



THE
MISLAID
UNCLE
EVELYN RAYMOND

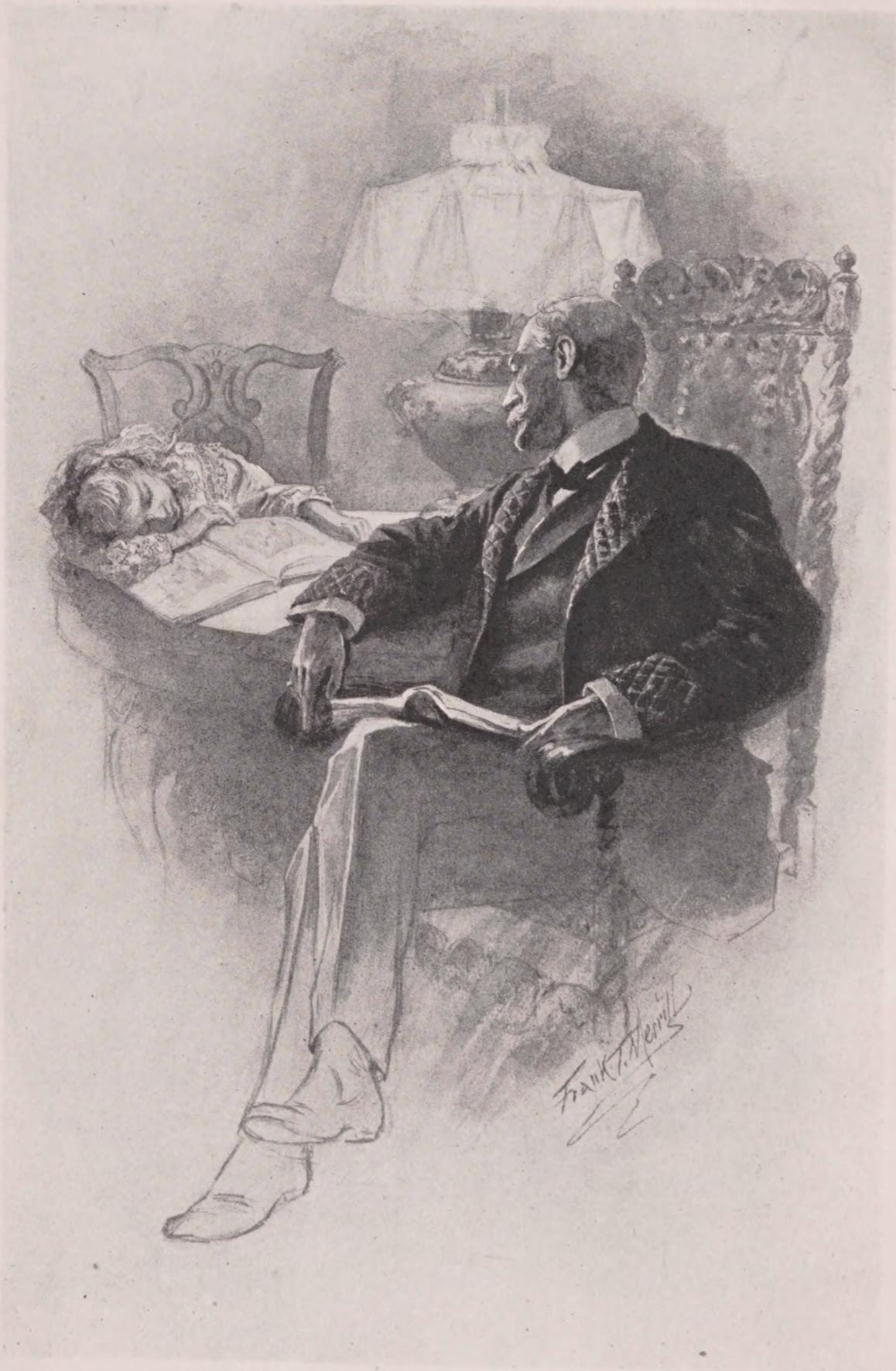


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THE LITTLE FACE DROPPED UPON THE OPEN PAGE.

T H E
MISLAID
UNCLE
by EVELYN RAYMOND



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THE MISLAID UNCLE.

CHAPTER I.

DIVERSE WAYS.

THREE people were together in a very pleasant little parlor, in a land where the sun shines nearly all the time. They were Doctor Mack, whose long, full name was Alexander MacDonald; mamma, who was Mrs. John Smith; and Josephine, who was Mrs. Smith's little girl with a pretty big name of her own.

Doctor Mack called Mrs. Smith "Cousin Helen," and was very good to her. Indeed, ever since papa John Smith had had to go away and leave his wife and child to house-keep by themselves the busy doctor-cousin had done many things for them, and mamma was accustomed to go to him for advice about

all little business matters. It was because she needed his advice once more that she had summoned him to the cottage now; even though he was busier than ever, since he was making ready to leave San Diego that very day for the long voyage to the Philippine Islands.

Evidently the advice that had so promptly been given was not agreeable; for when Josephine looked up from the floor where she was dressing Rudanthy, mamma was crying softly, and Doctor Mack was saying in his gravest take-your-medicine-right-away kind of a voice that there was "nothing else to do."

"Oh, my poor darling! She is so young, so innocent. I cannot, I cannot!" wailed the mother.

"She is the most self-reliant, independent young lady of her age that I ever knew," returned the doctor.

Josephine realized that they were talking about her, but did n't see why that should make her mother sad. It must be all the cousin-doctor's fault. She had never liked him since he had come a few weeks before, and scratched

her arm and made it sore. "Vaccinated" it, mamma had said, to keep her from being ill sometime. Which had been very puzzling to the little girl, because "sometime" might never come, while the arm-scratching had made her miserable for the present. She now asked, in fresh perplexity :

"Am I 'poor,' mamma?"

"At this moment I feel that you are very poor indeed, my baby," answered the lady.

Josephine glanced about the familiar room, in which nothing seemed changed except her mother's face. That had suddenly grown pale and sad, and even wrinkled, for there was a deep, deep crease between its brows.

"That's funny. Where are my rags?" asked the child.

Mamma smiled; but the doctor laughed outright, and said :

"There is more than one way of being poor, little missy. Come and show me your arm."

Josephine shivered as she obeyed. However, there was nothing to fear now, for the

arm was well healed, and the gentleman patted it approvingly, adding :

“ You are a good little girl, Josephine.”

“ Yes, Doctor Mack, I try to be.”

“ Yet you don't love me, do you? ”

“ Not — not so — so very much,” answered the truthful child, painfully conscious of her own rudeness.

“ Not so well as Rudanthy,” he persisted.

“ Oh, nothing like ! ”

“ Josephine,” reproved mamma ; then caught her daughter in her arms, and began to lament over her. “ My darling ! my darling ! How can I part from you? ”

Before any reply could be made to this strange question, the door-bell rang, and there came in another of those blue-coated messenger boys, who had been coming at intervals all that day and yesterday. He brought a telegram which mamma opened with trembling fingers. When she had read it, she passed it to Doctor Mack, who also read it ; after which he folded and returned it to the lady, saying :

“ Well, Cousin Helen, you must make your

decision at once. The steamer starts this afternoon. If you sail by her there's no time to be lost. If you go, I will delay my own preparations to help you off."

For one moment more Mrs. Smith stood silent, pressing her hands to her throbbing temples, and gazing at Josephine as if she could not take her eyes from the sweet, childish face. Then she turned toward the kind doctor and said, quite calmly :

"Yes, Cousin Aleck, I will go."

He went away quickly, and mamma rang the bell for big Bridget, who came reluctantly, wiping her eyes on her apron. But her mistress was not crying now, and announced :

"Bridget, I am starting for Chili by this afternoon's steamer. Josephine is going to Baltimore by the six o'clock overland. There is n't a moment to waste. Please bring the empty trunks from the storeroom and pack them while I attend to other matters, though I will help you as I can. Put my clothes into the large trunk and Josephine's into the small one. There, there, good soul, don't begin to

cry again. I need all my own will to get through this awful day ; and please make haste."

During the busy hours which followed both mamma and Bridget seemed to have forgotten the little girl, save, now and then, to answer her questions ; and one of these was :

"What's Chili, Bridget?"

"Sure, it's a kind of pickle-sauce, darlin'."

"Have n't we got some of it in the cupboard?"

"Slathers, my colleen."

"Chili is a country, my daughter," corrected mamma, looking up from the letter she was writing so hurriedly that her pen went scratch, scratch.

"Is it red, mamma?"

"Hush, little one. Don't be botherin' the mistress the now. Here's Rudanthy's best clothes. Put 'em on, and have her ready for the start."

"Is Rudanthy going a journey, too, Bridget?"

"'Over the seas and far away' — or over the land ; what differ?"

When the doll had been arrayed in its finery mamma had finished her writing, and, rising

from her desk, called the child to her. Then she took her on her lap and said, very earnestly :

“ Josephine, you are eight years old.”

“ Yes, mamma. This very last birthday that ever was.”

“ That is old enough to be brave and helpful.”

“ Oh, quite, mamma. I didn't cry when Doctor Mack vaccinated me, and I sewed a button on my apron all myself.”

“ For a time I am obliged to go away from you, my — my precious ! ”

Josephine put up her hand and stroked her mother's cheek, begging :

“ Don't cry, mamma, and please, please don't go away.”

The lady's answer was a question :

“ Do you love papa, darling ? ”

“ Why, mamma ! How funny to ask ! Course I do, dearly, dearly.”

“ Poor papa is ill. Very ill, I fear. He is alone in a far, strange country. He needs me to take care of him. He has sent for me, and I am going to him. But I cannot take you.

For many reasons—the climate, the uncertainty—I am going to send you East to your Uncle Joe's; the uncle for whom you were named, your father's twin brother. Do you understand me, dear?"

"Yes, mamma. You are going to papa, and I am going to Uncle Joe. Who is going with me there?"

"Nobody, darling. There is nobody who can go. We have no relatives here, except our doctor cousin, and he is too busy. So we are going to send you by express. It is a safe way, though a lonely one, and— Oh, my darling, my darling; how can I! how can I!"

Ever since papa had gone, so long ago, Josephine had had to comfort mamma. She did so now, smoothing the tear-wet cheek with her fat little hand, and chattering away about the things Bridget had put in her trunk.

"But she must n't pack Rudanthy. I can't have her all smothered up. I will take Rudanthy in my arms. She is so little and so sweet."

"So little and so sweet!" echoed the mother's

heart, sadly ; and it was well for all that Doctor Mack returned just then. For he was so brisk and business-like, he had so many directions to give, he was so cheerful and even gay, that, despite her own forebodings, Mrs. Smith caught something of his spirit, and completed her preparations for departure calmly and promptly.

Toward nightfall it was all over : the parting that had been so bitter to the mother and so little understood by the child. Mamma was standing on the deck of the outward moving steamer, straining her eyes backward over the blue Pacific toward the pretty harbor of San Diego, almost believing she could still see a little scarlet-clad figure waving a cheerful farewell from the vanishing wharf. But Josephine, duly ticketed and labelled, was already curled up on the cushions of her section in the sleeper, and staring out of window at the sights which sped by.

“The same old ocean, but so big, so big ! Mamma says it is peacock-blue, like the wadded kimono she bought at the Japanese store. Is n't it queer that the world should fly

past us like this! That's what it means in the jogaphy about the earth turning round, I suppose. If it does n't stop pretty soon I shall get dreadful dizzy and, maybe, go to sleep. But how could I? I'm an express parcel now. Cousin Doctor Mack said so, and dear mamma. Parcels don't go to sleep ever, do they, Rudanthy?"

But Rudanthy herself, lying flat in her mistress' lap, had closed her] own waxen lids and made no answer. The only one she could have made, indeed, would have been "Papa," or "Mamma," and that would n't have been a "truly" answer, anyway.

Besides, just then a big man, shining with brass buttons and a brass-banded cap, came along and demanded:

"Tickets, please."

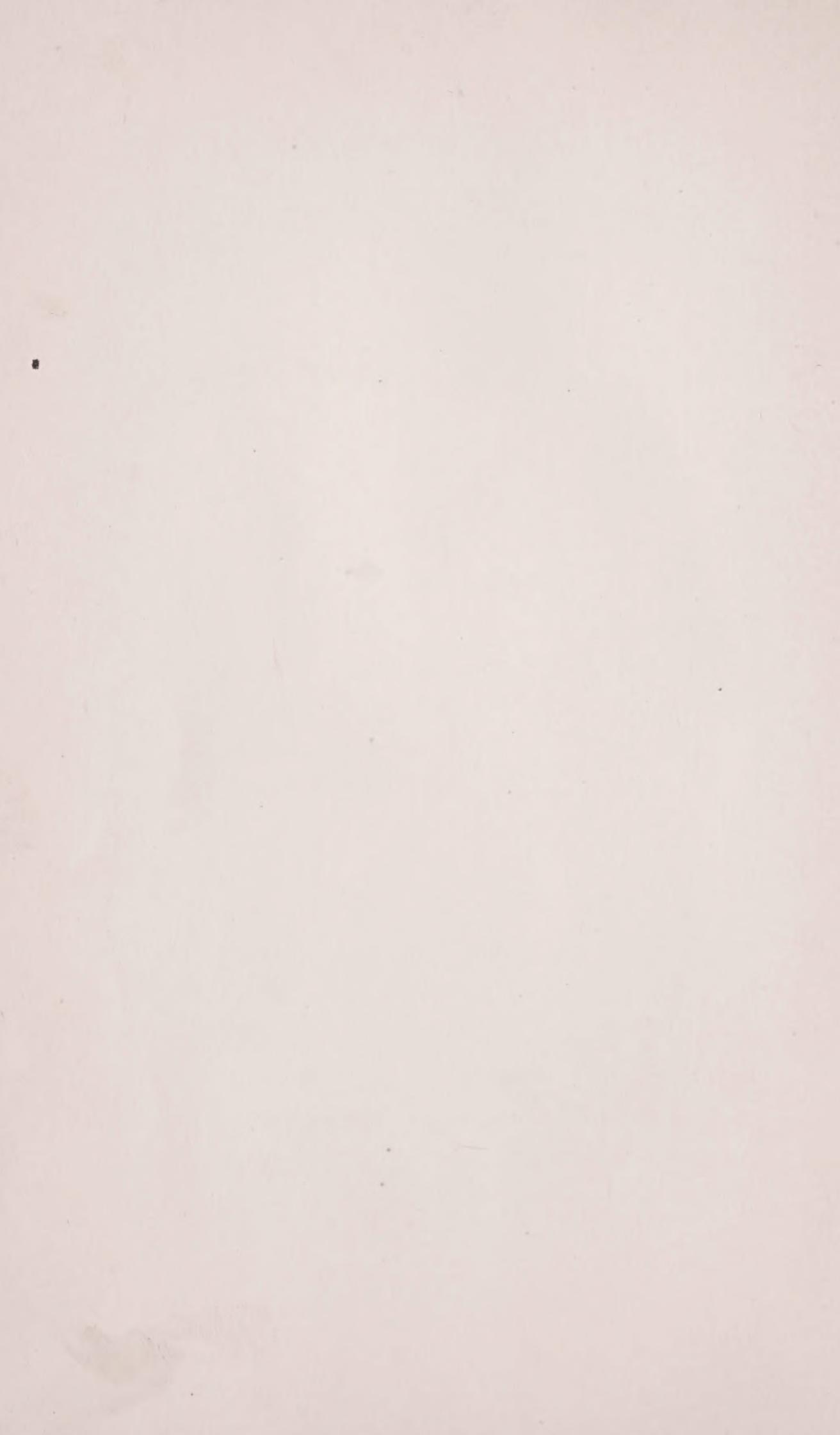
Josephine clutched Rudanthy and woke that indolent creature rather suddenly.

"Dolly, dolly, sit up! The shiny-blue man is hollering at the people dreadful loud. Maybe it's wrong for dolls to go to sleep in these railway things."



Frank T. Merrill

"WHERE 'S YOUR FOLKS?"



The shiny-blue man stopped right at Josephine's seat, and demanded fiercely, or it sounded fierce to the little girl :

"Sissy, where's your folks?"

"Please, I haven't got any," she answered politely.

"Who do you belong to, then?" asked he.

"I'm Mrs. John Smith's little girl, Josephine," she explained.

"Hmm. Well, where's Mrs. John Smith?" he persisted.

"She's gone away," said she, wishing he, too, would go away.

"Indeed. Tell me where to find her. You're small enough, but there should be somebody else in this section."

"I guess you can't find her. She's sailing and sailing on a steamer to my papa, who's sick and needs her more 'n I do."

"Hello! this is odd!" said the conductor, and passed on. But not before he added the caution :

"You stay right exactly where you are, sissy, till I come back. I'll find out your party and have you looked after."

Josephine tried to obey to the very letter. She did not even lay aside the doll she had clasped to her breast, nor turn her head to look out of the window. The enchanting, fairy-like landscape might fly by and by her in its bewildering way; she dared gaze upon it no more.

After a while there were lights in the coach, and these made Josephine's eyes blink faster and faster. They blinked so fast, in fact, that she never knew when they ceased doing so, or anything that went on about her, till she felt herself lifted in somebody's arms, and raised her heavy lids, to see the shiny-blue man's face close above her own, and to hear his voice saying:

"Poor little kid! Make her berth up with double blankets, Bob, and keep an eye on it through the night. My! Think of a baby like this making a three-thousand-mile journey alone. My own little ones — Pshaw! What made me remember them just now?"

Then Josephine felt a scratchy mustache upon her cheek, and a hard thing which might have been a brass button jam itself into her

temple. Next she was put down into the softest little bed in the world, the wheels went to singing "Chug-chug-chug," in the drowsiest sort of lullaby, and that was all she knew for a long time.

But something roused her, suddenly, and she stretched out her hand to clasp, yet failed to find, her own familiar bed-fellow. Missing this she sat up in her berth and shrieked aloud:

"Rudanthy! Ru-dan-thy! RUDANTHY!"

CHAPTER II.

A HUMAN EXPRESS PARCEL.

