, and she did. Jane hadn't been upstairs since breakfast, I know; and I suppose your room was locked while you were out of it last night, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Miss Ordway, but she spoke as though she was sorry to have to admit it.

"I locked the room, I am sure, because I remembered your requesting me to do so, and went back to attend to it after I had gone half way downstairs."

"I always ask the boarders to keep their rooms locked," explained Mrs. Perkins, "except in the morning when the room work is being done; then I plan to be around myself, and see that everything goes straight. I was just coming up this morning, to look after Mag, when I saw you come in. I calculate to keep only honest help about me, and I haven't a girl now that I wouldn't trust with anything I've got; but then, in a boarding-house like mine, I'd rather have the doors kept locked when people are out, and get rid of some of the responsibility. And since you are sure that the

ring was on the bureau, and it isn't there now, I don't know what else there is to think."

"The last recollection I have of it is putting it on the bureau last night just before dinner," said Miss Ordway, still in the regretful tone. "I had been using some paint that I was afraid might dull the gold, and I slipped it off just beside the cushion, intending to put it on again as soon as I was dressed. But I noticed at dinner that I had forgotten it. And to think that I forgot it again, and only noticed its absence this morning when I sat down to work! I can not imagine how I could have been so careless of my mother's gift!"

"It's too bad!" said Mrs. Perkins, sympathetically; "but then, as I say, we'll be sure to find it. The creature can not have made away with it. She went straight to the kitchen, and has been there under Norah's eye ever since. If the miserable little wretch would only tell what she has done with it, it would save us a good deal of trouble. She hasn't a pocket in that dress, so she must have tucked it away

under something; but, of course, we'll find it. I haven't any hope of her confessing, because she was so brazen about the raisins, though I promised to hush it all up and try her again, if she would just say that she had taken them."

"Mrs. Perkins," said Miss Ordway, taking a sudden resolution, "would you mind my talking to the child alone for a few minutes? She looks like such a timid creature that I think she may, perhaps, be too frightened to realize what she is saying. If I could talk with her quietly I might"—

Mrs. Perkins interrupted her with a grim laugh.

"You and Mr. Fred Ainsworth must look upon me as a kind of ogre!" she said. "He had a notion that Mag had been scared into telling lies. I'm sure I never meant to eat her up for stealing my raisins. But I'm entirely willing to let you talk to her just as much as you please. If you can bring her to reason, so much the less trouble for me. I've got plenty of business to attend to this morning. When

you want me you can just step to the hall and call me at the speaking-tube."

As the door closed after her Miss Ordway turned to Mag, who had ceased crying entirely, and sat a forlorn little heap on the hearth-rug, with her face quite hidden in the folds of the big kitchen apron that covered her from head to foot.

"My poor little girl!" said Miss Ordway, "I don't want to be hard on you, indeed I don't. And I don't want any one else to be. I can see how suddenly you may have been tempted, and now you feel, perhaps, that the only way is to insist upon what you have already said. But there could not be a worse road than that. Nobody ever found the way back by persisting in going on in the same road, after learning that it was the wrong one. Mag, if you will tell me where the ring is, or if you lost it, or threw it out of the window, and do not know where it is, and will tell me the truth, I will see to it that you are not sent to prison, and I will help you all I can."

She waited in silence for some minutes for this appeal to be answered; Mag, meantime, stirring neither hand nor foot, nor in any way showing that she had even heard her. Suddenly the child dropped the apron that was hiding her face and looked up at the lady beside her.

"Miss Ordway," she said, "do you know God?"

Miss Ordway was very much startled; it was such a different sentence from what she had expected to hear.

"Do I know him?" she repeated. "Why, of course, child. What do you mean? Every one knows him; at least, in this country."

"Oh, but I mean in a different way from that. I was thinking about his jewels. 'Every one that feared the Lord and thought upon his name,' he made into his jewels, you know. What I mean is that I am one of them. He loves me, and has called me; I fear the Lord and think upon his name, and he has made me his jewel, and I am to be

'Kept in his own royal casket,
Never, never to be lost.'

Do you think, after that, that I would take anybody's jewel, or tell what was not true about it for the world? I used to be dreadfully lonesome and sorrowful, and have no friends. But Mr. Frederick gave me 'Little Pillows' for a Christmas present, and there I found things that I never knew before. There it said, 'Come unto me, ye that are weary,' and 'Suffer little children to come;' and it said, 'Jesus calls you this very night;' and it told me to stretch out my hand and say, 'I am coming, Lord Jesus,' and I did; and he took me, and I have been one of his jewels ever since. Do you know him that way, Miss Ordway? And do you suppose one of his children would tell a lie about anything? I did not take Mrs. Perkins's raisins; I did not so much as touch them; and I did not see your ring. Can't you believe me?"

"Yes," said Miss Ordway, earnestly; "I do believe you, child; and I declare I *will,* how-

ever much the circumstances may be against you. I wouldn't have lost my ring for a great deal and I can not account for it; but I don't believe you know anything about it. Do you think it may be possible that your duster whisked it into the grate, Mag? I never thought of that; perhaps that is exactly what happened."

Mag shook her head sorrowfully. "No, ma'am," she said, "I don't think any such thing could have happened; not when I was dusting. I was very, very careful; I took up everything one by one, and laid it down again so as to be sure to get them in the places where they belonged. But I will pick every piece of coal out of the grate, as soon as the fire is down, and look in the ashes, and everywhere. Oh, I *hope* you can find it, Miss Ordway! I haven't got anything of my mother's. Is that the only thing you had?"

"Oh, no!" said Miss Ordway. "I have a great many things of hers besides; but that was very precious. Well, I wonder what I can

do for you? How shall we convince Mrs. Perkins that you know nothing about that ring?"

Mag's grave little face grew graver. "I don't know," she said sorrowfully. "I don't think she *can* believe it. It is very strange about the raisins. I saw the bowl full, and when Norah came back it was only half full; and nobody was there but me. She couldn't hardly help believing that I took them; could she?"

Despite her loss and anxiety, Miss Ordway was obliged to laugh. "You are the queerest little girl I ever heard of!" she said. "Here you are arguing the case against yourself. Does Mrs. Perkins know about the jewels?"

"What jewels, ma'am?"

"Why, the ones you have been describing to me? Did you tell her you were a jewel yourself, and were 'never, *never* to be lost?'"

Mag shook her head. "No, ma'am, I didn't tell her. I thought, perhaps, she would not understand what I meant. She doesn't know God in that way, I think. A great many

grown people do not. I asked Mr. Frederick, and he said that the world was full of folks that hadn't paid any attention to God calling them, and so missed knowing him. Mrs. Perkins makes me think that she hasn't."

Miss Ordway turned away her face to hide a smile. She could not but feel that the wise-eyed little girl was judging Mrs. Perkins correctly; and she could not help wishing the child need not know that she, too, was one of those who had "paid no attention to God calling her."

"Who is Mr. Frederick?" she asked, by way of changing the subject.

"He is a boarder, ma'am; he has the room opposite the parlors; and he is very good to me. He gave me my Christmas present."

"Your 'Christmas present'! Which one?"

"I never had but one, ma'am; just my little book; and I love it dearly. It is my 'Little Pillows,' where I learned what I have been telling you. Oh, and he lent me a book, too; the History of England; and I am reading in

it every day. Mr. Frederick has been kinder to me than anybody ever was before."

"And you never had but one Christmas present? You poor little mouse! This 'Mr. Frederick,' as you call him, is a mere boy, isn't he? Does he sit next to Miss Annie at table?"

"Yes, ma'am; oh, no, ma'am, he is a young man; and he knows a great deal, and has lots of books; he studies late at night sometimes; and he is very good to me."

Miss Ordway laughed. "I don't believe he is many years older than you are, child," she said; "but, no matter, he knows how to be good to a little girl, it seems. That is more than some older people know. Let me think what we would better do. If I were you, I would go back to my work just as though nothing had happened. I will see Mrs. Perkins and ask her if she will let you, and, in the meantime, you and I will look everywhere for that ring and see if we can not find it. I will let the grate fire go down, and, when it is out, you can look in the ashes, as you said; and we'll

hunt under the sofa, and chairs, and in all imaginable places. I think we shall find it."

"You are very, very good," said Mag earnestly; "and, Miss Ordway, wouldn't it be right to ask God to help me find it?"

"I suppose so," said Miss Ordway, stopping short and giving the child a curious look.

"I'm 'most sure it would," said Mag gravely; "because, when he called me to come to him, and took me, and made me his jewel, why he loves me enough to want to help me about everything. Shouldn't you think so?"

"It looks reasonable," said Miss Ordway, trying not to smile.

"I mean to ask him," said Mag. "It can't be too small a thing to talk to him about, because it is a very, very big thing to me, and so it is to you, isn't it? But, oh, isn't it *strange* where it can be?"

The door-bell rang at that moment, and Mag, consulting with Miss Ordway, decided to answer it just as usual. As she went out of the room Miss Ordway thought:

" That is either the most complete little hypocrite that I ever heard of, or else she is an unusually honest and interesting child. I mean to seek the acquaintance of the boy, Frederick, of whom she thinks so much, and see what his opinion is. Meantime, I must find Mrs. Perkins and beg for a flag of truce. The child shall not be carried off to prison, anyway."

CHAPTER VIII

THINGS "WORKING TOGETHER"

MAG JESSUP was dusting Miss Kate Perkins's room. It was several days since the disappearance of the ring, yet Mag was still slipping about the house in a scared way that went to the hearts of her friends. What with Miss Ordway, and Frederick Ainsworth, and her daughter Kate, Mrs. Perkins declared she was at "her wits' ends." Her first feeling had been, as she said, to "pack Mag off to prison," but Miss Ordway would not hear to any such thing; moreover, Mr. Frederick, when he learned what had happened, sneered at the whole story, and declared that they might as well accuse him of stealing a ring as to accuse little Mag. He was as certain that she did not take it as though he had been in the room with her all the time. Mrs. Perkins left them both,

at last, in disgust, and went upstairs, only to find her daughter Kate fully as positive as the others.

"Of course, she didn't take it, mother, how absurd in that woman to accuse her!"

"Look here, Kate," said her mother, "have a little common sense, can't you? Don't I tell you that the ring is gone, and that she was the only person in the room, between the hours that it must have been taken? Except yourself, indeed; I remember now that I sent you up with Miss Ordway's letters. If you keep declaring that you know Mag didn't touch the ring, the next thing you may be suspected yourself. How should you like that?"

Kate Perkins laughed. She was so far above suspicion that such a thought could be only amusing.

"It would be quite as sensible as the other idea," she said. "Only think of it, mother, here Mag has been in our house for three years. We have had boarders all the time, and she has been in and out of their rooms as freely as we

have, and has had a hundred chances to help herself to all sorts of trinkets, and was never known to touch so much as a pin that didn't belong to her. She is even silly about it. She has come and asked me dozens of times if she might have a pin, when there was the cushion right before her, and she could have helped herself. Does it look reasonable that all of a sudden she should steal a diamond ring?"

"No," said Mrs. Perkins, "it doesn't. I should be the last one to accuse her, if there was anything else to do; and if it hadn't been for the raisins, I don't suppose I would have thought of it. But, Kate, the ring is gone. What has become of it?"

"I don't know, I am sure. But, look here, mother, you know I didn't take it, don't you? If forty rings were gone from the house, you would be just as sure as you are now that I hadn't stolen them. Why can't we feel the same about Mag? She has certainly always been honest; as honest as I am. I don't think her taking the raisins proves anything. No-

body calls eating a few raisins stealing; Norah eats them herself when she feels like it; I've seen her; and Mag, being in trouble about raisins, would have been less likely than at any other time to meddle with rings."

"Kate," said her mother, with severe dignity, "there is this difference between you and Mag: if you had touched rings or raisins, I believe you would have told me so. But what do you think of Mag's denying that she so much as touched a raisin?"

Whereupon Kate, the champion, looked troubled.

"That is bad," she said. "I did not believe that Mag Jessup would tell what wasn't true. I thought she was to be trusted. You know what she did about going for that ride on Christmas Day? But she is an awfully scared little thing, and I suppose Norah just scared her into a lie, before she thought what she was saying."

Mrs. Perkins turned away impatiently.

"Scared her into it!" she repeated contemp-

tuously. "I suppose she was afraid Norah would eat her! You talk as foolishly as all the others. I'm sure I don't know what to do with her. I can't have her running to the boarders' rooms, and they missing things."

"I'm not afraid of her in my room," declared Miss Kate; "even though she has told a lie, I would be willing to leave my pocket-book open on the bureau, and feel sure that it wouldn't be touched. Nothing can make me believe that Mag Jessup will *steal*."

Mrs. Perkins had finally gone away feeling more perplexed than ever, and half inclined to be vexed with her daughter Kate for insisting on Mag's innocence. This conversation, however, resulted in making her conclude to wait for a day or two before taking any decided steps about Mag; and, in the meantime, to put her under Kate's special charge, with instructions that she look after her sharply out of school hours.

For this reason, Kate's room, which she was supposed to care for herself, was having an

unusually thorough dusting. Miss Annie Perkins was away from home on a visit, and Kate had the room to herself.

Mag looked up with a startled, half-frightened air as Kate entered suddenly. She had not been out of the room five minutes, but something in Mag's manner troubled her. The child certainly acted like one who had something to conceal. She sprang back from the bureau as Kate entered, her cheeks painfully red, and the hand that held her duster trembled.

"What is the matter?" asked Kate, and she could not keep her voice from sounding sharp; "what have you been doing to my bureau?"

"Oh, Miss Kate!" said Mag, in a voice that trembled, "I hope you will not care. I turned the leaf back to just where it was before. I was looking at your Bible, and I saw such a strange verse that before I thought I turned over the leaf and looked at the end of it. And I had told myself but a minute before that I wouldn't touch a thing on that bureau, because you said you didn't want it dusted."

Kate laughed. "What an absurd girl you are!" she said. "Why shouldn't you look at an open Bible if you want to? If I were you, I would try to get over that habit of starting and trembling every time any one speaks to you; it makes you look as though you had done something you were ashamed of. I've got to learn a selection to recite in chapel to-morrow; that is the reason my Bible is fastened open. What verse did you find that was so strange?"

"That one," said Mag, pointing to the bottom of the page, and Kate, looking, read: "All things work together for good to them that love God." "That is a common enough verse," she said; "I learned it when I was no taller than the bureau. What is there startling about it?"

"Oh, Miss Kate! it must be true; and yet how can it be? I'm one of them; I love him and how could it ever 'work together for good' to have your mother and other people think that I stole and told lies?"

Kate Perkins laughed again; but she looked

steadily at Mag the while, as though she would read her thoughts if she could.

"Mag Jessup," she said suddenly, "tell me one thing. Did you eat those raisins, or didn't you?"

"I never did," said Mag solemnly. "I didn't *touch* them."

"Well, I believe you," said Kate, with a determined air. "And what is more, I mean to, whatever Norah or anybody says. As to its 'working together for good,' you aren't obliged to understand how it can be, you know. And the verse doesn't say how long it will take. Perhaps some time you will find out that it really did do you good in some way."

Mag considered this for a few minutes with grave thoughtfulness. "That is so," she said at last, her face lighting. "I may have to wait until I am an old, old woman; but isn't it beautiful to think that some time it will come!"

Said Kate: "You are the queerest girl that was ever born, I do believe!" What this had

to do with the words she had said, Mag did not understand.

Kate set her charge at work, ripping the skirt of a dress that was to be made over, and went to her mother's room. Mrs. Perkins was sorting pillow-slips, and missing some that ought to be there, and she looked tired and perplexed. Kate entered at once upon a description of the talk she had been having with Mag, and ended with: "I don't believe now that she touched a raisin. You couldn't have believed that she did, if you had seen her face; and, if I were you, I should just make Norah tell that she had swallowed them herself and then accused Mag."

Just as she had spoken those words came a knock at the door and Norah's strong red face appeared. The sight made Kate Perkins's face feel red. She could only hope that her words had not been heard. Whatever Norah's faults—and everybody owned that she had faults—during the seven years that she had spent with Mrs. Perkins they had learned to

trust her word. Her tongue might be sharp, but it was honest.

"Can I speak to you a minute, ma'am?" was Norah's plea.

"Yes," said Mrs. Perkins, still counting her pillow-slips; "speak away; you need not mind Miss Kate."

But Norah evidently minded Miss Kate; her face grew redder than ever, and she looked as though she did not know how to begin.

"It's about them raisins, ma'am," she said, with an embarrassed laugh. "I was never so beat in my life, I am sure. You see it was this way. Saturday was an awful flustery day anyhow, and I packed that bowl full of raisins, thinking I'd make raisin-cake. Then, when I found how late it was getting, and the things not come yet from the market, I allowed that I couldn't do it, and that I'd take just raisins enough for the pudding, and make white cake that could be got out of the way quicker. So I took a teacup and filled it with the stoned raisins, and put it up behind the china tea set

so they couldn't be picked away. Then I went out and found that that heedless Nancy had let the water boil off the chickens entirely, and there was an awful time! And when I got back to the pantry I had clean forgot about putting up the raisins, and so I pitched into that young one. And, what is more, I haven't thought of them from that hour to this, until just now when I was moving the china teapot to make more room; and when I come upon that cup of raisins you could have knocked me down with a feather!"

"I am certainly very sorry!" began Mrs. Perkins, her voice all but drowned by Kate, who clapped her hands and shouted: "Good! good! I knew Mag didn't touch them."

"That poor child has had a good deal to bear," said Mrs. Perkins; "I supposed, of course, you knew what you were about, or I should not have accused her of taking them."

"Oh, well," said Norah, growing irritable, "it hasn't kilt her. I didn't mean no harm, and I shall tell her so. Folks can forget things

sometimes, I guess, without being hung for it."

"Oh, of course," Mrs. Perkins made haste to say. Norah was much too valuable a cook for a woman with a house full of boarders to quarrel with. "Mag will be glad enough to hear that the raisins are found. And so am I, I am sure; I did not want to think the poor child was a thief. Though the raisins are the least of her troubles," she added, after Norah had closed the door with a little bang and tramped downstairs; "if the ring had been found instead of the cup of raisins, I should be more glad."

"I shouldn't," said Kate positively. "The raisins were the first things, mother, and now that they are found, it makes it all the clearer that she did not touch the ring. I don't believe she would tell the least little bit of a lie to save herself from going off with a policeman to prison this minute; and she is nearly scared out of her senses at the thought of it, too."

"Mag seems to have bewitched you," said

Mrs. Perkins. The next moment both were startled by a scream that seemed to come from Miss Ordway's room.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Perkins, "what has happened now? We seem to have all sorts of things happening to us nowadays. Run, Kate, and see what is the matter."

"It is nothing dreadful," said Kate; "she screamed as though she was surprised, not frightened. Mother, she is coming up-stairs."

Sure enough; in rushed Miss Ordway at that very moment, with a lovely little white wool shawl of delicate pattern trailing from her left shoulder.

"Oh, Mrs. Perkins!" she said, "how sorry I am; and how glad! Where is that poor little mouse of a Mag? Come here, child, this minute!" as Kate Perkins's door across the hall at that moment opened and Mag's grave little face looked out; "come and see what a wicked girl I have been to have thought for a moment that you had anything to do with my missing ring. Look! here is the thief."

As she spoke she held up an end of the white shawl, and there, gleaming from one of the meshes, lay the diamond ring.

"I had the shawl on that very evening," explained Miss Ordway. "I remember feeling a trifle chilly because I had put on a thinner dress, so I wore the wrap down to dinner. I laid it back in the tray of the trunk that night; I remember thinking that it was so very easily soiled that I would not leave it out, but would get something more substantial; and, behold, that naughty ring must have caught hold of one of the loops and hidden itself, just to make trouble. Poor little Mag! your pale face and red eyes have kept me awake nights, though I honestly haven't believed that you had anything to do with the ring's disappearance since we had our talk about it. Now we will have a jubilee over its return. Are you glad, little girl?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mag, with a pale little smile; "I'm very glad that you have your ring again."

In her heart she could not help thinking that one might almost as well be suspected of stealing a ring as of stealing raisins. The ring was safe, but she was thought to be a thief all the same. Kate Perkins, who was beginning to understand the queer little girl whose moods she had been studying for the last few days, said suddenly:

"I can make her more glad. Mag, what do you think? the raisins have been found, too! Norah was just here to say that she had taken out a cupful and hidden them away, and then had gone off and forgotten all about it, until she came across them this morning."

Then indeed did Mag's wan face glow and her eyes sparkle.

"Oh!" she said, clasping her small brown hands, "isn't that just *too* good! Oh, Mrs. Perkins, now you know that I did not take them, and that I told the truth, don't you?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Perkins, "of course. I didn't more than half believe you took them any of the time. I told Miss Ordway

" Miss Ordway gave this to me," she said.

that you had never meddled with anything before."

I suppose in all that great city it would have been hard to find a happier little girl than Mag Jessup for the rest of that day. Even Norah was kind, and gave her a slice of cake stuffed full of raisins; and Mrs. Perkins herself prepared her dinner-plate and put an extra slice of turkey on it, and in various small ways showed that she wanted to atone to the little girl for what she had suffered. It was to Kate Perkins that the child let out the fullness of her joy.

"Oh, Miss Kate," she called, as she was toiling up the stairs that evening, and saw that young lady at the upper landing, "can you please wait just a minute? I want to show you something. What do you think? It has 'worked together for good' already. I didn't have to wait. Everybody is so kind to me; and look at this!" She was hugging to her heart a very handsomely bound Bible that closed with a silver clasp. "Miss Ordway gave me this

for my very own!" she said. "She wrote my name in it: 'Margaret Kane Jessup.' Isn't that lovely? Oh, you can't think how glad I am, because, you know, I am one of God's servants, and this is the Book that tells them what to do. I did not see how to manage without having one, and I didn't think I could ever get it; it is so big."

CHAPTER IX

DISCOVERIES

ALL this time Mag Jessup, despite her many troubles, was hard at work over the book that Fred Ainsworth had lent her. I do not suppose that a student of history ever worked more faithfully than did she. She had a way of studying that many little girls seem to know nothing about. She would not leave a sentence, if she could help it, until she understood what it meant. Sometimes this made hard and slow work, for Mag did not know many words; but it would not be easy to tell how glad she felt when in this way she learned a new one. The very first sentence in her book had held her for a long time. This is it: "If you look at a map of the world, you will see in the left hand upper corner of the Eastern Hemisphere, two

islands lying in the sea. They are England and Scotland, and Ireland."

That seems a simple enough sentence, does it not? But Mag had never seen a map of the world, and had not the least idea what it was. Neither did she understand why the book should say, "*two* islands," and then speak of three places. Moreover, she did not know what an island was. Now you understand something of the work before her. It chanced that Kate Perkins, on the very day that Mag began her book, had occasion to consult an atlas, and to look at the map of the world. Mag almost dropped the glass of water she was carrying, in her excitement, when she heard Kate, who was bending over a big book, say suddenly:

"Oh, the *Western* Hemisphere! What an idiot I am! I have been staring at the Eastern Hemisphere half an hour, trying to find it there."

Dear, dear! If only Mag could "stare at the Eastern Hemisphere" for half a minute, she thought that some of her riddles might be

guessed. After the glass of water was safely landed she hovered near the big book.

"If you please, is that a hemisphere?" she asked timidly.

"Of course," said Kate, who was busy; "don't you see it says so?"

Sure enough! it not only said that, but in large letters at the top of the page, "Map of the World." Now indeed Mag must have just a glimpse. There was no duty for her to fly to at that moment, and the book was large; so by standing rather near Kate and staring with all her might, Mag managed to discover a bright spot that said "England and Scotland," and another that said "Ireland. Only two places and three names! One of the bright spots had two names, then. But what did the word "island" mean? She watched her chance when Kate Perkins raised her head, at last, from the fine print she was studying, and ventured another question.

"Please, Miss Kate, what is an island?"

"Why, it is a body of land surrounded by

water, of course. What a dunce you are, Mag, for a girl of thirteen! Mother," turning her eyes for a moment toward Mrs. Perkins, who had just entered the room, "Mag ought to go to school; she doesn't even know what an island is!"

"Well," said Mrs. Perkins, "she knows what an iron is; and I want her to go and iron towels, instead of chattering to you."

Mag went to the towels at once, with satisfaction on her face. She had discovered England, Scotland and Ireland, and found out what an island was. Why should she not be happy?

But that method of study was necessarily slow. On that first page she encountered the words "solitary," "expanse," "cliff" and "adventures," none of which she knew. She wrote them down carefully on the margin of a newspaper and bided her time.

"If you please, Mr. Frederick," she said to him that evening, "Could I sometime, when you are not using it, look in your dictionary for four words?"

"Certainly," he said with great heartiness "Look in it as often as you like. When you are waiting in the hall for that industrious bell to ring and hear a word that puzzles you, just rush in here and find its meaning. There is no telling how much knowledge you may be able to get by the means."

He laughed at the idea of such a mouse studying the dictionary, and could not know how happy he had made her. Of course, she had not a great deal of time for reading, and, as she read over each page again and again, until she was sure that she understood every word in it, and came constantly to words whose meaning she had to wait for a chance to hunt out, it was not strange that at the end of two weeks she had read only to the tenth page. But when Fred Ainsworth thought of his experiment and questioned her as to how far she had got, he was much disappointed at the answer. Not ten pages in all that time! And he had imagined that she might really plunge through it and find the story parts, and learn something! Then

he called himself an idiot for supposing that such an ignorant little creature as she could care for a history, however simply written; and thought no more about her. But Mag Jessup was really living all the while in a little world of her own. The "girl out of a book," whose company she had enjoyed so much, had made her hungry for other companionship, and in the History of England she found it. In the course of a few weeks, not only Julius Cæsar, but the fair Rowena, with whom the king fell in love, and the good Edwin, King of Northumbria, and Prince Egbert, and Queen Edburga, and a host of others, became her intimate acquaintances. Around the little that the book had to tell about these, she threw the power of her imagination, and acted out in her mind all the good deeds that she could imagine of some of them, and grew white with horror over the crimes of Queen Edburga, for instance. Alfred the Great became her hero, and the number of times she played that she was the cowherd's wife, and King Alfred was set to

watch her cakes, could not be told. Hero though he was, she could not help being sorry that he so far forgot his duty as to let those cakes burn.

I do not know that I can make you understand how entirely this girl of one book made the book a part of her very life. Remember that she was not used to stories, only such as she had been able to imagine for herself, and to have real people brought before her, as they were in this history, to know their names and some of their famous deeds, and to be able to act them out in her own room at night, became a perfect fascination.

There was one thing to be always glad over; that "Little Pillows" had fallen into her hands before the history. Fascinating as this was, it could never take the place of her first dear book. Every night of her life she read and reread a "Pillow." When the month was completed, and she had read them all, she began again, with as much interest as though they were new to her. It is difficult, also, to tell you

how much she learned about God and heaven and her duty, from that one small book. You who have read many books, and who know the story of Jesus coming to earth, and living and dying, and rising from the grave, as well as you know your own names, can hardly understand what it all meant to Mag Jessup. Perhaps, after all, this is the great difference between you. You read a story from the Bible, or elsewhere, and close the book and forget it. Mag read it, and then began to live it. You remember that the very first "Little Pillow" invited her to come to Jesus? It said to her: "Will you not say, 'I am coming, Lord Jesus!' and ask him to stretch out his hand and help you to come, and draw you quite close to himself?" How often have you had the same, or a like, invitation? Mag accepted it. She went down on her knees and said those very words, and meant them, and, of course, Jesus stretched out his hand and helped her. He always does. At the head of every "Pillow" there was a Bible verse, and Mag learned every

one of these. One was, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," and the words that followed explained what it meant. So Mag knew her sins were blotted out, because God said so. There was one that said, "He that keepeth thee will not slumber." Then Mag knew that God would take care of her. There was one that said, "O Lord, thou knowest," and, from the explanation, she learned that he knew every little thing about her, not only what she said and did, but what she thought. Oh, by the time she had read that book through carefully three times, she could have passed a very fair examination on the central truths of religion; as good as you can, my girl, who have been in Sunday-school all your life, and read, as I heard a girl of thirteen say the other day, "more than two hundred books." Mag Jessup could have said something that that girl of thirteen could not: that as fast as she found out a truth she set herself to work to live by it.

