



BROWNIE

BY THE  
AUTHOR OF  
"PROBABLE SONS"

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*PRESENTATION COPY FROM THE EMPRESS ALEXANDRA TO HER DAUGHTER MARIE.*  
With inscription in pencil on fly-leaf, "For darling little Marie, for Xmas, 1908, fr. yr. loving  
Mama."

For darling little

Charlie

for Jesus God

for your

Mamma

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"We are going to be very happy here!"

[See page 10.



# BROWNIE

By AMY LE FEUVRE

AUTHOR OF

"HIS BIG OPPORTUNITY" "ROSES,"

"PROBABLE SONS," ETC.

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
W. H. C. GROOME

FIFTH EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON MCMVI

*Butler and Tanner, The Setwood Printing Works, Frome, and London*

To  
My LITTLE FRIEND  
REYNE



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## CHAPTER I

“We are Going to be  
very Happy Here!”

**B**ROWNIE sat on a shabby-looking trunk in the front garden, and looked about her. Buffy stood by her side, with one finger in his mouth, and regarded the country fly at the gate and its honest, broad-shouldered driver with great interest. It was a cold grey afternoon in February. As the children faced the road, they could see no other house near; opposite them was a long row of poplars, swaying to and fro in the keen wind that was blowing. Stretches of brown ploughed fields sloped upwards to a fir plantation, which spread along the horizon for a couple of miles. It was not a cheerful outlook, and Brownie, feeling cold and miserable, twisted her little body round to look at the cottage. It had a thatched roof with two attic windows; a wooden porch, with two casement windows above it; and a window on each side. The walls had been freshly whitewashed, and there was a japonica reaching to the roof, and struggling to bloom in spite of the rough treatment it had received at the hands of the whitewashers. The garden in front was only a strip of grass on each side of the gravel path, and a round bed was dug in the middle of each grass plot. All looked bare, brown, and dead.

Again Brownie turned her attention to the fly and the luggage. Hester, a tall gaunt woman, with high cheek-

bones and rosy cheeks, was trying to hasten the driver's movements. She came up the path carrying a hamper, a square wooden box, and a large carpet bag, and her voice was raised in shrill protest:

"Ye're a lazy loon, and want to be well shaken! Ye'll keep us till midnight while ye argues as to whether ye be able to lift yer little finger to help a woman! Now, children, go in; this is the last load, thanks be!"

Brownie rose from her seat with a sigh of relief, and taking Buffy's hand, entered the little house that was going to be their new home. They turned into the room on the right-hand side of the passage, which seemed at present to be a chaos of boxes and furniture; but which contained the one being who could bring comfort and order out of dreary confusion—their mother!

She was on her knees coaxing a freshly-made fire, and as the flames leaped up, throwing a ruddy glow on her slight black-robed figure, she turned to greet the children.

"Come along, chicks! What sober faces! You are perished with cold; come to the fire. Isn't this a dear little house? We are going to be very happy here!"

The bright, cheery tones brought smiles at once to the little faces. Buffy ran forward, and was lifted on his mother's knee; Brownie knelt by her side, and spread out her small hands before the welcome blaze.

"It is so cold and lonely outside, mother."

"Yes, but we're inside now, my girlie."

Brownie rubbed her cheek against her mother's shoulder, after a way of her own. Her name fitly described her. A tiny, rather delicate face, with large brown eyes, looked out of a frame of thick brown tresses; but though to-day she was quiet and rather pensive, as a rule she was like a bit of quicksilver, with a spirit and imagination big enough for a body three



times her size. Buffy was a stolid, fair-haired, blue-eyed boy, who followed his sister's lead implicitly, but sometimes had a startling way of originating a plan of action himself, which plan he carried out with the greatest expedition and despatch, regardless of consequences. Their mother, who now sat on an old tea chest, encircling them with her arms, was youthful enough to be pathetic in her widow's dress. One could see from whom Brownie got her beautiful eyes and hair, but young Mrs. Eustace had a look of stern determination, and of indomitable will, stamped upon her features that was absent in the child's. She was a woman who, without being beautiful, had the charm of interesting outsiders at once. In an animated conversation, a thousand different expressions would flit over her face, lighting it from grave to gay, from earnest resolve and deep thought to sparkling humour and careless badinage and jest.

Her past had been sad; wistful curves in brows and lips told that; but the present was bright, and the future was bravely and confidently faced.

That first evening impressed itself on the children's memories for the rest of their lives. They had come from lodgings over a milkman's shop in North London. The stillness and quiet surrounding this new home puzzled and awed them.

Yet when Brownie lay in her little bed in her mother's room that night, watching a blazing fire in the small fireplace, and feeling unusually satisfied after her long journey to be between her clean white sheets, she called her mother to her side.

"Are we going to be rich, mother, here?"

Mrs. Eustace laughed gaily.

"Rich in health, I hope, Brownie, in liberty, in fresh air and sunshine, and rich also"—here her voice dropped to a whisper—"in God's great love and goodness."

"I love Him!" was Brownie's emphatic comment; and she turned on her pillow and fell fast asleep.

The next few days were very busy ones. Hester and Mrs. Eustace unpacked and tidied, and gradually made every room habitable. Two tiny sitting-rooms, a fair-sized kitchen, two bedrooms, and a large attic were all furnished in the simplest style possible. Mrs. Eustace tacked down carpets, hung pictures, stitched breadths of chintz together for curtains and chair covers, converted boxes into couches, hammered up shelves and brackets, all with a rapidity and a light-heartedness that took away her faithful maid's breath, as she vainly tried to keep pace with her.

Brownie and Buffy, in warm overalls, were turned out of doors a good part of each day. They were nothing loth, for though the front garden did not appeal to them, the piece at the back did. It was a long strip of grass surrounded by a low stone wall, and at the bottom were two apple trees, a cherry tree, and an old oak. Looking over the stone wall they faced a common, now covered with gorse and dead heather; in the distance, about half a mile away, was a cluster of cottages and the village church. But the chief delight in this old garden was a well. There it was, with its old wooden cover, and the handle to wind up the buckets, as they were let up or down. Hester, seeing the fascination with which it possessed them, had roughly railed a bit of grass off round it with some old hurdles which she had found in an outhouse, and she had forbidden them to touch either handle or buckets.

But she could not forbid it forming a subject for their active brains to exercise themselves upon.

The sun was out. Brownie and her brother had both scrambled to the top of the stone wall, where they sat swinging their restless little legs to and fro, and talking fast and earnestly.

"It's a lovely thing to have in a garden, because you never know what's at the bottom, or who lives under the water."

"Frogs does," said Buffy stoutly.

"No, not ugly frogs ; beautiful little ladies with yellow hair, who come up and dance over the grass when we are in bed."

"Fairies."

"Water fairies, nimps I think they're called ; and they go to sleep in cockle shells, and have dresses of pink seaweed, and ride on fishes."

"Are there fishes down there ?"

"Deep, deep down, there's everything you can think of."

"Elephants and giraffes ?"

"Well," said Brownie, hesitating, "if you go down deep enough, and swim along, you'll most likely come out in India or Africa."

"I shall fish the fishes up for breakfus !" said Buffy decidedly.

Brownie shook her head with a frown.

"You will frighten the nimps away."

"P'raps I shall fish one of them up," suggested Buffy, quite unabashed.

Then Brownie hastened to preserve the secrecy and the sacredness of her wonderful well.

"A boy fished down a well once, when he was told not to, and something caught hold of his line and pulled him in, and down and down, till he found himself clawed hold of by a great red sea lobster with teeth and claws like iron spikes, and a mouth like a red-hot fire, and eyes like a cat's in the dark ! And he cried, but it was no good, for the lobster crunched him slowly into a jelly, and swallowed him for dinner."

This dreadful story brought a thoughtful look to Buffy's face. He changed the subject.

"Where does the water come from?" he asked.

"From the sea," said Brownie promptly. Then she clambered down from the wall, and looked wistfully over the hurdles. "It's very grand to have a well belonging to us," she continued, "it's like being in the Bible. I think Joseph was put down a well."

"Did he see the ladies and the red lobster?" demanded Buffy breathlessly.

"I think it was a dried-up well, but it was very dark and nasty for him. Oh, look, Buffy! did you hear a little splash? I saw the water move!"

"Who is it?"

"I think it's a little nimp called 'Sparkle.' She wanted to see us, and now she's run off to tell the others."

"What was she like?"

"She had a pink dress on, and some flowers in her hair, and tiny little white arms, and her face was like that picture in mother's room of the guardian angel."

"P'r'aps she is a angel."

Brownie shook her head.

"No; angels never get in wells—they're too good. Nimps are rather naughty!"

"What do they do?"

But, with one of Brownie's frequent changes of thought, she dashed away from the well.

"Let us climb the wall, and get out on the common."

No sooner said than done, and Buffy clambered hastily after her.

It was a delicious day for a run, and the children were soon tearing along the short soft grass, feeling a rare sense of freedom in the wide, open expanse before them.

Suddenly Brownie came to a standstill. A young girl in rough tweed coat and skirt was bearing down upon them, with five or six dogs leaping and barking around her. Buffy edged away from the dogs at once, but

Brownie stood her ground, and when a collie, in the exuberance of his spirits, leaped up at her, she laughed in delight.

The stranger stopped and called the collie off.

“Now,” she said, a little imperatively, “you are newcomers. I have never seen you before. Where do you live?”

Brownie pointed back at the cottage.

“Oh,” said the young lady, a look of understanding passing over her face, “I know who you are. I heard some widow in reduced circumstances had taken it. I suppose you are her children.”

Brownie resented something in the speaker’s tone, and looked defiant at once.

“We’re mother’s children, that’s who we are,” she said.

The girl gave a short laugh.

“Do you know your cottage belongs to me?” she said. “I hope you are polite, nice little children, or I shall wish you away.”

“Did you build the well?” asked Buffy, with round eyes, stepping nearer in his interest.

“That well is as old as Methuselah, I believe. How many are there of you? Are you the only ones?”

“Buffy and me is quite enough, thank you,” said Brownie again, with knitted brows.

“I shall come and see your mother one day, tell her; and tell her you have met Miss Monteith, and she hopes the cottage is comfortable.”

The girl passed on with a little nod; then she looked back at Brownie and laughed.

“You’re a little spitfire!” she said; and, whistling to her dogs, she moved away.

“I don’t like her,” said Brownie, with a little stamp of her foot.

“Let’s come and tell mother,” Buffy suggested.

Away they ran, and were soon pouring out their confidences.

Mrs. Eustace laughed as she sat on the floor, sewing a carpet, and listened to them.

“She is the grand lady of the place, chicks! She owns the whole village, and lives at the Hall, a beautiful house above those fir woods. I hope you spoke nicely to her. Now run along out again, for Hester and I are very busy.”

In a very few days the cottage was in order. “Mother’s room,” as the children called it, was the prettiest spot to them. It had her big writing-table in one corner; all her books in shelves up the walls; pictures, and china, and foreign curiosities, filling up every empty space and corner. One very large chintz-covered couch, two easy chairs, a work-table, and small piano completed the furniture; but the whole had an indescribable look of cosiness and comfort. The little dining-room seemed very bare in comparison to it, though the children’s play box was in it, and all their cherished playthings. Every morning for two hours Mrs. Eustace sat at the dining-room table, superintending their lessons. In the afternoon and evening she was always to be found at her writing-table—writing, writing, writing, until Brownie used to wonder whether she had not written letters to every one in the world! Sometimes she would throw down her pen and call the children to the piano, where she and they would sing quaint old songs together; sometimes she would take them out for a walk; and sometimes, before the lamp was brought in, she would tuck them and herself away on the roomy old couch, and entrance their hearts by relating to them wonderful fairy stories.

Sometimes—very rarely—she would settle down to a serious conversation with her small daughter. One of these conversations lingered long in Brownie’s memory.

They had been in their new home about three weeks. Buffy had been taken off to bed by Hester, and Brownie, with a book spread out in front of her, was lying on the hearthrug in her mother's room. She was very quiet; only the sound of her mother's pen travelling over the paper at a very rapid rate was to be heard, besides the ticking of a small French clock on the mantelpiece.

At last Mrs. Eustace rose from her seat with a sigh and a yawn.

“Well, girlie, what are you reading?”

“It's ‘Lays of Ancient Rome,’” responded Brownie, looking up with a flushed, excited face.

Her mother laughed; took the book out of her hand, and sitting down in the easy chair, lifted her up on her lap.

“You will follow in my steps, I think. Now talk to me; I am so tired of my writing.”

“Shall I have to be always writing letters to people, mother, like you, when I grow up?”

“They are not exactly letters. No; I pray God my little daughter may not have to live by her pen. I wish her a better fate than that.”

Brownie looked puzzled.

“Does a pen make you live?”

“My pen does. It sends us bread, and butter, and clothes, and coals, besides a lot of other things; at least, it sends us money to buy them with.”

Brownie glanced at her mother's pen, which was a silver one, with great awe. Her mother's writing was a great mystery to her. She could not understand how it brought them money, and concluded in her small mind that her mother wrote letters to people to ask them to send her some. She said something of this sort now, and her mother became almost angry.