"HUSH, sissy! Don't make such a noise. You're disturbing a whole car full of people," said somebody near her.

Josephine suppressed her cries, but could not stifle the mighty sob which shook her. She looked up into the face of the black porter, Bob, studied it attentively, found it not unkind, and regained her self-possession.

"My name is not sissy. It's Josephine Smith. I want my dolly. I cannot go to sleep without her. Her name is Rudanthy. Fetch me Rudanthy, boy."

Bob was the most familiar object she had yet seen. He might have come from the big hotel where she and mamma had taken their meals. Her mother's cottage had been close by, and sometimes of a morning a waiter had brought

their breakfast across to them. That waiter was a favorite, and in this dimness she fancied he had appeared before her.

"Do you live at the 'Florence,' boy?" she asked.

"No, missy, but my brother does," he answered.

"Ah! Fetch me Rudanthy, please."

After much rummaging, and some annoyance to a lady who now occupied the upper berth, the doll was found and restored. But by this time Josephine was wide awake and disposed to ask questions.

"What 's all the curtains hung in a row for, Bob?"

"To hide the berths, missy. I guess you 'd better not talk now."

"No, I won't. What you doing now, Bob?" she continued.

"Making up the section across from yours, missy. Best go to sleep," advised the man.

"Oh, I 'm not a bit sleepy. Are you?" was her next demand.

"Umm," came the unsatisfactory response.

"What you say? You must n't mumble. Mamma never allows me to mumble. I always speak outright," was Josephine's next comment.

"Reckon that's true enough," murmured the porter, under his breath.

"What, Bob? I did n't hear," from the little girl.

"No matter, I'll tell you in the morning," he whispered.

"I'd rather know now."

No response coming to this, she went on:

"Bob! Please to mind me, boy. I — want — to — hear — now," very distinctly and emphatically. Josephine had been accustomed to having her wishes attended to immediately. That was about all mamma and big Bridget seemed to live for.

The lady in the berth above leaned over the edge and said, in a shrill whisper:

"Little girl, keep still."

"Yes, lady."

Bob finished the opposite section, and a woman in a red kimono came from the dressing-

room and slipped behind the curtain. Josephine knew a red kimono. It belonged to Mrs. Dutton, the minister's wife, and Mrs. Dutton often stayed at mamma's cottage. Could this be Mrs. Dutton?

The child was out of bed, across the narrow aisle, swaying with the motion of the car, pulling the curtains apart, and clutching wildly at a figure in the lower berth.

"Mrs. Dutton. Oh! Mrs. Dutton! Here's Josephine."

"Ugh! Ouch! Eh! What?"

"Oh! 'Xcuse me. I thought you were Mrs. Dutton."

"Well, I'm not. Go away. Draw that curtain again. Go back to your folks. Your mother should know better than to let you roam about the sleeper at night."

"My mother knows — everything!" said Josephine, loyally. "I'm dreadful sorry you're not Mrs. Dutton, 'cause she'd have taken off my coat and things. My coat is new. My mamma would n't like me to sleep in it. But the buttons stick. I can't undo it."

“Go to your mother, child. I don’t wish to be annoyed.”

“I can’t, ’cause she’s over seas, big Bridget says, to that red-pickle country. I s’pose I’ll have to, then. Good night. I hope you’ll rest well.”

The lady in the red kimono did not feel as if she would. She was always nervous in a sleeping car, anyway; and what did the child mean by “over seas in the red-pickle country”? Was it possible she was travelling alone? Were there people in the world so foolish as to allow such a thing?

After a few moments of much thinking, the lady rose, carefully adjusted her kimono, and stepped to Josephine’s berth. The child lay holding the curtains apart, much to the disgust of the person overhead, and gazing at the lamp above. Her cheeks were wet, her free hand clutched Rudanthy, and the expression of her face was one that no woman could see and not pity.

“My dear little girl, don’t cry. I’ve come to take off your cloak. Please sit up a minute.”

"Oh, that's nice! Thank you. I—I—if mamma"—

"I'll try to do what mamma would. There. It's unfastened. Such a pretty coat it is, too. Have n't you a little gown of some sort to put on?"

"All my things are in the satchel. Big Bridget put them there. She told me—I forget what she did tell me. Bob tucked the satchel away."

"I'll find it."

By this time the upper berth lady was again looking over its edge and airing her views on the subject:

"The idea! If I'd known I was going to be pushed off up here and that chit of a child put in below I'd have made a row."

"I believe you," said Red Kimono, calmly. "Yet I suppose this lower bed must have been taken and paid for in the little one's name."

"'Xcuse me, Mrs. Kimono. I'm not a little one. I'm quite, quite big. I'm Josephine."

"And is there nobody on this train belonging to you, Miss Josie?" asked Mrs. Red Kimono.

“Josephine. My mamma does n’t like nicknames. There’s nobody but the expressman. And everybody. Doctor Mack said to my mamma that everybody would take care of me. I heard him. It is the truth. Doctor Mack is a grown-up gentleman. Gentlemen never tell wrong stories. Do they?” asked the little girl.

“They ought not, surely. And we ought not to be talking now. It is in the middle of the night, and all the tired people want to sleep. Are you comfortable? Then curl down here with Rudanthy and shut your eyes. If you happen to wake again, and feel lonely, just come across to my berth and creep in with me. There’s room in it for two when one of the two is so small. Good-night. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Red Kimono ceased whispering, pressed a kiss on the round cheek, and disappeared. She was also travelling alone, but felt not half so lonely since she had comforted the little child, who was again asleep, but smiling this time, and who awoke only when a lady in a

plain gray costume pulled the curtains apart and touched her lightly on the shoulder. This was "Red Kimono" in her day attire.

"Time to get up, Josephine. Breakfast is ready and your section-mate will want the place fixed up. May I take you to the dressing-room?"

"Our colleen's one of them good-natured kind that wakes up wide to-once and laughin'," had been big Bridget's boast even when her charge was but an infant, nor had the little girl outgrown her very sensible babyish custom. She responded to the stranger's greeting with a merry smile and "Good morning!" and was instantly ready for whatever was to come.

She was full of wonder over the cramped little apartment which all the women travellers used in succession as a lavatory, and it may be that this wonder made her submit without hindrance to the rather clumsy brushing of her curls which Red Kimono attempted.

"'Xcuse me, that is n't the way mamma or big Bridget does. They put me in the bath, first off; then my hair, and then my clothes.

Have n't you got any little girls to your house, Red Kimono?" inquired the young traveller.

"No, dear, I haven't even a house;" answered the lady, rather sadly. "But your own dear mamma would have to forego the bath on a railway sleeper, so let's make haste and give the other people their rightful use of this place."

By this time several women had collected in the narrow passage leading to the dressing-room, and were watching through the crack of its door till Josephine's toilet should be completed and their own chance could come.

"What makes all them folks out there look so cross, dear Red Kimono?"

"Selfishness, dearie. And hunger. First come best fed, on a railway dining-car, I fancy. There. You look quite fresh and nice. Let us go at once."

As they passed down the aisle where Bob was swiftly and deftly making the sections ready for the day's occupancy, Josephine was inclined to pause and watch him, but was

hurried onward by her new friend, who advised :

“Don't loiter, Josephine. If we don't get to table promptly we'll miss our seats. Hurry, please.”

“Are you one of the selfish-hungry ones, Mrs. Red Kimono?”

The lady flushed, and was about to make an indignant reply, but reflected that indignation would be wasted on such a little person as this.

“It may be that I am, child. Certainly I am hungry, and so should you be. I don't remember seeing you at supper last night.”

“I had my supper with Doctor Mack before we started. Oh, he was nice to me that time. He gave me turkey and mince-pie, and — and everything that was on the bill of fare that I wanted, so's I would n't cry. He said I'd be sick, but he didn't mind that so long as I didn't cry. He hates crying people, Doctor Mack does. He likes mamma 'cause she's so brave. Once my papa was a soldier, and he's a Company F man now; but most he's a 'lec-

trickeller, and has to go away to the funny pickle place to earn the money for mamma and me. So then she and me never cry once. We just keep on laughing like we did n't mind, even if we do hate to say good-by to papa for so long a while. I said I would n't cry, not on all this car ride; never, not at all. I—maybe I forgot, though. Did I cry last night, Mrs. Red Kimono?"

"Possibly, just a little; not worth mentioning. Here, dear, climb into this chair," was the lady's hasty reply.

"What a cute table! Just like hotel ones, only littler. It's dreadful wobbly, though. It makes my head feel funny. I—oh! I'm—I guess—I'm sick!"

The lady shivered quite as visibly as poor Josephine. The dining car was the last one of the long train, and swayed from side to side in a very unpleasant manner. The motion did not improve anybody's appetite, and the grown-up traveller was now vexed with herself for befriending the childish one.

"She was nothing to me. Why should I

break over my fixed rules of looking out for number one and minding my own business? Well, I'll get through this meal somehow, and then rid my hands of the matter. I'm not the only woman in our car. Let some of the others take a chance. The idea! sending a little thing like that to travel alone. It's preposterous — perfectly preposterous."

Unconsciously she finished her thought aloud, and Josephine heard her, and asked:

"What does it mean, that big word, Mrs. Kimono?"

"It means — my name is — is n't — no matter. Are you better? Can you eat? It's small wonder you were upset after the supper that foolish doctor gave you. What is your breakfast at home?"

"Oatmeal and fruit. Sometimes, if I'm good, some meat and potato."

"I will order it for you."

"Thank you, but I can order for myself. Mamma always allows me to. She wishes me to be myself, not anybody else," returned the child.

"Oh, indeed! Then do so."

Josephine recognized from the lady's tone that she had given offence, though did n't know why. Now, it was another of her wise mother's rules that her little daughter should punish herself when any punishment was needed. Opinions did n't always agree upon the subject, yet, as a rule, the conscientious child could be trusted to deal with her own faults more sternly than anybody else would do. She realized that here was a case in point, and, though the steak and potatoes which Red Kimono ordered for herself looked very tempting, asked only for oatmeal and milk, "without any sugar, if you please, boy."

The lady frowned inquiringly.

"Are you still ill, Josephine?"

"No, Mrs. Kimono."

"Are n't you hungry?"

"Dreadful." Indeed, the hunger was evident enough.

"Then why don't you take some heartier food? If you're bashful— Yet you're certainly not that. If you're hungry, child, for goodness sake eat."

"It's for goodness sake I can't. I dare n't. It would n't be right. Maybe I can eat my dinner. Maybe."

Tears were very near the big brown eyes, but the sweet little face was turned resolutely away from the table toward the window and the sights outside. One spoonful of unsweetened, flavorless meal was gulped down, and the trembling lips remarked:

"It's all begun again, has n't it?"

"What's begun, Josephine?"

"The all-out-doors to go by and by us, like it did last night."

"It is we who are going by the 'all-out-doors,' dear. The train moves, the landscape stands still. Were you never on the cars before?" inquired the lady.

"Never, not in all my whole life."

"Indeed! But that's not been such a long time, after all."

Another brave effort at the plain breakfast, and the answer came:

"It's pretty long to me. It seems—*forever* since yesterday!"

The lady could not endure the sight of Josephine's evident distress and softly slipped a morsel of juicy steak upon the oatmeal saucer. With gaze still averted the spoon came down into the dish, picked up the morsel, and conveyed it to the reluctant mouth. The red lips closed, smacked, opened, and the child faced about. With her napkin to hide the movement she carefully replaced the morsel on the empty plate beside the saucer and said, reproachfully :

"You ought n't to done that, Mrs. Kimono. Don't you s'pose it's bad enough to be just starved, almost, and not be tempted? That's like big Bridget; and my mamma has to speak right sharp to her, she has. Quite often, too. Once it was pudding, and I—I ate it. Then I had to do myself sorry all over again. Please 'xcuse me."

"You strange child! Yes, I will excuse you. I'm leaving table myself. You must n't attempt to go back through the train to our car alone. Eh? What? Beg pardon?" she said, turning around. x

An official in uniform was respectfully addressing the lady :

"Pardon, madam, but I think this must be my little 'Parcel.' I've been looking for her. Did you have your breakfast, little girl?"

"Yes, thank you," she answered.

"I hope you enjoyed it."

"I did n't much," was her frank reply to this kind wish.

"Why, was n't it right? Here, waiter! I want you to take this young lady under your special care. See that she has the best of everything, and is served promptly, no matter who else waits. It's a point of honor with the service, madam," he explained to the wondering lady beside them.

"The service? Beg pardon, but I don't understand. The child seemed to be alone and I tried to look after her a bit."

"Thank you for doing so, I'm sure. The Express Service, I refer to. I'm the train agent between San Diego and Chicago; she is under my care. There the agent of the other line takes her in charge. She's billed

through to Baltimore and no expense is to be spared by anybody concerned, that she makes the trip in safety and the greatest possible comfort. We flatter ourselves, madam, that our company can fix the thing as it should be. She's not the first little human 'parcel' we've handled successfully. Is there anything you'd like, Miss"—

He paused, pulled a notebook from his pocket, discovered her name, and concluded:

"Miss Josephine Smith?"

"Smith, Josephine Smith, singular!" murmured Mrs. Kimono, under her breath. "But not so singular after all. Smith is not an uncommon name, nor Baltimore the only city where Smiths reside."

Meanwhile the express agent had taken Josephine's hand in his, and was carefully guiding her back through the many carriages to the one where she belonged. His statement that Doctor Mack had put her into his care made her consider him an old friend, and loosened her tongue accordingly.

Porter Bob received her with a smile, and

asked if he had arranged her half of the section to her pleasure ; pointed out that Rudanthy's attire had been duly brushed, and begged her not to hesitate about ringing for him whenever she needed him.

By this time Mrs. Upper Berth, as the child mentally called her, had returned from her own breakfast and proved to be "not half so cross as you sounded, are you?"

To which the lady replied with a laugh and the assurance that tired people were apt to be a "little crisp," then added :

"But I've heard all about you now, my dear ; and I'm glad to have as section-mate such a dainty little 'parcel.' I'm sure we'll be the best of friends before we reach our parting-place at Chicago."

So they proved to be. So, indeed, did everybody in the car. "Little Parcel" was made so much of by the grown-up travellers that she might have been spoiled had the journey continued longer than it did. But at Chicago a change was made. The express agent put her into a carriage, and whisked her away to

another station, another train, and a new, strange set of people. Not a face with which she had become familiar during the first stage of her long journey was visible. Even Bob had disappeared, and in his stead was a gray-haired porter who grumbled at each of the demands, such as it had become natural for her to make upon the friendly Bob.

There was no Red Kimono in the section opposite; not even a be-spectacled Upper Berth lady to make whimsical comments on her neighbors; and the new agent to whom she had been transferred looked cross, as if he were in a dreadful hurry and hated to be bothered. Altogether things were changed for the worse, and Josephine's heart would perhaps have broken if it had n't been for the dear companionship of Rudanthy, who smiled and slept in a placid waxen manner that was restfully familiar.

Besides, all journeys have an end; and the six days' trip of the little San Diegoan came to its own before the door of a stately mansion, gay with the red brick and white marble which

mark most Baltimore homes, and the ring of an electric bell that the expressman touched :

“ A ‘ parcel ’ for Joseph Smith. Billed from San Diego, Cal. Live here, eh? ”

It was a colored man in livery who replied :

“ Yes, suh. Mister Joseph Smith, he done live here, suh. ”

“ Sign, please. That is, if you can write. ”

“ Course I can write. I allays signs parcels for Mister Smith, suh. Where ’s the parcel at, suh? ” returned the liveried negro.

“ Sign. I ’ll fetch it, ” came the prompt answer.

Old Peter signed, being the trusted and trustworthy servant of his master, and returned the book to the agent’s hands, who himself returned to the carriage, lifted out Josephine and Rudanthy, conveyed them up the glistening steps, and left them to their fate.

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVAL.

PETER stared, but said nothing. Not even when the agent ran back from the carriage with a little satchel and a strap full of shawls and picture-books. The hack rolled away, the keen March wind chilled the young Californian, who stood, doll in hand, respectfully waiting admission to the warm hall beyond the door. Finally, since the servant seemed to have been stricken speechless, she found her own voice, and said :

“Please, boy, I’d like to see my Uncle Joe.”

“Your — Uncle — Joe, little miss?”

“That’s what I said. I must come in. I’m very cold. If this is Baltimore, that the folks on the cars said was pretty, I guess they didn’t know what they were talking about. I want to come in, please.”

The old man found his wits returning. This was the queerest "parcel" for which he had ever signed a receipt in an express-book, and he knew there was some mistake. Yet he could n't withstand the pleading brown eyes under the scarlet hat, even if he had n't been "raised" to a habit of hospitality.

"Suah, little lady. Come right in. 'Tis dreadful cold out to-day. I 'most froze goin' to market, an' I'se right down ashamed of myself leavin' comp'ny waitin' this way. Step right in the drawin'-room, little missy, and tell me who 't is you 'd like to see."

Picking up the luggage that had been deposited on the topmost of the gleaming marble steps, which, even in winter, unlike his neighbors, the master of the house disdained to hide beneath a wooden casing, the negro led the way into the luxurious parlor. To Josephine, fresh from the chill of the cloudy, windy day without, the whole place seemed aglow. A rosy light came through the red-curtained windows, shone from the open grate, repeated itself in the deep crimson carpet that was so delightfully soft and warm.

"Sit down by the fire, little lady. There. That's nice. Put your dolly right here. Maybe she's cold, too. Now, then, suah you'se fixed so fine you can tell me who 'tis you've come to see," said the man.

"What is your name, boy?" inquired Josephine.

"Peter, missy. My name's Peter."

"Well, then, Peter, don't be stupid. Or are you deaf, maybe?" she asked.

"Land, no, missy. I'se got my hearin' fust class," he replied, somewhat indignantly.

"I have come to see my Uncle Joe. I wish to see him now. Please tell him," she commanded.

