Donald and Dorothy

by Mary Mapes Dodge

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DONALD AND DOROTHY

DOROTHY AT SIXTEEN. DOROTHY AT SIXTEEN.

DONALD AND DOROTHY

BY

MARY MAPES DODGE

AUTHOR OF "HANS BRINKER; OR, THE SILVER SKATES" WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Emblem

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CONTENTS.

Spine

CHAPTER I.Page

In Which None Of The Characters Appear

1 CHAPTER II.

Fourteen Years afterwards

3 CHAPTER III.

Which partly explains itself

7 CHAPTER IV.

The Drive

23 CHAPTER V.

Supper-Time

29 CHAPTER VI.

A Family Conference

31 CHAPTER VII.

The Danbys

47 CHAPTER VIII.

Too Much of a Good Thing

62 CHAPTER IX.

In which some well-meaning Grown Folk appear

71 CHAPTER X.

Which presents a Faithful Report of the Interview between Mr. Reed and his Mysterious Visitor

80 CHAPTER XI.

Jack

93 CHAPTER XII.

A Day in New York

98 CHAPTER XIII.

Donald and Dorothy entertain Fandy

106 CHAPTER XIV.

In which Uncle George proposes Something Delightful

119 CHAPTER XV.

The House-Picnic

124 CHAPTER XVI.

A Discovery in the Garret

155 CHAPTER XVII.

Dorry asks a Question

166 CHAPTER XVIII.

The Gymnasium

176 CHAPTER XIX.

The "G. B. C."

180 CHAPTER XX.

The Shooting-Match

194 CHAPTER XXI.

Danger

205 CHAPTER XXII.

A Frolic on the Water

210 CHAPTER XXIII.

Yankee and Doodle

224 CHAPTER XXIV.

Donald

236 CHAPTER XXV.

The Sunset

243 CHAPTER XXVI.

Uncle George tells Donald

248 CHAPTER XXVII.

Delia, or Dorothy?

257 CHAPTER XXVIII.

Don resolves to settle Matters

265 CHAPTER XXIX.

An Unexpected Letter

271 CHAPTER XXX.

A Time of Suspense

281 CHAPTER XXXI.

Only a Bit of Rag

289 CHAPTER XXXII.

Donald makes a Discovery

301 CHAPTER XXXIII.

An Important Interview

314 CHAPTER XXXIV.

Madame René tells her Story

326 CHAPTER XXXV.

A Day of Joy

350

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Page Dorothy at SixteenFrontispiece The Sparkling Lake beyond4 "You've her shining dark hair, Master Donald," said Liddy15 The End of the Drive27 Donald's Thoughts34 Mrs. Danby's Dream: the Four English Branches52 Fandy "Preaches a Sermon" to his Brothers and Sisters55 Donald to the Rescue67 McSwiver72 "I used to stand and wonder at them when I should have been workin'"78 Trinity Church and the Head of Wall Street101 The Garret before Fandy's Arrival108 Fandy's First Fencing-Match111 The Fencing-Master115 The Maid of Orleans127 The Candy-Pulling129 The Last View of the Picture Gallery143 Gory's Private Table146 Josie Manning waits for Dorry163 Donald and Ed Tyler try the Gymnasium178 "So picturesky!"185 "He's complainin'"187 "Don levelled his Rifle, and fired"208 The Conspirators' Plot is carried into Effect217 Ben's Cider Experience222 Off for Europe269 Kassy evidently had Something on her Mind275 Monsieur Bajeau becomes interested in Donald's Chain307

DONALD AND DOROTHY.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH NONE OF THE CHARACTERS APPEAR.

THE door of the study was closed, and only Nero was to be seen. He, poor dog, stood in the wide hall gazing wistfully at the knob, and pricking up his ears whenever sounds of movement in the room aroused his hope of being admitted. Suddenly he gave a yelp of delight. Somebody surely was approaching the door. The steps—they were a man's—halted. There was a soft, rolling sound, as if the master's chair were being drawn to the table; next, a rustling of paper; a deep-voiced moan; the rapid scratching of a quill pen; then silence—silence—and poor Nero again stood at half-mast.

Any ordinary dog would have barked, or pawed impatiently at the door. But Nero was not an ordinary dog. He knew that something unusual was going on, something with which even he, the protector and pet of the household, the frisky Master of Ceremonies, must not interfere. But when the bell-pull within the room clicked sharply, and a faint tinkle came up from below, he flew eagerly to the head of the basement stairs, and wagged his bushy tail with a steady, vigorous stroke, as though it were the crank of some unseen machine which slowly and surely would draw Liddy, the housemaid, up the stairway.

The bell rang again. The machine put on more steam. Still no Liddy. Could she be out? Nero ran back to take an agonized glance at the motionless knob, leaped frantically to the stairs again—and, at that moment, the study-door opened. There was a heavy tread; the ecstatic Nero rushed in between a pair of dignified legs moving toward the great hall door; he spun wildly about for an instant, and then,

with a deep sigh of satisfaction, settled down on the rug before the study fire. For there was not a soul in the room.

CHAPTER II.

FOURTEEN YEARS AFTERWARD.

The house is there still; so is Nero, now an honored old dog frisky only in his memories. But old as he is in teeth and muscle, he is hardly past middle-age in the wag of his still bushy tail, and is as young as ever in happy devotion to his master. Liddy, too, is down stairs, promoted, but busy as in the days gone by; and the voice of that very bell tinkled but an hour ago.

Here is the same study; some one within, and the door closed. Opposite, on the other side of the wide hall, is the parlor, its windows looking across piazza, sloping lawn, road-way, and field, straight out to the sparkling lake beyond. Back of the parlor is a sunny sitting-room, its bay-window framing a pleasant view of flower-garden, apple-orchard, and grape-arbor—a few straggling bunches clinging to the almost leafless November vines. And within, throughout the house indeed, floats a sunny-shady combination of out-door air, with a faint, delightful odor of open wood-fires. What a quiet, homelike, beautiful place it is!

Let us look into the sitting-room.

A boy, with his back toward the door, mounted upon the end of a big sofa, his bended knee tightly held between his arms, his head thrust forward earnestly,—altogether, from the rear view, looking like a remarkable torso with a modern jacket on,—that's Donald. Near him, on the sofa, a glowing face with bright brown hair waving back from it, the chin held in two brownish little hands, and beneath that a mass of dark red merino, revealing in a meandering, drapery way that its wearer is half-kneeling, half-sitting,—that's Dorothy.

THE SPARKLING LAKE BEYOND. THE SPARKLING LAKE BEYOND.

I am obliged to confess it, these two inelegant objects on a very elegant piece of furniture are the hero and heroine of my story.

Do not imagine, however, that Donald and Dorothy could not, if they chose to do so, stand before you comely and fair as any girl and boy in the land. It is merely by accident that we catch this first glimpse of them. They have been on that sofa in just those positions for at least five minutes, and, from present appearances, they intend to remain so until further notice.

Dorothy is speaking, and Donald is—not exactly listening, but waiting for his turn to put in a word, thus forming what may be called a lull in the conversation; for up to this point both have been speaking together.

"It's too much for anything, so it is! I'm going to ask Liddy about it, that's what I'm going to do; for she was almost ready to tell me the other day, when Jack came in and made her mad."

"Don't you do it!" Donald's tone is severe, but still affectionate and confidential. "Don't you do it. It's the wrong way, I tell you. What did she get mad at?"

"Oh, nothing. Jack called her 'mess-mate' or something, and she flared up. But, I tell you, I'm just going to ask her right out what makes him act so."

"Nonsense," said Donald. "It's only his sailor-ways; and besides—"

"No, no. I don't mean Jack. I mean Uncle. I do believe he hates me!"

"Oh, Dorry! Dorry!"

"Well, he doesn't love me any more, anyhow! I know he's good and all that, and I love him just as much as you do, Don, every bit, so you needn't be so dreadfully astonished all in a minute. I love Uncle George as much as anybody in the world does, but that is no reason why, whenever Aunt Kate is mentioned, he—"

"Yes, it is, Dot. You ought to wait."

"I have waited—why, Don" (and her manner grows tearful and tragic), "I've waited nearly thirteen years!"

Here Don gives a quick, suddenly suppressed laugh, and asks her, "why she didn't say fourteen," and Dorothy tells him sharply that "he needn't talk—they're pretty even on that score" (which is true enough), and that she really has been "longing and dying to know ever since she was a little, little bit of a girl, and who wouldn't?"

Poor Dorothy! She will "long to know" for many a day yet. And so will the good gentleman who now sits gazing at the fire in the study across the wide hall, his feet on the very rug upon which Nero settled himself on that eventful November day, exactly fourteen years ago.

And so will good, kind Lydia, the housekeeper, and so will Jack, the sailor-coachman, at whom she is always "flaring up," as Dorothy says.

CHAPTER III.

WHICH PARTLY EXPLAINS ITSELF.

Dorothy Reed was of a somewhat livelier temperament than Donald, and that, as she often could not but feel, gave her an advantage. Also, she was ahead of him in history, botany, and rhetoric. Donald, though full of boyish spirit, was steadier, more self-possessed than Dorothy, and in algebra and physical geography he "left her nowhere," as the young lady herself would tersely confess when in a very good humor. But never were brother and sister better friends. "She's first-rate," Don would say, confidentially, to some boon companion, "not a bit like a girl, you know,—more like—well, no, there's nothing tomboyish about her, but she's spirited and never gets tired or sickish like other girls." And many a time Dorothy had declared to some choice confidential friend of the twining-arms sort, that Donald was "perfectly splendid! nicer than all the boys she ever had seen, put together."

On one point they were fully united, and that was in their love for Uncle George, though of late it seemed that he was constantly making rough weather for them.

This expression, "rough weather," is not original, but is borrowed from Sailor Jack, whom you soon shall know nearly as well as the two D's did.

And "the two D's" is not original either. That is Liddy's. She called Donald and Dorothy "the two D's" for brevity's sake, when they were not present, just as she often spoke of the master of the house, in his absence, as "Mr. G." There was no thought of disrespect in this. It was a way that had come upon her after she had learned her alphabet in middle life, and had stopped just at the point of knowing or guessing the first letter of a word or a name. Farther than that into the paths of learning, Liddy's patience had failed to carry her. But the use of initials she felt was one of the short cuts that education afforded. Besides, the good soul knew secrets which, without her master's permission, nothing would induce her to reveal. So, to speak of "Mr. G." or "the D's," had a confidential air of mystery about it that in some way was a great relief to her.

Mr. George was known by his lady friends as "a confirmed bachelor, but a most excellent man," the "but" implying that every well-to-do gentleman ought to marry, and "the excellent man" referring to the fact that ever since the children had been brought to him, fourteen years before, two helpless little babies, he had given them more than a father's care. He was nearly fifty years of age, a tall, "iron-gray" gentleman, with the courtliest of manners and the warmest of hearts; yet he was, as Liddy described him to her cousins, the Crumps, "an unexpected kind o' person, Mr. G. was. Just when you made up your mind he was very stiff and dignified, his face would light up into such a beautiful glow! And then, when you thought how nice, and hearty, and sociable he was, he would look so grave out of his eyes, and get so straight in the back that he seemed like a king in an ermine robe."

When Liddy had compared a man to "a king in an ermine robe," she had expressed

her utmost pitch of admiration. She had heard this expression long ago in a camp-meeting discourse, and it seemed to her almost too grand a phrase for human use, unless one were speaking of Mr. George.

And a king Mr. George was, in some ways; a king who ruled himself, and whose subjects—Mr. George's traits of character—were loyal to their sovereign. Yet on one point he did deserve to be otherwise compared. All difficulties that were under his power to control he would bravely meet; but when anything troubled him which he could not remedy,—in fact, on occasions when he was perplexed, worried, or unable to decide promptly upon a course of action,—he often was a changed being. Quick as a flash the beautiful, genial glow would vanish, the kingly ermine would drop off, and he could be likened only to one of the little silver owls that we see upon dinner-tables, quite grand and proper in bearing, but very peppery within, and liable to scatter the pepper freely when suddenly upset.

Poor Dorry! It had been her sad experience to call forth this catastrophe very often of late, and in the most unexpected ways. Sometimes a mere gesture, even the tone of her voice, seemed to annoy her uncle. On one occasion, while he was pleasantly explaining some public matter to Donald and herself, she laid her hand gently upon the back of his, by way of expressing her interest in the conversation, and his excited "Why did you do that?" made the poor girl jump from him in terror.

Lydia, who was softly brushing the fireplace at that moment, saw it all, and saw, too, how quickly he recovered himself and spoke kindly to the child. But she muttered under her breath, as she went slowly down to the basement,—

"Poor Mr. G's gettin' worse of late, he is. I don't see as he ever will feel settled now. It's amazin' puzzlin', it is."

Yes, it was puzzling. And nobody better understood and pitied the kingly soul's perplexity than the good woman. Even Jack, the coachman, though he knew a good deal, had but a faint idea of what the poor gentleman suffered.

On the day when we saw Donald and Dorothy perched on the sofa, Mr. Reed had been remarkably changeful, and they had been puzzled and grieved by his manner toward Dorothy. He had been kind and irritable by turns, and finally, for some unaccountable reason, had sharply requested her to leave him, to "go away for mercy's sake," and then she had been recalled on some slight pretext, and treated with extra kindness, only to be wounded the next moment by a look from her uncle that, as she afterward declared, "made her feel as if she had struck him."

Donald, full of sympathy for Dorry, yet refusing to blame Uncle George without a fuller understanding of the matter, had followed his sister into the parlor, and there they had tried in vain to solve the mystery. For a mystery there evidently was. Dot was sure of it; and Donald, failing to banish this "foolish notion," as he called it, from Dot's mind, had ended by secretly sharing it, and reluctantly admitting to himself that Uncle George, kind, good Uncle George, really had not, of late, been very kind and good to Dorry.

"He hasn't been ugly," thought Donald to himself, while Dorothy sat there, eagerly watching her brother's countenance,—"Uncle couldn't be that. But he seems to love her one minute, and be half afraid of her the next—no, not exactly afraid of her, but afraid of his own thoughts. Something troubles him. I wonder what in the world it is! May be—"

"Well?" exclaimed Dorry, impatiently, at last.

"Well," repeated Don, in a different tone, "the fact is, it is trying for you, Dorry, and I can't make it out."

Meanwhile Lydia, down stairs, was working herself into what she called "a state" on this very matter. "It isn't Christian," she thought to herself, "though if ever a man was a true, good Christian, Mr. G. is; but he's amazin' odd. The fact is, he doesn't know his own mind in this business from one day to the next, and he thinks, Jack and I are stone blind—Mercy! If here don't come those precious children!"

Surely enough, the precious children were on their way down the kitchen stairs. They did not go into that cheerful, well-scrubbed apartment, however, but trudged directly into the adjoining room, in which Liddy, guarded by the faithful old dog, Nero, was now seated, peeling apples. It had been fitted up for Lydia years before when, from a simple housemaid, she was "promoted," as she said, "to have eyes to things and watch over the D's."

"You may think it strange," she had said, grandly, that very morning, to Jack, looking around at the well-polished, old-fashioned furniture, and the still bright three-ply carpet, "that I should have my sitting-room down here, and my sleeping apartment up stairs, but so it is. The servants need watching more than the children, as you know, Mr. Jack, and I've had to have eyes to things ever since the D's first came. Master Donald says I ought to call it 'having an eye,' but sakes! what would one eye be in a house like this? No, it's eyes I want, both eyes, and more too, with the precious D's wild as young hawks, and Mr. G. as he is of late, and the way things are."

Lydia looked up when Donald and Dorothy entered, with a "Sakes! You've not been fretting again, Miss Dorry?"

"No—not exactly fretting, Liddy; that is, not very much. We just came down to—to— Give me an apple?"

"Steady! St-e-a-dy!" cried Liddy, as after her hearty "help yourselves," the brother and sister made a simultaneous dash at the pan on her ample lap, playfully contesting for the largest. "One would think you were starving."

"So we are, Liddy," said Dorothy, biting her apple as she spoke; "we are starving for a story."

"Yes!" echoed Donald, "a story. We're bound to have it!"

"Hum!" muttered Liddy, much flattered. "Do you know your lessons?"

"Per-fectly!" answered the D's, in one breath. "We studied them right after Dr. Lane

left."

"Well," began Liddy, casting a furtive look at the old mahogany clock on the mantel; "which story do you want? You've heard 'em all a score of times."

"Oh, not that kind," said Dorothy, playfully motioning to her brother, for you see by this time she was quite cheerful again. "We want a certain par-tic-ular story, don't we, Don?"

Instead of replying, Don took Dorry's outstretched hand with nonsensical grace, and so dancing to the fireplace together, in a sort of burlesque minuet, they brought back with them two little mahogany and hair-cloth foot-benches, placing them at Lydia's feet.

Ignoring the fact that these well-worn seats were absurdly low and small, the D's settled themselves upon them as comfortably as in the days gone by, when the benches had been of exactly the right size for them; and at the risk of upsetting the apples, pan and all, they leaned toward Liddy with an expressive "Now!"

All this had been accomplished so quickly, that Liddy would have been quite taken by surprise had she not been used to their ways.

"Bless your bright eyes!" she laughed, uneasily looking from one beaming face to the other; "you take one's breath away with your quick motions. And now what certain, special, wonderful kind of a story do you want?"

"Why, you know. Tell us all about it, Lydia," spoke Dorothy, sobered in an instant.

"Sakes! Not again? Well, where shall I begin?"

"Oh, at the very beginning," answered Donald; and Dorothy's eager, expressive nod said the same thing.

"Well," began Lydia, "about fourteen years ago—"

"No, no, not there, please, but 'way, away back as far as you can remember; farther back than you ever told us before."

"Well," and Lydia proceeded to select a fresh apple and peel it slowly and deliberately; "well, I was once a young chit of a girl, and I came to this house to live with your Aunt Kate. She wasn't any aunt then, not a bit of it, but a sweet, pretty, perky, lady-girl as ever was; and she had" (here Liddy looked sad, and uttered a low "Dear, dear! how strange it seems!")—"she had two splendid brothers, Mr. George Reed and Mr. Wolcott Reed (your papa, you know). Oh, she was the sweetest young lady you ever set eyes on! Well, they all lived here in this very house,—your grandpa and grandma had gone to the better world a few years before,—and Master G. was sort of head of the family, you see, as the oldest son ought to be."

Donald unconsciously sat more erect on his bench, and thrust his feet farther forward on the carpet.

"Yes, Master G. was the head," Liddy went on, "but you wouldn't have known it, they were all so united and loving-like. Miss Kate, though kind of quick, was just too sweet and good for anything,—'the light of the house,' as the young master called her, and—"

"YOU'VE HER SHINING DARK HAIR, MASTER DONALD," SAID LIDDY
"YOU'VE HER SHINING DARK HAIR, MASTER DONALD," SAID LIDDY

"Oh, I do love so much to hear about Aunt Kate!" exclaimed Dorothy, her color brightening as she drew her bench up still closer to Liddy. Both of the apples were eaten by this time, and the D's had forgotten to ask for more. "Do we look like her?"

Here Donald and Dorothy turned and gazed full in Lydia's face, waiting for the answer.

"Well, yes—and no, too. You've her shining dark hair, Master Donald, and her way of steppin' firm, but there isn't a single feature like her. And it's so with you, Miss Dorry, not a feature just right for the likeness; still you've a something, somehow—somewhere—and yet I can't place it; it's what I call a vanishin' likeness."

At this the two D's lost their eager look, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"Hello, old Vanisher!" said Donald, making a sudden dive at Dorothy.

"Hello, old Stiff-legs!" retorted Dorothy, laughing and pushing him away.

Here old Nero roused himself, and growled a low, rumbling, distant growl, as if protesting against some unwelcome intruder.

"There, children, that's sufficient!" said Liddy, with dignity. "Don't get tussling. It isn't gentleman-and-lady-like. Now see how you've tumbled your sister's hair, Master Donald, and Mr. G.'s so particular. Hear Nero, too! Sakes! it seems sometimes like a voice from the dead to hear him go that way when we're talking of old times."

"Be still, old fellow!" cried Donald, playfully. "Don't you see Liddy's talking to us? Well, we look like our mamma, any way,—don't we, Liddy?"

"That picture of your mamma in your room, Master Donald," replied Lydia, "has certainly a good deal of your look, but I can't say from my own knowledge that it ever was a good likeness. It was sent over afterward, you know, and your mamma never was here except once, and then it so happened I was off to camp-meeting with Cousin Crump. Your papa used to go to see the young lady down at her home in New York, and after the wedding they went to Niagara Falls, and after that to Europe. Seems to me this going out of your own country's a bad business for young couples who ought to settle down and begin life." (Here Nero stood up, and his growl grew more decided.) "Well, as I was saying—Mercy on us! If there isn't that man again!"

The last part of Lydia's sentence, almost drowned by Nero's barking, was addressed to the empty window; at least it was empty when the D's turned toward it.

"Who? where?" shouted Dorothy. But Donald sprang up from the bench, and, followed by the noisy old Nero, ran out of the room, across the basement-hall, and through the back-door, before Lydia had time to reply.

"Who was it, Liddy?" asked Dorry, still looking toward the empty window, while

Nero came sauntering back as though the matter that had lured him forth had not been worth the trouble of following up.

"Oh, no one, dearie," said Lydia, with assumed carelessness; "that is, no one in particular. It's just a man. Well, as I was saying, your Aunt Kate wasn't only the light of the house, she was the heart of the house, too, the very heart. It was dreary enough after she went off to England, poor darling."

"Yes, yes, go on," urged Dorry, earnestly, at the same time wondering at her brother's hasty departure. "Go on, Liddy, that's a dear. I can repeat it all to Donald, you know."

"There isn't any more, Miss Dorry. That's the end of the first part of the story. You know the second well enough, poor child, and sad enough it is."

"Yes," said Dorry, in a low tone, "but tell me the rest of the beginning."

"Why, what do you mean, Miss Dorry? There's nothing else to tell,—that is, nothing that I got ear of. I suppose there were letters and so on; in fact, I know there were, for many a time I brought Mr. George's mail in to him. That day, I took the letters and papers to Mr. G. in the library,—poor, lonely gentleman he looked!—and then I went down to my kitchen fire (I was in the housework then), and some minutes after, when I'd been putting on coal and poking it up bright, it kind o' struck me that the master's bell had been ringing. Up I hurried, but when I reached the library, he was gone out, and no one was there but Nero (yes, you, old doggie!), lying before the fire, as if he owned the house. And that's the end of the first part, so far as I know."

"Yes," persisted Dorothy; "but I want to hear more about what happened before that. I know about our poor papa dying abroad, and about the wreck, and how our mamma and—"

She could not go on. Often she could speak of all this without crying; but the poor girl had been strained and excited all the afternoon, and now, added to the sorrow

that surged through her heart at the sudden thought of the parents whom she could not even remember, came the certainty that again she was to be disappointed. It was evident, from Lydia's resolute though kindly face, that she did not mean to tell any more of the first half of the story.

The good woman smoothed Dorothy's soft hair gently, and spoke soothingly to her, begging her to be a good girl and not cry, and to remember what a bright, happy little miss she was, and what a beautiful home she had, and how young folk ought always to be laughing and skipping about, and—

"Liddy!" said Donald, suddenly appearing at the door. "Uncle wishes to see you."

Lydia, flushing, set down the pan, and, hurriedly smoothing her apron, walked out of the room.

"Uncle called me from the window—that's why I stayed," explained Donald, "and he told me to bid Jack hitch the horses to the big carriage. We're to get ready for a drive. And then he asked me where you were, and when I told him, he said: 'Send Lydia here, at once.'"

"Was Uncle very angry, Donald?" asked Dorry, wiping her eyes.

"Oh, no. At first he seemed sorry, and I think he got up the drive just to give you pleasure, Dorry. He wanted to see me about something, and then he asked more about our visit to Liddy's room, and I told him she was only telling us a true story about him and our father, and—and that's when he sent me for Liddy, before I could say another word. Don't cry any more, Dot,—please don't. Go put on your things, and we'll have a gay old drive with Uncle. I'll not take the pony this time."

"Oh, do!" coaxed Dorry, faintly, for in her heart she meant, "Oh, don't!" It was good in Donald, she knew, to be willing to give up his pony-ride, and take a seat in the stately carriage instead of cantering alongside, and she disliked to rob him of the pleasure. But to-day her heart was lonely; Uncle had been "queer," and life looked so dark to her in consequence, that to have Donald on the same seat with her would

be a great comfort.

"No," said Don. "Some day, soon, you and I will take our ponies, and go off together for a good run; but to-day I'd rather go with you in the carriage, Dot,"—and that settled it.

She ran to put on her hat and bright warm woollen wrap, for it was early November, and beginning to be chilly. The carriage rolled to the door; Uncle George, grave but kind, met her, handed her in as though she were a little duchess, and then said:—

"Now, Dorothy, who shall go with us, to-day? Cora Danby or Josie? You may call for any one you choose."

"Oh, may I, Uncle? Thank you! Then we'll invite Josie, please."

Her troubles were forgotten; Uncle smiling; Donald beside her, and Josephine Manning going with them; the afternoon bright and glowing. Things were not so bad, after all.

"Drive to Mr. Manning's, John," said Mr. Reed, as Jack, closing the carriage-door, climbed up to the box in a way that reminded one of a sailor's starting to mount a ship's rigging.

"Ay, ay, Capt'n," said Jack, and they were off.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DRIVE.

Josie Manning was not at home, when the carriage stopped at her door; and so the party decided to drive on without company.

It was a beautiful autumnal day, and the modest little lakeside village, which, in deference to its shy ways, we shall call Nestletown, did its best to show its appreciation of the weather. Its windows lighted up brilliantly in the slanting

sunlight, and its two spires, Baptist and Methodist, reaching up through the yellow foliage, piously rivalled each other in raising their shining points to the sky. The roads were remarkably fine at that time; yet it seemed that almost the only persons who, on this special afternoon, cared to drive out and enjoy them were our friends in the open carriage.

The fine old equipage rolled along at first without a sound beyond the whir of its wheels and the regular quadruple beat of the horses' hoofs; and everything appeared to be very placid and quiet. But how many interests were represented, and how different they were!

First, the horses: while vaguely wishing Jack would loosen his hold, and that the hard iron something in their mouths would snap in two and relieve them, they were enjoying their own speed, taking in great draughts of fine air, keeping their eyes open and their ears ready for any startling thing that might leap from the rustling bushes along the drive, or from the shadows of the road-side trees, and longing in an elegant, well-fed way for the plentiful supper that awaited them at home. Next was the group of little belated insects that, tempted by the glittering sunlight, happened to go along, alighting now on the carriage, now on Jack, and now on the horses. Not being horseflies, they were not even noticed by the span,—yet they had business of their own, whatever it could have been so late in the season, and were briskly attending to it. Next, there was Jack,—good sailor Jack,—sitting upright, soberly dressed in snug-fitting clothes, and a high black stove-pipe hat, when at heart he longed to wear his tarpaulin and move about on his sea-legs again. His only consolation was to feel the carriage roll and pitch over the few uneven places along the road, to pull at his "tiller-ropes," as he called the reins, and "guide the craft as trim" as he could. Honest Jack, though a coachman now (for reasons which you shall know before long), was a sailor at heart, and followed his old ways as far as his present situation would allow. At this very moment he was wondering at his own weakness "in turning himself into a miserable land-lubber, all for love of the capt'n

and the two little middies." Meantime, Donald was divided between random boy-thoughts on one side, and a real manly interest in Dorothy, whose lot seemed to him decidedly less pleasant than his own. Dorry was quietly enjoying the change from keen grief to its absence, and a sense of security in being so near Uncle and Donald. And the uncle—what shall I say of him? Shall I describe only the stately form, the iron-gray hair, the kindly face brightened by the yellow afternoon light?—or shall I tell you of the lately happy, but now anxious, troubled man, who within a few days had been made to feel it possible that the dearest thing he had on earth might soon be his no longer.

"Oh, Uncle," said Dorry, suddenly, "I forgot to tell you something!"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. George, in playful astonishment, a quick smile rising to his lips, and his eyes full of pleasant inquiry. "What did my little maid forget to tell me?"

"Why, about the man on the croquet-ground. I was practising a roquet-shot, and before I knew it, he was close by me, a great, tall, lanky man, calling me 'Sis' and—"

"The rascal!" exclaimed Uncle George, growing red and angry in a moment. "And what business had you to—"

"I didn't, Uncle, I didn't. I'm too old to be called 'Sis,' and he acted just as if I ought to know him, and be real pleasant. I wouldn't have a word to say to him, but just turned around and ran to look for Donald. Didn't I, Don?"

"Yes," said Donald, but before he said it he had scowled, and nodded to his uncle, slyly as he thought, but his sister's eyes were keen.

"I declare, it's too bad!" broke forth Dorry, impetuously. "Everybody gets mad at me for nothing, and makes signs and everything!" and with this incoherent speech Dorry began to pout—yes, actually to pout, the brave, good Dorry, who usually was sunny and glad, "the light of the house," as her Aunt Kate had been before her! Donald stared at her in astonishment.

At this moment, one of the horses received a cut which he certainly did not deserve, but otherwise all was quiet on the coachman's box. No one looking up at that placid, well-dressed back would have dreamed of the South-Sea tempest raging under the well-padded and double-buttoned coat.

"Dorothy," said her uncle, with a strange trembling in his voice, "try to control yourself. I do not blame you, my child. John, you may drive toward home."

Poor Dorry stifled her rising sobs as well as she could, and, sitting upright, drew as far from her uncle as the width of the seat would allow. But after a while, sending a sidelong glance in his direction, she edged slowly back again, and timidly leaned her head upon his shoulder. In a moment his arm was about her, and she looked up saucily, with eyes sparkling through her tears.

"April weather to-day, isn't it, Don?" said Uncle. Don laughed. The uncle laughed, though not so cheerily as Don, and even Jack chuckled softly to himself to think that "all was well again abaft."

"Spoiled child!" said Uncle George, patting her gently. But his heart was full of a wild terror, and he reproached himself for many things, chief among which was that he had made it possible for the idolized little girl beside him to know a moment's sorrow.

"I must be more watchful after this," he said to himself, "and more even-tempered. I have acted like a brute to-day; what wonder the little maid is upset. But that rascal! I shall have to warn the children, though it's an ugly business. Donald," said he aloud, and with gentle dignity, "come into the library after supper, both you and Dorothy."

THE END OF THE DRIVE. THE END OF THE DRIVE.

"Yes, sir," said Donald, respectfully.

And as the dear home-road came in sight, the horses quickened their already brisk pace, the party leaned back luxuriously and gave themselves up to enjoyment of the clear air, the changing roadside, and the glories of the western sky, now ablaze with

the setting sun.

No one excepting Jack saw a tall, lank figure disappearing among the shrubbery as the carriage rumbled down the avenue that led to the house.

"Look to wind'ard, Capt'n!" whispered Jack, mysteriously, to Mr. George, while Donald was gallantly assisting Dorothy from the carriage; "there's mischief in the air."

"What now, John?" asked Mr. George, rather patronizingly.

"A queer craft's just hove to, sir, in the evergreen bushes as we came in," mumbled Jack, almost under his breath, while pretending to screw the handle of his whip.

Mr. George scowled. "Is he there now?"

"Can't say, sir."

"Very well; I will soon find out." And Mr. George, with a pleasant but decisive, "Run in, youngsters," as Liddy opened the wide hall-door, walked briskly down the carriage-drive.

When the door closed, he turned into the shrubbery.

CHAPTER V.

SUPPER-TIME.

"Oh, if gentlemen only knew the nature of muffins!"

Poor Liddy! Her trig black dress and jaunty muslin cap seemed to mock her perturbed feelings, as she hovered between the kitchen and the hall door. Donald and Dorothy, neatly brushed,—cool and pink of cheek, and very crisp in the matter of neck-ties,—stood at one window of the supper-room. The flaxen-haired waitress, in a bright blue calico gown and white apron, watched, tray in hand, at the other. A small wood-fire, just lighted, was waking into life on the hearth. Old Nero was

dozing upon the rug, with one eye open. And all—to say nothing of the muffins—were waiting for Mr. George, whom the D's had not seen since their return from the drive, half an hour before.

When that gentleman came in he stepped briskly to his seat at the table, and, though he did not speak, his manner seemed to say: "Everything is all right. I merely came in a little late. Now for supper!" But Nero, rising slowly from the warm rug, slipped under the table, rubbed himself sympathetically against his master's legs, and finally settled down at his feet, quite contented to serve as a foot-stool for Donald and Dorothy, who soon were seated one on each side of the table, while Lydia, carefully settling her gown, took her place at the large tea-tray.

Mr. George, as the good housekeeper soon saw to her satisfaction, did appreciate the nature of muffins.

So did Donald and Dorothy.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAMILY CONFERENCE.

After supper, Uncle George, Donald, and Dorothy went into the library, where they found the soft light of a shaded lamp and another cheerful fire,—so cheerful, that Mr. George let down the windows at the top, and the two D's were glad to go and sit on the sofa at the cooler end of the spacious room.

"Liddy is determined that we shall not freeze before the winter sets in," remarked Mr. George, hardly knowing how to begin the conversation. He was not the first good man who has found himself embarrassed in the presence of frank young listeners waiting to hear him speak and sure to weigh and remember everything he may say.

The children smiled solemnly.

Thus began an interview which, in some respects, changed the lives of Donald and Dorothy.

"Liddy is a good, faithful soul," said Uncle George. "She has been with us, you know, ever since you were babies."

"And before too," put in Dorry, knowingly.

"Yes, before too," assented Mr. George. "Some years before."

Nero, lazing by the fire, snapped at an imaginary fly, at which the D's, glad of a chance to relieve themselves, and feeling that the interview was one of grave importance, indulged in a smothered laugh.

"And Nero, poor faithful old dog, you knew us!" continued Mr. George, changing to a more cheerful tone, while Nero's tail contentedly beat time to the remark (for the good creature knew well enough that Mr. George was speaking of him); "he was hardly a year old then, the friskiest, handsomest fellow you ever saw, and brave as a lion."

"Did he know Aunt Kate?" asked the audacious Dorothy.

Donald looked frightened; Uncle George coughed; and just as Dorothy, wretchedly uncomfortable, made up her mind that it was too cruel for anything, never to be able to speak of your own aunty without raising a storm, Mr. George came out of the bright light and seated himself on the sofa between the D's with an arm around each. Dorry, puzzled but almost happy, drew as close as she could, but still sat upright; and Donald, manly boy that he was, felt a dignified satisfaction in his uncle's embrace, and met him with a frank, questioning look. It was the work of an instant. Dorry's startling inquiry still sounded on the firelit air.

"Donald," said Uncle, without replying to Dorry's question. "Let me see. You are now fourteen years old?"

"Fourteen and ten days,—nearly half a month over fourteen," said Dorothy,

promptly. "Aren't we, Donald? I'm so glad!"

Donald nodded, and Uncle placidly asked why she was glad.

"Because twins can't boss—I mean domineer—each other. If Don was the least bit older than me—I—me, it wouldn't be half so nice as starting fair and square."

Here she gave a satisfied little cough, and to her great surprise felt her uncle's arm immediately withdrawn.

"Stop your nonsense, Dorothy," said he, almost sternly, "and don't interrupt."

"Now Uncle's afraid again," thought Donald, but he felt so sorry for his sister that he said, in a tone of dignified respect: "Dorry didn't mean to be rude, Uncle."

"No, no. Certainly not," said that very puzzling individual, suddenly resuming his former position, and drawing the little lady toward him. "Where were we? Oh, yes! Fourteen years and ten days, is it?"

"Yes, sir, right to a minute," replied Donald, laughing.

"Well, there is no hurry, I am glad to say. I have been thinking of late, Donald, that a little boarding-school experience is a good thing for a boy."

Dorothy started; but she had resolved rather sullenly that people would have to wait a long while before they should hear another word from her.

"Yes, sir," assented Donald, quickly. It would be glorious to go, he thought, and actually be a boarding-school boy, belonging to a crack base-ball club, a debating society, perhaps even a secret society; to get boxes of fruit and cake from home, and share them with his room-mates; maybe have a fight or two, for a fellow must hold his own, you know;—but then how strange it would be to live without Dorry! Oh, if she only were a boy!

DONALD'S THOUGHTS. DONALD'S THOUGHTS.

"I'd come home on Thanksgiving and Christmas?" asked Don, following up a rather lonesome feeling.

"Oh, yes! but you're not off yet, my boy. The fact is, I did think seriously of sending you this autumn, and I even looked up a few good places, intending to make a selection. But there's no special hurry. This boarding-school business has its uncomfortable side. It breaks up a household, and makes little sisters lonesome. Doesn't it, Dorry?"

Dorry couldn't speak now, though she tried, and Mr. George considerately went on: "Besides, there's another, a very good reason, why we should wait awhile. You are needed here, Donald, just now."

"Needed here?" thought Dorry. "I should say so!" Uncle might as well remark that the sunshine, or the sky, or the air was needed here as to say that Don was needed. A big tear gathered under her lashes—"Besides, she was no more his little sister than he was her little brother. They were just even halves of each other—so now." And the tear went back.

Meantime, Uncle's remarks flowed slowly on, like a deep stream passing between two banks—one with its sunny leaves and blossoms all astir in the breeze, the other bending, casting its image in the stream, and so going on with it in a closer companionship.

"You are needed here, Donald; but, as I said before, there is plenty of time. And though I shall bear this boarding-school matter in mind, I cannot well spare you just now. I shall require, perhaps, some vigilance on your part, and coolheadedness,—not that anything very serious is likely to occur; in fact, there is no reason why it should—but a brother naturally guards his sister even when no danger threatens."

"Certainly," said Don.

"Humph!" thought Dorothy, "I don't want to be guarded, thank you." But, for all that, she felt proud that Uncle should speak of her in this way to Donald. Probably he was going to mention fire, and remind them of the invariable rule that they must

not, on any account, carry matches into the barn, or light a bonfire anywhere without express permission. Meanwhile, Donald watched his uncle's face, following every word.

"There is really nothing to be apprehended," continued Uncle George, with some hesitation; "but it is important that you—that Dorothy—I should say—well, my children, perhaps you have observed—indeed, you spoke to-day, Dorothy, of having seen something of a person who has been about here several times of late."

"Oh, yes, Uncle," responded Dorry.

But Donald waited to hear more. He had talked previously with his uncle about this same person, whom he had seen more than once lounging about the grounds.

"Well," said Mr. George, slowly, "this man, 'long and lank,' as Dorry truly described him, is not a very dangerous man,—at least, we'll believe he is not,—but he is one whom I wish you both to avoid. His company will do you no good."

"Wouldn't it be better, Uncle," suggested Dorry, now eager to help matters, "for Jack to order him off the place whenever he comes on?"

"Well, no," said Uncle George. "After all, he may not come again. But if he should, I wish you to have as little to do with him as possible."

"We could set Nero on him. Nero can't bite, but he'd scare him pretty well," insisted Dorry, with animation. "The idea of his calling me 'Sis!' the great, horrid, long—"

"There, there; that will do," said Mr. George. "All you need do is to remember what I say. Do not fear this man. Above all, do not let him imagine that you fear him. But avoid him. Keep within the gates for the present."

"O-h, Uncle!" exclaimed Dorry, in consternation, while even Donald broke forth with a plaintive "Both of us, Uncle?"

"Yes, both of you,—for a few days at least, or until I direct to the contrary. And while out of doors, keep together."

"We'll do that anyway," replied Dorry, half saucily.

"The man," continued Mr. George, "probably will not trouble either of you. He is a ne'er-do-weel, whom I knew as a boy, but we lost sight of him long ago. I suspect he has been steadily going down for years."

"I can't see wh—," began the irrepressible Dorry; but she was met by a firm, "You need not see, nor try to see. Only remember what I have told you, and say nothing to any one about it. Now we may talk of other things. Oh, by the way, there was one pretty good reason for thinking of making a change in schooling. Dr. Lane is going to leave us."

"Dr. Lane going to leave!" echoed Donald, in regretful surprise.

"Good! No more old algebra!" exclaimed Dorry, at the same time clapping her hand to her mouth. Her vivid imagination had instantly pictured relief and a grand holiday. But second thoughts made her feel vexed with herself, especially when her uncle resumed:

"Yes, the good man told me yesterday that his cough grows steadily worse, and his physician has ordered him to go south for the winter. He says he must start as soon as I can find a tutor to take his place."

"Oh, don't let him wait a day, Uncle," exclaimed Dorry, earnestly,—"please don't, if going south will cure him. We've noticed his cough, haven't we, Don? We can study our lessons by ourselves, and say them to each other."

Some boys would have smiled knowingly at this somewhat suspicious outburst, but Donald knew Dorothy too well for that. She was thoroughly sincere and full of sympathy for the kind, painstaking man who, notwithstanding one or two peculiarities which she and her brother could not help observing, was really a good teacher. For more than a year, omitting only July and August, and Saturday holidays, he had been coming to Lakewood every week-day to instruct the two young Reeds in what he called the rudiments of learning. There were two visiting

teachers besides Dr. Lane,—the music-master, Mr. Penton, and Mademoiselle Jouvin, the French teacher. These came only twice a week, and on different days, but Dr. Lane and they managed to keep the D's very busy. Mr. Reed had preferred that his nephew and niece should receive their early education at home; and so Donald and Dorothy thus far knew nothing of school life.

What could be the matter with Uncle George? Again Dorothy's look and tone—especially her sudden expression of kindliness for her tutor—evidently had given her uncle pain. He looked down at her for an instant with a piteous and (as Donald again thought) an almost frightened expression; then quickly recovering himself, went on to tell Donald that Dorry was right. It would be best to release Dr. Lane at once, and take the chances of obtaining a new teacher. In fact, he would see the doctor the very next morning, if they would let him know when the lesson-hours were over.

"Uncle!"

"Well, sir, what is it?"

"Did you go to boarding-school, when you were a boy?"

"Oh, yes! but I was older than you are now."

"Did Aunt Kate?" asked Dorry.

"There, there; that will do," was the reply. Uncle George frequently had to say, "There, there; that will do," to Dorry.

"Well," she insisted timidly, and almost in a whisper, "I have to ask about her, because you wasn't a girl,"—Donald, reaching behind Mr. George, tried to pull her sleeve to check the careless grammar, but her soul had risen above such things,—"you wasn't a girl,—and I don't expect to go to a boys' boarding-school. Oh, Uncle, I don't, I really don't mean to be naughty, but it's so hard, so awfully hard, to be a girl without any mother! And when I ask about her or Aunt Kate, you always—yes, Uncle, you really do!—you always get mad. Oh, no, I don't mean to

say that; but it makes you feel so dreadfully sorry, that you don't know how it sounds to me! You actually don't, Uncle. If I only could remember Mamma! But, of course, I can't; and then that picture that came to us from England looks so—so very—"

"It's lovely!" exclaimed Donald, almost indignantly.

"Yes, it's handsome, but I know Mamma wouldn't look that way now. It's so pale and stiff. May be it's the big lace collar,—and even Liddy can't tell me whether it was a good likeness or not. But Aunt Kate's picture in the parlor is so different. I think it's because it was painted when she was a little girl. Oh, it's so sweet and natural, I want to climb up and kiss it! I really do, Uncle. That's why I want to talk about her, and why I love her so very much. You wouldn't speak cross to her, Uncle, if she came to life and tried to talk to you about us. No, I think you'd—Oh, Uncle, Uncle! What is the matter? What makes you look so at me!"

Before Dorry fairly knew what had happened, Donald was at his uncle's feet, looking up at him in great distress, and Uncle George was sobbing! Only for an instant. His face was hidden in his hands, and when he lifted it, he again had control of himself, and Dorry almost felt that she had been mistaken. She never had seen her uncle cry, or dreamed that he could cry; and now, as she stood with her arms clasped about his neck, crying because he had cried, she could only think, with an awed feeling, of his tenderness, his goodness, and inwardly blame herself for being "the hatefullest, foolishest girl in all the world." Glancing at Donald, sure of his sympathy, she whispered, "I'm sorry, Uncle, if I did wrong. I'll try never, never to be so—so—" She was going to say "so wicked again," but the words would not come. She knew that she had not been wicked, and yet she could not at first hit upon the right term. Just as it flashed upon her to say "impetuous," and not to care a fig if Donald did secretly laugh at her using so grand an expression, Mr. George said, gently, but with much seriousness:

"You need not reproach yourself, my child. I can see very clearly just what you wish to say. Don and I can rough it together, but you, poor darling," stroking her hair softly, "need just what we cannot give you,—a woman's, a mother's tenderness."

"Oh, yes, you do! Yes, you do, Uncle!" cried Dorothy, in sudden generosity.

"And it is only natural, my little maid, that you should long—as Donald must, too—to hear more of the mother whom I scarcely knew, whom, in fact, I saw only a few times. Wolcott, I should say, your Papa, and she sailed for Europe soon after their marriage, and from that day we never—"

He checked himself, and Dorry took advantage of the pause to say, timidly:

"But it wasn't so with Aunt Kate. You knew her, Uncle, all her life. Wasn't she sweet, and lovely, and—"

"Yes, yes! Sweet, lovely, everything that was noble and good, dear. You cannot love her too well."

"And Papa," spoke up Donald, sturdily, "he was perfect. You've often told us so,—a true, upright, Christian gentleman." The boy knew this phrase by heart. He had so often heard his uncle use it, in speaking of the lost brother, that it seemed almost like a part of his father's name. "And Mamma we know was good, Dorry. Liddy says every one liked her ever so much. Uncle George says so too. Only, how can he talk to us about our mother if he hardly knew her? She didn't ever live in this house. She lived in New York; and that made a great difference—don't you see?"

"Yes," admitted Dorry, only half satisfied; "but you would have known her, Uncle George,—yes, known Mamma, and Aunty, and our Uncle Robertson [they had never learned to call that uncle by his first name]—we would have known them all—no, not all, not poor dear Papa, because he never lived to set sail from England, but all the rest, even our dear little cousin, Delia,—oh, wouldn't she be sweet, if we had her now to love and take care of! We should all have known each other ever so well—of course we should—if the ship had landed safe."

"Yes, my darlings, if the ship had not gone down, all would have been very, very different. There would have been a happy household indeed. We should have had more joy than I dare to think of."

"But we have each other now, Uncle," said Dorothy, soothingly and yet with spirit. "It can't be so very miserable and dreadful with you and Donald and me left!"

"Bless you, my little comforter!—No. God be praised, we still have a great deal to be thankful for."

"Yes, and there are Liddy and Jack, and dear old Nero," said Donald, partly because he wished to add his mite toward this more cheerful view of things, but mainly because he felt choked, and it would be as well to say something, if only to prove to himself that he was not giving way to unmanly emotion.

"Oh, yes—Jack!" added Dorry. "If it were not for Jack where should we twins be, I'd like to know!"

Said in an ordinary tone of voice, this would have sounded rather flippant, but Dorry uttered the words with true solemnity.

"I think of that often," said Donald, in the same spirit. "It seems so wonderful, too, that we didn't get drowned, or at least die of exposure, and—"

Dorothy interrupted him with an animated "Yes, indeed! Such little teenty bits of babies!"

"It does seem like a miracle," Uncle George said.

"But Jack," continued Donald, warmly, "was such a wonderful swimmer."

"Yes, and wonderful catcher!" said Dorothy. "Just think how he caught us—Ugh! It makes me shiver to think of being tossed in the air over those black, raging waves. We must have looked like little bundles flying from the ship. Wasn't Jack just wonderful, to hold on to us as he did, and work so hard looking for—for the others, too. Mercy! if we only get our feet wet now, Liddy seems to think it's all over with

us,—and yet, look what we stood then! Little mites of babies, soaked to the skin, out in an open boat on the ocean all that terrible time."

"Much we cared for that," was Don's comment. "Probably we laughed, or played pat-a-cake, or—"

"Played pat-a-cake!" interrupted Dorry, with intense scorn of Donald's ignorance of baby ways—"babies only six weeks old playing pat-a-cake! I guess not. It's most likely we kicked and screamed like anything; isn't it, Uncle?"

Uncle nodded, with a strange mixture of gravity and amusement, and Donald added, earnestly:

"Whether we cried or not, Jack was a trump. A real hero, wasn't he, Uncle? I can see him now—catching us; then, when the other boat capsized, chucking us into the arms of some one in our boat, and plunging into the sea to save all he could, but able to get back alone, after all." (The children had talked about the shipwreck so often that they felt as if they remembered the awful scene.) "He was nearly dead by that time, you know."

