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DAISIES AND
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by
EVELYN RAYMOND



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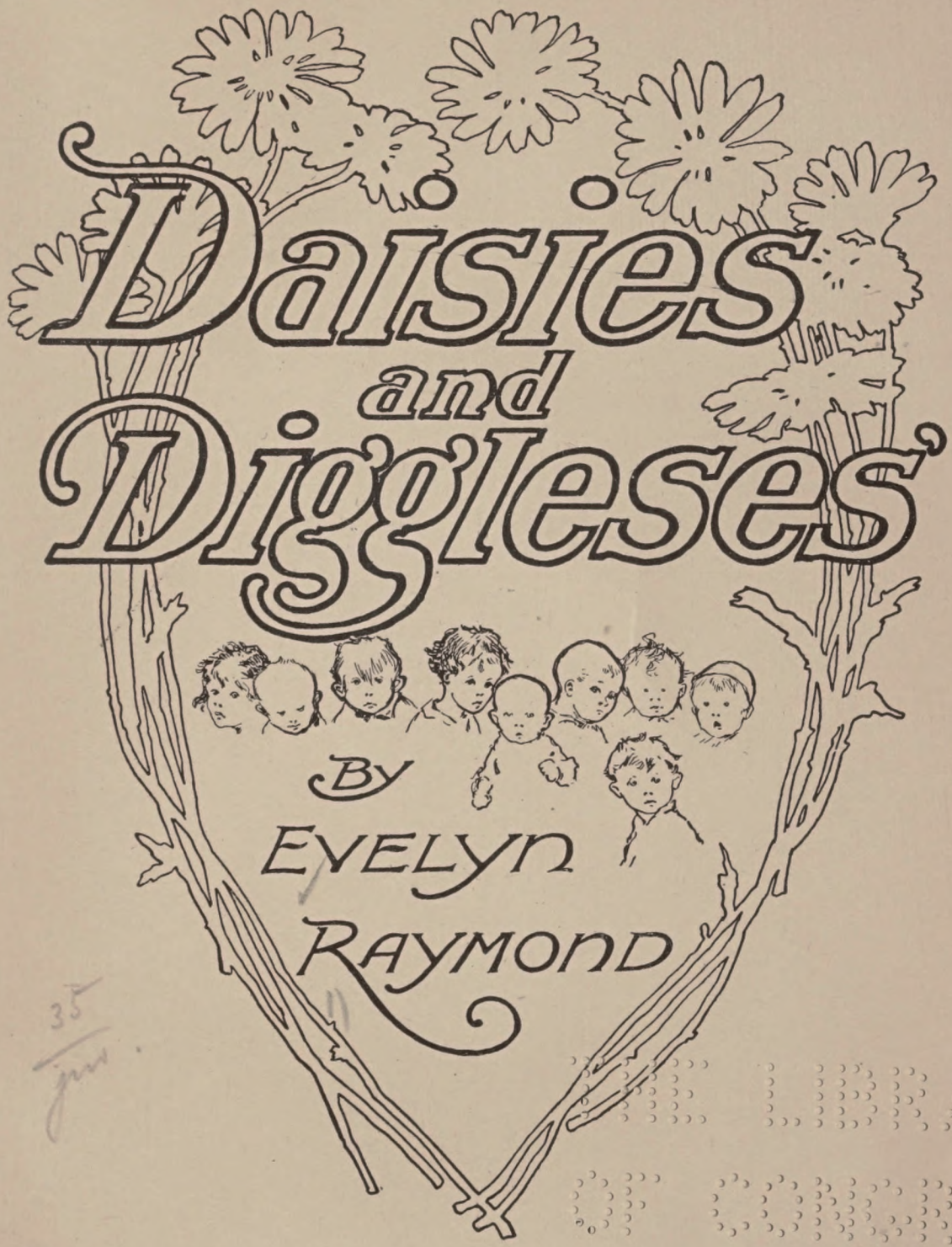
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DAISIES AND DIGGLESES'.

CHAPTER I.

DAISIES.

THERE were a hundred miles between farmer Eddy's orchard, where the daisies bloomed, and Digglese's Court, where Katie lived.

Probably nobody would have thought of going from one to the other, if farmer Eddy hadn't fallen out of the black ox-heart cherry-tree. Even then this might not have happened if he had tumbled straight downward and broken a bone, instead of slipping along from branch to branch, till he finally landed among the daisies, with nothing worse than a sprained right arm. He would have preferred the broken bone; "for a break mends, and a sprain seems good for nothing but to try a man's temper."

So would Eliza have preferred.

Eliza was farmer Eddy's son's wife; as nice a woman as ever milked a cow, but as sharp of speech as most women are who find the milking of cows among the day's tasks. She was start-

ing for the barnyard, a glistening tin pail upon each arm, when she saw her father fall, and hurried to him, with grumbling compassion.

“Now, father Eddy, you have done it!”

“Yes, Eliza, I rather think I have.”

“The idea of a man of your age climbing trees like a squirrel!”

“Not much like a squirrel, daughter, else I shouldn't be sitting on the heads of these daisies.”

Then they both laughed, and Eliza asked:

“Where are you hurt, father? I'm very sorry.”

“My right arm and side feel queer.” Then he looked wistfully upward into the tree from which he had just slipped, and added, rather sadly, “The birds will get the most of Mother's fruit this year. Nobody except me has picked it since she did; and — nobody else shall, while I live.”

As the name of “mother” passed the farmer's lips, all the sharpness left Eliza's face; and, slipping both pails to one arm, she placed the other under his shoulders, and helped him to his feet.

“Oh, hum! This means a summer of idleness, I'm afraid.”

“What of it? When I'm eighty, as you are, I'll think it time to rest. But you're the worst hand to sit still and do nothing that I ever saw. I wish you'd change your mind about the ox-hearts. The boys —”

“Enough, Eliza; though you may send one of the boys on horseback after the doctor. Maybe we could fix this arm all right ourselves; only the doctor needs a little cash, same as the rest of us. You go on and milk. I’ll sit on the porch and wait.”

“Father, how can you always get sweet out of bitter? Next you know, you’ll be saying ’twas providential that you fell out the tree.”

“I can say it already. All the time I was sliding down it seemed that every little twig was stretching out to save me from death;” and he cast a grateful glance toward those helpful branches.

The black ox-heart was a very old tree. Farmer Eddy and Mother had planted it together when they first came to live at Uplands, and she had always gathered its cherries. Its gnarled boughs were as familiar to her as her own kitchen floor; and she knew just where the ladder could rest in safety, while she climbed to pluck her fruit. Indeed, so sure-footed and supple was Mother that nobody quite realized that she was, in fact, an aged woman, till on one summer evening, sitting in her chair beneath her tree, she quietly fell asleep and waked no more.

Eliza walked with the farmer to the porch, and settled him in his rocker, where he leaned back and closed his eyes, lest they should betray the pain he was suffering. Then she hurried down the lane, calling as she went, in shrill, far-reaching tones:

“Reuben! Reuben! Sim-e-on! E-l-i!”

For a time there was no response. The three lads were sitting on the bank of the run, comfortably resting after a day's work in plowed ground, and dabbling their mud-stained feet in the cooling waters.

Yet when the shouts continued, Reuben nudged Eli, and ordered:

“Go, boy. Ma needs you.”

“Go yourself.”

“I'm tired.”

“So'm I.”

“Sim, then.”

But Simeon stretched his fat body backward on the grass and declined.

“I've got some figuring to think out for Grandpa.”

This boy was considered the clever one of the family, and was frequently consulted by his elders concerning their simple accounts. Which fact made him feel his importance even more than did his mother's ambition to train him for a minister, and his self-conceit was an amusement to the neighbors.

But he was not so amusing to his brothers. As Reuben reluctantly rose, he grumbled:

“Hmm! If you've got one of your lazy 'thinking fits,' I might as well go. Yes, ma; I'm coming. All right.”

“Indeed, it's not all right. Saddle Joe as quick as you can, and go for Doctor Gray. Grandpa's fallen out the cherry-tree.”

“Whew! Is he hurt? Why saddle? Bare-back’s easier.”

“No. If the doctor hasn’t his horse hitched up he can ride here on Joe. It’s a bad hurt, I guess; though grandpa’s plucky and won’t complain.”

“He’s queer about that old tree. I asked him last night to let me pick it, but he wouldn’t.”

Reuben ran to the night pasture behind the old barn and whistled to the sedate gray horse, who came obediently, and in another moment was riding down the road, with fear in his heart.

“What if grandpa should die! What should we do without him?”

However, he was not to die. He was only to be left half-helpless, for the first time realizing his age and grieving over his uselessness. It was thus that the new minister found him, a week later, and exclaimed:

“Why, farmer Eddy! are you suffering so much? I had hoped you were getting on all right.”

“Oh, I’m right enough, physically; but it’s hard not to do my share of the work, with help so scarce and Samuel—what he is. I’ve always done the most of the haying, and now—Well, I know there’s a lesson in it somewhere, only I can’t yet make out what it is.”

“You will. Ah! how cool and beautiful this orchard looks. Let’s sit under that tree, where

the bench is so invitingly placed, and the daisies are so lovely. I felt I could not stay in my study this morning, so walked over to bring you some reading matter."

Pleased by the clergyman's attention and admiration of the daisies, the old-time smile returned to the farmer's face. He exclaimed, with a sort of chuckle:

"They are pretty, but you'd best not let Eliza hear you say so. She doesn't like them, for they spoil the hay. Though, since mother loved them, they're safe enough. Poor Eliza! Life hasn't been any too smooth for her these few years back."

"If not too painful for you to discuss, I'd like to hear the story of your trouble, farmer Eddy," said the visitor, with sympathy.

"There's little to tell. He was a good lad, always, was my son Daniel, but a rover by nature. When he was fourteen he ran away to sea. But he came home sometimes, and when he grew up and married Eliza he stayed on land for years; though he hated farming, and spent them mostly in peddling and exhorting, for he was a religious man. After little Dan was born he shipped again in the old *Navigator*; and the very next week she foundered off the Newfoundland reefs, and every soul went down."

The minister stooped and quietly gathered a cluster of the daisies that grew about their feet. "Maybe not all were lost," he said. "He might

have been saved, and carried to some foreign port.”

The farmer shook his head.

“No; that would have been a miracle. Eliza is a capable woman. A trifle sharp of speech, but sound and sweet at heart. I leave the running of the farm to her, as far as I can, for it helps her to live. Samuel and Seraphine — did ever you hear such a name for a grown woman, or one that fitted its owner so well? — are ‘our hired help.’ The boys are an average crop, save Simeon, who’s smart and knows it. His mother hopes to make a parson of him, but I reckon she’s got a job on hand if she does.”

The minister smiled and rose, plucking another handful of daisies as he did so.

“These are certainly the largest I ever saw. When I go to the city next Monday, I wish you’d give me a basketful to carry with me.”

“Gladly. But what for?”

“To give my little street waifs. Some of the very ones who are mentioned in this magazine;” and he selected one from the pile, and placed it in the old man’s hand. Then he went away.

Somewhat later Eliza, passing through the orchard to gather cherries for a pie, was excitedly signalled to come beneath the ox-heart, to the empty seat beside her father.

“Daughter, here’s something beats all you ever heard!”

So she listened while he read a description, which the minister had marked, of a certain tenement-house in the great city.

“Father, do you believe that?”

“I must. The minister himself wrote it. He tells the truth.”

“Five hundred people in one house! That’s more than all who live in Middle Valley put together. You couldn’t crowd all of our townsfolk into one building. You couldn’t do it. They’d suffocate.”

“Think of it! Four families in one room. Just a chalk-line to partition the four homes, or, at best, a calico curtain. My soul! and here have we — all this!” spreading his hands outward, to indicate the extent of landscape around them.

“Well, it’s interesting; but reading won’t give my boys the cherry-pie I promised them for dinner.”

“Give them the cherries without the pie. Hear this.”

So she listened for another five minutes, at the end of which farmer Eddy tossed the pamphlet aside, and sprang up with the enthusiasm of an inspiration.

“Eliza, when the minister goes to the city, next Monday, I’m going with him!”

Eliza rose too, so quickly that her basin fell to the ground.

“Father Eddy! are you crazy?”

“No, no, lass; only just coming to my senses. I believe this is the very reason the Lord let me fall out of this ox-heart tree.”

“What an idea! And you never went to the city of New York in all your life!”

“Time I did, then!”

“Never was on the steam-cars, let alone the steamboat. You’ll have to risk both if you do it.”

“I’ll risk them.”

“But, father! Think a minute. What would mother say?”

“She would say, ‘Go. It is the Lord’s leading.’”

Eliza went tremblingly away; and of her foreboding state of mind between that hour and the memorable Monday, nothing need be said. Yet the morning finally arrived; and, feeling as if things were quite unreal, Reuben helped his grandfather into the wagon, and drove old Joe to the far-away station, where the minister was awaiting them upon the platform as calmly as if a hundred mile journey by rail and river were a very simple matter.

The train arrived, there were friendly farewells, the travelers disappeared within one of the cars, and the engine pulled out again, leaving Reuben to drive home alone, and to wonder why the departure of one simple old man had such power to dim the brightness of the sunshine.

But his mother comforted him after her fashion: —

“Yes, my son, it does seem sort of desolate; but never mind. One can get used to anything. I’ll give you a chicken dinner, with a roly-poly pudding. If we can’t go to York,

there's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy good victuals."

Meanwhile, in blissful excitement, a childlike smile on his fine old face, farmer Eddy sat close by the minister's side, and was whirled away and away, through novel scenes and sounds, toward a big, big city, and a small, small girl named Katie.

CHAPTER II.

DIGGLESES'.

DIGGLES' COURT, commonly known as Digglesees', was a little pocket of an alley, quite too short and narrow to be named a street, or marked down on the city map. The Court was so contracted, and the houses on each side and across its inner end so very tall, that the sunshine never could get into it at any time of day or year; and, as if to add worse to bad, the towering tenements were connected by iron bridges, or passage-ways, above the Court, thus joining the buildings into one.

At every story were several of these bridges, always swarming with the tenants of "north" or "south." They were more used than even the rusty fire-escapes which the law compelled, and sometimes got so crowded that a baby — or, occasionally, a careless adult — fell over into the depth below.

Yet Digglesees' was not without some brightness. At its open end, across West Street, there was a tiny wharf, past which the Hudson flowed, and where the sunshine found a resting-place. By a legal quarrel of some people somewhere, the wharf was no longer used, except by

the Diggles' Court children and a few of its quietest tenants.

Then there was Katie.

Having both the wharf and Katie, there were some mothers in Diggleses' who felt rich indeed, though they did have to toil eighteen hours out of the twenty-four and with little food to sustain them. But, because of these two bright things, they clung tenaciously to their wretched quarters; for the river brought to these mothers' little ones a breath from the meadows above and kept them strong; while Katie kept them safe.

She was on the wharf at noontide of the Monday when farmer Eddy went to New York; and after rescuing one of her six youngest babies, as it was about to fall over into the water, had ranged them in a row against a plank, and was a trifle flushed by her exertions.

"Oh, dear, Toddles! you are the wobbliest one! Here you are going on three months, if you're a day; yet you will no more sit up stiff than 'Smarty' yonder." Here she glanced affectionately toward a man lying asleep a few feet away. "Now there's Timmy Brady, just four months, can help himself a heap, and eat a crust good's the next one — when he can get it," she finished cautiously.

At the mention of crusts, Timmy held out his hands with a pretty, coaxing motion that went straight to Katie's heart.

“No, you precious; ’t isn’t crust-time yet. There, Mary Jane, you lean against Miranda. There isn’t any wobble to her, and that’s lucky, too, poor thing; ’cause being like she is, she’s just right for an end of the row, to keep all the rest up. If she should happen to topple over sometime, you’d all go down like that pile of bricks I set on end to play with. But she’ll not happen. Poor Miranda! ’most wish she would.”

Here Katie sighed; and just then a daisy fell at her feet.

She sprang up, to find two strangers smiling down upon her; though after a second glance she saw that only one was strange—the gentleman with the long white beard and mild blue eyes. The other had been at the wharf before, and Katie recognized him with a scream of delight. He was holding a basketful of just such wonderful daisies as had fallen beside her.

“Oh, sir! I—oh—I—O—O—H!”

“Yes, exactly, Katie. Glad to see me?”

“Oh! so glad I can hardly breathe! I’ve been wishing I could tell you. That nickel you gave me bought a bottle of milk for little Jacob, who, you know, couldn’t eat crusts, and he got well. ’Cause some the folks saw how he liked it, and they put together and bought one every day for a whole week. Think of that! Now he’s getting as fat as—as Miranda, ’most. But those flowers! Who they for? A hospi-

tal? Take 'em to Bellvue, 'cause that's the one most of us go to. There's some of us there now. Oh, please!"

"These are for no hospital, my dear; they are for a 'Little Mother' named Katie, to do with as she wishes."