“Don't you know—are you too little to understand—that no one with any self-respect or honour ever asks

for money? I would rather die than do it! Listen to me, Brownie, and remember this all your life—I would rather see you in your grave than living on charity, and content to take it! There is only one thing worse than begging, and that is borrowing, and getting into debt. You are a little girl now, and I will not tell you my trouble and cares. Thank God I am still young and strong; but for a long time you and Buffy and I have suffered because some one long ago borrowed money, and I am still trying to pay the debt. I want my children to have as great a horror of debt as I have. Never buy anything unless you have the money in your pocket to pay for it. Never wish for a thing that is beyond your means!”

Mrs. Eustace’s eyes glowed with deep feeling. Brownie listened, hardly understanding at the time her mother’s agitation, but her words sank into her heart, and stayed there. She clasped her little arms round her mother’s neck and exclaimed, with warmth:

“I never will ask for money, mother, and I’ll never, never get a debt! Tell me again what a debt is?”

“It is money you owe to another person.”

“And if a person gives you money, and you take it, is that a debt?”

“If you have no right to the money you must not take it. Oh, Brownie, you must help mother all you can, for she has set herself a hard task!”

Very seldom did Mrs. Eustace show the troubled part of her life to her children, and Brownie treasured up this conversation, resolving that when she grew up she would do all her mother’s writing for her, so that she could rest and be happy with nothing to do.



## CHAPTER II

### “Be His little Guardian”

THE days grew longer and brighter. Brownie and Buffy spent most of their time out of doors, and were trusted to roam about the common and the fields at their own sweet will.

One afternoon they found their way up to the fir woods, and were delighted at the strangeness and solemnity of the scene.

“We must follow this little path, Buffy, and p'raps we shall come to something wonderful.”

“Is there lions and bears?” asked Buffy, shrinking a little as he looked along the dusky way.

“If there was,” said Brownie emphatically, “we should go on. It's only cowards who turn back.”

Buffy made no further protest. The path was an easy one, fir cones lay strewn on the ground, and they made slow progress; for they could not resist filling their pockets with such treasures. At last they came to a bank with a gap in it leading over a green field, and Brownie immediately made for it.

“I don't like them firs,” said Buffy, lifting up his little face in delight towards the sun.

“No,” said Brownie, looking back thoughtfully, “I'm thinking about them, Buffy. They're all sad and proper and proud. They belong to a big family, and they won't know their neighbours; they're very poor and

haven't much to eat, so they're all very thin. They crowd together to keep each other warm, and they never laugh or sing songs, they are too proper!"

"And what will be the end of them?" asked Buffy, standing still in the sunny meadow. "Make it dreadfully awful, Brownie!"

Brownie's face brightened. There was nothing she enjoyed more than making her stories "dreadfully awful." Tragedy was more in her line than comedy.

"One day the witch of the wood will come, and she'll put up her wand and say, 'Now laugh, and thank the sun for shining and the birds for singing!' But the fir-trees shake themselves and frown, 'We will be miserable, we will be cross, we won't let the sun shine through us.' So the witch strikes a match and says, 'You make the path so dark that you frighten children. Now I shall punish you by making it light;' and she sets fire to one tree. He blazes up and pushes against his brother, and sets him on fire; then they try to get away from each other, but they can't. They scream and shake, but the flames get bigger and higher, and soon they're all on fire, and their screams and shouts are dreadful! They get red hot, and red hotter, then they begin to crack, and the fire roars and blazes, and then they break, and crash! crash! crash! their heads tumble off, and then their arms and all their little branches, and down they come cracking and banging and fizzing, and at last the fire goes out, and the proud, stiff firs are lying black and dead on the ground."

"Ah—h—h! Ugh—h—h!" went Buffy, with eyes nearly starting out of his head. Then, as Brownie subsided, he marched over the green grass, repeating in a whisper to himself, "They get red hot and red hotter, then they begin to crack, and the fire roars and blazes, and then they break and crash! crash! crash!"

He gloated over the words until, in a moment, a plan

of action commended itself to him, and he walked on, a serene smile breaking over his fair baby face.

They crossed the meadow, then opened a wooden gate, and found themselves by a delightful stream. The rushing water fascinated them, and when they saw fish darting under the clear water they sat down on the bank to watch. Soon, lying on their chests, their small black-stockinged legs kicking in the air, they were plunging their arms into the stream in very great danger of overbalancing themselves, and tumbling in head foremost. Sudden barking of dogs made them turn round, and Miss Monteith was by their side.

“You little imps! How on earth did you find your way here? Do you know this is my private trout stream, and no one is allowed to come near it?”

Buffy hung his head in confusion, but Brownie looked up bravely.

“We just walked on and we came to it,” she said.

“You can just walk on with me, then,” said Miss Monteith, in her clear, ringing voice, “until I settle what is to be done with you. Do you see that board up there? Can you read?”

Brownie looked up, and read out slowly, “Trespassers will be prosecuted.”

“That is right, and as you are two little trespassers I am taking you up to my house to teach you a lesson.”

There was a twinkle in her eyes that was not seen by the children. Buffy clutched hold of his sister’s hand, and bit his lips hard to keep himself from crying. Brownie held up her head, and set her face determinedly. Visions of policemen and prison flitted through her brain. She was a trespasser, and she had made Buffy one too. What would mother say when tea-time came and they did not come home? What would she say when she knew they were locked up somewhere? Her

little heart was full to overflowing, and her face was white and set.

Miss Monteith led the way, whistling carelessly as she went. Another gate led them through a shrubbery, and out in front of a large stone house.

"Now," she said, glancing at their terror-stricken faces, "I am going to take you to a lady and consult with her what is to be done with you."

She stepped into a large square hall, pushed open a door at the farthest end, and the children, following her, found themselves in a comfortable-looking room full of couches and flowers, with a blazing fire and a gentle, grey-haired lady sitting knitting, with a white Persian cat in her lap.

"Look here, Miss Grant! See what I have brought you! Two naughty little trespassers who have been disturbing my trout stream, and they're not a bit sorry. What do you advise. A whipping?"

"My dear Iris!"

Miss Grant looked reproachfully at the girl, then held out her hand to Buffy.

"Come here, little man, and tell me your name. Why these are not village children, Iris. Who are they?"

"The tenants of Japonica Cottage. I told you about them."

Miss Monteith threw herself into an easy chair by the fire, tossed her hat on a couch, and added, "They're trespassers, and we must make an example of them. Come here, little Spitfire, and don't look so defiant. Now tell me, what ought I to do to a trespasser?"

A sudden inspiration seized Brownie. She looked up with light in her eyes.

"You ought to forgive them; that's what we say in our prayers every morning—'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.'"

"Upon my word, you can preach, can you? What do you say to that, Miss Grant?"

Miss Grant shook her head at her.

"My dear Iris, don't tease them so. They do not understand you."

Iris sprang to her feet and ran out of the room. Then Brownie for the first time smiled.

"You won't send us to prison, will you?" she said, looking up into Miss Grant's face. "We didn't mean to be naughty, and Buffy wasn't naughty at all, because he follows me."

"No, dear, you certainly will not be sent to prison. Tell me about yourselves. How do you like your little cottage?"

Ten minutes after, Iris entered the room, and found the little tongues chattering away and Miss Grant looking quite bewildered between "Well nimps," "Mother's wonderful pen," and all the fancies of Brownie's imaginative brain.

Iris held in her hand a plate of cake and some grapes.

"Well, this is your sentence," she said; "you have each to eat one slice of cake and half a bunch of grapes, and then go straight home as fast as your legs will carry you."

Brownie looked up rather puzzled, but the cake and grapes were good, and she and Buffy set to work at once.

After they had finished their repast, Iris said abruptly:

"Well, Miss Spitfire, how do you like me? And what do you think of me?"

"I'm—I'm not afraid of you," said Brownie, with a determined look in her face; "and I'm sorry we trespassed, and we'll never come this way again. But Buffy and me thanks you for the cake and the grapes."

"And," put in Buffy rather eagerly, "p'r'aps we would like to come to this beautiful house another day."

"Perhaps you won't be asked," said Iris, laughing.

She stood on the hearthrug, her feet well apart, and her hands in her jacket pockets. She was a tall, rather broad-shouldered young woman, and inspired most of her tenants with a certain amount of awe.

Brownie looked her up and down perplexedly. She did not know whether she meant to be cross or kind.

"So you're not afraid of me?" Iris said, turning upon Brownie with a heavy frown. "Are you afraid of any one?"

"Nobody," said Brownie promptly, holding up her small head bravely.

"I am accustomed to be treated with great respect," Iris continued; "and in future, when I meet you out of doors, I shall expect a curtsey from you. All the village children make nice little curtseys."

"I don't know what they are," confessed Brownie.

"Don't tease her!" remonstrated Miss Grant again in a low voice.

Iris laughed again.

"I will teach her reverence to her betters, Miss Grant."

"She is not a village child."

Brownie did not understand these asides.

"Please may we go home?" she asked.

Miss Grant called them both to her, and gave them a kiss. Iris took them out into the hall, then beckoned to a boy sweeping the drive outside.

"Here, Bob, see these children home. They don't know the way out. Japonica Cottage is where they live. And look here, little Spitfire, tell your mother I am coming to call on her to-morrow, and I expect to have a nice little curtsey from you when I come to the door. Good-bye."

She turned back into the house, and Buffy and Brownie walked down the long avenue, Bob leading the way.

Mrs. Eustace was not altogether pleased with her children's account of how they had spent their afternoon. She gave them their tea with a little frown upon her brow. At last, Brownie said wistfully:

“Are you angry with us, mother?”

“I am sorry you have wandered into other people's grounds,” Mrs. Eustace replied. “I don't think Miss Monteith knows who you are, or anything about us. And I do not care about her coming here, after the way she has spoken to you. I would rather not meet her.”

“I don't like her,” said Brownie slowly. “She calls me ‘Spitfire,’ and I am not one!”

“I'm afraid my little girl was not polite?”

“No, I forgot to be nice,” confessed Brownie.

Mrs. Eustace did not pursue the subject. Buffy was very excited for the rest of the evening, and dilated at length on the glories of the “beautiful big house” to Hester as she put him to bed.

“It's a lovely place,” he said again, as he laid his fair head on the pillow, “and I'm going there another day when I want some cake; but the fir-trees cracking and blazing will be better.” Then under his breath he murmured rapturously, “They get red hot and red hotter, then they begin to crack, and the fire roars and blazes, and then they break and crash! crash! crash!” Sleep came upon him before he could say more.

The next morning, after lessons were done, Buffy disappeared. Brownie went out into the garden, and commenced digging with great energy at a small flower-bed that had become choked with grass and weeds. She was so engrossed with her task that Buffy was not missed, and when one o'clock dinner came, and he was not to be found, she began to feel anxious, and rather guilty.

“I'm so sorry, mother,” she said, running into her

mother's room, "but Buffy has lost himself. I forgot all about him, and now I can't find him."

"Hasn't he been with you in the garden?"

"I don't think he has at all."

Mrs. Eustace rose from her writing-table.

"I will come and look for him. I am not pleased with you, Brownie. You know how you can help me by looking after him, and I want you to feel you have a responsibility entrusted to you. He is a little boy, and very mischievous. I have always felt when I send you out after lessons that you will look after him. You must learn to be helpful to me, and not be so engrossed with your own pleasure that you forget Buffy."

Mrs. Eustace did not often reprove her children, and the quick tears sprang to Brownie's eyes. She followed her mother round house and garden in silence, but no Buffy could be seen. At last they went out into the road, and there, to Mrs. Eustace's intense relief, she saw the sturdy little figure of her boy coming down the road. He smiled when he saw his mother, and ran towards her.

"Oh, Buffy, where have you been?"

Buffy slipped his little hand into his mother's confidently. He was looking warm and dishevelled; his hands and face were very dirty.

"I've been doing something lovely," he said, with a little nod; "but a cross old man came and spoilt it all."

"Tell me all about it."

Buffy turned round in the middle of the road, and waved his hand towards the fir woods in the distance.

"I was going to burn them all," he said grandly. "Every one of them! And they would have been 'red hot and red hotter, and they would have crackled, and blazed, and crashed, and crashed!' It would have been dreadfully awful! But the matches was so stupid, they would keep going out, but I went on, and I tried



and I tried, and I took a lot of paper, and then I made a bonfire ; and the ground with the little brown spikes and fir cones burnt lovely ! All but the nasty smoke ! It smarted my eyes, and the stupid trees wouldn't catch fire, but the bonfire blazed and blazed, and then an old man came running along, and he called me a bad boy, and when I told him what I wanted to do, he scolded awful ! And so I ran away, and he was stamping out the bonfire, and it was horrid of him !”

“I shall have to punish you after dinner,” said Mrs. Eustace, looking quite aghast at Buffy's cheerful account of himself, “but I am not going to say a word till we have all had something to eat. It is an hour past dinner.”

It was a silent meal, and then Mrs. Eustace, taking her little boy upstairs, had a long talk with him. She left him sitting in a corner, with his face to the wall, and came down with a tired look on her face. Calling Brownie to her, she went into her sitting-room, then she put her arm round her and drew her close to her.

“Brownie, I don't want to make you old before your time. I love to see you happy, but I must speak to you seriously. Do you love mother ?”