"Yes, and nearly dead or not, if he hadn't come back," chirped Dorothy, who was growing tired of the tragic side of Donald's picture,—"if he hadn't come back to take charge of us, and take us on board the big ship—"

"The Cumberland," said Don.

"Yes, the Cumberland, or whatever she was called; if the Cumberland had not come along the next day, and Jack hadn't climbed on board with us, and wrapped us in blankets, and fed us and so on, it wouldn't have been quite so gay!"

Now, nothing could have been in worse taste than the conclusion of this speech, and Dorothy knew it; but she had spoken in pure defiance of solemnity. There had been quite enough of that for one evening.

Uncle George, dazed, troubled, and yet in some vague way inexpressibly comforted,

was quietly looking first at one speaker, then at the other, when Liddy opened the door with a significant, "Mr. Reed, sir, did you ring?"

Oh, that artful Liddy! Uncle read "bed-time" in her countenance. It was his edict that half-past nine should be the hour; and the D's knew that their fate was sealed.

"Good-night, Uncle!" said Donald, kissing his uncle in good, hearty fashion.

"Good-night, Uncle!" said Dorothy, clinging to his neck just an instant longer than usual.

"Good-night, my blessings!" said Uncle George, reluctantly. And as he closed the library door behind them, Nero, shut up in Liddy's room, was barking furiously.

Two more orderly, well-behaved young persons never left an apartment. But I must tell the truth: when they were fairly in the hall, Donald started to go up stairs on the outside, holding on to the balusters, and Dorry ran to the front door, in spite of Liddy's remonstrances, with a frisky, "Oh, do let me have just one breath of fresh air!"

She came back instantly, rushed past Lydia, who was slowly puffing her way up the stairs, met Donald at the first landing (he had condescended by this time to leap over to the regulation side of the balusters), and whispered:

"Upon my sacred word, I saw him! He's out there standing at the front steps!"

"Uncle ought to know it!" exclaimed Donald, turning to run down again.

But he stopped on the next step, for Mr. George came out from the library, opened the front door, and disappeared.

The two D's stole from their rooms, after Liddy bade them good-night, and sat on the top stair, whispering.

"Why did you open your window just now, Donald?"

"Why, because I wanted to look out, of course."

"Now, Don, I know better. You coughed, just to let Uncle know that you were

around, if there should be any trouble. You know you did."

"Well, what if I did?" admitted Donald, unwillingly. "Hark!" and he sprang up, ready for action. "No, he's back. It's Uncle. I say, Dorry, it will come hard on us to stay on this side of the hedge, like sheep. I wonder how long it will last."

"Goodness knows! But he didn't say we couldn't go to the Danbys'. I suppose that's because we can get there by going round the back way."

"I suppose so," assented Donald. "So long as we keep off the public road, it's all right."

"How queer!"

"Yes, it is queer," said Donald. "However, Uncle knows best."

"Dear me, how good we are, all of a sudden!" laughed Dorry; but she kissed Donald soberly for good-night, and after going to bed lay awake for at least fifteen minutes,—a great while for her,—thinking over the events of the day and evening.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DANBYS.

Who were the Danbys?

They were the Reeds' nearest neighbors, and no two households could be more different. In the first place, the Reeds were a small family of three, with four servants; the Danbys were a large family of twelve, with no servants. The Reeds had a spacious country mansion, rich old furniture, pretty row-boats, fine horses, carriages, and abundant wealth; the Danbys had a little house, poor old furniture, one cow, five pigs, one home-made scow, one wheelbarrow, and no money, excepting the very moderate income earned by the father of the family and his eldest boy. There the great contrast ended. The Danbys were thoroughly respectable, worthy and cleanly; the parents, kind and loving souls, could read and write, and the

children were happy, obedient and respectful. To be sure, it would have been very hard for the best schoolmaster of the county to parse some of Mrs. Danby's fluent sentences, or to read at a glance Mr. Danby's remarkable penmanship. But that same learned instructor would have delighted in the cleverness of the sons and daughters, had he been so fortunate as to direct their studies. True, the poor little Danbys had enjoyed but a scant and broken schooling; but they were sharp little things, and native wit served them whenever reading, writing, and arithmetic failed. Indeed, the very fact of their intercourse with Donald and Dorothy had done much for their language and deportment. Yet each individual, from the big brother Ben down to the latest baby, had his or her own peculiar character and style, which not twenty Dons and Dorothys could alter.

It was not very difficult, after all, to remember the names of the young Danbys; for Mr. Danby, being a methodical man, had insisted on their being named in alphabetical order and that they each should have two names, so as to give them their choice in after life. Therefore, the first was Amanda Arabella,—at the present stage of our story, a girl of seventeen, with poetical gifts of her own; the second was Benjamin Buster, aged fifteen; the third, Charity Cora, dark-eyed, thoughtful, nearly thirteen, and, the neighbors declared, never seen without a baby in her arms; the fourth, Daniel David, a robust young person of eleven; the fifth, Ella Elizabeth, red-haired, and just half-past nine, as she said; next came Francis Ferdinand, or "Fandy," as he was called for short, who, though only eight, was a very important member of the family; next, Gregory George, who was six. And here the stock of double names seems to have given out; for after Master Gregory came plain little Helen, aged four; Isabella, a wee toddler "going on three;" and last of all, little Jamie, "the sweetest, cunningest little baby that ever lived." So now you have them all: Amanda Arabella, Benjamin Buster, Charity Cora, Daniel David, Ella Elizabeth, Francis Ferdinand, Gregory George, Helen, Isabella, and roly-poly Jamie. If you cannot quite remember all the children, who can blame you? Even Mrs. Danby

herself, with the alphabet to help her, always had to name them upon her fingers, allowing a child to a finger, and giving Elizabeth and Fandy the thumbs.

The stars of the family, in Donald's and Dorothy's estimation, were Benjamin Buster, who had seen the world already, had enjoyed adventures and hair-breadth escapes, and was now at home for the first time in four years; Charity Cora, whose eager, dark eyes told their own story of patient aspiration; and little Fandy. Mr. Danby was proud of all his children, though perhaps proudest of Baby Jamie because there was no knowing what the child might come to; but Mrs. Danby looked with absolute reverence upon her eldest—Amanda Arabella. "Such a mind as that girl has, Mr. Danby," she would say to her husband, "it isn't for us to comprehend. She might have come just so out of a book, Amanda might." And Mr. Danby would nod a pleased and puzzled assent, vaguely wondering how long he could manage to hold his high parental state over so gifted a creature.

Amanda Arabella's strong points were poetry and sentiment. To be sure, she scrubbed the floor and washed the dishes, but she did these menial duties "with her head in the clouds," as she herself had confessed to her mother. Her soul was above it, and as soon as she could, she intended to "go somewhere and perfect herself." This idea of going somewhere to perfect herself was one which she had entertained in secret for some time, though she had not the slightest idea of where she could go, and in just what way she was to be perfected. She only knew that, at present, housework and the nine brothers and sisters were quite as much as she could attend to, excepting at odd moments when "the poetry fit was on her," as her mother expressed it—"and then wild horses couldn't stop her!"

"I can't deny, Mr. Reed," said that proud mother to her kind neighbor,—who, on the morning after the interview with Donald and Dorothy in his study, had halted at Mrs. Danby's whitewashed gate, to wish her a stately "Good-morning, madam!" and to ask after her family,—"I can't deny, and be honest, that I'm uncommon blest in

my children, though the Lord has seen fit to give us more than a extra lot of 'em. They're peart and sound as heart could wish, and so knowin'! Why," she continued, lowering her voice and drawing closer to the gate, "there's my Fandy now, only eight years old, can preach 'most like a parson! It'd rise your hair with surprise to hear him. An' Ben, my oldest boy, has had such adventures, an' haps an' mishaps, as ought to be writ out in a birography. An' there's Amanda Arabella, my daughter—well, if I only could set down the workin's o' my brain as that girl can, I'd do! She has got a most uncommon lively brain. Why, the other day—but all this time you're standin', Mr. Reed. Won't you walk in, sir? Well, certainly, sir, it ain't to be 'xpected you could take time goin' by so, as you are—Well, my 'Mandy, sir, only the other day was a-comin' out into the shed with a pan o' dish-water, and she sees a rainbow. 'Ma!' says she, a-callin' me, 'take this 'ere dish-water!' and before I knowed it, she was a writin' down with her lead-pencil the beautifullest ideas that ever was,—all about that rainbow. In the evening, when her Pa come, I just up and showed it to him, an' he says, says he, 'Them's the grandest thoughts I ever see put to paper!'"

"Ah!" said Mr. Reed, with an expression of hearty interest and amusement on his honest face, yet evidently ready to take advantage of the first opportunity to go on his way.

"Yes, indeed," promptly assented Mrs. Danby, "and she ain't all. Our children, if I do say it, seem to have more brains than they've a fair right to—bein' poor folks' children, as you may say. It don't tire 'em one bit to learn: their Pa says every study they tackle gets the worst of it,—they use it up, so to speak. I dreamed th' other night I see the four English branches, 'rithmetic, writin', readin', and hist'ry, standin' exhausted, waiting for them children to get through with them. But I see you're shifting yourself, sir, for going, and I ought to be ashamed to detain you this way clacking about my own flesh and blood. I've been poorly lately, I didn't tell you, Mr. Reed" (looking at him plaintively).

"No; indeed, I'm very sorry to hear it," said Mr. Reed, sympathetically. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no. One o' my billerous attacks; the spine o' my back seemed to give out somehow, and I was dreadful bad for a couple o' days. But my Thomas an' the children—bless their hearts!—got me up again. You're looking well, Mr. Reed. Good-morning, sir—good-morning!—(Sakes! he went off so sudden I forgot)."

And thus exclaiming to herself, the dear old talker went back into the house.

MRS. DANBY'S DREAM: THE FOUR ENGLISH BRANCHES. MRS. DANBY'S DREAM: THE FOUR ENGLISH BRANCHES.

"Forgot what, Ma?" asked Amanda, who stood in the doorway trying to think of a rhyme for olives.

"Why, to tell Mr. Reed about that queer kind of a man, who's just engaged to lodge with us. I don't feel like trustin' him somehow, and yet it isn't for plain folks to be refusing a real boarder who wants a plain family-table, and don't put on any airs. I told him," she continued, going farther into the house, and raising her voice as she increased the distance between herself and Amanda, "that if ours wasn't a family table (with ten children setting 'round it, includin' the baby, and Mr. Danby at the head), I didn't know what was. But he's to come back in an hour or two. Where in the world to tuck him is the question. Anyhow, you'd better go up, dear, and ready brother's room for him. Ben's got two rabbit-skins tacked outside the window which'll have to come down. Ben'll have to go in with Dan and Fandy to sleep.—Mercy! Here come the twins, 'cross-lots!—an' Fandy a preachin' there in the pump-shed!"

True enough, the twins were coming around by the back way. They approached softly, and made a motion of warning to Mrs. Danby, as they drew nearer, for they could hear Fandy Danby's voice, and wished to enjoy the fun. Mrs. Danby, smiling and nodding, pointed to a place where they could stand unobserved and hear the

sermon.

It was the hour for the afternoon "cleaning-up." Eight of the little Danbys, including Charity with Baby Jamie in her arms, had assembled to wash their hands and faces at the battered green pump under the shed, where, on a long, low bench, were two yellow earthenware basins, and a saucer containing a few fragments of brown soap, while on the wall hung a roller-towel that already was on very familiar terms with Danby faces and hands. The general toilet had been rather a noisy one, owing partly to the baby objecting to having soap in its eyes, and partly to the fact that too many required the services of the Danby roller at the same instant, to say nothing of Miss Helen insisting upon slapping the water in a most unladylike way, and so splashing Master Gregory.

This combination having brought matters to a crisis, Fandy had been inspired to mount a small step-ladder, and, with many original gestures, address the crowd in the following fashion:—

"Chil'ren! I'm ashamed of you! I don't know when I've been so—so umpressed with the badness of this family. How often, my hearers, do you 'spect me to stop my dressing to extort you! I didn't mean to preach no more sermons this week, but you do behave so awful bad, I must.

"Now, first, don't you know speakin' saucy is a sin? Don't you know it? It makes us hateful, an' it makes us cross, an' it makes people tell Ma. It ain't right for Chrisshen chil'ren to do such things. It don't never say in our Bible-lesson that folks can call peoples 'mean uglies' just for wantin' the roller. An' it don't say that a good Chrisshen child can say 'Pshaw for you!' for havin' not to make quite so much noise, which you, my beloved 'Gory, said just now to Charity.

"Now, we must be good an' perlite, if we want to do right and have things Chrissmas, an' if we want to be loved on earth and in heaven. (No, sir, that ain't talkin' big, and I do know what I mean, too.) I say, we must be perlite. We mussent

get mad unless we can't help it. It's natural for big folks to rub our noses the wrong way when they wash our faces, an' to comb hair hard—they're born so. An' all we can do is to be patient, an' wait till we get big an' have chil'ren of our own.

FANDY "PREACHES A SERMON" TO HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
FANDY "PREACHES A SERMON" TO HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

"But what I say—what I mean, what I—what I—(Now you, Gregory, give Helen back her dolly right away, or I'll come down to you!)—what I mean is, that we all ought to be good and perlite. It's wicked to be saucy. We ought to be able to stand one another. An' nudgin' is wicked, an' shovin' is wicked, an' makin' faces ain't the way to do. No more ain't bullyin', nor mockin', nor any of those things. I go in for bein' pleasant and kind, an' havin' fun fair; only, my beloved hearers, I can't do it all alone. If we'd all be good Chrisshen chil'ren, things would go better, an' there wouldn't be such a racket.

"Can't you cleanse your sinful hearts, my hearers?—cleanse 'em, anyhow, enough to behave? Can't you? (Stop your answerin', David; it puts me out, and, besides, you oughtn't to say that. You ought to say 'I'll try.') I notice you ain't none of you real quiet and peaceful, unless I'm preachin', or you're eatin' something good. I also can see two people lookin' through the crack, which I think they'd better come in, as I wouldn't mind it. Now I can't extort you no more this time."

To Fandy's great disgust, the audience applauded the conclusion of his sermon, and were about to become more uproarious than ever, when the sudden appearance of Donald and Dorothy put them upon their good behavior.

"Is Ben here?" asked Donald, after the usual "How-d'ye-do's" were over, and as Fandy was taking a hasty turn at the roller-towel.

"Don't know," said Fandy; "he was mendin' a trap, over there,"—pointing to an enclosed corner close by the house, that had been roughly boarded over and fitted up with bench and table by Master Ben, so as to make a sort of workshop.

They all went over, accompanied by Charity Cora, and were received in Ben's usual style, which consisted in simply ceasing to whistle aloud, though he still held his lips in whistling position while he proceeded with his work.

They watched him in silence for a moment (the young Danbys, at least, knowing that they would be firmly, but not unkindly, ordered off, if they interfered with the business in hand), and then, to their relief, Ben drove in the last nail and laid down the hammer.

"What's that for?—to catch yab-bits?" asked Gregory George, nicknamed 'Gory by his brothers, for the fun of the thing, he was so fair-haired and gentle.

"No; it's to catch little boys," answered Ben, whereat 'Gory grinned, and looked at Don and Dorry to see if they were foolish enough to believe it.

"Well, why don't you act perlite to your comp'ny?" asked Fandy, much shocked at Ben's unconscious want of ceremony.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Ben. "Hallo, Donald!"

Dorry was softly talking to Cora, and at the same time coaxing the baby from its sister's arms.

"Hallo yourself!" was Donald's quick response to Ben. "Did you have any luck last night?"

"Yes, two! Got the skins out drying. Beauties! I say, Donald, can you spare me your gun again, if you're not going to use it Thanksgiving Day?"

"Certainly," answered Don; "you can have it, and welcome. Tyler and I are going to fire at a mark in the afternoon, with Uncle and the girls. But we'll use the rifle for that."

"What girls?" asked Charity Cora, eagerly, hoping, from Donald's plural way of putting it, that she and Ella Elizabeth possibly were to have a share in the sport; whereat Daniel David, guessing her thoughts, answered for Donald, with a cutting,

"Why, Queen Victoria and the royal princess, to be sure. Who else could it be?"

Cora made no reply, but, feeling rather ashamed, rubbed her arms (a habit of hers whenever the baby for the moment happened to be out of them), and looked at Donald.

"Josie Manning and Ed Tyler are coming over after dinner," said Donald.

"I should think they'd rather come to dinner," spoke up Ella Elizabeth, with hungry eyes. "Turkeys and things—Oh, my! Punkin pie!"

This called forth two exclamations in a breath:

Dan. David:"'Punkin pie! Oh, my!' We're getting poetical. Call 'Mandy, quick. Punkin pie—sky high."

Fandy:"Don't be so unproper. It's pumpkun pie. Dorothy said so. And, besides, we ought to let the comp'ny do the talking."

"Humph! By this time, we've made them forget what they were talkin' about."

"Not I, Charity," laughed Donald, turning to the latest speaker. "In the first place, Josie and Ed didn't feel like leaving home on Thanksgiving Day till after dinner, and we two fellows are going to teach Josie and Dorry to shoot straight. And" (now addressing Ben, who by this time was wedging the handle of a hammer) "as for the gun, Ben, you're always welcome to it, so long as you return it in as good order as you did last time. You cleaned it better than I do."

"I found the rags," said Helen, slyly,—"ever so many. Didn't I, Ben?"

Ben nodded at her, and Helen, made happy for the whole day, ran off hugging a broken dolly in exact imitation of Charity and Baby Jamie; meanwhile her big brother, pleased at Don's compliments, remarked, "It's a prime gun, and never fails."

"Never fails you, Ben, you may as well say. It often fails me, never mind how carefully I aim."

"That's just it, Donald," said Ben. "There's no good in aiming so particular."

"Well, what's a fellow to do?" replied Donald. "You must take aim, and by the time you get a bird well sighted, he's gone."

"Sight? I never sight," said Ben. "I just fire ahead."

"You don't mean to say you shoot a bird without aiming at him?"

"Oh, well, I aim, of course; but I don't look through the sight, or any such nonsense."

"I don't understand," said Donald, doubtingly.

"Don't you? Why, it's just this: if the bird's flying he'll go ahead, won't he? Well, you fire ahead and meet him,—that's the whole of it. You know how an Indian shoots an arrow. He doesn't look along the line of the arrow for ten minutes, like a city archer; he decides, in a flash, what he's going to do, and lets fly. Practice is the thing. Now, when you're after a wild duck, you can aim exactly at him and he's safe as a turnip; but see a strip of water ahead betwixt the muzzle of your gun and him, and he's a gone bird, if you fire straight. You have to allow for diving—but practice is the thing. Learn by missing."

"Oh, that's good!" shouted Daniel David; "'learn by missing.' I'm going to try that plan in school after this. Don't you say so, Fandy?"

"No, I don't," said the inflexible Fandy, while he gazed in great admiration at the two big boys.

At this point, the mother appeared at the door with an empty pail in each hand, and before she had time to call, David and Fandy rushed toward her, seized the pails, and would have been off together for the well, if Mrs. Danby had not said, "Let David get the water, Fandy, and you bring me some light wood for boiling the kettle."

"You can't boil the kettle, Ma," called out one of the children. "You boil the water."

"No more you can't," assented Mrs. Danby, with an admiring laugh.

All this time, Dorry had been tossing the struggling baby, and finally winning it to smiles, though every fibre in its plump little body was squirming in the direction of

Charity Cora. Meanwhile, that much-enduring sister had made several pungent remarks, in a low tone, to her visitor, concerning babies in general and Jamie in particular.

"Now you see how nice it is! He keeps up that wriggling all day. Now it's to come to me; but when I have him, it's wriggling for the chickens, and for Mother, and for everything. And if you set him down out-of-doors he sneezes; and if you set him down in the house he screams; and Ma calls out to know 'if I can't amuse that baby!' I tote him round from morning to night—so I do!"

Here the baby's struggles became so violent and noisy that Charity Cora savagely took him from Dorry; whereat he threw his plump little arms about his sister's neck with such a satisfied baby-sigh that she kissed him over and over, and looked in placid triumph at Dorothy, apparently forgetting that she ever had made the slightest complaint against him.

"Have you begun with your new teacher yet?" she asked, hugging Jamie, and looking radiantly at Dorothy.

"Oh, no!" answered Dorry. "How did you know Dr. Lane was going?"

"Ma heard it somewhere! My, don't I wish I had a teacher to come every day and put me through! I'm just dying to learn things. But something always interferes with my getting to school. There's so much to do in the house; and now that we're to have a boarder there'll be more to do than ever. It's nice to be useful, I s'pose, but I'm really as ignorant, Dorothy Reed, as a—as a baby" (this simile was suggested by little Jamie's busy efforts to pull off her linen collar); "why, do you know, I can't even—"

And here the girls sauntered off together to sit down on a tree-stump, and have a good long talk, if the baby would allow it.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING.

Just as Donald and Dorothy were about to end the outdoor visit to the Danbys described in our last chapter, Coachman Jack was seen in a neighboring field, trying to catch Mr. Reed's spirited mare, "Lady," that had been let out to have a run. He already had approached her without difficulty and slipped a bridle over her head, but she had started away from him, and he, feeling that she had been allowed playtime enough, was now bent on recapturing her.

Instantly a dozen Danby eyes were watching them with intense interest. Then Donald and Ben, not being able to resist the impulse, scampered over to join in the race, closely followed by Dan and Tandy. Gregory, too, would have gone, but Charity called him back.

It was a superb sight to see the spirited animal, one moment standing motionless at a safe distance from Jack, and the next, leaping about the field, mane and tail flying, and every action telling of a defiant enjoyment of freedom. Soon, two grazing horses in the same field caught her spirit; even Don's pony, at first looking soberly over a hedge in the adjoining lot, began frisking and capering about on his own account, dashing past an opening in the hedge as though it were as solid a barrier as the rest. Nor were Jack and the boys less frisky. Coaxing and shouting had failed, and now it was an open chase, in which, for a time, the mare certainly had the advantage. But what animal is proof against its appetite? Clever little Fandy had rushed to Mr. Reed's barn, and brought back in his hat a light lunch of oats for the mare, which he at once bore into her presence, shaking it temptingly, at the same time slowly backing away from her. The little midget and his hatful succeeded, where big man and boys had failed. The mare came cautiously up and was about to put her nose into the cap, when Jack's stealthy and sudden effort to seize the bridle made her start sidewise away from him. But here Donald leaped forward at the other side, and caught her before she had time to escape again.

Jack was too proud of Don's quickness to appear surprised; so, disregarding the hilarious shout of the Danby boys, he took the bridle from the young master with an off-hand air, and led the now gentle animal quietly towards the stable.

But Dorothy was there before him. Out of breath after her brisk run, she was panting and tugging at a dusty side-saddle hanging in the harness-room, when Jack and the mare drew near.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried, "help me to get this down! I mean to have some fun. I'm going to ride that mare back to the field!"

"Not you, Miss Dorry!" exclaimed Jack. "Take your own pony, an' your own saddle, an' it's a go; but this 'ere mare'd be on her beam ends with you in no time."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't, Jack! She knows me perfectly. Don't you, Lady? Oh, do, Jack! That's a good Jack. Please let me! Don's there, you know."

Dorry said this as if Don were a regiment. By this time, the side-saddle, yielding to her vigorous efforts, had clattered down from its peg, with a peculiar buckle-and-leathery noise of its own.

"Won't you, Jack? Ah, won't you?"

"No, miss, I won't!" said Jack, resolutely.

"Why, Jack, I've been on her before. Don't you know? There isn't a horse on the place that could throw me. Uncle said so. Don't you remember?"

"So he did!" said Jack, his eyes sparkling proudly. "The Capt'n said them very words. An'," glancing weakly at the mare, "she's standin' now like a skiff in a calm. Not a breath in her sails—"

"Oh, do—do, Jack!" coaxed Dorry, seizing her advantage, "quick! They're all in the lot yet. Here, put it on her!"

"I'm an old fool," muttered Jack to himself, as, hindered by Dorry's busy touches, he proceeded to saddle the subdued animal; "but I can't never refuse her nothin'—that's

where it is. Easy now, miss!" as Dorry, climbing up on the feed-box in laughing excitement, begged him to hurry and let her mount. "Easy now. There! You're on, high and dry. Here" (tugging at the girth), "let me tauten up a bit! Steady now! Don't try no capers with her, Miss Dorry, and come back in a minute. Get up, Lady!—get up!"

The mare left the stable so slowly and unwillingly, that Jack slapped her flank gently as she moved off.

Jog, jog went Lady out through the wide stable doorway, across the yard into the open field. Dorry, hastily arranging her skirts and settling herself comfortably upon the grand but dingy saddle (it had been Aunt Kate's in the days gone by), laughed to herself, thinking how astonished they all must be to see her riding Lady back to them. For a moment she playfully pretended to be unconscious of their gaze. Then she looked up.

Poor Dorry! Not a boy, not even Donald, had remained in the field! He and the little Danbys were listening to one of Ben's stories of adventure. Even the two horses and Don's pony were quietly nosing the dry grass in search of green tufts.

"I don't care," she murmured gayly, overcoming her disappointment. "I mean to have a ride, any way. Get up, Lady!"

Lady did get up. She shook her head, pricked up her ears, and started off at a beautiful canter across the fields.

"How lovely!" thought Dorry, especially pleased at that moment to see several figures coming toward her from the Danby yard; "it's just like flying!"

Whether Lady missed her master's firm grip upon the rein, or whether she guessed her rider's thought, and was inspired by the sudden shouts and hurrahs of the approaching boys, can never be known. Certain it is that by the next moment Dorry, on Lady's back, was flying in earnest,—flying at great speed round and round the field, but with never an idea of falling off. Her first feeling was that her uncle and

Jack wouldn't be pleased if they knew the exact character of the ride. Next came a sense of triumph, because she felt that Don and the rest were seeing it all, and then a wild consciousness that her hat was off, her hair streaming to the wind, and that she was keeping her seat for dear life.

Lady's canter had become a run, and the run soon grew into a series of leaps. Still Dorry kept her seat. Young as she was, she was a fearless rider, and at first, as we have seen, rather enjoyed the prospect of a tussle with Lady. But as the speed increased, Dorry found herself growing deaf, dumb and blind in the breathless race. Still, if she could only hold on, all would be well; she certainly could not consent to be conquered before "those boys."

Lady seemed to go twenty feet in the air at every leap. There was no merry shouting now. The little boys stood pale and breathless. Ben, trying to hold Don back, was wondering what was to be done, and Charity was wringing her hands.

"Oh, oh! She'll be thrown!" cried the girls.

DONALD TO THE RESCUE. DONALD TO THE RESCUE.

"Not a bit of it!" insisted Donald. "I've seen Dot on a horse before." But his looks betrayed his anxiety. "See! the mare's trying to throw her now! But she can't do it—she can't do it! Dot understands herself, I tell you,—Whoa-o!—Let me go!" and, breaking from Ben, he tore across the field, through the opening in the hedge, and was on his pony's back in a twinkling. How he did it, he never knew. He had heard Dorry scream, and somehow that scream made him and his pony one. Together, they flew over the field; with a steady, calm purpose, they cut across Lady's course, and soon were at her side. Donald's "Hold on, Dot!" was followed by his quick plunge toward the mare. It seemed that she certainly would ride over him, but he never faltered. Grasping his pony's mane with one hand, he clutched Lady's bridle with the other. The mare plunged, but the boy's grip was as firm as iron. Though almost dragged from his seat, he held on, and the more she struggled, the harder he

tugged,—the pony bearing itself nobly, and quivering in eager sympathy with Donald's every movement. Jack and Ben were now tearing across the field, bent on rescue; but they were not needed. Don was master of the situation. The mare, her frolic over, had yielded with superb grace, almost as if with a bow, and the pony was rubbing its nose against her steaming side.

"Good for you, Dot!" was Donald's first word. "You held on magnificently."

Dorothy stroked Lady's hot neck, and for a moment could not trust herself to look up. But when Jack half-pulled, half-lifted her from the saddle, and she felt the firm earth beneath her, she tottered and would have fallen, had not Donald, frightened at her white face, sprung to the ground just in time to support her.

"Shiver my timbers!" growled Jack, "if ever I let youngsters have their way again!" But his eyes shone with a strange mixture of self-reproach and satisfaction as he looked at Dorry.

"Oh, is she hurt?" cried Charity, who, having stumbled with the baby in her rush across the field, was gathering up the screaming little fellow, catching her balance, and scrambling onward at the same time—"Is she hurt?"

"Is she hurt?" echoed the others, pressing forward in breathless excitement.

"Not hurt at all," spoke up Donald, stoutly, as, still supporting his sister, he saw the color coming back to her cheek,—"not hurt one bit! It's only been a splendid ride for her, and a jolly scare for us; but it is high time we were in the house. All's right, Jack. Good-by, everybody! We'll skip along home, now."

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH SOME WELL-MEANING GROWN FOLK APPEAR.

McSwiver—better known as "Michael" by the Manning family, or, more descriptively, as "Mr. Manning's Mike," at the village store, but always as "old Mr.

McSwiver," by our Liddy—was about to enjoy an evening out. This was a rare occurrence; for Mr. McSwiver, though he had advertised himself as having "no incumbrance," was by no means an ease-taking man. He united in his august person the duties of coachman, butler, waiter, useful man, and body-servant to Mr. Manning. Seeing him at early dawn, blacking his employer's boots, or, later, attending to the lighter duties of the coachhouse (he had a stable-boy to help him), one could never imagine the grandeur of that same useful individual when dressed in his best.

"A hall-door-and-waitin' suit brings out a man's fine points if he has any, so it does; and it's nowise surprisin' that parties callin' after nightfall should be secretly mistakin' me for the boss himself," thought Mr. McSwiver, critically regarding his well-scrubbed countenance in the hall mirror, before starting to make a formal call on his much-admired friend, Liddy.

Half an hour afterward he was stalking from Mr. Reed's garden-gate toward the village store, talking to himself, as usual, for lack of better company:

McSWIVER. McSWIVER.

"Humph! Queen Victorior herself couldn't be more high and mighty! and all because her young lady's gone an' had a runaway on horseback! 'Is she kilt?' says I. 'Mercy, no,' says she; 'but I shall be special engaged all the ev'nin', Mr. McSwiver,' says she; and with that she fastens her eyes on me (mighty pooty ones they are, too!) a-noddin' good-by, till I was forced, like, to take meself off. Miss Josephine herself couldn't 'a' been grander to one of them young city swells at the 'cademy! Och, but it beat all!"

Meantime, Liddy had quite forgotten his sudden nipped-in-the-bud visit. Old Mr. McSwiver was well enough in his own way, and at a fitting time, for he knew her cousins the Crumps; but she could not think of society matters so soon after her darling Miss Dorry had been in danger.

"Did you ever know it turn out any other way?" said she confidentially to Donald,

on that same evening,—after Dorothy, somewhat subdued by dreadful remarks on the subject of nervous shocks and internal injuries, had retired earlier than usual,—"now, did you, Master Donald? There Mr. G. had been taking extra precautions to keep her safe, and, under a merciful Providence, it was only by the skin of that dear child's teeth that she wasn't sent to a better world! And, do you know, Master Donald, there's been serious goings on here too?"

"Goings on? What do you mean, Liddy?"

"Why, that horrid man came—the very same that looked in at my sitting-room window—and Mr. George opened the door his own self, and spoke very severe to him, and 'I cannot see you to-night,' says he. 'Come on next Monday evening, at half-past nine, and not before.' I heard him say those very words."

Donald looked at her anxiously, but made no reply.

"There's no harm in my telling you," continued Liddy, softly, "because you and Mr. G. and me know about him."

"No, I don't, Liddy. I haven't heard half, and you know it!" was Donald's puzzled and indignant rejoinder. "This being let half-way into a secret doesn't suit me. If Uncle were not busy this evening, I'd go in and speak to him about that fellow at once."

"Oh, hush! please do," whispered Liddy, hurriedly. "Miss Dorry'll hear you. I only meant that you and I both know that he's been hanging about these parts for a week or more, and that his presence doesn't bode any good. Why, you noticed it before anybody else. Besides, I want her to sleep. The darling child! She's feeling worse than she lets on, I'm afraid, though I rubbed her back with liniment to make sure. Please don't talk any more about things now. To-morrow I'll ask your uncle if—"

"No, you needn't, thank you, Liddy," interrupted Don, "I'll speak to him myself."

"Oh my! When?"

"I don't know. When I get ready," he replied, laughing in spite of himself at Lydia's hopeless way of putting the question. "It is sure to come soon. I've had pulls at this tangle from time to time without getting a fair hold of it. But I intend to straighten it out before long, or know the reason why."

"Sakes! What an air he has, to be sure!" thought Liddy, as Donald moved away. "The fact is, that boy's getting big. We older folks'll think of them as children to the end of our days; but it's true as sky and water. And it's even more so with Miss Dorry. Those twins are getting older, as sure as I live!"

Monday evening came, and with it the "long, lank man." He did not come before half-past nine; and then, to Lydia's great disappointment (for she had rather enjoyed the luxury of dreading this mysterious visit), he rang the door-bell like any other visitor, and asked, familiarly, for Mr. Reed.

"Mr. Reed is at home, sir," responded Liddy, in a tone of cold disapprobation.

"All right. You're the housekeeper, I s'pose?"

Trembling within, but outwardly calm, silent, and majestic, Liddy threw open the study-door, and saw Mr. Reed rise to receive his guest.

The good woman's sitting-room was directly under the study. Consequently, the continuous sound of voices overhead soon became somewhat exasperating. But she calmed herself with the thought that Mr. George knew his own business. It was evident that he had something very important to talk over with "that person;" and if, in her desire to know more, a wild thought of carrying in glasses and a pitcher of water did enter her head, it met with such a chilling reception from Liddy's better self that it was glad to creep away again.

This, then, was why Lydia, busily engaged at her little sewing-table, was right glad, late as it was, to see Mr. Jack's shining face and newly-combed locks appear at the sitting-room door.

"Hullo, messmate! My service to you," was that worthy's salutation.

"Good evening, sir," said Lydia, severely. "My name is Blum—Miss Lydia Blum, though you've known it these twelve years, and been told of it twenty times as often."

"Miss Blum, then, at your service," growled Jack, bowing very low, and still remaining near the door. "It struck me, Mistress Blum, that a chap from the fo'castle might drop into your pretty cabin for a friendly chat this fine evening."

"Yes, indeed, and welcome," responded the pacified Miss Blum. "Take a seat, Mr. Jack."

He always was "Mr. Jack," evenings, and she, "Miss Blum," each enjoying the other's society all the more because of the mutual conviction that he was no ordinary coachman, and she was far from being an every-day servant. Kassy, the red-cheeked housemaid, and Norah, the cook, felt this; and though treated kindly by both dignitaries, they accepted their position, knowing well that they were not important members of the family, as Jack and Lydia Blum felt themselves to be.

"Mr. Jack," spoke Lydia, suddenly, "do you know who is up stairs?"

"Ay, ay, ma'am."

"Did you come on that account?"

Here Jack looked knowing, and said she must not question the man on the look-out.

"Not that I've had even a hint of such a thing from the Capt'n;" added Jack, as his companion nodded approvingly; "but your good sailor looks to the scupper before the ship fills—which doesn't apply in partic'lar, but it has its meaning, nevertheless. Young parties turned in, yet?"

"Master Donald and Miss Dorothy have retired, Mr. Jack," corrected Miss Blum, loftily. "That is, I presume so. At any rate, they are in their rooms, bless them!"

"Bless 'em again!" echoed Mr. Jack, heartily, ignoring the reproof. "A smarter, smilinger pair of beauties never came in my range on sea or land. There's Master

Donald, now, with the spirit of a man-o'-war in his boy's hull. My, but he's a fine one! And yet so civil and biddable! Always full set when there's fun in the air. Can't tell you, Mistress Blum, how I dote on that 'ere boy. Then there's Miss Dorothy,—the trimmest, neatest little craft I ever see. It seemed, t'other day, that the deck was slippin' from under me, when I see that child scudding 'round the lot on Lady's back. You couldn't 'a' told, at first, whether she was a-runnin' away with Lady, or Lady a-runnin' away with her. But didn't the skeer follow mighty quick! I tell you the wind blew four quarters to once fur a spell, but afore I could get there Master Donald had her. Whew! It was mirac'l'us! Never see such a boy—no, nor girl neither—as them two twins!"

"Nor I," said Liddy, fervently.

"And what babbies they were!" proceeded Jack. "I can see 'em now, as I first saw 'em after the wreck,—poor, thin, pinched mites, 'most sneezin' their little heads off. And then, when you took hold on 'em, Mistress Blum, with your tender care, night an' day, day an' night, always studyin' their babby naturs so partic'lar and insistin' upon their havin' their grog from one tap—"

"Mr. Jack, I'm ashamed of you! How often I've requested you not to put it that way! Milk from one cow is a common-sense rule. Every one knows that babies brought up by hand must be treated just so particular. Well, they throve on it, didn't they?"—her eyes kindling.

"Throve, my hearty?—ahem; beg parding! Throve! Why, they just bounded! I never see anything like it! The brightest, liveliest little pair o' sea-gulls I ever set eyes on; an' grow? Grow, Miss Blum? Well, throw me to the sharks if ever I see anything grow like them babbies!"

"Didn't they!" exclaimed Miss Blum, so happy in recalling her success with the "dear, darling little D's" that she quite forgot to check Mr. Jack's inelegance "Ah, many a time I used to stand and wonder at them when I should have been workin'! It

seemed to me as if they improved hourly. Why, do you know, Mr. Jack—"

A bell rang violently, as if some one were in trouble.

"I USED TO STAND AND WONDER AT THEM, WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WORKIN'." "I USED TO STAND AND WONDER AT THEM, WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WORKIN'."

"It's the master!" cried Liddy, and as she sprang up the stairs, Jack followed her rapidly and lightly on tiptoe.

But it was not Mr. George at all. When Liddy hastily opened the library door, with a "Did you ring, sir?" and Mr. Reed responded with a surprised "No, thank you!" while the visitor coolly stared at her, the good woman ran up to the second story to inquire further, and Jack went down again, whistling softly to himself.

Lydia found Donald in tribulation. He had remained up to write a letter to a friend at boarding-school, and somehow had managed to upset his inkstand. His attempts to prevent serious damage had only increased the mischief. A pale but very large ink-stain stared up at him from the wet carpet.

"De-struction!" exclaimed Lydia, as, standing at the open door, she took in the situation at a glance. "If you'd only rubbed it with blotting-paper the instant it happened," she continued, kneeling upon the floor, and rubbing vigorously with a piece that she had snatched from the table, "there wouldn't have been a trace of it by this time. Sakes!" glancing at the fine towel which Donald had recklessly used, "if you haven't ruined that too! Well," she sighed, slowly rising with a hopeless air, "nothing but sour milk can help the carpet now, and I haven't a drop in the house!"

"Never mind," said Donald; "what's a little ink-stain? You can't expect a bachelor's apartment to look like a parlor. I'll fling the rug over the place—so!"

"Not now, Master Donald. Do wait till it dries!" cried Lydia, checking him in the act, and laughing at his bewildered look. She ran down stairs with a half-reproachful "My, what a boy!"—while Donald, carefully putting a little water into the inkstand,

to make up for recent waste, went on with his letter, which, it happened, was all about affairs not immediately connected with this story.

CHAPTER X.

Which presents a Faithful Report of the Interview between Mr. Reed and his Mysterious Visitor

"Hope the young folks are at home," remarked the "long, lank man," with an off-hand air of familiarity, comfortably settling himself in an arm-chair before the smouldering fire, and thrusting out his ungainly feet as far as possible. "Would be glad to make their acquaintance."

"My nephew and niece will not be down again this evening, sir," was the stiff reply.

"Ah? Hardly past nine, too. You hold to old-fashioned customs here, I perceive. 'Early to bed,' etcetera, etcetera. And yet they're no chickens. Let me see; I'm thirty-nine. According to my reckoning, they must carry about fourteen years apiece by this time. Dorothy looks it; but the boy seems younger, in spite of his big ways. Why not sit down, George?"

"Dorothy!—George!" echoed Mr. Reed's thought, indignantly. But with a stern resolve to be patient, he seated himself.

"Look here, George, as this is likely to be a long session, let's have a little more of a blaze here. I got chilled through, waiting for that door to open. Ah, that's something like!"

Meanwhile this cordial person, carefully selecting suitable pieces from the wood-basket on the hearth, and rearranging the fire, had seized the bellows and begun to blow vigorously, nearly shutting up his long figure, like a big clasp-knife, in the act.

"Excuse my making myself at home," he continued, jauntily poking a small log into

place with the bellows, and then brushing his seedy trousers with his hand; "it was always my style. Most men that's been knocked about all their lives get shy and wary. But that's not Eben Slade. Well, when are you going to begin?"

"I am ready now, Mr. Slade."

"Pshaw! Don't Mr. Slade me. Call me Eben, plain Eben. Just as Kate did."

Mr. Reed's face flushed painfully.

"See here, George," the visitor went on, suddenly changing his sportive style to a manner that was designed to appear quite confidential and friendly,—"see here, I don't want to quarrel with you nor any other man. This here is just a chat between two almost relatives—sort of left-handed brothers, you know, and for my—"

"Slade!" exclaimed Mr. Reed, savagely, rising from his chair, but at once seating himself again, and speaking with forced calmness: "While I have allowed you this interview, I must request you to understand, now and for all time, as you have understood very plainly heretofore, that there can be no connection or implied relationship between us. For years we have been as strangers, and from this night must remain so!"

"Ex—actly!" assented Slade, cheerily—"the kind of strangers two chaps naturally would be, having the same sister—my sister by blood, yours by adoption."

Certainly this was a strong point with Mr. Slade, for he leaned forward and looked boldly into the other's face, as he finished the sentence.

"Yes," said Mr. Reed, with a solemn dignity, "precisely such strangers as the scape-grace brother of a noble girl must be to those who rescued this girl in her earliest childhood, sheltered her, taught her, honored and loved her as true brothers should, and to whom she clung with all a sister's fondness and loyalty."

"Pre—cisely!" observed Mr. Slade, with a mocking air of being deeply impressed. "Go on."

"You know the conditions under which you were adopted by Squire Hinsley, and Kate was adopted by my father, when you were left orphans, homeless, destitute—"

"Thank you. You are right. Quite destitute; I may say desperately destitute; though as I was six years of age at the time, and Kate but two, I have forgotten the painful particulars. Proceed."

"You know well," continued Mr. Reed, with quiet precision, "the agreement signed, sealed, and delivered, in the presence of witnesses, between my parents and John Hinsley on the one side, and your uncle and lawful guardian, Samuel Slade, on the other. The adoption was absolute. Kate was to have no legal claim on John Hinsley or his family; and you were to have none upon my father and his family. She was to be to my father, in all respects but birth, his own child,—his, Henry Reed's, to support and educate, sharing the fortune of his own children during his life, and receiving an equal share of his estate at his death; all of which was literally and faithfully fulfilled. And you were adopted by John Hinsley under similar conditions, excepting that they were, in fact, more favorable. He and his wife were childless, and rich in worldly goods; and they agreed to shelter and educate you—in fact, so long as you continued to obey and honor them, to treat you in all respects as their son and heir. You know the sequel. You had a pleasant home, tender care, and conscientious training; but, in spite of all, you were lazy, worthless, treacherous,—a source of constant grief and anxiety to the good pair who had hoped to find in you a son to comfort their old age—"

"Thank you, again!" exclaimed Eben Slade; "I always liked frankness."

"In time, and with good cause, they discarded you," continued Mr. Reed, without noticing the interruption, "and my father, for Kate's sake, did all in his power to win you to a decent life, but in vain. Later, in dire want and trouble, when even your worthless companions threw you off, you appealed to me, and I induced Mr. and Mrs. Hinsley to give you one more trial. But you fell into bad company again and

ran away, deserting your adopted parents just when they were beginning to trust you. Your subsequent course I do not know, nor where you have been from that day to this. I only know that, although during your boyhood you were free to visit your sister, you never showed the slightest interest in her, nor seemed to care whether she were living or dead. Even when we brought you together, you were cold and selfish in your treatment of her, moved by a jealous bitterness which even her trustful love for you could not dispel. These are disagreeable truths, but I intend that we shall understand each other."

"So I see," muttered Eben.

"Meantime," continued Mr. Reed, in a different tone, and almost as if he were talking to himself and had forgotten the presence of his visitor, "Kate grew in sweetness, in truth and nobility of nature; grew into a strong, beautiful girlhood, honored by all, and idolized by her new parents and by her two brothers Wolcott and myself. Bearing our name from her infancy, and coming with us, soon after, into this new neighborhood as our only sister, her relationship never was questioned—"

Eben Slade had been listening in sullen patience, but now he asked, quickly:

"Do they, do the youngsters—"

"My brother's children?" asked Mr. Reed.

"Well, your brother's children, we'll say; do they know that she was adopted by their grandparents, that she was not their own flesh-and-blood aunt?"

"They think of her always as the beloved sister of their father and myself, as she virtually was," replied Mr. Reed. "From the first, the custom of our household was to consider her purely as one of the family; Kate herself would have resented any other view of the case. Therefore—"

"Therefore the children have been kept in the dark about it," exclaimed Eben Slade, exultingly, as though it were his turn now to utter plain truths.

"The question has never been raised by them. They were hardly more than six weeks old when they were brought to this house; and as they grew older, they learned to know of her and love her as their Aunt Kate. If ever they ask me the question direct, I shall answer it. Till then I shall consider Kate Reed—I should say Mrs. Kate Robertson—as my sister and their aunt."

"And I likewise shall continue to consider her as my sister, with your permission," remarked Eben, with a disagreeable laugh.

"Yes, and a true sister she would have been. The letters which she wrote you during your boyhood, and which you never answered, showed her interest in your welfare."

"If she had known enough to put money in them, now," sneered Eben Slade. "I was kept down in the closest way, and a little offering of that kind might— But that's neither here nor there, and I don't see the drift of all this talk. What I want to know—what in fact I came for, and what I intend to keep coming for, is to see her will."

"Her will?" asked Mr. Reed with surprise, and in an unconscious tone of relief, for he had feared a much more serious demand.

"Yes, now you've hit it! Her adopted parents were dead. She had inherited one-third of their estate. With such a fortune as that, she must have left a will. Where is it? I want to know what became of that money, and why you withheld—"

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Reed, sorely tempted to lay hands on the fellow, and thrust him from the house. "No insolence, sir!"

Just then Lydia opened the door, and as we already know, vanished as soon as she learned her presence had not been called for.

"What I want to know"—began Eben again, in a high key.

"Not so loud," said Mr. Reed, quietly.

His visitor's voice dropped, as, thrusting out his elbows and resting a hand on each

arm of his chair, he started afresh:

"So Miss Kate Reed, as she called herself, and as you called her, never wrote me again after the old people died, eh?"

"Never" was uttered so significantly that his listener responded with a quick, "Well! what do you mean?"

"What do you mean?" echoed Slade with a darkening face. "Why didn't she ever write to me afterward?"

This was a bit of acting designed to mislead; for Kate had written again, and at that moment a yellow, worn letter, fourteen years old, was tucked snugly away in the visitor's pocket. And it was on the strength of this same letter that he hoped yet to obtain heavy favors from George Reed. Eben knew well enough what had become of the money, but, for some cunning reason of his own, chose for the present to plead ignorance.

"I will ask you a question in return," said Mr. Reed. "Why, if you took so keen an interest in your sister's fortune, did you not apply to me long ago for information?"

"Because," replied Eben Slade, boldly, "I had my reasons. I knew the money was safe; and I could bide my time."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Reed, "do you pretend to be ignorant of the fact that, two years after my sister Kate's marriage, she started with her husband and baby to return to America, absolutely penniless?"

"Then, how could they pay for their passage?" asked Eben;—but meeting Mr. Reed's eyes, he went on in an injured tone, "I know nothing but what you choose to tell me. True, you forgot to advertise for me to put in an appearance and hear of something to my advantage, but I supposed, very naturally, that coming here I should learn that Kate had left me a share of her fortune as a matter of course, and then I'd be able to go back and settle myself respectably in the far West. I may as well tell you I have a wife somewhere out there, and if I had means to buy up a splendid mining property

which can be had now for a mere song, I'd just buy it clean and settle down to a steady life."

