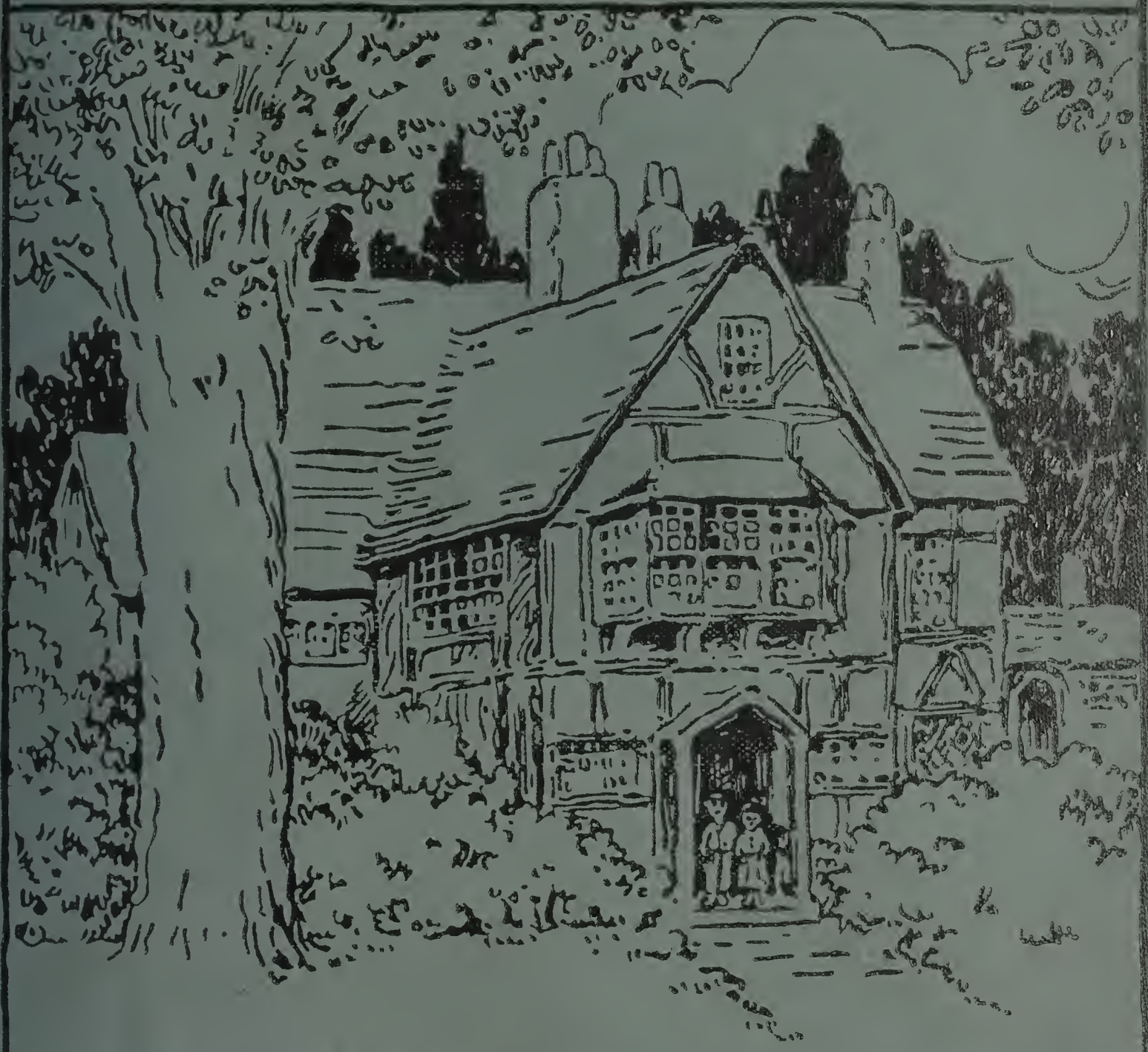
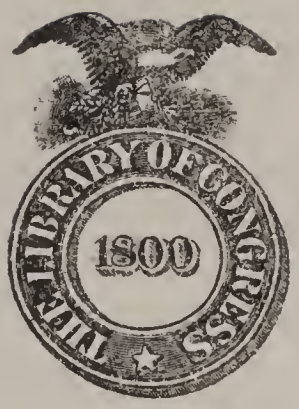
THE CHILDREN'S YEAR IN A HAPPY HOME



MARY HOWITT
Edited by EMILIE POULSSON



THE CHILDREN'S YEAR IN A HAPPY HOME

BOOKS BY EMILIE POULSSON

FINGER PLAYS
THROUGH THE FARMYARD GATE
CHILD STORIES AND RHYMES
THE RUNAWAY DONKEY AND OTHER RHYMES
FATHER AND BABY PLAYS
TOP-OF-THE-WORLD STORIES
WHAT HAPPENED TO INGER JOHANNE
FOUR COUSINS
INGER JOHANNE'S LIVELY DOINGS

Translated from the Norwegian of Dikken Zwilgmeyer.

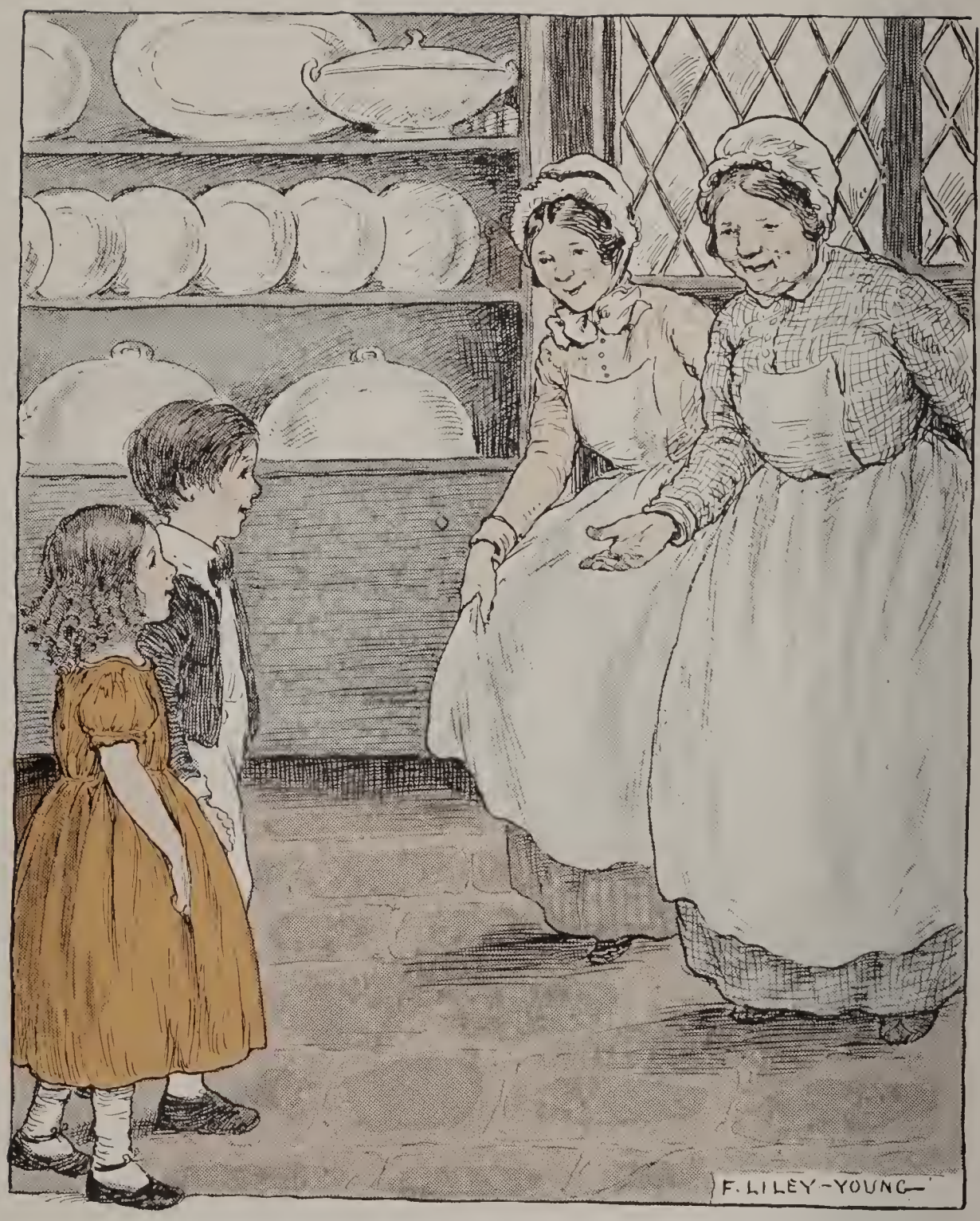
BY EMILIE POULSSON AND MAUD LINDSAY

THE JOYOUS TRAVELERS
THE JOYOUS GUESTS

EDITED BY EMILIE POULSSON

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR IN A HAPPY HOME
Revision of THE CHILDREN'S YEAR, *by Mary Howitt*

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON

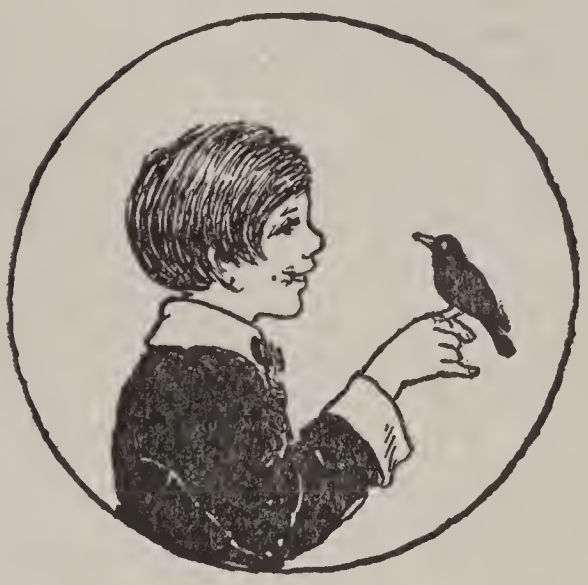


A Humble Tea-Party.—*Page 24.*

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR IN A HAPPY HOME

By
MARY HOWITT

Edited and Abridged by
EMILIE POULSSON



Illustrated by
FLORENCE LILEY YOUNG

BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

The Children's Year in a Happy Home

Printed in U. S. A.

Norwood Press
BERWICK & SMITH CO.
Norwood, Mass.

To
The Children who Read this Book
I send my greeting in Mary Howitt's own words:

"Go little book, and to the young and kind,
Speak thou of pleasant hours and lovely things.
* * * * * * * *
And greet thou those that love thee in my name."

EMILIE POULSSON.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Thomas Nelson and Sons, original publishers of "THE CHILDREN'S YEAR," appreciative thanks are due for permission to publish this new edition.

To Miss Muriel Brickwood Hutchings of Germantown, Pennsylvania, and to her uncle, J. Mortimer Angus, then Registrar of the University of Wales, I am greatly indebted for the copy of Mary Howitt's book from which this new edition is printed. My hearty thanks are herewith tendered to them for their kind coöperation.

EMILIE POULSSON.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

When discussing children's books with mothers, teachers, and librarians, I have not infrequently heard regret expressed that this book by Mary Howitt was out of print.

Concurring in this regret, and believing that modern children will find in the story the same pleasure-giving qualities that endeared it to past generations, I have prepared this new edition for the young readers of to-day.

The present title of the book is a combination of the two titles under which it was published at different times: "The Children's Year," and "The Story of a Happy Home."

The Herbert and Meggy of whom the book tells, were Mrs. Howitt's own children, and this chronicle of their year is strictly true. They did and enjoyed many things such as children

everywhere do and enjoy. Thus the book gives to the child reader a kind of reflection of his own busy, happy life; and this reflection not only pleases him but helps to develop his growing consciousness of himself in his own world.

Moreover, since the story gives a faithful portrayal of child life in England eighty years ago, the English setting and the earlier time add the flavor of the unfamiliar and set the young reader's curiosity and imagination at work. Such increased mental activity always increases the enjoyment a child gets from his reading.

My chief aim in editing the book has been to simplify it for inexperienced readers; so I have made it less wordy in places and omitted some lengthy descriptions and digressions. That these changes may give the good little story a new chance of life among children's books is my earnest hope.

E. P.

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THE CHILDREN'S YEAR IN A HAPPY HOME

CHAPTER I

THE CHILDREN'S HOME

The children were Herbert and Margaret, or Meggy, as she was called at home. They were very happy little children; they had kind parents, a pleasant home, a kind brother and sister older than themselves, good health and loving hearts,—so that it would have been strange if they were not happy.

Herbert and Meggy lived in the outskirts of London. Their house stood on a highroad, from which it was separated by a little green paddock and a row of tall old elm-trees. Carts and omnibuses were always passing along the

road, and ladies and gentlemen riding past on horseback, or driving in gay carriages. It was very amusing to sit at the windows on this side of the house and see all that was passing on the road, though it must be confessed that the drooping leafy branches of the elm-trees made the view much less distinct in summer than in winter.

The little paddock, however, was visible both in winter and summer, and it always looked green and pleasant. It was enclosed by neat white palings, and sheep now and then were turned into it to graze.

But what interested the children still more than the sheep—that might be said to be only occasional lodgers there—was the old couple that lived there every day, and these were a goose and a gander. These two creatures belonged to a good old poulterer who lived on the opposite side of the road.

Every morning, Herbert and Meggy could

see the old goose and gander either waiting to set off, or on their way to the little paddock. They had to cross the busy highroad to reach it, and it was quite amusing to see how deliberate and careful they were in all their movements.

They would stand side by side on the causeway, like a cautious old couple, looking up the road and down the road to see if all were safe; and if it appeared to them to be so, they would look at each other and nod their heads, and then step down from the raised curbstone into the road, and go waddling across, evidently in a great bustle lest anything should come driving along unexpectedly.

As soon as they had safely reached the other side, they would pause to take breath, and one would look at the other, as if to say, "Let us be thankful that we have got safely over." And then they would in a very leisurely way, and with great apparent self-satisfaction, turn

in at the little white gate of the paddock, which always stood open for them, and begin nibbling the nice fresh grass with as much relish and delight as Herbert and Meggy would eat their own breakfast.

Herbert and Meggy often wondered how old this goose and gander were; they thought that they must be very old, because they looked so grave and experienced, and had lived at the poulterer's across the way as long as the children could remember.

At the back of the house there was a pleasant garden with many evergreens growing in it; with a great deal of smoothly mown grass, bordered with flowers; and with a greenhouse, on the glass roof of which was trained a beautiful vine that bore plenty of grapes. There were green seats here and there in the garden, where people sat in summer. According to Herbert and Meggy's opinion, it was the most charming garden that ever was seen.

At the bottom of the garden a piece of ground was laid out in three little gardens side by side. These belonged to Herbert and Meggy, and their elder brother. Their elder brother had made an arbor in his garden,—he had made it all himself,—and the little children thought it a beautiful place. On one side of his arbor grew a willow-tree, on the other a rose; in summer, sweet peas were planted round it; and at the back there was a water-melon vine, which, with its large luxuriant foliage, bright yellow flowers, and ponderous fruit, the children thought very grand.

Beyond the garden there were green meadows in which herds of cattle were feeding.

A pleasant little lane, not far off, led down to these charming meadows; and when there, the children had the delight of seeing, in the distance, their own home, with its tall old elm-trees and ivied walls.

CHAPTER II

WINTER EVENINGS

The father of Herbert and Meggy liked to have his children with him in the evening. They were delighted to come down to him when all his writing was done, and his books and papers put away, and he had nothing to do but to talk or to read to them.

Herbert could remember the time when he used to sit upon his father's knee. He was too big a boy for that now, and either sat beside him on a low seat, or else leaned against his chair; while Meggy sat on the father's knee. He would very often tell them stories of the time when he was a boy, and lived in the country, where there were plenty of cows and horses, and sheep, and pigs, and poultry, and

when he kept rabbits and guinea-pigs of his own. If he were not in a humor to tell a story, he would read to them some pleasant book. In this way a great many charming books had been read, among them Captain Marryat's "Settlers in Canada." There was a great deal of talk while they were reading the "Settlers," about "suppose" they themselves should go to live in America. Alfred, the children's elder brother, who listened with them to all that was read, thought that nothing in this world would please him more than to live in America, to meet with all kinds of difficulties as the settlers did, to have hard work to do, and to be in danger from Indians.

There was another book which was a great favorite at this time, and that was "Pilgrim's Progress." It was as good as a fairy tale: Giant Despair was as pleasantly dismal as old Bluebeard himself, and Greatheart was a perfect hero.

Alfred had a book also, which had been a great favorite with him when he was younger. This was the "Swiss Family Robinson." He read this book to Herbert, and talked about it to Meggy, and it and its people thus became their delight also.

One day, when Alfred saw the pleasure the two little ones had in the book, an idea occurred to him—a very pleasant and kind idea. And on this he set to work.

He took a board about a foot wide and eighteen inches long, and, having bored several holes in it with a gimlet, he stuck into the holes little branches of juniper and arbor-vitæ, which looked exactly like trees. He then made a nice little house of stiff paper, as much like that described in the "Swiss Family," as he could, and this he put into the largest tree. Next, he cut out a neat little ladder of cardboard, by which to climb to the house. He then cut out the whole Robinson family, father,

mother, and children, and all the animals they possessed. He copied the animals very accurately from Bewick's "Natural History." He put tiny birds into the trees, and neat little tables and chairs in the house. Here Mrs. Robinson sat while her husband and sons were all busy below,—some driving up the cattle, one milking, and another with a gun in his hand, aiming up into a tree.

Alfred worked many evenings to complete all this, and the doing of it was a great pleasure to himself; and as for the two little children, nothing could equal their delight in the gift. They loved Alfred more than ever because he had made this interesting plaything for them. When they played with it, they could feel as if they themselves were the little Robinsons, who were so busy in that pleasant island. They felt, while they made the little pasteboard figures mount up the ladder, as if they themselves were doing so, and then as if

they went into the house in the tree, and sat down with good Mrs. Robinson.

The Robinson family was kept in a table drawer, and the island, with all its beautiful trees, in a closet. For a long time, they were brought forth every evening and set out afresh; and the Robinsons, the animals, and the trees could be arranged in so many different ways, that Herbert and Meggy always found new enjoyment in playing with their " island."

CHAPTER III

A HUMBLE TEA-PARTY

THE servants who lived with the parents of Herbert and Meggy were very good, respectable women. The children went but rarely into the kitchen, yet now and then they did so—for instance, one evening soon after New Year's Day. In the morning the children came running to their mother with a note in their hands. It was an invitation from the cook and the housemaid for them to drink tea in the kitchen. Such a thing was to them delightful. They had never had tea in the kitchen in their lives. Might they do so? Their mother gave them leave; they therefore ran into the nursery to beg Ellen to write an answer for them. This she did, and the note was sealed and sent downstairs at once.

In the evening, dressed in their best clothes, they went down into the kitchen for the tea-party. The servants had their Sunday gowns and caps on, and clean white aprons, and the whole kitchen looked very bright and company-like.

There was a hearth-rug before the great kitchen fender, and a nice red cloth on the little kitchen table, on which the tea things were already set out. A large fire blazed so brightly in the grate that the candles seemed quite dim. The dish-covers and the brass pans shone out on the walls; so did the blue and white dinner-service, which was ranged on the dresser shelves.

The children looked round, and thought how pleasant the kitchen was. Sprigs of green holly and ivy, and bunches of red holly-berries, were stuck all about in the brass candlesticks which were not used, and among the dishes and plates and bright tin covers. Everything

looked quite splendid! And then there was a low, warm sound of water bubbling in the boiler by the fire, and a chirping of crickets on the hearth, and such a warmth and glow as were delightful. The children laughed and were very merry, and the two servants laughed and were very merry also.

There were two arm-chairs with cushions in them for the children to sit in, one on each side of the fire; and here they sat and talked and watched the toasting of a tea-cake, and then they all sat down to tea as happy as could be. Both Herbert and Meggy thought that never in all their life had they had such a delicious tea as this.

After tea, they all sat round the fire and guessed riddles; and then the servants told stories about the time when they were little girls, and about their homes and their playfellows. Both Herbert and Meggy thought these stories very interesting indeed.

In the course of the evening Alfred presented himself at the kitchen door with an accordion in his hand, and asked permission to come in and play them a tune. He played very merrily,—so merrily, indeed, that they could not help dancing; so Herbert waltzed with the cook, and Meggy with the housemaid, and then the two children danced what they called the Polka together, much to the amusement of their entertainers.

When they were tired of dancing, Alfred sang them a song; and then it was supper time, and he was asked to join them; this he gladly did, because he saw oranges and gingerbread, which the cook had just set on the table. The supper was jollier than the tea had been: Alfred was very funny, and sang them another song; and they guessed more riddles, and told other merry tales, and laughed so loud that anybody might have heard them all the way upstairs.

By this time it was nine o'clock, and their parents, who had been out dining with some friends, came home; and the children had just time before going to bed to tell what fun they had had at the kitchen tea-party.

CHAPTER IV

ALFRED'S ADVENTURE ON THE ICE

In February there was a great deal of cold weather. Winter seemed to have come back again; the snow fell, and there was such severe frost that the ponds in the neighborhood of the children's home were once more covered with ice. Alfred again brought out his skates, —which he had just put by, as he thought, for the season,—and went out, whenever he could find the time, to enjoy his favorite amusement of skating.

One of the greatest pleasures which Herbert now had was going out with Alfred on such excursions. Alfred was always in good humor at the thought of the sport ahead; and when he took his skates in one hand, and Herbert's

hand in the other, away the two boys would go, laughing and chattering as merry as could be. So great was Herbert's admiration of his elder brother and his love for him, that nothing gave him more happiness than for Alfred to make him his companion.

Herbert had lost his fear of the ice. He ventured boldly upon it, when his brother had once assured him that it would bear; and he would run about on it, and practise sliding, and keep himself quite warm, let the weather be as cold as it would. Alfred and his young gentlemen friends, when on the ice, used to set him to clear the sticks and stones out of their way. Thus he found he could be very useful; which is always a pleasant thing, and which was now particularly so to Herbert, for Alfred then called him his "Man Friday," and that pleased the little boy very much.

Alfred said that in a year or two he would teach Herbert to skate, and would give him the

skates which he was then wearing, and which by that time would be too small for him. Herbert made a little run, slid along on his feet, and fancied that he was skimming over the ice on the promised skates.