The negro scratched his gray wool and reflected. He had been born and raised in the service of the family where he still "officiated," and knew its history thoroughly. His present master was the only son of an only son, and there had never been a daughter. No, nor wife, at least to this household. There were cousins in plenty, with whom Mr. Joseph Smith was not on good terms. There were

property interests dividing them, and Mr. Joseph kept his vast wealth for his own use alone. Some thought he should have shared it with others, but he did not so think and lived his quiet life, with a trio of colored men-servants. His house was one of the best appointed on the wide avenue, but, also, one of the quietest. It was the first time that old Peter had ever heard a child's voice in that great room, and its clear tones seemed to confuse him.

"I want to see my Uncle Joe. I want to see him right away. Go, boy, and call him," Josephine explained.

This was command, and Peter was used to obey, so he replied :

"All right, little missy, I'll go see. Has you got your card? Who shall I say 't is?"

Josephine reflected. Once mamma had had some dear little visiting cards engraved with her small daughter's name, and the child remembered with regret that if they had been packed with her "things" at all, it must have been in the trunk, which the expressman said

would arrive by and by from the railway station. She could merely say :

"Uncles don't need cards when their folks come to see them. I've come from mamma. She's gone to the pickley land to see papa. Just tell him Josephine. What's that stuff out there?"

She ran to the window, pulled the lace curtains apart, and peered out. The air was now full of great white flakes that whirled and skurried about as if in the wildest sort of play.

"What is it, Peter? Quick, what is it?" she demanded.

"Huh! Don't you know snow when you see it, little missy? Where you lived at all your born days?" he cried, surprised.

"Oh, just snow. Course I've seen it, coming here on the cars. It was on the ground, though, not in the air and the sky. I've lived with mamma. Now I've come to live with Uncle Joe. Why don't you tell him? If a lady called to see my mamma do you s'pose big Bridget would n't say so?"

"I'se goin'," he said, and went.

But he was gone so long, and the expected uncle was so slow to welcome her, that even that beautiful room began to look dismal to the little stranger. The violent storm which had sprung up with such suddenness, darkened the air, and a terrible homesickness threatened to bring on a burst of tears. Then, all at once, Josephine remembered what Doctor Mack had said :

“Don’t be a weeper, little lady, whatever else you are. Be a smiler, like my Cousin Helen, your mamma. You ’re pretty small to tackle the world alone, but just do it with a laugh and it will laugh back upon you.”

Not all of which she understood, though she recalled every one of the impressive words, but the “laughing part” was plain enough.

“Course, Rudanthy. No Uncle Joe would be glad to get a crying little girl to his house. I’ll take off my coat and yours, darling. You are pretty tired, I guess. I wonder where they’ll let us sleep, that black boy and my uncle. I hope the room will have a pretty fire in it, like this one. Don’t you?”

Rudanthy did not answer, but as Josephine laid her flat upon the carpet, to remove her travelling cloak, she immediately closed her waxen lids, and her little mother took this for assent.

“Oh, you sweetest thing! How I do love you!”

There followed a close hug of the faithful doll, which was witnessed by a trio of colored men from a rear door, where they stood, open-eyed and mouthed, wondering what in the world the master would say when he returned and found this little trespasser upon his hearth-stone.

When Rudanthy had been embraced, to the detriment of her jute ringlets and her mistress' comfort, Josephine curled down on the rug before the grate to put the doll asleep, observing:

“You're so cold, Rudanthy. Colder than I am, even. Your precious hands are like ice. You must lie right here close to the fire, 'tween me and it. By and by Uncle Joe will come and then — My! Won't he be surprised?”

That Peter boy is so dreadful stupid, like 's not he'll forget to say a single word about us. Never mind. He's my papa's twin brother. Do you know what twins are, Rudanthy? I do. Big Bridget's sister's got a pair of them. They're two of a kind, though sometimes one of them is the other kind. I mean, you know, sometimes one twin is n't a brother, it's a sister. That's what big Bridget's sister's was. Oh, dear. I'm tired. I'm hungry. I liked it better on that nice first railway car where everybody took care of me and gave me sweeties. It's terrible still here. I—I'm afraid I'm going to sleep."

In another moment the fear of the weary little traveller had become a fact. Rudanthy was already slumbering; and, alas! that was to prove the last of her many naps. But Josephine was unconscious of the grief awaiting her own awakening; and, fortunately, too young to know what a different welcome should have been accorded herself by the relative she had come so far to visit.

Peter peeped in, from time to time, found

all peaceful, and retired in thankfulness for the temporary lull. He was trembling in his shoes against the hour when the master should return and find him so unfaithful to his trust as to have admitted that curly-haired intruder upon their dignified privacy. Yet he encouraged himself with the reflection :

“ Well, no need crossin’ no bridges till you meet up with ’em, and this bridge ain’t a cross-in’ till Massa Joe’s key turns in that lock. Reckon I was guided to pick out that fine duck for dinner this night, I do. S’posin’, now, the market had been poor? Huh! Every trouble sets better on a full stummick ’an a empty. Massa Joe’s powerful fond of duck, lessen it’s spoiled in the cookin’. I’ll go warn that ’Pollo to be mighty careful it done to a turn.”

Peter departed kitchenward, where he tarried gossipping over the small guest above stairs and the probable outcome of her advent.

“ Nobody what’s a Christian goin’ to turn a little gell outen their doors such an evenin’ as this,” said Apollo, deftly basting the fowl in the pan.



"I'M JOSEPHINE!"

"Mebbe not, mebbe not. But I reckon we can't, none of us, callate on whatever Massa Joe's goin' to do about anything till he does it. He's off to a board meeting, this evening, and I hope he sets on it comfortable. When them boards are too hard, like, he comes home mighty 'rascible. Keep a right smart watch on that bird, 'Pollo, won't you? whiles I go lay the table."

But here another question arose to puzzle the old man. Should he, or should he not, prepare that table for the unexpected guest? There was nobody more particular than Mr. Smith that all his orders should be obeyed to the letter. Each evening he wished his dinner to be served after one prescribed fashion, and any infraction of his rules brought a reprimand to Peter.

However, in this case he determined to risk a little for hospitality's sake, reflecting that if the master were displeased he could whisk off the extra plate before it was discovered.

"Massa Joe's just as like to scold if I don't

put it on as if I do. Never allays account for what 'll please him best. Depends on how he takes it."

Busy in his dining-room he did not hear the cab roll over the snowy street and stop at the door, nor the turn of the key in the lock. Nor, lost in his own thoughts, did the master of the house summon a servant to help him off with his coat and overshoes. He repaired immediately to his library, arranged a few papers, went to his dressing-room and attired himself for dinner, with the carefulness to which he had been trained from childhood, and afterward strolled leisurely toward the great parlor, turned on the electric light, and paused upon its threshold amazed, exclaiming:

"What is this? What in the world is — *this?*"

The sudden radiance which touched her eyelids, rather than his startled exclamation, roused small Josephine from her restful nap. She sat up, rubbed her eyes, which brightened with a radiance beyond that of electricity, and sprang to her feet. With outstretched arms

she flung herself upon the astonished gentleman, crying :

“ Oh, you beautiful, beautiful man ! You darling, precious Uncle Joe ! I ’m Josephine ! I ’ve come ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

A MULTITUDE OF JOSEPHS.

“So I perceive!” responded the master of the house, when he could rally from this onslaught of affection. “I’m sure I’m very pleased to welcome you. I — when — how did you arrive?”

“I’m a ’xpress ‘parcel,’” she answered, laughing, for she had learned before this that she had made her long journey in rather an unusual fashion. “Mamma had to go away on the peacock-blue ocean; and Doctor Mack could n’t bother with me, ’cause he’s going to the folks that eat almonds together and give presents; and there was n’t anybody else ’xcept big Bridget, and she’d spent all her money, and mamma said you would n’t want a ‘wild Irish girl’ to plague you. Would you?”

“I’m not fond of being plagued by any-

body," said the gentleman, rather dryly. He was puzzled as much by her odd talk as her unexpected appearance, and wondered if children so young were ever lunatics. The better to consider the matter he sat down in the nearest chair, and instantly Josephine was upon his knee. The sensation this gave him was most peculiar. He didn't remember that he had ever taken any child on his lap, yet permitted this one to remain there, because he didn't know what better to do. He had heard that one should treat a lunatic as if all vagaries were real. Opposition only made an insane person worse. What worse could this little crazy creature, with the lovely face and dreadful manners, do to a finical old bachelor in evening clothes than crush the creases out of his trouser knees?

The lap was not as comfortable as Doctor Mack's, and far, far from as cosey as mamma's. Uncle Joe's long legs had a downward slant to them that made Josephine's perch upon them rather uncertain. After sliding toward the floor once or twice, and hitching up again, she

slipped to her feet and leaned affectionately against his shoulder, saying :

“That’s better. I guess you’re not used to holding little girls, are you, Uncle Joe?”

“No, Josephine. What is your other name?” said he.

“Smith. Just like yours. You’re my papa’s dear twin, you know.”

“Oh, am I?” he asked.

“Course. Did n’t you know that? How funny. That’s because you have n’t mamma to remind you, I s’pose. Mamma remembers everything. Mamma never is naughty. Mamma knows everything. Mamma is dear, dear, dear. And, oh, I want her, I want her!”

Josephine’s arms went round the gentleman’s neck, and her tears fell freely upon his spotless shirt front. She had been very brave, she had done what she promised Doctor Mack, and kept a “laughing front” as long as she could; but now here, in the home of her papa’s twin, with her “own folks,” her self-control gave way, and she cried as she had never cried before in all her short and happy life.

Mr. Smith was hopelessly distressed. He did n't know what to say or do, and this proved most fortunate for both of them. For whatever he might have said would have puzzled his visitor as greatly as she was puzzling him. Happily for both, the deluge of tears was soon over, and Josephine lifted a face on which the smiles seemed all the brighter because of the moisture that still bedewed it.

"Please 'xcuse me, Uncle Joe. I did n't mean to cry once, but it — it's so lovely to have you at last. It was a long, long way on the railway, uncle. Rudanthy got terribly tired," explained the visitor.

"Did she? Who is Rudanthy?"

"You, my uncle, yet don't know Rudanthy, that has been mine ever since I was? Mamma says she has to change heads now and then, and once in a while she buys her a new pair of feet or hands; but it's the same darling dolly, whether her head's new or old. I'll fetch her. It's time she waked up, anyway."

Josephine sped to the rug before the grate,

stooped to lift her playmate, paused, and uttered a terrified cry.

“Uncle! Uncle Joe, come here quick—quick!”

Smiling at his own acquiescence, the gentleman obeyed her demand, and stooped over her as she also bent above the object on the rug. All that was left of poor Rudanthy—who had travelled three thousand miles to be melted into a shapeless mass before the first hearth-fire which received her.

Josephine did not cry now. This was a trouble too deep for tears.

“What ails her, Uncle Joe? I never, never saw her look like that. Her nose and her lips and her cheeks are all flattened out, and her eyes—her eyes are just round glass balls. Her lovely curls”—The little hands flew to the top of the speaker’s own head, but found no change there. Yet she looked up rather anxiously into the face above her. “Do you s’pose I’d have got to look that dreadful way if I had n’t waked up when I did, Uncle Joe?”

“No, Josephine. No, indeed. Your un-

happy Rudanthy was a waxen young person who was indiscreet enough to lie down before an open fire. You seem to be real flesh and blood, and might easily scorch, yet would hardly melt. Next time you take a nap, however, I'd advise you to lie on a lounge or a bed."

"I will. I wouldn't like to look like her. But what shall I do? I don't know a store here," she wailed.

"I do. I might be able to find you a new doll, if you won't cry," came the answer which surprised himself.

"Oh, I shan't cry any more. Never any more — if I can help it. That's a promise. But I should n't want a new doll. I only want a head. Poor Rudanthy! Do you s'pose she suffered much?" was the next anxious question.

"It's not likely. But let Rudanthy lie yonder on the cool window sill. I want to talk with you. I want you to answer a few questions. Sit down by me, please. Is this comfortable?"

Josephine sank into the midst of the cushions

he piled for her on the wide sofa and sighed luxuriously, answering :

“ It ’s lovely. This is the nicest place I ever, ever saw.”

“ Thank you. Now, child, tell me something about other places you remember, and, also, please tell me your name.”

Josephine was surprised. What a very short memory this uncle had, to be sure. It would n’t be polite to say so, though, and it was an easy question to answer.

“ My name is Josephine Smith. I ’m named after you, you know, ’cause you ’re my papa’s twin. I ’m sent to you because ”—and she went on to explain the reasons, so far as she understood them, of her long journey and her presence in his house. She brought her coat and showed him, neatly sewed inside its flap, a square of glazed holland on which was written her name, to whom consigned, and the express company by which she had been “ specially shipped and delivered.”

It was all plain and straightforward. This was the very house designated on the tag, and

he was Joseph Smith; but it was, also, a riddle too deep for him to guess.

"I see, I see. Well, since you are here we must make the best of it. I think there's a mistake, but I dare say the morning will set it all right. Meanwhile, it's snowing too fast to make any inquiries to-night. It is about dinner time, for me. Have you had your dinner?" asked the host.

"I had one on the train. That seems a great while ago," said the guest.

"I beg pardon, but I think there is a little smut upon your pretty nose. After a railway journey travellers usually like to wash up, and so on. I don't know much about little girls, yet" — he rather timidly suggested.

"I should be so glad. Just see my hands, Uncle Joe!" and she extended a pair of plump palms which sadly needed soap and water.

"I'm not your" — he began, meaning to set her right concerning their relationship; then thought better of it. What would a child do who had come to visit an unknown uncle and found herself in the home of a stranger?

Weep, most likely. He didn't want that. He'd had enough of tears, as witness one spoiled shirt-front. He began also to change his mind regarding the little one's manners. She had evidently lived with gentlefolks and when some one came to claim her in the morning he would wish them to understand that she had been treated courteously.

So he rang for Peter, who appeared as suddenly as if he had come from the hall without.

"Been listening at the doorway, boy? Take care. Go up to the guest room, turn on the heat and light, and see that there are plenty of fresh towels. Take this young lady's things with you. She will probably spend the night here. I hope you have a decent dinner provided."

"Fine, Massa Joe. Just supreme. Yes, suh. Certainly, suh," answered the servant.

"Uncle Joe, is there a bathroom in this house?" asked she.

"Three of them, Josephine."

"May I use one? I have n't had a bath since I was in San Diego, and I'm — mamma would

not allow me at table, I guess ; I'm dreadful dirty."

If Josephine had tried to find the shortest way to Mr. Smith's heart she could not have chosen more wisely.

"To be sure, to be sure. Peter, make a bath ready next the guest room. Will an hour give you time enough, little lady?"

"I don't want so long. I'm so glad I learned to dress myself, are n't you? 'Cause all the women to this house seem to be men, don't they?"

"Yes, child. Poor, unfortunate house !"

"It's a beautiful house, Uncle Joe ; and you need n't care any more. I've come, now. I, Josephine. I'll take care of you. Good-by. When you see me again I'll be looking lovely, 'cause I'll put on the new white wool dress that mamma embroidered with forget-me-nots."

"Vanity !" thought Mr. Smith, regretfully, which shows that he did n't as yet understand his little visitor, whose "lovely" referred to her clothes alone, and not at all to herself.

The dinner hour at 1000 Bismarck Avenue was precisely half-past six. Even for the most notable of the few guests entertained by the master of the house he rarely delayed more than five minutes, and on no occasion had it been served a moment earlier. The old-fashioned hall clock had ticked the hour for generations of Smiths "from Virginia," and was regulated nowadays by the tower timepiece at Mt. Royal station. It was fortunate for Josephine that just as the minute hand dropped to its place, midway between the six and seven on the dial, she came tripping down the wide stair, radiant from her bath and the comfort of fresh clothing, and eager to be again with the handsome Uncle Joe, who was waiting for her at the stair's foot with some impatience.

Her promptness pleased him, and the uncommon vision of her childish loveliness pleased him even more. He had believed that he disliked children, but was now inclined to change his opinion.

"I'm glad you are punctual, Miss Josephine, else I'd have had to begin my dinner without

you. I never put back meals for anybody," he remarked.

"Would you? Don't you? Then I'm glad, too. Is n't the frock pretty? My mamma worked all these flowers with her own little white hands. I love it. I had to kiss them before I could put it on," she said, again lifting her skirt and touching it with her lips.

"I suppose you love your mamma very dearly. What is she like?"

He was leading her along the hall toward the dining-room, and Peter, standing within its entrance, congratulated himself that he had laid the table for two. He glanced at his master's face, found it good-natured and interested, and took his own cue therefrom.

"She is like — she is like the most beautiful thing in the world, dear Uncle Joe. Don't you remember?" asked the astonished child.

"Well, no, not exactly."

"That's a pity, and you my papa's twin. Papa has n't nice gray hair like yours, though, and there is n't any shiny bare place on top of his head. I mean there was n't when he went

away last year. His hair was dark, like mamma's, and his mustache was brown and curly. I think he is n't as big as you, Uncle Joe, and his clothes are gray, with buttony fixings on them. He has a beautiful sash around his waist, sometimes, and lovely shoulder trimmings. He's an officer, my papa is, in Company F. That's for 'musement, mamma says. For the business, he's a 'lectrickeller. Is this my place? Thank you, Peter."

Mr. Smith handed his little visitor to her chair, which the old butler had pulled back for her, with the same courtly manner he would have shown the pastor's wife. Indeed, if he had been asked he would have admitted that he found the present guest the more interesting of the two.

Peter made ready to serve the soup, but a look from the strange child restrained him. She added a word to the look:

"Why, boy, you forgot. Uncle Joe has n't said the grace yet."

Now, Mr. Smith was a faithful and devout church member, but was in the habit of omit-

ting this little ceremony at his solitary meals. He was disconcerted for the moment, but presently bowed his head and repeated the formula to which he had been accustomed in his youth. It proved to be the same that the little girl was used to hearing from her own parents' lips, and she believed it to be the ordinary habit of every household. She did not dream that she had instituted a new order of things, and unfolded her napkin with a smile, saying :

“ Now, I'm dreadful hungry, Uncle Joe. Are you? ”

“ I believe I am, little one.”