The child's eyes grew big and her cheek paled. Had the basket held loaves of bread she would have been less surprised. Then down went the round, freckled face, and the daisies were watered by almost the first tears which Diggleses' Katie had shed since she had been found a wailing baby on the stones of the Court — a waif from nobody knew where.

"Why, Katie! Why — why, Katie!" cried the minister, distressed.

Sob, sob, sob. Then kisses ecstatic, and in their fierceness menacing to the freshness of the ox-eyes; and more sobs and tears.

This was dreadful. When the new minister had fancied he was carrying a basketful of pleasure, to have it turn out a basketful of woe! The poor man was at his wits' end to know how to soothe such grief, when the weeper suddenly looked up.

"Why, whatever made me do that! I've never done it before!" she cried.

"I can't imagine."

"I can. It's too much joy coming at once," said farmer Eddy, laying his hand on Katie's rough curls, and smiling through the mist in his own eyes.

"Can you? Did you ever cry on your daisies, too?"

"I've done worse. I've fallen on them. Broken their pretty heads short off, poor things."

"My! How did it happen?"

"Well, I climbed a cherry-tree, and then fell out of it. I've a dim sort of notion that I climbed up a farmer and tumbled down a missionary."

"Sir? Oh! I hope not."

"What? Why do you hope that?"

"I don't like them. None of us do."

"Why, Katie! Do you know what even the word 'missionary' means?" asked the minister.

"Yes, sir, I know lots about them. They're the folks that come and tell the mothers to go to church, and keep themselves tidy, and use more soap and water and — and do things that cost money! when the poor dears haven't enough to buy breakfast, save a yesterday's roll, or a cup of second-hand coffee, of a Sunday. Oh! I know them, and I hate them, so I do!" she ended vehemently, her laughing eyes now filled with an angry light.

The minister was so shocked that he had to sit down; and did so — without looking — upon Miranda.

That phlegmatic infant uttered no protest, but calmly turned her eyes upon the expanse of broadcloth thus submitted to her view.

Not so calm was Katie. While one hand

still clutched the visitor's gift, with the other she vigorously jerked him to his feet.

"Why — of all things! I know she can't move around much, but she can *squash*, same's another one!"

"Dear me! have I hurt her?"

"Guess not. She's looking at the flowers."

The new minister took one from the basket, and tendered it as a peace offering to Miranda. But again he was corrected by the wiser Katie.

"Don't you know better'n to give a baby things like that?"

"No. Fact is, my experience with infants is rather limited."

"Well, any time you're tending 'em don't give 'em things they mustn't eat. They put everything they get into their mouths. If the mouth is big enough, and Miranda's is. She'd have put that posy in, and the long stem would have choked her, and 'Opium Molly,' her mother, 'd have beat me when she heard it. When she's 'under' she's all right, and as pleasant as Miranda; but when she's 'out from under', she's awful. Don't ever give a baby anything to hurt it, will you?"

"I'll try not."

By this time farmer Eddy was also looking about for a seat. He had walked some distance, and his valise was heavy. He wondered why he had brought it, since they were to go home on the morrow. Katie saw his fatigue, and placing her precious basket on the wharf, promptly

piled her bricks into a snug heap at one corner. Pushing the old man gently down upon them, she remarked : —

“ There. You’ll find that prime. I fix ’em that way when one of the mothers runs out here for a second, to me and the babies ; and now, if you’ll take care of the children a minute, I’ll go up Court and give the daisies away.”

The minister interposed. “ Wait, Katie. We’d like to go with you. This gentleman, Mr. Eddy, has come a hundred miles on purpose to see Diggles’ Court, and how so many people can live there. Besides, I’d also like to see the poor things when they get their posies.”

Again there was that flash of indignation in Katie’s eyes. Nobody enjoys being classed a “ poor thing,” even if the statement is true. But maternal anxiety banished the anger.

“ We couldn’t all go, and they were his flowers first, you said. So you just stay and watch the babies and ‘Smarty,’ who sometimes rolls over and near falls in. The old man may come.”

Seizing the farmer’s hand, she hurried him forward to the crossing of the street between the wharf and Court, into the very midst of its crowding vehicles. There was no break in the endless line of drays and wagons, and the noise of surface and elevated cars was distracting to his untrained ears.

“ Why, my child ! It’s dreadful ! Like two, three, funeral processions passing at once. Do

wait till they stop. I'm afraid. I don't want to be run over."

"But they never stop, never; so we can't wait. I'll take care of you. I'm not afraid."

They reached the Court, and he breathed again, though without much comfort. The odors of Diggleses' were very different from the airs of Uplands, and farmer Eddy hurried forward, now as anxious to be through his visit as he had been to make it.

"Poor things, poor things!" he murmured softly, though Katie heard.

"I s'pose we are; but we don't like to be told of it. Would you? No; not that way — but this side. We're 'south' folks, we are. The 'north' side ones are Rushing Jews, and Poles, and things like that. We 'southers' are all 'Mericans, or German, or Irish."

Thus farmer Eddy learned that there is an aristocracy everywhere in a great city, even in a Diggleses' Court; and thus guided, he made a timid tour of all the "south" side. Such stairs, such darkness, such dirt! At first, he was half-numbed by what he saw, and in constant terror of falling. With his sound arm he clung tightly to his leader, but gradually, as she moved from room to room, even from corner of room to other corner, he forgot all, save the way in which she was received, and the pleasure her gift of the flowers gave. She passed nobody by, yet apportioned but one bloom to each.

"Must make them go 'round, Mis' Brown. 'Twouldn't do, not, you know."

“No, indeed, lassie. I’ll stitch my seams twice as fast now with that ox-eye on the machine beside me. Blessings on you, child!”

It was plain to see that everybody loved Katie, and that each of these poor homes might be hers for the asking; yet all were too busy to pause in their ceaseless and ill-paid toil. Seamstresses, tailors, flower-makers, — it was hurry, hurry, hurry, with them all. Looking back over his own long life of quiet industry, farmer Eddy felt that day as if he had never known what labor really meant.

Finally, the basket was empty, and they returned to the Court.

“Why, Katie! you have kept none for yourself!” he cried.

“Course not; there wasn’t enough to quite go round, even so.”

“Dear heart, dear heart!” and so astonished was he, by her generosity, that he scarcely noticed how she guided him back to the wharf and the minister — her deputized nurse.

He had done very well, considering; though a few of the babies were dislodged, and had to be set up again’ — notably, Toddles, whose propensity for getting out of place was as great as Miranda’s for staying in it. The old farmer would have found the row of infants an amusing sight, had he not been tormented by a desire to help them. When one of them began to cry he remembered little Dan, at home, and that his grief could commonly be comforted by some

food dainty. "Baby Dan," they had called him, though, in comparison with Katie's charges, he seemed now quite adult.

Suddenly, he remembered his valise. With eager, left-handed awkwardness, he unfastened the ancient bag, and emptied before the astonished girl more good things than she had ever seen at a time, save through a restaurant window.

"There, child. Go ahead and eat your dinner."

Katie was very hungry, though she had not fully realized it till she saw all those cakes and sandwiches. Then her mouth watered, and she turned half-faint with eagerness. Yet she conquered her longing. She had had a sort of breakfast, she reflected. "Opium Molly" had come home at daybreak with a bundle of broken food, and had shared it with her baby's nurse. But Katie knew that there were some children in Diggleses' who had had no breakfast, it might be even no supper. They should feast now! they should, indeed.

With a twinkle of brown legs, the girl darted through the string of just then blockaded wagons, and they heard her calling excitedly in the Court:

"Children! children! Every hungry child get into line and follow me!"

No other cry would have been so instantly obeyed. Almost before her visitors realized that she was gone, she was back with a horde

of youngsters at her heels. Few of them were round and rosy like Katie, and but few of their small faces seemed childlike as hers. Pinched, careworn, and hollow-eyed, they swarmed over Eliza's good food, fought for, and devoured it. Almost the last vestige had disappeared when Katie remembered "Smarty," so called in derision of his witlessness. Ever since this unfortunate had drifted into Diggleses' she had been his self-constituted guardian; and now, just in time, she snatched a last sandwich and a fragment of seed-cake for him, — the last, a dainty of peculiar flavor, original with its maker.

The man's face was towards the river, quite away from the strangers, who, indeed, had scant interest in him. Their thought was for the little ones; and again the farmer's eyes were dimmed by a troublesome moisture. To banish this, he remarked, jestingly:

"Katie, you make me think of our white rooster, 'General Washington.' At feeding-time he will never eat till he has clucked together all the other fowls in the barnyard. The boys say they never do see him eat anything, though he's as plump as you are."

"Tell me about him," begged the little girl, dropping down at the farmer's feet.

Whereupon he gave a vivid description of his home and its belongings, while she listened in breathless interest. When he ceased speaking her hands were tightly clasped and her eyes were full of longing.

“Oh! how I wish I could see it all!”

“So do I, my child,” echoed the old man, heartily.

There was a moment of silence, during which the pair regarded one another keenly. At length, said Katie:

“Well, if you wish so, and I wish so, why can't I?”

The question was simple enough, but farmer Eddy found it difficult to answer. All at once he remembered Eliza.

CHAPTER III.

A DARK DAY FOR DIGGLESES'.

To Katie, the dearest hour of the day was sunset. By then the children had mostly fallen asleep, and there was nothing to interrupt her own day-dreams, which, despite the hardness of her lot, she enjoyed as do more fortunate small people.

That Monday evening her babies were flat upon the planks, quite happy and content, while beside them played a group of older children, who also liked to be where Katie was, and were quick to respond to her present quiet mood. Even "Smarty" sat upright, his dark face lighted by the flowing river, and his eyes fixed upon a heart-shaped cake that he fumbled in his fingers. Indeed, the little cake seemed to possess a fascination for him. He did not attempt to eat it, and, after toying with it a while, again stored it in his pocket. Then he dozed again, while Katie talked, — sometimes to him, but oftener to her friend, the sun.

"You see, 'Smarty,' I'm in trouble. I don't want to go away and leave you and the babies; and yet, how can I help it? If you'd only heard what the old man said! When I think of the

white rooster, and the cherries in the trees, and the daisies in the grass, I just *must* go. If you could only talk to me, or even the dear sun had a real voice and would. But he's tired, poor thing, and is going to sleep away yonder behind Jersey City. Well, 't isn't till to-morrow, anyway. I heard them say they were going home on the steamboat, on this same river. I'll just think it out for myself, and settle it one way or other."

Whereupon, in Katie's heart, there began a fierce battle with self, and it was almost the first time in her life that she had had such warfare to wage. She was such a busybody, so full of other people's needs and troubles, that she hadn't thought about her own. Yet dear, kind-hearted farmer Eddy, who would give no creature pain if he could help it, had all unconsciously roused her to discontent.

"I don't know who'd mind the babies if I went," pondered the child. "As for you, 'Smarty,' you'd get kicked out and sent to the Island. Who'd carry the work home if I wasn't here to make you do it? You are so big and strong you can pack fifty coats at once. That's why the folks give you your living, 'cause they daren't not if you take their work. Oh! speak to me, man!"

But he did not, and she presently addressed her own bare feet, stretched out before her.

"How would you feel, trotters, to be walking on that soft grass 'stead of stones? And

water, maybe much as a hydrant full, to dip yourselves in. Cherries in my mouth, my very own mouth, and daisies in my hands. Pick them myself, heaps, and heaps, and heaps. Oh! I must, I must!"

She failed to remember that farmer Eddy had not invited her to take this journey she prospected, nor mentioned the particular boat by which he was to sail. He had seemed uncomfortable after that question of hers, and he and the minister had gone away, saying good-by in a hurry. They had carried the empty bag and basket with them, and apparently been more concerned about the safe crossing of the street and climbing of the stairs to the elevated station, than anything else.

"Oh, dear! It does tire me to think so hard. I'd rather things would just happen themselves. I guess I'll go to sleep, too;" and the perplexed little maid dropped her head upon Miranda's fat body, knowing it would prove a soft and immovable pillow.

The sun disappeared behind the opposite city; the gas and electric lamps were lighted; and after a long while — near midnight, indeed — the mothers came down to the old wharf, sorted out their sleeping children, and carried them away in silence. But nobody disturbed either "Smarty" or his "guardian angel," Katie; and the pair slumbered dreamlessly till, in the very early morning, the drays and beer-wagons recommenced their wearisome rumble.

Then a fresh breeze touched the girl's cheek. To her keen imagination it seemed to have come straight from that upland meadow, of which she had learned, and, for an instant, she fancied she could hear "General Washington" crowing to his family, "Time to get up! Time to get up!"

In any case it cleared the tangles from her brain; and when she had sprung to her feet, she had fully decided on her course. Always a happy creature, she had never been so happy as at that moment. Catching "Smarty's" ragged shoulder, she shook him with all her strength.

"Wake up, man! I've something to tell you!"

Then she took his cake from his pocket, and forced it into his hand.

"Now eat your breakfast and listen. I'm going away; I'm going to find the woman that made this cake, and if she's as nice as the man who brought it, I'll come back and get you. Do you hear?"

"Smarty" had begun to munch the cake; but now with a sudden, animated gesture, he leaned forward, and thrust the last fragment into Katie's own mouth. She would have refused it if she had had time; but the thing was over and done, before she realized it.

"Oh! I oughtn't to have had that! Though it was prime. But I must be moving."

All Katie's movements were swift and sure,

and she now darted into the dusky homes of her life-long friends, calling loudly:

"Get up, everybody! It's time, and I'm going away!"

They roused at her summons with the guilty feeling of busy folk, who have idled too long, and their hearts sank at her words; because they knew their little maid always did what she said she would. Though one protested:

"Going away, child? You? why, you *belong* to Diggleses'. It couldn't do without you."

From floor to floor she sped, across the crowded bridges, into the despised "north" side, and everywhere the unwelcome message she carried was supplemented by the more cheerful statement:

"But I'm coming back again. I'm just going to find a place for us all."

Then over again to her own "south side," eagerly directing:

"Everybody get the work ready, right away. 'Smarty' and I'll carry steady till noon, 'cause I s'pose the boats don't go till after that. Then I'll quit. Have to keep the babies yourselves, won't you? Never mind. If I find it's like the old man said, I'll be back soon's I can. Just to think! Going, going, going!"

The heavy hearts began to lighten as the workers packed their bundles for Katie's last trip with them to the shops, where they were due. If she would go, she would also come again, for she was trustworthy in word and deed.

Where would they find a messenger to take her place? Who, like her, would always bring their scanty wages back to them, correct to the last cent? Well, while she was off now on her helpful errands, somebody had a bright thought. The whir and bur-r-r of somebody's machine suddenly ceased, and its operator cried to her room-mate :

“Let's make up a purse and pay her way!”

There is no luxury the poor so much enjoy as giving. So the notion sped like wildfire. Those who had a nickel gave a cent, and those who had a quarter gave a dime. The originator of the plan gave what was more precious still, — her time; making a room-to-room canvass on her collecting tour; finally, returning to lay before her room-mate the wonderful sum of one whole dollar!

“Yes. It lacked just three cents, and Polish Thaddeus gave them. Fact — fact! Yet never before did he give even a crust away. Now, to make up my lost hour.”

However, more time still was to be lost at Digglese's that day; for when the mid-day came, there gathered about Katie, at Jones's door, many of those who had contributed to her farewell gift, determined to see her bonny face when she received it, and to say good-by — reckless, for once, of wasted minutes.

Cried the little maid, again and again :

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear! How could you? But you oughtn't. Yes, I know you oughtn't.

Though, thank you, every single one. To buy a ticket on a steamboat — me — Diggleses' Katie! A ticket all my own. Oh, my heart, my heart!"

As if they stung her, she whisked away the tears, which were coming into her big brown eyes. How she did hate to cry, nor would she in the presence of all those shining faces, haggard indeed, but for the moment, beautiful with the love that lay behind them.

"I mustn't stay another minute, darlings! Good-by, good-by!"

With that she was off up West Street, her ragged scarlet frock gleaming for an instant between the sidewalk's obstructions, then utterly lost to the straining vision of Diggleses' toilers, who wearily turned to their tasks again.

Her great heart almost bursting with its mingled joy and woe, yet with a directness of purpose wholly characteristic, Katie's bare feet sped over several blocks of hot pavement, seeking one she knew. There was a certain thing she had long ago determined to have, if ever it were in her power, and now it was. Soon she met the man she sought, a vender of that cheap ice-cream, called "hokey-pokey." This mixture, so sweet to the palate of the street arab, commonly retails at one cent a plate; and Katie vainly tried to picture what one hundred plates would look like if she could see them stretched away from that corner, down toward Diggleses'. But even her

imagination failed to grasp a situation so unexpected, and she thrust her handful of coins toward the vender, gasping in her eagerness:

“A hundred plates! A hundred plates! A dollar is a hundred cents.”

“My fathers! *You?* You — mean — it?” stammered the seller, amazed.

“Quick! Quick! Before they catch me and find out. A hundred plates for Diggleses'. You haven't half so many? Never mind. Go! Go quick. They'll find the dishes, don't fear. Only — GO!”