Every morning the chamber window panes were covered with beautiful feathery frost-work, and the water-tubs in the yard were one solid mass of ice; but for all that, during the day, the sun was very warm and thawed the frozen paths and even the surface of the ice. Alfred's mother began to fear that it was not safe to skate any longer, because there were cracks in the ice here and there; and as the skaters went over it, it bent like a bow. Alfred was very unwilling to give up skating, and Herbert was just as unwilling to give up the pleasure of going out with him.

"Let me go just once more," begged Alfred; "only just to try if it will bear on the nearest pond."

His mother reluctantly consented. He might go and try, while Herbert and little Meggy had their things put on; for Meggy was to go out with them that day. Alfred promised that unless other skaters were on the ice he would not venture; and, at all events, Meggy and Herbert were not to go on it, but were to take Ellen with them to bear them company while they walked about near the pond.

The children and Ellen were just dressed and ready to go downstairs, when Alfred's voice was heard below; he was talking eagerly and laughing very much. The next moment they heard him coming upstairs, but very slowly and heavily, and then they saw him, and at every step the water was running from him like a river.

"I have been in," said Alfred; "in up to my neck! Only look how wet I am, and it feels so queer, and sticky, and so heavy!" and then he

laughed again, as if it were a very funny thing indeed.

But Alfred's mother did not think it funny at all, and at first she was sorry that she had consented for him to go; in a little while, however, she thought it was best that he had gone, as perhaps this little accident might make him careful for the future.

It was very amusing to Herbert to help Alfred get his wet things off, for it was just like skinning some great creature, and Alfred was being as funny as he could all the time, because he did not wish anybody to consider his falling into the water a serious affair.

Alfred said that every one on the ice was so alert that he could not possibly have been drowned. He said that even the poor boys who were sliding there, when they saw that he was in the water, came running to the place to help him; and when he was out, one unbuckled his skates, and another wrung out his gloves. Al-

fred's mother and all the rest were glad to hear of this, and wished they could tell the poor boys how much they were obliged to them. Herbert thought that he should like very much to give them something; and he and Alfred determined that when Alfred was re-dressed in warm, dry things, they would set off to the pond, and, if the boys were there, would thank them again.

Alfred took one of the little ones by each hand, and off the three set toward the pond, so full of the adventure that they could talk about nothing else all the way. When they came to the pond, and saw the hole in the cracked and splintered ice into which Alfred had fallen, he became more and more of a hero to the two little children.

Nobody was skating now: the ice was considered dangerous by all; even the boys who had been sliding were gone. The whole pond was deserted, except by a group of ragged-looking lads who were throwing stones on the ice to

break it. Meggy thought that they must be rude boys because they threw stones, and she could not conceive that any of them had been kind enough to help her brother. Great, therefore, was her surprise, when, in reply to Herbert's question whether any of those boys had helped him, Alfred replied, "Yes; that lanky lad with the old hat, who is just now throwing a stone, he ventured upon the very rottenest ice to pull me out."

Herbert felt as if he could have hugged the lad, in spite of his dirty clothes, and he pulled Alfred forward without saying a word. Meggy, too, was silent; she was thinking that people might be very good and yet poor and ragged.

When the boys saw Alfred coming they all looked at him with attention, for the ragged boy in the old hat had told them that the ice had broken with him.

"I say, my good fellow," said Alfred, ad-

dressing the boy, "you were very brave in venturing on that rotten ice to pull me out; I did not thank you enough then, and I am come now to do so—and to thank the others also who helped me, but I see that they are gone."

"You're heartily welcome, sir, to what I did —and it was but little," said the boy, coloring till his face looked almost handsome.

The children walked on with Alfred, all wishing that they could have done something really to benefit the poor boy; could have given him something that would have lasted longer than their thanks; but the boy felt abundantly rewarded by Alfred's thanks, and by the kind and grateful expression of the little children's faces.

CHAPTER V

MARY COMES HOME

At the end of February a pleasant event occurred at the home of Herbert and Meggy. Their dear sister, who had been away from home for three months, was now to return. Her arrival was talked of for a long time before it took place.

It gave Meggy great delight to see the fire lighted in her sister Mary's bed-chamber. She went and sat in that room and watched all the operations going forward. She saw the curtains put up, and the nice clean white sheets put on the bed, and the clean counterpane; and the little toilet-table made to look so nice with its frilled muslin cover over the pink lining. Meggy watched all this, and then, anxious to do something herself for this dear sister, she

put on a little make-believe apron and a clean night-cap, and calling herself Martha the housemaid, set about dusting and rubbing the chairs and writing-table, and all the nice little cut-glass scent-bottles and the boxes which stood on the toilet-table. Oh, how happy was Meggy! The bedroom was ready, and the next day her dear sister would come.

And now it was the next day. The last breakfast without her was eaten, the last dinner, and she was to be at home by six o'clock. At breakfast their mother said that she was going in a carriage to meet Mary at Euston Square Station, about four miles off, and that Herbert and Meggy should go with her, for there would be plenty of room. This was quite a joyful surprise to the children. They did not often go from home,—very seldom indeed in a carriage,—and therefore when such an indulgence was permitted to them, it made them very happy.

They were so grateful for this unexpected pleasure, that they worked very industriously at their lessons all that day. They knew that it always pleased their mother when they were industrious and tried to do their best.

What happy hearts they had, and what bright faces, when the last lesson was done, and they had only to be washed and dressed, and then the carriage would be at the door to take them all on such a joyful errand!

And now the carriage came, and out they rushed and sprang into it,—and out came their mother, and she, too, got in,—and then they drove away, the children almost ready to scream for delight.

When Herbert and Meggy and their mother reached the railway station, they found that they were twenty minutes too early, so they walked about and looked at everything that was going on. There was a train just about to start, and the children watched the people

running with their boxes and bundles, and taking their seats in a great hurry; and then the man rang his bell, and those who were yet behindhand ran all the faster,—till at last everybody was seated, and there were only the guards locking the carriage doors, and the boys offering newspapers beside the carriages; and then the steam screamed and puffed out, and then the engine began working, and away the train went. The next thing was that the porters began to assemble on the side of the station where the children were, and cabs, and carriages, and omnibuses drove up, all, like themselves, come to wait for arrivals.

And now the train from Birmingham was heard coming in; and now the engine was taken off, and men pushed on the train till it came under the shed, where all were waiting and in readiness. The children and their mother looked along the line; and now heads were popped out of the railway carriages,—heads of

old men and young men and women, and little boys and young ladies,—and there! just in the very midmost carriage, their dear sister was looking out,—smiling, and seeming as glad to recognize them as they were to recognize her.

The train stopped. The doors were opened, and out stepped all the passengers, and among the rest their own sweet sister; and what boxes, and hampers, and baskets, and bags she seemed to have with her! The children kissed her, and she kissed them; a porter carried her things to the carriage, and in she got, and in they got, and the mother did the same; and the boxes, and the bags, and the baskets were stowed one here and another there, and away they drove.

Their sister had a new little basket with her; she had brought it in her hand out of the railway carriage, and now she kept it very carefully on her knee. It seemed quite full of very neat little packets. Meggy wondered what they could be, and so did Herbert; but neither

of them liked to ask,—only Meggy remarked that it was a new basket, meaning thereby to turn her sister's thoughts to it. And she must have done so, for almost directly Mary said, looking down at the basket, "I have something here which I brought for you from Derby;" and with this she took a neat little packet, folded up carefully in nice white paper, and said, "Guess, now, what is here!"

The children guessed cakes and figs, and a little box, and many other things, none of which was right; and then their mother, who knew very well what sort of things might be bought in Derby, guessed a bird's nest.

"You shall see," said their sister, and opened the packet; and there, sure enough, was a little nest, looking just as if it had been made by a real bird, of moss and hair; but it was only made of spar, which was colored to look like them. Within it there lay four little spar eggs, white, spotted with brown,—so like eggs that

nobody who had not touched them could have believed them to be stone. The children admired the whole wonderingly, and declared that their sister could not have pleased them better than by bringing them such a present.

"I am not quite sure whether I have not something which you will admire even more than this," said their sister, and she took out another, and then another little packet. She opened them both. They each contained cake: the one a thick slice of delicious bride-cake, full of currants, rich and brown, with a layer of almonds an inch thick, and then covered over with sugar; the other was a nice, flat queen-cake.

"Oh, how good!" exclaimed both children at once, feeling as if they longed for a bite.

"May I taste a bit?" asked Meggy.

"Yes, certainly," said their sister.

"O dear, how hard!" cried Herbert, trying to break off a morsel of the bride-cake.

"O dear, how hard!" cried Meggy, trying to break the queen-cake. "I can't get any!" said she, looking puzzled.

Herbert, in the meantime, was turning the bride-cake over and over.

"I believe it is nothing but stone!" at length he said. "I believe it is all a sham!"

"And so is mine!" exclaimed Meggy.

Herbert was delighted. "What fun we shall have, when we get home, with Alfred!"

"Yes," said Meggy, as delighted as Herbert; "we will ask Ellen and Alfred, and everybody, to have a bit of cake!"

CHAPTER VI

HENRY'S VISIT

A GENTLEMAN came on a visit to the parents of Herbert and Meggy, and brought with him his little nephew Henry. Henry was an orphan, and his uncle had taken him to live with him as his son. The uncle and nephew were as dear to each other as parent and child. Henry was about eleven years old; he could play therefore with either Alfred or Herbert, or they could all three play together.

He was excessively fond of all kinds of tame and pet animals, especially of birds, and soon after they had come to London his uncle had bought him three birds—two canaries and a chaffinch. These birds were very beautiful and were fine singers as well, and Henry had wished of all things to bring them with him.

His uncle, however, had thought it best to leave them. Henry thought a great deal about his birds, and even dreamed that they were sitting perched on his finger, and that he was chirping to them.

One day his uncle brought him very bad news from London. The two canaries were dead; the last had died that morning, and he brought it with him in a little paper bag. Henry cried when he saw the little dead body of his favorite; and Alfred said he would go with him the next day, and they two would bring home the remaining bird in his cage.

It was quite an interesting journey to them; and Alfred, one of whose favorite places in London was the Polytechnic Institution, took Henry there, and showed him all the wonders of the place. He was weighed in the patent weighing-machine; they saw the diving-bell go down; they tried the electrical machine; they went and saw the glass-blower at work, and

brought away spun glass and a glass ship; and, last of all, they saw the magnified figures and the dissolving views. Henry was delighted; and Alfred, who rather prided himself on his scientific knowledge, had the pleasure of explaining all they saw.

They then went for the bird, and tying the cage up in a big kerchief, brought it safely home. The cage was hung in the nursery, but the poor bird, in spite of the care that was taken of it by all of them, died, like its companions, in a few days.

The children were very sad, especially Henry and Meggy, to whom the little stiff, dead body presented a very sorrowful spectacle. Henry longed for a bird, a bird of his own training, and he began to think that really he would catch one for himself. It was now the middle of March, and extremely cold and wintry; the ground was frozen quite hard, and the hungry little birds hopped about the doors

and windows looking for any crumbs they might find.

Alfred, who had sympathized with poor Henry in his loss, told him that nothing would be easier than to catch a bird, and that as soon as he had a little time, he would set such a good trap that it would be sure to take one. He soon found a little time, and the trap was set. Alfred told Henry that he should not wonder if he caught a bird that very day.

A pair of blackbirds came hopping about the grass plot every day. They had lived there two summers, and the whole family were very fond of them; they built in the garden, and no one was allowed to molest them. Henry did not know this. He thought that of all things he should like a blackbird; he told Alfred so, and Alfred, who had never caught a blackbird in all his life, and who believed them too wise to be caught, laughed, and said that if Henry caught a blackbird he might have it.

Henry thought of nothing but catching a blackbird; he knew that they sung beautifully in cages, and he had heard his uncle say that of all birds he should prefer having a blackbird. His uncle was then absent for a few days, and Henry determined to present him with one of these birds on his return.

Alfred had a large wicker cage, in which a jackdaw had lived last summer; and this Herbert, who entered into all Henry's plans, borrowed to have in readiness. The trap was set in the most skilful manner according to Alfred's method, and Alfred also lent Henry some books on the management of tame birds. Henry read, and became very knowing. Alfred, who had a great many lessons to do and but little time to spare, contrived, nevertheless, now and then to run out with Henry to see what was taken when the top of the trap had fallen. Sparrows, and robins, and tomtits were caught; but as none of these was able to sat-

isfy Henry's ambition, they were always speedily released.

It happened, however, one morning, when Alfred was too deeply engaged to have a moment's time to spare either for birds or little boys, and Herbert and Henry were in the garden together, they saw the trap down: something was caught. They ran and peeped in. Oh, joy and wonder! There really was a blackbird, with its full brown plumage and its yellow bill! Never before had two boys been so delighted.

"Run and fetch the cage, Herbert!" said Henry.

Herbert, forgetting the prohibition about taking blackbirds, ran and fetched it in a moment.

The captive bird was carefully taken from the trap and thrust quickly into the cage. What affection the two little boys felt for it! They would not have hurt a feather. They car-

ried the cage upstairs into the nursery to show Meggy and Ellen.

Henry had already prepared such food and sand as would be needful in case a blackbird was caught.

"May we catch blackbirds?" asked Meggy, half unwilling to dampen her joy by the thought that *would* intrude.

"Alfred said we might have a blackbird if we could catch it!" said Henry triumphantly.

In course of time Alfred had finished studying his lessons, and was shown the beautiful prize.

"You must never take the blackbirds, Henry!" exclaimed Alfred quite fiercely, and without expressing the least sympathy with Henry's joy.

"Why not?" asked Henry; "you said, if I caught one I might have it; I have caught it, and it is mine!"

"You *did* say so, Alfred!" said Herbert;

"you *did,* Alfred; and you ought to be glad that Henry has been so lucky!"

"Why, you know, Herbert," said Alfred, turning angrily to him, "that we never hurt or frighten the blackbirds—you know that well enough!"

"But I shall keep this now I have got it!" said Henry.

"I will never lend *my* cage, however, to keep a blackbird in!" said Alfred; and taking up the cage, he carried it downstairs.

"Are the blackbirds to be caught, mamma?" asked Alfred of his mother, who was reading.

"No, certainly not: I would not have the blackbirds frightened or distressed on any account," replied his mother, without making any inquiry as to the meaning of his question.

Armed with this authority, Alfred opened the cage door, and the blackbird flew away. Henry, who had quietly followed Alfred downstairs, burst into tears. Herbert stood also at

the door, and, though he knew the established law in favor of blackbirds, he could not resist a feeling of anger and indignation on account of the arbitrary power which Alfred seemed so unkindly to have exercised.

The true case was immediately stated to the mother and she, too, thought that Alfred had exercised his power in an unfeeling manner. She told him that the bird to Henry was something like what the poor man's lamb, in the Bible, was to him. The rich man came and took it away from him by force. Alfred had been as unkind in taking the bird from Henry.

Alfred sat and pondered in silence. He felt angry and out of humor, and yet a sense of his own unkindness was heavy at his heart. An hour or two afterwards, he stood by the dining-room fire, where his sister Mary was sitting. He looked thoughtful and sad.

"I am very sorry," said he, "that I have been so unkind to Henry; and as he wishes so

much for a blackbird, he shall have one. I know where a bird-trainer lives, and I will buy one from him. Will not that make up for my injustice?"

His sister approved of the idea, and was quite sure that Henry would accept the bird which Alfred would give him in the spirit of love and kindness.

Herbert, who in his indignation had said that he never would speak to Alfred again, and who had kept by Henry's side in his trouble, trying all in his power to comfort him, was quite satisfied when he heard his brother's resolution.

"Yes, dear Alfred," said he, "buy him a blackbird that has lived in a cage all its life,—and give him the cage, too!—that will be nice!"

Alfred and Herbert shook hands. They felt how happy love and kindness made them, and they did not rest until Henry was as happy as themselves.

CHAPTER VII

MARY'S LITTLE LESSON

MEGGY loved her elder sister. It was a pleasure to her to know that Mary was in the house. Whenever she was away from home, for even one day, Meggy missed her very much. "When will that dear creature come back?" she would say; and Mary's coming always made her feel happy. When Mary was drawing, or at any kind of needlework, Meggy liked to sit down near her and to draw and work like her.

They often had long conversations together; there was something very mild and affectionate in this dear elder sister's voice and manner which had great influence on Meggy.

The little girl had her faults, as we all have, but in her small way, she wished very much to be good and to do right. She folded up her

own clothes, and could be trusted to do little errands for herself or for other people. She knew the places of her favorite books on the shelves, and carefully put them back again when she had been using them. She was very kind-hearted, too, and loved and fed the cat, which was considered her own property. Mary wished her to try to overcome her little faults, and whenever the two sisters had conversation on this subject, it gave Meggy strength to do her best toward conquering these faults.

Mary and Meggy often talked about the minds and hearts of everybody being like gardens; and how, if the garden be not cultivated, weeds are sure to spring up. Meggy knew that this was the very case in her own real garden. She had also often seen pieces of ground which had lain waste, even for a few months, and what a crop of weeds was then always sure to spring up,—here and there a thistle, here and there a nettle, and everywhere a plentiful crop

of groundsel, and shepherd's purse, and chickweed; and how all these, when allowed to flower, had such a wonderful faculty of scattering their seed, that in a short time the earth would seem to be full of them! These were familiar images to the little girl, and she knew enough of gardens, and of the growth of weeds, to be able to carry out the idea still farther.

Her sister also told Meggy that by care and attention her own nature might be like a beautiful well-kept garden stored with lovely and precious plants; but that faults were the weeds that Meggy would have to watch for and root out. If she worked in earnest to destroy these, and to cherish the beautiful plants of goodness, the weeds would be conquered and the roses, lilies, and violets of love, purity, and unselfishness would grow abundantly.

This was Mary's little lesson, and Meggy understood every word of it and endeavored to profit by it.

CHAPTER VIII

SURPRISE AFTER SURPRISE

HERBERT and Meggy had great pleasure in playing at living in a house, and of having furniture and servants of their own, and of being servants themselves. They played at having a house in the nursery every day; they enclosed a little space with chairs, and played that the window-seats were rooms—for theirs was an old-fashioned house, and many of the windows had seats in them, which they thus found a great convenience. One window-seat they called a parlor, and another a kitchen, or else both were called chambers.

The children had a great deal of pleasure in pretending that they had no little trouble in their lives; there was no fun unless they had trouble and a great deal to do. Sometimes,

therefore, they pretended that a high wind came and blew part of their house down, so that all their belongings fell into the utmost confusion, and then they had to put everything to rights again.

One of their favorite troubles was the having a bad neighbor. They called her Mrs. Gingham, and used to play that as soon as they had set their house in order, and had gone out to take a walk, she came and upset everything. It was wonderful how much they seemed to have to endure from Mrs. Gingham; but they evidently would have been very sorry not to have this neighbor, for without her they would have had much less to do, and it is the having plenty to do which makes the lives both of children and of grown people pleasant.

They had many contrivances to make a fireplace in their playhouse, but often wished that they had something more satisfactory.

One day their mother went into London,

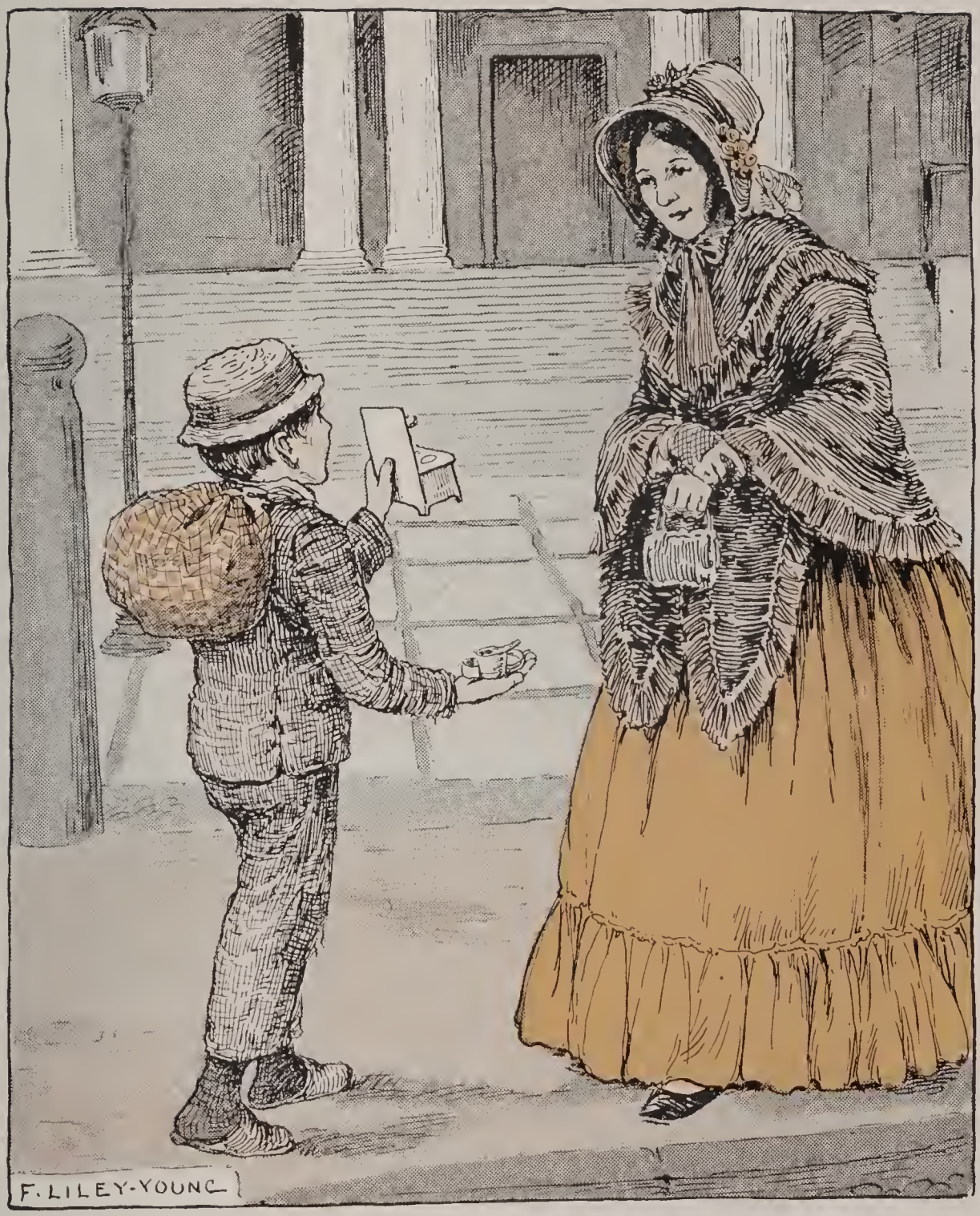
and as she was returning she passed St. Paul's Churchyard. It was getting quite dusk, but near the pavement stood a little boy, who looked not above ten years old, was very thin and pale, and had a very anxious expression of face. He held in his hand a little kitchen-range made of japanned tin with bright bars; it seemed strong and well made, and was very complete indeed. There were a great many things, such as pots and kettles, besides. The little boy held these in his hand, and said in a very melancholy voice, "All these for only one shilling!"