Because of these things the little girl's life

had not been entirely miserable, even while she was passing through her trial; and when she discovered that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and then had it proved to her so suddenly, and actually had a whole Bible all her own given to her, there was not to be found in the city, perhaps, a happier girl than Mag Jessup. But new experiences were in store for her.

In the first place, Miss Ordway, who, besides the kindly feeling that she had had from the first toward the lonely little girl, could not help thinking that she owed her a special kindness, because she had been to her the occasion of a special trouble, hit upon a way of showing it that gave Mag much pleasure.

"How well that little brown creature would look in bright colors," she said one day to Fred Ainsworth, as he lingered with her over a new flower she had just finished, and brought down to show him, and Mag passed the door on one of her many errands. "She has just the right complexion for something pink; and her eyes

are bright enough to match it. I think she has lovely eyes."

"She would look well in anything fresh and girlish," grumbled Fred, "and she never has anything. I don't see why Mrs. Perkins wants to make such a guy of her. She is the last creature in the world to wear blue, anyway; and by the time Kate Perkins gets through with her blue things they look more like grey ones. I'd like to see the mouse dressed up once, just for the sake of finding what a difference clothes can make. She ought to be in my Aunt Annie's hands for a little while. My Aunt Annie's an artist in dress, Miss Ordway; she studies my cousin Margaret's clothes as you do a picture, and the result is striking. I suppose poor little Mag will never have anybody to study dress for her. It seems a pity, doesn't it, to see such a young creature as she so alone in the world? My! what I would do if "—— He left the sentence unfinished; but Miss Ordway, who had become quite good friends with him, guessed that it might be: "What I would do if my

mother and father were not coming home next fall." And she could easily see why such a sentence might be left unfinished. The talk set her to thinking. She tossed her head a little over that remark about his Aunt Annie, and said to herself that she guessed there were other artists in dress as well as she. Then she thought of a pretty wrapper that lay in the bottom of her trunk, with a stain on the front breadth that it had been impossible to get out. But it wouldn't be impossible to cut around it; and she had new pieces like the goods; enough, she believed, to make a handsome dress for a little girl. Why shouldn't she please herself by seeing how the child would look in it?

Miss Ordway had been used all her life to pleasing herself; so that very afternoon she got out the wrapper, and the new pieces, and studied them instead of her next flower piece; and went down town and bought a pattern that her skilled eye saw would suit Mag's form and harmonize with the pieces, and before bedtime had the pleasure of having planned out the en-

tire dress. She was a woman of business. Therefore, she took the planned-out dress the next morning to a woman who did plain sewing, and sat for an hour with her, planning and directing. An old dress of Mag's had been secured as guide, and the sewing-woman agreed that there could be no doubt but the pattern would fit "middling well."

The idea grew. Before the dress was ready to be tried on, Miss Ordway had discovered among her laid-away trinkets a roll of brown satin ribbon and a bunch of poppies, and had bought a brown straw hat that matched the ribbon, and concocted out of them all a hat that she knew would look well with the dress. It was drawing towards spring now, and a brown straw hat was just the thing to have. But how horrid they would both look with that old grey sack that was much too large for Mag, and not of the right shape anyway! Miss Ordway happened on Sixteenth street one morning when a special sale of outside garments was announced, and there she found a brown sack so

exactly fitted to the brown hat, and offered for such a ridiculously low price, that it would have been a shame not to have bought it; so she bought it. Then she stopped at the sewing-woman's to find that the dress was ready for the trying on, the woman feeling sure that there would be almost no altering needed. She knew that slip of a girl, had often seen her pass. The waist seams might need a little letting out, but she didn't believe it. That kind of pattern was always made large, giving them room to grow. So now everything was ready for a grand surprise. Miss Ordway left the hat and sack at the sewing-woman's and agreed to call with Mag that very Saturday afternoon, if she could, in the hope that she could transform her and carry her home to show Mr. Fred Ainsworth that she too, was "an artist in dress."

CHAPTER X

SURPRISES

BEFORE the noon of that eventful Saturday, Mag Jessup's head was so completely turned by the surprise that had come to her as to make Norah, who was in her usual Saturday temper, say contemptuously that she might as well depend upon a cabbage-head to help her! The surprise was simply that Miss Ordway had invited the little girl to take a walk with her that afternoon, and Mrs. Perkins had given permission.

"She is going to her dressmaker's," Mrs. Perkins explained, "and she wants you to go along and bring home a bundle for her."

Even such an outing as this was a treat to Mag. She had errands in abundance to do, but most of them were at the branch grocery, on the corner of the avenue, for little things that had been forgotten in the day's order. Or else

to the branch furnishing store for buttons, or thread, or tape, or such commonplaces. Nearly always she was in a hurry, and had to run just as she was, in her work-dress. But on this afternoon she was to put on her best dress and walk with Miss Ordway down any street that she chose to take, "exactly," said Mag gleefully to herself, "as if I were a girl in a book!" What if the main object was to have a bundle brought home? Miss Ordway might have sent her for it in a hurry, between daylight and dark, instead of taking her with her.

If so small a matter could make Mag happy, what was it, do you think, to be invited to try on a dress that was brighter and handsomer than any she had ever touched, and had "lovely new trimming on it!" Mag doubted her own ears when the order came, and looked from one woman to the other in a bewilderment that was almost painful.

"Dear me!" said the dressmaker, "it will have to be taken in, after all. What a mouse she is, to be sure! Well, Miss Ordway, I left

the seams on purpose, you know, and I can have it ready within an hour's time."

"Very well," said Miss Ordway, "then we will do our other errands and come back for it. The dress is for a little girl of the same size as yourself," she said, turning to Mag with a smile; "do you think she will like it?"

"Oh, ma'am," said Mag, her cheeks aglow, "she can't help but like it; it is just lovely!"

"And it will be right becoming to her, too," said the dressmaker with a wise nod.

Miss Ordway was a little disappointed, because she had hoped that the dress would fit exactly, and she could take her charge in new garments to the Art Gallery, where she meant to spend an hour. She thought of letting her wear the new hat and sack, as Mag's little old felt hat, of a shape and color that had never fitted her, looked worse than ever on this bright, springlike day. But the lady decided, after taking a critical survey, that the blue dress Mag wore, which was much too long for her, and had faded in streaks, would look even

worse if the new hat and sack were placed in its company. So she took her just as she was.

"You seem to like pictures so well that I'm going to take you to look at some worth seeing," she said to Mag when they were on the street again. "Have you ever been to an art gallery?"

Mag never had; nor anywhere else, she might have added, save to a few stores and shops on errands.

Miss Ordway watched the girl with no little interest as they wandered through the world of pictures. She was curious to see what effect such splendid works of art would have on the untrained little creature, who yet seemed to know by a sort of instinct which among her own collection of paintings had the best work put on it. But she was not prepared for the surprise that Mag gave her. They were in the historical room, through which the lady had meant to pass in haste; nothing there could hold the attention of a child like Mag. Yet the

girl stopped suddenly before one large canvas, her cheeks and eyes aglow, her lips parted, and a sort of wondering delight in her eager look. Miss Ordway waited just behind her, and watched and wondered. She could see nothing on the canvas that should hold a child. At last the girl turned in search of her and asked her eager question:

"Oh, Miss Ordway, can these be the men from Calais? I think it must be. See! the ropes are around their necks, and there is the Queen kneeling, and King Edward looking as though he did not know what to do. Isn't it King Edward, Miss Ordway?"

"Upon my word, I do not know," said Miss Ordway, very much astonished. "Which King Edward do you mean?"

"Why, the one who saved the lives of the six men he had ordered to come to him from Calais, with ropes around their necks; they brought the keys of the castle and the town, you know; and King Edward said to the Queen when she went on her knees to him to save

them: 'I wish you were somewhere else; but I can not refuse you.'"

"Really," said Miss Ordway, with a pleasant laugh, "I shall have to rub up my knowledge of English history if I am to take walks with you. Where did you learn all that, child? I did not suppose you so much as knew that there had been any kings of England."

"It is in my book," said Mag simply. "Don't you remember my history of England that I told you Mr. Frederick lent me?"

"And you have made such good use of it that you recognize the characters when you see their pictures, do you? I think you must be right; let us see. Yes, you have named the scene correctly," she added, after a moment's reference to her catalogue. "I certainly think Mr. Frederick has reason to be proud of his pupil. A wise man once said: 'Beware of the man of one book.' If he had known you, he could have said: 'Beware of the little girl of one book.'"

Mag looked at her with a wistful, question-

ing gaze in her large eyes. It was clear that she did not understand.

"He meant," said Miss Ordway, kindly, "that the man who read and studied one book a great deal would after a time, come to know so much about it that people who talked with him would need to take care lest they appear very ignorant."

"Oh," said Mag, with a happy smile, "I have two books now, Miss Ordway, of my very own. My lovely, beautiful Bible! Every night before I go to sleep I hug it and kiss it. And I read in it every day. When I have read it through, I am going to begin at the beginning and read it again. Miss Ordway"—with the thoughtful look that was very noticeable in Mag spreading suddenly over her face—"is it wrong, do you think, to play Bible?"

"To *play* Bible!" repeated Miss Ordway, in great bewilderment; "that is an idea quite beyond me. Just what does it mean?"

"Why," said Mag, the ready flush coming into her face, "to make it into play,

you know; as one can do with English history. I can play that the kings and queens were there, and use my chair for a throne, and the window-seat for a platform, and go through all the talks as they did. And I like to do it with the Bible, but I wasn't sure it would be right."

"How could you manage it with the Bible?" asked Miss Ordway, trying not to smile. "That would be harder than the history of England, would it not?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. I take the flower-picture you gave me and set it on my table, and put the pressed flowers fastened to a paper that you said you didn't want any more, at one side, and an orange that Miss Kate gave me on the other, and I play that that is the garden of Eden. There is a picture of a man that I cut out of the paper, for Adam, and I"—this with a slight hesitation and a heightening of the pink on her cheeks —"can be Eve, you know; and the orange is the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil.'"

Then Miss Ordway laughed outright; she could not help it, despite the fact that poor Mag's eyes began to lose their brightness in a film of tears. The lady hastened to recover herself, and spoke quickly:

"You poor, lonely little mouse! No, I can not see why there should be any harm in playing it all out as much as you please. But I shouldn't think you would like to be Eve; she did such grave mischief."

"Did she?" Nothing was plainer than that Mag had not yet caught the fact that through Adam and Eve came all the trouble that sin causes in this world.

"I thought of that," she added gravely, "and I did not like to play all the time that I was Eve, but there was nobody else, you know. And she didn't do any worse than people do now, did she? People who do not try to obey God. Mr. Frederick said there were lots of folks who didn't care anything about obeying him; and didn't think anything about it; they just kept on disobeying, day after

day. That is being worse than Eve was, isn't it?"

The conversation was getting too close for Miss Ordway. "I don't know but it is," she said frankly. "It is certain anyway that you are a queer little mouse. I presume it will do no harm for you to keep on playing you are she; for I suspect she was sorry enough for her folly, afterwards."

"I'm not Eve all the time," explained Mag; "there are others, you know. Sometimes I am Sarah; but then she told a lie! I haven't found any real nice people yet that I would like to be, all the time. But I haven't got far in the book. I think I will come to some one." It would be hard to put into words an idea of the disappointment and hope that were marked in Mag's tones.

Miss Ordway laughed again; she could not help it; there was such a funny side to this revelation.

"I don't know," she said. "I am afraid if you are in search of a character to represent one

who never does wrong, you will have to take some angel. But I must say I think your way of reading the Bible is very interesting. I don't know as much about it as I ought. Perhaps if I had thought to try that way of studying it, I might have been wiser. But, do you know that we are spending a large part of our hour on this "Siege of Calais," and not seeing any of the pictures I brought you to look at?"

* * * * * * *

"We shall have to ring," said Miss Ordway two hours later, as she and her companion reached Mrs. Perkins's door. "I left my latch-key in the pocket of the dress I wore this morning. How do you suppose we shall get in, since you are not there to open the door?"

This began to be a question of some interest. After long waiting it was Mrs. Perkins who let them in.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long," she said; "the girls are all busy, and I forgot that Mag was out. What has become of her, Miss Ordway? Did you send her home

alone? If you did, she has not appeared yet?"

"Here she is," said Miss Ordway, her eyes dancing over this tribute to Mag's changed appearance.

Then did Mrs. Perkins stare! What a wonderful difference a becoming dress and hat and sack could make, to be sure!

"Well, really!" she said at last, trying to recover from her amazement. "I should not have known the child if I had met her on the street. 'Fine feathers make fine birds'; the old proverb is true enough. But I hope you will not spoil the child, Miss Ordway. She has her own living to earn, with nobody to help her, and can hardly afford to dress like that."

"It is very simple dressing," said Miss Ordway; "the dress is made of a wrapper of mine that I could not wear any longer, and is no more expensive goods than the dress that Mag had on was when it was new; and the hat and sack are very cheap. It is simply because the colors and the shape of the garments suit

Mag's face and form that they have made such a change in her appearance."

"Upon my word," said Fred Ainsworth, joining Miss Ordway, as they came up from dinner, "I believe you are a witch. I met that small mouse that I used to call 'Mag' in the hall leading to the dining-room, and did not know her. She tells me you have been waving the wand of your enchantment over her. Who would have imagined that a dress that came within a few feet of fitting her, and that was becomingly made, could create such a difference?"

"It is the color, chiefly," said Miss Ordway, laughing; "the child never had on anything but blue until to-day; and blue, as you said, is the color, of all others, that she can not wear. But don't mention clothes, please. I have had such a surprise this afternoon as it will take me months to recover from. While the dress was being finished it suited my mood to take my charge to the art gallery, and show her some of the wonders there. What do you suppose

she stopped over, with eyes aglow and her face speaking volumes, and presently poured out questions concerning it—no, not questions; information in the form of questions? 'Was that really King Edward, and the Queen on her knees? And those men with the ropes around their necks? Why they must surely be the six men from Calais?' Imagine it!"

"Where in the name of all that is bewildering did that chicken ever hear of the six men of Calais?" asked Frederick.

"The idea of your not knowing, when you are the original cause! Mag says you lent her the History of England, and, judging from what I heard this afternoon, I think she must be committing it to memory. More than that, she is adapting it to the stage, and acting it out in daily life. She confesses to me that she is by turns queen, and lady's maid, and what not! Oh, and more than that, her personations are a trifle mixed. What do you think of her becoming Eve, on occasion, and actually eating the forbidden fruit?"

"What?"

An outburst of laughter, and then the two sat down together in the back parlor, and Miss Ordway went over the experiences of the afternoon.

"She is a queer little bit of creation," said Frederick. "I discovered that, the first time I ever said a dozen words to her. It is an awful shame, Miss Ordway, that she should not have an opportunity to study. She ought to be in school, instead of dancing attendance on door-bells, and being made a drudge for Norah. I wish my father and mother were at home and I would see if something could not be done for her. She is thirteen years old, small as she is; and a perfect little dunce."

"No, she is not!" said Miss Ordway, with a positive little nod. "I'll venture to say that she is better posted in English history, so far as she has gone, than any girl of her age in this city. And now that she has got started, see if she does not make her way, notwithstanding her lack of opportunities. Still, as you say, it

is a pity that she should not have some. Is Mrs. Perkins going to take her to the country with her this summer?"

"I presume so," Frederick said gloomily; "to shell peas, and pick berries, and drudge. It is a dreadful shame! I don't understand how a woman can think she is doing her duty by an orphan child simply by giving her decent clothes and something to eat."

"It is too late in the season to accomplish much," said Miss Ordway, "but by next fall a way ought certainly to be made for a girl like her to be in school. Let us keep it in mind, Frederick, and see what we can do."

CHAPTER XI

NEW IDEAS

IT might have been the new dress and hat and sack that helped, or it might have been because Mr. Fred Ainsworth had been coaxed into making a positive promise that he would come around to the church on the "'Square" that evening and attend the young people's meeting. Or it might have been that his conscience troubled him for leaving that prayer of poor little Mag's so long unanswered. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that he determined to take Mag Jessup with him to the meeting she so longed for. That is, if Mrs. Perkins's consent could be gained. That was not easy of accomplishment.

"Why, I don't know," said Mrs. Perkins, doubtfully, and her face looked more than doubtful. "Oh, I could spare her, of course;

it isn't that," spoken loftily. "Mag's services are not so important that it makes very much difference where she is, especially at that hour of the night; but, Mr. Frederick, I have done what I could, so far, to bring her up respectably; I don't believe in little girls being out on the streets, evenings, and I've never allowed it; and if you break through my rule and begin with her, who knows where it will end?"

"But, surely, Mrs. Perkins," said Frederick, and there was a slightly indignant tone to his voice, "a little girl may be allowed to go to church on Sunday evening, provided there is some responsible older person who is willing to go along and take care of her. I did not intend to run away and leave her on the street unprotected."

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Perkins, and she tried to make her voice pleasanter; "but the fact is, I have to be very careful; since I am the only real protector the child has, I feel the responsibility, and if Miss Ordway and you, between you, put notions into her head that can not be

carried out, why, it will be the worse for her, as well as for me."

Frederick was still indignant. "Let us hope, Mrs. Perkins," he said, "that allowing a child to go to a prayer-meeting occasionally, under proper care, will not put any notions into her head that will injure her."

Then Mrs. Perkins decided that it would be wise to let Mag Jessup go to prayer-meeting. Frederick Ainsworth's family were too valuable patrons to lose, and if Mr. Frederick was a boy who took "notions," it was better to humor him.

Therefore it was that Mag Jessup, at half-past six of that wonderful Sunday evening, arrayed in her new bright dress and hat and sack, with a pair of silk gloves added, that Miss Ordway had discovered among her boxes, and which were not *very* much too large in the fingers, walked demurely down the street beside Frederick Ainsworth, who was half provoked with himself for doing it, yet could not but be amused over the sparkle in Mag's eyes,

and the evident tremor of delight which the little girl was in.

"She beats the little girl in the country on the way to the circus!" he muttered, remembering his last summer's experience.

It can not be said that he was a very companionable protector. On the plea that they were late, he hurried Mag along almost breathlessly, and said not a dozen words to her until the large, plain building at the Square was reached. It was true that they were late; as the outer door opened, a burst of song greeted Mag's hungry ears. Always afterwards she remembered the words that welcomed her

> "There is music in my soul to-day,
> A carol to my King;
> And Jesus, listening, can hear
> The songs I can not sing."

Never had the lonely little girl's heart been so full of song; a new world seemed to be opening to her. Being a very bird for music, before she was fairly seated and an open book had been

passed into her hands, by a young man who seemed to be watching to perform this service for all new-comers, she had joined in the ringing chorus:

"Oh, there's sunshine, blessed sunshine,
While the peaceful, happy moments roll;
When Jesus shows his smiling face,
There is sunshine in my soul."

I do not know that it would be possible to tell you how that meeting impressed poor little Mag. If you can think how you would feel if you had never been to a young people's meeting in your life, and when you were about thirteen years old had suddenly been introduced into a large, bright room, full even to the very back seats with girls and boys; with flowers on the pulpit, and flowers on the piano, and a burst of song from many throats just filling the house, you can, perhaps, imagine something of what it was to Mag Jessup. She wondered afterwards why it was that for a moment her eyes grew so dim that she could hardly see,

and a lump seemed to come in her throat. Actually, she was so happy that it almost made her faint!

Following the singing came the reading of a single Bible verse, or part of a verse: "And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

"You all know," said the fair-faced leader, who, to Mag's intense surprise, was a young girl not very much older than herself, "that this is our missionary evening, and our topic is 'The Tenth.' I am not going to take much time; I just want to say since I adopted Jacob's motto, and began to give the tenth of everything, that I have a great deal nicer time than I did before. When missionary Sunday came, I used always to be anxious. I did not know whether I could spare even a penny to give, and sometimes I had not a penny left; and it used to worry me so that I often wished we did not have missionary Sunday, and I did not have to keep thinking about giving. But now I really like to go to my tenth box and take out

a piece of money for the missionary collection, and know that I haven't got to study over it and decide whether or not I can spare it, because it already *belongs*. If there were no other reason for giving in this way, than the comfort one can have in it, I should vote for it. Now we want words from those who have tried it, as to how they succeed, and what they think of the plan."

Then followed witness after witness, declaring that the plan of giving a tenth to God had been tried by them, and proved helpful and in every way delightful. One girl especially, with a sweet face and a wonderfully clear voice, interested her hearers.

"Most of you know," she said, "that I have very little indeed to give, in money. It isn't often that even a ten-cent piece that I can call my very own gets into my hands. At first I thought I could not join the 'Tenth Legion' on this account; but one day, when I was studying my Sunday-school lesson, it came to me that one can give *time* as well as money. So

I counted up the hours in my day and divided them by ten, and I found that I had an hour and a half each day that I ought to give to Jesus. It made me very happy; only first I could not think of anything I could do that might be called work for him; but when I began to watch and plan, I found there were ever so many things waiting to be done. Now, the hour and a half is not long enough for what I plan to do, and I never was so happy in doing, in my life before."

Of all the people who listened to words like these, none were so intensely interested, and for a time so bewildered, as Mag Jessup. As she read very slowly in her Bible, and often re-read the verses for the night, so as to make quite sure that she understood them as well as it was possible to understand without help, she had not yet reached Jacob's story, and the motto was therefore, quite new to her. Still the words were plain enough: "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Mag had never studied arithmetic,

and knew nothing about fractions. Still, she had a fair share of what we call common sense, and, before many persons had spoken, she gathered that "one-tenth" meant a certain part of whatever one had. The idea of giving to God at all was entirely new to her. All her knowledge of him was connected with his giving to her. But it was a very pleasant thought; her eyes shone over it.

"It is just like a little girl making presents to her father," she said to herself; "she takes the money he gives her and gets a present for him with it, because she loves him, and he likes to have her do it. How *lovely* in God to let people do so!"

You will notice that little Mag had a strange way of thinking about God. It was because she had never been taught by any one how to speak. All her knowledge of God was learned from her one book, "Little Pillows," and the few Bible verses she knew, and the few chapters she had read, and by prayer. The result was that she constantly thought of him in much the

same way that she would of some strong, grand human friend.

All through that beautiful meeting the talking and the praying, and even the singing, had to do with the one subject, "The Tenth"—the importance of it, the duty of it, the joy of it—until Mag, listening as, it is safe to say, no other person listened there that night, knew at the close much more than she had when she entered.

A very short meeting it seemed to her. When, at last, they arose and sang,

"God be with you till we meet again,"

sweet as the words were, and much as she wanted to read them all, her eyes kept burning with tears; she was so very, very sorry that it was all getting done. But then, when they bowed their heads and prayed this prayer, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another," Mag was comforted. She had never heard that prayer before; she never forgot it. For the first time

in her life she had felt herself prayed for. "Between me and thee," what could that mean but the leader and each one present? And the leader at that time was the minister; then the *minister* had prayed for her!

Half a dozen people gathered about Frederick Ainsworth. "So glad to see you to-night, Fred!" "Good for you, Frederick! come again." "Oh, Mr. Ainsworth, won't you be sure to come next Sunday night? It is our temperance meeting, and we want to have an extra good time." These were some of the greetings. Everybody seemed to know him. He bethought himself once, and, turning to look for Mag, said:

"Helen, speak to the mouse that I have in charge. It is little Mag Jessup from our house." And then a bright-faced girl with merry eyes leaned toward her for a moment and said carelessly. "How do you do? I am glad to see you," and turned at once back to Mr. Frederick, and did not know then, and perhaps never will know or imagine, what an opportunity she

had to speak a few words of kindness to one of the Lord's own little ones. Not that she was not kind enough; she was simply careless.

"I wonder what Fred Ainsworth thought I could say to that little Jessup girl," she said to her friend on the way home. "I know the little thing; she is errand-girl at the Perkins's, the boarding-house, you know. It was funny for Fred to bring her, wasn't it? But he is a real good-natured boy. I never know what to say to girls like that." And then Miss Helen Westervelt, who had been one of the witnesses to the joy of giving a tenth to the Lord, thought no more about Mag Jessup. It would not have taken a sixteenth part of an hour to have spoken a word to Mag that might have helped her through all the rest of her life.

Mr. Fred Ainsworth had to talk during the walk home. Mag was overflowing with questions that demanded replies of some sort.

"Who is Jacob, Mr. Frederick?"

"Jacob? I did not see any person to-night by that name, so far as I know."

"No, but the man they talked about; who made that promise. They called it his motto: 'Jacob's motto.'"

"Oh! Why, that is a Bible character. Jacob was—let me see—well, for one thing, he was Isaac's son."

"Oh, is he?" said Mag, well pleased; "then I shall get to him very soon; I know Isaac. But, Mr. Frederick, just what is a tenth?"

"It is a *tenth,* of course!" said Frederick, laughing. "You are not up on figures, are you? Never mind, some day you will have a chance to learn. Suppose you had ten apples." Mag caught her breath over the thought of such wealth, but waited in eager silence.

"And you should give one of them to me; then you would have given me a tenth of all your apples. Do you understand?"

"I thought that must be it!" said Mag in intense satisfaction. "Then, Mr. Frederick, if I had a dollar, a whole dollar, and took Jacob's motto, I would give ten cents of it to the Lord?"

"That's it exactly; you are not a bad mathematician, after all. How did you work that out?"

"Mrs. Perkins gave me a dollar, once, and sent me to the store to get it changed into ten-cent pieces; and I counted them over a great many times to make sure that I had a dollar's worth. I thought of that when they were talking to-night, and it seemed as though that must be what a tenth meant. I don't suppose I shall ever have a dollar, but once I had ten cents of my very own; but Mr. Frederick"——

"Yes, I am all attention."

"What if I should, some time, have ten cents again. How could I give a penny to God. I mean, how do people give money to him? He doesn't need any *money!* And if he did, how could we get it to him?"

"What an ignorant little creature it is!" That was Fred Ainsworth's first thought; the second was: "What an ignorant hulk I am! How am I to explain to her what it means?" Then he tried.

"Why, Mag, you know about missions, don't you? There are people who live away off in heathen lands, where they don't know anything about God; and people in this country, for that matter, who are ignorant of him; well, more than that, people who are hungry and cold and homeless; certainly you know such?"

"Oh, yes," said Mag; "there is Sally who comes every Monday for cold pieces, and who sometimes cries because her feet are so dreadfully cold."

"Very well; and Mrs. Perkins fills her basket; perhaps she gives away a tenth of her food, for all that I know. That is what it means."

He was conscious that he was a poor teacher. Mag was silent, but if he could have seen her face he would have found great perplexity. After a minute she ventured a timid question:

"But Mr. Frederick, they talked about giving to *God*."

"Well?"

"And Mrs. Perkins only gives to Sally."

"Ah! I see. Why, Mag, it amounts to the same thing. He counts it so, you understand. Hold on, there is a Bible verse I used to know that will explain it: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it to me.' That was what Jesus said; and by 'the least' he meant the poorest and lowest and meanest —Sally and her tribe, for instance."

Then it is a pity that he could not have seen Mag's face; it was radiant.

"Did he truly say such words!" she murmured. "Does he love people like that!"

There was silence for several minutes. Frederick Ainsworth felt that he had no reply to make to that last question; and, indeed, Mag's tone indicated that it needed no answer; she was evidently just exclaiming over the greatness of the thought. But she began again.

