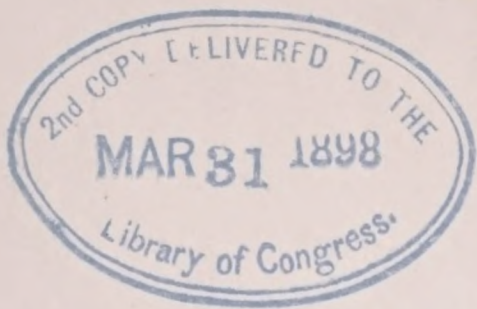


# BILBERRY Boys AND GIRLS



By  
Jophie Swett





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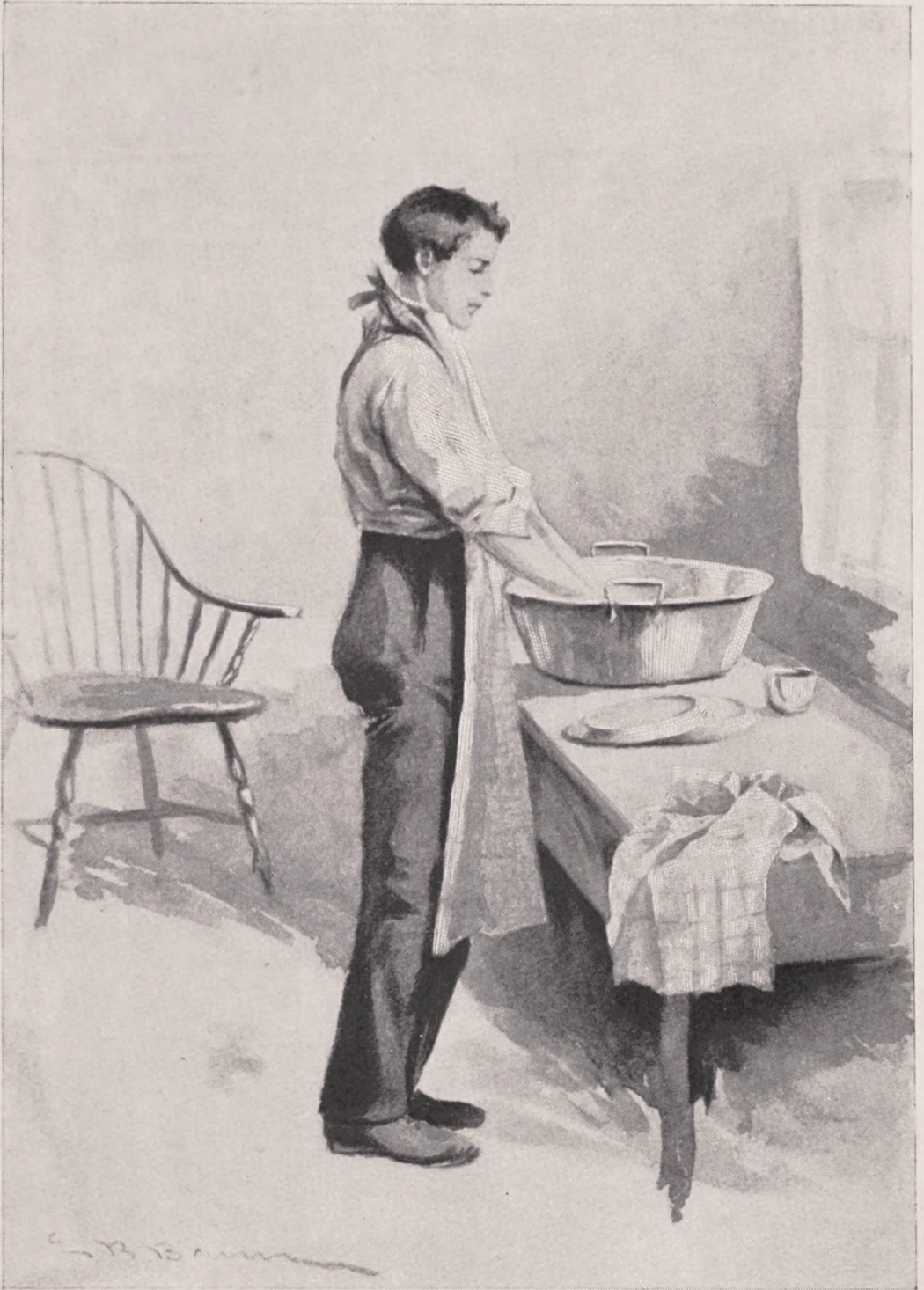












GRIF HORNER.

“With a long calico apron tied around his neck, washing dishes for his mother.”

*(See Page 21)*



# BILBERRY BOYS AND GIRLS

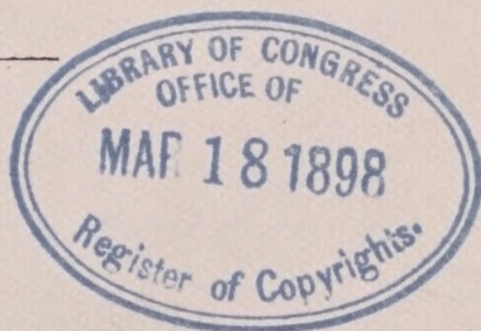
*THEIR ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES,  
THEIR TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS*

BY

SOPHIE SWETT

AUTHOR OF "TOM PICKERING OF 'SCUTNEY," "FLYING HILL FARM,"  
"CAPTAIN POLLY," "THE PONKATY BRANCH ROAD," ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED BY ETHELDRED B. BARRY*



BOSTON

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# BILBERRY BOYS AND GIRLS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SCHOOL EXHIBITION.

**G**RAN'THER Petherick at the poor-farm says, go where you will, you'll find that the world is "chock full of human nater." And that's the way it is in Bilberry. The boys and girls are just like other boys and girls. I don't for a moment assume that they are any better or brighter. In fact, they are, in both those respects, as one of them candidly admitted to me, "kind o' mixed."

Some people might think that because Bilberry is far from the great world there isn't much going on there, but they would be mistaken, as you will see when you read this book. They hear what is going on in the great world, too, or at least a part of it, and some of them mean to have a share in it one of these days.

Meanwhile, there are plenty of good times in Bilberry, although some of them are, like the goodness and the brightness of the girls and boys, "kind o' mixed."



To more than one person the school exhibition was one of those mixed good times, though to Viola Treddick — but I musn't make this story like the Irishman's elephant — “wid the tail in him at the for'ard ind!” To begin at the beginning, Simpsy Judkins was to “speak a piece,” and Viola Treddick to read an original composition; there was to be a glee sung by picked voices from the first class — it was all about the deep blue sky, and “the sky, the sky, the sky,” was repeated in a very thrilling and effective manner; and Tom Burtis was to display his powers as a lightning calculator. The exhibition was to be given in the new town hall, and not only would all Bilberry be there, but a crowd of people from the adjacent towns as well, to say nothing of teachers and pupils from the Normal School at Coheco; for the Bilberry Hill School exhibition has acquired a reputation.

In the Treddick family the girls have been obliged to take the family burden upon their shoulders. When Father Treddick died, somewhat less than a month after Mother Treddick, turning his face to the wall and saying that she had been his backbone and his underpinnin', and he couldn't live without her (it sometimes happens that way in spite of Mother Nature), the rocks still had the upper hand on the little farm, and Amasa, the only boy, was eleven. Lizette, who was fifteen,



went to work in the stocking factory. Every one thought it was a pity, because Lizette was fond of books, and had meant to be a teacher; she was slight and delicate, too, and work in the stocking factory was hard. But Lizette believed in doing "not what ye would, but what ye may," with just as good a will as if it were the former. Some people said she had taken warning by her father's example; he had always been trying to invent something, in his queer little workshop that was the wood-shed chamber; that was why the rocks had not been gotten out of the farm.

It was Viola who was now spoken of as a remarkably fine scholar, just as Lizette had been before she went into the factory; she was not yet sixteen, but she hoped to get the Doughnut Ridge School to teach in September. There were several other candidates, all older than she, but Viola was at the head of her class, and that original composition which she was to read at the exhibition was expected to make an impression upon the committee-men. The teacher had said to several people that it was really a remarkable production for a girl of Viola's age. And they thought a great deal of literary gifts in Bilberry.

Lizette was very proud of Viola, and so, indeed, was Amasa, who was fourteen now, but whose name was not on the programme at all. To tell the painful truth at once, although Amasa keenly



felt the especial need there was that he should be "smart," although he tried his best to be the man of the family in a satisfactory sense, yet he was at the very foot of his class; fractions floored him, and he had a hazy idea that Timbuctoo was out West, and that Captain John Smith discovered America. When it came to chopping wood, Amasa was pretty sure to cut his toe; and if he went fishing, he tumbled into the pond. And he couldn't get "jobs," like Cosy Pringle, the boy in the next house, who had money in the bank.

Cosy Pringle boasted that he always "came out top of the heap;" but some people thought he was too "smart."

When the exhibition day came, although Simpsy Judkins had been announced to "speak a piece," it was Cosy Pringle who spoke it; there was a report that he had hired Simpsy to have a sore throat. Simpsy had oratorical gifts, but he did not feel the advantages of appearing in public and having his name in the paper, as Cosy did. Cosy held the second rank in declamation, so Simpsy's sore throat gave him an opportunity to be heard. He wasn't second in his class; he came sympathizingly near to Amasa there; but he had carefully-weighed opinions — which he sometimes confided to Amasa — concerning the amount of study that "paid."

Mother Nature provided one of her loveliest days, as she is apt to do for school exhibitions in



June. The girls, in fleecy muslin gowns, were so much in evidence that the boys, in the background, were only a little hampered by the embarrassment of full dress. Cosy Pringle wasn't hampered at all; he wore his grandfather's large gold chain and his sister Amanda's moonstone ring, and felt that he ought to attract as much attention as the girls.

Cosy's voice was a little thin and sharp, but he recited one of Macaulay's lays with a great deal of "r-r-rolling drum" very well indeed, having been thoroughly coached by his sister Amanda and the young minister to whom Amanda was going to be married.

But beyond a little mild clapping, the recitation received no attention whatever; while Viola Tred-dick's composition was, as the *Bilberry Beacon* reported, received with the greatest enthusiasm. It was on "Schoolgirl Friendships," and there was some real fun in it; and once in a while it was pathetic, or at all events, the audience laughed and cried, and they couldn't really do that, as Cosy averred they did, because they liked Viola. It closed with a verse of original poetry, and Bilberry began to feel sure that a great poet was to arise in its midst.

Lizette stopped, and hugged Amasa behind a juniper-tree on the way home from the exhibition. Viola had staid to a spread that was given to the pupils and their friends; Lizette had to hurry back



to her work in the factory, and Amasa had felt that he did not shine in society. Amasa could not remember ever to have seen Lizette cry for joy before; she was not one of the crying kind, anyway.

“She’ll have a chance! Viola will have a chance! She’ll get the Doughnut Ridge School,” she said rapturously. “I’ve been so afraid she would have to go into the factory.”

Amasa realized suddenly how hard life was for Lizette. Her delicate hands were calloused and knobby, and her shoulders bent; she looked wistfully at the library books, and never had time to read; she knew that she wasn’t strong, and she was anxious about their future — Viola’s and his.

It was the very next night, as Amasa was going to bed, that Cosy Pringle came under his window and called to him. Amasa went down and unfastened the door, and Cosy followed him up-stairs.

He seemed excited and nervous, and kept saying “’Sh!” though there was no one stirring in the house. But it was like Cosy to have some mysterious scheme on foot. Amasa thought that he had at last discovered how Pember Tibbetts made his muskrat traps, or guessed the conundrum in the *County Clarion*, for which intellectual feat a prize of five dollars was offered. Or perhaps he had secured the job of weeding Mr. Luke Mellon’s onion-bed and hoeing his string-beans; last year he was paid three dollars for the job, and hired Amasa to



do the work for seventy-five cents. Amasa stoutly resolved not to be the victim of Cosy's sharp business methods this year.

But Cosy's shrewd gray eyes had a twinkle that meant more than onion-weeding or any "jobs."

"That was an awful nice composition that your sister wrote," he said, in an easy, complimentary manner.

Amasa nodded, brightening; it was more like Cosy to make a fellow feel small about his sisters and all his possessions.

"Folks are saying that she'll get the Doughnut Ridge School, if Elkanah Rice, that's school committee, *does* want it for his niece. A good thing, too, for Lizette is pretty well worn out taking care of you all." Cosy wagged his head with great solemnity. "Aunt Lucretia said she shouldn't be surprised if she got consumptive, like her mother, if she worked too hard."

Amasa's heart seemed to stop beating, and a choking lump came into his throat.

"But Viola'll get the school fast enough," continued Cosy, "if — if folks don't find out that she copied the composition."

"Copied the composition!" Amasa's brows came together in a fierce scowl, and he arose from the side of the bed where he was sitting, and advanced upon Cosy with a threatening gesture.

"Now just look here before you go to making



a turkey-cock of yourself," said Cosy, drawing a newspaper from his pocket. "I happened to go down to Gilead this afternoon to swap roosters with Uncle Hiram — made him throw in a pullet and a watering-pot because my rooster had a bigger topknot than his. There was a pile of newspapers in the woodshed, and I went to get one to wrap up some things that Aunt M'lissy was sendin' to mother, and I came across this. 'Schoolgirl Friendships' caught my eye. See! it's signed 'Lilla Carryl.' Aunt M'lissy said she believed 'twas a girl over to Gilead Ridge. That paper is two years old now, and Gilead being ten miles away, I suppose Viola thought nobody would ever find her out."

"She never did such a thing! Don't you dare say she did!" cried Amasa hoarsely.

But there it was in black and white; there it was word for word. Amasa knew every word of Viola's composition, he had been so proud of it. Cosy whistled softly, with his hands in his pockets as Amasa ran his eye over "Schoolgirl Friendships."

"There's some mistake," faltered Amasa. "Viola is the honestest girl!"

Cosy's whistling ended in a sharp, expressive little crescendo squeak. "There's no telling what girls will do," he said sagely. "When folks know it, why Elkanah Rice's niece will be pretty apt to



get the Doughnut Ridge School, and I'm kind of 'fraid Viola'll have to take a back seat altogether. It'll come hard on Lizette."

Cosy folded the Gilead *Gleaner*, and thrust it firmly and impressively into his pocket. Amasa had been acquainted with Cosy Pringle since they were both in long clothes, and he understood that that paper had its price. If he could pay the price, why, even Lizette need never know!

"I suppose it's my duty to show this paper," said Cosy, with an air of unflinching virtue; "but still, amongst old friends, and if you'll do a little good turn for me that you can do as well as not, why, I'll just chuck the paper into the fire, and agree not to tell anybody, and we'll call it square. I ain't a mean feller."

Amasa's heart thrilled with hope. What was the good turn that he would not do for Cosy on those terms? He thought of his fan-tailed pigeons, and of his dog Trip, on whom Cosy had always had his eye because he could do so many tricks; it would be an awful wrench to part with Trip, but to save Viola from disgrace he would not hesitate.

"I only want to go into your woodshed chamber for a few minutes. There's — there's something there that I want to see. If you'll let me, why, nobody shall ever know about Viola's cheating."

"It's father's old workshop; there's nothing



there," Amasa said. "Nobody ever goes near it but Lizette."

Cosy hesitated a little, then he decided that it would be as well to be more frank ; Amasa was so stupid. "She's up to something, Lizette is," he said, in an impressive whisper. "I've seen a light burning in that workshop half the night ! She's trying to make an improvement on the knitting-machine that they use in the factory. Of course she can't do it — a girl ! — but you'd better look out or it will kill her, just as it killed your father. How do I know what she's doing ? She told Emily Norcross" — Emily Norcross was the daughter of the owner of the factory — "and Emily told Thad. Thad and I have been trying, too. We've got things fixed now so'st we expect to get a patent. What I want to see is whether she's got anything that's likely to interfere with us ; of course she hasn't really, but then girls think they can."

Amasa felt desperately that this was too great a problem to suddenly confront a fellow like him, whom every one knew to be stupid. It seemed a trifle, but Cosy Pringle would want nothing but a good bargain. Still, there was no other way ; disgrace to Viola would mean heart-break to Lizette."

"Give me the paper," he said gruffly, and thrusting it into his pocket, he led the way softly through the corridor to the woodshed chamber.



Cosy was breathlessly eager over some queer bits of machinery which Amasa could not understand. He staid but a few minutes, as he had promised, but he stammered with excitement when he went away.

Amasa spent three miserable days, filling the woodbox so assiduously that Viola asked him if he thought she was going to bake for the County Conference, and hoeing the string-beans until Lizette was tenderly sure that his back ached, and advised him to go fishing.

But a boy may have troubles of the mind which even fishing cannot cure.

Lizette came home from her work with a radiant face on the third day. "Amasa, how came you to let Cosy Pringle go into the workshop?" she exclaimed. "But I can't scold you, it has turned out so beautifully! I have been trying a little invention — oh, for a long time! I never thought it could really succeed!" Lizette looked as fresh and bright as if all the work and care had been a dream. "Cosy saw it, and told Thad Norcross. It seems he and Thad had been trying to do the same sort of thing — mere boys' play, of course — and Thad told his father. Mr. Norcross will help me to get a patent! Viola! Amasa! he says it may be worth a great deal of money!"

Lizette and Viola were crying for joy; but Amasa could think only of the horror of Viola's



disgrace, for now, of course, Cosy Pringle would tell.

“You won’t think anything now of my little triumph,” said Viola, when they had calmed down a little, and sat down to supper. “‘Schoolgirl Friendships’ is to be published in full in the *Bilberry Beacon* next Saturday, with my own name signed to it — not Lilla Carryl, as I signed it two years ago, when I sent it to the *Gilead Gleaner*. Oh, what a flutter I was in then! and I never dared to let a soul know it! The editor of the *Beacon* made me write a foot-note telling all about it.”

“I’m an awful jackass,” said Amasa, his voice gruff with joy and shame.

“You’re the dearest boy in the world,” said Lizette. “But I don’t want you to associate with Cosy Pringle. I don’t see why you never have a nice boy for a friend — like Grif Horner, who is such a comfort to his mother.”

“Curly hair and wears his mother’s apron! Grif Horner is a sissy,” said Amasa scornfully.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

PEOPLE said that Grif Horner must have eaten of the alewives in Round Pond, because he was the only boy who didn't seem eager to get away from Bilberry. It was an old tradition that there was a charm about the alewives which kept a boy at home, no matter how dull home might be; and Bilberry was certainly dull, with no business opening whatever for an ambitious boy with a trading bump.

No one suspected that Grif was an ambitious boy with a trading bump, but we all have our little secrets. The other boys said that he was "tied to his mother's apron-strings."

They even went so far as to call him "Sissy;" but this was chiefly because his hair *would* curl in tight little ringlets all over his head, and they had seen him, with a long calico apron tied around his neck, washing dishes for his mother. She had had rheumatism, and the fingers of one hand were out of shape.

The other Horner boys were called "smart."



Lyman, the eldest, had inherited his father's business of storekeeping down at the Port. Their uncle had taken Clem, the second, into his clothes-pin factory, which was also at the Port, and promised to make him a partner in time. And Horace, who was thought to be mentally the most gifted, was in a lawyer's office at Potoxet.

Only Grif and his mother remained upon the little "run-out" farm, which yielded hardly vegetables enough for their own use. There was a little investment, the interest from which just served to keep their heads above water. As for Grif, who was now almost sixteen, he did what was to be done upon the farm, as well as most of the housework.

"Grif is my girl," his mother said laughingly, to Mrs. Deacon Parkes, who was spending the afternoon with her, sewing; and she did not observe that Grif winced and grew very red in the face.

Girls are very well in their way, as we all know, but there never was a boy who liked to be called a girl. That night, after his mother had gone to bed, Grif sat on the doorstep, and thought and thought until his heart burned within him.

No one knew what his father had said to him the night before he died, but Grif could not forget the earnest words: "It's for you to stay at home and take care of your mother, Grif. I shall die easier knowing that you'll do it."



Of course it was for him! All the others had been full of their plans, and only Grif had said nothing. He was often at the foot of the class, too, and no one understood that it was chiefly because he was diffident, and because the school-master's sharpness and the scholars' ready titters disconcerted him.

Only when Clem, who wanted to be a cowboy, or, at least, to go to a Texas ranch, was given a place in the clothes-pin factory did Grif feel a little bitter. Clem had no head for business, and, although no one believed it, Grif was sure that *he* had.

He was very fond of his mother, but he wanted to do something besides wash the dishes and iron the clothes for her. He wanted to make her proud of him, instead of just a little ashamed, as he knew she was now, in spite of the comfort he was to her. If there were only a business opening in Bilberry — anything to do to keep a boy with a trading bump from eating his heart out in idleness and girls' work!

And even the girls, right there in Bilberry, were doing greater things than he could do. Viola Treddick had written a poem that had been printed in a paper, and Lizette Treddick had invented an attachment to a knitting-machine that was used in the stocking-factory. She had got it patented and was making a lot of money by it. And she was



going to send her brother Amasa away to school — Amasa Treddick, who was like the queen in Alice's Wonderland; he could do addition if you gave him time.

Lysander Perrigo, 'Sander, as he was called, had a chance to work his way through St. Luke's School at Holdfast — that was a chance for you! And 'Sander wasn't smart, either, for a Bilberry boy.

That great lout of a Peter Judkins was to be sent to that school too. A good fellow, Peter, but what good would an education do him? It looked as if every boy and girl in Bilberry were going to have a chance to be somebody — every one but him.

The only person whom he had ever taken into his confidence in the slightest degree was old Gran'ther Petherick, who lived at the poor-farm, adjoining theirs.

“Folks's chances is generally nigher to hand than they think, and don't you go to despisin' the day of small things,” said Gran'ther Petherick, who was a philosopher. “Don't be in too great a hurry to get away from the place where the Lord has sot ye. For it ain't as if he didn't know what he was about,” added Gran'ther Petherick reverently.

But Grif would like to know what chances there were for a boy in Bilberry. A man had once wanted him to take the town agency for a new



preparation to kill potato bugs, but he had found out just in time that it killed the vines as well as the bugs. Some people might have accepted the agency without making a trial of the "Blue-Streak Annihilator," but that was not Grif's way.

Then, there was the agency for the pinless clothes-line which had been offered to him last week. He might have taken that if he had not thought in a moment of Uncle Josephus and the clothes-pin factory. It would never do for him to set up such an opposition as that! The boys and girls would titter, as they had done at school when he went to the foot of his class, and Uncle Josephus would think less of him than ever. Uncle Josephus had always been among those who prophesied that Grif "would never amount to anything."

As he sat on the doorstep, alone in the darkness, with the crickets' doleful chirping in his ears, it seemed to Grif that he should always go on hoeing potatoes and washing dishes. He could see himself, a little, bent, and grisly old man, still with the long calico apron tied around his neck.

And then suddenly the New York market report, which he had read on a scrap of newspaper in Lyman's store, flashed into his mind. "Watercress in great demand" was one of the items.

Their brook was full of watercress. They never ate it; but Aunt Sabrina Norton, who lived in Po-toxet, always wanted it when she visited them, and



the proprietor of the hotel at the Port had once sent for some. Grif's mother had laughed. She said "she should just as soon think of eating grass."

But Grif went in to the house, and laboriously, by the light of a tallow candle, — his mother was afraid of kerosene, — wrote a letter to the keeper of a stall in a great New York market, whose name he had seen in the report. The next morning he sent his letter, and a day or two after that, just at nightfall, their neighbor, Isaiah Moody, stopped at the gate and held up a telegram.

Isaiah Moody was much excited, for telegrams were not common in Bilberry, and Grif's mother began to cry in her apron, because she thought they always meant ill news.

"Send at once," the message read; and Grif explained briefly to Isaiah Moody that it was "only a little matter of business," while his mother dried her eyes and stared at him in amazement. He felt obliged to tell her about the watercress, and she said "it seemed like child's play, and she hoped it wouldn't cost him more than it came to."

When, three weeks later, he told her he was going to New York on business, his mother stared at him in even greater amazement. He had been sending the crisp, fragrant cress from the brook just about as fast as his old horse, Drom, could carry it to the Port station; but he said very little about his receipts.



His mother was worried lest Lyman or Uncle Josephus should be called upon to pay the expenses. She said she didn't know what was the matter with Grif; he "acted as if something had flew to his head."

Grif came home from New York with another project in his mind. The brook could help to raise something besides watercress. He was going to raise Pekin ducks, and Russian geese three feet tall! He had bought a pair of each to begin with.

He didn't dare tell his mother what he paid for them, lest she should send for Uncle Josephus at once. He told her he had found out what could be done on the farm, and she comforted herself by thinking that, perhaps, after all, it would be better than nothing for Grif, who wasn't "smart," like the others — if only he didn't run into debt.

Grif kept on his way, and when the watercress was buried under ice and snow, sent his poultry to market.

The next spring he bought a new horse, — the loads were too much for old Drom, — and Uncle Josephus came hurrying up the hill, with a scowl on his face, to say that "he needn't be expected to pay for that horse." Grif's mother aroused herself to reply that "Grif seemed to know what he was about," but inwardly she had fears.

But Grif himself had a brisk and confident air. He had grown taller — or was it only that he held



his head higher? He would not say much about his business, but that was Grif's way; he could not help being reticent.

Clem was the only one who approved of him. "I wish I had had sense enough to try to do something on the farm," Clem said. "I hate the factory. Feel as if I was turning into a clothes-pin myself."

"You don't see what might be done there. Uncle Josephus has got into a rut. It doesn't do to get into ruts in business," said Grif sagely.

It was a year and a half after his first venture when Grif announced to his mother that Mary Abby Sprowle, who was known to be a very capable and faithful girl, was looking for a place as domestic, and he thought they should hire her. He would pay her out of the proceeds of his business. And, with a long, long sigh, he hung the calico apron up on its nail for the last time.

"I shall never wash dishes again," he said firmly. His mother looked at him with sudden comprehension in her half-tearful eyes.

"I never knew you didn't like it, Grif," she said. "You always washed 'em so well!"

Bilberry, in which no one ever expected anything to happen, had a sensation at last. Uncle Josephus, who was so much afraid that other people would get into debt, did that very thing himself!



There were rumors, which at first no one believed, that he was on the verge of bankruptcy. People didn't see how it could be so; he had always been so slow and cautious. But it appeared that he had been a little too slow; rival manufactories, with more enterprise, had sprung up, and crowded his wares out of the market. The business had been gradually declining for a long time, and now the simultaneous failure of two men who owed him brought about a crisis. Uncle Josephus had notes to pay which he could not meet.

Grif wanted to go down and have a little talk with him about business, but he could not quite make up his mind to do it. He was almost eighteen now, but Uncle Josephus still regarded him as the one who was not "smart."

It was not long before Uncle Josephus came up the hill to tell his troubles, and receive sympathy from Grif's mother. He looked so worn and worried that Grif's mother began to cry at once, and even Grif, who had never been fond of Uncle Josephus, felt a lump in his throat.

"It's all over, Nancy, and I'm a ruined man!" said Uncle Josephus, shaking his head as if he had the palsy. "They say it's because I'm an old foggy, and that new blood was needed in the concern. Clem's of no use; he might as well have been raising greens and geese, like this fellow here!" Uncle Josephus jerked his thumb somewhat con-



temptuously toward Grif. "Lyman ought to be able to help me now, but he says it's as much as he can do to keep his own head above water."

"If — if a little money would do any good" — stammered Grif.

Uncle Josephus threw back his head and laughed in spite of his trouble.

"A little money! Well, now, youngster, how much of a golden egg has your goose laid?" he cried.

"I haven't quite a thousand dollars yet" —

"A thousand dollars!" echoed Uncle Josephus and his mother in chorus.

"I haven't had to spend any, you know," said Grif. "Of course I know that amount of money wouldn't help much, but what I was going to say was that I have friends in New York. I've been down there several times, you know. There's one man — a big marketman — that I've talked with a good deal, and he says he likes my ideas about business," said Grif, with modest pride.

Grif's ideas about business! Uncle Josephus fairly gasped for breath, and his mouth opened with astonishment.

"If he should know about the factory," continued Grif, — "what a chance there is there, with the great quantity of woodland which can be bought for a song, and such water-power for a sawmill, and a chance to increase the business and make other kinds of wooden ware" —



“Well, I never!” exclaimed Uncle Josephus.

“If you’ll go down to New York with me to-morrow” — suggested Grif.

“Well, I don’t know as there’s any need of me,” said Uncle Josephus, with only the faintest touch of sarcasm.

Uncle Josephus went, and found that Grif had made no vain boast of his influential friend. The man stipulated that, when the difficulty was tided over, the business should be extended as Grif suggested, and that as soon as Grif had mastered the details he should have a share in it.

Clem begged to be allowed to take Grif’s business of “raising greens and geese” off his hands. He said he should like it almost as well as a Texas ranch.

“Nancy,” said Uncle Josephus sternly, to his sister-in-law six months later, “I don’t know what you were thinking of to keep that boy in bib and tucker as you did! To think of a boy with such a head for business as he has doing housework like a girl!”

“I don’t like to think of it, but he did it so well!” said Grif’s mother apologetically.

And neither she nor Uncle Josephus thought that the fact that he did it so well was one great reason why he was turning out so fine a business man. But they were not philosophers, like Gran’ther Petherick at the poor-farm.



## CHAPTER III.

## LUDY JANE'S IDEA.

NOW, Grif Horner was not the only boy in Bilberry who had the sort of brains out of which ideas grow. There was a girl, too, who thought she had a bright idea. Her wits were sharpened by love and gratitude, so it ought to have been a bright one; but it is really very difficult to tell how ideas are going to work themselves out in this world. One thing I will vouch for, she had as honest and faithful a heart as ever a girl had, even in Bilberry. Whether her idea was a bright one — well, I will leave you to find that out for yourself.

The Tackaberrys lived in the "Creeper House" on Bilberry Hill. It was called the "Creeper House," because Aunt Tackaberry had planted vines, which completely covered it, except the windows; and in Bilberry they called vines "creepers." Woodbine, climbing roses, and cinnamon vines adorned the front, while hops, rampant Jennie, morning-glories, and scarlet beans covered unsightly nooks and corners. There were a good



many of these, it must be acknowledged; for an increasing family had led Uncle Tackaberry to build additions, — a room here, a closet there, and a woodshed in another place, — and he held somewhat eccentric views with regard to architecture, and still more eccentric ideas in the matter of paint. If funds ran low, — as, alas! they were apt to do in the Tackaberry family, — he bought whatever color was cheapest; or if a neighbor had some paint left that he wished to dispose of, Uncle Tackaberry would buy it to oblige him, although he might have to finish his red porch with pea-green paint. He would remark that he quite liked a variety himself; he thought it looked cheerful.

And that is a fair example of the way in which they got along together in the Tackaberry family, where relations were about as queerly mixed as Uncle Tackaberry's paint.

In the first place, there were Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry, who were really uncle and aunt to no one in the world, but were an old bachelor and spinster brother and sister, who would have been quite alone in the world if they had been of a nature to make that possible. When they first went to housekeeping, Aunt Tackaberry had only two cats (rescued from vagrant and unprincipled lives) and a lame robin to set her heart upon, while Uncle Tackaberry tried to devote himself to a remarkably unpromising pig; but before the year



was out, their second cousin had died in a distant city, and left twin babies waifs upon the world. Aunt Tackaberry felt that it was a great opportunity; but she was a little afraid that her brother might not share this feeling, they had to work so hard to keep the wolf from the door.

“There’s the silver mug that was little sister Roxy’s running to waste; it seems such a pity,” she said; “and the flowered china mug, with ‘Consider the lilies’ on it, would do for the other one; and the high-top sweeting trees bearing so wonderfully, and you and I liking tart apples — seems a pity; and when I’m frying doughnuts it’s so easy to make a doughnut boy or two, or — or pop-corn balls, and — and I think the robin’s lonesome.” Aunt Tackaberry grew almost incoherent in her eagerness.

“And we really ought to get our share of the school privileges, since we always pay our taxes,” said Uncle Tackaberry, who prided himself on his shrewdness.

So it came about that the homeless twins became little Tackaberrys, and grew and thrived; and as it was a remarkable harvest year, even the sterile little farm on Bilberry Hill blossomed like the rose, and everything they undertook prospered, and the house began to grow, and Aunt Tackaberry began to plant creepers.

The next addition to the family was half-witted



Jake Stumcke, who had a wild terror of the poor-house. Uncle Tackaberry said Jake could do chores that they would have to pay a hired man for doing, so he "calculated they should get the best of the bargain, if folks down in the village did say they couldn't afford it."

It was in the same year that they took little Enoch. His mother was old Parson Enoch Tapley's daughter, and when she married Freedom Ramsey he was a promising young man. Rickerby's Hotel at the Corner had been his ruin. He was killed in a drunken quarrel; and his wife died of consumption in the poor-house, and left little Enoch, another small baby for whom there seemed to be no room in the great world.

Little Enoch was a puny baby, with a head much too large in proportion to the rest of his body, and a neighbor aroused Aunt Tackaberry's indignation by saying he "wouldn't be a burden on anybody long." But little Enoch grew and throve as the twins had grown and thriven; people said "the air was so good up there on Bilberry Hill;" and no one but the Tackaberrys themselves knew what loving, tireless care and nursing had brought the bloom to the baby's face and the firm roundness to his limbs. And before a great while Uncle Tackaberry was chuckling over the discomfiture of those who had declared, judging by the size of his head, that he would never be "bright," for he developed



an astonishing quickness. The great head was especially "a head for figures," as Uncle Tackaberry proudly declared. Before little Enoch was seven years old, Uncle Tackaberry sat in the store and boasted of his feats at "ciphering." There was one drawback to this happiness; little Enoch at seven was no larger than a child of three or four, he seemed to have ceased to grow.

It was when little Enoch was almost eight and the twins were half-past eleven that old Mrs. Gilchrist had trouble with Luella Jane Myrick, a girl of thirteen, who was "bound out" to her. She said she "was so saucy she couldn't put up with her, anyhow;" and Luella Jane, for her part, had tried to run away. Aunt and Uncle Tackaberry felt some doubts and fears this time, the Creeper House was such a peaceful abode; the cats and dogs agreed, and even the turkey gobbler was of a mild disposition; but when the "poor-mistress" declared that she "wasn't going to have the house upset by an unruly girl," and Bilberry began to talk of sending Luella Jane to the reform school, they hesitated no longer.

So it happened that one spring morning Luella Jane walked into the Creeper House, a tall, awkward girl, with a small pinched face and tow-colored hair, which was drawn so tightly back from her forehead, and into such a tight little braid at the back, that it seemed to be responsible for the sin-



gularly round and wide-open appearance of her eyes.

“I hope you ain't sarcy folks,” she announced. “Old Mis' Gilchrist sarced me, and I talked back, and then she licked me.”

“Oh, dear, dear!” murmured gentle Aunt Tackaberry, in dismay.

“But mebbe she had to,” continued Luella Jane candidly. “I expect I be an awful young one. And I made her fidgety eatin' so much; she cal'lated I'd bring her to the poor-house. I *be* hearty to my victuals, but then I'm real smart to work.”

“I'm afraid we don't know how to train her,” said Uncle Tackaberry to Aunt Tackaberry, as soon as they were alone.

“I'm afraid we don't,” replied Aunt Tackaberry mournfully. “We shall have to try to get along by just being kind to her.”

This treatment seemed to act as a surprise upon Luella Jane, or Ludy Jane, as little Enoch set the fashion of calling her. But her quick intelligence and keen sensibilities responded to it at once. The very atmosphere of the Creeper House softened her voice and her ways, and before long even her thoughts. If she had been as turbulent a spirit as she had been reported to be, she might have ruined the peace of the Creeper House; but, poor Ludy Jane! her impertinence was only the bristling armor of ignorance against hardship and



unkindness, and it dropped off when there was no longer any occasion for it. Ludy Jane confided to one of her old friends that when she woke up in the night, she pinched herself to be sure she hadn't died and gone to heaven, she was so happy to be Ludy Jane Tackaberry and have "own folks."

It was the summer after Ludy Jane came to the Creeper House that Uncle Tackaberry signed a note for his old friend Daniel Rice, the miller, and lost all the money he had saved, and had to mortgage the farm for all it was worth. That was a sad time at the Creeper House. The old wolf that had been kept at a respectful distance came again prowling and howling around the house, and fairly got his nose in at the door. Things grew worse and worse, until by Thanksgiving-time it looked as if there were to be no Thanksgiving at all.

People had always said that it seemed as if Thanksgiving began on Bilberry Hill, and spread down through the village, the Creeper House was so full of it; the chimney roared and smoked for a week beforehand, and every one gleefully helped to beat eggs and seed raisins and crack nuts; and when the great day came, what a throng of company there would be, for they had hosts of friends, if they had no relatives, and the poorest, the most neglected, were always those who were bidden to the Creeper House!

Ludy Jane heard people talking in the store one



day when she went to buy a quart of molasses. She was behind the great stove, and they didn't see her.

“I expect they'll be lucky if they have as much as a bit of bacon for their Thanksgiving dinner,” said one. “But what could they expect, burdening themselves with that lot of paupers? So many mouths to feed! And Mrs. Gilchrist says that girl that lived with her came near eating her out of house and home. And those chubby twins and that idiot, what are they good for? That little dwarf, with his big head and his 'rithmetic, he's like a curiosity in a show.”

Ludy Jane went homeward with her heart as heavy as lead. “So many mouths to feed!” That was true, though when she had overheard Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry talking over the troubles, they had not mentioned that one; they never seemed to think there were too many. And she *was* “hearty,” that was true too. But she rolled her sleeve up, and looked at her arm with a glow of satisfaction; it had grown thin; it was almost as thin as when she came to the Creeper House. For a long time she had not eaten as much as she wanted; she had slyly hidden her doughnuts, and slipped them back into the jar, and she had pretended she didn't like her hot gingerbread. Aunt Tackaberry had found her out, and had scolded her gently, and had made her an apple turnover, which



she liked best of anything. Ludy Jane wiped her eyes with her mitten as she thought of it. But there were no apple turnovers at all now; it was literally true about the bit of bacon, for they had been obliged to "turn" at the stores their chickens and turkeys, and almost everything they had raised, for flour and shoes and other necessaries of life. Something must be done, and it seemed clear to Ludy Jane that she was the one to do it. She had a high opinion of her own "smartness." Had not even old Mrs. Gilchrist admitted that she had "faculty"? And had she not paid two dollars and sixty-seven cents of the interest on that terrible mortgage? Ludy Jane's heart swelled high with pride as she thought of it. She had earned five dollars by picking berries. Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry had made her keep the rest to buy herself a plaid dress. It had been a joy, that plaid dress, but now there was but scanty comfort in it.

But for all her dejection Ludy Jane had an idea. She went into the house with her head held very high, and she was very severe toward the unfortunate possessors of the many mouths which were devouring Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry's substance.

"You'd ought to grow, so as to ketch up with your head, and be good for something," she said sternly to little Enoch, who was her favorite among the children. "You might be a business man, like Grif Horner, if you could ketch up with your



head." And little Enoch, who felt as if the sky had fallen when Ludy Jane frowned, went out to his measuring-mark in the woodshed for the second time that very day, and found it hard to keep back the tears, like a man, when his head did not come the least bit higher.

After Ludy Jane had seriously reproved the twins for being so plump, and had scolded Jake for idleness, until he had begun to bring in wood and water with such zeal that the kitchen was almost full, she took a newspaper down from behind the clock, and read something over two or three times anxiously, and then she went in search of little Enoch. She found him sitting with the pig, in the cold, as he had a way of doing when he was melancholy, and wishing he could find the fairy who made Jack's beanstalk grow so fast.

"But perhaps it's all the better that you are so little," said Ludy Jane encouragingly. "Would you like to earn a lot of money for Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry? And then we'd have a Thanksgiving. Oh, such a Thanksgiving! I'll tell you how. There's a great show down at Marketville. They have got giants, and a skeleton, and a mermaid, and a man that swallows swords, and an educated bear, and a man with two heads, and a girl who never eats anything. I wonder how she does it!" Ludy Jane was suddenly so impressed by this idea as almost to lose the thread of her discourse.



“Oh, and elephants and monkeys and wild men! Of course it's beautiful to see them; but they haven't got any dwarf or midget. That's what they call little people. Somebody gave Jake a paper with all about it. And they pay midgets a lot of money; I read so. And then there's your 'rithmetic. You're 'most like the lightning calculator that exhibited at the schoolhouse. Do you suppose you could do your 'rithmetic before a lot of folks? Because I'm going to take you to the show and exhibit you. You'll go, won't you?”

“Yes, I'll go. Does it hurt to be 'zibited? But I'll go if it does,” said little Enoch manfully.

“You mustn't say a word about it; not a word — because we want to surprise Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry with the money, and we'll bring home loads of goodies for Thanksgiving. I'm going to ask Ben Holliday to take us in his market wagon to-morrow morning.”

Ludy Jane had felt it necessary to prepare little Enoch's mind for his responsibilities; but she thought it prudent not to confide her errand to Ben Holliday, who readily agreed to take her and little Enoch as passengers to Marketville. Aunt Tackaberry gave her consent, thinking it a little pleasure trip, and having no suspicion of the great enterprise which was agitating Ludy Jane's mind.

It was very strange and exciting to get up at



three o'clock and dress one's self by lamp-light. After they got into the great market wagon, among the plump chickens and turkeys, the mammoth squashes and pumpkins, the fragrant herbs and celery, and the great winter pears that Ben was carrying to market, it was perfectly delightful. There was a fascination even about the nipping, frosty air, and about Ben's lantern, which showed them their breaths in little vapory puffs. And Ben, who had been "round the world and home again" in the Mermaid, had gathered a store of songs and stories, with which he beguiled the way until Marketville came in sight quite too soon, and daylight put out the lantern.

It was only a cold gray daylight at first, and the men who were opening the markets, or unloading their produce from farm wagons, to display it upon the sidewalk, were sleepy and cross, and made unpleasant jokes about "country greens," and wounded little Enoch's feelings by saying, just as Ludy Jane had said, that he "ought to catch up with his head."

But Ben took them to a queer little eating-house, where they had hot coffee, which "made you feel more as if you could bear being smaller than your head," as little Enoch said, and then Ludy Jane politely but firmly bade Ben good-by.

Ludy Jane had quite the air of being mistress of the situation, and if inwardly she was quaking,



no one was the wiser. She was obliged to inquire the way several times to the "Grand Metropolitan Museum," and a rascally little street urchin sent them a mile out of their way, and little Enoch was tired, and the fear of being "'zibited" was growing upon him so that he was pale and trembling, but he walked on steadily; indeed he could not well do otherwise, with Ludy Jane's resolute grip upon his arm.

They reached the place at last, and pushed their way through a throng that blocked up the doorways. There was a performance every afternoon, and the "curiosities" were on exhibition all the time. Judging from the posters which covered the walls, the girl who never ate anything was the great attraction at present, and Ludy Jane determined that, if it were possible, she would get acquainted with her sufficiently to inquire how she did it.

The "head man" whom Ludy Jane inquired for seemed to be difficult to find. Busy men turned their backs upon her without answering, cross men told her to "get out of the way," and jocose men were the worst of all. Ludy Jane saw that it was necessary to assume great dignity. She drew her shawl primly about her, made herself as tall as possible, and directed a workman standing near her to "tell the head man that a lady had brought a great attraction for his show." The workman



looked about for the lady, cast a curious glance at little Enoch, and ushered Ludy Jane into a small office, where three or four men were sitting. Ludy Jane announced her errand eagerly to a man who looked at her pleasantly. He smiled very much before she got through, and the other men smiled too, and looked curiously at little Enoch.