“No, no! No, no, little gell! If you've stole the money and are afraid you'll get found out, I'm not risking arrest, too, I'm not! No, siree! Not by a jugful!”

Alas, poor Katie! At the very moment when, for the first time in her life, she had it in her power to be extravagantly generous, she was also, for the first time, to be accounted a — thief.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE WAY TO THE DAISIES.

FOR a moment the two confronted each other. While the vender saw no signs of guilt in Katie's face, she was wondering how such a wrong idea had gotten into his head.

"Look here, Ice-Cream John. I know you, if you don't know me. I'm Diggleses' Kate. Listen. I'm telling it straight, and I'm in a hurry. I'm going away, and my folks raised this whole dollar to pay my fare. But I can't take it, 'cept to do something back for them that they'd never do for themselves. So I want you to go there with the treat. I'll wait for you to. You ask the first one you meet, and if it isn't so, you can keep the whole dollar — so there."

The vender knew Katie by reputation. If this were she, it was all right; yet wonder kept him silent for a moment longer, till she impatiently exclaimed:

"Oh! won't you please ever start?"

"Yes, little gell. I've harked to you, now you to me. I'll take the stuff to Diggleses', but I won't take no dollar, I won't. This here is what I call wholesale, this is. I'll take half-

rates, I will, and I'll give good measure, too. Hold on — ”

For in her delight Katie had begun a fantastic promenade.

“ You don't get off that way, Diggleses' Kate! How'd I look, facin' all them customers, and havin' to own you never tasted a spoonful yourself? Well, I guess not! Not Ice-Cream John. No knowin' what a trade this transaction 'll lead up to. Yes, you've got time enough. Here's a plate for yourself, double portion, an' askin' pardon for suspicionin' you. An ice-cream man learns to be mighty scarey who he trusts. There; ain't that the best thing you've put into your little mouth to-day? ”

Katie assented that it was. She might have truthfully added that she had tasted no other food of any sort. Which proves the disadvantage of having too many homes, even poor ones. For in the excitement of the child's departure, every mother had quite forgotten such a trivial matter as breakfast, nor had Katie thought to mention it.

When she had emptied her plate, the vender returned her fifty cents as he had promised, bade her good-by, and started toward the Court.

“ Good-by, and be sure to tell them I sent it,” answered the little girl; “ and now to find my boat. I'll ask Apple Mary. She'll know. Good-by.”

Hurrying northward along the wharves, she reached one that she had often visited, where

“Apple Mary,” once a denizen of Diggleses’, sat by a little stand and sold her wares to travelers. There, gently rocking at its moorings, glistening in white and gold, lay a big boat, almost as clean as the daisies farmer Eddy had brought. It was rapidly filling with passengers, and from its masthead floated a flag that seemed to wave an invitation to all.

“Hello, Apple Mary! How d’ye do?”

“Hello, Katie. How’s all at Diggleses’?”

“First rate — as they can be, seeing I’m going away.”

“Hey? Where to?”

“Oh! on this boat, maybe,” answered the little maid, with such an airy grace that the old woman laughed.

“You don’t say! Since when have you set out to be a ‘globe trotter’?”

“Well, just this morning.”

“Hmm! Talkin’ is cheap, but travelin’ costs money.”

Katie sat down and opened her hand, displaying a pile of very moist and dingy coins, while again her curly head tossed proudly.

“Well, missy, you’re a caution, so top-lofty. How happens it? Been selling papers lately?”

“No; a present.”

“So! Who from?”

“Diggleses’! Guess you might stare. Listen.”

Apple Mary paid the closest attention to Katie’s story. Once she had lived in the country, and raised apples instead of selling them.

“Right you are, my girl. Go, and trust in the Lord. He never sent a mouth into the world, but He knew there was food to fill it. The food and the mouth don't always get together, but that's not His fault. Time was, honey, I could lie on the daisies too. But I didn't crave such a bed then. I had as good a feather tick as the next one, picked off my own geese, with one in the oven, each Christmas. Troubles come, my dear, troubles come. Husband went first; then the little farm, 'cause he'd signed some sort of paper he hadn't ought. Then down to York to keep house for my son, and him bringin' home a wife wasn't our sort, and old mother laid on the shelf. I didn't stay on it long, you believe. No, thank the Lord! I had a stout heart to keep me up, and sense enough to buy and sell right. Apples, ma'am? Very late in the season, but these puppy-noses are good keepers. Three for five cents, and thank you, ma'am.”

Old Mary had paused in her long story to sell some of her fruit, and now turned to Katie with the remark:—

“Cleared a cent and a half on that sale. But folks are comin' faster. In a few minutes the 'All-aboard' bell 'll ring, and you'd best be going. But first, let me wrap that money in this rag and pin it in your frock, so you can't lose it. And I do wish, child, that you'd washed your face.”

“Pshaw! I didn't think. But tell me about my ticket. Where will I get it?”

“You go aboard, as quiet as can be, an’ right up some stairs inside, an’ out to that end the deck — see?” pointing her thin finger.

“Yes, yes, I see.”

“Up there you’ll find a heap of camp stools. You pick out one an’ go for’ard, close to the rail, so you can see everything. Unless it blows too hard, and the wind is risin’, mighty strong. After you’ve set a spell, a colored woman’ll come round and ask, mighty polite, ‘Have you got your tickets?’ And ladies that don’t want to go to the office ’ll give her their money, and she’ll fetch back their tickets and change all right. She’ll get yours, too, ’less you should see the men you know and —”

Mary paused at the change in Katie’s expression. The child had recognized two figures among the hurrying crowd, and had started forward toward them. Then she remembered her old friend, and that she had not said good-by; so called out, cheerily: —

“Don’t you fret, Apple Mary. I’m coming back. And when I get rich I’ll take you home to the daisy-fields, and you shall sit in a rocking-chair and eat your own apples all day. Good-by, good-by, till I come!”

With a jaunty wave of her arms toward the feeble figure by the water-way, she was off once more and into the very thick of the crowd.

“Dear me! Everybody seems to be in a rush, and, to me, scolding everybody else for the

lateness. I guess my men have got on board, and if they have there's plenty of time for me. They can't get off again, I s'pose. Not yet. Dear! That fat woman stepped on my toe. She didn't mean to, maybe. Never mind. I'll sit on this beam close to the gang-plank, and when all but me have gone aboard then I will too. I don't care for that best place Mary told about; and I don't own the ship, I don't," she reflected, calmly, and sat herself in a dangerous place to wait.

But wharf-reared Katie feared nothing about the water, and she was deeply interested in the scene about her. So interested, in fact, that she failed to hear the calls and warning bells. Then, suddenly, a grating sound aroused her, and she realized with a sinking heart that the plank was being drawn from the pier, and she — left behind!

With a scream of dismay she bounded forward, and her outcry was echoed by a hundred throats. She had been just one instant too late, and was now in the water, which the boat's wheel was churning to foam.

CHAPTER V.

KATIE'S FIRST JOURNEY IN THE WORLD.

FORTUNATELY, Katie could swim well. She had taken many a header from the old wharf where she tended her babies, pulling herself out of the river when she chose by means of an old rope attached to a spile. She now came to the surface just as the lower plank was drawn in, sprang for it, caught it, held on, and was swung to the deck by a pair of outstretched hands.

The whole incident had occupied but a few seconds, so that even while the spectators thrilled with horror they were again thrilled by relief. The natural outcome of such a sudden change in emotion is anger; and while she was spluttering for breath Katie's rescuer, a burly boat-hand, shook her violently, exclaiming:—

“Didn't you know any better than that?”

She looked around; herself anxious but on one point. Yes! The boat was moving and she was on board! Satisfied of this fact, she laughed and gazed with merry frankness into the questioner's eyes.

“Silly, wasn't I? To watch so close I quite forgot to watch right. Never mind. I'm here.”

She had not been in the water long enough to become very wet, and she was used to drying her clothes upon her body; so she merely tossed her clinging skirt to loosen its folds, and felt for her precious money. It was quite safe.

"Isn't that lucky? Apple Mary said I ought to have washed before I came aboard, but I guess she didn't expect I'd mind her quite so sudden. I wonder if she saw me!"

Looking back toward the now rapidly receding pier she discovered her old friend standing and shading her eyes, as if watching for somebody. Katie scanned the deck where she stood, but saw nothing that she could wave as a signal; so she sprang to the deck-rail, and clinging tightly to it with her bare feet, frantically swung her arms.

An instant later she was plucked from behind, again shaken vigorously, and deposited upon a coil of rope, with the indignant reproof:

"Now, Sis, you quit! Are you trying to suicide? or what does ail you anyhow? What bad luck sent you on board?"

Katie vouchsafed the angry man no reply. Experience had taught her that "least said is soonest mended." She was contented where she was till the wind had dried her frock, and the workman become too busy to bother her. So she gazed out at the familiar city, which seemed a strange one as viewed from the river, and became wholly absorbed in watching the changing water line. She may have dozed a

bit, too, for she seemed suddenly to be awakened by a dull, crashing sound that shook the pretty steamer from end to end. Each employee paused in what he was doing, to look up in alarm, while some uniformed officials hurriedly gathered, and blue-shirted workmen rushed below, by some stairway invisible to the girl.

Yet the boat still moved, and the men returned to their task of arranging the trunks and boxes; so Katie decided that the crash was but an ordinary sound of river travel; also, when she wanted to go upstairs, that she had never tried to walk in such a gale. The wind now blew through the vessel as if it meant to sweep it clear of all it contained, and a few hats went overboard. Katie saw them, and was grateful that she had none to lose. She had to cling tightly to the shining rail as she ascended the broad stairway, but found herself at length in the upper cabin, amid the crowding passengers who had forsaken the decks for this more sheltered spot.

“My! it's warm in here! But what lots of babies! and aren't they dressed just lovely! I'd like to squeeze that round one yonder, that looks so like Miranda. I'll have to stay here, it blows so outside. I've got to pay my ticket, anyway, and hunt up my two men. When I've done that, maybe I can go on the deck, as Apple Mary said.”

Many a curious glance fell on the little figure that now coolly sauntered down the saloon,

peering into the faces of the gentlemen, and exclaiming in admiration of some infant in arms. How had that ragged gutter-child come there?

Katie soon observed these glances, and secretly resented them. Probably these rich folks didn't know that she was as good as any of them. People should see that she was a regular traveler, and not a begging little tramp of a girl. So she sat down in a conspicuous place, and taking out her money, began to count it from palm to palm, and with much ostentation. It gratified her when the scornful glances became simply interested ones; for she had discovered a tall, dark woman, in a big white apron, passing from one to another with the friendly manner Mary had told her to expect.

"That's the ticket-er. Course. Maybe she saw me come aboard — by way of the water — and is looking for me to pay her. Hmm! Ahem! Lady, will you buy my ticket?"

The stewardess was used to all sorts of people, and promptly replied, —

"Certainly, little girl. Where to?"

Katie caught her breath.

"I don't know. Is there more than one place?"

"Yes, indeed; I'll name them, and when I say the right one you stop me. Garrison's, West Point, Cornwall, Newburgh, Marl —"

"Oh, dear, I don't know. I must find my two men and ask."

“ Ah, well; if you've somebody belonging to you, you'll probably find him downstairs.”

Judging from the child's appearance, Katie's friends would scarcely be cabin passengers.

“ But they're not; I've looked around there. When I find them I'll come back.”

At the distant end of the great room a group of men were earnestly talking. Among them was one of the blue-uniformed, brass-buttoned officials who seemed so grand to Diggleses' Kate. Near him, listening intently, were farmer Eddy and the new minister.

Now, Katie had never been taught that it was rude to interrupt a conversation; so she grasped the old man's sleeve, exclaiming joyfully, —

“ Here I am! I've come to go with you! Where is it we're going? ”

Her question reached the ears of a stout man with an excited manner, who took it upon himself to answer: —

“ To the bottom of the river — in spite of our protests.”

“ W-h-a-t? ”

“ I say, we're going down — drowning in this mill-pond of a river — right in sight of land — because this captain is so pig-headed.”

“ Why, Katie! How came you here? ” demanded the minister, as the stout man paused for breath.

“ I'm going home with you, and I can't buy my ticket till you tell me where it is. Please say, and I'll pay her quick. Aren't you glad? ”

The dismay on farmer Eddy's face caused a happy diversion to the conversation of the group, which promptly understood the situation, and laughed at his expense. Laying his hand upon her shoulder, he gently drew her a little aside.

"In a way, Katie, of course I'm glad; but I don't know what Eliza will say — and I don't know as I — I greatly care. She's one to hear reason — after a time; yet, my child, we may neither of us ever live to see Newburgh City, let alone that peaceful Middle Valley, miles back from it, where I live."

"Why not?"

"I can't quite understand, except that something's wrong with the boat, and some folks declare she's slowly sinking. The captain denies it, and says he'll surely get us safe to where we started for. But I wish we were there now!"

"Yes; only then we'd lose the sail; and it isn't time, any way. But don't you worry. This ship isn't going down. How could it? Hasn't it been going along this river forever — almost? Do you s'pose the captain wants to let it, and spoil all his nice clothes, and scare the babies? Oh, say! did you see me tumble in? I tell you, I came near getting left. Wouldn't that have been too bad, after the Diggleses gave me the ticket money, Oh, I forgot! You don't know about that, do you? And you look dreadful tired. Let's go sit

down over yonder on that red-cushioned place. I've so much to tell; and, Ticket-er! Please, I've found 'em. Say, farmer Eddy, may I go right into the daisy-field the first thing?"

The stewardess came to them.

"So this is one of your 'men,' is it, child? I remember that his ticket was for Newburgh. I fancy you're a little 'Fresh Air' girl, aren't you? But whoever sent you should have fixed you up a bit."

When Mr. Eddy realized the exchange of funds he objected:—

"No, Katie; you are my guest now, you know, and I'll pay."

"Then whatever shall I do with all this money?"

"I guess you'll be able to spend it some way."

Just then the captain approached. He had noticed the old man's nervousness, and wished to allay it. He had also seen Katie's fall into the river and her want of fear, while her happy face attracted him. Besides, he never took money from such as she, and by a gesture reminded the stewardess of this fact. She explained it to the girl, who caught the officer's hand and kissed it gratefully.

He smiled and addressed farmer Eddy, —

"Please re-assure yourself, sir, that you are in no real danger, though just after we left the slip we were unfortunate enough to break some of our machinery, and this great wind handi-

caps us. The boat has settled in the water somewhat, yet is absolutely safe to make this run. However, for the comfort of our passengers I have signaled another steamer to keep alongside. If necessary she will tow us to our stopping places, or to the nearest point of land — should worse come to worst. I hope you'll help to quiet any excitement, if such arises, for you are safe."

Yet that was a stormy passage. Usually most swift and steady, the steamer now crawled and rolled along in an uncertain manner that tried the voyagers' nerves, and nearly roused that panic which the captain had feared. Mothers clasped their little ones and wailed over them. One or two women fainted; and the men began to distribute life-preservers.

Then came Katie's opportunity. Firm in faith and ignorant of danger, she broke from the farmer's side to catch up first one crying child and then another, and fetch them back to the cushioned sofa they had found. The simple contact with such rich upholstery made her happy; and she demanded of each, —

"There! Did you ever feel anything so soft as that? Then stop fussing, and let's play. Didn't you know that if you squall you'll set all the rest at it? That's so, isn't it, farmer Eddy?"

"Likely enough, child. You know a deal about nursing children. The little tackers all seem to like you."

“Why not? I like them. I’m going to get a lot of the bigger ones and play ‘Ring around a Rosy,’ then they’ll forget to cry.”

Presently the thoughts of anxious passengers were diverted by the sight of these happy little ones who followed their leader with gleeful confidence; and the captain, repassing with a brother officer, remarked, —

“I’m thankful that little girl came on board. Her behavior does more to quiet fear than any amount of talk would. And we’re getting on, if slowly.”

They were getting on, indeed; and to Katie it seemed that she had hardly come any distance before the first landing was reached and a number of people left the steamer. Other stops followed in quick succession; and at last the sound of the gong once more, and the loud cry, —

“All ashore for New-burgh! Aft gangway for New-burgh! All ashore that’s going!”

The minister helped farmer Eddy into his top-coat, picked up their belongings, nodded to Katie to follow, and promptly led the way from the boat to the city dock.

“Here, at last, thank the Lord!” said the farmer devoutly.

Then they climbed into a waiting railway train, which went whizzing away through a beautiful country, “like a Central Park without end,” as the child exclaimed. The twilight fell, the moonlight came out, and Katie was asleep.

She was still sleeping when their own station

of Middle Valley was reached; so the minister lifted her gently, and with her in his arms clambered after the farmer into the wagon, which Reuben had brought to meet them. Nor, lest they should wake her, would they explain to the boy's questioning gaze who this stranger might be; but when he stepped down at his own threshold the old man extended his sound arm, and directed, —

“Give her to me.”

“With your lameness? Better let me,” protested the clergyman.

“Thank you; but, no. If she's to be a blessing to this house, as I hope, it is I who wish to bestow it.”