"Mr. Frederick, I haven't a bit of money, nor anything to eat except what belongs to Mrs. Perkins, and she says I have no right to give it away, and, of course, I haven't; how could I give a tenth?"

Mr. Frederick laughed a little. "A puzzling question, I will admit!" he said. "I guess you would better wait until you get hold of something that belongs to you."

"I was wondering. You know that girl told about giving a tenth of her time. I do have a little time every day that I suppose belongs to me; times when I sit in the hall and wait, you know; and often a little while in the evening; if there was only something that I could do then, for God." Oh, the wistfulness of Mag's tone! "Couldn't you help me think of something, Mr. Frederick?"

Frederick Ainsworth did not laugh, and he made no answer for several seconds; then he said in a voice that sounded a trifle strange: "I'm afraid I'm not *up* in that kind of thing, Mag. You need a better teacher."

CHAPTER XII

PEAS AND PICNICS

MARGARET LANCASTER moved slowly down the stairs, crossed the wide hall, passed through the dining-room, and came out on the back piazza. She looked as fresh as the summer morning in a dress of pale blue muslin, with dainty lace at neck, and ruffled sleeves. Her pretty hair, that was almost the color of sunshine, curled about her neck and made damp little rings of itself on her temples. If it had not been for a look of discontent on her face, every one who noticed her would have been sure that she was pretty. The lines of ill-humor, or whatever feeling it was that caused them, were more strongly marked this morning than usual.

Mag Jessup was sitting on the steps with a great basket of green peas at her feet, and a small pan in her lap, from which she was shell-

ing industriously. Margaret crossed to her side and stood looking down on her for a few minutes in silence.

"Do you like to do that?" she asked at last.

Mag gave a little start, as though her thoughts had come back from a long journey, and said:

"The peas, do you mean? Oh, yes'm—very much."

"I should think it would be awfully stupid work; baskets and pans full of them, all just alike, and all having to be popped and rolled out; I hate anything that goes on and *on* without any end."

Mag laughed pleasantly. "These have an end," she said; "Norah means that the last one of them shall be boiling before very long."

"They are all just exactly alike," repeated Margaret, discontentedly. "If I had been going to make peas, I would have had some of them square, and some oblong, and all sorts of shapes and colors, just to give a little relief; I don't suppose you know what I mean."

"Oh, yes'm," said Mag, a bit timidly; "I know oblongs; I found the word in my reading, and looked in the dictionary for it, and I made some oblongs out of pea-pods, and some squares and triangles; but I don't think peas would be handy, made in that way; they wouldn't lie nicely together in the kettle to boil, and would take up a great deal more room."

Margaret gave a half-scornful little laugh. "You are a queer girl!" she said. "I wonder where Mrs. Perkins picked you up? Do you have to shell all the peas that are eaten in this house?"

"Almost all of them; sometimes Miss Kate helps me when the gardener is late with them; and once Miss Ordway came down and helped me for quite awhile; but I almost always do them alone."

"Do they make you talk like that all the time?"

"Like what?" asked Mag, looking up in surprise.

"Why, saying 'Miss Kate' to Kate Perkins;

she is nothing but a girl, and a boarding- house-keeper's daughter at that. I should think you would call her 'Kate,' as the others do."

Mag had no answer to this that she cared to make, so there was silence for some seconds; then Margaret began again:

"You make your fingers go fast, I must say; what a lot you have shelled since I stood here! I don't suppose it is shelling peas and such things that make your hands so brown, is it?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; they were always brown; the sun makes them worse, I suppose, when I pick berries, you know; but brown is the color that belongs to them."

Margaret laughed. "No, it isn't, you little goosie!" she said. "If you had a chance to take care of them, they would be white like that space below the line of the dress you have been wearing; this one is lower necked and shows the white below. You are awfully tanned, neck and face as well as hands and arms; but, of course, it doesn't signify. And so you are quite

willing to keep on shelling peas all your life?"

"No," said literal Mag, thoughtfully; "I shouldn't like to do it all my life, and do nothing else. I should be willing though to shell some peas every summer. It isn't such very stupid work, now that I have thought to make it into a kind of play."

"Play! How on earth can you make a play out of shelling peas?"

"Why," said Mag, a little pink flush spreading over her face, as it always did when she tried to tell anything about herself, "I make believe they are people. Sometimes I have them little children, ever so many, oh, hundreds and thousands of them, all dressed up fresh and clean, and going in great wagons for a picnic in the woods. They all come from the city, where there are no woods, and they don't have picnics; and I play that the pods are the cars that they came in, and I pop them out of the cars into the great hay-wagon—like that one they used for the school-children the other

day—and I get so eager and excited, helping them all out and getting them safely into the hay-wagon, that I almost forget that they are peas. Then when Norah takes a pan of them away and gives me another one, I say to myself: 'Oh, here is another hay-wagon all ready! I was afraid there wouldn't be room for all to go!'"

Mag had by this time become so interested in her account as to almost forget who was her listener, until Margaret suddenly interrupted by a laugh that some way did not sound sweet, as all laughter should.

"The idea!" she said. "If that doesn't sound for all the world like a half-witted creature; or a crazy one; it is really more like the talk of insane people. If you don't take care, they will be carrying you off to the county house for a crazy pauper. I wonder if you would make play out of that? Well, go on. What else do you make believe?"

But Mag was silenced; not for the world would she have told this contemptuous Mar-

garet another word about the picnic. Whatever happened to the children after that she would have to imagine for herself.

"What a disagreeable little thing you are!" Margaret said at last, having tried in vain to get any more of the story; "and what a pokey place this is! I wish Fred Ainsworth had been in France with his father and mother before he coaxed my aunt to come out here instead of going to Asbury Park, as I wanted to. I wonder where Fred is? Have you seen him since breakfast?"

"I think he has gone to the grove with Thomas; at least, Thomas has gone to see about a good place to build the tables for the picnic; and, when he drove up just after breakfast, Mr. Frederick was in the wagon with him."

"Mercy! gone away out to the grove. Why, they won't get back until afternoon. That is just like Fred, coax me out to this backwoods and then run off and leave me to pass the time away as best I can. Why do you call him 'Mr. Frederick'? Did he tell you to do that?"

"No, ma'am; but Mrs. Perkins did; she said that was the way that little girls should speak of young gentlemen like him."

"Young gentlemen!" mimicked Margaret, with another laugh that jarred. "The idea of calling Fred Ainsworth a young gentleman! He is nothing but a boy, and a very tiresome one, sometimes, if he is my own cousin. To be sure, he is a few years older than I; but then girls grow up a great deal faster than boys. How old are you?"

"I will be fourteen in December," said Mag.

"The idea! I don't believe it. You are just hoaxing."

"I don't know what that word means," said Mag, with quiet dignity; "but I know I always tell the truth. I will be fourteen the seventh day of December."

"Well, if I ever saw such a little runt in my life! Stand up here and let me see how much taller I am. More than a head, and I am not tall for my age. Why, Mag Jessup, you are older than I am; and look at the difference! I

should think you would want to go to school and learn things, and not be such a dunce at your age; but I suppose you couldn't do it if you wanted to ever so much. Haven't you any folks of your own at all?"

Mag shook her head, and the peas suddenly danced before her eyes through a mist made of tears that wanted to come. Sometimes it seemed *too* dreadful to this lonely little girl that she had "no folks at all."

"Well," said Margaret, after a moment's silence, "then I suppose it doesn't matter much about your knowing things. Servants do not have to be educated, and you will have to be a servant, I presume, always. They are very good, useful people, I am sure."

This she said with an honest desire to comfort the little brown girl whose eyes she saw were dimmed with unshed tears. Then she murmured once more that she did wish Fred Ainsworth had known enough to stay at home and amuse her; it was the least he could have done after bringing her to such a barbarous

place. After that she sauntered off and lounged in the hammock under the chestnut-trees with a book.

Mag Jessup finished her peas and carried them to Norah; her face was grave, and during all the rest of the shelling she knew in her sorrowful little heart that they were *peas,* and not happy children in fresh dresses being tumbled into fragrant hay-carts. Having parted company with them, she set the tables in the great dining-room, and rubbed the silver, and scraped the potatoes, and polished the glasses, and did dozens of other very useful things, without once attempting to make the silver into English lords and ladies, with the kitchen knives for their servants, nor considering the polished glasses great pearls and diamonds that the lords and ladies were to wear. They were just dishes, and she was a servant, and was always to be a servant. That part was not so hard to poor Mag as the information that servants did not have to know things. Down deep in the heart of this little girl was a desire

to know things. To go to school, sometime, and become almost as wise, perhaps, as Mr. Frederick himself. Of course, it would take years and *years,* but she had actually allowed her mind to dream much in that direction. She did not hint to Margaret Lancaster that she, the young woman who was helping all those children into the hay-wagons, was actually their teacher, who had come to the country with them for the purpose of caring for and giving them pleasure! She would not for the world have breathed the great secret, yet this was really the height to which her imagination had led her. And now, behold, she was always to be a servant, and servants did not have to be educated! She considered that problem all the while she was polishing the glasses. She was painfully afraid that Margaret Lancaster was right. Norah was not educated; she had asked her, once, something about Queen Elizabeth, and she had declared that she never heard of her, and didn't believe there was any such queen. Jane, the chamber-maid, had stood her

test no better; and as for Joe, he could not even read! The more Mag thought about it, the more sorrowful she grew. Perhaps servants ought not to be educated; and perhaps God had planned that she should be a servant. Life certainly had many hard places for poor Mag. Only that morning, sitting among the children, helping them from the cars into that splendid shining wagon, she had been so happy, and had assured herself earnestly that some day, when she knew a great deal and had earned a lot of money, she would bring a carload of children to the country, and do just these lovely things for them; and then Margaret Lancaster had come and put out her sunshine.

It was August, and Mrs. Perkins had been at her country boarding house since the first of June. Quite a number of her city boarders had come with her. Among them, much to his disappointment, Frederick Ainsworth himself; that is, he was disappointed that his father and mother, instead of returning home that spring, as he had hoped, must still remain abroad. But

if he must board, he preferred Mrs. Perkins to making new acquaintances, and the out and out country, as he called it, rather than any famous seaside resort. So he had coaxed his Aunt Helen, with whom vacations were to be spent until his parents returned, to come to Riverview Cottage with Mrs. Perkins. This was, as has been seen, much to his Cousin Margaret's disgust. She wanted to go, instead, to the Revere House at Asbury Park, and never wearied of telling Frederick what fun it had been, last summer, to sit in the parlors during the "hops" and watch the dancers. His Cousin Margaret was also in charge of her Aunt Helen, for her mother was abroad, seeking health for an invalid son. So Aunt Helen, besides her own little daughter Natalie, had the care of Margaret and Frederick for the season. Little Mag Jessup would have been astonished over the idea that any one should have to care for "Mr. Frederick," but the truth was that his Aunt Helen considered him quite a respon-

sibility, and was often anxious about his future.

Miss Ordway was also for a few weeks at Riverview Cottage, and expected, in a very few days, certain friends of hers, toward whose coming Margaret Lancaster was looking with the deepest interest. She had confided to Mag Jessup the news that they were very rich, and had magnificent clothes, and no end of jewelry, and had been abroad for years. Mag rejoiced in all these things. She loved to look at people who wore pretty clothes, and she loved the sparkle of jewels, and she rejoiced, above all things, in the thought that she should see people who had "been abroad." For she had learned that "abroad" meant, perhaps, the places where all her dear lords and ladies in the English history lived and flourished. What could not people who had actually been there tell her about them, if only she could manage to ask a few questions, or, perhaps, overhear their talk when they were telling others? Besides these

old acquaintances and expected friends, there were a dozen other boarders; most of them quiet, elderly ladies, who liked Riverview Cottage because it was quiet. Margaret Lancaster disliked it for that very reason, although there were two or three pleasant young fellows of her Cousin Frederick's age, and a couple of pleasant girls a year or two older than herself. For some reason that Mag Jessup did not understand, Miss Margaret did not take kindly to these young people, and openly announced that she "hoped with all her heart" the expected comers would not be "so stupid."

No wonder Mag had planned a picnic for her thousands of little city children, for the air was full of picnic plans. Hay-wagons, too, were to be called into service. The very next day the young people from the cottage were invited to join a party of young people from the village, and drive to a certain bend in the river, near which was a lovely grove of wide-spreading trees, and a natural table made of stone, upon which to spread the good things they

would take thither in baskets; to say nothing of numberless "easy chairs," "settees," "cozy corners," and any other pet name one chose to give the seats that had, at some time in the long ago, apparently been hewn out of solid rock. It required some imagination to see a strong resemblance always to easy chairs and "cushions"; but Mag Jessup, who longed exceedingly to get a view of the enchanted spot, and who never could get time to tramp the five miles and view it for herself, found no difficulty in imagining just how the stone furniture looked, and indeed would have been able to people the rocks with kings and queens and dukes of the long ago if she had been called upon.

Poor Mag! the nearest she expected to come to the picnic was to seed the raisins and beat the eggs for the cakes that were being made for the occasion, and do a hundred other small things toward their getting ready. Of course, no one thought of such a thing as Mag Jessup going to the picnic. Mag looked with much awe upon Margaret Lancaster because she curled her lip

at the whole affair, and pronounced it "country to the last degree!" What wonderful things must Margaret have enjoyed if she could despise such a day's pleasure as this! Such was Mag Jessup's reasoning.

CHAPTER XIII

WHITE DRESSES

THE picnic party, those of them who went from Mrs. Perkins's house, had just been directed to be ready to start "in fifteen minutes at the outside," when Harry Porter came hurrying across the meadow and bounded up the piazza stairs two steps at a time to speak to Margaret Lancaster and her cousin Fred Ainsworth.

"Neelie Saunders isn't well enough to go," he said, making pauses between his words to catch his breath; "that leaves a vacant seat, and I rushed over as fast as I could gallop to see what you would all think of letting that little girl who lives here go in her place."

"What little girl?" came quickly from the lips of Margaret. Other members of the picnic party, meantime, came hurrying up to hear any news that might have been brought.

"Why, Mag—something or other; I don't know that I ever heard the rest of her name; the little girl who lives with Mrs. Perkins. She is a nice, trim little thing, and, of course, she would like to go. She came from a city, where they don't have rivers, and groves, and things."

"The idea!" said Margaret.

"Of course, it is an idea," said her cousin Frederick, "and a very good one."

"I don't see any objection to it," said Anna Woodruff; "she is small enough, certainly; she won't take up much room; and she is a quiet little mouse and won't annoy anybody. I'm awfully sorry for poor Neelie; she was so determined to be well enough to go."

"I think it is a perfectly absurd idea!" said Margaret. "She never goes out with us girls, nor with any other girls, for that matter."

"All the more reason why she should have a chance to go to this picnic," said Frederick, coolly.

Margaret ignored his interruption. "She is just Mrs. Perkins's servant, and hasn't the

least idea of belonging to our society; to let her go would just be putting ridiculous notions into her mind; and Mrs. Perkins wouldn't thank us to do that."

"Margaret, don't be absurd!" said her cousin, impatiently. "What particular 'notions' could a little girl get by going with a company of other girls and boys to a picnic? I say, have her go by all means, if Mrs. Perkins will spare her. Who will go and interview the lady?"

"I most certainly shall not," said Margaret, drawing her fresh white lawn away from her cousin's side as though contact with him in his present mood might soil it; "I should expect her to think that I had suddenly become idiotic. She needs her servants, of course, when her house is full of boarders. Mag is in the garden this minute picking berries, and looking like a scarecrow. She hasn't anything to wear to a picnic, and she would have no one to be around with, if she went. Besides being a silly idea, it is a real unkind one. Mag is happy enough

where she is, but she would be miserable in our company."

"What a mean set we must be!" said Frederick; and while Harry Porter laughed at his significant tone, Anna Woodruff, who was generally an echo of somebody, decided that this time she ought to try to echo Margaret.

"I suppose it would be hard for Mrs. Perkins to spare her," she said timidly; "I shouldn't like to ask her; Mag is real industrious and does a great deal every day. Besides, as Margaret says, she probably couldn't go, anyway, because she hasn't proper things to wear."

"Girls always make such a time about 'things to wear'!" said Harry Porter.

"Excuse me," said a clear voice just over their heads, "you talked so loud that I could not help overhearing. I will ask Mrs. Perkins if you would like to have me. I think it would be very kind in you to give little Mag an outing of this sort."

"Oh, Miss Ordway!" said Frederick, wheel-

ing around and stepping towards her window, "you are just the one; Mrs. Perkins always does things for you. Do you suppose she could be got ready in about ten minutes? because we ought to be off. The others will be waiting for us at the turn."

He meant, get Mag ready, not Mrs. Perkins, but was so eager that he paid little attention to his pronouns.

"I guess they will have to wait one while!" murmured Margaret. "The girl has been crawling through the wet bushes and tramping over the plowed ground until she is a sight to behold. I don't believe the Lyman girls would go if they knew of the addition to our company; they are not used to associating with servants."

Her cousin turned upon her almost fiercely; his patience was utterly exhausted.

"Margaret, I wish you would not be such a hopeless idiot! Who do you suppose cares what a little girl does to earn her living? She has no one to do it for her as you and I have;

I am sure it is much more sensible in her to earn it in some way than it would be to fold her hands and let strangers take care of her."

"I did not say it wasn't," Margaret answered sullenly; "all I say is that I do not think it is necessary to associate with her; she does not belong to our set."

"Fiddlesticks! You have heard some silly girl from a set that hasn't an ounce of brains among them go on in that way or you wouldn't do it. You needn't *associate* with Mag, as you call it; go off in a corner and flock by yourself, if you want to; I'll answer for it that Mag doesn't trouble anybody else; they all have too much sense."

He was not gentlemanly, I will admit; but Margaret and her "airs," as he called them, had been a great trial to him that summer. Her aunt sighed over the fact that Margaret's summer friends that she had met at Hotel Revere had been an injury to her, and her cousin Frederick was sure of it; he had declared, some days

before, that Margaret needed severe measures of some sort to bring her back to common sense. Perhaps it was in that way that he excused himself for his manifest rudeness.

Meantime, Miss Ordway was busy. Mrs. Perkins had stared at the proposition to have Mag go to the picnic. She had even said "The idea!" in much the same tone that Margaret Lancaster had used when she said it. She had also told her daughter Annie that Miss Ordway and Fred Ainsworth between them would ruin that child; nevertheless, she had admitted to Miss Ordway that she could spare her better on that day than any other, and that she supposed it would do no harm to give her a day in the woods, though, goodness knew, she didn't have much to do any day but race around the garden, or sit on the back steps in the shade and enjoy herself! Mrs. Perkins, hard-worked woman of many cares that she was, honestly thought that the most Mag had to do was to shell a few peas, and pick a few berries, and enjoy herself! But Mrs. Perkins approved of

doing, as often as she could, what Miss Ordway and Fred Ainsworth wanted done.

"The child hasn't anything fit to wear," she said anxiously; "her blue calico is in the wash, and her other dress needs mending. I don't calculate to keep her dressed ready for picnics; and she isn't worth sixpence to do her own mending: I never saw a girl of her age who had so little sense with a needle."

Poor Mag! Nobody had ever sat down beside her for a single half-hour of her life and patiently tried to show her how to use her needle. The moment Miss Ordway heard this, she thought of another thing she could do for Mag, and wondered that it had not occurred to her before.

"I'll see to the dress," she said promptly. "I have been amusing my leisure half-hours for some time in fixing over an old dress of mine for Mag. I finished it only yesterday, and it will be the very thing for the picnic."

Behold, the dress was white! Not very fine, not very new. Miss Ordway, well as she knew

Mag by this time, was not prepared for the ecstatic delight of the little girl. Even the wonder of actually going to a picnic in a great hay-wagon with the others seemed lost in the pleasure of the new dress.

"Why, Mag," said Miss Ordway, smiling, as she saw the small brown fingers tremble while she handled it; "I did not know you were so fond of dress. You must not let it spoil you, as Mrs. Perkins, I am afraid, thinks it will."

Mag looked at her with great, wondering eyes.

"How could it, ma'am?" she asked simply. "I am afraid I shall spoil it; the dirt gets on things so! though I try ever so hard not to have it. Is that what you meant?"

"No," said Miss Ordway, laughing; "I meant just as I said, that the dress might spoil you; and you don't even understand what such an idea means!"

Then, in response to the wistful look in Mag's eyes, which said as plainly as words could have done, "There are so many things

that I don't understand! If people would only explain, instead of laughing at me": "Mag, some people like dresses, and ribbons, and things of that sort, so much that they make more of them than they should; think about them too much, I mean, and grow vain because they have prettier things than others, or jealous because they haven't them. Do you understand?"

"Yes'm," said Mag, gravely. "Perhaps I might get that way about dresses, if there were not so many other things. Sometimes I am 'most afraid I shall get so about going to school." Mag's voice had suddenly grown low and sad, but her eyes brightened again as they fell on the dress, and she said eagerly: "But I am glad, *glad,* that I have a white dress. Oh, Miss Ordway, you can not think how glad I am!"

"Do you like white so much?" asked Miss Ordway, gently.

"Yes'm, I do; but it isn't that. I read about them only two or three days ago, and I couldn't help wishing then that I had just one white

dress to help me remember them, and I—I *prayed* about it"—Mag's voice dropped again to almost a whisper, and her face took on a look of reverent awe—"doesn't it almost seem wicked, Miss Ordway, to talk to God about a white dress? But it says so in the Bible, you know; I mean it says to ask for anything you want, and Mr. Frederick said it couldn't be wrong to ask, if you were willing to have God do just as he thought best about it; and so I prayed for a white dress; and I didn't see how he could get me one, and here it is!" Words will not describe the delight in Mag's voice. Miss Ordway fastened the wonderful dress in silence; she really did not know what to say to this queer little girl.

"What do you mean," she asked at last, "when you say you read about them in the Bible? You did not find anything in the Bible about dresses, did you?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, yes, indeed! don't you remember? It is all on one of the cards you gave me. Miss Annie Perkins said it was a descrip-

tion of heaven. The man who is telling about it said that he saw a great many people—oh, ever so many! no one could count them—and all of them were dressed in white. And somebody asked him who they all were, and he couldn't tell; then the angel—I think it was an angel, Miss Ordway; it was somebody in heaven —told him that they were people who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. I couldn't think what that meant, and one night I asked Mr. Frederick, and he told me it was people who made up their minds to belong to Jesus and love him and obey him. Then I knew that I was one of them; and ever since that I have wanted a white dress."

Was ever stranger talk than this while getting ready for a picnic? Once more Miss Ordway did not in the least know what to say. She had to smile a little over the thought that Fred Ainsworth had to be called upon to explain Bible verses to this queer little girl. Privately she did not believe that he knew any more about the Bible than she did.

"You are an odd little girl," was all she had for Mag's ears; and that small person heard something of the kind so often that it made her very anxious to know what people meant. However, there was time for no more talk. The picnic people were shouting loudly that it was quite time they were off; and Margaret Lancaster was heard declaring that they would better postpone the picnic until the next day, and give all the servants a chance to get ready. Her cousin shot an indignant glance at her, which changed to a triumphant one as Mag came to the piazza. Her white dress fitted to a charm; she wore a pink sash, and pink ribbons tied back her hair; and the neat brown hat matched the entire suit perfectly. Certainly Mag Jessup would not disgrace them with her dress. Even Margaret gave her a swift, almost admiring glance; the little girl in white and pink looked so very different from the barefooted girl in dingy blue that she had seen in the berry patch that morning. It was then that Mrs. Perkins, looking out at Mag, told her daughter Annie

that Miss Ordway and Fred Ainsworth between them would spoil that child.

Kate Perkins had not been with the group on the piazza, and it chanced that her first knowledge that Mag was to be of the party came when they were getting into the hay-wagon.

"Why, Mag Jessup!" she exclaimed pleasantly, as she turned back for a second look; "if it made as much difference in me to dress me up as it does in you, I should stay dressed up all the time. So you are really going to the picnic! I'm glad of it. I told mother last night that I wished there was some way for you to go. How did it happen?"

"I don't half know," said Mag, gleefully. "Such lovely things are happening to me all the time that I don't half know myself. Where shall I sit, Mr. Frederick?"

"Plump down anywhere," said Frederick, cordially; "perhaps Kate can make room for you on her seat, and for me on the other side."

It was the first time in his life that he had paid the slightest attention to Kate Perkins.

Truth to tell, heretofore he had thought her really not worth his notice; but, since she could speak so cordially to the little girl who someway seemed to be especially his charge on this day, and had frankly owned that she had thought about her and wished that she could go, Mr. Fred decided that there was more to Kate Perkins than there was to half a dozen Margaret Lancasters, if the latter was his cousin. So Kate Perkins, with a radiant face, made room for Fred Ainsworth, who was decidedly the favorite boy of the party, to take a seat between her and little Mag; and the picnic goers were off.

CHAPTER XIV

SUNSHINE AND CLOUDS

DESPITE Margaret Lancaster's very evident disapproval of this addition to their party, Mag Jessup managed to have an excellent time. Mr. Frederick and Miss Kate between them kept her happy and merry during the ride. Indeed, they were astonished over the merry spirit that bubbled out at this first opportunity, and decided, as they stood together after the ride, that Mag was not only a "nice little thing," but was "real cute."

At the grove her good times continued. The truth was, she was looking out for good times, and expecting them; therefore she found them. It is true that Margaret took not so much notice of her as she would have done of a little brown dog, but Mag was not used to being noticed, and did not think anything about her.

She ran hither and thither among the groups, making herself useful by carrying a fan to this one, a glass of water to another, and picking up a handkerchief for a third. Before the morning was half over, it had become natural to say: "Here, little one, run to the wagon for a cushion, will you?" Or, "I say, Mag, suppose you bring up that basket of fruit; that's a good girl." Even Margaret sent her down to the spring for a fresh drink of water, and remarked loud enough for her to hear, had she been listening, that she did not know but it was a good idea to have a servant along to do the errands. But Mag's attention was at that moment attracted by the singing of a wonderful bird in the tree overhead, and she did not hear her. If she had, she would not have minded; she knew she was a servant, and she did not know that there was anything disgraceful in being called so. I think, however, that she would have noticed that Margaret's tone was not kind, and that she did not mean pleasant things. It was great fun to get the dinner ready; to plunge

into the various baskets and find good things and distribute them on the large table-cloth spread on the great stone table. All the girls enjoyed helping at this, and Mag was only allowed to run of errands, and watch the corn that was roasting, and do things of that kind. At table Frederick Ainsworth was again mindful of her, and seated her near himself with a good-natured Lyman girl on the other side. It proved that the Lyman girls, though their father was a great man and a Judge, did not seem to be in the least troubled because little Mag Jessup was along, but were very good-natured and friendly whenever they chanced to be near her.

To set the table for a picnic is one thing, and to clear off and pack the remnants of the feast away in baskets, and arrange the dishes so that they will not break, is quite another. Not a girl in the group wanted to touch the table.

"Miserable sticky things!" said one, survey-

ing the empty cake-plates with disdain, "they ought to be washed."

"Mercy knows I'm glad they can't be!" exclaimed another. "If there is anything that is horrid, it is washing dishes."

"These might be rinsed off at the river, so as to get rid of the worst stickiness," said one of the Lyman girls, "if anybody had energy enough to attempt it."

"Don't mention it!" said Kate Perkins, from her perch on one of the highest rocks. "Norah and Jane will look after all our stickiness. The great thing is to get them piled back into their baskets. Who will do that? I'm horrid at packing away dishes; they always get broken, and the table-cloths always come and poke themselves in where they will get the most stains on them. I say, girls, after we have got rid of the dishes, let us go up the road to the gypsy camp. I think it would be great fun to have our fortunes told. The boys have gone off to get apples. I heard them talking about

it; they are going across lots away over to a farm where one of them is acquainted. They won't be back this age; we must do something to amuse ourselves."