Brownie nodded. Her little face had flushed a deep crimson, and she could not trust herself to speak.

“You know,” Mrs. Eustace continued, tightening her hold of the child, “that I am not able to look after you as I ought. I should like to give you a nurse or governess, but I cannot afford it. Hester has not much more time than I have, and so you and Buffy are a good deal alone. You are old enough to know what harm Buffy might have done this morning, and what a wonder it is that he did not set himself on fire. He tells me you told him a story about the fir-trees being burnt. Of course, you did not think you were putting wrong ideas into his head. I don't blame you for that, but it

shows you how much he wants looking after. I don't want you to grow up a selfish, careless child. I want you to think and live for others, and try to be to Buffy what I—much as I would like to be—cannot. Be his little guardian at all times."

Brownie was crying fast.

"Will you punish me instead of Buffy, please?" she sobbed.

"No. Buffy must learn his lesson. I think you are punished enough by knowing that you have disappointed mother, and wasted about two hours of her precious time. I will give you a little text to think about: 'Even Christ pleased not Himself.' Will you try to remember it? For I think my girlie does try to be good?"

Brownie laid her face against her mother's shoulder.

"I will try," she whispered. "I never will please myself ever again, never!"

"Ask God to help you, darling. And now dry your tears and run away, for mother will have to be extra busy to make up for lost time."

## CHAPTER III

### “An Angel in the Wood”

IT was with talks like these that Brownie's character slowly developed. She went away from her mother's room with her little heart burning and throbbing with the longing to prove herself a faithful guardian of her small brother. Sitting down in the wooden porch, outside the front door, she began to weave wonderful stories out of her busy brain of possible calamities that might befall Buffy, but out of which she would invariably extricate him, culminating in an awful shipwreck and a shark. “And then,” she said, unconsciously speaking aloud, “I would carry him in my arms through the water, with the thunder and lightning roaring, and the storm tossing the sea mountains high, and a huge shark bellowing, and rolling his fiery eyes, and tearing after me like a—railway engine! And I would swim as fast as I could, but my breath would give way, and then some sailors in a boat would come to meet me. I would get more and more tired, and, of course, if I dropped Buffy, I could get to the boat easily—quite easily. And I would feel the shark's hot breath as he came nearer and nearer. But I would remember what mother said, and then I would just be able to hold out Buffy to the sailors, and they would catch him, and he would be saved. But the shark would catch hold of me, and his teeth would

crunch into my back. Oh, I really couldn't bear it. I should have to drop Buffy!"

The scene was so vivid that Brownie began to sob passionately, then, getting up from her seat, she stamped her small foot, and with clenched hands threw up her little head with glorious determination in her brown eyes.

"No, I would die, of course I would die for Buffy, and the shark would bite me into little bits, but I wouldn't cry, and mother would say when Buffy would run into her arms, 'My Brownie has been a faithful guardian!'"

"How very touching!"

The light, mocking tone brought Brownie back to realities at once.

She looked up, tears still on her cheeks, and confronted Miss Iris Monteith.

To the sensitive child, it seemed as if she must sink to the ground from shame. How much had Miss Monteith heard? Had she been talking aloud?

Iris laughed at her blushing, shame-stricken face.

"Poor little shark-eaten heroine! It is a shame to bring you back to life again, but I want to see your mother. Where is your curtsey?"

Brownie shrank back into the passage, and when Hester, hearing voices, came forward and ushered the visitor into Mrs. Eustace's room, the little girl ran upstairs into her bedroom. She felt she could not face the lady who took such a delight in teasing her. Iris walked in, and shook hands with Mrs. Eustace, with her usual frank patronage. She had been spoiled by her position in the village. She ruled her tenants with a rod of iron, and beyond the old clergyman and his wife, who both adored her, she had no friends of her own class with whom she could associate. She had come prepared to find Mrs. Eustace a timid, down-trodden tradesman's widow, and her proud, free bearing, with her soft-cultured voice,

filled her with astonishment and dismay. Mrs. Eustace was certainly more at her ease for the first ten minutes than was Iris Monteith.

“What a pretty room you have,” Iris said, struggling to regain her equanimity, “and such a learned-looking room too, with all your books. Are you fond of reading?”

“Very fond of it. Books have always been my greatest friends.”

“You will want something to occupy you in this small village. I am not a reader myself, for I am always out of doors. Do you know this neighbourhood?”

“I know Miss Bernard and her brothers at Dalton Towers. It was Miss Bernard who first told me of this cottage.”

“Oh, really? The Bernards are not in my line, and they live such quiet, secluded, lives that I never come across them. They are regular bookworms. Isn't he the editor of the C—— monthly? Miss Bernard is quite a blue stocking. Most of my friends—at least, the few I have—care more for sport than study. And, of course, the Bernards would not take any notice of me; I am a mere child to them.”

She regarded Mrs. Eustace dubiously.

“I did not think we should have a clever person come to live in our village. Have you seen Mr. Gayworthy yet?”

“Is he the vicar here? I have seen him at church.”

“Yes; his wife has been ill, or she would have been to call on you. I can't think why I didn't see you at church. I looked about for you, too!”

Mrs. Eustace smiled. Conversation did not flag, but when Iris got up to go, she felt she knew no more about her tenant's circumstances or life than she did when first she entered the house. The children were mentioned, and then, with a start, Mrs. Eustace remembered Buffy.

"I must fetch my little boy downstairs. He has been very naughty, but I did not mean to leave him so long in disgrace."

She left the room and appeared with both the children a few minutes after. Buffy looked fair and radiant, Brownie downcast and shy.

"I've been a naughty boy," he volunteered, turning to Iris, "but I'm good now. I nearly burnt hundreds and thousands of trees, but they wouldn't catch fire. I'm never to make a fire out of doors again; it's wicked!"

"Why, you little monkey, was it you that one of the keepers was telling me about this morning? Were you up in my fir woods?"

Buffy nodded importantly.

"You would not think so small a boy could attempt such mischief?" said Mrs. Eustace, her hand caressing his fair curls. "I don't think he will be guilty of such a prank again."

"You have a curious pair," said Iris, looking from one child to the other with intense amusement. "I must be going. I am really very glad to have made your acquaintance, and I hope you will be friends with me."

She departed, and with a sigh of relief Mrs. Eustace turned to her writing again.

A few days after this, Brownie and Buffy set off one afternoon on a primrose expedition. There was one general shop in the village, kept by a stout and cheery widow woman, Mrs. Pratt by name. Hester would sometimes take the children with her when she went to invest in groceries, and once or twice they had been despatched themselves there on an errand. It was Mrs. Pratt who had told Brownie on one of these occasions where the best primroses were to be found, and she set off with Buffy, carrying two big baskets, in bright anticipation of filling them for "Mother."

They crossed the common in the opposite direction to

the village, went through a white gate, which led across the river over an old bridge, and then climbed up through a wood, making their way to the ruins of an old tower that they could see peeping through the young green of the oaks and beeches surrounding it.

Here, under shelter of the old stone walls, the prim-roses grew and flourished. It was a sunny afternoon ; the fresh spring air, the singing of the birds, and the sweet scent of the little flower they had come to find all delighted Brownie’s artistic soul.

Buffy chattered and laughed, and she steadily gathered, till suddenly they were startled by a strange occurrence.

A voice not very far away broke out into beautiful singing. The children paused. So sweet, so unearthly, so wonderfully melodious in sound was it, that Brownie whispered in rapt, hushed tones to her little brother, “It must be an angel !”

There was no sound or sign of any one but themselves in the wood.

The sweet liquid notes rose and fell, vibrating through the soft spring air, till the very birds seemed to hush their songs and listen.

“Sighing, crying, oh what do ye here?  
Surely ye come from another sphere?  
Moaning, groaning, with faltering tread,  
Eyes fast-closed to the sun overhead.

Here we are merry, here we are gay,  
Suff’ring and care we banish away!  
Sunshine and Spring, with blossoms and song,  
This is our life we travel along !

Hush, empty hearts, oh list to the voice,  
Telling you mourners cannot rejoice !  
Dark is their lot and painful their way,  
Dreary and long the bright summer day.

Shadows and sunshine, darkness and light  
Follow as sure as day follows night

Laugh, and be merry ; weep, and bemoan ;  
Now many friends, to-morrow alone.

Summer and Autumn, Winter and Spring,  
Gladden and sadden the birds on the wing ;  
Earth always changing, heaven so sure,  
Sorrows but passing—joy evermore !”

As the last words died away, Buffy found his voice.

“I think,” he said with an emphatic nod, “that it’s a bird that has learned to speak English !”

“It’s an angel,” said Brownie, quivering with excitement from head to foot.

Neither child thought of going towards the spot from whence the voice had come. They were quite assured in their own minds that no human creature could own such a voice ; and when it ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, Buffy turned contentedly to the primroses again. Not so Brownie. She sat on the grass, her hands clasped round her knees, and tears were in her eyes.

“I wish I was in heaven,” she said at last.

“How do we get there ?” asked Buffy, staring at his sister with round eyes.

“You fall asleep and never wake up again, and angels carry you up singing through the clouds.”

Buffy’s blue eyes looked up at the cloudless sky above him.

“I should be very giddy,” he remarked.

Then Brownie came back to earth.

“We must make haste and fill our baskets, and then we will go home.”

They picked on, and when the baskets grew heavy, they slowly retraced their steps.

“I keep hoping I may hear the angel once more,” said Brownie, as Buffy enquired why she kept standing still.

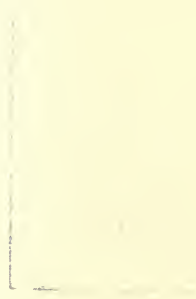
“I expect,” said Buffy, in his practical manner, “she’s having her tea now. I’m dreadfully thirsty !”





"It's an angel," said Brownie.

[See page 34.]



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They were very tired when they reached home.

Hester gave them their tea, for their mother was out.

"And glad I am she has got a change at last," said Hester emphatically. "You hadn't been gone half an hour before a carriage drives up, and Miss Bernard gets out. She that used to come and see your mother in London, don't you remember? She sits down for a bit, and then comes out to me. 'Hester,' she says, 'I'm going to carry your mistress off to tea with me. She's looking white and worn; you'll see to the children when they come in, won't you? She's anxious about them.' 'Of course I'll see to them,' I says; and so we persuaded your mother, and she won't be home till late, for Dalton Towers is a good ten miles away, the coachman told me."

"I don't like mother going away," said Buffy with a pout. "We've brought her a lot of primroses, and my hands is quite tired picking them."

"We'll put them in her room after tea," suggested Brownie, "and then it will be a surprise to her."

Arranging their primroses kept them busy till bedtime, but when they both had to go to bed before their mother returned, their little hearts were very heavy.

Buffy always refused to go to sleep till he had had his mother's "good-night" kiss, and he sat up in bed now, with round eyes and determined mouth.

"I shan't lie down; I want mother!"

Hester scolded him and left him. She was always too busy to "waste much time," as she expressed it, "coddling up children!"

Brownie stole up to see the small rebel.

"Lie down, there's a good boy, and if you like I'll dress up like mother and come in and kiss you."

"Dressing-up" had a great fascination for Buffy.

"Well, do it," he said, "and then I'll see."

In a few minutes Brownie entered the room in a long

trailing black dress, her hair tucked up under her mother's white widow's cap, and her little figure stiff with dignity and importance. In one hand she held her mother's silver pen, and her voice was in almost exact imitation of her mother's.

"Good-night, my darling boy. Mother is very busy to-night."

Buffy gave a little snigger of approval.

"My little boy must go to sleep at once," said Brownie, adopting a severe tone, "for I've a lot to do downstairs, and my pen doesn't want to stop."

"Mother never says that," said Buffy sturdily. "She never brings her pen upstairs. Let me see it."

Brownie held it up proudly. Then, in a sudden mischievous turn, Buffy seized hold of it, and with all his strength flung it out of the window, which had been left partly open.

Brownie gave an angry cry.

"You're a naughty, wicked boy, and if you've lost mother's pen, we shall all be starved to death! It makes all the money for us, mother told me so!"

She ran out of the room, leaving Buffy to his own devices, slipped off the borrowed cap and gown, and was down in the garden immediately, hunting anxiously for the pen. It was a great joy to her when she found it on the flower-bed underneath Buffy's window.

She took it back and laid it on her mother's writing-table with compunction at having taken it away.

"What should I have done if it had been lost! What would mother have said!"

She crept off to bed very quietly.

When Mrs. Eustace returned she found her boy fast asleep, but her girl tossing on her pillow with flushed cheeks. Sitting down by her bedside, she had to listen to the account of the primrosing, and the accident to her pen.

“I’m dreadfully sorry, mother. I’ll never touch it again.”

“No, I couldn’t bear to lose it, Brownie. It was the last present your father gave me, and it is my inseparable companion.”

Mrs. Eustace very seldom mentioned the children’s father to them.

“Did father know it would bring you money?” Brownie asked.

Mrs. Eustace smiled rather sadly.

“No, I don’t think he did.”

Then Brownie’s thoughts took another turn.

“Mother, it must have been an angel in the wood?”

“I hardly think so.”