The children's mother saw the boy and the little things he had to sell, and heard what he said, but she walked on. She could not help being touched by his pale face and sad voice; and as soon as she had passed him she thought that it would be only kind to buy something from him, remembering at the same time how pleased Herbert and Meggy would be with a

little kitchen-range for their house. So she turned back, and asked the boy if he would carry it for her to the omnibus at the Bank, if she bought it. He said he would, and seemed at the same time quite grateful to her for thinking of buying anything from him.

He had very old shoes on, and went shuffling along with a great deal of trouble; besides this he had a bundle on his back, which, on inquiry, the children's mother found to contain other little ranges, and cooking and kitchen utensils, like those he had in his hand. She made him walk by her side, and she talked with him as they went along.

In answer to her questions, he said that he and his stepfather, who was a tinsmith by trade, made these little things; they stayed at home two or three days making them, and, when they had a good stock, they went out to sell them. Working in a hot room, and then going out in the cold weather, and standing about



"ALL THESE FOR ONLY ONE SHILLING!"—*Page 59.*

in his poor thin clothes, must be what made him take such bad colds; he never was well.

There were five children, and he was the oldest of them; his own father was dead, and his mother had married again, but his stepfather was kind to him. He could neither read nor write, and had never been to school. His own father used to teach him a little in the evenings; but now they had to work so hard, they had no time for learning.

The children's mother asked him what was the greatest number of little ranges that he ever sold in a day. He said that once he sold seven, and then he was pleased; but that now he seldom sold above one or two.

"I have only sold this one to-day," said he, in his sad voice, "and I have been out ever since eight o'clock this morning, and it is so cold!"

It *was* a very cold evening. The children's mother was cold, though she was well wrapped

up. She was very sorry for the little boy, and spoke kindly to him; she thanked him for carrying the things to the omnibus, and then gave him sixpence for his trouble.

As she went home, she thought of the great delight all these things would give to Herbert and Meggy. She found them sitting, with their father and elder brother and sister, comfortably round the fire. She did not tell them how many things she had brought, but at first carried in only the little range.

"See," said she, "will not this make your house complete?"

The children jumped for joy, and clapped their hands.

"This is a very nice range," she said; "and see, there is a capital fender belonging to it! It only wants a few kettles and saucepans."

The children thought that kettles and saucepans would indeed make it complete. She went out of the room for a moment, and

brought in the most perfect little kettles and saucepans that ever were seen; there was a tea-kettle and a fish-kettle, and two saucepans, one large and the other small.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed the children, beginning to arrange them on the hobs and bars of their little range. "Never was anything so beautiful seen before! Thank you, dearest, dearest mother!"

"I think," said she, "that a little Dutch oven, and a hanging-bar, and a couple of smoothing-irons would not be amiss!"

The children looked at her in amazement, and then looked at one another, and laughed, as if they thought there was some strange magic at work. "Oh, they would be nice!" exclaimed both children. No sooner was this said, than she placed these things before them. Their father and brother and sister were by this time as much astonished as Herbert and Meggy were.

Everybody laughed, and said that mother dear was a conjuror.

"A very nice little kitchen-range is this!" said she gravely; "but it would be very inconvenient to bring coal to the fire in a kettle."

"A kettle!" said the children; "people never carry coal in a kettle, but in a coal-box!"

"But where is your coal-box?" asked she.

They had not thought about that.

"I must try to find you a coal-box," said she, smiling, and the next moment set down before them the prettiest little japanned coal-box that ever was seen!

"And then," said she, "when you want to stir your fire, you must not use your fingers, else you would burn yourselves, you know; so here are a poker, and a fire-shovel and tongs: and when you want to carry away your dust, you must not take a spoon—that would be very untidy—so here is a regular dust-pan; and then, as some day or other you may like

to dine on fried eggs, see, here is a frying-pan and an egg-slice, only we take no notice of the egg-slice being as large as the frying-pan—that's of no consequence, you know."

Nobody interrupted her in this long speech. But she had now done, for she had come to the end of all the things. And then there was a fresh burst of wonder and admiration. Never had such things been dreamed of.

At tea she told them about the poor little pale-faced boy with the sad voice, from whom she had bought the things, and the children wished that they had him there, to give him some warm tea and bread and butter, and a pair of good shoes. They would have thought even more about him than they did, if they had not been so much occupied with thinking of their new kitchen-range, and all their pans and kettles.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROOKS AND THE SPARROWS

Spring came on and the sparrows began to build. The rooks, too, were very busy in the old rookery just beside the garden, cawing early and late, and flying into all the trees round about for sticks. They would break off little branches with their beaks and fly away with them to their own trees.

The rooks quarrelled a great deal among themselves. They stole one another's sticks; and if a sentinel had not been left to watch the rooks that remained at home, these would have pillaged the half-built nests of those that were gone away. Herbert and Meggy took the greatest interest in the rooks.

The entire back of the house where the children lived was covered with ivy; it grew very

wild and thick, and great numbers of sparrows built in it, and roosted every night among its leaves. In the winter Meggy fed the sparrows. She had given them names, and fancied that she knew them all one from another. She considered the sparrows to be her own, and was very fond of them.

In the spring the ivy was cut. It was cut very close to the wall, so that there was no chance for the sparrows to build or roost in it again—that year, at least. It was very amusing to the children to see the men on their long ladders, clipping away the green ivy till only the bare branches, with their innumerable little fibry arms, were left. But when Meggy thought of her sparrows she was very sorry.

As evening came on the sparrows became very uneasy. They flew up against the bare walls, as if trying to find shelter, and then flew away again into a large tree, fluttering about, twittering and chattering in evident dismay

and anger. It was just as if anybody going to bed had found all the sheets and blankets gone, and nothing left to cover him.

Such an event as this certainly had not occurred to the sparrows before. They flew about and chattered, and almost screamed with astonishment. But there was plenty of old wild ivy in a long wall in the garden; and before long, sparrows' nests were to be seen wherever they could be put.

Before many weeks had passed, young rooks were heard sending forth their cries from the nests in the tall elm-trees, now almost green with their young leaves. The children watched the busy parent rooks feeding the young birds, and Herbert had great pleasure in pointing out to his mother and sisters the starlings that lived among the rooks being allowed by them to build in the same trees.

CHAPTER X

THE PLAYHOUSE IN THE GARDEN

The children now spent many hours each day in the garden; and as they still had great pleasure in playing at living in a house, they began to consider where their house should be. But no long consideration was needed for this subject.

In a secluded part of the garden there was a little tool-house with a rustic porch. It was overshadowed by a flowering acacia, and the whole front was overrun with ivy and a Scotch rose. The house consisted of two rooms, the inner one of which had a little casement window of four panes. Here, in former times, Alfred had kept his guinea-pigs, but it was now filled with rubbish.

This was the place which of all others Herbert and Meggy wished to have for their

house, because both rooms were so pleasant. The first looked out from its door under the acacia-tree; and the other had a pretty picturesque window, which would open and shut and which was surrounded with ivy.

Nobody can tell what pleasure it was to Herbert and Meggy to shut themselves up in this pretty little house. They fancied a great many delightful things about it which they told to nobody; and as their father saw that they enjoyed it so much, he said that it should be theirs, and that nobody should disturb them in it.

Oh, how charming it was, when the sun shone through the little window, and the bright form of the four little panes lay on the floor! There was a shelf—not a high one, but a very broad and strong one—in the first room, and this they called "upstairs." Their mother lent them a nice little step-ladder, and this they placed against the shelf, and it was the stair-

case. They set the dolls' cradle on the shelf, and all such things as made it look like a bedroom; and here they used to put the two dolls —Sophia and Alice—to sleep, while they were busy about their household work. They found in a lumber-room a piece of old Indian matting, with which they covered the floor of the inner room, and then they put a board across the first room to divide it into two parts; and thus they had a hall and a kitchen, while the little inner apartment was a grand drawing-room.

One day their friend Henry came to see them; he put up two little lower shelves for them, one in each room,—and these were chimney-pieces. The beautiful kitchen-range which their mother had given them was of course put in its place; a set of little candlesticks and other things stood on the mantelpiece; a fire was always supposed to be burning in the grate, and a pot was always on the

fire; the coal-box was filled with tidy little pieces of coal;—and nothing could be prettier or more complete. The children also decorated their walls with little pictures, and hung up a smart yellow cord and tassel for a bell; they hung some lilac ribbons, which had once trimmed their sister's bonnet, festoon-wise above their window, and these were their handsome curtains. The gardener gave them some cuttings of evergreens, which they set in little pots and placed in the window. They invited many people to go to see them in their house, and nothing could make them happier than having visitors.

It was still a favorite amusement to play at having a troublesome and bad neighbor. They played that the same Mrs. Gingham who had disturbed them so much in their other house, had, like themselves, removed, and that she now lived just by them in the melon-bed, and that whenever their backs were turned she

came and put all their things into disorder. They pretended that she had a husband as bad as herself, and children a great deal worse.

"Why do you not play that Mrs. Gingham is a good, useful neighbor?" asked somebody one day, "and that she has a friendly husband and good children?"

"It would not be half so funny," replied they; "and then we always have so much to do after any of the Ginghams have been here."

The delight of Herbert and Meggy in their house and the garden increased as the long hot summer days came on. It was very shady and cool and pleasant there, and there they spent all their spare time. They were particularly delighted if a shower came on when they were in their house,—a right heavy shower. This always pleased them, for then it seemed as if the house were more just their own—as if they were living quite away from everybody else—almost as if they were on a desert island.

CHAPTER XI

HERBERT AND THE BEES

When Herbert watched the rooks, he often stood in a long walk by the side of which ran an old brick wall. It was a very charming old wall; white and crimson snap-dragon, and yellow wall-flowers grew on the top of it, and as it faced the south it was almost covered with roses, and white and yellow jasmine. It was not so entirely covered, however, but that Herbert could see that it was inhabited by a great many busy little bees. Nobody told him about the bees: he found them himself, and that was a delight. The old mortar between the bricks was full of holes, and Herbert saw the bees go in and then come out again through these holes. Scarcely anything had ever given him so much pleasure. He would stand for an

hour at a time to watch them, and if anybody would come and stand with him and hear all he could tell about the bees, he was much pleased; but if not, then he stood and watched them by himself.

Meggy did not care much about the bees. She would look at them just to please him for a few minutes, but then she was always in a hurry to run away again. Herbert, however, stood patiently, and learned many things about them by his own observation. Some were mason bees, that worked very industriously, making cells and walling them up with clay after the eggs had been laid in them. Some of the bees were much larger than others, and these he called his humble-bees. Many of these big bees were very sluggish, and little active brown bees would come buzzing about them and creeping over them. When the days were sunny and hot, how busy the bees were! Little brown bees, as brisk and active as flies,

and a grayish-yellow kind, and black bees, all lived in the wall.

Herbert thought it very funny to see the bees always come backwards out of their holes; and this little circumstance pleased him, because he could thus understand something about their dwellings. It proved to him that they were not wide enough inside for the bees to turn round in. They were long narrow passages, with a sort of little bed at the end in which they laid their eggs and their honey. Herbert often wished that—just for a little while—he could be a bee, and live in a hole in the wall. It seemed very pleasant to him to have a house in that sunny place all amongst the roses and the jasmines. He thought about it till he almost felt as if he were a bee!

He studied the bees attentively, till he was quite sure that he knew every one, even when he saw them a good way from home. He used to say, "That bee lives under a branch of the

Macartney rose;" or, "That fellow lives high up among the yellow jasmine;" and his mother thought he really was not mistaken, because when she had time to attend to them with him she always found him right.

He would bring out Meggy's little wheelbarrow and turn it upside down in the walk for his seat; and there, when he was tired of standing, he used to sit. There was not anything in the whole garden which interested him more, for a long time, than the bees in the old brick wall.

Herbert watched his bees until he saw them fasten up all their holes with clay, and then he knew that they had left the eggs in these cells to hatch. He looked on the old wall with pleasure. It was now all covered with flowers, and he could not help fancying that the bees had had much pleasure in their summer work.

Besides the bees, Herbert watched with great interest a colony of ants that lived under

one of the gravel walks in the garden. They seemed to pass all their time in coming up out of the holes on one side, crossing the walk and going down into the holes on the other. He wondered very much what they did this for, what sort of underground world they had; but he could not tell.

Many of the ants carried little white eggs in their mouths; many others seemed to carry nothing, but came running up and crossing the walk, and running down on the other side, just as if to do that were the merriest thing in the world. There was a little busy stream of ants always going and coming, like the people in a London street.

Herbert felt very fond of the ants, and always begged people not to tread on them as they passed along; and whenever he could find a dead fly or spider he took it to the ants, and had the pleasure of seeing them enjoy the feast.

Herbert knew of many birds' nests in the

garden: there was the blackbird's, and a fly-catcher's, and a robin's, and plenty of sparrows' nests. He loved the birds as well as the bees. He would sit and watch them flying about with their young ones. Now and then he happened to catch one. What a delight that was! Poor little thing, its heart would beat, and it would be all in a flutter, and it would cry piteously, but that was only because it did not know how much Herbert loved it. He was very glad to have a live bird in his hand: to see its beak, its eyes, its breast, its little legs—to know really what it was like. He wished he could make it understand how he loved it, and that he would not hurt it.

Whenever he caught a bird or a mouse, he thought of it for hours afterwards. He felt as if it were still in his hand long after it was gone, and he could not help talking to everybody about it.

"What would that little bird say when I

caught it?" he would ask; and was much pleased if somebody made up an answer.

Herbert was very quick both with his hands and with his eyes. He could readily see the tracks of any small animal on the borders when nobody else could without the closest observation. His mother said that he was like an Indian in the forest, when set on the trail of an animal. He was invariably the first to see any little lizard or shining beetle running along the grass; and he could always manage to catch them, let them run ever so fast.

He often used to catch and carry his bees in his two hands, which he closed like a box for several minutes at a time,—and he had great pleasure in hearing them hum as he thus held them; but they never stung him, most likely because he never hurt them.

The bees and the birds and the ants, as well as the little house in the garden, made Herbert very happy this summer.

CHAPTER XII

HERBERT LEAVES HOME

After the midsummer of this year Herbert was to go to school,—not as a day-scholar, but as a boarder,—so that he would have to leave his home and his parents and his brother and sisters; but, above all, he would have to leave his dear little sister Meggy. That seemed a very great trouble to them both.

Herbert rather liked the idea of going to school, for he knew the lady and gentleman with whom he was to be placed, and who lived not above two miles from his own home; and he was to come home every Saturday evening, and go again on Monday morning, so that it all seemed pleasant enough.

Only one thing troubled him, and that was leaving Meggy; for he loved her very much,

and they played so nicely together in their house in the garden; and now that the summer days were so long and so warm, they were almost always together out of doors or in their house. Yes, he should be very, very sorry to part from Meggy. That was the one thing that made him sad when he thought about going to school.

At length the day came when he was to go. He had some new clothes, and they were packed in a nice little trunk which his grandmother had given him. He was to wear every day what had been his best suit. He had a new transparent slate, a new knife, and a top and some marbles, and these, too, were packed in his trunk.

Herbert felt quite in a flutter, as if something very new and strange were going to happen. He did not know exactly whether he were pleased, or frightened, or sorry, or what was amiss with him.

As soon as breakfast was over, he and Meggy went to their house to put everything in order,—for Herbert was not to go till after dinner, and they had the whole morning to do it in. They cleaned all their things and arranged all their furniture to the best advantage: they put coal in their kitchen grate, and set the pots and kettles on the fire as if they were cooking a great dinner. The dishes and plates were ranged in their prettiest order on the kitchen shelves; the little knife-tray, with the knives and forks in it, stood on the little kitchen-dresser,—and it all looked as neat and tidy as if the cook who lived there were the fairy queen herself!

The children now played that somebody had just told them that Mrs. Gingham and her husband and children had gone to America, so they would no longer be troubled by these mischievous neighbors. They laid one of the dolls in bed in the little chamber; and their

drawing-room, they thought, looked neater and more elegant than ever. There was a handsome piece of carpeting on the floor; half a dozen large flower-pots, turned upside down, stood around for seats; a table which Alfred had made for them stood in the centre, covered with its gay cloth; and little books in bright covers lay about in elegant disorder. In the middle of the table stood an old inkstand, now well-washed and filled with flowers, which looked very pretty indeed. The walls were newly adorned with large pictures from the *Illustrated London News.*

The children thought that they had never seen anything so charming as this room. How they wished that they could live there always! They played that the family was going from home for a long time, so they drew down the Venetian blind that the furniture might not be faded.

While they were busy playing at all this,

they did not think about the parting which was to take place so soon.

Herbert's trunk and all his things had been sent off, and now he had had his dinner, and he and his mother were going to walk to the school. She proposed that Meggy should go with them, for by this means she thought the parting would be easier. Their things were put on, and off they set as cheerfully as could be, neither Meggy nor Herbert seeming to be troubled about anything.

They were very merry, one on each side of their mother, and talked happily about the things which they saw by the way,—the gay carriages, and the horses, and the omnibuses and whatever else came along.

Suddenly, Meggy was delighted to see a little old man who sold green-groceries and flower roots of various kinds. He was an old acquaintance of hers, and she always called him her old man. He was shouting, " Green peas!

Sixpence a peck!" when he caught sight of Meggy. She had seen him just before, and had pulled at her mother's hand, and leaned forward to Herbert, to make them notice him.

The old man ceased to say any more about his peas when he saw Meggy, and setting down his wheelbarrow, he took off his hat, and smiled with a very good-natured, happy look.

"Good day, my little lady," said he.

"How are you to-day, and how is your wife?" asked Meggy, as her mother and Herbert both stopped and spoke to him, and admired the nice little roots of pinks and pansies which he had to sell.

It was always very pleasant to Meggy to see this poor old man. She felt that he was a friend of hers; and besides this, she knew that if it had not been for her, nobody in the house would have taken any notice of him. She had always a great deal to say about him when they met him anywhere; and now she told her

mother and Herbert that he was a very nice old man, and very sober, and that all the money he gained by selling his vegetables and his flowers he took home to his old wife, who was a very nice old woman, only she was very, very short—quite a dwarf; and that every Sunday they went to church together; and when there were flowers to be had, he always had a nice little bunch of something in his coat, and when there were no flowers he had a little sprig of evergreen.

The talk about the old man and his little old wife brought them to the place where Herbert was to go to school.

There were several boys already there; and one little fellow came to meet Herbert very kindly, and wanted to take him into the play-ground, where some of his future companions were amusing themselves. But Herbert did not wish to go; he held very firmly by his mother's hand, and looked very grave.

The lady of the school spoke kindly to him, and he knew that she was very kind and good, but he felt as if he could not talk. He stood beside his mother as she sat on the sofa, and still grasped her hand.

A strange feeling of the reality of going to school had now come over him. It was no longer a joke; he and Meggy were not playing at it, and it made him very serious. But still he was not sorry that he was going to school, nor had he any intention of crying, but he felt that it really was a serious business.

And now his mother and Meggy rose to go. Meggy kissed him, but she did not cry, and Herbert kissed her. He still grasped his mother's hand, and that so tightly, that it was almost painful to her; she looked in his face, and saw that he was very pale.

"Good-bye, dear Herbert," she said, kissing him, and disengaging her hand.

Herbert looked at her with his large blue

eyes without smiling, but he said nothing. He was keeping back his tears. He did not mean to cry, but he knew that if he spoke he should cry in spite of himself.

He felt rather forlorn, and rather afraid of the boys, when his mother and Meggy were gone; he looked through the window at the boys at play, but he did not wish to go to them. The lady of the school gave him some pictures to look at; so he sat down and amused himself with them until tea time.

He could not help thinking about his own happy home, and Meggy, and the pretty house in the garden. But he did not shed one tear; and after he had once seen the faces of all the boys at tea, he allowed a little boy, who was just his own age, to persuade him to go out to play. Playing with so many boys, and most of them little ones like himself, he soon found to be very pleasant. Before long, Herbert was sure that he should be happy at school.

CHAPTER XIII

MEGGY'S JOURNEY

MEGGY was very lonely without her brother. When she came back into her own home, the whole sense of her solitude fell upon her. She saw Herbert's garden hat in the hall, and she could not help crying. The nursery seemed empty, so did the garden; and as for the pretty little house, in which she had formerly enjoyed so much happiness, she thought she could never again bear to go near it. Everybody was very sorry for her, but the more that was said to her, the more unhappy she felt. She could not help wishing that there were no schools for little boys to go to.

A few days after Herbert was gone, however, Ellen the nurse set off with Meggy into the country for several weeks. This was an ex-

cursion which had been talked of for a long time, but which had been deferred till after Herbert had gone to school, because their mother knew that parting from him would be so great a sorrow to his little sister, and knew that this pleasure would divert her mind.

Meggy was overjoyed to see all her things laid out ready, and then packed in a trunk. She took one of her dolls with her, and her work-box, and her silver thimble,—although nobody expected that she would find much time for sewing.

She was going into quite a country place. A little girl, whose parents lived in London, was staying there, so Meggy would have a companion to play with, and her mother did not wish her to do anything in the way of lessons except a little reading.

They were going to stay at Ellen's home; and this was in the very village where Meggy's father and mother had once lived, and where

both Meggy and Herbert were born, although Meggy could remember nothing at all about the place. She was very fond of Ellen, who had lived in the family ever since Meggy was a few months old; and the thought of going on this journey with her was as pleasant as anything could be.

The morning came on which they were to set off. Meggy had thought for a long time of this journey, and had fancied how it would be. But she had always fancied it on a fine, sunshiny morning, just such as one imagines summer mornings always are. But Meggy's fancies were wrong this time; for it rained very hard.

When people got up in the morning it rained; and the first word everybody said was, "What a wet day for Meggy's journey!" Her mother thought that they had better defer going for a day or two, till the weather was finer. But this was an idea that neither Meggy

nor Ellen liked at all; and besides, everybody hoped it would be quite fine before noon. So, in spite of the rain, they set off.