"It's too far to walk over to the gypsy camp," objected Margaret Lancaster; "but we might ride. I can drive those ponies that we came with."

Here little Mag thought it time to speak.

"Mr. Frederick said we mustn't any of us touch the ponies," she began earnestly; "he said they hadn't been driven for a few days, and the man told him they were frisky."

"Oh, he did!" said Margaret, tossing her head in disdain; "then we will be sure to go. 'Mr. Frederick,' as you call him, doesn't know everything, though I verily believe you think he does. Those ponies are about as frisky as cows; I can drive them just as well as not. Come on, girls, we can drive to the gypsy camp and get our fortunes told, and get back here before the boys come with the apples."

"But the dishes," objected Anna Woodruff.

"I'll pack away the dishes," said little Mag; "but I do wish you wouldn't go away with the ponies. Mr. Frederick will not like it."

"Mr. Frederick doesn't own us, child!" said the elder Lyman girl, laughing. But Margaret Lancaster was talking again.

"Why, of course! I wonder we did not think of that before. She is used to dishes; we can leave her to straighten everything up and go on our lark."

"We can't leave her here all alone!" exclaimed Kate Perkins.

"I should like to know why not! It isn't in the least likely that any one wants to steal her. As for the work, she is used to it; and, if we didn't bring her along for that, what on earth did she come for?"

Then Anna Woodruff found her voice again. "You stay with her, Lora; you can help her, you know; and mamma wouldn't want you to go off to a gypsy camp; you are too little for such doings."

Lora Woodruff, aged eleven, by no means

approved of this, and expressed herself accordingly; but her sister Anna was firm. However much she might be led herself, by the opinion of the person who spoke to her last, she was authority for her younger sister, for whom she knew both father and mother would hold her responsible. In her heart she felt that the gypsy camp would not be objected to so much as the ponies without their driver. There was more or less discussion, but it ended in Margaret Lancaster carrying her point, and all the girls trooped off to the hay-wagon, save Mag and Lora Woodruff.

"What made you offer to do this?" asked Lora, as she watched Mag move with quick step and skillful hands about the stone table.

Now, it happened that the question was a hard one for Mag to answer. She felt instinctively that Lora would not understand what she meant. The little girl was just about her size, and one who merely glanced at them might have supposed the two to be well mated; but in some things Lora was wiser than Mag,

and in other things Mag was far ahead of her. Could she, for instance, hope to explain that the doing of these dishes was her "tenth?" You will remember that I told you the marked difference between Mag Jessup and most other girls of her age was that, when she found out a Bible truth, she proceeded at once to living by it, instead of forgetting all about it, or, perhaps, never realizing that it had anything to do with her. Ever since Mag had attended that wonderful meeting at the square she had faithfully worked at her new idea; having not a cent of money of her own, there had been nothing but *time* for her to divide. This she had laboriously apportioned as well as she knew how, and the result was, nearly fifteen minutes each day that she believed she ought to give to God. For a long while she was in painful doubt as to what she could possibly do that could be reckoned as done for him; but one evening in the meeting a young girl helped her out by mentioning a bit of work that a friend had done for some one—work that she did not like to do.

When asked if it was not hard, she had said: "It wasn't when I remembered that I was doing it for Jesus." After that, one who watched Mag would have discovered that there came over her a distinct and well-marked change. Up to that time she had contented herself with doing promptly, and as well as she knew how, every bit of work given her to do; now she began to watch for opportunities to do for others, without waiting to be told. She had very little idea of how much this added to her usefulness, and would have been amazed had she known that Mrs. Perkins had remarked to her daughter, after a few weeks of such service, that "that child was really becoming quite helpful"; but she knew that she was happier in the service than she had ever been before. There grew to be a certain fascination in watching for opportunities, and in keeping careful account with herself to see that she actually got in the allotted time. Her system of accounts was peculiar. If, on a given day, only ten minutes of helpful work for others, not required of her, were

given, she was careful to make it up, if possible, by giving twenty minutes on the following day. But if, on the other hand, she exceeded the fifteen minutes, she felt a glow of satisfaction, and by no means made a record in her favor. There were still times when she puzzled much over the question why being watchful to help Norah, for instance, should be accounted as giving time to God; but she put the anxiety aside with the quieting thought: "If he said so, why, it's so; never mind if I don't understand it." All through the happy hours of the picnic she had been on the alert, but had found no opportunity to put in her fifteen minutes. She had not been allowed to help much about the dinner because the other girls had considered that "fun"; and, in truth, she told herself it wouldn't have done, anyway, for, with all of them joining in and talking and laughing, it would have been fun to her also. Indeed, it was a trial not to be in their midst; but the moment the trip to the gypsy camp was proposed, and the dishes came in the way, Mag saw her opportunity. She did not

like to do dishes, especially when they must be carefully packed into baskets so that not one would get broken, but neither did any of the others; therefore she would do it. But how was such a thought to be explained to Lora Woodruff? She evaded the question. Lora followed up her idea.

"I don't see what made you; you *can't* like such work; you have enough to do every day anyway; and you can't have done it to please those other girls, for they don't deserve it. Margaret Lancaster is the last girl I should think you would want to do anything for."

"Why not?" asked Mag; she was curious for the answer. Within her heart was an instinctive turning away from Margaret Lancaster; she would rather, and she knew she would rather, run of errands for any other girl in the boarding-house than Margaret. But why? Margaret was beautiful, and wore lovely dresses, and often talked to her on the back piazza, where her shelling of peas, and work of that kind, was done, and had never been exactly

cross to her, not more than she was to most people; why didn't she like to do things for her? Perhaps Lora could throw light upon the problem. So she said: "Why not?" with eagerness.

"Because," said Lora, "she is perfectly hateful to you. If you had heard her go on about your coming to this picnic I guess you wouldn't want to please her! She was determined you shouldn't come; and she and her cousin Fred pretty nearly fought about it."

"Why didn't she want me to come?" Mag paused in the act of gathering up the plates to ask the question; all this was new and strange to her.

"Because," said Lora, elated that she had so good a listener, "she said you were nothing but a servant girl, and did not belong with us; and that we might as well take all the servants as you. Fred called her an idiot, and I should think she was one. Of course, we wouldn't think of taking Norah and the rest, but you are

different." This was intended to be complimentary.

A great deal more of what had been said that morning did this foolish little girl repeat, elated by the silent attention of her audience. In fact, as she became interested in her story, she made it sound as terrible as she could; not actually inventing statements, but giving such color to them that Margaret Lancaster herself would not have recognized them. The truth is, Lora had a dangerous talent for remembering the details of conversation, and of adding touches here and there when she could not remember the exact words. She did not like Margaret, and, naturally, all the disagreeable words and looks were reported to have come from her. Perhaps it is not strange that poor little Mag's heart was filled with feelings that were new to her. She had never heard herself actually spoken against before. Norah was cross and said disagreeable things; but then Norah was cross to everybody on occasion; she even said sharp things about Mrs. Perkins herself! Mag

had been accused of stealing, but then in her honest heart she had admitted the proof against her to be really very strong, and had readily forgiven them for the suspicion. This was something very different. Margaret Lancaster, without any reason for it, had spoken against her; had said that she was not fit to come to the picnic with them; had tried her best to keep her at home! She should never like Margaret Lancaster again; never think her pretty; never answer her questions any more than she could help. Margaret should see that she knew when she was treated meanly. It was cruel and ugly and hateful in her to try to make Mr. Frederick turn against her! In truth, poor Mag for the first time in her life was fiercely angry; all her beautiful day had been spoiled. She did not in the least understand her own heart, nor know why it was that she cared so very much for what had been said about her; nor, poor child, did she know that such feelings as she at once began to cherish were wrong, and must be struggled against. A queer little make up of

wisdom and ignorance was Mag Jessup. It must always be remembered that no patient mother had watched, and carefully trained, and explained and encouraged, and cautioned her. What little she knew, she might almost have been said to have blundered into. She said very little to Lora; there was still strong within her the feeling that Lora would not understand a great deal that she might say; but now she forgot all about the "tenth" that she was giving. She did the work well, it is true, from force of habit; each dish was packed with as much care as though it had been Mrs. Perkins's best china; but, while Lora's tongue ran on freely, and did not hesitate to say, among many other things, how horrid it was in those girls to go off and leave her behind, and how much she hoped that they would have a real mean, hateful time, poor Mag's feelings seethed and boiled within her in a way that was utterly new to her experience. She wished that she need never see Margaret Lancaster again. She almost resolved that she would at least never

speak to her again; only if she was spoken to, she would have to make some reply; Mrs. Perkins would see to that.

Just as the last dish was tucked away inside the great baskets, and the table-cloths were shaken and folded, the apple-seekers returned, headed by Frederick Ainsworth.

"We've got some prime apples for you!" he shouted. Then, as he drew nearer; "You two here all alone? Where are the others?"

Lora was happy to explain. Before her voluble story was concluded, Fred turned to the boys, his face pale with apprehension.

"They would have to cross the track by the curve; and the afternoon express will be due there in ten minutes, and those ponies are afraid of the cars! We mustn't lose a minute!"

With the last word he had turned and dashed down a side path that led to the road, every boy following at full speed. Lora dashed eagerly after them to discover anything that might have happened. As for Mag Jessup, she knew the lunch-baskets and wraps and sun

umbrellas and books of all the party must be taken care of; so she folded away the table-cloths, and sat down on a rock to watch and wait.

CHAPTER XV

"IF WE ONLY HADN'T"

THE group of young people, intent upon paying a visit to the gypsy camp, had gone gaily on their way; not without misgivings on the part of some, in regard to those ponies, whose reputation for gentleness was none of the best. Had Neelie Saunders been of the company, I do not think they would have started, for the ponies belonged to her father, and Neelie knew very well that neither she nor her sister were allowed to drive them. Ned Saunders, a young fellow of seventeen, was the driver, but he had gone after apples. On the way down the hill they discussed the situation.

"We can't hitch up the ponies, Margaret; *I* can't, I'm sure, and I don't believe you can."

"No more I can, goosie! but the boy who was left in charge of them can."

"Oh, so he can, and drive us, too; I never thought of that."

"He is not going to drive us. I propose to do the driving myself. I just ached to get hold of the reins coming out. That Ned Saunders is a dreadfully stupid driver. I shall make those ponies go like the wind, see if I don't."

"O Margaret," said Anna Woodruff, "are you sure you know how to drive?"

"Why, of course I know how to drive; the idea! Don't I drive my father's elegant span of bay horses? The handsomest turnout at the Park, everybody said. If you are afraid, Anna Woodruff, you might run back and stay with the servant."

But Anna, although she was afraid, was not to be ridiculed into turning back; she had insisted upon leaving her little sister in a safe place, and considered her duty done.

Mr. Saunders's boy, Dick, who had been brought along that he might be left at the foot of the hill to watch the wagon and ponies, had been told simply that he was to obey orders; so

when the entire troop of young ladies, who had come out that morning, came down upon him demanding that the ponies be hitched forthwith to the hay-wagon, he obeyed, not without a timid inquiry for Ned Saunders.

"He is coming by and by," said Margaret Lancaster, as she clambered gaily in; the others followed her swiftly, and they were off.

Now, Margaret Lancaster really had no idea that she was doing anything very daring. She had, as she said, often driven her father's beautiful span of matched bays, the pride of his heart, through the park grounds. It is true that her father sat beside her at the time; but what of that? She had done the driving. Moreover, she did not take into consideration the difference in the roads, nor the clumsiness of the hay-wagon. That she kept her word and drove fast, every girl in the party will always be ready to testify. Those ponies fairly flew down the steep, rough hill, the hay-wagon clattering ominously at their heels, increasing their speed, if Margaret had but known it; still, she held the

reins with firm hand, and they crossed the track in safety and drew up at the gypsy camp. Here they made quick work of it; there proved to be no gypsy in the encampment who cared to tell fortunes, and, after wandering about a few minutes, and admiring the splendid fire and the great kettle swinging on a crane, some one thought of the afternoon express and begged Margaret to make all speed back, before it was due. If she had not been at that moment seized with the desire to look inside a white-covered wagon, and learn how gypsies managed their sleeping accommodations, they might have accomplished it. As it was, they reached the top of the hill just as the express went thundering by. And then those ponies, if they had run before, fairly flew over the ground. To make matters more dangerous, Margaret "lost her head," as the boys say, and, slackening her hold, let the reins lie loose. Then the ponies seemed to think themselves deserted and ran in good earnest.

"Oh, girls!" screamed Margaret, her face

pale with fright; "they are running away; I can not hold them. I can't do anything with them! Oh! oh! we shall all be killed. They will run right straight into the river; I can not turn them!"

This looked extremely probable. About half a mile below, the road made a sharp bend, and at that point the river bank was almost on a level with it. If Margaret could do nothing with the ponies, what was more likely than that they should dash ahead without regard to the road, and plunge into the river? Then, what but death awaited any of them? For the river at that point was broad and deep. Suddenly Margaret had a thought which she proceeded to carry into execution:

"We must jump for our lives!" she said, and, suiting the action to the word, she threw the reins from her, and, poising for a second on the side of the wagon, gave a spring and a shriek at the same moment, and was gone. The frightened girls huddled together and shrieked with terror and dismay. Only one of

them tried to retain her self-control; that was Georgia Lyman.

"Don't one of the rest of you dare to jump!" she said sternly. "My father has told me again and again, 'Whatever else you do when a horse is running away, never jump; it is almost certain death.' If I had been near enough to Margaret, I would have held her fast. Let us all try to get hold of the reins and pull."

But, alas! Margaret in her terror had flung the reins so far that it was impossible to get hold of them. Every one was so frightened that they did not notice, what was plainly apparent, that the ponies themselves were rather tired of their wild race, and were decidedly slackening their pace. All the girls could think of was that they were nearing the river. Then, suddenly, one of them gave a different kind of a scream:

"Oh, look!" she panted; "the boys!"

Sure enough, there were the boys, eight of them, brave fellows, forming a cordon across the road; those ponies would need to be skillful

to get past them. I believe in my heart that the ponies did not want to pass them, but were, on the contrary, quite willing to be seized by their bridles by two such determined fellows as Ned Saunders and Fred Ainsworth.

There was a great deal to be done in the next few minutes; two of the girls, now that the danger was over, fainted dead away, and had to be thought about; but the most of them thought of poor Margaret.

"Who started this wild ride?" Ned Saunders asked sternly.

"Oh," said Anna Woodruff, "it was poor Margaret; but don't blame her now. She is —oh, dear!"

"She is what?" exclaimed Fred Ainsworth, looking up from one of the fainted girls. "Where is she?"

Then half a dozen voices told him; and his pale face grew paler, and he gave over trying to revive Carrie Benson, and said: "Then she is dead!"

"Oh, no, no," they shrieked; "don't say

that Oh, *don't* waste time here! Why *don't* you go to her?" Though why they should have added that, no one knows; for Ned Saunders was already jerking the ponies around, and, before the cry about wasting time was concluded, he and Frederick and three others of the strongest boys were in the wagon, and the ponies were hurrying up the hill again.

People who heard the story, told for days afterwards, exclaimed that it was "just a miracle!" and some said it couldn't be possible! But nevertheless it was that Margaret Lancaster was not killed by her wild jump from the hay-wagon. She was bumped, she was sprained, she was bruised all over; but she was very much alive.

Ned Saunders declared afterwards that, since she was such an idiot as to jump at all, some angel who takes care of idiots must have been there to select the only safe place for her. Just ahead, and just a step backward, were sharp, jutting stones, while the place where she fell was slightly depressed, and much shaded, so

that the ground was still soft from recent rains. Margaret had fainted at first, but, before the rescue party reached her, she had revived enough to issue some very assuring groans.

"She isn't dead, anyhow," said Ned Saunders, cheerfully, "and her lungs are still good, or she couldn't groan like that."

Frederick sprang like a cat from the wagon, and had his cousin in his arms before the others could come to help him. Two of the boys occupied themselves in making a bed in the hay-wagon, out of leaves and grasses, covered by their coats; but Ned Saunders was examining the wagon wheels.

"Here's a fix!" he said in a low tone to one of them; "I noticed that this wagon wobbled dreadfully when we came out. Something has happened to this hind wheel; they must have cracked some of its joints in turning; it won't last for us to get home, that is certain; and I don't hardly feel that it is safe to go back to the grove in, after our things, unless we fellows walk and keep a close watch, and kind of brace

it up, if necessary, while Fred rides, and takes care of Margaret. What we are going to do after that, I'm sure I don't quite see."

"I see," said Harold Wood. "Let some one take one of the ponies and gallop back to town as fast as possible for an easy rig of some kind for her and the girls; we fellows can walk back."

"Good for you!" said Ned Saunders approvingly. "That is just what can be done. I've traveled on Frisk's back without any saddle before now, and I can do it again. I'll bring our carriage and a doctor as fast as possible."

This program was carried out. Ned Saunders galloped off as soon as possible after the party reached the grove, feeling all the more need for haste because poor Margaret was evidently suffering great pain; she fainted twice on the way back. The others, having made her as comfortable as they knew how, stood, or sat, around in disconsolate groups waiting. Mag, having discovered that all the others were occupied, toiled down the hill with one basket

at a time until all but one were near the wagon; then it suddenly occurred to Frederick to observe her, and to order the boy Dick to go for the basket.

"See if you can do so much," he added sternly. "If you had done your duty, all this would not have happened. A child might have known that those ponies were not to be entrusted to girls."

Mag, relieved of her duties, looked with grave, troubled eyes at poor Margaret, whose pale face was drawn with pain, and who gave vent to feeble moans whenever she made the slightest movement.

"It is her foot, I think," said Georgia Lyman, in response to Mag's inquiring look; "at least, her foot is hurt; I don't know which part of her hurts the worst, but she can't move that the least bit without fainting."

"It ought to be put into hot water," said Mag.

"How do you know?" This from Georgia, curiously.

"One of the boarders sprained her wrist last winter, and the surgeon made her put it in hot water and keep it there for hours."

"That's so," said Frederick, briskly; "I knew that when I was no taller than the table, but I never thought of it. See what it is to have one's knowledge at command. Can one of you boys light a fire and put the big chocolate-pot on full of water? That will be better than nothing."

"There is a big pan that the cookies and cakes and things were packed in," said Mag.

"So there is; that will hold more than the chocolate-pot. It takes you to think."

It took Mag to do, also. It was she who finally managed the fire, as being the one who apparently understood it best. Mary Lyman was in the wagon trying to take the shoe and stocking from the poor, swollen foot; the latter had to be cut away; and at last, not without much groaning and one downright faint, the foot was placed in a pail of hot water; then there was really nothing else to be done but

watching and replenishing the fire, and waiting.

It was astonishing how hard they found it to wait; although they were on the very grounds where they had declared they would like to stay until the moon came up in the evening to light them home. Now they watched the sun with a kind of horror as it went swiftly toward the west; all the joy had gone out of their day, and the utmost desire of each was to get home as soon as possible.

"It's queer," said Harold Wood, "what a difference it makes to have one of the party hurt! Ned and I were groaning only a little while ago over his promise to his father to get home before dark; we thought it would be so delicious to have supper up here, and drive home by moonlight; and now it seems as though I wanted to fly home."

"If we only hadn't gone!" murmured Georgia Lyman.

"That's just it. What possessed you to get off in that way without any of us? Ned would

have driven you to the gypsy camp, with all his heart, if he had known you wanted to go. What that stupid boy was about to allow it, I can't imagine. I hope he will be discharged for his folly."

"I don't," said Georgia, resolved upon bearing her share of the blame. "I don't think he could have helped it. He saw just how determined Margaret was—you know how she is when she makes up her mind to do a thing? And we all helped her; we got into a sort of gale, you know. She was so sure she could drive, that we trusted her fully. Why, she said she had driven her father's horses in town, and we thought, if she could do that, she could certainly manage the ponies on a quiet country road."

Frederick Ainsworth had come down from his post in the hay-wagon, in search of his umbrella to make a canopy over the sufferer's head, and he halted for a moment beside the two.

"There is nothing like the exact truth," he said gravely. "Margaret never drove her fa-

ther's thoroughbred horses in her life, unless he or my father were sitting beside her. Perhaps she didn't think that little item made any difference, but I think it does. I've no doubt, though, that she thought she could drive; that is one trouble with her: she thinks she can do anything."

"I don't believe she would have been so determined to go," said Georgia, thinking back, "if it had not been for little Mag."

Frederick had started to return to the hay-wagon, but he turned back at the sound of Mag's name.

"What had she to do with it?" he asked.

"Why, she begged us not to go. She was sure it wasn't safe, because 'Mr. Frederick' said so, and he knew. There is something about 'Mr. Frederick's' name that seems to set Margaret off. After that she was determined to drive, though some of us were urging that we could all walk there nicely."

Frederick Ainsworth walked back to the hay-wagon with a thoughtful air. This matter of

influence was a strange thing. Could he possibly, in a remote way, be to blame for this accident, which might be more serious than any of them imagined? He knew he was inclined to be arbitrary with his young cousin, to exercise authority over her, especially in the absence of her father and mother. He liked to assume that the three years' difference in their ages gave him the right to be authoritative.

"Poor little Mag!" he said to himself with a sigh, "she is the only one who has a very high opinion of 'Mr. Frederick'; he even has to be ashamed of himself sometimes."

CHAPTER XVI

A HARD LESSON

THERE is one person who will doubtless never forget her ride home from the picnic. Every step the horses took seemed to cause her pain. Ned Saunders was back with easy carriage and the village doctor before even the impatient party who waited had begun to watch for him over the hill. Everything that could be done for Margaret's comfort was thought of, and her aunt, who had come in the carriage, pillowed the poor girl's head on her lap all the long, slow drive home. But at best it was a hard time. The doctor was as cheery as possible before Margaret, told her that she had had first-rate attention already, that the hot water was just the thing for her foot, and that they would soon have her in a place where they could make her more comfortable. But he shook his

head in answer to Frederick's questions, and told him that he was afraid there was a long, weary time before the poor girl; and that it was even doubtful whether she would ever jump again.

"That knee was bent in an ugly way," he said, "and sometimes these jumps make serious business. However, she is young and strong, and we will hope for the best."

The "best" was a serious trial to Margaret. The hurts all proved to be tedious in their results, rather than serious; at least, the city doctor, who was called in consultation, said he hoped the young lady would be as well as ever in a few months. But he might almost as well have said years, so far as Margaret was concerned. She had never been ill for more than three days at a time in her life; and the prospect of lying still for months was so utterly hopeless to her, that she turned her face away from them all, and, after murmuring that she would much rather have been killed outright, cried herself into a nervous headache.

With this for a beginning, it will be easily understood that she did not make a very cheerful patient. Indeed, as the days went by, and their anxiety in regard to her wore off, it began to be very hard for her nurses to listen to her continual fretting. She blamed the doctors, and the roads, and the ponies; the boys for going after apples and leaving them to take care of themselves, and the girls for going with her, and Dick for allowing them to go, and even the gypsies for being in camp at that time!

Frederick Ainsworth considered himself a model nurse because he gave up so much of his vacation to her, and his aunt commended him for patience and forbearance; but there were times when poor Margaret accused him of thinking only of himself. On the whole, there was no one at the boarding-house but earnestly hoped that the sick one would improve very rapidly and grow able to go back to town, where she longed to be. Of all who had to do with her, the one whose conduct was the most surprising, to those who knew her well,

was Mag Jessup. As a matter of course, Mag had occasion to be in Margaret's room very often during the day. It was she who toiled up stairs with the broths and toasts, and cool drinks and warm drinks, and fruits that were in some shape or other nearly always in demand for that room. It was she who sat in the room while Margaret's aunt went down to dinner. It was she who kept the flies from troubling Margaret while the aunt took an afternoon nap. In short, it was she who was called upon for all the extra and many of the regular services demanded by the invalid. She performed every duty with painstaking care; she might have been a wound-up clock, so regularly did she go about the work that became routine; yet Frederick Ainsworth knew, and Miss Ordway knew, and Margaret's aunt surmised, that the Mag who was attending Margaret was not the same Mag who had been doing errands all summer. There was almost never a smile on her little brown face when she came into the room. She offered no words except those that were abso-

lutely necessary, she stayed not one second beyond the time demanded of her by duty. Margaret herself noticed the difference, or at least disapproved of the present Mag.

"I would as soon be waited on by a tombstone!" she said petulantly one day when Mag had brought her a glass of water fresh from the spring, had stood silently by while she drank it, and silently retreated from the room the instant the glass was returned to her tray. "I wish there was some one to wait on me who didn't look as though she expected to die because of it! Why can't Jane come up with things? or Kate Perkins, for that matter?"

"My dear," said her aunt, soothingly, "remember that Mrs. Perkins has a large family and not a great deal of help; Jane has her hands very full. As for Kate Perkins, I suppose she would tell you that she is not hired to wait upon her mother's boarders, though she does come often, you know."

"Not very; they are all a selfish set; and it was just as much their fault as mine; if they

hadn't wanted to go to that horrid old gypsy camp, I shouldn't have gone. Kate Perkins ought not to feel above waiting on me, I am sure. If my mother kept boarders for a living, I should expect to do my share of it. Anyway, I wish I could have somebody besides that horrid little Mag."

"She is a very solemn-looking little girl, certainly," the aunt admitted, "but she is neat and quiet. I wonder if anything has happened to the child? I used to think she had more life in her."

"She had life enough at the picnic," said Margaret; "she chattered and giggled all the time. Fred made an idiot of himself petting her; it was his fault that she went along."

"My dear, what harm did it do? The poor child can't have many outings; and she was certainly not to blame for your accident. She was the only one who didn't go with you, was she not?"

"Good reason why; she had to stay and take

care of the dishes; we were sure she knew how to do that."

"But, Margaret dear, didn't she offer? Surely none of you were cruel enough to force the little creature's homeless and dependent position on her by obliging her to stay behind and do the work!"

Margaret turned irritably on her pillow as she said:

"O Aunt Helen, please don't talk about her any more. She is a stupid little owl, and I'm tired of the sound of her name."

It was Miss Ordway who broke in upon Mag's established order of things. Her city friends, by the way, had come; a young married lady with her two young sisters in charge. More winsome girls than Elise and Elsie Duane would be hard to find. Money they had in plenty, or at least their parents had; Mag Jessup heard the elder portion of the family talk so often about this, that she was in danger of getting a very false idea of the importance of wealth; but the girls themselves were as simple

and sweet as the wild flowers they delighted in. If they wore elegant dresses in town, as Margaret Lancaster declared that they did, they had left them all behind, and appeared in the morning in the freshest and neatest of percale dresses, while their *very* best were of white muslin, simply made. Elise was nearly a year older than Mag, and Elsie was quite a year younger, but both of them seemed to find an immediate attraction in the shy, brown little girl who had never been to school and who knew so much less and so much more than most girls of her age. They found their way often to the back porch where Mag still sat with her endless fruits and vegetables, and many were the talks the three had together. Poor Margaret Lancaster in her upstairs prison would have been sick with envy could she have seen them; for to meet and become intimate friends with the Duane girls had been one of the thoughts that had lately reconciled her to this summer in the country.

But I meant to tell you of Miss Ordway and

Mag. The little girl came one morning to bring Miss Ordway a fresh pitcher of spring water, and stopped to smell of a sweet pea that had been placed on the canvas the day before.

"It seems as though it could be smelled," she said, gleefully. "How can there be sweet peas so lovely as that, without being sweet? O Miss Ordway, it is so wonderful to think you can do it! If you could only make them smell, wouldn't it be too beautiful!"

"I presume it would," said Miss Ordway, smiling at her enthusiasm. Then she seized the opportunity to ask questions that had been puzzling her.

"Are there two little Mags in this house, do you think?"

Mag looked her surprise. "Oh, no, ma'am," she said, "I know there are not. There is Miss Margaret Lancaster, you know, of course, but nobody ever calls her Mag, and besides that there is only me."