“He *is* a real midget, ain't he?” asked Ludy Jane anxiously. “And he's awful cute at arithmetic; he's 'most a lightning calculator. You just listen to him now!” And she proceeded to give little Enoch numbers to add and multiply. Little Enoch did his best; but there was a very large lump in his throat, and his head felt confused, and he was so afraid of making a mistake that he was much slower than usual; and Ludy Jane, anxiously reading the faces of the men, knew that they were not greatly impressed. But the manager said he was “a smart little fellow,” and the men conversed together in low tones. Then one of them opened the door, and called to some one to “send Dr. Jack there if he was about the place.” And after quite an interval, during which another man had come into the office who asked Ludy Jane and little Enoch more questions than all the others had done, the doctor came. He examined little Enoch's head, and even looked at his tongue, like old Dr. Bouncer at Bilberry.

“Grow? Of course he'll grow. There's noth-



ing the matter with him ; he's a little slow about getting started, that's all," said the doctor.

"Oh, shall I — *shall* I be like any other fellow?" cried little Enoch joyfully.

Ludy Jane thought he was selfish ; she felt a pang of disappointment that he was not a midget ; and then she suddenly hugged and kissed him self-reproachfully. Who could blame little Enoch for being glad that he was going to be "like any other fellow" ? And how delighted Uncle and Aunt Tackaberry would be ! But, oh, dear ! where was the Thanksgiving she had hoped for, and what were they going to do about the mortgage ?

The manager gave her two tickets for the afternoon performance, but she could not find voice to thank him, and then she and little Enoch went out of the office. The man who had asked her so many questions — Ludy Jane had gathered that he was the owner of the building — followed them out, and offered to take them home to Bilberry ; he said he had an errand in that direction himself. But Ludy Jane told him about Ben and the wagon, and that little Enoch wanted to see the show. And the man slipped a shining silver half-dollar into little Enoch's hand, and went away.

Ludy Jane took the half-dollar out of the small fist in which little Enoch had clutched it, and bit it and rung it.

"I calc'lated he might be fooling us with a bad



one, but he wa'n't," she said. Ludy Jane's old distrust of people had been to some degree revived by her morning's experience in Marketville. "You're going to let me save it up to pay the interest on the mortgage, ain't you?" And little Enoch, heroically putting aside visions of taffy and marbles, and things that would "go off," which had danced before his eyes, cheerfully assented.

The show was truly delightful. Even Ludy Jane forgot her troubles when the beautiful little trick ponies came on. She did not like the sword-swallower much, but little Enoch did; and he quite forgot himself, and jumped upon the seat and shouted, when a man cut off his head and then his limbs one by one, and "then they all flied together, and he 'came a man again." That was the way in which he afterward described it to Aunt Tackaberry.

When they reached the wagon they found Ben waiting for them, all ready to start. Little Enoch was so tired and sleepy that Ludy Jane had almost carried him for the latter part of the way. He gasped out to Ben, —

"I'm going to grow — to grow like any other fellow, and — and" —

Then he was fast asleep, and slept all the way home, while Ludy Jane sitting heavy-hearted in the darkness, with his head on her lap, thought of the empty Thanksgiving and the mortgage.



How brightly the light shone from the Creeper House windows! It was like Aunt Tackaberry to be a little extravagant in the matter of lamps to make their home-coming cheerful.

But what was this? The living-room, when they entered it, looked as if a great horn of plenty had been emptied there, so full of Thanksgiving goodies was it. Everything that one could think of to eat, it seemed to Ludy Jane, and tempting, mysterious packages here and there and everywhere. And surely those were joyful tears that were running down Aunt Tackaberry's cheeks; and Uncle Tackaberry was winking very hard, and making queer little noises in his throat, as he always did when he was highly delighted.

Aunt Tackaberry seized little Enoch and examined him, to be sure that he was safe and sound. "To think of exhibiting him! Oh, Ludy Jane! But all the good fortune has come from it. That man who owned the show building, Ludy Jane, was Joe Rickerby, who used to keep the tavern at the Corner where little Enoch's father was killed. Folks call him Mr. Rickerby, I suppose, now he has reformed and grown rich. And he says he's trying to make up, so far as he can, for the harm he did when he sold rum. And he wants to pay all little Enoch's expenses, and he gave me a lot of money for him, and when he's twenty-one he is going to give him a lot more; and he's going to



help us about the mortgage, so we shall have plenty of time to pay it. And such things for Thanksgiving! And a pretty cloak and hat for you, Ludy Jane, and toys and everything for little Enoch."

"Something that will go off?" asked little Enoch eagerly, propping his eyes open with his fingers.

"The *thankfulest* Thanksgiving, Ludy Jane, and what if we hadn't had you!" said Aunt Tackaberry.

Ludy Jane couldn't say a word, her heart was too full.

"And I'm going to grow—to grow like any other fellow," piped up little Enoch, struggling with sleep, and with an impression that life had turned into a fairy story, "and catch up with my head, and be good for something. And I sha'n't have to be 'zibited any more, shall I, Ludy Jane?"



## CHAPTER IV.

A LOW TIDE : THE STORY OF A BILBERRY BOY  
AND HIS FIDDLE.

THERE was a boy who lived on Bilberry Hill about midway between the Creeper House and Grif Horner's, who thought he was just about the most abused boy in the world. And it was scarcely to be wondered at that he thought so, since the most precious treasure he had in the world had been destroyed before his very eyes.

It was only Ben Holliday's old violin, that he had left in the barn chamber. Ben had been the "hired man" at Farmer Ramsey's; and when he went off, on the top of the stage, young Pitticus Ramsey had followed him, heartsore, with the violin. In truth, Pitt had lain awake half the night dreading the parting with what, to ordinary perceptions, was only a cracked old fiddle, but whose music had seemed to the boy as the morning stars singing together.

"I don't care nothing about the old thing. You can have it," Ben Holliday had said, changing his mind even as he extended his hands to



catch the violin which Pitticus was about to toss up to him. Ben was thought to be a rather dull fellow, but a warm heart quickens the wits.

Pitt had enjoyed five enchanted weeks with the violin. He had never been taught, but he could already play more tunes than Ben. He could play all the tunes he had ever heard. He practised with the bluebirds and the song sparrows; he was only waiting for the bobolinks!

People stopped in their carriages on the highway to listen. The teamsters, hauling wood to the river, called out for more. Hannah r'Ann cried because it was "so beautiful."

No one would have expected Hannah r'Ann to cry — perhaps because she always had so much to do. She was Pitt's sixteen-year-old sister, and their mother was dead. Hannah r'Ann "did as well's she could," Farmer Ramsey said; but he thought it was hard for him that she couldn't do more. Pitt felt that she might as well bring in a little wood and water herself as to be always calling after him.

Hannah r'Ann's thin, narrow shoulders were stooped, and her long, slender hands were hard and calloused in some places. She seldom told any one how she felt or what she liked; perhaps that was another reason why it seemed very queer that the violin made her cry.

Now, whoever liked it, the violin would be heard



no more. Pitt's father had found him playing on it in the barn when he thought he ought to be hoeing potatoes, and had thrown it upon the floor and ground it to pieces under his heavy cowhide heel. He said that was the last time that Pitt would waste strumming on Ben Holliday's old fiddle—he would find out that folks had got to work in this world!

The farmer thought he was doing right. A fiddle seemed to him an ungodly as well as a useless thing; and yet the expression on the boy's face hurt him—it was such white, dumb misery. It was a horror-stricken look, too, as if it were something living, human, that he had seen crushed and killed.

Hannah r'Ann was coming down the ladder from the hayloft with some eggs in her pink gingham apron, and she let the eggs fall. If you had known her, you would understand that she must have been very much moved to let the eggs fall.

“Father, that was a burning shame!” she cried.

Farmey Ramsey could scarcely have felt more startled and amazed if the little statue of Justice over the new town hall had opened its gilt lips and denounced him. He went off to the potato-field muttering that people who had children were warming vipers in their bosoms. But he could not forget what Hannah r'Ann had said. He could not have believed that she would be so disrespect-



ful; she had always been so mild and meek—like her mother. So she thought it was a “burning shame!”

Pitt strode out of the barn without a word, and went down to the potato-field. He hoed so vigorously that his father began to think that his discipline had been effectual; but in truth a desperate resolve was forming in the boy's mind. Hannah r'Ann suspected as much, and looked out of the pantry window as often as she could find time to do so, to make sure that he was still in the potato-field.

Pitt stole out of the house that night with a little bundle of his clothes. He had been obliged to wait, in a fever of suspense. Ordinarily his father and Hannah r'Ann were in bed by nine o'clock; but to-night his father had stayed up to read the *Agriculturist*, and Hannah r'Ann—she said—to mix bread.

Pitt was afraid the tide would be low. He was going down the river. North Bilberry was near the sea, and its narrow river shared the sea's tides. Sometimes the lumbermen's great rafts were stranded there, and often a whole fleet of little fishing-smacks.

Pitt was going to Cromack's saloon, three miles down the river. Cromack had heard him play on the violin, and had offered him a situation. Cromack's was a resort for the lumbermen on the



river, and the crews of the fishing-schooners and coasters. It was suspected that drinking and gambling were carried on there, and once a week there was a dance which was apt to end in disorder.

When Cromack had made him that offer Pitt had felt indignant. He had said that a boy could not think much of himself who would play for that gang at the saloon. But afterward, when the farm drudgery was hard and his father harsh, he had remembered how much money Cromack had offered him. It was more than a boy could ever earn in North Bilberry; and money made one independent.

A fellow who could earn so much money need not get up at four o'clock in the morning — unless he wanted to go fishing. He need not hoe and dig and mow until his hands were blistered and his back was bent. This thought had recurred to him sometimes when Hannah r'Ann couldn't even play checkers of an evening, because she had so much mending to do, and his father, to save kerosene, thought they had better go to bed if they were not working. But when the music made Hannah r'Ann cry, he felt, vaguely, yet strongly, that he was glad he had never played at Cromack's.

When the violin was ground under his father's feet, with that dreadful snapping of strings and a little sound that was like a half-sobbing wail — then, after the first heartbroken moment, Cromack's had beckoned.





PITT AND HIS FIDDLE.

“He felt that Hannah 'r Ann might as well bring in a little wood and water herself.”







The tide was low. It seemed not to have turned yet, although by the town clock it was time; or else it was an unusually low tide. The muddy flats lay bare as far as one could see in the darkness. Pitt had engaged Amasa Treddick's boat; luckily it was a light one! He must drag it all the way over those flats before he could push off; and the river mud was soft — not like the sandy shore bared by the ocean's tide.

Pitt felt as if his strength were as the strength of ten boys from the excitement of his mood and the firmness of his determination, but his muscles ached when at length he succeeded in pushing the boat into the tide. He drew a long breath of relief as he felt the boat beneath him, slipping gently through the water toward Cromack's.

The tide was coming in. It began to be a little hard to row against it with cramped and aching arms; but he must have gone nearly a mile now. Soon, just below the Bend, he should see the cheering lights of Cromack's.

Any light would be cheering. A moment later the bow of his boat was stuck hard and fast upon the mud flats! He could hear voices in the darkness; there was another rowboat in the same predicament, waiting for the tide to rise and float it off. He recognized Mrs. Deacon Barker's high-keyed voice, with the queer asthmatic whistle in it. The boat seemed to be full of women. They had been



down to the Bend to prayer-meeting, thought Pitt. Since the North Bilberry church was burned, three months before, people were always rowing down to the Bend to meeting.

Pitt found that his boat was stuck fast. He could not push it off without getting out into the deep, soft mud. He decided that he should have to wait for tide to float him off. In the other boat they were talking about raising money to build a new church. Mrs. Barker's voice came shrilly and distinctly to his ears.

"Deacon Ramsey isn't so very close, except to his own," she was saying. "There'd ought to be somebody to do the work there besides that little, narrer-chested Hannah r'Ann. I declare, it makes my blood boil to see how those two selfish men-creturs will sit and see her tug and slave! I've seen her struggling with a heavy churn while that lazy Pitt was fiddling in the barn."

"I s'pose they're only kind of thoughtless, too, as men-folks will be," came to Pitt's ears in the gentler voice of Mrs. Bouncer, the doctor's wife.

"When Hannah r'Ann is an angel, — and she's pretty nigh being one now, — then mebbe they'll think!" responded Mrs. Barker, sharply. "Well, I declare, Mrs. Horner, if you ain't real smart!" she added heartily.

For, with much puffing and straining, Mrs. Horner, fat but energetic, and with the setting of bread



for her Saturday's baking on her mind, had pushed off the boat.

Pitt drew a long, hard breath. He couldn't have borne any more of that kind of talk, he said to himself. He didn't believe that Mrs. Barker's blood had ever boiled as his was boiling now. To call him lazy! He felt of the blisters and the callous spots on his hands with satisfaction; they proved that the charge was not true. But about that churn—it *was* too heavy for Hannah r'Ann; and she never had any good times.

It was very still on the river. The soft lapping of the incoming tide was a sound that calmed one's angry excitement and made one drowsy. A soft white mist was floating in with the tide. It was peaceful and dreamlike—and yet Pitt knew that he was not asleep, dreaming; he knew it when a white, angelic shape passed before him on the water.

An angel—an angel that had once been Hannah r'Ann! The thin, bowed shape was visible in the flowing, white garment; there seemed to his excited imagination a shining halo about the head, but Hannah r'Ann's thin yellow hair was meekly parted beneath it.

It was visible but for a brief time, but it was certainly real—it was no dream! Mrs. Barker's awful prophecy had been fulfilled so cruelly soon; Hannah r'Ann was an angel, and he had begun to think!



Had she died in her sleep, utterly worn out, and had her ghostly form been sent to tell him? One pang she had been spared — she could not have known that he had run away to Cromack's.

He worked desperately to push off his boat, its bow was so deep into the soft mud, and it was a labor of much time. He peered eagerly into the mist now and then, but the shining presence had vanished. Had she come to assure him of her forgiveness? His sore heart found a little balm of comfort in the thought.

In his final successful effort to get the boat afloat, an oar snapped. It was hard work to get up the river in the thick mist and darkness, and with his strength already overstrained.

A gray morning sky hung over the village, and the earliest stir of the day was already in its streets as he hurried through. He wanted to ask Link Peavey, the milkman, who had come down from their hill, about Hannah r'Ann, but a lump in his throat choked back the question.

There was a thin curl of smoke from the chimney as he drew near his own home, but no other sign of life. Yes, there was a figure at the end of the lane, peering down the road as if in search of some one. He caught the flutter of Hannah r'Ann's pink gingham apron, the glint of her yellow hair, and the sob that he had been holding down tore its way from his throat — a queer sob,



more full of joy than a laugh could be. A robin in the elm-tree over his head echoed it with the air of practising a new note without knowing quite what to make of it.

Hannah r'Ann was there, just like herself, only a little paler, and with an anxious look in her soft blue eyes! Pitt thrust his bundle of clothes under the old lilac-bush, that she might not see it.

"Pitt, I went into your room and found you were out, and I was worried," said Hannah r'Ann. "I knew it wasn't a bit like you, but some of the North Bilberry boys — go — go down to Cromack's. Don't be angry, Pitt!" for a deep flush had suddenly submerged Pitt's freckles. "Father had been so unkind, and I know you have a hard time.

"I'm so glad there won't be such a dreadful place as Cromack's any more!" she went on. "Link Peavey just told me that a sheriff went there at midnight, and arrested the whole crowd and closed the place. You'll laugh at me, Pitt, but I went down the river last night, hunting for you! I had to go away up to Perrigo's long slip to push off, the tide was so low. It grew so foggy that I had to come back before I got as far as the Bend."

Pitt reflected a moment. "You had on your old gray waterproof and your little white hood with the shiny beads on it," he said slowly.

"Did you see me? Were you rowing on the river?" asked Hannah r'Ann.



“I was stuck in the mud,” said Pitt concisely.

“So was dear old Parson Plumtree!” said Hannah r’Ann. “He was going down to the Bend, but the new minister convinced him that it wouldn’t be safe to go on with the fog coming in. They came up here, Pitt, last night, just as you were going to bed, — you didn’t know that, — and it was to talk about you! There are to be open-air services all summer, or until the new church is built, and they want you to play for the choir on the violin! They talked a great deal about your talent, and, Pitt, father grew really proud of it! He said he would buy you a violin himself. I don’t know what else they said, for I ran off to hunt you up; but this morning father told me that he was going to get Emeretta Nickerson to do the housework, and I was to go down to Aunt Euphemy’s for a vacation!”

Pitt studied a plot of dandelions with absorbed interest.

“There’s lots that a fellow ought to do,” he said, in a gruff and mumbling fashion. “You sha’n’t ever tackle that heavy old churn again, anyhow.”

Farmer Ramsey came up from the pasture-bars, where he had been talking with Joel Loomis, the ferryman. He brightened a little shamefacedly at the brightness of his children’s looks.

“Consid’able many folks ketched in the mud last night,” he said. “Lucky you wa’n’t out, Pitt; that river’s a pesky place when the tide’s low.”



## CHAPTER V.

AN OWN RELATION ; NEW-COMERS TO PIPPIN HILL  
AND WHAT BEFELL THEM THERE.

THE country-week girl came up the lane "with her head in the air," so Gideon, who was watching her from the crotch in the old sweet-apple-tree, afterwards remarked to little Adoniram.

After some hesitation Gideon dropped down at her feet. Aunt Esther had especially enjoined it upon him to be kind to the country-week girl. Aunt Esther *would* remember that he used to get under the bed when Ludy Jane Tackaberry came to see Phemie ; but that was when he was small.

"Is this Pippin Hill ? Be you Truworthys ?" demanded the girl, looking critically at Gideon.

"Yes'm," said Gideon, and then reddened and scorned himself because he had been overpolite. But the girl was tall for fourteen — "Grazella Hickins, aged fourteen," the letter from the Country-week Committee had read — and she wore a wide sash, and a scarlet feather in her hat, and carried a pink parasol.

Phemie, who came around the corner of the



house just then, saw at a glance that the finery was shabby, but Gideon thought that Grazella Hickins was very stylish.

Grazella dropped her bundle upon the grass opposite the front gate, and seated herself upon it meditatively. She did not arise from it as Phemie opened the gate, but she surveyed her with an air of friendly criticism ; Phemie was fourteen too.

“ I like your looks real well,” she remarked at length, with a trifle of condescension. Her glance sought Gideon and little Adoniram, who peeped from behind the friendly shelter of the big black-currant-bush. “ I think boys are kind of — middling,” she added. It was evident that a more severe adjective than this had been withheld only from politeness. “ I’ve got an own relation, though, that’s an awful nice boy — awful smart too ; you never know what he’s going to do next.”

Little Adoniram pricked up his ears ; Aunt Esther had been known to say that of him without meaning to be complimentary. City standards of behavior seemed to be cheerfully different from those of Bilberry.

“ I wouldn’t have said a word if Jicksy could have come too,” continued Grazella, and her snapping black eyes slowly filled with tears. “ A cousin is a real comfort.”

“ Do you mean that you didn’t want to come ? ” asked Phemie, in a disappointed tone.



“ I’m in the newspaper business ; ’twas kind of risky to leave it ; there’s so many pushin’ in. But they don’t want me to home ; mother she’s married again, and *he* don’t like me. Jicksy is all I’ve got that’s really my own. If he could have come too ” —

She swallowed a lump in her throat with determination, and raised her eyes to the old sweet-apple-tree, whose fruit was yellowing in the August sunshine.

“ Are them apples ? ” she asked. “ They ain’t near so shiny and handsome as Judy Magrath keeps on her stand ; Judy shines ’em with her apron. I never was in the country before, and I don’t know as I’m going to like it. But I’m run down, they say, and I’ve got a holler cough, so I had to come.”

Phemie had almost begun to wish that they had not taken a country-week girl ; but now she noticed, suddenly, the meagreness of the tall form, and the deep hollows under the snapping black eyes, and repented. It was proverbial that people grew plump and strong on Pippin Hill.

Aunt Esther came out, and the girl’s manner softened under the influence of her tactful kindness. She seemed to like Grandpa Trueworthy too ; she said she had a grandpa once, and ’twas the most she ever did have that was like other folks.



But, after all, it was she and Gideon who seemed most congenial. Gideon explained, with a gravely approving wag of the head, that she was "business." Gideon flattered himself that he had abilities in that line, and he was cultivating them diligently. He had not expected to get any hints from a girl; but the country-week girl was assistant at a newspaper stand, and she also "tended" for Judy Magrath when Judy, as she explained with sad and severe head-shakings, was obliged to go to a funeral; but it was Judy's only infirmity, she added, very charitably.

Of course girls did not generally have such business opportunities as these, and it was Gideon's opinion that she was "considerable of a girl, anyhow." It must be confessed that Aunt Esther was a little anxious, and the minister expressed a doubtful hope that she would not prove "a corrupting influence." Gideon told Grazella all his business plans, which Phemie never cared to listen to. It was after tea one evening, and he and Grazella were sitting on the orchard wall, while Phemie and little Adoniram shook the old damson-plum-tree. He told her of the contract he had made with the owners of the canning factory at Bilberry Port, to supply them with berries for the whole season; and, what he wouldn't tell any fellow, of the great find he had made — a blackberry thicket over on the other side of Doughnut Hill, almost an



acre, and the berries just beginning to ripen! He was going to sell the plums off his trees, too, and, later on, his crab-apples; he'd got a business opening, she'd better believe!

Grazella's eyes snapped, and her thin, sallow cheeks reddened suddenly. "You ought to have a partner!" she cried.

Gideon shook his head doubtfully. "It's awful risky takin' partners," he said. "If they ain't smart, you have to do all the work; if they are, they are apt to cheat you. I did think of Pitt Ramsey, but all he wants is to fiddle."

"Jicksy!" suggested Grazella, wistfully, breathlessly. "I — I've got a job for him up here — a little one; I didn't tell, because I was afraid your aunt wouldn't ask me to stay another week if she knew; she's scairt of me, and I expect she'd be scairter of Jicksy." (The country-week girl's eyes were sharp.) "Mr. Ramsey, across the field, said he'd give him his board to help him take care of his cattle, because his son had gone away to learn to be a musician; and I heard they were wanting a boy to blow the organ in church. It wouldn't suit Jicksy to throw away his talents workin' for his board; but he's crazy for the country, and the doctor said 'twould be the makin' of him, account of his heart beatin' too fast, and whatever he has to eat, he always thinks it's enough to go 'round amongst a dozen that's poorer than him. He



could blow the organ, for when he belonged to the show he blew up the fat man — all the ingy-rubber fixin's that made him fat, you know — every day ; and once he worked for a balloon-man. But if you'd take him for a partner in your business " —

Grazella's eyes were so anxious that Gideon found it hard to shake his head with the proper decision, though he felt strongly doubtful whether Jicksy were "the man for his money."

"He's coming up to Mr. Ramsey's, anyway," said Grazella, made hopeful by Gideon's evident weakness. "And when you see how smart he is, you'll say you wouldn't have nobody else for a partner! He ain't jest common folks, like you and me, anyhow, Jicksy ain't; his adopted father was a lion-tamer in a circus, awful famous and talented; and Jicksy himself has rode elephants and camels, and travelled 'round in the boa-constructor's cage, and his own uncle is the wild man of the South Seas!"

Gideon's prudent mind still hesitated; he doubted whether these wonderful opportunities especially fitted a boy for the berry business.

Nevertheless, when Jicksy arrived, he succeeded in convincing Gideon of his desirability as a partner, and this in spite of the fact that his appearance was not pleasing. His face was so thin and wizened that it made him look like a little old man, and his black hair standing upright above



the snapping black eyes, that were remarkably like Grazella's, gave him a fierce and combative aspect. Farmer Ramsey professed himself satisfied; he said he was up an' comin', if he wa'n't very likely-lookin'. And he secured the position of organ-blower at the village church, an easy matter because it was not coveted by the Bilberry boys, owing to the fact that the wind in the ancient instrument would occasionally give out with an appalling screech, and the luckless and innocent blower was always soundly cuffed therefor by the sexton, who held that this summary measure was necessary to preserve the public respect for the organ — which the parish hoped to sell to a struggling young church at the Port as soon as it could afford a new one.

And Aunt Esther did invite Grazella to stay another week. The neighbors thought the reason that she gave a very queer one — because she was kept awake nights by the hard little cough in the room next hers.

Gideon had been influenced by Jicksy's ready tongue; he confided to Phemie that there ought to be one good talker in a business firm. He said, too, that he didn't expect an equal share of the profits, but realized the value of Gideon's capital and experience. (Gideon had seven dollars and fifty-nine cents, which he kept tucked away under the ticking of his bed, and counted over every night.)



Jicksy wasn't extravagant, either, as Gideon had feared that he would be. He discovered at once that they were paying Steve Pennyphair, the stage-driver, too much for carrying the berries to the Port. Link Peavey, the milkman, would carry them among his cans for half as much. Gideon had thought of asking Peavey; but the fact was, Bobby Peavey often went on the route instead of his father, and Bobby was known to be greedy. Jicksy managed that difficulty by fastening some canvas (old hay-caps) securely over the tops of the baskets. Gideon had thought of the plan; he had lain awake half of two nights reckoning how large a hole the price of canvas enough would make in that seven dollars and fifty-nine cents; he had not thought of those old hay-caps that Jicksy had found in the barn chamber.

Gideon was truly honest, and before the end of the second week of the partnership he began to wonder whether an ability to think of things ought not to offset experience; and he had brought home from the Port library a very large book on the relations of capital and labor. But before he had settled these knotty problems of the partnership in his mind, something happened that caused a great excitement at North Bilberry, and made many people say they were glad they had known better than to take country-week children; for if the girl had not been sent to Pippin Hill the boy would



not have come. Jicksey had gone to the canning factory at the Port to collect a bill, and he had not returned. The amount of the bill was twenty-four dollars and sixty-four cents; Gideon had "done" the addition seven times over, and then had Phemie do it; strangely enough, thought Gideon, Phemie had "a head for figures." He had run a pitchfork into his foot, so he could not go and collect the money himself; and although he had a prudent mind, he had not thought of distrusting his partner. But he had heard from the factory that Jicksy had collected the money — and he had disappeared.

As soon as the fact became known there was another development; the minister's watch was also missing. Jicksy had blown the organ for three services with fidelity and success; only once had that fatal scream interrupted the devotions of the congregation, and then it was in a mild and mitigated form. But after the evening service the minister had thrust his watch, which he kept on the desk while he preached, into the absurd little pocket with a tight elastic and a blue ribbon bow which his wife had made in the embroidered cover of his sermon-case. He explained that he put it there because he knew that his wife liked to have him (he was young and newly married), and therefore he was sure that his memory was not at fault. He had carelessly left the sermon-case on the desk,



where the sexton had found it — without the watch. The boy who blew the organ was the only one who had an opportunity to take it. It was the day after this loss that Jicksy took “French leave;” he had “killed two birds with one stone,” Bilberry people said.

Grazella’s eyes snapped continually; grandpa said she was as hoppin’ as a parched pea. She said folks had ought to be ashamed of themselves that could believe such things of Jicksy. The probabilities of the case made no impression whatever on Grazella’s mind.

The minister’s wife, who had taken a fancy to the girl, offered her consolation at the sewing-circle, which met two days after Jicksy’s departure.

“You mustn’t think we hold you responsible for what he has done,” she said gently. “He is only your cousin.”

Grazella stood up, her little bony cheeks aflame. “He ain’t neither only my cousin. I just let on, because he’d got up in the world, and I didn’t want folks heavin’ it at him that he had a sister that tended for Judy Magrath. He’s my own brother as ever was in the world; and when folks are thinkin’ he’s a *thief*, I just want ’em to know that he’s my brother. Jicksy is smarter’n other folks, and you never know what he’ll do next; and I told Gideon that he’d find him an awful square partner, and I stick to it — now.”



There were melancholy head-shakings in the sewing-circle; in fact, the whole circle shook its head as one woman; but it was whispered that the girl was probably honest, that the little scamp had deceived her, as he deceived others.

But at that very time an exciting rumor was circulating about Bilberry. Iky Snell shouted it at the open window of the room where the sewing-circle sat at supper.

A boy had been seen on the turnpike-road coming towards Pippin Hill, leading a giraffe.

"Looks as if he had a circus procession all to himself," declared Iky enviously; and if several persons who had seen him were not very greatly mistaken, the boy was Jicksy.

"If some boys should come home leadin' a giraffe, why, I might be kind of surprised," remarked grandpa; "but it does seem jest like Jicksy."

Grazella, who had been trying to swallow black-berry tart mingled with tears, tried very hard to be calm, though her thin little face paled and flushed. "You never know what Jicksy will do next," she said proudly.

Pippin Hill turned out; so did half Bilberry; every one ran towards the turnpike-road; even the sewing-circle supper-table was deserted in undignified haste.

It *was* Jicksy, footsore and begrimed, and ac-



commodating his gait to the tread of a creature whose body seemed to be set upon stilts, and whose neck might, as Phemie declared, be tied into a double bow-knot. The animal was lame, and its head wagged in a curious fashion.

Gideon, seeing his partner afar off, felt a thrill of delight in his honesty, which seemed probable since he was returning; but it was followed by a painful doubt concerning his "business bump." Jicksy had wished to buy Aaron Green's old horse, which Aaron would sell for twenty dollars. It was a good horse for the money, and it could easily be kept on their little farm; and the old blue cart in the barn could be repaired at very small expense, and perhaps what Jicksy said was true — that you had to have some style to a business to advertise it. Nevertheless, Gideon had not consented to buy Aaron Green's horse; he had felt that the twenty-four dollars and sixty-four cents must go under his bed-ticking with the seven dollars and fifty-nine cents, where he could count it every night. He felt a wild fear that Jicksy had bought the giraffe to draw the blue cart, following his theory that there was nothing like attracting attention to your business.

"I didn't run away!" Jicksy was saying angrily, as Gideon pressed through the crowd. "Gid understood that it was business that kept me, didn't you, Gid?" But Gideon looked away; he could



not say that he had understood, and he was certain that he didn't understand now about that giraffe.

“I heard that McColloh's show was stranded down to Westport; that's the show I b'longed to once; couldn't pay their bills, and the sheriff was after 'em; I thought maybe I could get a horse cheap.” There was silence as the crowd listened to Jicksy's explanation; only now and then a shrill question interrupted him. “Foot it? Of course I did.” (It was twenty miles to Westport.) “I wasn't goin' to fool away the firm's money. Comin' back I had the giraffe; they're slow travellers, and Squashy is lame. There wasn't any horse that I could buy — trained horses and Shetland ponies, and they were selling high. Squashy is lame and old, and sometimes he gets ugly.” (The crowd withdrew from Squashy's vicinity.) “Me and Nick Pridgett could always manage him. Nick is partner in a show now, and it's down to Hebron. I saw that in the paper. When Jim McColloh says to me, ‘There's old Squashy; gets on to his tears worse than ever; you can have him for twenty dollars if you want him.’ A giraffe for twenty dollars! If you knew the show business as well as I do you'd know that was a big bargain.” Jicksy addressed this remark to Gideon, but his partner was unresponsive; he saw, in fancy, the giraffe harnessed to the old blue cart; the equipage was attended by crowds, but the berry business was not



a circus. "Quicker'n scat I give him the money," pursued Jicksy, and Gideon groaned. "Then I telegraphed to Nick Pridgett, 'Will you pay fifty dollars for Squashy?' 'Bring him along and the money is yours,' telegraphs Nick. So I'm bringin' him along." The crowd cheered; Gideon's face brightened; this *was* business. "And I've got to bring him along pretty lively," continued Jicksy, "for there isn't a building in town big enough to hold him, unless it's the church."

That made every one think of the watch; but, queerly enough, just at that moment the minister was seen running in a very undignified manner up the lane. In dressing to officiate at a wedding at the Port, he had discovered his watch, chain and all, in one of his coat-tail pockets. He said that, knowing it was his duty to put it in some unusual place, and being absent-minded, he had stowed it away there.

Grazella hushed every one's exclamations before they reached Jicksy's ears. She said her cousin was proud, and she didn't want him to know that he had been suspected of stealing. Her cousin! The sewing-circle ladies looked at each other; but she held her head in the air, and looked so stern that no one dared, or had the heart, to contradict her. Jicksy was up in the world again, and she was not going to have him dragged down by a sister who had tended for Judy Magrath! When



Jicksy returned from Westport bringing a dollar's worth of blue paint to paint the old cart, the partnership was settled upon a firm basis. Jicksy said Bilberry was a place that suited him "down to the ground," and the minister's wife had taken Grazella to live with her. That made him want to stay; they hadn't any real own folks, but just each other. Gideon said that, seeing Jicksy had put some capital into the business, as you might say, henceforth they would share and share alike.

They got Grif Horner, who understands business, to draw up a contract, and the firm is flourishing so that there is a prospect that before long Enoch Tackaberry, who has "caught up with his head," and is a remarkable mathematician, may be hired to keep the accounts.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CHRISTMAS TOLL.

ON the other side of the town from Bilberry Hill was the Port, with its wharves on the river, and its long, long toll-bridge.

Grandma Pettigrew liked to take the toll, for she was always ready for a bit of cheerful gossip with Bilberry people or strangers. December had scarcely more than come when she began telling all passers-by, —

“We’re expecting our Freedom home Christmas!” Her soft little laugh of delight always caused home people to look shocked, and the strangers to linger for more news of Freedom.

“Our Freedom’s in Bagley and Matchell’s great store up to Boston, you know,” grandma would say, if Aunt Cordelia did not come out to check her. “He’s working his way up, and I expect he’ll be one of the firm before long, Squire Bagley thinks so much of him.”

Aunt Cordelia had so often overheard this that she would leave the rug she was “hooking” or the bed-comforter she was making, and rush out to fore-



stall grandma. And when Sar' Abby came home at night from school, Aunt Cordelia would say, —

“She's making us the laughing-stock of the town. I think she'd ought to be told that that boy is bringing her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

“Oh, don't, don't, Aunt Cordely!” Sar' Abby would say piteously. “Freedom never did it — never!”

“How can you go on saying such a thing, Sar' Abby?”

“He didn't — I know he didn't!”

“How do you know, child?”

“Why, he's *Freedom*, you know.”

For when the dreadful news came to the toll-house that her brother Freedom had been discharged from Bagley and Matchell's for theft, Sar' Abby had stoutly refused to believe him guilty, no matter how often Aunt Cordelia called her a “child.” Still, one does not like to be called a child when one is fifteen, and so Sar' Abby was shy of bringing up the question of Freedom.

But she persuaded Uncle 'Lisha — who, after a long life of vain struggling with a stony farm, had come to being a toll-bridge-keeper — that he should tell Aunt Cordelia to keep Freedom's trouble from grandma. Sar' Abby was afraid the evil tidings would kill grandma, who liked boys, and believed in Freedom above all.



So it happened that the dear old woman was planning for all possible Christmas merrymaking because Freedom was coming home, while even Sar' Abby had almost lost knowledge of the boy's whereabouts.

Sol Winkley, another Bilberry boy who went to Boston to seek his fortune, had come home for Thanksgiving with the latest news Sar' Abby had heard of her brother.

"I stumbled on Freedom by accident two weeks ago," Sol said, but not to Sar' Abby. "He told me he'd been having mighty hard times — been sleeping on wharves and doorsteps, and on the seats in the Common, and had very little to eat. But he wouldn't take a quarter I offered him. There wasn't much left of the old twinkle in his eyes — no, nor anything that looked like Freedom, unless 'twas the scar on his forehead that he got when his double-runner smashed into Deacon Ramsey's ox-sled."

"Did he confess he took that money?" asked Sol's interlocutor.

"Not much he didn't!" And I don't know that he did take it, either," said Sol uneasily, turning to go.

"Well, your cousin Job thinks he did," said the other.

"I don't know that Job is much of a judge of character," said Sol, walking away hastily.



As he, too, was now employed in Bagley & Matchell's, the Bilberry folks thought it sensible in him to evade talk about the theft. For Sol could not protest his belief in Freedom's innocence without indirectly attributing injustice to Squire Bagley, who had discharged the boy; and it would never do in Bilberry to accuse Squire Bagley of anything wrong or unwise.

Squire Bagley was himself the development of a poor Bilberry boy who had gone up to Boston years before to seek his fortune. Though he found it, he never forgot Bilberry. His big store gave employment to every bright Bilberry boy for whom he could find occupation. His big mansion near the village was the residence of his family in the summer, and so particularly their home that they always came there for a week at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thus Squire Bagley was deservedly the potentate and most popular of Bilberry men. It would not have been judicious for Sol to cast reflections on his employer.

But Sol Winkley suspected Freedom was innocent; and Sol's cousin, Job Winkley, could have increased Sol's doubt if he had wished to. Job had been a porter at Bagley & Matchell's when Freedom was discharged. Some months later he had come home ailing to Bilberry, confirming the public understanding that he was shiftless as well as subject to "spells."



Sar' Abby had tried in vain to pry out of Job some of the facts concerning the accusation against her brother. Job said, "It 'peared as if Freedom took the money," and that was all he would say. But his peculiar head-shakings convinced all Bilberry that Squire Bagley had not erred.

"I think I'd better stay home from school, Aunt Cordely," Sar' Abby had said, when the charge against Freedom was in the public mouth.

"I guess I wouldn't if I was you," Cordelia said kindly. "It's no blame to you. And you ought to go — such a fine scholar as you are. Haven't the committee held you up as an example? You *go* — I don't expect anything else but what you'll be keeping school before you're seventeen, like Lupiry Lamson over to the Falls."

A week before Christmas, when Sar' Abby came in from school, she found Aunt Cordelia in an uncommonly cheerful frame of mind.

"Something good has happened," she said, "but it kind of rubs the wrong way. Maybe it's because I'm too proud."

"There is word from Freedom?" cried Sar' Abby.

"No, child; but the selectmen have voted to let us keep all the toll Christmas week. I suppose they saw the town would have to help us soon, the way things are going, and that was as good a way as any. It doesn't *look* so bad for us as



some ways would ; it looks kind of like raising our pay."

"O Aunt Cordely, it will be ever so much money!" cried Sar' Abby. "Everybody goes across to Gobang to buy Christmas presents."

Gobang was the town on the other side of the river, a growing town with large lumbering interests, though Bilberry remembered when Gobang had been too small and poor to pay half the expense of building the bridge that joined the two places ; but now Gobang, full of bustle and business, was the only market that the slow-going Bilberry farmers needed.

Sar' Abby's heart sang for joy. Good things always happened at Christmas, she told herself.

"Maybe we will have enough money to send for Freedom, Aunt Cordely," said she.

"Couldn't find him if we did, child."

"Oh, yes, we could, Aunt. Sol Winkley is coming home for Christmas, the same as he did for Thanksgiving. He will be likely to know where Freedom is. Good things always happen at Christmas."

The girl impulsively joined her fresh voice to the hymn that her grandma and Gran'ther Petherick, from the poor-house, were singing in the best room.

They had sat in the singing-seats together when young ; they loved to sing the old hymns, and



now their thin old voices were piping and quavering:—

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The angel of the Lord came down,  
And glo-o-ory sho-one around.

“Good for you, Sar’ Abby!” said grandma, with a little soft gurgle of delight, as the girl went in to shake hands with Gran’ther Petherick. “My, you helped us out! You ain’t a mite afraid but what Freedom will come home, I can see.”

“I’m ’most sure he’ll come, grandma,” said Sar’ Abby stoutly.

“I’ve got his red mitts ’most knit already,” quavered grandma. “An’ I’m goin’ to set to work a-crackin’ a heap of shagbarks for him — Freedom was always great for shagbarks. An’ we *might* hev a turkey, Cordely. Why, with such sleighin’ an’ folks comin’ an’ goin’, afoot an’ all, there’ll be more’n a dollar a day in the toll-money — two, mebby.”

But next day came a rain that threatened to spoil the sleighing, and for two days afterward the travel across the bridge was very light. Bilberry Christmas shoppers patronized Mr. Ferris’s little fancy-goods store on Bilberry’s main street, and Bilberry geese and turkeys intended for the Go-bang market were reprieved for three days.

It was on the third day that Sol Winkley passed



the toll-house on his homeward way ; but he had only sad news of Freedom for Sar' Abby, who ran out to meet him with a thumping heart.

"Freedom and I've had different luck," he said. "I'm mighty sorry about Freedom. The last I saw of him he was staying in Cat Alley with a young man in the boot-blackening business. Don't take on so, Sar' Abby ; 't isn't such a bad business. Sometimes things go down for a man, and sometimes they go up. You remember what hard times it was with me last winter? And now" — Sol merely looked down complacently over his new red necktie to his very new overcoat.

"But Freedom takes it hard," he went on. "If he had any good clothes to hunt up a job in, he'd have more chance. But he didn't want to stop and talk to me."

Sar' Abby went in, choking back her sobs and drying her tears lest grandma should take alarm. But the dear old woman was absorbed in her vision and her hymn.

"'Fear no-o-ot!' he cried," she sang over her knitting. "Sar' Abby, you don't expect Freedom's hands will be too small for them mitts, do you?" and she quavered on : —

Good tidings o-of great jo-oy I bring  
To you-ou-ou and a-all mankind.

Next morning, but two days before Christmas,



was cold and clear. The sleigh-bells jingled merrily up to the bridge; the little hoard of toll-money grew quickly, and Sar' Abby was counting it over joyfully when Job Winkley came along with his hobbling old horse and dilapidated sled.

"Why, Job's going across to Gobang with a load of Christmas trees and wreaths!" cried Sar' Abby, looking out of the window.

"And well he may," said Aunt Cordelia. "He, with his wife and three girls, 'most starved out there to their crow's nest of a farm — if you could call such a place a farm!"

"How pretty the sleigh looks! My, I hope he'll get 'em all sold," said Sar' Abby.

"Yes, but the trees are scraggly. He took just the first he could find. Trust Job Winkley for that," said Aunt Cordelia, coming to the window. "The wreaths? Well, Clorindy must have made 'em. She's smart enough to keep their heads above water if she only had a chance."

"Why, what's the matter with Job?" cried Sar' Abby, running out. She had meant to ask him once more if he wouldn't tell her all he knew about the charge against Freedom; she had meant to take the risk that he would again shake his head in that melancholy way which suggested that he did not wish to give her the painful truth. But at the sight of his pallid face the intention gave place to pure pity. For big, brawny Job was lean-



ing back stiffly among his evergreens, and the reins had fallen and were dragging about the old horse's legs.

"I've got one of them 'ere numb spells!" he groaned. "I felt it a-comin', but Hannah kept a-harryin' me to go. And there was Clorindy; seems's if I couldn't bear to have Clorindy disap'nted about the typewriter. I was goin' to get her one on instalments. Lawyer Blade was goin' to let her hev some copyin' to do. She learnt how to write on it of Victory Green — her that was down here from Boston last summer. And 'twas a chance for Clorindy."

"Oh, well, don't give up, Job. Mebbe you'll be all right soon," said grandma.

"No, it's one of my spells. I aint got no luck, and we never had such a chance before. And now the trees and wreaths might's well be pitched out into the road."