Peter served with much dignity and flourish ; but Josephine had dined at hotel tables often enough to accept his attentions as a matter of course. Her quiet behavior, her daintiness, and her chatter, amused and delighted her host. He found himself in a much better humor than when he returned through the storm from an unsatisfactory board meeting, and was grateful for the mischance which had brought him such pleasant company.

As for old Peter, his dark face glowed with

enthusiasm. He was deeply religious, and now believed that this unknown child had been sent by heaven itself to gladden their big, empty house. He didn't understand how his master could be "uncle" to anybody, yet, since that master accepted the fact so genially, he was only too glad to do likewise.

It was a fine and stately dinner, and as course after course was served, Josephine's wonder grew, till she had to inquire :

"Is it like this always, to your home, Uncle Joe?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Such a birthday table, and no folks, 'xcept you and me."

"It is the same, usually, unless Peter fails to find a good market. Have you finished? No more cream or cake?" he explained and questioned.

"No, thank you. I'm never asked to take two helpings. Only on the car I had three, sometimes, though I did n't eat them. Mamma would n't have liked it."

"And do you always remember what 'mamma' wishes?"

"No. I'm a terrible forgetter. But I try. Somehow it's easier now I can't see her," she answered.

"Quite natural. Suppose we go into the library for a little while. I want to consult the directory."

She clasped his hand, looked up confidently, but felt as if she should fall asleep on the way thither. She wondered if it ever came bedtime in that house, and how many hours had passed since she entered it.

"There, Miss Josephine, I think you'll find that chair a comfortable one," said the host, when they had reached the library, rich with all that is desirable in such a room. "Do you like pictures?"

"Oh, I love them!"

"That's good. So do I. I'll get you some."

But Mr. Smith was not used to the "loves" of little girls, and his selection was made rather because he wanted to see how she would handle

a book than because he thought about the subject chosen. A volume of Dore's grotesque drawings happened to be in most shabby condition, and he reflected that she "could n't hurt that much, anyway, for it's to be rebound."

Afterward he opened the directory for himself, and Josephine thought it a dull-looking book. For some time both were interested and silent; then Uncle Joe cried out with startling suddenness:

"Three thousand Smiths in this little city; and seventy-five of them are Josephs! Well, my child, you're mighty rich in 'uncles'!"

CHAPTER V.

A WILD MARCH MORNING.

JOSEPHINE was half-asleep. A woman would have thought about her fatigue and sent her early to bed. "Uncle Joe" thought of nothing now save the array of common and uncommon names in the city directory. He counted and recounted the "Smiths," "Smyths," and "Smythes," and jotted down his figures in a notebook. He copied, also, any address of any Smith whose residence was in a locality which he considered suitable for relatives of his small guest. He became so absorbed in this study that an hour had passed before he remembered her, and the extraordinary quiet of her lively tongue.

Josephine had dozed and waked, dozed and waked, and dreamed many dreams during that hour of silence. Her tired little brain was all

confused with the weird pictures of tortured men gazing at her from the trunks of gnarled trees, and thoughts of a myriad of uncles, each wearing eyeglasses, and sitting with glistening bald head beneath a brilliant light. The light dazzled her, the dreams terrified her, and the little face that dropped at length upon the open page of the great folio was drawn and distressed.

“For goodness sake! I suppose she’s sleepy. I believe that children do go to bed early. At least they should. If I’m to be a correct sort of ‘uncle,’ even for one night, I must get her there. I wonder how!” considered the gentleman.

The first thing was to wake her, and he attempted it, saying:

“Josephine! Josephine!”

The child stirred uneasily, but slumbered on.

“Uncle Joe” laid his hand upon her shoulder rather gingerly. He was much more afraid of her than she could ever be of him.

“Miss Josephine! If you please, wake up.”

She responded with a suddenness that startled him.

“Why — where am I? Oh! I know. Did I go to sleep, Uncle Joe?”

“I should judge that you did. Would you like to go to bed?”

“If you please, uncle.”

He smiled faintly at the odd situation in which he found himself, playing nurse to a little girl. A boy would have been less disconcerting, for he had been a boy himself, once, and remembered his childhood. But he had never been a little girl, had never lived in a house with a little girl, and did n't know how little girls expected to be treated. He volunteered one question :

“If somebody takes you to your room, could you — could you do the rest for yourself, Josephine?”

“Why, course. I began when I was eight years old. That was my last birthday that ever was. Big Bridget was not to wait on me any more after that, mamma said. But she did. She loved it. Mamma, even, loved it,

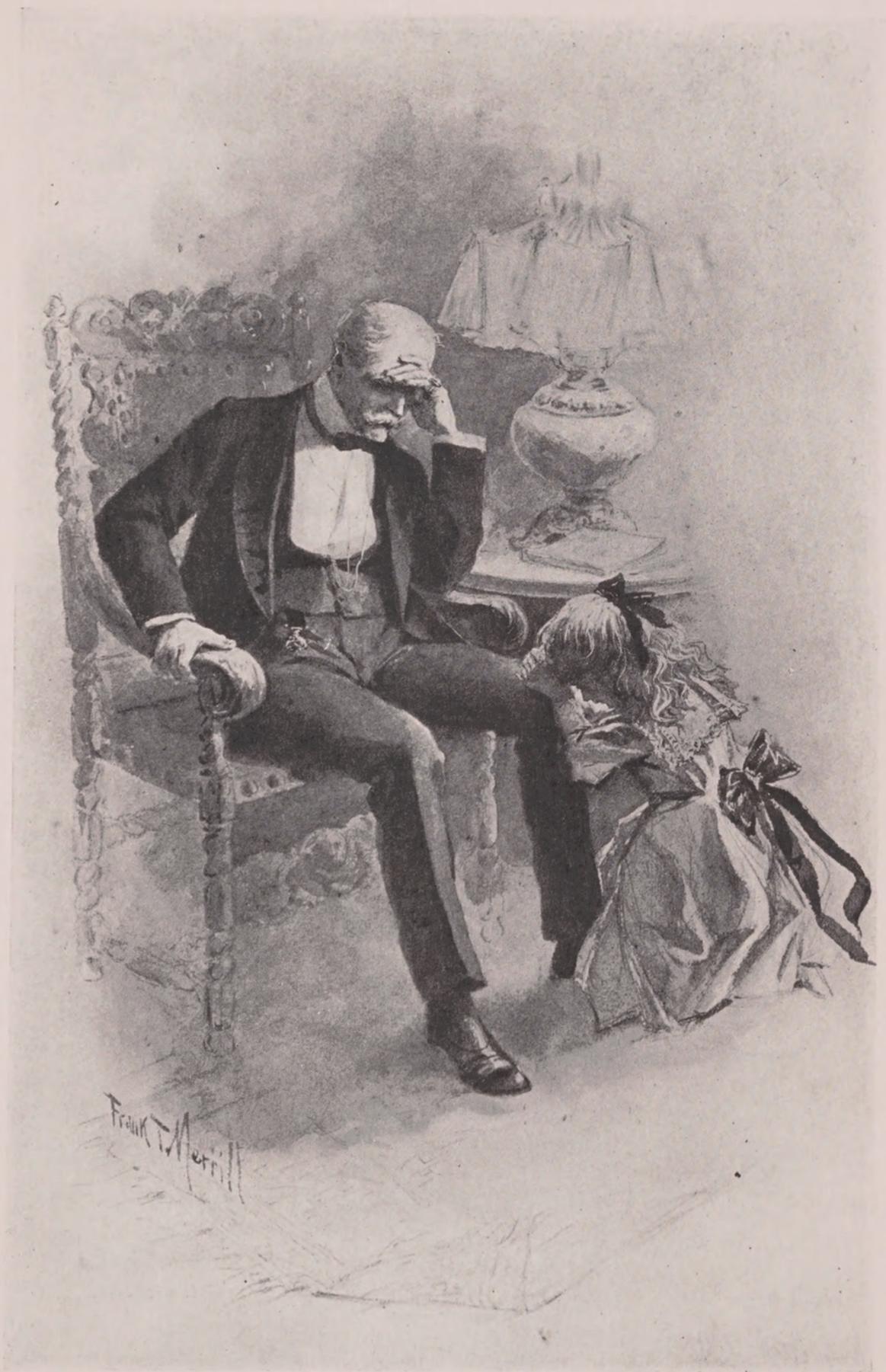
too. And nobody need go upstairs with me. I know the way. I remember it all. If— May I say my prayers by you, Uncle Joe? Mamma”—

One glance about the strange room, one thought of the absent mother, and the little girl's lip quivered. Then came a second thought, and she remembered her promise. She was never to cry again, if she could help it. By winking very fast and thinking about other things than mamma and home she would be able to help it.

Before he touched her shoulder to wake her, Mr. Smith had rung for Peter, who now stood waiting orders in the parting of the portière, and beheld a sight such as he had never dreamed to see in that great, lonely house: Josephine kneeling reverently beside his master's knee, saying aloud the Lord's Prayer and the familiar "Now I lay me."

Then she rose, flung her arms about the gentleman's neck, saw the moisture in his eyes, and asked in surprise:

"Do you feel bad, Uncle Joe? Are n't you



"NOW I LAY ME."

happy, Uncle Joe? Can't I help you, you dear, dear man?"

The "dear" man's arms went round the little figure, and he drew it close to his lonely heart with a jealous wish that he might always keep it there. All at once he felt that he hated that other unknown, rightful uncle to whom this charming "parcel" belonged, and almost he wished that no such person might ever be found. Then he unclasped her clinging arms and — actually kissed her!

"You are helping me very greatly, Josephine. You are a dear child. Peter will see that your room is all right for the night. Tell him anything you need and he'll get it for you. Good-night, little girl."

"Good-night, Uncle Joe. Dear Uncle Joe. I think — I think you are just too sweet for words! I hope you'll rest well. Good-night."

She vanished through the curtains, looking back and kissing her finger-tips to him, and smiling trustingly upon him to the last. But the old man sat long looking after her before he turned again to his books, reflecting:

“Strange! Only a few hours of a child’s presence in this silent place, yet it seems transfigured. ‘An angel’s visit,’ maybe. To show me that, after all, I am something softer and more human than the crusty old bachelor I thought myself. What would her mother say, that absent, perfect ‘mamma,’ if she knew into what strange hands her darling had fallen? Of course, my first duty to-morrow is to hunt up this mislaid uncle of little Josephine’s and restore her to him. But — Well, it’s my duty, and of course I shall do it.”

The great bed in the guest room was big enough, Josephine thought, to have held mamma herself, and even big Bridget without crowding. It was far softer than her own little white cot in the San Diegan cottage, and plunged in its great depths the small traveller instantly fell asleep. She did not hear Peter come in and lower the light, and knew nothing more, indeed, till morning. Then she roused with a confused feeling, not quite realizing where she was or what had happened to her. For a few moments she lay still, expecting

mamma's or big Bridget's face to appear beneath the silken curtains which draped the bed's head; then she remembered everything, and that in a house without women she was bound to do all things for herself.

"But it's dreadful dark everywhere. I guess I don't like such thick curtains as Uncle Joe has. Mamma's are thin white ones and it's always sunshiny at home — 'xcept when it is n't. That's only when the rains come, and that's most always the nicest of all. Then we have a dear little fire in the grate, and mamma reads to me, and big Bridget bakes and cooks the best things. We write letters to papa, and mamma sings and plays, and — it's just lovely! Never mind, Josephine. You'll be back there soon's papa gets well again, and Uncle Joe was sort of cryey round his eyes last night. Mamma said I was to be like his own little daughter to him and take care of him and never make him any trouble. So I will."

There was no prouder child in that city that morning than the little stranger within its

gates. She prepared her bath without aid, brushed her hair and dressed herself entirely. It was true that her curls did not look much as they did after mamma's loving fingers had handled them, and the less said about those on the back of her head the better. Nor were the buttons in the right places to match the buttonholes, and the result was that the little frock which had always been so tidy hung at a curious angle from its wearer's shoulders.

But who'd mind a trifle like that, in a beginner?

Not Uncle Joe, who saw only the fair front of his visitor, as she ran down the hall to meet him, emerging from his own chamber. Indeed, he was not now in a mood to observe anything save himself, though he answered Josephine's gay "Good-morning" with another rather grimly spoken.

The child paused, astonished. There were no longer tears in his eyes, but he looked as if a "good cry" would be relief. His face was distorted with pain, and every time he put one of his feet to the floor he winced as if it hurt

him. He seemed as dim and glum as the day outside, and that was dreary beyond anything the little Californian had ever seen. The snow had fallen steadily all the night, and the avenue was almost impassable. A few milk-carts forced their way along, and a man in a gray uniform, with a leather bag over his shoulder, was wading up each flight of steps to the doorways above them and handing in the morning mail.

"Are n't you well, Uncle Joe? Did n't you rest well?" she inquired solicitously.

"No, I've got that wretched old gout again," he snapped.

"What's that?"

"It's a horrible, useless, nerve-racking 'misery' in my foot. It's being out in that storm yesterday, and this senseless heap of snow on the ground. March is supposed to be spring, but this beastly climate does n't know what spring means. Ugh!" he groaned.

"Does n't it?" she asked, amazed by this statement.

"Hum, child. There's no need of your re-

peating everything I say in another question. I'm always cross when I'm gouty. Don't heed me. Just enjoy yourself the best you can, for I don't see how I'm to hunt up your uncle for you in such weather."

Josephine thought he was talking queerly, but said nothing; only followed him slowly to the breakfast room, which Peter had done his best to make cheerful.

Mr. Smith sat down at table and began to open the pile of letters which lay beside his plate. Then he unfolded his newspaper, looked at a few items, and sipped his coffee. He had forgotten Josephine, though she had not forgotten him, and sat waiting until such time as it should please him to ask the blessing.

For the sake of her patient yet eager face, Peter took an unheard-of liberty: he nudged his master's shoulder.

"Hey? What? Peter!" angrily demanded Mr. Smith.

"Yes, suh. Certainly, suh. But I reckon little missy won't eat withouten it."

It was almost as disagreeable to the gentle-

man to be reminded of his duty, and that, too, by a servant, as to suffer his present physical pangs. But he swallowed the lesson with the remainder of his coffee, and bowed his head, resolving that never again while that brown-eyed child sat opposite him should such a reminder be necessary.

As before, with the conclusion of the simple grace, Josephine's tongue and appetite were released from guard, and she commented:

"This is an awful funny Baltimore, is n't it?"

"I don't know. Do you always state a thing and then ask it?" returned Uncle Joe, crisply.

"I 'xpect I do ask a heap of questions. Mamma has to correct me sometimes. But I can't help it, can I? How shall I know things I don't know if I don't ask folks that do know, you know?"

"You'll be a very knowing young person if you keep on," said he.

"Oh! I want to be. I want to know every single thing there is in the whole world. Papa used to say there was a 'why' always, and I like to find out the 'whys.'"

"I believe you. Peter, another chop, please."

"With your foot, Massa Joe?" remonstrated the butler.

"No. With my roll and fresh cup of coffee," was the retort.

"Excuse me, Massa Joe, but you told me last time that next time I was to remember you 'bout the doctor saying 'no meat with the gout.'"

"Doctors know little. I'm hungry. If I've got to suffer I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. I've already eaten two chops. Another, Peter, and a juicy one."

The order was obeyed, though the old negro knew that soon he would be reprimanded as much for yielding to his master's whim as he had already been for opposing it.

"Doctor Mack knows everything," said Josephine.

"Huh! Everybody belonging to you is perfect, I conclude," said the host, with some sarcasm.

"I don't like him, though. Not very well. He gives me medicine sometimes, though

mamma says I don't need it. I'm glad he's gone to eat those philopenas. Are n't you?"

"I don't care a rap where he goes," answered Uncle Joe testily.

Josephine opened her eyes to their widest. This old man in the soiled green dressing-gown, unshaven, frowning and wincing in a horrible manner, was like another person to the handsome gentleman with whom she had dined overnight. He was not half so agreeable, and— Well, mamma often said that nobody in this world had a right to be "cross" and make themselves unpleasant to other people. She was sorry for poor Uncle Joe, and remembered that he had not had the advantage of mamma's society and wisdom.

"Uncle Joe, you look just like one of them picture-men that was shut up in a tree trunk. You know. You showed them to me last night. I wish you would n't make up such a face," she observed.

Mr. Smith's mouth flew open in sheer amazement, while Peter tossed his hands aloft and rolled his eyes till the whites alone were visible.

In all his service he had never heard anybody dare to speak so plainly to his master, whose temper was none of the mildest. He dreaded what would follow, and was more astonished than ever when it proved to be a quiet :

“Humph! Children and fools speak truth, ’t is said. You’re a sharp-eyed, unflattering little lady, Miss Josephine; but I’ll try to control my ugly visage for your benefit.”

The tone in which this was said, rather than the words themselves, was a reproof to the child, who immediately left her place, ran to her uncle’s side, and laid her hand pleadingly upon his arm.

“Please forgive me, poor Uncle Joe. I guess that was saucy. I—I didn’t think. That’s a way I have. I say things first, and think them afterward. I guess it is n’t a nice way. I’ll try to get over that. My! won’t that be fun? You trying not to make up faces, and I trying not to say wrong things. I’ll tell you. Have you got a little box anywhere?”

“Yes, I presume so. Go eat your breakfast, child. Why?”

"'Cause. Did you know there was heathens?" she asked gravely.

"I've heard so. I've met a few."

"You have? How delightful!" came the swift exclamation.

"I did n't find it so. Why, I say?" he inquired.

"Each of us that forgot and broke over must put a penny, a cent, I mean, in the box. It must be shut tight, and the cover gum-mucilage down. You must make a hole in the cover with your penknife, and when you screw up your face, just for nothing, you put a penny in. I'll watch and tell you. Then I'll put one in when I say wrong things. I've a lot of money in my satchel. Mamma and Doctor Mack each gave me some to buy things on the way. But there was n't anything to buy, and I can use it all, only for Rudanthy's new head. Can we go buy that to-day, Uncle Joe?"

"No. Nobody knows when I'll get out again, if this weather holds. The idea of a snowstorm like this in March. *In March!*" angrily.