Eliza nodded in her sewing-chair beside the table, from which a lamp, under a crimson shade, shed a pleasant light about. Reuben was so much later than she had expected that his brothers had all gone to bed; and the silence had made her so drowsy that she knew nothing of the travelers' arrival till a weight upon her breast aroused her, and her arms unconsciously closed about that which had been placed within them. Then her eyes opened upon the faces of farmer Eddy, the new minister, and the red-frocked little maid within her own embrace. Then she looked into her father's eyes, demanding, —

“What is this?”

“A little present I have brought you from New York, my daughter.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL'S CALL.

“FATHER EDDY! Of all things!”

Eliza sprang up and placed Katie on the floor, where, thus suddenly roused, she rubbed her eyes and stared confusedly about her. Then the old man's hand was on her head, and she heard him saying:

“Poor little creature! You're completely tuckered out. I don't wonder, either, for I'm tired myself. But it's all right, child. You've got to the house where 'General Washington' belongs, and this is Eliza. She'll be glad to see you — in a minute.”

As yet Mrs. Eddy showed none of this gladness. She exclaimed with sharpness:

“Well, father, I think you might at least have told me what you meant to do!”

“So I would, daughter, if I'd so meant. This has happened without any planning of mine, and we'll talk it over by and by. That's a nice supper I see on the side table, and here comes Reuben in from the barn; so let's all enjoy it.”

Eliza remembered that she had not as yet extended any greeting to the minister, and has-

tened to do so; ignoring Katie, who watched her silently and intently, and who was suffering a sudden, terrible homesickness. The child gazed around wistfully. If there had only been one baby in sight! If only anything familiar. But that rag-carpeted floor, the mirror reflecting the staring red lamp, that stiff row of chairs — all these seemed to reach out toward her and choke her. She closed her eyes to escape them; and when she again raised her lids, she was out on the vine-covered porch, where the minister was holding her on his knee, and a spoonful of milk to her lips.

“There, Katie, drink that. Tastes nice, doesn't it? Another? Good. You're coming round all right. She's come to, Mrs. Eddy, he called to somebody within.

Then another face bent above her, — a woman's face, no longer angry and forbidding, but full of motherly compassion.

“Poor child! To think that anybody who was starving should ever come to my door! Drink it slowly, little one, and you shall have all you want.”

Kate lifted her head from the clergyman's shoulder, and asked:

“Where?”

“Where what, dear?”

“The little one.”

“Why, you, yourself, Katie.”

The small maid swallowed the cup of milk now offered her, then laughed aloud. She had

fainted from hunger, as Eliza had guessed, having that day eaten no food save ice-cream — John's gift; but she was rapidly regaining her strength, and soon slipped from the minister's lap to her own feet.

It had needed nothing but this fainting fit to rouse all Eliza's kindness of heart; and she now led the stranger back into the supper-room, and placed her before a plate which farmer Eddy had heaped with good things.

"My! Is all that for me?"

"All for you, my child, after grace."

The word "grace" was meaningless to Katie; but she watched while the others bowed their heads, and the minister gave thanks for the food set before them, and for all the mercies of the day. Then the meal began, and all ate heartily, except Katie, who soon finished, though the host urged her to take more.

"I'd like to, but I can't. I'm all filled up already; yet it was so nice. How I wish Apple Mary had what I have left!"

Having served the others, Mrs. Eddy now rose from behind her tea-urn, and said:

"Come, child. I'll carry you to a place where you can sleep. A night's rest will make another girl of you;" and she stooped to lift the slender body in her own strong arms.

"Carry me! Anybody carry *me*! Wouldn't Mis' Jones laugh if she heard that? But I'd rather walk."

The independence pleased the farm-wife.

“Come on, then. I see you're not one to make much trouble.”

“I wouldn't want to do that. Is this the way to the daisies?”

“I don't know what you mean, child. They are all about us — the pests! This is the way to the sitting-room chamber where I sleep. But there's a tub of fresh rain-water in the lean-to, and you must take a bath before you get into bed.”

“I'll like the water, though I've been in the river once to-day. I want the daisies more. Oh! if you knew how I have thought about them! I must find 'em, if they are near, and lie right down among them. I must — I must!”

Eliza paid no attention to this curious desire, but gave the girl no time to change her mind about the bath, and led her at once into the moonlighted lean-to, where stood a tub of water. Without waiting further directions, Katie tossed aside her rags and leaped in.

“Why, child! You're very sudden in your movements. I'll get a towel for you.”

This was an unknown luxury to the bather, who felt as if she must obey all the rules Mrs. Eddy laid down, so meekly accepted it. With the towel was also brought a nightgown of little Dan's, who was as large as Katie, if not so old; and already the farm-wife was pondering how best to provide some decent clothing for this stranger, so unexpectedly thrust upon her care, and who received the gown with delight.

“Oh! this is beautiful! Some of the children have nightclothes and put them on every evening. I never had. Oh! how sweet!” and she caught up the folds of snowy muslin and pressed them to her nostrils.

“That’s the smell of the grass, child. I always put my washing on the grass from the first blade comes to the last that stays.”

“It must be splendid to have it all around so.”

“Well, it is nice, that’s true. But come now, for bed.”

Clad in her fresh attire, and dewy from her bath, it was a very dainty Katie who followed into the great room, where a white-counterpaned bed stood between wide open windows. The bed could easily have accommodated a dozen of the Court babies, and she gaped in amazement when her hostess remarked:

“This is where I sleep. Little Dan is in the crib, yonder; and I’m going to fix you a shake-down on this lounge. It’s soft, and to-morrow I’ll see about something fitter.”

“Alone? You sleep alone here, with only that one boy there? Why, you could rent out half and never know it.”

“Well—of all things! Rent it? I rather guess I should know it if I did, though I shouldn’t know myself. Yes; that’s Danny, my baby. You may go look at him if you won’t wake him.”

Katie ran to the crib and peeped in, then drew back in disappointment.

“That a baby? Why, he ought to be selling papers and earning his keep. He’s a great, big boy!”

The mother made no comment, but she was not pleased. She went on spreading sheets on the lounge, and unfolding a warm blanket. Then she took a great pillow from her own bed, regarded it rather regretfully, yet finally placed it at the head of the lounge.

“There! Say your prayers and hop in. Then I must go back to the folks.”

“I don’t know any prayers; and I don’t want to sleep on that soft thing. I couldn’t breathe. I want to go to the daisies, if you’ll only show me where.”

Eliza’s ready temper flamed. She was used to having people obey her without question. She was taking much trouble for this unwelcome guest, and the pity she had begun to feel now gave way to vexation.

“Tut, tut! Morning’s time enough for daisies. Even then you mustn’t trample the hay to get them. To-morrow, too, I’ll teach you your prayers. I haven’t time to-night, with that late supper, and dishes to wash, and everything to do single-handed. Get into bed now, and don’t hinder any more.”

Katie had led almost a charmed life in the dark haunts of Diggleses’, where she had been so useful, and had never before been spoken to in such a tone. It frightened her, and she crept between the sheets, while, meaning to be kind,

Eliza tucked the heavy blanket over these, and left the room.

Then said the child to herself:

“I’ll get up and find my own clothes and my fifty cents, and go away. I’ll walk to the river, and find a boat and go home. I hadn’t ought to have left the babies, after all; and I do hope Miranda won’t be let roll off the dock before I get there. In a minute —”

But in a minute Nature had taken matters into her own wise hand, and Katie was asleep.

Some time during the night she awoke. The wind was blowing the sweet odors of grape-blooms through the windows, and coaxing her to throw off that burdening blanket and come out into the open. She sat up and listened. Accustomed to the roar of city streets, the silence terrified her. There was absolutely no sound to reassure her, till from far away came the cry of a whip-poor-will.

After all, then, there was something alive, somewhere. She would up and answer it. She would have the rest of this one night in the cool grass among the daisies. She would find “General Washington,” and pick some cherries from a tree, if there was one away off that nobody — meaning Eliza — owned. Then for Diggleses’ and freedom.

In that quiet place doors might be sometimes closed, but were rarely locked. In a few seconds the child had passed beyond the threshold, and stumbled against something soft, which

the housemistress had tossed there in haste and some disgust, till it could be safely disposed of.

“My frock! my frock, and the money’s in it still!”

Then off came Danny’s borrowed gown, to be folded upon the door-step, while the familiar garments readjusted themselves to their owner’s shoulders. As she shook them into place and fastened what buttons there were, the little maid gayly tossed her head and bounded forth into an unknown land.

CHAPTER VII.

ANIMALS ON A FROLIC.

IN the morning, Mrs. Eddy's first glance showed her the empty lounge; and when she had dressed and crossed the lean-to, she was somewhat startled to see the neatly folded night-gown lying on the doorstep.

"Katie! Little Katie, where are you?"

Nobody answered, and Eliza was too busy a woman to waste time in searching for the missing guest. She started her kitchen fire, and hurried to the well to fill the teakettle; and the sound of its sweep roused farmer Eddy, though the lads needed their mother's peremptory call:

"Come, boys, come! Everybody's behind time this morning!"

There followed the patter of bare feet on the floor above, and one after another three drowsy urchins descended to the kitchen. Reuben only had known of Katie's arrival, and was eagerly telling the story to his brothers, when Eliza cut him short.

"Mustn't stop to talk now. Eli, don't stand staring in that witless way. Come — come on!"

She put on her sun-bonnet, and with her milk

pails jingling on her arms, led the way to the night pasture, where the cows were usually milked.

Under Mrs. Eddy's firm rule the work ran very smoothly at Uplands. Each one of the family had his own duties, and she saw to it that he performed them. Then there were the "hired folks," Samuel and Seraphine Black, who lived in a cottage at the foot of the lane. Samuel was slow and indolent, and inclined to put his own tasks upon the boys; he was also silent and morose, and disliked his mistress as heartily as she disliked him. The original arrangement between them, made years before, called for Seraphine's regular assistance at the "big house;" but she liked to consider herself an invalid, and was apt to be seized by a "spell" whenever her services were most needed; and though many efforts had been made by the Eddys to alter the state of things, no reform was ever permanent, and they had now given up the effort.

Soon father Eddy's face appeared above the pasture bars, and he bade everybody in sight a genial good-morning, adding the question:

"Where's the little girl?"

"She's found her old dress and gone off — seeking for daisies, I presume. I wish you'd see where. She may be in the best meadows, tramping down the grass. Besides, she ought to come and wash up for breakfast; I'm 'most through milking."

“I’ll go; and when I fetch her I wish you’d give her as much of that warm milk as she can drink. Best stuff in the world for children, and she needs good food.” Then he climbed a ladder that rested against the near-by corn-crib, though his daughter called warningly:

“Take care, father! Don’t want any more tumble, do you?”

“No, indeed. Only from here I can see all over the farm. Soon’s I catch a glimpse of that little red frock, I’ll after it.”

But there was no sign of Katie in any of the wide meadows surrounding the home-place; and as the farmer stepped again to the ground, he advised:

“Don’t wait for me, Eliza, if you’re late already. Give the boys their breakfasts, and we’ll take ours when we can.”

Then he disappeared through a wicket gate leading into the garden, which, on that northern side, was protected by a tall privet hedge that, also, hid the interior from view. A single pace beyond the wicket, he stopped short with an exclamation of dismay.

“My garden — my garden! What has happened!”

This was the one spot at Uplands which the old farmer best loved and tended, and it was his especial pride to have it far excel that of any neighbor. It had received his prompt visit, upon his return on the night before, and he had found it in perfect order, with some pet

vegetables well advanced. The moonlight had shown him that very clearly.

Now it was ruined. Pea-vines were torn down and trampled, cabbages gnawed, corn broken as if a roller had passed over it; and seeing the rear gate opened, he rushed toward it.

“That explains! Somebody has passed through here, and forgot to shut it. Little Dan, or Simeon in one of his absent-minded moods. But—this makes me about sick.”

Then he looked over the young orchard, upon which the inner gate opened, and where had been kept a number of sheep and calves. The orchard was empty, and a gate on the further side of it was also open. This gave upon a green lane, down which farmer Eddy hastened, till he reached an open space before the Blacks' cottage, which Samuel was just leaving.

“Thought I wasn't coming, didn't you? Well, I was nigh not.”

“Do you know who let the sheep out?”

“No, I don't. I wish I did.”

“Why? Have they done harm here, too?”

“'Twasn't their fault they didn't. If Seraphine hadn't been in a 'spell,' I might have had my garden spoiled.” Samuel was the rival of his employer in the gardening line, and Eliza declared that he spent more time and strength over his “patch” than on the whole farm which he was engaged to till.

Despite his anxiety, farmer Eddy smiled. It was the first time he had ever known one of Mrs. Black's "spells" to be useful to anybody.

"Were the calves with the sheep?"

"Course. Acted like possessed. Careerin' an' cavortin' round, crazy as loons, and scarin' poor Phiney nigh into fits. Till she thought about the garden an' waked me up. Just in time, too, for I haven't no nice fence 'round mine, to keep other folkses' stray critters shut of it," concluded Samuel, with a characteristic whine.

"Well, I fared worse with my fence than you with none. Where are they now?"

"How can I tell? Down the road to 'Ballyhack,' for aught I know."

"Why didn't you stop them? you must have known they were ours."

"Couldn't. The calves drove the sheep, and 'twould have been right over my body if I'd give 'em a chance. I didn't. I've no legs or arms to spare, to get broke. I'll go and seek them now, soon's I've had a bite of breakfast. Had yours, boss?"

"Not yet."

"My rye coffee is ready, if you'll stoop to taste it."

"Come, Samuel, don't whine. You earn enough to provide real coffee, if you wish it, and Seraphine should be willing to prepare it for you." With intention, the master spoke loud enough for the woman within the cottage

to hear; and that she did so, was evinced by a loud groan.

“I’ll go ahead, and track the creatures. You hurry to the house and tell Eliza. You get the mowing-machine out and send Simeon to help me. We’ll cut the six-acre meadow this morning. No, thank you. No coffee yet. The stock may be doing somebody else a damage.”

Samuel looked admiringly after the old gentleman as he strode away. “Smartest old fellow in the country, for eighty year. I’m twenty younger, an’ feel like Methuselah. Yes, Seraphine. What is it now? Ain’t you comfortable?”

“Am I ever comfortable, Samuel Black?”

“No, deary. I s’pose not. What can I get you?”

“I wish you wouldn’t go to work to-day. I don’t feel a mite like bein’ left.”

“I’ll have to, Phiney. With his lame arm boss ain’t able to drive the machine, an’ hay’s fit to cut. I might get one of the neighbors to stay with you.”

“Samuel Black, is there a neighbor in all Middle Valley believes there’s a thing the matter with me, only ’t I’m spleeny?”

“No, Seraphine, I guess not. But — they don’t know you as I do.”

Mrs. Black made no further remark, but watched her husband eat and depart; then she leaned back among the cushions of her rocker

and prepared herself for a doze ; which, however, she was not destined to secure.

She was suddenly roused by a succession of shrill cries from some child in terror. Now in Seraphine's foolish nature there was one redeeming quality, a passionate love for children. Since there were none in her own house she made much of her neighbors' little ones, and to make them happy would rouse herself at any time from her habitual indolence. They loved her in return and delighted to visit her ; and she now thought it must be one of these favorites who was screaming so frantically.

“ My heart ! Whatever little tacker that is, it's frightened nigh to death ! ”

She hurried to the doorway and saw, almost flying up the road, a small, red-clad figure, and following it with lowered head and vicious bellow was farmer Watkins' Holstein-Friesian bull, “ Captain Grand,” the most dangerous as well as valuable animal in all that countryside, and who was commonly kept under closest guard.

Seraphine forgot her imaginary woes and ran to the rescue ; also forgetting her own red print wrapper which seemed a fresh insult to the enraged beast. He roared again ; and the woman fancied she could almost feel his horns upon her body, as she reached the cottage, with “ Captain Grand ” close at her heels. Then Seraphine made the leap of her life ; landing safely in her kitchen beyond the porch, and

flinging its door shut behind her, while she deposited the rescued child upon the floor. Then across to the inner, woodshed door, to close that and feel at last secure.

Panting and flushed, she asked:—

“Sissy, who in the world are you? and how came you with that creature? Don’t you know he might have killed us both?” Then watching through the open window the excited movements of the “Captain,” she added: “He may yet—if he takes a notion to butt that door down. We’d better go up-stairs, quick!”

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHOICE OF MOTHERS.

KATIE followed into a cool and shadowy upper room, where Seraphine knelt before the green blinds, groaning each time she saw the bull move toward the garden, and sighing with relief when he finally started up the lane toward the big barns. She was just rising to go back down-stairs when she discovered some men hurrying along the road, but paused to throw open the shutters and speak to them.

“Oh! Miss Black. Seen anything of our ‘Captain’?”

“Should think I had! He near scared me to death. How came he loose? He’s gone on up the lane.”

“I was changing the Captain’s pasture just as Eddy’s young stock came tearing by, and that set the mischief into him. There was a little girl in the road, had on a red dress, and that made him madder. I’m afraid she’s been hurt. Seen her?”