They led him into the house and let him lie on the old sofa. Grandma prepared a hot drink, and Aunt Cordelia a mustard-plaster, while Sar' Abby, with a great pity for Clorinda in her heart, hurried away to bring old Doctor Bouncer. While she ran she made up her mind that Clorinda must have that typewriter. Sar' Abby knew Clorinda Winkley well, for though too lame and delicate to attend school regularly, Clorinda sometimes got above Sar' Abby in arithmetic



“You won’t be able to get over the four miles back home before night,” said the doctor, when he had examined Job’s condition.

“Oh, it’s too bad!” Job fairly wept. “I’ll be too late for the Christmas fixin’s, and poor Clo-rindy can’t get that machine.”

“Yes, she can, she shall!” struck in Sar’ Abby. “I’ll drive the sled over to Gobang, and sell your Christmas things.”

“Sar’ Abby Pettigrew! Aren’t you ashamed to think of such a thing?” cried Aunt Cordelia.

“No, I’m not! I’d be ashamed not to,” said Sar’ Abby stoutly.

“You’d ought to have been a boy!” cried her aunt.

“I wish I was for one day, or that Freedom was here! He’d sell ’em for you, Job.”

“Oh, I couldn’t hev him — nor I can’t let you. It’d be too much,” groaned Job, looking down dismally.

“But I’m going,” insisted Sar’ Abby. “Why would it be too much? What do you mean?”

“Well, a gal sellin’ Christmas-trees might look kind of oncommon. But you’d sell ’em,” said Job, with a changed air.

“You just go, Sar’ Abby,” whispered grandma. “They’re dreadful poor, and it’s Christmas time.”

Sar’ Abby did go. She went in her old fitch-fur cape, and a pair of red mittens like Freedom’s,



which granny had secretly knitted, and now suddenly produced. She went with charity in her heart, and the flush of young enterprise in her cheeks, and sitting among the greenery, she was as pretty a picture as Gobang saw that day.

So thought Sol Winkley when he came across from Bilberry that afternoon, went to Gobang's market-place to buy some "fixin's for Christmas," and suddenly saw Sar' Abby among the trees and wreaths. Alas! almost nobody had bought from her, for Job's fit of energy had come after Gobang had nearly satisfied its demand for greenery.

"Why, Sar' Abby Pettigrew! Have you gone into business?" laughed Sol.

"O Sol, I wish you'd help me, for you understand selling goods, I'm sure. I don't. Folks don't seem to want much of anything from me."

"Well, folks don't show much taste," said Sol gallantly. "Why, of course I'll try to help you. But I guess it's too late for big sales. Say, why didn't you come two days ago?"

"Why, you don't suppose I'd have waited till now? These aren't our things. They are your Cousin Job's." And then Sar' Abby explained.

Sol's brow darkened, and he got down from his seat beside the girl.

"No," he said. "I'm not going to do anything for Job Winkley. He and I don't train in company. To think of his letting you work for him!



You! He'd ought to be ashamed of himself worse than ever."

"Why, the poor man is sick, Sol."

"I don't care — he ought to have died before he'd let Freedom Pettigrew's sister give him charity."

"Why, what do you mean, Sol, bringing in Freedom in that way?"

"Oh, I daren't say — I daren't." Sol walked away a few steps. But his indignation mastered the cool Yankee boy, and he turned back suddenly with a low cry.

"I will tell you, Sar' Abby," he said furiously. But he retained his caution so firmly that he came to the seat beside her, and whispered, lest passers-by should hear, "Freedom never stole that money, Sar' Abby!"

"Of course he didn't, Sol. But who did?"

"Ask Job straight if he did!"

"Job!"

"Mind, I can't prove it. But I'm sure Freedom didn't, and Job was the only one except him that could. Mind, I only suspect him. I've done so this long time, but I've got to be careful. But you put it right to him that you've heard he did, Sar' Abby, and you'll see."

"O poor Clorindy!" said Sar' Abby.

"O poor Sar' Abby and poor Freedom — that's what I say!" snapped Sol. "You just drive the





SAR' ABBY'S CHRISTMAS LOAD.

"Sitting among the greenery, she was as pretty a picture as Gobang saw that day."







stuff right back, and face that mean cousin of mine with accusing words — that's my advice, and that's all I'll say, and don't you ever tell I gave you the word."

Then Sol, his fit of moral indignation past, stalked away with a sense that he had been extremely rash.

The girl among the Christmas greenery sat so still and pale that passers-by thought she was in deep grief over her failure to dispose of her load. A few of the more pitiful who stopped to look at her stock, perhaps buy from her, could scarcely rouse her from her reverie.

She was seeing a vision of Freedom as grandma saw him, happy and prosperous and trusted, and busy in the great store. With that was the vision of Freedom as Sol had seen him — accused, half-starved, ragged, in Cat Alley, among the boot-blacks. Tears came fast into Sar' Abbey's eyes.

Poor grandma! thought the girl, and had a moment of wild hate for Job as her vision changed to the gentle old woman mixing the hot drink for the criminal and the false witness against Freedom. But grandma had so instilled tenderness into the girl's heart that soon a deep pity for Clorinda, and divine forgiveness for Job, filled her soul. It was with the exultation of victory that she drove out of the crowd, determined to undertake the task from which her timidity had shrunk in the early day.



“I will go up the hill to where the rich people’s houses are,” said Sar’ Abby’s resolution, “and try to sell these things from door to door. That’s what grandma would wish,” and her triumph found Christmas words, and she clearly sang, though nobody could have heard it a yard away:—

Glad tidings of great jo-oy I bring  
To you-ou-ou and a-all mankind.

Job Winkley was at the toll-house door that evening as Sar’ Abby came over the bridge with a third of the greenery still unsold. He looked limp, dejected, but not more ill than was his wont.

“How are you now, Job?” asked the girl.

“I’ve pulled through this spell, but I might as well not,” he said. “You couldn’t sell ’em all, eh? How much did you get, Sar’ Abby?”

She told him.

“Oh, well,” he said, “there ain’t enough to go round, and poor Clorindy can’t have that typewriter. Everybody can have luck but us.”

Sar’ Abby, unthanked, silently got out of the sled and went into the toll-house.

“Squire Bagley’s come home,” cried grandma. “He’s just went by in his big Russian sleigh with plumes a-noddin’ so pretty. I didn’t know but what he had Freedom along with him. But Freedom will be home Christmas, wont he, Sar’ Abby?”



"He ought to, grandma," said the girl.

"She had gone to the little drawer where the toll-money was kept. From this she took what she calculated could be spared, and went out to Job.

"You can put that with what the wreaths brought," she said, "and it will be enough for the typewriter, wont it, Job? It's a little present for Clorinda."

She could not bear to look at him, nor could he look at her. He put away her hand with the money, then changed his mind, took it with a choking sound in his throat, got upon his sled, and drove away toward home.

"He never so much as thanked you," said Aunt Cordelia. "But that's always the way. If you stoop to objects beneath you, you'll always get your come-uppance."

"I guess he was thankful enough," said Sar' Abby. "But he couldn't tell."

Not very long after this Job Winkley's old horse may have wondered why he was stopped at the entrance to the long avenue leading up to Squire Bagley's mansion. The house was all aglow with Christmas lights. The illumination abashed Job. He sat on his sled irresolute, and gazed at the flood of light with dim, lack-lustre eyes. The horse waited for his decision.

"'Tain't no time, Christmas time ain't," he mut-



tered. "And Freedom will come out all right. What good if I did? Only hurt me—and I never had a chance."

The old horse obeyed a jerk of the reins and started on. But he was stopped again, and turned and driven quickly up the avenue.

"I felt as if a strong hand was drorin' me on," Job afterward confided to his wife.

But what had drawn him on was only the small hand in a red mitten that had lain a moment in his, after slipping into it the money for the first instalment on Clorinda's typewriter.

Squire Bagley's "great Russian sleigh, with plumes a-noddin'," delighted grandma hugely by stopping at the toll-house early next morning and discharging there the squire, who looked much moved, and blew his nose emphatically and often.

"I've telegraphed Matchell to hunt up Freedom, rig him out in good shape, and send him straight home for Christmas," he said. "I never felt so mean about anything in my business life as judging that boy wrongfully. All we can do now is make it up to him. He shall have his salary from the day he left, and a place in the store where he'll not be overlooked in promotion. You must all try and forgive me, for the circumstances deceived me terribly, and that scoundrel Job lied.

"But please don't punish Job," pleaded Sar' Abby.



“Well, no, I don’t mean to. His wife and daughter must be considered — and besides, he confessed — and at any rate he’s not long for this world.”

Grandma did not at all understand what had happened except that the squire was bringing Freedom home in state, because he thought more of him than even she had supposed. But happy tears ran down her soft old cheeks.

“No matter what you say, Cordely,” she said, while they watched for him, “we’ve got to have a Christmas turkey for Freedom.”

So they did, and a party too; and it was the merriest Christmas party in all Bilberry. At dinner Freedom stood up to ask the blessing, very erect and tall, and wofully thin, but with a proud flush on his cheeks as became a boy who had not flinched through a sore trial, and whose sister had always believed in him.

After dinner grandma and Gran’ter Petherick from the poor-house sang delightful and funny songs of long ago. And it was late, late in the evening, when Sar’ Abby said they would all be able to go to sleep with a “real Christmassy feeling” if they joined in the song: —

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The angel of the Lord came down,  
And glo-o-ory sho-one around!



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE WHITE TURKEY'S WING : A PIPPIN-HILL STORY.

THERE were going to be delightful times at the Judd Farm on Pippin Hill. Mary Ellen was coming home from her school-teaching at the Falls, and Nahum from 'tending in Blodgett's store at Edom Four Corners, and Uncle and Aunt Piper with Mirandy and Augustus and the twins were coming from Juniper Hill, and there was every prospect of as merry a Thanksgiving as one could wish to see. And Thanksgivings were always merry at the Judd farm on Pippin Hill. Uncle Ichabod might be a trifle over-thrifty, — a leetle nigh, his neighbors called him, — but there was no stinting at Thanksgiving ; and when a boy is accustomed to perpetual corn bread and sausages, he knows how to appreciate unlimited turkey and plum-pudding ; and when he is used to gloomy evenings, in which Uncle Ichabod holds the one feeble kerosene lamp between himself and a newspaper, and Aunt Drusilla knits in silent meditation on blue-yarn stockings, he knows how good it is to have the house filled with lights and people, jolly



games going on in the parlor, and candy-pulling in the kitchen. All these delights were directly before Phineas Judd, as he dangled his legs from the stone wall, and whittled away at the skewers which Clorinda, the "hired girl," had demanded of him; and yet his heart was as heavy as lead.

He did not even look up when his sister Lizy Ann came up the hill toward him. He knew it was Lizy Ann, because she was hop-skipping and humming; and he knew that Aunt Drusilla had sent her to Mrs. Deacon Baldwin's to get a recipe for snow-pudding; she had said she "must have something real stylish, because she had invited the new minister and his daughter to dinner."

"O Phineas! don't you wish it was always going to be Thanksgiving day after to-morrow?" Lizy Ann continued her hop-skipping; she went to and fro before the dejected figure on the wall. Lizy Ann was tall, for twelve; and she had a very high forehead, which made Aunt Drusilla think that she was going to be "smart." Aunt Drusilla made her comb her hair straight back from the high forehead, and fasten it with a round comb; not a vestige of hair showed under Lizy Ann's blue hood, and her forehead looked bleak and cold, and her pale blue eyes were watery, and her new teeth were large and overlapped each other; but Aunt Drusilla said it was no matter, if she was only good and "smart."



“Why, Phineas, is anything the matter?” Lizy Ann stopped, breathless, and the joy faded out of her face.

Phineas continued to whittle in gloomy silence. His hands were almost purple with cold; and the wind flapped his large pantaloons — they were Uncle Ichabod’s old ones, and Aunt Drusilla never thought it worth the while to consider the fit if they were turned up so that he could walk in them.

“You don’t care because the new minister and his daughter are coming?” pursued Lizy Ann. Phineas’s tastes, as she well knew, did not incline to ministers and schoolmasters as companions in merrymaking. “She’s a big girl, almost sixteen, and she will go with Mary Ellen; and we shall have Mirandy and Augustus and the twins, and the Treddick girls and Nick Tweedle are coming in the evening; and we shall have such fun, and such lots to eat!”

“That’s just like you. You’re friv’lous. You don’t know what an awful hard world it is. You haven’t got a realizing sense,” said Phineas crushingly.

This last accusation was one with which Aunt Drusilla was accustomed to overwhelm Clorinda when she burned the pies or wore her best bonnet to evening meeting. Lizy Ann’s face grew so long that it looked like the reflection of a face in a



spoon, and the tears came into her eyes. It must be a hard world, since Phineas found it so. He was much stouter-hearted than she; his round, snub-nosed, freckled face was generally as cheerful as the sunshine. Phineas had his troubles, — Lizy Ann well knew what they were, — but he bore them manfully. He didn't like to have Clorinda use his hens' eggs when he was saving them to sell; and perhaps it was even more trying to be at school when the eggs-man came around, and have Aunt Drusilla sell his eggs, and put the money into her pocket. Phineas wished to go into business for himself, and he had a high opinion of the poultry business for a beginning. Cyrus, their "hired man," had once lived with a man at North Edom who made fabulous sums by raising poultry. But Aunt Drusilla's peculiar views of the rights of boys interfered with his accumulation of the necessary capital. All these troubles Phineas bore bravely. It must be some great misfortune that caused him to look so utterly despairing, and to accuse her of such dreadful things, thought poor Lizy Ann.

Phineas took pity on her woful face. "P'r'aps you're not so much to blame, Lizy Ann. You don't know," he said, in a somewhat softened tone. "It's Aunt Drusilla."

Lizy Ann heaved a long, long sigh. It generally *was* Aunt Drusilla.

"She's told Cyrus to kill the — the white tur-



key!" continued Phineas, with almost a break in his voice.

"To kill Priscilla!" gasped Lizy Ann. "She couldn't—she wouldn't! O Phineas! Cyrus won't do it, will he?"

"Hasn't he got to if she says so?" demanded Phineas grimly.

"But Priscilla is yours," said Lizy Ann stoutly.

"She says she only let me call her mine. Just as if I didn't save her out of that weak brood when all the rest were killed by the thunder-storm! And brought her up in cotton behind the kitchen stove, no matter how much Clorinda scolded! And found her nest with thirty-one eggs in it in the old pine stump! And she knows me, and follows me round."

"I shouldn't think Aunt Drusilla would want to," said Lizy Ann reflectively.

"She wants a big turkey, because the minister and his daughter are coming to dinner; and she doesn't want to have one of the young ones killed, because she is too stin—"

"I wouldn't care, if I were you. After all, Priscilla is only a turkey," said Lizy Ann, attempting to be cheerful.

But this well-meant effort at consolation aroused Phineas's wrath. "That's just like a girl!" he cried. "What do you care if you only have blue beads and lots of candy?"



Poor Lizy Ann's face lengthened again, and her jaw fell. "There's my two dollars and thirty cents, Phineas," she said anxiously.

Phineas started, and a ray of hope flushed his freckled face.

"We can buy a big turkey over at Jonas Hicks's for all that money," continued Lizy Ann. And then she drew nearer to Phineas, and added a thrilling whisper, "And we can hide Priscilla!"

Phineas stared at her in amazement. He had never expected Lizy Ann to come to the front in an emergency. Perhaps the high forehead meant something, after all. "*She'll* be after you about the money, you know," he said, with a significant nod towards the house.

"It's my own. I earned it picking berries and weeding old Mrs. Jackman's garden. It's in my bank, and the bank won't open till there's five dollars in it."

Phineas's face darkened.

"But we can smash it," said Lizy Ann calmly.

*Certainly* the high forehead meant something.

Priscilla was hidden. The "smashing" was done in extreme privacy behind the stone wall of the pasture. Cyrus was bound over to secrecy, as was also Jonas Hicks, who, after some haggling, sold them his finest turkey for two dollars and thirty cents.

"Cyrus is gettin' real handy and accommodatin',"



said Clorinda the next morning, when they were all in the kitchen, and Phineas, ignobly arrayed in Clorinda's kitchen-belle apron, was chopping, and Lizy Ann was seeding raisins. "I expected nothin' but what I'd got to pick the white turkey, and he's fetched her in all picked and drawed."

"She don't weigh quite so much as I expected," said Uncle Ichabod, as he suspended the turkey on the hook of the old steelyards.

Phineas and Lizy Ann slyly exchanged anxious glances, and Lizy Ann's face was suffused with red, even to the roots of her tow-colored hair.

Mary Ellen and Nahum came that night; and bright and early on the morning of Thanksgiving Day came Uncle and Aunt Piper with Mirandy and Augustus and the twins, and the house was full of noise and jollity. Phineas was obliged to go to church in the morning with the grown people; but Lizy Ann staid at home to help Clorinda, and after much manœuvring she found an opportunity to run down to the shanty in the logging-road and feed the white turkey. The new minister and his daughter came to dinner, and Phineas and Lizy Ann were glad that the children had seats at the far end of the table. The minister's daughter was sixteen, and looked very stylish; and Aunt Drusilla said she was glad enough that they had the snow-pudding, and that she had asked Aunt Piper to bring her sauce-dishes.



It had begun to be very merry at the far end of the table, in a quiet way; for Aunt Drusilla's stern eye wandered constantly in that direction, and Phineas and Lizy Ann had almost forgotten that there were trials and difficulties in life, when suddenly Aunt Piper's loud voice sounded across the table, striking terror to their souls.

"You don't say that this is the white turkey? Seems kind of a pity to kill her, she was so handsome. But she eats real well. Now, you mustn't forget to let me take a wing home to Sabriny. You know you always promised her a wing for her hat when the white turkey was killed."

Sabriny was Aunt Piper's niece, who had been left at home to keep house.

"Sure enough I did," said Aunt Drusilla; "you go out to the barn, Phineas, and get Cyrus to give you one of the white turkey's wings; and, Lizy Ann, you wrap it up nice, so it will be handy for your aunt to carry. Go as soon as you've ate your dinner, so's to have it ready, for Uncle Piper has got to get home before sundown."

"Yes'm," answered Phineas hoarsely, without lifting his eyes from his plate. He could scarcely eat another mouthful, and Lizy Ann found it unexpectedly easy to obey Aunt Drusilla's injunction to decline snow-pudding lest there should not be "enough to go round."

"What are you going to do?" asked Lizy Ann,



overtaking Phineas as he walked dejectedly through the woodshed, as soon as dinner was over.

“I don’t know; run away and be a cowboy like Hiram Trickey, I guess.”

Lizy Ann’s heart gave a throb. Hiram Trickey had sent home a photograph, which showed him to have become like the picture of a pirate in Cyrus’s old book, with pistols and a dirk at his belt.

“Phineas, the new minister’s daughter has got a white gull’s wing on her hat, and it’s up in the spare chamber on the bed; and I don’t think Sabriny would ever know the difference.”

Phineas stared in wild-eyed, speechless wonder. Lizy Ann had never shown herself a leading spirit before.

“It will be dark before the minister’s daughter goes, and there’s a veil over the hat; and if we put a little something white on it, I’m sure she won’t notice. And when she does notice she won’t know what became of it. And we can save up and buy her another gull’s wing.”

“Sabriny ’ll know,” said Phineas, but there was an accent of hope in his voice.

“They don’t have turkeys, and they know that Priscilla wasn’t a common turkey; perhaps they won’t know the difference,” said Lizy Ann. “Anyway, it will give us time to get Priscilla out of the way. If Aunt Drusilla finds out, she will have her killed right away.”



"You go and get the wing off the minister's daughter's hat, Lizy Ann," directed Phineas firmly.

Lizy Ann worked with trembling fingers in the chilly seclusion of the spare chamber, but she made a neat package. And she stuck on to the hat, in place of the wing, some feathers from the white rooster.

There was an awful moment as Uncle and Aunt Piper were leaving.

"Just let me see whether he's got a real handsome wing," said Aunt Drusilla, taking the package which Lizy Ann had put into Aunt Piper's hand.

"Malachi is in considerable of a hurry, and they've done it up so nice," said Aunt Piper. "There! I 'most forgot my sauce-dishes, and Sabriny's going to have company to-morrow!"

Lizy Ann drew a long breath of relief as the carriage disappeared down the lane, and Phineas privately confided to her his opinion that she was "an orfle smart girl."

There was another dreadful moment when the minister's daughter went home. They had played games until a very late hour, for Bilberry, and she dressed so hurriedly that she did not observe that anything had happened to her hat; but as she went down the garden walk Phineas and Lizy Ann saw in the moonlight the rooster's feathers blowing from it.



The next morning, in the privacy afforded by the great woodpile, to which Phineas had gone to chop his daily stint, the children debated the advisability of committing the white turkey to the care of Lot Rankin, who lived with his widowed mother on the edge of the woods.

"It's hard to get a chance to feed her," said Phineas, "and she may squawk."

"Lot Rankin may tell," suggested Lizy Ann. And she heaved a great sigh. Conspiracy came hard to Lizy Ann.

Just then the voice of the new minister's daughter came to their ears. She was talking with Aunt Drusilla on the other side of the woodpile.

"There was a high wind last night when I went home, and I suppose it blew away. I am very sorry to lose it, because it was so pretty, and it was a present too," she said.

"Maybe the children have found it; they are round everywhere," said Aunt Drusilla. And then she called shrilly to Phineas.

Lizy Ann shrank down in a little heap behind a huge log as Phineas stepped bravely out from behind the woodpile, and answered promptly that he had not seen the gull's wing. That was literally true; but how *she* was going to answer, Lizy Ann did not know.

It was so great a relief that tears sprang to Lizy Ann's eyes when, after a little more conversation,





THE MINISTER'S DAUGHTER'S HAT.

“Lizy Ann worked with trembling fingers in the chilly seclusion of the spare chamber.”







the minister's daughter went away. Aunt Drusilla had taken it for granted that, as she remarked, "If one of them young ones didn't know anything about it, the other didn't."

Lizy Ann felt her burden of guilt to be greater than she could bear. And there was no way in which she could earn money to buy the minister's daughter a new feather until berries were ripe and the weeds grew in old Mrs. Jackman's garden. Lizy Ann racked her brains to think of something she could give the minister's daughter to ease her troubled conscience. There was her Bunker Hill Monument, made of shells, her most precious treasure; she would gladly have parted with even that, but it stood upon the table in the parlor, and Aunt Drusilla would discover so soon that it was gone. And Aunt Drusilla was quite capable of asking the minister's daughter to return it. Lizy Ann felt, despairingly, that this atonement was impossible.

But suddenly a bright idea struck her. The feather on her summer Sunday hat! It was blue—it had been white originally, but Aunt Drusilla had thriftily had it dyed when it became soiled. Blue would be very becoming to the minister's daughter, and perhaps she would like it as well as her gull's wing. There was another sly visit to the chilly spare chamber. Lizy Ann took the summer Sunday hat from its bandbox in the closet, and carefully abstracted the blue feather. It was



slightly faded, and there were some traces of the wetting it had received in a thunder-storm in spite of the handkerchief which Aunt Drusilla carefully pinned over it ; but Lizy Ann thought it still a very beautiful feather. She put it into a little paste-board box, wrote the minister's daughter's name on it, placed it on her doorstep at dusk, rang the bell, and ran away.

It was nearly a week before she could find this opportunity to present the feather, for Aunt Drusilla didn't allow her to go out after dark ; and in all that time they had not been able to negotiate with Lot Rankin, for Lot had the mumps on both sides at once, and could not be seen. But the very next day after the minister's daughter received her feather, — as if things were all coming right, thought Lizy Ann hopefully, — Uncle Ichabod sent her down to Lot Rankin's to find out when he would be strong enough to help Cyrus in the logging-camp ; and Phineas gave her many charges concerning the contract she was to make with Lot. But as she was going out of the house, there stood the minister's daughter in the doorway, talking with Aunt Drusilla.

“ I shouldn't have known where it came from if Miss Plympton, the milliner, hadn't happened to come in,” the young girl was saying. “ She said at once, ‘ It's Lizy Ann Judd's feather. I had it dyed for her last summer, and there's the little tag



from the dye-house on it now.' I can't think why she sent it to me."

Aunt Drusilla turned to the shrinking figure behind her, holding the blue feather accusingly in her hand.

"Lizy Ann Judd, what does this mean?" she demanded sternly.

"I — I — she felt so bad about her gull's wing, and — and" — A rising sob fairly choked Lizy Ann.

"Please don't scold her. I'm sure she can explain," pleaded the minister's daughter.

"It's my duty to find out just what this means," said Aunt Drusilla severely. "I never heard of a child doin' such a high-handed thing! You can do your errand now, because your uncle wants you to; but when you come back I shall have a settlement with you."

Poor Lizy Ann! She ran fast, never looking back, although the minister's daughter called to her in kindest tones.

There was no hope of keeping a secret from Aunt Drusilla when once she had discovered that there was one. The only chance of saving Priscilla's life lay in persuading Lot Rankin to care for and conceal her.

But, alas! she found that Lot was not to be persuaded. He was going into the woods to work, and his mother was "set against turkeys." More-



over, she was "so lonesome most of the time that when folks *did* come along, she told 'em all she knew."

Phineas, who had been very anxious, met her at the corner. Perhaps it was not to be wondered at that Phineas was somewhat cross and unreasonable. He said only a girl would be so foolish as to send that feather to the minister's daughter. Girls were all silly, even those who had high foreheads, and he would never trust one again. He hoped she was going to have sense enough not to tell, no matter what Aunt Drusilla did.

Poor Lizy Ann felt herself to be quite unequal to resisting Aunt Drusilla ; but she swallowed a lump in her throat, and said, firmly, that she would try to have sense enough.

As they passed the blacksmith's shop, 'Liphlet, Uncle Piper's man, called out to them : "Mebbe I sha'n't have time to go up to your house. The blacksmith is sick, so I had to come over here to get the mare shod, and I wish you'd tell your aunt that Sabriny says 'twa'n't no turkey's wing that she sent her ; 'twas some kind of a sea-bird's wing, and it come off of somebody's bunnit, and she's a-goin' to fetch it back !"

Lizy Ann and Phineas answered not a word, but they looked at each other despairingly.

"We should have been found out anyway," said Lizy Ann.



Her pitifully white face seemed to touch Phineas, and arouse a spark of manly courage in his bosom.

“I’ll stand by you, Lizy Ann, feather and all. You can’t help being a girl,” he said, magnanimously. “And I won’t run away to be a cowboy, like Hiram Trickey.”

Lizy Ann gave him a little grateful glance, but she could not speak. It did not seem so dreadful now about Hiram Trickey. She wished that a girl could run away to be a cowboy.

As they slowly and dejectedly drew near the house they saw a horse and a farm wagon at the door; and through the window they discovered that Uncle Ichabod and Aunt Drusilla, Clorinda, and Cyrus were all in the kitchen. There was a visitor. Here was, at least, a slight reprieve. They went around through the woodshed; it seemed advisable to approach Aunt Drusilla with caution, even in the presence of a visitor.

“Well, I must say I’m consid’able disappointed,” the visitor was saying, as they softly opened the door. He was a bluff, burly man, who sat with his tall whip between his knees. “I ought to ’a’ stopped when I see her out there top of the stone wall the last time I come by—the handsomest turkey cretur I ever did see, and I’ve been in the poultry business this twenty years. I knew in a minute she belonged to that breed that old Mis’



Joskins had; she fetched 'em from York State. She moved away before I knew it, and carried 'em all with her."

"I bought some eggs of her, and 'most all of 'em hatched, but that white turkey was the only one that lived," said Aunt Drusilla. "I declare if I'd known she was anything mor'n common, and worthy of havin' her picture in a book" —

"You'd ought to have known it, Drusilla!" said Uncle Ichabod testily. "I wa'n't for havin' her killed, and you'd ought to have heard to me!"

"I was calc'latin' to hev her picter right in the front of my new poultry-book," continued the visitor, whom the children now recognized as the distinguished poultry-dealer of North Edom for whom Cyrus had once worked. "And I was goin' to have printed under it, 'From the farm of Ichabod Judd, Esq., Bilberry.' Be kind of a boom for you 'n' Bilberry too — see? And if you didn't want to sell her right out, I was calc'latin' to make you a handsome offer for all the eggs she laid."

"There! Now you see what you have done, Drusilla! I declare I wouldn't gredge givin' a twenty-dollar bill to get that white turkey back!" exclaimed Uncle Ichabod.

"Oh, O Uncle Ichabod!" Lizy Ann broke away from Phineas, who would have held her back, not feeling sure that it was quite time to speak, and rushed into the room.



“You needn’t give twenty dollars! Priscilla is down in the little shanty in the logging-wood! We saved her — Phineas and I — and we bought a turkey of Jonas Hicks instead. I paid with my own money, Aunt Drusilla! And then I — I took the gull’s wing off the minister’s daughter’s hat to send to Sabriny, and — and so that’s why I sent her the blue feather, and — and Sabriny’s going to send the gull’s wing back —”

“Phineas, you go and fetch that turkey home!” said Uncle Ichabod. “And, Drusilla, don’t you blame them children one mite!”

“I — I never heard of such high-handed doin’s!” gasped Aunt Drusilla.

“I expect I shall have to send you children each a copy of my book with the picter of that turkey in it,” said the poultry-dealer. “And maybe the boy and I can make kind of a contract about eggs and chickens.”

The minister’s daughter wore her gull’s wing to church the next Sunday, and she privately confided to Lizy Ann that she “didn’t blame her one bit.” Aunt Drusilla looked at Lizy Ann somewhat severely for several days; but only as she looked at her when she turned around in church or fidgeted in the long prayer. And after the poultry-book came out with Priscilla’s photograph as a frontispiece, and people began to make pilgrimages to the Pippin Hill farm to see the poultry, she was heard



to say several times that "it was wonderful to see how a smart boy like Phineas could make turkey-raising pay," and that "as for Lizy Ann, she always knew that high forehead of hers wasn't for nothing."



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRIZE PUMPKIN — PIPPIN HILL AND PHINEAS  
AND LIZY ANN AGAIN.

UNCLE ICHABOD and Aunt Drusilla meant to be kind to young Phineas and little Lizy Ann when they came, forlorn orphans, to the farm on Pippin Hill; but Phineas found that they had many opinions with which he could not agree. They thought a boy ought to save up for a suit of clothes instead of a bicycle, and put his Fourth of July money into the contribution box. They thought that having fun was a waste of time, and that a boy should prefer hoeing potatoes to going fishing.

Aunt Drusilla wouldn't allow Lizy Ann to go out to play until she had sewed or knit a "stent;" and she combed the little girl's tow-colored hair back from her high forehead so tightly that it seemed to keep her eyes wide open, and braided it in two tight little tails behind, and Lizy Ann cried because the girls said she was not fashionable.

Young Phineas lay awake nights and planned to run away; but, after all, home is home, and the world is cold and wide.



“What you want to do is to get your own way without letting them know it,” said Pitticus Pringle.

Pitticus was a tall boy with a sharp nose, and a pair of little sharp eyes that looked persistently at the nose. It was the general opinion on Pippin Hill that Pitticus was “too smart ;” but Phineas thought this idea of his might be valuable. He remembered it when, in October, there was a great Jack-o’-lantern procession on the hill, and Uncle Ichabod wouldn’t let him have a pumpkin to make a Jack-o’-lantern of. Cyrus, the hired man, did at last find a little one that had a speck in it, and Uncle Ichabod said he might have it ; but who wanted to parade with a lantern like that ?

It happened on the night of the procession that Uncle Ichabod and Aunt Drusilla had gone over to Canterbury Four Corners to spend the night, and Cyrus went down to the Bend to see his girl, and Clorinda, the hired girl, went to bed with the neuralgia.

Phineas took Cyrus’s lantern and went out to the squash-house, and there by itself on a shelf in the corner was the great pumpkin that had taken the first prize at the State Agricultural Fair.

Phineas’s pocket-knife was sharp — it seems as if knives were sure to be when one is getting into mischief with them — and the work was soon done ; the top cut off the pumpkin, — if Clorinda’s glue was all that she recommended it to be, that could be



fastened on so that one could still take the pumpkin up by the stem, — the inside scraped out, and delightfully effective features cut out in the great yellow face. When the candle was placed inside, there was a Jack-o'-lantern indeed!

A great shout greeted it when Phineas joined the Pippin Hill company; but he was able to hush it quickly, for the boys were friends of his and understood. He was a little afraid of Billy Bostwick, who was considered envious, and who told everything to his sister Maud, who was Lizy Ann's friend. But a boy must expect to run some risks, as Pitticus Pringle said. (Pitticus was at home, afflicted with mumps on both sides at once; Phineas thought mumps was the only thing that had ever been able to take an unfair advantage of Pitticus Pringle.)

When the Pippin Hill company joined the procession in the town the great lantern was not so conspicuous: but it still attracted much attention, and Phineas was very proud. But he had not been able to fasten it upon a pole, as most of the other boys had done with theirs, and it was very bulky and hard to carry; and he was obliged to run home before the other boys to glue the pumpkin to its original shape before Cyrus should return.

It was a difficult task to fit the pieces exactly, especially when one was in a hurry; and then Phineas was obliged to fill the hollow pumpkin with



bran and meal, lest its lightness should betray the ruin it had suffered. But the work was done at last; and on the shelf, at least, no one would have suspected that it was not the solid pumpkin that had won a prize at the fair.

At the school recess the next day Maud Bostwick whispered something in Lizy Ann's ear, which caused Phineas's young sister to turn red and white and almost to burst into tears. And in the afternoon Lizy Ann carried to school her blue bead necklace that grandma had given her, and gave it to Maud. (Aunt Drusilla thought little of necklaces, and probably would not even miss it.) Maud had great influence over her brother Billy, and could keep him from telling things.

At the very first opportunity she could find, when no one was looking, Lizy Ann went out to the squash-house. When she saw the prize pumpkin on the shelf she uttered a little cry of joyful surprise, and felt an impulse to run across the field at once and demand the return of her necklace. But Lizy Ann had a prudent mind, and she decided to investigate farther. So she climbed up and felt all over the pumpkin. To her soft little fingers the lines that marked where the Jack-o'-lantern's eyes and nose and mouth had been were plainly to be felt. Lizy Ann prayed tearfully that night that Phineas might repent, but not be found out.





PHINEAS AND THE PUMPKIN.

“There, by itself, on a shelf in the corner of the squash-house, was the great pumpkin.”







Lizy Ann blushed painfully whenever pumpkins were mentioned; but Phineas — as nothing happened, Phineas was forgetting.

The day before Thanksgiving Uncle Ichabod came home with a letter from Aunt Lucetta. She was the children's youngest aunt, and lived in Boston. She had taught in the high school in Plumfield, and had married the master of the school, and he was now a thriving young lawyer in the city. Uncle Ichabod and Aunt Drusilla had visited them once, and brought home wonderful accounts of the flat in which they lived, where the bookcase was a bed and the armchair a table, and everything turned into something else in the most fascinating manner. It was the dream of the children's lives to visit that wonderful place.

Aunt Lucetta's letter was an invitation to spend Thanksgiving with her in Boston.

Phineas thrilled with hope and fear; and Lizy Ann gazed breathlessly at Aunt Drusilla, her mouth a round O.

Aunt Drusilla shook her head; she was so apt to shake her head at delightful things. "That's just like Lucetty," she said. "She don't stop to think that there ain't room for us all to turn round in that flat. But I should kind of like to have the children go, if we could manage it; 'twould be something so new to 'em." Aunt Drusilla was



kind like that sometimes, when one least expected it. "Besides, it always seems kind of an imposition to carry 'em over to Hiram's, where there's so many young ones a'ready."

"I was calc'latin'," said Uncle Ichabod, with provoking slowness — "I was calc'latin' that it might be worth the while to send Cyrus down to the city with a wagon-load of stuff — some of them turkeys are uncommon handsome — and the children could ride down 'long of him."

Lizy Ann fairly gasped with delight. Dreams were coming true, as if one lived in a fairy-book. Phineas's heart swelled as if it would burst his jacket, though he wore outwardly as calm an air — to impress Lizy Ann — as if he were in the habit of going to Boston every week.

Joyful days of preparation followed; joyful although they lagged, and at length came the eve of the exciting journey.

They were to start at three o'clock in the morning; for it was eighteen miles to Boston, and Cyrus must be early at the market with his produce. The wagon was loaded the night before; and it was great fun to be in the barn by the lantern-light, with every one helping.

"We must send a fine large turkey to Lucetty," said Aunt Drusilla. "And I shouldn't wonder if punkins were skurce in the city, and Lucetty likes punkin-pies; you'd better send her the prize punkin."



“I declare, I b’lieve I will; guess ’twill astonish ’em some!” said Uncle Ichabod, with a chuckle of proud anticipation.

Phineas was helping Cyrus to fill a barrel with the finest squashes, and he dropped one out of his hands when Uncle Ichabod said that. As for Lizy Ann, the joy went out of everything as suddenly as it did for Cinderella when the clock struck twelve.

Cyrus brought the big prize pumpkin from the squash-house under his arm. Phineas expected at every moment to see him lift it by the stem; then it seemed as if everything in life would depend upon the strength of Clorinda’s glue.

“Jest slip it into that bag, Cyrus. I shouldn’t want it to get jammed or scratched,” said Uncle Ichabod.

Cyrus slipped the pumpkin into a canvas potato-bag, and tucked it into the wagon. Phineas drew a long breath, and Lizy Ann swallowed a hard lump in her throat.

Then Phineas had a bright idea; he had heard Pitticus Pringle say that “there never was a scrape without a way out of it,” and one wasn’t Pitticus Pringle’s friend for nothing.

Even before the start was made in the early morning, — a very sleepy time, when even the delightful queerness would scarcely keep Lizy Ann’s eyes open, — Phineas found an opportunity, while



Cyrus was harnessing the great roan horses, Tom and Jerry, to slip a large squash into the bag instead of the pumpkin, which he tucked away under the front seat. He would have liked to leave it behind, but Cyrus might miss it on the way. He threw Lizy Ann's shawl carelessly over it.

"If you want your shawl, you just tell me," said Phineas to her gruffly.

It is scarcely too much to say that Lizy Ann would have frozen before she would have admitted that she wanted that shawl.

Cyrus stopped before the Pringle farm-house and whistled sharply. "I promised Llewellyn Pringle that I'd carry him down to Brockville," he said. "I guess we can stow him in somewheres. He's got a chance to work in a big manufacturin' concern down there; they're smart fellers, them Pringle boys. Llewellyn ain't *too* smart like Cosy and Pitticus."

Llewellyn's conversation enlivened the long drive, and diverted one's mind from the dreadful worry about that pumpkin; he was so full of excitement and pride about the situation that he expected to get in the manufactory — a better opening in life than often came to a Pippin Hill boy.

It was not quite daylight when they stopped in Brockville, but the busy town was already astir. Cyrus stopped at the hotel on the main street to water his horses.



Llewellyn jumped out of the wagon, and carefully lifted out the box of butter which his mother had sent as a Thanksgiving offering to Llewellyn's prospective employer.

"Here, Llewellyn, you can have this too!" called Phineas, obeying a sudden impulse, and with a furtive glance towards the stable. "We — we've got a squash to carry to Aunt Lucetta." He drew the prize pumpkin out from its concealment.

Llewellyn's eyes grew wide with wonder and delight; this would be a better propitiatory offering than the butter.

Phineas kept an anxious eye on the stables as Llewellyn strode off, the pumpkin under one arm and the box of butter under the other; he turned a convenient corner, and still Cyrus had not appeared. He had not missed the pumpkin; it would be very likely that Phineas could now convey that bag unopened to Aunt Lucetta. He drew a long breath of relief; but Lizy Ann's small freckled face looked pitifully drawn, and her wide-open blue eyes were full of the horror of this deed without a name.

Aunt Lucetta would write a letter of thanks for the Thanksgiving presents, thought Phineas; she might specify the squash; then what would they think at Pippin Hill farm? Why, that she didn't know the difference, or that the pumpkin had acquired the peculiar power of the flat's belongings,



and turned into something else! Phineas grinned broadly as this solution of the difficulty presented itself to his mind, so light-hearted had he become.

It was even more easily managed than Phineas had hoped; he jumped out of the wagon and seized the big squash, in its bag, before Cyrus had been able to induce Tom and Jerry to resign themselves to the electric cars, which ran through the street where Aunt Lucetta lived. He and Lizy Ann had to take the other things, too, because Cyrus dared not leave the horses long enough to go in the elevator up to Aunt Lucetta's fifth-story flat.

A proud elevator boy made them take all their rough and bulky packages to the freight "lift" in the back of the house; and Phineas cherished a wild hope that the squash might get lost, in which case he decided — with only a slight pang of conscience, so hardened in falsehood had he already become — to describe it as a huge pumpkin.

It came up safely, of course, and Aunt Lucetta called it "a delightful countrified squash" — as if, thought Phineas, she were accustomed to squashes that grew on pavements. He forgot all about it soon, in the excitement of inspecting this queer place to live, so far up in the sky, and so small, with the great city roaring around it. Even Lizy Ann forgot it when Aunt Lucetta really banged her hair, because her father-in-law and her sister-



in-law, who were very stylish, were coming to dinner the next day.

Aunt Lucetta's father-in-law was a manufacturer in Brockville. Phineas did remember the pumpkin when he heard this, although with only a slight pang; there were so many manufacturers in Brockville. But Lizy Ann had a more anxious mind; she forgot even the little frills and the big sash and the bangs with which Aunt Lucetta had adorned her, and stared at Aunt Lucetta's father-in-law with a fascinated dread all through the Thanksgiving dinner. It seemed to her that by this time all Brockville must be ringing with the report that the great prize pumpkin was only a hollow Jack-o'-lantern. It was no comfort even to be fashionable when Phineas was going to be found out.

When the dessert was brought on Aunt Lucetta's father-in-law sharply eyed the squash-pies.

"Ought to have pumpkin-pies at Thanksgiving, Lucetta," he said, with the frankness of a well-to-do father-in-law. "Reminds me of a saucy trick that was played on me yesterday. There was a fellow from Pippin Hill who had been recommended to me as smart. I meant to give him a good chance. But I hate a practical joke, anyway, and 'twas such impertinence in a boy like him. He brought me a pumpkin from home — a present — the largest and finest pumpkin I ever saw. I said



to my cook that we'd have some old-fashioned pumpkin-pies. When she put a knife into it, out came a lot of bran and stuff; the pumpkin had been scooped out and filled up with trash. He brought a box of butter too; I suppose that is tallow. We've no use for such fellows in Brockville; they're *too* smart."

Phineas choked, and had to be patted on the back by Aunt Lucetta; he said he had swallowed something hard, he guessed it was a raisin-seed in the pudding. But he had sufficient presence of mind to scowl dreadfully at Lizy Ann, who looked as if she were going to cry.

"I just sent word to the fellow that he wouldn't suit me," continued Lucetta's father-in-law. "I didn't say anything about his pumpkin; I wouldn't give him the satisfaction."

Phineas drew a long breath of relief. He said he thought he *would* take a piece of mince-pie, and he gave Lizy Ann a warning kick under the table. Llewellyn Pringle would never know why he had missed his great chance in life; Aunt Lucetta would scarcely think to mention in a letter that she had received a squash among her Thanksgiving gifts. Phineas ate his mince-pie with relish, and said to himself that he was about as smart a fellow as Pitticus Pringle.

He wished that Lizy Ann would not look so woe-begone, and say that she didn't care for candy



or nuts. Being only a girl, she couldn't understand that in this world, as Pitticus Pringle said, you had to get there yourself, and you couldn't stop to look out for the fellow that was left behind.