"Yes, suh," responded Peter respectfully, since some reply seemed expected.

"Here, boy. Carry my mail to the library. Get a good heat on. Fetch that old soft shawl I put over my foot when it's bad, and, for goodness sake, keep that child out of the way and contented, somehow."

Josephine had gone to the window, pulled the draperies apart, and was looking out on a very different world from any she had ever seen. White was every object on which her eye rested, save the red fronts of the houses, and even these were festooned with snowy wreaths wherever such could find a resting place. The scene impressed and almost frightened her; but when, presently, it stopped snowing, and a boy ran out from a neighboring house, dragging a red sled through the drifts, her spirits rose. It had been one long, long week since she had exchanged a single word with any child, and this was an opportunity to be improved. She darted from the room, sped to the hall door, which stood ajar for Lafayette's

convenience in clearing off the steps, and dashed outward.

Her feet sank deep into the cold, soft stuff, but she did n't even notice that, as she cried, eagerly :

"Little boy! Oh, little boy! Come here quick! I want somebody to play with me."

A moment's pause of surprise, that a child should issue from "old Mr. Smith's," and the answer came cheerily back :

"Wish I could; but I'm going sledding."

"I'll go with you! I never went a-sledding in all my" —

The sentence was never finished, for somebody jerked her forcibly back within doors just as a great express wagon crawled to a pause before the entrance.

CHAPTER VI.

MEMORIES AND MELODIES.

“MY trunk! my trunk! My darling little blue trunk!”

“Massa Joe says for you to go right straight back to the library, missy. He says you done get the pneumony, cuttin’ up that way in the snow, and you not raised in it. He says not to let that boy in here. I—I’s sorry to disoblige any little lady what’s a-visitin’ of us, but” —

“It’s my trunk, Peter. Don’t you hear?”

“Yes, missy. But Lafayette, that’s his business, hauling luggage. I’s the butler, I is.”

Josephine retreated a few paces from the door. She had lived in the open air, but had never felt it pinch her nose as this did. Her feet, also, were cold, and growing wet from the

snow which was melting on them. But Peter was attending to that. He was wiping them carefully with his red handkerchief, and Josephine lifted first one, then the other, in silent obedience to his touch. But her interest was wholly in the trunk, which had now been deposited in the vestibule, and from which Lafayette was carefully removing all particles of snow before he carried it up over the carpeted stair.

Mr. Smith limped to the library door and looked out. He had meant to send word that the trunk should be retained at the railway station for the present, or until he should find out to whom Josephine had really been "consigned," and asked, in vexation :

"Come already, has it? Humph! If it had been something I wanted in a hurry, they'd have taken their own time about delivering it. Said they could n't handle goods in a storm, and such nonsense. I don't see, Peter, as it need be taken upstairs. Have it put in the storeroom, where it will be handier to get at when she leaves."

Both Peter and Josephine heard him with amazement.

"What is that, Uncle Joe? That 'when I leave.' Have I—have I been so—so saucy and forgetful that—that you can't let me stay?"

"No, no, child. I merely meant—There, don't look so distressed. You are here for the day, anyway, because none of us can go trudging about in such weather. I'll telephone for—There. No matter. It's right. It's all right. Don't, for goodness sake, cry. Anything, anything but that. Ugh! my foot. I must get out of this draught," he almost yelled.

Josephine was very grave. She walked quietly to Uncle Joe's side, and clasped the hand which did not hold a cane with both her own.

"It's dreadful funny, seems to me. Are n't we going to stay in this house all the time? I wish—I'm sorry I spoke about the box and the heatheny money. But if you don't mind, I must, I must, get into my trunk. The key is in my satchel in my room. Mamma put it there with the clean clothes I wore last night.

She said they would last till the trunk came ; but that as soon as ever it did I must open it and take out a little box was in it for you. The very, very moment. I must mind my mamma, must n't I?"

"Yes, child, I suppose so," he slowly returned.

Mr. Smith was now in his reclining chair, with his inflamed foot stretched out in momentary comfort. He spoke gently, rather sadly, in fact, as he added :

"My child, you may open your trunk. I will never counsel you to do anything against your mother's wishes. She seems to be a sensible woman. But there has been a mistake which I cannot understand. I am Joseph Smith. I have lived in this house for many years, and it is the street and number which is written on the tag you showed me. Do you understand me, so far?"

"Course. Why not?"

"Very well. I'm sorry to tell you that I have no twin brother, no 'sister Helen,' and no niece anywhere in this world. I have many

cousins whom I distrust, and who don't like me because I happen to be richer than they. That's why I live here alone, with my colored 'boys.' In short, though I am Joseph Smith, of number 1000 Bismarck Avenue, I am not this same Joseph Smith to whom your mamma sent you. To-morrow we will try to find this other Joseph Smith, your mislaid uncle. Even to-day I will send for somebody who will search for him in my stead. Until he is found you will be safe with me, and I shall be very happy to have you for my guest. Do you still understand? Can you follow what I say?"

"Course," she instantly responded.

But after this brief reply Josephine dropped down upon the rug and gazed so long and so silently into the fire that her host was impelled to put an end to her reflections by asking:

"Well, little girl, of what are you thinking?"

"How nice it would be to have two Uncle Joes."

"Thank you. That's quite complimentary to me. But I'm afraid that the other one might

prove much dearer than I. Then I should be jealous," he returned, smiling a little.

Josephine looked up brightly.

"I know what that means. I had a kitten, Spot, and a dog, Keno; and whenever I petted Spot Keno would put his tail between his legs and go off under the sofa and look just — mis'able. Mamma said it was jealousy made him do it. Would you go off under a table if the other Uncle Joe got petted? Oh! I mean — you know. Would you?"

Though this was not so very lucid, Mr. Smith appeared to comprehend her meaning. Just then, too, a severe twinge made him contort his features and utter a groan.

Josephine was on her feet and at his side instantly, crying out:

"Oh, does it hurt you so dreadful much? Can't I do something for it? I can bathe feet beautiful. Bridget sprained her ankle and mamma let me bathe it with arnica. Big Bridget said that was what cured it so quick. Have you got any arnica? May I bathe it?"

“Would you really handle a red, unpleasant, swollen old foot and not dislike it?”

“I guess I should n't like it much. I did n't like big Bridget's. I felt queer little feelings all up my arm when I touched it. She said it hurt me worse than it did her. But I'd do it. I'd love to do it even if I did n't like it,” she answered bravely.

“Peter, fetch the arnica. Then get a basin of hot water,” he ordered.

The pain was returning with redoubled force, and Mr. Smith shut his lips grimly. He looked at Josephine's plump little hands, and felt that their touch might be very soothing; as, indeed, it proved. For when the servant brought the things desired, the little girl sat down upon the hassock beside the great chair and ministered to him, as she had done to big Bridget. The applications were always helpful, but the tender strokes of her small fingers were infinitely more grateful than the similar ministrations of the faithful, yet hard-handed, Peter.

“Now I'll put it to bed, as if it were Ru-

danthy. Poor Rudanthy! How bad she must feel without any face. That's worse than having a sore foot, is n't it?" as she heaped the coverings over the gouty toes.

"Far worse. Only waxen faces are not subject to pain."

"I s'pose not. Now, Uncle Joe, would you like me to sing to you?"

"Can you sing?"

"'Course. Mamma sings beautifully. She is the leader in our choir. My papa says she makes him think of angels when she sings. I don't sing like her. Course not. But I can do some things, if you like me to."

"What about the trunk, Josephine? Though I really think you would better leave it packed pretty nearly as it is, since"—

"Uncle Joe, I've been thinking about that other uncle we've lost. If he is n't nice, and mamma will let me, I'll stay with you."

He did not dampen her spirits by suggesting that she would better wait for him to ask her to stay, and merely answered:

“ Well, time will show what ’s best. Shall Peter unlock that trunk? ”

Mr. Smith did not wish to break into anybody’s confidence ; yet, since she had spoken of a box destined for the mislaid “ Uncle Joe,” he felt that he would be justified in examining, at least, the outside of it.

Josephine went away with the old colored man, but did not tarry long. The tin box was very near the top of the trunk, and she was in haste to give it to her patient, to whom she explained :

“ I know what’s in it. Nothing but some California flowers. Mamma said that you would like them, even if they faded a little. But she hoped they would n’t fade. The box is tight, like the big one she and papa take when they go botanizing. Mamma is making a collection of all the flowers she can and putting them in a big, big book. She knows their names and all about them. Mamma knows — everything.”

“ I begin to think so, too, little girl. I never before heard of so much virtue and wisdom

shut up in one woman. Yes, I see. The box is addressed exactly like the tag. Still, I do not feel I have a right to open it, for it is sealed, you see."

"That's only paper. It is to keep out the air. The air is what spoils things like violets. Please do open it, or let me. Mamma would be so dreadfully disappointed if you did n't. Why, think! We were in that terrible hurry, yet she took time to fix it. She had n't seen you in so many years, she said, and so she *must* send it. Please."

"But I am not the 'you' she meant, you know, Josephine."

"Well, you're somebody, are n't you? You're my Uncle Joe, anyway, whether you're the regular one or not. Shall I?" and she held the box edgewise, ready to tear the strip of paper which fastened its edges.

"Y-es, I suppose so. It may lead to the explanation of this riddle," he assented.

As the little girl had said, there was nothing whatever in the tin box except a quantity of violets, with some of the wild blossoms that

brighten the mesas in spring-time, and one tiny scrap of paper, on which was written, in evident haste

“DEAR BROTHER JOE : Let these violets tell you all that I would say ; and, as you are good to our little one, may God be good to you.

“HELEN.”

“Well, there’s no great injury done anybody by that deed, I think. We’ll put the note back in the box and the flowers in water. When the mislaid Joseph arrives we’ll restore him his property in the best shape we can,” said Mr. Smith.

Peter listened, surprised. His master was almost mirthful, and that, too, even during an attack of his dreaded malady. If this were the effect of Josephine’s presence, he hoped that she would remain ; though he was shrewd enough to comprehend, from Mr. Smith’s words, that this was doubtful.

“The worst I hopes about it is that that other out-of-the-way Joe Smith turns out a

wuthless creetur' that Massa Joe won't be trustin' little missy with. I ain't a-wishin' nobody no harm, I ain't, but I'se powerful willin' the mislaid uncle stays lost forever. Yes, suh," he assured his fellow-servants.

The violets were in a cut-glass bowl which Peter received no reprimand for bringing, though it was the choicest piece in his master's possession, but, as the old man reasoned: "The fittestest one for posies what had travelled in a little gell's trunk, all the way from Californy." The gouty foot had ceased to torment its owner; the street without was utterly quiet; the fire glowed in the grate, and its glow was reflected in a lonely old man's heart as on the happy face of a little girl who nestled beside him. He remembered her statement that she could sing, but he had been musical in his own day and shrank from discord. Could a child so young make real melody? He doubted it, yet it was now his intention to make her as happy as it lay in his power to do, for the brief while that he might keep her; and he recalled her mother's written words:

“As you are good to our little one, may God be good to you.”

So he forced himself to say :

“If you want to sing now, Josephine, I will listen.”

It was n't a very gracious request, but the other did not notice that. The sight of the home flowers had brought back a crowd of happy memories, and without delay she began :

“Maxwelton braes are bonny,
Where early fa's the dew,”

and had not proceeded thus far before the old Virginian had raised himself upright in his chair and was listening with all his keenly-critical ears to the sweetest music he had ever heard.

Josephine sang for love of singing. She could no more help it than a bird could, for song came to her as naturally as to it. Her voice was birdlike, too, in its clearness and compass, and true in every note.

“Do you like that song, Uncle Joe?” she asked.

“Like it? It's wonderful. Child, who trained you?”

"I — why, I've just sung with mamma; though papa says that when I am older, if he is able, I shall have other teachers. I don't think anybody can be better than mamma, though," she answered.

"Something else, little girl," came the prompt request.

It was as pure enjoyment to her as to him. She sang whatever came to her mind, and many old ballads suggested by himself. With each one he grew more enthusiastic, and finally called Peter to bring him his flute.

By this time that bewildered creature was prepared for anything. When he and Massa Joe had been young, music and the flute had been their mutual delight. But it was years and years since that ancient instrument had been breathed upon, though it always lay, wrapped in its swaddling clothes, convenient to its owner's desk. Alas, when it was brought, it uttered but the ghosts of former melodies, yet nobody in that small company was the sadder for that. The unusual sounds stole through the house, bewitched Lafayette from his cleaning and

Apollo from his range. Open-eyed, they stood without the library door and wasted their time, with none to reprove; because, for once, the sharp eyes of the major-domo, Peter, were bent upon a more delectable sight.

Into the midst of this happy scene came the discordant ring of the electric bell, and instantly all other sounds ceased.

"Who in the world would trespass upon us, on such a day as this!" cried Mr. Smith, at last arousing from the unusual mood into which he had been betrayed by Josephine's sweet voice.

"Maybe it's company, Uncle Joe."

"No company comes here without invitation, child."

"I came, did n't I? But we did n't know that, then."

"Business, I suppose. Always business; and to-day I'm unfitted for all business."

Business, indeed. For there was ushered into the room, by the frowning Peter, the man whom of all others his master now least wished to see.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOY FROM NEXT DOOR.

THE unwelcome visitor was a Mr. Wakeman, confidential clerk and business manager, under Mr. Smith, of that gentleman's many vast enterprises. He was an alert young man, rather jaunty of dress and manner, and almost too eager to please his employer.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith."

"Morning. Terrible prompt, are n't you!"

"I'm always prompt, sir, if you remember."

The stranger had brought an air of haste and unrest into the quiet library, and its owner's comfort was at an end. He moved suddenly and his foot began to ache afresh. Even Josephine sat up erect and smoothed the folds of her red frock, while she gazed upon Mr. Wakeman's face with the critical keenness of childhood. On his part, he bestowed upon

her a smile intended to be sweet, yet that succeeded in being merely patronizing.

"Good morning, sissy. Did n't know you had any grandchildren, Mr. Smith," he remarked.

"Have n't. Of course," was the retort.

"Beg pardon. I'd forgotten, for the moment, that you were a bachelor. I got your telephone message," said the clerk.

"Naturally."

"Thought I'd best see you personally before conducting the inquiries," went on the young man.

"Unnecessary. Repeat the message you received."

Mr. Wakeman fidgetted. He realized that he had been over-zealous, but proved his reliability by saying: "'Find out if there's another Joseph Smith in town whose residence number resembles mine.'"

"Hmm. Exactly. Have you done so?" demanded the employer.

"Not yet. As I was explaining" —

"Explanations are rarely useful. Implicit

obedience is what I require. When you have followed my instructions bring me the results. I—I am in no especial haste. You need n't come again to-day. To-morrow morning will answer. Peter, show the gentleman out."

But for once Peter was not on hand when wanted. Commonly, during an attack of gout, he kept as close to his master as that exacting person's "own shadow." The old man now looked around in surprise, for not only had Peter, but Josephine, disappeared. There were also voices in the hall, and one of these was unfamiliar.

"Peter! Peter!" he called, and loudly.

"Yes, Massa Joe. Here am I," answered the butler, reappearing.

"Who's out yonder?"

"A—er—ahem!—the little boy from next door, suh."

"That rough fellow? What's he want?"

"He, I reckon, he's just come to call on our Miss Josephine, suh."

Mr. Smith leaned back in his chair, over-

come by astonishment, and Mr. Wakeman quietly slipped away.

"Send her back in here," ordered the master of the house.

The little girl came, attended by a red-headed lad, somewhat taller than herself, with whom she had already established a delightful intimacy; for she held fast to his hand and beamed upon him with the tenderest of smiles as she cried:

"Oh, Uncle Joe! Here's Michael!"

"Huh! Well, Michael, what's wanted?"

"Josephine, Mr. Smith," returned the lad.

"Michael, Josephine! How long have you two been acquainted?"

"About five minutes, I guess," answered the manly little chap, pulling a battered silver watch from his jacket pocket. The watch was minus a crystal and he calmly adjusted the hands with one red little finger as he announced the hour. "It was just eleven o'clock when I rang the bell, and it's six minutes past now, Mr. Smith." Then he shook up his timepiece, generously held it toward Josephine and in-

formed her: "It goes best when it's hung up sidewise. I've had it ever so long. 'Most six months, I reckon."

"And I've had my watch sixteen years," remarked Mr. Smith, displaying his own costly chronometer, with its double dials and elegant case. "But I should never think of using it as you do yours. Well, what's wanted with Josephine?" he asked, with an abrupt change.

"I'd like to take her sledding," explained the visitor.

"Well, you can't. She does n't belong to me, and I never lend borrowed articles."

The countenances of both children fell.

"What put it into your head to come here, anyway?" demanded Mr. Smith.

"She did," answered Michael.

"Josephine? How could she?"

"She saw me when I started out, before the sidewalks were shovelled, and hollered after me. I could n't stop then, 'cause I was going to meet another fellow. When I went in to get a cracker I told my grandmother that there

was a little girl in here and she wouldn't believe it. She said" —

Michael paused with so much confusion that his questioner was determined to hear just what the lady had remarked, and ordered :

"Well, go on. Never stop in the middle of a sentence, boy."

"Not even if the sentence isn't — isn't a very polite one?"

"What did she say?" repeated Mr. Smith.

"She said you were too selfish and fussy to allow a child within your doors," said the boy, reluctantly.

"You see she was mistaken, don't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Smith. I explained it to her. I said she must be a visitor, and grandma thought in that case she'd be very lonely. She sent me in to ask permission to take her a ride around the park on my sled. We don't often have such nice sledding in Baltimore, you know, Mr. Smith."

"And, Uncle Joe, I was never on a sled in all my whole life!" entreated Josephine, folding her hands imploringly.

"No, sir, that's what she says. She is a Californian, from away the other side the map. Where the oranges come from. Say, Josephine, did you bring any oranges with you?" inquired Michael.

"Not one," said the little girl, regretfully. "I guess there was n't time. Mamma and big Bridget had so much packing to do, and Doctor Mack prob'ly did n't think. I wish I had. I do wish I had."