“But it must. You didn’t hear it. It made me feel quite—quite funny. When you sing to us sometimes I feel a little bit like it; but this was such a different voice. It made me shiver with cold, and yet I liked it. Will you come to the wood, and hear it with us, mother?”

“Perhaps I will one day.”

Brownie dropped off into dreamland that evening, hearing that wonderful voice sounding in her ears, and weaving itself into all her sleeping fancies.

## CHAPTER IV

### “Only a Small Boy”

THE children paid two more visits to the wood in the hope of hearing the beautiful voice again, but they were disappointed. The birds, and primroses, the budding trees, and bushes seemed the only inmates, and to Brownie the wood had lost its charm. She wandered disconsolately through it, and came home tired and cross.

The strange, wild air, the last words of the song haunted her day and night. She could hear the triumphant rise in the sweet notes that had thrilled her so,—

“Sorrows but passing—joy evermore!”

And she felt in a dim, shadowy way that she had been through sorrow whilst the voice had been so sadly wailing about it, that she had mounted from the depths to the heights of bliss when the singer had let forth such jubilant notes of victory at the close.

Every night she prayed in her little bed this prayer—  
“Please, God, send the angel to sing to us again!”

One afternoon they wandered down the road in a different direction. Generally they preferred the common and the fields to the high road, but Brownie was fond of exploring, and wanted to see where the road went. It was rather uninteresting, she thought. The hedges on either side were too high to see over, and

the road seemed to stretch away in front of them for miles, without a break. So when a narrow green lane turning off it came in sight, she gladly led Buffy up it. It was little more than a cart track, and grass grew in the ruts. Buffy ran along delightedly, sometimes stopping to gather some treasure from the ditch on one side, sometimes getting Brownie to reach up to the hedges to pick some fresh young fern or flower. They walked on until at last they came to a standstill. A rusty iron gate barred their progress, and an old board stared them in the face—“No thoroughfare.”

“Is it a trespasser’s board?” asked Buffy, gazing up at it with deep interest.

Brownie considered. Then curiosity got the better of her prudence; finding the gate unlocked, she pushed it open, and crept through, Buffy following her on tip-toe. There was a little narrow path through thick overhanging bushes and tall rank grass. They were pushing their way along very cautiously when suddenly, without warning, the voice they had heard in the wood rang out sweetly and clearly, and the words rose and fell with their sweet sadness,—

“Shadows and sunshine, darkness and light,  
Follow as sure as day follows night.”

Clasping Buffy’s hand Brownie stood immovable; then, when the last words had died away, when the glad ring of “joy evermore” still seemed to be vibrating in the air, she eagerly led her little brother on.

“I don’t want to lose the angel again; let us find her,” she said breathlessly.

In another moment the path led them towards a small wicket gate, upon which was written, “The Hermitage.” Opening this they found themselves opposite an old-fashioned stone house almost buried in ivy and creepers. A very untidy garden surrounded

it, and from one of the open windows the voice was raised once more. It was a strange, wild air this time, and Brownie could distinguish no words. On the impulse of the moment she crept up to the window and looked in.

She saw a small dark room, with a low ceiling; an old man with a long white beard seated at a grand piano; and in the centre of the room the singer. No angel, after all; only a small boy, quaintly dressed in velvet and lace, and a crop of long soft black hair curling round his little white face and throat. He was standing with clasped hands and upward gaze, his head well thrown back from his shoulders, and his voice was as liquid and thrillingly sweet as a nightingale's. After the first moment of disappointment Brownie gazed in wonder at the little boy. If he were not an angel he was not an ordinary boy. She had only to glance at fair, sturdy Buffy to see the difference between them. She stood there entranced, gazing at the little singer with adoring eyes. How could he sing so beautifully? Who had taught him? And how easily he did it! Then she was startled by Buffy's voice,—

“Oh, look, Brownie! here's a fat brown frog, and you nearly stepped on him!”

Buffy's shrill tones were raised in earnest protest. The little singer heard them. He faltered in his song, he stopped; and then Brownie, in an agony of shame and alarm, seized her small brother's hand and tore along the narrow path out into the green lane as fast as her legs could carry her.

“You're a rude, naughty boy!” she said breathlessly. “You've spoilt everything, and I wish I hadn't brought you with me!”

Buffy pouted.

“It was only somebody in a house; it wasn't an



angel at all, and you did nearly step on the frog, you did!”

Brownie’s eyes blazed.

“It was a beautiful little boy, not a common, fat boy like you! He had lovely black hair and eyes, and is a prince, I’m sure he is. I wish I had trodden on the frog and killed it! You like frogs better than angel princes!”

Being a very tender-hearted little girl, this speech showed what a tumult her heart was in. Buffy stared at her, then marched along with wounded dignity.

“I’m not a fat, common boy. I belong to mother, and I shall tell her what you called me. I hate your angel boy. He doesn’t know how to sing.”

Then Brownie took him by his shoulders and shook him passionately. Buffy burst into uproarious crying, whereupon Brownie came to herself, and began kissing him as violently as she had shaken him.

“I’m sorry, Buffy dear, I was in a wicked temper. Do forgive me. I didn’t mean it, and it was very kind of you to tell me about the poor frog. Don’t cry any more. We will go home and play in the garden till tea-time.”

Buffy dried his eyes and was comforted. Brownie was not often cross with him, and he was quite willing to kiss and be friends.

The “angel prince” was not mentioned again, but Brownie’s head was full of him. She began to be discontented with poor Buffy’s looks, and took her mother into her confidence.

“Wouldn’t you like Buffy to have long black hair, mother? Don’t you think he would look much nicer? I should like to have a brother with black hair and black eyes, and to be always dressed in velvet clothes and a lace collar.”

Mrs. Eustace laughed at her little girl’s fancies.

"My poor little Buffy! I wouldn't have a hair of his head altered, Brownie; his fairness is his beauty."

Brownie said no more, but day after day she took Buffy down that green lane in the hopes of hearing her hero. She never ventured inside the garden, however, and at last Buffy rebelled.

"I shan't go down that horrid lane; I'm going over the common," he announced one day.

With reluctance Brownie gave in to him; then she persuaded him to go over to the primrose wood. She wandered about restlessly when she got there, and at last called Buffy to her.

"Shall I sing to you, Buffy?" she asked.

"Yes, sing 'See-saw Margery Daw,'" said Buffy promptly, as he sat down by her side and clasped his hands expectantly. Brownie had a sweet little voice of her own, but in her present mood nursery ditties were not to her taste. She had a longing to sing like the strange boy, and had been practising for some time in private. She cleared her throat, stood up, adopting the same attitude she had witnessed through the open window, and throwing her head back, opened her mouth in a long-drawn wail which quite frightened Buffy, whose eyes got rounder and rounder.

"Sor-or-or-ows are passing-ing-ing,  
Joy-oy-oy ev-ever-ev-ever more-re-ore!"

It was not a success. Her little voice went from a wail to a squeak, and Buffy, relieved at the tragic ending in the comic, rolled over on the grass with shrieks of laughter.

"Do it again, Brownie! It is so funny! Please do it again!"

Brownie was angry and mortified. She was about to speak when a little rustle in the bushes made her look round, and there, stepping softly towards them

with a smile upon his small white face, was the “angel prince.” Brownie gasped.

“Were you trying to sing my song?” he asked.

His voice was an ordinary one, perhaps a little lower and sweeter than Buffy’s shrill treble.

Brownie’s face got crimson. She hung her head in shame.

“I couldn’t do it,” she said, after a minute’s silence, “but I wanted to.”

Buffy advanced eagerly to the new-comer. He gazed at his dress in astonishment. He was in a buff linen suit with a white frilled collar, and a red fringed sash was tied round his waist. On his black curls was a large leghorn hat, and some crow’s feathers were sticking up jauntily on one side.

“You’re the angel prince that Brownie talks about,” said Buffy, quite unabashed. “We’ve heard you sing, and Brownie thought you was an angel from heaven, till she saw you. She peeped in at the window, but it was too high up for me. Are you a prince?”

“No, I’m not,” said the boy, laughing, and showing two rows of very white teeth; “I’m just Angelo Pinet, that’s my name. Who are you? I’ve never seen you before, and I’ve been in this wood so often.”

Then Brownie found her voice. She was relieved and delighted to find that her hero was so friendly. The children’s tongues ran fast, and before they parted they were the greatest friends.

Angelo told them about himself quite frankly.

“I live with Ninette and my guardian. Ninette is French, but she speaks English well. She makes all my clothes, and cooks for us. Her husband, Pierre, is my guardian’s servant. I call him Guardian, but his proper name is Count Alphonse Matalio. He used to be a very rich man in Italy, but he had to go away. I don’t know why. I believe if he had stayed there he might have

been killed ; so we came to England, and I sing to him, and he says I'm the comfort of his life. He teaches me music all day long. He never comes out of the garden. He reads books, and makes up music, and then teaches me songs. We don't know anybody in England. But Guardian has friends of his that come to see him sometimes, and there is one man I'm afraid of ! He wants to take me away with him every time he comes. He says I could make such a lot of money if I came with him, but Guardian says he doesn't want me to make money, but to stay with him."

"How would you make money?" asked Brownie.

"By singing to people. They would pay to hear me."

"Not like the boys and organ-grinders do in London. Oh, I shouldn't like that !"

"Of course not. I should sing in great big halls, and kings and queens would come to hear me."

Angelo spoke a little loftily.

Brownie looked at him in wonder. Then she said simply, "We haven't many kings and queens in England, have we?"

"Oh, I wouldn't sing in England, unless the Queen wanted me to very much. Monsieur Capello says he would take me all over Europe, but I wouldn't like to go. He is a cruel man. He killed a little kitten I had, because it sprang on his shoulder and frightened him. Guardian is kind, and I shall never leave him, though I do get very tired sometimes, when I have to sing so long."

"Will you sing to us now?" said Brownie, a little shyly.

Angelo considered. A blackbird was pouring forth a melody close to them. He raised his small finger with a warning "Hush!" And then he whispered, "When he has finished I will sing like him. I can copy any bird !"

The blackbird finished, and then in an instant Angelo took the song up, in such exact imitation of the bird's notes and trills that the bird himself, from a branch overhead, put his head on one side, and listened in wonder.

Buffy clapped his hands in delight.

“Sing again,” he said, “sing like—like an eagle !”

But Brownie was hardly satisfied.

“I like a song with words,” she said.

Then Angelo stood up and threw his head back.

“The sky it is so blue,  
 And the little leaves so new,  
 And the hedges are so beautiful in fresh blown May ;  
 And my bosom is so light,  
 I must laugh for mere delight,  
 She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way.

I had rather see her eyes  
 Than the sweetest azure skies ;  
 She is lovelier and purer than the snowy bloom of May.  
 Do not talk of Nature bright,  
 For I see my own delight,  
 She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way.”

They were the words of an old song, but the music was the Count's ; and the light, tripping, fairy-like notes enchanted Brownie's musical ear.

“Oh, how lovely !” she exclaimed ; “and who is she ?”

Angelo laughed. “It's only a song. You don't have real people in songs.”

“Don't you ever ?”

“I don't think so.”

Then he put on his hat, that had tumbled off.

“I'm going ; and if you come here another day we'll have games together !”

He skipped off, and the children heard him whistling gaily as he went.

They returned home, and poured into their mother's ear a confused and excited account of their new friend.

"Isn't it funny, mother? His name is Angelo, and I thought he was an angel. You would love him if you saw him."

"And he sings just like a blackbird."

"And he says he wants some one to play with so much."

"And he has a grand red sash!"

"And, mother, may we ask him to tea?"

"Softly, little ones. I must find out more about him before I can let you play with him."

This checked their enthusiasm.

For the rest of the day Brownie was in dreams, and through all her thoughts came the tripping tinkle of the song—

"She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way."

## CHAPTER V

### “Tell Me What You Know”

“**B**ROWNIE, bring Buffy in from the garden, and come into my room. Our clergyman is here and would like to see you.”

Mrs. Eustace stood at the garden door, and called her little girl. When the children entered their mother's room, they saw Mr. and Mrs. Gayworthy both seated there. They were a picture of an old couple. Both had snow-white hair and cheerful, smiling faces. Mrs. Gayworthy was a little bit feebler than her husband, but her figure was wonderfully erect for her years, and Mr. Gayworthy carried himself like a soldier.

“I know these little people by sight,” said Mrs. Gayworthy, “for I have often seen them on the common. I suppose they haven't begun lessons yet?”

“Oh, yes, we have two hours every morning,” said Mrs. Eustace.

“Indeed? And they learn together? By-and-by the boy will go to school, I suppose? But not yet awhile.”

“No; Brownie's education will come first.”

“Yes, but girls can learn at home; they do not need a boy's education.”

“I mean to give my little girl quite as good an education as my boy,” said Mrs. Eustace firmly. “I don't approve of girls' brains remaining undeveloped.”

“You like this modern system of cramming girls with Greek and Latin?” asked Mrs. Gayworthy doubtfully. “In my youth it was so different.”

"I don't think they ought to be crammed at all, but a woman does not lose her feminine character because she has been well educated. I think now-a-days it is a little overdone, perhaps; people always rush from one extreme to the other, but the balance will be fairly struck soon. I acknowledge men to be superior in everything but intellect. That has been equally divided between the sexes from the time of creation, I believe, but circumstances have been unfavourable to women."