Aunt Lucetta gave a party for them that night, and the next day her father-in-law took them to the play; but in spite of the good times and of all the sayings of Pitticus Pringle that he could recall, Phineas couldn't get rid of the thought of Llewellyn Pringle going home, disappointed and humiliated, to the old farmhouse, where they were ill and poor, and everything depended upon the boys. It was in vain that he said to himself that he was as silly as a girl — as silly as Lizy Ann, whose face looked worn, and who followed him with wistful eyes.

He seized the coat-tails of Aunt Lucetta's father-in-law, who was entering the elevator for his final departure.

"I can't — stand it — anyhow!" he stammered. "It wa'n't Llewellyn's fault — that scooped-out punkin wa'n't — 'twas mine!"

And out came the whole story, with a murmured accompaniment of excuses for Phineas from Lizy Ann. Phineas made no excuses for himself; he told the story in a manly fashion, and the manufacturer said, "Well, well; he believed he liked Pippin Hill boys, after all, and he would send for Llewellyn and give him the place, and if Phineas



ever wanted a chance for himself, why, he liked a boy that would not let another suffer for what he had done, no-matter how hard it was to own up." Phineas felt as if he did not deserve any praise, he had come so frightfully near to not owning up.

It was happiness to stop at the Pringles' to tell Llewellyn that the great chance was his — it seemed to fortify one for owning up to Uncle Ichabod.

Almost before the first greetings were over, before Aunt Drusilla had decided whether to be angry about Lizy Ann's little frills and big sash and bangs, which made her look like a very serious-minded doll, Phineas stood forth like a man, and told the story of his misdeeds.

"That prize punkin for a Jack-o'-lantern! Well, I wouldn't 'a' believed you'd 'a' darst to do it!" cried Uncle Ichabod. He was so overcome that he dropped heavily into his armchair.

"Aunt Lucetta's father-in-law said it was the finest punkin he ever saw. I guess they never saw our punkins down to Brockville before!" piped Lizy Ann, with the wisdom of the serpent.

"I guess it did astonish 'em some!" chuckled Uncle Ichabod, and lost his wrath's sharp edge in the chuckle. "I ain't goin' to say any more about this, young Phineas, seein' how it's turned out; but I'm goin' to raise a punkin next year that'll beat this year's all hollow, and that one won't be made into no Jack-o'-lantern!"



“I declare them children both look real peaked and worn out,” said Aunt Drusilla pityingly.

Uncle Ichabod shuffled his feet uneasily. “I never thought you cared so much about Jack-o’-lanterns, young Phineas,” he said. “They’re all foolishness anyway. But I’ll tell you what I’ll do: next spring I’ll give you and Lizy Ann a punkin-patch of your own, and you can raise a whole procession if you’ve a mind too.”



## CHAPTER IX.

THE BILBERRY BOY WHO LOST THE FOURTH OF  
JULY.

NICK TWEEDLE sat astride the hen-house, whittling. The roof of the hen-house could not be said to afford a comfortable seat, especially in the position which Nick always chose; but it was a retired spot, and therefore suited to meditation, and Nick's mind was so absorbed that he thought little of his bodily comfort; besides, he liked to get astride the hen-house when he wanted to form a very brilliant plan, because it suggested being on a horse's back, and gave him a sense of courage and freedom.

He couldn't be on a horse's back, because Aunt Jane didn't believe in boys riding horseback. The very worst thing about Aunt Jane was her scepticism; there were so many things that she didn't believe in.

She didn't believe in two pieces of pie.

She didn't believe in swapping jack-knives.

She didn't believe in circuses.

She didn't believe in dogs.



She didn't believe in guns.

She didn't believe in playing all day on Saturday.

She didn't believe in camping out.

She didn't believe in playing Indian, and would not let Tommy be scalped.

She didn't believe in base-ball.

She didn't believe in carrying pickles and jam-tarts to bed.

She didn't believe in making a noise.

She didn't believe in leaving things 'round.

She didn't believe in red-headed boys, anyway.

When she expressed that last sentiment, as she did very often, Nick found it hard not to regard it as personal; for his hair was undeniably red — so red that people were always making unpleasant jokes about its being a beacon light on the top of Pippin Hill, and the men who lounged in the village store pretended to light their pipes by it. Perhaps Aunt Jane "didn't mean anything," as his father always assured him; but Nick thought it was a little singular that it never happened to be light-haired boys, nor brown-haired boys, nor black-haired boys that she didn't believe in.

She didn't believe in tearing trousers, nor being forgetful, either. In fact, Nick was of the opinion that a list of her unbeliefs would be longer than the catechism he had to say in Sunday-school.

To-day Nick had planned to go fishing with



'Sander Perrigo, who was a big boy. They were going to Lazy Brook, where, as 'Sander declared, the trout were so thick and so willing to be caught that they would "peek out and wink at you;" and Aunt Jane had commanded him to stay at home and weed the garden, because she didn't believe in going fishing.

And Nick had made up his mind that there were some things that no boy could endure.

He had fully determined to run away.

Just how and where to go were the subjects to which he was now giving his attention. Although he sat astride the hen-house and whittled, no brilliant ideas seemed to come.

Nick didn't want to do anything commonplace; he was convinced that he had uncommon talents. He had thought of running away to sea; but three boys from the village had already done that, and so it seemed rather tame. Besides, Dick Harris, who had come home, darkly hinted that there was more hard work than fun about it, and it was a peculiarity of Nick's that he liked fun better than hard work.

Jacob, their hired man, had secured a position in a menagerie to educate a whale. That was an occupation that would just suit himself, Nick thought; but from inquiries that he had made he judged that whale educators were not in great demand. Not everybody was as lucky as Jacob — though



Aunt Jane thought he had better have staid on the farm, and said she didn't believe in menageries nor whales.

Another thing that Nick wanted was to be a magician, and take a cat and three kittens out of a hat that wouldn't begin to hold them ; but he didn't know just where to go to learn the business. His father could not tell him ; and as for Aunt Jane, she didn't believe in magicians.

He had thought somewhat of joining an Arctic exploring expedition, until he read that the provisions almost always gave out. Nick never thought there was much fun where there wasn't plenty to eat ; and he read a list of the supplies that were usually taken, and found no mention of pies. After that he went over to Aunt Jane's way of thinking, and didn't believe in Arctic exploring expeditions.

He had intended to invent a telephone which should be so superior to those already in use that, instead of merely transmitting the sound of voices, it should do the talking all by itself. But he had not succeeded as yet ; and it would hardly be prudent to run away from home trusting to that as a means of support, although, once out of Aunt Jane's reach, his chance of success would be much better, for he had no opportunity to experiment now, because she didn't believe in telephones. Another plan that occurred to him was to ride around the world on a bicycle. He thought that by the time



he got to Kamchatka he might make money by exhibiting himself, as it was quite probable that they didn't have bicycles there; but there was a difficulty in the way — it would take money to get as far as Kamchatka, even on a bicycle. A boy might possibly endure to sleep out-of-doors with only ambition to keep him warm, but Nick was of the opinion that ambition would never keep a boy with a big appetite from being hungry.

It is very sad, but one has to take a practical view of matters, even if one is a genius, and expects to do great things in the world; so Nick decided that he would not attempt the tour of the world on a bicycle, even if he could get a bicycle, which was very doubtful, as Aunt Jane didn't believe in them.

Walking on a tight-rope he regarded as an agreeable and elevated means of gaining a livelihood; but an experiment of that kind which he had tried, with the rope fastened to the high beams of the barn, had proved so disastrous that he was forced to the conclusion that his talents did not lie in that direction.

Going to fight Indians on the Western plains was another of his favorite plans, but the unpleasant habit of scalping people which the Indians indulged in so freely made him feel some hesitation. He might be like the "Red-handed Rover of the Rocky Sierras," whose adventures he had read, who



always turned upon the twenty-seven uncommonly large Indians who were about to scalp him, and scalped them with their own weapons. But although he might not have acknowledged it, he had some doubts, drawn from his experiences in the fighting line, whether his abilities were as great as the Red Rover's. He reflected that he had once "licked little Solomon Trull out of his boots," but when Solomon Trull's big brother came upon the scene the results of the contest were sadly changed. He was as ready as anybody to "stand up man to man;" but when it came to encountering twenty-seven uncommonly large Indians, all in war-paint, and brandishing tomahawks, Nick felt that he would rather not.

To be a soldier had always been his greatest desire. He was very patriotic, and wanted an opportunity to defend his country; but as there seemed no prospect whatever of a war he felt almost discouraged about that. He had gotten up a sham fight at the last Fourth of July celebration, and with several other boys had become so excited as to entirely forget that it was a sham, and the result had been more lively than delightful.

And Aunt Jane didn't believe even in ten-cent pop-guns, nor two bunches of fire-crackers under a tin pan at four o'clock in the morning, nor even in the dinner-bell and a fish-horn,—which didn't make any noise to speak of,—and she said she



didn't believe Nick wanted anything but to give her a headache.

There really seemed to be no way of giving vent to patriotic feeling without being misunderstood.

Nick concluded that it was a hard world for a boy; but still he didn't think he could find anything harder in it than staying at home with Aunt Jane and her unbeliefs, and he was just resolving to go and be a tramp until he could raise money enough to buy out a tin-peddler, when Pitt Ramsey, a next-door neighbor, came along and called out to him that he had brought him a letter from the post-office.

"Jehoshaphat!" exclaimed Nick.

His list of correspondents was extremely limited. In fact, he had received but one letter in his life, and that was from Aunt Jane when she had gone to pay a visit, telling him that she didn't believe in boys wasting money on postage stamps, so he needn't write to her. There was nobody who would be likely to write him a letter, so it must come from somebody who was unlikely to; and that might be the Khan of Tartary, who had written to offer him the position of Grand Vizier, or Decapitator General, or whatever the highest dignitary of his court was called.

After such a splendid vision it was somewhat disappointing to open the letter and find it was from their old "hired girl," Tryphosa, who had married



Augustus Spilkins, and moved up into the backwoods. Tryphosa wrote: —

*My Deer Boy,* — me and augustus Wants yu to kum and sea us, And Stay A long Spell. we Kepe tarvern and hev a Plenty off Good Vittuls. not exceptin Pys. yu Kan take augustuses Old Muskit and Shoot the cros that is eatin' up all the Corn and aint a mite Afrade off the scarcro though it is maid to look edzacly like augustus and yu kan brake in the Colt that is caliker and a romun Nose and One Good i and Terrerble Skitish, and yu kan help augustus maik Jinger Ail wich has to bee Plenty bein a temperunce hous and not Another Drop though soshyble. me and augustus alwys set by yu and we Want yu to kum sertin sure pertik-erly as it kant bee none two kumfurtin' wher thare is sich an Onbeleiver az sum fokes that yu and i noes off. with Respecks yores respectful

TRYPHOSA.

p. S. Kum Rite Of.

If a visit to Tryphosa was not so delightfully exciting as the adventures which Nick had been proposing to himself, it had an advantage over them which was not to be disregarded in this uncertain world — it was a possibility.

And there was a mild attractiveness about the prospect of shooting crows, and breaking in the calico colt, with his one eye and his skittishness.

Besides, Nick liked Tryphosa; she knew how to sympathize with a boy that had an Aunt Jane; and her sympathy did not take the form of hugging and kissing, — things which Nick could not endure, — it took the form of pie. If there was a person in the



world who thoroughly understood the art of pie-making, it was Tryphosa; and she was never known to cut a pie into stingy little pieces.

Augustus Spilkins was very agreeable, too, and had gifts that distinguished him. He could balance a pitchfork on his eyelid, and do a trick with cards that the schoolmaster couldn't find out. He could swallow a cent and take it out of his sleeve, and he could fiddle and dance so that the minister couldn't help listening and looking on. And, though he came from Nova Scotia, there never was a Yankee who could equal him at whittling; he could whittle out a pig that could almost squeal, and mice that drove the cat half crazy. And he whittled out a dog that would wag his tail — though the wag did get out of order very soon.

Tryphosa used to scold at first, because he "littered up" the kitchen; but he won her heart by whittling out a butter-stamp for her with two hearts, joined together, and a turtle-dove upon it. That was how they came to be married.

Nick thought things over, and decided that there was sure to be fun going on where Augustus was.

He was sure that his father would give him leave to accept Tryphosa's invitation; but Aunt Jane didn't believe in boys visiting, so Nick decided to avoid any little unpleasantness that might possibly arise, by omitting to take leave of her.

He wrapped his clothes in a gay bandana hand-



kerchief, which was a present from Augustus, and hung the bundle over his shoulder, upon a stout stick. He had a travelling-bag, but he thought that gave him a less adventurous air than the bundle. As he left the gate he heard Aunt Jane's voice calling him, and declaring in shrill tones that she didn't believe in boys having on their best clothes on a week-day. Nick hurried along. He didn't know how many bad people he might meet in the world, but Tryphosa had once solemnly assured him that he would never find another such an "infiddle" as Aunt Jane.

He stopped at his father's store; but his father not being in, he contented himself with leaving a note for him, in which he explained where he was going, and asked him not to tell Aunt Jane. Nick's father was a very easy and obliging man; and, besides, Nick suspected that he suffered himself from Aunt Jane's unbelieving disposition, and would enjoy keeping the secret from her.

He felt a little sorry that he could not take Tommy with him. Tommy was Aunt Jane's son, but he was not in the least like her. He was four years younger than Nick, and believed in everything Nick did. And he never was so mean as to "tell on him." How much of his reticence was due to the fact that Nick threatened to make fiddlestrings of him if he did tell, it is impossible to say; but it is probable that this terrible threat had



a powerful effect on Tommy's mind, as it always made him turn pale.

Tommy's most striking characteristic was a propensity to tumble into the well; four times he had been rescued dripping and senseless, and Aunt Jane "didn't believe that boy would be anything but a lifeless corpse the next time he was hooked out of the well." Nick almost wished that he had taken Tommy with him when he thought of that dreadful possibility; but he contented himself with going back and adding a postscript to the note he had left in his father's store: "Tell Tommy not to get drowned in the well till I come home."

Then Nick went on with a mind at ease.

Augustus had appended to Tryphosa's letter minute directions, so that Nick might have no difficulty in making his way to Tantrybogus, the town where he and Tryphosa lived; but he mentioned so many different railways and stage-routes that Nick was afraid his funds would not hold out until the end of the journey.

He found that railroads and stage-routes came to an end nine miles from Tantrybogus. By the good nature of the driver of the last stage he was enabled to ride to the end of the route, although his money was exhausted. And he found that nine miles was as far as he cared to walk, but he reached Tantrybogus about nine o'clock.

Tryphosa was almost overcome with surprise and



delight ; but instead of fainting, or kissing him, she gave expression to her feelings by setting six kinds of pie before him. There was no doubt that Tryphosa was just as agreeable as ever.

Augustus complimented him in a very gratifying manner.

“ Well, now, I swanny, I wouldn’t have thought ’twas you, you’ve growed so ! If I was onbeliev-in’ like your Aunt Jane, I should declare ’t wa’n’t you ! I declare you’re gettin’ to be a man so fast it makes me feel awk’ard to think what a little spell ago ’twas that I made free to call you sonny ! ”

You may say what you will, it is pleasant to meet people who realize that one is getting to be a man, and cannot properly be called “ sonny. ”

The “ tavern ” seemed to be a very “ soshyble ” place, as Tryphosa had said ; there were many very pleasant and jolly people there, but it seemed to Nick that they looked and talked very differently from Bilberry people. Some of them he could hardly understand, and they had very odd, outlandish names.

Nick came to the conclusion that very night that Tantrybogus was a queer place.

He found out the next day that it was also a very delightful place. There were plenty of good times to be had, and no school, no garden to weed, no Aunt Jane, and unlimited pie.

Shooting crows was great fun. He didn’t hap-



pen to hit any, but he hit the scarecrow and made a complete wreck of him. He also hit Tryphosa's favorite black turkey that was roosting in a tree, and a neighbor's black cat, mistaking them for crows. So nobody could say that he was a poor shot, even if he didn't kill crows. As for the colt, everybody knows that a calico colt with a Roman nose and one good eye is very hard to break; so it is not surprising that he ran away with Nick into the river, and might have drowned him if he had not been able to swim.

Tryphosa cried over Nick because he had had such a hard time, and carried a whole pie to his bedside in the middle of the night; and Augustus said he didn't know how they had ever got along without him, he made things so kind o' lively.

All these things happened in a few days; for it was less than a week after Nick's arrival in Tantrybogus that he suddenly became aware that the very next day would be the Fourth of July. At home, in Bilberry, he would have been counting the hours that must pass before the day came, but here he had found so many novel diversions that he had quite forgotten that it came so soon.

In a great state of excitement he rushed to Augustus, who was bottling ginger-ale.

"Fourth of July, to-morrow!" he shouted, "and not so much as a fire-cracker ready! Have you forgotten?"





NICK AT TANTRYBOGUS.

“Shooting crows was great fun. He didn’t happen to hit any, but he did hit the scarecrow.”







Augustus seemed disturbed and uneasy. He let the corks fly out of two or three ale-bottles in his uncertainty of mind. Nick thought that popping was better than nothing; it sounded a little like the Fourth of July.

“You see, Tantrybogus is kind of a cur’us place. They don’t seem to set no great store by the Fourth of July; and seein’ it’s Canady, and they’re mostly English and French, it couldn’t in nater be expected,” said Augustus, looking sad.

Canada! Nick knew it was just across the line, and hadn’t thought of it, he had been having so many other things on his mind. He sat down on the lowest step of the cellar stairs, clasped his hands around his knee, and reflected.

“I couldn’t stand it, Augustus!” he said firmly, at last. “It’s all right for Tantryboguses, and for you, because you came from Nova Scotia; but I should burst!”

Augustus scratched his head in perplexity, and went on letting the corks pop.

“You might go down to Polywhappit,” said he, brightening suddenly. “That’s across the line, and it’s only a matter of ten miles from here, and I expect they’ll have a rousing time.”

“I’ll start right off!” cried Nick, jumping up.

“I’ll harness up, and carry you a good piece, and you can walk the rest of the way; and I’ll give you a five-dollar bill to do your celebratin’ with.



Oh, you needn't feel bad about takin' so much, for I'm glad to have you go and enjoy yourself, and bein' you're so lively, it's worth more'n that to me to have you go."

Afterward it struck Nick that a double meaning might be attached to those words of Augustus, but he was too eager to go to think about them then.

Tryphosa took a tearful leave of him, and insisted upon putting a pie in the crown of his hat, where it "wouldn't be in his way, but would be handy when he got hungry," and told him to be sure to find her brother's wife's cousin, Lysander Hewitt, who lived in Polywhappit, and would be sure to welcome him for the sake of the family connection.

Augustus drove him a little more than half way to Polywhappit, and then had to hurry back lest his ginger-ale should spoil.

It was late in the afternoon when Nick reached Polywhappit. It was almost as large a town as Bilberry; but Nick thought it didn't look very wide awake, and though he looked about him very sharply, he could see no signs of preparation for the Fourth of July.

However, they were, unquestionably, Yankees in Polywhappit; and Nick had never heard of Yankees who didn't make a noise on the glorious Fourth.



Great, therefore, was his dismay when he learned from Tryphosa's relative, Lysander Hewitt, "that Polywhappit didn't calkilate to do no celebratin'. They had built a new town hall, and repaired a great many roads, and didn't feel able to spend any more money. Money's skerce in Polywhappit, and that's a fact," said Tryphosa's relative.

"Do you mean to say that they won't make any noise at all to-morrow?" asked Nick, not without an accent of disgust.

"Well, Polywhappit folks seem to feel that when your powder is burnt up, your money's burnt up too, and there ain't no great profit in it, to say nothin' of the danger of bein' sot afire. I did hear that the school children over to the East Polywhappit district was every one agoin' to recite the Declaration of Independence, and sing some of them appropriate pieces like Ameriky and Old Hundred. If you feel like celebratin' I'll carry you over there to-morrow mornin'."

Nick heaved a sigh, and thought of the grand times that he had been wont to enjoy at Bilberry on the Fourth of July.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't be quite lively enough for me. We do things differently in Bilberry. We don't value money that we spend to do honor to our country!" said Nick, with a grand air.

His thoughts were turning wistfully to Bilberry. Even if he had to endure Aunt Jane and her un-



beliefs, Bilberry was not the worst place a boy could live in. For there they had not lost the Fourth of July. There they would have a ringing and a banging, a rattling and a snapping, that it would do one's heart good to hear. And, probably, at five o'clock in the afternoon a balloon would go up from the Common. If he were at home, Nick might have some chance of going up in that balloon, for the aeronaut was Aunt Jane's brother-in-law's wife's nephew. And, at all events, he could go up on to the band-stand when the band was playing, because Aunt Jane's sister-in-law's second husband's son played the cornet. There were advantages as well as disadvantages about having an Aunt Jane. It occurred to Nick that he had never fully realized the advantages. He had thought too much about Aunt Jane's unbeliefs and not enough about her desirable family connections.

He decided to get back to Bilberry very soon — if possible, before that balloon went up.

He asked Lysander Hewitt whether he thought he could do it by walking all night, but Lysander thought he would get there just as soon by taking the stage at five o'clock in the morning. The railroad station was only seven miles away, and an express-train connected with the stage.

So Nick accepted Lysander Hewitt's hospitality for the night; and, being very tired, he fell asleep, although it was entirely contrary to every Bilberry



boy's ideas of propriety to sleep on the night before the Fourth ; and he dreamed that he was an enormous fire-cracker, and was all lighted and going off splendidly, and very proud of himself, when all the people in Tantrybogus and all the people in Polywhappit began to pour cold water over him. He was very angry, and made an immense effort to go off, in spite of the cold water, and suddenly found himself wide awake, and rolling out of bed.

It was daylight, but not a sound indicated that it was different from any ordinary day — no ringing of bells, no firing of guns, no inspiring rattle and bang of fire-crackers, not so much as the cheering snap of one torpedo ! Nick felt that Polywhappit was in a low condition morally, and ought to be aroused to a sense of its duties, and encouraged to perform them. He took his money out of his pocket and counted it ; besides the five dollars that Augustus had given him he had some change which Tryphosa had slipped into his hand after she put the pie into his hat ; there was just thirty-seven cents ; counting it over three times wouldn't make it any more than that. On a scrap of paper which he found in his pocket he wrote this note :

“ Please celebrate a little, for it is an Orfool Disgrace not to have any fourth of july at all. i give you this dollar and Thirty Seven Cents to Help Along. as much noys as you could get for this would be a Grate Deel better than no fourth of july at all.”



He enclosed the money in the note, and slipped it under the door of Lysander Hewitt's chamber. Then he hurried to the stage, and soon bade farewell to Polywhappit.

He had saved a little more than enough money to pay his fare home, and would have been glad to invest that little in fire-crackers for a parting salute to Polywhappit ; but the stage-driver told him that not a fire-cracker was to be had in the town.

“ There wa'n't no great liveliness about the Polywhappiters,” he said.

It seemed to Nick that never before had stages and railroad trains moved so slowly as those that he rode on that day. The stages waited for the mails, and waited for passengers, and waited to feed the horses, and waited for a young lady to go back and find something she had forgotten, and for an old lady to go back and see if she hadn't forgotten something. And the trains waited for wood and waited for water, and stopped, not only at the stations, but at almost every house they came to. Nick thought it was fortunate that the houses were a good many miles apart, otherwise they might never reach Bilberry. All the stations seemed half buried in the woods, and Nick saw scarcely a sign that anybody knew it was the Fourth of July. Once or twice a horrible suspicion seized him that the day had really dropped out of the calendar. But that was when he grew



very tired and sleepy with the long ride and the jolting of the cars.

Five o'clock came and went, while they were still miles away from Bilberry. Nick, in despair, pictured to himself the scene on the Common, the crowd shouting and clapping hands as the great balloon — the balloon which he might have been in — sailed skyward. But he might still be in time for the fireworks; it was likely to be a dark night, and they would begin early, but he might get there before the close. But, alas! nine miles away from Bilberry the engine broke down! It might take hours to repair it, so Nick decided to walk the rest of the way. The seven-league boots could hardly have gone over those nine miles in a shorter space of time than Nick did, but it was all in vain. A distant glimpse of the last sky-rocket that went up from Bilberry Common was all he had!

When he walked into the village there were still a few belated people in the streets whom he heard congratulating each other upon the grandest Fourth of July celebration that Bilberry had ever known!

Nick hurried homeward, not feeling just in the mood to hear about the celebration.

He went into the back yard, thinking he would creep up to his room by the back stairs, and not let anybody see him. But he stumbled over Tommy, who was fast asleep on a heap of empty torpedo



boxes and fire-cracker papers, with a pop-gun still clutched tightly in his hand, and Tommy awoke, with one of the resounding screams for which he was famous.

“Keep still! what have *you* got to cry about?” said Nick bitterly.

“I w-w-want it to be F-f-fourth of July some more!” sobbed Tommy.

Tommy’s cry drew Aunt Jane from the front gate, where she was talking over the glories of the day with a neighbor, and Nick was discovered.

“So it’s you, though I wouldn’t have believed it,” said Aunt Jane. “I don’t believe in boys slinking in by the back way, even if they have reason to be ashamed of themselves. If you’d been here you might have touched off the cannon, for Captain Thumb said he meant to let you — though *I* don’t believe in boys touching off cannons. And you might have gone up in the balloon; for you had an invitation, and your father said he should have let you go, though *I* don’t believe in balloons. I should like to know *where* you have been, for I don’t believe in people leaving a splendid Fourth of July celebration in their own town to tramp all over the country!”

“Neither do I,” said Nick. He wouldn’t have believed that he should ever come to share one of Aunt Jane’s unbeliefs, but he did.

Nick never expected to hear anything of the re-



sult of his effort to arouse the patriotic feelings of the Polywhappiters ; but in less than a week after his return he received a letter in which Lysander Hewitt, in behalf of the selectmen, returned thanks for his generous gift, and regretted to say that, owing to the lateness of its reception, they had been unable to apply it to the object which he had mentioned ; but as the town had been for years afflicted with the nuisance of stray animals, especially pigs, running loose about the streets for lack of a suitable enclosure, they had resolved to use the money, with his permission, to make a pound, to be called in compliment to him "The Nick Tweedle Pig-pound!" Nick hoped he never should hear anything more from those benighted Polywhappiters, who preferred a pig-pound to a Fourth of July celebration.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE GIRL FROM BILBERRY CORNER.

WHEN Lyddy Ann Grimsby was told that she was to go away to a fashionable boarding-school, she sat down on the flat stone step of the back door, between the tall mullein stalks, and wiped away a large tear-drop from the tip of her freckled nose; only one, for Lyddy Ann had an intellect, and had discovered by the time she was four that it was of no use to cry.

She was fourteen now; and grandpa had said, just before he died, that when she was fourteen Lyddy Ann must be sent away to school because she had brains. Lyddy Ann had tried to find out, by way of Dilly, the "hired girl," why he thought she had brains; but Dilly didn't know unless it was because she had such a knobby forehead. Anyway, Lyddy Ann meant to prove that he was right! She felt as if he were looking down, out of the blue sky, to see just what she did; and she resolved that he should not be disappointed in her.

Grandpa had said nothing about a fashionable school; it was Uncle Phineas's wife who had de-



cided that matter. Uncle Phineas had gone away from Bilberry when he was young ; he hadn't liked a place that you couldn't find on the map, he said ; in fact, there is, on the large maps, only the tiniest dot to stand for Bilberry Centre and Bilberry Corner and the Port, and on the small maps no notice whatever is taken of the Bilberries or of the little river on which they straggle along. Uncle Phineas lived away out West now, and had made money in ways that Bilberry knew nothing about. He wrote home about wild-cats and bulls and bears in a way that thrilled Tommy Coquard's soul, and made Lyddy Ann very anxious about him ; but it turned out, very disappointingly to Tommy Coquard, that it meant only railroads and mines and wheat. Uncle Phineas's wife was stylish, and she knew about this fashionable city school because some girls from Denver had been sent there ; she wrote that when Lyddy Ann had been there three years there wouldn't be a sign of Bilberry Corner about her.

Grandma's spectacles grew misty when she read that, and Aunt Nabby sighed, and Dilly sniffed scornfully. Dilly thought Bilberry Corner was good enough for anybody. The very first thing that Lyddy Ann did after she had flicked away the tear was to say, —

“ O Dilly ! who will look after Tommy Coquard and keep him out of mischief when I am gone ? ”



“He is going to be a handful,” admitted Dilly, shaking her head seriously. “I don’t know how your grandmother is going to feel about keeping him.”

“About keeping Tommy Coquard?” Lyddy Ann sprang to her feet, and gazed at Dilly in bewildered dismay.

“Well, he isn’t our own, you know; but there, child, you needn’t worry.”

Dilly had one failing; almost everybody has one, you know; she didn’t like boys. That may have been because she didn’t know much about them. She had never had any brothers; and she had lived at the Grimsby farm for twenty years, and in that time there had never been any boys there — until Tommy Coquard came. Grandpa had brought Tommy, with his mother, whom he had found lying very ill by the roadside, in a storm. She had died without telling who she was or where she came from; but she was apparently French, and grandpa thought she had come from or been travelling to the little French Canadian town across the river. But no one there professed to know anything about her, or wanted the boy, only about two years old then. They were poor in the little Canadian town, and children were plenty. So in spite of Dilly’s objection to boys, and grandma’s confession that she didn’t know what to do with him, and Aunt Nabby’s belief that you always ought to know who



a child's parents were, Tommy Coquard stayed on at the farm. Grandpa said he couldn't bear to send the little chap to the poor-house.

They called him Tommy Coquard because the name marked upon his clothes, nearly obliterated by hard usage, seemed as much like that as anything, grandpa being helped in the reading, perhaps, by the fact that Coquard was a name he had heard in the little French town.

Tommy was six now ; and although he undoubtedly was, as Dilly complained every day, just like a boy, he also was, as Lyddy Ann maintained, a dear. And the sharpest pang that Lyddy Ann suffered when she went away to the fashionable school was in parting from Tommy Coquard.

What Tommy Coquard felt was shown by his running after the stage, and forcing upon Lyddy Ann, with tears, his precious pet turtle — which Lyddy Ann could not bear to refuse, but was obliged to return by the stage-driver, because, on account of his wandering habits and his startling way of thrusting his huge head out of his shell, it seemed doubtful whether he would be welcomed at the fashionable school.

The girls at the school looked at her as if she were very queer indeed, Liddy Ann thought ; and it seemed very strange after Mrs. Prouty, the Bilberry dressmaker, had spent nearly two weeks in making new clothes for her, had made her a dress



out of Aunt Nabby's beautiful large plaid silk, purple and green, and two or three other dresses just as grandma and Aunt Nabby liked them ; and Dilly had tied grandma's gold beads around her neck — strongly, so they wouldn't come off, and pierced her ears so she could wear Aunt Nabby's beautiful large gold ear-rings with the yellow stones in them. And Dilly had shown her how to "do up" her hair instead of wearing it in a long braid.

The girls at Madame Frey's school were not so much "dressed-up" as she, but they looked very different ; Lyddy Ann saw that in a moment, with a sinking heart. The fashions didn't reach Bilberry until they were rather old ; and grandma and Aunt Nabby and Dilly had fashions of their own to which they clung, and which Mrs. Prouty mingled rather oddly with the newer ones.

The girls had looked at each other and smiled ; one girl had tittered openly. Lyddy Ann almost lost the faith in Providence which Dilly whispered to her the very last thing that she must be sure to have, when she found that the girl who tittered was to be her room-mate. The girl's name was Paulina Wells ; and besides being stylish, she wore glasses, through which she looked, Lyddy Ann thought, with a superior and disdainful air.

Very early in the morning she sat up, and looked across from her little brass bedstead to Lyddy Ann's little brass bedstead in the opposite corner



of the room. She had taken her glasses from under her pillow, and adjusted them carefully upon her sharp little nose; and Lyddy Ann thought it was their glitter which awoke her so suddenly that she sprang up in bed.

“You are not bad looking when you haven’t those clothes on—not at all bad looking,” said Paulina Wells, with candid criticism. “Where is Bilberry Corner? I never heard of it.”

“It is a beautiful place,” said Lyddy Ann, with unshed tears smarting in her eyes, “and the people are polite.”

“Why did you do your hair up? You’re not old enough, you know. If you’ll come over here, I’ll untie those gold beads for you. They’re awfully funny and old-fashioned,” continued Paulina Wells.

“I had my hair done up because I wanted to be fashionable. Now I don’t care whether I’m fashionable or not! And I shall wear the beads,” cried Lyddy Ann resentfully.

“I should like to have a girl for a room-mate that the girls didn’t laugh at,” said Paulina Wells plaintively. “There was another new girl yesterday, Dorothy Harbinger; my father knows hers; he is a famous physician and very wealthy, they’re society people. They live here in the city; but Dorothy will be a boarder because her aunt, who is at her house, is ill with nervous prostration and



can't hear her practise. Didn't you see Dorothy? — plain hair and very *chic*?"

Paulina Wells lisped a little; and the French word conveyed less meaning than it might otherwise have done to Lyddy Ann, who didn't know French, but was quick of wit. She had seen Dorothy Harbinger; and Dorothy had smiled, not about, but at her, in friendly sympathy. She evidently didn't mind because she was a new girl, but she seemed to understand that Lyddy Ann did.

"She rooms with Carlotta Prime, next door," continued Paulina. "You can hear nearly everything through the register in that room, and all the others are where Miss Pulsifer can see lights under the doors; she has eyes in the back of her head, and Fraulein Schoppe can smell goodies a mile off; so we have all the high teas in here. Do you have much money to spend? Shall you give high teas?"

Lyddy Ann thought of the dollar and thirty-seven cents for which she had sold her bantam chickens, and the Columbian half-dollar which Aunt Nabby had given her for a keepsake, and said she didn't know. But her heart lightened a little at the thought of possible good times, as it does when one is fourteen.

"Almost every Saturday night some girl gives a high tea; lights out at ten all over the house you know; then we begin."



“In the dark? Do they let you?” asked Lyddy Ann stupidly.

“We stop up every chink to hide the lights. Of course they don’t let us; that’s half the fun.”

“We wouldn’t have had a picnic in Bilberry without Caddy Ames; she was the life of it. She was our teacher,” said Lyddy Ann reflectively.

“Bilberry must be a funny place. Here teachers are something you get the better of, if you’re smart.”

“I don’ tlike that, someway,” said Lyddy Ann; but she said it to herself, and it began to seem to her discouragingly possible that grandpa had been mistaken about the significance of her knobby forehead.

“Shall you have things sent you from home — goodies?” continued Paulina Wells, who, after all, had a practical mind — and a sweet tooth.

“I shall have a birthday in about two months; then they’ll send me a box,” said Lyddy Ann.

Paulina Wells talked glibly, giving instructions about the successful smuggling of nougatines, ice-cream, and marsh-mallows; but Lyddy Ann was silent, instructing herself, as it were, and making a strong resolution.

She had wept a little, in the night, under the bed-clothes, and solaced herself — weakly, as she knew — with visions of a home-going in which everything had come right. Bilberry schools were



good enough for any one, as Dilly thought; one needn't be so very smart, even if one's forehead were knobby; every one liked boys, and never said they didn't know what to do with Tommy Coquard, and he could have all the queer live things he wanted for pets — even toads, although Lyddy Ann herself had never been able to thoroughly enjoy those; and one need never, never be fashionable. But Lyddy Ann put that bright, impossible dream sternly away now, and said to herself that life was a struggle, as Dilly said when the butter didn't come, or it rained on her new bonnet.

“They may look down upon me,” she added firmly, still hearing nothing of Paulina Wells's chatter, “but I will not let them look down upon Bilberry Corner.”

The girl from Bilberry Corner was a better scholar in some directions than any one expected; there was scarcely a mathematical nut too hard for her to crack. But when Paulina Wells said that she was lucky again, her last room-mate had done her examples for her, Lyddy Ann calmly replied that she shouldn't; they didn't do things in that way in Bilberry Corner, they thought it was mean; but she was willing to help her just as far as it was fair to do so.

She helped all the scholars, and there began to be a real interest in mathematics; and poor Fraulein Schoppe, who taught the classes, brightened



up, and was actually seen to smile, and it was suspected that she had pulled the gray hairs out of her head.

Lyddy Ann put away her plaid silk dress and wore her plainer ones, and took the long ear-rings out of her ears ; but she would not let Paulina Wells untie the gold beads ; she said she liked to wear them because they were grandma's. Lyddy Ann and Dorothy Harbinger had proved to be congenial spirits, greatly to the astonishment of Paulina Wells. Dorothy said she did love a girl who could do geometry, and have a good time if her hair wasn't crimped. Besides these accomplishments, Lyddy Ann had a knack at candy-making which was appreciated by all the girls ; and she actually obtained leave — through the mediation of Fraulein Schoppe — to have a candy-pull in the kitchen. She went to several high teas, held in the girls' rooms after the lights were supposed to be out, but she didn't like the anxiety and the scrambling haste ; she told the girls plainly that they didn't do underhanded things at Bilberry Corner.

There was an increased respect for Bilberry Corner in that school ; even Paulina Wells used her eye-glasses more politely when she looked at Lyddy Ann ; but Lyddy Ann felt a little anxiety about the birthday box which Paulina Wells had told every one she was to have sent her, and



with whose contents she planned to give a high tea. She had obtained permission to give the tea in the small schoolroom, and Dorothy Harbinger was to receive with her, and Lyddy Ann fondly hoped that the affair would reflect credit upon Bilberry Corner. But Dilly's dainties were apt to be old-fashioned and countryfied; Lyddy Ann was even afraid there might be doughnuts — in truth, she was fond of doughnuts, and Dilly knew it, while the girls at Madame Frey's would be sure to hold them in utter scorn. She couldn't quite bring herself to give Dilly a hint about that box, Dilly would so thoroughly enjoy its preparation, and be sure that she knew just what Lyddy Ann would like. It was a comfort to know that there would be a birthday cake, beautifully frosted and covered with little red and white candies; that had been made for every birthday that she could remember.

It was Friday night when the box came, and the invitations were out for Lyddy Ann's high tea the next day. It was a big box; and when the expressman set it down in her room, Lyddy Ann felt, with a thrill of relief, that the birthday cake must be very large. Paulina Wells, who was toasting marsh-mallows over the lamp, stood over the box with a very large marsh-mallow impaled upon a hat-pin; and Dorothy Harbinger, who was visiting them, walked around it reflectively; she was very anxious for the success of that tea. She



leaned down and listened, and then ran her fingers through two or three holes in the top. Queer little noises came from the box.

“Girls, there’s something alive in it!” cried Dorothy Harbinger. While the cover was being taken off that queer sound went on — chirr-r-r.

“I know it’s a squirrel!” cried Dorothy.

“Tommy Coquard!” murmured Lyddy Ann, with forebodings. It was a large gray squirrel in a cage; but he could thrust his head between the wires of the cage, and he had nibbled the top entirely off the birthday cake!

The cake had evidently had a chocolate frosting, and been covered with nuts instead of the little red and white candies that had been good enough before. Lyddy Ann had just mentioned to Dilly, in a letter, that she didn’t mean to let those girls look down on Bilberry Corner.

“Tommy Coquard is a love,” said Lyddy Ann loyally. “He has sent me what he prized most, but — oh, dear! the cake! and what shall I do with the squirrel?”

“He’s a splendid fellow,” said Dorothy, making friends with the captive, whose “chirr” had grown more noisy with delight at being liberated from the box.

“I think Aunt Ethelberta would like him; she’s never too nervous for a new pet, and they take up her mind.”



It was Aunt Ethelberta whose nervous illness had caused Dorothy to be sent to school.

“Perhaps we could get leave to carry him to her — you and I, this afternoon,” added Dorothy hopefully. “Madame would do anything rather than let you keep a squirrel!”

That would be a relief, thought Lyddy Ann; but her high tea weighed heavily on her mind.

“There’s something in a box, and the cover has only been nibbled a little,” said Paulina Wells, who was more interested in goodies than in pets. Lyddy Ann opened the box, and she smelled clover-fields and summer mornings, for it was a curd cheese.

“Oh, what funny, countryfied stuff!” cried Paulina Wells, disappointed out of what little politeness she had. “And if that pasteboard box isn’t full of doughnuts! There’s a pair of roasted chickens, but why didn’t she send angel cake instead? And there, in the bottom of the box — oh, my! how funny, is a great big patchwork quilt; calico too. The girls will die!”

Lyddy Ann held her head high, and her eyes flashed through a mist. “It’s the rainbow pattern; I think it’s beautiful,” she said firmly. “I know Dilly has been a long time making it; she never would let me see it. She meant to surprise me. There are pieces of every one’s clothes; it is just like home! That is grandma’s purple wrapper; and



oh, that brocade is grandpa's wedding-vest! It isn't all calico, it's mixed up; we think more of feelings than looks in Bilberry Corner; and that brown silk is a piece of the little cloak that Tommy Coquard wore when grandpa brought him home. I think it's a handsome quilt, and I shall put it on my bed!"

"I like things that mean something—that have associations; they're better than anything you can buy," said Dorothy Harbinger.

Paulina Wells's sharp little nose elevated itself a trifle, but she said no more. There was a letter in the box which troubled Lyddy Ann more than the squirrel's ravages.

"Tommy Coquard is a boy," wrote Dilly; "and your grandmother says she ain't fit to bring him up. Besides, it's being found out every day that there ain't much propuppy. So your grandmother is going to let a man from the French town, that says he's his uncle, have Tommy Coquard; he's going to carry him back to France with him, right away." It was a relief to go home with Dorothy, because it diverted one's mind a little from this sad news.

Aunt Ethelberta did want the gray squirrel; she promised to let Lyddy Ann have him again when she went home to Bilberry Corner. Lyddy Ann wished to keep him for Tommy Coquard's sake.



Aunt Ethelberta liked queer pets, just as Tommy Coquard did; she had always been accustomed to having them about, for her father had been a famous naturalist; she did not even flinch when Lyddy Ann told her about the toads that Tommy took to bed with him. She said he must be a dear little fellow. Lyddy Ann couldn't tell her how dear he was, now that he was going away; she choked when she tried to. Dorothy explained to her, aside, that the loss of Aunt Ethelberta's own little boy had caused her illness; he had died four years before, and she had never recovered from the shock. On the way back to school Lyddy Ann planned to send a telegram to her grandmother in the morning:—

“Don't let Tommy's uncle have him. I will take care of him,” she would say.

That might sound self-sufficient for a girl of fourteen, but some one must take care of Tommy! Grandpa would not have let the uncle have him, she thought; they were poor and thriftless people in that French town; but grandma was feeble and childish, and Aunt Nabby shared Dilly's objection to boys, and was afraid of all Tommy's pets, even of the little blind mole that he was educating. She would think of some way by which she could take care of Tommy Coquard; a girl from Bilberry Corner with a knobby forehead must not give up!

That other and slighter problem of the high tea



troubled her a little when she laid her head on the pillow that night. The invitations were out for the next night, and there were only two roast chickens, the curd cheese and the doughnuts of Paulina Wells's scorn, to furnish forth the feast. And Paulina said she didn't know about eating things that came in a box with a squirrel. Aunt Nabby had sent her a five-dollar gold piece as a keepsake; should she spend it all for goodies, or should she regale her friends on doughnuts and curd cheese, with perhaps the addition of some peanut taffy which she could get permission to make, and for which she knew a crisp and toothsome Bilberry Corner recipe? Bilberry Corner would hold its head up, and not be ashamed of its doughnuts and cheese, however Paulina Wells might jeer!