During this speech, Eben Slade's expression of face had become so very frank and innocent that Mr. Reed's conviction began to waver. He had felt sure that Slade remembered well enough having long ago written him two letters—one asking for information concerning Kate's property, the other bemoaning the fact that it was all lost, and appealing to him for money. But now it seemed evident that these documents, still in Mr. Reed's good keeping, had quite escaped his visitor's memory.

"I don't want to go to law about this thing," continued Slade, slowly, as if to demand closer attention, "especially as it would stir up your home affairs for the public benefit; and so, as I say, I hope to settle things quietly. If I only had what ought to be coming to me, I wouldn't be here at all. It would be lonesome for my many friends in this favored spot, but I should be far away, making a man of myself, as they say in the books."

"What is all this to me?" said Mr. Reed, coldly. "You have had your answer concerning Mrs. Robertson's property. Have you any more questions to ask? It is getting late."

"Well, yes, a few. What about the wreck? No, let's hear from the date of the marriage." And Mr. Slade, inwardly surprised at Mr. Reed's patience, yet unable to forego the luxury of being as familiar and pert as possible, settled himself to listen to the story which Mr. Reed had permitted him to come and hear.

"They sailed," began that gentleman, "early in—"

Slade, leaning back in his easy-chair, waved his hand with a sprightly, "Beg pardon! Go back a little. This Robertson—"

"This Robertson," said Mr. Reed, as though it quite suited him to go back, "was a stranger to me, a friend of the lady whom my brother Wolcott afterward married. Indeed, Kate formed his acquaintance while visiting at this lady's home in New

York. He was a fascinating, handsome man, of a visionary turn, and with extravagant tastes,—but without a grain of business capacity."

"Like myself," interrupted the listener, with an ugly attempt at a smile.

"From the first I opposed the marriage," continued Mr. Reed; "but the poor girl, reasonable in everything else, would listen neither to argument nor to appeal. She was sure that in time we would know him and believe in him as she did. I would not even attend the wedding, which took place at her friend's house; though, by the terms of my father's will, and very much against our judgment, my brother Wolcott and myself, who were her guardians up to the date of her marriage, gave up to her unconditionally one-third of the family estate on her wedding-day. The result was as we had feared. They sailed immediately for England, and there, he entered into various wild speculations, and in less than two years the little fortune was utterly gone."

"Can you prove it?" interrupted Mr. Slade, suspiciously.

"Meantime," said Mr. Reed, looking at him as though he were a vicious spaniel, "my brother had married, and had gone with his bride to Europe, intending to remain two years. In a twelvemonth his wife became the mother of twins, a boy and a girl, and before two weeks had passed their father was stricken with fever, and died. News then came to me, not only of my brother's death, but also that my sister Kate had become destitute, and had been too proud to let us know of her misfortunes, and finally, that at the time the letter was written, she and her husband, with their baby daughter, then only three weeks old, were living solely on the bounty of Wolcott's widow.

"There was but one thing to be done. The widow was broken-hearted, totally unable to attend to her business affairs, and Kate's husband, Mr. Robertson, was the last man whom I could trust to do it for her. But he at least could accompany the party to America, and I sent word for both families to come as soon as they could safely

bring the three babies; and charged Mr. Robertson to leave nothing undone which could tend to their comfort and safety on the voyage.

"They sailed—" Here Mr. Reed paused, bracing himself for the remainder of the recital, which he had resolved should be complete and full. He had at hand legal papers proving that his adopted sister Kate, at the time of her marriage, had received her rightful third of his father's estate; but he did not feel in any way compelled to show these to his unpleasant visitor.

Eben Slade for an instant respected the silence. But he had a point to gain.

"Yes," said he, "but this is sudden news as to the loss of her property. I don't understand it. She must at some time have made a will. Show me documents!"

"There was no will," said Mr. Reed. "As for documents,"—here he arose, walked to a high, old-fashioned secretary, unlocked a drawer, and produced two letters,—"you may recognize these!" and he unfolded the yellow, time-worn sheets before Mr. Slade's astonished eyes—astonished, not that they were his own letters, betraying his full knowledge of his sister's loss of property, but that Mr. Reed should be able to produce them after all these fourteen years.

"See here!" said that gentleman, showing him one of the letters, and pointing to these heartless words in Slade's own handwriting: "It's terrible news; for now that Kate's money is gone, as well as herself, I know there's nothing more to look for in that quarter."

Slade scrutinized the passage with well-feigned curiosity. But he had his revenge ready.

"Seeing as you've a fancy for old letters, George, may be this 'ere will interest you."

Was it magic? Another yellow letter, very much soiled and worn, appeared to jump from Slade's pocket and open itself upon the table before Mr. Reed's eyes. He recognized Kate's clear, bright penmanship at a glance.

"Read it," said Eben, standing close, and still keeping hold of the letter.

And Mr. George read:

"In my extremity, Eben, I appeal to you. By this time you may be yourself again, turned from all evil ways. I married against my brother George's consent—and he has as good as cast me off. We are penniless; my husband seems completely broken down. He may not live long. My brother Wolcott has just died. I am too proud to go to his widow, or to my brother George. Oh, Eben, if I starve, if I die, will you take my baby-girl? Will you care for her for our dead mother's sake?"

"I'd have done my duty by that baby," said Eben Slade, slowly folding the letter, and looking with hateful triumph into Mr. Reed's pale face. "I'd have had my rights, too, and you never should have seen hide nor hair of the child if it had lived. I wish it had; she'd 'a' been handy about the house by this time, and my wife, whose temper is none of the best, would have had some one to scold besides me, as well as some one to do the chores. What have you got belonging to the child? What's hers is mine. Where's the baby-clothes,—the things that Robertson's people must have sent on afterward from England?"

"There was nothing sent on afterward," replied Mr. Reed, with a stunned look; but in an instant, he turned his eyes full upon Slade, causing the miserable creature to cringe before him:

"If you had the soul of a man, I could wish for your sake that something belonging to the lost baby had been saved; but there was nothing. My sister was not herself when she wrote that letter. She was frantic with grief and trouble, else she would have known that I would forgive and cherish her. And now, sir, if you are satisfied, I bid you good evening!"

"I am not satisfied," said Eben doggedly. "There's more to be settled yet. Where is the man who saw the shipwreck?"

Mr. Reed opened the window. Seizing something that hung there, he blew a shrill

whistle, then lowered the sash and sat down.

Neither spoke a word. Quick steps sounded upon the stairs. The door opened.

"Ay, ay, Capt'n!" said Jack. Nero stood beside him, growling.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK.

Jack and Nero entered the library, where Mr. Reed and Eben Slade sat waiting.

The entrance of the sailor-coachman had a peculiar effect upon Eben Slade. It gave him a drowsy appearance. Some men have that look when they are specially on their guard.

"Did you want me, Capt'n?" asked Jack, after standing a few seconds and receiving no orders.

"No; I want you," spoke up Eben Slade, in a bold yet uneasy tone. "Let's see if you can answer a few plain questions."

Jack glanced inquiringly at Mr. Reed; then, brightening, replied to Slade as to one not at all worthy of his respect:

"Questions? P'raps. Reel 'em out."

It was plain from the start that, if the sailor-coachman could have his own way, Eben Slade would get but little information out of him. He had despised the fellow as a "skulker," from the moment he had seen him sneaking about the grounds like a spy, as he truly suspected him to be.

"So," began the questioner grandly, as if to awe his man into a becoming deference, "you are the person who, according to Mr. Reed, rescued the twins? How—I mean in what way, by what means—did you save them?"

"Mostly by tryin', your honor," replied Jack, sullenly.

Eben Slade looked vexed, but he returned blandly:

"Undoubtedly so. But I want the details of the saving. Let us hear from the beginning."

"There warn't any beginning," growled Jack. "The first we knew about it, it was all over."

"Well, but you had some part in the wreck, hadn't you? What was it?"

"I didn't have no part in it, bless you," replied Jack, with grim humor, "it did itself."

"Clever tar!" exclaimed Mr. Slade, in mock admiration, inwardly resolved to conciliate the man, if possible, by letting him have his own way for a while. "Well, I was on the wrong tack, as you sailors would say. Now, to start fair, can you tell me what happened after the first shock of the shipwreck was over? Which of the children did you pick up first?"

"Sorry I can't oblige you," said Jack; "but you see it was night, and, besides, I'd forgot my specs."

"Have you any recollection whatever on that point, Jack?" asked Mr. Reed, though he well knew what the answer must be.

"No, sir," replied Jack, respectfully; but instantly throwing a tone of pathetic appeal into his voice: "Why, Capt'n, look a' here! It's hard seein' any diff'rence between young babbies in broad sunlight and a smooth sea; but down in the ragin' waves, an' in the night time, now? It ain't in reason."

Mr. George nodded, and Slade, after thinking a moment, asked mildly:

"Did you happen to know any of the passengers, Jack?"

"When a cove hails from the fo'castle, your honor, he ain't apt to be over intimate in the cabins; but I knew one lady aboard, if I do say it."

"Ah," exclaimed Eben Slade, "now we have it! You knew one lady aboard. Which of the ladies was this?"

"It was the stewardess, sir, and she was drownded."

"And you knew no other lady, eh?"

"Can't say, sir. Opinions differ as to knowin'; what some might call bein' acquainted another might call otherwise," said Jack, with a scrape, and a light touch at his forelock.

"Right!" pursued Eben Slade. "Now did you happen to be 'acquainted, or otherwise,' with either Mrs. Reed or Mrs. Robertson?"

"I was 'otherwise,' your honor, with every lady on the ship, exceptin' the party I told you was drownded."

"Then you didn't know Mrs. Reed and Mrs. Robertson apart, am I to understand?" asked Slade, sharply.

"Can't say, sir. Never saw 'em apart."

"Ah! They were always together, then; now we're getting it. Could you tell which was the mother of the twins?"

"Could I tell which was the mother of the twins? I didn't know half the passengers from t'other half, let alone knowin' which babby belonged to which mother. Why, man, boxin' the compass back'ard would be nothin' compared to that. All I can tell you is we was 'most all hove out into the sea, high and low together."

"I'd have you hove out again if you were my man, or make you keep a civiller tongue in your head," was Eben's savage retort. "Now, sir, will you or will you not tell me how you saved the two babies, and what became of the other one?"

"I will not," answered Jack, doggedly; then seeing that Mr. George was about to reprove him, he added, in an altered tone: "As for the savin', that's my business; but the other poor little critter must'a been put into the boat with its poor mother. I feel sartain it was."

Eben leaned forward, and asked with some gentleness:

"How did you know it was the mother?"

"Because—well, by the way the poor soul screamed for it, when they were letting her and the rest down into the boat; and the way she quieted after,—that's how I know. But it's all unsartain."

"And where was the other mother?"

Jack turned an imploring glance toward Mr. Reed. Must he go on humoring the fellow?—but Mr. Reed's expressive nod compelled him to reply:

"The other mother? I don't know where she was. One instant we men was all obeyin' orders; the next, everything was wild. It was dark night, women screamin', men shoutin', the ship sinkin', some hollerin' she was afire, and every one savin' himself an' others as best he could. Perhaps you ain't aware that folks don't gen'rally go and get out the log at such times and set down their obserwations for future ref'rence."

"Did you see Mr. Robertson?" asked Slade, loftily. "Was he with the lady in the boat?"

"Well, if ever I met the like of land lubbers! Was he with the lady in the boat? Did I see him? Why, man, it warn't a pleasure-party. Out of all that shipload, barely twenty men and wimmen ever saw the sun rise again; and Mr. Robertson,—no, nor his wife, nor the babby, nor t'other poor lady,—warn't amongst them, as the master here can tell you; and none on 'em couldn't make us any the wiser about who the babbies belonged to. An' their mothers wasn't hardly ever on deck; 'most like they was sick in their state-rooms, for they was born ladies, both of 'em; and that's all you'll learn about it, if I stand here till daylight. Now, Capt'n, shall I pilot the gentl'man out?"

"Yes, you may," cried Eben, rising so suddenly that Jack's eyes blinked, though, apart from that, not a muscle stirred. "I'll have a talk with you outside."

"Jest my idee!" said Jack, with alacrity, holding wide the door. "No place like the open sea for a collision." Again his glance questioned Mr. Reed. He was in the habit

of studying that face, very much as in times past he had studied the sky to learn the weather. But the stern answer he found there, this time, disappointed him, and "saved Eben Slade from bein' stove in an' set beam-end in less than no time," as Jack elegantly remarked to himself, while Mr. George rose and bade his visitor a stiff "good-evening."

CHAPTER XII.

A DAY IN NEW YORK.

On the next morning, when Donald and Dorothy, very much to their surprise, were advised by their uncle not to go to the Danbys' for the present, Dorry exclaimed, tragically:

"Not even to the Danbys', Uncle! Why, what have they done?"

His reply was far from satisfactory to the young lady.

"Done? Nothing at all, my girl. We'll not keep you in close confinement very long, so you must try to bear your captivity with fortitude. There are worse things, Dot, than being obliged to stay within one's own domain for a few days."

"I know it, Uncle!" said Dorry; then, resolving to be brave and cheerful, she added, with a mischievous laugh: "Wouldn't it be a good plan to tether us in the lot, with Don's pony?"

"Excellent!" replied Uncle. "But, by the way, we need not tether you quite yet. I have business in the city to-morrow, and if you and Donald say yes, it shall be a party of three."

"Oh, indeed we say yes," cried the now happy Dorry. "Shall you be there all day, Uncle?"

"All day, my dear. We shall have plenty of time for sight-seeing."

"Good! good!" and off she ran to tell the glad news to Lydia. "Only think, Liddy! Donald and I are to be all day in New York. Oh, we'll have such a nice time! and I'll buy you the prettiest white apron you ever wore in all your life!"

The new morning, skipping across the sparkling lake, climbed up to Dorry's window and wakened her with its sunny touch.

"Get up, Don," called Dorry, at the same time tapping briskly on her wall. "It's a glorious day!"

No answer. She tapped again.

A gruff, muffled sound was the only response. In a few moments, however, Dorry heard Don's window-blinds fly open with spirit, and she knew that her sisterly efforts to rouse him had not been in vain.

Uncle George was fond of giving pleasant surprises; so, when later they all three were comfortably settled in the rail-car, he remarked carelessly to Dorothy that he thought her idea an excellent one.

"What idea, please, Uncle?"

"Why, don't you remember expressing a wish that you and Don could make Dr. Lane a present before his departure?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle; but I didn't know that you heard me."

Well, the three talked the matter over quite confidentially under the friendly racket of the train, and finally it was decided to present to the good tutor a nice watch, with his name and "From his grateful pupils, Donald and Dorothy," engraved on the inside of the case. Donald had proposed a seal-ring, but Mr. Reed said heartily that while they were about it they might as well make it a watch; and Dorry, in her delight, came near jumping up and hugging her uncle before all the passengers. It is true, she afterwards expressed a wish that they could give Dr. Lane the price of the watch instead; but, finally, they agreed that a gift of money might hurt his feelings,

and that after so many months of faithful service some sort of souvenir would be a more fitting token of respect and affection. Yes, all things considered, a watch would be best.

"He hasn't any at all, you know," said Dorry, earnestly, looking from one to the other, "and it must be an awful—I mean a great—inconvenience to him; especially now, when he'll have to be taking medicines every two hours or so, poor man."

Donald smiled; the remark was so like Dorry! But he looked into her grave yet bright young face, with his heart brimful of love for her.

The day in town passed off pleasantly indeed. As Uncle George's business took him to a banker's in Wall Street, the D's enjoyed a walk through that wonderful thoroughfare, where fortunes are said to come and go in an hour, and where every one, in every crowded room of every crowded building, and on almost every foot of the crowded sidewalk, thinks, speaks, and breathes, "Money, money, money!" from morning till night. But Uncle's business was soon despatched; the anxious crowds and the "clerks in cages," as Dorry called the busy workers in the banks, were left behind. Then there were fresh sights to be seen, purchases to be made, and above all, the watch to be selected,—to say nothing of a grand luncheon at Delmonico's, where, under their busy appetites, dainties with Italian and French names became purely American in an incredibly short space of time.

TRINITY CHURCH AND THE HEAD OF WALL STREET. TRINITY CHURCH AND THE HEAD OF WALL STREET.

Uncle George delighted in the pleasure of the D's. The more questions they asked, the better he liked it, and the more sure he became that his Don and Dot were the brightest, most intelligent pair of young folk under the sun. In fact, he seemed to enjoy the holiday as heartily as they did, excepting when Dorothy, toward the latter part of the afternoon, surprised him with a blank refusal to go nearly three hundred feet above the street.

You shall hear all about it:

They were homeward bound,—that is to say, they were on their way to the down-town ferry-boat that would carry them to the railroad station,—when Donald suddenly proposed that they should stay over till a later train.

"And suppose we walk on down to Wall Street, Uncle," he continued, "and go into Trinity Church. There's a magnificent view from the spire."

"Yes," was his uncle's rather frightened comment. "But the spire is more than two hundred and eighty feet high. What are you going to do about that?"

"Why, climb up, sir, of course. You know there's a good stairway nearly to the top, perhaps all the way. Anyhow, we can get up there, I know; and Ed Tyler says the view is perfectly stupendous."

"So I've heard," said Uncle, half ready to yield; "and the climb is stupendous too."

"Yes, but you can look down and see the city, and the harbor, and all the shipping, and the East River, and everything. There's an hour to spare yet. We can take it easy. What say you, Uncle?"

"Well, I say yes," said Uncle, with forced heartiness, for he dearly loved to oblige the twins.

Then they turned to Dorry, though it seemed hardly necessary; she always was ready for an adventure. To their surprise, she responded emphatically:

"And I say, please let me wait somewhere till Uncle and you come down again. I don't care to go up."

"Why, Dot, are you tired?" asked her uncle, kindly.

"Oh, no, Uncle, not a bit. But whenever I stand on a high place I always feel just as if I must jump off. Of course, I wouldn't jump, you know, but I don't wish to have the feeling. It's so disagreeable."

"I should think as much," said Donald; but Mr. Reed walked on toward the ferry,

silently, with compressed lips and a flushed countenance; he did not even mention the steeple project again.

Meantime the noble old church on Broadway stood calmly overlooking the bustle and hurry of Wall Street, where the "money, money, money" chorus goes on day after day, ceasing only on Sundays and holidays, and when the clustering stars shed their light upon the spire.

"Uncle thinks I'm a goose to have such silly notions," pondered Dorry, taking very long steps so as to keep up with her companions, who, by the way, were taking very short steps to keep pace with Dorry. "But I can't help my feelings. It really is true. I hate to stand on high places, like roofs and precipices." Finally, she spoke:

"Uncle George, didn't you ever hear of other persons having that feeling?"

"What feeling, Dorothy?"

How sternly Mr. Reed said it! Surely he could not blame the poor girl for asking so natural a question as that? No. But the incident had saddened him strangely, and he was unconscious of the severity of his tone, until Dorothy's hesitating manner changed the current of his thoughts.

"Why—why, the—" she began, adding: "Oh, it doesn't matter, Uncle. I suppose I am foolish to ask such questions. But Don is ever so much steadier-headed than I am—aren't you, Don? I do believe he'd like to stand on the top of that telegraph-pole, if he could get there."

"There's no 'if' about that," said Donald, jokingly. "It's a mere question of time. Provided a fellow can climb a pole at all, a little more height makes no difference. Why, if I hadn't on my crack suit, I'd ask you and Uncle to wait and let me have a try at it."

"Oho!" laughed Dorry: "'crack' suit is slang; so is 'have a try'. Five cents apiece. That's ten cents fine for you, sir! Well, we ought to be thankful he hasn't on his old clothes, Uncle! Ahem! The 'crack' would be in the head then, instead of the suit, I'm

afraid."

"Poor joke!" retorted Don; "ten cents fine for you, young lady."

Thus the party walked on, the light-hearted D's bantering each other with many laughing sallies, feeling confident that their uncle enjoyed it exceedingly.

And so he did; yet all the while he was thinking:

"Strange! Every day something new—something that reminds me of poor Kate. Now it's this dread of standing on high places; what will it be to-morrow? And yet, as the child herself intimates, many other persons have the same feeling. Now I think upon it, it's the commonest thing in the world."

CHAPTER XIII.

DONALD AND DOROTHY ENTERTAIN FANDY.

In a few days after the visit to town, Mr. Reed received a letter, very dingy on the outside and very remarkable within. It was brought by one of the little Danby boys, and it read as follows:

"George Reed Esquir.

"Dear Sir: I take my pen to say that the border left yesterday without notis owin us fur the hole time. He hadent a portmanter nor any luggage except paper collars, which enabeled him to go off without suspition. A tellygram which he forgot and my wife afterward pikt it up said for him to go right to Pensivania old Squir Hinson was dying. It was from a party caling himself Janson K. The border as I aught to enform you has told my children inclooding Francis Ferdinand who bares this letter a cockanbull story about bein related to your honered self by witch we know he was an imposture. I write insted of calling at the house as I am laim from cuttin my foot with an ax yesterday and it dont apear quite cuncistunt to send you a verble message.

"Yours respecfully, "Erasmus Danby.

"Saturday."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Reed, drawing a deep sigh of relief as he folded the missive. Then, conscience-smitten at his indifference to the Danby interests, and resolved that, in the end, Mr. Danby should be no loser by "the boarder," he looked toward Master Danby. That young gentleman, dressed in a made-over Sunday suit, still stood hat in hand in the library doorway.

"Is your father badly hurt, my little man?"

"No, sir," repeated Fandy, rapidly, and with a solemn countenance. "His thick boot saved him. The axe fell and cut through down to his skin, and it bled a sight, and 'Mandy 'most fainted, and Ma bandaged it up so tight he hollered a bad word."

"What?"

"Yes, sir. He said 'blazes!' And Ma said for him not to forget hisself if he was hurt, and he said he wouldn't again. And Ma devised him, as Sunday was comin' so soon, to take Saturday, and so give his foot two days to heal, and he's doin' it."

"But 'blazes' isn't a very, very bad word, is it?"

"No, sir, not very wicketly bad. But Pa and Ben mean it instead of swearin' words, and Ma's breaking them of it. Ma's very partic'lar."

"That's right," said Mr. Reed. "So, Master Francis Ferdinand," referring to the letter, "the boarder told you that he was a relation of mine, did he?"

"Yes, sir, but we knew better. He was a bad lot, sir."

"A very bad lot," returned Mr. Reed, much amused.

"Ma said I could stay, sir, if I was asked."

"Very well," said Mr. Reed, smiling down upon the little midget. "You probably will find Donald and Dorothy in the garret."

THE GARRET BEFORE FANDY'S ARRIVAL. THE GARRET BEFORE FANDY'S ARRIVAL.

"Yes, sir!" and off went Fandy with nimble dignity through the hall; then soberly, but still lightly, up the stairs to the landing at the first turn; then rapidly and somewhat noisily across the great square hall on the second story, to the door of the enclosed stair-way, and, finally, with a shrill "whoop!" leaping up two steps at a time, he found himself in the open garret, in the presence of—the family cat!

No Donald or Dorothy was to be seen. Only the cat; and she glared at him with green eyes. Everything up there was as still as death; grim shadows lurked in the recesses and far corners; the window was shaded by some limp garments hanging near it, and now stirring drearily Fandy could chase angry cattle and frighten dogs away from his little sisters, but lonely garrets were quite another matter. Almost any dreadful object could stalk out from behind things in a lonely garret! The boy looked about him in an awe-struck way for an instant, then tore, at break-neck speed, down the stairs, into the broad hall, where Donald, armed like a knight, or so it seemed to the child, met him with a hearty, "Ho, is that you, Fandy Danby? Thought I heard somebody falling. Come right into my room. Dorry and I are practising."

"Praxin' what?" panted the relieved Fandy, hurrying in as he spoke, and looking about him with a delighted, "Oh my!"

Dorothy was a pretty girl at any time, but she certainly looked very pretty indeed as she turned toward the visitor—her bright hair tumbled, her face flushed with exercise, her eyes sparkling merrily. She held a fencing-mask in one hand, and a foil, lightly upraised, in the other.

"Oh, Fandy!" she said, "you are just the one we want. Don is teaching me to fence, and I can't half see how he does it, because I have to wear the mask. Here, let me put it on you—that's a good boy," and she suited the action to the word, laughing at the astonished little face which Fandy displayed through the wire network.

"Now, take the foil!—No, no. In your right hand, so." Then, addressing Donald, she added: "Now he's ready! Fall to, young man!"

"Yes! fall to-o!" shouted Fandy, striking an attitude and catching the spirit of the moment, like the quick little fellow he was. "Fall to-o!"

Donald laughingly parried the small child's valiant but unscientific thrusts, while Dorry looked on in great satisfaction, sure that she now could "catch the idea" perfectly.

No armed chieftain at the head of his clan ever appeared more desperately valiant than Fandy on this occasion.

Fortunately cats can tell no tales.

A very active youngster of eight, with a long foil in his strong little hand, striking right and left regardless of consequences, and leaping from the ground when making a thrust at his opponent's heart, or savagely attempting to rival the hero of Chevy Chase who struck off his enemy's legs, is no mean foe. Donald was a capital fencer; and, well skilled in the tricks of the art, he had a parry for every known thrust. But Fandy's thrusts were unknown. Nothing more original or unexpected could be conceived; and every time Dorry cried "foul!" he redoubled his strokes, taking the word as a sort of applause. For a while, Donald laughed so much that he scarcely could defend himself; but, whenever he found that he was growing short of breath, he would be in earnest just long enough to astonish his belligerent foe. At the moment when that lively young duellist flattered himself that he was doing wonders, and pressing the enemy hard, Donald would stop laughing for a second, make a single sudden pass toward Fandy, with a quick turn of his wrist, and, presto! the eight-year-old's foil, much to his amazement, would leave his hand as if by magic, and go spinning across the floor. But Fandy, utterly unconscious that this unaccountable accident was a stroke of art on Donald's part, was not in the least disconcerted by it.

Fandy's first fencing-match. Fandy's first fencing-match.

"Hello!" he would shout, nothing daunted, "I've dropped my soword! Wait a minute.

Don't hit me yet!" And then, picking up his weapon, he would renew the attack with all his little might.

At last, Donald, wearying of the sport, relieved himself of his mask and consulted his watch, a massive but trusty silver affair, which had been worn by his father when a boy.

Was Fandy tired? Not a bit. Practice had fired his soul. "Come on, Dorothy!" he cried. "Pull to-o! I mean, fall to-o!"

But Dorry thanked him and declined; whereat a thought struck the young champion. His expression grew fierce and resolute as, seizing the foil with a sterner grip, he turned to Donald.

"There's a cat up stairs. I guess it's a wild-cat. D' YOU WANT IT KILLED?"

"Oh, you little monster!" cried Dorry, rushing to the door and standing with her back against it. "Would you do such a thing as that?"

"I would to d'fend myself," said Fandy, stoutly. "Don't hunters kill tigers?"

"But this isn't a tiger, nor even a wild-cat. It's tame. It's our Nan!"

"Let him go try," spoke up Donald. "He'll get the worst of it."

"Indeed I'll not let him try, either," cried Dorry, still holding her position.

But Fandy already was beginning to cool down. Second thoughts came to his rescue.

"I don't believe in hurtin' tame animals," said he. "It's naughty," and the foil and mask were laid carefully upon the table.

"Who taught you to fight with these things?" he asked Donald in an off-hand way, as though he and Don were about equal in skill, with the great difference that his own power came to him by nature, while Donald's undoubtedly was the result of severe teaching.

"Professor Valerio."

"Oh, did he? I've heard 'Manda talk about him. She says he's

the—the—somethingest man in the village. I forget now what she called him. What's those things?" Here the visitor pointed to Don's boxing-gloves.

At any other time Don would have taken them from the wall and explained their use, but it was nearly three o'clock, and this was his fencing-lesson day. So he merely said, "They're boxing-gloves."

"Do you wear 'em?" asked Fandy, looking in a puzzled way, first at the huge things, then at Donald's hands, as if comparing the sizes.

"Yes, when I'm boxing," returned Donald.

"What will you do about your fencing-lesson, Don?" said Dorry. "Do you think Uncle will let you go? We're prisoners, you know."

"Of course he will," replied Donald, taking his hat (he had a mask and foil at the professor's) and preparing to start. "I'm to call for Ed Tyler at three. We'll have rare times to-day; two fellows from town are to be there,—prime fencers, both of them,—and we are to have a fencing match."

THE FENCING-MASTER. THE FENCING-MASTER.

"You'll win," said Dorry. "You always do. Ed Tyler says you are the finest fencer he ever saw, excepting Professor Valerio, and he says you beat even the professor sometimes."

"Nonsense!" said Donald, severely, though his face betrayed his pleasure. "Ed Tyler himself's a match for any one."

"What a mutual-admiration society you two are!"

Dorry said this so good-naturedly that Donald could not resent it, and his good-nature made her add:

"Well, I don't care. You're both splendid, if I do say it; and, oh, isn't the professor handsome! He's so straight and tall. Uncle says he's a standing argument against round shoulders."

Dorry had taken a photograph from the table, and had been talking partly to it and partly to Donald. As she laid the picture down again, Fandy stepped up to take a look.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It's Professor Valerio, Don's fencing-master."

"Whew! See his soword!" exclaimed the small boy, looking at the picture in great admiration. "My, wouldn't I like to fight him!"

"There goes Don," said Dorothy, who by this time was looking out of the window; "Uncle must have consented."

"Consented!" echoed Fandy. "Why, can't Donald go out 'thout askin'? Ben can, and Dan David, too; so can 'Mandy and——Hello, Charity, I'm a-comin'."

This last remark was shouted through the open window, where Dorothy stood waving her hand at the baby.

"Can you come up, Charity?" she cried out.

"No, thank you. Mother said I must hurry back. She wants Fandy."

CHAPTER XIV.

UNCLE GEORGE'S HAPPY THOUGHT.

Dr. Lane, made proud and happy by the affection of his bright young pupils, as well as by their beautiful gift, bade farewell to Mr. Reed and the D's, with repeated promises to write in due time and tell them how he liked the sunny South, and how it fared with him.

"I shall like it, I know," he assured them, "and the climate will make me strong and well. Good-by once more, for you see" (here he made a playful show of consulting his watch as he took it proudly from his vest-pocket) "it is precisely six and

three-quarter minutes after three, and I must catch the 4.20 train to town. Good-by." But there were more good-byes to come; for Jack had brought the light top-wagon to the door, and Donald and Dorothy insisted upon driving with him and Dr. Lane to the station.

Upon their return, they found their uncle and Liddy engaged in consultation.

The evening came on with change of wind, a dull gray sky and all the unwelcome signs of a long storm.

"I have been thinking," remarked Mr. Reed, while he and the D's were waiting for supper, "that it would be a good idea to have a little fun between times. What say you, my dears?"

The dears looked at each other, and Don asked, "Between what times, Uncle?"

"Why, between the going of our good friend Dr. Lane and the coming of that awful, but as yet unknown personage, the new tutor."

"Oh, yes, Uncle!" cried Dorothy, clapping her hands, "I'm ready for anything. But then," she added, half-playfully, "you forget we're prisoners, like the princes in the Tower!"

"Not prisoners at all now," he exclaimed, "unless the storm should prove your jailer. Circumstances have changed; and you are free as air."

"Let me see, what shall we have," he went on, taking no notice of the D's' surprise at this happy turn of affairs, and speaking slowly and deliberately—just as if he had not settled that matter with Liddy some days ago!—"Let me see. What shall it be? Ah, I have a happy thought! We'll try a house-picnic!"

"What's that, Uncle?" asked Dorry, half-suspiciously.

"You don't know what a house-picnic is!" exclaimed Uncle George with pretended astonishment. "Well, upon my word!"

It did not occur to him to mention that the idea of a house-picnic was purely an

invention of his own; nor did he suspect that it was one which could have found favor only in the brain of a doting and rich bachelor uncle.

"Now, Uncle, do—don't!" coaxed Dorry; and Don echoed, laughingly: "Yes, Uncle, do—don't!" But he was as eager as she to hear more.

"Why, my dears, a house-picnic means this: It means the whole house thrown open from ten in the morning till ten at night. It means fun in the garret, music and games in the parlor, story-telling in odd corners, candy-pulling in the kitchen, sliding-curtains, tinkling bells, and funny performances in the library; it means almost any right thing within bounds that you and about thirty other youngsters choose to make it, with the house thrown open to you for the day."

"No out-of-doors at all?" asked Donald, doubtfully, but with sparkling eyes.

"Oh, yes, a run or two when you wish, for fresh air's sake; but from present appearances, there'll be drizzling days all the week, I suspect, and that will make your house-picnic only the pleasanter."

"So it will! How splendid!" cried Dorry. "Jack can take the big covered wagon and go for the company, rain or not, while Don and you and I plan the fun. We'll try all sorts of queer out-of-the-way things. Good for the house-picnic!"

"Good for the house-picnic!" shouted Donald, becoming almost as enthusiastic as Dorry.

"Oh, Uncle," she went on, "you are too lovely! How did you happen to think of it?"

"Well, you see," said Uncle, with the glow-look, as Liddy called it, coming to his face, "I thought my poor princes in the Tower had been rather good and patient under the persecutions of their cruel Uncle Gloucester, and so Liddy and I decided they should have a little frolic by way of a change."

"Has he gone from the neighborhood, I wonder?" thought Donald (strange to say, neither he nor Dorry had known that the Danbys' boarder and the "long, lank man"

were the same), but he said aloud: "We're ever so glad to hear it, Uncle. Now, whom shall we invite?"

"Oh, do hear that 'whom'!" exclaimed Dorry, in well-feigned disgust, while Don went on gayly:

"Let's have plenty of girls this time. Don't you say so, Dorry?"

"Oh, yes, let's have fifteen girls and fifteen boys. Let's invite all the Danbys; may we, Uncle? It would be such a treat to them; you know they never have an opportunity to go to a party."

"Just as you please, my girl; but will not ten of them be rather a large proportion out of thirty?"

"Oh, no, Uncle dear. They can't all come—not the very littlest ones, any way. At any rate, if Don's willing, I'd like to ask them."

"Agreed!" assented Don.

"The ayes have it!" said Uncle George. "Now let us go to supper."

Dorry ran on ahead, so as to have a word with Liddy on the delightful subject of house-picnics; but Don, lingering, startled his uncle with a whispered:

"I say, Uncle, has Jack thrashed that fellow?"

"I have heard nothing to that effect," was the reply. "The man was called away suddenly."

"Oh," said Donald, in a disappointed tone, "I hoped you had given him his walking papers."

"I have, perhaps," returned Mr. Reed, smiling gravely, "but not in the way you supposed."

Don looked up, eagerly, hoping to hear more, but his uncle, without another word, led the way into the supper-room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOUSE-PICNIC.

The house-picnic proved a complete success. In the first place, not only the original thirty came, but other boys and girls whose names had been added to the list; secondly, a lovely snow-storm, one of the bright, dry kind, had come during the night, and evidently had come to stay; thirdly, the guests made it a frolic from the start, and every sleigh-load driven to the door by Jack came in singing and cheering; fourthly, Uncle George, as Dorry said, was "splendid," Jack was "good as gold," and Liddy was "too lovely for anything;" fifthly, the house from top to bottom was bright, home-like, and beautiful; and lastly, hardly anything was broken, not a single child was killed, and the house wasn't burned to the ground,—all of which Liddy and Jack agreed was "simply mirac'l'us!"

Such a wonderful day as that is hard to describe. Imagine the scene. Great square halls on the first and second floors; broad stair-ways; fine open rooms; pleasant fires; beautiful flowers; boys and girls flitting, gathering everywhere, from garret to kitchen,—now scattered, now crowded, now listening to stories, now running, now hiding, now gazing at an impromptu "performance," now sitting in a demure circle, with a napkin on every lap,—you know why,—now playing games, now having a race on the broad freshly-swept piazza, that extended along every side of the mansion, now giving three cheers for Uncle George, and then beginning all over again. It lasted more than ten hours, yet nobody was tired, (until the next day!) and all the guests declared, in one way or another, that it was the very nicest time they ever had known in their lives. Donald and Dorothy were delightful as host and hostess. They enjoyed everything, were on the alert for every one's pleasure, and by their good-humor, courtesy, and graceful manners, unconsciously set an example to all the picnickers. Uncle George,—ah, now I know what to say! You have known

him heretofore as a man of grave responsibility,—troubled with an anxiety which to you, perhaps, has been uncomfortably mysterious. But Uncle George, at the house-picnic, was quite a different man. He threw care to the winds, proposed games, invented capital "forfeits," sprang surprises upon the guests, laughed and played like a splendid boy, and, better yet, wore his "glow-look" nearly all the time.

"How handsome Mr. Reed is!" thought more than one young guest. "They say his brother Wolcott was handsomer still. No wonder Don and Dorry are so good-looking. Ho! what are we going to do now?"

Then would follow a merry, well-ordered rush to this or that part of the house, according to the special attraction of the moment. But, really, it is quite impossible for any one to describe the day properly. The only way is to give you a few notes from observations taken on the spot.

We'll begin with the kitchen—Norah's kingdom. There she stands, a queen in a calico gown. But Dorothy has the sceptre. It is a big wooden spoon. She and a dozen other girls are crowding about the big cooking-stove. All have large towels pinned over their dresses, after the fashion of Topsy's apron—close to the throat, tight around the skirt, and the arms left free. What in the world are they making? What but molasses candy! It is nearly done. It ought to be, after the boiling and the stirring that the girls in turn have given it. Finally, some one holds forward a pan of cold water. Dorothy, carefully dipping out a spoonful of the fragrant syrup, drops it into the water. It sizzes; it stiffens—hurrah! the candy is ready to be taken from the fire.

Cool enough now. "Come, boys! Come, girls!" cries Uncle.

"Here, put these on,—every one of you!" cries Liddy, her arms loaded with the coarse towel-aprons which she—knowing soul!—had specially prepared for the occasion. "Sakes! be careful! Don't burn yourselves!"

But who hears? They are pulling the candy already. Boys and girls in pairs, with hands daintily washed and greased, are taking soft lumps of the cooling confection,

drawing them out into long, shining ribbons, doubling and drawing them out again until they get lighter and lighter in color, and finally, the beautiful golden strands are declared ready for more artistic handling. Then follow royal fun and rivalry, each young confectioner trying to outdo the other. Some twist the soft candy into sticks and lay them aside to cool; some braid it charmingly; others make little walking-canes; others cut it into caramels,—one and all indulging meantime in flavorsome morsels, and finally shouting with delight over Donald's masterpiece, which he has placed upon the table for inspection, and which he calls

THE MAID OF ORLEANS! THE MAID OF ORLEANS!

"Ha! ha!" shouts Daniel Danby. "Pretty good! But supposing it hadn't been made of Orleans! Guess there are other kinds of molasses." But that sarcastic and well-informed young gentleman is hardly heard in the laughing commotion.

Ah, what a washing of hands! For the fun of the thing, Uncle George has caused warm water to be put into a great tub, which stands upon the wash-bench, and now the candy-pullers take their turn in a close ring about it, all frantically feeling and struggling for the soap which repeatedly bobs to the surface, only to be dashed out of sight again by some desperate little hand.

While this merry crowd of cooks and pullers is working and frolicking in the kitchen, under Norah's watchful eye, a few of the company may be found in other parts of the old mansion, amusing themselves in their own fashion. Some of the very young guests are in the upper rooms playing childish games; and one or two older ones, who, as it happens, see quite enough of the kitchen in their own homes, prefer to enjoy themselves now in the finer apartments.

THE CANDY-PULLING. THE CANDY-PULLING.

We'll look into Mr. Reed's study, the door of which stands slightly ajar. Amanda Danby is there alone. She is sitting in the master's big chair with a volume of poems in her hand—forgetting the party, forgetting that she has laboriously smoothed her

curly hair for the occasion, forgetting that she is wearing her precious drab merino—her mother's wedding gown—now made over for the fourth time, forgetting the new collar and pretty blue bow at her throat (Dorry's gifts), conscious only that

"The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up, He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup. She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh, With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye. He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,— 'Now tread we a measure!' said young Lochinvar."

Amanda smiles to herself as she turns the leaf, feeling that, after all, there is a great deal of life and spirit in the world, and that dish-pans, pots, and kettles are mere phantoms of the imagination. The verse runs on so smoothly too. She could write whole books of poetry herself if she only had gone somewhere and improved herself. Then, as she reads on, the great, comfortable arm-chair, the soft carpet, the well-filled book-shelves and the subdued light, give her a vague, delightful sense of having improved herself already.

Let us look into the other rooms. No one in the parlor; the back sitting-room, too, is deserted; the dining-room is locked for awhile; but high up on the garret-stairs sit three wide-eyed, open-mouthed youngsters listening to Ben Buster.

"True?" he is saying, "of course it's true; I knew the boy myself—Joe Gunther, smart fellow. He's on a ranch, now, out in Californy. I'll tell you how it was; he was living with a settler named Brown, 'way off in Utah. Brown had three men besides Joe to help him,—sort of partnership, I b'lieve, raising cattle. It was a desolate place, and the Indians were troublesome. Brown nor his men never went outside the door without a loaded gun, and they kept several more in the hut, always loaded, ready for an attack. One morning, long before daylight, Joe heard a rumpus. He was in bed,—none of your cots, but a bunk, like a shelf, fastened to the inside of the stockade walls."

"What do you mean by stockade walls?" asks one of the listeners.

"Why, walls made out of logs standing upright. It was only a hut, you see; no laths, nor plaster, nor any such nonsense. Well, Joe knew by what he heard that old man Brown was inside, firing from the door at the Indians; didn't know where the other two were,—killed, may be,—and so Joe gets up on his knees and looks through a crevice of the stockade wall, and sees the chief crawling stealthily around the hut to get in at the only window and attack the old man! A loaded gun—double barrel—was hanging on the wall right near Joe. What did he do but take it, put the muzzle through the chink, and let go at the fellow; discharged both barrels clean at him. 'You will, will you?' he yelled out, as the Indian fell; and I declare, if the other Indians weren't so scared and mystified by the sudden voice, and the chief killed, out of the very walls, as it seemed to them, that they turned and scampered. Joe rushed out to old man Brown, and there he was, with his two partners, at the door, not one of the three scratched, and the chief was lying there by the stockade wall, just as he fell.

"Joe didn't care to go near him, for by this time he began to feel rather weak in the joints. But the most wonderful part of all is to come yet. That Indian chief was only wounded, after all. They thought he was killed; and while the three men and Joe were in the hut, planning what they should do next,—for they were sure the redskins would come back in greater force to get the body of their chief,—I declare if that old Indian didn't up and go about his business. Brown and Joe and all of them searched the forest well, that day and the next, but they never found him. Joe had made his mark though, and he was in more than one scrimmage with the Indians after that."

"It's a shame to kill Indians!" at last exclaims one of Ben's awe-stricken listeners. "My father says they've been imposed upon and abused by the white folks. He says we ought to teach them instead of killing them."

"That's so," says another of the trio, nodding emphatically. "My father says so too."

"Oh, does he?" returns Ben Buster, in mild wrath, "who doesn't? But this was a fair fight. What are you going to do when they're doin' the killing, eh? Open your book and hear them a spelling lesson? Guess not. Ask 'em questions in 'rithmetic when they're helping themselves to your scalp? Oh, of course."

All of which would be very impressive and very convincing to the young hearers, did not a small boy, named Jedediah Treadwell, at this moment come suddenly rushing across the hall, shouting—

"Ho! Candy! I smell merlasses candy. They're making it. Come on."

And down they run—all but Ben, who prefers to go through the house in search of adventures. He opens a door, sees a small ring of prettily dressed little girls and boys, hand in hand, singing:

"Oats, pease, beans, and barley grows! You nor I nor nobody knows Where, oats, pease, beans, and barley grows."

He beats a hasty retreat. Signs of commotion come from Mr. Reed's room on the other side of the hall; but Ben, hearing Fandy's familiar voice there, turns aside and goes slowly down stairs, feeling rather bored since there is no one to listen to his stories.

Soon he is in the kitchen, laughing with the rest at Donald's expressive masterpiece, but secretly resolving never to go into company again until he can have a frock-coat. The blue cloth jacket and trousers, bought with his last year's savings, somehow do not seem to him as fine as they did when he put them on earlier in the day; though he is an independent youth, not easily made dissatisfied with his appearance. For the first time in his life he rather envies Daniel David and Ellen Elizabeth, who look remarkably well on this occasion, being dressed in clothes that once were Donald's and Dorothy's. This is no unusual effect. For Lydia, with Mr. Reed's hearty sanction, has long been in the habit of slyly handing garments to Mrs. Danby, with the flattering assurance that as the dear D's grow like weeds, it will be an act of real

kindness if Mrs. Danby will turn the clothes to good account; and Mrs. Danby always has complied.

Talking of the Danbys, perhaps this is a fitting time to explain the commotion that Ben heard in Mr. Reed's sleeping-room.

A moment before, and in the midst of certain lively planning, a middle-sized boy, named Thomas Budd, had strayed from the candy-pulling scene and appeared at the threshold of this apartment, where Charity Danby, little Isabella Danby, Fandy, and three or four others were assembled.

"All right!" shouted Fandy, excitedly, as Master Budd entered; "come along, Tommy Budd, you can play too. Now Charity Cora, look out for Is'bella! We're going to have my new game."

"Oh, please do, Cora! quick!" cried little Helen Danby. "Fandy's made it up all hisself, and he's goin' to teach it to us."

"That's right," said Fandy, approvingly, as Charity Cora hastily lifted her three-year-old sister from the floor; "take her 'way off. It's a awful dang'rous game. She might get killed!"

Very naturally, Cora, with little Isabel in her arms, stood near the door to see what was going to happen.

"Now, chil'ren," cried Fandy, "take your places all over. Pete, you're a lion; Sammy, you're a big wolf; Helen, you're a wild cat; Gory, you're a elephant; and Tommy, you'll have to be,—let's see, what other animal is there? Oh! yes; you must be a kangaroo! and I'm a great big hunter-man, with a gun an' a soword!"

So saying, the great big hunter-man took a small brass-handled shovel and poker from the brass stand by the open fireplace, and struck an attitude.

"Now, chil'ren, you must all go 'round, a-howling and going on like what you all are, and I'll pounce on you fass as I can, an' kill you. When I shoot, you must fall right

down; and when I chop off your heads with my big soword, you must roar awful."

"Hah! Where's the game in that?" cried Gory, scornfully.

"Why—let's see," said Fandy, rather puzzled. "Oh! yes; the one I kill first is it—that's the game."

"All right," exclaimed Tommy Budd, "and then that one takes the gun and sword and hunts. That's first-rate. Let's begin."

But Fandy objected to this.

"No, no," he said, "I've got to do all the killin', 'coz it's my game. I'll tell you what! The ones that gets killed are dead animals; and all the dead animals can go under the bed!"

"That'll do," they shouted; and the game began. Such roaring and baying, growling and shouting, were never heard in human habitation before.

Baby Isabel, who must have been born to be a lion-tamer, looked on in great glee; and Cora tried not to feel frightened.

Fandy made a capital hunter; he shot right and left, and sawed off the heads of the slain like a good fellow, until at last there were four dead animals under the bed, all lying curled up just as still as mice.

There was only one more animal to kill, and that was Tom, the kangaroo.

Bang! went Fandy's gun—the shovel end pressed in style against his shoulder. Bang!

But the kangaroo didn't fall.

Fandy took more careful aim, and fired again.

Bang!

Still the kangaroo hopped about, as frisky as ever.

"Bang! I tell you! Don't you hear me say 'bang'? Why don't you go dead?"

"You haven't hit me yet," retorted the kangaroo, taking wonderful leaps. "Look out! Pretty soon I'll jump on you and smash you!"

"No, you won't, neither!" cries the hunter, growing very red and taking fresh aim.

Bang!

Unlucky shot! The kangaroo was on him in an instant.

"Now, sir," growls the kangaroo, butting the overthrown hunter with his head, "what's the next part of this game? Who beats?"

"I do!" gasped Fandy. "Get off me."

This was too much for the dead animals under the bed. They began to laugh.