"There are plenty of oranges in this city, child. I presume Peter has some now in his pantry. You may ask him, if you like," said Mr. Smith.

Peter did n't wait for the asking, but disappeared for a few moments, then to return with a dish of them and place them on the table. The eyes of both children sparkled, for it was the finest of fruit, yet they waited until the butler had brought them plates and napkins before beginning their feast. This little action pleased the fastidious old gentleman, and made him realize that small people are less often ill-bred than he had hitherto imagined them to be.

He had based his opinion upon the behavior of some other little folks whom it had been his misfortune to meet upon cars or steamboats, who seemed to be always munching, and utterly careless where their crumbs or nutshells fell. This pair was different.

Indeed, had the host known it, Michael had been reared as daintily as Josephine had been. "Company manners" were every-day manners with him, and it was one of Mr. Smith's beliefs that "breeding shows more plainly at table than anywhere else." He watched the boy with keenness, and it was due to his present conduct, of which the lad himself was unconscious, that final consent was given to Josephine's outing.

Selecting an orange the boy asked :

"Shall I fix it for you?"

"If you please," answered the little girl.

Michael cut the fruit in halves, placed it on a plate, laid a spoon beside it, and offered it to Josephine, who received it with a quiet "Thank you," and began at once to take the juice in her spoon. When each had finished

an orange they were pressed to have a second, and the boy frankly accepted, though the girl found more interest in this young companion than in eating.

"It makes a fellow terribly hungry to be out in the snow all morning, Mr. Smith. Seems as if I was always hungry, anyway. Grandma says I am, but I reckon she does n't mind. Oh! I forgot. Why, she sent you a note. I never do remember things, somehow."

"Neither do I," said Josephine, with ready sympathy.

"You ought to, then. Girls ought to be a great deal better than boys," answered Michael.

"Why?"

"Oh, because. 'Cause they're girls, you know."

Uncle Joe looked up from reading the brief, courteous note and felt that that, added to the boy's own manner, made it safe for him to entrust his guest to Michael's care for a short time.

"Very well, Josephine. Mrs. Merriman, my neighbor, whom I know but slightly, yet is

kind to you, requests that I allow you to play with her grandson for an hour. You may do so. But put on your cloak and hat and overshoes, if you have them."

"I have n't, Uncle Joe. But I don't need them. My shoes are as thick as thick. See? Oh, I'm so glad. I never rode on a red sled in all my life, and now I'm going to. Once my papa rode on sleds. He and you — I mean that other uncle, away up in New York somewhere. He's seen snow as high as my head, my papa has. I never. I never saw only the teeniest-teeniest bit before. It's lovely, just lovely. If it wasn't quite so cold. To ride on a sled, a sled, like papa!"

Josephine was anything but quiet now. She danced around and around the room, pausing once and again to hug her uncle, who submitted to the outbursts of affection with wonderful patience, "considerin'," as Peter reflected.

"What did you ride on, the other side the map?" asked Michael, laying his hand on her arm to stop her movements.

"Why — nothing, 'xcept burros."

"Huh! Them! Huh! I ride a regular horse in the summer-time, I do. Go get ready, if you 're going. I can't stand here all day. The fellows are outside now, whistling. Don't you hear them?"

"But I said she might go with you, because you are — well, your grandmother's grandson. I did n't say she might hobnob with Tom, Dick and Harry."

Michael fidgetted. The whistling of his comrades had already put another aspect on the matter. So long as there were no boys in sight to play with, he felt that it would be some fun to play with even a girl; especially one who was so frank and ready as she whom he had seen in Mr. Smith's doorway. But now the boys were back. They 'd likely laugh and call him "sissy" if he bothered with Josephine, and what fellow likes to be "sissied," I 'd wish to know!

Josephine felt the change in his manner, and realized that there was need for haste, yet, fortunately, nothing deeper than that. It

never occurred to her that she could be in anybody's way, and she returned to the library very promptly, her red hat thrust coquettishly on one side of her head, and her coat flying apart as she ran. She was so pretty and so eager that the red-headed boy began to feel ashamed of himself, and remembered what his grandmother often told him: that it was the mark of a gentleman to be courteous to women. He was a gentleman, of course. All his forefathers had been, down in their ancient home in Virginia, which seemed to be considered a little finer portion of the United States than could be found elsewhere. Let the boys jeer, if they wanted to. He was in for it and could n't back out. So he walked up to Josephine who was giving Uncle Joe a parting kiss, and remarked:

"I'll button your coat. But put your hat on straight. It won't stay a minute that way, and when I'm drawing you, I can't stop all the time to be picking it up. Where's your gloves? Forgot 'em? Never mind. Here's my mittens. Ready? Come on, then. Good

morning, Mr. Smith. I'll take good care of her and fetch her back all right."

He seized Josephine's hand, lifted his cap, dropped it over his red hair, and darted from the house.

A group of lads, his mates, had congregated before the house, recognizing his sled upon the steps, and wondering what could have sent him into that forbidding mansion. They were ready with questions and demands the instant he should appear, but paused, open-mouthed, when he did actually step out on the marble, leading Josephine. He was not "a Virginian and a gentleman" for nothing. Instinct guided his first words:

"Hello, boys! This is Josephine Smith, from San Diego, California. She's never seen snow before, worth mentioning, and I'm going to give her a sleighride. Her first one. S'pose we make it a four-in-hand, and something worth while? What say?"

"Will she be afraid?" asked one of them.

"Are you a 'fraid-cat, Josephine?" demanded Michael, sternly, in a don't-you-dare-to-say-

you-are kind of voice, and the little Californian rose to the occasion gallantly.

“No, I am not. I’m not afraid of anything or anybody — here.”

“Come on, then.”

Ropes were unhitched from another sled and tied to lengthen that on Michael’s, while he and another carefully placed the little passenger upon the “Firefly,” bade her “Hold on tight!” and shouted: “Off we are! Let her go, boys, let her go!”

Then began not one hour, but two, of the wildest sport the old square had ever witnessed. The walks traversing it had already been cleared of the snow, but for once there was no restricting “Keep off the grass” visible.

The park was like a great, snowy meadow, across which the four lads darted and pranced, at the risk of many upsets, their own and Josephine’s, who accepted the plunges into the banks of snow heaped beside the paths with the same delight she brought to the smoother passages, where the sled fairly flew behind its hilarious “four-in-hands.”

Pedestrians crossing the square were gayly informed that this was "a girl who 'd never seen snow before, and we 're giving her enough of it to remember!" Michael was leader, as always, and he led them a merry round, shouting his orders till he was hoarse, losing his cap and forgetting to pick it up, his red head always to the fore, and his own enjoyment intense.

As for Josephine — words fail to express what those two hours were to her. The excitement of her new friends was mild compared to her own. The snow sparkling in the sunlight, the keen frosty air, the utter enchanting newness of the scene, convinced her that she had entered fairyland. Her hat slipped back and hung behind her head, her curls streamed on the wind, her eyes gleamed, her cheeks grew rosy, and her breath came faster and faster, till at last it seemed that she could only gasp.

Just then appeared old Peter, holding up a warning hand, since a warning voice would not be heard. The four human ponies came to a reluctant pause, stamping their feet and

jerking their heads after the approved manner of high-bred horses, impatient of the bit.

“For the land sakes, honey! You done get your death! You’s been out here a right smart longer’n Massa Joe told you might. You come right home with me, little missy, now, if you please,” said the butler.

“We’ll draw her there, Peter. Why, I didn’t know we’d been so long,” apologized Michael.

“Thought you was a young gentleman what carried a watch!”

“So I am, old Peter,” then producing that valuable timepiece he turned it on its side, studied its face, and informed his mates: “Half-past one, fellows, and my grandmother has lunch at one! Whew! Home’s the word!”

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE FROLIC.

REACTION followed excitement. Josephine had never been so tired, no, not even during her long railway journey. She had laughed and shouted till her throat ached; her eyes were still dazzled by the gleam of sunlight upon snow; and her clothing was wet through. She stepped from the "Firefly" and climbed the cold marble stoop, holding on to Peter's hand as if without its aid she could not have mounted it at all. She allowed him to take off her hat and cloak, without protesting that she liked to do things for herself, and sat down by the register with a shiver of content.

"Tired, little missy?"

"Terrible tired, Peter, thank you."

"Massa Joe's takin' his luncheon, Miss Josephine."

"Is he?" she asked indifferently.

"Reckon you better come get yours. Massa Joe don't wait for nobody, he don't. Less'n ever when he's got the gout on. Better hurry, maybe, honey," urged the butler.

Josephine rose, observed that she must go wash her hands and fix her hair before she could go to table, and wearily ascended the stairs to her own grand room. Once there the bed looked so inviting, despite its great size, that she climbed upon it and dropped her hot face on the cool pillow. She forgot to remove her wet shoes, nor thought how her dampened clothing might stain the delicate lace spread. She meant to stay there for a moment only, "Just till my eyes get right," but she fell asleep almost instantly.

She did not notice that the window was open, nor that the heat had been turned off, the better to warm the library below. She noticed nothing, in fact, till some time later when old Peter shook her sharply, exclaiming still more indignantly:

"For land, honey, don't you know no

better 'n go sleepin' with your window open right here in March? 'Tisn't your fault, missy, if you don't done ketch the pneumony. Massa Joe says for you to come downstairs. Little gells what live to his house must learn not to keep table waitin', less'n they can't stay. Better get up, Miss Josephine."

She obeyed him, but shivered afresh as she did so. The next moment she was so warm she ran to the window and thrust her head out of it. Peter drew her back and closed the sash with a bang. Then he led her to the washstand and made a futile attempt to brush her tangled curls.

"Never mind, good Peter. I can do it. I'm sorry I went to sleep. Has Uncle Joe wanted me?" she interrupted.

"Reckon he has, honey. He done suffer terrible. He like to hear you sing them songs again, likely."

"Well, I will, if I'm not too tired," she answered.

The butler looked at her anxiously. Was she going to be sick? If she were, whatever

could he do with her? A sick man — that was one thing; but a sick little girl, that was quite another matter. She would have to go, he feared, and to lose her now would seem very hard.

After all, she did not appear ill. She laughed and apologized so sweetly to her would-be-angry host that he forgot his indignation and forgave her on the spot. Only warned her gravely that he was a man who meant exactly what he said, and intended anybody belonging to him should do the same. One hour was never two; and, in case they never came across that missing uncle of hers, he supposed she would have to stay where she was until such time as her own parents could claim her; ending his lecture with the question:

“Would she remember?”

She'd promise to try and remember; and would he like to hear all about what a lovely, lovely time she had had? Did he know what snow felt like? Had he ever ridden and ridden till he couldn't see, and been dumped into high banks and buried underneath the soft, cold

stuff, till he was nearly smothered, and got his stockings all wet, and shouted till he could n't shout another shout? Had he? she cried.

"I suppose I have. Many, many years ago. But wet stockings? Have you got such on your little feet?" he anxiously asked.

Then, though he shrank from contact with anything damp or cold, fearing fresh pangs to himself, he drew off her shoe and felt the moist but now hot, little foot within.

"Child, you're crazy. Never go round like that. Run up to your bathroom and take a hot bath. Then put on everything clean and dry. Don't you know better than to behave as you have done? Didn't your mother have sense"—

There he paused, arrested by the piteous look which came over his guest's bonny face.

"Never mind. Don't cry. I could n't stand that. It's bad enough to have the gout, and a little girl in the house who does n't—won't—has n't changed her stocking—Oh! Ouch! Clear out, can't you? My foot, my foot!" he shouted.

Josephine might have echoed, "My throat! my throat!" but she disdained any such outcry. Her lip curled in a fine scorn, and at sight of the grimace he made she laughed outright. Laughed foolishly, convulsively, began to cry, and with a little wail of "Mamma! Mamma!" ran out of the room.

Old Peter followed, saw that her room was made warm, prepared her bath, helped her to lay out clean, dry clothing, and left her, with the consoling remark:

"Don't you never mind Massa Joe when he's gouty. Men-folks ain't done got the gumption little gells has to keep their mouth shut and not groan. Groanin' lets a powerful lot of bad temper outen gouty people, missy, and don't you mind, honey. Just you call on me for what you'se needin' and everything will all come right. Now fix yourself up pretty and come laughin' down the stairs, like you done last night, and see what 'll happen."

Josephine was comforted. The hot bath did make her feel all right, and the pretty frock she had selected reminded her quite happily of

mamma and the days when she had sat sewing upon it. The very tucks in its skirt seemed to bring that dear presence nearer, and she reflected that they were absent from each other only till such time as poor papa should get quite well. She appeared below, saying :

“Now I’m good, Uncle Joe. Forgive me for being bad. I’ll sing again if you want me.”

“Of course I want you. Maybe I was a bit stern, too, little lady. I hope this wretched pain will leave me by to-morrow, then I’ll be able to think of something else besides that hateful foot.”

“Poor foot!” she exclaimed.

“Now sing, if you will.”

Josephine tried, but it was altogether another sort of voice which essayed “Old Lang Syne” from that which had warbled it so sweetly earlier in the day; so that she was promptly bidden to give over the attempt, Mr. Smith adding :

“You’re as hoarse as a raven. A few more such rough plays with a parcel of boys and

your voice would be ruined. Then your mother would never forgive me. I know enough about music to realize what your singing is to her. Here. Take a book and read. By-and-by it will be dinner time. Maybe the hot soup will soothe your throat."

He directed her to a bookcase and a vellum-bound copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress;" observing with fresh pleasure that it was her habit, not an accident of the previous evening, that she handled all books daintily and with respect for them. Then he forgot her in his own Review, and his foot grew easier as the afternoon wore on.

Josephine sat patiently poring over the familiar story, which she could easily read in her own copy at home, but that seemed different in this grand volume; and after a time the words began to mix themselves up in a curious sort of jumble. She closed her eyes the better to clear her vision, didn't think to open them again, and her head sank down upon the pictured page.

"Huh!" said Mr. Smith, at last laying aside

his own magazine, and regarding the sleeper across the table with some amusement. "Old Bunyan's a trifle heavy for that pretty head. I must hunt up some lighter stuff. Grimm or Andersen, if I've such books in the library. If not, I'll send out after them. How lovely and innocent she looks, and how red her cheeks are. Her whole face is red, even, and — Peter!"

"Yes, Massa Joe. Yes, suh," answered the butler.

"Does n't that child seem a bit feverish? Do you know anything about children, Peter?" asked "Uncle Joe."

"Mighty little, I'se afraid, suh."

"Well, sleep can't hurt anybody. Carry her upstairs and lay her on her bed. Cover her warm, and probably she'll be all right afterward. She must n't get sick. She must not *dare* to get sick on my hands, Peter!"

"No, Massa Joe. No, suh. She dast n't," said the negro, quickly.

Peter lifted the little girl as tenderly as a woman, and carried her off to rest. She did

not rouse at all, but her head dropped heavily on the pillow as if her neck were too slender to support it, and her breath came with a strange whistling sound.

The old negro laid his hand upon her temples and found them hot. Though he knew little about children, he did know that cold water was good in such a case, so dipped a towel and folded it across her head. The application seemed to soothe her, for her features became more natural, and, after a time, as she appeared to be resting well enough, he stole cautiously from the room and went about his business. Though his interest was now wholly with Josephine, he dared not neglect his duties below stairs, and knew that, as usual when he was ill, Mr. Smith would expect the best of dinners that evening. It had been so stormy early in the day that he had not attended to his marketing, and must now make haste to repair the delay. Apollo was apt to lay the blame on the butler, if things failed to turn out as desired, and there was need for haste if the roast beef were to be secured of the cut preferred.

"I'll just fetch a posy for the little lady, I will. If market's over they's plenty them flower-stores, and maybe it'll make her forget all her lonesomeness. Poor little missy! What the Lord done sent to bless this great, empty house. Nothing must n't happen to hurt her, nothing must n't. No, suh," reflected the good old man.

When Peter returned from his marketing Josephine was still asleep. He did not disturb her, though he listened anxiously to her hoarse breathing and carefully replaced the damp towel which her restlessness had tossed aside. He also laid the bunch of carnations on the coverlet beside her and cautiously retreated to the hall, where he kept as close a watch upon her as he could find time to give.

"Dinner is served, Massa Joe," he announced, when its hour arrived.

"Is Miss Josephine ready?" asked the host.

"She done sleepin' mighty comf'table, suh," protested Peter.

"Seems to me I've read somewhere that

children should sleep half the time. Is that so, Peter?"

"Certainly, suh, I reckon likely 't is," replied the other, willing to agree.

"Then don't wake her. You—you may have a little dinner put back for her," said "Uncle Joe," with some hesitation.

The butler stared at this unheard-of condescension, but answered after his common formula. Yet the plate of food he so carefully prepared and set in the hot-water dish to keep warm for her was destined never to be eaten.

CHAPTER IX.

NEIGHBORLY AMENITIES.

MRS. MERRIMAN'S bell rang violently once, twice, and the lady laid aside her book, exclaiming :

"Who can that be, so late as this? Half-past nine, and almost bed-time. Run, Michael. Though I thought you 'd gone upstairs before now. It takes the maid so long to answer. There it is again. Hurry. Dear, dear! I *hope* it is n't a telegram."

"I'm going, Mary," called the lad to the maid, as he rushed to the door.

Peter stood outside, bareheaded and looking almost white in his terror.

"For mercy's sake, Massa Michael, is there a woman in this house?"

"Of course. Lots of them. Grandmother, Mary, waitress, Samanda — Why?"

“Our little Miss Josephine. I reckon she ’ll die.”

“Die, Peter? That little girl? What’s the matter?” cried Michael.

“Goodness knows, I don’t. She can’t hardly breathe, she can’t. Massa Joe’s sent for his doctor and his doctor he’s out, and we don’t have no faith in them others round the square, and—*Will* some of your women please just step in and take a look at our poor little missy?”

Michael darted back into the sitting-room, exclaiming:

“Grandma, that little girl next door is awful sick. Peter’s frightened most to death himself. He wants some of our women to go in there and help them.”