But before the matter was quite settled in Lyddy Ann's mind things began to be a little mixed, and Tommy Coquard rode gayly off on a bicycle, of which the wheels were made of doughnuts—or were they gold pieces? or—no, they certainly were Fraulein Schoppe's eye-glasses.

She awoke from that queer dream with a start as Tommy Coquard rode recklessly into the Atlantic Ocean. There was a faint light in the room by which she saw that Paulina Wells's bed was empty. The light came from the queer little "cubby-hole" closet which extended under the eaves of that wing of the house in which their room was situated.



As Lyddy Ann looked, Paulina Wells crawled out of the closet, which was too low for her to stand upright in, and sat in its doorway, greedily eating doughnuts and curd cheese. Occasionally she threw some fragments over her shoulder into the closet, and Lyddy Ann remembered that Paulina had advised her not to put her box of eatables in there lest mice should get into it; but Lyddy Ann had never heard any mice there, and had not heeded the warning. Paulina meant to make her think that mice had eaten the doughnuts and curd cheese.

Lyddy Ann shut her eyes tightly when Paulina Wells looked towards her bed. She felt as if the disgrace would certainly kill Paulina, if she were discovered; and she was generous enough to prefer to sacrifice her goodies. She thought she might even be able to resist the temptation to tell Dorothy, provided that Paulina didn't express any more contempt for doughnuts and curd cheese; there were limitations to Lyddy Ann's self-control.

She lay awake until Paulina had finished her feast. Occasionally she ventured to take a peep; and she discovered that Paulina's hair and nightgown were cobwebby from the closet, which was not supposed to be used, and was never cleaned; and her face was smeared with cheese like a child's; and, with her glasses on, she looked so funny, that Lyddy Ann was forced to hide her head for a mo-



ment under the bed-clothes and give way to mirth. At last the feast came to an end ; Paulina extinguished her candle and returned to bed, and it very soon became evident that she was fast asleep. Then Lyddy Ann went to sleep again, and dreamed another queer dream : she was swinging in the great barn at home, and Philetus, the "hired man," swung her and swung her until she was dizzy, although she cried out to him to stop ; and then all the hay in the loft came down upon her, slowly, gradually, but she couldn't escape it, and she was suffocating, and she couldn't cry out. But she did cry out, at last, springing up in bed with a painful weight upon her chest, and a horror of thick suffocating blackness around her.

"Fire ! fire !" she cried, and a wild scream from Paulina Wells and shrieks from the adjoining room echoed her cry. Lyddy Ann half dressed herself in breathless haste. Paulina Wells opened the door into the corridor, and the flames rushed in.

"Shut it, quick !" cried Lyddy Ann. "The fire has burst out in the end of the cubby-hole — where you set the candle down ! This wing is cut off by fire from the rest of the house !"

Dorothy Harbinger and her room-mate came in by a door, which, fortunately, connected the two rooms, the only ones on that floor of the wing.

"Bring the spreads off your beds !" cried Lyddy Ann, displaying the practical abilities behind her



knobby forehead. "We will tie them together — yours and those on our beds ; they are stronger than sheets, and with my patchwork quilt we can make a rope that will reach to the ground !"

They were in the third story of the wing ; Lyddy Ann's rope was strong and long, but the descent was frightful, although there were helpful hands waiting to receive them now, and encouraging shouts came to them.

Dorothy and her room-mate went down safely ; but Lyddy Ann was forced to almost drag Paulina Wells, who had nearly lost her senses with terror. And near the ground Paulina gave up her hold, and Lyddy Ann was not strong enough to cling to her. She fell upon the birch walk, and was so badly hurt as to be insensible.

She was wrapped in Lyddy Ann's patchwork quilt, and carried into the house, the main body of which was quite unharmed and likely to remain so, for the firemen had speedily gained control of the flames.

Madame Frey, in a panic, proposed to send her to the hospital ; but Dorothy Harbinger's father, appearing just in time, interposed, and offered to take her to his own house, and attend to her injuries himself. Paulina's father was known to him ; and he was thinking, perhaps, that his own daughter might have been the unfortunate sufferer. Paulina clung to Lyddy Ann ; and Lyddy Ann went



to the doctor's too, and Dorothy's room-mate as well, the whole party wearing for wraps the bed-quilts of Lyddy Ann's hastily devised fire-escape. After all, however, their clothing was mostly saved, and was sent to them at Dr. Harbinger's.

But it was while Paulina Wells, whose injuries were a badly sprained ankle and some painful bruises, was still wrapped in the patchwork quilt which she had so held in scorn, that Dorothy's Aunt Ethelberta went to see her. She admired the rainbow quilt so heartily that Lyddy Ann told her all about it, and just whose dresses the pieces that made the rainbow came from.

"That bit of brown silk with the queer little apple figure, is a bit of Tommy Coquard's little cloak," she said; "the cloak he wore when grandpa found him."

And a pang rent Lyddy Ann's heart, because in the excitement she had forgotten the telegram she was going to send, and before she could stop it Tommy Coquard might be carried off to France. Aunt Ethelberta gazed at the bit of brown silk, and every bit of color went out of her face.

"Found him?" she echoed.

"Grandpa found him with his mother, a French woman; she was dying beside the road; and she seemed to have walked a long ways" —

Aunt Ethelberta clung to Dorothy's father, trembling like a leaf.



“Dodo’s little cloak! A French woman! it was Melanie!” she gasped. Her brother tried to calm her.

“It seemed certain that he was the child who died in the hospital; don’t excite yourself with false hopes,” he said gently.

“Melanie was a bad woman; she hoped for a reward; and she had a brother in Canada! Bilberry is near the line — tell me how the boy looks! how she looked!” cried Aunt Ethelberta frantically.

“Coarse, black curly hair, and a dent in her forehead as if some one had struck her,” explained Lyddy Ann, recalling the French woman’s looks. “And Tommy is so different; oh, he is like you!” she cried suddenly. “I can see it now! And his name! — it was Crawford that we took for Coquard!”

“It was Theodore Crawford!” said Aunt Ethelberta; and she was able to be quite calm as her hope grew into assurance — for joy does not kill.

Lyddy Ann sent her telegram, but this was the way it ran: “Keep Tommy Coquard. I have found his mother.” The French maid had hidden her steps carefully when she had carried the child away hoping for a reward; and a false clew which led them to believe he had died in a foundling hospital, had stopped the search that might have discovered him. The man who wished to take him was really the woman’s brother, and believed



the child to be his sister's; she had died on her way to the little town which had been her home in childhood.

"Next to having Tommy for our own, I would rather have him yours," said Lyddy Ann to Aunt Ethelberta and Dorothy, with joyful tears.

. . . . .  
"Aren't you really going to tell of me? I've always been pretty mean to you," said Paulina Wells on the day when she went back to school.

"I think you've had enough," said Lyddy Ann. "Besides, we don't like to tell of each other at Bilberry Corner, and we never tell tales when it doesn't do any good. I'm going to have another box from home, and give a high tea; and I'm going to invite you and Dorothy to receive with me."

Paulina Wells wiped her misty eye-glasses. "I think you're a very uncommonly nice girl," she said. "And I think Bilberry Corner must be a splendid place. I always liked doughnuts and patchwork quilts."



## CHAPTER XI.

A NEW YORK BOY AT SCHOOL WITH SOME OF THE  
BILBERRIES.

A NEW boy was especially welcome at Saint Luke's school that summer ; there was need of a good bowler at cricket, of a catcher who could take Puffer's place in the base-ball nine when he was obliged to study out of school-hours, — poor Puffer, who was as weak at mathematics as he was strong at base-ball, and who was now stuck fast on the *pons asinorum*, — also of a fellow who wouldn't knuckle to old Presby for the sake of Miss Mildred Ellicott's five o'clock teas, and who could take hard knocks generally without flinching, as a boy should.

They didn't really expect the cricketer ; there was only one other school in New England at which cricket was played, and some of the boys thought base-ball was good enough ; indeed, Lawton, who had started it, despaired of ever getting enough players for a double wicket. The boys liked tennis, too, which Lawton thought "girly ;" and there was scarcely one who regarded with the



disdain which Lawton thought proper, the chocolate and angel cake of Mildred Ellicott's five o'clock teas.

But it was a New York boy who was coming, — almost in the middle of the summer term, — and Lawton declared that he had hopes of him. Lawton was a New Yorker himself.

Pupils were seldom allowed to enter so near the end of the school year; but a special dispensation had been made in this boy's favor, no one quite knew why.

Lawton and Fraser Hallett, who were kindred spirits, walked down to the station on the morning when he was to arrive. Two very large leather trunks and several brass-mounted boxes stood on the platform of the little station. They were covered so thickly with the labels of foreign travel as to suggest the probability that some pains had been taken to preserve them.

"That's some girl's toggery," said Lawton contemptuously. "Girls are always afraid people won't find out that they've been abroad. I know 'em." Lawton had four sisters, and was therefore regarded as unquestionable authority upon the ways of girls, and his stern resistance to the lures of five o'clock tea was also attributed to his experience as a brother.

But Fraser Hallett was pointing a scornful finger at the luggage. "Peter Ten Eyck Tafferton,



New York," he read, in a tone of ineffable contempt.

"It's him," said Lawton despairingly. (They taught grammar at Saint Luke's, but — Lawton was a boy.) "But then, a fellow isn't to blame for his name," he added, a little more hopefully.

"He needn't write it all out on his trunks, nor sit up nights to keep those labels stuck on. There is no sand in him; here he comes!"

A tall boy of fifteen or sixteen, with an absent-minded air, and near-sighted eyes peering through glasses, came out of the little station, and pointed out his trunks to Uncle Simeon, the old colored man who had carried homesick boys and their luggage up the steep hill from the station to the school for many a long year. The new boy had a drawling voice, and his hands were unpardonably white, judged by the stern (unwritten) laws of Saint Luke's. Lawton and Fraser Hallett objected to the glasses also. Little Dick Hallett, the pluckiest boy in the third class, wore them; but then, it makes a difference whether one wears them of necessity, or for effect. It was clear to Lawton's mind that the new fellow wore them for effect.

And he said, "Here, boy!" to 'Sander Perrigo in a way that made 'Sander flush and scowl angrily. 'Sander had come from North Bilberry, in Maine, to work his way through the school; he was gen-



eral errand boy; window cleaner and driver when rheumatism disabled old Simeon; he helped the gardener with his digging, and even Miranda, the cook, with her dinner on special occasions.

The boys generally treated him as one of themselves; he had distinguished himself in the baseball nine, and even as a cricketer, and muscle was more highly regarded than money or social position, at Saint Luke's.

"That new fellow had no business to speak to 'Sander as if he were a servant," Lawton said, with more indignation than he might have shown if the new fellow had been satisfactory; for Lawton had been heard to say that when it came to a lawn party on Class Day, he wasn't sure that it was the thing to introduce 'Sander to one's cousins and sisters, especially now that his fifteen-year-old sister was a waiter at Mrs. Carter's boarding-house.

Here was Dr. Ellicott, the head master; when had he been known to come to the station before to welcome a new boy?

"I always knew old Ginger was a toady," remarked Fraser Hallett. "And Miss Mildred will have that mollycoddle pouring for her at her very next tea!"

"It's all he's good for," said Lawton, with a heavy sigh. "And when that cricket match comes off, the Graftons will knock the daylight out of us! — that's all there is about it."



“Right side up with care — perfumery bottles, 'Sander,” called Fraser Hallett as the trunks were lifted into the wagon.

The owner of the trunks peered at Fraser across the doctor's portly form, and his thin face flushed sensitively.

'Sander Perrigo confided his opinion of the new boy to his sister, Abby Ellen, in the retirement of Mrs. Carter's back porch that evening.

“He offered me a quarter! I didn't fire it at him, but I said, so he knew what I meant, that the doctor paid me.”

“I'm afraid you're too proud,” said Abby Ellen, with a little sigh.

“You don't understand. A girl can't be expected to,” said 'Sander loftily. “You don't mind waiting upon people, and you like it when they give you pink ribbons.”

Abby Ellen blushed guiltily; it was impossible to deny the pink-ribbon impeachment.

“I heard Mrs. Carter say that Mr. Presby thought your Latin verses were remarkable,” she ventured, in an effort to console 'Sander.

His gloomy face brightened, but only for a moment. “A fellow like me in a school like this has got to bear a lot. I'm willing to, for the sake of being somebody some day; but I can't bear that new fellow's ways. I shall have to take the wind out of his sails!”



“Oh! I hope you won't, 'Sander,” said Abby Ellen anxiously. “There are only six weeks before vacation, and perhaps he won't come back again.”

But 'Sander repeated the thrilling prophecy that he should take the wind out of the new boy's sails.

Peter Ten Eyck Tafferton did make himself useful at Miss Mildred's tea.

“He had on stunning clothes, and you ought to have heard him drawl; and his *a*'s were broader than the Boston fellows' — so English, you know; and all the girls liked him,” Fraser Hallet reported to Lawton. And it was at this first tea that the new-comer's many-syllabled name was abbreviated to Taffy.

Lawton and Fraser Hallett were leaders, and very few advances were made to the new pupil.

“Leave him to the girls,” was Lawton's contemptuous decree. And, in fact, Taffy seemed to be in his element when Miss Mildred Ellicott took him to play tennis with the Bramer girls who had already arrived at their summer cottage.

The next Saturday after his arrival Taffy appeared in his tennis-suit long before it was time for the game at the Bramers'. He strolled languidly down to the cricket-field, with a camp-stool; and seated himself in a convenient place to watch the game. Derisive shouts greeted the camp-stool,



and there were even threats to "hoist" Taffy to the grass; to all of which he listened with such an imperturbable air that one was almost forced to believe him deaf. Reckless balls flew dangerously near him. A few boys thought it would be better fun to knock Taffy's glasses off than to beat at cricket. Lawton was too intent upon the game to pay any attention to the spectator; and 'Sander who was catching, had no time for more than a scowl at the offender; while Fraser Hallett, who was a fielder, contented himself with staring quizzically at him, occasionally providing himself with an imaginary eye-glass by the aid of his thumb and forefinger.

Little Dick Hallett was struck by the "new fellow's" critical air.

"Perhaps he knows how; we might ask him to join," he suggested to Lawton. Dick was good-natured, and it was his avowed theory that "a fellow ought to have a fair chance."

"That 'sissy!' He'd look better playing croquet with the old ladies at Mrs. Carter's," cried Lawton scornfully. And Lawton was angry with himself for feeling chagrined that his side had never played so badly as they played under the cool, near-sighted eyes of Tafferton, and a little disappointed that he sauntered off with his camp-stool just as they began to do a little better.

Little Dick Hallett remarked to his comrade,





TAFFY AT CRICKET.

“He strolled languidly down to the cricket field with a camp-stool, and seated himself to watch the game.”







Simcoe, that "Taffy looked a little red and queer when he went away, as if his feelings were hurt, you know." But little Dick was suspected in some quarters of being "soft-hearted."

Taffy was not a fine scholar, but much consideration was shown him by Dr. Ellicott and all the teachers; a fact which did not improve his standing with the boys. He was not a fine scholar, but he could translate Latin verses better than 'Sander Perrigo.

Lawton condoled feelingly with 'Sander.

"What does a fellow that's so smart as you want to write verses for?" he said. "Taffy'll turn out a poet — you'll see! and it will serve him right!"

But 'Sander, who could not share Lawton's practical views, felt his heart burn within him.

Eastham village awoke early one June morning to find itself placarded all over with circus-bills. The store doors, the back-yard fences, even the grim faces of the everlasting hills which formed a rampart on one side of the village, set forth in red, yellow, and blue letters the news that Varley's Circus was coming. Although Saint Luke's was looking forward to the excitement of Class Day and the joys of vacation, a mild diversion like the circus was welcome.

Only one afternoon and evening could a great circus give to a little town like Eastham. All day people from the back districts came flocking into the village, as if to a county fair or a muster. The



great procession passed through the village streets early in the morning with huge wild beasts and bewitching little ponies, and hints of most fascinating wonders to be seen behind the great white canvas walls in the field at the end of Fore Street.

And Abby Ellen, who had watched the procession, dish-towel in hand, over Mrs. Carter's back-yard fence, cried to go that evening.

To do Abby Ellen justice, she was not given to crying; but circuses came seldom to Bilberry, and she worked very hard now — Mrs. Carter's house was full of summer boarders. She looked across the road at the Bramer girls' lawn-parties; and down the road at the merry buckboard loads that drove by, with horn-blowing and singing; and it seemed to her that no good times ever came her way.

'Sander said it was "fooling money away" to go to a circus. 'Sander had secured "a job" that morning, which gave him a private view; but he could not resist Abby Ellen's tears.

They sat far up in front; 'Sander said they would have "as good seats as anybody," and very near them sat Taffy with two old ladies; for Taffy really played croquet in his languid fashion, at Mrs. Carter's, having found a friend there, and was very attentive to the old ladies. Abby Ellen found the animals so fascinating, especially the little trick ponies; the music so thrilling; and the



clown such a delightfully funny fellow, that she became very much excited and laughed until she cried, and 'Sander was ashamed of her. But Taffy and the old ladies laughed, too, until they all had to wipe their eyes; and Taffy applauded so vigorously that he split one of his lemon-colored kid gloves down the back.

Suddenly Abby Ellen stood up and leaned eagerly forward, resisting all 'Sander's efforts to pull her down.

"'Sander, it is—it is Deacon Baldwin's Jo!" she cried. "Don't you see, 'Sander? the one that's riding the mustang! the one they call Señor Caraballero on the bills! It was in the midst of haying three years ago that Jo ran away,—and it killed his mother. Don't you remember how he used to ride Dr. Kittredge's Whirlwind, and could always break colts when nobody else could? If they do call him Señor Caraballero he is just Jo Baldwin! Oh! how glad his father will be!"

Abby Ellen, carried away by excitement, spoke loud; and people frowned at the disturbance, and one or two even hissed, for the clown in the foreground was cracking his whip and his jokes, and they wished to hear.

But Taffy looked at her sympathetically, and adjusted his glasses to get a better view of Señor Caraballero.

'Sander was standing, himself, now. Was it



possible that this gorgeous being in scarlet and spangles standing jauntily a-tiptoe of the racing little mustang pony was the old comrade with whom he had gone coasting and fishing and tamed squirrels and set traps when he was "a little shaver"?

There came the mustang, racing madly around the ring again, but — what had happened? There was a cry of dismay, and all the spectators were on their feet now.

"He's fallen off!" cried Abby Ellen. "Oh! no wonder — though he never fell off Dr. Kitt-ridge's Whirlwind. Oh! I hope he isn't killed."

The manager came forward, and made a soothing explanation to the excited audience. Señor Caraballero, the daring rider, was not hurt. He had been ill for some time, and had been seized with a fainting-fit; — and now the performance would go on as usual.

"Let's go and see poor Jo, 'Sander!" said Abby Ellen eagerly. "He'll be so glad to see old friends — especially if he is sick."

They made their way around to the back of the tent. Señor Caraballero, already divested of his gaudy riding-dress, was being helped off across the field by an infirm old man who apparently needed help himself.

"Where are you taking him?" called 'Sander. "I declare, if it isn't to Phillips's old barn on the



edge of the woods!" he added to Abby Ellen. They both ran forward, but the old man waved them back.

"It's ketchin' — ketchin'!" he said. "He's been sick most two weeks, and now he's breakin' out. He ketched it of some sailors down to Harbormouth. He's got to be kept out of the way of folks."

"What does he mean, 'Sander?" asked Abby Ellen anxiously.

"I suppose he means — smallpox," said 'Sander slowly. "There are cases of it sometimes in those sailor boarding-houses at Harbormouth."

Abby Ellen's round face grew pale under its coating of yellow freckles.

"We can't leave him alone — like this!" she said.

"They won't let us go near him," said 'Sander. And, in fact, as Abby Ellen advanced, the old man waved his arm more imperatively than ever.

Jo looked around with a faint gleam of recognition — a pitiful, appealing look — and Abby Ellen would have rushed to him if 'Sander had not held her back.

"You can't, you know! They won't let you; it's against the law," he said hoarsely. 'Sander was miserable; Abby Ellen could see it in his face; he had always liked Jo Baldwin. But the law! one could not defy that.



All but the very earliest risers in Eastham awoke to find that the circus had gone, leaving scarcely a trace behind them. Very soon it was rumored about the village that even the old man who had taken care of Señor Caraballero in Phillips's old barn had gone, too, following in the rear of the procession as fast as his infirm old legs would carry him. There was much indignation; how could the town take care of a smallpox patient? And old Dr. Furber was away; and young Dr. Merriman from Oldtown was so very young that people had but little confidence in him; but no one doubted that his verdict was correct — that the patient was very ill with smallpox, and that, in common humanity, a nurse must be found for him.

But a nurse was not to be found. It was haying-time, and harvest-time for those who kept summer boarders, and Eastham had a great horror of smallpox.

Food and water were conveyed to the sick boy through the barn window by means of a long pole. Abby Ellen persuaded 'Sander to go over to the barn with her and help her to convey to Jo some delicate broth that she had made. 'Sander had grumbled all the way — after 'Sander's fashion — but Abby Ellen did not care, for she had discovered that he had already been there himself and offered Jo such condolences as he could from the stone wall a hundred feet away.



'Sander and Abby Ellen were such busy people that it was not until twilight that they could find leisure for their errand; and as they reached Phillips's barn a new moon poised itself upon the ridge-pole. 'Sander called from the stone wall, and a head appeared from the barn window. The moon glittered upon a pair of eye-glasses; a drawling voice inquired what was wanted.

"It's Taffy!" gasped 'Sander.

"I'm taking care of him, you know," explained Taffy languidly.

"But — but — they won't let you!" said 'Sander.

"They couldn't help it. There's no one to interfere with me, any way. I'm all alone in the world — so I'm the right one to do it, you know. Besides, I know how; my brother was an invalid; we travelled everywhere together; he — died two months ago." Taffy's voice was as drawling and languid as ever; Abby Ellen almost thought she imagined the break in it.

"There are some things that I would like to have sent to me. If you have a pencil perhaps you'll write a list."

Abby Ellen looked, with a housewifely eye, over the list which 'Sander wrote down.

"He has thought of everything. What a boy he is!" she said.

"And the very last fellow that you would have expected to do such a thing!" exclaimed 'Sander.



And then he swallowed a great lump in his throat. "Abby Ellen, I — I wish't I'd done it!" he said.

Dr. Ellicott was in a state of nervous irritation in which he vowed summary vengeance upon the circus proprietors, the town authorities, and the teachers, whose negligence had allowed "the last representative of a distinguished family, and the heir to great wealth," to risk his life for the sake of a circus-rider. He telegraphed to several cities for an experienced smallpox nurse; but before one arrived old Dr. Furber had returned, and allayed the great excitement and anxiety by the assurance that the patient in Phillips's barn was only suffering from measles.

Jo mended speedily under the cheering influence of this assurance; but before the day when Deacon Baldwin came from Bilberry — farther from home than he had ever been in his life before — to seek his prodigal son, Jo's nurse showed symptoms of the disease, which he had never had.

And even Dr. Ellicott approved when he accepted Jo's eager invitation, seconded by Jo's grateful father, to go with them to the farm in North Bilberry in the health-giving hills.

"He's going to be awfully sick with the measles, the doctor says," 'Sander remarked to Abby Ellen, after he had seen the party off on the train. "But — I wish't I had got 'em the same way!"

On the stone wall, within hail of Phillips's barn



'Sander had gained new ideals of life — as new as Jo Baldwin's, who said that a boy who had run away and broken his mother's heart deserved to belong to a circus-company!

But, after all, Taffy could not have been so very ill; for 'Sander had a letter from him just before school closed — in spite of all the differences between them an electric spark of sympathy had made its way between the stone wall and Phillips's barn — in which this sentence appeared: —

“I expect to be able to go to Grafton to the cricket-match next week; and if Rafe Burton does not get over his lameness perhaps I shall be needed to help out. I can play a little. I should have said so, if the fellows had ever asked me.”

In the records of Saint Luke's it is set down, and every new boy is told that the cricket-game played that year between the Graftons and Saint Luke's was the greatest school-game ever known; and the boy whose cool skill and pluck snatched victory from the very jaws of defeat was Tafferton of New York.

Luck had been with the Graftons from the first; they won the first innings, and Grimsby, one of their bowlers, had been at an English school and had played cricket, according to his own statement, “as soon as he was out of long clothes.” They had been full of glee when they voted to accept Tafferton as a substitute for Burton, whose lame-



ness had increased to a hopeless degree. Measles had not improved Taffy's appearance; he was very thin, and more languid and drawing than ever. Lawton and 'Sander Perrigo had overheard the Graftons' prophecy that it would be "only too easy to wipe out the Saint Lukes'." Grimsby was what little Dick Hallett called a "fearfle" bowler. The Saint Lukes' bails were off their wickets continually before they could recover their ground. Taffy was so languid at first that 'Sander Perrigo declared with a groan to Lawton that he either didn't know how things were going, or couldn't see an inch beyond his nose. But all at once Taffy straightened himself up; he was a batsman, and he was beginning to take wonderful aim. Their first innings had counted them almost nothing. "I was a little out of practice," Taffy afterwards explained nonchalantly. "And besides, I didn't really think it was necessary to make much effort."

The notches were almost even; Lawton had kept account; the last ball would tell. And Taffy had had a fall; no one could say that Gilson tripped him — it was too bad a thing to believe of a Grafton — but his right arm was doubled under him, and he was white in the face when he rose and tried to lift it. But he ran with his bat just as 'Sander Perrigo tried to catch their last ball and unaccountably dropped it — and with tremendous force and an unerring aim sent the ball beyond the



reach of any Grafton fielder, and secured the one notch that meant victory.

Taffy came back to school a little late. He had been to New York to see his guardian and been delayed there. There were almost as many elegant trunks and boxes deposited on the station platform as on his first arrival ; but one could scarcely see them for the crowd of boys. Bewildered, helplessly-grinning Uncle Simeon was invited to dismount from his wagon ; and in a trice the horses were unhitched, and a throng of boys pushed and struggled for the honor of taking their places. Tafferton himself was borne aloft on the shoulders of the tallest boys — 'Sander Perrigo was one of them — and up the steep hill to the school went the procession with shouts and hurrahs that set wild echoes flying among the Eastham hills.



## CHAPTER XII.

HOW SANTA CLAUS FOUND THE BILBERRY  
POOR-HOUSE.

NOWADAYS Bilberry is proud of its poor-house. And since the town has become a summer resort, the path that is shovelled for Santa Claus has to be wide enough for a big express-wagon. But what I am going to tell you happened long ago, and was the very first time the dear old saint ever got there.

Heliogabalus was shovelling snow. The snow was very deep, and the path from the front door to the road was a long one, and the shovel was almost as big as Heliogabalus.

But Gobaly — as everybody called him, for short — didn't give up easily. You might have known that he wouldn't give up easily by one glance at his sturdy little figure, his bright, wide-open eyes, his firm mouth, and square, prominent chin; even the little, turned-up end of his nose looked resolute.

Besides, Mrs. Pynchum had told him to shovel out the path; and she had a switch behind the wood-shed door, to say nothing of her slipper.



Mrs. Pynchum kept the poor-farm, and Gobaly was "town's poor." The boys sometimes called him that, when he went to coast on Pippin Hill or to see the skating on the mill-pond; sometimes, too, they made fun of his clothes. But it was only the boys who were a great deal bigger than he who dared to make fun of Gobaly; and some of them, even, ran when he doubled up his fists. But Methuselah! I don't know what would have become of Methuselah if he had not had Gobaly to defend him. For he was a delicate little fellow; "spindlin' and good for nothin'," Mrs. Pynchum called him; and he had come to her in a basket—in other words, Methuselah was a foundling.

Mrs. Pynchum "didn't think much of children who came in a basket from nobody knew where. It didn't seem to belong to Bilberry to support him, since he didn't belong to anybody that ever lived there, and his keep and his medicine cost more than he would ever be worth to anybody."

Gobaly's mother died in the poor-house, and left him there, a baby; she had always lived in the town, and so had his father, so of course Gobaly had a perfect right there; and old Dr. Bouncer, who was very learned, had said of him that he was an uncommonly fine baby, and had named him Heliogabalus.

Besides, he was strong and willing, and did a great deal of work. Mrs. Pynchum "could put up



with Gobaly." But Methuselah, she said, was "a thorn in her side." And now, after being a trial all his life, he had a hip disease, which the doctor feared was incurable, and which made him more troublesome still!

But, after all, Mrs. Pynchum wasn't quite so bad as one would have thought from her talk. She must have had a soft spot somewhere in her heart; for she put plums in Methuselah's porridge, now that he was ill, and once she had let Gobaly leave his wood-chopping to draw him out on his sled.

I suppose there is a soft spot in everybody's heart, only sometimes it isn't very easy to find it; and Mrs. Pynchum might not have been so cross if she had led an easier life. There were a good many queer people in the poor-house, "flighty in their heads and wearin' in their ways," she said, and sometimes they must have been trying to the patience.

Once in a great while, indeed, Mrs. Pynchum was good-natured; and then, sometimes for a whole evening, the poor-house would seem like home. All those who lived there would then sit around the fire and roast apples. Mrs. Pynchum would even unlock the closet under the back stairs, where there was a great bag full of nuts that Sandy Gooding and Gobaly had gathered; and Uncle Sim Perkins would tell stories.

But it happened very unfortunately that Mrs.



Pynchum never had one of her good-natured days on Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or any holiday. She was sure to say on those days that she was "all tried to pieces."

And everybody was frightened and unhappy when Mrs. Pynchum was "all tried to pieces;" and so that was the reason why Gobaly's heart sank as he remembered, while he was shovelling the path through the snow, that the next day was Christmas.

Some people from the village went by with a Christmas-tree, which they had cut down in the woods just beyond the poor-house; there were children in the party, and they called to Gobaly and wished him a merry Christmas, and asked him if they were going to have a Christmas-tree at his house, and expressed great surprise that he wasn't going to hang up his stocking. Then one of the children suddenly exclaimed, —

"Why, that's the poor-house! It's never Christmas there!"

Poor Gobaly's heart sank still more as he caught these words; and somehow he felt very tired, and minded the cold, as he had not thought of minding it a moment before, and the snow-bank looked as if he could never shovel through it. For though Gobaly was stout-hearted, he didn't like to be reminded that he was "town's poor," and that Christmas was nothing to him.

Just then he caught sight of Methuselah's little



pinched face pressed against the window-pane. Methuselah always had, even when he was a baby, a worn and pallid face, like a little old man, and that was why they called him Methuselah. It was cold in the front room, but Methuselah had wrapped himself in a piece of an old quilt and stolen into that room and to the window, where he could see Gobaly shovelling the snow.

Methuselah was never quite happy when Gobaly was out of his sight.

Gobaly went up to the window.

"To-morrow's Christmas, 'Thusely!" he said.

"Is it? Do you s'pose she knows it? She'll be 'all tried to pieces,' won't she?"

("She" always meant Mrs. Pynchum in the poor-house; nobody there ever spoke of her in any other way.)

Gobaly was sadly afraid that she would, but he said, cheerfully, —

"May be she won't. May be she'll let me take you out on my sled; and one Christmas there was turkey and plum-pudding."

"Must have been a good many Christmases ago; I can't remember it!" said Methuselah. "Some folks have 'em every Christmas, Uncle Sim says; but perhaps it isn't true. Gobaly, do you believe there really is any Santa Claus, such as Uncle Sim tells about, or did he make it all up? To be sure, he showed me a picture of him."



“ I know there is,” said Gobaly firmly, “ because I’ve seen presents that he brought to boys and girls in the village.”

“ Then why don’t he ever come here and bring us some ? ” said Methuselah, as if a new idea had suddenly struck him. “ Do you s’pose it’s because we’re worse than any other boys in the world ? She says we are, sometimes. Or may be he’s too proud to stop at the poor-house.”

“ Perhaps he can’t find the way,” said Gobaly. “ ’Cause it’s a pretty crooked road, you know. Or may be he wouldn’t think it was worth the while to come so far out of the village just for us ; he wouldn’t be going to Squire Bagley’s, because there aren’t any children there, and there aren’t any other houses on this road.”

“ I wish we lived where there was a truly Christmas, like places where Uncle Sim has been ; don’t you, Gobaly ? May be he makes them all up, though ; it seems as if they’re too good to be true.”

“ I shouldn’t wonder if you got lots of plums in your porridge to-morrow, and perhaps a piece of mince-pie. And I’ll ask her to let me take you up to Pippin Hill on the sled.”

Gobaly always showed the bright side of things to Methuselah, and he had become so accustomed to looking for a bright side that he could find one when you wouldn’t have thought there was any there.



And whenever he found a very big lump in his throat he swallowed it for Methuselah's sake, and pretended that he didn't see anything in the world to cry about.

He had to go back to his shovelling then ; but after he had started he turned back to say, —

“ When I'm a man, you shall have Christmases, 'Thusely ! ”

It was in that way that Gobaly often comforted Methuselah. It never seemed to occur to either of them that 'Thusely might possibly grow to be a man too.

Gobaly went to work at the snow again as if it were not a bit bigger than he was, and he soon had a rampart piled up on each side of the path so high that he thought it must look like the Chinese Wall which Uncle Sim was always telling of.

As he was digging the very last shovelful of snow out of the path, he heard the jingle of sleigh-bells and saw the butcher's wagon, set upon runners and drawn by a very frisky horse, going in the direction of the village. The butcher's boy and three of his comrades occupied the seat, and as many more boys were wedged in among the joints of meat and heaps of poultry in the back of the wagon. They were evidently combining pleasure with business in the liveliest manner.

Coming in the other direction, from the village, was a large Newfoundland dog with a basket in his



mouth. Gobaly liked dogs, and he was sure that he was acquainted with every one in the village. As he was on intimate terms with every big one, he knew that this must be a stranger.

The butcher's boy was driving recklessly, and seemed to think it would be fun to make a sudden turn into the drifts through which the dog was bounding. The horse, taken by surprise and somewhat frightened, made a sudden plunge ; and though Gobaly could not quite see how it happened, it seemed that before the dog had time to get out of the way, the sled had gone over him, and he lay helpless and howling upon the snow!

The boys either found it impossible to stop their horse, or were too frightened to investigate the extent of the mischief they had done ; for they went careering on, and left the poor dog to his fate.

Gobaly was at his side in a moment, patting his shaggy black head, calling him "poor doggie" and "good doggie," and trying to discover how badly he was hurt. He came to the conclusion, after a thorough examination, that his leg was either broken or badly sprained, — and Gobaly was a judge of such things. He had once doctored a rooster's lame leg ; and though the rooster was never again able to mount a fence, but crowed with diminished energy, while his gait was no longer lordly, yet he was still able to cheer his heart by fighting the three other roosters all at once, and was likely to



escape the dinner-pot for a long time to come. Gobaly had also successfully treated a kitten with a sprained ankle — to say nothing of one whose tail the gobbler had nipped off. And he had seen the doctor in the village set a puppy's leg, and had carefully watched the operation.

He helped the dog along toward the house, — and it was well that he was a strong and sturdy little fellow or he could not have done it, — and managed at last to get the poor creature, unobserved, into the wood-shed. He was very much afraid that Mrs. Pynchum, if she should see him, would order him to leave the dog in the road, and he knew it would not do to carry him in beside the kitchen fire, as he wanted to, for Mrs. Pynchum never wanted “a dirty dog in her clean house.”

Gobaly found it hard to decide whether the bone was broken or only out of place, but he made a sort of a splint, such as he had seen the doctor use upon the puppy's leg, and then wound soft cloths, wet with liniment, about it, and the dog certainly seemed relieved, and licked Gobaly's hand, and looked at him with grateful eyes.

He ventured into the house after a while, and beckoned to Methuselah to come out to the wood-shed.

Methuselah was convinced that Santa Claus had sent the dog to them as a Christmas present, and his delight was unbounded.





GOBALY AND 'THUSELY.

“Methuselah was convinced that Santa Claus had sent the dog as a Christmas present.”







“Of course, Santa Claus must have sent him, or why would he have come down this lonely road all by himself? And you will cure him” (Methuselah thought there was little that Gobaly couldn't do if he tried), “and perhaps she will let us keep him!”

But a sudden recollection had struck Gobaly. The dog had been carrying a basket in his mouth; there might be something in it that would tell where he came from.

Though the dog's appearance was mysterious, Gobaly was not so ready as Methuselah to accept the Santa Claus theory.

He ran out and found the basket, half buried in the snow, where it had fallen from the dog's mouth. There were several letters and papers in it addressed to “Dr. Carruthers, care of Richard Bagley, Esq.”

Dr. Carruthers was the famous New York physician who was visiting Squire Bagley. Gobaly had heard the people in the village talking about him. The dog probably belonged to him, and had been sent to the post-office for his letters.

Although he had not really believed that Santa Claus sent the dog, Gobaly did feel a pang of disappointment that they must part with him so soon. But then, Mrs. Pynchum would probably not have allowed them to keep him anyhow, and she might have had him shot because his leg was hurt. That



thought consoled Gobaly ; and having obtained Mrs. Pynchum's permission to carry him to his master, — which was readily given, since it was the easiest way to get rid of the dog,— he put a very large box, with a bed in it made of straw and soft cloth, upon his sled, and then lifted the dog gently into the box. The dog whined with pain when he was moved, but still licked Gobaly's hand, as if he understood that he was his friend and did not mean to hurt him.

Methuselah stood in the shed door, and looked after them, weeping, sadly making up his mind that Santa Claus was proud and would never come to the poor-house.

Gobaly had never been even inside Squire Bagley's gate before, and he went up to one of the back doors with fear and trembling ; the servants at Squire Bagley's were said to be "stuck-up," and they might not be very civil to "town's poor." But at the sight of the dog they raised a great cry, and at once ushered Gobaly into the presence of Squire Bagley and Dr. Carruthers, that he might tell them all he knew about the accident.

Dr. Carruthers was a big, jolly-looking man, with white hair and a long white beard, just like pictures of Santa Claus. Gobaly was sure that Methuselah would think he was Santa Claus if he could see him. He evidently felt very sorry about the dog's accident, and pitied him and petted him



as if he were a baby ; Gobaly, who had never had so much petting in his whole life, thought the dog ought to forget all about his leg.

And then he suddenly turned to Gobaly and asked him who set the leg. Gobaly answered modestly, that he "fixed it as well as he could because there wasn't anybody else around."

"How did you know how?" asked the doctor. And Gobaly related his experiences with the rooster and the kitten and the puppy. Dr. Carruthers looked at him steadily out of a pair of eyes that were very sharp, although very kind. He turned to Squire Bagley, and said, "An uncommon boy." And they talked together in a low tone, casting an occasional glance at Gobaly.

How Gobaly's ears did burn ! He wondered what Squire Bagley knew about him, and he thought of every prank he ever had played in his life. Gobaly was an unusually good boy ; but he *had* played a few pranks, — being a boy, — and he thought they were a great deal worse than they really were, because Mrs. Pynchum said so. And he imagined that Dr. Carruthers was hearing all about them, and would presently turn round and say that such a bad boy had no right to touch his dog, and that such conduct was just what he should expect of "town's poor." But instead of that, after several minutes' conversation with Squire Bagley, he turned to Gobaly, and said, —



“I want an office-boy, and I think you are just the boy to suit me. How would you like to come and live with me, and, perhaps, one of these days, be a doctor yourself?”

Gobaly caught his breath.

To go away from Mrs. Pynchum; not to be “town’s poor” any more; to learn to be a doctor! He had said once in Mrs. Pynchum’s hearing that he wanted to be a doctor when he grew up; and she had said, sneeringly, that the “town’s poor weren’t very likely to get a chance to learn to be doctors.”

And now the chance had come to him! Gobaly thought it seemed too much like heaven to be anything that could happen to a mortal boy!

“Well, would you like to go?” asked the doctor again, as Gobaly could find no words to answer.

“Would I, sir? *Wouldn’t I!*” said Gobaly, with a radiant face.

“Well, then, I will make an arrangement with the selectmen, — which I have no doubt it will be easy to do, — and will take you home with me to-morrow night,” said the good doctor.

But the brightness had suddenly faded from Gobaly’s face. He stood with his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, gazing irresolutely at the carpet.

But it was not the carpet that Gobaly saw; it might as well have been the yellow paint of the



poor-house floors for all that he noticed of its luxurious pile and beautiful colors. It was 'Thusely's pale, pinched little face that he saw! It had risen before him even while the doctor was speaking. If he went away, who would take care of 'Thusely? And 'Thusely's heart would be broken.

"I can't go, sir; I forgot. No — no — I can't go!" said Gobaly.

Oh, what a lump there was in his throat! He had swallowed many a lump for 'Thusely's sake, but that was the very biggest one!

And then he turned and ran out of the house without any ceremony. He knew it was rude, but that lump wouldn't stay down; and though he might be called "town's poor," he wasn't going to be called a cry-baby!

And home he ran, as fast as his legs would carry him.

That night something very unusual happened. Mrs. Pynchum went to the village to a Christmas festival. She went before dark, and the spirits of everybody in the poor-house rose as soon as she was out of sight. Mr. Pynchum piled great logs upon the fireplace, till there was such a roaring fire as had not been seen there for many a long day; and he told Joe Golightly and Gobaly to go down cellar and bring up as many apples as they wanted to, and he found the key of the closet where the bag of nuts was kept! And Sandy Gooding brought



out some fine pop-corn that he had saved up ; and Joe Golightly brought out his violin, which, though some of its strings were broken and its voice was a little cracked and wheezy, could yet cheer one up wonderfully with "Bonnie Dundee" and "The Campbells are Coming." Everybody was merry, — although there was no Christmas-tree, and nobody had a present except 'Thusely, who had a big red peppermint-drop that Gobaly bought him with a penny hoarded for six weeks, — and it would have been a very pleasant evening if there had not been one great drawback. Mrs. Pynchum had a way of pouncing upon people when they least expected her. If a window rattled or a mouse stirred in the wall, a hush fell upon the mirth, and everybody shrank with dread. It would be so like Mrs. Pynchum to suspect that they were having a good time, and turn back to put a stop to it before she had fairly reached the festival !

Just as they had poured out a popperful of corn, — popped out so big and white that it would do you good to see it, — and Uncle Sim was clearing his throat to begin a story, there came a loud knock at the door. Everybody jumped. Mr. Pynchum and Sandy began to cram the apples into their pockets, and thrust the corn-popper into a closet, and Joe hid his violin under his coat-tails. It took them all fully two minutes to remember that Mrs. Pynchum never knocked.



Mr. Pynchum sat down again, and said, in a tone of surprise, as if he had not been in the least agitated, —

“What is the matter with you all? Gobaly, open the door!”

Gobaly opened the door, and who should be there but Squire Bagley and the city doctor!

The moment 'Thusely saw Dr. Carruthers he called out, “Santa Claus!” And the big doctor laughed, and took a great package of candy out of his pocket and gave it to 'Thusely.

After that it was of no use for Gobaly to whisper, “The dog gentleman!” in 'Thusely's ear; he couldn't think it was anybody but Santa Claus.

“I'm *so* glad you've come!” he said confidentially. “And you look just like your picture. And I don't see why you never came before, for you don't seem proud. And we aren't such very bad boys; anyway, Gobaly isn't. Don't you believe what Mrs. Pynchum tells you? — *Will* you?”