Cora laughed as heartily as any, and so did half a dozen big boys and girls who by this time had assembled in the open doorway.

"Stop laughin'," shouted Fandy, still struggling under the kangaroo, "an' all you under the bed come out. Don't you know when all the animals 'cept one is killed, that's the end of the game? Let's play somethin' else."

"Where'd you get that?" he added, as soon as he was a free man,—partly to change the subject, and partly because a boy whom he knew suddenly appeared eating a piece of molasses candy.

"Down stairs. We've been making loads of it," was the muffled reply.

A hint was enough. It is hardly necessary to say that in a twinkling, lion, tiger, wild cat, wolf, elephant, and hunter and kangaroo had joined the crowd in the kitchen, and were feasting ecstatically upon caramels and molasses sticks.

"Whatever shall I do, Mr. George, sir," said the distressed Lydia, "to stop the eating? They'll be sick, sir, every mother's child of them, if they keep on."

"Tell them to wash their hands and faces and come to the parlor. We'll have the picture-gallery game now," said Mr. Reed.

Accordingly, scouts were sent through the house to bring the company together.

Meantime, Sailor Jack, in his best clothes, was hard at work clearing the decks for action, as he said.

All were in the parlor and seated, at last. That is, all excepting Uncle George and eight or ten, who hardly could be missed from such a roomful. Jack had arranged the chairs in several long rows, facing the great sliding-doors that separated the parlor from the back sitting-room; and on these were seated subdued and expectant boys and girls, all gazing at the closed doors, while the youngest of the guests sat on the floor in front of the chairs, half-frightened, half-delighted at the prospect of "seeing something."

By this time the feathery snow-storm had ceased, and a flood of afternoon sunlight was pouring into the large room. Whispered comments upon the change of weather arose, coupled with remarks that there would be coasting next day, anyhow; then came other remarks, and light laughter, with occasional clapping of hands, when suddenly Mr. Reed appeared at the side entrance which led into the hall:

"YOUNG LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! You are now to see a live picture-gallery, and we ask for your criticism upon the paintings, begging you to be merciful in your remarks, and not to be too funny while you try to make the pictures laugh. For, you must know, if any picture in our gallery is guilty of even a smile, it must instantly pop out of sight, leaving its frame empty. When all the frames are thus deserted, we shall expect some of you to fill them again. In fact, each picture in the present exhibition is to select his or her substitute for the next time."

At this, some of the boys looked troubled, and some of the girls tittered; but one and all clapped, in hearty applause of Mr. Reed's little speech.

Then came the tinkle of a bell to announce that all was ready; Ed Tyler and Donald pushed back the sliding doors, and there, in the great square doorway, was the picture-gallery. To be strictly correct, we should call this gallery a gray wall, apparently hung from top to bottom with fine portraits in broad gilt frames, and all

looking wonderfully life-like and unnatural; for when a live portrait must not laugh, how can it feel at ease?

At first the spectators were too surprised to speak. Then came a murmur of admiration, with cries of "Good, good!" from the boys and "How lovely!" from the girls; while Liddy, by the parlor door, clasped her hands in silent rapture at the beautiful show.

Beautiful, indeed, it was. All the portraits were as fresh and glowing as though they had been "painted yesterday." The drawing was perfect, the coloring exquisite, and so well were the pictures lighted, so cunningly provided with dark backgrounds, that they seemed really to be paintings. Dorry, in a prim Quaker cap and muslin neckerchief, was prettier than ever. Josie Manning, in red cloak and hood, made a charming gypsy; little Fandy, with his brown eyes and rosy cheeks, was a remarkably handsome portrait of himself; and a sallow, black-haired youth in a cloak and slouched hat, with a paper-cutter in his clenched fist, scowled admirably as a brigand. The other pictures, though content to be simply faces trying not to smile, were really very bright and effective, and a credit to any artist.

"Well!" exclaimed Uncle, after a moment, "what have the critics to say? What do you think of—of the gypsy, for instance? Who will buy it?"

"I won't!" shouted a funny little fellow in knickerbockers. "It's a chromo."

The gypsy twitched very slightly, and all the other pictures put on increased solemnity of expression, for they felt that their time, too, was coming.

"Do you throw in the frame?" asked some one else.

"Isn't that right eye a little out?" said a girl who was taking drawing-lessons.

This made the picture laugh, and presto! the frame was empty.

After this, though the remarks made were not brilliant nor irresistibly funny, the picture-gallery soon suffered severe losses. So small a thing will make us laugh

when we try to look grave. The brigand exploded at a cutting allusion to his dagger; the Quakeress yielded to a profound remark concerning her chiaro-scuro; other faces grinned the instant they were specially alluded to, and finally, Fandy's portrait was the only one left in its frame. That bright little countenance stared into the room so defiantly that even Uncle George tried, with the rest, to conquer it.

In vain critics criticised—the portrait was deaf. In vain they tried to be as funny as they could; it was obdurate. In vain they shouted at it, laughed at it. Not a smile. Fandy was a youth of principle, and he felt bound in honor to do his duty. Then the boys called the picture names. It was a monkey, a tramp, a kitten, an eel, a hop-toad. Everybody tried to think of something too funny for him to resist. Then Donald said:

"No, it's not an animal at all. Let's see—what does it look like, any way? Ah, it's a target; don't you see the bull's-eye?"

Not a smile.

"Bring a pot of varnish," cried Ed Tyler, "the picture is so dull we'll shine it up a little and see what that will do." Suddenly a childish howl was heard, to everybody's surprise; for little three-year-old Isabel had been quite forgotten.

"A-ow, a-ow! Tate Fan'-y down. What's 'e masser wis Fan'-y? Me want Fan'-y."

The little sister unconsciously triumphed where every one else had tried and failed. Fandy laughed with the rest, and instantly disappeared, as though he had been blown out like a candle. He was soon in the parlor, comforting Isabel to the best of his ability, casting saucy glances at the rest of the company meanwhile, with a merry shake of the head, as if to say, "You thought you could make me laugh, did you? No, sir, you couldn't."

Now while the folding doors were closed, a new set of pictures was made; the bell tinkled again, and the game went on as before.

There hung the same six frames in the same places upon the gray wall; but the portraits were new, and very effective, though some of them laughed as soon as the

opened doors revealed them to the spectators. This time, by way of variety, each frame as soon as vacated was filled with another portrait in full view of the company. When the emptied frame happened to be on the lower part of the gray wall, the new "picture" had only to stand or kneel upon the carpet behind the frame, but if it happened to be higher up, he or she was obliged to climb upon a chair or table behind it, or even a ladder, whichever might be necessary to enable the picture to appear at the proper place.

For this gray wall, you must know, was but a large straight curtain of dark cotton stuff, without any fulness, stretched tightly across the doorway behind the sliding doors, and with large square or oblong pieces cut out of it here and there. Each open space thus left was bordered with a strip of gilt paper, thus forming an empty picture-frame. Don and Dorry had made the whole thing themselves the day before, and they were therefore very happy at the success of the picture-gallery, and the fun it created. They had ingeniously provided the highest pictures with small, dark curtains, fastened above the back of the frames, and hanging loosely enough to be drawn behind the living pictures, so as to form backgrounds. A draped clothes-horse answered the same purpose for the lower pictures. All of this explanation and more was given by Don and Dorry at the house-picnic to eager listeners who wished to get up exactly such a picture-gallery at their own homes some evening. But while they were talking about it somebody at the piano struck up a march—"Mendelssohn's Wedding March"—and almost before they knew it the guests found themselves marching to the music two by two in a procession across the great square hall, now lighted by a bright blaze in its open fireplace.

THE LAST VIEW OF THE PICTURE-GALLERY. THE LAST VIEW OF THE PICTURE-GALLERY.

Donald and Dorry joined the merry line, wondering what was about to happen—when to their great surprise (ah, that sly Uncle George! and that innocent

Liddy!) the double doors leading into the dining-room were flung open, and there, sparkling in the light of a hundred wax-candles, was a collation fit for Cinderella and all her royal court. I shall not attempt to describe it, for fear of forgetting to name some of the good things. Imagine what you will, and I do believe there was something just like it, or quite as good, upon that delightful table, so beautiful with its airy, fairy-like structures of candied fruits, frostings, and flowers; its jagged rock of ice where chickens and turtles, made of ice-cream, were resting on every peak and cranny; its gold-tinted jellies, and its snowy temples. Soon, fairy-work and temple yielded to ruthless boys, who crowded around with genteel eagerness to serve the girls with platefuls of delicacies, quite ignoring the rolling eye-balls of two little colored gentlemen who had been sent up from town with the feast, and who had fully expected to do the honors. Meanwhile Liddy, in black silk gown and the Swiss muslin apron which Dorry had bought for her in the city, was looking after the youngest guests, resolved that the little dears should not disgrace her motherly care by eating too much, or by taking the wrong things.

"Not that anything on that table could hurt a chicken," she said softly to Charity Cora, as she gave a bit of sponge-cake and a saucer of blanc-mange to little Isabel, "Mr. George and I looked out for that; but their dear little stomachs are so risky, you know, one can't be too careful. That's the reason we were so particular to serve out sandwiches and substantials early in the day, you know. But sakes! there's that molasses candy! I can't help worrying about it."

Charity Cora made no reply beyond a pleasant nod, for, in truth, conversation had no charms for her just then. If Donald had found you, hungry reader, modestly hidden in a corner, and with a masterly bow had handed you that well-laden plate, would you have felt like talking to Liddy?

But Liddy didn't mind. She was too happy with her own thoughts to notice trifles. Besides, Sailor Jack just at that moment came to lay a fresh log on the hall fire, and

that gave her an opportunity to ask him if he ever had seen young folks "having a delighteder time."

"Never, Mistress Blum! Never!" was his emphatic, all-sufficient response.

At this very moment, Gory Danby, quite unconscious of the feast up stairs, was having his own private table in the kitchen. Having grown hungry for his usual supper of bread and milk, he had stolen in upon Norah and begged for it so charmingly, that she was unable to resist him. Imagine his surprise when, drowsily taking his last mouthful, he saw Fandy rush into the room with a plate of white grapes.

"Gory Danby!" exclaimed that disgusted brother, "I'm 'shamed of you! What you stuffin' yourse'f with common supper for when there's a party up stairs? Splendid things, all made of sugar! Pull off that bib, now, an' come along!"

GORY'S PRIVATE TABLE. GORY'S PRIVATE TABLE.

Again the march struck up. Feasting was over. The boys and girls, led by Uncle George, who seemed the happiest boy of all, went back to the parlor, which, meanwhile, had been rearranged, and there, producing a great plump tissue-paper bag, he hung it to the chandelier that was suspended from the middle of the parlor ceiling. I should like to tell you about this chandelier, how it was covered with hundreds of long, three-sided glass danglers that swung, glittered, and flashed in a splendid way, now that all its wax candles were lighted: but that would interrupt the account of the paper bag. This bag was full of something, they were sure. Uncle George blindfolded Josie Manning with a handkerchief, and putting a stick in her hand, told her to turn around three times and then try to strike the bag with the stick.

"Stand back, everybody," cried Donald, as she made the last turn. "Now, hit hard, Josie! Hard enough to break it!"

Josie did hit hard. But she hit the air just where the bag didn't hang; and then the rest laughed and shouted, and begged to be blindfolded, sure that they could do it. Mr.

Reed gave each a chance in turn, but each failed as absurdly as Josie. Finally, by acclamation, the bandage was put over Dorothy's dancing eyes, though she was sure she never, never could—and lo! after revolving like a lovely Chinese top, the blindfolded damsel, with a spring, and one long, vigorous stroke, tore the bag open from one side to the other. Down fell the contents upon the floor—pink mottoes, white mottoes, blue mottoes, and mottoes of gold and silver paper, all fringed and scalloped and tied with ribbons, and every one of them plump with sugar-almonds or some good kind of candy. How the guests rushed and scrambled for them!—how Fandy Danby fairly rolled over the other boys in his delight!—and how the young folks tore open the pretty papers, put the candy into their pockets, and shyly handed or sent the printed mottoes to each other! Fandy, in his excitement, handed a couplet to a pretty little girl with yellow hair, and then seeing her pout as she looked at it, ran over to her again with a quick "Let me see't. What does it say?" She held out the little bit of paper without letting it go, and Fandy seizing it at the other end, read laboriously and in laughing dismay:

"You-are-the-nicest-boy-I-know, And-this-is-just-to-tell-you-so."

He recovered himself instantly, however, and wagging his handsome little head at her, exclaimed emphatically:

"Girl, girl, don't you see, I meant girl! It's pleposterous to think I meant boy, cause you ain't one, don't you see. Mottoes is awful foolish, anyway. Come over in the hall and see the gol'-fishes swimmin' in the 'quarium,"—and off they ran together, as happy as birds.

Then came a dance—the Lancers. Two thirds of the young company, including Don and Dorry, attended the village dancing-school; and one and all "just doted on the Lancers," as Josie Manning said. Uncle George, knowing this, had surprised the D's by secretly engaging two players,—for piano-forte and violin,—and their well-marked time and spirited playing put added life into even the lithe young forms

that flitted through the rooms. Charity looked on in rapt delight, the more so as kind Sailor Jack already had carried the sleepy and warmly bundled Isabel home to her mother.

One or two more dances brought this amusement to an end, and then, after a few moments of rest came a startling and mysterious order to prepare for the

"THANK-YOU" GAME!

"What in the world is that?" asked the young folk of Don and Dorry; and their host and hostess candidly admitted that they hadn't the slightest idea what it was; they never had heard of it before.

"Well, then, how can we play it?" insisted the little spokes-people.

"I don't know," answered Dorry, looking in a puzzled way at the door.

"All join hands and form a circle!" cried a voice.

Every one arose, and soon the circle stood expectant.

"Your dear great-great fairy godmother is coming to see you," continued the voice. "She is slightly deaf, but you must not mind that."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the laughing circle, "not in the least."

"She brings her white gnome with her," said the invisible speaker; "and don't let him know your names, or he will get you into trouble."

"No, no, no!" cried the circle, wildly.

A slight stirring was heard in the hall, the doors opened, and in walked the big fairy godmother and her white gnome.

She was a tall, much bent old woman, in a ruffled cap, a peaked hat, and a long red cloak. He, the gnome, wore red trousers and red sleeves. The rest of his body was dressed in a white pillow-case with arm-holes cut in it. It was gathered at his belt; gathered also by a red ribbon tied around the throat; the corners of the pillow-case tied with narrow ribbon formed his ears, and there was a white bandage over his

eyes, and a round opening for his mouth. The godmother dragged in a large sack, and the gnome bore a stick with bells at the end.

"Let me into the ring, dears," squeaked the fairy godmother.

"Let me into the ring, dears," growled the white gnome.

The circle obeyed.

"Now, my dears," squeaked the fairy godmother, "I've brought you a bagful of lovely things, but, you must know, I am under an enchantment. All I can do is to let you each take out a gift when your turn comes, but when you send me a 'Thank-you,' don't let my white gnome know who it is, for if he guesses your name you must put the gift back without opening the paper. But if he guesses the wrong name, then you may keep the gift. So now begin, one at a time. Keep the magic circle moving until my gnome knocks three times."

Around went the circle, eager with fun and expectation. Suddenly the blindfolded gnome pounded three times with his stick, and then pointed it straight in front of him, jingling the little bells. Tommy Budd was the happy youth pointed at.

"Help yourself, my dear," squeaked the fairy godmother, as she held the sack toward him. He plunged his arm into the opening and brought out a neat paper parcel.

"Hey! What did you say, dear?" she squeaked. "Take hold of the stick."

Tommy seized the end of the stick, and said, in a hoarse tone, "Thank you, ma'am."

"That's John Stevens," growled the gnome. "Put it back! put it back!"

But it wasn't John Stevens, and so Tommy kept the parcel.

The circle moved again. The gnome knocked three times, and this time the stick pointed to Dorry. She tried to be polite, and direct her neighbor's hand to it, but the godmother would not hear of that.

"Help yourself, child," she squeaked; and Dorry did. The paper parcel which she drew from the sack was so tempting and pretty, all tied with ribbon, that she really

tried very hard to disguise her "Thank you," but the blindfolded gnome was too sharp for her.

"No, no!" he growled. "That's Dorothy Reed. Put it back! put it back!"

And Dorry, with a playful air of protest, dropped the pretty parcel into the bag again.

So the merry game went on; some escaped detection and saved their gifts; some were detected and lost them; but the godmother would not suffer those who had parcels to try again, and therefore, in the course of the game, those who failed at first succeeded after a while. When all had parcels, and the bag was nearly empty, what did that old fairy do but straighten up, throw off her hat, cap, false face, and cloak—and if it wasn't Uncle George himself, very red in the face, and very glad to be out of his prison. Instantly one and all discovered that they had known all along it was he.

"Ha! ha!" they laughed; "and now—" starting in pursuit—"let's see who the white gnome is!"

They caught him at the foot of the stairs, and were not very much astonished when Ed Tyler came to light.

"That is a royal game!" declared some. "Grand!" cried others. "Fine!" "First-rate!" "Glorious!" "Capital!" "As good as Christmas!" said the rest. Then they opened their parcels, and there was great rejoicing.

Uncle George, as Liddy declared, wasn't a gentleman to do things by halves, and he certainly had distinguished himself in the "Thank-you" game. Every gift was worth having. There were lovely bon-bon boxes, pretty trinkets, penknives, silver lead-pencils, paint-boxes, puzzles, thimbles, and scissors, and dozens of other nice things.

What delighted "Oh, oh's!" and merry "Ha, ha's!" rang through that big parlor. The boys who had thimbles, and the girls who had balls, had great fun displaying their prizes, and trying to "trade." After a deal of laughter and merry bargaining, the gifts

became properly distributed, and then the piano and violin significantly played "Home, Sweet Home!" Soon sleigh-bells were jingling outside; Jack was stamping his feet to knock the snow off his boots. Mr. McSwiver, too, was there, driving the Manning farm-sled, filled with straw; and several turn-outs from the village were speeding chuck-a-ty-chuck, cling, clang, jingle-y-jing, along the broad carriage-way.

Ah! what a bundling-up time! What scrambling for tippets, shawls, hoods, and cloaks; what laughter and frolic; what "good-byes" and "good-byes;" what honest "thank-you's" to Mr. Reed; and what shouting and singing and hurrahing, as the noisy sleigh-loads glided away, and above all, what an "Oh, you dear, dear, dear Uncle George!" from Dorry, as she and Donald, standing by Mr. Reed's side, heard the last sleigh jingle-jingle from the door.

And then the twins went straight to bed, slept sweetly, and dreamed till morning of the house-picnic? Not so. Do you think the D's could settle down so quietly as that? True, Uncle George soon went to his room. Liddy and Jack hied their respective ways, after "ridding up," as she expressed it, and fastening the windows. Norah and Kassy trudged sleepily to bed; the musicians and colored waiters were comfortably put away for the night. But Donald and Dorothy, wide awake as two robins, were holding a whispered but animated conversation in Dorry's room.

"Wasn't it a wonderful success, Don?"

"Never saw anything like it," said Donald. "Every one was delighted; Uncle's a perfect prince. He was the life of everything too. But what is it? What did you want to show me?"

"I don't know, myself, yet," she answered. "It fell out of an old trunk that we've never looked into or even seen before; at least, I haven't. Some of the boys dragged the trunk out from away back under the farthest roof-end of the garret. It upset and opened. Robby Cutler picked up the things and tumbled them in again in a hurry; but I saw the end of a parcel and pulled it out, and ran down here to see what it was. But

my room was full of girls (it was when nearly all of you boys were out in the barn, you know), and so I just threw it into that drawer. Somehow, I felt nervous about looking at it alone."

"Fetch it out," said Donald.

She did so. They opened the parcel together. It contained only two or three old copy-books.

"They're Uncle George's when he was a little boy," exclaimed Dorry, in a tone of interest, as she leaned over Donald, but with a shade of disappointment in her tone; for what is an old copy-book?

"It's not copy-writing at all," said Don, peering into the first one, "why, it's a diary!" and turning to look at the cover again, he read, "'Kate Reed.' Why, it's Aunt Kate's!"

"Aunt Kate's diary? Oh, Don, it can't be!" cried Dorry, as, pale with excitement, she attempted to take it from her brother's hands.

"No, Dorry," he said, firmly; "we must tie it up again. Diaries are private; we must speak to Uncle about it before we read a word."

"So we must, I suppose," assented Dorry, reluctantly. "But I can't sleep a wink with it in here." Her eyes filled with tears.

"Don't cry, Dot; please don't," pleaded Don, putting his arm around her. "We've been so happy all day, and finding this ought to make you all the happier. It will tell us so much about Aunt Kate, you know."

"No, Don, it will not. I feel morally sure Uncle will never let us read it."

"For shame, Dorry. Just wait, and it will be all right. You found the book, and Uncle will be delighted, and we'll all read it together."

Dorry wiped her eyes.

"I don't know about that," she said, decidedly, and much to her brother's amazement. "I found it, and I want to think for myself what is best to be done about it. Aunt Kate

didn't write it for everybody to read; we'll put it back in the bureau. My, how late it must be growing," she continued, with a shiver, as, laying the parcel in, she closed the drawer so softly that the hanging brass handles hardly moved. "Now, good-night, Donald."

"What a strange girl you are," he said, kissing her bright face. "Over a thing in an instant. Well, good-night, old lady."

"Good-night, old gentleman," said Dorry, soberly, as she closed the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DISCOVERY IN THE GARRET.

"Is Miss Dorothy in?"

"I think she is, Miss Josie. And yet, it seems as if she went over to the Danbys'. Take a seat, Miss, and I'll see if she's in her room."

"Oh, no, Kassy! I'll run up myself and surprise her."

So the housemaid went down stairs to her work, for she and Liddy were "clearin' up" after the house-picnic of the day before; and Josie Manning started in search of Dorry.

"I'll look in her cosey corner first," said Josie to herself.

Only those friends who knew the Reeds intimately had seen Dorry's cosey corner. Mere acquaintances hardly knew of its existence. Though a part of the young lady's pretty bedroom, it was so shut off by a high folding screen that it formed a complete little apartment in itself. It was decorated with various keepsakes and fancy articles—some hanging upon the walls, some standing on the mantelshelf, and some on the cabinet in which she kept her "treasures." With these, and its comfortable lounge and soft Persian rug, and, more than all, with its bright little window over-head, that looked out upon the tree-tops and the gable-roof of the

summer-kitchen, it was indeed a most delightful place for the little maid. And there she studied her lessons, read books, wrote letters, and thought out, as well as she could, the plans and problems of her young life. In very cold weather, a wood fire on the open hearth made the corner doubly comfortable, and on mild days, a dark fire-board and a great vase of dried grasses and red sumac branches made it seem to Dorry the brightest place in the world.

Josie was so used to seeing her friend there that now, when she looked in and found it empty, she turned back. The cosey corner was not itself without Dorry.

"She's gone to the Danbys' after all," thought Josie, standing irresolute for a moment. "I'll run over and find her. No, I'll wait here."

So stepping into the cosey corner again, but shrugging her pretty shoulders at its loneliness, she tossed her hood and shawl upon the sofa, and, taking up a large book of photographic views that lay there, seated herself just outside the screen, where she would be sure to see Dorry if she should enter the room. Meantime, a pleasant heat came in upon her from the warm hall, not a sound was to be heard, and she was soon lost in the enjoyment of the book, which had carried her across the seas, far into foreign scenes and places.

But Dorry was not at the Danbys' at all. She was over-head, in the garret, kneeling beside a small leather trunk, which was studded with tarnished brass nails.

How dusty it was!

"I don't believe even Liddy knew it was up here," thought Dorry, "for the boys poked it out from away, 'way back under the rafters. If she had known of it, she would have put it with the rest of the trunks."

Dorry laid the dusty lid back carefully, noting, as she did so, that it was attached to the trunk by a strip of buff leather inside, extending its entire length, and that its buff-paper lining was gay with sprays of pink rose-buds. In one of the upper corners of the lid was a label bearing this inscription:

Kate Reed. From Papa. October 1849. For my Dolly.

"Oh! it's Aunt Kate's own writing!" exclaimed Dorry, under her breath, as, still kneeling, she read the words.

"'From Papa,'" she repeated slowly,—"her Papa; that was Donald's and my Grandfather. And she wrote this in October, 1849—ten whole years before we were born! and when she was only a little girl herself!"

Then, with reverent hands Dorry lifted the top article—a soft, pink muslin dress, which had a narrow frill of yellowish lace, basted at the neck. It seemed to have been cast aside as partly worn out. Beneath this lay a small black silk apron, which had silk shoulder-straps, bordered with narrow black lace, and also little pockets trimmed with lace. Dorry, gently thrusting her hand into one of these pockets, drew forth a bit of crumpled ribbon, some fragments of dried rose-leaves, and a silver thimble marked "K. R." She put it on her thimble-finger; it fitted exactly.

"Oh dear!" thought Dorry, as, with flushed cheeks and quick-beating heart, she looked at the dress and apron on her lap, "I wish Don would come!" Then followed a suspicion that perhaps she ought to call him, and Uncle George too, before proceeding further; but the desire to go on was stronger. Aunt Kate was hers,—"my aunty, even more than Don's," she thought, "because he's a boy, and of course doesn't care so much;" and then she lifted a slim, white paper parcel, nearly as long as the trunk. It was partly wrapped in an old piece of white Canton crape, embroidered with white silk stars at regular intervals. Removing this, Dorry was about to take off the white paper wrapper also, when she caught sight of some words written on it in pencil.

"Dear Aunt Kate!" thought Dorry, intensely interested; "how carefully she wrapped up and marked everything! Just my way." And she read:

My dear little Delia: I am fourteen to-day, too old for dolls, so I must put you to sleep and lay you away. But I'll keep you, my dear dolly, as long as I live, and if I

ever have a dear little girl, she shall wake you and play with you and love you, and I promise to name her Delia, after you. Kate Reed. August, 1852.

With a strange conflict of feeling, and for the moment forgetting everything else, Dorry read the words over and over, through her tears; adding, softly: "Delia! That's why my little cousin was named Delia."

And, as she slowly opened the parcel, it almost seemed to her that Cousin Delia, Aunt Kate's own little girl, had come back to life and was sitting on the floor beside her, and that she and Delia always would be true and good, and would love Aunt Kate for ever and ever.

But the doll, Delia, recalled her. How pretty and fresh it was!—a sweet rosy face, with round cheeks and real hair, once neatly curled, but now pressed in flat rings against the bare dimpled shoulders. The eyes were closed, and when Dorry sought for some means of opening them, she found a wire evidently designed for that purpose. But it had become so rusty and stiff that it would not move. Somehow the closed eyes troubled her, and before she realized what she was doing, she gave the wire such a vigorous jerk that the eyes opened—bright, blue, glad eyes, that seemed to recognize her.

"Oh, you pretty thing!" exclaimed Dorry, as she kissed the smiling face and held it close to her cheek for a moment. "Delia never can play with you, dear; she was drowned, but I'll keep you as long as I live—Who's that? Oh, Don, how you startled me! I am so glad you've come."

"Why, what's the matter, Dot?" he asked, hurrying forward, as she turned toward him, with the doll still in her arms. "Not crying?"

"Oh, no, no, I'm not crying," she said, hastily wiping her eyes, and surprised to find them wet. "See here! This is Delia. Oh, Don, don't laugh. Stop, stop!"

Checking his sudden mirth, as he saw Dorry's emotion, and glancing at the open trunk, which until now had escaped his notice, he began to suspect what was the

matter.

"Is it Aunt Kate's?" he asked, gravely.

"Yes, Don; Aunt Kate's doll when she was a little girl. This is the trunk that I told you about—the one that the diary fell out of."

A strong, boyish step was heard coming up the garret stairs: "Who is it? Run, Don, don't let any one come up here!" begged Dorry.

"It's Ed Tyler,—Hold up, Ed!" cried Don, obediently. "I'll be there in a minute." Then hurriedly kissing Dorry, and with a hearty "Cheer up, little sister!" he was gone.

Don's pleasant tone and quick step changed the current of Dorry's thoughts. More than this, a bright beam of sunlight now shone through the dusty window. Sobbing no longer, she carefully wrapped the doll in the same paper and piece of silk that had held it for so many years. As she arose, holding the parcel in her hand, the pink dress and black silk apron on her lap fell to the floor.

A sudden thought came to her. Dorry never could remain sad very long at a time. She hastily opened the parcel again.

"Lie down there, Delia dear," she said, gently placing the doll on the rose-buds of the still open trunk-lid. "Lie down there, till I put on these things. I'm going to take you down to see your uncle!"

"Won't he be astonished though!" murmured Dorry, as, half smiling, half sighing, she took off her dress in great excitement, and put on, first the pink muslin, and then the black silk apron, fastening them at the back as well as she could, with many a laborious twist and turn of her white arms, and with a half-puzzled consciousness that the garments were a perfect fit.

The dress, which was high at the neck, had short sleeves, and was gathered to a belt at the waist. Tying the apron at the back, so that the ends of its black ribbon bow

hung down over the full pink skirt, she proceeded to adjust the silk straps that, starting in front at the belt, went over the shoulders and down again at the back.

As she did this, and perceived that each strap was wide on the top and tapered toward the belt, it struck her that the effect must be quite pretty. Bending to take up Delia, she saw, for the first time, among the bits of calico and silk lying in the bottom of the trunk, what proved to be a wide-brimmed straw hat. In another moment it was on her head, and with a quick little laugh, she caught up Delia and ran down the stairs.

Looking neither to right nor left, Dorry sped down the next flight; across the hall, on tiptoe now, and so on to the study door, which stood ajar just enough to admit her slight figure.

Mr. Reed, who sat at the table busily writing, did not even look up when she entered.

"How d'ye do?" she exclaimed, courtesying to her uncle, with the doll in her arms.

He sprang to his feet in amazement.

"Don't be frightened. It's only Dorry. I just wanted to surprise you! See," she continued, as he stood staring wildly at her, "I found all these things up stairs. And look at the dolly!"

By this time the hat had fallen off, and she was shaking her tumbled hair at him in a vehement manner, still holding Delia in her extended arms.

"Good-bye, Ed!" rang out Donald's clear voice from the piazza, and in an instant he was looking through the study window, much surprised to see a quaint little pink figure folded in Uncle George's embrace, while Dorry's voice was calling from somewhere: "Be careful! Be careful! You'll break Delia!"

Ed Tyler, sauntering homeward, met Josie Manning on her way to the Danbys'. "I think Dorry has gone to see Charity Danby," she said, "and I'm going after her. I've been waiting at her house, ever so long."

"I've been at Don's too," said Ed. "Just come from there."

Josie laughed. "As if I didn't know that," she said. "Why, I was in Dorry's room all the time. First I heard Don run up to the garret for something, then you went up after him, and then you both passed down again, and out upon the piazza. I suppose you went to the old carriage-house, as usual, didn't you?"

JOSIE MANNING WAITS FOR DORRY. (See page 156.) JOSIE MANNING WAITS FOR DORRY. (See page 156.)

"Of course we did. We're turning it into a first-class gymnasium. Mr. Reed has given it to Don outright, and I tell you it will be a big thing. Jack's helping us. Don has saved up lots of pocket-money, and Mr. Reed gives him all the lumber he wants. Just you wait. But, by the way, Dorry isn't out. Don told me himself she was rummaging up in the garret."

"Why, that's queer!" was Josie's surprised exclamation. "Then it must have been Dorry who ran down stairs. It couldn't be though; some one, with a hat on and a short-sleeved pink dress, went by like a flash."

"Don't you know Dorry Reed yet?" laughed Ed, "she is always dressing up. Why, one day when I was there, she came into Don's room dressed like an old woman,—cap, crutch, corked wrinkles and all complete; never saw anything like it. What a little witch she is!"

"I think she's an angel!" said Josie, warmly.

"A pretty lively angel!" was Ed's response.

But the tone of admiration was so genuine that it satisfied even Josie Manning.

"Well!" exclaimed Donald, noting Dorry's strange costume, as he entered the room, after shouting a second good-by to Ed Tyler.

"Well!" echoed Dorry, freeing herself from her uncle's arms, and with a little jump facing Donald,—"what of it? I thought I'd pay Uncle a visit with my pretty

doll-cousin here" (hugging Delia as she spoke), "and he started as if I were a ghost. Didn't you, Uncle?"

"I suppose I did," assented Mr. Reed, with a sad smile. "In fact, Dorry, I may as well admit, that what is fun to you, happened, for once, not to be fun to me."

"But it wasn't fun to me!" cried that astonishing Dorry. "It was—it was—tell him, Don; you know."

There was no need for Don to speak. Dorry's flushed cheeks, shining eyes, and excited manner told their own story; and both her brother and uncle, because they knew her so well; felt quite sure that in a moment Dorothy's own self would have a word to say.

Still folding the dolly to her heart and in both arms, and with the yearning look of a little child, the young girl, without moving from the middle of the room, looked wistfully toward the window, as though she saw outside some one whom she loved, but who could not or would not come to her. Then she stepped toward her uncle, who had seated himself again in the big chair, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, said earnestly:

"Uncle, I've been brought nearer to Aunt Kate to-day than ever in my life before, and the lonely feeling is almost all gone. I found a little old trunk, far back under the rafters, with her doll in it, her clothes and her writing; and now I see how real she was,—not like a dream, as she used to seem, but just one of us. You know what I mean."

"A trunk, Dorry! What? Where?" was all the response Uncle George made, as, hastening from the room, he started for the garret, keeping ahead of the others all the way.

CHAPTER XVII.

DORRY ASKS A QUESTION.

Donald and Dorothy followed their uncle closely, though he seemed to have forgotten them; and they were by his side when he reached the little treasure-trove, with its still opened lid.

Paying no attention to their presence, Mr. Reed hurriedly, but with the tenderest touch, took out every article and examined it closely.

When he came to the diary, which Dorry that day had restored unopened to the trunk, he eagerly scanned its pages here and there; then, to the great disappointment of the D's he silently laid it down, as if intending later to take it away with him.

"May we see that, Uncle?" asked Dorry, softly. "Isn't it right for us to read it? We found out it was her diary; but I put it back."

Without replying, Uncle George went on with his examination. Finally, replacing the last article in the trunk, he closed the lid with a hopeless air, and turned toward Dorry, saying:

"Dorothy, where is that doll? It must go back where you found it, and the clothes too."

She handed it to him without a word—all her hope turned to bitterness.

But as he took it, noting her grieved expression, he said:

"Thank you, my dear. You are too old to play with dolls—"

"Oh, Uncle, it is too bad for you to speak so! You know I didn't mean to play with it. It isn't a dolly to me; she's more like—like something with life. But you can shut her up in the dark, if you want to."

"Dorry! Dorry!" said Don, reproachfully. "Don't be so excited."

In a flash of thought, Dorry made up her mind to speak—now or never.

"Uncle!" said she, solemnly, "I am going to ask you a question; and, if it is wrong, I can't help it. What is the reason that you always feel so badly when I speak of Aunt

Kate?"

He looked at her in blank surprise for an instant; then, as she still awaited his reply, he echoed her words, "Feel badly when you speak of Aunt Kate! Why, my child, what do you mean?"

"I mean, Uncle dear, that there is a secret in the house; something you have never told Don and me. It's always coming up and making mischief, and I don't think it's right at all. Neither does Don."

"That's so, Uncle," said Donald, emphatically; "we feel sure there is something that gives you trouble. Why not let us share it with you? Remember, we are not little children any longer."

The uncle looked quickly from one to the other, mentally deciding that the children could be told only the facts that were positively known to him; then seating himself on the corner of a large chest, he drew Don and Dorry towards him.

"Yes, my children," he said, in his own hearty way, as if already a load had been taken from his mind, "there is something. It is right that I should tell you, and this is as good a time as any. Put the doll away, Dorry" (he spoke very gently now), "wherever you please, and come down stairs. It is chilly up here—and, by the way, you will catch cold in that thin gown. What have we been thinking of all this while?"

"Oh, I'm as warm as toast, Uncle," she replied, at the same time taking her pretty merino dress from the old chair upon which she had thrown it, scarcely an hour ago; "but I suppose it's always better to be on the safe side, as Liddy says."

"Much better," said Uncle, nodding with forced cheerfulness. "Down with you, Dot. We'll join you in a minute."

Dorry, as she left them, saw her uncle stooping low to peer into the far roof-end of the garret, and she had time to place Delia carefully in her treasure-cabinet, put on the warmer dress, and be ready to receive her uncle and Donald before they made their appearance.

"May we be your guests, Dot?" asked Uncle George, at her door.

"Oh, yes, sir; come right in here," was her pleased response, as, with a conflict of curiosity and dread, Dorry gracefully conducted them into her cosey corner.

"It is too pretty and dainty here for our rough masculine tread, eh, Don?" was Mr. Reed's remark, as, with something very like a sigh, he placed himself beside Dorry upon the sofa, while her brother took a seat close by.

"Well," began Dorry, clasping her hands tightly, and trying to feel calm. "We're ready now, Uncle."

"And so am I," said he. "But first of all, I must ask you both not to magnify the importance of what I am going to reveal."

"About Aunt Kate?" interposed Dorry.

"About Aunt Kate. Do not think you have lost her, because she was really—no, I should say not exactly—"

"Oh," urged Dorry, "don't stop so, Uncle! Please do go on!"

"As I was about to say," resumed Mr. Reed, in a tone of mild rebuke at the interruption, "it really never made any difference to me, nor to your father, and it should make no difference to you now. You know," he continued, with some hesitation, "children sometimes are adopted into families; that is to say, they are loved just the same, and cared for just the same, but they are not own children. Do you understand?"

"Understand what, please, Uncle? Did Aunt Kate adopt any one?" asked Dorry.

"No, but my father and mother did; your grandfather and grandmother Reed, you know," said he, looking at the D's in turn, as though he hoped one of them would help him.

"You don't mean, Uncle," almost screamed Dorry, "that it was that—that horrid—"

Donald came to her assistance.

"Was it that man, Uncle?" he asked, quickly. "Ben Buster told me the fellow claimed to be related to us; was he ever adopted by Grandfather Reed?"

"Ugh!" shuddered Dorry.

Very little help poor Uncle George could hope for now from the D's. The only way left was to speak out plainly.

"No, not that man, my children; but Aunt Kate. Aunt Kate was an adopted daughter—an adopted sister; but she was in all other respects one of our family. Never was daughter or sister more truly beloved. When she came to us she was but two years old, an orphan. Grandpa and Grandma Reed had known her parents, and when the little"—here Mr. Reed hastily resolved to say nothing of Eben Slade for the present—"the little girl was left alone in the world, destitute, with no relatives to care for her, my father and mother took her into their home, to bear their name and to be their own dear little daughter.

"When Aunt Kate was old enough, they told her all; but it was her wish that we boys should forget that we were not really her brothers. This was before we came to live in this house.

"Our Nestletown neighbors, never hearing anything of the adoption, naturally supposed that little Kate Reed was our own sister. The secret was known only to our relatives, and one or two old friends, and to Lydia, who was Kate's devoted young nurse and attendant. In fact, we never thought anything about it. To us, as to the world outside, she was Kate Reed—the joy and pride of our home—our sister Kate to the very last. So it really made no serious difference. Don't you see?"

Not a word from either of the listeners.

"Of course, Dorry darling," he said, coaxingly, "this is very strange news to you; but you must meet it bravely, and, as I said before, without giving it undue importance. I wish now that, from the first, you and Donald had been told all this; but indeed your Aunt Kate was always so dear to me that I wished you to consider her, as she

considered herself, a relative. It has been my great consolation to think and speak of your father and her as my brother and sister, and to see you, day by day, growing to love and honor her memory as she deserved. Now, do you not understand it all? Don't you see that Aunt Kate is Aunt Kate still?"

"Yes, indeed. I say so, most decidedly," broke forth Donald. "And I am very glad you have told us, Uncle. Aren't you, Dorry?"

Dorry could not speak, but she kissed Uncle George and tried to feel brave.

"Mamma and Aunt Kate were great friends, weren't they?" Donald asked.

"Yes, indeed. Though they became acquainted only a few months before your parents married and departed for Europe, they soon became very fond of each other."

"Then, Uncle," pursued Donald, "why didn't you know mother too? I should think she would have come here to visit Aunt Kate sometimes."

"As your mother was an only child, living alone with her invalid father, she was unwilling to leave him, and so Aunt Kate visited her instead. I wish it had been different, and that I could speak to you and Dorothy more fully of your mother, whom I rarely saw. We all know that she was good and lovely, but I should like to be able to bring her familiarly to your minds. This old home would be all the dearer, if it could be associated with thoughts of your mother and happy days which she had passed here with Aunt Kate."

At this point Mr. Reed was summoned to his study. A gentleman from town had called to see him on business.

"Keep up a good heart, my girl," he said, tenderly, to Dorry, as he left her, "and as soon as you feel like it, take a run out-of-doors with Donald. The bracing air will drive all sad thoughts away."

Dorry tried to smile pleasantly, as she promised to follow his advice. She even

begged Don not to wait any longer, assuring him that she would go out and join him very soon.

"That's a good old Dot," said Don, proudly. "I'll wait for you. Where's your hat?"

"No, you go first, Don. I'll be out soon. I really will."

"All right. Ed's out there again by this time. You'll find us in the gymnasium." And off he ran, well knowing that Dorry's heart was heavy, but believing that the truest kindness and sympathy lay in making as light as possible of Uncle George's revelation; which, in his boyish logic, he felt wasn't so serious a thing after all, if looked at in the right spirit.

Dorothy waited until he was out of sight, and then sat down to think it all over.

The result was that when Liddy chanced to pass through the hall, a few moments later, she was startled by hearing half-suppressed sobs.

According to the custom of the house, which made the cosey corner a sort of refuge for Dorry, the good woman, upon entering at the open door, stood a moment wondering what to do. But as the sound of another little sob came from behind the screen, she called out in a cheery voice:

"May I come in, Miss Dorry dear?"

"Y-yes," was the answer. "Oh, Liddy, is that you? Uncle has told us all about it."

"Sakes alive!" cried Liddy, holding up her hands in dismay—"not told you everything?"

"Yes, he has," insisted Dorry, weeping afresh, as Lydia's manner seemed to give her a new right to consider that an awful fact had been revealed to her. "I know now all about it. I haven't any Aunt Kate at all. I'm a-all alone!"

"For shame, Miss Dorry; how can you talk so? You, with your blessed uncle and your brother, to say nothing of them who have cherished you in their arms from the day you were a helpless baby—for shame, Miss, to say such a thing!"

This was presenting matters in a new light.

"Oh, Liddy, you don't know about it. There's no Aunt K-Kate, anyway," sobbed Dorry, rather relieved at finding herself the subject of a good scolding.

"There isn't, eh? Well, I'd like to know why not!" retorted Lydia, furtively wiping her eyes. "I guess there is. I knew, long before you were born, that she was a dear little adopted girl. But what of that? that doesn't mean she wasn't ever a little girl at all. Don't you know, Miss Dorry, child, that a human being's a human being, and folks care for 'em for what they are? It wasn't just belonging to this or that family made Miss Kate so lovely,—it's what she was herself; and I can certify to her bein' as real as you and me are—if that's all that's wanted."

By this time Dorry, though half-comforted, had buried her face in the sofa-pillow.

"Not that I can't feel for you, poor dear," Liddy continued, gently patting the young girl's shoulder, but speaking more rapidly, "many's the time I've wept tears, just to think of you, longing with all your little heart for a mother. I'm a rough old body, my dove, and what are your dear good uncle and Master Donald but menkind, after all, and it's natural you should pine for Aunty. Ah, I'm afraid it's my doings that you've been thinkin' of her all these days, when, may be, if I'd known your dear mother, which I didn't,—and no blame to me neither,—I wouldn't always have been holding Miss Kate up to you. But she was a darling, was your Aunt Kate, as you know by her picture down stairs—don't you, dear?"

Dorry nodded into the cushion, by way of reply.

Liddy gazed at her a moment in sympathizing silence, and then, in a more cheerful tone, begged her to rouse herself.

"It won't do any good to fret about it, you know, Miss Dorry. Come, now, you'll have the awfulest headache that ever was, if you don't brighten up. When you're in trouble, count your blessings—that's what I always say; and you've a big share of 'em after all, dear. Let me make you a nice warm cup of tea—that'll build you up,

Miss Dorry. It always helps me when I—Sakes! what's that?"

"What's what, Liddy?" said Dorry, languidly raising her head from the pillow. "Oh, that's—that's her—that's Aunt Kate's frock and apron. Yes, and here's something else. Here's Delia—I'll show her to you."

And so saying, she rose and stepped toward the cabinet.

"Show me Delia! Merciful heavens," cried Liddy, "has the child lost her senses?"

But the sight of the doll reassured her.

"Oh, that's Delia, is it?" she asked, still wondering; "well, where in the world did it come from?"

Dorry told her all about the discovery of the little trunk that had been hidden in the garret so many years.

"Oh, those miserable house-cleaners!" was Liddy's wrathful comment. "Only to think of it! We had 'em workin' up there when you twins were too little to spare me, and I've never felt easy about it since, nor trusted any one but myself to clean that garret. To think of their pushin' things in, 'way out of sight and sound like that!"

This practical digression had a good effect on Dorry. Rousing herself to make the effort, she bathed her face, smoothed her hair, and seizing her hat and shawl, started with a sigh to fulfil her promise to Donald.

And all this time, Liddy sat stroking and folding the little pink dress and black apron.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GYMNASIUM.

When Dorry reached the "gymnasium," as Ed and Don called it, she could not help smiling at the grand title they had given prematurely to a very unpromising-looking

place.

The building had been a fine carriage-house in its day, but of late it had been used mainly by Jack, as a sort of store-house for old barrels, boxes, wheels, worn-out implements, and odds and ends of various kinds. Its respectable exterior had saved it from being pulled down when the new carriage-house was built. Besides Jack's appropriation of a portion of the building, Donald had planked off one end for his own special purposes,—first as a printing-office, later as a carpenter's shop,—and Dorothy had planted vines, which in summer surrounded its big window with graceful foliage; and so it had come to be looked upon as the special property of Jack and the D's.

Consequently, when Donald asked Mr. Reed to allow him to sell or send away the rubbish, and, with the proceeds of the sale of the old iron, added to his own saved-up pocket money, to turn the place into a gymnasium, his uncle not only gave free consent, but offered to let him have help and material, in case the young man should fall short of funds—as he most undoubtedly would.

The project was but a few days old at the time of the house-picnic, but being a vigorous little project, with life in its veins, it grew and prospered finely. Sailor Jack entered heartily into the work—the more so as his gallant fancy conceived the idea of some day setting up near by a sort of ship's-rigging with shrouds and "ratlines," in which to give the boys lessons, and occasionally disport himself, by way of relief, when his sea-longing should become too much for him. Plans and consultations soon were the order of the day, and Dorry, becoming interested, learned more about pulleys, ropes, ladders, beams, strength of timber, and such things, than any other girl in the village.

The building was kept moderately warm by an old stove, which Jack had set up two years before, when Don and Dorry had the printing-press fever (which, by the way, had broken out in the form of a tiny, short-lived newspaper, called The Nestletown

Boom), and day after day the boys spent every odd moment of daylight there, assisted in many ways by Dorothy. But perhaps more efficient help was rendered by Jack, when he could spare the time from his horses, and by the village carpenter, when that worthy would deign to keep his engagements.

Besides, Uncle George had agreed that the new tutor should not begin with his pupils until after the Christmas holidays, now close at hand.

Under this hearty co-operation, the work prospered wonderfully.

DONALD AND ED TYLER TRY THE GYMNASIUM. DONALD AND ED TYLER TRY THE GYMNASIUM.

Pretty soon, boys who came to jeer remained to try the horizontal bar, or the "horse," or the ladder that stretched invitingly overhead from one end of the building to the other. By special suggestion, Don's and Dorry's Christmas gifts from Uncle were a flying-course, a swinging-bar, and a spring-board. Jack and Don carted load after load of sawdust from the lumber-mill—to soften the deck in case of a slip from the rigging, as Jack explained to Lydia—and presto! the gymnasium was in full operation.

All of which explains why Josie Manning and Dorothy Reed bought dark-blue flannel, and sent to town for the latest pattern for gymnasium dresses; why Don and Ed soon exasperated them by comfortably purchasing suits ready made; why Dorry's cheeks grew rosier; why Uncle was pleased; why Jack was proud; and why Lydia was morally sure the D's would break their precious necks, if somebody didn't put a stop to it.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "G. B. C."