“Our women! Of what use would they be, either of them? I’ll go myself. Ring for Mary, please,” said the old lady, rising.

The maid appeared, and was directed to bring:

“My shawl and scarf, Mary. I’m going in next door to see a sick child. You stay right

here in the hall and keep the latch up, so that there 'll be no delay if I send in for you or anything needed. Yes, Michael, you may go with me to help me up and down the steps, though you ought to be in bed. Yet come. It must be something serious for Mr. Smith to thus far forego his reserve."

Uncle Joe was waiting at the head of the stairs as Mrs. Merriman ascended them, with that activity upon which she prided herself, and asked :

"Are you in trouble, neighbor? What is it?"

"The little girl. I don't know whose even. Came to me, an express 'parcel,' and I have n't traced the blunder, found the right — no matter. This way, please. I'll explain later."

There was no trace of the gout left in the gentleman's movements as he preceded his neighbor to Josephine's room, where the child lay gasping, feverish, and clutching at her own throat in an agony of terror.

One glance, and Mrs. Merriman's shawl was tossed aside, and she had lifted the little sufferer in her arms, observing :

"Not even undressed! How long has she been like this?"

"For several hours, Peter says, but growing steadily worse. I've sent for the doctor, but he has n't come. He"—

She interrupted him with:

"Send for another. The nearest possible. It's croup. Short and quick, usually. Michael, run in for Mary. Now, Peter, heat some blankets. Find me her night-clothes. Warm that bed. A foot-tub of hot water. Any oil in the house? Epicac? Any other household remedies?"

"There's the medicine for the gout, madam," suggested Mr. Smith.

"Oh, bother the gout. That's nothing. *This* is — serious. There, Mary, lend a hand. Michael, run for Doctor Wilson. Hurry. If you can't find him, then the next one. There are seven of them around this square, perched like vultures, seeking whom they may devour. As a rule, I ignore the whole crowd, but I'm thinking of this little one's mother now. Hurry, lad," directed Mrs. Merriman.

Mr. Smith stood silent, helpless, and admiring. This was a gentlewoman of the old school, such as he remembered his own mother to have been, who was not afraid to use her own hands in ministering to the suffering and who wasted no time in questions. Every movement of her wrinkled but still firm fingers meant some solace to the little child, whose brown eyes roamed from one to another with a silent, pitiful appeal. In a twinkling, it seemed, Josephine was undressed, reclined in soft, warm garments, her chest anointed with the relaxing oil, and a swallow of hot milk forced between her lips. Then Michael was dispatched to the nearest drug store and brought back a dose of the old-fashioned remedy Mrs. Merriman had used for her own little children. But she had hardly time to administer it before one of the physicians summoned had appeared, and to him she promptly resigned the direction of affairs. His first order was that Mr. Smith should go below to his own comfortable library and remain quiet, adding :

"I'll report as soon as your child is better, sir."

"She is n't my child, doctor, but do you care for her as if she were. Spare no expense. She must not, she must not die upon my hands. I'd no right to retain her as long as I have, but — but — Don't let her die, doctor, and you'll save me from everlasting remorse."

"Go below, Mr. Smith. Peter, attend your master. There are enough of us here, and this little lady will soon be all right. It's croup only, and — What has she been eating lately?"

"What has she not? How can I tell? But one thing I know, she ate no dinner to-night," answered the host.

"So much the better. Now, Mr. Smith" — a wave of the hand in the direction of the doorway suggested that the master of the house was banished from the sickroom.

Daylight was breaking when at last the doctor led Mrs. Merriman down the stairs and to her own home, leaving Mary and Peter on watch, and promising a speedy return, with

the assurance that all danger was now past. At the door of the library the old lady paused and looked in. Mr. Smith still sat erect in his chair, and seemed as wide awake as she was drowsy, and she advised him :

“Go to bed, neighbor. The little one is all right again. We’ve had a tussle for it, but she’s pulled through. Go to bed and get some rest. I’m really sorry for you that this uninvited trouble has come upon you, and will help you share it, so far as I may. But, doubtless, we’ll all see why it was allowed, before we’ve done with it.”

He returned, gallantly enough :

“For one reason, it may be, madam, to render me more just and tolerant to my neighbors. You have laid me under great”—

But she checked him, saying :

“Beg pardon, under nothing at all. It was the little child for whom I came, and if I have served you, too, why so much the better. Good morning.”

She went at once, leaving him to reflect :

“To go to bed at daylight! When ever did

I such a thing? But I will. Though I wonder if I am quite right in my mind. The idea of one small child upsetting two such households, all for the sake of a sled-ride! Hmm. Hmm. Peter! Here, Peter. I'm for bed at breakfast time! After an hour or two of rest I'll set about finding that mislaid Joseph Smith and hand over to him this little-too-absorbing responsibility. Thank God, boy, that she did not die."

"Aye, Massa Joe. I'se been a-thinkin' of him the whole endurin' night. Powerful queer, ain't it? Just such a little speck of while, and now seems if that little missy worth more to old Peter than the whole universe. Yes, suh, the whole universe!"

"Much you know about the universe, boy. There, there! Take care that foot. If you set it aching again — Ouch!"

It was not one but many hours that Mr. Smith slept, worn out by his late physical suffering and his anxiety of the last night. When he woke his first inquiry was for Josephine.

"Laws, Massa Joe, it's just wonderful. That child seems if nothing ever ailed her. The doctor done been here again and told what to give her for breakfast. She eat it like she was 'most starved, the little lamb. Now she's sleepin' again, the beautifulest ever was. I 'xpect 't was that sleddin' round the square done fetched it on. Next time"—

"Hush, boy. Don't count on any 'next time' for her here. I must hunt up that other Joseph Smith and hand her over to him forthwith," said the master.

Peter's heart sank. How could they ever endure that great house now with this little child gone out of it? Well, there was one thing which nobody could prevent—his wishing that the "other Joseph" might never be found!

After Mr. Smith had eaten he paid a flying visit to the little one's room, gazed at her now peaceful, if pale face, and stole downstairs again with softened tread. [He limped but slightly, and made a critical survey of himself before he issued from the great hall into the street.

"If you 's going down town, Massa Joe, like enough you better have a cab. 'Counten your foot," suggested Peter.

"You may 'phone for one, boy. No. Stay. I'll not baby myself thus far. The air is warm as summer, almost, and the streets cleared. I'll take a car; but — Shut that door, Peter. I don't need you further. If anything happens to Miss Josephine, or any news comes concerning her, send me word at once. Shut that door, can't you?" he finished testily.

"Certainly, suh;" yet good Peter left it a crack ajar, the better to watch his master, whose actions somehow suggested a different order of things from usual. He saw Mr. Smith descend his own and ascend Mrs. Merriman's stoop, and threw up his hands in dismay, exclaiming:

"For goodness! I do hope Massa Joe ain't done gone rake up all that old line-fence trouble, just after her bein' so good to our little missy. What if 't is five inches on our ground, and she claimin' it's just so far 't other way, and the lawyers argifyng the money

outen both their pockets, this ain't no time for to go hatchin' fresh miseries. And I never, not once, all these dozen years seen Massa Joe go a callin' and a visitin' nobody, not for just pure visit. Whenever he has, 't was 'cause there was some sort of business tacked on to the end of it somehow. Huh! I never done looked for this, I did n't."

Neither had the lady expected the call which was made upon her. But she greeted her guest with a friendly courtesy that made him all the more remorseful for the legal difficulties he had placed in her way in the past, and quite ready to offer his apologies for the same at a fitting opportunity. At present his visit was to express his gratitude for her services to Josephine, and to ask her advice.

"My advice, Mr. Smith? I am the last person in the world to advise so capable a person as yourself. My opinion you're most welcome to, if you explain what I should express it about," she returned.

"The little girl, Josephine;" and he told all he knew and had thought concerning her; fin-

ishing with the words, "I have so little information to go upon."

She promptly inquired :

"Beg pardon, but have you gone upon what little you do possess?"

"Madam?" he asked.

"I mean, have you really set about finding this mislaid uncle as if your heart was in it?" she explained.

"I have n't hurried. I deputized my business man to look the thing up, but — I don't deny that I wish the other rightful Joseph Smith might be found to have left the country," he answered.

"Even despite the anxiety Josephine has caused you?"

"Yes, madam. I mean to be honest. I hate to set detectives on the task, yet I will. But meanwhile, until the child's relatives are found, what shall I do with her? Can you direct me to a capable woman who will engage to look after her welfare for the few days I may need her?"

Mrs. Merriman looked at him critically,

with a twinkle gleaming in her eye. An audacious thought had come to her, yet a thought so full of possibilities for good — and, maybe, ill — that she decided to act upon it, and quietly replied :

“Yes, Mr. Smith, I think I do know just the right woman. She has lately returned from a winter in California, where she has been nursing an invalid back to health. She is a trained nurse and was with me last year, during my long illness. I received her card recently saying that she would be in this city about now. Indeed, she must have left Southern California at about the same time as your little ward, though she was to delay a day or so at Chicago. I will send to inquire if she is at home, at her boarding-house, if you desire.”

He assented, adding :

“I should be very grateful. I trust I may be able to prove later on that I am not unappreciative of all your goodness.”

“Don't mention it. Good morning. I will write the note immediately, and until some

person is regularly established in your house to look after little Josephine, I will step in there now and then, myself, to see that all is right."

They parted most amicably, and the first action of Mr. Smith, upon reaching his office, was to send for his lawyer and tell him that he had abandoned the question of line-fences entirely; that Mrs. Merriman should be notified that all claim to the "insignificant strip of land midway their respective side-yards was hereby and forever relinquished, with no costs to herself."

Her own proceeding was the writing of a note to her friend, the nurse, and so imperative was the summons it contained that the lady answered in person, although not yet sufficiently rested from the fatigue of a long journey and her previous engagement to desire another so promptly.

As for Josephine, after a morning of dreamless, health-restoring sleep, she woke to find a familiar figure sitting by her bedside, smiling affectionately upon her. A brief, puzzled

glance, a rubbing of the brown eyes to make sure they saw aright, and the child sprang out of bed, into the woman's arms crying :

“ Oh, Red Kimono ! You dear, kind, Mrs. Red Kimono, where did you come from ? ”

CHAPTER X.

TOM, DICK, HARRY, AND THE BABY.

FOR the next week Mr. Smith was untiring in his efforts to find the missing Joseph Smith, his namesake. Telegrams sped back and forth between Baltimore and San Diego, with the result that the only information gained was: on the very day, or the next following that, on which Mrs. John Smith sailed from San Diego for Santiago de Chile, Doctor Alexander Mac-Donald, otherwise known as "Doctor Mack," had departed for the Philippines. No person at their recent home knew anything further concerning these two persons, and owing to their long journeys all communication with them was for the present impossible.

The seventy-five Joseph Smiths residing in or around Baltimore had all been unearthed, so to speak, without finding one who in any

particular beyond the name resembled the desired one. Not one was anybody's twin, not one happened to have had any relative in either San Diego or Santiago, and not one welcomed the thought of receiving a strange child into his household.

One Joseph Smith had, indeed, been found to have lately resided at 1000 Bismarck Street and this confusion of street and avenue explained to Uncle Joe's mind the whole curious, yet simple blunder. This Bismarck-Street Joseph Smith was, doubtless, the right one; but, also, he was the only one of the seventy-five who could not now be located! He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him, and Josephine's present guardian rested his efforts; merely causing an advertisement to be inserted in each of the daily papers to the effect that the person answering it might hear of something to his advantage by calling at the newspaper office and leaving his address for the advertiser, "S."

Nobody called. Matters dropped into a comfortable routine. Uncle Joe was disturbed

at finding the name of the trained nurse was also Smith, and to prevent unpleasant complications, requested that he might call her as the little girl did, "Mrs. Red Kimono," or, more briefly, "Miss Kimono," she having set him right as to her maidenly condition.

She readily and smilingly agreed to this, and, reporting the matter to Mrs. Merriman, laughed so heartily over it, that that lady remonstrated, saying:

"Dear Miss Desire, it's outrageous. Under the circumstances I would never permit it. The idea! He excludes you from table with himself and the little girl, does he not? For so Michael tells me."

"Yes. Not, I fancy, from arrogance, but merely from force of habit. He dislikes women, utterly and sincerely. Or he thinks he does. But Josephine has won his whole heart for childhood, and he likes her to be with him as constantly as possible. From what the servants tell me, she has wrought a complete transformation in the household. And she is so lovely, so winning, that event-

ually she'll bring everything right. I don't mind the table business; the main thing is that I am in his house, tolerated there, and determined, if the time is not too short, to prove to him that blood is thicker than water, and that, just though he thinks himself, he has been wholly unjust in his treatment of others. Oh, I don't object to the situation. I get lots of quiet fun out of it, and haven't felt so happy in a long time. I've even lost all bitterness against him, poor, solitary, prejudice-bound old man," returned the nurse.

"Well, may I be there to see when the revelation is at last made! Though I prophesy that his behavior in the matter will be as straightforward as it was about the line-fence. Think! We squabbled over it like a couple of silly children, for years and years. I can't understand now how I could ever have been so absurd. Must you go? Well, then, since your employer wishes you to take little Josephine down town to get that Rudanthy a head, suppose you both go with me in my carriage? I will call for you at three o'clock."

Miss Kimono thanked her friend and departed; and that same afternoon the unhappy doll's ruined countenance was replaced by one so beautiful that it almost consoled Josephine for the loss of the more familiar face.

That very day, too, away out in a suburban village, where rents were cheap and needs few, three little lads sat on a bare floor, surrounding a baby, who rejoiced in the high-sounding name of Penelope, but rejoiced in very little else. Even now she was crying for her dinner, and each of the "triplets," as they were called by the neighbors, was doing his utmost to console her. In reality they were not triplets, though the eldest were twins, and their names were those so objectionable in Uncle Joe's ears, Tom, Dick, and Harry.

"Here, Penel! You may play with my pin-wheel!" cried the latter.

"No, Harry, she must not. She'll swallow it. The pin'll scratch her insides. She swallows everything, Penelope does. And you must n't say just 'Penel.' Mother does n't like that. She says it's a beautiful name and must n't be spoiled."

"Oh, Tom, you're always a c'recting a fellow. Well, if she can't have my pin-wheel, what shall I give her to make her shut up?"

"Maybe I can find something in mother's cupboard, maybe," answered Harry.

The tone was doubtful, but the suggestion cheering, and with one accord the triplets left the baby to its fate and betook themselves to the rear room where they ransacked a small pantry, only to find their search rewarded by nothing more palatable than a stale loaf of bread and a few raw potatoes.

"She can't eat taters, and she can't eat this bread, 'ithout it's softened. And there is n't any milk," said Dick, despondingly. "I don't see why we don't have things like we used to have. I don't know what made my folks move 'way out here to nowhere, anyway. I was just going to get a new 'rithmetic to my school, and now, I — I hate this."

"No, you don't hate it, Dicky. Not always. You're hungry, that's all," said the more thoughtful Tom.

"Well, so are you!" retorted Dick, resent-

ing the statement as if it were an implication of guilt.

"If you can't get milk, water must do," answered Tom, taking the loaf from his brother's hand and carefully breaking off a portion of it, to moisten it under the spigot.

The others watched him with keen interest, and Harry inquired:

"Do you s'pose I could have just a little bit, Tom?"

"No, I don't s'pose anything like it. You are n't a baby, are you? Only babies eat when 't is n't dinner time, now."

"Once I used to eat when 't was n't dinner. Once I did," answered the little boy, with something like a quiver of the lip.

"Does our father or our mother eat 'tween meals, Harry Smith?" demanded Tom, indignantly.

"No. Come on. If we can't have bread let's play hop-toad."

"All right. After I've set Penelope up against the wall so's we shan't knock her over," answered the brother.

The little maid was soon propped securely across an angle of the whitewashed wall, with a chair before her to keep her from creeping forward into danger, and the small triplets were soon leaping over one another's backs, around and around the room. Fortunately, there was little furniture to obstruct their movements and therefore little danger of hurting themselves; and though the exercise tended to increase their always-present hunger, that was nothing new.

"A fellow can have a good time even if he does n't have a good dinner," was their father's assertion; and to them father was an oracle.

While the fun was at its height there came a knock on the little street door. The house was but the tiniest of cottages, and its floor raised but slightly above the street. Its door hung loosely from its upper hinge and dragged so heavily in closing that it was commonly left ajar. No landlord cared to fix it up for such poor tenants as now occupied the property, and they had not done it for him. So that when his knock was unanswered, because unheard,

the visitor calmly entered, followed the noise, and presented himself before the gaze of the astonished, suddenly quieted lads.

"Hello, youngsters, hard at it?" demanded the stranger, playfully.

"Hop-toad, leap-frog; having frolics," answered Harry, boldly, while his brothers, the twins, clung together and looked anxiously at the man.

"Nice game. Used to play it myself, when I was a little shaver. Don't know but I might be persuaded to try it again, if I was invited," said the unknown visitor.

None of the trio responded to this suggestion, nor was the game resumed. The three children stood utterly silent, regarding the gentleman with the intensely critical gaze of childhood which pretence finds so disconcerting. The stranger felt as if six gimlets were boring their way through his outward amiability to the vexation beneath; a vexation that he had allowed himself to come so far out of his way to find a man who could not possibly reside in such a hovel. None the less, since

here he was he would ask a question or two for the satisfaction of it, and put the first one, thus :

“ Say, youngsters, what’s your name?”

“ Tom, Dick, and Harry. That’s me,” answered the latter, placing his arms akimbo, the better to stare at the questioner, it seemed.

“ The mischief! Saucy, are n’t you!” rejoined the newcomer.

“ And the baby. That’s Penelope,” added Tom, with his usual precise gravity.

“ Tom, Dick, and Harry, and the baby; a hopeful lot of you. All right. So much for first names, though I don’t believe they’re genuine. Give us the last name and be quick about it,” ordered this odd man.

“ Our name is Smith. That’s our father’s name and our mother’s. Why? *Do they owe you something?* ’Cause if they do, I wish, I wish you’d please go away, quick as a wink, and not let them know you’ve been here. My father can’t help it. He — something got wrong with the business, and I’ve heard them talk lots of times. They” — explained Tom.