This talk was above the children's heads, and gentle Mrs. Gayworthy sought to change it.

"And what kind of lessons do you like best?" she said, turning to Brownie.

"I know what I should like to learn best," said Brownie, with shining eyes. "I should like to learn to sing."

"Like a blackbird," put in Buffy.

"No; like Angelo."

"My children are very interested in a little boy whom they have come across," said Mrs. Eustace, smiling. "I wonder if you can tell me anything about him. Where is it he lives, Brownie?"

"At a funny old house covered with trees, called 'The Hermitage,'" said Brownie breathlessly.

"Oh yes," Mrs. Gayworthy said. "I know about him, but I am afraid we do not know the family personally. They came here about three years ago; but the 'count,' as he is called, will not see any one. We first heard that they were Jews, then Roman Catholics; but the two servants are French Protestants. I am afraid the count"—here Mrs. Gayworthy lowered her voice, so that the children should not hear—"does not believe in anything, and I believe the child is quite a little heathen. We have tried hard to gain an entrance into the house, but we have been refused admittance. Now and then the French servants appear in church, but they never bring the child with them."



"Are they respectable?" asked Mrs. Eustace doubtfully.

"Yes," said Mr. Gayworthy. "I always make a point of knowing who my parishioners are, even if they keep me out of their houses. I have a friend in Italy who found out all particulars for me. The count is not a Nihilist or anything of that sort, but he was banished for some political offence, and this child has been adopted by him. He was an orphan, but of gentle birth, and the count knew his parents intimately. I believe his mother was a great musician, and I hear that the count is bent on the boy becoming one too."

"Angelo sings, oh beautifully!" said Brownie, edging near the old vicar.

"You have been favoured if you have heard him, my dear," Mr. Gayworthy said. "I never have had that privilege."

Mrs. Eustace looked a little anxious, but she said nothing more; and after her visitor had gone and the children had returned to their play, she took up her writing and forgot all about Angelo and his belongings.

It was not many days after, that the children met their little friend again in the wood. He welcomed them gladly, and they had a merry game of hide and seek together. When they were tired with their exertions he said,—

"And now I'll show you where I sit and rest some times. Can you climb?"

Both Brownie and Buffy stoutly asserted that they could. He led them to one side of the tower, and there they saw some rough, uneven steps had been cut up one of the broken walls. Carefully they mounted up, until they reached a square platform of stone and grass about thirty feet above the ground, and bearing many traces of tourists' hands in the roughly carved names on the wall.

"Now sit down," commanded Angelo, "and look

over the common. Doesn't the village look tiny? How big the birds must feel when they look down on us!"

"The church looks quite short," said Brownie with interest.

"Why do churches always have spires like that?" asked Angelo reflectively.

Brownie was so accustomed to questions of this sort from Buffy that she answered readily enough, though with a sweet gravity in her tone,—

"Because they point to God."

Angelo stared at her.

"They point up to the sky," he said.

"Yes, and heaven is up there, and God."

"I don't know those kind of things," said Angelo, a troubled look coming into his dark eyes. "Guardian doesn't talk to me about them."

"But you sing about heaven," said Brownie,—

"'Earth always changing, heaven so sure!'"

"But I told you nothing is true in songs; it's only a make-up."

"Heaven is true," argued Brownie, "because mother and the Bible says so. God, and Jesus, and all the good people who died are there."

"Don't you know about 'Jesus who lived above the sky'?" questioned Buffy wonderingly.

"No," said Angelo. "Ninette won't speak to me about church, and that, because she says Guardian won't like it. Tell me what you know."

"God is very kind, and loves me," said Buffy breathlessly. "He loves everybody in the world, and He gives us all we can see. I say my grace and prayers to Him every day. He looks at me and says 'Good boy' sometimes, and sometimes He shakes His head at me, and then I'm sorry."

"Oh, Buffy!" said Brownie. "You mustn't make-up!"

Buffy denied this charge with warmth. Angelo turned to Brownie.

“You tell me,” he said. “You know more than he does.”

So in gentle tones Brownie told all she knew about the “old, old story.” And Angelo never moved his large dark eyes from her face.

“Of course,” he said, “I have heard the names of Jesus and God, but I never knew they were real people. Aren’t they very, very, very old? When will they die?”

“They aren’t people at all,” said Brownie, a little shocked. “They’re—they’re God, and they can’t never die. They’re always there, always. Jesus did die once, I told you, and then He came alive again, and He can never die any more.”

“Why did He die?” asked Angelo. “You said He died for us. I don’t understand.”

“One of our hymns says :—

‘He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.’”

“I don’t understand,” said Angelo perplexedly. “It is all very strange. That is a kind of song you said.”

“Oh no, it is a hymn. It belongs to a ‘Green Hill.’ That’s one of Buffy’s hymns. I have one I like much better. Shall I say it to you?”

“Yes.”

Brownie folded her hands in her lap, and repeated slowly and reverently,—

“If I come to Jesus,  
He will make me glad,  
He will give me pleasure  
When my heart is sad.

If I come to Jesus,  
Happy I shall be ;  
He is gently calling  
Little ones like me.

## BROWNIE

If I come to Jesus,  
 He will hear my prayer,  
 He will love me dearly,  
 He my sins did bear.

If I come to Jesus, etc.

If I come to Jesus,  
 He will take my hand,  
 He will kindly lead me  
 To a better land.

If I come to Jesus, etc.

There with happy children  
 Robed in snowy white  
 I shall see my Saviour  
 In that world so bright.

If I come to Jesus," etc

"Oh! that's a lovely song," exclaimed Angelo, standing up eagerly. "I feel I could sing it. Teach me the words. I sing things out of my head sometimes, and I should like to sing that."

"I'll teach you the words, and then you sing it to us," said Brownie.

"I think," remarked Buffy, who found he had sat still quite long enough, "I think you're making to-day into Sunday, and you—you didn't ought to!"

His remark was unheeded. Angelo was quick at learning. He had had much practice in getting things off by rote, and Brownie was quite as quick a teacher. Buffy clambered down the stone steps, and began to play on the grass below. After a time he suddenly heard Angelo's voice ring out from the old tower above. Very sweet was the quaint air, and sweeter still were the words.

Brownie listened entranced, and heaved a deep breath when he had finished.

"I wish I could sing like you," she said.

"Tell me," said Angelo, a little imperiously, "what

does it mean by coming to Jesus? You say He is up in heaven. We can't go to Him."

Brownie knitted her brows.

"You make it all so difficult," she said. "It just means coming and talking to Him, that's all."

"And where can you talk? In the church?"

"I think you can talk to Jesus anywhere. He does go to church on Sunday, I know, but He lives in our house with mother and us. He is always there, all the weekdays, as well as Sunday. I don't know if He lives in your house."

"I'm sure He doesn't; and Guardian won't let me come to your house, so I can't come to Him at all."

Angelo's face fell.

"However," he said, brightening up, "I will sing that song of yours, and pretend I'm going to do it. It sounds very nice, and makes me feel quite glad!"

"Yes," assented Brownie, "pretending is quite as good as really doing it sometimes. I pretend with Buffy lovely things. There's a game called 'Perils'—I'll tell you about it another time—that we often play. But," she added, a graver look coming over her face, "I don't think you must ever pretend about hymns. They aren't a game."

"Well, if I can't come to Jesus," said Angelo, "I can think about what happens if I did come. That's what your hymn says. And now I'll say good-bye."

"Good-bye, Angel," said Brownie. "We may call you 'angel,' mayn't we? because that's what I called you before I knew your name."

Angelo nodded, then led the way down to the wood again, where they found Buffy eagerly waiting for them.

"I've seen a rabbit," he exclaimed, "and I raced him, and we fell over each other, and when I got up, he was gone."

"I shall race home," said Angelo ; and away he tore, his curls flying in the wind.

Buffy looked after him gravely.

"He's a funny boy, isn't he?" he said. "When you and him talks you get too difficult for me. I wish I had another little boy to talk to."

"You can talk to the rabbits and birds," said Brownie.

"They're nobodies."

"Talk to yourself, then ; that's what I do when I want to say something."

Buffy trudged home silently. He got little pity from his sister, but was too sturdy-minded to feel it. Mrs. Eustace was not told about Angelo till bed-time, for she was very busy, and told them she could not be disturbed. They gave her rather a confused account of their conversation, but what she heard eased her mind. Certainly as yet, Angelo had not done her children harm, and they might do him good. She resolved not to interfere in the matter.

The children had another interview with one another soon, but it was a short one.

Brownie and Buffy were picking some yellow broom on the common, when Angelo came up to them.

"I can't stay," he said ; "I'm to learn a new song this afternoon : but I thought I would find you here. I want to ask you something."

"What?" asked Brownie.

He hesitated, then lowered his voice.

"You remember the hymn you taught me? I've been thinking about it, and you said the church pointed to God. What's inside the church?"

"Haven't you ever been to church?" said Brownie, dismayed.

"No ; Guardian never likes me to go near the village, and the people stare at me so, and the boys call me 'Frenchy.' I did ask Ninette to take me once, but

Guardian wouldn't let me. He said he didn't want the people to hear me sing, and he was afraid I would try to if I got inside. He likes me to keep it secret; so you mustn't tell people about my singing."

"We've told mother," said Brownie; "we tell her everything."

"You mustn't tell any one else, because Guardian doesn't like it. I don't know why. Can people go to church every day?"

"We only go on Sundays."

"And what do you do?"

"We sing hymns, and we have prayers, and then Mr. Gayworthy gets up in the pulpit and preaches."

"Is that coming to Jesus?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it's a kind of coming," said Brownie slowly.

"I suppose He comes to church always? Is He there every day?"

"Yes," said Brownie, brightening at the thought. "I know He is, because it's God's house. Mother says so."

"Then if I went to church He would be sure to be there? I could speak to Him, even if I didn't see Him."

"Yes, I know you could."

Angelo flew off without another word, and the children watched him disappear in the distance.

"He's a very funny boy," said Brownie. "I wish he would talk to mother. I believe he is going to church when no one is there."

"He doesn't know nothing, does he?" said Buffy, a little disparagingly.

"He knows how to sing!" was Brownie's enthusiastic retort.

Buffy was crushed, and ventured no further criticisms.

## CHAPTER VI

### “A Holiday with Mother”

THE count was tired and irritable. He was sitting at the piano, and Angelo with troubled face was standing before him.

“Ah, you stupid child! How you set every nerve of my head tingling with shame at such notes! They are like a screech owl!—wiry, discordant, almost flat!”

To be “flat” was a disgraceful and awful crime.

The blood rushed into the child’s cheeks, and quick tears sprang to his eyes. He clasped and unclasped his hands nervously. The count crashed away recklessly and passionately on the beautiful instrument before him. Angelo vainly tried to follow him.

The count stopped abruptly, clasped his head in his hands, and Angelo burst into tears.

“I’m frightened!” he sobbed. “When you frighten me I can’t sing.”

“Do I lash you with a whip? Do I seize you by the ears and hair, and shake the music into you? You want to be a pupil of Monsieur Capello’s. He would teach you what fear is! Are you turning into a pitiful coward, because your discordant notes distract and tear my heart-strings?”

Angelo brushed his tears away, and stood erect.

“I won’t be a coward!” he said. “I want to sing it, but the music is too angry for me.”

The count got up from the piano, and threw himself



into an easy chair. It was not the first time that he had found he could not transmit his own mood to his pupil.

"It is my head to-day," he murmured apologetically. "I forget a man's restless longings and passion cannot find expression in a baby's soul! We will have no more music, boy, to-day. You have no voice for my mood, you cannot follow me. My head is aching badly; sit down and play me something soft."

Angelo sat down at the piano. His little fingers strayed over the keys in soft uncertainty for a few minutes, then, striking a chord, he suddenly broke out into song.

It was the hymn that Brownie had taught him, and which had been ringing through his heart and brain ever since.

The simplicity, the artless joyousness of words and air, the soft hush with which he ended each verse,—

"He is gently calling  
Little ones like me,"

all struck the restless, excited musician with strange awe. Following his own passionate playing, the contrast of this sweet little melody appealed to his feelings as only such contrasts in harmony can do.

And as he listened the words took him back to the time—long years ago—when he had lisped out his baby prayers at his mother's knee.

When Angelo's voice died away, there was dead silence for a moment or two.

"Where did you learn that?"

The count's voice was husky.

"That little girl taught it to me, the one I told you I met in the wood. She taught me the words, and I just sang the music."

"Leave me. I want to be alone."

Angelo obeyed. He wandered out into the garden. The very words of the hymn had given him fresh longing to visit the church.

"He is gently calling," he whispered to himself. "I will go now; I shall find Him there."

He slipped out of the garden, and along the green lane, trudged on the high road for a quarter of a mile, then crossed the common, and found himself by the little village church.