Dorothy was made very happy one day by Uncle George handing her the little

copy-book diary, and saying that she and Donald could read as much of it as they wished.

"Oh, Don; see here!" she exclaimed, holding up the book, as Donald, by invitation, joined her in the Cosey Corner. "It's all right. Uncle says so. We'll begin at the first page and read every single word!"

The diary, it seemed, contained nothing startling, but it gave them an excellent idea of Aunt Kate's happy girlhood. She spoke of many things familiar to them, and above all, they were interested in her frequent allusions to "our new dog, Nero," evidently her own special pet.

Poor Nero! So young then, and now so very old! This was his last winter. He had become blind of late and very feeble; but, nevertheless, when the end came, it was a shock to all, and a sore trial to Don and Dorry. Many a time, after that day, they would stop in their sports to bend beside the little headstone under the evergreens and talk of him—the faithful friend they had loved all their lives, who had reached his prime and died of old age during their own youth.

We must pass rapidly over the next few months, only pausing to say that they were busy ones for the D's. In the first place, the new tutor, as Don expressed it, was "worked by steam" and was "one of the broad-gauge, high-pressure sort;" but Uncle George noted that his nephew and niece made great advancement under what he called Dr. Sneeden's careful and earnest teaching.

But they had, too, their full share of recreation. Don and Ed found the gymnasium not only a favorite resort in the way of pleasure, but also a great aid to their physical development. After a few weeks' exercise, their muscles began to grow stronger and harder, and the startling climbs, leaps, tumbles, hand-springs and somersaults which the boys learned to perform were surprising.

When the summer came, Don and Ed Tyler secretly believed themselves competent to become members of the best circus troupe in the country, and many a boy-visitor

was asked to "feel that, will you?" as each young Hercules knotted the upper muscles of his arm in order to astonish the beholder. Even the girls caught the spirit, and, though they would not for the world have had the boys know it, they compared muscle in a mild way among themselves, and Dorry's was declared by admiring friends to be "awfully hard."

Little Fandy Danby, too, after giving himself numberless bruises, became so expert that he finally attained the summit of his ambition by hanging from the horizontal ladder and going hand over hand its entire length, though not without much puffing and panting and a frantic flourishing of little legs.

Don and the boys had great fun in "stumping" each other; which consisted in one performing a certain feat and challenging the others to do it, and if matched in that, then daring them to some bolder and more difficult attempt.

Uncle George himself took part in these contests, and, though often beaten, threatened to distance them all after a few months' practice. "There's a plentiful share of limberness tied up in these old muscles," he would say, "and when it's set free, boys, look out for your laurels!"

Well, the spring passed away and no bones were broken. Boating and bathing, berrying and other sports, came with the advancing season; but the great feature of the summer was the G. B. C., or Girls' Botany Club, of which Dorry was president, Josie Manning secretary, and Dr. Sneeden inspirer, advisory committee, and treasurer, all in one. Nearly all the favorite girls joined, and boys were made honorary members whenever their scientific interest and zeal in hunting for botanical treasures entitled them to that distinction.

Ah, those were happy days! And if the honorary members were troublesome now and then, scaring the girls half to death with lizards, toads, or harmless garter-snakes, why it was only "the boys;" and after all, it really was fun to scream a little by way of lightening the more solid pursuits of the club. Besides, the boys

often were a real help, especially in rocky places and in the marshes, and— Well, it was less troublesome to have them than to do without them.

So far, only one real shadow had fallen across the sunny hours; and that was when Dorry had proposed Charity Danby as a member, and some of the foolish girls had objected on the plea that the Danbys were "poor folks."

"Poor folks," indeed! You should have seen their president then! You should have heard her spirited remarks, her good, wholesome arguments, and seen her glowing, indignant presidential countenance! The opposition had been stubborn at first, gathering strength in secret and losing it in public, until at last good sense and kindliness prevailed. The motion to admit Charity as a member of the G. B. C. was carried unanimously, and almost the first she knew about it she was a full member, eagerly searching hill-side and meadow with the rest, and wondering deep in her inmost soul whether she ever, ever could "catch up" to the other girls. They knew so much from books, and she had been able to study so little!

Poor Charity! She was wiser than she knew. Her habit of close observation, and her eager desire to learn, soon made her a valuable addition to the club. She knew where to find every wild flower of that locality in its season, from the trailing arbutus in the spring to the latest bloom of the autumn, and "Charity Danby says so" soon became a convincing argument in many a discussion.

But we must now go back several weeks, and learn how it happened that our busy Charity was able to accept the invitation of the G. B. C.

It was early in July; remnants of exploded fire-crackers still lingered in the trampled grass near Mrs. Danby's white-washed fence. She—busy soul!—was superintending the mending of her home-made chicken-coop now trembling and quivering under the mighty strokes of Daniel David. With one breath the mother was making suggestions to her young carpenter, and with the next screaming to Helen and Isabella to be careful or they would tumble into the pig-pen, when, suddenly, she

saw Dorry at the back gate.

"Massy! Here comes Dorothy Reed, looking like a fresh rose, as she is, and not a thing in the house to rights. Well, I can't help it—ten children so, and everything to look after. Ah, Dorothy!" continued Mrs. Danby, exchanging her silent thoughts for active speech, "walk right in, dear, and do please excuse everything. Charity's in the house, picking up and putting away; I'd call her out, but—"

No need to finish the sentence. Dorry, with a cheery "Oh, no, indeed, thank you!" had already vanished under the morning-glories that brightened the doorway.

"Bless her heart!" pursued Mrs. Danby, now talking to Daniel David, "but she's a beauty! Not that my own are humly, either. Charity's no fright, by no means, and there's your sister Amanda—why, only last summer Master Donald's teacher drew a picture of her, because she was so picturesky, which I'll keep to my dying day. There, Dan Dave, you don't need no more slats on that side; take this broken one out here, that's a good child; it scrapes the old hen every time she goes under. Look out! You'll break the whole thing to pieces if you ain't careful. My! How strong boys are!"

Meantime, Dorry, as we know, had entered. The house was out of order, but Charity was doing her best. With one hand she was "picking up and putting away," and with the other stroking the bumped head of baby Jamie. Though now able to walk alone, the little one had just experienced one of his frequent tumbles, and was crying and clinging to Charity's skirts as he trotted beside her. No one else was in the room, and perhaps this was why the busy sister was softly saying to herself, as she worked:

"SO PICTURESKY!" "SO PICTURESKY!"

"Queen Elizabeth was one, William-and-Mary's Mary was another, and Lady Jane Grey and Queen Victoria—Oh, do hush, Jamie, dear, I've kissed it twice already—there!"

Suiting the action to the word, she pressed her lips of healing once more upon

Jamie's yellow hair, and lifting her head again, she saw Dorry in the doorway laughing.

"Oh, Dorothy, how you startled me! I didn't hear you coming at all! I'm so glad! But you needn't laugh at me, Dorry—I'm only trying to remember a little hist'ry."

"I'm not laughing at you," Dorry protested, merrily. "But it was so funny to hear you putting the English queens into the pots and pans; that was all. Here, let me help a little. Come, Jamie, sit on Dotty's lap, and she'll tell you all about Bluebeard."

"Oh, no; that's too old for him. Tell him about the chickies," suggested Charity, in a business-like way, as, disengaging her gown from his baby clutch, she sprang upon a chair, in order to put something away on the highest shelf of the dresser.

"It's no use," she said, jumping down again, almost angrily, and raising her voice to be heard above Jamie's outcry. "Oh, dear, what does make you so naughty, Baby?"

"He isn't naughty," said Dorry, soothingly; "he's only tired of being indoors. Come, Jamie, we'll go out and play chickie till Charity gets through, and then we'll all take a nice walk."

Jamie seized Dorry's hand instantly, and out they went.

"Be careful!" called Charity, after her, setting a chair down hard at the same time. "Look out, or he'll get right under the cow's feet; he always does."

"I'll be careful," sang out Dorry. "Come as soon as you can. This delightful air will do you good." Then, seeing Ellen Eliza, the ten-year-old Danby girl, standing not far from the house, she led Jamie toward her.

"HE'S COMPLAININ'." "HE'S COMPLAININ'."

Ellen Eliza had a very tender heart. Every one who knew Mrs. Danby had heard of that tender heart more than once; and so Dorry was not in the least surprised to find Ellen Eliza in the act of "comforting" a draggled-looking fowl, which she held tenderly in her arms in spite of its protest.

"Is it hurt?" asked Dorry.

Ellen Eliza looked up with an anxious countenance as she murmured:

"Oh, no, not exactly hurt; he's complainin'. I think he's hungry, but he won't eat."

"Dear me!" was Dorry's unfeeling comment; "then I'd let him go hungry, I certainly should."

"Oh, no, you couldn't be cruel to a poor sick rooster!" Here Ellen Eliza pressed the uneasy fowl to her heart. "May be, he has a sore throat."

"Do you know what I think?" said Dorry, quite disregarding the patient's possible affliction.

"What?" asked Ellen Eliza, plaintively, as if prepared to hear that her feathered pet was going into a rapid decline. And Dorry went on:

"I think that if people with tender hearts would remember their sisters sometimes, it would be—"

"What do you mean?" interrupted the astonished Ellen Eliza, releasing the now struggling bird as she spoke.

Dorry laid her hand kindly on the little girl's shoulder.

"I'll tell you," she said. "If I were you, I'd help Charity more. I'd take care of this dear little brother sometimes. Don't you notice how very often she is obliged to stay from school to help with the work, and how discouraged she feels about her lessons?"

"No!" answered Ellen Eliza, with wide-open eyes. "I didn't ever notice that. I think it's nice to stay home from school. But, anyhow, Charity wouldn't trust me. She dotes on Jamie so. She's always been afraid I'd let him fall."

Dorry smiled.

"Oh, that was long ago, Ellen. Jamie can walk now, you know, and if you look after him sometimes, you'll soon be able to help Charity wonderfully."

"All right!" was Ellen Eliza's cordial answer. "I'll do it. Somehow, I never thought of it. But I often help Mother. She says I'm the best-hearted of all the children, and so I am. You see if I don't help Charity after this."

The conversion seemed too sudden to be very lasting; but Ellen Eliza, who was really sincere, proceeded at once to put her new resolution into practice. To be sure, her renowned tender heart did not make her all at once an experienced housemaid, seamstress, and nurse, as Charity was; but from that day it made her, at intervals, a willing little hand-maiden, and so gave her sister many a leisure hour for reading and study. More than this, Ellen Eliza and Dorry became close friends in Charity's behalf, and one thing led to another, until Charity actually attended school regularly. She was behind most of the scholars, of course; but very often she spent an hour in the Cosey Corner, where Dorry helped her to study her lessons. Her progress was remarkable.

"You make everything so beautifully plain, I can't help improving," she would say to Dorry. And Dorry would laugh and protest that the teacher was learning as much as the pupil, and that they were a wonderful pair, anyway.

All this while, Charity, bright and hopeful, was doing a goodly share of house duties, and making the Danby home more sunny with her happiness. Little Jamie was her delight, as she was his; but she was no longer jaded and discouraged. Ellen Eliza looked at her with pride, and willingly submitted to the school teaching that Charity, in turn, was able to give her.

"I can't bear 'rithmetic," was the tender-hearted one's comment, "but I have to learn my tables, else Charity'd worry, and Dorry wouldn't like it. And jography's nice, 'cause Pa likes me to tell him about it, when he comes home. Soon's I get big, I mean to make Helen and Is'bella learn their lessons like everything!"

Alas! The new educational movement met with a sudden but temporary check in the shape of the measles. One fine day, that unwelcome visitant came into the house,

and laid its hand on poor little Helen. In a few days, Isabella and Jamie were down beside her—not very ill, but all three just ill enough to require a darkened room, careful nursing, and a bountiful supply of Dorry's willing oranges.

This was why Charity, for a time, was cut off from her studies, and why she was quite taken by surprise when word came to her of the G. B. C., and that she was to join it, as soon as the little ones could spare her.

You have seen Charity botanizing on the hill-side with the other girls, but to understand her zeal, you should have heard her defend the science against that sarcastic brother of hers—Daniel David. In vain that dreadful boy hung dried stalks and dead branches all about her room, and put dandelions in her tea cup, and cockles in her hair brush—pretending all the while that he was a good boy bringing "specimens" to his dear sister. In vain he challenged every botanical remark she made, defying her to prove it. She always was equal to the occasion in spirit, if not in knowledge.

One Saturday morning, though, she had her triumph, and it was an event to be remembered. Daniel David had listened, with poorly concealed interest, while Charity was describing a flower to Ellen Eliza,—how it has calyx, corolla, stamens, and pistils; how some flowers have not all these parts, but that all flowers have pistils and stamens,—when he, as usual, challenged her to "prove it."

"Very well," said Charity, with dignity, and yet a little uneasily; "you bring the flowers, and I think I can satisfy Your Majesty."

Out he ran, and in a moment he came back, bearing defiantly a fine red-clover blossom.

"Ha, my lady!" he said, as he handed it to her. "There's the first flower I came to; now let's see you find your pistils and stamens and thingamies."

Instead of replying at once, Charity looked long and silently at the pretty flower in her hand. She seemed rather puzzled and crestfallen. Daniel David laughed aloud;

even Mrs. Danby and the poetic Amanda smiled.

"Oh!" said Charity, at last, with an air of great relief. "I see it now. How funny! I never thought of it before; but the clover-blossom isn't one flower at all—it's a good many flowers!"

"Ho! ho!" cried Daniel David. "That's a good one! You can't get out of it in that way, my lady. Can she, Ma?"

Ma didn't know. None of the rest knew; but they all crowded about Charity, while, with trembling fingers, she carefully pulled the blossom to pieces, and discovered that every piece was a flower. "See!" she exclaimed, eagerly. "Dozens of them, and every single one complete,—pistil and stamens and all! Oh, my! Isn't it wonderful?"

"I surrender," said Daniel David.

"But you've helped me to find out something that I didn't know before," said the enthusiastic sister, forgiving in an instant all his past taunting. "I wonder if Dorothy knows it. Let's go right over and ask her."

"Agreed," said Daniel David. "Wait till I dress up a bit." Off he ran, whistling, and in fifteen minutes he and Charity were with Dorry in the Reed sitting-room, examining the separated, tiny clover-flowers through Donald's microscope.

Dorothy explained to them that the clover-blossom or head is a compound flower, because a head is made up of many flowerets, each complete in itself.

But when she went further, and told them that not only the clover, but every dandelion and daisy in the field is made up of many flowers, even Charity appeared incredulous, saying: "What! Do you mean to say that the daisy, with its yellow centre and lovely white petals, is not a flower?"

"No, I don't mean that," said Dorry. "Of course, the daisy is a flower. But it is a compound flower. What you call white petals are not exactly petals. Anyhow, the yellow centre is made up of hundreds of very small flowers. That's what I mean. I

have seen them magnified, and they look like yellow lilies."

Daniel David hardly dared to say "prove it" to so elegant a creature as Dorry, but his countenance was so expressive of doubt that the president of the G. B. C. at once proposed that he should go and gather a dandelion and a daisy, for them to pull to pieces and then examine the parts under the microscope.

All of which would have come to pass had not Donald rushed into the house at that moment, calling:

"Dorry! Dorry! Come up on the hill! We're going to set up the targets."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHOOTING-MATCH.

The boys were to have a shooting-match.

The targets, eight in number, which had been made by the boys a few days before, were really fine affairs. They were painted on sheets of strong pasteboard, and were each about eighteen inches in diameter. Every circle, from the bull's-eye to the outer ring, was carefully made out, and all the targets were of exactly the same measurements. Eight rough tripods already awaited them at the shooting-range, and each tripod had its upright piece of eighteen-inch plank at the top, to which a pasteboard target was now to be firmly fastened.

On any ordinary occasion one or two tripods would have been sufficient, but on this special day there was to be a real "match," and a target to each man would be required, so that the contestants could show a clear record of every shot. Experience had proved this to be the best plan.

The spot selected for the shooting-range was well adapted to the purpose. It was a plateau or broad strip of level land, forming the summit of the long slope that rose from the apple-orchard back of the Reed mansion. At the rear or eastern limit of this

level land was a steep, grassy ridge, called by the D's the second hill.

Perhaps you will see the plateau more clearly if you read this description which Dorry afterward wrote in a letter to a friend at boarding-school:

"Don and the boys have made a rustic summer-house by an apple-tree on the second hill, back of the house. It's so high up that you can look across our place from it, and see the lake in front, and the village far down at the left. It is beautiful, at sunset, looking from the summer-house, for then the lake sometimes seems to be on fire, and the trees in the orchard between us and the road send long shadows that creep, creep up the hill as if they were alive. You see we really have two hills, and these are separated or joined, whichever you please, by a long level strip more than a hundred feet wide, forming a grassy terrace. I often imagine a long row of enormous giants resting there on the grass side by side, sitting on the great wide level place, with their backs leaning against the second hill, and their feet reaching nearly to the edge of the first hill. Now, I hope you understand. If you don't you will when you come here to visit me this fall. Well, it was on this level ground that we had the shooting-match I'm going to tell you about, and where something happened that I'll never, never forget as long as I live."

While Don and Ed, assisted by the doughty Daniel, are at work setting up the row of targets close to the base of the second hill, so that stray bullets may be safely buried in the soft earth-wall, and while Dorry and Charity are watching the boys from the shady summer-house, we may look into Mr. Reed's study.

He is sitting in his arm-chair by the window, but the warm breeze stealing through the closed blinds is not lulling him to repose; his face is troubled, and he holds something in his hand which he is studying intently, though it seems to give him no satisfaction. It is a small gold chain or necklace, with an old-fashioned square clasp. On a graceful mahogany stand close by are several articles carefully laid together near an open box, as though he had been examining them also. They were there

when Donald knocked at the door, a few moments ago, to ask his uncle to come up and see the arrangements for the shooting-match. But Mr. Reed, without unlocking the door, had said he was very busy, and begged Don to excuse him.

"Certainly, Uncle; but I'm sorry," Don had replied, and even while trudging up the hill with the targets his mind had been busy.

"What is the matter? Something is troubling Uncle George yet. I've noticed it very much of late. There's more to be told, and I must soon have a good square talk with him about it. There's no use in putting it off for ever.—We can't excuse him from the match though. Why, it would spoil the whole thing not to have Uncle see it.—Wouldn't it, Dot?" he asked aloud, as Dorry at that moment joined him.

"Wouldn't what?"

"Why, not to have Uncle here at the match."

"I don't understand," she said, looking puzzled.

"Why, the study door's locked and he's very busy. I was just thinking it would be a great shame if he shouldn't come up this afternoon at all."

"What a ridiculous idea!" said Dorry, with a light laugh. "Why, of course, Uncle will come. I'll bring him myself."

And she did.

Of all the merry company that came trooping up the green slope to the shooting-range that afternoon, not a brighter, happier-looking pair was seen than Mr. Reed and Dorry, as they joined the eager crowd of boys and girls. The little maid evidently had chased away his troubles for that day.

Donald was too busy to do much more than glance at them, but that glance did him good; his hearty "Ho, Uncle!" did Mr. Reed good, too.

After a careful inspection of the arrangements, and a few words with Don and the other boys concerning the necessary rules and restrictions for the general safety, Mr.

Reed retired to the rustic seat of honor that had been prepared for him. The other spectators stood near by, or settled themselves comfortably upon the turf.

Sailor Jack stood at a respectful distance with the smallest youngsters about him, explaining to them that they'd best "stand close, and keep a sharp lookout; for dry land was a pesky dang'rous place at all times, and now, with bullets flyin' about there was no tellin' what might happen. But if they wanted to see right clever shootin', they could just wait a bit; for Master Donald had the sharpest eye he ever see'd in any youngster on sea or shore."

There were to be eight contestants. All had arrived excepting Ben Buster. He had been invited to shoot, but had loftily replied that he had other affairs on hand, and he'd come if he could; and anyhow, they'd best have a substitute ready.

Mr. Reed's two rifles and Don's and Ed Tyler's were the only fire-arms to be used; for Mr. Reed had objected to a fully equipped party of young gunners ranging across his estate. But they were not like Creedmoor shooters, who must not only use their own special rifles, but must clean them after every shot. The Nestletown boys were used to trying borrowed weapons, and though a few had grumbled at a fellow not being allowed to bring his own gun, the spirit of sport prevailed, and every face wore a look of eager interest in the occasion.

Ben Buster was missing, but a substitute was soon found, and the match began in earnest, four on a side,—the Reds and the Blues,—each wearing ribbon badges of their respective color.

The Blues. Edward Tyler, Barry Outcalt, Theodore Hart, "Ben Buster."The Reds. Henry Jones, Will Burroughs, Frank Henderson, Donald Reed.

Dorry had made the four red rosettes and Josie Manning the four blue ones. Besides these, Josie had contributed, as a special prize to the best marksman, a beautiful gold scarf-pin, in the form of a tiny rifle, and the winner was thenceforth to be champion shot of the club, ready to hold the prize against all comers.

Ed Tyler had carefully marked off the firing line at a distance of forty paces, or about one hundred feet from the targets; and it had been agreed that the eight boys should fire in regular order,—first a Blue, then a Red, one shot at a turn, until each had fired fifteen times in all. This was a plan of their own, "so that no fellow need wait all day for his turn." In the "toss-up" for the choice of targets and to decide the order of shooting, the Reds had won; and they had chosen to let the Blues lead off.

As Ed Tyler was a "Blue," and Don a "Red," they found themselves opponents for once. Both were considered "crack shots," but Don soon discovered that he had a more powerful rival in another of the "Blues"—one Barry Outcalt, son of the village doctor. It soon became evident that the main contest lay between these two, but Don had gained on his competitor in the sixth round by sending a fourth bullet into the bull's-eye, to Barry's second, when Ben Buster was seen strolling up the hill. Instantly his substitute, a tall, nervous fellow, nicknamed Spindle, proposed to resign in Ben's favor, and the motion was carried by acclamation,—the Blues hoping everything, and the Reds fearing nothing, from the change.

Master Buster was so resolute and yet comical, in his manner, that everyone felt there would be fun if he took part. Seeing how matters stood as to the score, he gave a knowing wink to Barry Outcalt, and said he "didn't mind pitchin' in." He had never distinguished himself at target practice, but he had done a good deal of what Dorry called "real shooting" in the West. Besides, he was renowned throughout the neighborhood as a successful rabbit-hunter.

Shuffling to his position, he stood in such a shambling, bow-legged sort of an attitude that even the politest of the girls smiled; and those who were specially anxious that the Reds should win felt more than ever confident of success.

If Don had begun to flatter himself that it was to be an easy victory, he was mistaken. He still led the rest; but for every good shot he made after that, Ben had already put a companion hole, or its better, in his own target. The girls clapped; the

boys shouted with excitement. Every man of the contestants felt the thrill of the moment.

The Blues did their best; and with Outcalt and Ben on that side, Don soon found that he had heavy work to do. Moreover, just at this stage of the shooting, one of the Reds seemed to contract a sudden ambition to dot the extreme outer edge of his target. This made the Blues radiant, and would have disconcerted the Reds but for Don's nerve and pluck. He resolved that, come what might, he would keep cool; and his steadiness inspired his comrades.

"Crack!" went Don's rifle, and the bull's-eye winked in response. A perfect shot!

"Crack!" went Ed's, beginning a fresh round, and his bull's-eye didn't wink. The second ring, however, showed the bullet's track.

"Crack!" The next Red left his edge-dot on the target, as usual.

"Crack!" went Outcalt's rifle, and the rim of the bull's-eye felt it.

Will Burrough's bullet went straight to the left edge of the centre.

Hart, the third Blue, sent a shot between targets, clean into the earth-wall.

"Crack!" went the next Red. Poor Henderson! His target made no sign.

Ben Buster, the Blue, now put in his third centre shot. He was doing magnificently.

In this round, and in the next, Donald hit the centre, but it was plain that his skill alone would not avail to win the match, unless his comrades should "brace up," and better their shots; so he tried a little generalship. He urged each of the three in turn not to watch the score of the enemy at all, nor to regard the cheers of the Blues, but to give attention solely to making his own score as high as possible. This advice helped them, and soon the Reds once more were slightly ahead of the Blues, but the advantage was not sufficient to insure them a victory. As the final rounds drew near, the interest became intense. Each marksman was the object of all eyes, as he stepped up to the firing-line, and the heat of the contest caused some wild shooting; yet the

misses were so evenly divided between the two companies that the score remained almost a tie.

Ed Tyler advanced to the firing-line. His shot gave the Blues' score a lift.

Now for the rim-dotter. He pressed his lips together, braced every nerve, was two whole minutes taking aim, and this time put his dot very nearly in the centre!

Outcalt was bewildered. He had been so sure Jones would hit the rim, as usual, that now he seemed bound to do it in Jones's stead. Consequently, his bullet grazed the target and hid its face in the earth-wall.

The second Red fired too hastily, and failed.

Third Blue—a bull's eye!

Third Red—an "outer."

Ben Buster stepped to the line. The Blues cheered as he raised his gun. He turned with a grand bow, and levelled his piece once more. But triumph is not always victory. His previous fine shooting had aroused his vanity, and now the girls' applause quite flustered him. He missed his aim! Worse still, not being learned in the polite art of mastering his feelings, he became vexed, and in the next round actually missed his target entirely.

Poor shooting is sometimes "catching." Now, neither Reds nor Blues distinguished themselves, until finally only one shot was left to be fired on each side; and, so close was the contest, those two shots would decide the day.

It lay between Ben Buster and Donald.

Each side felt sure that its champion would score a bull's-eye, and if both should accomplish this, the Reds would win by two counts. But if Ben should hit the bull's-eye, and Don's bullet should fall outside of even the very innermost circle, the Blues would be the victors. It was simply a question of nerve. Ben Buster, proud of his importance, marched to position, feeling sure of a bull's-eye. But, alas, for

over-confidence! The shot failed to reach that paradise of bullets, but fell within the first circle, and so near the bull's-eye that it was likely to make the contest a tie, unless Donald should score a centre.

Don had now achieved the feat of gaining nine bull's-eyes out of a possible fifteen. He must make it ten, and that with a confusing chorus of voices calling to him: "Another bull's-eye, Don!" "One more!" "He can't do it!" "Fire lower!" "Fire higher!" "Don't miss!"

It was a thrilling moment, and any boy would have been excited. Don was. He felt his heart thump and his face flush, as he stepped up to the firing-line. Turning for an instant he saw Dorry looking at him proudly, and as she caught his glance, she gave her head a saucy, confident little toss as if sure that he would not miss.

"Ay! ay! Dot," said Don under his breath; and, reassured by her confidence, he calmly raised the gun to his shoulder and took careful aim.

It seemed an age to the spectators before the report broke upon the sudden hush of expectation. Then, those who were watching Don saw him bend his head forward with a quick motion, and for a second peer anxiously at the target. Then he drew back carelessly, but with a satisfaction that he could not quite conceal.

A few moments later, the excited Reds came running up, wildly waving Don's target in their arms. His last bullet had been the finest shot of the day, having struck the very centre of the bull's-eye. Even Ben cheered. The Reds had won. Donald was the acknowledged champion of the club.

But it was trying to three of the Reds, and to the Blues worse than the pangs of defeat, to see that pretty Josie Manning pin the little golden rifle on the lapel of Donald's coat.

Little he thought, amid the cheering and the merry breaking-up that followed, how soon his steadiness of hand would be taxed in earnest!

Mr. Reed, after pleasantly congratulating the winning side and complimenting the

Blues upon being so hard to conquer, walked quickly homeward in earnest conversation with Sailor Jack.

CHAPTER XXI.

DANGER.

The company slowly dispersed. Some of the young folk cut across lots to their homes; others, remembering errands yet to be attended to in the village, directed their course accordingly. And finally, a group of five boys, including Donald and Ed Tyler, started off, being the last to leave the shooting-range. They were going down the hill toward the house, talking excitedly about the match, and were just entering the little apple-orchard between the hill and the house, when they espied, afar off, a large dog running toward them.

The swiftness and peculiar gait of the animal attracted their attention, and, on a second look, they noted how strangely the creature hung its head as it ran.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Don, "there's something wrong there. See! He's frothing at the mouth. It's a mad dog!"

"That's so!" cried Ed. "Hurry, boys! Make for the trees!"

A glance told them plainly enough that Don was right. This was a terrible foe, indeed, for a party of boys to encounter. But the apple-trees were about them, and all the boys, good and bad climbers alike, lost not a moment in scrambling up into the branches.

All but Donald: he, too, had started for one of the nearest trees, when suddenly it occurred to him that the girls had not all left the second hill. Most of them had quitted the range in a bevy, when the match was over; but two or three had wandered off to the summer-house, under the apple-tree, where they had been discussing the affairs and plans of the Botany Club. Don knew they were there, and

he remembered the old ladder that leaned against the tree; but the dog was making straight for the hill, and would be upon them before they could know their danger! Could he warn them in time? He would, at least, try. With a shout to his companions: "The girls! the girls!" he turned and ran toward the hill at his utmost speed, the dog following, and the boys in the trees gazing upon the terrible race, speechless with dread.

Donald felt that he had a good start of his pursuer, however, and he had his gun in his hand; but it was empty. Luckily, it was a repeating-rifle; and so, without abating his speed, he hastily took two cartridges from his jacket and slipped them into the chamber of the gun.

"I'll climb a tree and shoot him!" he said to himself, "if only I can warn the girls out of the way."

"Girls! Girls!" he screamed. But as he looked up, he saw, descending the hill and sauntering toward him, his sister and Josie Manning, absorbed in earnest conversation.

At first he could not utter another sound, and he feared that his knees would sink under him. But the next instant he cried out with all his might:

"Back! Back! Climb the tree, for your lives! Mad dog! Mad dog!"

The two girls needed no second warning. The sight of the dreadful object speeding up the slope in Donald's tracks was enough. They ran as they never had run before, reached the tree in time, and, with another girl whom they met and warned, clambered, breathless, up the ladder to the sheltering branches.

Then all their fears centred upon Donald, who by this time had reached the plateau just below them, where the shooting-match had been held. He turned to run toward the apple-tree, when, to the horror of all, his foot slipped, and he fell prostrate. Instantly he was up again, but he had not time to reach the tree. The dog already was over the slope, and was making toward him at a rapid, swinging gait, its tongue out,

its bloodshot eyes plainly to be seen, froth about the mouth, and the jaws opening and shutting in vicious snaps.

Dorry could not stand it; she started to leave the tree, but fell back with closed eyes, while the other girls clung, trembling, to the branches, pale and horrified.

To the credit of Donald be it said, he faced the danger like a man. He felt that the slightest touch of those dripping jaws would bring death, but this was the time for action.

Hastily kneeling behind a stump, he said to himself: "Now, Donald Reed, they say you're a good shot. Prove it!" And steadying his nerves with all the resolution that was in him, he levelled his rifle at the advancing dog and fired.

To his relief, the poor brute faltered and dropped—dead, as Don thought. But it was only wounded; and, staggering to its feet again, it made another dash forward.

"DON LEVELLED HIS RIFLE AND FIRED." "DON LEVELLED HIS RIFLE AND FIRED."

Don was now so encouraged, so thankful that his shot had been true, that, as he raised his gun a second time, he scarcely realized his danger, and was almost as cool as if firing at the target on the range, although the dog was now barely a dozen feet away. This was the last chance. The flash leaped from his rifle, and at the same moment Donald sprang up and ran for the tree as fast as his legs could carry him. But, before the smoke had cleared, a happy cry came from the girls in the tree. He glanced back, to see the dog lying motionless upon the ground.

Quickly reloading his gun, and never taking his finger from the trigger, he cautiously made his way back to the spot. But there was nothing to fear now. He found the poor brute quite dead, its hours of agony over.

The group that soon gathered around looked at it and at one another without saying a word. Then Dorry spoke: "Stand back, everybody! It's dangerous to go too near. I've often heard that."

A hint was sufficient. Indeed, the shuddering girls already had turned away, and the boys now drew aside, though with rather an incredulous air.

"It ought to be buried deep, just where it lies," suggested Ed; and Donald, nodding a silent assent, added, aloud: "Poor fellow! Whose dog can he be?"

"Why it's our General!" cried one of the boys. "As sure as I live it is! He was well yesterday." Then, turning pale, he added: "Oh, I must go right home—"

"Go with him, some of you fellows," Don said, gravely; "and Dot, suppose you run and let Uncle know. Ask him if we shall bury it right here."

"He will say 'yes,' of course," cried Dot, excitedly, as she started off. "I'll send Jack right back with spades."

"Yes; but tell Uncle!" Don shouted after her.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FROLIC ON THE WATER.

Donald had won the gratitude of many Nestletown fathers and mothers, and had raised himself not a little in the estimation of the younger folk, by his encounter with the rabid dog. That it was a case of hydrophobia was settled by the testimony of some wagoners, who had seen the poor animal running across the road, but who, being fearful of having their horses bitten, had not attempted to stop him. Though all felt sorry for "General," everybody rejoiced that he had been put out of his misery, and that he had not bitten any one in his mad run through the fields.

As the summer advanced, and base-ball and running-matches proved to be too warm work for the season, the young folk naturally took to the water. Swimming and boating became the order of the day, and the night too; for, indeed, boats shot hither and thither through many a boy's sleep, confounding him with startling surprises and dreamland defeats and victories. But the lake sports of their waking hours were more

under control. Donald and Ed Tyler, as usual, were among the most active in various contests with the oars; and as Donald believed that no event was absolutely complete if Dorry were not among either the actors or the spectators, boat-racing soon grew to be as interesting to the girls as to the boys.

The races usually were mild affairs—often impromptu, or sometimes planned in the morning and carried into effect the same afternoon. Now and then, something more ambitious was attempted: boys in rowing suits practised intently for days beforehand, while girls, looking on, formed their own not very secret opinions as to which rowers were most worthy of their support. Some went so far as to wear a tiny bit of ribbon by way of asserting allegiance to this or that crew, which sported the same color in cap, uniform, or flag. This, strange to say, did not act in the least as "a damper" on the pastime; even the fact that girls became popular as coxswains did not take the life out of it; all of which, as Dorry said, served to show the great hardihood and endurance of the boy-character.

After a while, Barry Outcalt, Benjamin Buster, and three others concocted a plot. The five held meetings in secret to complete their arrangements, and these meetings were enlivened with much smothered laughter. It was to be a "glorious joke." A boat-race, of course; and there must be a great show of previous practice, tremendous rivalry, and pressing competition, so that a strong feeling of partisanship would be aroused; while in truth, the race itself was to be a sham. The boats were to reach the goal at the same moment, nobody was to win, yet every one was to claim the victory; the air was to be rent with cries of "foul!" and spurious shouts of triumph, accompanied by vehement demands for a "fresh try." Then a second start was to be made—One, two, three, and off! All was to go well at first, and when the interest of the spectators was at its height, every eye strained and every heart almost at a standstill with excitement, two of the boats were to "foul," and the oarsman of one, in the most tragic and thrilling manner, was to fall over into the astonished lake. Then, amid the screams of the girls and scenes of wild commotion, he was to be

rescued, put into his empty boat again, limp and dripping—and then, to everybody's amazement, disregarding his soaked garments and half-drowned state, he was suddenly to take to the oars in gallant style, and come in first at the close, rowing magnificently.

So ran the plot—a fine one truly. The five conspirators were delighted, and each fellow solemnly promised to stand by the rest, and not to breathe a word about it until the "sell" should be accomplished. So far, so good. Could the joke be carried out successfully? As the lake was public property, it was not easy for the two "fouling" boys to find opportunities for practising their parts. To make two boats collide at a given instant, so as to upset one and spill its occupant in a purely "accidental" way, required considerable dexterity. Ben Buster had a happy thought. Finding himself too clumsy to be the chief actor, he proposed that they should strengthen their force by asking Donald Reed to join the conspiracy. He urged that Don, being the best swimmer among the boys, was therefore best fitted to manage the fall into the water. Outcalt, on his part, further suggested that Ed Tyler was too shrewd to be a safe outsider. He might suspect, and spoil everything. Better make sure of this son of a lawyer by taking him into the plan, and appointing him sole judge and referee.

Considerable debate followed—the pros urging that Don and Ed were just the fellows wanted, and the cons insisting that neither of the two would be willing to take part. Ben, as usual, was the leading orator. He was honestly proud of Don's friendship, and as honestly scornful of any intimation that Don's better clothes and more elegant manners enhanced or hindered his claims to the high Buster esteem. Don was a good fellow, he insisted,—the right sort of a chap,—and that was all there was about it. All they had to do was to let him, Ben, fetch Don and Ed round that very day, and he'd guarantee they'd be found true blue, and no discounting.

This telling eloquence prevailed. It was voted that the two new men should be

invited to join. And join they did.

Though Donald generally disliked practical joking, he yielded this time. As nobody was to be hurt, he entered heartily into the plot, impelled both by his native love of fun and by a brotherly willingness to play an innocent joke upon Dorry, who, with Josie Manning, he knew would surely be among the most interested of all the victimized spectators.

A number of neat circulars, announcing the race and the names of the six contestants, with their respective colors, were written by the boys, and after being duly signed by Ed Tyler, as referee, were industriously distributed among the girls and boys.

On the appointed afternoon, therefore, a merry crowd met at a deserted old house on the lake-shore. It had a balcony overlooking the place where the race was to begin and end.

This old building was the rendezvous of young Nestletown during boating hours; indeed, it was commonly called "the boat-house." Having been put up long years before the date of our story, it had fallen into a rather dilapidated condition when the Nestletown young folk appropriated it; but it had not suffered at their hands. On the contrary, it had been carefully cleared of its rubbish; and with its old floors swept clean, its broken windows flung open to air and sunlight, and its walls decorated with bright-colored sun-bonnets and boating flags, it presented quite a festive appearance when the company assembled in it on the day of the race.

Fortunately, its ample piazza was strong, in spite of old age and the fact that its weather-stained and paintless railing had for years been nicked, carved, and autographed by the village youngsters. It was blooming enough, on this sunny Saturday, with its freight of expectant girls and boys, many of the first-named wearing the colors of their favorites among the contestants.

The doughty six were in high spirits—every man of them having a colored 'kerchief

tied about his head, and sporting bare, sinewy arms calculated to awe the beholder. Don was quite superb. So were Ben Buster and young Outcalt. Many a girl was deeply impressed by their air of gravity and anxiety, not suspecting that it was assumed for the occasion, while the younger boys looked on in longing admiration. Ed, as starter, umpire, judge, referee, and general superintendent, rowed out with dignity, and anchored a little way from shore. The six, each in his shining boat, rowed into line, taking their positions for the start. The stake-boat was moored about a third of a mile up the lake, and the course of the race was to be from the starting-line to the stake-boat, around it, and back.

The balcony fluttered and murmured as Ed Tyler shouted to the six rowers, waiting with uplifted oars:

"Are you ready?—ONE, TWO, THREE—GO!"

On the instant, every oar struck the water, the six boats crossed the line together, and the race began.

No flutter in the balcony now; the spectators were too intent.

Not for a moment could they imagine that it was not a genuine race. Every man appeared to bend to his work with a will. Soon Ben Buster, with long, sweeping strokes, went laboriously ahead; and now Outcalt and another passed him superbly, side by side. Then Don's steady, measured stroke distanced the three, and as he turned the stake-boat his victory was evident, not only to Dorothy, but to half the spectators. Not yet. A light-haired, freckled fellow in a blue 'kerchief, terribly in earnest, spun around the stake-boat and soon left Don behind; then came the quick, sharp stroke of Ben Buster nerved for victory, closely followed by Steuby Butler, who astonished everybody; and then, every man rowing as if by super-human exertion, inspired by encouraging cries from the balcony, they crowded closer and closer.

"Ben's ahead!" cried the balcony, confusedly.

"No, Donald Reed has gained on him!"

"Don't you see! it's Outcalt! Outcalt will win!"

"No, I tell you it's Butler!"—And then, before any one could see how it was done, the boats, all six of them, were at the line, oars were flourished frantically, the judge and referee was shouting himself hoarse, and the outcry and tumult on the water silenced the spectators on the land. Cries of: "Not fair!" "Not fair!" "It won't do!" "Have it again!" "Hold up!" "I won't stand such work!" culminated in riotous disorder. Seven voices protesting, shouting, and roaring together made the very waters quiver.

But Tyler was equal to the occasion. Standing in his boat, in the identical position shown in the picture of "Washington Crossing the Delaware," he managed to quiet the tumult, and ordered that the race should be rowed over again.

Once more the boats were in line. Again the umpire shouted: "Are you ready?" and again the crowd fluttered and murmured with expectation as every boat dashed forward.

But what was this? Dorry and Josie, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, moving rapidly as they could among the crowding spectators, and whispering urgent words that evidently produced a strong sensation.

Still the boats pressed on, every rower apparently outdoing himself, if not outdoing everything else. If cheers and shouts had inspired them before, the intense silence now was even more inspiring. Could anything have succeeded better? With every show of exertion, the rascals managed to slacken or quicken as the case required, until, when nearly home, they were all close together.

THE CONSPIRATORS' PLOT IS CARRIED INTO EFFECT. THE CONSPIRATORS' PLOT IS CARRIED INTO EFFECT.

It was glorious! They never had known such fun in their lives. Now for the grand business!

Donald and Outcalt came together with a crash—a perfect "foul!" One masterly effort—over went Don's boat and over went Don, headlong into the water!

The boys in the other boats did beautifully, crowding about and, in spite of Don's wild struggles, catching him with oars and arms, never hearing the screams of the girls in the suppressed mirth and wild activity of the moment, but getting Don into his boat again, limp and dripping; and finally, with real dramatic zeal, carrying out their entire plan—too busy and delighted with success to note its effect upon the crowd of spectators. Everything worked to perfection. Don, scorning his half-drowned state, dripping and uncomfortable as he was, had sprung suddenly to his oars, and in dead earnest had won the race, against every mock-earnest competitor, and—

What do you think?

When those six oarsmen, including the victor, looked up to receive the acclamations of the crowd, white with the waving of pocket-handkerchiefs, they heard only—silence; saw nothing but an empty piazza. Not a spectator was to be seen—not even a face at a window—not a single eye peering through a crack. Worse than all, their judge and referee was in the bottom of his boat, kicking with merriment. He had strength only to point to the boat-house and gasp, between his bursts of laughter:

"Not a soul there!—they found us out!—went off before Don's ducking!"

The boat-house was, in truth, deserted. After the mysterious movements and whisperings of Dorry and Josie, every boy and girl had sped away on tiptoe; and down in a hollow grove near the road, where they could not even see the water, they were chatting and giggling and having the very best kind of a time—all because they had turned the tables on the gallant seven.

It was now well understood by these spectators who had deserted their post, that a second mock race had been carried on without a single eye-witness, and the thought

was rapture. How much more they would have enjoyed it had they known of the difficult "foul," of Donald's headlong plunge, and of the subsequent frantic and exhaustive contest of rowing!

So much for carrying out one mock race and starting another in the presence of somebody named Dorothy, who first had suspected and then had been morally sure that those boys were playing a trick! When four of them crossed the line at once, her suspicions were aroused. "I do believe they're fooling!" she had said to herself, and then, remembering certain mysterious conferences that Don and some others of the "seven" had been holding, coupled with a sly look or two that she had seen exchanged by the contestants, she had jumped to the correct conclusion. As she afterwards expressed it to Ed Tyler, she had seen through it all in a flash.

Misery loves company. Those seven boys, from that day, had a peculiar tenderness for one another. They were linked by a hidden bond; and while they laughed heartily at their own expense, and tacitly confessed themselves beaten, they compelled all outsiders to be satisfied with guessing and with hints of the catastrophe that somehow came to light. Not one of them ever disclosed all the facts of the case,—the secret sessions, the frequent upset-practisings on cloudy evenings, the difficulty of the final performance, and the full sum of their defeat.

Ben, usually a kind brother, was sternness itself so far as the great race was concerned. Not one of the juvenile Danbys dared to allude to it in his august presence. Only on one occasion did he unbend, and that was when little Fandy ventured to observe that he ought to have heard what one of the girls had said about him in the race. This remark rankled even in that stony bosom. The more Ben Buster tried not to care, the more it tortured him. To make matters worse, he had betrayed himself too soon to the sagacious Fandy. In vain the big brother cajoled the little one; in vain, at cautious intervals, he tried the effect of indirect bribes and hidden threats. The more he desired to know what that girl had said, the more Fandy

wouldn't tell him. At last he triumphed. In a yielding moment, when Ben had been touchingly kind, the grateful youngster let it out:

"You want t' know what that girl said? It was a compliment! She said: 'How splendid your brother Ben can row!' He! he! Now lend me your gimlet just a minute!"

Ah, that dignified Ben! Not for the world would he have had the small child know how those words thrilled him.

"Dorothy Reed said it! It sounds like her," was Ben's ecstatic thought; but to poor Fandy's surprise and disappointment, he only muttered aloud: "There, there, that's a good little boy. Go and play!"

BEN'S CIDER EXPERIENCE. BEN'S CIDER EXPERIENCE.

Many a time after that, in the sanctity of the lonely fields, did Ben, rather sheepishly, repeat to himself the bewitching phrase:

"How splendid your brother Ben can row!"

Judge, then, of his feelings, when one Sunday in September, Master Fandy whispered to him, rather loudly, while coming out of church, "There she is" (pointing to a pretty little tot of seven summers)—"that's the very girl who said it!"

Ben stared at her, speechless with disgust.

"I might have known," he thought, "that the little goose would call a baby like that, a girl!"

So much for Ben's private feelings. Concerning the race, the six—among themselves—enjoyed exceedingly the unexpected recoil of their little joke. I say six, for in this matter Ed Tyler was unanimously suspected by the others of being on the fence. They never could tell whether he was laughing at them or with them. Donald was sure that it was the very best thing he ever heard of in his life. Outcalt protested he wouldn't have missed it for the world; and Ben Buster, laughing rather ruefully, declared that he never knew the "beat of it" but once; and that was one day when he

had slipped into Jones's cider-yard and taken a good, long drink, through a straw, from a barrel marked "sweet cider," as he thought. "I tell you, fellows," was Ben's concluding remark, "if I wasn't sold that time, I'll give in. I was so warm and thirsty that I took a good, long pull before I found out that it wasn't cider at all, but vinegar, sour enough to take a man's head off. What made it worse was, the barrel was marked 'sweet-cider vinegar,' after all. It's a blamed shame the way a fellow gets caught sometimes!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

YANKEE AND DOODLE.

Donald and Dorothy exchanged but four words on the subject of the sham race after it was over, but these were very expressive:

Donald."Well, madam!"

Dorothy."Well, sir!"

Their sparkling looks, Donald's tone of accusation and injured innocence, Dorothy's playful, rather defiant, air of triumph, said the rest. Uncle George, who was present at the interview, having previously heard both sides of the story from the D's separately, was much amused. In fact, he laughed aloud in quite an undignified manner, and so did they.

The next day brought news of Dr. Lane, their old tutor, who had been living for several months in South Carolina. He was better—indeed quite well again, and having lately accepted the position of principal of the boys' academy at F——, about ten miles from Nestletown, he proposed taking up his abode there immediately.

"Oh, Don," said Dorry, as she folded the letter; "I've an idea!"

"I cannot believe it," exclaimed Don, in well-feigned surprise.

"Yes, but I have," she insisted. "Dr. Lane will be at F—— by Friday. Let us ride

over on Dood and Yankee and give him a welcome!"

"Agreed!"

Friday came, full of sunshine, and in a fresh, breezy way, as if to say, "Now for the ride!"—at least, so it seemed to Dorry.

Lydia, who was shaking rugs over the wide piazza railing, was pleased to salute Sailor Jack as he led the ponies, saddled and ready, to the door. Fine ponies they were, too, large of their kind, glossy black, with flowing tail and mane. Uncle George had given them to the D's, on the Fourth of July of the previous summer; and in honor of the day they had been named Yankee and Doodle. Yankee, being the more spirited, was given to Don, and Doodle, by no means a lamb, became the special pride and property of Dorry.

"Good-morrow to you, Mistress Blum!" said Jack, in a subdued though airy way, returning Lydia's nod. "Are the middies ready?"