"I don't quite know how to account for it," said Miss Ordway, arranging flowers for her

vase, and seeming to give not a great deal of heed to what she was saying; "there is a little Mag who comes to my room with the brightest face! When she brings me water it is always done with a smile, as though she was glad to bring it, and when she sees any of my pretty things her face lights up with pleasure, and, altogether, she is a very pleasant sight to look at. But occasionally in Miss Margaret's room I find a little girl called Mag, whose face is so very sober that it seems much longer than the face that I know, and, as nearly as I can discover, she never laughs in that room, nor says a cheery word. Can she possibly be the same Mag? and if she is, how does she account for the difference?"

Mag did not laugh then; instead, she blushed until her cheeks were as red as the roses Miss Ordway was arranging. It was clear that she did not want to make any answer, but Miss Ordway kept silence and waited. At last Mag said, in a voice that was low and timid:

"It is because I love you, Miss Ordway."

"That is very nice, I am sure; I like to be loved; but does that mean that you do not love Miss Margaret?"

"Yes'm, it does; I don't love her the least bit in the world and I don't want to say any words to her, only just what I have to; and I haven't got any smiles when I am where she is, and don't want to have."

Miss Ordway turned and looked at her curiously. "What a fierce little creature it is, after all!" she said, as if thinking aloud; "who would have supposed it?" Then, to Mag: "Little girl, what is the matter? What has poor Margaret done to arouse such wrath? I supposed you would be all melted into pity for her."

"I don't pity her," said Mag in severest tone; "she brought it all on herself, and made trouble for everybody, and broke Mr. Saunders's wagon, and lamed one of the ponies, and was hateful and horrid."

Miss Ordway could not help laughing.

"So you think you must punish her for such

selfish and inconsiderate conduct, do you? My child, if Mr. Saunders has forgiven her, one would suppose you might. Don't you know that he has sent her fruit several times, and the most lovely flowers; and has promised to take her out to ride after those same ponies as soon as she is able?"

"It isn't that," said Mag, lowering her voice again. "She wasn't at all good to me. I don't think I have any reason to like her, or to try to be pleasant to her." And then Miss Ordway resolved to know what it was all about, and questioned until Mag poured out her tale of woe, as revealed to her by Lora Woodruff. In truth, the lady, after the first revelations were made, had no difficulty in understanding the situation; she had seen enough of Margaret Lancaster to know that she could be very disagreeable when she chose. Still, it was a pity to see a little girl take the follies of another little girl so deeply to heart. What could be said to lessen the effect? Suddenly an idea occurred to the lady.

"How do such feelings as those match with your new book?" she asked, turning and looking at Mag with a winning smile.

"Ma'am?" said Mag, bewildered; "which book do you mean?"

"Why, the Bible. Didn't you tell me something about following the directions in the Bible as soon as you found them out? How do the directions about Margaret Lancaster match your conduct?"

"Is there something about Margaret Lancaster in the Bible?"

No words will describe the note of astonishment and also of dismay in poor Mag's voice. Despite the undertone of pathos, Miss Ordway could not help smiling.

"I am pretty sure there is," she said positively; "let me see if I can find it for you."

She looked about for her Bible, and blushed a little over the fact that it was nowhere to be seen. Manifestly she did not order her daily life by its teachings. She remembered carry-

ing a pile of books, a few days before, to stow away in the large trunk in her closet; the Bible must have been among them, and she had not missed it! She went down into the depths of the trunk and pulled it out. But now she did not know where to look for the promised words. However, the Bible had a concordance attached, and Mag, leaning over the lady's shoulder, had its mysteries explained to her. By its aid the verse was found and read aloud: "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

"Who said that?" exclaimed poor Mag, almost breathless with astonishment and pain; "who was it talking, Miss Ordway?"

"It was the Lord Jesus when he was on earth."

"Will you let me look at it?" asked Mag, and she read each word again with painstaking slowness, pausing only to ask one question: "Who are the publicans, Miss Ordway?"

"The publicans," repeated that lady, hesitatingly; "why, I presume in that connection it means outsiders; people who do not pretend to order their lives by the Bible. It is a very easy matter, you know, to love people who love us, and are good and kind to us; but Jesus wanted his followers to do a great deal more than that."

And then, quite to Miss Ordway's relief, Mag was called in peremptory tones by Mrs. Perkins.

"In two minutes more I should have been beyond my depth!" thought Miss Ordway, smiling, as the door closed after Mag. I wonder what Ward would think to hear me trying to preach a sermon from a Bible text? Poor little mouse! I have given her a hard lesson to learn,

one that I couldn't practice myself to save my life. I wonder what she will do with it?"

She might well have asked! Never in all her fourteen years of life had such a bitter truth been pressed upon Mag's notice. She ignored the History of England entirely, and, finding the words in her own little Bible, read and re-read them at every leisure interval until they were burned into her memory. And their meaning grew plain as she studied. She was actually told to *love* Margaret Lancaster! If it had not been for that word, Mag might have got some comfort. After an hour or two, she admitted to her conscience that she could pray for Margaret, and do good to her; in a sense she had been doing good to her all the time—but to love her! that was simply impossible. Yet it said: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven;" and what did that mean if not that people who refused to obey the orders would not be counted his children?

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE STORM

THAT August day which began by being very bright, clouded over early and by ten o'clock a dreary rain was falling. The storm increased in violence until, by the middle of the afternoon, some of Mrs. Perkins's boarders said it was much more like the last of November than the last of August. The wind blew in fierce gusts and the air had a nip in it that did really remind of November. Just before dark it was announced to Mag Jessup that the fire-place in the great parlor, which had been filled all summer with lovely dried grasses and plumy ferns, was to be cleared out and a fire laid and started.

"It is perfect nonsense!" said Mrs. Perkins in caustic tones. "Nobody needs a fire in the parlor, any more than a cat needs two tails; but some of them have taken a notion that they do,

and that is just as bad as though they did. Trust people who have nothing to do, to get up notions that make work for others; they will do it every time!"

Mag Jessup was rather glad than otherwise that this bit of work had fallen to her. The parlor was full of a dusky, shadowy light made by the fading day; she could see to do her work, and yet the shadows were thickening so fast that no one who might happen to enter the room could see her very plainly, and she felt, this poor little mouse, as though it would not be possible any longer to get along without a quiet cry. Nothing that would hinder her work, nor make disturbance in any way, but just a chance to let the tears chase each other down her cheeks. All day long she had hunted in vain for such a chance; the day had been an unusually busy one, made so by the unexpected storm. Nobody in the large house had the remotest idea where his rubbers had last been left; and, as for umbrellas, the fairies seemed to have hidden them. Several children who had

gone to the spring-house to play, had to be hurried after with wraps, and cautions; and Norah, made cross by the upsetting of certain plans of hers, had wanted constant waiting on between times. The twilight and the fire-place were Mag's first helps toward solitude. While she got on her knees to lay the sticks scientifically, she let the tears have it their own way. Her tired little heart felt almost broken.

"What is the use? Oh, what *is* the use?" it kept drearily asking of her; and a mean-spirited creature, that seemed to have an abode inside her, kept muttering that there wasn't any use; she might as well give it all up. She wasn't the Lord's servant any more; and couldn't be. He wouldn't have her unless she would love Margaret Lancaster; and she never could, *never!* As for being his jewel, that was all a mistake, of course. She had thought she was, she had meant to be; but here was something he said she must do, and she *couldn't;* and of course he wouldn't have her for a jewel after that.

With such words whispered at her all day, was it any wonder that Mag wanted to cry? She laid the fire, however, with utmost care, and swept up the hearth, then looked about for matches. The boarders were already taking supper in the dining-room; in a few minutes they would be trooping in, and Mrs. Perkins had told her to be sure to have the fire going well before they came. She struck a match and showed how skillfully she had done her work by the cheerful sputter that began immediately among the kindlings, and the ruddy glow that presently filled the room with light. It showed distinctly the tears that were still slowly traveling down the little girl's cheeks. They were perfectly plain to Fred Ainsworth, who had come in the back way, because of his dripping umbrella, and had at the moment stepped to the parlor door to learn what made that sudden light. Then he meant to hurry in to his belated supper. Instead, he went forward into the room.

"Halloo!" he said. "What have we here?

You don't say you are trying to put that fire out with tears! What a waste of water! Why, everything is soaking outside; if you could just turn it out on the road, instead, it would be quenched in two seconds."

Mag tried to laugh; this was such a funny idea; she did make a hysterical little noise that she meant for a laugh, but it sounded more like a sob. Mr. Frederick came near to her.

"What is it, Mag?" he said kindly, in a changed tone. "Something very bad must have happened, I am sure. "What can it be?"

Whereupon Mag struggled with her tears and overcame them and spoke distinctly, though very low:

"I can't do it, Mr. Frederick; I've got to give everything up, I suppose; and it makes me feel dreadful; I don't see how I can give up, but yet I must, of course, because I *can not* do it."

"Nothing was ever clearer!" he said, with great gravity. "Let me see if I can repeat it: 'I can't do it; I've got to give it up; I can't

give it up, yet I must, because I can't do it!' Is that right? It is perfectly plain, I am sure."

Then Mag really had to laugh a little; but it was only a very little. In a second she was grave.

"I don't know how to tell you," she said mournfully. But by dint of much questioning, she succeeded at last.

"I begin to comprehend," her listener said. "You consider my cousin Margaret your enemy, and you find that you can't love her, and Miss Ordway has shown you in the Bible that in that case it is all up, with you. Is that right?"

Mag nodded her head.

"It is a bad case," he said gravely. "I'll own that I don't think you have any great reason to love my cousin; still I don't think she really means to be your enemy."

"But she has been *mean* to me," said Mag earnestly, "and said mean things about me; you don't know how many, Mr. Frederick. Lora Woodruff told me all about it."

"I dare say! I could find something in the Bible about Lora Woodruff I believe, that it might do her good to see; but about your case, I think you said you were willing to pray for Margaret?"

"Oh, yes sir; I haven't, but I most know I could; and if it was only that, I would try; but there's that word 'love,' Mr. Frederick."

"I see. You don't believe in any half-measures; still, if I were you, I should try the praying. I've heard wise people say that when they prayed for persons they didn't like, the feeling they had for them changed, sometimes. I don't know anything about it myself, Mag, but I heard a very good woman say that once—one who knew more about the Bible than I should if I lived a hundred years." And the young fellow gave a little homesick sigh as the picture of his dear grandmother came vividly before him at that moment, with her serene old face framed in a white cap, an open Bible always on the table at her side.

Mag was looking at him intently with very

wide-open, anxious eyes, that presently changed in expression, and seemed full of wondering awe.

"I never thought of that," she said slowly, "I thought I must not pray for her because I did not love her; the love comes first in the verse; but maybe, seeing God knows just how it is, he would help me."

"It is worth trying, I assure you," said Mr. Frederick, and now there was a broad smile on his face. All at once the ridiculousness of it came upon him—Miss Ordway and himself trying to explain the Bible and teach Christian duty to this child! "Physician, heal thyself!" he repeated as he went toward the dining-room. "If the mouse knew enough, she might quote that old proverb to us with relish."

But Mag was not thinking of either of them; her mind was full of a great and solemn thought. God, who knew her much better than Miss Ordway or Mr. Frederick did, knew that she could not make herself love Miss Margaret, and perhaps in his greatness he would find a

"Beside the cot she knelt."

way to help her, if she only asked him. Why had she not thought of this before?

I think the angels must have looked that night upon a sight to interest them. A bare little room boarded off by a very thin partition from the larger attic where others of the help slept; a room furnished only by a small cot bed, a pine box turned on its side and its top covered with newspaper, for a washstand, and ornamented with a bright tin basin and a broken-nosed water pitcher; and a three-legged stool for a seat—this was Mag Jessup's room. Beside the cot she knelt, a small figure in a dark blue calico nightgown—Mrs. Perkins made nightgowns out of old colored wrappers, because they showed soil less than white ones. The rain had ceased suddenly and the moon was struggling with clouds, and occasionally got the better of them and filled the little room with glory; and bathed in it was the little soul that wrestled on her knees with the old problem of how to forgive one who had injured her. She did not know, poor child, how old a story

it was; she thought in her ignorance that she was the first person in this great sinful world who had found it hard, even to impossibility, to do right.

She did not kneel long; children's prayers if perfectly sincere are always very short; Mag had not many words to say, and when they were said, she waited a minute and said the very same words again, not that she felt it was necessary, but because the repeating them in some way comforted her. Then she laid herself down on her very short and narrow cot and fell asleep at once; for she had worked hard all day and was tired.

She was awakened in the morning by a sound of voices outside her door. She recognized the voices; they were Jane's the chambermaid, and the nurse girl, who assisted Margaret Lancaster's aunt in the care of the invalid.

"Well, and how is she this morning?" Jane was asking.

"She isn't very good and that's a fact!" was the emphatic answer. "She's as cross

as two sticks; but I don't know as I blame her very much, poor thing! It is awful dull for a young girl like her to be lying there day after day; she ain't used to it, you see; and last night her foot pained her a good deal; she got out of patience with it yesterday and gave it an ugly twitch or two that made her have a hard night. I reckon she'll have a chance to learn patience, though, before she gets through. Have you heard what the doctor told her aunt yesterday?"

No, Jane had heard nothing. The voices dropped a little lower, but still Mag could hear distinctly.

"Why, don't you think he is afraid her foot will never be just right again! He had over some big words that I guess nobody but himself understood, but they meant that there is some kind of a twist to it that they don't often get over. He said she might have to walk with a cane, or she might get so that she wouldn't need a cane, but he was afraid there would always be a limp; and I guess it would about kill her

if she knew it; for she looks like a proud piece."

They talked longer, but their voices sank to whispers, and Mag made no effort to hear more; she had heard enough. Poor, *poor* Margaret! Her heart swelled with such a sense of pity as she had never felt for any one before. Those beautiful small feet of which their owner had evidently been so proud! and now to have a "twist" in one of them that would not get well! Mag hopped up and began the process of washing and dressing in haste. It was still early, but she felt in a great hurry. For what? Her fingers came to a full stop as she asked herself that question and waited for the answer, and realized what it meant. She felt in a hurry to do something for Margaret Lancaster! Something to comfort her, cheer her, help her in some way. Then did she actually love her a little, after all? Oh, never mind, she did not know; perhaps the name of it was not "love," but it was named something different from what she had felt before. She must get

downstairs and see if there were any asters in bloom of that queer pale color that Miss Margaret liked so much. Nobody had taken her any, and Mrs. Perkins said she did not care how many were picked, there were going to be shoals of them. She had no time for the asters, after all. Norah called to her and kept her feet running hither and thither, although she knew she was downstairs nearly half an hour earlier than usual. At last came the order to toast a slice of bread for "Miss Fussy!"—that was Norah's name for the invalid. Never was bread more carefully toasted; and the milk to be poured over it was heated to just the point that escaped that disagreeable "scum" which was occasionally allowed to gather. Then Mag arranged the tray with utmost care, choosing a plate that she felt sure Miss Margaret would like, and a tiny, shell like cup for her cocoa. When all was ready she asked eagerly, "Norah, may I just fly out to the garden and get an aster or two for it, before I take it up?"

"An aster or two!" repeated Norah in fine

scorn; "folks can't eat asters; and by Jane's tell she is cross enough this morning to throw them at your head; but I'm sure I don't care; git 'em if you want to." And Mag brought them, pale and pure and wet with dew. Her face was bright when she entered the upstairs room with her tray.

"Good morning," she said cheerily, "I've brought you some lovely toast, and an egg that was laid this very morning for you, and a cup of cream for the toast."

"I hate the sight of toast;" said Margaret, crossly. "Why didn't you—oh, there are asters! I thought I should be down stairs before they were ready. I don't believe I'm ever going down stairs. I believe that hateful old doctor is cheating me, telling me I will be better next week, and *next* week and all the time he knows that I'm never going to get well." She pushed the tray from her, and burying her face in the pillow burst into a passion of tears.

Oh poor Margaret! It was the only thought

the little attendant had. Every vestige of dislike, or aversion, or indignation had gone out of her heart. She was sorry for Margaret, yes, and she loved her! how could anybody help it, when she was sick and felt so badly, and had a twist in her foot that perhaps never—and here Mag felt a choking sensation in her throat and was afraid that she too would cry. This would never do.

"Won't you take a swallow of the cocoa while it is nice and hot?" she asked timidly, "and you can't think what is under this saucer. It is a surprise on purpose for you; something that you like, I guess, ever so much."

Curiosity presently got the better of tears; Margaret peeped and found a wonderful cluster of Niagara grapes, the first of the season in that part of the world. Before she knew it, she was pressing great globes of cool sweetness between her lips, and tasting of the cream toast and delicately poached egg, and taking sips of the cocoa. And Mag, eager, alert, patient, was

holding the tray at just the right angle and keeping the napkin ready for the dainty grape-stained fingers, intent on helping Miss Margaret Lancaster to just as good a time as could possibly be secured.

CHAPTER XVIII

"WHAT MADE YOU CHANGE?"

"LOOK here," said Frederick Ainsworth, detaining Miss Ordway as she was passing through the hall, "who is responsible for the present condition of things, you or I?"

Miss Ordway laughed. "What a large question!" she said. "Do you refer to the weather, or the state of the crops, or the fact that vacation is almost over?"

"I refer to the small brown child upstairs; it is simply angelic, the way in which she is humoring my cross cousin's most unreasonable whims! and it is but a short time since I found her bathed in tears over the fact that you had shown her that the Bible and her treatment of the said cousin did not agree!"

"It was not that she did anything very dreadful to poor Margaret," said Miss Ordway, still

laughing, " but the little mouse did not try to be cheerful, and quaint, and interesting, as she can be, and I wondered what was the matter; then I found that she was nursing a terrible state of things in her poor little heart, so I tried to talk to her on a level with her own theories, that was all. I confess that the result is surprising. No angel could have been sweeter or brighter than she has been ever since to Margaret."

" She is a very curious little girl," said Frederick, with the air of a man of thirty. " I like to study her; I confess that I do not understand her in the least. My cousin Margaret hasn't been especially gracious to her, as I happen to know; and since she has been ill, she hasn't spared any of us, but Mag seems to have risen above it all in a way that is really wonderful in a child. But what amuses me the most is the fact that you and I seem to be responsible for this development; and as, in Mag's opinion, it is altogether in a religious line, the query is, how came we to know so much about it?"

" Do you think I know no more about re-

ligion than you do, you saucy boy?" said Miss Ordway, trying to keep the whole question on the plane of a joke; then, despite this attempt, her face grew suddenly grave.

"I know what you mean," she said, "and I have no hesitation in confessing that the little homeless orphan girl puts us both to the blush. At least I ought to be ashamed; I do not remember my mother, but father certainly tried to instil Bible principles; and theoretically I know a great deal about religion."

"I don't understand it," said Frederick again —"I mean I don't understand Mag. I've known little people before who jabbered Bible verses and said prayers, even in public, in their children's meetings, and did both very much as parrots might; meaning nothing but words. I always thought it was a pity to teach children a lot of grown-up words and ways that they could not be expected to understand. Nothing that I ever saw in the lives of those whom I watched matched their words."

"I know," said Miss Ordway; "I have seen

such children as you describe, but Mag is different. I don't mind owning that I am studying her with the deepest interest. I'll tell you what I think makes the difference between her and others. She means business. Show her a Bible verse and she immediately acknowledges it as containing orders for her, and sets about obeying them. When I showed her the verses about loving enemies and praying for people who ill-treated her, I thought, in view of her state of mind toward your cousin, that she had reached something that would stop her. But, behold! before the next day closed she had altered her manner toward Margaret entirely. I was curious enough to question her, and I found that she was perfectly childlike in her explanations—there is the most delicious mixture of child and woman about her! She had no theories to advance, and in fact was so interested in Margaret, and so eager to make the time pass less drearily, that she had no special interest in theorizing about it. 'I'm so sorry for her! Miss Ordway,' she said, and 'I can't

help liking to help her now. I don't think I could have meant anything I said yesterday; only I thought I did; but, anyhow, I don't now;' and away she flew to carry a glass of milk to Margaret. Frederick!" with a sudden change of tone.

"Yes'm," said Frederick, meekly; he and Miss Ordway had grown to be very firm friends.

"Isn't it time that you and I began to take lessons of little Mag? I confess to you that the child has something that I would give a great deal to possess—a certain settled faith in God as her Father; a certain assurance that he will make all things 'work together for her good'—that is certainly worth having."

"How did she get it?" asked Frederick, curiously. "She is a very ignorant child, immensely ignorant about a thousand things that girls of her age generally know, and has had no religious instruction whatever. How did a child like that jump suddenly into such mysterious knowledge and experience as this?"

"Didn't I tell you? She obeyed orders. You should hear her tell the story—it is simplicity itself. It was your own book, the one you gave her last Christmas, that began her education. She found there that Some One called her to come to him; and she had been told that she must run just as soon as she was called; so she went; and he did the rest! That is all that she knows about the process; but any one can see how it is transforming her life. Frederick, I really envy her."

The boy looked at her curiously for a moment, then laughed a little as he said: "I do myself, at times. She seems to have such a settled conviction that Somebody who can manage her, and events, and everything, has taken her in charge. I think of it often now that my mother is"—his voice faltered and stopped; for a moment he could not add a word. All Miss Ordway's heart went out in sympathy for him; she knew how the sentence might end in his thought. He struggled with his pain and at last added—"is not well; but that is nonsense;

of course it is on account of the warm weather; she will be all right when the cool bracing days come."

"I hope so," Miss Ordway said, trying to speak cheerfully; "but Frederick, I am wondering whether you and I can not profit by this poor little girl's example. We both have Bibles and I think, from something you told me, that we give about equal attention to them. What if we should reform? Little Mag goes steadily through her Bible and takes each direction as it comes. She gets along wonderfully well, but I think I should begin with the New Testament. Suppose we together turn over a new leaf and see what will come of it?"

"How far do you mean that the leaf shall be turned?" he asked, studying her face the while, to see if she was really in earnest.

"Why, entirely over. If you will join me I will agree to read a chapter in my New Testament every day, and order my life by its directions."

"There is more than that," he said quickly;

and he spoke in the tone of one who felt afraid that he might be referring to something that his listener would not in the least understand.

"More that what?" asked Miss Ordway briskly; "you speak in riddles."

"I don't think I can explain very well; I am not used to talking on such subjects." His face flushed, and he turned half away from Miss Ordway, but she waited for more.

"What I mean is," he said, beginning with difficulty, "that the reading of the Bible is but a small part of it."

"Of course it is; but I added, living up to its directions."

"Yes, but there is more than that; or, rather it isn't possible to do that without something else. Miss Ordway, you said that you had more training in these matters than I; don't you know what I mean? I think they call it conversion."

"Oh," said Miss Ordway, "yes, I know what you mean; but, Frederick, that isn't *our* part." He looked at her blankly.

"Don't you understand? Our part is to follow the directions, and God does the rest."

"One *can't* follow the directions, Miss Ordway. I know more about the Bible than you think I do. Very early in your reading of the New Testament you will come to commands or inferences, that it isn't possible for me, at least, to carry out. Take the very direction that you pointed out to poor little Mag about forgiving your enemies, and blessing them that curse you, and doing good to them that you hate, and all the rest of it. Don't you think you see me living up to such a state of things!"

"Yes," said Miss Ordway, firmly, "if little Mag can do it, you and I ought to be able to. The truth is, Frederick, we do not know what we could do if we had the help that Mag secured. Don't you believe, when she prayed that night, that she received the strength she asked for? I do. The question is, have you and I strength of character enough to take a decided stand. Choose the Bible for our guide-book,

and Jesus Christ for our guide, and let him do with us as he will? I've been thinking about this for a long time—ever since little Mag set me at it, indeed, and as you are the one who set her to thinking, it seems as though you ought to join me."

Some time before this they had moved away from the hall and were standing near a little side table in the parlor. Miss Ordway was resting her hand for support on a great book which lay there; as she closed her earnest words, looking up at the young fellow's face, he laughed a slight, embarrassed laugh. "I don't know where to begin," he said at last.

"Begin at the beginning; I have. Look here." She opened the Bible and turning the leaves quickly reached the verse, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

"There," she said, "that is the beginning, so far as I understand it. I have resolved to follow him. The mysterious part—the change that must come over my feelings, and plans, and hopes, before I can do what he wants—I

look to him to give. Frederick will you join me?"

Upstairs, Margaret Lancaster was studying a question that interested her. She had been crosser than usual that morning; various things had happened to cause this. In the first place, Miss Ordway's friends, the Duanes, had gone back to town, and she had not so much as been able to see them for a few minutes. It is true that this was because she declined to receive a call from them in her bedroom; she wanted to be carried downstairs to the sitting-room, and as the doctor would not allow this, the whole plan had to be given up.

"As if I wanted girls like the Duanes, who live in style all the while, to come up to this stuffy little bedroom, and call on me in bed!" she said angrily, and held stoutly to her determination to do no such thing. Then her foot and back took revenge on her for being so restless, and ached nearly all night. So the morning found her hard to get on with; even her gentle aunt nearly lost patience with the poor

girl's whims. When Frederick, who was making his morning call, ventured to suggest that the kinks that used to be in Margaret's hair must have somehow got into her temper, that young lady broke all bounds.

"I wish you would every one of you go away," she said, turning on her pillow and speaking in the most querulous of tones, "you are all tired of me, I can see that plainly; and Fred is just as disagreeable as he can be; I don't know what he comes up here for; I am sure I have enough to try me without him. I wish everybody would let me alone; send Mag here; she is the only one in the house who knows how to make it pleasant for me or cares to try."

Fortunately her aunt had left the room before this tirade began; so the nurse girl and Frederick were the ones who had the benefit of it. The young fellow had borne a good deal from his cousin that morning, and just what he might have been tempted to say in reply, had not Mag at that moment appeared, no one

will know. He lingered to see the cheerful patience with which she greeted the nervous invalid's ill-humor, and then went down to his talk with Miss Ordway. Perhaps it is no wonder that he felt, just then, the impossibility of following out the teachings of the New Testament, even with regard to friends, to say nothing of enemies.

The contrast between the Mag of the present and the Mag who had attended her during the first few days of her illness, presently struck Margaret Lancaster, and she began a search after the reason.

"What was the matter with you when I was first hurt? You were just as glum as you could be, and didn't try to do anything to make the time pass."

Poor truthful Mag! What was she to answer to such a question? Yet there was something very sweet to her in the suggestion that it gave. "Am I different now?" she could not help asking timidly. She had tried so hard to be helpful.

"Why, of course you are; you know that without asking. You tell some quite interesting stories—that is, they interest me now, when I can't read, nor go anywhere, nor see anybody worth seeing, and you do as well as you can, I guess"—this in a tone of great condescension —"but at first you didn't. I thought you were stupider than ever, and really hateful some of the time. What was the matter?"

Mag looked down, her cheeks aflame. How could she tell just the truth? Yet, of course, she must tell nothing else.

"I didn't love you," she said at last, in the lowest and most timid of tones. Margaret was very much astonished.

"Didn't love me!" she repeated. "Mercy! What had that to do with it? Who asked you to love me?"

"I didn't think you had been good to me," murmured Mag, "and I couldn't feel right and love you, and want to help you, and comfort you."

"The idea! How did you want me to treat

you, pray? Well, what made you different all of a sudden? Do you love me now?"

"Yes." Mag looked up with sweet eyes and met the fixed gaze unflinchingly. "I do love you now, and want to help make the time pass faster, and do everything for you that I possibly can."

"Why do you? What made you change?"

Mag's eyes drooped again, but her voice came low and clear. "I prayed about it; I asked God to show me how to love you, and want to do for you, and want you to be happy, and he did."

"You prayed about me! Well! if ever I heard of anything so queer in my life! As if *praying* to love people would do any good, anyway! I don't believe you have what they call common sense, Mag Jessup! I don't, really; you are so awfully queer. But I don't care, since you amuse me. Finish that silly story now. What became of the prince?"