It still rained when they reached London, and as they drove through the city nothing was to be seen but wet streets and wet umbrellas, and everything looked damp and dreary. But neither Meggy nor Ellen were out of spirits for such a trifle as that: they were sure it would be fine enough long before they reached the country; and they did not mind about the weather anywhere else.

They went by railroad the rest of their journey, fourteen miles, into Surrey, to the pleasant neighborhood of Claremont, where Queen Victoria, at that time, had her country house; and where she and her little children went for quietness and recreation, just as Meggy and Ellen were now doing.

Meggy enjoyed skimming along in the railway carriage very much. It was not the first

time she had made such a journey, but that did not signify. It was a great delight to her to arrive at the Vauxhall terminus and see all the stir and bustle there; people driving up in cabs and carriages, and omnibuses full of people and their luggage—and to see them hurrying to get their tickets, and to see Ellen get hers, and then the porters running off with the luggage, and to feel herself and Ellen running on after it; then to see people getting into the carriages, and to feel herself lifted in, and to see Ellen come in with smiling face, and hear her say, "Thank you, sir," to a civil gentleman who had told her it was all right about their boxes.

Then Meggy stood up at the window of the carriage, and watched all that was going on, till the second bell rang, and the steam gave a scream, and the train was put in motion, and off they went,—at first rather slowly, and then very fast. The road seemed like a long gravel-

colored ribbon drawn out, and the white posts at each quarter of a mile flashed by as if close to one another. When a train came on a track near them it was almost frightful as it rushed past like a flash of dark lightning.

Oh, how delightful to stand at the window and watch it all! How many market gardens they passed after leaving London, and then how many pretty villas, and gentlemen's houses, and green sloping parks, and little villages, and fields where the hay was half made! And then there were the different stations, where some passengers got out and others came in. All this was very entertaining, and the only thing that Meggy needed to make her happiness complete was to have Herbert in the same carriage with her, to enjoy everything as much as she did.

The prophecy about the rain clearing off before they reached the country proved false, for when they arrived at Ditton station, where

they had to leave the railroad, it rained as fast as it had done any time that morning. It really seemed to rain faster.

Although it was July, there were pools of water all over the common at Ditton; the cocks and hens stood looking very forlornly patient on one leg under carts or hovels; and the very ducks and geese looked dabbled and discontented, as if they thought there had been quite rain enough for one day.

But neither Ellen nor Meggy looked troubled, however the ducks and geese might look; for no sooner were they out of the railroad carriage with all their boxes, than up came Ellen's father, smiling and looking very much pleased to see them; and he had a nice covered spring-cart to take them to his house.

Meggy was delighted; she smiled, and felt ready to jump for joy as she saw the boxes put in the spring-cart, and saw how glad Ellen was to see her old father, who looked so merry

and kind. The spring-cart seemed like a little room, and Meggy could not help thinking how nicely Herbert and she could have lived in it, as they went merrily along over the wet common to Ellen's home.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW PLAYMATE

The cottage where Ellen's parents lived was a very pleasant old-fashioned country cottage. It stood in a garden, part of which was full of flowers, and the rest was kitchen-garden and orchard combined. There were, of course, a great many apple, and pear, and cherry trees; there were also strawberry beds, and raspberry and gooseberry and currant bushes. Plentiful as the fruit was, Meggy never gathered any herself, because Ellen's father sold his fruit, but as he was a very good-natured old man, he often gave her some of the finest and ripest that he had.

There were two tall cypresses, that rose up like dark green spires, in front of the white cottage; and over its green porch was trained

a beautiful honeysuckle, which was now in flower, and which smelled very sweet.

The cottage stood upon the edge of a village green, or common, along which wound a good road. This green was nearly as smooth as a lawn, and at a distance, with here and there a fine old tree, looked like a park. The cottagers who lived around it in houses which were half-buried in trees, kept many geese, and these fed on the common, and made it look very lively.

Just by the gate which led into the garden of Ellen's father, there ran a little brook, which at this particular place spread out into a pond; and this being overhung with old willow-trees, looked very pretty. Here the geese came to swim and enjoy themselves in the water. Meggy was very much pleased with the cottage, and the green, and the geese, and the pond overhung with the old willow-trees.

Louisa, the little girl who had come from

London for country air, was a year younger than Meggy, and was a very nice little girl. She had been several weeks at the cottage before Meggy came, so that she was able to show her everything.

The day after that on which Meggy and Ellen arrived was very fine, and the hot July sun soon dried up all wet from the surface of the ground. The children went into the garden and looked at the flowers and the fruit, and saw Ellen's father gather peas.

There had been in the spring plenty of violets and primroses on the tall banks of the garden-hedge; now the little girls saw their wild, thick, green leaves growing; and Meggy, who knew more about flowers and country things than little Louisa, had the pleasure of telling her which were which, and of showing her the pretty little blue robin-run-in-the-hedge, and the wild hop which was beginning to send forth its long sprays above the top of the hedge.

Meggy felt herself very happy. She had not been so happy since Herbert went to school.

At the back of the house there was a rather wild piece of ground, which was overgrown with grass, and not at all cultivated. Here the little girls were told that they might play; might do just what they pleased, for here they could do no mischief.

At the end of this piece of ground, and just opposite the house, stood a very old wooden barn. Gray and yellow lichens grew upon its wooden walls, and house-leek and beautiful masses of golden-flowered stonecrop upon its old roof.

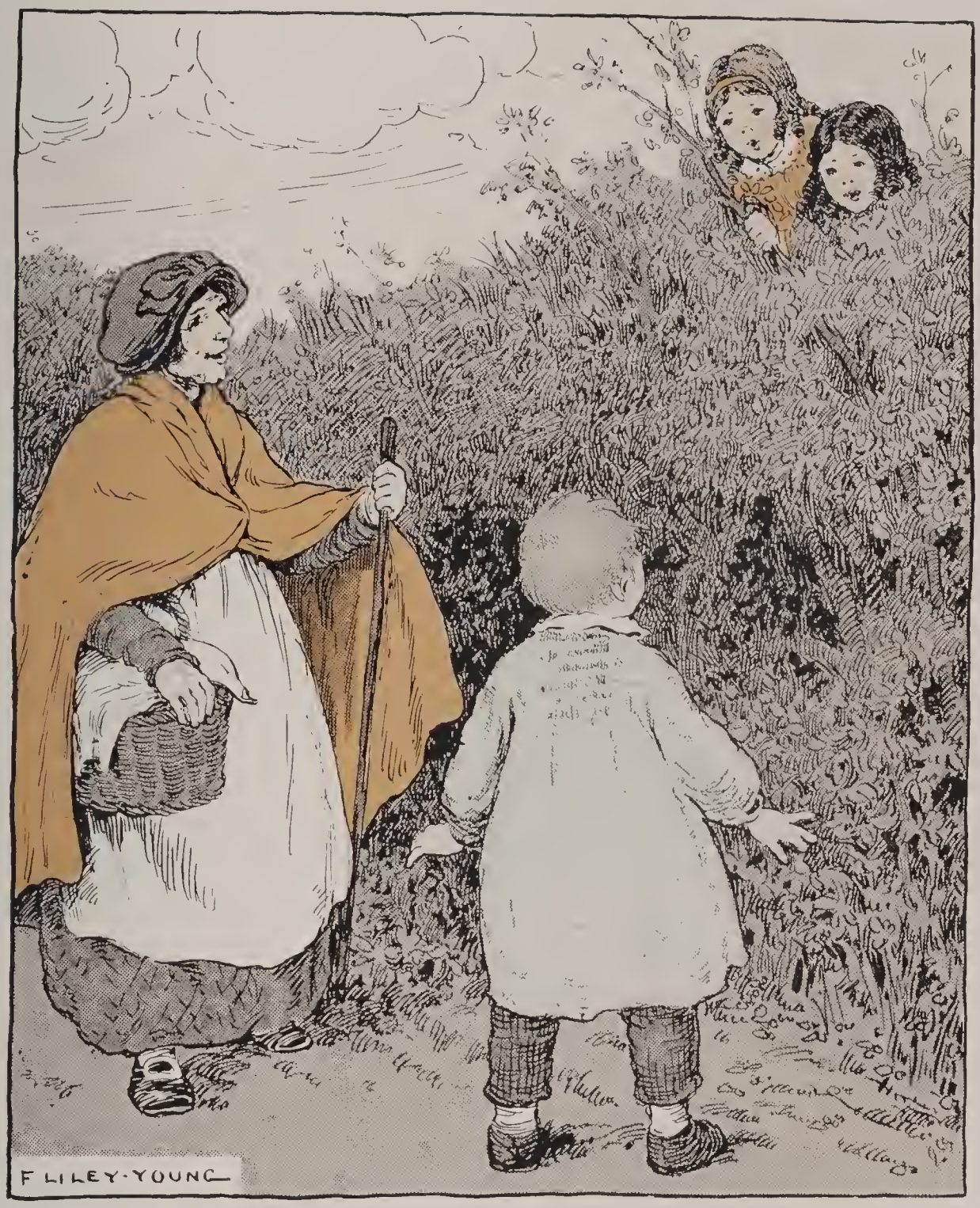
This building had once been a cow-shed, but now was used only to house fuel, and pea-sticks, and garden-tools. Here, too, the hens and the broods of chickens lodged; and up near the roof lived the lovely white and blue pigeons that came flying down every morning to be fed with vetches, which the little

girls, to their great delight, were allowed to scatter on the ground for them.

On one side of the rough field was a lane which led to a village not far off. This lane was much lower than the field, and was divided from it by an old hedge in which grew crab-apple-trees and wild plum-trees, and which was a perfect tangle of single roses and brambles.

It was very interesting to the little girls to peep down into this lane, and see now and then a man, perhaps, driving a cow along it, or a woman in a red shawl with a basket or bundle, or a little child going along on an errand, perhaps a rosy-cheeked lad in a smock frock, or two or three little children, hand in hand, going to or coming from school.

Meggy and Louisa were very fond of these peeps, and sometimes they called, "Cuckoo!" to some one in the lane. It was great fun to make the passer-by look up to see who was there. If it were a grown-up person, the



SOMETIMES THEY CALLED, "CUCKOO!"—*Page 102.*

children would run away, but if it were a child, they only shouted, "Cuckoo!" louder than ever, and nodded and smiled, and looked as happy as the bird itself.

This hedge, however, had something which belonged to it much more remarkable even than the lane,—and that was an old wooden summer-house, which seemed stuck into the hedge, like a great big nest. It was open to the front, and had a nice dry wooden floor. At the back, and overlooking the lane, were two little, tiny windows, each of one pane of glass, one of which was now broken. There were two old wooden chairs in the summer-house, and a block of wood, covered with carpeting, as a footstool. As soon as Meggy saw it she thought how charmingly they could play at having a house there.

Louisa had never been used to play at having a house, but she soon found it quite as delightful as Meggy and Herbert had done.

They swept out the house, pretending that a very untidy person had lived there before them; they cleaned the one remaining window; they dusted the chairs, and made all very neat and orderly. They hunted about, and found many broken pieces of earthenware, which they stood up for plates and dishes.

There was a very little, old-fashioned, rusty fireplace in one corner, and this they filled with sticks and little bits of coal; they rolled up pieces of white paper and stuck them into the holes of empty spools, and these were candles in candlesticks; they brought in their dolls for children, and felt as if they were quite comfortably settled there. Meggy thought it was almost, if not quite, as nice as the house in the garden at home.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DOG MUSCHY

Besides themselves, a gentleman lodged at the cottage. He was a good-natured man, and used often to speak very kindly to the children when he met them in the garden or on the stairs. Sometimes he would open his parlor door and call them in; then he would take a key from his pocket and open a cupboard door, and give them nice little round and heart-shaped cakes. He had a little dog; a rough, queer-looking, gray Scotch terrier called Muschy.

Muschy was always running about and poking his nose into holes and corners, and smelling here and there. He never barked at the little girls, although he used to bark at almost everybody else that came to the house. They often called Muschy into their house, and

would have felt delighted if he would have stayed with them. But he was always fidgeting about, and would not be still a minute. They did not know at all how to manage him.

One day they determined to play at having a dinner party. They invited their dolls to come, and the dolls accepted the invitation; they invited Muschy, and Muschy very politely said that he would come. Their dinner was a capital one; they had cakes, and apples, and gooseberries, and currants,—which they called fish and roast beef, and apple-pie, and gooseberry pudding.

The dolls and they would enjoy all these very much, but there was Muschy to be provided for. He did not turn up his nose at cake, but as for apples, and gooseberries, and currants, he would not touch them; so they collected all the bones which were left after dinner, and with these they thought they should make a *real* feast for Muschy.

They set out their dinner beautifully, and placed their dolls one on each side, and then fetched in Muschy. But he was unusually unruly that day. They wanted to make him sit tidily on his hind legs, as he did at his master's bidding, but all their efforts with him were in vain. As they were both very busy trying to bring him into order, they heard, all at once, a sound outside the summer-house as if somebody had climbed up the bank from the lane. They looked at one another, and then glanced at the little broken window; and there, without a doubt, was *some one.*

Muschy sprang up and overturned the dinner-table, barking and whining as if he were out of his senses. Meggy and Louisa ran out screaming, though they knew not at what. They had seen a man with a hat on at the window; but why that should frighten them, they could not tell. Both children, however, had heard a voice which said, "I see

you!" and the voice had seemed loud and gruff. Who could it be? and what could it mean?

Muschy flew out of the place after the intruder. What a good little dog! They were more inclined than ever to give him a dinner. They stole softly to the hedge, and peeped cautiously down into the lane; but nothing frightful was to be seen there—nothing but their good fellow-lodger Mr. Hernshaw, who was walking quietly below, with Muschy trotting on before him.

"Oh, Mr. Hernshaw!" they exclaimed, "there has been such a horrid man here; and he peeped through the window and said, 'I SEE YOU!'"

"So Muschy has told me," said he, looking very good-natured; with that he walked on.

They neither of them knew exactly how Muschy could have told him, but they did not ask any questions, and the dog seemed to them now worthy of the best of dinners.

By this time their terror was all gone, and they returned to the summer-house to re-arrange their dinner. Muschy was nowhere to be found, and as Mr. Hernshaw had not returned to the house, they concluded that the dog was with him. Neither he nor his master came back by tea-time; and it did not seem as if they would come back before dark. The children determined, however, not to eat their dinner without Muschy, so before going to bed they turned a large wash-tub over their feast, and left all, as they thought, quite safe.

The next day, when they got up, they found that it was washing-day at the cottage; and what was their surprise, on going to the summer-house, to find the tub carried away, all their dinner demolished, the gooseberries and currants smashed, the apples rolled away, the cakes gnawed and dirty, and the bones vanished—every one! Could the man who had looked in at the window have been there again?

While they were thus wondering, who should come bounding in but Muschy, wagging his tail, and looking in such a good humor that no one could have doubted about his smiling. He frisked round the summer-house, caught up an apple between his paws and rolled it along the floor; snapped at a cake, which he gobbled up in a minute, then jumped up and snuffed here and there about the floor.

"Muschy has been here and has had his dinner without us!" exclaimed Meggy. "Now haven't you, Muschy?"

Muschy barked, and capered about, and smiled; and that was all the answer he gave.

He had made an end of their dinner as well as his own, but they quite forgave him; and if he would only have stayed with them that morning, they would gladly have given him a share of their breakfast; but he was off with his master into the pleasant fir woods.

CHAPTER XVI

MEGGY AT HOME AGAIN

Meggy was six weeks at the cottage in the country. And now the time was come for her and Ellen to return to London.

She had seen much that was new to her,—the hay carried, the sheep shorn, and the corn cut and piled up into shocks in the field; besides she had enjoyed herself very much with little Louisa. But she was now quite willing to go back to her own dear home, where, although she could not have Herbert every day, she at least should see him every Sunday. And was not that a great happiness?

The day after Meggy's return, Herbert was allowed to come from school, although it was not Sunday, to see her. Nothing could be a greater happiness than their meeting. They

kissed each other over and over again; they walked hand in hand in the garden; they talked of all that had happened since they parted. Meggy had to relate all her adventures and pleasures in the country, and Herbert had to tell of various interesting events which had happened to him.

Among other things, his brother Alfred had taken him twice to London. They had gone in an omnibus, and this he had found very amusing. The first time they went, Alfred took him to see Gog [1] and Magog in Guildhall, and all through St. Paul's Cathedral.

Herbert thought Gog and Magog very wonderful. There was a gentleman in Guildhall, quite a stranger to the boys, who came up and began talking to them. He seemed a very

[1] Fanciful figures of Gog and Magog, sometimes called the Guardians of London, have been connected with English history since the reign of Henry V. The colossal wooden figures now in Guildhall were carved by Saunders in 1708 to take the place of those made of wicker-work which were burned in London's Great Fire.

merry man, for he laughed a great deal, and would insist upon it that Gog and Magog were real giants, and that in the daytime they pretended to be wood and paint, and stood there with their big faces staring out stupidly at everything. This was all make-believe, he said, for they could hear and see just as well as we could; and then he made a great start and said, " Oh, did you not see the eyes of one of them move? "

It was plain enough that he was joking all the time. One giant, he said, was very deaf, and the other near-sighted,—and no wonder, for they were very old; he believed many hundred years old, and the only wonder was that they had lived so long.

He said that at night, as soon as Gog and Magog heard St. Paul's clock strike twelve, and all London was gone to sleep, they two came down, and the one that could hear told the one that was deaf everything that people

had been saying in the day; and the one that had good eyes told the near-sighted one all that he had seen, and so they were very useful and entertaining to each other.

Herbert was delighted to tell all this about Gog and Magog to Meggy. He did not believe a word of it himself, but thought it was very amusing; and while the gentleman was telling it to him and Alfred, Herbert had felt as if it were true, and wished he could go at night and see the two old giants walking up and down!

Then Herbert described St. Paul's Cathedral with its huge organ, its many monuments, and the echoing sound produced by the closing of a door, and which to him seemed like the roaring of a lion. Then there was the going up and up and up to the Whispering Gallery, and the going higher and higher still to the outside gallery, where there was such a wind as almost lifted them off their feet, and from

which they had such a grand view over all London.

That was one day's excursion. Another day Alfred took him to the Pantheon, and showed him all the beautiful things there. And now Herbert described the pyramids of dolls that he saw, the dolls' houses and palaces, the dolls in beautiful cradles, and some dolls as big as real babies, and some like the Queen and Prince Albert and all their children. It was wonderful, Herbert said, and he wished Meggy could have seen them. And there were all kinds of toys, and guns and whips, and little carriages and horses, and everything! And such caps and bonnets, and books, and baskets, and flowers, and vases, and china! When you went upstairs and walked round a gallery, you saw more things and more things, and when you looked down, you saw all the beautiful things that you had seen before, and it made quite a grand picture.

Then they went to a place where nothing but confectionery was sold; and Alfred said now Herbert should have something good—what would he like? Herbert looked all round; everything seemed so nice, he did not know what he should choose, and then Alfred said he should have some buns and an ice! Herbert had never eaten an ice before, and it was so good! He only wished Meggy could taste it. He did wonder whether he could not save her a bit, but he knew that ice all melts away, and so he ate it and his buns. Alfred was very good-tempered, and seemed to think nothing any trouble, and therefore Herbert asked him questions about everything, and Alfred always answered him, and never once said, "Don't bother me so!" nor anything of that sort.

Last of all, they went into a beautiful conservatory, where there was a fountain playing, and lovely flowers in bloom, and beautiful birds,—parrots, macaws, and love-birds,—all

in cages or on poles; and the fountain splashed, and the birds sang and chattered, and the flowers sent forth a delicious fragrance; and Herbert thought it was the most charming place in all London.

This was what he had to tell Meggy of the greatest pleasures which he had enjoyed during her absence; and as he described them to her, they settled down into her mind as if she too had seen them.

Besides talking, Herbert and Meggy had a great deal of work to do. They again set their house in order, for it, of necessity, began to look neglected after having been uninhabited for so many weeks. They pulled up the weeds also from their gardens, and filled their joint kitchen-garden with lettuces and celery. They did in a short time a great deal of work; and all the while Herbert had to tell Meggy about his school-life—how very happy he was, and that he did not find his lessons at all hard, and

that he liked his school-fellows, particularly Walter and Edwin, very much.

While Meggy was away, Walter had been once at home with Herbert, and they two had lived in the playhouse, and had made a feast of lettuces and bread and butter, which his mother had given them, and there never was anything so good as those lettuces! They gathered them quite fresh in the garden, washed them at the garden-tubs, and then had eaten them in their little house with bread and butter and salt. His father also gave them some apples and grapes. Had they not had a feast? They went with his father to gather the apples and to cut the grapes, and they laid them on vine-leaves for dishes, and sat round the little table, and were very happy.

Herbert showed Walter the holes where the mason-bees had laid their eggs, and the underground regions inhabited by the ants; and Walter had said many times since then, that he

would rather go home with Herbert than anywhere else in the world!

Meggy, in return, told her brother about her sojourn in the country,—about her little companion Louisa, the queer little fidgety dog Muschy, and the three cats, Beauty, Granny, and Jack. She described the beautiful pigeons that used to fly down to be fed and then go to the stone trough and drink so prettily. As Meggy talked, Herbert almost wished he had been with her.

That was a happy day; and what could equal the joy of the little ones, when their sister Mary said that, if their parents would consent, she would take them both the next day to the Zoological Gardens! Then Herbert could not only stay at home all night, but spend a second happy day with his little sister.

Alfred volunteered to walk down to the school to explain Herbert's absence, and the whole thing was at once decided upon.

CHAPTER XVII

WHERE WAS THE SUN-BEAR?

The next morning, which was as fine as anybody could wish, they set off. Martha, one of the maids, went with them. She had never been to the Zoological Gardens, so Herbert had a great deal to do before they arrived at the place, in explaining to her what there was to see. He told her, that long and long before she got to the Gardens—miles off, almost—she would hear the wild beasts roaring. (He was a very little boy when he was there before, and he imagined all this.)

As they walked through Regent's Park, he was in a great state of excitement, listening for the roar of the lion; and every now and then stopped, and was sure it must be heard. Meggy had never been there any more than

Martha, and of course she, too, was filled with the most intense expectation.

At last they were within sight of the Gardens, and then, all at once, the sound so long listened for was heard. The lion *did* roar, and immediately afterwards something yelled—it must have been the hyena; and then a wild ass sent forth a discordant, trumpeting cry; and the lion roared again, and Herbert was delighted beyond measure.