It stood just outside the village, and being a quiet time of afternoon, when most of the villagers were at their tea, he was able to enter the churchyard unmolested. For a moment, when he approached the church door, he feared he was shut out. But after a great deal of effort the heavy door yielded to his touch, and he timidly entered the building. It was very dark inside; the stained windows, though beautiful, kept the bright daylight from entering. He gazed at the pews and pulpit in astonishment. Strange as it may seem, he never remembered to have seen the inside of a church before, and he felt bewildered and confused. Where was he to say the words that were bursting from his heart? It was an old-fashioned church, with a high pulpit and a gallery. He considered for a moment, then remembered Brownie's words: "The church has a spire because it points to God." "Jesus and God live together," he thought, "and they're high up. I should like to get as near them as I can."

He found his way up the pulpit stairs, and got inside. Then, as he stood on the hassock, his little head just came above the pulpit itself. He looked round the dim, silent church in awe, and then he spoke:

"I've come to meet you, please, Jesus Christ. You are calling me, and I've come. You'll make me glad. You'll give me pleasure when my heart is sad. You'll love me and take my hand, the hymn says so, and

Brownie says it is true. Do it, please, and make me know about you better. You’ve called me, and I’ve come!”

He did not expect to hear an answer. But still he waited. And a sense of being in touch with an unseen Power crept into his small soul. Then, as a realization came over him that he must leave the church, he stretched out his little hands with a passionate cry,—

“Oh, come home with me, Jesus! Come home! Don’t leave me. You live with Brownie and her brother; live with me! Come home with me now!”

Softly he stole out of the church and away across the common he sped. Running swiftly, with a confused idea of preventing the unseen Presence from leaving him, he reached his house at last. And when once in the garden, he went down to an old broken-down summer-house, where he knew he would be out of ear-shot from the house, and, lifting up his voice, sang with jubilant assurance his hymn once again.

A few days after this Brownie and Buffy had a great treat. Their mother looked up from her letters at breakfast with a smile upon her face.

“Here is a surprise, children! Miss Bernard is sending over her carriage to take us all over to Dalton Towers. Would you like to come? She wants us to spend the day with her. I think we must all take a holiday and go!”

Brownie’s eyes shone. Any new place had a strange fascination for her. Dalton Towers sounded to her like some fairy palace, and she seized hold of Buffy round the neck, nearly choking him in her excitement.

“Oh, Buffy, we’re going to drive in a carriage! And no lessons!”

“Will we have jam tarts for dinner?” asked Buffy, extricating himself with difficulty from his sister’s embrace.

A holiday with "mother" was very rare, and when the carriage came, and the children got into it, dressed in their best clothes, and the pair of horses set off at a fast pace along the high road, Brownie turned to her mother with a glow in her eyes.

"We can pretend this is our own carriage, can't we?" she said.

"We shouldn't like it half as much if it were," said her mother, laughing. "Perhaps one day we shall have one, Brownie, and then you won't want to use it."

"Yes, indeed I should. Do you think we shall ever be really rich?"

"Like the lady that lives in the big house with the dogs," put in Buffy. "I should like a house like that, with cows that would give me a glass of milk whenever I want it, and eggs for breakfast *every* day, and somebody to lace my boots and put my toys away!"

"I should like," said Brownie dreamily, "white silk dresses and red coral beads to wear every day, and a very large playroom, and a pony to ride, and a dog of my own, and rabbits, and white mice, and canaries, and a lovely greenhouse full of flowers, and a fountain playing over goldfish, and strawberries always ripe."

"You are more ambitious than Buffy," laughed Mrs. Eustace. "Now I will tell you what I would like. A housekeeper who would send up meals and manage the whole house without my having to think about it. I would have a very cool, shady drawing-room with lots of pretty things. It would be so still and quiet that I could go in and lie down and think of nothing if I wanted to. And then I would like a lovely library and a purse that would never, never get empty."

"Ah, I should like that," broke in Buffy; "and then I would buy those big round sweets that are a whole penny each!"

With such nonsense as this, mother and children

whiled away the time. The carriage rolled on through sweet-scented lanes, past small thatched villages, up and down hill, until at last Dalton Towers was reached.

They drove up a lime avenue which was scenting the air with its fragrance, and drew up before an old weather-beaten red-brick house, with a very formidable entrance and broad flight of steps.

The hall seemed full of sunshine and flowers, and when they were shown into the drawing-room, and Miss Bernard rose from her writing-table to greet them, Brownie thought that this must be the room that “mother” wished for when she grew rich.

It was a very bright and home-like place, but with exquisite old china and paintings on the walls. Miss Bernard kissed them all, took them upstairs to a very luxurious bedroom, and when they had removed their walking things they came down into the drawing-room again. Here she settled Mrs. Eustace in an easy chair for a good talk, and then turned to the children.

“What would you like to do, I wonder? Here are some old volumes of *Punch*. Would you like to take them into the conservatory and look over them? You will find some chairs there.”

Brownie gladly assented. She felt she was in fairy-land when she was once seated amongst the flowers, and for a long time could do nothing but gaze at them. Buffy enjoyed them too, but the pictures were more to his taste, and every now and then his greedy little soul would get the better of him.

“What do you think we shall have for dinner, Brownie?”

Brownie at first was shocked and angry at him, then she began to contemplate.

“Perhaps chicken!”

“And apple tart?”

“Perhaps.”

Flowers, pictures, and the anticipation of an unknown lunch in this beautiful house were quite enough to occupy the little ones' thoughts. When they did go into the dining-room to lunch, there were several strangers there. Mr. Bernard was a tall, thin man with a clean-shaven face and humorous mouth. He was fond of making dry jokes, and though Brownie had seen him once or twice in London, she was a little afraid of him. There were two other gentlemen: one a young man with a long fair moustache, which he pulled out thoughtfully after every sentence he uttered; the other a dark, fierce-looking being, who said the strangest things in the mildest voice, and evoked smiles and laughter after every remark. There was a stout, cheerful lady with a lot of rings on her hands, and a young fair girl who seemed to be enjoying herself immensely. Every one talked and laughed, and Brownie's grave eyes took note of everything. Buffy was absorbed in the good things spread on his plate. Once he forgot himself, and exclaimed rapturously in one of those sudden pauses that come so often in conversation, "It's like a king's feast; I wish I could eat it all."

He was overwhelmed with confusion at the laughter which followed this speech, and after the young man with the fair moustache began hastily passing him up all the dishes he could lay hands on, Buffy wriggled down from his chair and buried his face in his mother's lap.

She stopped the laughter, and made him return to his seat.

"Children are so deliciously honest!" said the stout lady.

"And honesty is always so amusing," said the dark man.

Brownie lost much of the conversation that followed, but she gazed admiringly at her mother, who seemed

so thoroughly at her ease in this gay party; and no one at the table, thought the loyal little daughter, looked so pretty and sweet as she.

Every now and then things were said that completely puzzled the little girl.

"As you have begun talking shop," said the fair man, "let me give you an idea in composition. Don't kill off the objectionables or the villains, just allow them to disappear."

"You mean make them disappear?"

"Just so. There is the little mystery, and the fear of their turning up before the right couples shake together, that keeps the interest from flagging."

"And when do they turn up?"

"Never! Close the volume gently after their disappearance."

"I don't like vague endings," said the stout lady. "I always kill outright when I see there is a necessity."

"A tortured, crippled villain is rather fetching."

"Now, Mrs. Eustace, what do you think? Are you one who goes in for murders?"

"I never kill," said Mrs. Eustace, smiling, "unless there is no other way out of it. I have killed somebody once, but it was with great regret I did it."

"Oh, I know," said the fair girl; "that was 'Bessie Glover.' I cried over her. I little thought I would ever meet her murderess!"

The conversation went on, but Brownie heard no more. Her little heart was beating violently, and she felt sick and faint. Was she dreaming? Did her mother, her sweet, gentle mother, say quite calmly and indifferently that she had killed somebody once? The child left her food untasted in her plate. When luncheon was over, she and Buffy were told they could run out into the garden and play. Buffy wondered at her silent mood.

“Do run races with me, Brownie,” he pleaded. “It is such a lovely big garden. What’s the matter? Have you got a pain?”

She had a pain indeed, but it was too deep down to reach. The sunshine, the flowers, the beautiful garden, all seemed blurred and spoilt. She sat down under an old elm on the lawn.

“Leave me here, Buffy, and go away and play. I want mother; oh, I want mother!”



## CHAPTER VII

### “You Said You Killed Her !”

IT was not long before Mrs. Eustace came down the garden, talking earnestly to Mr. Bernard. Brownie left her seat, and running up, slipped her little hand into her mother's.

Mrs. Eustace smiled down upon her.

“Tired of running about, Brownie?”

“I want you,” Brownie whispered.

Mrs. Eustace shook her head at her and went on talking to Mr. Bernard. She did not mind her little girl walking with them, and Brownie silently paced the lawn holding her mother's hand.

“I cannot undertake more, Mr. Bernard. You must not tempt me.”

“It is such an opening.”

“I should have to go abroad to study the place.”

“Why not?”

“The expense would be too great !”

“But you would more than cover it after.”

“I have not the ready money to do it.”

“Let me advance it.”

“Thank you, but I could not allow that.”

“I assure you it is a mere matter of business. I know your extreme punctiliousness about advancements. Debts you consider them, don't you? But in this case you are losing a grand opportunity.”

"I have my children, and they must come first. I try not to neglect them, and I don't think I do. I have only just settled down here, and you must not try to disturb me."

"But, my dear, you must be more ambitious. Get your children a good governess, and leave them with her. You ought to be entirely unfettered, with such a talent as you possess. Don't be afraid of spending. You are making a very good income."

"Mr. Bernard, you are my kind friend and banker; surely you remember my circumstances! You know where my money goes."

Mr. Bernard smiled quietly.

"Your conscience plays you false," he said. "Where the creditor is satisfied, there is no debt."

"There always will be until I have paid the last penny."

Mrs. Eustace spoke hotly; then she added more gently,—

"I don't think the discipline of a very narrow income will hurt either me or my children. It teaches us habits of carefulness and self-denial. I would not have it otherwise."

There was a silence, then Mr. Bernard said, in a different tone,—

"Will you try to send me those articles we talked about some time ago?"

"Yes, I will."

All this Brownie listened to with a vague wonder that grown-up people could talk about such uninteresting subjects as "incomes," "circumstances," "creditors," and "discipline."

And through her little head the horrible thought kept running,—

"Mother has killed some one, and her name was Bessie Glover, and she smiled about it."

But try as she would, she could not get her mother alone to ask her about it. In fact, she hardly liked to utter the dreadful thought, and yet how it was spoiling her day, and darkening even the sunshine around her!

Miss Bernard's other guests came strolling out soon, and Brownie, finding her mother surrounded, fell back and joined Buffy, who was having an animated conversation with a small boy weeding a shrubby path. Presently Miss Bernard and the stout lady came by them. They paused when they saw the children, and the latter laid her hand on Brownie's shoulder.

“These are her children, are they not? Happy children, to have such a genius for their mother. It is enchanting to see her in such a guise. Her pen is so masterful that I had formed very different ideas of her. It has been a pleasure to meet her.”

Brownie looked up quickly.

“Do you know about mother's pen that makes the money?” she asked.

“I think all England knows your mother's pen,” said the stout lady with a laugh, as she walked on. “I would that I could hold the public as well!”

A pink colour came to Brownie's cheeks.

“All England know mother's pen! What a wonderful one it must be! And what did it do?” she wondered.

By and bye they went into the house to tea, and soon afterwards the carriage came round to take them home. Buffy chattered away merrily to his mother, but Brownie sat silent, and Mrs. Eustace looked down at her tenderly.

“I don't think you have enjoyed yourself, have you, Brownie?”

“Not very much,” said truthful Brownie.

“Aren't you well? I don't like to see you such a little sober-sides. I have enjoyed my holiday very much, and I hoped you had too.”

Brownie's little face flushed. She could not tell her

mother her thoughts. She sat opposite to her, and every now and then Mrs. Eustace would catch her eyes looking at her with a grave, sad scrutiny that was quite perplexing.

"I think she has a pain and is cross," said Buffy.

"I am not cross," said Brownie.

"What is the matter?"

"I think I feel a little sad;" and Brownie confusedly turned away her face from her mother's earnest gaze. Mrs. Eustace said no more. She knew she would be told the trouble at bedtime, and leaving Brownie to her thoughts, she turned her attention to her boy. They were a very tired little couple when they reached home, and Buffy was fast asleep directly his head touched the pillow. But Brownie was not asleep when her mother came to her, though her little face looked white and tired. Mrs. Eustace sat down by her and pushed her thick hair off her forehead with a very tender hand. She did not speak, and silence gave Brownie courage.

"Mother, if I killed—a—a bird, would it be wicked?"

"Not if it was an accident, darling. I think you would never be so cruel as to do it on purpose."

"Is it cruel to kill, mother?"

"Very cruel, unless there is some good reason."

Brownie remembered her mother's words, "There was no other way out of it." She did not feel comforted.

"And grown-up people have to kill each other sometimes, do they mother?"

"Never!" said Mrs. Eustace, with a horrified look; then she added hastily, "Except, of course, in case of war."

"Have you been in a war, mother?"

"No, darling; why? What is it that is troubling you? Tell mother straight out. Have you killed anything?"

“No, no,” and Brownie shuddered ; then sitting up she clasped her hands tightly round her mother’s neck, and hid her face in her shoulder.