"If you mean the twins, I presume they are, Mr. Jack. Have you looked carefully to Miss Dorothy's saddle?"

"Not extra," he answered, in an aggravating tone—first looking up at the windows to be sure that none of the family were near; "think the girth's 'most broke; 't ain't worth while to be too pertickler."

"Yes, it is; you'd better make sure of saddle and bridle too, I can tell you. Miss Dorry'll ride twenty miles, and more, before sundown."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Sailor Jack, still bent on teasing her. "Hadn't you better come down, Mistress Blum, an' see to it that the pony's legs is on good and tight? It would be dreadful if one on 'em was to tumble off, now."

Lydia laughed. "Oh, but you're a funny man, Mister Jack! Well, I needn't worry. You're even worse about Miss Dorry than I am, bless her!—Hush, here they are!"

Off went Jack's hat, though he had to hold the two bridle-reins with one hand to

accomplish it.

"Up-a-daisy!" he exclaimed, as Dorry, assisted by Donald, sprang lightly to her saddle. "It's a splendid day for a ride, Miss!"

"Yes, indeed," said Dorry, looking about her with bright, happy eyes, as she stroked her pony's neck.

Uncle George came out upon the piazza. By this time Don was on Yankee's back, dexterously making him appear as spirited as possible; whereat Dorry's steed began to prance also.

"Good-by, Uncle! Good-by, Jack and Liddy!" cried Dorry, waving her whip and looking back with a smiling face.

"Good-by!" shouted Don; and they cantered off—glad to be together, glad to breathe the bright, clear air, glad at the prospect of a good gallop over the hills.

Uncle George, Liddy, and Jack looked after them proudly, till the road turned and the sound of hoofs died in the distance. Jack was the first to speak.

"Ay! but they're a pretty pair, Capt'n!"

Mr. Reed nodded a happy assent.

"An' do you know, sir, I'm fancyin' of late they're growin' liker to one another."

"Ah?" said Mr. Reed, well pleased. "In what way?"

"Why, in feature, sir, an' manners, an' most ev'ry way."

"Why shouldn't they favor one another," remarked Lydia—"bein' twins? Yet, some way, I don't see it myself, sir, as plain as I might. Shall I serve dinner on the back porch, Mr. George?"

"Well, yes, Lydia, as I shall be alone. The birds and trees will be good company for me."

And so the three separated.

Meanwhile, the D's cantered on, happy as—I was going to say, as birds, but they were happier even than birds; they were happy as happy brothers and sisters.

For a while they galloped in silence, Don often going so far ahead that he had to wait for Dorry to catch up; then, when the road was specially pleasant and shady, they rode leisurely, side by side, laughing and chatting. The day was so fine, and they saw so much to interest them, and there were so many things to talk about, that the ten-mile ride to F—— was accomplished almost before they were aware of it.

Leaving the ponies in the yard of the pretty hotel, to be fed and cared for, they enjoyed a hearty luncheon, and then proceeded on foot to the Academy near by—Dorry deftly carrying the train of her riding-habit over her arm, and snapping her riding-whip softly as she tripped beside her companion. Fortunately, the path was well shaded, and the dust had been laid by showers of the night before.

Dr. Lane was surprised and delighted to see them so soon after his arrival. He had many interesting things to tell them, and they in turn, rather shyly but heartily, related the main incidents of the past months, and gave him some account of their present course of study.

Then they all went through the Academy building, which, as it was vacation, was now being cleaned and made ready for the fall term. Globes, maps, blackboards, collections of minerals, electric machines, patent desks, dining-room, and dormitory passed before them in rapid succession, figuratively speaking; afterward they went up to the cupola to see the view, and finally settled themselves on the large front porch to rest.

Then, and not till then, they noticed a change. Light clouds were gathering; the sun still was shining, but it was shining under difficulties, as Dorry observed, and the air was heavy and sultry.

"It's going to rain, Professor," said Don, rising from his seat on the steps of the porch. "I think we'll have to go now."

"Yes, indeed," said Dorry, in her impulsive way; "we've no time to lose, either. Good-by, Professor. What shall we say to Uncle for you?"

"Give Mr. Reed my hearty regards, and tell him I hope to see him at Nestletown very soon."

"Yes, thank you," said Dorry, starting toward the gate. "Good-by. Come, Donald, we may be able to get home before it rains hard."

The Professor joined her at once, and the three were soon at the hotel. At first it seemed best to wait until the approaching shower should be over; but, as the clouds grew no darker, and the ponies evidently were ready for a brisk run, it was decided that they should try a race with the shower, and see which could get home first.

The shower beat. They were not half-way home when, just after crossing the railroad, with its cottage-like station in sight, the sky darkened rapidly and a big drop fell upon Donald's nose.

"We're in for it!" he cried. "Whip up, Dot! We'll make for the station."

Reaching the station, and finding themselves still dry, in spite of the warning thunder, they decided to hurry on to the next stopping-place.

This was Vanbogen's, a little country inn about half a mile farther, where they could be housed if necessary, and the horses be sheltered also. A sudden flash gave point to their determination. On they sped, the lightning now dancing ahead of them, and the thunder rolling on apace.

"It's a race for life," thought Dorry, in high spirits—so pleased to have an adventure that she forgot to dread the threatening shower. Yankee and Dood did nobly; abandoning their canter, they galloped on, neck and neck, while their riders carried on a panting sort of conversation concerning the new turn of things, and the prospects of reaching home before dark.

"What mat—ter if—we don't?" said Dorry, her voice almost lost in the rumbling

thunder; "Yankee—and Dood—can find—the way—if it's—pitch dark."

"But, Uncle—ex-pected—us by—"

"Well—he'll know—what keeps—us."

"Plucky girl!" thought Don, admiring her bright cheeks and graceful air as she at that moment dashed by.

Yankee, on principle, never let Dood beat him. In the commotion of the thunder and lightning, it seemed to Donald that a livelier race had begun; but, the next instant he realized that Dorry's pony had halted, and his own was some paces ahead.

Turning at Dorry's call, he saw that something was the matter. Dood limped painfully for a few steps, then stopped.

"He's hurt his foot," cried Dorry. "It wasn't a stumble; he tripped. Poor Dood!" she added, as the pony's head turned pitifully toward her, "you must go on now."

Dood tried, but it was slow work. He grew lamer at every step. Don, noticing that one of the pony's fore-shoes was loose, dismounted and tried to take it off, but it would not come. A turn in the road disclosed Vanbogen's not far away. By this time, slanting lines of rain showed against the trees.

"It's going to storm in earnest, Dot; you'll get soaking wet!" said Don.

"Not I," chirped Dorry. "My riding-habit is water-proof. You'll be the wet one. Hurry ahead, Don. Dood and I will be there as soon as we can. I do hope he isn't hurt seriously. Oh, Don, do hurry!"

But Don wouldn't and Dood couldn't. If the shower had not paused to take breath before making its grand dash, they certainly would have been drenched.

As it was, they hardly had dismounted at the inn before the rain came down in torrents.

"Dear me!" said Dorry, shaking her riding-skirt, as she sprang into the bare hall, "our saddles will get soaked!" But a negro, in a blue-checked jacket, already was

leading the steeds to shelter.

It was a very shabby house at the best of times, but it was particularly dreary now. Dorry was sure she never before had seen anything so dismal as the damp little parlor into which Donald escorted her. The closed blinds, the mouldy, bumpy sofa, the faded-green table-cover, the stained matting, the low-spirited rocking-chair with one arm broken off, and the cracked, dingy wall-paper oppressed her strangely.

"What a horrid place!" she exclaimed in an awe-struck whisper to Don, as a flash of lightning shone through the blinds. "Let us go!"

"Don't mind it, Dot," he answered. "We'll start as soon as the shower is over. Wait here awhile, and I'll run and see what we're to do about the pony. Would you like to have a cup of hot tea?" he added, looking back as he left the room.

"Mercy, no!" said Dorry, "not here!"

They both laughed. "It's fun, after all," thought the young girl as he went out. "I don't mind anything as long as Don's around, the dear old fellow!"

Vanbogen's seemed deserted. She had noticed a solitary hen stepping daintily across the long wet stoop as she entered, and a woman, going up stairs, had turned to stare at her. A sound of men's voices, too, had reached her from a closed room opposite the parlor, yet she felt strangely alone. For company's sake she examined some faded ambrotypes, that stood upright in their half-opened cases on a table between the windows. The ghastly things made her only more lonely.

At that moment, hearing a clicking sound, she raised her head, and saw a man's face outside looking at her through the blinds. The slats closed sharply, when she moved back.

"How nervous I am!" she thought, with a slight shiver. "A pretty traveller I'd make!"

Donald soon came in.

"Here's a fine piece of business!" he said. "Dood has really injured his foot in some

way—sprained, I suppose. It is swollen, and evidently pains him very much. I've sent for a man who claims to be a veterinary surgeon. No, indeed, no use in your going out there, Dot; the men appear to be doing all they can for him. It's out of the question for us to travel with that pony to-night; the last train that stops at this one-horse station has gone by, and I can't get a carriage anywhere."

"Can't you hire a horse, then, for yourself? Put my saddle on Yankee; I can ride him."

"Can't get a horse, either. They've only one, and he's out for the whole afternoon."

"Let's walk then. The shower is nearly over. It's only five miles."

"Good!" said Don. "But no—Yankee can carry you, and I'll trot alongside on foot;" and he hastened out to have the side-saddle put on Yankee.

To Dorry's amazement, Donald came back in a few minutes, looking flushed and excited. "I've taken a room for you, Dot; come up stairs—quick."

"But I don't want a room. I—"

"Yes, you do; you'll need to rest. Come right up," he insisted in a low voice, hastily locking the parlor door behind him, and almost pulling her toward the stairs. "I'll tell you up there; come quick."

They ran up together. "What's the matter?" she asked on the way. "What have you heard?"

"Oh, nothing at all," he said, as he stepped into a room shabby with ragged matting and worn-out furniture; then, closing the door, he added: "Dorry, you must go away from this place at once. Don't ask any questions! Oh, it's nothing much, Dot," as he noticed her alarm; "but this is a rough sort of place, you see, and of course I can't go away and leave Dood here with these fellows. The sooner you get off, the better. I'll bring Yankee round to the back door at the end of the hall, so as not to attract attention. Lock your door while I'm gone, and when I come back, hurry down with

me, jump on Yankee, and be off without a word."

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, half inclined to laugh, but he was gone.

She turned the key in the lock and ran to the window, pulling its green-paper shade aside. Nothing to be seen but tumble-down out-buildings, a dog-kennel, trampled grass, an empty clothes-line, and a barrel or two.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed again. "Oh, there comes the pony."

Donald lost not a moment; but it seemed to Dorry that he never would come up. Meantime she resolved that, happen what might, she would not go and leave him. Unlocking the door, she stood with her hand upon the knob, intending to discuss the matter with Don; but no sooner had his hand touched the other side than somehow she found herself on the stairs, in the hall, then on Yankee's back, and leaning to catch Don's words.

"Careful, now, don't lose a moment! Send Jack to me at once, with Lady and the buggy! Go!" Even after she had started, she still seemed to feel the pressure of his hand upon hers. Never had she seen Don more resolutely in earnest.

As she galloped through the open gateway, and passed the inn, she turned and saw him in the hall, talking savagely to a man in a wet linen duster, whose back was toward her.

"The idea of leaving Don here alone! I shall not go," she said, suddenly pulling at the bridle. But Yankee, hungry for his supper, thought otherwise. He determined that she should. After a momentary contest, Dorry yielded, deciding to hurry home as fast as possible, and send Jack to Don's relief.

The shower, which had held back for a while, now started afresh. Yankee, with visions of a dry stall and bountiful supper before him, went on his rapid way through the rain, troubling himself little about Dood or Don, and quite unconscious of the disturbed state of his rider's mind, in which anxious thoughts and surmises chased each other in quick succession.

"I noticed that it was a rough place the moment we went in. Who were the noisy men in the other room, I wonder? The man in the wet duster wasn't one of them. What could Don have been saying to him? May be Dood had broken a leg, and Don didn't like to tell me. Ridiculous idea, as if a pony with a broken leg could go a step! May be Don's watch was stolen, or he'd lost his pocket-book. But he could have told me that. Dear me, he needn't have been so dreadfully afraid for me to stay there. It's forlorn to be a girl, and have people think you can't stand anything. Don can take care of himself, anyhow. I'd like to see any of those fellows trying to hurt him,"—and here, by way of showing how very much she would like it, Dorry's cheek turned pale. "How foolish! Probably he stayed for Dood's sake. Poor Dood! I hope he'll not be laid up long; Jack could cure him quickly enough. Dear me, how it rains! Glad my riding-habit is water-proof. Liddy will be frightened about me. I suppose they think we're at F—— yet, waiting to ride home by moonlight. How well Dr. Lane looks! But he has a fearfully Greek-and-Latin expression. Can't help it, I suppose. Don knows nearly as much Latin as Uncle, I do believe. Dear old Don! I How kind he is! Oh, if anything should happen to him!" Here, Yankee, already speeding bravely, received instructions to "get up," and then Dot, to her great joy, spied a familiar horse and buggy in the distance, coming swiftly toward her.

Lady was a fast mare when Sailor Jack held the reins.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DONALD.

Donald was talking rather savagely when Dorothy turned and saw him in the hall as she galloped through the opened gateway. But the man in the wet duster was not in the least vexed by Donald's manner. On the contrary, he assumed an air of superiority, and called him "my boy."

"All the Reeds are impetuous," he had said lightly, as if apologizing for this particular member of the family; "so we'll waive ceremony, my boy. With your permission, as I said before, I'll step into the parlor now, and have a little chat with the young lady."

"And as I said before," retorted Donald, "you'll do no such thing."

"Calm yourself," sneered the other. "It would be easy for me to get in through the window, were it not that one hates to scare the pretty bird; and as for the key—"

"As for the key," echoed Donald, who happened to have it in his possession; "well, and what of the key?"

"Why, my boy," glancing toward Don's pocket, "it wouldn't tax a six-footer like me overmuch to help himself to it; but, under the circumstances, it might be wiser merely to tell mine host in yonder room that an irate little manikin has taken it into his head to lock his sister, as he calls her, in the public parlor, and refuses to let her out."

"Insolent fellow!" exclaimed Donald, yet restraining his anger as well as he could. "Look out what you say. Another word like that, and I'll have you turned out of this place, neck and heels."

"Ha! ha! Pretty good. Well, as I was remarking, I've a word or two to say to my young lady in there. Hold up! H-o-l-d up! No one is going to kill her. Perhaps you're not aware I have a right there!"

"You have a right there, I'll admit, as a traveller," said Don; "but just now, I ask you to stay outside."

"And I ask you to let me in," returned the six-footer, beginning to be angry.

At any other time, Donald would not have parleyed a moment with the man, but, as the reader may have surmised, he had reasons of his own for prolonging the interview. He had planned well and worked quickly to get Dorry off unobserved;

and now that his strategy had succeeded, the next point was to gain time for her to be far on her way before Eben Slade—for he it was—should discover that Dorry was not safely locked in the dingy parlor.

"I ask you to let me in," repeated the long, lank man, softening his tone, "as one gentleman would ask another. May be I've more right to talk to her than you have yourself."

"What do you mean, you rascal?"

"Thank you!" sneered Eben. "Rascal is good. Pray, do you know my name?"

"No, I do not; and I don't want to. It's enough that I recognize you; and probably the less one knows about you, the better."

"May be so. But the time's gone by for that. My name's Eben Slade. Now do you know why I want to go into that room? No? Well, I'll tell you," continued Eben Slade; "it's because I've more right to speak to that girl than you have. It's because—Hi! hi! not so fast, young man," muttered Eben, restraining Donald with considerable effort. "You can't put me out on the road this time. As I was saying—"

"What do you mean by those words, sir?"

"Let me into the room, my boy, and I'll tell you and her together, quietly, just what I mean. I want to tell both of you a plain story, and appeal to her sense of justice. She's old enough to act for herself. Perhaps you think I haven't heard something of Dorothy's, or what-you-call-her's, spirit by this time."

"Let her name alone!" cried Donald, furiously. "If you mention my sister again, I'll knock you flat, you overgrown ruffian!"

"Hush, not so fast! You'll have those fellows out here in a minute. What's the use of letting everybody into our private affairs?"

Here Eben stepped further into the hall, followed by Donald.

"Let me into that room, will you?"

Donald, taking the key from his pocket, now threw open the door, with a "much good may it do you;" and, closing it again after Slade had entered, coolly locked him in the room. The blinds flew open. Don rushed out to the still deserted stoop, only to see Eben Slade's angry face glaring at him from the window. The man could have got through the window easily enough, but he preferred his present position. Leaning out, with his elbows on the sill, he said distinctly, in a passionate, low voice:

"You've baffled me this time, Donald Reed, but I'll carry the day yet. That girl, wherever she's gone to, is no more your sister than she is mine, and I can prove it to her! She's my niece—my own sister's child! I've a right to her, and I can prove it. She's going back home with me, out West, where my wife's waitin' for her. Now, sir, what have you to say to that?"

The poor boy, aghast at Eben's statement, stood at first as if stunned; but recovering himself, he made a rush toward Eben, not blindly, but with a fierce determination to clutch him by the throat and force him to unsay his terrible words.

Eben sprang from the window at a bound. A struggle ensued—brief, violent. Donald might have been mastered, had not a strong man sprung upon them and with one blow knocked Eben Slade prostrate upon the boards.

It was Sailor Jack, who had driven up unperceived and leaped from the buggy just in time.

Three or four men rushed from the bar-room, all calling out at once.

"What's the matter here?"

"Any one killed?—What's the row?"

"Hi!—Separate them!" shouted the stout, red-faced landlord, coming out slowly behind the others and, as usual, failing to take in the situation.

Meantime, two of the men had seized Jack as Eben rose slowly; another tried to

catch hold of Donald. Their sympathy plainly was with Slade, who, seeing his opportunity, suddenly started toward the buggy with the evident intention of driving off in it.

Jack, breaking from his astonished captors, was upon him in an instant, dragging him back, just as Slade had put one foot on the buggy-step, and as Donald was alertly seizing Lady's bridle.

"Stand off, all of you!" cried Jack, still holding Eben by the collar. "We're out on the open seas at last, my man! and now look out for yourself!"

The thrashing was brief but effective. Jack wore a serene look of satisfaction when it was over; and Eben Slade slunk doggedly away, muttering:

"I'll be even with 'em yet."

Every hat was off, so to speak, when Jack and Donald, who had paid the landlord handsomely, drove from Vanbogen's door. Lady was impatient to be off; but Jack soon made her understand that the splendid time she had made in coming from Nestletown was no longer necessary, since Dood, tied at the rear of the buggy, could not go faster than a walk. The removal of his shoe and prompt nursing had helped the pony so much that by this time he was able to travel, though with difficulty.

It was a strange drive: the spirited mare ahead, relieving her pent-up speed by gently prancing up and down as she walked; Jack, grim and satisfied, going over again in fancy every stroke that had fallen upon the struggling Eben; Donald, pale and silent, with Slade's vicious words still ringing in his ears; and the pony limping painfully behind.

"He's taken up with his own thoughts," said Jack to himself after a while, noting Don's continued silence. "It ain't for me to disturb him, though them twins somehow seem as near as if they was my own children; but I would like to know just what the little chap has heard from that sea-sarpent. Somethin' or other's took fearful hold on him, sure's sailin', poor lad! He ain't apt to be so onsociable."

Following up these thoughts, as the mare jogged along, it was a great solace to good Sailor Jack, after their dismal drive, to see Don look up at the house as they turned into the lane, and wave his hat gallantly to Dorothy.

She, too, standing at her bedroom window with Lydia, was wonderfully relieved by Don's salutation.

"Oh, it's all right!" she exclaimed, cheerily. "Even Dood isn't hurt as badly as we feared, and how lovely it is to have Don back again, safe and sound! And, oh, Liddy, you should have seen Jack when I refused to get into the buggy, and made him drive on for his life, to help Don. But the trouble is over now. How lovely! Both of us will take supper with Uncle, after all!"

Lydia, who had been doing all sorts of things to save Dorry from "taking her death o' cold," stood admiringly by, while with rapid touches, and many a laughing word, the happy girl arrayed herself to go down and meet "dear old Don and Uncle."

Meanwhile Mr. Reed, in his study, looking up inquiringly to greet Donald's return, was surprised to see the boy's white face and flashing eyes.

"Uncle George," said Donald, the moment he entered the room, "tell me quick! Is Dorothy Reed my sister?"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SUNSET.

For an instant Mr. Reed was too astonished to speak.

"Tell me," implored Donald, "is Dorothy Reed my sister?"

"Hush! hush!" was the hurried response. "She'll hear you!"

"Is she or not?" insisted Donald, his eyes still fixed on his uncle's face. It seemed to him that he caught the words, "She is." He could not be certain, but he stepped

hopefully forward and laid his hand upon Mr. Reed's shoulder.

"She is!" he exclaimed joyfully, bending over till their faces almost met. "I knew it! Why didn't you tell me the fellow lied?"

"Who? What fellow?"

"Uncle! Is she or not? I must know."

Mr. Reed glanced toward the door, to be sure that it was closed.

"Uncle, Uncle! please answer my question."

"Yes, my boy, I think—that is, I trust—she is. Oh, Donald," cried Mr. Reed, leaning upon the table and burying his face in his hands, "I do not know, myself!"

"What don't you know, Uncle?" said a merry voice outside, accompanied by a light rapping at the door, "May I come in?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Reed, rising. But Don was first. He caught Dorry in his arms as she entered.

"Well!" she exclaimed, never suspecting the nature of the scene she had interrupted, "I thought I'd never get dressed. But where's the sense of shutting yourselves in here, when it's so beautiful outside after the shower? It's the grandest sunset I ever saw. Do come and look at it!"

With these words, and taking an arm of each, she playfully led them from the room, out to the piazza, where they could see the glory of the western sky.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she went on, as they stood looking over the glowing lake. "See, there's a splendid, big purple cloud with a golden edge for you, Uncle, and those two little ones alongside are for Don and me. Oh!" she laughed, clapping her hands, "they're twins, Don, like ourselves; what a nice time they're having together! Now they are separating—farther and farther apart—and yours is breaking up too, Uncle. Well, I do declare," she added, suddenly turning to look at her companions, "I never saw such a pair of doleful faces in all my life!"

"In all your life?" echoed her uncle, trying to laugh carelessly, and wishing to divert her attention from Donald.

"Yes, in all my life—all our life I might say—and it isn't such a very short life either. I've learned ever so many things in it, I'd have you know, and not all of them from school-books, by any means."

"Well, what have you learned, my girl?"

"Why, as if I could tell it all in a minute! It would take a year. I'll tell you one thing, though, that I've found out for certain" (dropping a little courtesy): "I've the very dearest brother ever a girl had, and the best uncle in the whole United States."

With these words, Dorothy, raising herself on tiptoe, smilingly caught her uncle's face with both hands and kissed him.

"Now, Don," she added, "what say you to a race to the front gate before supper? Watch can try, too, and Uncle shall see which—Why, where is Don? When did he run off?"

"I'll find him," said Uncle George, passing her quickly and reaching his study before Dorry had recovered from her surprise. He had seen Donald hasten into the house, unable to restrain the feelings called up by Dorry's allusion to the clouds, and now he, too, could bear her unsuspecting playfulness no longer.

Dorry stood a few seconds, half puzzled, half amused at their sudden desertion of her, when sounds of approaching wheels caught her attention. Turning, she saw Josie Manning coming toward the house, in an open carriage driven by Mr. Michael McSwiver.

"Oh, Dorothy!" Josie called out, before Michael had brought the fine gray horse to a halt, "can you come and take supper with me? I have driven over on purpose, and I've some beautiful new lichens at home to show you. Six of us G-B-C girls went out moss-hunting before the shower. So sorry you were not with us!"

"Oh, I don't think I can," hesitated Dorry. "Donald and I have been away all day. Can't you stay here instead?"

"Im-possible," was Josie's emphatic reply. "Mother will be waiting for me— Oh, what a noble fellow! So this is Watch? Ed Tyler told me about him."

Here Josie, reaching out her arm, leaned forward to pat the shaggy head of a beautiful Newfoundland, that, with his paws on the edge of the rockaway, was trying to express his approbation of Josie as a friend of the family.

"Yes, this is our new dog. Isn't he handsome? Such a swimmer, too! You ought to see him leap into the lake to bring back sticks. Here, Watch!"

But Watch would not leave the visitor. "Good fellow, I admire your taste," said Josie, laughingly, still stroking his large, silky head. "But I must be off. I do wish you'd come with me, Dot. Go and ask your uncle," she coaxed; "Michael will bring you home early."

Here Mr. McSwiver, without turning his face, touched the rim of his hat gravely.

"Well, I'll see," said Dorothy, as she ran into the house. To her surprise, Mr. Reed gave a willing consent.

"Shall I really go?" she asked, hardly satisfied. "Where is Donald?"

"He is readying himself for supper, I think, Miss," said Kassy, the housemaid, who happened to pass at that moment. "I saw him going into his room."

"But you look tired, Uncle, dear. Suppose I don't go, this time."

"Tired? not a bit. Never better, Dot. There, get your hat, my girl, and don't keep Josie waiting any longer."

"Well, good-by, then. Tell Don, please, I've gone to Josie's—Oh, and Josie and I would like to have him come over after tea. He needn't though, if he feels very tired, for Josie says Michael can bring me home."

"Very well, my dear. If Donald is not there by half-past nine o'clock, do not expect

him. Wait; I'll escort you to the carriage."

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCLE GEORGE TELLS DONALD.

"Come into the study, Donald," said Uncle George, after their lonely supper,—lonely even to Lydia, who presided at the tea-tray wondering how Mr. G. could have been so thoughtless as to let that child go out. "We can have no better opportunity than this for our talk. But, first tell me—Who was the 'fellow' you mentioned? Where was he? Did Dorry see him?"

Donald, assuring his uncle that Dorry had not recognized the man, told all the particulars of the interview at Vanbogen's, and of Jack's timely appearance and Slade's beating.

Disturbed, even angry, as Mr. Reed was at hearing this unwelcome news, he could not resist Donald's persistent, resolute desire that the present hour should be given to the main question concerning Dorry.

Twilight slowly faded, and the room grew darker as they sat there, until at last they scarcely could see each other's faces. Then they moved nearer to the open window, conversing in a low tone, as star after star came softly into view.

Donald's large, wistful eyes sometimes turned to look toward the front gate, through which Dorry had passed, though he gave close attention to every word Mr. Reed uttered.

It was a strange story; but all its details need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say, at last Donald learned his uncle's secret, and understood the many unaccountable moods that so often had perplexed Dorry and himself.

What wonder that Mr. George had been troubled, and had sometimes shown signs of irritation! For nearly fifteen years he had suffered from peculiar suspense and

annoyance, because, while he believed Dorothy to be his own niece, he could not ascertain the fact to his complete satisfaction. To make matters worse, the young girl unconsciously increased his perplexity by sometimes evincing traits which well might be inherited from his brother Wolcott, and oftener in numberless little ways so reminding him of his adopted sister Kate in her early girlhood, that his doubts would gain new power to torment him.

All he had been able to find out definitely was that, in the autumn of 1859, in accordance with his instructions, Mrs. Wolcott Reed, his brother's widow, with her twin babies, a boy and girl of six weeks, and their nurse, had sailed from Europe, in company with Kate and her husband, Henry Robertson, who had with them their own little daughter Delia, a baby barely a week older than the twins.

When about seven days out, the steamer had been caught in a fog, and, going too near the treacherous coast of Newfoundland, had in the night suddenly encountered a sunken rock. The violence of the shock aroused every one on board. There was a rush for the pumps, but they were of no use; the vessel already had begun to sink. Then followed a terrible scene. Men and women rushed wildly about, vainly calling for those belonging to them. Parents and their children were separated in the darkness—all, passengers and crew alike, too panic-stricken to act in concert. In the distracting terror of the occasion, there was great difficulty in lowering the steamer's boats—now their only possible hope of rescue. These were no sooner let down than they became dangerously overloaded. The first one, indeed, was so crowded that it swamped instantly. The other boats, threatened with the same fate, were tossed far apart as fast as they were filled, and in the darkness and tumult their crews were able to pick up but a few of the poor creatures who were struggling with the waves.

Two of the three babies, a boy and a girl, had been rescued, as we already know, by the efforts of one of the crew, Sailor Jack, known to his comrades as Jack Burton. He had just succeeded in getting into one of the boats, when he heard through the

tumult a woman's wild cry from the deck:

"Save these helpless little ones! Look out! I must throw them!"

"Ay, ay! Let 'em come!" shouted Jack in response; and the next moment the babies, looking like little black bundles, flew over the ship's side, one after the other, and were safely caught in Jack's dexterous arms. Just in time, too, for the men behind him at once bent to the oars, in the fear that the boat, so dangerously near the sinking ship, was in danger of being engulfed by it.

Against Jack's protesting shout of "There's another coming!—a woman!" the boat shot away on the crest of a wave.

Hearing a scream above the surrounding din, Jack hastily flung off his coat, thrust the babies into the arms of his comrades, and shouting, "Keep them safe for me: I'm Jack Burton. It may be the mother! Look out for me, mates!" he plunged into the sea.

Jack made gallant efforts for a time, but returning alone, worn out with his fruitless exertions, he was taken into the boat. If, after that, in the severe cold, he remembered his jacket, it was only to take real comfort in knowing that the "little kids" were wrapped in it safe and sound. In the darkness and confusion he had not been able to see who had thrown the babies to him, but the noble-hearted sailor resolved to be faithful to his trust, and if he ever touched land again never to lose sight of them until he could leave them safe with some of their own kindred.

All night, in the bitter cold, the boat that carried the two babies had tossed with the waves, the men using their oars as well as they could, working away from the dangerous rocks out to the open sea, and hoping that daylight might reveal some passing vessel. Every one excepting the babies, suffered keenly; these, wrapped from head to feet in the sailor's jacket, and tucked in between the shivering women, slept soundly, while their preserver, scorning even in his drenched condition to feel the need of his warm garment, did his best at the oars.

With the first light of dawn a speck appeared on the horizon. It slowly grew larger, sometimes seeming to recede, and often disappearing utterly, until at last the straining eyes that watched it discerned its outline. It was a ship under full sail! Everything now depended upon being able to attract attention. One of the women, wrapped in a large white woollen mantle, snatched it off; it would serve as a signal of distress. The men hoisted the garment upon an oar, and, heavy and wet though it was, waved it wildly in the air.

"She's seen us!" cried Sailor Jack at last. "Hooray! She's headin' straight for us!"

And so she was.

Before sunset of that day, the honest sailor, with two babies, and all his companions in the boat were comfortably quartered on what proved to be the good ship "Cumberland," a sailing vessel bound for the port of New York.

Once safely on board, Sailor Jack had time to reflect on his somewhat novel position—a jolly tar, as he expressed it, with two helpless little kids to take ashore as salvage. That the babies did not now belong to him never entered his mind; they were his twins, to be cared for and to keep, he insisted, till the "Cumberland" should touch shore; and his to keep and care for ever after, unless somebody with a better right and proof positive should meet him in New York and claim them, or else that some of their relatives should be saved in one of the other boats.

So certain was he of his rights, that when the captain's wife, who happened to be on board, offered to care for the little creatures, he, concealing his helplessness as a nurse, accepted her kindness with a lordly air and as though it were really a favor on his part. "Them twins is Quality," he would say, "and I can't have 'em meddled with till I find the grand folks they belong to. Wash their leetle orphan faces, you may; feed 'em, you may; and keep 'em warm, you may; but their leetle jackets, night gownds, and petticuts, an' caps has got to stay just as they are, to identify 'em. And this ere gimcrack on the leetle miss—gold it is, you may well say" (touching the

chain on the baby's neck admiringly)—"this ere gimcrack likely's got a legal consequence to its folks, which I couldn't and wouldn't undertake to calc'late."

Meantime the sailors would stand around, looking reverently at the babies, until, with Jack's gracious permission, the kind-hearted woman would tenderly soothe the little ones to sleep.

Among the survivors of the wreck, none could give much information concerning the babies. Only two were women, and one of these lay ill in a rough bunk through the remainder of the voyage, raving in her fever of the brother who bent anxiously over her. (In her delirium, she imagined that he had been drowned on that terrible night.) Sailor Jack held the twins before her, but she took no notice of them. Her brother knew nothing about them or of any of the passengers. He had been a fireman on the wrecked vessel, and scarcely had been on deck from the hour of starting until the moment of the wreck. The other rescued woman frequently had seen a tall nurse with two very young infants on her lap, and a pale mother dressed in black standing near them; and she remembered hearing some one say that there was another lady with a young baby on board, and that the two mothers were sisters, or relatives of some kind, and that the one with twins had recently become a widow. That was all. Beyond vaguely wondering how any one could think of taking such mites of humanity across the ocean, she had given no more thought to them. Of the men rescued, not one had known of the existence of the three wee passengers, the only babies on board, as the little creatures seldom had been taken on deck.

The two mothers, as Jack learned from one of the women, had been made so ill by the voyage that they rarely had left their state-rooms. Mr. Robertson, Kate's husband, was known by sight to all as a tall, handsome man, though very restless and anxious-looking; but, being much occupied with the care of his wife and child, he had spoken to very few persons on board the vessel.

This was all Jack could find out, though he never wearied of making inquiries

among the survivors. He was shrewd enough, however, to ask them to write their names and addresses for him to keep, so that, if the twins' people (as he called them) ever should be found, they could in turn communicate with the survivors. The family naturally would want to inquire about "the other baby and its poor father, and the two mothers, one of which was a widow in mournin'—poor soul! and the nurse-girl, all drowned and gone."

Long weeks afterward, one other boat was heard from—the only other one that was ever found. Its freight of human beings, only seven in all, had passed through great privation and danger, but they finally had been taken aboard a steamer going east. The list of persons saved in this boat had been in due time received by Mr. Reed, who, after careful investigation, at last ascertained to a certainty that they all were adults, and that neither Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, nor Wolcott Reed's widow, were of the number. He communicated in person or by letter with all of them excepting one; and that one was a woman, who was described as a tall, dark-complexioned girl, a genteel servant, who, as three of the men declared, had been occasionally seen, pacing up and down the deck of the ill-fated vessel during the early part of the voyage, carrying a "very small baby" in her arms. She had given her name as Ellen Lee; had accepted assistance from the ship's company, and finally she had been traced by Mr. Reed's clerk, Henry Wakeley, to an obscure boarding-house in Liverpool. Going there to see her, Mr. Wakeley had been told that she was "out;" and calling there again, late on the same day, he learned that she had paid her bill and left the house four hours before.

After that, all efforts to find her, both on the part of the clerk and of Mr. Reed, had been unavailing; though to this day, as the latter assured Donald, detectives in Liverpool and London had her name and description, as belonging to a person "to be found."

"But do they know your address?" asked Donald.

"Oh, yes, I shall be notified at once if any news is heard of her; but after all these years there is hardly a possibility of that. Ellen Lees are plentiful enough; it is not an uncommon name, I find; but that particular Ellen Lee seems to have vanished from the earth."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DELIA, OR DOROTHY?

As Donald listened to his uncle by the study-window, on that starlit evening, many things that he had heard from Sailor Jack rose in his memory and blended with Mr. Reed's words. Part of the strange story was already familiar to him. He needed only a hint of the shipwreck to have the scene vividly before him. He and Dorry had often heard of it, and of their first coming to Nestletown. They knew that Uncle George had easily established his claim to the babies, as these and the one that was lost were the only infants among the passengers, and that he had brought them and Sailor Jack home with him from New York; that Jack, through his devotion to the children, had been induced to give up the sea and remain with Mr. Reed ever since; and that they, the twins, had grown up together the happiest brother and sister in that part of the country, until "the long, lank man" had come to mar their happiness, and Uncle had been mysteriously bothered, and had seemed sometimes to be unreasonably annoyed at Dorothy's innocent peculiarities of manner and temperament. But now Donald learned of the doubts that from the first had perplexed Mr. Reed; of the repeated efforts that he had made to ascertain which one of the three babies had been lost; how he had been baffled again and again, until at last he had given himself up to a dull hope that the little girl who had become so dear was really his brother's child, and joint heir with Donald to his and his brother's estates; and how Eben Slade actually had come to claim her and take her away, threatening to blight the poor child by proving that she was his niece, Delia Robertson, and not Dorothy Reed at

all.

Poor Donald! Dorry had been so surely his sister that until now he had taken his joy in her as a matter of course,—as a part of his existence, bright and necessary as light and air, and never questioned. She was Dorry, he even now felt confident, not Delia—Delia, the poor little cousin who was lost; certainly not. She was Dorry and he was Donald. If she was not Dorry, then who was he? Who was Uncle George? Who were all the persons they knew, and what did everything in life mean?

No, he would not give her up—he could not. Something within him resented the idea, then scouted it, and finally set him up standing before his uncle, so straight, so proud in his bearing, so joyfully scornful of anything that threatened to take his sister away from him, that Mr. George rose also and waited for him to speak, as though Donald's one word must settle the question for ever.

"Well, my boy?"

"Uncle, I am absolutely sure of it. Our Dorry is Dorothy Reed—here with us alive and well, and I mean to prove it!"

"God grant it, Donald!"

"Well, Uncle, I must go now to bring my sister home. Of course, I shall not tell her a word of what has passed between us this evening. That scoundrel! to think of his intending to tell her that she was his sister's child! Poor Dot! think of the shock to her. Just suppose he had convinced her, made her think that it was true, that it was her duty to go with him, care for him, and all that—Why, Uncle, with her spirit and high notions of right, even you and I couldn't have stopped her; she'd have gone with him, if it killed her!"

"Donald!" exclaimed Mr. Reed, fiercely, "you're talking nonsense!"

"So I am—sheer nonsense! The man hasn't an argument in favor of his claim. But, Uncle, there is a great deal yet to be looked up. After Dot has bidden us good-night and is fast asleep, may I not come down here to the study again? Then you can show

me the things you were speaking of—the pictures, the letters, the chain, the little clothes, the locks of hair, and everything—especially that list, you know. We'll go carefully over every point. There must be proof somewhere."

Donald was so radiant with a glad confidence that for an instant his uncle looked upon him as one inspired. Then sober thoughts returned; objections and arguments crowded into Mr. Reed's mind, but he had no opportunity to utter them. Donald clasped his uncle's hand warmly and was off, bounding down the moon-flecked carriage-way, the new dog leaping before him. Both apparently were intent only on enjoying a brisk walk toward the village, and on bringing Dorry home.

Dorry was very tired. Leaning upon Donald's arm as they walked homeward—for they had declined Mr. McSwiver's services—she had but little to say, and that little was all about the strange adventure at Vanbogen's.

"Who in the world was that man, Don?" and then without waiting for a reply, she continued: "Do you know, after I started for home, I really suspected that he was that horrid person—the long, lank one, you know—come back again. I'm glad it wasn't; but he may turn up yet, just as he did before. Why doesn't he stay with his own people, and not wander about like a lunatic? They ought to take care of him, anyway. Ugh! I can't bear to think of that dreadful man. It makes me shiver!"

"Then why do you think of him?" suggested Donald, with forced cheerfulness. "Let us talk of something else."

"Very well. Let's talk—let's talk of—of—Oh, Don, I'm so tired and sleepy! Suppose we don't talk at all!"

"All right," he assented. And so in cordial silence they stepped lightly along in the listening night, to the great surprise of Watch, who at first whined and capered by way of starting a conversation, and finally contented himself with exploring every shadowed recess along the moonlit road, running through every opening that offered, waking sleeping dogs in their kennels, and in fact taking upon himself an

astonishing amount of business for a new-comer into the neighborhood, who naturally would be excused from assuming entire charge of things.

Mr. Reed met Don and Dorry on the piazza. Greetings and good-nights were soon over; and before long, Dorry, in her sweet, sound sleep, forgot alike the pleasures and adventures of the day.

Meantime, Mr. Reed and Donald were busily engaged in examining old family ambrotypes, papers, and various articles that, carefully hidden in the uncle's secretary, had been saved all these years in the hope that they might furnish a clew to Dorry's parentage, or perhaps prove that she was, as Mr. Reed trusted, the daughter of his brother Wolcott. To Donald each article was full of interest and hopeful possibilities; but his uncle looked at them wearily and sadly, because the very sight of them recalled a throng of disappointments and baffled surmises. There were the little caps and baby-garments, yellow, rumpled, and weather-stained, just as they had been taken off and carefully labelled on that day nearly fifteen years ago. Donald noticed that one parcel of these articles was marked, "Belonging to the boy, Donald," and the other simply "Belonging to the girl." There were the photographs of the two babies, which had been taken a week after their landing, carefully labelled in the same way, giving the boy's name but leaving a blank in place of the girl's. Poor, pinched, expressionless-looking little creatures, both of them were; for, as Uncle George explained to the crestfallen Donald, the babies were really ill at first, from exposure and unsuitable feeding. Then there were the two tiny papers containing each a lock of hair, and these also were marked, one, "The boy, Donald," and the other simply "The girl." Donald's had only a few pale little brown hairs, but "the girl's" paper disclosed a soft, yellow little curl.

"She had more than you had," remarked Uncle George, as he carefully closed the paper again; "you'll see that, also, by the accurate description of the two children that I wrote at the time. Here it is."

Donald glanced over the paper, as if intending to read it later, and then took up the chain with a square clasp, the same that Uncle George held in his hand when we saw him in the study on the day of the shooting-match. Three delicate strands of gold chain came together at the clasp, which was still closed. This clasp was prettily embossed on its upper surface, while its under side was smooth.

"Was this on Dor—on her neck or on mine, Uncle?" he asked.

"On the little girl's," said Mr. Reed. "In fact, she wore it until she was a year old, and then her dear little throat grew to be so chubby, Lydia fancied that the chain was too tight. The catch of the clasp seemed to have rusted inside, and it would not open. So, rather than break it, we severed the three chains here across the middle. I've since—"

Donald, who was holding the clasp toward the light, cut short his uncle's remark with the joyful exclamation:

"Why, see here! The under side has letters on it! D. R.—Dorothy Reed."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Reed, impatiently, "but D stands for Delia too."

"But the R," insisted Donald; "D. R., Dorothy Reed—it's plain as day. Oh!" he added quickly, in a changed tone, "that doesn't help us, after all; for R would stand for Robertson as well as for Reed. But then, in some way or other such a chain as this ought to help us. It's by no means a common chain. I never saw one like it before."

"Nor I," said Mr. Reed.

By this time, Donald had taken up "the girl's" little garments again. Comparing them with "Donald's" as well as he could, considering his uncle's extreme care that the two sets should not get mixed, he said, with a boy's helplessness in such matters: "They're about alike. I do not see any difference between them, except in length. Ho-ho! these little flannel sacques are of a different color; mine is blue and hers is pink."

"I know that," his uncle returned, despondingly. "For a long time I hoped that this difference would lead to some discovery, but nothing came of it. Take care! don't lay it down; give it to me" (holding out his hand for the pink sacque, and very carefully folding it up with "the girl's" things).

"How strange! And you wrote immediately, you say, and sent somebody right over to Europe to find out everything?"

"Not only sent my confidential clerk, Henry Wakeley, over at once," replied Mr. Reed, "but, when he returned without being able to give any satisfaction, I went myself. I was over there two months—as long as I could just then be away from my affairs and from you two babies. Liddy was faithfulness itself and needed no oversight, even had a rough bachelor like me been capable of giving it; but I felt better to be at home, where I could see how you were getting along. As Liddy and Jack and everybody else always spoke of you as 'the twins,' my hope that you were indeed brother and sister became a sort of habit that often served to beguile me into actual belief."

"Humph! well it might," said Donald, rather indignantly. "Of course we're brother and sister."

"Certainly," assented Mr. Reed, with pathetic heartiness, "no doubt of it; and yet I would give, I cannot say how much, to be absolutely certain."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DON RESOLVES TO SETTLE MATTERS.

For a time, an outsider looking on would have seen no great change at Lakewood, as the Reed homestead was called. There were the same studies, the same sports, the same every-day life with its in-comings, its out-goings, its breakfasts, dinners, and pleasant home-scenes; there were drives, out-door games, and sails and rambles and

visits. Uncle George always was heartily willing to take part, when he could leave his books and papers; and Lydia, busy with household matters, often found opportunities to teach her young lady some of the mysteries of the kitchen.

"It's high time, Miss Dorry, that you learned these things," Lydia would say, "even if you are to be a grand lady, for you'll be the mistress of this house in time; and if anything should happen to me, I don't know where things would go to. Besides, as your uncle truly says, every lady should understand housekeeping. So, Miss Dorry dear, if you please to do so, we'll bake bread and cake on Saturday, and I'll show you at to-morrow's ironin' how we get Mr. Reed's shirt-bosoms so lovely and smooth; and, if you please, you can iron one for him, all with your own pretty hands, Miss."

As a consequence of such remarks, Mr. Reed sometimes found himself eating, with immense relish, cake that had only "just a least little heavy streak in the middle," or wearing linen that, if any one but Dorry had ironed it, would have been cast aside as not fit to put on.

But what matter! She was sure to improve under Lydia's instruction. Besides, her voice was sweet and merry as ever, her step as light and her heart even more glad; for Uncle was always his dear, good self now, and had no mysterious moods and startling surprises of manner for his little girl. In fact, he was wonderfully relieved by having shared his secret with Donald. The boy's stout-hearted, manly way of seeing the bright side of things and scouting all possible suspicions that Dorry was not Dorry, gave Mr. Reed strength and a restfulness that he had not known for years. Unconscious of the shadow still hanging over the home, Dorry, prettier, brighter, and sweeter every day, was the delight of the household; her very faults to their partial eyes added to her charm; for, according to Lydia, "they were uncommon innocent and funny, Miss Dorry's ways were." In fact, the young lady, who had a strong will of her own, would have been spoiled to a certainty but for her scorn of affectation, her love of truth, and genuine faithfulness to whatever she believed to be

right.

Donald, on his part, was too boyish to be utterly cast down by the secret that stood between him and Dorry; but his mind dwelt upon it despite his efforts to dismiss every useless doubt.

Fortunately, Eben Slade had not again made his appearance in the neighborhood. He had left Vanbogen's immediately after Jack had paid his rough compliments to him, and he had not been seen there since. But at any moment he might reappear at Lakewood and carry out his threat of obtaining an interview with Dorry. This Donald dreaded of all things, and he resolved that it should not come to pass. How to prevent it was the question. He and his uncle had agreed that she must be spared not only all knowledge of the secret, but all anxiety or suspicion concerning her history; and they and Jack kept a constant lookout for the disagreeable intruder.

Day by day, when alone, Donald pondered over the case, resolved upon establishing his sister's identity, recalling again and again all that his uncle had told him, and secretly devising plans that grew more and more settled in his mind as time went on. Jack, who had been in Mr. Reed's confidence from the first, was now taken fully into Donald's. He was proud of the boy's fervor, but had little hope. Fourteen, nearly fifteen, years was a long time, and if Ellen Lee had hidden herself successfully in 1859 and since, why could she not do so still? Donald had his own opinion. Evidently she had some reason for hiding, or fancied she had; but she must be found, and if so, why should not he, Donald Reed, find her? Yes, there was no other way. Donald was studying logic at the time, and had committed pages of it to memory in the most dutiful manner. To be sure, while these vital plans were forming in his brain, he did not happen to recall any page of the logic that exactly fitted the case, but in some way he flattered himself that he had become rather expert in the art of thinking and of balancing ideas.

"A fellow can't do more than use his wits, after all," he said to himself, "and all this

studying and getting ready to enter Columbia College next year, as Uncle says I may, will do well enough afterward; but at present we've something else to attend to."

And, to make a long story not too long and tedious, the end of it was that one bright spring day, months after that memorable afternoon at Vanbogen's, Donald, having had many earnest interviews meanwhile, obtained his uncle's unwilling consent that he should sail alone for England in the next steamer.

Poor Dorry—glad if Don was glad, but totally ignorant of his errand—was too amazed at the bare announcement of the voyage to take in the idea at all.

Lydia, horrified, was morally sure that the boy never would come back alive.

Sailor Jack, on his sea-legs in an instant, gave his unqualified approbation of the scheme.