Katie joined Mrs. Black at the window and answered for herself:

“Here am I, all safe. He didn’t hurt me.

What made him act so? I was just running after the cute little calves, that kicked up their heels like anything. We'd all slept in the parky-place together. Then the big one ran toward me and roared, and I ran too. My! I never was so scared and had so much fun at the same time in my life."

The men now turned into the lane; and eager to see if they captured their animal, Seraphine hurried to the lower doorway. But they were soon out of sight, and she had time to question the stranger.

"Who are you, child?"

"Katie."

"Katie who?"

"Why, just Katie. Diggleses' Katie."

"Hmn. Kate Diggles. I don't know of any Diggleses around here. Are your folks newcomers?"

"Oh! they haven't come yet."

"How did you, then?"

"On a boat and the cars. With farmer Eddy and the minister man."

"You don't say! Of all things! Farmer Eddy fetched you? Are you one of the fresh-airers the parson talks about continual, and thinks everybody ought to take in and do for? Even me that can't lift my hand to my head half the time."

"Can't you? Why, what a pity! Is it the rheumatism?"

"No, 't isn't. It's just a general disability," with a sigh.

“You ought to go to the Infirmary and get some medicine.”

Mrs. Black turned from the honest, sympathetic little face toward the window, and remarked:—

“By the dust risin’ I should say that was the boss now, drivin’ home his stock. I hope to goodness they won’t get into my garden too. Say, you’re young an’ spry; you just stand out that edge the ‘patch,’ won’t you? Turn ’em off if they try it. Hurry up an’ get there, before they spy the young cabbages.”

Katie ran to the spot indicated, and had hardly reached it when, with wild gambols that set her into peals of laughter, the calves rushed over the whole clearing, sparing neither the cabbages nor the row of double hollyhocks that were Seraphine’s especial pride. The child did her best. But her shouts rather increased than calmed the antics of the animals, though the sheep huddled in a group at one side and refused to move from thence.

“Katie! Katie! Be quiet. Here, Seraphine, you’ll have to help. Once we can get them headed for home they’ll go right enough. I wonder who was at the bottom of this business,” said farmer Eddy. Then he looked again at the little girl and suspected her of the mischief.

“Child, did you open the gate for them?”

“Yes. In the morning when I waked up. They wanted me to.”

“Oh, oh, oh! But little you dream, I suppose, the trouble you've made.”

Katie's heart sank. The handsome old face that had seemed so kind now looked hard and stern, and with its change of expression the landscape, also, seemed changed and grown dismal. She thought of the old wharf and her babies, and wished she had never heard of farmer Eddy or his daisies. She longed for the crowded Court, where there had always been room for her; though up here, where there was a whole world full of empty fields, she was all the time in somebody's way. Her breast heaved, and her lips quivered, but she kept the tears back. Then said Seraphine, —

“There, sissy, never mind. Come in, and I'll fix you some breakfast.”

The farmer also held out his hand, —

“As Seraphine says, don't grieve. What's done can't be helped, and you were ignorant of harm. Cheer up.”

His returning gentleness touched the girl to deeper distress. She caught up his hand and kissed it.

“No, no! I didn't mean to do wrong. I love you; but I hated the house, and the Eliza-woman was sorry I'd come. I wanted the daisies I'd come after. I went through some gates and doors, and the calves played with me. Then when I started to find the river they moored and followed. That was all the way of it. I'm sorry; and as soon as she gives me a crust

I'll go straight away. Would my fifty cents pay for the garden?"

The farmer drew the ragged little person to his side.

"There's something much nicer than crusts waiting for us at home, Katie. Think no more of the matter, except to remember that a closed gate is always to be left as you find it. The calves have sobered down now, and there comes Eli. You can help me drive them back again."

"I'll help you, but I'm afraid of Eliza. I guess she's like the mothers that beat their children. And I don't care to stay. It isn't as nice as I thought it was."

Farmer Eddy clasped the child's hand even more firmly, and led her along the lane, though he said nothing further. Sending her in to the now empty kitchen, he sought Eliza in the dairy, and what passed there was never known. But he came out alone, and with a rather troubled manner dished up the belated breakfast, and set a chair for Katie beside his own.

"Oh! how nice it is! I can eat a lot this morning if — if the lady will not care."

"No, my child. She feels badly over the ruined garden, because we are not like city people with a market convenient to hand. Have some of this stewed potato? What do you say to that for a boy's cooking?"

"Prime!" answered she, her spirits rising rapidly, and her feet beginning to swing back and forth in a childishly natural action.

Then Eliza came in, heard the scuff-scuff of the small, calloused soles against the chair-round, and reproved, —

“Oh, child! Don't do that! Your feet are dirty, and you'll scratch the paint.”

“Shall I help clear away, daughter?”

“No, thank you. You should be out doors, seeing to things. The men have caught ‘Captain Grand’ and led him past. Samuel and Reuben have shut the calves in the south pasture, and got the sheep back into the orchard. He ought to be mowing if he means to get that grass cut this morning. I wish you'd hurry him a bit — if he can be hurried.”

“He's always slow, daughter; but I'm leaving you with a little helper who's quick as lightning, or was so yesterday. Good-by, Katie. Try to learn how country folks live, and mind all Eliza tells you. I sha'n't be far away; and after you've done what you can here, maybe you can come out to the hay-field.”

Katie was tempted to follow him then, but Mrs. Eddy gave her no chance. She was greatly angered by the ruin of her garden, and her tone was severe as she asked, —

“Child, have you washed your face this morning?”

“Oh, no!”

“Aren't you in the habit of washing your face?”

“I do it sometimes, if there aren't too many others at the spigot. Mostly I go in the river for a ducking.”

“Humph! Can you sew?”

“No, indeed.”

“It’s time you learned.”

“I never had anything to sew. The mothers do that to our Court.”

“Your Court. From all I hear about it, it’s the worst spot in the world. You must forget it as soon as possible. You may have lived like a little heathen heretofore, but I intend you shall now be brought up like a Christian.”

“Are you a Christian?”

The innocent question brought a flush to Mrs. Eddy’s cheek; but her tone was much gentler as she answered, —

“I hope I am, though a very imperfect one. If mother were here you’d have an example, indeed. But, there. Go wash your face in the tin basin that hangs outside the lean-to door. There’s a pail of water on the bench, and a dipper hangs over it. Then come back and help me. I’ve much to do, and not least of all — to get you something decent to wear. I must go to the village myself, for I can’t trust anybody else.”

Katie’s heart was lightened by the change in her hostess’ manner, and she answered gayly:—

“Oh! I don’t need anything. This frock will last till cold weather, and then I guess ‘Opium Molly’ will find me another somewhere. She’s real good sometimes, even when she’s ‘out from under.’”

A moment later Mrs. Eddy heard a merry

voice singing a bit of a popular melody outside the lean-to door; then a splash, splash; laughter; and a sudden call:—

“Hello, boy! Who are you? Aren't you funny! Are you a waiter?”

“No; I'm nobody's waiter. I'm Simeon Claude Eddy. I'm the smartest one of the family. I can figure like a streak.”

“Can you? You don't look it. I've seen a lightning calculator. He was in a procession. He wasn't fat like you. He had nothing on but his skin and some clothes. Why do you have so many names? What made you act so queer when you saw me—bobbing and grinning that silly way?”

“I didn't; I don't like girls nohow—ragged nor whole. And I have the names 'cause they was give to me. I think Claude's pretty, don't you? Ma read it in a book. I wish they'd call me Claude all the time; but grandpa says it's too fine for a farmer. I sha'n't be a farmer, though, always.”

“What will you be?”

“Oh, maybe President or something.”

“But why do you wear a big white apron if you're not a waiter?”

“Pshaw! you're a regular stick-to-it-er; well, then, 'cause I have to. It saves my overalls when I wash dishes. I hate it!”

“Should think you would.”

“It ain't a man's work, anyway. I won't do it any more, now you've come.”

“ But I’m not going to stay, you know.”

“ Why not?”

“ I didn’t come to do that; only just to see if there was room. But there isn’t. I was going to-day; but now, perhaps, I’ll wait till to-morrow.”

“ Why ain’t there room? There’s over two hundred acres in our farm of Uplands. Can you beat that?”

“ I don’t know what an acre is. Hark! Eliza is calling you.”

“ You mustn’t say that; you must say ‘ Mis’ Eddy.’ ”

“ All right. Shall I come too?”

“ I s’pose so; I heard her say she was going to take you in hand. I guess you’ll know what dish-washing is yourself before you get done.”

Yet there was nothing unpleasant in store for the little girl that morning. Eliza did, indeed, set her to peeling potatoes for dinner, and found her pupil so quick and obedient that her interest in her “ present ” continually increased. To the “ present ” herself that first half-day in a well-appointed kitchen was a revelation; and she watched the making and baking of some sweet, heart-shaped cookies with a yearning thought of the hungry folks at Diggleses. When a panful had been taken from the oven and she was given one to eat, she regarded it wistfully, but laid it carefully aside.

“ Don’t you like cookies, Katie?”

“ Oh, don’t I! But I want to take this to a

man I know. Farmer Eddy gave him one, same kind, it looks."

"Tell me about him, child," said the house-mistress, well pleased that her work should have given somebody comfort.

So Katie told the story of "Smarty," finishing with a sigh for his familiar presence.

Eliza also sighed:—

"Poor fellow! I'd be glad to give this whole batch of cakes to anybody who's been a sailor."

"You would? Then will you give them to me to take to him? I was going to wait till to-morrow; but if I can have these for him and the babies, I'll start right now."

Mrs. Eddy felt suddenly surprisingly disappointed. With real anxiety she exclaimed:—

"Why, I thought you had come to stay — to be my little girl. I never had one."

Katie was sorely troubled by this, but was saved the pain of answering; for there was now a woman looking in at the window, who spoke in her stead.

"Nor I! Neither chick nor child in my poor cottage, Eliza Eddy; while you have sons to spare. So I've come to ask her to be *my* girl; and I've been all morning running this little frock together on my machine, so she can surprise her father Samuel when he comes home at nooning. Now say, Katie; will you come?"

Mrs. Eddy was shocked by the audacity of this demand; and with a fierceness of manner

that really expressed her anger against Seraphine only, she turned upon Katie, —

“Well, child, which is it — she or me?”

Poor Katie saw but the anger, not divining its cause, and her first fear of the richer woman returned. She forgot that she would be with neither of them for long, as she quietly answered: —

“I’ll go with her, because, I guess, she likes me.”

CHAPTER IX.

A YOUNG PHILANTHROPIST.

“HUMPH! I hope she'll prove it. But, poor child, you are making the mistake of your life.”

“Maybe not, maybe not,” answered Seraphine, temptingly holding up the pink calico frock. “Come, sissy, let's go try it on. I made some for Mis' Watkins' Lucy, and had her pattern. Indeed, if it wasn't that I got a job of sewing for the neighbors now and then, I'd be pretty short of cash.”

Mrs. Eddy dared not answer, lest she should say too much; nor did she even look up as Katie left the kitchen, and joined the woman outside the window. Half-way down the lane, however, the child paused. She was greatly troubled, though puzzled to understand her own offense. With a sudden — “Wait a minute!” she ran back to the big house. Eliza had just removed her last pan of cakes from the oven. The kitchen was redolent of spices and sweetness, and remorseful thoughts of “Smarty” added to Katie's distress. Catching Mrs. Eddy's crisp skirts in her hands, she implored:

“Please forgive me if I oughtn't to go. I

thought you didn't really want me and she did, though it's only for to-day, you know. I won't put on the pink frock if you don't like me to. I'm sorry about the cakes. If I could do something to buy them — my fifty cents might help. If there was a baby to tend —”

“Ma! Ma-a! M—a—a!”

Both ran to answer this howl of distress, which came from small Dan, perched on the lean-to roof.

“Why, mother's baby! What is the matter?” demanded Eliza, stretching her arms upward to lift him down.

“Eli — he — he — sent — Ow, wow!”

“There, sweet! What did Eli do?”

“He — huh — he said I — I — let his squirrel trap loose. An'—an'—jabbed his fish-hooks crooked; an' I only — I only — I —”

“Yes. What else about Eli?”

“He sent me up here to look for a new hen's nest; an' then he — he pushed the ladder down an' run. I can't get off, I can't — Ow, wow! Say, what's that girl laughin' at?”

Everybody in the neighborhood knew that Mrs. Eddy was “spoiling” her youngest child, the namesake and image of his lost father, and everybody had excused her for it; but now came sturdy Katie, and her severer judgment.

“Why, I'm laughing at you, you great boy! As big as I am, yet yelling like that. If you lived at Digglese's you'd get ducked in the river for it. Why didn't you jump off the

roof if you wanted to get down? See — this way.”

With wonderful agility the girl climbed to the peak of the roof, and leaped from it, evoking an admiring exclamation from Seraphine, who had returned and joined the group:

“Land, sissy! You’re as supple as a lizard on a fence. But don’t cry any more, Danny. Me and this little girl are going to pick wild strawberries for a shortcake. Want to come along an’ have some?”

Eliza had not forgiven Seraphine, but she could not resist the delight which now replaced the gloom of her son’s countenance.

“Well — I suppose you may. But mind that you don’t hurt yourself, nor go near the poison ivy. And don’t eat too much; and come back in time to feed the chickens; and don’t — Hold on. Wait a minute. I’ll give you a plate of cookies, Seraphine. Samuel likes them, you know.”

They waited for the gift; and having told Master Dan what she thought of him, Katie now undertook to make him happy; and neither of them ever forgot that first day together at the Blacks’ cottage.

Seraphine was capable when she chose to be, and for children she always so chose. She prepared a delicious dinner, of which the principal dish was the berry-heaped shortcake; and even she could scarcely wait for Samuel to appear in the lane, that they might begin.

He approached rather slowly, not expecting anything more savory than bread and milk; and was almost thrown off his balance by the onrush of a small girl in a pink frock, with flying curls and merry eyes, who regarded him curiously, and repeated, parrot-like, a lesson in which she had been carefully drilled:

“I’m your new little daughter, father Samuel, and please to tell me how you like me!”

But Samuel was too flustered to answer, even if little Dan had given him a chance.

“Yes, she is. That’s so. Ma wanted her, but Seraphine got her. And ma didn’t like it; and Seraphine don’t care if she didn’t, cause ma has got me, an’ Seraphine hasn’t; and do hens ever lay eggs on lean-to roofs? Please to hurry up, for there’s shortcake for dinner; and Seraphine feels fine as a fiddle now, and has got more to tell you than you can shake a stick at. And O Samuel! I don’t want to go home, either. I want to stay with you an’ Seraphine an’ Katie. Wouldn’t have to drive old cows, nor stir chicken-dough, nor pull carrots, nor — anything bad” —

Danny paused, rather from want of breath than language; and taking a hand of each child, Samuel walked amazedly toward the cottage.

With hair neatly brushed, and her old red wrapper exchanged for a fresh print gown, Seraphine met him at the door, her comely face bright with excitement.

“Isn’t this wonderful, husband? Here have

I always been wanting a little girl of my own, and now the Lord's sent one right into my very arms. She says she can't stay, but she'll have to change her mind. I can't never let her go. She shall have the front chamber, an' everything on earth I can give her."

"Slow, deary, tell me slow, so's I can take it in. The boys said the boss had brought one of them fresh-airers, but — Hello, what a shortcake that is! I tell you, Seraphiney Black, if it wasn't for them 'spells' of yours, there wouldn't be a woman in Middle Valley could hold a candle to you for smartness."

That was the shortest "nooning" Samuel had ever known; and when it was over he remarked:

"Well, 'tis a long lane that has no turnin'. Things are on our side at last, Seraphine. First my garden wasn't spoiled, though the boss's was; an' he had the trouble of fetchin' this little girl up here an' we got her; an' 'twas him sprained his arm, not me; an' I reckon things generally do even up if a body only waits a bit. But you'd best lie down awhile, deary. You mustn't overdo."

"No danger now. Haven't I a new little daughter to help me?" gayly returned the wife; and at once asked Katie a multitude of questions, whose answers gave a very truthful picture of the child's whole previous life.

The story was deeply moving, because of its very simplicity. Mrs. Black had visions of

Katie's babies rescued from squalor, and set down among the daisies; and the visions alternated with projects for accomplishing the transition.

"Because, you see, that's what I came for: to find for myself how I could stow them. Though now I know I can't bring them. Well, I've seen it, and I can tell them, and sometime I'll do it! Oh! how I wish Mis' Jones had had my piece of your shortcake! the minister man said I couldn't eat much at first, 'cause I wasn't used; but I'm getting used fast."

Seraphine could not answer because of her tears; and both were startled when Danny, whom they had supposed asleep on the lounge, suddenly observed:

"Once there was a circus."

"Yes, sonny. So there was."

"I didn't go to it. I wasn't let."

"'Twas a shame, me an' Samuel thought. We went."

"Well, there's goin' to be another. Right to our own village. The pictures are on the fences an' blacksmith shop. Men jumpin' over six horses to once, an' a monkey parade, an' a clown, an' rernosterous, an' — an' — things!"