“Oh, mother, I don’t know how to say it, and it must be right, I know it must. But I keep thinking of it, and of what Hester read in a newspaper once about some woman killing her little daughter. You won’t ever think it right to kill me, mother ; oh, do tell me you won’t !”

Mrs. Eustace was completely puzzled and alarmed. She felt Brownie quivering from head to foot, and her little hands were feverishly warm.

“My girlie, how can you say such dreadful things ! do you think mother would hurt a hair of your head ?”

Brownie burst into tears.

“But you said you killed her, mother, and the lady called you that dreadful name—a—a murderess.”

“Who did I kill ?” asked Mrs. Eustace, wondering if her child was in a delirium.

“Bessie Glover—I remember her name. Was she a little girl, mother ?”

The light flashed into Mrs. Eustace’s mind at once, and she heaved a deep sigh of relief. She did not smile, though at first she felt inclined to, for she saw what a terrible experience her little girl was going through.

“My darling Brownie, dry your tears and listen to me. I can explain it all. I have never really killed any one ; it is all a big mistake. No wonder you have been so unhappy if you have had this awful idea in your little head. I think I must tell you now what my pen does, and how I get money. It is by writing books. I have never told you because I very much dislike it being talked about ; but I wish you had known it before you heard that foolish conversation at lunch.”

Brownie was gazing at her mother with round eyes, but she could not say a word.

“You like story-books, don’t you?” her mother continued. “Well, grown-up people like them too, and I write them, and a lot of papers and essays that you would think very dull. They were talking about my books at lunch, and ‘Bessie Glover’ was a girl in a story-book who was drowned in a flood. I made her die in my story: that’s what I meant when I said I killed her. She wasn’t a real person at all. Do you understand, dear?”

Brownie nodded, but she began to cry afresh.

“I don’t know why I’m crying,” she sobbed. “I’m so happy. I knew you wouldn’t kill any one, only I couldn’t understand it.”

“Now lie down and go to sleep like a good child. You are quite worn out.”

Mrs. Eustace kissed Brownie, and put her back on her pillows. After a little sob or two, the brown eyes slowly closed, then they opened very sleepily.

“Mother?”

“Yes, dear?”

“It is a wonderful pen, isn’t it, to write books?”

“It is indeed,” said Mrs. Eustace, smiling; and then she left the bedroom, saying to herself,—

“It is a warning not to let children be present at a literary luncheon.”

Brownie got up the next morning quite her bright little self again. She never told Buffy the cause of her uneasiness, and for a long time afterwards they talked of their visit to Dalton Towers. Hester was given glowing accounts of the house and garden.

“It’s much nicer than The Hall, where Miss Monteith lives,” said Brownie; “it seemed kinder indoors and out.”

“I never heard of a house being kind before,” said Hester, with a smile.

“Well, you know the feeling when everybody likes

you; and I think the flowers and trees know those kind of things, don't you?”

Hester shook her head, and said no more.

Miss Monteith had not won the children's affections. If Brownie saw her coming down the road when she and Buffy were taking a walk, she would clamber over a gate or hide behind a tree until she passed by. Buffy alone would walk on impassively. One afternoon he was doing this when Iris stopped him.

“You are too small to be so far from home. Where is your sister? I thought she always took care of you.”

“Yes, she does, unless I does it,” said Buffy stolidly.

“Where is she?” repeated Iris, looking at him sternly, wondering if he was meaning to be saucy.

Buffy gazed at his questioner with open mouth and eyes, then said thoughtfully, “I think she is on the ground somewhere.”

“She is a naughty little girl to run away and leave you.”

Then, suddenly seeing a glimpse of a cotton frock behind a tree, Iris marched up and seized Brownie by the shoulders.

“Why are you hiding there? Aren't you supposed to look after your little brother when you are out of doors?”

“I was only hiding from you,” said Brownie confusedly.

“Hiding from me!” ejaculated Iris in genuine astonishment. “Why were you hiding from me, pray?”

“Because—because you ask me questions,” murmured Brownie.

“I shall make you say your catechism straight away if you don't take care,” said Iris, laughing, but looking a little vexed. “So you're too grand a little lady to be asked questions, are you? I wonder what children are coming to! Do you know that I am going to have a school treat soon in the hay fields? I was just on my

way to see your mother and ask her to let you come to it. But if you hide away when you meet me, you wouldn't care to come?"

"Yes, I think I should," said Brownie slowly.

"I should very much," said Buffy, with a broad smile. "I like hay; Brownie and me tried to make some the other day in our garden; we cut a lot of the grass with a pair of scissors, but it hurt our fingers dreffully!"

"Perhaps I had better ask you by yourself, then," said Iris. "I don't like to have children who hide from me."

Brownie flushed; then her feelings got the better of her shyness.

"Buffy couldn't come to you unless I came too, to take care of him. I'm his—his guardian; mother told me I was. I'm sorry I hid behind the tree. I won't do it again."

"Then we won't say any more about it, and I shall expect to see Buffy and his guardian at two o'clock next Saturday, if your mother allows you to come."

She nodded to them, and walked on.

Buffy was in transports of joy.

"I think she's a very nice lady, Brownie; it will be like a big party, won't it? And there'll be a lot of children to play with. Oh, I wish Saturday was to-day."

They could talk of nothing else till Saturday arrived. Their mother had been asked, but she said she could not spare time to go, and then Iris delighted Hester's heart by including her in the invitation.

It was a lovely day, and Iris, pleased and happy at seeing all the villagers and children enjoying themselves, proved herself a very efficient and kindly hostess. Brownie made great friends with a clergyman's little daughter from the adjoining parish. She was an old-fashioned child of ten years, who had five small brothers and sisters with her, and over whom she vainly tried to exercise control.



“I manage them at home,” she assured Brownie; “but when we come out for the day, they don’t like my speaking to them. Mother is ill, and we have a tiny baby at home that she looks after. I look after all the rest.”

“Boys are rather troublesome,” said Brownie, adopting the grown-up tone of her new friend. “Buffy gives me a lot of trouble. I look after him, you know.”

“It must be so easy with only one,” sighed Nora Wallace. “You see, we’re very poor; and I mend their socks and stockings, and the holes are always coming.”

“I don’t do much work,” admitted Brownie. “Hester mends our stockings.”

“I do it to save mother,” said Nora. “I wish you could see mother. She is as beautiful and good as an angel. She calls me her ‘comfort.’”

“She can’t be as nice as my mother,” said Brownie hastily, “and she calls me Buffy’s guardian. I like that name, don’t you?”

This was their style of conversation. Nora was not so ready for a romp in the hay as Brownie was. She preferred quiet conversation. The cares of life already sat heavily on her shoulders. But Brownie thought she was a wonderful child, and kissed her fervently at parting.

“I don’t know any little girls here, and only one boy besides Buffy. I should like you to come to tea with me one day. I’ll ask mother.”

Nora’s eyes brightened.

“I should love to come if mother can spare me. And p’r’aps when we have a birthday, you might come to have tea with us. We always have a cake on a birthday.”

They parted firm friends, and Brownie summed up the account of the day to her mother with,—

“The hay was lovely, and so were the games, and the tea, but Nora was best of all, and she’s such a very proper little girl that I’m sure you would like her.”

“I hope I should,” was the smiling reply, “but she must be much older than you.”

“Yes, she is, but, you see, we’re very like each other. She has brothers and sisters to look after, and I have Buffy. We talked”—Brownie’s eyes took a sober look in them—“of the trouble they gave us.”

And then impulsive Mrs. Eustace seized hold of her little girl and clasped her tightly to her.

“Oh, my Brownie, I hope I’m not making a little old woman of you! I don’t want you to be ‘proper,’ as you call it. I want you to be a happy, careless child. It is this dreadful, but necessary writing, that hampers me so!”

## CHAPTER VIII

### “ Without a Friend in the World ! ”

“ **N**OW, Angel, this is a shipwreck. That’s always the first thing. Of course we really ought to be in the water, but we must just pretend we are. See, I’m going to make my way to that big stone. Now I’m on it ; you must find another, or you will be drowned. Quick, quick, there’s a shark coming after you ! ”

“ I’m climbing a tree ! ” shouted Buffy.

“ But that isn’t right. Trees wouldn’t grow in the sea.”

“ It’s a high mountain,” said Buffy quickly. “ It fell into the sea and was nearly drowned one day, and now I’m on the top of it.”

“ I’m on an island ; what are you on, Angel ? ”

“ I’m on a big stone like you.”

“ You mustn’t say that. It is an island. I’m very cold and wet, and very hungry, but I’m so glad to be safe. What are you, Buffy ? ”

“ I’m in the awfulest danger ; there’s a bear climbing up to me one side, and a fox the other, and a whale is biting my toe off ! ”

“ What are you, Angel ? You mustn’t laugh. It’s quite real ! ”

Angelo tried to enter into the spirit of this wonderful game.

“The waves are nearly washing me away!” he cried. “The lightning has made me quite blind, and the thunder roars round and round. I stretch out my hands. I can feel nothing. My eyes are shut, and it’s dark, and I shall never see again. No sun, no flowers, no home, no friends! I’m a shipwrecked ruin!”

“Oh, how beautiful!” murmured Brownie. “Now it’s my turn. I wish I had thought of being a ‘shipwrecked ruin,’ it’s a lovely word. I’m so cold, my teeth are chattering, and yet my tongue is burning hot. I’m wanting food and drink. I’m getting very ill. What can I eat? My clothes are wringing wet, my shoes may taste better than nothing—I’ll try. They’re very tough, but oh, I want a drink. Is that a drop of rain? I see it coming; can I catch it? Ah—oh, alas! alas! It has fallen on my nose, I cannot reach it.”

“Try, try!” shouted Buffy, “put out your tongue and lick it! Now it’s my turn. A red alligator has just come up. I must fight him! And now my mountain is catching fire at the top, and the whale is eating it all up at the bottom. I shall tumble off into the sea again, and be drowned all over again!”

This delicious game was being played in the wood by the three children, Brownie being chief instigator. Angelo had met them there again, and had wished to be initiated into the game of “Perils.” His poetical spirit was stirred by the different flights of imagination, and Brownie’s cup of happiness was full when from his “island” he burst into impromptu song,—

“Wild wind rushing!  
 Rough waves tossing!  
 Thunder roaring all around!  
 Lightning frightening!  
 Island tottering!  
 Safety not on sea or ground!”

“Oh, Angel!” she exclaimed, rushing to him and

hugging him impetuously, “you’re *lovely* to play games with!”

The shipwreck soon came to an end, and Angelo inquired if it were all.

“Oh, no,” said Brownie, “there’s crowds and crowds more. You see, I got it out of the Bible. I heard it in church one Sunday, and it’s lovely. It’s what St. Paul said. There’s robbers, and beatings, and stormings, and prison! I found it out in my own little Bible, and I’ve put a marker in it, and I read it over to myself when I want my heart to thump. I should like to go through it all one day myself.”

Here she lifted up her eyes, and drew a deep breath, for Brownie had the true martyr’s spirit, with perhaps more love of sensationalism than was good.

“I learnt two verses,” she went on, “and I’ll say them to you. They’re rather difficult. ‘Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren!’ That’s why we call it ‘Perils.’”

“I should like to read it,” said Angelo.

“It’s in the Bible. You find it when you get home.”

“But I haven’t got a Bible.”

“Oh, dear,” said Brownie, looking at him in dismay. “I thought everybody had a Bible when they learnt to read.”

“Perhaps Ninette has one; I’ll ask her,” said Angelo, brightening at the thought. “Is it a story-book?”

“It isn’t a common story-book,” said Brownie. “It is God’s story-book. Have you never read the Bible? That’s how you didn’t know about God, and Jesus, because it’s all about them. It tells all about Jesus

coming down into the world and going up to heaven again."

"Oh, I should like to read about it," said Angelo, a pink colour coming into his cheeks.

"Your guardian must have a Bible," pursued Brownie. "I thought everybody but the heathen had a Bible. You can't love God without one!"

"Can't you?" said Angelo wistfully. "I think I love Jesus Christ, because of that hymn you taught me. He loves me, it says. How does the Bible help you to love Him?"

"Oh, it tells you—it keeps telling you about Him, and then you think how very good He is."

"Could I buy one at a shop?" asked Angelo. "But then, I've got no money. Would it cost much?"

"I don't know," said Brownie, considering. "Perhaps Mrs. Pratt may sell Bibles, but I've never seen any."

"Guardian doesn't like me to go to the village shop. If I had the money, would you go and buy it for me?"

"Oh, yes."

"I'll ask Ninette about it," said Angelo softly. "I should like one very, very much."

"Let's have some more perils!" said Buffy.

So the game went on, with alternations of gravity and mirth. Little hearts can turn so quickly from one to the other.

But Angelo did not forget his purpose when he reached his home.

He went straight into the kitchen to Ninette.

She was sitting by the table in the sunny window, with scraps of material in front of her, out of which she was manufacturing, with her clever fingers, a fresh suit for Angelo. She was singing a little French song when he entered.

Angelo came to the point at once.

"Ninette, have you got a Bible?"