Meggy clung to her sister in terror, and Herbert laughed and put his arm round her, and stood like a champion, and said, in his fondest voice, "Don't be afraid, Meggy. No wild beast can get loose; and they are only glad that we are come—that's all."

To Herbert's great joy, Martha declared that though they had not heard it "miles off," yet that it was much grander than she expected, and that the lion must be a terrible beast to have such a voice.

Though Herbert had been such a little boy when he was there before, yet he seemed to remember so much about the Gardens, that his sister Mary said he should guide them. He should take them just where he liked. This made him very happy.

One thing, however, quite troubled him. His sister Mary had told him about the great sun-bear which she had seen when she was there last; about its pale sea-green eyes; and how big, and silly, and melancholy it looked. Herbert had never seen a sun-bear, he had not even read about it; but the idea of it as his sister described it—in its shaggy coat, which looked like a rough blanket, the color of a London fog, and its pale sea-green eyes—made a great impression upon his mind. He was, therefore, most anxious to see the sun-bear. His sister said she would show it to him; but when they reached the den where the great sun-bear had been when she saw it, the sun-bear was no

longer there—another animal, quite different, was living in the den.

Herbert grew anxious. Was the sun-bear ill or dead, or had it merely changed its lodgings? His sister encouraged him with the hope that they might yet see it. They went on: they saw the lion that had roared so grandly, and the tigers and all their relations, the leopards, and panthers, and cougars, and cat-a-mountains; they saw the brown bears, and fed them with buns, and saw them climb up the poles, and then come down again. All this was very entertaining; but still they did not see the sun-bear!

They found great amusement among the monkeys,—some of whom cracked nuts, others swung and leaped about, and played all sorts of pranks; but most of all were they delighted with a grave old mother-monkey tending her little child. She was so odd, and looked so serious! After she had tossed her baby about,

and hugged and cuffed it, she made it cling to her neck with its funny little black arms, and began capering and frisking, and flinging herself from one side of the cage to the other. And all the time the baby-monkey clung to her neck, and looked as if it were glued to her.

They saw the eagles, and other noble birds, standing with grave and intelligent countenances on their perches. They saw the parrots, and heard their loud chattering till they were almost deafened by it.

Herbert and Meggy still looked in vain for the sun-bear; it was not near the elephants, or the wild asses, or the giraffes. They rode on one elephant's back, and threw buns into the big open mouth of another; they saw the great hippopotamus go down to the water; and they felt as if they never should be tired of looking at the beautiful camelopards, or giraffes, with their graceful movements and their mild affectionate eyes.

There were some odd-looking, Syrian goats, with long flapping ears, which Herbert was delighted to recognize from plates of them which he had seen in Calmet's "Dictionary of the Bible." Yes, it was all delightful, if they could only have found the sun-bear.

Herbert ran hither and thither; peeped into the most unlikely as well as likely places; but nowhere did he see the pale sea-green eyes and the shaggy fog-colored coat of the sun-bear. He began to think that, after all, he should not see it. They came back to the very point where they had entered; they made many inquiries, but nobody could assist them. Some said they had seen it that very day, others that they had not; they only wished they had!

Some said it was somewhere, others that it was nowhere, and that there never had been a sun-bear in the Gardens. But Mary knew better than that, for she had seen it herself. They turned down all sorts of winding walks, and

came to the seal, that to their great joy lay basking beside the water; and to the beavers, that came out as if to be looked at. They could see everything, excepting the sun-bear!

It was now time to go home. They stood beside the iron gate of exit, which once passed admits of no return. What were they to do? Herbert was almost ready to cry; he said he cared for nothing but the sun-bear—neither lions, nor tigers, nor anything—and it was such a shame not to have seen it! The only consolation he could find was in his sister's words—that some day or other they should come again, and then, if the sun-bear were in the Gardens, they *would* find him.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VERY SHORT CHAPTER WHICH, HOWEVER, CONTAINS SOMETHING!

Everybody remarked that Herbert had a bad cough, and it seemed worse even on the second day than the first. They said he must have something for his cough, and they wondered how he could have caught it, because the weather was so dry and pleasant.

A day or two afterwards news came from school that Herbert had the whooping-cough; and by this time Meggy also had begun coughing, as she had taken it from her brother. This was a strange and unlooked-for event, and Meggy, though feeling pretty well herself, was full of sorrow and compassion for Herbert; she feared that he would be ill.

Herbert, on his part, was concerned only

about his sister, who he knew was not nearly so strong as he was.

Everything, however, has its consolation; and the best consolation to the children was, that the cough was not very bad, and that as they both had it, they could be always together.

CHAPTER XIX

LITTLE HARRY TWIGGS

One Sunday it was excessively hot; so hot that the children did not know what to do. The heat and their coughs together made them very fretful. If they sat in the house, they were hot; if they went out, they were almost melted. In the evening they sat at tea with the windows open, flowers on the table, and the butter almost like oil though the butter-dish was standing in water. Nobody ate or drank much; indeed, to drink hot tea was out of the question.

Herbert was almost cross, and so was Meggy. They wished they had ice to put in their tea. They said that the Chinese were much wiser than the English, because they drank their tea cold; and that they did not be-

lieve anybody in all the world was as hot as they had been all day.

Their father said, what would they think if they were little Harry Twiggs?

They had never heard of little Harry Twiggs, and they asked who he was. Their father said that at five o'clock that very morning, little Harry Twiggs went out with a wooden clapper in his hand to frighten away the birds from Farmer Broadbent's corn. This corn grew in a thirty-acre field—a monstrous field; the whole parish called it the "big field." It was full of corn, beautiful corn, just getting ripe; and the birds, great and small, came from far and near to peck it.

Farmer Broadbent meant that that one field should pay the rent of his whole farm, so he was very particular about having the birds kept out. He hired little Harry Twiggs, who was one of the poorest boys in the parish, at threepence a day, to walk round and round

the corn-field, and down the foot-road that went across it from end to end, to make a noise with his little wooden clapper, and to shout as loud as he could, and thus to frighten away the birds.

For the last six days—from Monday till Saturday—little Harry had done so. He went at five o'clock in the morning, and came away at eight o'clock at night; and all day long he saw nobody, unless by chance any one went along the foot-road when he was on it, for otherwise he was so little, and the corn was so tall, that he could not have seen them. In all that long week he had seen only a beggar,—who was deaf and dumb, and so could not talk to him,—and the parish constable, of whom he was always afraid, because when he saw him he thought of the round-house, which was the parish prison.

All round the field there were tall hedges full of wild roses and honeysuckles, and mead-

ow-sweet, and pretty purple vetches, which made them very delightful, only that poor Harry soon grew tired of looking at them by himself.

In the hedges there also grew, here and there, tall old oak-trees, which all day long cast pleasant shadows; and Harry used to think, that if he could but lie down under the shady trees it would be delightful. But he never dared to indulge himself; and all day long he went round and round, and up and down that great, wide corn-field, on which the sun shone without any shadow, unless from a passing cloud.

Poor Harry often was so tired that he did not know what to do; and he was always glad when, by the height of the sun, he thought it was noon, and then he might sit down and eat his dinner,—his little dinner of bread and cheese and buttermilk.

Sometimes he made a mistake, and ate it an

hour too soon—he never took it an hour too late—and then the afternoon seemed so long that he thought it never would end. And he often was ready to cry because he was so hot and tired, and had nobody to speak to—not even a dog.

Harry lived with his old grandmother. They lived by themselves in a little mud cottage, one story high, beside the common; and Harry used to play with all the neighbors' children, for they were none of them too grand to play with a poor little lad like him.

There was Dick Tattersall, the son of the blacksmith. He was Harry's favorite playfellow,—a stout lad, who would have made two of a little fellow like Harry Twiggs, though he was not quite half a year older. Then there were all Dick's brothers and sisters—such a flock of them!—who always came trooping at his heels, because he was such a funny, good-natured fellow, and was always so kind to

them. There was Peggy Ford, too, Widow Ford's little daughter, who lived in the smallest house in the whole parish—smaller even than the Twiggs', for the Fords, like them, were very poor. Peggy used to play with Dick Tattersall's sisters, and that made her very friendly also with Harry and Dick.

Poor little Harry often told his friends in the evening, when he got home and found them playing, and yet was himself too tired to play, how solitary and forlorn he felt in the "big field" all by himself from morning till night.

One evening when Harry had been talking in this way, Dick said, as sure as he was alive, he would go and keep him company in the big field all next Sunday; and Peggy Ford said so would she, if Nancy Tattersall would; and Nancy said she would, if little Joshua might go,—and everybody said little Joshua might. So it was agreed and settled, and Harry wished it was Sunday.

The days between passed slowly, but at last Sunday morning came. Up got little Harry as usual, put on his clean shirt (stockings he had none) and his good pair of trousers—his common ones were very old indeed—and his Sunday jacket, which was but an old one after all; and as soon as he had swallowed his breakfast, off he set with his dinner in an oldish, gray-looking basket.

It was a capital dinner that he had to-day: a little bit of cold mutton, a huge piece of bread, some treacle in an old teacup with a teapot lid that fitted it, and which with bread was to be the grand second course. Besides this, he had a little can of buttermilk. It was a particularly good dinner, and Harry meant to divide it among his friends if it were better than what they brought.

He hoped as he passed the blacksmith's to see some of the family about, perhaps even Dick himself. But no, it was shut up, shop

and all; for they were resting an hour or two later, as it was Sunday morning.

He then turned down the lane toward the little house where Widow Ford lived; but the door was shut, and the white cotton curtain drawn in the window, and no signs of life were visible about the place, excepting the old, grayish tortoise-shell cat, which had been shut out all night. As soon as the cat saw Harry, she heaved up her back and tail, and rubbed in a sidling way against the door-post, and mewed with a long whining mew.

"Poor pussy!" said Harry, and stroked her, and wished he could only leave a message with her. But it was no use wishing that, so he stroked her again, and called her "poor pussy" in rather a louder voice, that they might hear him if they were awake,—for he knew where their bed stood. But they must have been fast asleep, for though he waited five minutes and talked a great deal to the cat, they

never heard him; and as the curtain did not move, he thought it would be of no use to stay any longer, so he went on slowly, looking back every now and then to see if anybody by chance peeped out. But nobody did.

There was nothing then to be done but to trudge off to the field as fast as he could, for he now heard the church clock strike a quarter to six, and he was afraid Farmer Broadbent might take a walk into the field, as he often did before breakfast, and not find him there.

Harry was afraid of Farmer Broadbent, partly because he was such a large man, and had such a large voice, and walked with such a large stick. So whenever he saw the farmer in the field, he contrived to be a good way off, always clapping industriously and shouting to the birds. The farmer, who was very fat, and not at all nimble, could not follow very quickly, and thus Harry contrived to keep quite out of his way.

The first thing Harry did when he got into the field was to walk all round it, clapping as he went, though he never once thought about the birds, because he was thinking of the party he was going to have, and he wanted now to find out which was the pleasantest place in all the field. To be sure, he had fixed that in his mind some days ago, even before he knew that his friends would come to visit him; but he now wanted to be quite sure about it. The nicest place in all the field was that on which he had before decided, and he now felt sure that it was the sweetest spot in all the parish.

It was in an old overgrown marl-pit which separated this field from the next, and where there was no regular fence, but a great many oak and ash trees, and plenty of hazel-bushes which formed a close and cool thicket, where at any time of the day it was very shady.

There were places something like regular seats in the broken sides of the hollow, so he

trampled down the long grass and tall plants, and broke off hazel boughs, or twisted them in one with another, till he formed a little open cove in the bushes, just like a little parlor in a wood, or a sweet little nest, just big enough to hold five or six children. He gathered beautiful green moss, which was now wet with dew, and laid it in the sun to dry, and this he meant for cushions for the seats.

There never was a prettier little spot than that. It was a regular bower; and though it was midsummer, the blackbirds and thrushes sang with all their might, and so did the larks up in the clear bright sunshine.

"It's a regular Sunday morning," said Harry joyfully to himself; "everything, dumb creatures as well as Christians, know when it is Sunday morning!"

His heart was full of joy. He had but one fear,—lest the children should come before he was ready for them.

But he need not have feared that. He was ready hours before they came. The church bells began ringing for morning service. Harry never thought they would be so late—never! He had expected they would come by eight o'clock, by nine at farthest; and now it wanted only a quarter to eleven.

All at once a thought came into his mind. Suppose they did not come at all! It was a miserable thought. He climbed upon a low bough of an oak, and looked out over the whole extent of the "big field." The sun shone burning hot; there was not a single shadow upon the whole extent of yellow corn. It quite dazzled his eyes.

He could see the heads and shoulders of people who were walking along the footpath on their way to church—for the church lay half a mile from the village, and those who liked the fields best would go that way. He saw them moving onward at little intervals above

the level of the yellow corn; they were in their Sunday best, and seemed to be very happy!

He jumped down from the tree, and ran to the end of the footpath; for some of these people must have passed Dick Tattersall's, and could tell him if he seemed to be coming. At the end of the road he met old Nelly Wardle, and her daughter Jenny; they lived next door to the blacksmith's.

"Did you see anything of Dick Tattersall?" asked Harry of them.

"Oh yes," old Nelly said; "Dick was sitting among the children, as usual, on the shady side of the house, making dandelion chains for them, poor things!"

"Then he does not mean to come!" said Harry to himself, with a great pang at his heart. He did not speak a word aloud, but walked on without looking anybody in the face, lest they should see that he was crying.

At the end of the footpath was a gate, which

opened into a shady lane, down which Dick and his young party ought to have come. Harry climbed on the bottom bar, and as the gate was a tall one his chin just rested on the top bar; and there he stood, poor little boy, with great blinding tears in his eyes staring up the empty lane.

The church bells had left off ringing, everybody was in church; not a soul was now coming from the village. Everything looked silent and solitary; and as Harry thought of all the long morning he had spent in getting things ready and in waiting, and all the long rest of the day that he should now have to spend by himself in disappointment, he felt quite miserable and forsaken.

He thought that Dick, and all the children who had promised to come and see him, were sitting on the shady side of the house, making dandelion chains, as happy as could be. They had forgotten him; they had forgotten their

promise; they cared for nothing but amusing themselves!

He shut his eyes to keep back the tears for a while, and then, fairly overcome, slipped down from the gate, threw himself on the grass, and cried bitterly. It was quite enough to make even an older person cry.

If he had not been crying, and if he had not been so miserable, and if he had only stayed a little longer looking over the gate, he would soon have seen a very pleasant sight!

He would have seen Dick Tattersall carrying the sturdy little Joshua on his back; and Nancy with a sheaf of timothy-grass in one hand, on every bent of which were at least four-and-twenty wild strawberries like great coral beads—and in the other, a little basket as full as ever it would hold, and covered with a cloth; and Peggy Ford, with something in her hand that looked very like a big basin tied up in a buff handkerchief. And down the lane

they were trudging as fast as they could, chattering as they came along.

Poor Harry, who lay crying in the grass, heard something just before they reached the gate which made him jump up at once and rush forward. He heard their voices—and there they were, all four of them!

They saw that he had been crying, and he did not pretend to deny it, for he said he thought that they would not come; he thought they would stay at home and make dandelion chains instead.

"Not come!" Dick exclaimed; "why, I've been out ever so early this very morning to get strawberries out of Smith's spinny! And we should have been here two hours earlier, only Mrs. Ford's cat was lost, and we had to find her. She had been shut out all night, and Mrs. Ford was quite miserable till she was found, so we all went to hunt her."

Then Peggy had such a great deal to tell

about their trouble on her account; and Harry had to tell how he had seen the cat mewing at the door, and little Joshua had to tell that he it was who saw her first, and nobody would believe it was she;—and she was in Martin's old pig-sty, and nobody could tell how she got there.

Then Nancy wanted Harry to look at the strawberries all strung on the tall timothy-grass; and then they had to tell that they were doing this, and not making dandelion chains, when Mrs. Wardle saw them.

Harry gave little Joshua the clapper, and he strutted about, clapping with all his might; the others ran on down to the little parlor among the hazel-bushes, and there they examined what they all had for dinner. Nancy Tattersall opened her basket, and there was such a lot of cold beans and bacon, and bread; and a lustre-mug, that looked like silver, to drink out of; and a great three-cornered piece

of cold batter pudding, at the bottom of which was a layer of currants an inch thick. And in Peggy Ford's basin there was a cold rice pudding which her mother had baked the night before; and all the strawberries besides! Now, was it not a famous dinner? They thought it as good as a Lord Mayor's feast.

The visitors said that Harry had made a beautiful little parlor for them, and they admired the seats and the moss-cushions, and everything. Harry felt very happy, and so did they all; and as they were all very hungry, too, they agreed to eat Peggy Ford's rice pudding now, by way of luncheon. Little Joshua did nothing all the morning but strut about, clapping and shouting; and not a single bird came near the corn.

Of course, they supposed that old Farmer Broadbent was gone to church; but instead of that he was walking down to his big corn-field, and reached the other side of the old marl-pit

just as they had finished eating the cold pudding. They did not see him, because he stood behind the hazel-bushes, but *he* saw *them;* and presently, crash! he came through the hedge just below.

There he stood before them, his face all red with heat, his hat in one hand, and his stick and a great red pocket-handkerchief with which he was going to wipe his face, in the other. He was dressed in his Sunday clothes; his brown coat, yellow and black and white striped waistcoat, which was all unbuttoned, and drab breeches, and gray stockings—for today he was without his gaiters because it was so hot.

Harry was quite frightened, for the farmer's face looked very red, and when he lifted up his red pocket-handkerchief to wipe his face, he lifted also his great stick, because, as we said, he held them both in the same hand.

"You children seem to be very merry

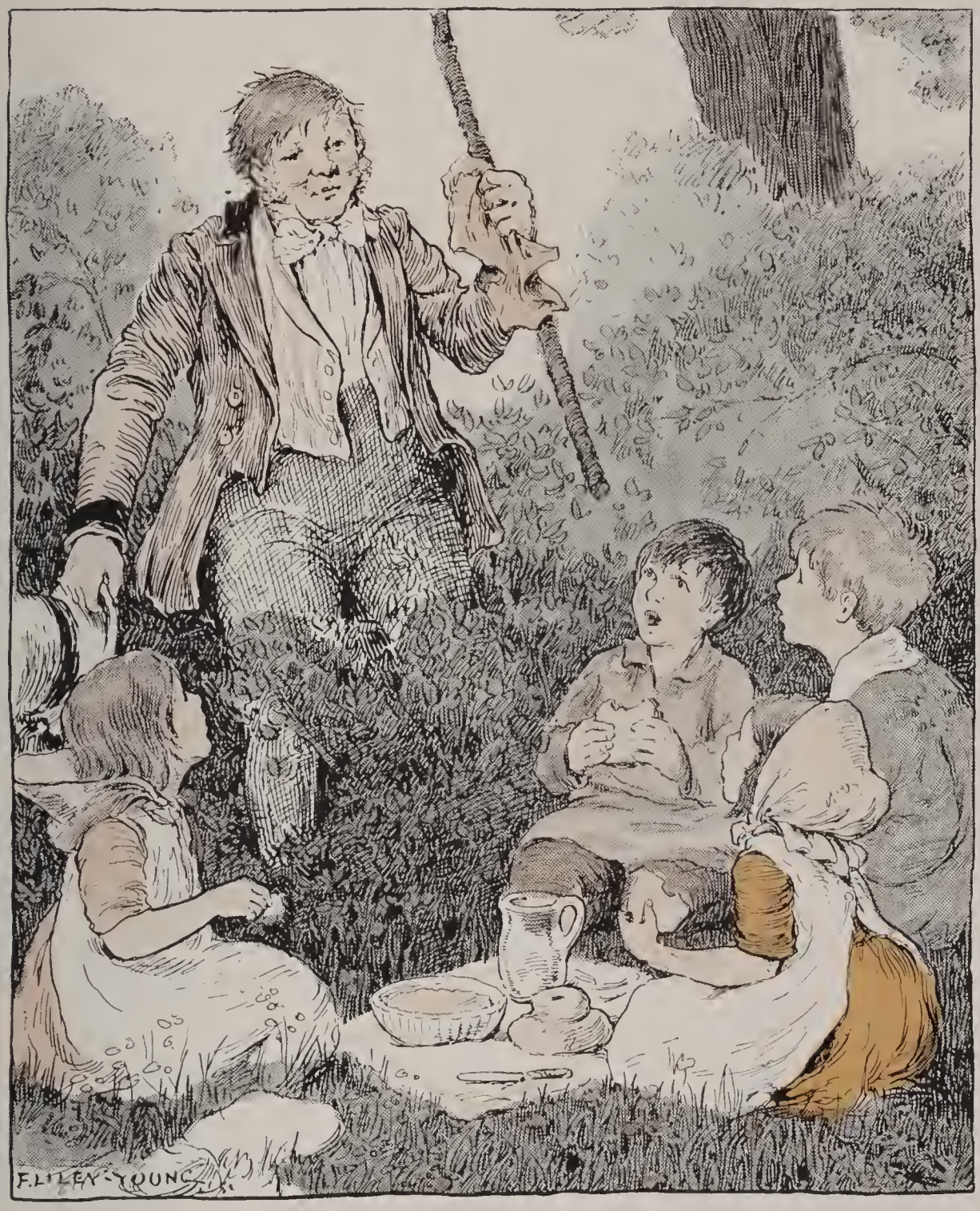
thear!" said he; "you've gotten a famous feast, and a nice shady corner to eat it in! But you would na be worser for a nice bottle o' my best fizzing root-beer; so if one on you will go wi' me, I'll gie you one!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Dick, jumping up at once, ready to go with him.

"Thank ye, mester!" said Harry, surprised, and looking as pleased as Punch.

"And th' little one does a' th' work to-day, I reckon!" said the farmer, smiling at little Joshua, who was making noise enough to deafen anybody.

Dick went with the farmer for the bottle of "fizzing root-beer"; and heard him laughing in the best kitchen, where Mrs. Broadbent, who had just come in from church, was sitting. The farmer told her all about "a parcel o' children that were having a feast wi' little Harry Twiggs, all among the hazzle-bushes," and how he had promised them a bottle of



CRASH! HE CAME THROUGH THE HEDGE.—*Page 147.*

"fizzing beer." Then Mrs. Broadbent was heard laughing, too, and she said that one of "those gooseberry pies" would not come in amiss among them; and then out she came with a great big gooseberry pie, baked in a brown dish, with all sorts of zigzags on the crust, and a bottle in her hand. Mr. Broadbent came after her, and both of them were still laughing; and he said, and so did she, that they hoped the pie would be to the children's liking, and the root-beer, too,—but they must remember not to break either bottle or dish!