Just there it occurred to the little fellow that he was discussing family affairs too freely with a stranger, and instinct made him pause.

"Well, 'they' what? Is his name Joseph? Joseph Smith? Has he a brother who is a twin?" asked the stranger.

Tom considered, there seemed no harm in answering these questions.

"Yes, his name is Joseph. He has a brother who is a twin, same as me and Dick."

Then there ensued the following dialogue, begun by the visitor with the next question:

"Where does this uncle of yours live?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know? Haven't you ever seen him?"

"No. Never."

"Where's your father?"

"Out looking for work. Maybe he'll get it to-day, maybe."

The wistfulness of the childish voice told its own story, and even Mr. Wakeman's heart was touched by it. He was compelled to say:

"Likely he will, chappie. Likely enough

he will. And your mother? I suppose you have a mother?"

"Course. The nicest mother there is."

"Does she happen to be at home?"

Tom's gaze flew past the questioner toward a little woman who had entered unperceived, and who was closely followed by a handsome man with a mien as bright and undaunted as if he were not evidently half-starved and poor in the extreme. With the gentlest of movements he placed himself between the lady and the stranger, as if to ward off from her any fresh misfortune.

"Your errand, Mr." —

"Wakeman. My name is Wakeman. Since you did n't answer our advertisement I looked you up, myself. I represent Joseph Smith, of the Stock Exchange."

"Ah!" The ejaculation spoke volumes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISPOSAL OF THE PARCEL.

IN that little word "Ah!" were expressed hope, relief, eagerness, and gratitude. The name was that of a well-known financier; one who had the power of dispensing good or ill to hundreds of other men. It could not forebode ill to the master of this insignificant home, since he was no debtor to it; therefore it must denote some blessing. A situation, the chance to earn a living for these precious ones whom his failure and his honesty had impoverished. For the first time, at the relief of this fancy, tears leaped to the bright, clear eyes of this new Joseph Smith, and unconsciously, it seemed, he clasped his wife's thin waist with his strong arm.

"Cheer for us, Kitty, girl. Doubtless this other Joseph Smith needs an accountant and

has heard of my skill that way. I was an expert, sir, before I went into business for myself and failed, attempting a commercial line I did not understand," explained the man, yet losing his own courage as the explanation went on. He had boasted thus of his reputation the better to comfort his wife, but he read no encouragement in the countenance of Mr. Wakeman, which grew more forbidding each instant.

"Do not mistake, Mr. Smith. My errand is not of the sort which you appear to expect. My employer — I am myself an expert accountant, and the only one necessary to our business — my employer does not know of my present visit. Some days ago he entrusted a private bit of detective work to me, and I have now, I think, brought it to a finish. Why, however, may I ask, did you not reply to our advertisement?"

"I have seen none. This," waving his hand around the bare apartment, "is hardly the place where the luxury of newspapers may be looked for. What was the advertisement, if you please?"

Mr. Wakeman explained. Explained, added, itemized, and diffused himself all over the argument, so to speak, while the faces of his audience grew more and more tense and disturbed. At length he finished :

“That is the way it stands, sir, you see. Your brother John consigned this child to my employer, through a mistake in the address. Simply that. Now an old gentleman and — feeble, I may say” — Oh ! if Uncle Joe could have heard him ! “A feeble old man is not the one to be burdened with other folks’ relations. When I go back to town, now, I’ll be able to report that the missing uncle of this waif has been found at last, and that — Shall I say when you will call to reclaim her ?”

Father and mother looked into each other’s eyes, one questioning the other, and reading in each but the same answer. Then said Joseph Smith, rightful uncle of our Josephine :

“Spare yourself the trouble, Mr. Wakeman. My brother’s child is our child, as dear and near. Alas, that I can offer her no better shelter ! but it is a safe one and will be more

comfortable. I shall soon get a situation; I *must* soon get one. It is impossible that skill shall go forever unrecognized. In any case the little Josephine must come home to us. Eh, Kitty, girl?"

She answered him valiantly, seeing through his unusual boastfulness, who was commonly so modest of his own attainments, and smiling back upon him with the same undaunted courage he brought to their changed life. It was taking bread from her own children's mouths to do what now she did, yet her step never faltered as she walked across to the little cupboard and took from some hidden nook, known only to herself, their last quarter dollar. This she gave to her husband, saying cheerily:

"If you go at once, Joe, you may be home again in time for dinner. I'd like to be prompt with it for I've secured a dress to make for a woman in the neighborhood and can begin it to-night. Besides, I'm all impatience to see this little Josephine. Think of it, dear, the child who was named for you.

How little we dreamed she was right here in our own Baltimore all this time. Go, dear, at once."

With something like a groan the man caught the brave little creature in his arms, and was not ashamed to kiss her then and there before this staring stranger who had brought them this news. Ill or good, which would it prove? Then he put on his hat and went directly away.

Mr. Wakeman followed more slowly. He did not feel as much elated over his success as an amateur detective as he fancied he should feel. He was thinking of many things. Suppose this fellow, who was so down on his luck, this other unknown, insignificant Joseph Smith, should happen to take the fancy of the great Joseph Smith, of whom the world of business stood in such awe, and that magnate should happen to employ him on certain little matters of his own? Suppose those inquiries were directed toward his, Mr. Wakeman's, own accounts, what would follow? Who could tell? Hmm! Yes, indeed. To prevent any such "happenings" that might prove unpleasant, it

would be as well to make a little detour around by the office, even though it was after office hours and business all done for that day. In any case the new-found Uncle Joe, the real article, was now *en route* for 1000 Bismarck Avenue, and it would n't take two to tell the same story. Mr. Wakeman hoped the story would be told, and that child which had caused him so much trouble well out of the way before he again met his master. Then would be quite time enough to look for a reward, such as was due from a multi-millionaire to his trusted and effective man of affairs.

Pondering thus, Mr. Wakeman rode back to town in a livery hack, while the impecunious uncle of the little Californian rode thither in a democratic street car. The faster the car sped the more impatient the improvident young man became. He wondered if his twin's little daughter could be half as pretty and interesting as his own small people. He was glad he had never once written John or Helen anything about his business troubles. They supposed him to be doing uncommonly well and living

in comfort, if not in luxury. Well, if this young Josephine were of the same good stock as her father a little poverty and privation in her youth would n't hurt her; and where, search the wide world over, could any child find a sweeter, better foster-mother than his own Kitty?

When he arrived at Bismarck Avenue, things were already happening there which were out of the ordinary, to say the least. Among the day's mail had come several letters to one Miss Desire Parkinson Smith, care of Mr. Joseph Smith. These letters had been handed to the master along with his own, and had caused him surprise amounting almost to consternation.

"Desire Parkinson! Desire Parkinson! And Smith! The combination is remarkable, if nothing more, Peter," he exclaimed.

"Yes, suh, Massa Joe. Yes, suh," returned the also startled negro.

"Do you see these letters?" asked the master.

"Yes, sir," said the butler.

"Notice the superscription. Ever been any others with the same?"

"Yes, suh, heaps. Most all of them comes to Miss Kimono. Though some is just plain Miss Smith."

"Hmm! Hmm! This is — this is — disturbing," admitted Mr. Smith.

Uncle Joe dropped into deep thought and sat so long in profound quiet that Josephine, playing on the carpet near by, folded her hands and watched him anxiously. She had grown to love his stern old face, that was never stern to her, with all the fervor of her affectionate heart; and presently she could not refrain from tiptoeing to him and laying her soft fingers tentatively upon his arm. He looked up at her, smiled, and murmured, more to himself than to her:

"Strange, strange. I've noticed something, a familiar trick of manner, something unforgotten from boyhood, Aunt Sophronia — Little Josephine, where is your — your nurse?"

"In the sitting room with Mrs. Merri-

man, Uncle Joe. Shall I call her?" she answered.

"If you will, dear. I'd like to speak with her a moment," said he.

The ladies were deep in the intricacies of a new lace pattern, and though Miss Kimono rose obediently to the summons Josephine delivered, Mrs. Merriman for once forgot the requirements of etiquette and followed without invitation. But Mr. Smith was now too excited to notice this, and so it happened that one of the old gentlewoman's wishes was gratified without anybody's connivance. "May I be there to see," she had said, and here she was.

"Miss Smith, what is your Christian name?" demanded the master of the house.

"Desire Parkinson, Mr. Smith," glancing toward the letters lying on his table, replied the nurse. They flung their brief remarks at each other, as though they were tossing balls, thus:

HE: "That is an uncommon name, Miss — Smith."

SHE: "As uncommon, I suppose, as our mutual surname is common."

HE: "Were you named for anybody in especial?"

SHE: "For a very dear lady in especial. For my mother's twin sister."

HE: "She was a Parkinson?"

SHE: "She was a Parkinson."

HE: "She married a Smith?"

SHE: "She married a Smith, of Virginia. So did my mother another Smith, of another State. The world is full of them, Mr. Smith. We shall never be lonely because of a dearth of our patronymic." The lady was smiling in great amusement, and, it is possible, the amusement was tinctured by a spice of malice.

HE: "What was your mother's Christian name, if I may ask?"

SHE: "Surely you may ask, and I will answer to the best of my ability. Her name was Sophronia."

HE: "Then you and I are — are" —

SHE: "Bear up, Mr. Smith, we are first cousins."

HE: "You — you knew this before?"

SHE: "I've known it ever since our branch

of the family began fighting you to recover their portion of the old family estates in — Virginia!”

The excitement of the moment, so long anticipated by her and undreamed of by him, was tinging her cheeks with a little color which made her, for the time being, nearly as handsome as he was and that brought out with distinctness a strong family likeness. This resemblance was swiftly detected by little Josephine, who caught a hand of each exclaiming :

“Why, you’re just the same as one another, my darling Kimono and my precious Uncle Joe! We’re all folks together? We’re all the same Smith folks together!”

Upon this tableau the portières parted, and the dignified voice of Peter obtruded the announcement :

“Mr. Joseph Smith.”

Utter silence for an instant, then Josephine dropped the hands she was clasping and bounded toward the new-comer, almost screaming her delight :

“Papa! Papa! Papa!”

“My little Joe! John’s one baby daughter! My precious little namesake!”

The mislaid uncle had been found! That truth was evident in the spontaneous recognition of him, by his likeness so strong to his twin, that even the daughter had confounded the pair. A moment later, though, the child had perceived her own mistake and was regarding him more shyly, from the safe refuge of the old Uncle Joe’s knee, which had long since learned to adjust itself to the convenience of small maidens.

Something prompted Mrs. Merriman and Miss Kimono to withdraw from a scene they dreaded might be painful, and they thoughtfully took Josephine away with them. They knew, far better than she, how wonderfully she had grown into the lonely heart of the aged millionaire, whose money was so powerless to buy for him what this other, younger Joseph was so rich in. It were kinder and wiser to leave the two uncles alone, and face to face to adjust their complicated affairs as best they might.

Nobody need have feared, though. When folk are honest-minded, and love a common object, such as little Josephine, matters are soon arranged. In half an hour the conference was over, and the child ran back into the library to find the two Uncle Joes standing before its window and looking across the pretty square — where the crocuses were peeping through the tender grass and no sign of snow remained — toward a small house on its sunny northeastern corner.

The child slipped in between the two and caught a hand of both, while for an instant each diverted his gaze to her sweet face and smiled upon her. Then began again the deep, well-beloved tones of the old Uncle Joe :

“ There, Joseph, that’s the house. It’s empty. I bought it on a speculation, and fitted it up well. It’s completely furnished, and so nicely I would n’t let it to every tenant who’s applied. That will go with the position, in addition to the salary. I’ve been dissatisfied with Mr. Wakeman this long time. He’s too officious, too grasping, too eager. I’m thank-

ful he found you, and will pay him well for it. But that ends his service to me. I'll give him an advance of wages and shake him. You can enter upon your duties—to-morrow, if you like. I'll send out a van or two to move in your effects."

The new Uncle Joe held up his hand.

"Unnecessary, dear Mr. Smith. Our effects could easily be brought in on a pushcart;" yet saying this the man's smile was neither less bright nor more ashamed. Why should he be ashamed? He had gone down in one battle with the world, but he was up again and ready for another.

The answer, somehow, pleased the elder man. He liked simplicity, and he liked frankness. Josephine's new uncle possessed both these, with an added cheerfulness which communicated itself to all who met him. He was, or had been, as ready to take his brother's charge upon his hands in his penury as he now seemed to be in his suddenly acquired prosperity.

Looking across the square at the home offered

him, his eye kindled and his cheek glowed. His figure that had stooped somewhat from the wasted strength due insufficient food became erect, and his whole bearing assumed a military poise that was so fondly familiar to the little Californian.

“ Oh, my, Uncle Joe! My dear, sweet, new Uncle Joe! You're more and more like my papa all the time. If you had on his gray, bright-buttony soldier clothes, and his lovely red sash, you would be a regular Company F—er! would n't you? I wish mamma was here, and papa and Doctor Mack and funny big Bridget!”

“ So they all shall be some day, Josephine. But first you'll have to get acquainted with Tom, Dick, Harry, and Penelope, and the sweetest Aunt Kitty that ever the sun shone on,” he answered heartily.

Josephine's brown eyes opened in astonishment, and she said, with a deprecating look at the old Uncle Joe:

“ I'd like to, if you'd like me to, but he — this one — *he*'d not like me to. He said, he

told Michael, that lovely red-headed Michael, that I could n't hob-nob — whatever that is — with any Tom, Dick, or Harry who was in the square. Did n't you, Uncle Joe?"

It pleased the old gentleman that she still retained her familiar name for him, and he lifted her tenderly to his breast, replying :

"Yes, little lassie, I did ; but that was before I knew these were real children who were coming to live in my house yonder. Such boys as are brought up by this gentleman, and your own cousins — why, of course, it's different."

From her safe place within the first uncle's arms, she questioned the younger man :

"Have you got all those to your house, Uncle Joe?"

"Yes, little girl. Will you come and live with them when we all move to that pretty house on the corner?" he responded.

Her arm went around her first friend's neck, and he now did n't fret in the least because it ruffled his fresh linen, as she cuddled her cheek against his, and asked :

"Who'll live here with you in this big house, first Uncle Joe?"

"Oh, I suppose my colored 'boys' only; as before you came," was his low-toned answer.

"Nobody else?" she continued, in tones equally low.

He sighed: "Who else could, lassie?"

"Why, me! He's got so many, and it's only across the square. And Red Kimono, who's your own cousin, you know. Shall we?"

"If you will, darling," answered the old man, with moistened eyes.

"Then when papa and mamma come back from that far off red-pickley country maybe they'd be glad to stay, too. Can't 'lectrickellers find places to earn money in this Baltimore, Uncle Joe?"

"Be sure that your Uncle Joe and I will find your electrician a fine place, little one; and we'll call Red Kimono by her real name, Cousin Desire, because she was my mother's twin sister's child; and we'll send for big

Bridget to wait upon this real Tom, Dick, and Harry combination of youngsters; and — anything you like!” he answered, so gleefully that even Peter scarcely recognized him.

“Will you? Will you? Oh, I love you — I love you! I love you both, both. But is n't it the twiniest kind of world ever was! Papa and Uncle Joe are twins; and your mamma and Red Kimono's mamma were twins; and Tom and Dick are twins; and big Bridget's folks are twins; and — Oh, oh, there's my darling, red-headed Michael going by! I must call him in, I truly must! Won't he be the gladdest boy ever lived, to know all about my new cousins that I never saw coming to live and play with us in the square? He has n't any child to his house and you have n't any child but me to yours, Uncle Joe; and the line-fence is down; so nothing's to hinder Michael and me making another pair of twins, is there?”

Nobody prevented the child's movement to bring in her first child-friend in that strange city to which she had come, and presently

entered the jolly lad, flushed and breathless and a trifle unkempt, as was his habit, but with such a manly bearing and such a world of good-fellowship beaming from his freckled face, that the new Uncle Joe [instantly rejoiced in the prospect of such a comrade for his own small lads.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Smith and — Mr. Smith ; and is it all just as she says ?” demanded the small gentleman from Virginia. “Has the little ‘Express Parcel’ really found her right uncle at last? ‘Cause it’s just like a ‘Rabian Night’s story, seems to me, and girls — well, girls, you know, they — they’re sometimes silly, ‘cept Josephine, maybe.” Then, as if a sudden fear attacked him he turned upon her, firmly admonishing her to remember : “If I’m to be your twin, as you say, you’ve got to have no nonsense in it. If I say ‘go in’ when there’s a lot of boys out in the square you’ll have to mind, ‘cause they don’t always act polite, you see. Oh, bother ! It’s all boys, anyway, is n’t it ! I wish there was another girl, to even up” —

“Why, Michael Merriman!” cried Josephine, interrupting her playmate’s long speech. “There *is* another girl! You forget — how *could* you forget — *Penelope!*”

At which the new Uncle Joe threw back his handsome head and laughed as he had not laughed in many a day; for in fancy he could see Miss Penelope, aged seven months, helping “Cousin Josephine” to maintain the dignity of their mutual girlhood, as against a square full of rollicking lads.

Presently everybody was laughing, for happiness is delightfully infectious, and always even more “catching” than the measles. Grandma Merriman and Cousin Desire, who had come quietly into the room; the three black “boys” in the hall outside; the two Uncle Joes and Michael; and most heartily, most musically of all, the little San Diegan, who for very joy could not keep still, but went skipping and flying about the room, like a bewilderingly lovely butterfly, demanding between whiles of the person nearest:

“Oh, isn’t it beautiful, beautiful? Aren’t

you glad I was a wrong 'parcel,' and came to this wrong, splendid, old Uncle Joe?"

"I am," answered that gentleman, with sweet solemnity; "since your coming has showed me how to deal justly, and love mercy, and find happiness in my barren wealth. God bless you, little 'Parcel'!"

"Amen, and amen!" echoed the other Uncle Joe, as he went softly and swiftly out, to carry the good news to those whom he loved.

THE END.

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