The doctor laughed, and said he was getting to be an old fellow, and the snow was deep, and it was hard for him to get about; but he was sorry he hadn't come before, for he thought they did look like good boys. Then he asked Methuselah about his lameness and the pain in his side, and said he ought to be sent to a certain hospital in New York, where he might be cured. And then



he asked him particularly if he had any relatives or friends.

“I’ve got Gobaly,” said ’Thusely.

The doctor turned, and looked sharply at Gobaly.

“Is *he* the reason why you wouldn’t go with me?” he asked.

“He’s such a little chap, and I’m all he’s got,” said Gobaly.

The doctor took out his handkerchief (it was bad weather for colds) and said, “Suppose I take him too?”

This time the lump in his throat fairly got the better of Gobaly!

But ’Thusely clapped his hands for joy. He didn’t understand what was to happen, only that Santa Claus was to take him somewhere with Gobaly; and one thing that ’Thusely was sure of was that he wanted to go wherever Gobaly went. And he kept saying, —

“I told you that Santa Claus sent the dog, — now, didn’t I, Gobaly?”

Methuselah went to the hospital and was cured; and Gobaly, — well, if I should tell you his name, you might say that you had heard of him as a famous surgeon-doctor. I think it is probable that he could now make a lame rooster, or a kitten with a sprained ankle, just as good as new; and I am sure he wouldn’t be above trying, for he has



a heart big enough to sympathize with any creature that suffers.

There is at least one person in the world who will agree with me ; and that is a gentleman who was once a miserable little cripple in a poor-house, and was called Methuselah.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE BOY FROM NORTH BILBERRY.

THE boys sometimes explained that he was called Peter the Great to distinguish him from another Peter in school; but as the other Peter was always called Taffy, of course that was unnecessary. Tafferton, of New York, he was — the other Peter — with an off-hand manner and a liberal supply of pocket-money. He had also a great many kid gloves, of which the boys were scornful, and a fortnightly box of most delectable goodies from home, which was of itself calculated to inspire a certain respect for a boy.

Taffy wore kid gloves, and carried a small cane; and the fact that he possessed his cane and his kid gloves in peace in Saint Luke's School at Eastham was the strongest possible proof of his popularity. There had been a boy — Brown, from Boston — who wrote a poem, its metre only a little less weak than its French, in which Taffy's locks were not too obscurely alluded to as "*Miss Nancy's chevaux.*" But the Brown boy had not a strong constitution, and he left in the middle of the term.



Peter the Great was a boy of an altogether different sort from Taffy. His home was a farm somewhere in the wilds of Maine. He had a large, awkward figure and a shuffling gait ; his hair would not look as if it were combed even when the boys hadn't stuck burdocks into it, and his hands and feet were dreadfully in his way ; they stuck so far out of his jackets and trousers that one could see his coarse underwear and the blue yarn stockings which his sister Charlizzy had knit for him. All these things Peter could have borne ; although at the fortnightly receptions — all the boys hated those receptions — he thought that every girl who giggled behind her fan was giggling at him. Girls didn't count, after all, since they only lasted through the reception, and then a boy was happily rid of them. If they had been girls like his sister Charlizzy, he would not have been so dreadfully embarrassed for something to say to them. Charlizzy never had a fan or went to a reception.

Peter the Great could say to himself that these things were small ; it would have mattered little to him that he was slow and awkward of body and speech if only his wits had been nimble. But — poor Peter ! — if dunce-caps had been in use at Saint Luke's, the boys would almost never have had an opportunity to stick burdocks in his hair. He tried to learn — there was scarcely a boy in the school who studied so hard — and often he



thought he knew his lesson, but his memory would play him a trick just in the nick of time.

Sometimes Peter almost doubted whether he ought to be grateful to his uncle Ebenezer, who was paying his tuition at Saint Luke's in order that he might be a physician, like his grandfather. Peter wanted to be a doctor; he *meant* to be; but he thought there must be a shorter cut to that goal than over the *pons asinorum* and through the dreary mazes of Latin declensions.

It seemed too much that, with all his other troubles, Peter should have the mumps in the Christmas holidays, and on both sides at once, and be so ill that the doctor positively forbade his going home, North Bilberry being twenty miles off the railroad, and the weather bitterly cold. To go home was what he had dreamed of so long. They had never seemed to discover there how stupid he was; in fact, his mother and Charlizzy greatly admired him.

Peter Tafferton was to stay at school through the holidays also, and very wroth he was about it. His guardian's family had gone to Europe; but it had been decided at the last moment that Peter would be safer at school than with the boy who had invited him home with him. There were three other boys left over for the holidays — Speckler, whose home was in the Sandwich Islands; little Claude Damon, an orphan, with an aunt who disapproved of holi-



days ; and Jo Wingate, whose father was a missionary bishop.

“ If that lout Peter the Great were not in bed, we might have some fun with him,” said Taffy regretfully.

“ He’s got the mumps awfully,” said Jo Wingate, not without a pang of sympathy. “ There’s such a lot of him to have ’em, you know.”

But by this time Peter had a heavier trouble to bear than either mumps or homesickness. Dr. Ellicott had seized the opportunity when he thought homesickness might help him to take it easily to tell him that he had come to the conclusion that — well, in plain terms, that he might as well give up trying to get an education, and go back to the farm for good. The Doctor was a kind man, and he said it kindly ; but to poor Peter it seemed as if the universe had tumbled about his ears. Not his universe alone ; but his father’s and mother’s and Charlizy’s, or even little Ebenezer’s ; for it had been one of their great plans at home that he should help little Ebenezer along. And he *must* be a doctor or a surgeon. Peter had felt that almost ever since he could remember ; at least, ever since he successfully set the white kitten’s broken leg, and extracted a fish-hook from Trip’s jaw.

Good Dr. Ellicott sent Kitty, his fifteen-year-old daughter, whose apple cheeks and baby-blue eyes were seldom seen in the boys’ domains, to Peter’s



room with a red Christmas rose off her own bush, a bunch of holly, and some ruby jelly and whipped cream in a dainty dish. He remembered that "something sweet in the mouth can sweeten all the bitter world for a boy."

But he did not know Peter the Great. Peter colored so that even his big ears were scarlet; and turned his face to the wall, away from Kitty's pitying lisp and her jelly.

The Doctor blew his nose vigorously when he heard Kitty's account of her visit.

"He'll be able to get up by to-morrow, Dr. Furber says, and we must have him down here, and — and cheer him up."

The Doctor was aware that he didn't know how to cheer Peter up. He didn't understand him, but perhaps his wife or Mildred and Kitty would. But that very afternoon there came a letter from Charlizzy, which was at least more effectual as a comforter than Kitty's jelly.

"I take my pen in hand to write you a few lines" [wrote Charlizzy, and it was evident that it had been hard work for her. Charlizzy's tongue was glib enough — how it would have run if she could have seen Peter! — but she had not the pen of a ready writer. You see, she could never be spared for the summer school; and she had two miles to go, and in winter the drifts were often over her head]. "I write this to let you know that we are all in good health and the pig is killed and has made beautiful sausages and we hope you are enjoying the same blessing. We had to turn



all the turkeys for flour and molasses except the ugly old gobbler we hope to keep that because the minister is boarding here, we hope he isn't tuff father is hauling logs and your Guinea-hens lay five eggs a day eggs are twenty-five cents a dozen at the store and old mrs. fowler is dead. Johnny wing caught a fox but he got away father got a good price for the pork little Ebenezer says he would have one side of your mumps for you and mother and I would have them all and more too So no more from your loving sister.

“CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH JUDKINS.”

“P. S.— This is to let you know that I am down at Uncle Abner's mother thought of it Young Abner is going down to Eastham to market day after to-morrow and I am going with him Aunt abner has let me cook and I have made lots of things for you I know they will taste real good to you because you always do like my victuals.

“CHARLIZZY.”

Peter's heart warmed. How good it would be to see Charlizzy's dear homely face! Her nose was a snub, and she had freckles, and her head was not stylish like the heads of the Eastham girls; but Peter saw nothing to be desired in her looks. He tucked Charlizzy's letter under his pillow, and felt that it made the pain easier to bear.

Little Claude Damon saw the letter sticking out from under the pillow when he went, instigated by Dr. Ellicott, to make polite inquiries in behalf of the boys. Peter turned his back upon little Damon as he had upon Kitty, and little Damon pulled the letter softly out and carried it off to the boys. Per-



haps it might help them to have some fun with Peter the Great. Perhaps little Damon didn't realize quite how mean he was; for he was only nine, and had never known what it was to have a mother. Tafferton realized, but he couldn't resist the temptation to have some fun at Peter's expense.

There was a great shouting in the hall, and Peter heard it for some time without discovering what it meant. At length he caught a word, — Charlizzy's name.

"I say, fellows, this *is* rich!" cried Tafferton's voice. "She hopes he has been made into sausages, and she hopes the minister isn't tough!"

Peter groped in bewilderment for his letter, and found it gone. He sprang out of bed, and rushed down-stairs, his eyes flashing from his swollen face, and the strength of ten in his arm in spite of the mumps. He snatched the letter from Taffy, and knocked him down with one well-delivered blow. Taffy's allies fled, but Taffy called after him, —

"I'd thrash you, if you weren't ill! I'll pay you up, anyway!"

In spite of his bold front Taffy was inwardly quaking and ashamed. He expected that Dr. Elliott would hear about the letter, and the doctor would be very severe about a meanness like that. Little Damon hid himself under his bed; and Jo Wingate, who had laughed louder than all the



others, said he was glad he hadn't had anything to do with such a mean trick. It was not the flower of Saint Luke's school that had been left there for the holidays. But Dr. Ellicott heard nothing of the matter; for Peter was no tale-bearer, and by the next morning the boys had forgotten their fears, and were readier than ever for "a lark." Peter was dressed, and, very much embarrassed by the honor, was ensconced in an easy-chair in Dr. Ellicott's sitting-room. Charlizzy was coming; he could think of nothing else. He was not ashamed of her, by any means; he was not ashamed of that letter, with all its homely details and the little slips which the boys thought so funny. Not one of them, thought Peter, would have done so well as that with only Charlizzy's opportunities; there was only one word spelled wrong, and Charlizzy knew better than "tuff;" it was only anxiety about the gobbler's condition that had made her spell like that.

Peter sat at Dr. Ellicott's window, and looked eagerly out into the snowy street. There were Christmas wreaths in all the windows, and a bustle of expectancy about the passers-by. It was the day before Christmas. Young Abner must come early to market with his goods. Uncle Abner lived twenty miles away; they must have started in the night.

In fact, young Abner had slept, figuratively, with



one eye open, and literally, with his alarm-clock at his ear, and Charlizzy had only one or two cat naps, and was up and dressed when, at three o'clock, young Abner's alarm went off. Young Abner had the great pung laden with barrels of chickens and turkeys, great yellow pumpkins and squashes, and bunches of celery and trimmings of evergreen imparted a festal appearance. It was very cold, and Charlizzy put a heated brick at her feet, and another in the huge, old-fashioned muff which Aunt Abner lent her; and she also wore Aunt Abner's old pumpkin hood, made of brown merino and wadded with cotton, for Aunt Abner said there was nothing like a pumpkin hood to keep out the cold. Charlizzy didn't think much about appearances; they didn't in North Bilberry.

Young Abner had to go to market first of all, though Charlizzy was impatient to get to Peter. Young Abner had to sell the last barrel of chickens in pairs, and Charlizzy thought they never would go. When there was only about half a barrel left, and a few squashes and bunches of celery, young Abner said that, considering prices, they had done very well, and he wanted his breakfast. Charlizzy demurred at the breakfast; young Abner had met an old friend, and they were likely to spend a long time at it.

"Well, I'll drive you over to the school first," said young Abner good-naturedly; "and I'll leave



the team there. I shall feel safer about leaving it in that quiet street."

So it happened that Peter had not been looking out of Dr. Ellicott's window for more than twenty minutes, when down the street with a great jingling of bells came the pung, Charlizzy behind Aunt Abner's huge yellow muff, her freckled, rosy face beaming from the depths of the ancient pumpkin hood.

Young Abner hitched the horse, and hurried off down a side street to his belated breakfast. As Peter was hurrying to the door, he heard a great shouting and laughing. Perhaps Charlizzy did look a little funny and old-fashioned; as I said before, they thought but little of looks in North Bilberry. As the servant opened the door, Peter saw Stuyvesant unhitch the horse and mount the pung seat, followed by the shouting, jeering boys (they had all been lying in wait behind the garden wall for Charlizzy's appearance). Charlizzy was greatly excited; she dropped the great muff, and seized the brick in it for a weapon. She called angrily to them to stop, and tried to snatch the horse's reins from Stuyvesant's hands. Failing in these efforts, she clung to the pung, partially lifting herself in at the back, and hanging on resolutely, as the horse dashed wildly off, terrified by the noise that the boys made. It was a part of the bringing up in North Bilberry to learn to hang on to one's re-



sponsibilities; no one could carry off that pung without carrying Charlizzy too.

It was wonderful to see how soon those boys discovered the basket under the seat. Charlizzy's doughnuts flew through the air, and were picked up by the crowd of street urchins, which was soon in delighted pursuit of the pung. The chicken-pie, Charlizzy's flakiest effort, intended to cheer Peter's convalescence, became the cause of a lively dog-fight, which added to the excitement caused by the wild career of the pung. Jo Wingate and little Damon crammed their pockets with the frosted cakes; and in his efforts to get at the jam, Speckler broke the bottle, and the jam trailed its red way along the snow.

Charlizzy appealed to the people in the streets for help, but no one seemed inclined to interfere. "Some boys on a frolic, that's all," she heard one man say. And the few policemen that Eastham boasted were in the business streets on that day.

They were getting out toward the suburbs now, with the crowd of hooting boys still following them. The barrels were tipped over, and the great squashes went bouncing out. Charlizzy had all that she could do to keep the chickens from going too. Taffy leaned over the seat, and tossed a pair of chickens out to the crowd; the shout that arose terrified the horse anew, and Stuyvesant had lost his firm



hold of the reins. He attempted to turn a corner where repairs had been made, and the workmen had left some heavy stone to be partially covered by the snow. The horse had just reared and plunged in his fright. Taffy struck him with the whip; he dashed too sharply around the corner, and over went the pung. Charlizzy had dropped off just in time. Jo Wingate raised his head from a snow-drift, and said that they ought to keep those chickens to roast; and little Damon set up a piteous howl that he might have been killed, and had lost his cakes anyhow; and Speckler said he wished he hadn't come. But Taffy had fallen on the stone, and he lay quite still; and in a moment some one cried out that the snow beneath him was growing red.

There was a house near by; and they carried him into it, while some men went in pursuit of the horse, which had dashed off with the pung.

Peter had rushed out of the house when he saw the seizure of the pung, heedless that he had no overcoat, and nothing on his head but the bandage that covered his swollen cheeks. The doctor saw him go, and had seen enough of the previous proceedings to guess what had happened. He followed, too, but waited to put on his overcoat and hat; and he took a heavy shawl to wrap that reckless boy Peter in, if he could catch him.

Peter ran on; he ran fast, although he felt faint



and giddy. Charlizzy was in that pung. Of course he could not overtake the pung, — it was soon out of sight, — but he traced its course by the crowds and the scattered provisions. The doctor had happily met a friend with a horse and sleigh, which he borrowed, and it was not long before he overtook Peter, and got him into the sleigh, with severe reprimands for his carelessness. Just as Taffy was carried into the house, Dr. Ellicott's sleigh drove up. Peter saw a pumpkin hood in a window of the house, and drew a long, long breath.

They went into the house; and there lay Taffy with a white face, but conscious, and with his eyes open.

“A sharp stone cut his leg, and he's losing a great deal of blood,” said a man.

Dr. Ellicott sent a man in haste for a physician.

Peter sprang forward. “Here you, Charlizzy, you know how to help me. Make a tourniquet,” he cried quickly.

Every one gave way to him, although he was only a boy. He worked deftly, and in a few minutes the dangerous stream had ceased to flow. But Taffy groaned with the pain which the slightest movement caused him.

“I'm afraid he's got some broken bones about his shoulder,” said a bystander.

“Not broken; only dislocated,” said Peter, with authority, as he touched the shoulder. “Now try



to bear it, Tafferton! It will be only a moment. I can replace the bone."

There was a kind of snap that every one heard, with a little cry from Tafferton.

"That's all! He'll do perfectly well now," said Peter, with a professional air.

"A smart boy, that!" said a gentleman.

"Ah — ahem! — yes, quite so," said Dr. Ellicott, in a bewildered way.

The doctor, when he arrived, repeated that remark about Peter's "smartness." He said Tafferton might have bled to death if it had not been for him. And it was remarkable that a boy should set a bone like that.

"I — I s'pose I should have been a goner if it hadn't been for you," stammered Tafferton, as Peter was leaving him; for the doctor had said that he must not be moved, and Dr. Ellicott was to send a nurse. "I've been a mean fellow, an awfully mean fellow, and you — well, I guess it was more appropriate than we thought when we named you Peter the Great. And that sister of yours has a lot of pluck. I never saw such a girl. I — I say, I can pay the damages, but that isn't much; and I'll try to make up, if I can; and if ever you could feel like being friends" —

Peter shook his hand heartily, and it was only Taffy who was embarrassed. Peter was, for once, master of the situation.



Dr. Ellicott sent for him into his study early in the evening. "I've been thinking, Judkins, that perhaps I was a little hasty in that matter that we were speaking of. There is a force of character that tells even when a boy isn't — well, isn't very quick. With that, and a talent to be developed, he is likely to succeed." The doctor blew his nose, and then he was afraid he had been too soft. "But you'll have to dig if you stay here, — you'll have to dig, sir!"

Peter went up-stairs and told Charlizzy all about it, and she cried and laughed in a breath. Charlizzy had not gone back with young Abner, who had recovered his horse and pung, and been liberally paid for his losses by Dr. Ellicott, in Taffy's name. Mrs. Ellicott had invited her to stay for a Christmas party which Kitty was to give. They had dressed her in one of Kitty's dresses, and they had covered the places where they had had to nip and tuck it to make it fit with flowers and ribbons; and she had a fan — a pink one, with feathers. She was radiant over it, and insisted that Peter should admire it. Charlizzy liked a party and a fan just like any girl. But she would go home just as contentedly in the pumpkin hood to-morrow.

The choir boys were out singing Christmas carols, and Kitty sent them to sing under Peter's window.

"It's Christmas," said Charlizzy. "I had almost



forgotten, though it seems like it, doesn't it? Listen, Peter!"

The old, old carol had never been heard in North Bilberry; it thrilled Charlizzy's heart:—

God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour, King,  
Was born on Christmas Day.

"'Let nothing you dismay,'" hummed Charlizzy lightly, but with sparkles on her lashes.

Peter swallowed a happy sob, and set his teeth firmly together.

"I don't know what to think of you, Tafferton," said Dr. Ellicott when he had Taffy cornered in his study, for reproof. "You behaved nobly and bravely once, when a boy was supposed to have the small-pox. That was when you first came here. And now—I hope I shall not be forced to think that the atmosphere of Saint Luke's has had an unfavorable influence on your character."

"No, sir, I think not," said Taffy, with an air of sage reflection. "That, you see, sir, was earnest, and this seemed to be fun. It didn't turn out quite as I expected—and—and I'm awfully ashamed, though I know that doesn't do any good."

"It is an advantage to know the difference between fun and earnest, in this world," said the doctor dryly; "and it is a very wholesome thing to be ashamed."



## CHAPTER XIV.

A DAGHESTAN PATTERN : HOW A BILBERRY GIRL WAS  
A RUG-MAKER AND A PEACE-MAKER.

PHŒBE JANE BRECK hung the little rug over the arm of the old haircloth rocking-chair, and Mrs. Ponsonby Ten Broeck gazed at it critically.

“It’s a real Daghestan pattern,” said the great lady, who was a summer visitor at Bilberry, and Phœbe Jane colored high with pride and pleasure. Being only fifteen years old, and not the capable one of the family, it was a great satisfaction to have her handiwork admired by a lady from New York.

“You really have a knack at rug-making,” said Phœbe Jane’s older sister Eunice, when the visitor’s carriage had gone. It was at that very moment, while Phœbe Jane was washing the best thin glass tumbler in which the lady had drunk her cream, that a great idea came to her.

She did not tell Eunice at once ; Eunice was trying to trim Pauliny Jordan’s bonnet “kind of subdued,” according to that lady’s injunctions, as



she was coming out with new false teeth, and was anxious not to look too "flighty." When Eunice had something on her mind, was not the time to talk to her. Besides, it was such a great idea that it almost took Phœbe Jane's breath away.

If she could have told her Cousin Luella, that would have been a comfort. Luella went to the Oakmount Female Seminary, and knew almost everything; but Luella and she were forbidden to speak to each other, because her father and Luella's mother, Aunt Cynthia, had quarrelled long ago.

Aunt Cynthia's boys, Jerome and Albion, and Phœbe Jane's brother, Llewellyn, had always scowled at each other; but Phœbe Jane and Luella had wanted to be friends ever since the day when Luella's buff kitten got lost in Horner's woods, and Phœbe Jane climbed a tall tree, in the top of which it was mewling piteously, and restored it to its mistress's arms.

That had happened long ago, when they were little girls; but ever since, they had known themselves to be congenial spirits. So Phœbe Jane longed to ask Luella's advice about her bright idea. But as that could not be, she allowed it to rest a while in her eager brain, and then proceeded forthwith to develop it.

Phœbe Jane stole softly into "the shepherdess room" — they called it so because the old-fashioned paper on the walls was covered with shepherdesses



with their crooks and their flocks of sheep. It was the best room, the parlor; but although Phœbe Jane's father and mother had lived in that house ever since they were married, the room had never been furnished.

They had always been planning to furnish it; that had been one of Phœbe Jane's mother's hopes as long as she lived, and now Eunice, whenever she was able to save a little money, said that sometime, perhaps, they could furnish the parlor.

Eunice had made a beautiful lounge for it out of an old packing-case; and Mrs. Tisbury, when she moved to Orland, had left them her base-burner stove to use until she wanted it. But Eunice said the great difficulty was the carpet — it was such a large room.

Phœbe Jane stood in the middle of the room, and surveyed it with a measuring eye.

“Llewellyn will paint the edges for me,” she meditated, “and it is very stylish to leave half a yard all 'round.”

“Then we could have the choir rehearsals here,” said Phœbe Jane aloud to herself.

The choir rehearsals were held in the church before the service on Sunday mornings, which was a very inconvenient time for those singers who lived away up beyond Pippin Hill or down at Wood End. These rehearsals seemed a little like profaning the Sabbath, too, to some of the singers; and, any



way, it was not pleasant and social, as it would be to have them in the evening. But it cost too much to heat or even to light the church for evening rehearsals ; it was a large, old-fashioned church, and Bilberry was poor.

The Brecks had a large parlor organ ; it almost filled the little sitting-room. Mary Ellen, the sister who died, had bought it with her school-teaching money. No one else in Bilberry had such an organ ; and Eunice had often said, with a long sigh, " How delightful it would be to have the choir rehearsals here, if we only had the parlor furnished ! "

Phœbe Jane decided that if she had a "knack" it was high time she used it to accomplish something worth the while, especially as she had an uncomfortable sense of not being good for much.

Eunice was a famous housekeeper, and could trim bonnets so well that people preferred her work to that of the village milliner. She was so useful in sickness that every one sent for her ; and she could play beautifully on the organ, too, although she had never taken any lessons.

Even Llewellyn, who was thirteen years old, and only a boy, could be trusted to get dinner better than Phœbe Jane ; he could draw delightful music out of the old fiddle they had found in Grandpa Pulsifer's garret, and could puzzle the schoolmaster himself when it came to mathematics.

Phœbe Jane couldn't play on anything except



a comb, and she was obliged to go to the barn to indulge in that musical performance because it made Eunice nervous; she said she *could* bear it if Phœbe Jane could keep a tune. And Phœbe Jane was very apt to be at the foot of the class at school.

Never mind! Mrs. Ponsonby Ten Broeck might flatter, but Eunice certainly never did; and Eunice had said that she, Phœbe Jane, had a "knack."

Phœbe Jane slipped away that afternoon without giving any account of herself. She called first on old Mrs. Prouty, who had been the Bilberry dress-maker for fifty years. Old Mrs. Prouty had the reputation of being "snug;" she had a great store of "pieces" in her attic, and she had never been known to give any away, even for a crazy-quilt.

But she and Phœbe Jane were very intimate. Phœbe Jane had brought up Mrs. Prouty's tender brood of turkeys, hatched during a thunder-shower; had always stood up for Ginger, the old lady's little rat-terrier, that was voted a nuisance by the neighbors, and had twice rescued him from cruel boys. Moreover, old Mrs. Prouty's niece Lorinda sang in "the seats," and longed for evening rehearsals.

The pile of "pieces" in Mrs. Prouty's attic was like a mountain of rainbows, and old Mrs. Prouty had so good a memory that she knew to whose dress almost every piece had belonged.

Phœbe Jane made two or three other calls, and





IN MRS. PROUTY'S ATTIC.

“Old Mrs. Prouty knew to whose dress almost every piece had belonged.”







before she went home the success of her plan seemed assured.

Eunice said, "I don't see how you're going to make a rug that's large enough;" and "I hope you won't get tired of it before it's half-done, as you did of the bed-spread you began to crochet." But she helped; Eunice would always help, though she was practical, and saw all the difficulties at once.

Llewellyn got the Trull boys to help him make a frame that was large enough, and he helped to make the rug too. By dint of hard work it was finished and laid upon the parlor floor the first of December. As Phœbe Jane said, if you don't believe it was a siege, you'd better try one! A real Daghestan pattern, nine by twelve feet.

Then, alas! when the rug was down, and the parlor furnished, all the pleasure of the choir rehearsals was spoiled by a church quarrel. It arose, as church quarrels and others often do, from what seemed a very small thing.

Old Mrs. Tackaberry, Aunt Cynthia's mother, had the old-fashioned New England habit of suspending all labor on Saturday evening, and beginning it again on Sunday evening; and being a very obstinate woman, she *would* knit in the Sunday evening prayer-meeting. No matter how loud the minister and the members prayed and exhorted, no matter how loud the congregation sang, old



Mrs. Tackaberry's knitting-needles seemed to click above everything!

Some people were shocked, and some had their nerves affected, while others declared that "a mother in Israel," like old Mrs. Tackaberry, should be allowed to indulge in such a harmless eccentricity. At this time the church was divided into two parties, one insisting that old Mrs. Tackaberry should cease to knit or leave, and the other declaring that if she left, it should leave with her.

So the church was rent asunder. The supporters of old Mrs. Tackaberry hired the town hall for their services, and a young divinity student for their minister. The funds that had been barely enough for one church were sadly insufficient for two, and there was enmity between old friends and neighbors. So Phoebe Jane said, with a tearful sense of the futility of all human hopes, that there was "no comfort in *half* a choir rehearsal."

It was old Mrs. Tackaberry who had made the trouble between Aunt Cynthia and her brother-in-law years before; so it was not very likely that the Brecks would espouse her cause, though Deacon Breck, who was a mild and gentle man, and never had quarrelled with anybody but Aunt Cynthia in his life, — Deacon Breck said he "wished folks could have put up with the knitting, for he believed it was conducive to godliness to let *some* folks do as they were a mind to."



As if Phœbe Jane had not had disappointment enough, the worst storm of the season came on that Saturday night when the choir had been invited to hold its first rehearsal in the newly furnished parlor. It was a rain, following a heavy fall of snow. The roads were almost impassable, and most of the singers lived a long distance from the village.

The town hall was opposite the Brecks' house; and Phœbe Jane, looking out of the window, saw that the choir of the new society was assembling in spite of the storm. It was to be a great occasion with the new society to-morrow; Jerome, Aunt Cynthia's eldest son, who was a student in a theological seminary, was going to preach.

But a great volume of smoke was pouring out of the doors and windows of the hall; and Llewellyn, who had been over to investigate, announced that "that old chimney was smoking again, and they would have to give up their rehearsal." Then Llewellyn, who was a strong partisan, and didn't like Aunt Cynthia's Jerome, turned a somersault.

"It is too bad!" cried Phœbe Jane, whose soul was sympathetic. "Father — Eunice — *don't* you think we might ask them to come in here?"

Father Breck hesitated, rubbing his hands together nervously. He said he was afraid people would think it was queer, and if any of their choir should come it would be awkward.



Then Eunice suddenly came to the front, as Eunice had a way of doing quite unexpectedly.

“I think Phœbe Jane has a right to use the parlor as she likes ; she worked so hard for the rug,” said Eunice.

“Well, well, do as you like, Phœbe Jane. Maybe it’s a providential leading,” said Father Breck.

Phœbe Jane threw her waterproof over her head and ran out. There were Aunt Cynthia and Jerome, and with them a professor from Jerome’s seminary. Phœbe Jane had a lump in her throat when she tried to speak to them ; but behind, oh joy ! there was Luella.

“If you will come and rehearse in our parlor — you know about my rug !” said Phœbe Jane ; and then she drew her waterproof over her head again and ran back.

There was a consultation evidently. Phœbe Jane heard old Mrs. Tackaberry’s voice, and was afraid they wouldn’t come.

But they did ! It seemed almost the whole of the new society that came pouring into the parlor ; and by that time Viola Treddick and Pitticus and Hannah Ann Ramsay of their own choir had come !

It would have been a little awkward, if old Mrs. Tackaberry had not been immediately struck by the new rug, and begun to ask questions about it with a freedom that made every one laugh.

Soon they were all talking about it. Phœbe



Jane remembered, as she had meant to, where she put almost all the "pieces" of which Mrs. Prouty had told her the history.

Old Mrs. Tackaberry cried about the pink delaine that was her little granddaughter, Abby Ellen's, who died; and about the brown thibet that was her daughter Amanda's wedding-dress when she married a missionary and went to China and died there.

Then they all laughed at an arabesque in one corner which was Jerome's yellow flannel dress — Phœbe Jane had been a little afraid to tell of that, Jerome was so imposing in a white necktie. Aunt Cynthia wouldn't believe that she had let the dressmaker make that dress until she remembered that it was the time when she scalded her hand.

People kept coming in. Phœbe Jane had an inspiration, and made Llewellyn go and invite them. It became a good old-fashioned neighborhood party — "just like a quilting," old Mrs. Tackaberry said. Everybody found some of their "pieces" or their relatives' "pieces" in the rug, and smiles and tears and innumerable stories grew out of this.

The new-comers found the two factions apparently so reconciled that they were surprised out of any animosity that they might have felt; and when they came to rehearse their music it happened, oddly enough, that both parties had chosen the same hymn, and they all sang together!



When they had finished rehearsing, some one — Phœbe Jane never was quite sure whether it was Jerome or the professor — started “Blest be the tie that binds.” How they did sing it! Old Mrs. Tackaberry’s thin, cracked treble sang out in defiance of time and tune; and when the hymn ended tears were rolling down her seamy cheeks.

“I’m goin’ back to the church!” she said brokenly. “I’ve sp’ilt my meet’n’s and other folks’s long enough. And — and — I’m goin’ to do what I’m a mind to, to home, when it comes sun-down on the Sabbath day; but I aint goin’ to knit a mite in meetin’ again — not a mite!”

There was a great hand-shaking; Aunt Cynthia and Father Breck actually shook hands, and out in the entry old Mrs. Tackaberry kissed Phœbe Jane.

In spite of the bad roads, there was a great congregation in the Bilberry church the next day. It was the professor who preached. He chose for his text, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” and every one looked at Phœbe Jane until she grew red to the very tips of her ears.

She and Luella walked homeward together — openly, arm in arm; and it seemed like walking in paradise, although one went over shoe in mud.



## CHAPTER XV.

THE HIGH-TOP SWEETING TREE. A STORY FROM  
THE TIP-TOP OF PIPPIN HILL.

THEY all cried — every one of the Bells, from Peggy, who was sixteen, down to Rufus (who was four and despised a cry-baby), when old Mr. Pigeon moved away. He was such a tried and trusty friend, and, if he was sixty, such a congenial companion. He was always ready to go fishing or coasting with the boys, or to take the girls to drive; although he was a bachelor and lived alone, he had a double carriage, and the largest sleigh on Pippin Hill — because he had so large a heart, Peggy said. He knew as much about the wild things in the woods as “The Hunter’s Own Book;” and on a rainy day, or when one had the mumps or the measles, he would tell stories by the dozen — stories that were worth telling, too, for he had been “’round the world and home again,” and knew all there was to know about cannibals and buccaneers and wild men, and all such distinguished and interesting people.

It happened that the only houses on the very



tip-top of Pippin Hill were the Belfry (I suppose the Bells' house may have received that name because Papa Bell always spoke of his children as his "small fry;" anyway, that is what every one in Bilberry called it) and the old Pigeon house, which had belonged to this Mr. Pigeon's grandfather. The houses backed up to each other, and there was a mutual back-yard fence; so, of course, it was very desirable that the neighbors should be friendly and congenial; more than this, there was a mutual apple-tree. The gnarled old "high-top sweeting" was directly on the boundary line between the two estates, and the mutual fence had been cut in two to make space for it. Its branches were low and spreading, in spite of its high top; and they spread very impartially over the Bells' smooth lawn and over Mr. Pigeon's orchard, and dropped their delicious fruit — early, the first sweet apples that there were — almost as evenly as if it were measured on each of their owners' land. The only difference was that the August sunshine lay longer upon Mr. Pigeon's side; so the first red and yellow, mellow and juicy apples dropped upon his orchard grass, and he tossed them up to Christine in her seat in the low crotch of the tree, the seat that he had made for her.

It was Christine who thought the most of Mr. Pigeon and he of her, because they both had a twist, Christine said. She could always speak of



her trouble cheerfully, even jokingly. You would scarcely have thought that she minded it at all; it was a spinal weakness, which had bowed her shoulders and twisted her head to one side. The others didn't mind much when Christine was left out of things, — they were a rough, merry set; but Mr. Pigeon had always remembered her. His twist was in one of his legs; he had to wear an uncomfortable iron boot, and walked with a queer, sideways motion.

When Becky, who was eleven, and was called the Bilberry Budget because she carried all the news, came home with the dreadful intelligence that Mr. Pigeon was going to move away, no one would believe it.

“In the first place it's too dreadful to be true, and in the next place he would have told us,” said Peggy.

But it really proved to be true. Mr. Pigeon's sister — his own sister! — had gone to law to obtain a share of her grandfather's estate, which he had failed to bequeath to her because she had gone contrary to his wishes in some way, and the only share that she would have was that old estate on Pippin Hill. Perhaps the law might force her to take something else as her share, since he had held possession there so long; but she was Hitty, and he should give it up to her. That was what Mr. Pigeon said in answer to the indignant remonstrances of the Bells. She was Hitty; that was



all he *would* say ; perhaps it wasn't much of a reason, but the Bells understood. We all know what it is to give up things to people just because they are Iky or Polly or John.

So it happened that the Bells' dear Mr. Pigeon went away to a little house that he owned down at Pequawket Mills, and Miss Mehitable Pigeon came to live at the old place on Pippin Hill, and owned half of the high-top sweeting tree.

And the very first thing she did — it was September when she came — was to threaten to have Tommy Bell arrested, because when he shook their side of the tree her side shook too ; and she said the top of the tree leaned toward their side and more apples fell there, so when the apples were picked and divided she must have an extra bushel. She threatened to have their yellow kitten drowned because he scampered after the flying leaves in her garden ; and she did have their cross gobbler killed because he ran after her red morning-gown, as a gobbler will, you know, and gobbled at her. He wasn't much loss ; and she sent him home plucked and dressed, with the message that she should have eaten him if she had not feared that he would be tough !

She complained that Becky's peacock squawked, and Dicky's guinea pig squealed, and the vane on their stable had "a rusty squeak" that kept her awake nights ; and if one of the little Bells mounted



the fence she came out and "shoo'd" him off as if he were a chicken.

Christine, who was inclined to look on the bright side and to think well of every one, said that she would probably grow better when they got better acquainted; and she gave Tommy and little Rufus five cents each not to use their bean-slingers over the fence, or make faces through the knot-hole.

But instead of growing better their new neighbor grew worse. She had the mutual fence built up ten feet high; she had the branches of the sweeting tree lopped off where they interfered with the fence, and Christine's seat thrown down to the ground so roughly that it was broken. She said she had let people impose upon her all her life, and she wasn't going to any more.

Papa Bell, who was an easy man and absorbed in his business, said he supposed that so many children and squeaking things did make them troublesome neighbors; but he thought they should have to remonstrate with Miss Pigeon about the fence, because it took away so much of their sunshine. Christine begged him to wait; she always would believe that people were going to be better, and she knew there must be something good about Miss Pigeon, because she looked like her brother — "only the twist seemed to be in her mind, poor thing!"

It was in November when Christine's seat was



thrown out of the tree, so she could not have used it any more that season anyway; and when any one asked her how she was going to do without it in the spring, she always answered, "Perhaps Miss Hitty will be good by that time." But that transformation didn't seem in the least likely to any one else. She never forgot that Mr. Pigeon had said she was Hitty, though how she could ever be Hitty to anybody was more than the other young Bells could understand.

Christine would bow to her, too, and smile shyly, although Miss Pigeon only scowled dreadfully in response. Far more difficult to forgive than their own wrongs was the injury that she had inflicted upon her brother. He wrote to them doleful letters, which showed plainly how homesick he was for the good air and the good-fellowship of Pippin Hill. One of the neighbors who saw him at Pequawket said one would hardly know him he had "pined away" so.

After that little Rufus (honorably) returned the five cents to Christine, because he knew he should yield to the temptation to make faces through the knot-hole again.

Christine turned a little pale when she heard this about Mr. Pigeon, and she put on her thinking-cap. She couldn't go to school like the others, she couldn't go skating; in fact, there were so many things she couldn't do that it would have



been very discouraging to one who believed less firmly than Christine did that things as well as people were going to be better ; but that gave her all the more time to wear her thinking-cap. And Christine's thoughts were pretty apt to blossom into deeds some way.

Christine had made the Christmas wreaths of evergreen and holly from their own Pippin Hill woods ; and she had sent two beauties to Miss Pigeon, who had promptly returned them with the message that she didn't want such rubbish littering up her house. Now, when they heard that sad news from Mr. Pigeon she was making valentines. She had a very dainty knack with both pencil and brush, for a fourteen-year-old girl ; and her valentines were more beautiful than any that could be bought in the shops, or so the Bilberry young people all thought.

The fashion of sending valentines might wane elsewhere ; but it always flourished in Bilberry, perhaps because Christine Bell kept it up. She sent them to the very last people who expected to have a valentine — to neglected old people and forlorn sick people ; to Biddy Maguire, just from the old country, and "kilt" with homesickness, and to Antony Burke, the old miser, for whom no one had a civil word, and who, perhaps, didn't deserve one. And for every valentine that was disregarded or thrown impatiently aside, a dozen made a little



warmth and comfort in a sad heart ; for nobody has yet begun to understand how great is the day of small things.

Christine was more mysterious than usual this year about her valentines ; she colored when Peggy said she would better send one to Miss Pigeon, but they never thought she would ; they thought she was only sensitive about her Christmas wreath.

When Mr. Pigeon went away he gave Christine an old desk that he had had ever since he was a boy. It had initials and hearts and anchors cut into it, and was whittled at every corner ; you would have known if you'd seen it anywhere that it had belonged to a boy. But Christine would have it in her own room ; she thought it was beautiful. It had his boy-letters and diaries in it, and she had laughed and cried over them. And now she had found in that old desk material for the very queerest valentine she had ever made ; and although she liked to share the fun of making her valentines with the others, she was a little secretive about that.

What should the paper be but a leaf from one of the old diaries, one side all written over in an unformed, boyish hand ; and this is what was written on it, the ink faded by time :—

“ I cant bare to rite becos hity has the Feever and i cant bare knot to rite becos it semes like teling sombody. she



held mi hand tite when she did knot now enyboddy last nite and I did knot let them send me to bed the fellers say if she does di i hav other sisters but they are knot hity the fellers do knot understand wen enyboddy sais she will evver hav a bo like our agusta hity sais the Tom Tinker verse and that meens me as is rote on the 1st leef of this Diry mi name is Thomas Tinkham Pigeon hity has gott a Temper but so hav a Good Meny Peeple and she is Good way inside and she is hity and she and i will alwys liv together but i cant bare to rite eny more for i want to now what the dokter sais. they say a feller must be A Man but wen it is hity i cant bare" —

Here the words became illegible on the old yellow paper; there were blots and smudges as of tears. Although valentines are supposed to be dainty, Christine didn't try to clean it a bit! And on the unwritten side, instead of painting any of her pretty flowers or drawing hearts or cupids, she only wrote "the Tom Tinker verse" which Hitty had lovingly quoted to her brother: —

"Tom Tinker's my true love, and I am his dear,  
I'll gang along wi' him his budget to bear."

It certainly was a very queer valentine. Christine thought it would probably be returned, even more scornfully than the Christmas wreath, — if Miss Pigeon should guess who sent it, — and she would be likely to guess that it came from the Belfry; for she knew that her brother had given them many of his belongings.



She sent it with fear and trembling; and she told none of the others, for the older ones seemed, in their hearts, to share the feeling of Tom and little Rufus, that the only proper way to approach Miss Pigeon was bean-slinger in hand.

The valentine was not returned; but nothing seemed to come of it. The Bells' Jane heard from Miss Pigeon's Jane that her mistress had neuralgia. One day after March had come, and a bluebird had been seen to alight upon the high-top sweeting tree, as Christine came along the garden path there came a shrill, imperative voice through the knot-hole in the fence.

"If you have any more of those leaves, stuff them through the knot-hole; if you have the whole diary, throw it over the fence."

Of course Christine was not going to do that with the diary that seemed so precious; but she did send it around to Miss Pigeon's door by old Jeremy, the gardener, for none of the boys would go.

It was about a week after that a man made, under Miss Pigeon's direction, a new seat in the crotch of the apple-tree — a seat that was delightfully comfortable for a back that wasn't straight. Miss Pigeon seemed to know just how. When it was finished, she went up and examined it and tried it. Then she called to Christine, who was sitting on the porch.



“I’m a cantankerous old woman ; I was born cantankerous,” she said. “But there’s your seat!”

No one at the Belfry knew what to think of Miss Pigeon ; it was little Rufus’s opinion that a good fairy had tapped her with her wand and turned her into something else, and he was much disappointed to find, on peeping through the knot-hole, that she looked just the same.

“It’s delightful,” Christine said slowly. “But it isn’t exactly what I meant by the valentine,” she added to herself.

But a few days after, what Christine had meant by the valentine really did happen ; sometimes things that seem too good to be true do come to pass in this world. Miss Pigeon mounted the high buggy in which she drove herself and went down to Pequawket ; when she came back Mr. Pigeon was with her. Tommy discovered it first as they drove into the yard, and raised a shout. All the young Bells rushed pell-mell into the apple-tree, and dropped from its branches into Miss Pigeon’s orchard, — even Peggy, who was sixteen, — shouting and laughing and crying all together. They quite forgot Miss Pigeon until her harsh voice broke into the whirlwind of greetings ; with all its harshness there was a queer little quaver in it !