Away went Dick as fast as he could with the great big pie in the brown dish and the bottle of fizzing beer. Now, only think what a surprise to everybody! Nancy, when she saw the pie, exclaimed, "My goodness!" and Peggy, "O my!" Little Joshua's eyes opened twice as wide as common, and he clapped louder than ever; while Harry capered about like a wild Indian, singing with all his might:

"O my!
Here's a gooseberry pie
With a zigzag crust, for dinner."

When they had set out their dinner, they sat down to it. And—would anybody believe it?—there they sat eating their dinner amongst those pleasant shady "hazzle-bushes," as old Farmer Broadbent called them, from half-past twelve o'clock till a quarter to three, when the bells began ringing again for afternoon service!

There was never such a dinner as that! and many times while it lasted little Joshua would strut about, clapping as loud as he could, so that the birds heard him all over the big field; and so did Farmer Broadbent, as he sat under the sycamore-tree before his kitchen door, smoking a pipe after dinner.

About an hour after this, up rose the farmer from the bench under the tree where he had been having a comfortable nap after his pipe, and smiled to himself as he thought of the children in the corn-field.

And what did he do then? Why, without saying a word to anybody, he walked down to see what they were after, saying all the time to himself, what a foolish old fellow he was to find so much amusement in "a parcel of poor children." And though he knew that it was not right to be a listener, yet he went and stood close behind the hazel-bushes again, just on purpose to hear what they were talking about; and if the children had not been so much taken up with their own talk, they must have heard him laughing to himself.

They had drunk all the "fizzing root-beer," every drop of it; and now Dick Tattersall was lying on his back, all among the grass and flowers before the little wood-parlor door, kicking up his legs, and thumping down his great heels again in a very ecstasy of delight, and all the time his tongue was rattling away like a mill-clapper. The afternoon service at the church was just over, and Dick was pre-

tending that he could see all the folks come out, and was talking for them: now very solemnly, for the clergyman; now very pompously, for the schoolmaster; and now very savagely, for the constable, who was so hard and pitiless to the poor, and whom everybody disliked so much.

How the children laughed! and Dick kicked up his legs and banged them down again, just as if it were a great steam-engine at work. The farmer behind the bushes laughed quite as much as they did; and then he walked away, thinking how pleased he was that poor little Harry Twiggs had such a merry company.

"And there they are at this moment," said Herbert and Meggy's father; "and are you not as much pleased as the farmer that they have had a merry day of it, and such a good dinner?"

"What a long day to-morrow will seem

to poor little Harry all by himself!" said Meggy.

"Not at all so!" returned the father. "Harry will do nothing all day but think of the fun he had the day before; one day like that will last him a week. Besides, they promised to come again next Sunday.

"The farmer heard them, and told his wife, scarcely an hour ago, as they were sitting in the arbor at tea; and she said in a minute that she would take care that they should have another gooseberry pie, and another bottle of fizzing root-beer, to make merry with. And Mrs. Broadbent is a woman that always keeps her word; only she made her husband promise that he would say nothing to the children about it beforehand."

Meggy and Herbert were delighted and clapped their hands for joy. They forgot all about the excessive heat which had made them so uncomfortable before.

CHAPTER XX

OFF TO HASTINGS

The children's coughs soon began to mend, and in a few weeks a great and most unexpected happiness resulted for the children. They were both to go to Hastings for one whole month, with their mother and their sister Mary, and Martha the maid. Never had they heard such good tidings before.

"I am glad that we had the whooping-cough," said Meggy.

"Good often comes out of evil," said Herbert, who had a little more experience of life than his sister.

Meggy heard her mother and sister say that Hastings was a very pleasant place, and by the seaside. All their friends said the same, and this general opinion filled her with the

most charming idea of the place. Some of the boys from the school, who came up to see Herbert, had been at Hastings with their mothers, and they told him the same. It is impossible, therefore, to say with what delight the children thought of going there.

They were to set off on Tuesday; and on Monday what a pleasure it was to see all their things piled on the nursery table, ready to be packed!

The happy morning came, as all happy mornings are sure to come; and yet people are often as impatient about them as if there were some doubt on the subject! The morning came: the trunks and portmanteaus and carpet-bags were brought down into the hall. Their father gathered a basket full of beautiful peaches and purple grapes for them, and there was another basket of biscuits and sandwiches. There was no longer any question about their going. Martha brought down her

little green wooden box, and it stood among the other luggage.

What a charming thing it was to be setting off on a journey! Meggy thought it pleasanter even, this time, than when she set off with Ellen into the country. The children were impatient; they said they wondered how it was that time seemed to go so slowly when they were waiting for any pleasure, but so fast when they were enjoying it. It seemed to them as if it would never be ten o'clock, at which time the carriage was to come to take them to the railroad station. Their mother sat reading; so did their sister; their father was writing; the hands of the clock seemed absolutely not to move.

The children seated themselves on a portmanteau in the hall, jumping up every minute to see if the carriage were not coming. Now, they guessed what sort of horse they would have—whether a white one, or a black one, or a

bay; and then they watched the omnibuses drive up and down, and the carts and carriages; and guessed whether, after having shut their eyes for half a minute, they should see a man or a dog first; if they happened to guess right, they were very much pleased.

At last, to their great joy, the carriage was at the gate, and the man was fixing on the trunks and the carpet-bags. Herbert carried out one carpet-bag himself, and then the basket of fruit was given to him, which he was to take care of through the journey.

And now everybody was seated, and off they drove. Really and truly the time was come when the journey to Hastings had begun.

CHAPTER XXI

TRAVELLING AND ARRIVAL

HERBERT enjoyed all the bustle at the railway station quite as much as Meggy had done a few weeks before.

And now, what a happiness it was to be sitting in a nice snug railway carriage, looking out at the window and talking together of all the new and wonderful things that they saw! They were very much amused with the sea of chimneys and housetops through which, when they first set out, they seemed to be floating. Then they came to market-gardens where there were immense beds of rhubarb, now looking withered and desolate, but which in spring had produced such thousands and thousands of stalks of rhubarb, and out of which such thousands of pies and puddings had been made.

Their mother told them to think of the hundreds of little children, many of them very poor children, who had rejoiced over the puddings and pies made from this very rhubarb, and which had been to them like the most delicious luxury.

And then, just as had been the case with the Southampton Railway, on which Meggy had travelled, they came presently to charming country-houses, with their lawns and flower-gardens, and pleasant shrubberies, and saw ladies and little children walking in them; then to some grand mansion standing on a green slope, in a wooded park; and then to little towns where the train stopped and some passengers got out, and fresh ones got in—and then the steam screamed, and off went the train again.

All this was charming; but nothing interested Herbert like the electric telegraph, of which he now heard for the first time. It was

wonderful to him; it interested him beyond words; he never was tired of talking about it, and he kept his eyes fixed on those marvellous wires, and could think of nothing else.

Presently they came to a tunnel; this was the first tunnel they had been through since they had travelled two years before on a railroad in Belgium, when they returned with the family from Germany. The children had almost forgotten that long, pleasant journey, but now this tunnel brought it back to their minds.

Yes, there had been just such a tunnel in Belgium or Germany, and they had then been frightened at the long darkness, and the loud, roaring, rushing noise of the train as it had passed through. They were not at all frightened now, though they thought of dungeons and dark, deep caverns. It seemed, in fact, a pleasant variety; a little excitement which was not the less agreeable for having something of the dismal and terrific in it.

Now they were out of the tunnel,—out again into the pleasant daylight, with the sun shining over everything with a warm clear radiance.

In a little while they came to where the line of the railroad cut through vast fields of hops; and here and there they saw groups of hop-pickers, men and women and children, stripping the clustered flowers from the vines.

There was something very cheerful and picturesque in these groups of hop-pickers. Mary wished that she could stay and make a sketch of them; and Herbert and Meggy thought that they should very much like to go into a hop-garden, and help the poor little hop-pickers at their work.

Hop-picking seemed a very pleasant employment on this warm, bright autumn day. And so it is in fine season; and the poor people, who come with their whole families for the hop-picking, find it pleasant enough when the weather is favorable. When it is wet, they

often suffer greatly, and then they find shelter in the kilns, or oast-houses, which are always heated for drying the hops. Here the poor hop-pickers dry their wet clothes, and make themselves as comfortable as they can under existing circumstances.

The railroad at that time was not made to Hastings, and therefore people had to go part of the way by coach. Herbert was very sorry to be shut up inside the coach; he would have liked so much better to have gone on the outside, and looked about him and seen the beautiful country, and caught the first sight of the sea. However, as he could not have his wish, he and Meggy contrived to see a good deal through the windows. At last they saw the sea, the bright sea, lying before them, and looking like a sun-lit mirror of polished steel.

On the west stretched out a headland with a strongly defined outline, which was Beachy Head. On this side of it lay Pevensey Bay,

where William the Conqueror landed with all his Normans. And now, to the left, came into sight the old gray ruins of the Castle of Hastings, on its green heights overlooking the sea. The children were delighted, for they knew enough of the early history of England to understand how interesting this view was; and when their sister said that it was like looking at a grand historical picture, they understood that also.

They were all charmed with this first view of Hastings. Presently they came down to the level of the sea, and drove along its margin. The setting sun shone in warm crimson light upon the moving water. The tide coming in, and a fresh breeze, made the water still more animated. Herbert had never seen anything which had pleased and astonished him so much, and he kept exclaiming about it.

"Only look at those beautiful waves! Are they billows, mother dear?" asked he. "Look

how they come dashing and tumbling up! Oh, how I love the sea!"

The children's happiness was increased by their finding that the house in which they were to lodge was close to the sea. There was nothing but the pebbly beach between them and the water. They could stand at the window of their little room and look out on the sea; they could hear its roar as plainly as if they stood beside it.

"It roars like a thousand dragons!" said Herbert, enthusiastically. "I shut my eyes and fancy it is dragons. I love to hear it! I did not think that the sea was so grand!"

CHAPTER XXII

SEA TREASURES

THE next morning the sun shone as bright as possible. The tide was again coming in, and as soon as breakfast was over the children went out with Martha. They went first to buy for each a little wooden spade, and an old-fashioned, odd-looking wooden basket, in which to collect seaweed and shells.

When the tide went down they found treasures at every step: there were shells, and seaweed, and starfish, and those little black, bladder-like weeds shaped like a hand-barrow, which the children at Hastings call "money-purses." Meggy, who was not nearly so strong as Herbert, found it very fatiguing to walk on the shingle; she and Martha therefore sat and

rested, while Herbert wandered about near them looking for treasures and wonders.

Everything was wonderful both to him and Meggy; but nothing pleased him more than the sea itself. He used to go out with his sister Mary when the tide was either coming in or at its height, and walk close to its margin, or stand and watch it. There was, to his mind, indescribable beauty in one great wave rolling in after another, coming up with such power and grandeur, and then, just as it reached its extreme limit, heaving itself up and giving a plunge,—head forward, as it were,—and tumbling like a cascade fringed with spray, headlong upon the shingle, and then rolling back again with a rattling *shaling* sound.

One morning, though the weather was not good, Herbert and his sister Mary went out together. Several days had been wet and stormy. The wind had howled, the sea had roared, and the sea and the sky had both been

of a dull leaden color; it looked very wild and gloomy.

The children had not been able to go out for two whole days; they had occupied themselves in arranging their shells and seaweeds in a little cupboard, on the shelves of which they displayed their treasures, and were never tired of looking at them. Here were assembled every kind of shell and every kind of seaweed which they had yet found. It was to them like a little marine museum.

During these two stormy days Herbert counted all the sea-gulls which he saw, and they amounted to twenty-seven. He wrote a letter to his father; and, for his own pleasure, did several multiplication examples.

On the third of these gloomy mornings, however, his sister Mary proposed to him that, as it was not cold, and as it did not then rain, he should have his coat on, that they should take an umbrella, in case rain came on, and sally

forth—they two—and walk up the shore, as far as the weather would permit them.

This proposal was quite to Herbert's taste. They wrapped themselves up, therefore, and off they set; Herbert, with his odd little wooden basket—which looked as if it had come down from the time of the Danes—and his sister with the umbrella.

It looked very gray in the sky, and it looked very gray on the water. They were much afraid that they should not even reach the base of the East Cliff. Stout fishermen, in oilskin-covered hats and reddish-colored tanned smock-frocks, were standing amongst the fishing-boats. Not a fisherman had been out for these three days. Here and there a gentleman with a boy, or a gentleman without one, wrapped up in greatcoats, and with umbrellas in their hands, were walking on the shore. Herbert's sister was the only lady that had ventured out.

It was a dull, still morning, and the only thing that seemed to have any life in it was the sea, which came thundering up with heavy billows that looked like lead under that gloomy sky. There had been so few people out that morning that there was plenty of seaweed to be picked up; and Herbert had not gone far before he found two or three kinds which he had not seen before. He found shells, too, both large and small; and feathers of the sea-gull. All these, laid together in his basket, looked very pretty. How much Meggy and he would enjoy arranging them in their museum!

On they walked, past the town and under the beautiful East Cliff, which they had been afraid of not being able to reach, and where great rocks were scattered thickly about the shore, and amongst which the dark sea, with its foaming billows, seemed to boil and churn and lash itself into fury.

By this time the clouds began to break

away; and, though it was not clear enough for the sun to come out, it was very pleasant.

"I am glad we came," said Herbert.

"It is much better to have courage and not to be afraid of little difficulties," said his sister.

"Yes, I know that by my reading, and my multiplication table," said Herbert; and the two were beginning to moralize about bold, determined people always having much less trouble, and being able to accomplish much more than timid, irresolute ones, when Herbert stopped short and uttered a scream of delighted surprise.

He had found something; what could it be? He had nearly set his foot upon it. Was it alive or was it dead? Was it a fish or a land-animal? He could not remember any such creature as that in Bewick's "Natural History." It was alive! Yes, it moved; it had such a number of legs! What a queer thing it was!

Herbert said that perhaps it might be a duck-billed platypus. No, it could not be a duck-billed platypus either, for that had something like a duck's beak, but this had nothing of the kind. This thing was somewhat like a long fat mouse, with its head, and legs, and tail all squeezed into its body, and with about twenty little legs on each side; there was a coarse sort of hair on its back and on its sides; and its sides looked quite metallic, and reflected colors like the inside of the Venus-ear shell. No, certainly it was not a duck-billed platypus.

Then, suggested Herbert, perhaps it was quite a new kind of creature which nobody had ever seen before; perhaps they should have the honor of discovering it, and it would be called after them. The idea was quite delightful. Unfortunately, his sister could not flatter him with the hope that it might be so. But she would, she said, ask somebody.

Presently they saw an old fisherman stand-

ing on a sandy piece of beach, among wild rugged rocks, and to him they went. He was very busy digging in the sand. They waited till he made a pause in his work, and then asked him if he had ever seen such a thing as this they had found.

The old man had a face as weather-beaten and as rugged as the rocks among which he stood. He looked at them and then at the creature about which Herbert was so much interested, and taking it into his great rough hand, he turned it over. Herbert thought that certainly he never had seen such a creature before, and was getting quite excited, when the old man said,—

"Why, yes, it's a sea-mouse; there's plenty of them hereabouts, and they are very handsome in *sperrits!*"

This, then, was a sea-mouse. All at once Herbert's desire to be the discoverer of a new animal gave way to a fresh idea. House-mice

he knew, and field-mice, and wood-mice; and this, then, was their little comical ocean-cousin, the sea-mouse. He had listened to the reading of German stories of *meer-katzen,* or sea-cats. He could now fancy the sea-cat lying in wait for the funny little sea-mouse. He put the sea-mouse in his basket among his treasures, and felt quite an affection for it. What would Meggy say when she saw the queer creature?

While he was thinking about this, he had one ear open all the time to listen to what the old man was talking about. He said that he was setting baits for fish in the sand. He had a hook baited with a piece of fish fastened to a short line, the end of which, being tied to a brick or heavy stone, was buried in the sand. In this way he sometimes caught cod and conger-eels. Sometimes he would catch a good many; and sometimes he set his baits, tide after tide, day after day, and took nothing. If he caught anything, why, then he was thankful;

if not, he set his baits again, and hoped for better luck next tide.

Herbert and his sister bade him good morning, and then walked on. Before they turned homeward the gray cloud had melted away into soft blue ether; the sun came out, and the shingly beach was soon dry. And that was the last storm, or even rain, that they had while they stayed at Hastings.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LIGHT-GREEN BOAT

One morning (it was the most beautiful morning that ever was seen) the sun shone with a warm golden light into their chambers before the children were awake. Beachy Head and Eastbourne stood clearly distinct in the eastern light; the morning sun was so dazzlingly reflected in the sea that they could not look upon it.

People were already out on the shore and the children were impatient to be up and dressed. For that one morning they did not care about seeing the little donkey milked at the next house, where the poor sick child was; and yet hitherto this had been one of the morning's interesting events.

As soon as breakfast was over, they set out

with their mother and sister, to go a long way up the shore—which, according to Herbert's account, who had been along it on that gloomy morning, was the most charming thing in the world. Herbert carried a basket filled with biscuits and apples, and Mary took her sketch-book.

Before they had gone far, they came to the place where the fish was brought in from the fishing-boats which had been out in the night. The large fishing-boats, with their great tan-colored sails, lay a little way out from the shore, in deep water, and between them and the shore went to and fro the little boats which brought away the fish. It was a very busy and a very amusing sight.

Everybody looked active and cheerful. The strong fishermen, in their huge waterproof boots, and tanned short linen frocks, were carrying baskets full of shining silvery herrings, and pouring them out upon the shore; and

there the fish lay in little mounds, by thousands and thousands. Other men were busy packing up these fish into square wicker-baskets, which were all to be sent off directly to London.

Groups of women and children were standing about, laughing and talking and looking on. There was a pretty young woman, with a child in her arms, and two older ones holding by her apron. Nothing could be prettier than this group—they looked so healthy and so good-humored.

Presently there came up to them a stout, merry-faced fisherman, brown and weather-beaten, in his coarse fisherman's dress, helping to bring up a huge basket of fish. The moment these two children saw him, they let go their mother's apron, and sprang toward him with a shout of joy. The baby saw him, and kicked and screamed with delight; the mother smiled; the father emptied out the shining slippery fish; and then catching up both little children

at once, one in each arm, gave them such a hug of affection as made them scream again. He gave, first to one, and then to the other, a loud smacking kiss; and then, snatching the baby from the mother, tossed and tickled and twirled it about, and held it up aloft on the palm of his huge strong hand; and the baby, accustomed to such rough merriment, screamed and kicked, and roared again with laughter. It was a pleasant sight! He was a fine fellow, that fisherman, and had a warm, loving heart under his coarse tan-colored frock.

Herbert and Meggy watched all that went on with great delight; and when their mother reminded them that many of the disciples of Jesus Christ were rough, weather-beaten men, and, like these, went out at night on the seas of Galilee and Tiberias to catch fish, they felt only fresh interest in what they saw.

The tide was sufficiently low to leave visible the large blocks of stone with which the part of

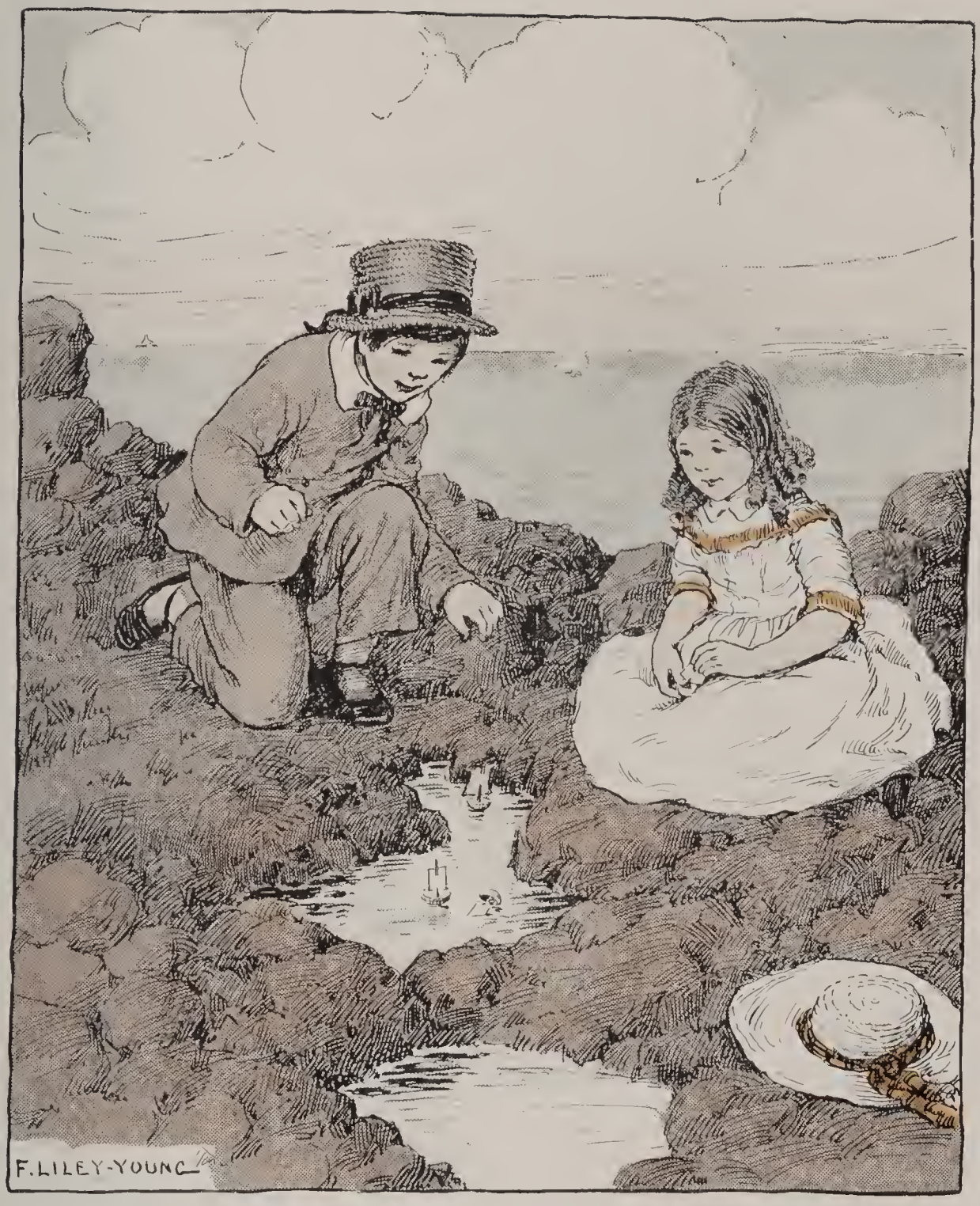
the beach below East Cliff was scattered. Such stones as are usually covered by the tide are overgrown with a short, close-growing, velvety sea-moss, of a rich green color: the angles of many of the blocks of stone are worn off by the action of the waves; and this roundness and this moss give to them the fanciful appearance of huge heads covered with green wigs.