Seraphine's interest had returned to home matters. Next to childhood she delighted in a "show." She replied, encouragingly:

"Goin' to be splendid, folks say. Everybody 'll turn out then, haying or no haying.

The boys told Samuel they were goin', and you will, too, I guess."

"No. I ain't a goin'. Not a step."

"I should like to know why not?"

"I sha'n't never see the rernosterous, nor the clown, nor the elephant, nor nothin'."

Here Danny's breast heaved, and Seraphine proffered him a cookie. But he shook his head dejectedly.

"Well, maybe you aren't hungry. Don't see how you can be after such a dinner."

"'Tain't that."

"What then, sonny?"

"I'm going home a minute. I'll tell you when I come back."

They watched him disappear up the lane, then each returned to her day-dreams; which presently passed into real dreams, and neither woke till a small hand plucked at Katie's sleeve. There stood Danny, with a toy savings bank in his hand. He appeared both broken-hearted and determined. Katie's arm went round him, promptly:

"Why, Danny, boy! What's the matter?"

"You may as well smash it. I can't."

"But why? What is it?"

"All the money I've got in the world is in there. Ma give me a penny just this morning. That's there too," dolefully.

"Oh, I see! A place to put things where you can't get at them. Well, best leave it as it is. Eliza mightn't like it if you didn't."

“Don't you dast to tell her! Don't you! If you do you sha'n't ever see 'General Washington' again. If a thing is yours, it's yours, ain't it?”

“I suppose so.”

“Then smash it, I tell you. I can't stand it if you don't do it quick, an' I must—I must! Something inside me makes me, though I hate it! I'd ruther go to the circus. I'd ruther go to the circus a hundred times than do it once,” he finished passionately.

Seraphine had waked and heard his demand. Though she knew him to be a miserly child, she began to suspect his meaning, and watched the affair without comment. So when Katie asked how she could break the bank open, the woman merely nodded toward a shelf, where lay a hammer and nail-box.

When the tin house was in ruins, there rolled upon the floor a quantity of cents, with a sprinkling of nickels. There was also one dime, which had been polished to the last degree. Danny regarded the coins with a mournful gaze, and remarked:

“You can count up an' see if there's enough.”

“Enough for what, Danny?”

“Why don't you count 'em?” impatiently.

The girl did so then; arranging the cents in piles of ten, and the nickels by themselves. The dime she placed at the head of the little row, remarking:

“That’s like some processions I’ve seen. The ten-cent piece is the captain; the nickels are the marshals on their horses; the cents are the soldiers in the ranks. See them march!”

“Stop. Don’t play. Just count it, quick.”

“I have. There’s a dollar and fifteen cents.”

“Is it enough?”

“For what?”

“To fetch one them babies, what sleeps on boards, and falls into the water sometimes.”

“Oh! Danny, you little angel! It’s plenty, plenty! — enough to bring two whole babies, I believe, even if they are as big as Miranda!”

“Then fetch ’em. But don’t you dast to tell anybody till you get ’em. ’Cause, likely, ma wouldn’t let ’em come. She’d be afraid they’d make dirt, and she hates dirt like poison. So, don’t you tell!”

“I won’t. Not a word. Oh, you dear!” cried happy Katie rapturously, cuddling the young philanthropist in her arms.

CHAPTER X.

ANNOYING MYSTERIES.

LONG before time to leave off labor, Eliza saw Simeon coming home across lots. He walked as if he were suffering; and she paused in her cutting out of the coarse overalls, which were the lad's summer wear, to watch him; then exclaimed in dismay:

“What next! First, father hurts himself, and goes trapesing off to New York, and brings home that ungrateful child; and she is the means of destroying all our vegetables, besides putting the mischief into those young cattle. Once they break bounds they'll do it again. Then Eli comes in with his hand cut on the machine-knives and about crippled by it. It's been such a dry spring the hay is getting too ripe, and — Well, Simeon, what's happened?”

The lad reached the window, and turned his face for her inspection.

“I'm poisoned, ma.”

“If that isn't the last drop in the bucket! What made you do it? Did you wash in salt-and-water before you went to the field, as I bade?”

"No, I didn't. The whole meadow's full of it, and I didn't believe 'twould do any good. Give me something to put on it, won't you? It stings awful."

"Next time put your didn't in your pocket, and mind what you're told."

"I'm sorry, ma; but I'm getting the worst of it, and I wish you'd fix me something, quick."

The boy was, indeed, in a pitiable plight. The poisoning had been done on the previous day; and his face was now swollen so that his eyes appeared but half open, while his hands were puffed and stiff.

"Dear, dear! you'll be no more help for a fortnight, at least. I don't see what possessed you to do it now, while we're so behindhand."

Simeon began to cry, and Eliza's anger gave place to pity.

"There, lad, don't do that. It will only make your eyes feel worse. I'm sorry for you and for myself, and I shouldn't have spoken so sharply if I hadn't been so sorely tried this day. What do you think? Seraphine Black has gone and bewitched that girl your grandfather brought, and coaxed her off to live at the cottage! I call it right down impudent, just as I was planning to make a woman of her. Well, Seraphine never did have any sense. There. Put this saleratus water all over you, and wet some white rags out of the piece-bag. It'll cool you some. You always were a regular 'catcher,' and have

had everything going except the small-pox. Get that next, I suppose."

Simeon tried to laugh but could not, and groaned :

"That circus is comin' next week, too."

"Oh, maybe you'll be all right by then. Did you see little Dan?"

"Didn't see anything but my own face, swelled out so."

"He's down at Seraphine's too. You go and fetch him home. He'll have to do more than feed the chickens, now you're laid up."

"All right. Shall I fetch the girl too?"

"No. I don't want any unwilling folks, though I'd made up my mind to do well by her."

When farmer Eddy came in from the field, he proudly announced that he was learning to use his left hand almost as well as his right one, old man though he was ; and that Katie's defection to the cottage might result in good, after all. "For I never saw Samuel take hold as he did this afternoon. I don't mind his rejoicing over our bad luck with the garden and so on if it makes him do two days' work — at his rates — in a half one."

"Sweet out of bitter again, father. I prefer my sweet without the tang, myself."

"'Tisn't so wholesome, daughter. Where's Simeon? He was in trouble enough."

"All his own fault," answered the mother briskly. The boy had now been gone some time, and the chickens were chirping to be

fed. She cast an anxious glance down the lane as she moved swiftly about the kitchen, forwarding the supper work.

The farmer fancied her glance was only for the despoiled garden, and her anger against Katie, so interposed:

“Don't lay it up against the little girl, Eliza. She was just as ignorant of the country as I was of the city. Folks aren't to blame for what they don't know.”

“It's Simeon I'm thinking of. 'Twouldn't make him suffer any more to mind what he was told—just for once in a way!” With which she took her pails from the rack, and went to the barn.

The old man followed slowly; and in a few moments the chickens were filling their crops with the sweet food he gave them, while he finished Simeon's regular duties. It was he, too, that when supper was over, and the mother would have sent the weary lads to bed, suggested that they should go down the lane and bring their brothers home. A visit to Seraphine's fascinating cottage would do them more good than sleep, he fancied.

“Well, I don't object. Yet, first Danny, then Simeon, and now these two. If they overstay you'll have to make the journey after them yourself, father.”

“All right, mother. But we'll be home soon,” answered Reuben, already brightened by the prospect of the little outing.

Then the farmer took his place in the rocker under "Mother's Tree," and Eliza joined him there. He had still much to tell concerning his trip to the city, and the quiet hour in the twilight was infinitely restful to them both. At times like this, when the overburdened housewife could forget her sordid cares, she felt that if circumstances had been different for her she would have been a gentler woman.

When the talk was ended the farmer rose, saying:

"I'd like to do something for such as Digglesees', if I wasn't so 'land poor.' But, hark! Isn't that the clock striking?"

"Yes. I wonder if the boys have come in."

Eliza hurried to the kitchen chamber to see, but descended swiftly.

"Father, the children haven't come!"

"Haven't they? Don't worry, daughter. I'll try my powers this time; and if I fail — just get out the town-crier!"

He laughed and walked away, and she sat down on the porch to wait for him; but presently she heard the voices, approaching, and smiled to herself:

"Father's as mild as new milk, yet what he says has to be obeyed."

When the party reached the porch Simeon was still missing, while Danny was lying upon his grandsire's breast, who remarked:

"I found him asleep on the floor, so wouldn't disturb him to make him walk."

“The floor! Much Seraphine knows about raising children.”

“Yes, ma; and she’s going to let that Katie sleep right out of doors, on a rug on the grass. Yet there’s her nice front chamber that the girl could have if she wanted it. She doesn’t. She says it’s ‘stuffy,’ and she never had enough out doors yet. She isn’t going to stay. She’s —”

“Look out, Eli Eddy! You’ll be telling something first you know,” warned Reuben.

“What is there to tell? where’s Simeon?”

“He wants to stay all night. Seraphine says he can lie on the lounge in her sitting-room, where she can hear him if he needs anything. She’s a masterhand to cure poison-ivy swellings. She’s covered him with buttermilk poultice, and if he isn’t a sight! She says you haven’t time to fuss as she has, and Katie helps her. Seems as if that girl thought our Sim was one of her ‘babies,’ the way she treats him. Moves soft as a kitten, and tells him jolly stories, and hasn’t laughed at him, not once.”

Eliza was tempted to send again for her absent son, but for his sake refrained. So she only bade the others hurry to bed, immediately after farmer Eddy had offered their evening devotions.

But the boys were not as quiet as usual, and talked so long that she called from the foot of the stairs:

“Reuben! Eli! Too much noise. What are you discussing so eagerly?”

“Nothing, ma. I mean — I can’t — I’d rather not tell,” answered honest Reuben.

“Eli, what is it?”

“Shut up!” came in a sibilant whisper from Reuben’s side of the room.

“What is it, Eli?”

“I can’t, ma. I dassent.”

“Why not?”

“I promised Seraphine I wouldn’t.”

This was the crowning trial of a troublesome day. With indignant haste the mother mounted the stairs, and stood over her sons’ beds. Eli cowered beneath the light covers; but Reuben regarded her steadfastly, with no symptom of yielding, though with no lack of respect.

“Ma, I would if I could, but you have always taught me not to break a promise. I wish I could tell you, I do with all my heart, but I promised not.”

It cut the mother’s heart to be thus opposed, and in an apparently trivial matter; and her answer was stern:

“If you’d gone to bed right after supper, as you should, this would not have happened. I do not like it, sons; distinctly, I do not like it. I wish I had not allowed you to go.”

“Ma, don’t say that. As yet you don’t know what you’re talking about. That visit to Seraphine’s may turn out to be — ”

“Reuben, Reuben! It’s you who’s blabbing now!” cautioned Eli.

“No, I’m not. Say, ma, don’t feel bad. Maybe something’s going to be — and if it isn’t, and I told or raised false hopes — oh, dear! I might break your heart.”

“You’re doing that already,” said Eliza, and went her way below.

CHAPTER XI.

INSUBORDINATION.

“MIS’ EDDY, does havin’ what you’ve most wished for, yet never expected to come to pass, ever set you crazy?” asked Samuel, who had visited the big house to consult its mistress.

“I never heard that it did.”

“Fact is, I’m worried about Seraphine; yet, by rights, I don’t know whether I ought to be, or t’other way.”

“You’re always worried about her, aren’t you?”

“Well, you know yourself she’s sickly.”

“Stuff and nonsense. She’s hypo-ey. That’s all.”

Mr. Black was too much in earnest to take offense.

“’Twas three days ago that ‘Captain Grand’ chased Katie girl into our house, an’ my wife ain’t had a ‘spell’ since. She’s up mornings before I am, singin’ away like she used to when she was Seraphine Tuttle, an’ I went sparkin’ her. The little one sings, too, the cutest kind of songs ever you — ”

“She didn't sing during the short time she lived with me.”

“She would if she'd stayed. She'd been bound to. Her whole natur' is either sing or laugh. Why, the two are just like a pair of children out of school. Seraphine don't 'pear any older than Katie does. Heads together, whisperin', every time I come around. Got Simmy into it too. The poultices have took down the swellin' so's he's got one eye open, an' he's figuring all the time; yet soon's he hears me, under his jacket goes the piece of paper, whilst he an' wife an' Katie look as if they had some great secret on their minds. There's somethin' a-foot, so sort of queer I really don't know but that Seraphine really is just a mite — a teeny tiny mite — out of her wits. 'Twouldn't be strange, would it, seeing she's been an invalid so long?”

“Nothing whatever that Seraphine Black could do would surprise me in the least,” answered Mrs. Eddy curtly.

“Well, you're always so druv, I hate to ask it; but if you could spare time to step down the lane sometime to-day, an' look the thing over, 'twould be a comfort to me. I've a high respect for your judgment; and if you say it's nothin', why, nothin' it is.”

“If Simeon's so much better, he must come home. When he did walk over this morning, Katie was leading him, and both eyes were bandaged. I'll make excuse to carry Seraphine

some muslin to make up for that girl. But you needn't worry, Samuel; your wife isn't deep enough to go crazy. She's simply an overgrown child with a new doll. I'll go."

So as soon as her dinner work was over, Eliza put on her afternoon gown, — a white cambric with pink flowers dotted over it, — and tied on her second-best sunbonnet. She was a fair, wholesome body, with a fresh color and a mass of soft brown hair; and as she entered the cottage, somewhat flushed by exercise, Katie exclaimed, —

"O Mis' Eddy! how nice you look! — just like one of the pink-and-white hollyhocks out there. I wonder if folks that live in the country always do seem like some flower. Do they?"

"Nonsense, child; I try to keep myself clean — that's all."

Yet she was secretly pleased by the compliment, and Seraphine hastened to deepen the good impression.

"You're that bees'-wax neat you always do look as if you'd just stepped out o' the wash-tub, Mis' Eddy."

"Small thanks to you then, Seraphine, if I do. But here's some more muslin for Katie's underclothes; and do have sense enough to cut them big. She's growin'; and no knowing when she'll get more, for the boys say she's going back to town."

Mrs. Black and Katie exchanged a meaning glance.

“Yes; I’m going, Mis’ Eddy.”

Then Seraphine produced some crocheted lace, saying, —

“I’m going to trim the things with this. There’ll be enough for all, I guess.”

“I hope you’ll do nothing so foolish. Better sell it at the county fair next fall, and send her the money.”

“I don’t agree with you. It’ll do my Katie more good to have, for once, something just plain pretty than the money would; and I hope she won’t suffer for that.”

“There are none so rich as those who have nothing.”

“True enough; but I’m terrible glad you’ve come, for I was going to see you to-night, to ask a favor. Will you lend or hire me old Joseph?”

“Lend you my horse! What in the world do you want of him?”

“I’ve a little business village-way, and I want to consult the minister about something. When you’ve answered that question, I’m going to ask another.”

“Why, you haven’t been to the village in years! Don’t I or the other neighbors always do your errands — and to suit?”

“Yes, you’ve all been real kind; but this affair’s my own. Will you?”

“I’ll see when to-morrow comes.”

“That won’t do. I’d rather have Joseph and the light wagon, with Simeon to drive; but if

you can't let them, I'll step over to Mr. Watkins. He's always glad to do anybody a good turn."

"'Step over' a full mile and a half! Yet I've heard you boast you couldn't walk the length of the lane without suffering for it."

"Yes, I know; I've got past all that, though, thank the Lord. I say it with all my heart. I'm a changed woman, Eliza Eddy. The other thing I want is this: I want to hire the Pine Tree lot for four or five months. What rent would you ask for it?"

Eliza began to think that Simeon's fear was not unfounded, and exclaimed, —

"What vagary is this? The Pine Tree lot is a side-hill, rocky, with just enough grass for a fall pasture, and soil too poor to raise even hollyhocks."

"'Tisn't everybody speaks so about their own land; but I admire you for it, Eliza Eddy. If you don't want to rent it, I'll try Mr. Watkins for a piece of ground, as well as a rig. Both I must have, though not for posy-raising."

"It isn't even cleared. Indeed, I'd be glad to rent it for the cultivation. An experienced farmer might possibly get some sort of crop off it."

"It'll raise just the crop I want, though I wouldn't have it cleared. It's the prettiest spot in Middle Valley, 'cording to my notion — with the old woods, and the little Kit-Kat creek tumbling over the big rocks, an' so sightly.

There isn't any maiden-hair brakes anywheres around like those Samuel fetches me from Pine Tree."

"Humph! If you didn't keep so many pots of weeds and ferns standing about you'd have better health."

"Maybe; I don't see as they hurt me, though. But that's no more here nor there. Will you rent it to me?"

Mrs. Eddy looked outward and upward toward the slope in question. Mother had loved the Pine Tree lot, which took its name from an immense tree crowning the peak of the hill.

"I should know what you want to do with it before I give an answer, Seraphine."

"I can't tell you, Mis' Eddy, yet. It's for a good purpose. One o' the grandest in the world, I believe. Will you? and for how much?"

"I don't think I want to rent that piece."