“He’s come back, and he’s going to stay,” she said. “It is he that belongs here, and not I. If you’re born with a cross-grained disposition you’ve



got to get over it when you're young or you'll have to have more'n a ten-foot fence between you and other people! I'm going back to nursing people in a hospital—yes, I can, though you wouldn't think it; and they like me. There's a doctor I know who has invented a new contrivance for— for making backs straight" — her voice really broke now, but she recovered herself instantly; "the're easier to straighten than crooked dispositions! I'm going to send one here, and I want her to try it." She nodded toward Christine, and then she turned away suddenly. Little Rufus ran after her — prudently keeping his hand on the bean-slinger in his pocket. (They discovered at an early stage of the acquaintance, that if Miss Pigeon had a weakness it was a terror of the bean-slingers.) "Are you really just the same? Didn't a good fairy turn you into something else?" he demanded breathlessly.

Miss Pigeon turned and looked down upon him, her strong features working.

"Yes, she did!" she answered gruffly.

"Did she tap you with her wand?" pursued little Rufus eagerly, delighted with this confirmation of beliefs that were scorned in his home circle.

"She didn't tap me with a wand," said Miss Pigeon; "she sent me a valentine!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

### ALL THE PLUMS. THE STORY OF A THANKS— GIVING VISITOR TO BILBERRY.

IT seemed to the little Trulls on Pippin Hill as if Thanksgiving never would come.

The November page of the Farmer's Almanac that hung under the clock bore innumerable prints of small thumbs that had laboriously travelled over it, counting the number of days that must be lived through before that happy day arrived which, according to the governor's proclamation, was to be "a day of thanksgiving and praise."

Little Darius and Lucy Ann thought praise meant plum-pudding; and even Jonah, who was getting to be an old boy, and could do problems in cube root, owned that it was not very long ago that he thought so too.

There was a continual weighing and measuring of goodies, and odors of spice and sweetness floated out of the great kitchen all over the house. The children seeded the raisins, and sliced citron, and cracked walnuts, and chopped apples for the mince-pies; but Lucy Ann and little Darius were getting



discouraged, for it seemed every day as if the next *must* be Thanksgiving, and yet when they awoke in the morning it wasn't.

This was not going to be only an ordinary Thanksgiving day, with almost everything nice that could be thought of for dinner, and a great many aunts and uncles and cousins, all grown up, and all wanting to sit down and talk (instead of having a good time), for visitors. This year their little city cousin, whom they had never seen, was coming to spend Thanksgiving with them.

Her name was Mabel Hortense, and the children were very proud of having a cousin who lived in the city and was named Mabel Hortense. At Bilberry, where they lived, all the little girls were named Mary Jane or Sarah Ann or Lucy Maria, or, at the best, Hattie and Carrie; they had scarcely even heard of so fine a name as Mabel Hortense. But a little girl who lived in a great city, where there was scarcely a bit of anything so common as grass, and the "great big houses were all hitched on to each other," as Roxy Jane, the hired girl, said, and hand-organs and monkeys were as thick as huckleberries in August, and there was a candy-store at every corner, could not be expected to have a common name.

They had a photograph of Mabel Hortense, with her hair banded and a doll almost as large as a real live baby in her arms. She had a necklace around



her neck, and bracelets on her arms, and ear-rings in her ears. Becky borrowed Hannah Olive Judson's blue-glass beads to wear during Mabel Hortense's visit, and made Lucy Ann a necklace of red alder-berries ; and then, as they all had on their Sunday clothes, she felt ready for Mabel Hortense's arrival.

It was the very night before Thanksgiving Day ; and all the aunts and uncles and cousins had arrived, except Mabel Hortense and her mother, and Peter Trott, the hired man, had driven over to the station to bring them.

Even little Darius, who had begun to think that Thanksgiving Day had been postponed until next year, was now convinced that it was coming tomorrow. There was a blazing log-fire in the great fireplace in the sitting-room ; and Priscilla sat on the rug in front of it, herself and her three kittens in that condition of holiday freshness which becomes New England cats on the eve of Thanksgiving Day. The canary birds were singing so loud that they had to be muffled in grandpa's bandana handkerchief, that the aunts and uncles and cousins might hear each other relate all the happenings of the past year.

Little Darius was continually running to the door, with his cage of white mice under one arm and his tame squirrel under the other, so that he might show them to Mabel Hortense the first thing.



“I wouldn’t be such a silly,” said Lucy Ann, who had her black Dinah, with ravelled yarn for wool, and two great white buttons for eyes, in her arms, and wanted Mabel Hortense to see *her* the very first thing. “Why, in the city, where she lives, the mice are all white, and so tame that they come out and dance when people play on the piano. Peter Trott says so. And they keep squirrels in the stores, all with white aprons and caps on, to crack nuts for customers. Peter Trott says so.”

“They ain’t so nice as my mice and my squirrel, anyway; and grandpa says not to b’lieve Peter Trott, ’cause he tells wicked, wrong stories!” cried little Darius, almost moved to tears at the possibility that any mice or any squirrels were more attractive than his. “I shouldn’t think you’d want to show any city girl your old Dinah. She was homely enough before grandpa sat on her and flattened her all out; she’s *orfle* now!”

Lucy Ann might have resented this; for she was very fond of Dinah, and thought her a beauty in spite of the accident that had befallen her, — which was a very cruel one, for grandpa weighed over two hundred pounds, — but just then the carriage drove up, and a little girl was lifted out by Peter Trott, and set down inside the door.

There was Mabel Hortense, bangs and doll and all, just as she looked in the photograph, only that



both she and the doll had on travelling costumes, so there was not so much jewellery to be seen.

She did not look in the least like a Bilberry little girl, nor the doll like a Bilberry doll. The doll wore a suit trimmed with fur, just like her mamma's, and it fitted her just as nicely. (Becky could only make a doll's dress like a sacque, with slits for the arms, and Aunt Eunice didn't think it was worth the while to make dolls' dresses at all.) And she had on the daintiest gloves and boots imaginable, without a wrinkle in them. Gloves and boots were entirely unknown in doll society in Bilberry.

For one moment Lucy Ann felt ashamed of Dinah, but she gave her an extra hug the next moment to make up for it.

Becky was glad that she had on Hannah Olive Judson's blue beads, and that Lucy Ann had on brand-new shoes, for Lucy Ann's toes were almost always threatening to stick out through her shoes, and she did hope that Solomon wouldn't tell that the beads were borrowed; that would be just like Solomon, and she wished she had thought to warn him about it when Aunt Eunice was cautioning him not to tell that they had borrowed the sugar-tongs of Aunt Jemima, and that they didn't always have two kinds of preserves for supper.

The first thing that Mabel Hortense seemed to notice was Dinah.



“Oh, what a perfectly beautiful doll!” she exclaimed. “She is truly colored, isn’t she?”

“She was born so,” said Lucy Ann, proudly displaying the ravelled-yarn wool, which was Dinah’s strong point in the way of looks.

“I don’t think I ever saw a colored doll before! You will give her to me, won’t you?”

Lucy Ann was very much surprised, and didn’t know what to say. Becky gave her a little poke with her elbow. Aunt Eunice had said they must do everything that their city cousin asked them to do, and Becky thought Lucy Ann ought to give Dinah to her; but Dinah wasn’t Becky’s, and she didn’t know how it felt to part with her.

“To keep?” said Lucy Ann falteringly, after Becky had given her a second poke.

“Oh, of course! I shall carry her home,” said Mabel Hortense.

“Will you give me yours for her?” said Lucy.

“Oh, no; I want them both!” said Mabel Hortense decidedly.

And taking Dinah out of Lucy Ann’s arms — by her wool — she thrust her under one arm and her own doll under the other, and followed her mother into the sitting-room. Lucy Ann’s tears began to flow, but Becky whispered, —

“I suppose that’s the way city people do. You mustn’t cry.”

Mabel Hortense seated herself on a stool before



the fire, and immediately picked up the three kittens, dropping a doll on each side of her.

“I like kittens. I shall take these home with me,” she said.

Lucy Ann received a warning look from Becky, but she felt that, when it came to carrying off kittens, the ways of city people could not be endured; and she said firmly, “The Maltese one, with the very peaked tail, is Becky’s, and the black one with a spot on his nose is Solomon’s, and the little, white, fuzziest one is mine, and Priscilla herself belongs to Jonah.”

Little Darius at this moment thrust his cage of white mice and his squirrel before Mabel Hortense’s eyes, and she dropped the kittens.

“Oh, what funny little things! And the squirrel, with his tail the most of him, is too sweet! I shall carry them all home with me.”

Even Becky began to doubt whether she should like city ways. Lucy Ann’s eyes and mouth grew into round O’s with astonishment; and little Darius set up such a howl that Aunt Eunice forthwith shut him up in the china-closet.

“I am afraid these children are not very obliging,” said Mabel’s mother. “Mabel Hortense has always been accustomed to have everything she wants.”

Lucy Ann drew Becky into the hall and shut the door. “We mustn’t let her see the play-house,



nor my tea-set, nor Solomon's soldiers, nor little Darius's elephant, nor anything. I think we'd better carry them all up to the attic closet and lock the door!" she exclaimed.

Becky thought so too; and they hurriedly collected all their playthings, and hustled them into the attic closet, and locked the door securely. Becky even took off Hannah Olive Judson's blue beads and left them there. It would be so dreadful if Mabel Hortense should decide to carry those home with her.

But Becky's conscience troubled her a little as she went back to the sitting-room; for Aunt Eunice had said they must be hospitable, and do everything they could to make Mabel Hortense have a good time. Becky resolved that she would not refuse to do anything that Mabel Hortense wanted her to do.

As she re-entered the sitting-room, Solomon was entertaining Mabel Hortense.

"I've my old clothes on, because I'm a boy and don't care; but you ought to see how the others have been fixing up, all in their Sunday things; and Becky borrowed Hannah Olive Judson's beads. Say, are the sidewalks all made of gingerbread in the city? Peter Trott says so."

"No," said Mabel Hortense, slowly and reflectively. "They are made of pound-cakes."

"True as you live?" said Solomon. "I thought



it was only one of Peter Trott's yarns. And are the houses made of molasses candy?"

"Oh, no! only some of the poor people's houses; ours is made of ice-cream."

"I should think it would melt!" exclaimed Solomon.

"It doesn't; but sometimes we eat it up, and build ourselves another," said Mabel Hortense.

Becky looked at her. It was a feeble imitation of the way in which Aunt Eunice looked at Lucy Ann and her when they misbehaved in church.

"I am afraid you tell very wrong stories," she said severely. "People couldn't possibly live in houses made of ice-cream."

Mabel Hortense blushed very red, and cast down her eyes. But then she answered snappishly, —

"Well, who ever s'posed he would believe it! Such a big boy! I never saw one so silly!"

It was not the first time that Solomon had been told he was silly, but coming from a girl who lived in the city it was especially cutting.

Solomon made a resolve then and there that he would "get even" with Mabel Hortense.

"Do you like Thanksgiving Day?" asked Becky politely. She was afraid she had spoken rather severely to Mabel Hortense, and was trying to make amends for it.

"Not so very much," said Mabel Hortense. "I like to see the stained glass in church make the



people's noses look red and yellow. And then there's the dinner; but that's disappointing, because one can't have all the plums."

Becky and Solomon and Lucy Ann looked astonished and inquiring.

"In the pudding, you know. I don't care anything about the dinner, except the pudding; and I don't care anything about the pudding, except the plums. Mamma gives me hers, and grandpa gives me his, but other people are so selfish. They eat their own plums. Couldn't you manage, to-morrow, so that I could have all the plums?"

Solomon and Lucy Ann looked at each other in silent astonishment. Lucy Ann was very fond of plums, but it had never occurred to her that she could have more than her share. Solomon was particularly fond of plums, and had been known to imitate on the sly the example of little Jacky Horner; but he had never wanted to eat all the plums out of a Thanksgiving plum-pudding. Mabel Hortense seemed to him almost as wonderful as the hen that Mother Goose was acquainted with, that

"Ate a cow and ate a calf,  
Ate a butcher and a half,  
Ate a church and ate a steeple,  
Ate the priest and all the people!"

"I will ask Aunt Eunice to give you a very plummy piece, but I don't see how you could have all the plums," said Becky seriously.



Solomon was thinking. An idea had suddenly popped into his mind that here was a chance for mischief. Solomon loved mischief. And there might be also a chance to "pay up" Mabel Hortense, who had laughed at him and called him silly.

"Oh! I think we could manage it," said he. "Roxy Jane always bakes the pudding the day before Thanksgiving, because on Thanksgiving Day the oven is filled with the turkey and chickens and things, and then she warms it up or serves it with a hot sauce. The pudding is in the pantry this very minute; I've seen it."

"Well, what if it is?" asked Becky.

"We might slip into the pantry when nobody was looking, and carry it off and hide it somewhere, — out in the barn, on the haymow, would be a good place, — and to-morrow we could eat it and have all the plums!"

"Why, of course! That is just as easy! And you're a very nice boy to think of it. I'll never call you silly again. Of course you'll give me all the plums," said Mabel Hortense.

"It would be very wrong! What would Aunt Eunice say? Why, Solomon, when last Sunday was your birthday, and you said you were surely going to be good a week!"

"I didn't know then that I was going to have company from the city," said Solomon. "And it



isn't any harm, anyway. There'll be plenty for dinner without the pudding — maybe 'twould make some of them sick to eat it ; and Aunt Eunice will never find out what became of it."

"I don't think it's nice of you to say it would be wrong, when I'm your company. People ought to do everything that company wants."

"Aunt Eunice said we must do everything that Mabel Hortense wants us to," urged Solomon.

"Yes, so she did," said Becky rather faintly, "but" —

"It doesn't make any difference whether you help or not, we're going to do it," said Solomon. "And now, too, for they're all talking and won't notice where we go, and Roxy Jane is setting the table, and can't see us go to the pantry."

Lucy Ann skipped along with Solomon and Mabel Hortense, not minding in the least that Becky looked reprovingly at her.

After a little hesitation Becky arose and followed them. She might as well see what they were going to do, she thought.

There was the Thanksgiving plum-pudding in a great, yellow earthen baking-dish on the pantry shelf, rich and toothsome and sweet-smelling.

"I was going to take the pudding-bag to put it in ; but it isn't big enough for such a whacker of a pudding, and the clothes-pin bag isn't clean enough. Becky, you go to the clothes-press and get a clean



pillowcase! We can slip it into the wash-tub on Monday morning, and nobody will notice."

Becky went. Since they were going to do it anyway, she might as well join them, she said to herself. Perhaps it wasn't polite to refuse company. And it was going to be great fun!

Solomon slipped a knife around the edge of the pudding to separate it from the dish, as he had seen Roxy Jane do, and put it into the pillowcase. Then they all stole softly out through the long wood-shed to the barn, Solomon, with the pudding slung over his shoulder, leading the way.

Solomon looked cautiously around to be sure that Peter Trott was not in the barn. Peter was not a tell-tale; but he had a sweet tooth, and it was just as well to be on the safe side.

There was not a sound to be heard as they entered the barn, and both Solomon and Becky soon forgot everything except that they were having great fun.

They deposited the pudding in its pillowcase bag in a bed of hay, covering it carefully so that scarcely a glimpse of the white cloth was to be seen. It was hardly done when Roxy Jane rang the supper-bell vigorously.

"We shall all have to go to church in the morning," said Solomon, as they hurried into the house; "but the first thing after we come home we'll go up on to the haymow and eat the pudding."



One who was watching Solomon closely might have seen a twinkle in his eye, when he said that, which meant mischief deeper than any of his companions in the pudding enterprise suspected.

For it wouldn't be paying up Mabel Hortense to let her eat all the plums. Oh, no, indeed!

At five o'clock the next morning Solomon arose from his bed softly, that he might not awake Jonah, who was sleeping beside him, dressed himself in great haste, and stole down-stairs. He had meant to be up at four o'clock, but, unfortunately, had failed to awake. It was quite important for the accomplishment of his purpose that he should get to the barn before Peter Trott did, and Peter Trott was a very early bird.

The large lantern which Peter used was not hanging in its accustomed place; but that was not a sure sign that Peter had gone to the barn, because he was not very orderly, and might have left it somewhere else.

Solomon lighted the small lantern, and tiptoed softly, listening intently, all the way through the wood-shed, which had never seemed so long nor so dark. There was no sign of Peter Trott's lantern, and Solomon came to the conclusion that Peter's alarm-clock had not yet gone off.

An industrious hen, who had been laying an egg at this unseasonable hour, flew off her nest with a loud cackling, and startled Solomon so that he





SOLOMON AND MABEL HORTENSE.

“Solomon slipped a knife around the edge of the pudding, and put it into the pillow-case.”







almost dropped his lantern into the hay. Perhaps she meant to lay more than one egg that day, because it was Thanksgiving Day; but Solomon thought she might have waited until daylight.

Her nest seemed to be very near the place where they had hidden the pudding. Solomon hoped that she hadn't been having a peck at the plums. He meant to have all those plums for his own private refreshment. He would never have thought of it if Mabel Hortense had not suggested it, and he did not want to eat them all at once; but he thought it would be a very good plan to hide the pudding where nobody but himself could find it, and have a private nibble whenever he liked.

But the best of it was that he should be more than even with Mabel Hortense. Instead of having all the plums, she wouldn't have any of them. And wouldn't the girls all be surprised when they came, after church, to the place where the pudding had been hidden and found it gone? And shouldn't he have to pretend to be surprised? Solomon chuckled to himself, thinking of it.

By this time he had come to the place where he had put the pudding. He put his hand down to pull up the bag, but, lo and behold! there was only a deep hole where the pudding had lain.

The pudding had vanished, bag and all!

Solomon's first thought was that it must be magic — some fairy had spirited it away, to punish



him for his misdeeds. But when his knees had stopped shaking, he thought of Peter Trott.

Peter wore soft shoes, and was always near when one did not suspect it, and he was very fond of goodies. He might like all the plums as well as Mabel Hortense. Just at that moment he heard the noise of the hay-cutter at the farther end of the barn, and a ray of light from Peter Trott's lantern was cast upon the barn-floor.

"Peter, Peter, what have you done with the plum-pudding?" cried Solomon angrily.

"Sakes alive! Is that you up on the haymow? Do you want to scare a fellow to death?" said Peter, in a shaking voice. "What are you doin' up there at this time in the morning?"

"I'm not so early but what you've been before me, and carried off my plum-pudding, or else eaten it up!" said Solomon, almost in tears.

"Plum-puddin'! Plum-puddin'! You ain't walkin' in your sleep, or dreamin', are you? It's Thanksgivin' Day, sure enough; and it's likely there'll be a plum-puddin' along about dinner-time, good and spicy, and chock full of plums, but it's too early in the morning to talk about it now. I'm a master hand for plum-puddin', myself, but I shouldn't consider it wholesome before breakfast!"

"I hid the plum-pudding, in a pillowcase, up on this haymow, and it's gone!" said Solomon; "and nobody has been here but you."



“Hid a plum-puddin’ up in the hay? That’s cur’us!” exclaimed Peter Trott, in a tone of great astonishment. “And it’s gone? — that’s cur’user still! But, now I think of it, that yaller-speckled hen was makin’ a great fuss up there, and she’s a master hand for victuals, that hen is, and she’s got a terrible big swallow. Why, I see her swallow a pumpkin the other day and make no more of it than she would of a pea!”

“I sha’n’t believe any more of your stories, Peter Trott!” cried Solomon. “I got called silly by doing it, and grandpa says not to.”

Peter looked very sad.

“Well, I s’pose I have got an unfort’nit habit of stretchin’ the truth a little. It seems to come nateral. But I’m a-breakin’ myself of it fast. Now I come to think of it, it wa’n’t a pumpkin, but a squash, and not more’n a middlin’-sized one, that I see that hen swallow. And it ain’t likely that she swallowed the puddin’, on account of the bag; that would have stuck in her throat, certain sure.”

“You have done something with that pudding,” insisted Solomon hotly.

“Well, now, I did toss some hay off that mow into Dandy Jim’s stall. You don’t s’pose the puddin’ could have caught on the pitchfork, do you? Dandy Jim wouldn’t have eaten the bag, anyhow, bein’ dretful pertikler about his victuals, so it’s easy enough to find out.”



And Peter Trott, in a very eager and interested manner, went into Dandy Jim's stall, and searched about. Solomon followed him, with his lantern, and looked carefully all over the stall. But no traces of either pudding or bag were to be found; and Dandy Jim, after the closest inspection, did not seem to be suffering from indigestion, as Solomon thought he certainly would be if he had eaten the pudding-bag.

Peter Trott certainly looked very innocent, but Solomon had by no means lost his suspicions that he knew more about the disappearance of the pudding than he chose to tell. But to show anger toward him would never bring Peter to confession. So Solomon began to plead with him, —

“Peter, please don't tease me. P-l-eas-e tell me all about it.”

Peter thrust both hands into his trousers pockets, and looked very benevolent.

“Well, now, I have been jokin' a little, that's a fact, but I don't want to hurt your feelin's. But as for that puddin', all I can say is that I saw a tramp eatin' somethin' out in the barn-yard last night, an' it may 'a' been that puddin'. I can't say certain that it was the puddin', but he was a-eatin' ez if he enjoyed it mighty well. He was sittin' kind of doubled up in that bushel-basket, with his legs kind of danglin', and he had a cloth tucked under his chin for a napkin. Of course, I didn't



know how he come by it. I didn't once think that it might be our Thanksgivin' puddin'. I did think about orderin' him off, but he had such a queer look in his eye that I felt like givin' him a wide berth; and I let him alone. Judgin' from what you tell me, I'm afraid your puddin' 's gone for good. But I can't say for certain."

Solomon felt satisfied that Peter was telling the truth now. Tramps were plenty in the neighborhood, and only the day before he himself had seen just such an one as Peter described, resting under a tree. And Peter was always careless about the barn-door.

Now that the pudding was gone, Solomon began to think anxiously of the probability of being found out. While there was a great deal of fun to be expected with the pudding, that probability had kept in the background of his mind, but now it loomed out fearfully. Aunt Eunice would be sure to make a strict investigation as soon as she knew that the pudding was gone, and Aunt Eunice could always find out things. Sometimes her finding out seemed really marvellous, and she said that a little bird told her. Jonah said she was only joking, and Becky didn't really believe it, but Solomon was inclined to think it was true. Solomon thought, now he came to consider the matter, that anybody who had stolen the Thanksgiving plum-pudding wouldn't be "let off very easy." He de-



liberated whether he should throw the blame upon Mabel Hortense or not. It seemed rather mean to tell of a girl; but, "anyway, he shouldn't have thought of it if it hadn't been for her."

The Thanksgiving sermon had always seemed endless to Solomon, but on this day it was actually too short; anything was better than having dinner-time come.

As soon as they reached home, Mabel Hortense and Lucy Ann came to him and whispered, —

"Now we will go to the barn and have the pudding, won't we?"

Becky stood in the background, looking pale and sad. The truth was, Becky's conscience had been making her very unhappy.

"The pudding's gone," said Solomon gloomily.

"Gone! Where?" exclaimed Mabel Hortense, Becky, and Lucy Ann, in a breath.

"Eaten up!" said Solomon.

"What! plums and all?" exclaimed Mabel Hortense, the corners of her mouth beginning to droop. "Who did such a cruel, wicked thing?"

"A tramp. He ate the pudding—plums and all."

"Oh, what a greedy thing, to eat all the plums! I wanted them myself," said Mabel Hortense.

"We haven't had a bit of fun. And what will Aunt Eunice say?" said Becky.

"Girls are always getting a fellow into trouble," said Solomon savagely.



The children showed a surprising lack of eagerness in obeying the summons to dinner, all except little Darius, who did not feel guilty, and still expected plum-pudding.

Solomon had a very small appetite for turkey, and Becky could scarcely force down a mouthful.

Solomon felt, when they were waiting for dessert to be brought in, that it was one of the most awful moments of his life; and Becky watched the door with a frightened and fascinated gaze.

But what did their eyes behold! Roxy Jane, with beaming face, bearing aloft a huge platter, on which reposed a great, rich-brown, plummy-looking pudding! It looked exactly like the pudding they had stolen; and Roxy Jane said, in answer to a compliment upon the looks of her pudding, that "it got a splendid bake. She never knew one to slip out of the dish so easily."

It was placed on Solomon's end of the table, and he bent over and examined it critically. A tiny wisp of hay was clinging to its side. Solomon picked it off slyly, and showed it to Becky.

"Grandpa, don't ever send Peter Trott away, for he's a good fellow!" said Solomon eagerly.

And all the grown people wondered why the plum-pudding made him think of that.

"I want all the plums!" said Mabel Hortense.

But nobody paid any attention to her, and she had only her share.



## CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORY OF AN EASTER HAT. A BILBERRY  
PORT HAPPENING.

“LINDA JARVIS has a new hat — that’s all that Easter means to her! I saw Miss Plumer’s girl carrying home the bandbox; and then I just glanced in at the window as I went by, and there was Linda trying it on before the mirror. She must have been there half an hour!”

The other girls — there were four or five of them grouped together in the high-school hall — looked somewhat disapprovingly at Abby Luce. They were all proud of the fact that Abby was a better Greek scholar than any boy in the school, and they had a vague impression that it conferred honor upon the Bilberry high school to have one girl pupil who eschewed bangs, in spite of a very high forehead, and was always guiltless of a ruffle or a ribbon; but Abby Luce, with all her strength of mind, must not be allowed to be too severe upon Linda Jarvis, for Linda was a favorite.

“Linda does like pretty clothes; she’s a real Easter lily. But I don’t think it’s a bit of harm,



if one isn't selfish about it," said Alice Carver stoutly.

"Or doesn't allow one's self to be faint-hearted because one can't have them," said Janey Jackson. Janey never had a dress except her Aunt Mehitable's old ones. She had worn a snuff-colored one now for nearly two years — ever since the lavender and green plaid wore out. Janey loved pretty clothes, and it was hard not to feel sometimes that an overruling Providence might have given Aunt Mehitable a different taste in dress!

"Of course, one ought to be thinking of better things than clothes at Easter," said little Amy Drummond.

"But one's belongings ought to be new and fresh and pretty then; it's fitting," maintained poor Janey.

"I should expect more sensible ideas from you," said Abby Luce severely. (Janey had "a head for" higher mathematics, and Abby respected her accordingly.) "Of course, Linda is nothing but frivolous; she shirks Latin, and writes compositions on 'Woodland Flowers,' and ties the manuscripts with a blue ribbon!"

"Sh! sh!" The warning came from several girls simultaneously, as the object of these dreadful accusations passed through the hall within ear-shot. She was a tall girl, with an air of style which was not common in Bilberry. In fact, her



father had brought his family there from the city a year before, having established the large cotton mills at the Port, which seemed likely to change Bilberry from a drowsy country village to a bustling town.

She joined the group of girls now; and the conversation turned to the coming Easter services at the new church, and the boy choir, an innovation of the new minister's which had aroused much interest, and also much criticism.

"There's one good thing about it, anyway — every one in Bilberry will go to church!" said little Amy Drummond.

But little Amy Drummond did not know every one in Bilberry, although she had lived there all her life.

Away off beyond Pippin Hill, three miles away from the village, there was a queer, dilapidated old house, whose mistress did not even know that it was Easter. M'randy Fickett, the mistress of this old house, was a girl of fifteen, and many of the good things of this life, as well as Easter, had never come in her way. Christmas never came beyond Pippin Hill; and the "back folks," as the dwellers in that region were called by all Bilberry, were too poor and "shiftless" to keep Thanksgiving Day. Of course, there will be something of the Fourth of July wherever there is a boy, and there were boys among the "back folks;" and one



day — oh, blissful memory! — the balloon that went up from Bilberry common had come down on the edge of Purgatory Swamp, only a few rods from the dilapidated old house. M'randy had dated everything from that exciting day for long afterwards. It was different for her brother 'Lije; more good times came to him, either because boys always will have them, or because he had plenty of boy comrades, while there was scarcely a girl of M'randy's age among the "back folks."

'Lije and M'randy, who were twins, lived alone together in the queer house — you will believe that it was queer when you know that it was Deacon Baldwin's old granary; its owner had benevolently moved it there for the Ficketts to live in, when they had come to Bilberry with their father, who was dying of consumption.

They could raise vegetables; they could cut all the wood they needed off the piece of land which Deacon Baldwin had given them; they kept a cow, and M'randy made butter and sold it; in winter she knit stockings, which found a sale at the store, and they need never have been really in want if 'Lije had only been — well, just a little different. M'randy never admitted anything more than that even to herself; she would like to have 'Lije just a little different, but then, being a boy, perhaps he couldn't be. She was always ready to find excuses for him when he preferred to go fishing



rather than to chop wood or dig potatoes, and she was inclined to think that 'Lije would always behave well if there were not so many rough boys to lead him into mischief. The mills had brought a set of rougher boys to town than ever were there before; and 'Lije seemed to have private affairs with them, which troubled M'randy.

There was a cloud on her face as she stood in the doorway on this Easter morning — as sunshiny and springlike an Easter morning as ever dawned. She had lain awake in the night worrying about 'Lije. For 'Lije had been very silent of late; he was cross when she wanted him to do anything, and he had been out late the night before, probably with those dreadful mill-boys.

But her face lightened as a boy's voice rang out from the woods immediately behind the house; a boy's voice of wonderful quality — clear, flute-like, angelic, as only a boy's voice can be.

Ordinarily 'Lije's songs were not angelic; he picked them up in the street, or at the mills; he sang the airs that were ground out by a stray hand-organ or a minstrel troupe. Surprise grew no M'randy's face as she listened now:—

“ The strife is o'er, the battle done!  
The victory of life is won;  
The song of triumph is begun,  
Hallelujah!”



How 'Lije's clear soprano rang out on the "hal-lulujah"! M'randy didn't know just what the words meant. "That must be the song that he said he heard them practising down to the new meetin'-house. 'Lije can catch a tune so quick!" she said to herself. "I guess it's the same tune that man heard the other day, when he was goin' by 'n' stopped 'n' asked who 'twas that was singin'. I don' know who the man was; mebbe 'twas the new minister down to the Port. They say he thinks a sight of singin'. I wish't I could hear 'em sing down there! But I hain't got nothin' to wear."

This sad reflection brought a new idea to M'randy's mind.

"I wish't I could get 'Lije to harness up old Nancy 'n' go down to the Port with me this morn-ing. I want to sell my butter, and I've got that soft-soap made that Mis' Giles wanted. 'Lije!"

'Lije was still singing:—

"Christ the Lord is risen to-day!"

The strains came joyfully to M'randy's ears. But M'randy's mind was on her butter and the soft-soap for Mrs. Giles.

'Lije came at last, with his arms full of wood for the fire. It meant that 'Lije was good-natured when he brought in wood in the morning without being asked to do so.



“Carry your butter to the store this morning?” he repeated after M’randy, in a tone of extreme surprise.

“I know you said you was goin’ fishin’, but we hain’t got a mite of flour, ’Lije; so I must sell the butter.”

There was a very queer twinkle in ’Lije’s eyes. M’randy thought she hadn’t known him to be in such good humor for a long time; in fact, not since he had begun to go with the mill-boys.

’Lije turned his head away to hide a laugh. He thought it was a good joke that M’randy had forgotten that it was Sunday — M’randy, who was always preaching to him about behaving well, and mourned because they couldn’t go to church, and used to read, once in a while, in the old Bible that their father had left them, until he gradually tore it up — a fellow had to have wadding for his gun!

He thought it would be a fine joke to take M’randy through the main street of Bilberry with her butter and soap in their old wagon, while the people were going to church.

Nancy was an ancient, raw-boned steed of which the Bilberry boys made fun; the Ficketts had bought her of old Jerry Flint, the drunken cobbler, for two loads of wood, a dozen pairs of stockings, and half a cheese; and as the wagon was very old and rickety, and rudely mended with ropes and wires, it was altogether a queer equipage of which



Abby Luce and little Amy Drummond caught sight on their way to church.

“They really look as if they were going peddling! I don’t suppose it makes the least difference to them that it’s Sunday,” said Abby Luce. “That Fickett boy goes with the mill-boys, and puts them up to mischief, I’ve heard. There’s a strike, you know, and they’re afraid of serious trouble among the boys.”

“There really ought to be some missionary work done among those back folks!” said little Amy Drummond, with her soft blue eyes full of trouble.

They looked so severely at M’randy that the color rose to her face.

“’Lije, they’ve all got their best clothes on! Everybody we’ve seen has.” The color and the distress deepened suddenly in M’randy’s face. “O ’Lije! how could you let me do it? Why didn’t you tell me? — it’s Sunday!”

’Lije turned away his face. He was fond of M’randy, and her distress touched him. It did not seem so good a joke, after all.

“Sunday? Of course it’s Sunday!” called a cheery voice. “Easter Day too.”

M’randy, turning, saw, through her tear-suffused eyes, a tall, stylish young lady, adorned with the very prettiest of spring hats. M’randy knew her at once as the daughter of Mr. Jarvis, the mill-owner. ’Lije recognized her also, and scowled at



her. He prided himself upon siding with the strikers, and disapproving of mill-owners.

“Aren’t you the boy who sings?” asked the girl, smiling upon him in the most friendly way, quite regardless of scowls. “I’ve heard that you had a wonderful voice. Mr. Morris, the new minister, has heard you, and he said he wished that you would sing in the choir.”

A look of gratification was struggling through Lije’s scowl in spite of himself.

“Won’t you come to church and hear the music, any way?” said the girl.

“Oh! I wish’t we could,” cried M’randy. “But we look so! I—I forgot ’twas Sunday! I don’t know how I come to. I do remember mostly. But we was all out of things, and I was real worried, ’n’ I wanted to sell my butter ’n’ soap. Oh! I would like to go to meetin’ ’n’ hear them boys sing!”

“I’ll tell you what you can do,” said Linda Jarvis, who had been performing some rapid mental calculations. “Aunt Ruth Oliver lives just below here. She will let you leave your wagon in her barn, and you can come to church with me.”

M’randy looked at her calico gown and her old sacque; they were clean and whole, although faded. Then she took her hood off her head, and eyed it ruefully; it was hopelessly ragged, and its original color was entirely lost.



“If it wa’n’t for the hood! but folks would laugh; they wouldn’t want me to meetin’ in that,” she murmured dejectedly.

Linda hesitated; there was not time to go home; the church bells had long ago ceased to ring; then she took the dainty hat off her own head, and set it upon M’randy’s. I am not going to tell of the struggle that went on in her mind while she hesitated; some one might think that I exaggerated; but it would not be a girl who, dearly liking pretty things, had planned an Easter hat weeks beforehand, and found it a triumph of her own and the milliner’s art, and the most becoming hat she had ever worn! Whatever you may think, I am sure that the recording angel knew it was a sacrifice.

“There! you shall have that for your own. Now I am sure you won’t be ashamed to go to church,” cried Linda.

M’randy colored high with delight under the pretty hat. It was quite wonderful to see how pretty she looked. Linda was surprised that she had not observed how lovely she was. ’Lije felt surprised in the same way, and in spite of himself his heart softened and swelled.

“Oh, no! I sha’n’t go to church bareheaded,” Linda said gayly, in answer to M’randy’s anxious query. “Aunt Ruth Oliver will lend me a hat.” She winced a little at the thought of the hat which Aunt Ruth Oliver would lend her; Aunt Ruth



was an elderly spinster, and wore the dowdiest of clothes.

Linda had reflected, while she hesitated about giving away her Easter hat, that Aunt Ruth would never lend any of her head-gear to one of the "back folks."

"You will come, too, won't you?" Linda said to 'Lije, after the wagon had been driven into Miss Ruth Oliver's barn, Linda having asked the permission of that much surprised and scandalized lady.

M'randy had previously whispered to 'Lije that he looked "'most like other folks," the patches on his trousers showed so little, and his jacket and cap were almost new.

'Lije found it hard to decide whether he would go or not. It seemed like a forsaking of his principles to go to church with the mill-owner's daughter, and yet he did want to hear that boy choir sing! He privately confided to M'randy that he knew he "could sing them fellers out of sight; but he should like to hear how well they could do."

So it came to pass that both 'Lije and M'randy went to church that Easter Day with Linda Jarvis. They would have been ushered into her father's pew, but that 'Lije stoutly declined that honor. So they sat near the door; but all the high-school girls who were at church, craned their necks to see the "back folks" girl with an astonishingly pretty



hat on, whom Linda Jarvis had brought to church ; while Linda herself wore an old brown thing with purple roses on it.

The choir-master sought 'Lije out after the service, privately instigated by Linda. 'Lije was flattered by the invitation to join the choir ; he loved to sing, and had long cherished an unconfessed desire to have his voice trained. M'randy went home almost overcome with delight that even 'Lije was, at last, going to have a chance, and was willing to try to be "like other folks."

To the surprise of all in Bilberry the trouble with the mill-boys came to a sudden and most peaceful end. Linda overheard some men talking about it.

"They had a plan to get hold of Ponsonby, the overseer of the weaving-room, and duck him in the pond," said one. "Ponsonby is harsh and overbearing ; but he is an old man, and 'twould have been a serious matter. Then they meant to set fire to the old mills, and that fire would have spread. How did they happen to give up so peaceably ? Well, that Fickett fellow was the ringleader. He's a young chap, but smart, and has great influence over the boys, especially over those who live up back there where he does. He has reformed ; he and his sister go to church every Sunday, and he sings in the choir. He told the boys to go to Mr. Jarvis and tell of their wrongs like men. It seems



that Jarvis's daughter was kind to his twin sister ; that's how it all came about."

"I'm glad that I didn't think too much of that Easter hat!" said Linda to herself, drawing a long, long breath.

The girls in the academy hall were talking about 'Lije and M'randy about a year afterwards.

"Do you know, that girl is actually coming to school?" said little Amy Drummond. "Linda Jarvis has been helping her to prepare, and she calls her 'my friend, Miranda Fickett.' The boy is in Mr. Jarvis's counting-room, and Mr. Jarvis tells everyone how promising he is. He really has a wonderful voice; he is going to have a salary for singing next year. And that queer little granary house of theirs has muslin curtains in the windows, and the prettiest flower-garden in town! I wonder how such a change came about. Abby Luce and I saw them coming to the village in their old wagon last Easter Day, as if it were a week-day, and how they did look!"

Abby Luce was meditative. After that Easter morning she became less severe in her judgments. No one but her had guessed the story of the Easter hat; for Miss Plumer, the milliner, had been pledged to secrecy.

"I know how the change came about," said Abby Luce slowly. And while they all look wonder-



ingly at her, Abby told them as much of the story as she knew. "It was through Linda Jarvis's Easter hat," concluded Abby, "and Linda's lovely, self-denying spirit. And, girls, if you ever know me to say mean things of any one again, I hope you'll remind me of that Easter hat!"



## CHAPTER XVIII.

MARMY, A BILBERRY CORNER "HOUSE-MOTHER," AND  
A SCHOOL-TEACHER WHO IS AN OLD FRIEND.

"IF it were not for the Dodds and the Dusenberrys" —

That was what Miss Tackaberry said when her adopted daughter wished to teach the summer school at Bilberry Corner. And old Dr. Kittredge, of the School Committee, said the same thing, with grave head-shakings, when Miss Louisa Jane Tackaberry applied to him for the school.

"They're a rough set over at the Corner, and the Dodds and the Dusenberrys keep up a perpetual quarrel. I'm afraid they'd be more than you could manage, my dear."

"Let me try, Doctor. I'm not afraid." And Miss Tackaberry drew her nineteen-year-old slimness very erect.

The upshot of the matter was that Ludy Jane secured the school, and on the first Monday morning when she "called the roll" her heart beat a lively accompaniment to the names of the Dodds and the Dusenberrys. She had found in the desk



the book which her predecessor had used ; and it had occurred to her that it would simplify matters to call the names which she found there, and see how many were still pupils.

There was nothing very alarming in the appearance of the Dodds and Dusenberrys who answered to their names on that Monday morning. The Dodds were dark, straight-haired little fellows of a most serious aspect, from Hosea, aged twelve, down to Aaron, who was six, and spoke thickly, by reason of having his thumb in his mouth. Tow hair, snub noses, and freckles seemed to be the characteristics of the Dusenberrys — Leck (a nickname evolved somewhat mysteriously from Alexander), Leonidas, and Phœbe Jane. In addition to these family characteristics, Phœbe Jane, aged ten, had a remarkably prominent chin, and an angular little figure which showed energy and determination in every line. She was near-sighted, and her eyes were slightly crossed ; and it was this, probably, which caused the slight scowl which the new teacher thought looked defiant. She remembered the wise talks about physiognomy which she had heard at the time when the composite photographs were taken, and said to herself that if any one of the Dodds or Dusenberrys should prove "more than she could manage," it would be Phœbe Jane. And she adhered to this opinion ; although Phœbe Jane showed a disposition to be helpful,



and was full of information, which proved to be more reliable than that which the other children offered. She knew that little Lysander Huckins was coming to school as soon as his grandmother finished his new trousers, and that Sarah Ann Grindall wasn't coming, because her mother "didn't believe the new teacher knew beans."

Miss Tackaberry had appointed Phœbe Jane spokesman, because at every question she asked a babel of voices arose, from which it was impossible to obtain any intelligible answer. It was immediately evident that Phœbe Jane had become an object of envy to the others. Viola Cook, the largest girl in the school, "made faces" at her in the most open and unabashed manner; and while Phœbe Jane stood properly erect, with her arms folded behind her, Miss Tackaberry saw with surprise that her face was growing scarlet and her eyes filling with tears. She was hoping that she had not said anything to wound her feelings, when Emeretta Gooch, who sat in the front seat, arose from an excursion on the floor, and frantically waving her hand for permission to speak, cried out, "Drusilly Pepper's a-pinchin' her legs!"

And at the same moment Phœbe Jane's stoical endurance gave way, and she swooped upon the offending Drusilla, whose cries testified to summary punishment. After Miss Tackaberry had tried to administer strict justice, receiving from Drusilly



as an explanation of her conduct that Phœbe Jane was "teacher's pet," she attempted to go on with the roll.

When she called Electa Dodd's name, there had been no reply of "present"; and now, as she inquired where Electa Dodd was, Phoebe Jane surprised her by bursting into tears. Miss Tackaberry looked anxiously upon the floor, thinking that the revenger of partiality must have again resorted to pinching; but Emeretta Gooch again explained,—

"She feels bad because Lecty Dodd can't never come to school any more. She fell off'm the hay-loft, and now she can't walk a single step. She likes Lecty, and Lecty likes her, if all their folks is a-fightin' and a-quarrellin', and always was. Doddses tried to say that Phœbe Janepushed her off'm the hay-loft, but Lecty said 'twa'n't so, and nobody don't believe it, if Phœbe Jane has got an awful quick temper. Doddses was mad because Phœbe Jane was over there; she 'n' Lecty was always gettin' together when they could. Doddses and Dusenberrys' —

Miss Tackaberry interrupted Emeretta's flow of information by calling the next name. Phœbe Jane womanfully swallowed the lump in her throat, and pressing her lips tightly together to hide their quivering, stood in the same proper attitude, her little sharp elbows protruding at each side, ready to answer the new teacher's questions. But the very



next day Miss Tackaberry had reason to think that, after all, she had not been mistaken in expecting that Phœbe Jane would be "hard to manage." By that time something like order and discipline had been established. The new teacher was strict in suppressing whispering and all communication. When a small wad of paper came flying across the room, and was dexterously caught by Phœbe Jane Dusenberry, who unrolled it and read something written upon it, Miss Tackaberry promptly commanded her to bring the paper to the desk. After one instant's hesitation, Phœbe Jane popped the little wad of paper into her mouth, chewed it determinedly with her small, strong teeth, and swallowed it.