Herbert and Meggy were delighted with this idea. They amused themselves by fancying all kinds of queer grotesque faces to each of these bewigged heads, and recalled all the stories that they had ever heard read of mermen and mermaids, sitting on rocks in the sea, combing their long green hair. Surely this must be a great company of sea gods and goddesses, or mermen and mermaids, whose heads were only just above water; or else old Neptune and his court had met here, and now were looking about them with their odd stony faces and sleek green hair!

The children found endless amusement here. On the tops of some of the larger blocks of stone they found hollows, which were still full of water, left from the tide which a few hours before had covered them: these they called lakes on the tops of mountains. They made boats of little limpet-shells, and twisted up little tiny bits of paper, which they called fishermen, and set in them. Herbert blew them along; and it was the greatest delight imaginable to see how the one jostled the other, and what a natural desire they seemed to have to sail in company; and then Herbert blew a great hurricane and upset them all. Was not that a thing to lament over?

Herbert showed his mother and Meggy the place where he had found the sea-mouse; but this time there was not one to be seen. Suppose the sea-cats had eaten them all up, he said, would not that be a misfortune?

The old man was again setting his baits.



THEY MADE BOATS OF LITTLE LIMPET-SHELLS.—*Page 180.*

They went to him and asked what luck he had had the night before. He told them that he had caught nothing—not a single fin! But he was setting his baits again, and maybe, he said, he should be more successful the next tide.

The billows danced in the sunshine; curlews and sea-gulls flew along the water; and chattering jackdaws by hundreds wheeled round the tops of the cliff, and seemed as if they were saying, "Here we are, Herbert and Meggy, this fine morning."

Before long, their mother thought they had all gone far enough without resting, so they sat down among the rocks at the foot of Ecclesbourne Glen to rest; and the children, finding that they were hungry, ate some biscuits and apples.

While they were thus sitting, a little boat came skimming along the sea at about a hundred yards' distance from the shore. Ladies and gentlemen were seated in it. The boat

seemed as light as a shell, and was painted pale green; a sailor in a blue shirt and red cap was rowing; the ladies were in bright-colored dresses, and had green parasols in their hands. With all its gay coloring and its smooth rapid movement, it was just like a boat in a fairy tale. Oh, how pretty it was! It glided along in the sunshine, and the water dropped from the oars like shining silver.

Herbert and Meggy were seized with a desire for a ride in such a boat as that. They left off playing and watched it for a long time; and as it went farther off, they saw two sea-gulls dashing about in the golden sunshine, between them and the boat—and this made it look only the more like a lovely picture. After they had watched these objects till they were tired, they turned their attention to something else; and thus, after a very pleasant little rest, they set off again to walk farther up the shore.

They walked on and on until at last their

mother said it was quite time they turned their faces homeward. To walk on the shingly shore was always fatiguing, and soon Meggy found herself so tired that she did not know how in the world she should get home. She no longer took any pleasure in the green heads of the old sea-gods; nor did it seem worth while to look even at the little lakes on the tops of the rocky mountains, where, in going, they had sailed their little limpet-shell boats.

They went on very slowly, and Meggy's mother, like the weary little girl herself, wished that they had not gone so far. Herbert wished that he were big and strong enough to carry Meggy all the way home on his back; he was sure he could carry her a long way even as it was. He wished very much they would let him try to do it.

As they were thus toiling on, they heard merry voices behind them, and turning round they saw that it was the gay party who had

gone up in the boat, and were now walking along the beach like themselves. The little boat in the meantime kept alongside of them on the water, and was evidently going to take them in a little lower down. As they came up they saw how tired poor Meggy was; and kindly invited the whole party to come into their boat, and enjoy the trip back to Hastings.

Meggy's mother was very glad. She thought the ladies kind and considerate, and thankfully accepted their offer; and Meggy, tired as she was, jumped for joy. Herbert's face brightened, and his eyes looked twice their usual size. He pulled Meggy a little out of the hearing of the others, and said how glad he was that they should have a ride in that beautiful boat; and that she would not have to walk back!

The party got into the boat, and there seemed to be just room for everybody.

So now the children had their wish, and were

riding in a lovely little green boat that went skimming along like a shell. The sailor in the blue shirt and red cap rowed away, the golden noonday light lit up the incoming tide, and the two sea-gulls dashed about in the sunny air just as they had done before.

The children could see, as they sat in the boat, the very places on the shore where they had enjoyed themselves so much. There was the place where the sea-mouse was found, and where the old man set his baits; and other ladies and other children were hunting for shells and seaweed and pebbles, while still others were reading and sketching.

Everybody looked up as they passed; and the children could fancy, perfectly well, how they themselves looked; and they could fancy, too, that other children would say, as they had done, how pleasant it must be to sail on the sunshiny sea in a light-green boat that went skimming over the waves like a shell!

CHAPTER XXIV

A COUNTRY EXCURSION

One morning their mother told the children that they were going that day with her and Mary to the Lovers' Seat, about three miles from Hastings. They had often heard of the Lovers' Seat; they knew many people who had been to it. Their mother had gone one day before; and the kind people who had brought them home in the pretty green boat had been there that same morning.

It was very delightful news, therefore, to Herbert and Meggy, that they were that very day going to the Lovers' Seat themselves. They were to take some refreshment with them, and were to be out several hours. They never thought of the morning when Meggy was so tired with walking up the shore; she

was not tired now, and so they did not think about fatigue. Herbert said he should carry the basket of eatables; he could carry also his sister's sketch-book, and the book that his mother was going to read. They were very impatient to be off.

Scarcely were they out of the door when they saw a pretty little blue carriage, drawn by a couple of goats, standing as if waiting for somebody. There were red cushions in the little carriage; and the goats were very pretty —the one was as white as snow, the other of a ruddy brown. A lad with a handsome face and bronze complexion stood beside the goats; he had a little stick in his hand, and was evidently their driver. As soon as he saw the children's mother, he lifted his green cap from his head and smiled very merrily, as if he were in a good humor, and was going to enjoy something very much.

Herbert and Meggy had seen this little car-

riage several times, and there had always been children riding in it, who seemed to find it very pleasant, as they had always thought *they* should, if they rode in it. And now, were they really going to ride in it? It must be so, for their mother walked up to the carriage, and then turned round and looked at the children.

Meggy's face all at once became as red as a rose with joy, and Herbert gave a loud exclamation of delight, as their mother said,— "Now, children, what do you think of driving in this pretty carriage, with these pretty goats, all the way to the Lovers' Seat?"

There was no necessity to wait for any reply. Never were there such looks of joy and surprise before.

"Thank you, dear mother!—thank you, dear mother!" said they; and while Herbert seated himself with great dignity in the front seat, Martha lifted Meggy into the back seat. The basket of provisions and the books, which

Herbert had been so anxious to carry, were put in also; and then the bronze-complexioned boy touched the goats with his little stick, and away they went.

Really, it was a very charming thing to ride in a goat-carriage! The children were wonderfully talkative; they were brimful of happiness, and the subjects of conversation that they found were endless.

The little willing goats trotted on, nodding their horns and wagging their beards as they went; and the bronze-complexioned boy trudged on beside them, with his merry, handsome face, looking back every now and then to see that all was right, and to cast a good-natured glance at the children, who seemed so much to enjoy their drive.

They left the goat-chaise at a white gate, where they turned off from the road; and now Herbert carried the provision-basket and one of the books, while Meggy, anxious to be use-

ful, claimed the privilege of carrying the other. They bounded along like mountain roes, and Herbert was so full of fun and spirits, that he was forced every now and then to set down his book and basket, that he might have the free use of all his limbs for a caper of delight.

The children, who always thought the present pleasure the greatest they had ever enjoyed, now declared that they really never had seen anything so delightful as the walk which they were now taking. They passed through old pasture-fields, where grew ancient mossy crab-trees, and then down into a deep, deep lane, overshadowed with trees. The banks on either side rose up like slanting walls, and were overgrown and festooned with luxuriant branches of feathery fern, and the beautiful polished green leaves of the hart's-tongue.

After they left the lane they entered a wood, where children came and offered themselves as guides to the Lovers' Seat; but Herbert's

mother preferred finding the way by themselves. So they stopped and talked to the children, and gave them each a penny, and admired the baby which one of them was tending. Then they walked on through the wood, gathering, as they went along, a nosegay of such autumn flowers as still remained.

At the end of the wood they came quite suddenly upon a beautiful scene. Before them lay the hill, sloping downwards as smooth and green as velvet. A sort of terrace on the left evidently led to the famous Lovers' Seat; for along this broad green path, groups of gay people were seen going and coming.

Exactly opposite, lay the sea. Here and there on its surface skimmed along little boats, or larger craft with all their sails set. The greatest joy of all, however, to Herbert and his sister, was to see the very object for which they had looked, and looked in vain, ever since they came to Hastings. This was a steam-

vessel. It was a long way out at sea, but still very distinct, and it advanced with a smooth, stately motion along the expanse of sunshiny water, leaving behind its trail of dark smoke. The children were delighted; they called it the *Water Witch,* and said that she was going from London to Portsmouth.

At the Lovers' Seat, which is perched like a sea-fowl's nest on the side of the cliff overlooking the sea, they took their refreshment. Herbert amused himself with the idea that this was an eagle's nest, and that he was a young eaglet that sat flapping its wings and gaping to be fed.

In returning, instead of pursuing the green terrace on the hillside, by which they had come, they went down the smooth velvet-like hill into the valley below. The children ran, leaped, and shouted for joy. As they descended the hill, a low sound of delicate music reached them; it was like the tones of a music-

box, liquid and sweet!—like a ringing, ever-varying peal of the most melodious little bells!

The low sweet music seemed at first to come from the wood: if it had been moonlight, the children might have fancied it came from a revel of the fairies, it was so sweet and delicate; but when they reached the bottom of the valley, and could see that part of the opposite hill which had till then been concealed by the wood, they found that it proceeded from a flock of sheep which was grazing in a compact group.

They had often heard sheep-bells before, and so had their mother and sister. The old-fashioned sheep-bells, with their dry, monotonous dub, dub, had pleased them, because it was odd and country-like; and they could fancy the fat old sheep that had the honor of wearing the iron canister without a bottom, thinking that there was great dignity in its one-toned dub, dub. But this was so different! The flock,

which was all beautifully white, and every individual sheep of which was worthy to be painted in a picture, wore each one a little bell, which sent forth the most musical cadence, low and liquid, and ever varying.

The children were in raptures. Meggy thought it was like the ringing of the bells of flowers, as she had read of it in fairy tales; only one must fancy, she said, that *the music was heard through a magnifying-glass.* Herbert thought so, too. Their mother and Mary declared that they had never heard anything more melodious. They sat down on the hillside and listened. The flock spread itself out, and the music became more soft and low. Meggy shut her eyes, and talked again about fairies dancing. She could think of nothing else.

They sat there for a long time listening to the soft sighing of the breeze, the coo of the wood-pigeon, the low murmur of the sea and

the chime of the little bells. Then they went into the wood and walked up a path that led to the Dripping Well. Here a stream tumbled with a lively sound from a ledge of rock into a little basin which the water had worn for itself. A magnificent chestnut-tree arched over the basin like a tent.

The children said it was just such a well as a hermit would like to have had near his cell. They fancied that in ancient times there must have been a hermit living somewhere in these beautiful woods.

This was a day's ramble not to be forgotten; and in the evening, when they talked it over, they all agreed that it was one of the pleasantest days they ever had spent.

CHAPTER XXV

A DISAPPOINTING SEA TRIP

After they had been a fortnight at Hastings, their father and elder brother joined them. The children knew enough about the early history of England to take great interest in Hastings and its neighborhood, as connected with William the Conqueror. They had seen Pevensey Bay from a distance, and they heard that the place where that great and bloody battle was fought between Harold the Saxon king and William the Conqueror was about seven miles off; but they had no expectation of going to either of these places. It was a very joyful surprise, therefore, when one day their father said that while he stayed with them they would go to both these famous places; and,

what was still more delightful, that they would take a boat and go by water to Pevensey.

The day came on which they were to go on this sea trip. It was a splendid morning, warm and bright, and the wind was in the right direction; a soft, steady breeze, just enough to fill their sails, and carry them to Pevensey in a short time.

Herbert went with his father to look for a boat, and came back again in the highest spirits: they had engaged, he declared, the most beautiful boat in Hastings. Two men were to row them, and they were to have a couple of sails. The boat was called the *Nautilus*—was not that a beautiful name? The men who were to go with the boat said it was just the day for going to Pevensey, just the right wind: they should get there in an hour and a half with that wind, and it would take them two hours to row back again.

Everybody was delighted. Martha was to

go with them; and nothing could exceed the zeal with which the children informed her of all those historic facts which made Pevensey so interesting. The basket of provisions was ready. The sun was burning hot, and the party almost scorned the idea of cloaks and warm shawls being taken with them; Mary took her sketch-book, and Alfred the large telescope; and away they went for a day of thorough pleasure.

After rowing a little distance, the men laid up their oars, and began to busy themselves in hoisting the sails. Herbert was deeply interested; he had so much to ask, and so much to see, that he was in everybody's way. The sails were hoisted, and the children now thought that nothing could be more charming; they could just imagine how it would look from the shore. The motion was so smooth, that they wished they were going to sail in this way for days. Mary began to make a sketch

of the elder man, who had a handsome weather-beaten countenance.

Presently, however, one of the ropes which confined the sails gave a perverse sort of swing, and knocked off Alfred's hat. The men apologized, as if it were their fault, and made some little alteration; but that alteration only caused the rope to knock off the father's hat. The men were quite vehement in their apologies. They said that the whole arrangement of one sail must be altered—so down it came, and up it went again; but now it was ten times worse than ever. The sails blustered about like wild things, and carried the little boat quite out of its course.

Thin clouds were now coming up and veiling the sun, and everybody began to think about cloaks and warm shawls; the men also pulled their jackets out from a sort of little cupboard at one end of the boat and put them on; and Mary put aside her sketch-book, for

the motion of the boat prevented her drawing a line. Meggy was very quiet—much quieter than common.

The sun went behind a thick cloud, and the wind began to blow in their faces. How was that? It must have changed. The men set about altering the sails again. Down they came, and up they went once more; now they were tightened, now they were loosened; now they were hung this way, now that; and soon they were taken down altogether, and the men resumed their oars.

It was quite cold now, and a gray gloom had come over sea and sky. The little group in the boat sat wrapped up in their cloaks and shawls; Meggy was very quiet and rather pale, and Alfred and Herbert ravenously hungry. They counted the sea-gulls, and watched the merry little divers, that one minute were on the surface of the water, like a beautiful kind of duck, and the next were gone—but were

sure to pop up into sight again, often at a distance of several hundred yards. The two boys watched and admired these, and ate some dozens of sandwiches, and were full of life and fun.

In the meantime the boat approached no nearer to Pevensey. It had advanced as far as Bulverhithe, and there it seemed determined to stay. A sort of gray haze was coming up from the sea; it looked rather dismal. The men said that very often the wind stayed in this quarter for weeks, and brought terrible storms with it.

The time had dragged on to afternoon, and they were as far off as ever. The men seemed to have changed, like the weather; they looked gloomy, and seemed to have lost their gaiety. They evidently wanted their dinners, and saw no prospect of having them anywhere but at Hastings.

There was nothing, therefore, to be done,

but for the children's father to give the word that the boat's head should be turned about, and the sails again hoisted. In a minute after he had resolved on this it was done; and in a very short time the boat was going merrily over the sea, tossing on its waves, and scudding before a brisk west wind.

Again they saw the sea-gulls and divers. The boys shouted and sang as they had done before; the men looked cheerful and alert; and little Meggy, nestled in the bottom of the boat between her mother and sister, fell asleep.

They were again at home. They had a good fire made in their little parlor, sat down to dinner, and talked over, the while, their voyage to Pevensey. They all agreed that they had been much less successful than William the Conqueror.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CHILDREN VISIT BATTLE

Their "defeat at Pevensey," as their little unsuccessful trip came to be called, did not discourage them from going to Battle. The wild west wind, which had troubled them the other day, sunk to rest without a storm; and again the sun shone bright, on the morning when they set out in a large open carriage on this second excursion.

They had read about the great battle of Hastings, at which Harold was killed, and where thirty thousand men of the English alone lost their lives. They were going now to see the scene of this terrible tragedy, which, having been acted there nearly eight hundred years before, had left its name and its bloody memory to all future time.

They talked, as they went, of the probable

state and aspect of England when William came over from the opposite coast of Normandy in his flat-bottomed boats. The sea must then have looked much the same as now, except for the difference in the shipping; but the country itself must have looked very different. A great part of this flat coast of Sussex was then a succession of dreary, desolate marshes; but for all that, William knew that England was a noble country, and he determined to try to conquer it. He therefore brought over a vast army, landed at Pevensey, and, advancing but a short distance into the country, was met by Harold the Saxon king and his army. They fought. Harold was killed, his army defeated; and from that time William and his Normans became masters of England.

As the family approached Battle, all were struck with the beauty of its situation. With

its church and charmingly picturesque abbey, it lay in the bottom of an open valley, richly wooded and cultivated. Here had raged the great battle of Hastings, which was fought on the 14th of October, 1066.

Like other visitors, the children and their parents went through Battle Abbey and saw everything which was to be seen. This abbey was built by William the Conqueror, and a chapel was raised over the very spot where King Harold fell. The chapel is now quite demolished; nothing remains of it but its foundations and the bases of its pillars.

The children were much interested in such rooms in the abbey as are shown to visitors; the hall, with its armor, and the large painting of the battle of Hastings; and the old parlor of the monks, with its low arched roof and aisles like a church. Nothing, however, excited their imagination more than the cells in the old ruinous part of the abbey in which

skeletons had been found. That was horrible indeed! Until that moment, the children had no idea that men had ever been so cruel to their fellow-beings as to wall them up alive and leave them to perish.

Herbert and Meggy for the first time began to rejoice in the belief that the world is mending. People would not dare to do such things in England now.

"Now, if poor people are in distress," said Herbert, with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks, "rich people help them; and the Queen and the Parliament are always thinking what they can do to make people happier and better! And if anybody were to attempt to starve anybody to death in a narrow brick dungeon like this, the Queen and all the nation would rise up against them! I know they would!" continued he; "and so would the newspapers! People could not be so wicked now, if they would—and I don't even think anybody

would! Are not you glad, Meggy, that you live now, and not when people were so wicked and so hard-hearted?" he asked.

The whole party agreed with Herbert in thinking that the world had mended since the times when people might be bricked up in narrow cells and left to perish; but still, his mother told him, improved as the world was in many respects, there was a great deal to be done yet before it should be as perfect as it might be; and that everybody, even little boys and girls, must try to do something toward improving it still more; and that if they would always remember never to do to others what they should not like others to do to them, then they would be sure not to do anything wrong toward their fellow-creatures.

Herbert and Meggy understood this perfectly. Each took the other's hand, and they walked off, perhaps to continue the subject, but much more likely to talk of something else.

CHAPTER XXVII

A REMEMBERED CHRISTMAS

The pleasant month at Hastings was over. The children bade farewell to the sea and the shore, paid their last visit to the Castle and the East Cliff, and to the old sea-gods with their green wigs; and, furnished with a plentiful supply of roots of thrift, and sea-poppy, and fern, and hart's-tongue for the rockery at home, and with what they thought a most valuable collection of pebbles, shells, and sea-weed, they returned to London. They were very sorry to leave Hastings. They thought that the month they spent there was the pleasantest time they had ever spent anywhere.

Herbert and Meggy had again parted. He was at school and she was at home; but the parting, this time, was without tears, for they

found that their occasional meetings were so full of pleasure that really they had nothing more to desire. In a few weeks it would be Christmas, and then there would be the long holidays, when they should be together for six weeks.

It looked a great deal more like winter and the approach toward Christmas when they reached home, than it had at Hastings. There it had been very warm,—so warm indeed that no fire was needed except in an evening; they had seen the sun rise in the morning, and set at night. Here at home it was quite different; it felt cold, and was often very foggy, and the sun seemed hardly to shine all day; nobody could do without fire, and people were wearing their winter clothing. It really was the beginning of winter in London, and at Hastings it had often seemed like June. Well, the only comfort was that Christmas was coming.

A short time after their return, Alfred in-

formed Herbert and Meggy that Pelz-Nickel was coming to pay them a visit; and the thought of him made the whole family talk a great deal about the Christmas they had spent in Germany, and the visits of Pelz-Nickel and the "Christmas-angel."

Who was Pelz-Nickel? He was the forerunner of the little angel of Christmas. He came about two weeks before Christmas to everybody's house, rich and poor alike, to learn whether the children were good, and worthy to receive such presents as the kind and beautiful little Christmas-angel was going to bring to them.

Pelz-Nickel had come to Herbert and Meggy's home in Germany. They remembered all about it. Before it grew dusk, their faces and hands were well washed, their hair smoothly brushed, and they were made very neat and nice to receive him. They sat in the

drawing-room, with their parents, and brother and sister, and Ellen, all waiting for Pelz-Nickel's arrival.

At last one of the German maids ran upstairs out of the kitchen, looking quite excited, and said he really was coming; he was just then at the door! A loud, very, very loud ringing at the great entrance-door was then heard; heavy footsteps slowly ascended the broad stone staircase, and strange sounds were heard as of a gruff voice, and the dragging of a chain, and then the drawing-room door burst open, and in walked Pelz-Nickel.

He was, as his name expressed, dressed in furs—his name meaning Furry-Nicholas. He had a high fur cap on, fur boots, and a fur cloak, which was bound round him by a chain, the end of which dragged on the ground; on one side hung a huge bag, and in one hand he held a ponderous rod, as long as a broom-handle, only not so thick.

He said that he was the celebrated Pelz-Nickel, come all the way out of Russia, and now made his annual visit to that house to inquire about the characters of the two children, Herbert and Meggy, that he might report them to the little Christmas-angel.