CHAPTER XIX

A NEW HOME

IT was a January day, clear, cold and beautiful. Mag Jessup was standing on the steps of a handsome house in Clinton avenue waiting for her car.

She had changed a good deal since the days when she had waited on Margaret Lancaster, and shelled peas, and picked over berries and pared vegetables on the back porch of Mrs. Perkins's summer boarding-house. For one thing, she had grown taller, and her form had rounded out and her complexion cleared. She was still brown of skin, but on her cheeks was the glow of health, and the eyes, that had been considered too large for her face, now matched it better. Perhaps her dress had much to do with the change; it was by no means rich or expensive, but it fitted her perfectly, and was very neatly made in the prevailing style, and

the colors harmonized with her eyes and skin. Her hair, too, had changed. It was still a sunny brown, but it had grown thick and long, and was very carefully brushed, and tied back with ribbons.

Greater changes than these had come to Mag Jessup; and, for that matter, to others who made her world.

In the first place, Miss Ordway was Miss Ordway no longer, but Mrs. Ward Duane, by which means Elise and Elsie Duane, those winsome young girls who had come with their sister to Mrs. Perkins's summer boarding-house, had become her sisters. Mrs. Duane lived in Clinton avenue now, the same city that held Mrs. Perkins and her winter boarding-house, but miles away from the latter; and Mag Jessup had lived on Clinton avenue ever since the new home was established there. It had been, all that summer, part of Miss Ordway's little plan to bring this to pass, but as she was not ready to explain the steps by which she meant to do it, she had naturally not spoken of

it even to Fred Ainsworth, despite his many plans for, and anxieties about, Mag Jessup's future.

Several weeks before the wedding took place, however, Mag Jessup knew that she was to be table waitress and general errand girl for Mrs. Ward Duane, and was happy. There had been more trouble in bringing this state of things to pass than Mag knew about. Mrs. Perkins had decidedly opposed it, and it was feared for a time that the whole scheme would have to be abandoned. She declared that she was the one who had had all the care of Mag, and the trouble of bringing her up, in the days when she was good for nothing but to be in the way, and now when, after careful training, she was really beginning to make herself useful, it was unreasonable to suppose that she, Mrs. Perkins, would be willing to let her go, and ungrateful in the child to be willing to go; but gratitude was not what she expected in this world.

It was Kate Perkins who finally helped to

turn the scale. Kate knew that Miss Ordway, when she became Mrs. Duane, intended to send the little girl to school, and she assured her mother that it would be "too mean for anything" to keep Mag away from people who were rich enough to dress her up, and give her the chances that she ought to have. Perhaps there was no one in the world whose good opinion Mrs. Perkins valued more than she did that of her plain-spoken daughter Kate, who seemed to have what her mother called "odd ideas." A few talks with this young daughter determined her to change her mind, and without much further trouble Mag Jessup was transferred to her new home, as soon as the Duanes returned from their wedding trip.

In almost every way the home had been a surprise to her.

She began by being much astonished at Mrs. Duane's directions to her to wear her "best clothes" every day; and in discovering very soon afterwards, that the much-worn blue dresses that she had brought in a neat package

from Mrs. Perkins's were given to the little colored girl who came for cold pieces.

"They were not suited to your present work," Mrs. Duane explained. "I want you to be always ready to receive my callers and show them into the parlor, and in order to do this properly you must be neatly dressed; besides, Mr. Duane and I like to be waited upon at the table by a little girl who looks as well as she can."

Mag said not a word, but obeyed orders, not without some inner misgivings in regard to Sunday. Mrs. Duane had assured her that she should go regularly, not only to Sunday-school, but to church, and if she wore her best dress every day, and her lovely brown hat and sack whenever she went out on errands, how long would they look well enough to wear to church? Before the second week in her new home had closed, her heart was set at rest. A new Sunday dress and hat and coat were waiting for her when she went upstairs from the dining-

room on Saturday evening. Quite new, every bit of them; not made from anything that had been worn before! It was Mag's first perfectly new dress. Her way of receiving the gifts was like Mag Jessup. She came down to Mrs. Duane's room after breakfast on Sunday morning, dressed as she had been directed, in the new garments, and with her Bible in her hand open to the place that had become very familiar to her since the days in which she had "found Margaret Lancaster in it." Her eyes were shining and her voice was very sweet as she said:

"If you please, Mrs. Duane, I have found verses just for me; and I'm not going to 'take thought' about it any more."

"That sounds serious," said Mrs. Duane, smiling. "As a rule, people do too little thinking, instead of too much. What have you found?"

So Mag read: "Take no thought saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we

drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

"I was worried," confessed Mag, "for fear I should get my best dress looking so bad, from wearing it every day, that you would not think it would do to wear to church and Sunday-school, and I thought about it a good deal; and there wasn't any use, because he knew all the time that I was going to have a beautiful new one on purpose for church."

Mrs. Duane laughed. "So that is what has been filling your thoughts, is it?" she said, pleasantly, "and you have decided to do no more thinking along that line? A very good resolution; I advise you to keep it as long as you can. An excellent rule in life I have found to be, thus far, to think about what I wear only as much as is necessary in order to be properly clothed. While you stay with me, Mag, I will see to it that you have clothes for every day, and for Sunday, too." In that way the dress question was settled; but there

were other very astonishing things, among them, Mag's own room. It was not large, but it seemed so to her; there were two windows, and they were dressed in white; so were the bed and the bureau, and everything, for that matter, that could be.

"You are so fond of white," said Mrs. Duane, well pleased that she had made Mag's great eyes sparkle, "that I thought I would dress your room in it; the covers are very simply made, and are easily washed. I will teach you how to take care of them yourself, and to make new ones to use in exchange for these." There was white matting on the floor, and a crimson and white rug at the bedside. Mag thought it the most beautiful room in the world. Occasionally there came to her a wistful feeling that Margaret Lancaster could see it. Margaret's mother and father had come home, and they were all spending the winter in this same great city; but they lived in a different world from Mrs. Duane, and Mag thought she was not likely ever to see Margaret Lancaster

again. Never mind, what did it matter, since she had a lovely new home, and everybody was just as kind and nice to her as they could be?

But the most astonishing change to Mag was that she went to school. Nothing whatever had been said to her about that; and it came to her that October morning with all the charm of a great surprise. It is true that Margaret Lancaster would not have called it going to school, but I am in doubt whether a better school, all things considered, could have been found for Mag than was established in the library at No. 636 Clinton avenue. Mr. Duane, who was himself a student, and a specialist in English history, had been very much amused at his wife's account of little Mag's way of studying her one book. He questioned and cross-questioned the little girl at different times, until he learned exactly how much she knew about history, and was astonished with the result. "I never before realized," he said to his wife, "that so much could be learned from one book, and a

child's book at that; but the little girl certainly has a talent for history; it must be cultivated."

So he set about cultivating it; every day he gave an hour out of his busy life to the hitherto neglected little girl, with a view to teaching her the best way of learning the great story of the past. Mrs. Duane for her part undertook to teach the other common branches of study. They had talked it over together and decided that Mag's knowledge and ignorance were both so surprising that for a time it would be useless to send her to school. She would not grade anywhere. She was an excellent reader, having taught herself to read as though every word interested her deeply, as indeed it did. But she knew almost nothing about numbers, and was alarmingly ignorant of geography, save that portion of it which had to do with her beloved book. By reason of her habit of copying scraps of writing wherever she found them, she had learned to write a remarkably good hand; and because she had lived upon her three books, the Bible, Little Pillows, and the Child's His-

tory of England, she had learned to express her ideas in remarkably good language. All these puzzling contradictions would simply bewilder the ordinary teacher, and it was therefore decided that for the first year Mag should be trained to study at home, with a view to her "catching up" so as to be on a level with girls of her age.

So it came to pass that this small woman who had expected to be at all times at the call of the cook or chambermaid, and to make herself useful in a hundred ways between times, found that she was held as carefully to regular hours as though Mrs. Duane had kept a private school for training little girls. She had her morning duties in the dining-room and parlor, as well as in her own room; but at ten o'clock she was expected to go to her books. A small room opening out of Mrs. Duane's own sewing-room was fitted up with books, maps, blackboard and all conveniences, and here Mag Jessup was to spend her happy hours until one o'clock. When Mrs. Duane sat in her sewing-

room, Mag was at all times at liberty to go to her with a question or a perplexity. During this time the bell might ring and ring again for all attention Mag was to pay to it. At one o'clock she became little table waitress again, but Mr. and Mrs. Duane, when quite alone, amused themselves and helped her by entering into conversation with her concerning the work she had been doing that morning; so that it grew to seem like a free and easy recitation instead of the luncheon hour.

Following luncheon, there was nearly always some errand to do or message to take that gave the little girl a brisk, purposeful walk in their end of the town. On Tuesdays, Mrs. Duane's day for receiving guests, Mag, neatly dressed, was in the hall ready to welcome callers; but she had always a book on the little table at the end of the hall for her use, and between the bells was at liberty to read or study. On Thursday, which was Mr. Duane's leisure day, he always went out somewhere with his wife; but the other afternoons that lady devoted

largely to her painting, and it was Mag's duty and delight to bring her books and go over with this quaint and winning teacher the work of the morning. Mr. Duane, who was usually released from business cares by four o'clock on four days of the week, gave the little girl the hour from five to six for history. Take it all in all, a wider contrast to the life she used to live at Mrs. Perkins's boarding-house could hardly have been imagined than the one Mag was living in Clinton avenue; yet to those who knew only the outside of things she was merely table-waiter and general errand girl for the Duanes.

"Mag doesn't go to school, after all!" said Kate Perkins in a disappointed tone to her mother the evening after she had chanced to meet Mag on the street. "I thought they as good as promised to send her, mother, if you would let them have her?"

"So they did," said Mrs. Perkins, taking three pins out of her mouth in order to answer; she was trying to refit one of Kate's worn-out

dresses to the little girl who had taken Mag's place, and it was hard work, for the girl was taller and stouter than Kate, and not so easy to suit as Mag had been. Mrs. Perkins missed little Mag in many ways. "So they did," said she, "but I thought at the time that they would probably forget it as soon as they got hold of her. The truth is, Mag had been taught and trained and drilled until she was really becoming a very useful girl, and Miss Ordway was sharp enough to see it. I have never felt very much pleased with the way in which she coaxed the child away from me. It is just as I said at the time—I had all the work and she reaps the benefit. And this creature we have now, in Mag's place, is a nuisance if ever there was one."

"Well," said Kate, her tone still dissatisfied, "I'm real sorry for Mag; she ought to go to school, and I thought Miss Ordway would be sure to send her; she said a good deal about it last year."

Said Mrs. Perkins: "Of course she ought,

and if she had stayed with me, she would have gone; I fully meant to get around to it this winter. It is one thing to find fault with other people, and quite another to do things yourself. Mrs. Duane finds, I suppose, that it is not so easy to hire a servant and then send her to school. Mag has become a very useful girl, thanks to my training."

Mrs. Perkins honestly believed that she would have sent Mag to school if she had had her, and honestly believed that it was entirely her training that had made Mag a useful girl. For that matter, her training, undoubtedly, had a good deal to do with it, for Mrs. Perkins was a very neat woman, and knew how work should be done. The higher training that Mag had received through her three books the weary housekeeper did not understand.

CHAPTER XX

A MEMORABLE BIRTHDAY

MAG would by no means have appreciated the pity that Kate Perkins bestowed on her. She was royally happy. To study and learn had been her ambition ever since Frederick Ainsworth had spoken to her about it so earnestly; now she was doing it. A better school than she attended she believed could not have been found, and she was undoubtedly right. Both Mrs. and Mr. Duane knew how to help people to learn, and were deeply interested in their pupil. The little girl made most surprising progress, and by the time she reached her fifteenth birthday it had been decided that she was now fairly ready for school life.

What school should be chosen had been a matter of grave importance to Mrs. Duane, who had her own theories about education. The

public school of their ward was a long distance from their home, and it happened that Mrs. Duane knew, and did not in the least approve, two of the teachers under whose care Mag would naturally be. After much talk between Mr. and Mrs. Duane they agreed upon a plan that would undoubtedly astonish many of their acquaintances; but, fortunately, they did not care for that. Just a pleasant ride from their home, and not a very long walk from it, on pleasant days, was a private school, for whose chief Mrs. Duane had the highest respect.

She took not many pupils, and all were girls, and she watched over their interests in every possible way. Of course to attend this school was a somewhat expensive matter, but Miss Ordway had had money enough for her own needs before she married a wealthy man. Why should they not send their little maid-servant to a school that cost money, if they chose to do so? Before Mag knew anything about it, all arrangements had been made, and on this January morning, when she stood waiting for a car,

she was about to begin her life as a pupil at the Garland Place school.

"You can walk home if you feel like it," explained Mrs. Duane in reply to Mag's protest against spending money for car-fare, "but it is now so late that you might possibly be tardy if you undertook to walk, and that would be a poor beginning. Remember, you are to go directly to the office, that side building that I showed you yesterday, and give your name and street and number; the secretary will attend to the rest. Your name is entered as Margaret Kane Jessup; don't forget and say 'Mag' or they may not recognize you."

Imagine, if you can, how Margaret Kane Jessup felt as she sat in the street car, being carried to her new world! The cars had become familiar to her, as she often went of errands for Mrs. Duane to such long distances as to need to ride; more than that, she had been taken frequently on excursions that required their aid, but this was the first time they had been used to carry her on an errand of her own.

She glanced at the conductor as she handed him her ticket and wondered what he would think if he knew she was going to school.

Meantime, in the secretary's office at Garland Place, girls were gathering from all parts of the city, whose names had been entered for the midyear term. By ten o'clock dozens of them were moving about the large, cheery schoolroom. The first day of the term was a sort of gala day in this school; no very regular work was done; seats were chosen, desks arranged, lessons assigned, and all things put in order for actual work the next morning. During this period the girls were allowed to chat together freely, and were often left with no teacher in charge. Such was the state of things when Carrie West made her announcement:

"Girls, we have one new scholar this midyear, at least. I was in the office when she gave in her name. It is Margaret Kane Jessup. She is a little bit of a creature, not half so large as her name, but she looks as though she might be pleasant."

"Margaret Kane Jessup!" It was our old friend Margaret Lancaster who repeated this name very slowly, as though she stopped over each syllable to wonder. "Are you sure, Carrie? How queer that it should be exactly the same name! but of course it isn't Mag. Where does this girl come from? Did you hear her address?"

"Yes, indeed; she is from 636 Clinton avenue. I noticed the number because it is exactly ours, only we are Pearmain street instead of Clinton avenue."

Margaret Lancaster repeated the new scholar's street and number in precisely the dazed way that she had her name; and the girls turned and looked at her curiously, laughing the while, as Carrie said: "What is the matter with you, Margie, that you 'are guilty of the inelegance of repeating all my sentences,' as Madame LaLande would say?" Her answer was:

"Carrie West, you must be mistaken! I know the people who live at 636 Clinton ave-

nue; it is Mr. Ward Duane, the one who married Miss Ordway, the artist, and they have a servant, a little brown runt of a creature, named Mag Jessup, but of course she wouldn't be coming to Garland Place to school!"

"I can't help it," insisted Carrie; "a girl who gave her name as Margaret Kane Jessup, and her number as 636 Clinton avenue, is in the office this minute, and Mrs. Garland is talking with her. If you don't believe it, you can go and look at her."

This proved to be unnecessary, for at the moment the door leading from the secretary's office opened, and Mrs. Garland appeared, and behind her, of all persons in the world, Mag Jessup! Margaret Lancaster knew her in an instant, although many things had taken place since she had seen her that had greatly changed Mag Jessup. Mrs. Duane had seen to it that she was quite as neatly dressed as any of the girls. As a rule, those who attended Mrs. Garland's school had sensible mothers, so nearly all the dressing was simple and appro-

priate to school life. In truth, it was well known that Mrs. Garland herself disapproved of any other style; so there was nothing conspicuous about little Mag. Her eyes were fully as large as ever, but the almost wild look that they used to have when she was startled or excited had passed away. She was now a becomingly dressed, quiet, well-behaved young girl. Margaret Lancaster could only stare at her. She did not yet believe even the evidence of her own eyes. It could not be possible that Mag Jessup was entered as a pupil at Garland Place private school!

By noon it was quite a settled thing, and Margaret gathered a few choice spirits about her and blazed her indignation, "The idea! Why, she is just a servant; she used to live at that Mrs. Perkins's on East street, the one who keeps a large boarding-house. 'Mistaken!' Why, Addie Phillips, I know her as well as I do you. When we went to the country a year ago last summer, we boarded with Mrs. Perkins at her summer boarding-house, and this

little brown thing was one of her servants. She picked berries, you know, and shelled peas, and pared potatoes, and did all sorts of things. Why, she was the one who waited on me a great deal, after I was hurt; of course I know her. When Miss Ordway married Mr. Duane she took Mag with her to be table-waiter. I remember we laughed about her having such a small table-waiter. I must say I think it is queer to have her come here with all of us. What will we do with her?"

"I don't see that we are called upon to do anything with her," laughed one of the girls; "that is, if she behaves herself; she looks like a nice, modest little creature. I don't suppose she will hurt any of us. Why didn't you go up and speak to her, Margie, if you knew her so well? She must have felt rather lonesome among all us girls."

Margaret drew herself up as well as her lameness would allow, for the poor girl had never recovered from that wild drive that she took on the day of the picnic, and said haugh-

tily: "I don't know her as a school girl; I never made her acquaintance in that line, and never expect to. If she has come here to work for Mrs. Garland, I will speak to her, of course, just as I would to any servant; but at present I don't know her."

Several of the girls laughed; and one more outspoken than the others, said "Margie, you are too silly for anything, sometimes! What difference does it make whether the new scholar is a servant, or what she is, so long as she behaves herself?"

When Margaret moved slowly and haughtily away, they talked about her a little, as school girls will.

"Isn't it queer that Margie Lancaster should have such grand ideas, and feel so superior to almost everybody? Her father isn't a very wealthy man; my father says he is quite embarrassed, and that he has lost a good deal of money lately."

"My mother says that Margie Lancaster is too old for her years," contributed one. "Just

think! she isn't fourteen yet, and she talks and acts like a young lady."

"She always did," laughed a girl who was older than the others. "I am nearly three years older than she, and I felt like a very little girl who ought to be in a kindergarten the first time I met her. She has been used to grown-up people all her life, they say, and has never learned to act like a young girl. She looks older than she is, too; and that is against her. Madame LaLande could hardly believe me one day when I happened to say that Margie wasn't fourteen yet. 'Why, Mademoiselle Hervey!' she said, 'she is older than yourself, *certainmente.*'"

"Well, I wonder if that new little girl, who has disturbed Margie so, looks younger than she is," said Carrie West. "It doesn't seem as though she was old enough to join any of our classes."

But Carrie West discovered her mistake in a few days. "Miss Jessup," as the teachers called her, was not only in the same language

class with the other girls of nearly her age, but was also in the leading history class in the school. In certain studies she was not yet their equal, but from the very first recitation in history it became apparent that they must look well to their honors if they did not mean to allow little Mag to carry them off.

For the first few days Mag can not be said to have had a very social time with her schoolmates. Margaret Lancaster refused to acknowledge her presence even by a bow, although at their first meeting Mag had looked pleasantly at her, expecting some sort of greeting. Her face took on a deeper red for a moment when she found that she was not to be noticed, but she turned away without a word, and opened her book as soon as possible. Several of the girls who were more or less under Margaret's influence, although they felt ashamed of her, held aloof from Mag, not knowing quite what to do; and others who were busy with their books, or their fun, thought nothing about her; and it might have

been that Mag, who was shy and quiet, would have made no friends in the schoolroom had it not been for something that happened when she had been there but a few days.

One morning, reaching the schoolroom ten minutes before the bell rang for opening exercises, she was just in time for Alice Wheeler's news.

"Oh, girls! don't you think we have two new scholars! They have come to spend the rest of the winter in the city, and the girls are to begin here this morning."

"Who?" "What girls?" "Why on earth don't you tell us what you are talking about?" These were some of the ways of receiving the news.

"Why, the Duane girls; Elise and Elsie. Don't you know them? You do, Margie Lancaster. They are just lovely girls, both of them. They are here with their married sister. Their father had to go abroad again on business, and Mrs. Duane went with him; and Mrs. Schuyler, their married sister, has brought them here

so as to be near her brother for the winter, and they are coming to school this morning."

Now it happened that little Mag could have told that bit of news two days before. Mrs. Duane had told her all about it. She and her husband had spent the evening before with the Schuylers at the hotel where they were staying. For the first five minutes after she heard the news, Mag's face had glowed with pleasure. Then the light had died out of her eyes, and she had said not a word. She had known Elise and Elsie Duane for only two weeks at the summer boarding-house, and she had known and waited upon Margaret Lancaster all summer. If Margaret had forgotten her so entirely as never to speak to her, what could be expected of the Duane girls?

Much excitement was created at Garland Place over the new arrivals. All the girls knew about the Duanes, and a few of them had the honor of a slight acquaintance. Among these was Margaret Lancaster, who had had the good fortune to meet them at Long Branch the sum-

mer before. She was voluble in their praises, and inclined to think that she must be the most intimate acquaintance they had in the school. It was not until the ten minutes' recess at eleven o'clock that the new scholars were introduced to the school by Mrs. Garland. It was Margaret Lancaster who immediately moved forward and claimed acquaintance, kissing them both eagerly, and telling them how glad she was to have them in her school. They seemed pleased with her kind greeting, but were almost shy before so many watching eyes, until Elise, looking eagerly about her, made a sudden dash and rushed almost into little Mag's arms.

"Oh, you *dear!*" she cried impetuously, "Ward said we would see you here this morning, and we were oh, so glad! you can't think. Elsie, here is our dear Mag." Then Elsie, too, turned abruptly away from Margaret Lancaster and the favored girl whom she had just introduced, and went over to little Mag Jessup and kissed her again and again. The scholars looked on and said nothing. But from that

moment most of them thought that Margaret Lancaster was probably mistaken in the place that Mag Jessup held in the Duane family—it was silly to suppose that the young Duanes would greet a servant in their brother's house in any such fashion. Others of them decided that whether Mag Jessup was a servant or not, they liked her, and meant to show it. They guessed they could afford to, if the Duane girls thought so much of her as that.

So the Duanes, all unknown to themselves, settled Mag Jessup's place for her in the minds of a number of girls who had had silly ideas put into their minds by coming in contact with a few who had secured those silly ideas from people older than themselves. Mrs. Garland and her fellow-teachers did what they could to keep their school strong and pure; but they could not counteract altogether the influence of a few foolish mothers who had allowed their little girls to play at being grown up long before they ought to have thought of such a thing. Perhaps it was really worse than that. The

false ideas they were allowing to take root and grow would have disgraced any age that they might reach. Poor Margaret Lancaster, for instance, had been much with people who had led her to believe that wealth and the sort of position that wealth gives in the world were really the most important things of life.

CHAPTER XXI

MAG'S WAGES

IT took but a few weeks for Mag Jessup to become thoroughly acquainted with school routine and settle down to hard work. Life was not altogether blissful to her; if she had supposed that girls who went every day to school had nothing to mar their complete enjoyment, it was probably as well that she was undeceived. Margaret Lancaster, without being exactly ugly, or at least meaning to be, could not forgive poor Mag for being undeniably a favorite of the Duanes; moreover, as the weeks went by and Mag grew used to reciting before others, it became very apparent indeed that she knew more about English history and talked more understandingly about it than did any girl in the class. She had not lived among the chief characters and personated them in her little attic room all win-

ter for nothing. Now, Margaret Lancaster, before Mag's advent, had been the leader in this class; and as she liked to lead, the history hour had been to her the pleasantest one in the day. All this was past when Mag Jessup took her acknowledged place in the class. For a girl of Margaret's temperament to be outshone by little Mag Jessup was bitter indeed. The indifference with which she had meant to regard the young girl began to deepen into positive dislike, and she omitted no opportunity to say little hateful things about Mag; loud enough, many of them, for the girl to overhear. Mag had not been long at school before an incident occurred that gave Margaret a chance to indulge in no end of sarcasm at her expense. An incident which was in itself so funny that many, who would not otherwise have ridiculed Mag, found themselves laughing heartily at her mistake. In order for you to understand it, it will be necessary to remember that Mag, although she had, considering her opportunities, learned a great deal, was still very ignor-

ant of many matters that other girls seem to learn by a sort of instinct, and was inclined to be what people call credulous about a great many things.

It was a custom in this school for the pupils to recite Bible verses at the opening exercises. Mrs. Garland sat on the little platform near the piano and herself called the name of any young lady whom she chose to have recite. There was no rule about this, at least none that was known to the scholars; the same girl might be called upon five or six mornings in succession, for all that she knew to the contrary. The directions were that each pupil must always be ready to recite when called upon. It was astonishing to the girls to see what a wonderful memory Mrs. Garland had. If a scholar gave the same verse twice in the course of a week, she was sure to hear from the platform in smoothest tones, "Is that verse a special favorite of yours, Miss Smith!" or "My dear Miss Jones, that is a very choice verse, but there are others equally so; you have given it to us sev-

eral times, I believe." The consequence was that the girls prepared their Bible verses with care, and learned many of them, in the course of a year at school.

One morning Mag, who enjoyed this part of the day very much, and who always chose her verse with great care, stood near little Alice West's seat, waiting for the piano to sound the strains that meant "Be seated." While she waited she took up a neat little black book that lay on Alice's table. Small books will probably always have a special attraction for Mag, because they remind her of her dear "Little Pillows." Behold, the tiny, handsomely bound gilt-edged book was a part of the Bible—the book of Proverbs bound by itself; how delightful! Mag had often wished that she had a Bible so tiny that it could be carried about in her pocket. She opened this one eagerly. More than once she had stopped thoughtfully over the book of Proverbs in her Bible and studied some of the strange, quaint verses; she had already learned from the wise man some

keen truths. But this morning her eyes were held to the words that first met them: "It never rains but it pours!" What could the words mean? Certainly not exactly what they said, for that very morning a slow, gentle rain was falling; such a rain as reminded the grass and trees that spring was on its way; but there was nothing about it that suggested the word "pour," and in Mag's experience nothing was more common than those soft, silent rainy days. Of course she had by this time learned that there was such a thing as figurative meanings, and being an imaginative girl had had no difficulty in grasping that idea, but what this particular verse was intended to teach, she could not imagine. While she stood considering, the warning strains from the piano were heard, and all the girls were marching to their seats, keeping step with the music. Before Mag had had time to collect her thoughts, she heard her name called by Mrs. Garland, and knew that her verse was waited for. The beautiful one that she had prepared for that morning's possi-

ble use had for the moment slipped from her; never mind, she could use this new strange one, although she liked to know what words meant before she spoke them. In the utter silence that awaited her the young girl's voice clearly sounded through the room, "It never rains but it pours." To her dismay the recitation was followed by a very distinct ripple of laughter, and even Mrs. Garland let an amused smile flit over her face as she said: "You have made a remarkable selection this morning, Miss Jessup." Then she touched the little silver bell at her side and order was instantly restored. Throughout the service that followed, poor Margaret sat with downcast eyes, blushing and wondering. What was there so strange in her recitation? To be sure it did not especially fit the occasion, at least she supposed it did not, though when she could not yet imagine what it meant, how was she to be certain? Still, other girls recited verses that were not even so appropriate as this, for it certainly rained this morning; and they had not laughed, even when

little Louise Ellis repeated "Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan." She could not understand it, and it troubled her so that she lost most of the verses and could not join in the singing. But Mrs. Garland's prayer quieted and helped her. It was nearly an hour afterwards that that lady called her to the desk, and after giving her some general directions about the morning's work, laid her hand kindly on her arm as she said: "My dear, there are girls in my school-room whom I should have suspected of a bad joke if one of them had recited at prayers the words you gave us, but I believe I know you better. Will you explain to me what it all means?"