Uncle George, unconvinced but yielding, answered Donald's questions; agreed that Dorry should be told simply that his uncle was sending him on important business; allowed him to make copies of letters, lists, and documents, even trusted some of the long-guarded and precious relics to his keeping; furnished advice and money, and, in fact, helped him all he could; then resolved the boy should not go after all; and finally, holding Dorry's cold hand as they stood a few days later on the crowded city wharf, bade him good-by and God bless him!

OFF FOR EUROPE. OFF FOR EUROPE.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

"It was all so sudden," explained Dorothy to Charity Danby, a few weeks afterward, in talking over her brother's departure, "that I feel as if I were dreaming and that Don must soon come and wake me up."

"Strange that he should 'a' been allowed to go all the way to Europe, alone so—and he barely fifteen yet," remarked Mrs. Danby, who was ironing Jamie's Sunday frock at the time.

"Donald is nearly sixteen," said Dorry with dignity, "and he went on important business for Uncle. Didn't Ben go West when he was much younger than that?"

"Oh, yes, my dear, but then Ben is—different, you know. He's looked out for himself 'most ever since he was a baby. Now, Ellen Eliza," she exclaimed, suddenly changing her tone as the tender-hearted one came in sight, "what in the world are you goin' to do with that lame rabbit you put in the box there?"

"Cure it, Ma. That's what I'm going to do with it."

"Well, if anybody can, you can, I s'pose. But it's layin' so still I'm afraid you'll lose it."

"Charity says only hens lay, Ma," replied Ellen Eliza, suggestively, at the same time hurrying to the box in great solicitude.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Danby, laughing lightly. "Them children" (here the proud mother turned to Dorothy), "with their lessons and what not, are gettin' to be too much for me. I have to speak as ac'rate as a school-teacher to satisfy 'em. Only the other day, little Fandy took me by surprise. He's the brightest of the lot, you know. Well, I wanted to start the fire, and the matches had given clean out. 'Here's a pretty fix!' says I. 'A fire to light, and no matches!' 'I can help you, Ma,' says Fandy. 'Can you dear?' says I, pleased enough; 'have you got some matches?' 'No, Ma,' says the child. 'Well, how can you help me then?' I says; 'there isn't a spark or a live coal anywhere in the house. I can't light the fire without matches, that's certain.' 'Yes, you can light it without matches, Ma,' says he, in his 'cute, pos'tive way; 'yes, you can.' 'How can I?' says I, more to draw him out than with any hope o' gettin' help from him. 'Why,' says he, bowin' to me as grand as the best, and takin' somethin' out o' his little wescut pocket, 'you can use a match, Ma, and here's one; it's the only one I've

got!' Now wasn't that a good catch, Dorothy, for a child o' his tender years?"

"Yes, indeed it was," assented Dorothy, heartily.

"Ma," began Ellen Eliza, who had been listening with much interest, "did—"

"Why, Ellen Eliza! Are you standing there yet? Now don't lay your wet apron down on your sister's poetry you forlorn, distres-sèd lookin' child! She's been writin' like wild this mornin', Mandy has, but I haven't had time enough to read it. It's a cryin' shame, Dorothy, her poetry isn't all printed in a book by this time. It would sell like hot cakes, I do believe,—and sell quicker, too, if folks knew she wasn't going to have much more time for writin'. She's going to be a teacher, Mandy is. Young Mr. Ricketts got her a situation in a 'cademy down to Trenton, where she's to study and teach and make herself useful till she perfects herself. 'Tisn't every girl gets a chance to be perfected so easy, either. Oh, Charity—there's so much on my mind!—I forgot to tell you that Ben found your 'rithmetic in the grass, 'way down past the melon-patch where baby Jamie must have left it. There, put up your sewing, Charity, and you and Dorothy take a run; you look jaded-like. Why, mercy on us!" continued the good woman, looking up at this moment and gently waving her scorching-hot iron in the air to cool it off a little, "you look flushed, Dorothy. You haven't gone and got malaria, have you?"

"Oh, no," said Dorry, laughing in spite of her sadness. "It is not malaria that troubles me: it's living for three whole weeks without seeing Donald."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Danby. "I don't wonder if it is, you poor child—only one brother so, and him a twin." Dorry laughed pleasantly again, and then, with a cheerful "good-by," walked slowly homeward.

The next morning, when she awoke, she felt so weary and sleepy that she sent a good-morning message to her uncle and told Lydia she would not get up till after breakfast-time. "Be sure," she said to Liddy, "to tell Uncle that I am not really ill,—only lazy and sleepy,—and by and by you may let Kassy bring a cup of very

weak coffee."

Lydia, secretly distressed but outwardly cheerful, begged her dear young lady to take a nice long nap. Then lighting the fire,—for the morning was raw and chilly though it was May,—she bustled about the room till Dorry was very wide-awake indeed. Next, Uncle George came up to bid her good-morning, and make special inquiries, and when he went down reassured, Kassy came in with her breakfast. By this time Dorothy had given up all thought of sleep for the present.

"Why, Kassy!" she exclaimed in plaintive surprise, "you've brought enough to feed a regiment. I can't eat all that bread, if I am ill—"

"Oh, but I'm to make toast for you, here in your room, Miss," explained Kassy, who evidently had something on her mind. "Lydia,—I mean Mr. Reed, said so."

"How nice!" exclaimed Dorry, listlessly.

Kassy took her place by the open fire, and after hesitating a moment began to toast the bread, while Dorry lay looking at her, feeling neither ill nor well, and half inclined to cry from sheer loneliness. This was to be the twenty-third day without Donald.

"I wonder what that important business can be," she thought; "but, most likely, Uncle will tell me all about it before long."

KASSY EVIDENTLY HAD SOMETHING ON HER MIND. KASSY EVIDENTLY HAD SOMETHING ON HER MIND.

Meanwhile, Kassy continued to toast bread. A formidable pile of browned slices already lay on the plate, and she was preparing, in absent-minded fashion, to attack another slice, when suddenly the long toasting-fork hung aimlessly from one hand, while the other began fumbling in her pocket. Finally, in a cautious, troubled way, she handed the young lady a letter.

"I—I should have given it to you before, Miss," she faltered, "but kept it because I

thought—that—perhaps—I—"

But Dorry already had torn open the envelope, and was reading the contents.

Kassy, watching her, was frightened at seeing the poor girl's face flush painfully, then turn deadly pale.

"Not bad news, is it, Miss? Oh, Miss Dorry, maybe I've done wrong in handing it to you; but a gentleman gave me half a dollar, day before yesterday, Miss, to put it secretly into your hands, and he said it was something you'd rejoice to know about."

Dorry, now sitting up on the bed, hardly heard her. With trembling hands, she held the opened letter, and motioned toward the door.

"Go, call Mr. Reed! No, no—stay here—Oh, what shall I do? What ought I to do?" she thought to herself, and then added aloud, with decision: "Yes, go ask Mr. Reed to please come up. You need not return."

Hastily springing to the floor, Dorry thrust her feet into a pair of slippers, put on a long white woollen wrapper that made her look like a grown woman, and stood with the letter in her hand as her uncle entered.

She remained motionless as a statue while he hastily read it, her white face in strange contrast to the angry hue that overspread Mr. Reed's countenance.

"Horrible!" he exclaimed, as he reached the last word. "Where did this letter come from Dorothy? How did you get it?"

"Kassy brought it. A man gave her half a dollar—she thought it had good news in it. Oh, Uncle!" (seeing the wrath in Mr. Reed's face), "she ought not to have taken it, of course, but she doesn't know any better—and I didn't notice either, when I opened it, that it had no post-mark."

"Did you read it all?"

Dorothy nodded.

"Well, I must go. I'll attend to this letter. The scoundrel! You are not going to faint,

my child?" putting his arm quickly around her.

"Oh, no, Uncle," she said, looking up at him with an effort. "But what does it mean? Who is this man?"

"I'll tell you later, Dorry. I must go now—"

"Uncle, you are so angry! Wait one moment. Let me go with you."

Her frightened look brought Mr. Reed to his senses. In a calmer voice he begged her to give herself no uneasiness, but to lie down again and rest. He would send Lydia up, for he must lose no time in attending to that letter. He was just going to open the door, when Josie Manning's pleasant voice was heard at the foot of the stair: "Is any one at home? May I come up?"

"Oh, no," shuddered Dorothy.

"Yes, yes," urged Mr. Reed. "Let your friend see you, my girl. Her cheerfulness will help you to forget this rascally, cruel letter. There, good-by for the present," and, kissing her, Mr. Reed left the room.

Josie's bright face soon appeared at the door.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed. "Are you rehearsing for a charade, Miss Reed? And who are you in your long white train—Lady Angelica, or Donna Isabella, or who?"

"I don't know who I am!" sobbed poor Dorothy, throwing herself upon the bed and hiding her face in the pillows.

"Why, what is the matter? Are you ill? Have you heard bad news? Oh, I forget," continued Josie, as Dorry made no reply; "what a goose I must be! Of course you are miserable without Don, you darling! But I've come to bring good news, my lady—to me, at least—so cheer up. Do you know something? Mamma and Papa are going to start for San Francisco on Wednesday. They gave me my choice—to go with them or to stay with you, and I decided to stay. So they and your uncle settled it late last

night that I am to be here with you till they come back—two whole months, Dot! Isn't that nice?"

"Ever so nice!" said Dorry, without lifting her head. "I am really glad, Jo; but my head aches, and I feel dreadfully this morning."

"Have you had any breakfast?" asked the practical Josie, much puzzled.

"N-no," sobbed Dorry.

"Well, no wonder you feel badly. Look at this cold coffee, and that mountain of toast, and not a thing touched. I declare, if I don't go right down and tell Liddy. We'll get you up a good hot breakfast, and you can doze quietly till we come."

Dorry felt a gentle arm round her for an instant, and a warm cheek pressed to hers, and then she was alone—alone with her thoughts of that dreadful letter.

It was from Eben Slade, and it contained all that he had told Donald on that day at Vanbogen's, and a great deal more. He had kept quiet long enough, he added, and now he wished her to understand that, as her uncle, he had some claim upon her; that her real name was Delia Robertson; she was no more Dorothy Reed than he was; and that she must not tell a living soul a word about this letter, or it would make trouble. If she had any spirit or any sense of justice, he urged, she would manage for him to see her some day when Mr. Reed was out. Of course—(the letter went on to say)—Mr. Reed would object if he knew, for it was to his interest to claim her; but truth was truth, and George Reed was no relation to her whatever. The person she had been taught to call Aunt Kate was really her mother, and it was her mother's own brother, Eben, who was writing this letter. All he asked for was an interview. He had a great deal to say to her, and Mr. Reed was a tyrant who would keep her a prisoner if he could, so that her own Uncle Eben could not even see her. He had been unfortunate and lost all his money. If he was rich he would see that he and his dear niece Delia had their rights, in spite of the tyrant who held her in bondage. She must manage to see him,—(so ran the letter)—and she could put a letter for him,

after dark that night, under the large stone by the walnut-tree behind the summer-house. He would come and see her at any time she mentioned. No girl of spirit would be held, for a single day, in such bondage, especially when sacred duties called her elsewhere. The writer concluded by calling her again his dear Delia, and signing himself her affectionate uncle, Eben Slade.

Early on that same evening, Sailor Jack, reaching the summer-house by a circuitous route, stealthily laid a dainty-looking note under the large stone by the walnut tree. He held his breath as he lingered a moment among the shadows. Ah, if he only could have his own way, what a chance this would be to leave that paltry thrashing at Vanbogen's far in the background! How he longed to get his hands on Eben Slade once more! But, no; he had received his instructions, and must obey. Besides, Slade was too wary a man to be caught this time. So poor Jack was forced to go back to the stables, and there bustle noisily about as though nothing unusual were expected.

But it was some satisfaction to follow Mr. Reed's further orders to keep a sharp lookout all that night, about the premises. Meantime Eben Slade, who like most men of his sort was a coward at heart, had hastily withdrawn to a safe distance, after finding what he sought under the walnut-tree. Soon he sat down in the woods that crossed his road, and there, by the light of a candle-end that he had with him, eagerly opened the dainty letter.

The man clutched the paper angrily as he read. It was not from the poor, frightened girl whose words he had hoped to see, but from Mr. Reed,—a plain, strong letter, that, while it increased Slade's wrath, and showed him the futility of pursuing his persecutions for the present, made him also savagely hopeful.

"Well," he muttered to himself, as he stole through the rain, along the dark road towards the shabby house which was to shelter him for the night, "I don't give her up yet by a good deal, and there's considerable worry ahead of George Reed still. Confound it! If I had that man's money and position I could work out the case to a

certainty. But what can a fellow do without a dime or a friend? What if the boy has gone over the sea to find out for himself, he isn't likely to succeed after all these years; and if he does get any further particulars, why they're just as apt as not to be all in my favor. The girl is just as likely to be mine as theirs. Ten chances to one she's Kate's child, after all. Things will work right, yet. I'll bide my time."

CHAPTER XXX.

A TIME OF SUSPENSE.

That same morning, after Josie had gone home to assist her mother in preparations for the trip to California, Dorothy, exhausted by the morning's emotions, fell into a heavy sleep, from which she did not waken till late in the afternoon. By the bed stood a little table, on which were two fine oranges, each on a Venetian glass plate, and surmounted by a card. On one was written: "Miss Dorothy Reed, with the high, respectful consideration of her sympathizing friend, Edward Tyler, who hopes she will soon be well;" and the other bore a limping verse in Josie's familiar handwriting:

"To this fair maid no quarter show, Good Orange, sweet and yellow, But let her eat you—in a certain way That Dorothy and I both know— That's a good fellow!"

Dorry appreciated both the notes and the oranges, and her spirits rose again as she heard Liddy softly singing in the next room. That evening, after she and her uncle had had a long talk together, she kissed him for good-night, and, though there were tears in her bright eyes, she looked a spirited little maiden who did not intend to give herself up to doubting and grieving, so long as "there was more than hope" that she was Dorothy.

Half an hour later, the young girl stole softly down to the deserted sitting-room, lit only by the glowing remains of a wood-fire, and taking an unlighted student's lamp

from the centre-table, made her rapid way back to her pretty bedroom up stairs. Here, after putting on the soft Lady-Angelica wrapper, as Josie had called it, she sat for a long time in a low easy-chair, with her little red-slippered feet in a rug before the fire, thinking of all that the eventful day had brought her.

"There is more than hope," she mused, while her eyes were full of tears: "those were Uncle's very words—more than hope, that I am Dorothy Reed. But what if it really is not so; what if I am no relation to my—to the Reed family at all—no relation to Uncle George nor to Donald?" From weeping afresh at this thought, and feeling utterly lonely and wretched, she began to wonder how it would feel to be Delia. In that case, Aunt Kate would have been her mother. For an instant this was some consolation, but she soon realized that, while Aunt Kate was very dear to her fancy, she could not think of her as her mother; and then there was Uncle Robertson—no, she never could think of him as her father; and that dreadful, cruel Eben Slade, her uncle? Horrible! At this thought her soul turned with a great longing toward the unknown mother and father, who, to her childish mind, had appeared merely as stately personages, full of good qualities—Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott Reed, honored by all who knew them, but very unreal and shadowy to her. Now, as she sat half-dreaming, half-thinking, their images grew distinct and loving; they seemed to reach out their arms tenderly to her, and the many good words about them that from time to time had fallen tamely upon her ears now gained life and force. She felt braver and better, clinging in imagination to them, and begging them to forgive her, their own girl Dorothy, for not truly knowing them before.

Meantime, the night outside had been growing colder and there were signs of a storm. A shutter in some other part of the building blew open violently, and the wind moaned through the pine-trees at the corner of the house. Then the sweet, warm visions that had comforted her faded from her mind and a dreadful loneliness came over her. A great longing for Donald filled her heart. She tried to pray,—

"No thought confessed, no wish expressed, Only a sense of supplication."

Then her thoughts took shape, and she prayed for him, her brother, alone in a foreign land, and for Uncle, troubled and waiting, at home, and for herself, that she might be patient and good, and have strength to do what was right—even to go with Eben Slade to his distant home, if she were really his sister's child.

The storm became so dismal that Dorry poked the fire into a blaze, and lighted the student's lamp that she had placed on the table behind the arm-chair. Then she took a photograph from the mantel-shelf and an oval hand-glass from her dressing-table, and, looking hurriedly about her to be doubly sure that she was alone, she sat down resolutely, as if saying to herself: "Now, we'll see!"

Poor Dot! The photograph showed Donald, a handsome, manly boy, of whom any loving sister might be proud; but the firm, boyish face, with its square brows, roundish features, and shining black hair, certainly did not seem to be in the least like the picture that looked anxiously at her out of the hand-glass—a sweet face, with its oval outline, soft, dark eyes and long lashes, its low, arched eyebrows, its expressive mouth, and sunny, dark brown tresses.

Feature by feature, she scanned the two faces carefully, unconsciously drawing in her warm-tinted cheeks and pouting her lips, in her desire to resemble the photograph; but it was of no use. The two faces would not be alike; and yet, as she looked again, was there not something similar about the foreheads and the lower line of the faces? Hastily pushing back her hair with one hand, she saw with joy that, excepting the eyebrows, there really was a likeness: the line where the hair began was certainly almost the same on both faces.

"Dear, dear old Donald! Why, we are just alike there! I'll show Uncle to-morrow. It's wonderful."

Dorry laughed a happy little laugh, all by herself.

"Besides," she thought, as she laid the mirror away, "we are alike, in our natures,

and in our ways and in loving each other, and I don't care a bit what anybody says to the contrary."

Thus braced, she drew her chair closer to the table and began a letter to Donald. A vague consciousness that by this time every one in the house must be in bed and asleep deepened her sense of being alone with Donald as she wrote. It seemed that he read every word as soon as it fell upon the paper, and that in the stillness of the room she almost could hear him breathe.

It was a long letter. At any other time, Dorry's hand would have wearied with the mere exercise of writing so many pages; but there was so much to tell that she took no thought of fatigue. It was enough that she was pouring out her heart to Donald.

"I know now," the letter went on to say, "why you have gone to Europe, and why I was not told the errand. Dear, dear Donald! And you knew it all before you went away; and that is why you sometimes seemed silent and troubled, and why you were so patient and good and gentle with me, even when I teased you and made sport of you! Uncle told me this afternoon all that he has to tell, and I have assured him that I am Dorry, and nobody else, and that he need not be bothered about it any more (though you know, Don, I cannot help feeling awfully. It's so dreadful to think of us all being so mixed up. The very idea of my not being Dorry makes me miserable. Yet, if I were anybody else, would I not be the first to know it? Yes, Donald, whether you find proof or not, you dear, good, noble old fellow, I am your sister—I feel it in my very bones—and you are my brother. Nobody on earth can make me believe you are not. That dreadful man said in his letter that it was to George Reed's interest that I should be known as Dorothy Reed. Oh, Don, as if it were not to my interest, too, and yours! But if it is not so, if it really is true that I am not Dorothy, but Delia, why, I must be Delia in earnest, and do my duty to my—her mother's brother. He writes that his wife is sick, and that he is miserable, with no comforts at home and no one to care whether he is good or bad. So, you see, I must go and leave

you and Uncle, if I am Delia. And, Don, there's another thing, though it's the least part of it: if I am Delia, I am poor, and it is right that I should earn my living, though you and Uncle should both oppose it, for I am no relation to any one,—I mean any one here,—and it would not be honorable for me to stay here in luxury.

"I can see your eyes flash at this, dear brother, or perhaps you will say I am foolish to think of such things yet a while. So I am, may be, but I must talk to you of all that is in my thoughts. It is very lonely here to-night. The rain is pouring against the windows, and it seems like November; and, do you know, I dread to-morrow, for I am afraid I may show in some way to dear Uncle George that I am not absolutely certain he is any relation to me. I feel so strange! Even Jack and Liddy do not know who I really am. Wouldn't Josie and Ed be surprised if they knew about things? I wish they did. I wish every one did, for secrecy is odious.

"Donald, dear, this is an imbecile way of talking. I dare say I shall tear up my letter in the morning. No, I shall not. It belongs to you, for it is just what your loving old Dorry is thinking this night.

"Good-night, my brother. In my letter, sent last Saturday, I told you how delighted Uncle and I were with your descriptions of London and Liverpool.

"I show Uncle your letters to me, but he does not return the compliment; that is, he has read to me only parts of those you have written to him. May be he will let me read them through now, since I know 'the important business.' Keep up a good heart, Don, and do not mind my whining a little in this letter. Now that I am going to sign my name, I feel as if every doubt I have expressed is almost wicked. So, good-night again, dear Donald, and ever so much love from your own faithful sister,

Dorry.

"P. S.—Uncle said this afternoon, when I begged him to start with me right away to join you in Europe, that if it were not for some matters needing his presence here, we might go; but that he cannot possibly leave at present. Dear Uncle! I'll be glad

when morning comes, so that I may put my arms around his neck and be his own cheerful Dorry again. Liddy does not know yet that I have heard anything. I forgot to say that Mr. and Mrs. Manning are going to California, and that Josie is to spend two months with me. Won't that be a comfort? How strange it will seem to have a secret from her! But Uncle says I must wait.

"P. S. again.—Be sure to answer this in English. I know we agreed to correspond in French, for the sake of the practice, but I have no heart for it now. It is too hard work. Good-night, once more. The storm is over. Your loving

Dorry."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONLY A BIT OF RAG.

Dorry's long letter reached Donald two weeks later, as he sat in his room at a hotel in Aix-la-Chapelle. He had been feeling lonely and rather discouraged, notwithstanding the many sights that had interested him during the day. And after many disappointments and necessary delays in the prosecution of the business that had taken him across the sea, he had begun to feel that, perhaps, it would be just as well to sail for home and let things go on as before. Dorry, he thought, need never know of the doubts and anxieties that had troubled Uncle George and himself, and for his part he would rest in his belief that he and she were Wolcott Reed's own children, joint heirs to the estate, and, as Liddy had so often called them, "the happiest pair of twins in the world."

But Dot's letter changed everything. Now that she knew all, he would not rest a day even, till her identity was proved beyond a possibility of doubt. But how to do it? No matter; do it he would, if it were in the power of man. (Donald in these days felt at least twenty years old.) Dorry's words had fired his courage anew. As he looked out

upon the starry night, over the roof-peaks of the quaint old city, he felt like a Crusader, and Dorothy's happiness was his Holy-land, to be rescued from all invaders. The spirit of grand old Charlemagne, whose bones were in the Cathedral close by, was not more resolute than Donald's was now.

All this and more he told her in his letter written that night, but the "more" did not include the experiences of the past twelve hours of daylight. He did not tell her how he had that day, with much difficulty, found the Prussian physician who had attended his father, Wolcott Reed, in his last illness, and how very hard it had been to make the old man even remember the family, and how little information, after all, he had been able to obtain.

"Vifteen year vas a long dime, eh?" the doctor had said in his broken English, and as for "dose dwin bapies," he could recall "nod-ings aboud dot at all."

But Don's letter suited Dorothy admirably, and in its sturdy helpfulness and cheer, and its off-hand, picturesque account of his adventures, it quite consoled her for the disappointment of not reading the letter that she was positively sure came to Mr. Reed by the same steamer.

The full story of Donald's journey, with all its varied incidents up to this period, would be too long to tell here. But the main points must be mentioned.

Immediately upon landing at Liverpool, Donald had begun his search for the missing Ellen Lee, who, if she could be found, surely would be able to help him, he thought. From all that Mr. Reed had been able to learn previously, she undoubtedly had been Mrs. Wolcott Reed's maid, and had taken charge of the twins on board of the fated vessel. Soon after the shipwreck she had been traced to Liverpool, as the reader knows, and had disappeared at that time, before Mr. Reed's clerk, Henry Wakeley, could see her. But fifteen years had elapsed since then. Donald found the house in Liverpool where she had been, but could gain there no information whatever. The house had changed owners, and its former occupants had scattered,

no one could say whither. But, by a persistent search among the neighboring houses, he did find a bright motherly woman, who, more than fifteen years before, had come, a bride, to live in an opposite house, and who well remembered a tall, dark-complexioned young woman sitting one night on the steps of the shabby boarding-house over the way. Some one had told her that this young woman had just been saved from a shipwreck, and had lost everything but the clothes she wore; and from sheer sympathy she, the young wife, had gone across the street to speak to her. She had found her, at first, sullen and uncommunicative. "The girl was a foreigner," said the long-ago bride, now a blooming matron with four children. "Leastwise, though she understood me and gave me short answers in English, it struck me she was French-born. Her black stuff gown was dreadful torn and ruined by the sea-water, sir, and so, as I was about her height, I made bold to offer her one of mine in its place. I had a plenty then, and me and my young man was accounted comfortable from the start. She shook her head and muttered something about 'not bein' a beggar,' but do you know, sir, that the next day she come over to me, as I was knitting at my little window, and says she, 'I go on to London,' she says, 'and I'll take that now, if you be pleased,' or something that way, I don't remember her words; and so I showed her into my back room and put the fresh print gown on her. I can see her now a-takin' the things out of her own gown and pinning them so careful into the new pocket, because it wasn't so deep and safe as the one in her old gown was; and then, tearin' off loose tatters of the black skirt and throwing them down careless-like, she rolled it up tight, and went off with it, a-noddin' her head and a-maircying me in French, as pretty as could be. I can't bring to mind a feature of her, exceptin' the thick, black hair, and her bein' about my own size. I was slender then, young master; fifteen years makes—"

"And those bits of the old gown," interrupted Donald eagerly, "where are they? Did you save them?"

"Laws, no, young gentleman, not I. They went into my rag-bag, like as not, and are

all thrown away and lost, sir, many a day agone, for that matter."

"I am sorry," said Donald. "Even a scrap of her gown might possibly be of value to me."

"Was she belonging to your family?" asked the woman, doubtfully.

Donald partly explained why he wished to find Ellen Lee; and asked if the girl had said anything to her of the wreck, or of two babies.

"Not a word, sir, not a word; though I tried to draw her into talkin'. It's very little she said, at best; she was a-grumpy-like."

"What about that rag-bag?" asked Donald, returning to his former train of thought. "Have you the same one yet?"

"That I have," she answered, laughing; "and likely to have it for many a year to come. My good mother made it for me when I was married, and so I've kept it and patched it till it's like Joseph's coat; and useful enough it's been, too—holding many a bit that's done service to me and my little romps. 'Keep a thing seven year,' my mother used to say, 'keep it seven year an' turn it, an' seven year again, an' it'll come into play at last.'"

"Why may you not have saved that tatter of the old gown twice seven years, then?" persisted Donald.

"Why, bless you, young sir, there's no knowin' as to that. But you couldn't find it, if I had. For why? the black pieces, good, bad, and indifferent, are all in one roll together, and you nor I couldn't tell which it was."

"Likely enough," said Donald, in a disappointed tone; "and yet, could you—that is—really, if you wouldn't mind, I'd thank you very much if we could look through that rag-bag together."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed the woman, seized with a sudden dread that her young visitor might not be in his right senses.

"If I could find those pieces of black stuff," he urged, significantly, "it would be worth a golden guinea to me."

Sure, now, that he was a downright lunatic, she moved back from him with a frightened gesture; but glancing again at his bright, manly face, she said in a different tone:

"And it would be worth a golden guinea to me, young master, just to have the joy of finding them for you. Step right into this room, sir, and you, Nancy and Tom" (to a shy little pair who had been sitting, unobserved, on the lowest step of the clean, bare stairway), "you run up and drag the old piece-bag down to Mother. You shall have your way, young gentleman—though it's the oddest thing that ever happened to me."

The huge bag soon came tumbling down the stairs, with soft thuds; but the little forms that, for the time, had given it life and motion, did not appear. Donald gladly drew it into the little room, where his hostess soon extracted from its depths a portly black roll.

Alas! To the boyish mind a bundle made of scores of different sorts of black pieces rolled together is anything but expressive. On first opening it, Donald looked hopelessly at the motley heap; but the kind woman helped him somewhat by rapidly throwing piece after piece aside, with, "That can't be it—that's like little Tom's trousers;" "Nor that,—that's what I wore for poor mother;" "Nor that—that's to mend my John's Sunday coat;" and so on, till there were not more than a dozen scraps left. Of these, three showed that they had been cut with a pair of scissors, but the others were torn pieces, and of different kinds of black goods. Don felt these pieces, held them up to the light, and in despair, was just going to beg her to let him have them all for future investigation, when his face suddenly brightened.

Putting one of the pieces between his lips, he shook his head with rather a disgusted expression, as though the flavor were anything but agreeable, then tried another and another (the woman meantime regarding him with speechless amazement), till at

last, holding out a strip and smacking his lips, he exclaimed:

"I have it! This is it! It's as salt as brine!"

"Good land!" she cried; "salt! who ever heard of such a thing,—and in my rag-bag? How could that be?"

Don paid no attention to her. Tasting another piece, that proved on closer examination to be of the same material, he found it to be equally salt.

His face displayed a comical mixture of nausea and delight as he sprang to his feet, crying out:

"Oh! ma'am, I can never thank you enough. These are the pieces of Ellen Lee's gown, I am confident—unless they have been salted in some way since you've had them."

"Not they, sir; I can warrant that. But who under the canopy ever thought of the taste of a shipwrecked gown before!"

"Smell these," he said, holding the pieces toward her. "Don't you notice a sort of salt-sea odor about them?"

"Not a bit," she answered, emphatically, shaking her head. Then, still cautiously sniffing at the pieces, she added: "Indeed and I do fancy so now. It's faint, but it's there, sir. Fifteen years ago! How salt does cling to things! The poor woman must have been pulled out of the very sea!"

"That doesn't follow," remarked Donald: "her skirt might have been soaked by the splashing of the waves after she was let down into the small boat."

Donald talked a while longer with his new acquaintance, but finally bade her good-day, first, however, writing down the number of her house, and giving her his address, and begging her to let him know if, at any time, she and her husband should move from that neighborhood.

"Should what, sir?"

"Should move—go to live in another place."

"Not we," she replied, proudly. "We live here, we do sir, John and myself, and the four children. His work's near by, and here we'll be for many's the day yet, the Lord willing. No, no, please never think of such a thing as that," she continued, as Donald diffidently thrust his hand into his pocket. "Take the cloth with you, sir, and welcome; but my children shall never have it to say that their mother took pay for three old pieces of cloth—no, nor for showing kindness either" (as Don politely put in a word), "above all things, not for kindness. God bless you, young master, an' help you in findin' her—that's all I can say, and a good-day to you."

"That French nurse probably went home again to France," mused Donald, after gratefully taking leave of the good woman and her rag-bag. "As we twins were born at Aix-la-Chapelle, in Prussia, most likely mother obtained a nurse there. But it needn't have been a Prussian nurse. It was this same French girl, I warrant. Yes, and this French nurse very naturally found her way back to France after she was landed at Liverpool. But, for all that, I may find some clew to her at Aix-la-Chapelle."

Before going to that interesting old Prussian city, however, he decided to proceed to London and see what could be ascertained there. In London, though he obtained the aid of one James Wogg, a detective, he could find no trace of the missing Ellen Lee. But the detective's quick sense drew enough from Donald's story of the buxom matron and the two gowns to warrant his going to Liverpool, "if the young gent so ordered, to work up the search."

"Had the young gent thought to ask for a bit like the new gown that was put onto Ellen Lee? No? Well, that always was the way with unprofessionals—not to say the young gent hadn't been uncommon sharp, as it was."

Donald, pocketing his share of the compliment, heartily accepted the detective's services, after making a careful agreement as to the scale of expenses, and giving, by the aid of his guide-book, the name of the hotel in Aix-la-Chapelle where a letter

from the detective would reach him. He also prepared an advertisement "on a new principle," as he explained to the detective, very much to that worthy's admiration. "Ellen Lee has been advertised for again and again," he said, "and promised to be told 'something to her advantage;' but if still alive, she evidently has some reason for hiding. It is possible that it might have been she who threw the two babies from the sinking ship into the little boat, and as news of the rescue of all in that boat may never have reached her, she all this time may have feared that she would be blamed or made to suffer in some way for what she had done. I mean to advertise," continued Donald to the detective, "that information is wanted of a Frenchwoman, Ellen Lee, by the two babies whose lives she saved at sea, and who, by addressing so-and-so, can learn of something to her advantage,—and we'll see what will come of it."

"Not so," suggested Mr. Wogg. "It's a good dodge; but say, rather, 'by two young persons whose lives she saved when they were babies;' there's more force to it that way. And leave out 'at sea;' it gives too much to the other party. Best have 'em address 'Mr. James Wogg, Old Bailey, N. London.'" But Donald would not agree to this last point.

Consequently, after much painstaking on the part of Donald and Mr. Wogg, the following advertisement appeared in the London and Liverpool papers:—

IF ELLEN LEE, A FRENCHWOMAN, WILL KINDLY SEND her address to D. R., in care of Dubigk's Hotel, Aix-la-Chapelle, Prussia, she shall receive the grateful thanks of two young persons whose lives she saved when they were infants, and hear of something greatly to her advantage.

Again Ellen Lees, evidently not French, came into view, lured by the vague terms of the advertisement, but as quickly disappeared under the detective's searching inspection; and again it seemed as if that particular Ellen Lee, as Mr. Reed had surmised, had vanished from the earth. But Mr. Wogg assured his client that it took

time for an advertisement to make its way into the rural districts of England, and he must be patient.

Donald, therefore, proceeded at once to Dover, on the English coast, thence sailed over to Ostend, in Belgium, and from there went by railway to his birthplace, Aix-la-Chapelle. As his parents had settled there three months before his mother started for home, he felt that, in every respect, this was the most promising place for his search. He had called upon George Robertson's few family connections in London, but they knew very little about that gentleman, excepting that when very young he had gone to America to seek his fortune; that in time he had married a well-to-do young American lady and had then come back to settle in England; that he soon had lost everything, being very reckless and unfortunate in business; that his wife, in her poverty, had received help from somebody travelling in Prussia; and that the couple had been sent for to meet this friend or relative at Havre, when his little girl was not two months old, and all had sailed for America together. Donald knew as much as this already. If, fifteen years before, they could give Mr. Reed no description of the baby, they certainly could give Donald no satisfaction now. So far from gathering from them any new facts of importance, in regard to their lost kinsman and his wife and child, they had all this time, as Donald wrote to Mr. Reed, been very active in forgetting him and his affairs. Still, Donald succeeded in reviving their old promise that, if anything should turn up that would throw any light on the history of "poor Robertson's" family, they would lose no time in communicating the fact—this time to Mr. Reed's nephew, Donald.

No word had been heard from them up to the evening that Dorothy's letter arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle; no satisfactory response, either, had been called forth by the Ellen Lee advertisement; and Donald, who had had, as we know, a disappointing interview with his father's physician, was weary and almost discouraged. Moreover, every effort to find the store at which the gold chain had been purchased was in vain. But now that Dorothy's letter had come, bringing him new energy and courage,

the outlook was brighter. There still were many plans to try. Surely some of them must succeed. In the first place, he would translate his Ellen-Lee advertisement into French, and insert it in Paris and Aix-la-Chapelle newspapers. Strange that no one had thought of doing this before. Then he would—no, he wouldn't—but, on the other hand, why not send—And at this misty point of his meditations he fell asleep, to dream, not as one would suppose, of Dorothy, but of the grand Cathedral standing in place of the Chapel from which this special Aix obtained its name; of the wonderful hot springs in the public street; of the baths, the music, and the general stir and brightness of this fascinating old Prussian city.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DONALD MAKES A DISCOVERY.

The new French advertisement and a companion to it, printed in German, were duly issued; but, alas! nothing came from them. However, Donald carefully preserved the black pieces he had obtained in Liverpool, trusting that, in some way, they yet might be of service to him. He now visited the shops, examined old hotel registers, and hunted up persons whose address he had obtained from his uncle, or from the owners of the "Cumberland." The few of these that were to be found could, after all, but repeat what they remembered of the account they had given to Mr. Reed and Henry Wakeley many years before.

Don found in an old book of one of the hotels at Aix-la-Chapelle the names of Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott Reed on the list of arrivals,—no mention of a maid or of a child. Then, in the books of another hotel whither they had moved, he found a settlement for board of Wolcott Reed, wife, and maid. At the same hotel a later entry recorded that Mrs. Wolcott Reed (widow), nurse, and two infants had left for France, and letters for her were to be forwarded to Havre. There were several entries concerning settlements for board and other expenses, but these told Donald nothing new.

Finally, he resolved to follow as nearly as he could the course his mother was known to have taken from Aix-la-Chapelle to Havre, where she was joined by Mr. and Mrs. Robertson and their baby daughter, a few days before the party set sail from that French port for New York.

Yes, at Havre he would be sure to gain some information. If need be, he could settle there for a while, and patiently follow every possible clew that presented itself. Perhaps the chain had been purchased there. What more likely, he thought, than that, just before sailing, his mother had bought the pretty little trinket as a parting souvenir? The question was, had she got it for her own little twin-daughter, or for Aunt Kate's baby? That point remained to be settled. Taking his usual precaution of leaving behind him an address, to which all coming messages or letters from Mr. Wogg or others could be forwarded, Donald bade farewell to Aix-la-Chapelle, and, disregarding every temptation to stop along the way, hurried on, past famous old cities, that, under other circumstances, would have been of great interest to him.

"We, all three, can come here together, some time, and see the sights," he thought to himself; "now I can attend only to the business that brought me over here."

At Havre he visited the leading shops where jewelry and fancy goods were sold or manufactured. These were not numerous, and some of them had not been in existence fifteen years before, at the time when the sad-hearted widow and her party were there. There was no distinctive maker's mark on the necklace from which Donald had hoped so much, and no one knew anything about it, nor cared to give it any attention, unless the young gentleman wished to sell it. Then they might give a trifle. It was not a very rare antique, they said, valuable from its age; jewelry simply out of date was worth only its weight, and a little chain like this was a mere nothing. As Donald was returning to his hotel, weary and inclined to be dispirited, he roused himself to look for Rue de Corderie, numéro 47, or, as we Americans would say, Number 47 Corderie Street. As this house is famous as the birthplace of Bernardin

de St. Pierre, author of "Paul and Virginia," Donald wished to see it for himself, and also to be able to describe it to Dorothy. He did not visit it on that day, however; for on his way thither his attention was arrested by a very small shop which he had not noticed before, and which, in the new-looking city of Havre, appeared to be fully a century old. Entering, he was struck with the oddity of its interior. The place was small, not larger than the smallest room at Lakewood, and though its front window displayed only watches, and a notice in French and English that Monsieur Bajeau repaired jewelry at short notice, it was so crowded with rare furniture and bric-à-brac that Donald, for a moment, thought he had entered the wrong shop. But, no! There hung the watches, in full sight, and a bright-faced old man in a black skull-cap was industriously repairing a bracelet.

"May I see the proprietor of this store, please?" asked Donald, politely.

"Oui, Monsieur," replied the old man, with equal courtesy, rising and stepping forward. "Je suis—I am ze popriétaire, je ne comprend pas. I no speak ze Ingleesh. Parlez-vous Français—eh?"

"Oh, yes," said Donald, too full of his errand to be conscious that he was not speaking French, as he carefully took a little red velvet case from an inside pocket, "I wished to show you this necklace—to ask if you—"

The old man listened with rather an aggrieved air. "Ah! Eh! I sall re-paire it, you say?" then adding wistfully, "You no speak ze French?"

"Oui, oui, Monsieur,—pardonnez," said Donald, thus reminded. From that moment he and the now radiant Monsieur Bajeau got on finely together, for Donald's French was much better than Monsieur's English; and, in truth, the young man was very willing to practise speaking it in the retirement of this quaint little shop. Their conversation shall be translated here, however.

"Have you ever seen this before, sir?" asked Donald, taking the precious necklace from the box and handing it to him over the little counter.

"No," answered the shop-keeper, shaking his head as he took the trinket. "Ah! that is very pretty. No, not a very old chain. It is modern, but very odd—very fine—unique, we say. Here are letters," as he turned the clasp and examined its under side. "What are they? They are so small. Your young eyes are sharp. Eh?" Here Monsieur bent his head and looked inquiringly at Donald from over his spectacles.

"D. R.," said Don.

"Ah, yes! D. R.; now I see," as he turned them to the light. "D. R.,—that is strange! Now, I think I have seen those same engraved letters before. Why, my young friend, as I look at this little chain, something carries the years away and I am a younger man. It brings very much to mind—Hold!—No, it is all gone now. I must have made a mistake."

Donald's heart beat faster.

"Did you make the chain?" he asked.

"No, no, never. I never made a chain like it—but I have seen that chain before. The clasp is very—very—You know how it opens?"

"It is rusty inside," explained Donald, leaning forward anxiously, lest it should be injured. "We need not open it." Then controlling his excitement, he asked as calmly as he could:

"You have seen it before, Monsieur?"

"I have seen it. Where is the key?"

"The key, Monsieur? What do you mean?"

"The key that opens the clasp," returned the Frenchman, with sudden impatience. This American boy began to appear rather stupid in Monsieur's eyes. Donald looked at him in amazement.

"Does it lock?"

"Does it lock?" echoed Monsieur. "Why, see here;" and with these words he tried to

press the upper part of the clasp aside. It stuck at first, but finally yielded, sliding around from the main part on an invisible little pivot, and disclosing a very small key-hole.

Donald stared at it in hopeful bewilderment. Evidently his uncle had failed to find this key-hole, so deftly concealed!

The old man eyed his visitor shrewdly. Having been for some time a dealer in rare bric-à-brac, he prided himself on being up to the tricks of persons who had second-hand treasures to sell.

"Is this chain yours?" he asked, coldly. "Do you bring it to sell to me? All this is very strange. I wish I could remember—"

"Oh, no, indeed. Not to sell. Yes, the chain is mine, my sister's—my uncle's, I mean—in America."

Monsieur drew back with added distrust, but he was reassured by Donald's earnest tone. "Oh, Monsieur, pray recall all you can about this matter. I cannot tell you how important it is to me—how anxious I am to hear!"

"Young man, your face is pale; you are in trouble. Come in and sit down," leading the way into a small room behind the shop. "As for this necklace, there is something—but I cannot think; it is something in the past years that will not come back—Ah! I hear a customer; I must go. Pardon me, I will return presently."

So saying, Monsieur left him. Bending slightly and taking short, quick steps, he hurried into the shop. Donald thought the old man was gone for an hour, though it really was only five minutes. But it had given him an opportunity to collect his thoughts, and when Monsieur returned, Donald was ready with a question:

"Perhaps a lady—a widow—brought the chain to you long ago, sir?"

MONSIEUR BAJEAU BECOMES INTERESTED IN DONALD'S CHAIN. MONSIEUR BAJEAU BECOMES INTERESTED IN DONALD'S CHAIN.

"A widow!" exclaimed Monsieur, brightening, "a widow dressed in black—yes, it comes back to me—a day, ten, twenty years ago—I see it all! A lady—two ladies—no, one was a servant, a genteel nurse; both wore black, and there was a little baby—two little babies—very little; I see them now."

"Two!" exclaimed Donald, half wild with eagerness.

"Yes, two pink little fellows."

"Pink!" In a flash, Donald remembered the tiny pink sacque, now in his valise at the hotel.

"Yes, pink little faces, with lace all around—very droll—the littlest babies I ever saw taken into the street. Well, the pretty lady in black carried one, and the nurse—she was a tall woman—carried the other."

"Yes, yes, please," urged Donald. He longed to help Monsieur on with the account, but it would be better, he knew, to let him take his own way.

It all came out in time, little by little, but complete, at last. The widow lady had gone to the old man's shop, with two infants and a tall nurse. Taking from her purse a tiny gold key, she had unlocked a necklace from one of the babies' necks, and requested Monsieur Bajeau to engrave a name on the under side of its small square clasp.

"A name?" asked Donald, thinking of the two initials.

"Yes, a name—a girl's name," continued the old man, rubbing his chin and speaking slowly, as if trying to recollect. "Well, no matter. Intending to engrave the name later in the afternoon, I wrote it down in my order-book, and asked the lady for her address, so that I might send the chain to her the next day. But, no; she would not leave it. She must have the name engraved at once, right away, and must put the necklace herself on her little daughter. She would wait. Ah, how it all comes back to me! Well, I wished to obey the lady, and so set to work. But I saw immediately there was not space enough for the whole name. She was very sorry, poor lady, and then she said I should put on the two letters D. R. There they are, you see, my own

work—you see that? And she paid me, and locked the chain on the baby's neck again—ah me! it is so strange!—and she went away. That is all I know."

He had spoken the last few sentences rapidly, after Donald had asked, with eagerness, "What name, Monsieur? What was the name, please, the name that the lady wished you to engrave?"

Now the old man, hardly pausing, deliberately went back to Don's question.

"The name? the name?—I cannot quite say."

"Was it—Delia?" suggested Donald, faintly.

"Yes, Delia. That was the name."

If Donald had been struck, he scarcely could have been more stunned.

"Wait!" exclaimed Monsieur. "We shall see. I will search the old books. Do you know the year? 1850?—60? what?"

"1859, November," said Donald, wearily, his joy all turned to misgiving.

"Ha! Now we can be sure! Come into the shop. Your young legs can mount these steps. If you please, hand down the book for 1859; you see it on the back. Ah, how dusty! I have kept them so long. Now"—taking the volume from Donald's trembling hands—"we shall see."

Don leaned over him, as the old man, mumbling softly to himself, examined page after page.

"July, August, September—ah, I was a very busy man in those days—plenty to do with my hands, but not making money as I have been since—different line of business for the most part—October—November—here it is."

Donald leaned closer. He gave a sudden cry. Yes, there it was—a hasty memorandum; part of the writing was unintelligible to him, but the main word stood clear and distinct.

It was DOROTHY.

"Ah! Dorothy," echoed the other. "Yes, that was it. I told you so."

"You said Delia," suggested Don.

The old man gave a satisfied nod. "Yes, Delia."

"But it's Dorothy," insisted Donald firmly, and with gladness in his tone that made the old man smile in sympathy. "Dorothy, as plain as day."

To Monsieur Bajeau the precise name was of little consequence, but he adjusted his glasses and looked at the book again.

"Yes—Dorothy. So it is. A pretty name. I am glad, my friend, if you are pleased." Here Monsieur shook Donald's hand warmly. "The name in my book is certainly correct. I would be sure to write just what the lady told me." An antique clock behind them struck "two." "Ah, it is time for me to eat something. Will you stay and take coffee with me, my friend? We are not strangers now."

Strangers indeed! Donald fairly loved the man. He did not accept the invitation, but thanking him again and again, agreed to return in the evening; for Monsieur Bajeau wished to know more of the strange story.

Donald walked back to the hotel lightly as though treading the air. Everything looked bright to him. Havre, he perceived, was one of the most delightful cities in the world. He felt like sending a cable message home about the chain, but on second thought resolved to be cautious. It would not do to raise hopes that might yet be disappointed. It was just possible that after that visit to Monsieur Bajeau, his mother, for some reason, had transferred the necklace to baby Delia's neck. He would wait. His work was not yet finished; but he had made a splendid beginning.

More than one tourist hurrying through Havre that day, bound for the steamer, or for that pride of the city, the hill of Ingouville, to enjoy the superb view, noticed the young lad's joyous face and buoyant step as he passed by.

Donald walked briskly into the hotel, intent upon writing a cheery letter home; but,

from habit, he stopped at the desk to ask if there was anything for him.

"Mr. D. Reed?" asked the hotel clerk, pointing to a bulky envelope half covered with postage stamps.

"That's my name," returned the happy boy, as he hurriedly tore open one end of the envelope. "Whew! Six!"

There were indeed six letters; and all had been forwarded from Aix-la-Chapelle.

One was from Mr. Wogg, enclosing a bit of printed calico and a soiled memorandum, stating that he sent herewith a piece like the gown which the party in Liverpool had given to the young Frenchwoman fifteen years before. He had obtained it, Mr. Wogg said, "from an old patch-work quilt in the possession of the party, and had paid said party one crown for the same." Two letters were from Mr. Reed and Dorothy, and the rest, three in number—addressed to D. R., in care of Dubigk's Hotel, Aix-la-Chapelle—were from three persons with very different handwritings, but each was signed "Ellen Lee."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW.

Donald, going to his room, laid the three Ellen-Lee letters upon the table before him and surveyed the situation That only one of them could be from the right Ellen Lee seemed evident; but which one? That was the question.