He asked about their learning; demanded to see their writing-books and hear them read; he said he had heard such and such bad things of them (any little faults which, of course, he had been told beforehand). Of these faults they must cure themselves, or else —and here he shook his tremendous rod over them,—or else they would be punished in some dreadful way or other.

However, continued Pelz-Nickel, other things also had he heard of them, which had given him great pleasure,—and these were, that they tried, as much as they knew how, to do right; that they were industrious; loving to each other and obedient to their parents; and

therefore he would present them with a token of his good-will and kindness.

With that he put his hand into his great big bag, and out came such a torrent of apples and gingerbread, nuts and raisins, and all kinds of things, as never was seen. What a rejoicing there was, and what a scrambling to pick up everything! Yet all the time what a secret dread lest they should go within reach of his great rod, which he kept flourishing about constantly as if he meant to use it!

After this scrambling and bustling had somewhat subsided, Pelz-Nickel had something further to say,—and that was, that since he could give a good report of them the little Christmas-angel would assuredly pay them a visit on Christmas Eve, and would bring them many very beautiful things. Having said this, Pelz-Nickel smiled, made his bow, and departed. He was not, after all, anything to be afraid of. He was a right good fellow, and the

children only wished that he would come once a week instead of once a year.

As Pelz-Nickel had said that the little Christmas-angel would come, wonderful were the preparations that were made to receive that visitor. Nobody was permitted to go into the drawing-room all the day before Christmas Eve. It was shut up, and the children were sure that something very unusual was going on there.

Everybody also looked busy and mysterious; and though they had been ordered to keep in the nursery with Ellen all the day, yet they were forever popping out and running into everybody's way, and everybody was carrying something or other, and was sure to call out, "Do go out of my way, children!" or "What *are* you children doing here?" and then off they would scamper, only to meet a somebody else who was carrying another mysterious something. Well, it was all very strange!

Herbert threw himself down on his little old-fashioned wooden German stool, and laughed with all his might. He was sure that something funny was going to happen. Meggy, who was very little then, sat down on her little wooden stool beside him, and laughed with all her might, too.

At last afternoon came, and after the children had had an extra good washing and hair-brushing, they were dressed in their best clothes in honor of the expected wonderful visitor. Then it began to get dusk, and as soon as it was quite dark the little Christmas-angel would come! And then—and then—oh, nobody knew what would happen then! The children did not, that was quite certain, for they had never been in Germany before, nor had read German books. All they knew was that, ever since that funny old Pelz-Nickel came, everybody had been talking about the little Christmas-angel's visit and making great

preparations; so there must be something very extraordinary about it.

At length it grew dark, and then some German friends, who were come to spend the day with them, said that the little Christmas-angel had come into the house, nay, even into the drawing-room, and that in a few minutes the drawing-room door would open, and then—what would they not see! The children stood hand in hand, almost afraid to breathe. Their eyes seemed twice their usual size, because of the wonders they expected to behold.

And after all, were they satisfied with what they saw? Nobody need have asked that question who saw their looks, and heard their shout of amazement, when the drawing-room door really opened. The whole room looked to them like a fairy palace—such a blaze of light was there, revealing such wonderful things!

There was a tree, just like a tree come down

from heaven, covered as if with flowers of softly burning light; birds of sugar, and of the loveliest colors of the rainbow, sat in the branches; and all the branches were laden with the most wonderful and varied fruits. There were golden apples, and pears, and nuts; bunches of raisins, and almonds, and walnuts, and cakes, shaped like hearts; and rings, and diamonds, and beautiful bouquets of flowers, made of sugar! There was no telling all the fruit which that wonderful tree bore! And under the tree there was a garden full of flowers and velvet-like moss; and a stag with gilded horns, and a shepherd with his sheep were also in the garden. No wonder that the grown-ups as well as the children were delighted.

But the tree was not the only wonderful thing, for there was the little Christmas-angel, all in white, with white wings, and a crown of silver on her head, and a little silver bell in her hand; and she rang her little bell, and then,

first to one and then to another, gave beautiful presents.

The children remembered all this—they would never forget it. They remembered the doll and the horse, and the little dishes and plates, and chairs and tables, which she had given them, and the great picture-books, which they still had, and the little fable books, and the scarlet coats trimmed with fur, that she had brought, too. Was she not a wonderful Christmas-angel?

CHAPTER XXVIII

PELZ-NICKEL, JUNIOR

YES, the children remembered that Christmas in Germany very well indeed; and now this winter when the Christmas season was again drawing near, they almost wished themselves in Germany!

However, Alfred told them one day, that Pelz-Nickel, Junior, was intending to 'pay them a visit in their English home.

What exciting news this was!

The children asked Alfred whether this Pelz-Nickel, Junior, who was coming to see them, was like the one they had seen in Germany. Alfred said, no, not exactly like him, for he was old Pelz-Nickel's youngest brother, and therefore could not afford to be as well-dressed; for instance, the coat in which he

would come—and it was his best coat, and one which he had made for the occasion—was made of coarse hempen cloth, and was only lined with fur. His hair, which was flax-colored, was tied behind in a long pigtail. He had a red, frost-bitten sort of face, and spoke in a queer squeaky voice, and altogether was not half so grave and venerable as his elder brother. But then he had quite as large a rod, and Alfred was not sure whether his bag was not larger; at all events, he had plenty of good things in it, and therefore would do quite as well for them.

The children were in a state of the highest excitement and delight. The very day after Alfred had described him, a letter written in queer, sharp-pointed German characters came to the family. It was to make known that on the very evening on which that letter was received Pelz-Nickel, Junior, would pay them a visit. How the little children rejoiced to hear

this! Alfred looked grave, shook his head, and said that he meant to be out of the way when young Pelz-Nickel came. The children thought that was very cowardly. They said they were not the least in the world afraid, and they were sure Pelz-Nickel, Junior, would leave him something. But Alfred was not to be persuaded; so as soon as it began to grow dusk, he took up his hat and walked off.

The children and their mother sat by the fire. It was almost dark out-of-doors, and they ran to the library to beg that their father would come in and see Pelz-Nickel; and he, like a good father as he was, allowed himself to be dragged in, even from a new book which he was reading. Mary came in after the children had spent a whole quarter of an hour in trying to find her—people *did* hide themselves so unaccountably, they said.

However, Mary was now there, and so were their father and mother, and the candles were

brought in; and then Mary said, she quite believed that Pelz-Nickel was not far off. Scarcely had she said these words when a loud ringing at the bell announced his arrival. His steps were heard in the hall, his chain rattled, and the queer squeaking voice of which Alfred had spoken was heard, and in he came! He spoke broken English at first, and then he began talking German.

First of all he ordered Meggy to come, and then Herbert, and questioned them about many things, and told them of all their little faults —there was not one he did not know of! He even knew about Herbert's swinging the doll round by its legs, and scattering the sawdust out of its body, and saying that dolls were silly things. He knew about Meggy's idleness over the kettle-holder she was making, and preferring rather to knit the cat a stocking than to read her lessons! He was a wonderfully well-informed Pelz-Nickel!

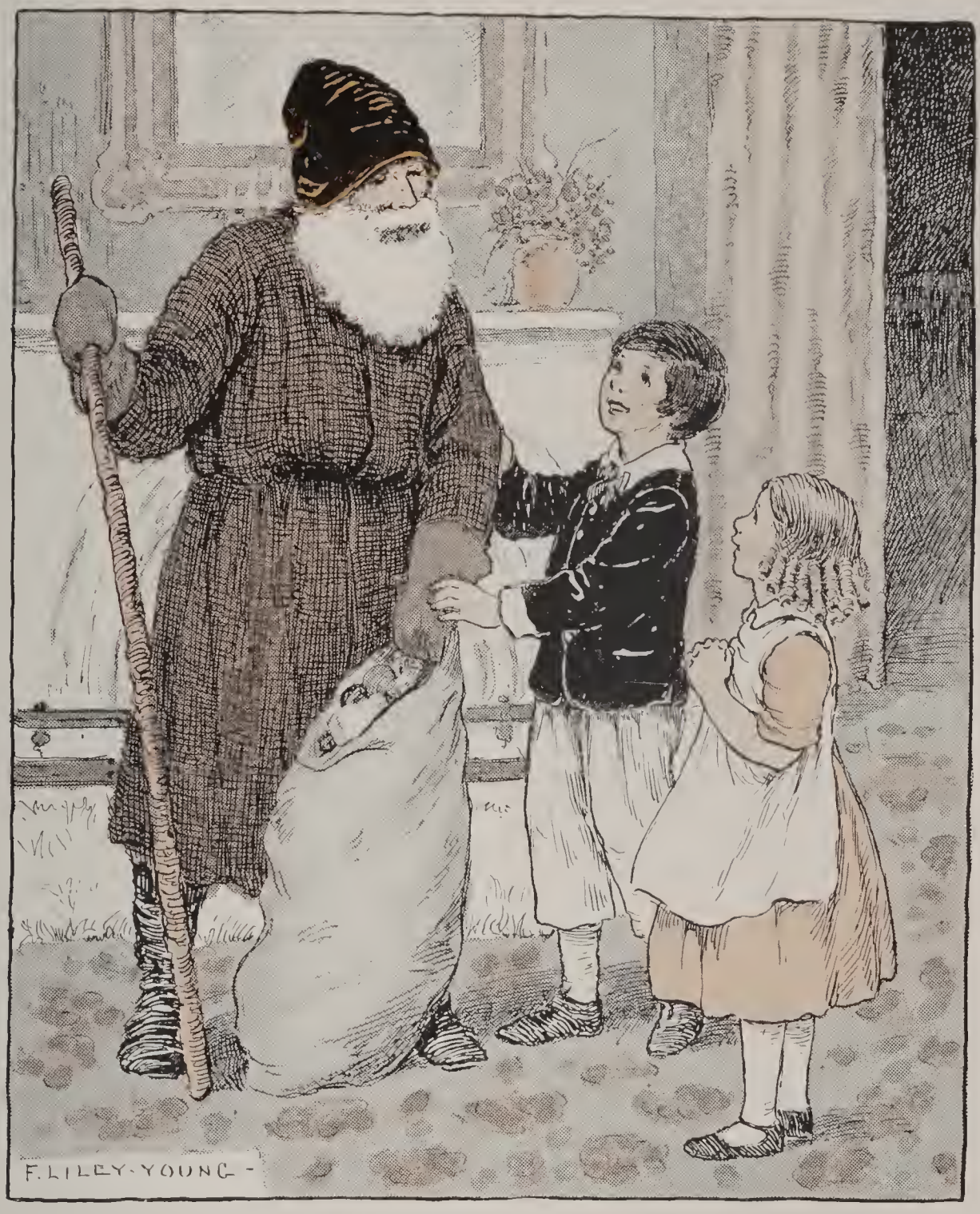
He shook his rod about desperately, and then he shook his bag, and the children heard the nuts rattling in it; but just as they thought he was going to put his hand in and bring something out, he suddenly turned round and demanded where that youth was—that elder son —that Alfred?

Herbert burst into a fit of laughter; Meggy looked frightened, and wondered what Herbert could mean by laughing in that way. Herbert knew that this Pelz-Nickel, Junior, was Alfred himself, and that was why he laughed. He laughed again, and afraid that Pelz-Nickel might not hear him, he plucked at his coarse coat, and told him that Alfred had gone away because he was coming.

"Ho! ho!" said Pelz-Nickel, "I'll be after him when I've done with you!" and he put his hand in his bag, and said that they should see what he had brought for good children; and out came lots of good things,—such rosy-

cheeked apples, though it was Christmas, and such nuts, and raisins, and gingerbread! He said they must take care not to give Alfred any, for that he had something for him, too, if he could only catch him; and he began to make movements with his terrible rod as if it were *that* that he meant. Then he suddenly disappeared.

In a little while Alfred came in. He was as full of inquiries as the children were of news. Herbert, who entered into the whole joke completely, began to tell Alfred how Pelz-Nickel, Junior, was dressed, and what a queer figure he looked with his hair tied in a long tail. And such a face! He had a white beard that hung to his breast, and a coat all lined with sheepskin like rugs, and hairy gloves, and such big legs and shoes, quite as rough and odd-looking as grandmamma's buffalo-slippers; and a fur cap standing up half a yard, just like his mother's muff—oh, if



HERBERT KNEW THAT THIS PELZ-NICKEL, JUNIOR, WAS ALFRED HIMSELF.—*Page 224.*

Alfred had but seen him! And then his voice! Herbert laughed and jumped about for joy.

Later in the evening, as the children were cracking their nuts and eating some of their apples, what should they see but Alfred take just such an apple as one of theirs out of his pocket, and begin to eat it—without ever thinking that they would notice it. Herbert was sure from this that he was right in his conjectures. He whispered his opinion to Meggy. *Alfred was Pelz-Nickel, Junior!* Meggy did not so readily comprehend all this. Alfred went out of the house, she argued; she herself had seen him go. He only pretended to go, said Herbert; he went upstairs or somewhere to dress himself, and Mary helped him. She came in, and then Pelz-Nickel came; for how could Alfred be in the room, if he were Pelz-Nickel? No, certainly! Did she not see? Pelz-Nickel went out and then Alfred came in; and now Alfred had an apple out of his own bag. That

was it! that was it! He saw it all as plainly as could be. Pelz-Nickel was only Alfred.

It might be so, Meggy said; but she was not quite sure.

Herbert said he was very sure about it, but that he chose to believe in Pelz-Nickel, and hoped he would come to see them again sometime.

CHAPTER XXIX

CHRISTMAS EVE

In Germany, the year before, Pelz-Nickel's visit was only preparatory to that of the little Christmas-angel, and Herbert and Meggy thought it would be the same this year.

On Christmas Eve they sat with their father and mother by the library fire, talking about the hundreds and thousands of happy families in England, who were going to enjoy that evening as fully as they were. They wished that there was nobody too poor in England and Scotland and Ireland to make a festival, and to receive a visit from the little Christmas-angel. While they were thus speaking, a silvery bell in their own house was heard to ring, and Mary summoned them all into the dining-room, where the visitor was to be re-

ceived. The room was light and cheerful, with plenty of red-berried holly, ivy and mistletoe, but there was no Christmas-tree. Presently, however, a sound was heard outside—no doubt it was the beautiful white-winged Christmas-angel! The door opened, and then who should enter but the comical white-bearded, squeaky-voiced Pelz-Nickel, Junior!

There was some strange mistake, Mary said, and the little Christmas-angel must have lost her way, for here again was Pelz-Nickel. She wanted to keep him out of the house, she said, but he *would* come in, and he was so strong that it was no use opposing him.

On this, Pelz-Nickel began bowing and scraping, and making endless apologies in English and German. He knew it would all be badly managed, he said, for the English did not understand a regular German Christmas. The English, he said, were a very left-handed people—he begged pardon for saying so—and

that made him just look in as he was on his way back to Novgorod, for he had taken a great liking to the little children. So, as he was here, he would with permission of all the good company assembled, take upon himself to be the little Christmas-angel—which would be very wrong, he knew, according to German usage, but it would do very well for England.

Herbert whispered to Mary that he did not like that, for England was quite as good as Germany. Mary squeezed his hand to make him quiet, for Pelz-Nickel, in a voice ten times more squeaky than ever, said he would now distribute the gifts. Everybody thought that all these gifts were to come out of his bag, but instead of that he drew a great marketing basket, to everybody's surprise, from under the table. The basket was covered with a cloth, and on this being removed it was seen to be full of beautiful things. There was a wooden box for Meggy and Herbert, which their

father had given them, full of carpenter's tools. It was just what they wanted. What a great deal of work they could do in their house now! Then came a book for them—"The Good-natured Bear." The author had sent it to them; but who was the author? Nobody knew; everybody said it must be Pelz-Nickel himself. Then came something for somebody else, and then something for Alfred. Alfred was called, but no Alfred came.

"Put it into your bag, Pelz-Nickel!" shouted Herbert. Pelz-Nickel said it was a good idea, and that he would keep it, too. Herbert danced about for joy, and everything that was for Alfred went into Pelz-Nickel's bag.

Presently there came a fresh set of chairs and tables for Herbert and Meggy's house; and then such a flock of poultry,—hens and cocks and guinea-fowls,—all made with real feathers of the real birds,—and they could stand, and looked just like life. Then there

were more books,—fairy tales and histories of England, and nobody knew what else. And there were purses, and slippers, and beautiful pocket-handkerchiefs, and drawings and books for the rest of the family. It seemed as if there would be no end to the treasures out of Pelz-Nickel's basket.

Pelz-Nickel made a great deal of fun. There never was a merrier Christmas Eve, even in Germany, than that. When he came toward the bottom of the basket, he said that the remainder of the things were meant for the servants, and therefore he begged that Herbert and Meggy might show him the way to the kitchen, because, as a stranger, he could not be supposed to know the house.

The children were delighted. Meggy had lost all fear of him, and downstairs they went with a great deal of noise and laughter, Pelz-Nickel even carrying Meggy on his back.

After everybody in parlor and kitchen had

received their gifts, Pelz-Nickel begged to sing a song, and then take his leave. He did so, made a dozen bows, said that he should tell all the good people in Novgorod, when he got there, what excellent, dearly-beloved children were Herbert and Meggy; and so went out.

They seated themselves, with their beautiful presents, round the fire. Presently in rushed Alfred with his arms full of things. He seemed out of breath, and looked quite hot; he said he had met that fellow Pelz-Nickel, and found that he was carrying off his presents in his bag. He said he had had a terrible piece of work with him, but had managed, he believed, to get all his things at last, and that Pelz-Nickel was now quite gone. He was on his way to Novgorod, and would not return again to England until another year.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PANTOMIME

New Year's Day was come, and in eight days from this time Herbert would be eight years old.

Herbert and Meggy had a great desire to see a pantomime; and their surprise and pleasure may be imagined, when one morning at breakfast their father said, "I hear that Herbert's birthday is just at hand!" Their father never remembered birthdays, and somebody had always to remind him of them. "I hear," said he, "that Herbert's birthday is just at hand. Of course, he expects something on his birthday. All little boys do!"

Herbert smiled because he knew that his father was going to propose something pleasant. Meggy smiled, too, and took hold of his

hand—it was her way whenever Herbert was either in joy or trouble, for the spirit of sympathy was very strong in her.

"Of course Herbert expects something on his birthday," repeated his father. "What shall it be?"

The children looked at one another, then at their mother, then at Mary, and then at their father, but they said nothing.

"I have been thinking," said he, "that if you, Herbert, went to a pantomime, Meggy must go, too."

"A pantomime!" exclaimed both children at once. "Do let us go to a pantomime, father dear!"

"Yes," continued their father, "we should be obliged to take Meggy with us. Don't you think so, Herbert? and don't you think that your mother and I, and you and Meggy, would make a nice little party?"

Everybody was of the same opinion.

"There are several performing at present," said their father. "We must now take the matter into serious consideration, for we cannot afford to go, such a large party, twice to the pantomime; so you must choose wisely, that we may see the very best."

Alfred and Mary undertook to consult all the newspapers on this subject, and to ask all their friends, and report accordingly. They reported that "Gulliver" was the most amusing pantomime in the world. Nothing more could be desired, and it was all settled that very same evening that Herbert's birthday pleasure was to be his and Meggy's going to see Gulliver.

"Oh, how good we will be, and how quiet! and we will not disturb anybody all day," said Herbert to Meggy on the morning of his birthday; "for is it not kind of father and mother to take us to the pantomime?"

The only regret to the children, at the be-

ginning of this day, was that plays began in the evening instead of the morning.

The evening, however, finally came; and the carriage which was to take them to the pantomime came also; and away they went.

When they reached the place the children's hearts beat with excitement! There was a throng of carriages at the door, and they had to wait some time before they could get in.

But at last they entered, and took their seats; and in a little while the curtain drew up and the wonderful show began.

The first scene was Guildhall, after a Lord Mayor's feast, with Gog and Magog, those very giants which Herbert had seen in the summer, and about which he had had so much to tell to Meggy. And Gog and Magog, at the hour of twelve, came down from their pedestals, just as the funny gentleman had said they did. Then, all of a sudden, the beautiful fairy queen made her appearance,—the fairy

queen which Meggy liked so much! This really *was* the best of all.

Another *best of all,* however, came when Gulliver found himself in the island of Lilliput, amongst all its swarms of little people. Not a word did either Meggy or Herbert say when they saw this. First there was the little wood-cutter, and his tidy little wife, who discovered the giant Gulliver lying asleep on the shore. How charming were this little man and his little wife even in their terror! They roused the whole country round; and in came flocking little townfolks and little countryfolks, in all sorts of old-fashioned and new-fashioned dresses; and doctors in wigs and spectacles; and little old women and little old men hobbling along, afraid of being too late; and little policemen, in little blue uniforms, who *were* too late.

The scene changed. The king and queen of Lilliput came forth in all state, attended by

their court and their guards. Little feet moved on again, this time with a stately and measured tread; little heads were held aloft, in all the dignity of powder and plumes; and in front of the lovely little palace of Lilliput the king and queen seated themselves on their little thrones.

The children might well admire it. Even their mother said that it was beautiful.

Long before the pantomime had reached the second act, however, Herbert had recovered himself so as to give the most lively demonstrations of his pleasure. He laughed and clapped, and entered into the fun of Gulliver eating up all the royal dinner, and carrying off dozens of people at once, with even the king and queen themselves tucked under his arm, when the great fire broke out in the palace.

The children's amazement was unbounded when all at once Gulliver and his old wife transformed themselves into clown and panta-

loon,—comical characters, who filled the rest of the evening with their merry pranks.

It was past midnight when the children reached home, and even that was a source of interest and pleasure. They never in all their lives had been up so late before. That the streets of London should be quiet and empty was a new idea to them; they had hitherto only seen them full of life and bustle. Their father told them of Wordsworth's beautiful sonnet, in which he describes all so hushed in repose that "the very houses seemed asleep." Both children could understand the idea. The very houses seemed asleep now. They would never forget the impression.

When they reached home, everything there was still also. The children thought how startled the poor little mice, that had come out for the night, would be at their thus coming home, when they had fancied them all in bed and asleep.

They had a pleasant little supper in the warm dining-room, and talked over again the many things they had seen. How wonderful and beautiful it had all been!

The children kissed their father and mother with loving and grateful hearts; they thought of the delight of telling all to Alfred and Mary next morning; and then they went to bed as silently as little mice, that they might disturb nobody in the house.

This was the pleasant ending of one year of Herbert and Meggy's happy childhood.