Margaret looked steadily at the open grammar in her hand, and struggled with her voice to keep it from quivering, as she said: "I hardly know how to explain, ma'am. I saw the verse a moment before in Alice West's Bible, and I thought it a very strange one and could not imagine what it meant. Then, when you called my name first, the verse I had

learned did not come to me, but this one did, and so I said it."

Mrs. Garland's face wore a look of bewilderment.

"You found the words in Alice West's Bible!" she repeated.

"Yes, Mrs. Garland, just this morning. I never saw them before, and I wanted to remember them, to ask Mrs. Duane what they meant."

"My dear, will you go to Alice's table and get her Bible for me to look at?"

Mag turned at once to do so. Little Alice was at that hour in her recitation room with the younger pupils, but the small black book that had attracted Mag lay on her table. She returned with it to Mrs. Garland's desk.

"It is only a piece of the Bible ma'am," she said, as she passed it to her, "but there is the verse on the first page."

Light broke over the puzzled teacher's face.

"My dear," she said, "I understand; you thought this was quotations from the Book of Proverbs in the Bible? I suppose you have not

met before the word 'proverb' used in any other way. It was a most natural mistake; but not a word of this little volume is taken from the Bible; instead, it is the supposed wise sayings of many different men, gathered from all classes of books."

"But what can it mean?" asked Mag, her face ablaze with mortification over her mistake, yet unable to let this opportunity for acquiring information slip away. "It often rains without pouring; it does this morning."

"Yes," said Mrs. Garland, smiling a kind indulgent smile on her ignorant young pupil. "It simply means to express the idea that when a bit of marked good or ill fortune come to one, others of like nature are apt to follow; at least such has so often been the case that it seemed natural to somebody to put the thought into this phrase."

Poor Mag! before the day was done, and indeed for many following days, she had occasion to realize the truth of the proverb thus explained. The discomfort that she felt because

of her blunder was deepened and increased tenfold by the manner in which the girls received it. Had she dealt with only the refined and sweet-hearted Mrs. Garland, the whole subject would soon have been forgotten, but Margaret Lancaster and those who copied her took care that Mag should not forget. The moment she appeared in the halls, at recess, or crossed the grounds in the morning, or passed out of the great gateway at night, somebody was sure to shout after her:

"Take care, Mag Jessup, you'll get wet!" or, "Oh, oh! don't you want to borrow an umbrella? It is going to pour, I think!" or some other arrangement of her unfortunate proverb. Nothing was said about all this at home; Mag having decided very early in her school experience that people who had been so very, very kind as Mrs. and Mr. Duane, deserved to hear only the best and brightest news from there, but her own pretty little room could have told the story of some very bitter tears, had it been trained to speak. I have given you

only an illustration of her trials; none of them large, nor serious in any way; none of them worth complaining about to teachers or special friends, at least so Mag thought; but nevertheless most of them were hard to bear, and shadowed what else would have been a perfectly bright winter to the orphan girl. Yet among those school girls I suppose there was scarcely one but would have opened her eyes wide in amazement and indignantly denied the charge of cruelty to their schoolmate. Most of them were simply thoughtless and fun loving. It is worth thinking about, what heartaches one can make in the world by simply being thoughtless and selfish.

Meantime, I am sure there are those who are anxious to know just how Mag Jessup treated her schoolmates in return; and when I tell them that she was steadily patient and meek toward them, I am sure there are some who will say: "Oh, nonsense! I don't believe anything of the kind. A girl who had any spirit, and was treated as she was, would have given

her schoolmates a piece of her mind. At least, she couldn't help almost hating them." I want to assure you that Mag Jessup was a girl of spirit, and that she treated every one of her schoolmates as kindly as she knew how, and, so far from hating them, tried in every way to be kind and helpful. You are mistaken in supposing such a course impossible. That very few people meet ill-treatment in this way only goes to prove that very few people try Jesus Christ's way. Mag Jessup, remember, had fought her battle and conquered, once for all. Rather, she had discovered just what the Lord Jesus, whose servant she was, expected of her, and also that he had said to her: "My grace is sufficient," and "I will with the temptation provide a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it;" and she had *taken him at his word.* With every annoyance, though it was no more than a pin-prick, she went straight to Jesus Christ, and he was true to his word, as he always is, and she was able to bear it. You think her a very unusual girl? I grant that. I

am sorry to have to admit it, but it is a sad fact that only an occasional girl, even among those who say that Jesus Christ has given them new hearts and that they mean to serve him, seem to believe exactly what he says, and trust him to help them keep their word. If I can help those who read this story to realize that Mag Jessup was unlike other girls simply because she believed, and tried, and not because of anything wonderful in the girl herself, I shall have accomplished a great deal. If I can, in addition to that, induce others to ask themselves, "Why should not we be unusual girls and boys?" and to resolve then and there, to try every day to live up to the rules that Jesus has given, I shall have accomplished that for which, above all other objects, I write. I am sure that the grave trouble with the lives of many young Christians grows out of the fact that they do not consider selfishness and occasional ill temper, and a nursing of the spirit that cries for petty revenge for ill-treatment, very bad faults; instead, they think of them as

states of mind that, as one girl expressed it, "can't be helped, anyhow, whether they are very bad or not, because they are so perfectly natural that you've got to feel them!" What we want is not "natural" fruit, but that which grows after Jesus has become the Lord of the heart-garden.

So I want you to understand that, despite the petty troubles of her school life, and the tears she was occasionally obliged to shed, Mag was, for the most part, a happy girl. She sang over her work at home in a way that pleased Mrs. Duane; and she managed her school work in a way to astonish and delight her teachers; for that she made really remarkable progress in her studies, even the school girls who liked her least, admitted. During these days in speaking of Mrs. Duane's house, Mag always called it "home." She did not study her own heart to find out the reason. She had never spoken so of Mrs. Perkins's house; she had by no means been adopted by the Duanes; she waited at table each day with painstaking care, and was

most conscientious in performing the other duties that fell to her share. She remembered that she was an orphan, and expected and wanted to earn her living; yet without planning to do so, her heart and lips said lovingly "home" whenever there was occasion. Meantime, there was no question of wages between them, although Mag was led to think about it once.

"Mag Jessup," called out Margaret Lancaster one morning, when Mag stood with a group of girls telling them exactly how she had fixed certain troublesome dates in her memory, "Mag Jessup, what do the Duanes pay you for your work? I suppose they give you good wages, don't they? They are awfully rich."

She had meant to hurt the girl's feelings, or at least to remind her that she was by no means the equal of the young people to whom she was so eagerly talking; but Mag was too simple hearted to catch her meaning.

"Wages!" she said, breaking off abruptly

in her explanation as if to consider an entirely new idea, then her face lighting in a way that it had when a new and pleasant thought struck her,

"Why, they do; they pay me—very large wages indeed."

The girls shouted. "Aren't you glad you know, Margie?" one of them cried, in the midst of the laughter; and Mag moved away, her eyes still bright. It had really come to her like a new thought, what wonderful wages she was receiving. For the first time since she could remember, she had a home!

CHAPTER XXII

"THAT LITTLE MAG JESSUP"

IT was one morning in May that Mag, arriving early, found the school-room in a hum of excitement. Very splendid times were in store for some of them, and they were making the hearts of others throb with envy while they told. Mag, lingering on the outskirts, as she was inclined to do unless distinctly invited into the circle, heard scraps of news. It all had to do with one whom she remembered every day in her prayers with a gratitude that many of the talkers would not have understood. Before Miss Ordway was married, "Mr. Frederick," as Mag continued to call him in her thoughts, had been suddenly summoned to join his father and mother abroad. His friends bade him goodbye with faces almost as sad as his own, for he was going upon a sad errand. His mother was

worse, and the gravest fears were felt lest he could not reach her in time to say good-bye. Mag had heard of him several times since then —first, that his mother was still living when he reached Italy; then that she really seemed to be gaining a very little; then that there had been a decided change for the better; finally that there actually seemed to be hope of her entire recovery, but that she could by no means return home as yet; therefore Mr. Ainsworth was to come to look after his long-deserted business, and Mr. Frederick was to stay abroad with his mother. After that, by degrees, he dropped out of Mag's world. Mrs. Duane occasionally heard of him through his relatives, but never thought to mention the news to Mag. Still, as has been said, she had never forgotten him, and she could not help the sparkle in her eyes over the news she heard that May morning. Mr. Frederick had come home; was actually at that moment in the same city with herself. The possibility was now always before her of meeting him somewhere and being able

to tell him that she was working hard for that education which he had put it into her heart to get.

"Of course I've seen him," Carrie Jones was saying. "Don't I tell you I was chatting with Margaret Lancaster when he came over to see her? He is Margaret's cousin, you know. Oh, but that girl is as proud of him as a peacock. It is too funny to see the airs she puts on."

"He used to be a real handsome boy," volunteered Alice Porter.

"He is yet; only I don't think you would call him a boy; he always had a way of looking older than he was, just as Margie Lancaster has, and he does now. He is, let me think—why, he must be about nineteen, and I should take him for twenty-three or four. Oh, very handsome and so stylish, my! There isn't a college boy in this city who can compare with him."

"Yes, indeed; they have come home to stay. They have gone right to their house on Laurel avenue; it has been refurnished, they say, and

everything about it is elegant—that is, Margie Lancaster says so; but then everything is always elegant that belongs to her relatives, you know." Then there was a general laugh at the absent one's expense. Followed by Carrie Jones again:

"Well, of course it is elegant. Mrs. Ainsworth always had exquisite taste. It is nice for Margie Lancaster, isn't it, to have a handsome grown-up cousin always at hand to go with her to places? I'm afraid this world will not contain her very long, she will be so fearfully set up."

"Do the Lancasters live here, or are they only staying?" This question from a comparatively new girl.

"Well, I think they may be said to be living here now. They have spent two winters here, and that is longer than they stay anywhere. Margie's father is Admiral Lancaster, of the United States Navy, as you must have heard if you have talked with Margie for five minutes. That is one of the things of which she is proud.

Mrs. Lancaster was abroad for more than a year to be near her husband, and Margie stayed with her Aunt Helen. She was in the country with her that time when she was hurt, you remember, girls; then they came on here, and Margie entered this school, and wants to stay here; therefore they will be likely to do so; she rules her mother, and her father too, I guess. I know her better than most of the girls do, for we used to live in Chicago, where they spent a good deal of their time. They boarded right next door to our house. I knew Fred Ainsworth when he was a little bit of a fellow; for he was on there one winter with his mother, and we quarreled like cats, I remember, over a balloon that we both claimed. But he has forgotten all about me; didn't succeed in remembering me very well, even after I had referred to old times and the balloon, although he pretended to for the sake of politeness; he is awfully polite."

Nobody invited Mag into the circle; nobody had an idea that she knew even Mr. Frederick

Ainsworth's name, and she was obliged at last to move away, still hungry for news of him. She had so much, so very much for which to thank him! Could she hope for a chance, some time, to do it? Of course he would not remember her; he had not remembered even Carrie Jones, a beautiful young lady, with whom he played when a child; but that need make no difference, she could thank him all the same. He might come, some time, to see Mrs. Duane, and she might possibly be at home and if Mrs. Duane knew that she wanted to thank him she would be sure to give her a chance.

The chance came much earlier than she expected. That afternoon as she stepped into the front hall on her return from school, she heard a voice that she felt sure she would have known anywhere. "Mr. Frederick" himself, looking so grown-up and dignified, as she peeped at him through the half open door, that she almost decided she should be afraid ever to speak to him. Yet he was chatting eagerly

with Mrs. Duane, asking questions with a rapidity that showed him in haste to learn all about his old friends. Mag stood in the hall, hesitating; she had a message of importance for Mrs. Duane, but she dreaded to deliver it. Perhaps Mrs. Duane would remember that she used to know Mr. Ainsworth, and would try to recall her to his memory, and her heart was so full just then of all his kindness to her when she was a lonely little girl, that she was almost afraid the tears would come, if Mr. Frederick should treat her as Margaret Lancaster did, for instance; that would be even worse than entire forgetfulness. She would like to wait and get used to the thought of his being at home, and train herself to remembering that, of course, he would have nothing to say to her. Duty triumphed; Mrs. Duane ought to have the word that her husband had sent, and have it immediately, therefore Mag pushed the door wider open and entered.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Duane, but may I speak to you a moment?" These words were

on her lips when she heard Mr. Ainsworth's voice:

"Why, can it be possible that this is—it certainly *is*—our little Mag! The eyes are the same, but for the rest—. Are you sure that you are little Mag Jessup, the child of one book?—no, two,—bless me! I believe there were *three*." The same genial voice, and he was actually holding out his hand—both hands—for her greeting! Mag, blushing and astonished, and wondering between times if he knew that his cousin, Margaret Lancaster, did not approve of her being treated as an equal, and very glad, gave him her hand, and assured him, with a laugh full of childish gleefulness, that she was the same little Mag.

"Not a bit of it!" he said, "you are wonderfully changed. You remember, Mrs. Duane, that I told you there were possibilities? Have a seat and tell me all about it—school life, and home life, and the history of England, and all the rest."

How kind he was! and how wise and how

patient with her ignorance, and how interested in everything that had to do with her studies!

Mrs. Duane, having received her husband's message, and finding herself obliged to go out at once to carry out his directions, invited Mr. Ainsworth to stay to dinner, and directed Mag to entertain him until her return. The hour that followed was one that Mag will always remember. It set her right about several matters concerning which she had been in danger of drawing wrong conclusions. Mr. Frederick Ainsworth's estimate of worth was evidently not like his cousin's. And he was young and rich, and had seen more of the world than had Margaret Lancaster. Mr. and Mrs. Duane and their relatives were not then different from all the rest of the world, as she was begining to think; here was another, from entirely another family who was "different" also; perhaps there were more. She would think better of the world than she had been doing; it was evidently larger than she had supposed.

Mr. Frederick, meantime, who meant to be a lawyer, and who studied human nature wherever he had a chance, questioned and cross-questioned, and learned more about Mag's school life than she had any idea she was telling; knew more about it in an hour's time than the Duanes imagined, and made his plans accordingly.

"You don't know my mother, do you?" This remark he made to Mag just as they were leaving the dining-room. Mag had served him carefully at the table like the deft-handed little table-waiter that she had become, and had been entirely silent of course, save when spoken to. Mr. Frederick had respected the proprieties of the table and said not a word to her until dinner was over.

"She is acquainted with you," he continued; "at least she has heard about the history of England and the 'Little Pillows,' and wants to make the acquaintance of their owner. I promised to bring you to see her as soon as possible. Could you go to-morrow afternoon,

do you think? I might call at the school for you if you could."

"Oh no, thank you," said Mag quickly, "I should not have time to-morrow. Friday is a very busy day."

But Mrs. Duane interposed, smiling, "You mean your home duties, Mag? Then I think we can arrange it; in fact I have already promised Mr. Ainsworth to do so."

So Mag in great wonderment and certainly no small delight over this unexpected glimpse of the beautiful world, went away with a look in her eyes that paid Mrs. Duane for whatever sacrifice she had made. In the parlor they talked about her a little.

"Her eyes are as expressive as ever," said Mr. Frederick. "Do you know, Mrs. Duane, that you have a remarkable little table waitress? I have been examining her in English history, and I assure you her knowledge of it would put some of our college men quite to the blush."

"She is an apt pupil," said Mr. Duane. "I

have been astonished to see how wonderfully well she grasps historic situations; makes a sort of picture of them in her mind, and studies it until it becomes hers."

"She acts it all out," said Mrs. Duane. "Don't you remember, Frederick, how she used to entertain herself up in that dreary attic room at Mrs. Perkins's? I think she continues much the same habit, and it accounts for the extreme clearness of her knowledge. Oh, we consider her a remarkable girl, and we are doing our best not to spoil her. See that you are as prudent."

"I don't intend to spoil her," laughed Mr. Frederick, "but I know two or three of her schoolmates who need to be taught a certain lesson, and I am going to take that part of their education in hand; that is why I want to meet little Mag at the school instead of calling here for her."

Mrs. Duane interested herself in Mag's next day's toilet, with the result that she appeared in

school with what she was in the habit of calling her "Sunday dress."

"How fine we are!" murmured Margaret Lancaster, with a toss of her head toward Mag; "I wonder what is going to happen to us to-day!"

As a matter of fact, Mag was not at all "fine" in the sense that Margaret Lancaster meant; Mrs. Duane's taste was good, and she could be trusted not to overdress a young girl for any occasion.

It was the hour for history that Mr. Frederick chose for his call.

"Miss Lancaster," the teacher had just said, when a side door opened and Mrs. Garland entered with her guest. Margaret, surprised and a bit fluttered by the unexpected appearance of her cousin, was at a disadvantage, and did not recite nearly so well as usual. Mag gave her a surprised and pitiful glance as she made a serious mistake in names and dates, and the next moment heard her own name

called. The lesson was one that had interested her even more than usual, and that morning, in reply to a question of hers, Mr. Duane had given her such a description of the situation that she had told him gleefully it was "almost like being there;" so she was not only ready, but glad, to recite.

"She is an unusual girl in many respects," Mrs. Garland said to her guest, as he commented on the recitation.

"I do not know when I have had a pupil who has interested me so deeply. Perhaps I notice her more because she is an orphan and quite alone in the world. But she has fallen among rare people. Do you know the Duanes, Mr. Ainsworth?"

They gathered about him for the "five-minutes' recess" that followed the history hour, those favored ones who could claim intimacy with Margaret Lancaster, and she was gracious and introduced her handsome cousin, explaining to him, between times, the mischief he had wrought.

"You were horrid not to tell me you were coming; it was all your fault that I made such dreadful blunders in class; I never recite in that fashion, do I girls? But I was so astonished at seeing you walk in that I couldn't gather my wits. Are you going to stay for our Shakespeare class? Oh, do! We have great fun then."

"Not to-day," said Mr. Frederick; "I came by appointment. I have a young friend here who is engaged to dine with my mother this evening, and she was to be ready for me after history. What has become of her, I wonder? I saw and heard her in the class."

"Who on earth could it be?" This question was in the eyes of every astonished girl of the group. In their opinion, every girl in that school who could have the slightest hope of dining with Mrs. Ainsworth was already one of the group about him. His cousin Margaret was as astonished as the rest, and opened her mouth to question, when the young man stopped it by saying: "Oh, here she is! Are you ready, Mag? If we make haste, we shall

be in time for a fair view of that picture I tried to describe to you."

And those girls stood in dumb amazement and watched the elegant Mr. Ainsworth walk away with "that little Mag Jessup!" she laughing as gleefully, in response to something he said, as though he were a schoolmate of hers.

"Well!"

"What do you make of that?"

"I never heard of such a thing in my life!"

These were some of the ejaculations that could have been heard as soon as the dumbness gave place to speech.

CHAPTER XXIII

"EXCELLENT"

THE midyear examinations of Mrs. Garland's school were drawing near. Almost a year, now, since Mag Jessup had entered the school as a pupil. In that time she had proved to schoolmates, as well as teachers, the position she meant to hold. Nobody thought of her as other than an excellent scholar. She was still behind some of her age in certain studies, but was always so thoroughly well prepared, and so sure of all ground that she had been over that she was steadily "catching up," even in these; and in history and composition it was generally conceded that she and Margaret Lancaster were by far the best scholars in the school. As to which of the two was ahead, opinions differed. Margaret Lancaster had her friends who stoutly argued that of course she

was a better scholar than "that little Mag Jessup!" But, on the other hand, Mag had many friends, some of whom smiled triumphantly and said: "Wait until you see which wins the prize."

The prize which was attracting most attention was the one for English history and composition combined. It was unlike any other award in Mrs. Garland's school. That lady did not as a rule approve of prizes, in the strict meaning of that word.

"Youthful human nature is too ugly to run a race in which only one can win." This was her explanation to some of her friends who urged more prizes; but there were other friends who said Mrs. Garland was wise, and that the ugliness of human nature in this respect was not confined to young people.

But the history prize had the right of way. It had been an institution for many years, being first established by Mrs. Garland's grandfather, who was a student of history. He had arranged that every year there should be a

trial of skill in the history class; every pupil who chose to compete for the prize being required to write a paper of not less than twenty-five hundred words and not more than five thousand, which paper was to be a sort of historic novel—that is, it was to be written in narrative form, and the characters were to be fictitious, but every statement in it must be true to history, and in keeping with the period of time which the writer chose to represent. One week before the close of the midyear term these papers were to be read before the assembled school, and a committee chosen by the faculty was to select the two that they agreed were the best, to be read at the public exercises with which the midyear closed, at which time a committee of award, originally chosen by the giver of the prize, and self-perpetuating, one dropping out and a new one being added each year, was to determine which young lady should receive the prize, and to award the same. The prize itself was valuable, and was hedged about by useful regulations. It was $50 in gold, all

to be spent for books, and only $5 worth to be bought at a time, with three months to intervene between each purchase. Evidently the old grandfather had had to do with young people who wasted much money in the hasty and careless buying of books. Margaret Lancaster sneered at the prize and its regulations.

"I don't care a straw for his old fifty dollars!" she said loftily. "Of course I can buy as many books as I want, without his money; and I don't have to wait any three months to get them, either. He was an absurd old man who must have had idiots to deal with; but what I am after is the honor. I can win the prize easily enough; mamma says expressing myself on paper is my forte."

This, she said in the early days of the year, before Mag Jessup had been recognized as such a formidable rival. After a time she began to look glum when Mag recited, and to be in ill humor for several hours after Mag's history paper had been returned to her with the peculiar mark on it made by Mrs. Garland's blue

pencil, and which every girl in the school knew meant "Excellent." Twice the mark on Margaret's paper meant only "Very good," and Mag's was "Excellent!" To a girl of Margaret Lancaster's disposition this was food for many hours of glumness. Before the former year had closed Margaret had resolved to go on with her studies in history during the summer, and to practice writing a paper each week, and to get her cousin Fred to help her. Then they would see in the fall if that little servant girl would be her equal! But, alas! for resolutions. Mrs. Lancaster went with a number of retired naval officers and their families to the mountains for the summer, and life was very gay, and Frederick Ainsworth was not there. For the first few weeks Margaret struggled bravely with her resolve to study an hour each day, but as the days grew fuller of delightful engagements for mountain climbing and choice boating parties she gradually gave up any attempt at work, assuring herself that "anybody would be too stupid to live who would try to

study in the summer. It wasn't likely that Mag Jessup would have time to look into a book; she was probably shelling peas and picking over strawberries somewhere."

But in this last idea she was mistaken. The truth was that Mag Jessup had more leisure than she had ever enjoyed in her life before. Mr. and Mrs. Duane went away by themselves to quiet places where Mrs. Duane could sketch and Mr. Duane could write on the historic work he was preparing, and Mag went with them. Beyond the looking after their rooms and doing the mending and repairing necessary after the clothes returned from the laundry, she had almost no duties, and was at liberty to sit out in the woods or under the trees in the arbor all day long, if she choose, book in hand, so that she was near to be summoned for an errand, on occasion, it seemed to be all that Mrs. Duane required. Not that any of them chose to sit at work all day. They took long walks into the wild and fascinating country, and did more

mountain climbing of a rugged sort than Margaret Lancaster thought of. But on most such excursions it seemed to be the wish of both Mr. and Mrs. Duane to have little Mag with them. On these and other occasions they talked with her about the books she was studying in a way to increase her knowledge of, and interest in them. The result of it all was that Mag returned to school in the fall much more vigorous in body and brain than she had been before, and showing very promptly in her recitations what the summer had done for her. Very early in the fall Margaret Lancaster gloomily recognized her as a formidable rival in history.

She was also a rival in other ways. It would be difficult to explain, on paper, Margaret's annoyance when she found that her cousin Frederick not only remembered Mag as the little girl at Mrs. Perkins's boarding-house, but continued to have a lively interest in her, and lavished his kindnesses upon her almost as freely as he did upon his cousin.

She never ventured to refer to this but once. This was on a certain day when she was feeling particularly cross at Mag because she had so manifestly excelled her in class. Her cousin Frederick had promised to take her for a sleigh ride in the park that afternoon, and he appeared at the door promptly at four o'clock, with a beaming face and a—

"Hurry up, Margaret; I have little Mag out there holding the ponies, and they feel more lively than she enjoys, I am afraid."

Then did Margaret's face settle into a frown.

"What in the world is she doing out there? John will come and hold your horses if you want them held. She hasn't turned hostler, has she, with all the rest?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Frederick, affecting not to understand. "Mag is going with us, of course; and, being a plucky little woman, she has undertaken to look after the ponies while I wait for you. Be as quick as you can, Margaret, please."

But Margaret was still on the lounge where

she had flung herself at the first mention of Mag Jessup's name.

"You need not wait for me, Frederick Ainsworth; if you think I keep company with servants and creatures of that sort, you are mistaken. When I go to the park, or anywhere else, in company with Mag Jessup, I shall be a good deal older than I am now."

"Oh, come, Margie," said Frederick, in perfect good humor, "don't be a dunce. Mag Jessup is your classmate, and the best scholar in the school, if some of the leading teachers are to be credited. One of these days it will be an honor to have known her as a school girl, and to have taken rides with her to the park. Hurry up, we shall not have time for a spin around the park drive before father wants the horses, if you don't hasten."

"When you take that girl back to her dining-room and table waiting, where she belongs, or drop her in the river if you prefer, I will be ready to go with you, and not before."

Margaret's eyes were flashing, and all her

common sense was evidently gone. Her cousin's reference to Mag's scholarship had been too much for her.

"Honestly?" asked Frederick, looking at her curiously, "Don't you mean to go, Margie? It is a splendid afternoon for driving, and the sleighing is prime. If you really mean it, I won't waste any more time; but I confess I did not think you were such a simpleton. Excuse the plain word, but, honestly, Margie, such absurd airs on your part call for plain language. Why, the Duanes, who have money enough to buy us all out, if money is a pass to society, and whose position in the world can not be questioned, couldn't be kinder to Mag if she were their own sister. Why shouldn't you give up that childish spite you used to have against her, and treat her as she deserves? She is a good girl and a smart one, and everybody knows it."

If it had not been for the history class, I think Margaret would have yielded, but Frederick, in his ignorance, would put forward

Mag's claim to scholarship; and the poor girl could not bear it.

"Go away!" she said, with an angry wave of her hand in dismissal, "I don't want to see or hear any more of either of you."

"All right," said Frederick, promptly, and he closed the door and went away whistling "Away Down South in Dixie."

Margaret raised herself sufficiently to see the ponies spring away with her cousin and "that hateful Mag Jessup," as she had begun to call her; then she buried her head in the lounge pillow and cried.

These and several like experiences served to increase the poor girl's silly prejudices, until by the midyear she was ready to own to herself that she all but hated Mag Jessup.

Mag, on her part, had as little to do with this particular schoolmate as possible, and, as far as she could, forgot her existence. She was very busy and very happy; most of the girls in school had decided to treat her kindly; many of them were quite friendly, and others simply

let her pleasantly alone. The Duane girls were not there that winter, and Mag missed them, but, as has been said, she was really too busy to think much about companionship. I don't think it even occurred to her to notice that she was not invited out to any of the gatherings of the young people. When one day she actually received an invitation to an evening gathering at Mary Condit's home, she opened her eyes wide with astonishment, and felt half afraid, and was sorry that the invitation had come. The Condits were old acquaintances of Mrs. Duane, and Mary was one of the older girls in Mrs. Garland's school, and one who had been kind to Mag from the first.