This was the first open rebellion that the new teacher had encountered. There was a murmur all over the schoolroom, surprise, not unmixed with a delightful excitement. It was "teacher's pet" who had been guilty of this daring disobedience.

"Phœbe Jane Dusenberry will stay in at recess," said Miss Tackaberry, so calmly that no one would have supposed that she was inwardly sorely disquieted and perplexed about what she was to do with this small rebel.

After she had marshalled the others out in single file to recess — an astonishing innovation for the Corner school, where they had always been allowed to go out with a rush and a whoop at the touch of



the teacher's bell — Miss Tackaberry returned, with a troubled mind, to Phœbe Jane, who sat with a sturdy and defiant air before the window, on the other side of which some laughing boys had already gathered, and little Aaron Dodd's scornful face was raised as far above the sill as his extremely limited height would permit. The teacher waved the boys away with an imperative gesture.

"La! you needn't trouble about them young ones. I can 'tend to them," remarked Phœbe Jane, with calm superiority.

"Phœbe Jane, why didn't you obey me when I told you to bring that paper to my desk?" said Miss Tackaberry.

"'Cause I wa'n't a-goin' to have anybody know what was wrote on that paper," said Phœbe Jane firmly. "I ketched it on the fly, so'st Leck couldn't get it. Hosy Dodd he throwed it to Leck; he was mad 'cause Leck got above him, but sence he beat Leck choosin' sides, he won't say no more. But if Leck had read what was wrote there, he'd 'a' carried the paper straight home to Hash. Our Hash he's said he'd shoot D'ri Dodd if ever he heard of his sayin' agin that 'twas him that cut the underpinnin' of the bridge over their crick time it broke, and D'ri got carried off and 'most drowned. You don't know our Hash so well as I do! He'll do what he says he will, and there ain't any stoppin' him."



Miss Tackaberry had indeed heard that Ahasuerus, the eldest of the Dusenberry boys, was a lawless fellow, and the prime mover in the feud between the two families.

“Hosy wrote that ’twas Hash that had cut the bridge, and that I pushed Lecty off’ m the hay-loft. I’m tellin’ you jest what was wrote, ain’t I? But you don’t ’pear to be one of them kind that tells all they know. But I was afraid you’d read it right out if I carried it to you. The teacher we had last summer she used to do that with every note she could ketch. I wanted to mind you. I like you real well; but, you see, there wa’n’t anything I *could* do but jest to swallow that note. I didn’t want to make you mad at me, but I don’t care for anything if I can only jest keep the boys from quarrellin’ and fightin’. It makes Lecty feel awful. Me ’n’ Lecty like each other. We always did. You see, it’s awful lonesome where we live. There ain’t many houses, and what there is is chockful of boys. That’s what makes the boys think so much of me; where girls is scarce, they do. Hash and Leck, they’ll do anything for me, except to quit fightin’ Doddses. There ain’t any mother to our house either, ’n’ so they call me Marmy.

“It’s jest the same way over to Lecty’s, only they’ve got a gra’mother. We got so that we didn’t darst to speak to one another, Lecty ’n’ me,





“MARMY.”

“Phebe Jane stood properly erect, with her hands folded behind her.”







only jest through a chink in the fence, except that one day when they was all gone away but Gram, and I went over to their barn, and Lecty fell, and they said I pushed her. That was an awful foolish story to tell; for, if I be quick, I never got mad with Lecty. The boys set out to drownd a kitten that I gave her through the chink in the fence. They didn't, 'cause Lecty cried; but they wouldn't have it round the house, and Lecty has to keep it 'way up-stairs in the mill. It's got a whole family of kittens now, all up in the mill chamber, and Gram has to feed them. Lecty thinks everything of that yellow cat; but until she got hurt, D'ri was always threatenin' to drownd her, 'cause she was our cat once. D'ri is the worst, unless it's our Hash, and they used to be great friends once, too. So, now, I wa'n't to blame for swallowin' the paper, was I?"

Phœbe Jane had poured out her story breathlessly, as if it were a relief to an over-full heart.

"I — I wish that you had brought it to me, and asked me not to read it aloud," said Miss Tackaberry, hesitating between due regard for discipline and sympathy with Phœbe Jane's feelings, which seemed too deep for her years.

"I didn't stop to think; and if I had, I don't expect I could have risked it. You see, Lecty 'n' me have got a plan. I wrote it to her, and she kept wavin' and wavin' at me, and I know how



glad she'll be if we can do it. You see, Lecty's boys and our boys are all goin' over to Cumberland Village to the Fourth of July celebration. Hash said he'd take me, and I guess he didn't know what to make of it when I said I didn't want to go. There ain't goin' to be anybody to home at Lecty's but Gram, and she'll help us. Gra'mothers almost always will help you. She'll bring Lecty as far as the fence — there's quite a piece between Lecty's house and mine, if the farms does join — and then Huldy, our work-girl, will carry her the rest of the way; she ain't much more'n a feather now, Lecty ain't, she's fell away so. Some folks might not think it was any great for Lecty to spend the day with me; but Lecty will, 'n' it seems as if I couldn't stand it if anything should happen so she couldn't come. You do get awful sick of such a lot of boys as there is at my house and Lecty's, even if you do think a lot of 'em. And it's so hard to bring 'em up right, that you do want a little rest, with nobody but Lecty and the dolls."

Phœbe Jane heaved a deep sigh of responsibility, and Miss Tackaberry repressed a smile. Her interview with her disobedient "kept-in" pupil was not what she had expected it to be, but she found Phœbe Jane's confidences interesting.

"Elder Doak heard what they called me," continued Phœbe Jane, vaguely aware that she had found a sympathetic listener, "and he patted me



on the head, jest as if I was little, you know ; and says he, 'Bring 'em up well, Marmy ; bring 'em up well !' "

With a sudden awakening to her duty, Miss Tackaberry touched the bell, and the children came trooping in, looking with round-eyed wonder at the clock, and congratulating each other with furtive nudges upon the new teacher's ignorance of the proper limits of a recess.

"I hope that Marmy and Lecty will have their day together," was the first thing that the new teacher thought on the morning of the Fourth. She drew her curtain aside when she heard the rattle of wheels, and saw with satisfaction all the younger Dusenberry boys in their wagon, with Hash, a big brawny fellow of seventeen, riding his black mare — all on the way to Cumberland Village. Even earlier than this she had heard the Dodd boys go by, shouting and firing crackers. She felt a little anxious lest they should get into a quarrel at the celebration. She did not know that Hash, penned in behind the wood-shed door by Marmy, had held up his right hand, and solemnly promised that he would not. Hash would not always promise like that ; when he did, Marmy could have a quiet mind.

She was at the fence almost as soon as the boys were out of sight ; and "Gram," a tall, dark old



woman, with a worn but kindly face, was lifting over the fence a fragile, wan-faced little girl, who looked all eyes and smile. Huldy's strong arms caught her, and Marmy went wild with joy.

"You mustn't keep her too late," said Gram, "though I don't expect the boys will be at home till 'most morning."

What a day it was! Hash had left some fire-crackers and torpedoes, and Phœbe Jane had a secret liking for them; but she gave them up without a sigh when Lecty thought they savored too much of boys. The dolls' house which Hash had made for Phœbe Jane was new to Lecty; and they had it out upon the piazza, with no jeering boys to hear them play "come to see." And good-natured Huldy made strawberry cake out of the sweet little wild strawberries that grew all about Bilberry, and cream-pies with mountains of frosting; and Nap, the old dog, brightened up and performed all his tricks, as if he realized the importance of the occasion; and altogether the day slipped away too soon, and it was time to watch for the rockets from Cumberland Village common.

As soon as it was "pitch dark" Lecty said she must be carried home, and Phœbe Jane agreed to this sorrowful necessity. Some of the boys might come home. Leck had a strong tendency to blow himself up, more or less seriously, with fire-crackers and toy pistols, and little Aaron Dodd always



got lost ; so there was an undercurrent of motherly anxiety amidst all the felicities of the playhouse, and some dread of being surprised as well.

"There don't seem to be so very many rockets," said Lecty, as they watched the darkening sky. "But look, Phœbe Jane, what a great flaring light right over by our mill-stream!"

"It must be at the Grindalls," said Phœbe Jane. "They had fireworks one year. See! it lights up the whole sky. Oh, Lecty, it must be a fire! It's your mill!"

"Oh, oh, Phœbe Jane! Mary Buttercup and her kittens are shut up there, away up-stairs! I got Gram to shut the door, because Dicky Grindall was about the mill with fire-crackers, and he torments cats."

Phœbe Jane flew. She shouted fire as she went, with all the breath she had. She had seen Lecty *spring to her feet*, and in her excitement had hardly thought it strange. Now as she heard footsteps behind her, she turned and saw in the dusk a small figure evidently struggling hard to run as fast as she did. It was so like Lecty that it filled her with wonder and a vague fear. But she could not stop to wonder or fear. There seemed to be no one to come to her call ; men, women, and children had gone to the Cumberland Village celebration ; but still she ran on and shouted. And still the little figure, trembling and stumbling, with now



and then a quivering sob breaking from its lips, followed close behind, until at last it fell, a little heap by the roadside.

“Oh, Mary Buttercup and all her dear kittens!” it murmured, with a great sob of despair.

The Dusenberrys were coming home from the celebration. Leck was riding the mare now; and Hash was dangling his long legs from the back of the wagon, while Leonidas drove. Now and then Hash would growl at Leonidas about getting his feet upon a bundle which was under the seat. It was some blue-sprigged muslin and blue hair-ribbons which Hash had bought for Marmy, making haste to do it the first thing in the morning, lest the shops should be closed.

They were not in the best of humor, for the economy of the Cumberland authorities had limited the expected grand display of fireworks to a few rockets. Before eight o'clock Cumberland Village had shown a disposition to say good-night to its guests, and put on its night-cap. They were grumbling about the “one-horse town,” when the Dodds' wagon dashed by them, raising a great cloud of dust. Leck was urging his horse after them, with an angry exclamation about “taking their dust,” when Hash savagely called him back.

“Let 'em go! The horses are tired,” he said.

Perhaps, knowing that the boys were in a quarrelsome mood, he had remembered his promise to



Marmy. Queer as it was, she had even more influence over that great burly six-footer of a Hash than over the younger boys.

"Well, if you want to take that fellow's sneers," growled Leck as he reined in his horses. "He was makin' fun of our team. *I ain't a lamb.*"

No one seemed disposed to dispute this assertion of Leck's, but Hash half started from the wagon.

"I s'pose I ought to put a stop to his sarse," he said. But he lay back in the wagon after a moment, drawing the bundle of blue muslin out from under the seat and using it as a pillow.

"Look here, boys!" cried Leonidas. "Bilberry Corner has been beating Cumberland out and out on fireworks."

They were just turning out of the woods road, and now they could see the glow which reddened the whole sky.

"What does it mean?" said Hash, standing up in the wagon and gazing eagerly, with his hand shading his eyes.

"It means that Dodds' have got something to do besides sneering at folks. Their mill's a-fire" exclaimed Leck.

"Here, give me the reins, Leonidas. Make the mare go, Leck," cried Hash.

"Mebbe you want to help the Dodds," sneered Leck.

But Hash only urged the horse for answer.



The highway near the burning mill was blocked with teams. People had driven home post-haste, on seeing the fire. Hash left the wagon and ran across the field, followed by the boys. He could scarcely have told whether he meant to try to "help the Dodds'," or was only following his natural impulse to run to a fire.

There was intense excitement in the crowd gathered around the burning mill.

"'Twas a foolhardy thing to do." "He'll never get out alive." "'Twon't last a minute more." "The girl was a plucky one." "'Twas a cat and kittens that she was after, and she dropped 'em down in a basket." "The stairs must have gone just as D'ri got up." "He's got to the little girl, though." "There they are in the window." These were the confused cries that Hash heard. In the blinding glare he saw a little white face and a tow head in the window.

"It's Marmy!" he cried, and rushed toward the burning ruin. But strong arms held him back, and just then a shout arose from the crowd.

"D'ri has jumped into the water with the girl." "He's swimming." "There it goes" — the mill walls had fallen with a crash — "but he's clear of it." "But he'll sink if he don't let go of the girl." "No, he won't; they're helping him out." "Well, you wouldn't think that D'ri Dodd would have risked his life for one of the Dusenberrys!"



Hash heard it all as if in a dream, as he pushed his way frantically through the crowd, and took Marmy's dripping, motionless little figure from D'ri Dodd's arms.

"I don't feel as if I was fit, D'ri Dodd," he said huskily, "but I'd like to shake hands with a hero like you, and — and the fellow that saved Marmy."

The first thing that Marmy said was, "Tell Lecty they're safe — Mary Buttercup and all the kittens. And, oh, Lecty walked! She ran! I saw her."

They thought that her brain was turned, — as if Marmy's steady little brain was likely to be, — but they found that it was true. The doctor said that it often happened in cases like Lecty's that the power of motion returned with sudden excitement. She might have relapses, she might even become helpless again, but it was probable that she would in time be fully restored to health.

And, in fact, in the last week of the term Lecty answered "present" to her name in the Corner school.

Hash says he "never will quarrel with the fellow that saved Marmy's life."

Elder Doak says "it is a wonder to see how Marmy brings up her boys."



## CHAPTER XIX.

“BETSEY:” A BILBERRY BOY WHO MADE AN  
APRIL FOOL OF HIMSELF.

THERE were old Aaron and Achsah Ann and young Aaron in the Green family at Bilberry Corner. The prefix “old,” in Mr. Green’s case, had been acquired rather by a red nose and a dragging, shuffling gait, the result of paralysis, than by age. The red nose and the paralysis were both caused by drinking; and though Mr. Green had seen the evil of his ways and reformed, people learned but slowly to respect him, and he would always be “old Aaron.”

Young Aaron was a fourteen-year-old boy, with luxuriant red hair, an extremely large nose, and as honest a pair of gray eyes as ever tried to look you straight in the face. They tried, and couldn’t; both of them seemed to look at the extremely large nose, as if they were astonished at it.

Young Aaron declared that from this peculiarity of his eyes came his reputation for being mischievous. “People always will believe a cross-eyed boy is up to something,” he said.



It was Achsah Ann's opinion that evil reputations were not so easily acquired. But although she was only fifteen years old, Achsah Ann had learned the value of keeping some of her opinions to herself.

Being fifteen, Achsah Ann "came between;" "her father leaned down upon her, and young Aaron leaned up," as Mrs. Melchisedec Peters, the dressmaker and their neighbor, was always saying; and Achsah Ann felt the responsibility. She was the house-mother, for her mother had died in the old, evil days when her father was a drunkard; and with that responsibility added to the "coming between," life was a pretty serious business for Achsah Ann Green.

She loved fun, too, as well as young Aaron did, and sometimes it was hard to wear a long face when she wanted to laugh; but in the practical jokes in which young Aaron and his friend, Jud Freedley, indulged, she "didn't see any fun," since some one was always annoyed or mortified by them.

She certainly did not feel like laughing when Jud and Becky Freedley, at whose house the "supplying" minister always stayed, put their tame squirrel in the minister's pocket as he was going to church; and the squirrel frisked all over the pulpit, so that the service had to be interrupted until the animal was put out. And she thought it



was vulgar and insulting, rather than funny, when they carried up shaving-water to the Rev. Miss Blodgett, who "supplied" one Sunday.

When young Aaron could think of nothing more novel or entertaining, he would put burdocks in people's beds, sew up the sleeves of coats and dresses, and fasten packages to the sidewalk. Sometimes when Achsah Ann was late for school and found her dress sleeves sewed up, she almost lost patience; she never quite lost it, because she remembered what her mother had said to her just before she died: "You must *encourage* little Aaron to be good."

Although people were continually saying that he ought to be punished, or at least scolded, — and there is no doubt that he really deserved to be, — Achsah Ann kept on encouraging him. Their father left everything to her, having apparently no confidence in his own judgment.

He had once kept a large store and done a thriving business; but that had all slipped away from him in his days of dissipation, and now he did odd jobs of carpentry — a trade he had learned in his youth, earning, with the help of Achsah Ann's prudent housekeeping, just enough to keep the wolf from the door.

Achsah Ann was ambitious. Besides encouraging young Aaron to be good, she meant to encourage him to be *great*. She was sure that he had



brains. He often got to the head of his class, but some prank soon sent him to the foot again. He sometimes showed more quickness in arithmetic than the schoolmaster himself, and he had won two prizes for answers to mathematical puzzles in the *County Clarion*. He was to graduate from the grammar school at the end of the winter term, and then — would there be nothing better for him to do than help his father at odd jobs of carpentry?

The town of Bilberry, in which they lived, had a new academy for boys which was the pride of the county; but the charge for tuition was quite too high to squeeze out of old Aaron's income from odd jobs. Achsah Ann, who had lain awake nights to calculate, had found that it could not be done, even if they should live on corn-meal and stewed beans, to say nothing of the doubt whether learning could thrive or greatness be encouraged in young Aaron on so meagre a diet.

If young Aaron could, by any means, go to the academy, Achsah Ann thought that she might follow the course, with his help; and then she might teach school! Dazzling visions visited Achsah Ann's pillow in the watches of the night, — hard indeed is the pillow under a fifteen-year-old head to which they do not come! — and on one bright March morning they seemed to be all coming true.

Young Aaron came running home almost out of breath. "Old Simon Foss has moved away," he



gasped, "and Dr. Kittredge wants a boy to take care of the academy — the building and the grounds — for his tuition!"

"O Aaron!" cried Achsah Ann.

"Roy Flower wants it, and Phineas Judd up on Pippin Hill; but they can both afford to pay. The schoolmaster said he would recommend me, and Deacon Trueworthy said he would!"

"O Aaron, then you'll get it!" cried Achsah Ann joyfully.

A slight cloud came over young Aaron's face.

"Deacon Trueworthy said that Dr. Kittredge was pretty particular, and he hoped that he hadn't heard that I was up to pranks. And the schoolmaster said about the same thing. It's pretty hard on a fellow, just because he has cross-eyes that make him look like an imp of mischief!" Aaron looked the embodiment of injured innocence.

"Dr. Kittredge will have heard what a real good scholar you are. I think he will take you," said Achsah Ann encouragingly, as she absently sweetened the beef stew and salted the apple-sauce. "But, Aaron, you must be very careful — very careful indeed, not to — not to look cross-eyed!" she added, with a glance which made him color furiously, and mutter that it was hard on a boy when his own sister would listen to wrong stories about him. He shut the door somewhat forcibly when he went out.



But Achsah Ann had no doubt that, if he got the place, he would be careful. What an opportunity it was! And Aaron would soon be a great credit to the academy. Before the beef stew was fairly on the table young Aaron was, in her imagination, preaching in the Bilberry church, in a white choker, — to some imaginations young Aaron in a white choker might have been difficult, but Achsah Ann's was equal to it, — with the whole county thronging to hear him, astonished and weeping at his eloquence; and she herself, the teacher of Latin and mathematics at the academy, was in a front pew, in a very nice best bonnet, and a silk dress which rustled considerably.

"Dr. Kittredge wants to see me; I am to go to see him to-morrow evening!" young Aaron announced the next noon; and Achsah Ann felt that the good fortune was almost sure.

Young Aaron felt so, too, and his spirits were high. It was the first of April; but he had felt the necessity of being sober-minded, and had not played a single prank on any one. He had thought Achsah Ann unnecessarily severe in refusing even to make a cotton meringue or a cayenne-pepper doughnut, but he had submitted gracefully to such deprivations of his accustomed April-fool delights.

But when, just at dusk, he ran into the yard of their neighbor, Mrs. Melchisedec Peters, to see whether 'Liph Peters had got his new bicycle, he



succumbed to temptation. It was not very serious April-fooling, he thought, to run up softly behind Mrs. Peters's servant, Sarah, whom he thought he saw standing on the back porch, and utter in her ear a frightful yell, known to Bilberry boys as the Comanche war-whoop; not at all serious, but quite funny, since Sarah was slightly deaf and very nervous.

The supposed Sarah was standing with her back toward him, and she did not turn when the blood-curdling shriek rang in her ears. There were boys in the Peters family. Sarah was probably prepared for such demonstrations on the first day of April.

A new idea was suddenly suggested to young Aaron by the sight of the rising moon behind the academy hill.

"'Cademy's a-fire! Doctor's house 'n' all!" he shouted.

Before he had time to shout "April fool!" as he intended, Sarah swayed and fell.

"She must have fainted away! Well, I never meant to scare her like that!" said young Aaron to himself, in dismay.

As he drew near, cautiously, he saw that she had fallen partly down the steps. The moonlight fell upon her dress, a light blue sateen, with little wheels upon it; not like any dress that Sarah wore. Where had he seen that dress, and noticed it because the figure looked exactly like bicycle



wheels? He remembered now! Mrs. Dr. Kittredge had worn it to church last summer!

Young Aaron's heart stood still; this, then, was not Sarah, but Mrs. Dr. Kittredge, whom he had frightened so that she had fainted! What should he do? He could not leave her lying there; she might die. But if he were found out, farewell to his hopes of the academy!

There was Mr. Peters coming in at the gate! He would see the fainting woman. Over the fence went young Aaron, and fled homeward.

He could not bear even to see Achsah Ann. He called to her that he was not feeling very well, which was strictly true, and went to bed without his supper.

Mrs. Meacham, the blacksmith's wife, who always heard the news, came in to borrow some eggs the next morning.

“Poor Mrs. Kittredge is very sick,” she said. “She has one of those spells that she is subject to whenever she gets tired or nervous, or anything; the doctor thinks it's her heart, and she's likely to die in one of 'em.”

“I suppose you can't go to see Dr. Kittredge to-night, Aaron, since his wife is so sick,” said Achsah Ann, as soon as Mrs. Meacham had gone.

“Oh, I can't go at all! I never can go, Achsah Ann! I'm to blame for Mrs. Kittredge's sickness! I s'pose I've killed her,” groaned young



Aaron. And Achsah Ann drew from him the story of his April-fooling.

It seemed to her that it had never before been so difficult to encourage young Aaron. It was a dreadful thing that he had done, and all her hopes were blasted as well as his own.

“I don’t think she knew who it was — she didn’t once turn her head, so far as I could see — but the Peterses know my voice well enough, and I expect every minute somebody will be coming to arrest me, or something! She is a nice woman; she used to call me in to give me high-top sweetings last summer. I ’most hope they’ll hang me!” said young Aaron desperately. “If they don’t take me up I guess I’ll go down and work for old Hotchkiss, who wants a stable-boy; it’s all I’m fit for!”

The day passed; and to Achsah Ann’s surprise, as well as young Aaron’s, no one appeared to make any inquiries concerning his part in causing Mrs. Kittredge’s illness. Perhaps the Peterses had not recognized his voice. Perhaps they had not even heard it. They discussed the question whether he ought to confess, and young Aaron went off into the pasture to think it out alone, at last; he had to whittle while he thought, and Achsah Ann wouldn’t let him do that in the house.

Achsah Ann was thinking about it while she tried to sew, when Mrs. Peters came in, bringing



the rattan figure or dummy upon which she draped dresses.

"I wonder if I can get your father to repair my 'Betsey' a little," she said. "That wide rattan at the bottom has got bent, so she keeps toppling over. I set her out on the porch, yesterday, with Mrs. Kittredge's blue sateen on, that she'd sent down for me to fix over, while Sarah was sweeping my work-room; and if I didn't forget her, and when Mr. Peters came home she'd tipped over, and part of that sateen dress was dragging into the flower-bed."

A light had dawned upon Achsah Ann which made her face radiant.

"Oh yes, father'll mend it," she said. Then she asked, "Do you know how Mrs. Kittredge is?"

"She's a great deal better; those attacks don't last long. I expect she'll be able to come and try on her dress in a day or two," said Mrs. Peters.

"I have made up my mind," said young Aaron firmly, when he came in at nightfall. "I shall tell just what I did, whether — whether she lives or dies!"

Achsah Ann turned away her head; she did not quite know whether it was because she wanted to laugh or cry. Young Aaron came tumbling downstairs, with a scared face, a moment after.

"There's a woman in my room!" he said in a



stage whisper. "She's standing there, looking into the glass!"

"A woman? Why don't you go and find out who she is?"

Young Aaron hesitated.

"She may be crazy; it's very queer, you know," he explained.

"Oh, if you're afraid!" said Achsah Ann.

That started young Aaron, of course, but this time he took a light. Achsah Ann stole up behind him.

"It's only 'Betsey'! You've seen her before," she said. "Mrs. Peters left her on the porch yesterday with Mrs. Kittredge's sateen dress on, and she tipped over —"

That was enough for young Aaron; he drew a long, long breath, as nearly a sob as it was manly for a boy to indulge in.

"I've April-fooled a lot of people. I hope none of 'm were so badly fooled as I was!" he said solemnly.

"Mrs. Kittredge is much better, so there isn't any reason why you shouldn't go to see the doctor. And I've laid your best clothes out, here on the bed, and made you a new necktie" — Achsah Ann thought she would go down-stairs without even finishing her sentence; if there was anything that young Aaron hated, it was to have any one see him "make a girl of himself."



He never plays any pranks nowadays. Perhaps it is because he has to sustain the honor of being first in his class at the academy ; or it may be because, if he shows the least disposition to mischief, Achsah Ann asks him if he is acquainted with Betsey Peters.



## CHAPTER XX.

HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO TUKEY'S COVE. THE STORY OF A POOR LITTLE PLACE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BILBERRY AND OF ONE GOOD TIME THAT CAME THERE.

IT was queer, but nothing ever seemed to come to Tukey's Cove, or, if it did, it was belated. You would never know there when it was the Fourth of July unless the wind happened to be in such a quarter that you could hear the Bilberry bells ringing, or some uncommonly fortunate boy had one or at most two bunches of crackers, which he would fire off under a tin pan to get all the noise possible out of them, with all the boys and dogs in town to assist: that was the most of a celebration they ever had. Thanksgiving Day never came either — and it was New England too. The Tukey's Cove turkeys quaked with dread of a far worse fate than being comfortably and fragrantly browned in their own homestead ovens, and eaten where their plumpness and tenderness would call forth home praises and lasting memories; they were ignobly “turned” in the nearest market for flour



and tea and other necessaries. Birthdays could scarcely be said to come there, since no one could remember ever having had a good time or a present because it was his birthday. Even spring kept away long after she had come to all the Bilberrys — North Bilberry and the Corner and the Port; the east winds blew and blew so that the leaves and buds dared not come out; and even when it was Christmas in the almanacs, it never seemed to be Christmas at Tukey's Cove.

"Of course they couldn't expect that," Nahum Nickerson said patiently.

It was when Emeretta went out, with her shawl over her head, to the wood-pile where he was chopping, and said that she wished they could have a little bit of a Christmas for little Mary Jane's sake. She went out there to say it, because they didn't like to have their mother know that they thought much about the things they couldn't have. Mother was an invalid, and lay on the old haircloth sofa almost all the time; and little Mary Jane was delicate, and could never go out to play like other children; and Nahum and Emeretta had to work in the stocking-factory, and leave them alone all day. And the days were long and monotonous, especially to little Mary Jane, who knew all the stories in her one picture-book by heart, and could read them upside down, and could see the pictures with her eyes shut, and whose one doll was constantly coming



unsewed and unpinned, and turning again into the old shawl from which it was evolved, which was very perplexing and distressing to maternal feelings, and had now, moreover, lost one of its black-button eyes into a crack in the floor, from whence it could not be recovered. To have life look dark to little Mary Jane was, to all the others, the hardest thing they had to bear.

Nahum thought that perhaps Emeretta meant that he ought to take the four dollars and fifty-nine cents that he had saved up, and make a Christmas for little Mary Jane; but how could he do that when at any time the drummer who came from Boston to buy goods at the stocking-factory might say he had found for him the situation he had promised to seek? for if he had not money enough to pay his fare he could not go. His mother had given her consent to his going to Boston — anywhere, indeed — if he would not wish to go to sea. Nahum meant to be somebody in the world, if he couldn't be a sailor. Long, long thoughts and plannings that no one would have imagined went on inside that round, tow-thatched head of his.

His mother was to grow strong and happy, and wear a silk dress; Emeretta was to have a new hair ribbon each day (it must be acknowledged that Emeretta would have liked that), and go to a high-school, and little Mary Jane — what was not little Mary Jane to have? — a strong back and the reddest



of cheeks, and whole toyshops and menageries at her command. There were to be carpets on the floors, and pictures on the walls, and always plum-cake for supper. He was somewhat undecided whether he should be the editor of a great newspaper which should take the right side on every question and be honored and approved of by every one, or a great merchant who never made a bad bargain, or the president of a bank in which every one trusted. There had been times when he had seriously contemplated shooting buffaloes, or being President, or inventing a new kind of balloon; but he said to himself that he had grown wise and practical since then. But however his views as to his own career changed, in one determination he never wavered — he meant to have a *good* gun. Perhaps much of Nahum's planning was foolish and visionary, and yet what may not a boy do with a strong arm and a stout heart and that armor of courage that wards off all the blows of evil fortune? At all events, if you had prophesied to Nahum that he would never succeed, he wouldn't have believed you — no, indeed!

Emeretta was going into the house, looking disappointed, in spite of the fact that she had not really expected that Nahum would spend his four dollars and fifty-nine cents, and would scarcely have wished him to; for Nahum's precious plans were occasionally divulged to her, and she had implicit faith in



them ; and Nahum was wondering whether he had not better call her back, and tell her that he would spend the fifty-nine cents for something to put into little Mary Jane's stocking, when Nim Baker, one of their neighbors, who had been over to Bilberry Corner, stopped at the door.

"Here's a box for Emeretta that I fetched over from the express office," called Nim. "Guess she's got a Christmas present !"

"For *me*?" cried Emeretta, running out to the wagon. "It must be a mistake ! Who would send me a box?"

"Well, as long as there isn't any other Emeretta Ellen Nickerson in these parts, I calc'late you'll have to take it. Mebbe Santa Claus has sent by express, bein' he never seems to have time to get round here with his reindeer," said Nim facetiously.

"Oh, oh, Emeretta ! did Santa Claus send it?" cried little Mary Jane, dancing around the box in wide-eyed excitement and delight.

Emeretta stood, with clasped hands, at a respectful distance, and looked it all over, although there was nothing to be seen but the four wooden sides, and the address, in very large black letters, "Miss Emeretta Ellen Nickerson, Tukey's Cove, Bilberry." But Nahum, who was a boy of action, was already prying off the top with the hatchet.

"Here's a letter ; that will tell you all about it," he said.



Emeretta turned the letter over and over in her hands, looking at it with a kind of awe, and afraid to open it.

But little Mary Jane had already thrust her small hand into the box, and found a package, from which she had torn the wrappings and disclosed a most beautiful waxen doll. She had "truly" hair as yellow as gold, and a complexion like strawberries and cream; she had ear-rings in her ears, and a very stylish dress on, not to mention the whole Saratoga trunk full of clothes that was in the package with her; and, greatest wonder and delight of all, when little Mary Jane pressed her to her heart in a transport of joy the waxen lips opened, and the doll said, "Mama!"

Little Mary Jane turned pale, and I am not sure that Emeretta and Nahum didn't; for not only had no talking doll ever opened its lips in Tukey's Cove or in any other part of Bilberry before, but they had never even heard that such a marvel existed. Little Mary Jane, who believed in fairies, and so found nothing very startling, except for the moment, was the first to recover herself.

"Of course Santa Claus sent it to me, or else it wouldn't have called me mama," she declared.

Being a boy, Nahum immediately upset this theory by discovering the spring which governed the doll's powers of speech, and making her say "Papa" or "Mama" at his pleasure. But this dis-



covery seemed to increase rather than diminish little Mary Jane's satisfaction, especially after she found that she could do it herself.

Meanwhile Emeretta was reading the letter.

"Oh, mother! oh, Nahum! it's from that lovely Miss Enderton who was boarding at Bilberry Corner last summer, and came over to visit the factory. Don't you remember that I told you Mr. Barker let me show her round? And she asked me questions, and made me talk so much, that before I knew it I had told her all about us, little Mary Jane and all, and about Luella Tukey, who was working next to me, and her little lame sister Nancy. She seemed interested in everybody who had trouble. I heard people say that she was very rich and very odd. She didn't say much herself; but she made me talk, and she wrote my name down. I wondered why, but I didn't suppose she would ever think of me again."

Nahum had drawn the box to his mother's sofa; and she, with a brighter look than she had worn for many a long day, was taking out the gifts — a soft warm shawl and a pretty hat; a pair of blankets so soft and thick that it warmed one just to look at them; a pair of boy's rubber boots, into which Nahum thrust his feet, and found, with great satisfaction, that they were just a fit; some books and games; and some delicate fruits and jellies; and a great box of candy.



"Is that all?" said Emeretta, peering into the box and turning everything over and over.

"*All?* Surely it is enough! My dear, you are not ungrateful?" said her mother reproachfully.

Emeretta looked from her letter, which she had read over and over, to little Mary Jane, who sat in her small chair, with the doll hugged tightly in her arms, talking and singing to it, and her face was troubled.

"I suppose it's foolish, but it does seem as if little Mary Jane's doll were the best of all," said her mother, with tears of joy running down her face.

Emeretta crushed her letter all into a little ball, and thrust it into the depths of her pocket.

"See! she can do more than talk—she can walk!" cried Nahum, who had discovered another mechanical arrangement in the doll. He set her upon her feet, and with a little swish of her pink silk train she walked gracefully off half-way across the room, while little Mary Jane was almost hysterical with delight.

"It's better than medicine to the child," said her mother.

Emeretta took the letter from her pocket, and tossed it into the very heart of the fire; she was afraid that her mother or Nahum might wish to read it. As it blazed up, she felt as if the words, which kept repeating themselves in her ears, must



show themselves in the flames: "The blue-eyed doll is for Luella Tukey's little lame sister."

If she had only read the letter before little Mary Jane had found the doll and thought it hers! How could she take it away from her now? She hoped she was not ungrateful for all those useful presents, but if there only had been a doll for little Mary Jane! She remembered that Miss Enderton had led her on to tell her that the Tukeys were not so poor as they; that was the reason why there were warm clothes for them, and the beautiful doll; was for Nancy Tukey. Poor little Mary Jane! She might have liked the games, although they were somewhat too old for her, if she had not seen the doll. They discussed the naming of the doll; and their mother favored Emily, because Emily Ender-ton was the name signed to the letter, and little Mary Jane wanted to name her Goldilocks, after the Princess in her book.

How merry they were—all but Emeretta. Their mother sat up on the sofa, and made Emeretta try on the pretty hat; Nahum, still wearing the rubber boots, lay flat on the floor, in boy fashion, and tried each of the games, with the gay cards spread around him; and little Mary Jane had exchanged the doll's pink silk trained dress for a Paris night-gown all laces and ribbons, and was singing her to sleep, which was comfortable for her dollship, who must have been hoarse and stiff after so prolonged a display of her accomplishments.



A knock at the door made Emeretta start. Nahum, who had looked out of the window, said it was only Luella Tukey. Emeretta called to him, as he was going to the door, not to invite Luella into the sitting-room; it might make her feel badly to see all their beautiful presents, when she never had any. But of course a boy wouldn't think of that, and Nahum didn't hear; and in came Luella, and went into raptures over all the things. She tried on the pretty hat and shawl, and was not in the least envious, for she was a very good girl; and Emily Goldilocks was ruthlessly aroused, and made to talk and walk until Nahum said she would certainly get out of order. Luella wasn't envious; but she did say, as she was going away, "O Emeretta, what *wouldn't* I give if little Nancy only had a doll like that! I think it would almost make her walk."

Emeretta was in such haste to get rid of her that she almost shut the door in her face; and then she was cross to Nahum, and when she tried to get supper ready she poured the hot water into the tea-canister, and put the tea into the dried-apple sauce. And her heart was as heavy as lead, and she almost wished that Christmas had never come to Tukey's Cove.

"If Luella hadn't come, perhaps I might have carried the doll over to Nancy," she said to herself. "Now of course I never can."



Her sleep that night was troubled ; and she had a very bad dream, in which Emily Goldilocks, changed into a giantess, was walking and walking over her, and trying to strangle her with her long hair, because she had shut little Nancy Tukey up in the Christmas-box which Miss Enderton had sent. She awoke from this dream with a great start.

“I can't bear it ; I am a thief,” she said to herself. “I will try to take the doll away from Mary Jane in her sleep, and perhaps I can console her in some way in the morning.”

But little Mary Jane clung to the doll, even in her sleep, with all her small strength, and frowned and moaned when Emeretta tried to loosen her grasp. Moreover, little Mary Jane, who had a bad habit of sucking her thumb, had taken into her mouth to-night, instead of her own thumb, the waxen hand of Emily Goldilocks, and in that warm retreat, lo and behold ! the fingers of the hand had melted and run together, and Emily Goldilocks's once beautiful hand was but a lump of wax !

“Little Mary Jane will like her just as well ; but of course I couldn't carry her to Nancy now,” said Emeretta. “Oh ! what *shall* I do ?”

Early the next morning—so early that the Christmas stars were still twinkling—she was down in the cow-shed, where Nahum was milking Brown Betty, telling him all about it, and asking him what she should do.



Nahum was very good to her; Emeretta will never forget how good he was. He did not even say, as she had expected he would, "I wouldn't have believed it of you," or "You see it is always better to do right, no matter how hard it is or who suffers." He only said, "There's my four dollars and fifty-nine cents; perhaps we can buy a doll just like it. I'll walk over to Bilberry Corner this morning and see Mr. Ferris, who keeps the variety store. He won't have a doll like that, but perhaps he will send to Boston for it."

It cut Emeretta to the heart that Nahum should be obliged to sacrifice his precious savings, upon which so much depended; but it was a relief to think that Nancy would soon have her doll. But alas! Nahum came back from the Corner with a very downcast face.

"What do you think a doll like that costs—a walking and talking doll?" he said to Emeretta, who ran out to meet him. "Mr. Ferris says thirty or forty dollars at the least!"

"Thirty or forty dollars for a doll! O Nahum! what shall we do?"

"I've thought it all over," said Nahum. "If the doll's hand were not spoiled I suppose we should have to take it away from Mary Jane, although I am afraid it would make her sick. As it is, we *must* buy one for Nancy Tukey. We might sell Brown Betty; old Mr. Meserve would buy her;



but I don't know how mother and little Mary Jane could get along without the milk."

"Oh, they couldn't! they couldn't! We must not sell Brown Betty!" cried Emeretta.

"There's one other way. Mr. Barker at the factory will give me a dollar more a week if I will bind myself to stay a year, and I think he would advance me enough money to pay for the doll."

"And then you'd have to stay, even if you got a chance to go to Boston. What made you put your hand into your pocket then, Nahum? Is that a letter? O Nahum, *have* you got a chance?"

"I didn't mean to tell you, but I don't know that it will make you feel any worse. It's queer how things happen! The postmaster called me, when I was passing this morning, and gave me this letter. That drummer is an awful good fellow! I suppose he thought it would be all the better to me coming Christmas. It's a pretty good place, I think; it's a large firm. Llewellyn Pringle, of Bilberry, works for a branch house of the same firm, at Brockville. They want a boy they can trust (Nahum said this a little proudly), and there's a chance to work up. But don't feel so badly, Emeretta; maybe there'll be another chance some time."

"There won't. And you can never earn anything here, and you'll go off to sea and break



mother's heart," cried Emeretta, in despair. "Oh! isn't there some other way to get the money?"

"They wouldn't advance it to me in a new place; I couldn't ask them, you know," said Nahum, who had turned over possibilities in his mind all the way from Bilberry.

"Then we'll carry the doll to Nancy Tukey, if the hand *is* spoiled!" said Emeretta desperately.

"Even if the hand were not spoiled I couldn't bear to take it away from little Mary Jane now. She's so sensitive, I'm afraid it would kill her. And mother keeps saying she thinks it may cure her, she's so happy with it. You needn't feel so badly, Em; it was awful hard," added Nahum generously. "I might have done just the same myself. I am going to see Mr. Barker this afternoon; he'll have time to talk to me to-day. And if he won't advance the money, I shall have to tell Mr. Meserve that he can have Brown Betty."

"I will go with you as far as Luella Tukey's; I am going to tell her all about it," said Emeretta firmly. "It will be something of a Christmas to them to know that Nancy is going to have a doll, and I sha'n't feel quite so much like a thief."

"Better wait till we get the doll," counselled Nahum sagely. "She might insist upon taking that one, with its spoiled hand, and then what would Mary Jane do? Besides, it's no good to confess," added Nahum, being a boy. "If you've



wronged a fellow, or a girl, or anybody, it's the way to make up for it just as quick as you can; then he knows how you feel, without your making a great fuss."

But this advice, which I think myself was not to be despised, did not impress Emeretta favorably. She felt that she must relieve her overburdened feelings, and also that Luella ought not to be left to think that they were quite forgotten by Santa Claus — a condition of which she knew the unhappiness. So they set out together, with perhaps about as heavily burdened hearts, for young ones, as the Christmas skies looked down upon; for Nahum could not reconcile himself to the loss of his long-hoped-for opportunity, and Emeretta was doubly miserable in being the cause of his trouble. Luella Tukey came running out of her house when she saw them coming. Nahum, who had already a well-developed masculine objection to "scenes," was preparing to climb over the fence and pretend that he was in such a hurry that he was obliged to go "across lots"; but Luella called to him. Her face was radiant, and she was almost breathless with eagerness.

"O Nahum, you must come and see it too! — and a shawl and a hat for me — just like yours, only its eyes are bluer; they're just as blue as — as china! And she forgot to put it into your box, as she meant to, and she marked 'Immediate' on



the bundle, so they sent it right over from the express office, and it's just come, and you ought to see Nancy; we're afraid she'll hug the talk and the walk right out of it! And I don't know as Miss Enderton meant to send *me* anything, for she only said she forgot to put the doll into your box, so I suppose, because she forgot, she thought she would. So I'm glad she did forget. Why, Emeretta Nickerson, what are you crying for? The idea of crying over such beautiful things! What is the matter with her, Nahum?"

But Nahum had turned about, and was hurrying toward home. His voice threatened to fail him, and he thought of explaining to Luella that he had a very bad cold. He decided that it was allowable for a boy to run away when there was danger of his making a girl of himself if he stayed. He called back that he was going to pack his clothes, and write to that drummer that he was coming at once.

"If Luella Tukey knew that he had got a place to work in Boston, she couldn't expect him to be interested in dolls and things," he said to himself.

Did Emeretta confess to Luella? I know, but I never shall tell. Whether she did or not, they were just as good friends as ever, or even better; and little Mary Jane and Nancy had a tea-party, at which both the dolls "received," and there was a great deal of discussion as to whether Mary Jane's



doll's eyes looked blue at all, Nancy's doll's were so much bluer. And Luella's brother Leander milks Brown Betty now and chops the driftwood, for Nahum is in Boston. He is not earning very much money at present, the room he is living in does not have much carpet to boast of, and he does not have plum-cake for supper any oftener than he did at home; but he is showing his employers that they can trust him, and bidding fair to make his dreams come true. He is the sort of boy that is not content to stop at dreaming. So I shouldn't wonder if all kinds of good times yet found their way to Tukey's Cove, and that Nahum will turn out to be quite as bright, and "proper," and successful as we hope all the other boys and girls of Bilberry will be when they become men women.























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