But Mrs. Eddy was frightened by the effect of her refusal upon the other woman, who now seemed upon the verge of a "spell" much more disastrous than common.

"Why, Seraphine! Is it so important as that? Don't look so queer. I'm speaking, really, for your own good. It is simply out of the question that Samuel should undertake to cultivate that field. His time belongs to us. Indeed, if he did as he should by us, even that garden patch wouldn't be so flourishing."

"Don't let that hinder you. I'm not expect-

ing him to lift his finger on that lot. I'm managing this thing myself. I mean — how much would it be?"

The owner named a moderate price, though it seemed large to the would-be tenant, who said, —

"Wait a minute, till I ask Simeon something."

A moment later the visitor heard a whispered conversation going on in the kitchen, and smilingly wondered if the young adviser would give judgment against his own mother. However, when Seraphine returned to the porch, she announced, —

"He says we can do it."

"Oh! Indeed!"

"Yes. He's done all my figuring. I'm not going into it blindfold. Shall I pay in advance?"

"No, Seraphine. I'll wait to see what you do with the lot."

"That won't answer. You might change your mind. A lawyer must draw up a regular lease, and we'll both sign it."

"That's all right. You understand business better than I thought. Yet you know, too, that I'm a woman who keeps her word."

"If 'twas only you and me I wouldn't want a better bond. As it is — oh! how I hope things will turn out just as I planned!"

Here Katie's small finger warningly touched Seraphine's lips.

“ Ah, deary, I'll take care. Well, I haven't let any cat out the bag, nor kitten either. Now, about the horse and wagon. Can I have 'em? ”

“ Yes. To-morrow, if you like. ”

“ First-rate. I'll be ready for them as soon as I get my breakfast work out the way; and it don't take long with Katie to help. Even if my family is bigger by two than it used to be; ” and she nodded gayly toward Simeon, appearing rather timidly, lest his mother should compel his return home. However, she permitted him to remain over another day, and so act as driver for Mrs. Black on her unwonted journey.

But Mrs. Eddy walked up the lane in a perplexed frame of mind, and eagerly welcomed her father's arrival at supper time; relating the details of her visit, and concluding, —

“ I really couldn't say no; but why she should want to trouble the minister puzzles me. ”

The farmer's reply was delayed by the peculiar behavior of both Reuben and Eli. They were giggling, nudging each other, and making so many warning grimaces toward little Dan, that their grandfather took matters into his own hands.

“ Boys, if you can't show respect to your mother when she's talking, and can't behave decently at table, you can leave it. ”

This was exactly the permission they craved; though Reuben flushed, and Eli answered rather hurriedly, —

“I’m sorry, grandpa. But the chores are all done; and if Seraphine’s going to the village in the morning, we’d like to step down and see her a few minutes. Fact, we must; ’cause you couldn’t spare us then, and” —

The mother interrupted sternly, —

“No, sons. An extra pleasure is not a punishment. When you see fit to confide in me it will be time enough for you to visit Mrs. Black. If I hadn’t promised to let Simeon stay and drive for her I would go myself, and fetch him home. After all, I more than half believe that Samuel was right, and that the woman is crazy.”

“O mother! Don’t say that. Seraphine is all right — just the very rightest kind of right; and do let us go. We have talked it all over, and we really must. Say yes, please.”

But she remained firm in her refusal; and Eli exclaimed sullenly, —

“You’ll be sorry some day; and we might as well go to bed.”

So they hurried up the stairs, leading Danny with them. They seemed afraid to let him leave them; and Reuben held the child’s hand so tightly that he cried out, —

“You quit hurting me, brother! I’m no more a tell-tale than you are.”

“Hush!” ordered Eli, and fairly pushed the youngster up the stairs.

Heretofore the mother’s word had been law, and there had been no law-breakers; therefore,

it did not occur to her that her sons would ever openly disobey her. She was glad that they were in bed, and the troublesome day over; and for a time she again sought the bench beneath "Mother's Tree," where she, as always, found rest and peace. When she finally returned to the house, it was with the fear that she had been a "little hard on Daniel's boys," and the resolution to make amends in some way.

"I'll give them an hour in the morning to see that silly woman, if they so desire," she thought.

But again was her tenderness to be turned to hardness. Again were the white beds undisturbed. Despite her strict command, the lads had gone to the cottage; and an act that to some other mothers would have seemed but youthful folly, to Eliza Eddy appeared an insult.

"Oh! my sons, my sons! And you have taken even my baby with you!"

Then she sought her own room to await their return.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUMMER DRIVE.

IT was two hours beyond the lads' usual time when they hurried up the lane, and saw their mother sitting by her window. Eli clutched Reuben's sleeve, imploring:

"Don't. Let's wait till she gets tired out and goes to bed. I'm afraid to meet her now."

"I'm not. We'll go straight to her and tell her just how it was."

"If we do, I shall say more than I want to — yet."

"Then you keep still, and I'll do the talking. I guess I'm not scared of my own mother."

Yet, despite this manly assertion, Reuben's heart did sink a little as he entered Mrs. Eddy's presence.

"Mother, I'm terrible sorry we had to disobey you, and that we overstayed. We *had* to go; and you'll be pleased with us when you understand it all, by and by. We didn't mean to be gone but a few minutes, only we got talking."

"Good-night, Reuben. Good-night, Eli. Come, Daniel."

That was all. The elder brothers stood, for

a moment, almost as much shocked by her reticence as she had been by their disobedience. Then they silently climbed to their own chamber, where Reuben declared:

“I sha’n’t be able to sleep a wink to-night, I feel so sorry she’s angry;” then laid his tired head on the pillow, and at once forgot his troubles.

At breakfast no mention was made of the evening’s events, and Mrs. Eddy very quietly directed Reuben:

“As soon as you have finished your other chores, harness Joseph and drive him down to the cottage. Hitch him to their tie-post, and come directly back. See that there is sufficient provender for an all day’s trip put in the box. Then take your sickle and scythe to the far meadow. Samuel will mow three fields to-day, for I’ve hired the machine to a neighbor as soon as we’re through.”

The latter part of her speech was addressed to farmer Eddy, as Reuben hastened away, determined to obey her this time to the very letter; and just as he returned the minds of all were diverted by the arrival of a neighboring farmer, who was driving past and brought the Eddys’ newspaper from the post.

He was full of talk concerning the wonderful circus-posters displayed about the country, and finished by saying:

“It’ll be the biggest show ever came to Middle Valley. I plan to take all my youngsters, and suppose you do, too, farmer Eddy?”

“ Oh! I reckon they’ll be on hand,” he answered genially.

But to his surprise the lads’ faces evinced anything save delight, while Danny burst into a wail, and started for the barn at his greatest speed. After a moment his brothers followed him there, and Reuben attempted some comfort.

“ Don’t you mind, child. There’ll be others.”

“ ’Twon’t be this one ! ”

“ Look here, boys. Seraphine hasn’t started yet. If either of you want to take your money back, now’s your chance.”

“ Don’t want to,” retorted Eli; “ though nine chances to one that ‘Smarty’ is nothing but some old tramp, not worth all we’ve given for him.”

“ Whoever he is, he needs it more than we do, Eli; ” but finding small compensation in this for the woe of that present moment, Eli silently departed for his field of labor.

Then Reuben lifted Danny from the hay, where he had thrown himself face downward, and asked :

“ Little shaver, how’d you like to go to the village with the rest? ”

“ She — I couldn’t — you know it.”

“ Stop crying. Be patient. I’ll go ask. If I whistle for you, come.”

The mother was in her dairy, and to this request opposed another question :

“ Reuben, do you think he deserves such a treat? ”

“Yes, mother, I do. So will you think, by and by, when you know all.”

“I’ve no time for fixing him up, and I doubt if Seraphine would bother with him.”

“If she wouldn’t, Katie would. Please, mother. I’ll dress him and all. I’ll do his chores, too.”

“Very well.”

Whereupon a joyous whistle sounded across the yard, and Danny promptly responded. But when he appeared, it was the cautious mother herself who prepared him for his trip, having small faith in her elder son’s powers as nursemaid; and a little later the now happy child was speeding towards Seraphine’s cottage of delight, clothed in his Sunday best, and with a new quarter-dollar in his hand, which he was to “spend just e’zactly as he pleased.”

It did seem to impatient Katie as if her adopted mother would never stop “fussing,” and really set off on this wonderful trip. But at last she was ready and came out to the wagon, anxiously remarking:

“I do hope no accident will happen to us. I’m all worked up.”

But Katie comforted:

“Now, don’t you worry. Things most always happen right. Why, just you think; a little while ago I hadn’t heard of you, nor Middle Valley, nor the daisies, nor—anything. Now I know you all, and you’re my new mother; and we’re going to be able to do it, and won’t every-

body everywhere just be surprised? — just you, that has always been ‘spelling it’ till I came, and just plain Diggleses’ Kate! My! ain’t it grand?”

“How will we sit?”

“I know,” answered the ever-ready Katie. “You sit in front, ’side of Simeon. It’s proper you should ride nearest the horse. Danny and me will be on the back seat. Is the basket of dinner put in? And your green parasol? and the jacket for Simeon, so he won’t take cold in his poison? Can you get in alone? Sha’n’t I help you? Simeon ought to, ’cause that’s the way the men do to their women in New York. My newsboys, even, wouldn’t let a lady get in a street-car without helping.”

“You keep still, Katie Diggles. You talk too much. You talk so much a body can’t hear himself think.”

“Some ‘thinks’ wouldn’t be worth hearing. But there, boy, don’t you fret. You’ll improve. I shall be around here some time, and I’ll tend to that.”

But now they were off, Simeon slapping the reins over old Joe’s back, while Seraphine nervously expostulated:

“Oh, Simmy, do take care! You shouldn’t drive so fast. He might get to runnin’, and then what should we do?”

“Why, stop him, I s’pose,” laughed Katie from the rear.

“More danger of his stopping than of his

running," said Simeon; and the animal's gait proved his statement correct.

What a ride that was! It seemed to each one of the little party that she or he had never been so happy. To Katie the fences appeared to fairly fly past them; and she held out her arms to catch the rush of sweet-scented air against them, exclaiming:

"Oh, mother Seraphine! Why don't you unpin your shawl, and let this lovely breeze blow right straight through you?"

"Well, child, I suppose because I've no notion of taking the pneumonia at this season of the year. Besides that, we're comin' to the village. It's only half a mile away now. Sit up erect, Danny, and pull your jacket down, and keep your hat on tight, and do your ma credit. We want to be prepared when we get there, and not all in a fluster with hurry."

Which advice, delivered earnestly, set Katie off into a fresh peal of laughter, that nobody minded in the least, and which was only checked by small Daniel demanding:

"I should like to know when we're going to eat dinner."

"Dinner? Why, you've just had your breakfast. Yes, I know. I rather fancy the smell of that lunch-basket, myself; but I'm afraid it'll be some time before my nose gets any nearer the smell," answered Simeon, cutting Joe so smartly that he fairly broke into a trot.

Seraphine put up a warning hand.

“Sh! sh-h! The minister lives in this very first house in the street. Boards with old Deacon Luther. I don’t know what’s best to do. He might not be in; and if he wasn’t, I could go on and see the Squire first. Though I did plan — Katie! Child! Where are you going?”

Before the wagon stopped she had leaped out, and run up the path to the Deacon’s front door, where, presently, she gave a resounding rap on the ancient brass knocker. Then a venerable gentlewoman appeared at the door, which she opened but slightly, inquiring:

“Don’t you know better than to knock like that while we have sickness in the house?”

“How should I? I want to see the minister.”

“Well, you can’t. He’s too ill to be pestered with children.”

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE MINISTER'S STUDY.

As the door closed, a familiar voice was heard asking :

“ Who is it, Miss Luther ? ”

“ Nobody but a little girl. ”

“ What sort of little girl ? ”

“ Oh ! I didn't notice. Just plain girl. You lie still, dear man, and I'll bring you your chicken broth. It's so light in here I don't wonder you're restless. ”

Katie caught a glimpse of black skirts passing through an inner hallway, and leaped in at the window, so temptingly convenient to the porch. An instant later she stood in a darkened room beside a reclining chair, whereon, amid a wilderness of pillows, lay her friend, the minister.

“ Why, Katie ! ”

“ Oh ! you poor dear ! Whatever is the matter ? ”

“ Just a little trouble with my lungs. Nothing worth mentioning. ”

Then they heard steps returning along the passage, and Miss Luther reëntered, bearing a

tray with a bowl of soup, which she nearly dropped at sight of Katie.

“Why, child, how came you here?”

“Through the window, ma'am.”

The lady frowned, and the clergyman interposed:

“She hasn't had the benefit of Middle Valley training, Aunt Maria. This is the girl from Diggles' Court.”

“Ah, indeed! Maybe she, too, would like a bowl of broth.”

“No, I'm not hungry now; and I'm in a hurry. If you'll stay out a minute I'd like to talk to the minister, about a — a secret.”

Miss Luther was shocked by such plainness of speech, yet instantly departed, with only a brief warning to her invalid not to overtax himself. Then Katie explained all that Seraphine and she had planned, while the minister listened eagerly, assenting to her wish, as she ended her story:

“Now, I want to run out, and fetch them all in, every one, so we can fix it all up and get things going.”

So they all came in; and Seraphine, being a person of one idea at a time, was so full of her own projects that she treated the gentleman's illness with a lightness that amused him.

“But, my dear Mrs. Black, I'm helpless, you see. Though it grieves me not to be able to aid you, I don't see how I can.”

Seraphine did not understand that this was

refusal. Having accomplished so much, she felt that nothing would be allowed to interfere with her complete success. When she had finished her argument, she rose, remarking :

“ Well, that’s the way it is, and I’ve a deal of business on hand. I’ll go now to the Squire’s. Good-by. Come, Simeon, come, Daniel — and Katie.”

But Katie did not follow, for the invalid had detained her by a touch upon her arm and the enthusiasm of his face.

“ My child, there *is* one way! If I should give you a letter to a gentleman in New York, could you find the address and deliver it promptly? If so, I believe it all can be arranged just as well as if I were present, and it would save the delay of letters to and fro. Do you know where Number — West Thirty-fourth Street is? ”

“ Yes, indeed. I know that street from end to end. I used to sell my papers up there — when I had any.”

“ Please find Miss Luther, and ask her to come to me for a few minutes. I must consult her, and enlist her sympathies. I know she will want to help, and so will the Deacon.”

The old gentleman came to the study with his sister; and their guest laid the case before them, with such eloquence that they promised every assistance in their power, — even the immediate conveyance of Katie to the village and to the care of her adopted mother.

“For it wouldn't do that so valuable a messenger should be lost in Middle Valley, to begin with,” laughed the genial Deacon.

“No fear of that, sir, but I'd like the ride all the same,” answered the happy child; and from his now unshaded window the minister watched them drive away together, while Miss Luther remarked:—

“This good news has done you more good than all your medicine.”

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME TO DIGGLESES'.

IT was eleven o'clock in the morning, the very busiest hour in the day for the manager of a certain Aid Society. Indeed, he was so crowded with work that he directed the office boy:—

“Admit nobody else until I order you to do it.”

“Yes, sir. All right, sir; but there's a little girl here who says she must see you. She won't take no for an answer.”

“Keep her out. Can't attend to her yet.”

“All right, sir.”

The boy turned from the inner office, but, catching a glimpse through the window of a passing street parade, paused for an instant to watch it.

This was Katie's opportunity. While his gaze was elsewhere she bounded from her chair in the ante-room, and slipped between his back and the door-frame.

“Oh! what a stupid boy!” she exclaimed, advancing towards the manager's desk, and nodding her head by way of further salutation.

"I *had* to come, you know. I *had* to give you this letter with my own hand. So here it is;" and she placed the envelope between the gentleman and the page he was inscribing.

It was an ill-bred action, but Katie had had scant training; besides, the handwriting was such that it secured her instant pardon.

"Hiram Castle! From the Reverend Hiram Castle. Well, a message from him is certainly a passport to me, though I hope he isn't asking aid for any protégé just now. I'm very short of funds, and the demand —"

"I guess you'd better read it, sir," said Katie, with a touch of pride.

As he broke the seal the little girl dropped upon the floor, and kicked off her stiff shoes. The stockings followed. She had come, clothed in Seraphine's gifts, though much against her will. Rolling the obnoxious articles together, she sprang up again, ready for anything which should come. But the manager pondered so long over the letter that she coughed to remind him of her presence. Then he looked up and laughed, seeming a different person from the care-burdened individual who had forbidden her entrance.

"Child, you're right to remind me that I am wasting time. I was thinking how wonderful, yet simple, the whole affair may be. Is this Mrs. Black a wealthy woman?"

"I — don't — know. She's a dear little cottage, and plenty to eat, and lots of 'tidies' and

things. Sometimes she's quite 'spelly,' though not since I came. Now I want to go home to Digglesees', and will you tell me everything about it?"

"Yes. Mr. Castle writes that I can trust you completely. That's a fine character to have, my child! It will take two or three days to arrange all that he wishes; but I think you can safely include twenty in the party. I will hurry matters up; and you come back here the day after to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock sharp."