Mag went to the party because Mrs. Duane advised it. She was frightened at the thought, and felt sure she would rejoice when the evening was over; but to her surprise she enjoyed it. Kate Perkins was there, and renewed her acquaintance with Mag in a very friendly manner, and most of the girls were cordial to her. Moreover, Frederick Ainsworth was present,

and saw to it that Mag had not a moment in which to feel left out and deserted. In thinking of it all, afterwards, Mag said, as she had said a hundred times before. "How good and kind he is! not a bit like anybody else." Though what she meant by that last it might have been hard for her to have explained, as there were certainly several people who were uniformly good and kind to her.

One little experience connected with the party had its pleasant and unpleasant side. They were studying, a group of them, a very old engraving on the library wall, and a discussion arose as to what period it represented. Several different views were brought forth and argued, until at length one of the school girls said: "Ask Mag Jessup; she is sure to know." Whereupon Mag offered a suggestion unlike any of the others, and sustained her views against earnest opposition, until at last the owner of the picture was appealed to, and pronounced her right.

"I told you she would know!" said the little

girl, triumphantly, who had first called upon her. Then Margaret Lancaster, quite loud enough for Mag to overhear, said: "Of course she would know; she sits up nights and snatches all spare minutes between table-waiting and errand-running to cram dates into her brain, and is as proud of it as ever a peacock was of his tail. If I had my living to earn I would try to give myself more useful study than the piling up of a lot of dates that nobody cares for."

Mag tossed about on her bed that night, unable to sleep for thinking of this speech. Was it true that she was proud of her knowledge of history? Did she appear like a "peacock" to others as well as to Margaret Lancaster? It made her cheeks burn to think of it. Underneath was another thought. Was she learning to like Margaret less and less? How could she help it when the girl was steadily and increasingly disagreeable to her? But she must help it. If Margaret were determined to be her enemy, then her duty was plain, and had been set-

tled long ago. What was there she could do to make herself really love that girl? If there was only something that she could do to help her! But all such opportunities were past, and would not be likely to come to her again. Are these unusual thoughts for a young girl to bring home from a party? Does not that depend upon what the young girl's life is? Suppose she belongs to those who are steadily trying to obey the direction, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?"

CHAPTER XXIV

"THE EXACT TRUTH"

AT last arrived the eventful day in which nine young ladies, contestants for the fifty-dollar gold prize, were to read their respective papers before the assembled teachers and pupils of Mrs. Garland's school. The day was given up to it, and although no visitors were admitted, the rooms and the girls themselves were in festive dress, and as much honor was bestowed upon the readers as possible. In truth, some of the scholars made so much of the matter of toilet that more than once Mrs. Garland had been known to say, with a significant smile, words something like these: "My dear, I am trying to think what you will wear to honor your graduation day!"

Margaret Lancaster, especially, was splendid in ribbons and flowers. Mag Jessup, whose

name was called next to hers, looked like a small brown robin beside her. Mag's neat brown dress, a trifle finer than she wore for every day, and brightened by a few scarlet ribbons, received an approving smile from Mrs. Garland. Just as the exercises were about to commence, a messenger came with a magnificent bouquet of blush roses. There was a general subdued exclamation over their beauty, and Mrs. Garland not attempting to suppress it, smiled as she turned the card and read aloud the name.

"Margaret Kane Jessup, with best wishes for the day."

"Your friend has done what he could to make you the envy of us all," she said genially to Mag, who had come forward to receive her gift, her cheeks almost rivaling the roses. She did not need to look at the name on the card to be sure that it was Frederick Ainsworth who had been so kind. "How good he was!" Yes, and how naughty, I am afraid. He wanted Mag to have the flowers, and he wanted

above all things to further impress his cousin Margaret with her "silliness" in the stand she had taken against Mag. That his gift would be sure to increase the ill feeling Margaret already had, he did not stop to consider.

The midday recess had come and passed, and some of the roses were drooping, and some of the scholars were yawning wearily, before either of the Margarets were called upon. At last a general wave of renewed interest seemed to pass over the room as Margaret Lancaster's name was heard. The sleepy girls sat more erect and with brightened faces; Margaret was sure to have something worth listening to. Her story was certainly worthy of commendation; some of her listeners paid her the compliment of forgetting that she was reading a trial essay—they forgot all about her, indeed, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of her story.

"Wasn't that splendid!" murmured one or two of her admirers, as she took her seat. "And so beautifully read; she ought to take

the prize." "She is the best one yet, decidedly." "Yes, and there are only two more."

"Ah, but one of them is Mag Jessup!"

Comments like these surged through the room during the five minutes' respite; then came Alice Powell, whose paper was substantial and sensible. "And stupid!" added one of the younger girls in a semi-whisper; and the secretary called: "Miss Margaret Kane Jessup."

When Mag had concluded her paper I don't think there was a dissenting opinion in the room. Even Margaret Lancaster, had she been strictly honest, would have been compelled to admit that Mag had held the interest of her audience from almost the first moment of her reading, in an unusual manner. The truth was that Mag had been so deeply interested in her own plot as almost to forget that her effort had anything to do with a prize; and she read very much as she would have told a story that thrilled her.

The committee of teachers retired to the

library immediately after the reading of this paper, and the buzz of undertone conversation filled the schoolroom while they waited. Mag sat apart and did not attempt to talk with any one; now that the excitement of the reading was over, she felt tired and frightened; it seemed to her that her story was very silly, and that Mrs. Garland must be ashamed of her. She could even take no pleasure in her roses, because "Mr. Frederick" had made her promise to read that silly thing to him, and he would see how entirely unworthy of roses it was. She stole a glance once or twice at Margaret Lancaster, and wondered that she did not look happier; she must be almost certain of the prize. Yet her face had a look on it that made poor Mag shiver; she was talking hard and fast with two of the girls who were especially intimate with her, and much under her control. Then the committee returned. What a very few minutes they had been away! They must have known before they went out just what they would do. The room was very still wait-

ing for their report, and certainly there was much astonishment over it. Honorable mention was made of Miss Margaret Lancaster; indeed, the chairman admitted that there had been some discussion over her name, but they had finally agreed unanimously to propose the names of Margaret Kane Jessup and Alice Stuart Powell. And Margaret Lancaster was actually left out! Very many were surprised over this; the younger portion of the school had not imagined that Alice Powell had any chance beside her. As for little Mag, her head seemed to be spinning about the room, and for a moment she could hardly see; such genuine surprise took possession of her. But yesterday she had thought: "What if I should really get the prize and be able to buy some books of my own!" But this morning she had lost all faith in her story and expected nothing.

A very general, and, on the whole hearty clapping of hands greeted the report, but a few of the scholars did not join. At last Mrs. Garland's voice was heard in congratulation. She

heartily approved of the committee's decision, and she added a few choice words of commendation for Mag's story, which set the young girl's heart to throbbing as even the report had not done. Every girl in school appreciated commendation from Mrs. Garland. And then the school was treated to a sensation the like of which no scholar remembered. It was Margaret Lancaster's voice, distinct and angry, that created an instant hush, while those in the back seats leaned forward to lose no syllable of what was being said:

"Mrs. Garland, some of us did not know that you allowed copious quotations or we might have earned a little glory also."

"Quotations!" repeated Mrs. Garland, in great surprise. "Unacknowledged quotations do you mean, Miss Lancaster?"

"Certainly I do."

"Then your remark is not understood. Since you have chosen to make it before the entire school, you may explain your meaning."

"I mean that Mag Jessup's story, of which

you seem to think so highly, is copied from a book."

Utmost excitement prevailed at once.

"What a shame!" said one voice, distinctly.

"I think as much!" said another.

"I don't believe a word of it!" exclaimed a third.

"Silence!" said Mrs. Garland, in a clear, cold voice. "Young ladies, the privilege of conversing together is withdrawn. Miss Moreton will be kind enough to come to the platform. Miss Lancaster and Miss Jessup, I will see you at once in my office."

Miss Moreton, the mathematical teacher, came at once to the chair and set the school at work; though she could not have expected very clear replies to questions in mental arithmetic, with the thoughts of every scholar behind those closed office doors.

How shall I try to describe the feelings of little Mag Jessup as she waited with tightly clasped hands that would tremble with excitement in spite of her, while Mrs. Garland ques-

tioned her accuser. The idea that she would do such a despicable thing as steal part of her story! She! who had refused a suggestion that Mr. Duane had made, and several hints that Mr. Frederick had kindly given her, because, although they were splendid, they were not her own and she had no right to profit by them. Mr. Frederick had argued the point with her; had assured her that she was overparticular, and that before she began to write she was quite at liberty to make use of all such general suggestions; that they had nothing to do with the actual work which her paper was expected to represent; but Mag, though disliking to appear ungrateful and obstinate, had yet held steadily to her determination to take not a hint of help from anybody—and this was her reward!

"Take that chair, Miss Jessup," commanded Mrs. Garland, not unkindly, and she pointed her pupil to an easy chair near the window; perhaps she saw that the poor girl could hardly stand. Then she turned to Margaret.

"Now, Miss Lancaster, repeat and explain your extraordinary statement, which, whatever you may mean by it, would have been very much better made to me in private."

"I don't see anything to explain," said Margaret, sullenly. "I said she stole her story, that every one is making such a fuss about, and so she did."

"You know that is not true!" burst from poor Mag's white lips. She felt that it would be impossible to hear such words and not say so much. Then Mrs. Garland's voice:

"Hush, my dear, I am conducting this examination. Miss Lancaster, what reason have you for thinking so?"

"The very best reasons in the world."

"Very well, state them as briefly as possible."

"It is all in an old book of ours."

Mag started to her feet with an exclamation, then at a warning glance from Mrs. Garland, sat down again and clasped her hands so

tightly that the print of the nails showed for several days.

"Be explicit, Miss Lancaster. Do I understand you that a portion of Miss Jessup's paper you believe to be like something in a book of yours?"

"All of it," said Margaret firmly, "every single word." And now Mag's face, that had been crimson, began to pale; this astounding statement all but took her breath away. What could the girl mean? Was it possible that she could have written something much like what some one else wrote years ago? Did people ever do such things? If they did, and this was an instance, how could she ever make Mrs. Garland, or, for that matter, the Duanes, or Mr. Frederick himself believe that she had never seen nor heard of the book, and that she had thought out every word for herself?

"Oh, Mrs. Garland!" she burst forth, and Mrs. Garland lifted her hand.

"My dear, I must insist upon your allowing me to manage this whole matter in my own

way. Miss Lancaster, do you realize what you are saying? Are you prepared to stand by the statement you have made, that there is a certain old book in your father's library that contains every word of Miss Jessup's paper which she has read before the school to-day?"

A look of sullen defiance overspread Margaret's face as she answered haughtily:

"I am in the habit of being believed, Mrs. Garland; that is what I said."

"Very well, then you are of course ready to prove it. I shall ask you to take a carriage from the stand at the corner and go at once to your home for the book; returning here as quickly as possible with it. Miss Jessup and I will wait here until you return."

For a single instant Margaret hesitated and seemed half frightened. Then she said angrily:

"I do not see the need for putting everybody to so much trouble. I told you I was in the habit of being believed; what I say I mean."

"Pardon me, Miss Lancaster, for reminding

you that your opinion as to how I shall manage this matter has not been asked. I must be allowed to do as I think best. It is a very grave charge indeed, against one of my pupils who is also in the habit of being believed. The very least we can do, when we make a charge against a person, is to bring undeniable proof that we are not mistaken."

"Mag hasn't denied it."

Mrs. Garland was for a moment startled by this statement. It was undoubtedly true that, beyond her first excited exclamation, Mag had been quite silent concerning the charges; still, that was probably because she herself had directed her to be silent. But Margaret's words reminded her that she had not asked her whether there was any shadow of truth in the charge against her; she had taken it for granted that there was not. At this point she looked toward the small brown figure sunken in the depths of her easy chair and said:

"Miss Jessup, I have not formally asked you if you wrote your paper without assistance or

quotations. I do it now as a matter of form. Is every sentence in your paper your own composition?"

"I—I thought so," said poor Mag, hesitating and blushing violently. Certainly it was the worst answer she could have made. For the moment Mrs. Garland's perfect faith in her was staggered, and Margaret Lancaster was triumphant.

"There!" she said, "you see that she does not deny it; she knows, of course, that what I am saying is true. I suppose that at least you will take her word and save me from going after the old book in our attic."

By this time Mag was crying so violently that she could not speak, and Mrs. Garland, looking at her with a troubled expression such as seldom appeared on her face, still spoke coldly to her other pupil.

"Miss Lancaster, I will try to overlook your insolence to me, on the ground that you are probably very much excited. You may carry out my directions at once, and I will await your

return. Or stay; perhaps I should not send a young lady alone in a public carriage. I will have you attended." Her hand was on the bell as she spoke, and in another moment one of the teachers had been requested to call a carriage and accompany Miss Lancaster to her home on an errand and return with her. There was nothing left for Margaret but obedience.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, during which Mrs. Garland left her pupil to herself, then seeing she had gained self-control, she asked a single question.

"My dear, if you are willing, I should like to have you tell me what your singular reply meant a few minutes ago. Surely you know whether your work is your own!"

She remembered long afterward the mournful eyes that were turned toward her as Mag said:

"How can I know? If she has a book that has it in, somebody must have written it before I did. Are not such things possible, Mrs. Gar-

land? Of course, I believed that I was writing what no one else had ever written. I thought every word of it was true; but if it is in a book, how can I help it? And how can I make anybody but God believe that I am honest and true?"

Mrs. Garland arose, came over to her pupil, and bending down, kissed her forehead lightly as she said:

"I believe in you, my dear girl, and I shall continue to do so, however suspicious the plot against you may be. I shall believe that what you say about it is the exact truth."

Little Mag has received many precious kisses since that hour, but perhaps none that stole into her heart with such healing balm as that.

Five minutes afterward the door opened and Margaret Lancaster entered bearing in her arms a very large old book, with one cover and the fly leaves torn away.

"There!" she said, flinging it down on the table; "you will find that I have told the exact

truth; every single word of her wonderful story is in that book."

She was right; it was a copy of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary!

CHAPTER XXV

"WHAT ELSE COULD ONE DO?"

IT was Margaret Lancaster's turn to cry. More bitter tears than her old schoolmate Mag Jessup had ever shed were following each other slowly down her cheeks. The first agony of grief and surprise and terrible disappointment were past, and she was now too worn out to do other than cry quietly. The old housekeeper who had known her from childhood, was moving softly about the room setting a chair straight now and then, or picking up a mislaid book; more from the habit of being busy than because there was really anything to be done. She looked pitifully now and again at the young girl over on the couch among the cushions, and at last she attempted awkwardly a word of comfort.

"I wouldn't cry any more if I were you, Miss Margie. It doesn't do any good; not

after people have shed as many tears as you have. You are all tired out."

"What difference does that make? There is nobody to care any more whether I am tired or not."

This thought brought a fresh burst of tears; yet it was so true that the literal woman who heard it could only shake her gray head and murmur in half undertone: "Poor young thing! it is hard, I am sure. Nobody can blame her for going on so; and she expected it all to be so different!"

Perhaps that was one of the bitterest drops in poor Margaret's cup of sorrow, that it was all so utterly different from any form of trouble that she had imagined could come to her. She went over it all in memory for the hundredth time, as she lay there with closed eyes through which the slow tears constantly forced themselves. That morning, only six weeks ago, when she was going down stairs dressed for a walk, dressed in the most perfect of winter costumes, costly furs, and

handsome gloves, and nodding plumes, all of exactly the right shade and shape; looking faultlessly elegant.— Margaret Lancaster, the young lady who had the year before graduated with honor from Mrs. Garland's school, had learned better than to overdress her handsome body, and was a model of propriety in all things that belonged to the fashionable world. She had been unusually happy that morning, she remembered; first, because her new suit fitted perfectly, and was unusually becoming, and secondly, because that very morning her mother had consented to go abroad again soon after the holidays. As she reached the lower hall, she had just planned what her traveling suit should be; then the doorbell had rung and she had waited in the breakfast room to see whether that need interest her. She had heard the word "telegram" and had rushed out to see about it; not frightened, but interested. It might be about the creams she had ordered for the evening, or a message from her friend Nettie to meet her down town somewhere; tele-

grams and telephone messages were common enough. Ah, but this had been one of those terribly common ones, such as shoot over the wires somewhere every minute of every day, carrying with them misery that lasts.

"It's important, lady," the messenger had said, and something in his tone had startled her and made her carry the yellow envelope to her mother instead of sending it by the maid. In two minutes more she knew that she was fatherless! It was a terrible blow to the girl. She had loved her father, not only, but had been extravagantly proud of his position and influence. Some of the most rose-colored dreams of her successful future had had to do with persons and places that her father's position would make possible for her to see. In all her plannings she had not for a moment thought of the possibility of death. For three wretched days she gave way to the violence of utterly uncontrolled grief, sure that life could have no heavier blow for her. Then, one evening, the family physician roused and fright-

ened her by the announcement that he was seriously anxious concerning her mother, who had not rallied from the effects of the nervous shock as he had hoped she might, and he considered her situation critical. Margaret's love for her mother was the most unselfish feeling that she had cultivated in her selfish life; she really, for a few days, forgot herself, and became her mother's devoted attendant; never for a moment allowing herself to think that the poor, frail lady was seriously ill. She assured all the friends who hurried to offer sympathy and condolence, that "mamma was prostrated by the shock, but was slowly gaining." She believed so, poor girl, deaf alike to the doctor's opinion and to the mother's own belief, until, only ten days from the hour that the news of her father's death reached her, people passed the house with quiet step and spoke low as they said: "Poor Margaret Lancaster! father and mother both gone in so short a time."

This last blow seemed for a time almost to stupefy Margaret. She shed less violent tears

than she had over her father's death, but she refused to eat, or to take exercise, or even to try in a rational way to sleep; she spent her days and nights in her mother's room, declined to see any of her acquaintances, and in short seemed almost anxious to have done with this life as soon as possible.

"She needs another shock to arouse her to action," said the troubled physician; "if something does not happen soon to change the current of her thoughts, she will follow her father and mother."

The "shock" was nearer than any of them imagined. One morning, Margaret's aunt, Mrs. Schuyler, who had come on at once when the telegram announcing her brother-in-law's death was received, and who had been with Margaret during all the trying weeks that followed, was summoned to a private conference with Admiral Lancaster's confidential lawyer; from him she went to see the family physician; she came home late and went directly to her room, sending word to Margaret that she was

so utterly tired out that she must excuse her for the night. But she did not at once retire; instead, she slipped on a warm wrapper and sat in her easy chair before the grate for hours, thinking, and occasionally crying. She had a heavy task before her for the next day, and dreaded it.

The morning following this night vigil was the one in which Margaret lay among the cushions with the housekeeper for company. It was just as the housekeeper had tried in vain to cheer her that Mrs. Schuyler entered the room.

"How do you feel this morning, my dear?" she said, kindly. "No different, auntie; there is nothing to make any difference with me any more, you know." Margaret had already brushed away the tears, and as she turned her great mournful eyes with heavy black rings under them toward her aunt, it was plainly to be seen that this utter abandonment to grief was wearing heavily upon the young girl. Still, Mrs. Schuyler was more than doubtful of the physician's prescription for rousing her.

"It will kill her!" she said to herself, as she looked at the haggard face. "I am just afraid it will kill her! but what can I do? I am under orders; and of course she must know the whole now."

"My dear," she said, hesitatingly, "I hope you did not miss me too much yesterday. I was obliged to be absent such a long time. I was with Mr. Sumner, you know. Do you feel able to listen to a little business this morning?"

Margaret shook her head, "I don't ever want to hear anything about it," she said. "I am like poor mamma, I neither understand business, nor care anything for it; fix everything exactly as you please."

"But, my dear Margie, that will not do; you will be of age in a few months, you know, and there are matters that it is absolutely necessary for you to think about. Mr. Sumner thinks you should be told at once, and so, for that matter, does Dr. Ledwith."

Margaret's eyes seemed to open wider.

"I do not see why," she said, wearily. "Surely, it is not Dr. Ledwith's business; so long as I swallow his tonics and nervines and other stuffs he ought to be content; even if I do not swallow them, his bill will be paid all the same. Why cannot Mr. Sumner manage just as he has always done, and not torment me? It is about money, I suppose; and what do I know of money except to have some when I want it?"

"My child, you must remember that you are not a little girl any more; every woman has to know more or less about business matters. And there is much more than money involved. Oh, my poor dear! I don't know how to tell you! I wish they had chosen anybody else."

The slightest show of curiosity appeared in Margaret's eyes—she drew herself partly up from the pillows as she said:

"What is there to tell, auntie? I can't think of anything important enough now to fuss over; the worst has happened to me, and noth-

ing else matters. Has Mr. Sumner lost some of the money?"

"There have been heavy losses, Margie; Mr. Sumner has known about them for years, but my poor brother hoped to recover some of the loss; Mr. Sumner says there is no hope of it. However, that is not the serious matter, dear; there is enough, much more than I wish there were, as matters stand. Margie, did my sister ever hint to you anything about the time when you were a little bit of a girl?"

"We never talked very much about my early childhood. I asked her, once, to show me some of the things I wore when I was a baby; and she said she had none of them. I remember I scolded her a little for not keeping them. I told her I thought mothers always kept the clothes of their only child. Why do you ask me that?"

"Because, my dear, I have a heavy task before me. I hoped I could prepare you a little for it, but I find I do not know how. I believe the humane way will be to tell you at once.

Had you ever a hint from any one that you were an adopted child?"

"Never!" Margaret sat erect now, and her eyes began to glow; "I never heard or dreamed of such a thing; of course, I am Admiral Lancaster's daughter. Auntie, what do you mean?"

"My poor darling! you were just as dear to my sister and her husband as though you were their very own; I am sure of that; and they never meant you to know; but now it has become necessary. They took you to their home and hearts, Margie, when you were a little bit of a girl. I remember as if it were but yesterday. How astonished I was when my sister wrote me about you, and what a cunning little creature you were, the first time I saw you."

She talked on rapidly, trying to stem the stream of questions she saw in Margaret's eyes, trying to cover her own intense embarrassment and pain by dwelling on trifling details. At last Margaret interrupted her—"Not their own child! then I have had no father and

mother all these years! Everybody has deceived me! It cannot be possible!"

But Mrs. Schuyler's sensitive nature was struck by these words and she said what was perhaps the best she could say to help the girl to self-control.

"Margaret, I know you are suffering, and allowance must be made for you; but even now is 'deceived' the word to use toward people who took you, a homeless, friendless little child, and during all these years have lavished upon you all the love and care that real parents could give? It certainly does seem to me that even at this time you have many mercies to remember."

It was hours later that Margaret asked the question which Mrs. Schuyler had been fearing.

"If I am not Margaret Lancaster, who am I? What name have I a right to?"

"Margaret, my brother-in-law fully meant to give you a legal right to his name; he thought of you always as his daughter. I

never knew until yesterday that the legal forms had been neglected."

"Then, I am a beggar! Well, what is my name? I insist upon knowing now all that there is to know."

"Margie, I never knew myself until last night. We often talked about you in those early years, but it happened that while I knew all the circumstances, I did not hear your name. Of late years you were so entirely her own that my sister never mentioned any of these things. I think she had even forgotten the name herself."

"What is the *name?*" The old imperious tone that belonged naturally to the girl whom Mrs. Schuyler had known as Margaret Lancaster, was distinct enough. The question could not be parried longer.

"You are—your name was Jessup," she faltered, "Susan Jessup; my sister did not like the name—Susan, so she changed it very soon to Margaret, her mother's name."

"Jessup!" repeated Margaret, in a tone that

Mrs. Schuyler could not forget. "Susan Jessup! and that Mag Jessup who has always been—well, never mind what,—is she any connection of mine?"

"She is your sister, my dear, and a better educated or finer looking sister one could not very well have. You must not blame me, Margaret. I assure you, all this is hard for me, too. I never expected to have to tell it. I learned the particulars only yesterday. It seems that my brother kept all the papers. He meant to use them, of course, in having the necessary legal papers made out, but he—well, he *neglected* it—that was all.

"Your own mother, my dear, was a very worthy woman; poor, and unfortunate, but in every way worthy of respect. There is nothing about her memory to blush for.

"As for money, let that miserable nephew of my brother-in-law—who has been mean enough to hunt this all out, and try to slip into property that was never intended for him—

have the money; with your education, you can be independent of other people's money."

"Other people's money!" Her own father's wealth that by and by, when time had softened her grief, Margaret Lancaster had felt, despite the careless words she had spoken about it, would be a pleasant thing to have. And now she had not a penny! and Mag Jessup, her rival not only in the history prize, but throughout her school days, was her sister! She could not bear it! She would not!

"Don't!" she said sharply, putting her hands to her ears to shut out Mrs. Schuyler's attempts at soothing. "Go away! I can not bear another word. Let me alone, don't let any one come near me. Not *any one!*" she added, fiercely, as the remembrance that now she had a sister rushed over her.

Mrs. Schuyler turned sadly away; she did not know what to do with this fierce girl. She had been roused, certainly, but it seemed more than doubtful that she would reach a sane and

healthful state of mind. Margaret Lancaster, crushed and dependent, might be more easily dealt with than Margaret Lancaster roused to fierce obstinacy.

On the evening of that same day two young people sat in the music-room of Mr. Duane's house and talked over this stricken girl's strange history, and the strange way in which their own lives had been suddenly linked with her's.

"And to think that all these years she has been my sister!" Little Mag Jessup had uttered an exclamation somewhat like this several times before. She could not get away from the strangeness of it. Mr. Ainsworth smiled indulgently.

"That feature of the situation impresses you most," he said.

"Yes; how can I help it? I have grown up thinking that I had no sister; though I distinctly remember our little Susie, and the idea carefully taught me that I was always to take care of her."

"Little Mag looked down on the heavy gold loop."

"Then your way is quite clear, I hope, if she will consent to it?"

Little Mag looked down at the heavy gold loop she wore on her third finger, and was silent for some seconds.

"Are you sure that you want it?" she asked at last.

"I am sure that I want whatever best pleases you; and my first interest in you was strangely deepened by the discovery that you accepted, without argument, any situation that you believed to be right."

"Of course," said Mag. "What else could one do?"

Over this question Mr. Frederick laughed softly. "I think I know several people who have discovered a middle ground," he said.

A week afterwards they sat together, the two Margarets, one of them in deep mourning, and with a face out of which all the brightness had gone; yet it was a quieter face than some of her friends had expected to see. Margaret Lancaster was learning self-control at last.

"It all seems so strange," she said, mournfully. "The idea of you, Mag Jessup, offering me a home! Do you remember I told you once that I presumed you would always be a servant?" She laughed a little bitterly over the memory.

"Yes," said Mag, softly. "And I always shall be—a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"I haven't even a right to my name!" burst forth Margaret again; "I can never get acquainted with myself as Susan Jessup; but I have no right to be Margaret Lancaster."

"Indeed you have!" said Mag, very earnestly. "Do not for a moment believe otherwise; the mother who loved you and cared for you and was everything to you for so many years had a right to name you, and you were and are her daughter Margaret. It is not my name; my best and dearest friends know me as 'Little Mag.' I couldn't be called Margaret; and you couldn't be called anything else. But, Margaret, I have been motherless nearly all my life and alone; I am truly glad to have found a

sister. I shall love you very much; and I think you can love me a little after awhile, when you get used to me."

Margaret Lancaster laughed outright. "I remember that, too," she said. "You told me, that summer when we were in the country, that you loved me; I didn't believe it then, but I do now. You were always a good little thing; it is strange that I disliked you so much. I shouldn't have done so if you hadn't been a better scholar in history than I; that seemed too absurd! I wonder you do not hate me, and I wonder that cousin Fred doesn't; I have given you both reason enough. He isn't my cousin Fred, is he? 'Mr. Frederick,' you used to say, and I laughed at you for it. I couldn't call him that; I am glad I have no need. My respected brother-in-law that is to be! How bewildering it all is! But you are both good. You have been the only people who had any sense during this awful time. I think I shall love you, Mag Jessup; and I like the thought of having Fred for a brother."

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