"This cannot be it," thought Donald, as he took up a badly written and much blotted sheet. "It is English-French, and evidently is in the handwriting of a man. Well, this brilliant person requests me to send one hundred francs to pay her expenses to Aix-la-Chapelle, and she will then prove her identity and receive the grateful reward. Thank you, my good man!—not if the court knows itself. We'll lay you aside for the present."

The next was from a woman—a bonne—who stated that by good nursing she had saved so many babies' lives in her day that she could not be sure which two babies this very kind "D. R." alluded to, but her name was Madame L. N. Lit. A wise friend had told her of this advertisement, and explained that as L. N. Lit in French and Ellen Lee in English had exactly the same sound, the inquirer probably was a native of Great Britain, and had made a very natural mistake in writing her name Ellen Lee. Therefore she had much pleasure in informing the kind advertiser that at present her address was No. — Rue St. Armand, Rouen, where she was well known, and that she would be truly happy to hear of something to her advantage. Donald shook his head very doubtfully, as he laid this letter aside. But the next he read twice, and even then he did not lay it down until he had read it again. It was a neatly written little note, and simply stated, in French, that D. R. could see Ellen Lee by calling at No.—Rue Soudière, Paris, and making inquiry for Madame René.

"An honest little note," was Donald's verdict, after carefully scrutinizing it, "and worth following up. The others can wait. I shall go to Paris and look up this Madame René. Yes, she shall receive a visit from his majesty."

Don was in high spirits, you see,—and no wonder. He already had accomplished a splendid day's work in visiting M. Bajeau, and here was at least a promising result from his advertisement. He longed to rush back at once to the quaint little shop, but he had been asked to come in the evening, and the old gentleman had a certain dignity of manner that Don respected. He felt that he must be patient and await the appointed hour.

It came at last, and by that time Donald had enjoyed a hearty meal, written to Mr. Wogg, and made all needed preparations to take the earliest train for Paris the next day.

M. Bajeau—good old man!—was made happy as a boy by the sight of Ellen Lee's letter.

"It is great good luck, my friend, that it should come to you," he said, in rapid French, his old cheeks faintly flushing with pleasure. "Now, you take my word, if she is tall, dark, fine-looking—this Madame René, eh?—you have found the very bonne who came to my little shop with the widow lady. Ask her about me—if she remember, eh? how I engraved the two letters with my own hand, while she stood by, holding the pink-faced baby—ha! ha!" (Here Monsieur rubbed his hands.) "She will remember! She will prove what I say, without doubt. She will know about the key to the necklace—yes, and the lock that has the air of a clasp. Let me see it again. You have it with you?"

Donald displayed the treasure promptly.

"Stay," said Monsieur. "I will, with your permission, try and open the little lock for you. I shall be very careful."

"No, no—thank you!" said Donald, quickly, as M. Bajeau took up a delicate tool. "I would rather wait till I have tried to find the key, and until my uncle and—and sister have seen it again just as it is. My uncle, I am positive, never discovered that the top of the clasp could be slid around in this way. The key itself may come to light yet—who knows? Now, Monsieur, will you do me a great favor?"

"Name it," replied the old man, eying him not unkindly.

"Will you allow me to cut that page out of your order-book?"

"Certainly, my boy; certainly, and with pleasure," said M. Bajeau.

No sooner said than done. Donald, who had his penknife ready, delighted M. Bajeau with his clever way of cutting out the page close to its inner side, and yet in a zigzag line, so that at any time afterward the paper could be fitted into its place in the book, in case it should be necessary to prove its identity.

Next the story of the chain was retold with great care, and written down by Don as it came from Monsieur's lips, word for word, and signed by M. Bajeau with trembling nicety. "Stay!" he exclaimed, as he laid down the pen. "It will be right for me to

certify to this in legal form. Early in the morning, we can go to my good neighbor the notary and sign the paper. In a day or so we shall know whether this Madame René is Ellen Lee. If so, she will remember that hour spent in the shop of the watch-mender Bajeau, ha! ha!"

Monsieur could afford to laugh, for, though he still repaired watches, he had risen somewhat in worldly success and dignity since that day. An American, under the same circumstances, would by this time have had a showy bric-à-brac establishment, with a large sign over the door. But Monsieur Bajeau was content with his old shop, well satisfied to know the value of the treasures of jewelry and rare furniture which he bought and sold.

The visit to the notary over, Donald took his leave, promising the old man to come and bid him good-by before sailing for America, and, if possible, to bring Ellen Lee with him to Monsieur Bajeau's shop.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, after a dusty seven hours' ride in a railway coach, he found himself in Paris, on the way to the Rue Soudière, in search of Madame René.

It was something beside the effort of mounting five flights of stairs that caused his heart to beat violently when, after inquiring at every landing-place on his way up, he finally knocked at a small door on the very top story.

A short, middle-aged woman, with pale blue eyes and scanty gray hair, opened the door.

"Is this Madame René?" asked Donald, devoutly hoping that she would say "No."

The woman nodded, at the same time regarding him with suspicion, and not opening the door wide enough for him to enter.

"You replied to an advertisement, I believe?" began Donald again, bowing politely; but noting the woman's blank reception of his English, he repeated the inquiry in French. The door opened wide; the woman smiled a smile that might have been

agreeable but for the lonely effect of her solitary front tooth, and then courteously invited her visitor to enter and be seated.

Poor Donald, wishing that he were many miles away, and convinced that nothing could come of an interview with this short, stout, pale-eyed "Ellen Lee," took a chair and waited resignedly for Madame to speak.

"I have advertised," she said in French, "and am ready to begin work."

Donald looked at her inquiringly.

"Perhaps Madame, the young gentleman's mother," she suggested, "wishes a fine pastry-cook at once?"

"A pastry-cook!" exclaimed Donald, in despair. "I came to see Ellen Lee, or rather to inquire for Madame René. Is your name René?"

"I am Madame René," a woman answered, in well-spoken English, as she stepped forward from a dark corner of the room, where she had been sitting unobserved by Donald. "Who is it wishes to see Ellen Lee?"

"The boy whose life she saved!" said Donald, rising to his feet and holding out his hand, unable in his excitement to be as guarded as he had intended to be. A glance had convinced him that this was Ellen Lee, indeed. The woman, tall, dark-eyed, stately, very genteel in spite of evident poverty, was about thirty-five years of age. There was no mistaking the sudden joy in her care-worn face. She seized his hand, without a word; then, as if recollecting herself, and feeling that she must be more cautious, she eyed him sharply, saying:

"And the other? the brother? There were two. Is he living?"

For a second Donald's heart sank; but he quickly recovered himself. Perhaps she was trying tricks upon him; if so, he must defend himself as well as he could. So he answered, carelessly, but heartily, "Oh! he's alive and well, thank you, and thanks to you."

This time they looked into each other's eyes—she, with a sudden expression of disappointment, for would-be shrewd people are apt to give little credit to others for equal shrewdness.

"Did you never have a sister?" she asked, with some hesitation.

"Oh, yes!" he replied, "but I must ask you now to tell me something of Ellen Lee, and how she saved us. I can assure you of one thing—I am alive and grateful. Pray tell me your story with perfect frankness. In the first place,—are you and Ellen Lee the same?"

"Yes."

"And do you know my name?"

"Indeed I do," she said, a slow smile coming into her face. "I will be frank with you. If you are the person I believe you to be, your name is Donald Reed."

"Good!" he exclaimed, joyfully; "and the other—what was—"

"His name?" she interrupted, again smiling. "His name was Dorothy Reed, sir! They were twins—a beautiful boy and girl."

To the latest day of his life Donald never will forget that moment; and he never will understand why he did not jump to his feet, grasp her hand, ask her dozens of questions at once, and finally implore her to tell him what he could do to prove his gratitude. He had, in fancy, acted out just such a scene while on his hopeful way to Paris. But, no. In reality, he just drew his chair a little nearer hers,—feeling, as he afterwards told his uncle, thoroughly comfortable,—and in the quietest possible way assured her that she was right as to the boy's name, but, to his mind, it would be very difficult for her to say which little girl she had saved—whether it was the baby-sister or the baby-cousin.

This was a piece of diplomacy on his part that would have delighted Mr. Wogg. True, he would prefer to be entirely frank on all occasions, but, in this instance, he

felt that Mr. Wogg would highly disapprove of his "giving the case away" by letting the woman know that he hoped to identify Dorothy as his sister. What if Madame René, in the hope of more surely "hearing of something greatly to her advantage," were to favor his desire that the rescued baby should be Dorothy and not Delia?

"What do you mean?" asked Madame René.

"I mean, that possibly the little girl you saved was my cousin and not my sister," he replied, boldly.

Ellen Lee shrank from him a moment, and then almost angrily said:

"Why not your sister? Ah, I understand!—you would then be sole heir. But I must tell the truth, young gentleman; so much has been on my conscience all these years that I wish to have nothing left to reproach me. There was a time when, to get a reward, I might, perhaps, have been willing to say that the other rescued baby was your cousin, but now my heart is better. Truth is truth. I held little Donald and Dorothy both in these arms that terrible night. If I saved any little girl, it was Dorothy; and Dorothy was Donald Reed's twin sister."

Donald gave an exclamation of delight, but he checked himself as he glanced toward the short, light-haired Madame, whose peculiar appearance had at first threatened to blight his expectations. She was now seated by the small window, industriously mending a coarse woollen stocking, and evidently caring very little for the visitor, as he was not in search of a pastry-cook.

"We need not mind her," Madam René explained. "Marie Dubois is a good, dull-witted soul, who stays here with me when she is out of a situation. She cannot understand a word of English. We have decided to separate soon, and to leave these lodgings. I cannot make enough money with my needle to live here; and so we must both go out and work—I as a sewing-woman, and she as a cook. Ah me! In the years gone by I hoped to go to America and live with that lovely lady, your poor mother."

"Do you remember her well?" asked Donald, hesitating as to which one of a crowd

of questions he should ask first.

"Perfectly, sir. She was very handsome. Ah me! and so good, so grand! The other lady—her husband's sister, I think, was very pretty, very sweet and gentle; but my lady was like a queen. I can see a trace of her features—just a little—in yours, Mr.—Mr. Reed. I did not at first; but the likeness grows on me."

"And this?" asked Donald, taking a photograph from his pocket. "Do you see any resemblance here to my mother?"

She held it up to the light, and looked at it long and wistfully. "Poor lady!" she said at last.

"Poor lady?" echoed Donald, rather amused at hearing his bright little Dorry spoken of in that way; "she is barely sixteen."

"Ah, no! It is the mother I am thinking of. How proud and happy she would be now with this beautiful daughter! For surely this is your sister's likeness, sir?"

Ellen Lee looked up quickly, but, reassured by Donald's prompt "Yes, indeed," she again studied the picture.

It was one that he had carried about with him ever since he left home—putting it upon the wall[1] or the bureau of his room, wherever he had chanced to lodge; and it showed Dorothy just as she looked the day before he sailed. He had gone with her to the photographer's to have it taken, and for his sake she had tried to forget that they were so suddenly to say "good-by."

"Ah, what a bright, happy face! A blessed day indeed it would be to me if I could see you two, grown to a beautiful young lady and gentleman, standing together—"

"That you shall see," responded Donald, heartily, not because he accepted the title of beautiful young gentleman, but because his heart was full of joy to think of the happy days to come, when the shadow of doubt and mystery would be forever lifted from the home at Lakewood.

"Is she coming? Is she here?" cried Madame René, who, misinterpreting Donald's words, had risen to her feet, half expecting to see the young girl enter the room.

"No. But depend upon it, you will go there," said Don. "You must carry out the dream of your youth, and begin life in America. My uncle surely will send for you. You know, I promised that you should hear of something greatly to your advantage."

"But the ocean," she began, with a show of dread, in spite of the pleasure that shone in her eyes. "I could never venture upon the great, black ocean again!"

"It will not be the black ocean this time. It will be the blue ocean, full of light and promise," said Donald, growing poetic, "and it will bear you to comfort and prosperity. Dorothy and I will—"

"Dorothy!" cried Ellen Lee. "Yes, I feel as if I could cross two oceans to see you both together, alive and well, so I could."

At this point Madame Dubois, rousing herself, said, rather querulously, in her native tongue: "Elise, are you to talk all night? Have you forgotten that you are to take me to see the lady on the Rue St. Honoré at six?"

"Ah, I did forget," was the reply. "I will go at once, if the young gentleman will excuse me."

"Certainly," said Donald, rising; "and I shall call again to-morrow, as I have many things yet to ask you. I'll go now and cable home."

Ellen Lee looked puzzled.

"Can I be forgetting my own language?" she thought to herself. But she had resolved to be frank with Donald. Had not he and Dorothy already opened a new life to her? "Cable home?" she repeated. "I do not understand."

"Why, send a cable message, you know—a message by the ocean telegraph."

"Oh, yes. Bless me! It will be on the other side, too, before one can wink. It is wonderful; and Mr. Donald,—if I may call you so,—while you're writing it, would

you please, if you wouldn't mind it, send my love to Miss Dorothy?"

"Good!" cried Donald. "I'll do exactly that. Nothing could be better. It will tell the story perfectly."

Donald, going down the steep flights of stairs soon afterwards, intending to return later, longed to send a fine supper to Ellen Lee and her companion; also beautiful new gowns, furniture, pictures, and flowers. He felt like a fairy prince, ready to shower benefits upon her, but he knew that he must be judicious in his kindness, and considerate of Ellen Lee's feelings. Poor, as she evidently was, she had a proud spirit, and must not be carelessly rewarded.

Before another night had passed, Uncle George and the anxious-hearted girl at Lakewood received this message:

Ellen Lee Sends Love to Dorothy.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MADAME RENÉ TELLS HER STORY.

On the following day, when Donald again climbed the many flights of stairs and knocked at her door, he found Madame René alone. The pastry-cook advertisement had succeeded: Marie was gone to exercise her talents in behalf of a little hotel on the Seine, where, as she had assured her new employer, she would soon distinguish herself by her industry and sobriety. The almost empty apartment was perfectly neat. Madame René herself had brushed her threadbare gown with care, and, by the aid of spotless white collar and cuffs, given herself quite a holiday appearance. Very soon she and Donald, seated by the shining little window, were talking together in English and like old friends, as indeed they were. The reader shall hear her story in her own words, though not with all the interruptions of conversation under which it was given.

"It's no wonder you thought me a Frenchwoman, Mr. Donald. Many have thought the same of me, from the day I grew up. But though I look so like one, and speak the language readily, I was born in England. I studied French at school, and liked it best of all my lessons. In fact, I studied little else, and even spoke it to myself, for there was no one, excepting the French teacher, who could talk it with me. I never liked him. He was always pulling my ears and treating me like a child when I fancied myself almost a woman. Then I took to reading French stories and romances, and they turned my head. My poor home grew stupid to me, and I took it into my heart to run away and see if I could not get to be a great lady. About that time a French family moved into our neighborhood, and I was proud to talk with the children and to be told that I spoke 'like a native' (just as if I did!), and that, with my black hair and gray eyes, I looked like a Normandy girl. This settled it. I knew my parents never would consent to my leaving home, but I resolved to 'play' I was French, and get a situation in some English family as a French nurse—a real Normandy bonne with a high cap. I was seventeen then. The bonne in the latest romance I had read became a governess, and then married a marquis, the eldest son of her employer, and kept her carriage. Why should not some such wonderful thing happen to me? You see what a silly, wicked girl I was.

"Well, I ran away to another town, took the name of Eloise Louvain (my real name was Elizabeth Luff), and for a time I kept up my part and enjoyed it. The parents who engaged me could not speak French, and as for the children—dear, what a shame it was!—they got all they knew of the language from me. Then I went to live with Madame Lefevre, a Parisian. The lady mistrusted my accent when I spoke French to her, and asked me where I was born; but she seemed to like me for all that, and I stayed with her until she was taken ill and was ordered to the baths at Aix-la-Chapelle for cure. She did not get well, poor lady, and before long I was left in the strange city alone. I had the name of being very quiet, but I was not so by nature. You see I forced myself to speak only in French or broken English, and it

was not always easy. At last I saw in a newspaper that a lady in Aix wanted a French maid to go with her to America. Here was my chance. Why, Mr. Donald, if you'll believe me, I wasn't sure but that if I went I'd in time be the bride of the President of America himself! You needn't laugh. Many's the silly girl—yes, and boy, too, for that matter—who gets ridiculous notions from reading romantic books. Well, I answered the advertisement, and then, sir, I became your mother's maid. By this time my French was so good that she might not have found me out; but she was so lovely, so sweet, and sharp withal, that I one day told her the whole truth, and it ended in my writing a letter home by her advice, sending my parents fifty francs, asking their forgiveness, begging them to consent to my going to America with my new lady, and telling them that I would send presents home to them as often as I could. When the answer came, with love from my mother, and signed 'your affectionate and forgiving father, John Luff,' I laughed and cried with joy, and forgot that I was a Normandy bonne. And a bonne I was in earnest, for my lady had the prettiest pair of twins any one could imagine, if I do say it to your face, and such lovely embroidered dresses, more than a yard long, the sleeves tied with the sweetest little ribbon bows—"

Here Donald interrupted the narrative: "What color were they, please?" he asked, at the same time taking out his note-book.

"Pink and blue," was the prompt reply. "Always blue on the boy and pink on the girl; my lady's orders were very strict on that point."

"Did—did the other baby—little Delia, you know—wear pink bows?"

"Not she; never anything but white, for her mamma insisted that white was the only thing for a baby."

"What about their hair?" Donald asked, still holding his note-book and looking at this item: "Girl's hair, yellow, soft, and curly. Boy's hair, pale-brown, very scanty."

"Their hair? Let me see. Why, as I remember, you hadn't any, sir,—at least, none to

speak of; neither had the poor little cousin. But my little girl—Miss Dorothy, that is—had the most I ever saw on so young a child; it was golden-yellow, and so curly that it would cling to your fingers when you touched it. I always hated to put a cap on her, but Mrs. Reed had them both in caps from the first. So different from the other lady! She said caps worn all the time were too heating for little heads, and so her baby never had any; but it wore a loose hood when it was taken out in the air. I must hurry on with the story. You know the other baby was never at Aix. We met it and its parents at Havre, when my lady went there to take the steamer to America. You twins were not two months old. And a sad day that was indeed! For the good gentleman, your father—Heaven rest his soul!—died of a fever before you and Miss Dorothy had been in the world a fortnight. Oh, how my lady and the other lady cried about it when they came together! I used to feel so sorry when I saw them grieving, that, to forget it, I'd take you two babies out, one on each arm, and walk the street up and down in front of the hotel. I had become acquainted with a young Frenchman, a travelling photographer; and he, happening to be at Havre, saw me one morning as I was walking with the babies, and he invited me to go to his place, hard by, and have my picture taken, for nothing. It was a wilful thing to do with those two infants, after I had been allowed to walk only a short distance by the hotel; but it was a temptation, and I went. I wouldn't put down the babies though, so he had to take my picture sitting on a rock, with one twin on each arm. If you'll believe it, the babies came out beautifully in the picture, and I was almost as black as a coal. It was like a judgment on me, for I knew my lady would think it shocking in me to carry the two helpless twins to a photographer's."

"But the picture," said Donald, anxiously, "where is it? Have you it yet?"

"I'll tell you about that soon," Madame René answered quickly, as if unwilling to break the thread of her story. "The dear lady was so kind that I often had a mind to own up and show her the picture, but the thought of that ugly black thing sitting up so stiff and holding the little innocents, kept me back. It's well it did, too,—though

it's rare any good thing comes out of a wrong,—for if I had, the picture would have gone down with the ship. Well, we sailed a few days after that, and at first the voyage was pleasant enough, though I had to walk the cabin with the babies, while my lady lay ill in her berth. The sea almost always affects the gentry, you know. The other lady was hardier, though sometimes ailing, and she and her husband tended their baby night and day, never letting it out of their arms when it was awake. Poor little thing,—gone these fifteen years!"

"Are you sure the little cousin was lost?" asked Donald, wondering how she knew.

"Why, Mr. Donald, I drew it from your not saying more about the child. Was she ever found? And her mother, the pretty lady, Mrs. Robbins, no, Robertson,—and my lady, your mother? I heard people saying that all were lost, except those of us who were in our boat. And I never knew to the contrary until now. Were they saved, sir?"

Donald shook his head sadly.

"Not one of them saved!" she exclaimed. "Ah me! how terrible! I had a sight of Mr. Robertson, with his baby in his arms—just one glimpse in the dreadful tumult. It all came on so suddenly,—every one screaming at once, and not a minute to spare. I could not find my lady, yet I fancied once I heard her screaming for her children; but I ran with them to the first deck, and tried to tie them to something—to a chair, I think, so they might float—I was frantic; but I had no rope, only my gown."

"Yes, yes," said Donald, longing to produce the pieces of black cloth which he had brought with him, but fearing to interrupt the narrative just then. "Please go on."

"I tore long strips from my gown, but I could not do anything with them; there was not time. The men were filling the boats, and I rushed to the side of the sinking vessel. No one could help me. I prayed to Heaven, and, screaming to the men in a boat below to catch them, I threw the babies out over the water. Whether they went into the boat or the water I could not tell; it seemed to me that some one shouted back. The next I knew, I was taken hold of by strong arms and lifted down into one

of the boats. My lady was not there, nor the babies, nor any one of our party; all were strangers to me. For days we drifted, meeting no trace of any other boat from the ship, and living as best we could on a few loaves of bread and a jug of water that one of the sailors had managed to lower into our boat. We were picked up after a time and carried to Liverpool. But I was frightened at the thought of what I had done—perhaps the twins would have been saved with me if I had not thrown them down. I was afraid that some of their relatives in America would rise up and accuse me, you see, sir, and put me in disgrace. I had acted for the best, but would any one believe me? So when they asked my name, I gave the first I could think of, and said it was 'Ellen Lee,' and when they wondered at such a strange name for a French girl, as I appeared to be, I told them one of my parents was English, which was true enough. Not having been able to save a bit of my luggage, I was fain to take a little help from the ship's people. As I had been entered on the passenger-list only as Mrs. Wolcott Reed's maid, they were satisfied when I said I was Ellen Lee. After getting safe ashore I kept my own counsel and hid myself. To this day I never have breathed a word about the shipwreck or my throwing out the babies—no, not to a living soul, save yourself, sir. Well, a woman gave me another gown, which was a help, and I soon found a place with a family in the country, fifteen miles from Liverpool, to sew for the family and tend the children. Of course I dropped the name of Ellen Lee the moment I left Liverpool, and I hoped to settle down to a peaceful life and faithful service. But I grew sadder all the time; nothing could cheer me up. Night and day, day and night, I was haunted by the thought of that awful hour."

"Yes, awful indeed," said Donald. "I have often thought of it, and tried to picture the scene. But we will not speak of it now. You must take happiness in knowing that, instead of losing the babies, you saved them. Only don't forget a single thing about the twins and their mother. Tell me all you can remember about them. Haven't you some little thing that belonged to them or to any of the party? A lock of hair or a piece of a dress—anything that was theirs? Oh, I hope you have—it is so very

important!"

"Ah, yes, sir! I was just coming to that. There's a few things that belonged to the babies and the poor mother—and to tell you the truth, they've pressed heavy enough on my conscience all these years."

Donald, with difficulty, controlled his impatience to see the articles, but he felt that it would be wisest to let Madame have her way.

"You see how it was: a young man—the same young man who had taken the picture—came to the ship to bid me good-by, and stood talking apart with me a minute, while the ladies were looking into their state-rooms and so on; and somehow he caught hold of my little satchel and was swinging it on his finger when Mrs. Reed sent for me. And before I could get back to him, the ship was ready to start; all who were not passengers were put ashore; somebody shouted an order, and the vessel began to move. When, at last, I saw him, we were some distance from shore; and he was standing on the dock looking after me, with my satchel in his hand! We both had forgotten it—and there was nothing for me to do but to sail on to America without it."

"Were the things in that satchel?" cried Don. "Where is the man? Is he living?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "No, I shall never see him again in this world," she said.

Her grief was so evident that Donald, whose disappointment struggled with his sympathy, felt it would be cruel to press her further. But when she dried her eyes and looked as if she were about to go on with the story, he could not forbear saying, in a tone which was more imploring than he knew: "Can't you tell me what was in that satchel? Try to think."

"Yes, indeed, I can," she said, plaintively; "there was the picture of the babies and me; the baby Dorothy's dress ribbon; my purse and the key—"

"A key!" cried Donald. "What sort of a key?"

"Oh, a little bit of a key, and gloves, and my best pocket-handkerchief, and—most of all, Mrs. Reed's letter—"

"Mrs. Reed's letter!" echoed Don. "Oh, if I only could have had that and the picture! But do go on."

"You make me so nervous, Mr. Donald—indeed you do, begging your pardon—that I hardly know what I'm saying; but I must tell you how each of the things had got into my hands. First, the picture was my own property, and I prized it very much, though I had not the courage to show it to Mrs. Reed; then the pink ribbon was for baby Dorothy. My lady had handed it to me at the hotel when we were dressing the twins; and in the hurry, after cutting off the right lengths to tie up the dear little sleeves, I crammed the rest into my satchel."

"And the key? what about the key?"

"Oh, you see, baby Dorothy had worn a chain from the time she was a week old. It fastened with a key. Mr. Reed himself had put it on her little neck and locked it the very day before he was taken down, and in the hurry of dressing the babies, as I was telling you, Mrs. Reed let fall the speck of a key; it was hung upon a bit of pink ribbon, and I picked it up and clapped it into the satchel, knowing I could give it to her on the vessel. But the letter—ah, that troubles me most of all."

She paused a moment and looked at Donald, before beginning again, as if fearing that he would be angry. But he sat watching her, with breathless interest.

"It was a letter to a Mr. George Reed, somewhere in America—your uncle, was it, sir?—and your mother had handed it to me a whole week before to put in the post. It would then have gone across in the steamer before ours, but—ah, how can I tell you? I had dropped it into my little satchel (it was one that I often carried with me), and forgotten all about it. And, indeed, I never thought of it again till we had been two days out, and then I remembered it was in the satchel. I don't wonder you feel badly, sir, indeed I don't; for it should have gone to America, as she intended,—the

poor, dear lady!"

"Heaven only knows what trouble it might have spared my uncle; and now he can never know," said Donald, in a broken voice.

"Never know? please don't say that, Master Donald, for you'll be going back alive and well, and giving the letter to him with your own hands, Heaven willing."

Donald could only gasp out, "With my own hands? What! How?"

"Because it's in the satchel to this day. Many a time, after I was safe on shore again, I thought to post it, but I was foolish and cowardly, and feared it might get me into trouble in some way, I didn't know how, but I never had the courage to open it when the poor lady who wrote it was dead and gone. May be you'll think best to open it yourself now, sir."

So saying, Madame René stepped across the room, kneeled by an old trunk, and opening it she soon drew forth a small leather hand-bag.

Handing it to the electrified Donald, she gave a long sigh of relief.

"There it is, sir, and it's a blessed day that sees it safe in your own hands!"

Yes, there they were,—the ribbon, the picture, the tiny golden key, and the letter. Donald, looking a little wild (as Madame René thought), examined them, one after the other and all together, with varying expressions of emotion and delight. He was bewildered as to what to do first; whether to take out the necklace, that he now always carried about with him, and fit the key to its very small lock; or to compare the group with the babies' photographs which his uncle had intrusted to him, and which he had intended to show to Madame René during the present interview; or to open and read his mother's letter, which the nature of his errand to Europe gave him an undoubted right to do.

The necklace was soon in the hands of Madame René, who regarded it with deep interest, and begged him to try the key which, she insisted, would open it at once.

Donald, eager to comply, made ready to push aside the top of the clasp, and then he resolved to do no such thing. Uncle George or Dorry should be the first to put the key into that long-silent lock.

Next came the pictures. Don looked at the four little faces in a startled way, for the resemblance of the babies in the group to those in the two photographs was evident. The group, which was an ambrotype picture of Ellen Lee and the twins, was somewhat faded, and it had been taken at least three weeks before the New York photographs were. But, even allowing for the fact that three weeks make considerable change in very young infants, there were unmistakable points of similarity. In the first place, though all the four heads were in baby caps, two chubby little faces displayed delicate light locks straying over the forehead from under the caps, while, on the other hand, two longish little faces rose baldly to the very edge of the cap-border. Another point which Ellen Lee discovered was that the bald baby in each picture wore a sacque with the fronts rounded at the corners, and the "curly baby," as Donald called her, displayed in both instances a sacque with square fronts. Donald, on consulting his uncle's notes, found a mention of this difference in the sacques; and when Madame René, without seeing the notes, told him that both were made of flannel, and that the boy's must have been blue and the girl's pink,—which points Mr. Reed also had set down,—Don felt quite sure that the shape of the actual sacques would prove on examination to agree with their respective pictures. Up to that moment our investigator had, in common with most observers of the masculine gender, held the easy opinion that "all babies look alike;" but circumstances now made him a connoisseur. He even fancied he could see a boyish look in both likenesses of his baby-self; but Madame René unconsciously subdued his rising pride by remarking innocently that the boy had rather a cross look in the two pictures, but that was "owing to his being the weakest of the twins at the outset."

Then came the pink ribbon—and here Donald was helpless. But Madame René came to the rescue by explaining that if any ribbons were found upon baby Dorothy

they must match these, for their dear mother had bought new pink ribbon on purpose for her little girl to wear on shipboard, and this was all they had with them, excepting that which was cut off to tie up the sleeves, when the baby was dressed to be carried on board the ship. And now Madame recalled the fact that after the first day the twins wore only their pretty little white night-gowns, and that, when it was too warm for their sacques, she used to tie up baby Dorothy's sleeves loosely with the bits of pink ribbon, to show the pretty baby arm.

Next came the letter. Donald's first impulse was to take it to Uncle George without breaking the seal; but, on second thoughts, it was probable that for some yet unknown reason he ought to know the contents while he was still in Europe. It might enable him to follow some important clew, and his uncle might regret that he had let the opportunity escape him. But—to open a sealed letter addressed to another!

Yes, all things considered, he would do so in this instance. His uncle had given him permission to do whatever, in his own judgment, was necessary to be done; therefore, despite his just scruples, he decided that this was a necessary act.

Madame René anxiously watched his face as he read.

"Oh, if you only had posted this, even at any time during the past ten years!" he exclaimed, when half through the letter. Then, softening, as he saw her frightened countenance, he added; "But it is all right now, and God bless you! It is a wonderful letter," said Donald, in a tone of deep feeling, as he reached the last line, "and one that Dorothy and I will treasure all our lives. Almost every word tends to confirm Dorry's identity, and it would complete the evidence if any more were needed. How thankful Uncle George will be when he sees it! But how did you ever get all these treasures again, Ellen Lee?"

Madame René started slightly at hearing her old name from Donald's lips, but replied promptly:

"It was by neither more nor less than a miracle. The satchel was given back to me

not very long after I found myself in Europe again."

"Not by that same young man!" exclaimed Donald, remembering Madame René's tears.

"Yes, Mr. Donald, by that same young man who took it on the vessel—the photographer."

"Oh!" said Donald.

"I may as well tell you," said Madame René, flushing, and yet looking ready to cry again, "that I had his address, and some months after the shipwreck I sent him a line, so that he might find me if he happened to pass my way. Well, you may believe I was glad to get the purse and some of the other things, Mr. Donald, but the picture and the key were a worriment to me. The picture did not seem to belong to me any longer. Sometimes I thought I would try to send them to the ship's company, to be forwarded to the right persons, and so rid my mind of them; but I had that foolish, wicked fear that I'd be traced out and punished. Why should I, their bonne, be saved and they lost? some might say. Often I was tempted to destroy these things out of my sight; but each time something whispered to me to wait, for some day one who had a right to claim them would be helped to find me. I little thought that one of the very babies I threw down over the waves would be that person—"

"That's so," said Donald, cheerily.

Hearing a doleful sound from the alley far below them, he opened the window and leaned out. A beggar in rags stood there, singing his sad story in rhyme.

Verse after verse came out in mournful measure, but changed to a livelier strain when Don threw down a piece of money, which hit the ragged shoulder.

"Well," said Donald, by way of relief, and again turning to Madame René, "that's a sorry-looking chap. You have all kinds of people here in Paris.—But, by the way, you spoke of tearing strips from your gown on the night of the shipwreck. Do you happen to have that same gown still?"

"No, Master Donald—not the gown. I made it into a skirt and wore it, year after year, for I was obliged to be very saving; and then it went for linings and what not. Yonder cape there on the chair is faced with it, and that's ready to be thrown to the beggars."

"Let this beggar see it, please," said Donald, blithely; and in a moment he was by the window comparing his samples with the cape-lining as knowingly as a dry-goods buyer.

"Exactly alike!" he exclaimed. Then with an invisible little shudder, he added: "Hold! let's try the flavor."

This test was unsatisfactory. But, after explanations, the fact remained, to the satisfaction of both, that the "goods" were exactly the same, but that Madame René's cape-lining having often been washed was quite divested of its salt.

Here was another discovery. Donald began to feel himself a rival of the great Wogg himself. Strange to say, in further corroboration of the story of the buxom matron at Liverpool, Madame René actually gave Donald a fragment of the gown that had been given to her so long ago; and it was identical, in color and pattern, with the piece Mr. Wogg had lately sent him.

"How in the world did you ever get these pieces, Master Donald?" asked Madame René.

Whereupon Donald told her all about his Liverpool friend and her rag-bag—much to Madame's delight, for she was thankful to know that the good woman who had helped her long ago was still alive and happy.

"And now," said Donald, pleasantly, "let me hear more of your own history, for it interests me greatly. Where have you lived all these years?"

"Well, Master Donald, I went on keeping my own counsel, as I told you, and never saying a word about the wreck or the two dear babies, and living with Mr. Percival's family as seamstress and nursery governess, under my old French name of Eloise

Louvain. I was there till, one day, we said we'd just get married and seek our fortunes together."

"We!" repeated Donald, astonished and rather shocked; "not you and Mr. Percival?"

"Oh, no, indeed!—I and Edouard René," she said, in a tone that gave Don to understand that Edouard René was the only man that any girl in her senses ever could have chosen for a husband.

"What! The photographer?"

"Yes, Mr. Donald, the photographer. Well, we married, and how many nice things they gave me—and they were not rich folk, either!"

"They? Who, Madame René?"

"Why, Mrs. Percival and the children—gowns and aprons and pretty things that any young wife might be proud to have. She had married a fine gentleman, but she had been a poor girl. Her little boy was named after his grandfather, and it made such a funny mixture,—James Wogg Percival; but we always called him Jamie."

"Wogg!" exclaimed Don. "I know a James Wogg—a London detective—"

"Oh, that's the son, sir, Mrs. Percival's brother; he's a detective, and a pretty sharp one, but not sharp enough for me."

She said this with such a confident little toss of her head that Don, much interested, asked what she meant.

"Why, you see, Mr. Wogg often came to see his sister, Mrs. Percival, as I think, to borrow money of her; and he was always telling of the wonderful things he did, and how nothing could escape him, and how stupidly other detectives did their work. And one day, when I was in the room, he actually told how some people were looking for one Ellen Lee, a nursemaid who had been saved from shipwreck, and how one of the survivors was moving heaven and earth to find her, but hadn't succeeded; and how, if the case had been given to him, he would have done thus and

so—for she never could have escaped him. And there I was almost under his very nose!—yes, then and many a time after!"

"It's the funniest thing I ever heard!" cried Donald, enjoying the joke immensely, and convulsed to think of Mr. Wogg's disgust when he should learn these simple facts.

"Poor old Wogg!" he said. "It will almost kill him."

"I tell you, Mr. Donald," continued Madame René, earnestly, though she had laughed with him, "I listened then for every word that man might say. I longed to ask questions, but I did not dare. I heard enough, though, to know they were looking for me, and it frightened me dreadfully.

"Well, as soon as we were married—Edouard and I—we went to my old home, and I made my peace with my poor old parents—Heaven be praised!—and comforted their last days. Then we went about through French, Swiss, and German towns, taking pictures. I helped Edouard with the work, and my English and French served us in many ways. But we found it hard getting a living, and at last my poor man sickened. I felt that nothing would help him but the baths at Aix-la-Chapelle; and so did he. We managed to work our way there, and once safe at Aix, I found employment as a doucheuse in the baths."

"What is that, please?" asked Don.

"The doucheuse is the bath-woman who attends specially to ladies. My earnings enabled my poor husband to stay and take the waters; and when he grow better, as he did, he got a situation with a photographer in the town. But it was only for a while. He sickened again—Heaven rest and bless his precious soul!—and soon passed away like a little child. I couldn't bear Aix then, and so I went with a family to Paris, and finally became a visiting dressmaker. My poor husband always called me Elise; and so Madame Elise René could go where she pleased without any fear of the detectives finding her. At last, only the other day, I picked up a French

newspaper, and there I chanced to see your notice about Ellen Lee, and I answered it."

"Bless you for that!" said Donald, heartily. "But had you never seen any other? We advertised often for Ellen Lee in the London and Liverpool papers."

"No, I never saw one, sir; and, to tell the truth, I hated to remember that I had ever been called Ellen Lee, for it brought back the thought of that awful night—and the poor little babes that I thought I had killed. If the notice in the paper had not said that I saved their lives, you never would have heard from me, Mr. Donald. That made me happier than I ever had been in all my life—mostly for the babies' sake, though it seemed to lift a load of trouble off my mind."

Several times during the long interview with Elise René, Donald found himself wondering how he could manage, without hurting her pride, to give her the money which she evidently needed. For she was no pauper, and her bright, dark eyes showed that time and trouble had not by any means quenched her spirit. The idea of receiving charity would shock her, he knew; but an inspiration came to him. He would not reward her himself, but he would act for Dorothy.

"Madame René," he said, with some hesitation, "if my sister had known I was coming here to talk face to face with the friend who had saved her life, I know what she would have done: she would have sent you her grateful love and—and something to remember her by; something as she would say, 'perfectly lovely.' I know she would."

Madame had already begun to frown, on principle, but the thought of Dorry softened her, as Donald went on: "I know she would, but I don't know what to do about it. I'd buy exactly the wrong article, if I were trying to select. The fact is, you'll have to buy it yourself."

With these words, Donald handed Elise René a roll of bank-notes.

"Oh, Mr. Donald!" she exclaimed, with much emotion, "I can't take this—indeed I

cannot!"

"Oh, Madame René, but indeed you can," he retorted, laughing. "And now," he added hastily (to prevent her from protesting any longer), "I am not going to inflict myself upon you for the entire day. You must be very tired; and, besides, after you are rested, we must decide upon the next thing to be done. I have cabled to my uncle, and there is no doubt that he will send word for you to come with me at once to America. Now, surely, you'll go? Please say that you will. I'll wait a week or two, for you."

Elise hesitated.

"It would be a great joy," she said, "to go to America and to see little Dorothy. She is a great deal more to me—and so are you, Mr. Donald—than one would think; for, though you were both too young to be very interesting when I was your bonne, I have thought and dreamed so often of you in all these long years, and of what you both might have lived to be if I had not thrown you away from me that night, that I—" her eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, indeed; I know you take an interest in us both," was his cordial reply. "And it makes me wish that you were safe with us in America, where you would never see trouble nor suffer hardship any more. Say you will go."

"Could I work?" she said eagerly. "Could I sew, make dresses, do anything to be useful to Miss Dorothy? My ambition of late has been to go back to England and set up for a dressmaker, and some day have a large place, with girls to help me; but that would be impossible—life is so hard for poor folk here in Europe. I feel as if I would do anything to see Miss Dorothy."

"But you can have America, and Miss Dorothy, and the dressmaking establishment, or whatever you please," Don pursued with enthusiasm; "only be ready to sail by an early steamer. And since you go for our sakes, and to satisfy my uncle, you must let us pay all the cost and ever so much more. Think what joy you give us all in

proving, without a doubt, that Dorothy is—Dorothy."

"I will go," she said.

That same day Donald again flew up the long flight of stairs in the Rue Soudière. He had, meantime, secured a room in some hotel recommended to him by M. Bajeau, and already had received a letter there that had filled him with pleasant expectation. It was this letter that now sent him back to ask Madame René if he might call that evening and bring a friend.

"A friend?" Madame René looked troubled. Donald, to her, was her own boy almost; but a stranger!—that would be quite different. She glanced anxiously around, first at the shabby apartment, and then at her own well-worn gown—but Mr. Donald, she thought, would know what was best to do. So, with a little Frenchy shrug of her shoulders, and a gesture of resignation, she said, "Oh, certainly"—and that she would be much pleased.

The evening visit was a success in every way, excepting one. The bonne of former days did not at first recognize the "friend," M. Bajeau, though at the first sight he was certain that this tall, comely woman was the veritable person who had come with Mrs. Reed and the pink-faced twins into his little shop. But she remembered the visit perfectly, and nearly all that happened on that day. She recalled, too, that Mrs. Reed had intended to have the baby's full name, Dorothy, engraved upon the clasp, and that on account of the smallness of the space the initials, D. R., were decided upon. Still it was annoying to M. Bajeau, and consequently rather embarrassing to Donald, that the woman did not promptly recognize him as the same jeweller.

The simple-hearted and somewhat vain old gentleman, who felt that this would be a very important link in the chain of evidence, had recognized Madame René; and why could she not return the compliment?

Donald, by way of relieving the awkwardness, remarked during a rather stiff moment that it was unusually warm, and begged leave to open the door. At this,

Monsieur, hinting delicately that a draught would in time kill an angel, produced a skull-cap, which he deftly placed upon his head; and no sooner was this change effected than Madame René grew radiant, clasped her hands in honest rapture, and declared that she would now recognize M. Bajeau among a million as the very gentleman who engraved that blessed baby's dear little initials upon the clasp!

CHAPTER XXXV.

A DAY OF JOY.

While the great ship that bears Donald and Madame René to America is plowing its way across the ocean, we who are on dry land may look into the home at Lakewood.

Uncle George and the two girls have just come in from a twilight walk; the glow of exercise is on their faces, and they are merry, not because anything funny has been seen or said, but because their hearts are full of joy. Donald is coming home.

Down stairs in the housekeeper's pleasant sitting-room are a pair of old friends, and if you could open the door without being seen you would hear two familiar voices.

"Where's the use," Mr. Jack is saying confidentially, "in Master Donald's bein' away so long? The place ain't natteral,—nothing's natteral without that boy. And there's Miss Dorothy, the trimmest little craft that ever was; here she's been tossin' about and draggin' anchor, so to speak, all because he ain't here alongside. He's gone to find out for certain, is he? Where's the use in findin' out? One clipper's as good as another if both are sound in the hull and full-rigged. To my mind the capt'n'd better took what the Lord's giv' him, and be thankful accordin'. You can't change the bottom o' the sea by continyully takin' soundin's. I tell you, messmate—"

He stops short as Lydia raises a warning finger,—

"You're forgetting again, Mr. Jack!" she pleads, "and after all the grammar me and Miss Dorry have taught you. Besides, you might be just as elegant in talking to me

as to the family."

"Eleganter, Mistress Blum—eleganter," is the emphatic response; "but not when a chap's troubled—'t ain't in the order o' things. A cove can't pray grammatic and expect to be heard, can he? But, as I was sayin', there's been stormy times off the coast for the past three days. That boy ought t' have been kept at home. Gone to find out? Humph! Where's the use? S'pose when them two mites was throwed out from the sinkin' ship I'd 'a' waited to find out which babies they were; no, I ketched 'em fur what they was. Where's the use findin' out? There ain't no use in it. I'm an old sailor, but somehow I'm skeery as a lass to-night. I've kind o' lost my moorin's."

"Lost what, Mr. Jack?" said Lydia, with a start.

"My moorin's. It seems to me somehow's that lad'll never come to land."

"Mercy on us, Jack!" cried Lydia, in dismay. "What on earth makes you say a thing like that?"

"'Cos I'm lonesome. I'm upset," said Jack, rising gloomily, "an' that's all there is about it. An' there's that wall-eyed McSwiver—"

"Mr. Jack," exclaimed Lydia, suddenly, "you're not talking plain and honest with me. There's something else on your mind."

"An' so there is, Mistress Lydia; an' I may as well out with it. Ken you pictur' to yourself a craft tossed about on the sea, with no cap'ain nor compass nor steerin' gear nor nothin',—the whole thing clean adrift, an' no anchor to hold it from a-driftin' furder? Well, I'm that craft. I want some one to tow me into smooth waters, and then sail alongside allers—somebody kind and sensible and good. Now do you take the idee?"

Ship

Lydia thought she did, but she was not quite sure; and as we cannot wait to hear the thrilling conversation that followed, we will steal up stairs again, to hear the pleasant

"good-night" often repeated while Uncle, at the study door, waves his hand blithely to the pretty procession of two mounting to the sleeping-room above.

Later, while the girls are whispering together in Dorry's cosey corner, Mr. Reed writes the long letter to Eben Slade, which tells him that he may now come on with "legal actions" and his threats of exposure; that Mr. George is ready to meet him in any court of law, and that his proofs are ready. Then at the last follows a magnanimous offer of help, which the baffled man will be glad to accept as he sneaks away to his Western home—there to lead, let us hope, a less unworthy life than of old.

The letter is sealed. Now the lights are out. Mr. Jack, tranquil and happy, having at last made Lydia "take the idee" to his satisfaction, has tip-toed his way to his bachelor room above the stable, and Watch settles himself upon the wide piazza to spend the pleasant midsummer night out of doors.

Sleep well, good old Watch! To-morrow will be a busy day for you. Very early, a trim young man will come with a message from the telegraph office, and you will have to bark and howl as he approaches, and slowly subside when Dorothy rushes down to receive the telegram, which tells of a certain ship being sighted at daylight off Sandy Hook. Then affairs at the stable will occupy you. Jack, getting out the carriage in a hurry, never heeding your growls and caresses, will drive to the house, and (while you are wildly threading your way between wheels and the horses' legs) Uncle George, Josie, and Dorothy, radiant with expectation, will enter the vehicle, Jack will mount to the box, and off they will start for the railway station!

Lydia—happy soul!—will call "Come back, Watch!" and then, resting on the piazza again, you may amuse yourself with the flies that try to settle on your nose, or dream of a wild race with your young master, while she makes the house fairly shine for the welcoming that is soon to be.

. . . Wake up, old Watch! "To-morrow" is here. Even now Uncle George, Josie, and

Dorothy are on the Express-train for New York. It shakes and trembles with excess of speed, yet it is all too slow to satisfy the happy three who are going at last to see their ship come in.

Lydia Blum, are you aware that this is the twentieth time that you have "just run up and put the finishin' touch to Mr. Donald's room"? Ah, how pleased he will be when he learns that, after your wedding, you and Jack are to continue living on the place just the same, excepting that you are to have a little cottage of your own!

And you, Charity Danby,—so trim, rosy, and joyful for Dorothy's sake,—don't you see how you are hindering Kassy with your nosegays and garlands and vines trailing all through the house?

And, Jack, how can you wait till it is time to drive to the train but by working like mad in the stables, in the carriage-house, in the gymnasium,—anywhere, everywhere,—so that the boy will be all the more delighted when he comes?

Hark, now, Liddy! Don't you hear something? No, that was only the village boys shouting out on the lake! Dust away, dear woman! And you, Charity, throw wide the study-blinds, and brush that stray twig from the study-table before the young mistress of the house comes back! Ah, little you dream of the joy that will thrill those very walls to-night when under Dot's own fingers the clasp of a quaint old necklace shall yield to the touch of a tiny key, and Uncle George and his precious girl shall laugh and cry together!

Ready, every one! No false alarm this time. Lydia, Kassy, and Norah, Charity and all the Danbys, are waving handkerchiefs and hats as two carriages come rolling up through the sunset light that floods the avenue.

Hurrah! Bark your loudest now, old Watch! Jack feels like dancing a hornpipe on his box. Ed Tyler, and his father, and Josie Manning jump out of one carriage; Uncle George, leaping like a boy from the other, helps a tall, bright-eyed woman, dressed in black, to alight; and then, amid a chorus of cheers and barking, and joyous cries

of welcome, happiest of the happy, follow the brother and sister—DONALD and DOROTHY!

FOOTNOTE:

[1] See Frontispiece.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 286, a parenthetical statement begins but no ending was printed. This was retained.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DONALD AND DOROTHY ***

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