"I'll be here. Good-by, sir!"

He had intended to ask if she had car fare, or even a lunch provided; but she gave him no time; nor did the nimble little feet wait for the slowness of any street car, though in Katie's pocket was now not only her original fifty cents, but a whole silver dollar that Seraphine had given her, and she could have ridden had she chosen so to do.

She almost flew over the pavement, along the avenues and cross streets, and in an incredibly short time had reached the old wharf, where there was nobody in sight, not even a baby. Then up the dingy court she darted, singing as she went, and calling cheerily to the unseen toilers within, who recognized the voice instantly, and dropped their tasks with a glad answering cry:—

"Katie! Our Katie!"

Yes, it was she. Hurrying from room to

room, carrying her joyful tidings everywhere, kissing the mothers, hugging the children, and gathering up a batch of babies, which "Smarty" and some idle lads helped her convey to the old pier. Once there, it seemed to her she had scarcely been away, save for the fine new clothes and the tormenting shoes that proved it. It was there, too, in the familiar place, when night had fallen and labor ceased, that they settled the matter, when Katie had told her story to as many as could draw near enough to hear it; though it would have been a slow business, had not the policeman on that beat himself joined them to listen, because he, too, loved Katie, and was glad to find her at home again.

"Well, then, everybody, I've told you how big and splendid and daisy-ish it is, and how you'll be as happy as the sun itself. So now, let's pick out the twenty who can go, and do it quick. Oh! it breaks my heart I cannot take you all — all. Who first?"

"Mis' Jones, 'count of her cough," suggested a bowed old woman, whose days were numbered, and thought it mattered little where they ended.

"Hunchback Ned!" cried another.

The lad protested shamefacedly, though the color leaped to his thin cheek, and his eyes brightened.

"Ned, of course. I counted on him. Who next?"

To the honor of Diggleses' it was that very

little selfishness was shown ; but there was such length of argument, as to who most needed the outing, that the policeman felt it wise to interfere :

“ I'll fix it for you folks, if you want.”

“ Aye, aye.”

So he drew a pad from his pocket, and wrote down the names of all who had been decided upon, together with an unlimited number of babies ; which, being so small, could be added like sums in arithmetic, four in a column equaling one adult.

“ For they'll not take up any room, and the captain won't ask any fare for them on his boat. Who else ? ” said Katie.

To complete the number, the officer suggested the drawing of lots.

“ That'll make short work of it, and is according to Scripture. So now, let's at it, and then move on. Time honest folks were abed and rogues a-jogging.”

It was done as he suggested, and he was given the precious list to keep till needed ; after which the tenants of Diggleses' turned homeward, to dream of green fields and babbling streams, and to thank whatever stood to them for God, because of a small human child named Katie.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAPPY ENDING.

ONE morning when farmer Eddy entered the dairy, Eliza met him with the exclamation:

“Father, I believe the millennium is coming!”

“I hope so, daughter; but what are the new signs of it?”

“Seraphine has been here, and, of her own accord, carried home all the week’s washing to do.”

“Hmm. Wasn’t that in the original contract?”

“Did either of the Blacks ever live up to their contract? I don’t know what’s changed the woman so. She’s active and full of fun as that Katie was, herself, — yet whom she doesn’t miss, apparently; and Reuben says her cottage has been cleaned from top to bottom.”

“Samuel seems worried about her. Says she has drawn out all of her bank money.”

“Why should she, father? and why should she want to hire the Pine Tree lot? or send that child back to the city without asking your consent?”

“I can’t say.”

“Heigho! Here’s Eli again. That’s the third time he has made some excuse to come back to the house since he went to the field this morning. Well, Eli, what now?” she called from the low doorway.

The boy jumped in a guilty sort of fashion, but he could not banish the joyous expectancy from his face.

“Oh! nothing much, ma. Reuben, he just wanted something out of the old lane corn-crib, and I was fetching it.”

“Tell Reuben to remember his needs before he goes so far away. You are both wasting time.”

“Yes, ma;” whereupon the lad ran toward the old crib, which commanded a view far beyond the turning of the lane; of the Blacks’ cottage; and high above that, of the much discussed Pine Tree lot. The “lot” was invisible from the big house or its grounds; and for several reasons both Seraphine and the boys were glad that day that this was so.

When Eli repassed the house on his return to the hayfield, he was still running, and his face was even more flushed with excitement.

“There’s something more than industry the matter with that boy! The mere delight of raking hay wouldn’t affect his ankle-joints like that!” thought Eliza.

Indeed, there had been something out of common at Uplands for more than a week; and the mystery had deepened ever since Diggleses’

Kate had departed whence she came. And when soon the family gathered about the dinner table, there were many smiles and nudges exchanged between the four lads; till, at last, Eli and Simeon, on one side, kicked the shins of Reuben and Danny, on the other, with such force that the latter's high chair tipped backward, and the mother interfered.

"Reuben Eddy, it's time this nonsense stopped. There's something underhand going on, and I insist upon knowing what it is."

"Boys, shall we tell her?" asked Reuben, glancing from one brother to another. "Tell her part, any way?"

They nodded affirmatively.

"Well, ma and grandpa, as soon as you've finished I wish you'd walk down the lane with us. We've something to show you."

"A whole lot of somethings," added Simeon.

"White," said Eli.

"Like a circus. Only better. And why we wouldn't spend our money for the real one. 'Cause we hadn't any. We'd given it all to these — I mean, to fetch a man and buy his clothes. Oh! pshaw! what am I saying?"

"Well, never was a circus as white as them!" cried Reuben, taking the words from Simeon's lips.

"What's up, lads?" asked the farmer, smiling at their eager faces.

"I should say tents were up, grandpa."

"Tents? Where?"

“Pine Tree lot.”

“Wh-a-t?”

“Fact, ma. Come and see.”

Eliza's mind worked rapidly. If, as her sons declared, there were tents upon the Pine Tree lot, if Seraphine had taken all her savings for this extraordinary folly — whose purpose she could not guess — why, the truth could no longer be put aside: the woman had become a maniac, and should be promptly consigned to some safe retreat.

When the meal was over the elder Eddys followed the excited lads down the lane, to its turn by the old corn-crib, where the sight burst upon them. On the sunlit Pine Tree lot gleamed a dozen white tents. A few workmen were still moving among these open-air homes, putting the finishing touches which would make them perfectly secure; while by the bar-way, at the foot of the slope, stood Deacon Luther's great wagon waiting to carry these strangers away whence they had come.

Eliza's face turned very white, as she asked, —

“Sons, is it — is it — that dreadful circus — or another — right on mother's own beloved hill?”

“No, indeed! A thousand times better. It's for the folks from Diggleses', that Katie went to bring. To-night as many are coming as the tents will hold. Seraphine did it all herself — or she began it. Now she's most pestered to death with all the folks 'round, who want to help as soon as they hear of it. Yet it was our

own Danny made the very first offering. True. He was the foremost of us all. But, hello! There are Seraphine and Samuel waving to us. They want us to come down to the cottage and talk it all over. Seems as if we never could get it all explained, doesn't it?"

But as they moved onward down the lane, Eliza's thoughts were still troubled.

"Boys, I don't see why you couldn't have told me, why it should have been such a secret. Seraphine has much to make clear."

She was quite willing so to do; though first she bade the lads run up the hill and satisfy their curiosity, while she placed her best rocker on the porch for her mistress' use. Then she pointed with pride to a line full of snowy linen, fluttering in the clothes-yard.

"There, Eliza Eddy, I want you to have a little bit of vacation this week. Some of the folks coming may need some of your time. Or, so I hope. Now, I'll tell;" and beginning with the day of Katie's arrival, she gave a graphic picture of her own thoughts and actions up till that moment.

There were tears in the narrator's eyes when she had finished, and in Eliza's as well; but the latter was always practical, and asked, —

"Well, Seraphine, now that you and the neighbors have gotten yourselves into this scrape, how do you propose to feed your tenters? How many are coming? Shall I be allowed to lend a hand in that part?"

“Yes, Eliza. I counted upon you for that. And I should have told you, right off, only there's something me and the boys hope — if maybe — I wouldn't want you disappointed — I — oh! dear! I do believe that of all the happy folks who will come to the Pine Tree lot this night you will be the very happiest.”

Simeon came leaping down the hill, crying, —

“Oh! it's wonderful! Beds and chairs in all; and a stove in one! Say, Seraphine, won't it do for ma to go up there now, before the tenters come?”

“Best wait till sundown, I guess. It'll be cooler then.”

As Seraphine had said, the story of Katie and the Pine Tree lot had spread through all that countryside; and the Eddy household was but one of many which visited the attractive place that same evening. Nor came anybody empty-handed, so that the little canvas-walled “store-room” was full to overflowing long before the expected great picnic-wagon of the Deacon's appeared in the distance.

At sight of it, Reuben Eddy's tanned face turned pale, and he slipped his strong young arm about his mother's waist protectingly. At which she marveled and smiled, making no further comment.

Oh! the cheers that hailed the arrival of the strangers! and the happy voices which tried to answer the salute of welcome!

Cried Seraphine, — almost beside herself with joy, —

“Katie! Katie! Oh, my Katie!”

For there she was, in all the glory of her gay pink frock, poised on tip-toe upon the high driver's-seat, as if just ready for a spring. Then the wagon stood still, and she began her human distribution, —

“There, Mis' Jones! Hand me up Toddles! I'll toss him out! Here, you nice lady, yonder! catch a baby!”

Limp and incapable as ever, away through the air flew Toddles, amid a chorus of “Ohs!” and “Ahs!” as many a motherly arm outstretched to break an imminent fall.

“Good enough! Here's another! Miranda — round and soft, and such a dear! Going, going, gone!”

With a squeeze of affection, which would very seriously have disturbed a less phlegmatic infant, Miranda was kissed, uplifted, and heavily dropped into the very grasp of Samuel Black himself.

“Hold on, Katie! You aren't going to rain babies on us, are you?”

To have seen the child's face in that hour, would have been a benediction and an inspiration for a lifetime. But when all the rest had been helped from the wagon, and had begun to climb the hill toward their new canvas homes, there yet remained standing by the wheel one poor creature, over whom the small maid

fluttered in an agony of anxiety; and at whom more than one of those welcoming country folk cast a startled glance — then caught their breath in wonder.

One moment Reuben felt his mother sway in his embrace, and turned his face from the sight of her emotion. The next she had released herself, and put her own arms around “Smarty’s” shoulders.

Those who heard it never forgot the compassionate tenderness of her voice as she cried:

“Daniel — my husband!”

He shivered and shrank, but the shock of delight pierced to his clouded brain:

“Why — why — Eliza!”

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

AN old man's fall from a cherry-tree and a penniless child's unselfishness seem small matters to lead to great results. Yet with God nothing is trivial.

The Pine Tree Camp proved the greatest blessing which had ever been sent to Middle Valley, nor would a hundred circuses have equaled it in perpetual interest.

In gratitude for her husband's return, Eliza Eddy donated the hill to the tenants of Digleses' for a permanent summer home; and the people were never tired of discussing this marvelous story, which they had pieced out from the fragments he could now remember, and their own imaginations. He had been in the water many hours after the wreck of the *Navigator*, but had been rescued at last by a passing foreign vessel, and carried to a distant port. Fever followed his exposure; and though his bodily health was restored, his brain remained clouded. On its return trip the same ship which had saved him conveyed him back to New York, where he drifted into Digleses', and became Katie's charge.

Soon the Middle Valley people realized that their countryside had been greatly enriched by the arrival of these humble folk who had come among them so empty-handed. Did one need a farrier, or a worker in leather?

“Send to the Pine Tree Camp for blacksmith Cole, and tell that sick-looking Pole that my harness wants mending.”

Was any housewife overtaxed?

“Never mind. One of the women from the Camp will be glad to lend a hand;” and most capable hands they proved.

The sewing which farmer womenfolk find so little time to accomplish seemed a trifle to these seamstresses from Diggleses'; and thus another need was supplied.

But the end of summer came, fall winds began to blow, and it was evident that the holiday must be accounted over. Then there arose a question in Eliza Eddy's mind which, after consultation with her wisest friends, she answered by the erection of several cottages upon her own broad lands.

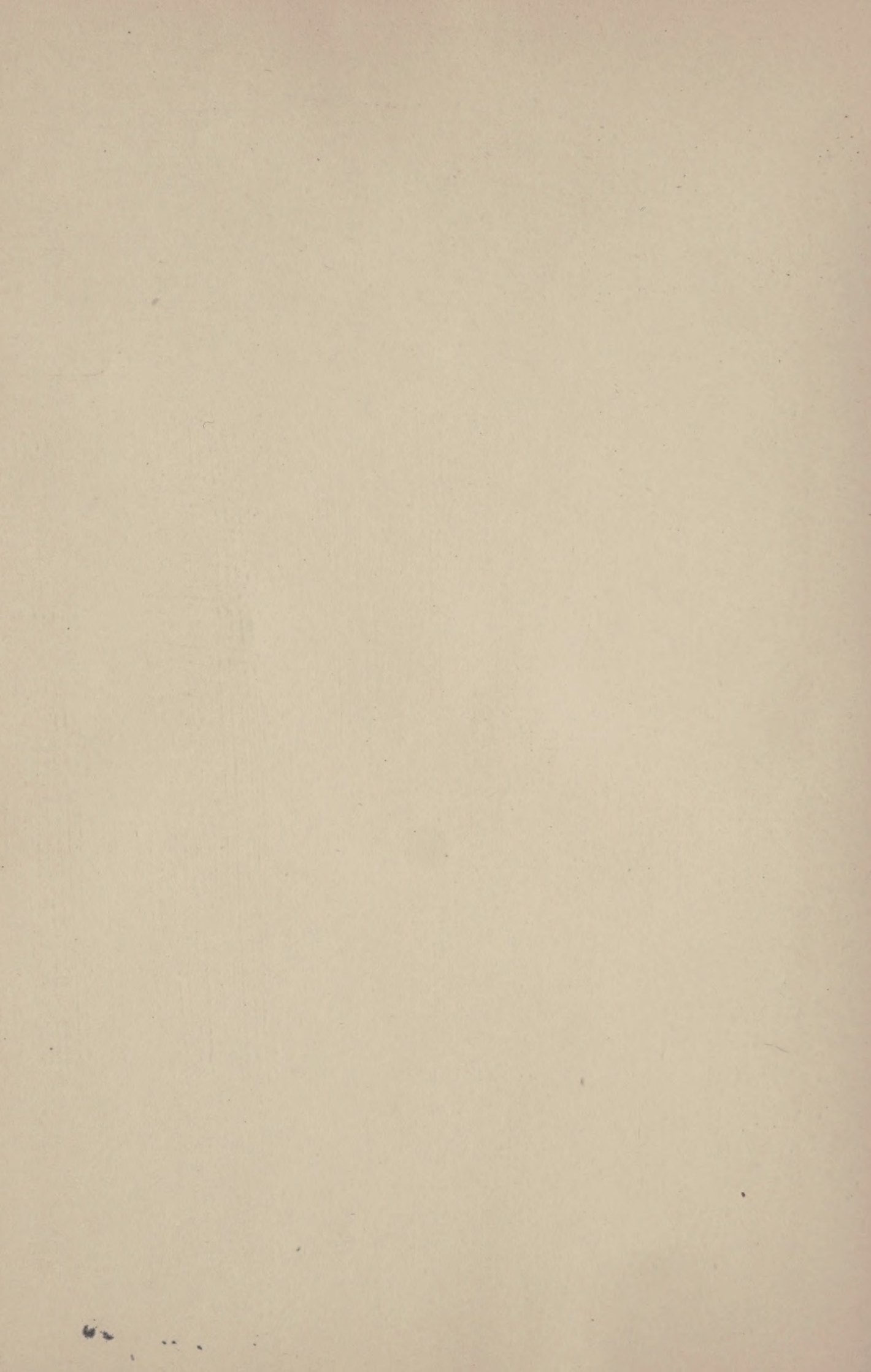
Wherever there was an especially attractive spot a little house was built; and Katie saw to it that always the merry Kit-Kat zigzagged so as to water a tiny garden behind the dwelling. Into these new homes, so inexpensive, and yet so comfortable, some family from Diggles' Court was promptly moved, there to take root and flourish.

Of course this was expensive; and when the

carpenters' or painters' bills came due, there was, sometimes, still a brief dismay in Eliza Eddy's money-loving soul; but she had only to lift her eyes to her own Sailor Dan, sitting opposite, to be glad again, and to feel that even to her last dollar in the bank, or the last acre of her land, she could never give enough.

As for Katie — she is almost too happy to live. The first love and loyalty of her heart is to Diggleses', whose population is forever shifting, yet is eternally the same — a type whose joy and sorrow are her own. But almost as dear is Middle Valley; and like a pendulum she vibrates between the two points, blessing each. Of herself she laughingly remarks:

“I have so many homes I haven't any; and though I have no money in my pocket, I am the richest girl in all the world.”



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