"Ah, *mon enfant*, what a question! Ask your guardian such things. If Ninette has one, it is not for thee, little one. *Comprends tu?*"

"No, I don't *comprend*," said Angelo, with that strange mixture of French and English with which he always spoke to Ninette and her husband. "I want to see one, for *j'en ai besoin*. *Laissez moi* see yours, Ninette, do, *s'il vous plait!*"

"But it is at the very bottom of my drawer upstairs. I do not so often use it; and the Count, he will be astonishingly angry! *Non, petit Angelo, non; ce n'est pas un livre pour vous.*"

Nothing would induce her to yield, then Angelo went to his guardian.

He found him reading in his easy chair. The Count had not been well lately, he began to look frail and old. His eyes brightened at the sight of the child.

"Come and sing to me," he said, "and I will listen. I will not play; it does exhaust me so."

"What shall I sing?" asked Angelo.

"Sing 'Sighing, crying, what do ye here?'"

Angelo stood up and sang his very best. The old man's eyes gleamed and sparkled as he listened to the sweet, wild air that he had himself composed.

"You have a gift, a wonderful gift," he said, when the song was finished. "When I am gone, perhaps it will be well to give the public the benefit, and yet I cannot go against my promise."

"You won't let Monsieur Capello take me away?" said Angelo, his eyes dark with terror.

"Ah well, perhaps this old man will live longer than he thinks. But when my time comes, who will take care of you? You must have a guardian. Monsieur Capello is the only one who wants you. You cannot live alone."

"But, Guardian, you are not going to leave me—oh, please don't leave me! Let me come with you wherever you go!"

The count laughed harshly.

"You would hardly thank me. I am breaking up, my boy. This body of mine is becoming a burden to me; it is worn out and will not last much longer. I shall go the way of most men, and when you will be in your prime, I shall be forgotten in my grave."

"You mean you are going to die?" Angelo said, gazing at his guardian perplexedly.

The count did not answer. He looked out of the window thoughtfully, then turned to the boy, and drew him gently to him.

"Angelo, I have never talked to you of your mother. She was my ward. Her father and I were friends from childhood. She left my house when she married your father. I will not tell you much that I could about him. Your mother was a born musician, her singing was divine. She had been brought up in luxury, in an atmosphere of refinement and of love. Your father got hold of her fortune—it was not my fault—ah! how I tried to prevent it; but who can interfere between husband and wife? He spent it; he forced her to appear on the stage, to sing in public; he lived on her success as a public singer. She—my tender, delicate blossom—could not stand the toil, the glare, the degradation of such a position. I was called to her dying bed. She handed you into my arms. 'Take my boy,' she said; 'he inherits his mother's fatal gift: train him as a musician if you will, but never let him appear in public. It is my dying command. Love him, teach him, train him, as you have trained me, but spare him the sordid, the cruel life that comes to the public favourites.' I took you, and I promised her you should never set foot on a stage."



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“And where is my father?” asked Angelo.

“Dead. He only survived your mother two years.”

“Poor mother!” said Angelo sadly; then he added earnestly, “You will not let Monsieur Capello take me, will you? I shall die like mother did, if he makes me do what she did.”

“We will talk no more. My heart, it is aching with the past. But you have no guardian but me, and if I am taken you will be without a friend in the world.”

Angelo turned to go, then he remembered his errand.

“Guardian, may I have some money?”

“For what?”

“For a book I want to buy.”

“There is no place here that you can obtain books. These English country villages are dull and stupid, they have no love for art, these English; they buy their food. It satisfies their bodies, their souls have never learnt to live!”

“The little girl I told you about said she would get me the book, but she has no money, and I have none to give her.”

“Ah, well, you are not yet a beggar. Here is silver, how many pieces? Five. And show me your purchase when it is obtained.”

Angelo's eyes sparkled, as five shillings were put into his small palm.

With a graceful gesture he stooped and kissed the count's hand, the nearest approach to a caress that he ever ventured to give.

Then he quitted the room, and soon, out in the sunny garden, his sweet voice was heard gaily singing.

Very proud did Angelo feel when he gave his five shillings to Brownie the next time he saw her.

“You must buy me a very nice one, for that is a lot of money. I have never had so much before.”

“I will buy you a beauty,” was Brownie's delighted

reply, "and I will ask mother to let us go to the shop to-morrow."

"Come and play hide and seek," shouted Buffy from behind a tree. "See if you can catch me."

But Angelo did not respond. He turned to Brownie with a grave look on his sweet little face—

"I am feeling sad to-day."

"Are you?" said Brownie, sympathetically. "I do sometimes. It is generally after I have been naughty, when it's over, and just a kind of sad taste is in my mouth. Sometimes I feel sad when I make up stories about myself; when I lose my life through trying to be very, very good. Do you make up stories like that?"

"No," said Angelo, with a shake of his head. "This is a real sadness to me. Guardian said things to me before he gave me this money, and I keep thinking of them."

"Was he cross?"

"Oh, no; he told me he would perhaps die soon, and then I would be left without a guardian—quite, quite alone. He said I would be without a friend in the world. I keep thinking of it."

"Yes," said Brownie soberly, "that's a dreadful thing to think of. But you would have Ninette and Pierre."

"I'm afraid I shouldn't. I asked Pierre the other day if he liked England, and he said no, but he liked Guardian, and if Guardian went away he would go too. He would go back to his own village in sunny Normandy."

"Then I suppose you would have to live quite by yourself, like Robinson Crusoe?"

"I suppose so. It does make me sad."

"Couldn't you get another guardian?" suggested Brownie.

"I don't know anybody. Guardian said the only

person who wanted me was Monsieur Capello, and I can't go with him. I would rather run away into the woods and live like a wild man!”

“I'm a guardian to Buffy,” said Brownie slowly. “Mother said I was; but I can't be your guardian too: you're too big for me. I expect God will be your guardian, if you ask Him.”

“Would He really, do you think?” asked Angelo, his face lighting up at the thought.

“I'm sure He would; and of course He would be better than any person, because He sees and knows everything, and never goes to sleep. He would always be taking care of you, every little minute.”

Angelo was silent for a few moments, then he turned radiantly to Brownie—

“Why, of course, that's what it means in the hymn you taught me—

“ If I come to Jesus  
He will take my hand,  
He will kindly lead me  
To a better land.”

“Yes,” nodded Brownie, “only you want to have a very particular guardian. That's what Jesus does to every boy and girl, only you must ask Him to look after you much more than most boys, who have mothers, and sisters, and friends.”

“And do you think He would really and truly live in the house with me every day, and never leave me?”

“I'm sure He would, if you ask Him.”

“I never feel quite certain,” said Angelo, in a low tone, “whether He does live with me now. I feel as if He does sometimes, but I very often go to church when I'm not quite sure, for I know He is there.”

“Mother says Jesus is everywhere,” said Brownie decidedly; “and wherever you say your prayers, in the house or out of doors, anywhere, He will listen.”

“What is saying prayers?”

“Oh, it is telling Him what you want, and asking Him to make you good.”

“You know such a lot more than I do,” sighed Angelo. But he went home happy, singing to himself—

“ He will take my hand,  
He will kindly lead me  
To a better land ! ”

## CHAPTER IX

### “I Have Found Some One!”

MRS. EUSTACE looked very doubtful when Brownie announced her wish to go to the village shop and buy a Bible.

“I do not think you will get one there, dear. I think you had better let me have the money and I will send straight to London for it. I would take you into the nearest town, but I cannot spare the time to do it.”

“But, mother, it will be so long in coming if you get it from London. I want to get it to-day.”

“Oh, well, little impatience! go to the shop and see what you can do!”

So Brownie and Buffy, full of importance, presented themselves before Mrs. Pratt with their request.

“Eh, my dears, no, no. 'Tis not in books that I deal. We don't want Bibles in this village. One lasts a lifetime, and the vicar he gives 'em away as prizes in the Sunday-school. To be sure, the chapelfolks ain't so well off, but they gets 'em from the colportoy who comes his rounds with a sight o' pretty books; and Bibles, arter all said and done, is only for those that has eddication and time to sit down and unravel the mysteries o' the gospel!”

This was incomprehensible to Brownie.

“Where can I buy one?” she asked dejectedly.

“Well, now, the vicar will tell you all about it. You

go and ask him. Perhaps he can put you in the way of it at once !”

So with fresh hopes Brownie trotted Buffy off to the vicarage, and asked to see Mr. Gayworthy.

He was fortunately in, and took them in to see his wife, who was knitting in her pleasant little drawing-room. They asked who was in need of a Bible, and when Brownie explained Mr. Gayworthy whispered to his wife:

“‘Out of the mouths of babes,’ my dear ! She has done what we could not !”

Then he delighted Brownie by taking her off to his study and showing her a drawer full of new Bibles.

“I keep a stock for the children,” he said, “and here is a better one that I think will just meet your wants. I can let you have it for five shillings, though it cost more than that originally.”

Brownie gazed at it in admiration. It was a dark red morocco one, with beautiful large print ; she longed to be the possessor of it herself.

A little time after, she and Buffy, with the precious paper parcel, were making their way down the green lane to The Hermitage. Brownie was so impatient to give it to Angelo that she was boldly going to seek admittance to his home, but before she reached the gate Angelo met them. His little face looked very grave, but when the parcel was put into his hands, and he opened it, his joy knew no bounds.

“I’ve never had a book of my own before,” he said, “and this book’s a lovely one ! I wish I could bring you into the garden, and then we could read some of it together, but Guardian isn’t well, and he is sad and cross, and I know he wouldn’t like it !”

“We must go home,” said Brownie, “because it’s so late. I’m so glad I got it for you.”

“I’ll come back with you a part of the way.”

This was very good of Angelo, for he really wanted

to begin reading his new treasure at once; but he saw from Brownie's disappointed face how much she would like further talk.

Buffy was soon engaged, after his usual custom, in examining the ditches by the side of the road, so Angelo and Brownie were left to themselves.

"Guardian keeps saying he is going to leave me," said Angelo, presently. "It makes me rather frightened, but I told him just now that I thought I knew of another guardian. I didn't tell him who, because I wanted to talk to you again about it. You see, Guardian told me this morning that he was afraid I shouldn't have any money when he was gone. He is really very poor, he says. All his own money was taken away from him by some wicked people, and a kind cousin sends him some every year, but if—if he died she wouldn't send any more. Do you think that Jesus would be able to keep me if I had no money? You see, I couldn't live without any food, and how would I get it?"

Poor little Angelo looked distressed and anxious. He had been thoughtfully turning over his future in his own mind, and the count had painted it very blackly to him.

But Brownie threw up her head with an assured little nod.

"Of course, if you have Jesus as your guardian, He'll give you everything. Why, the whole world belongs to Him. Perhaps you'll get your dinner like Elijah did. God took care of him when there was no food to be had. A famine—the Bible calls it—and so Elijah went and sat by a little stream, and the ravens brought him some bread and meat in their beaks; God sent them."

Angelo smiled delightedly.

"Why, that would be lovely," he said. "I should like to get my dinner like that."

"Oh, yes," said Brownie emphatically. "You couldn't have no one better than Jesus to take care of you, because He can do everything, and I've just thought how He will send you money."

"How?" asked Angelo breathlessly.

"Why, in a fish's mouth. You'll go down to the river, and if you ask Jesus when you want some money, He will send a fish along, and then you must catch hold of the fish, and open his mouth, and the money will tumble out. That's what Peter did. It's all in the Bible; it will tell you all about what Jesus does."

Angelo asked a few more questions, then ran back to his house with a light and happy heart.

"Of course Jesus will take care of me," he said. "I will tell Guardian all about it."

But he was not allowed to see the count again that day. The old man was not at all well, and Pierre was very anxious about him, as he would not hear of seeing a doctor. He was very depressed in spirits and kept bemoaning his poverty. Angelo's future weighed heavily upon him. "Rosina's boy left to the cruel world," he kept murmuring; "only Monsieur Capello to fall back upon. I shall have to send for him and break my promise to Rosina!"

The next day he felt better, and, though unable to leave his room, he sent for Angelo to come and sing to him. He made Pierre bring him his violin, and insisted upon accompanying the boy himself. Angelo did not like singing with the violin. He had a strange dislike—almost amounting to jealousy of the instrument—and would never try to play on it himself, though the count had offered to teach him.

"It is just another voice," he used to say. "I like to hear you make it sound, Guardian; it isn't playing, it is singing, and you make it sing better than I do!"

But now Angelo obediently sang song after song to





"Again and again did the sweet notes rise and fall."

[See page 89.]



the trembling, excited accompaniment of the count on his precious violin.

At last the old man stopped with a weary sigh.

"I am tired," he said. "Tired in body and spirit."

"I've made up a new kind of song," said Angelo eagerly. "I made it up in the garden before breakfast, and I got it from my new book. I found it all at once, and I thought you might like it."

"Sing it, then," said the Count listlessly.

"It's how Jesus got His name," said Angelo simply; "an angel said it was to be."

The count gave an angry start, but Angelo did not notice it. He opened his mouth, and again and again did the sweet notes rise and fall,—

"Thou shalt call His name,  
Thou shalt call His name,  
Shalt call His name Jesus, for  
He shall save His people from their sins."

The boy seemed never tired of repeating them. Exultantly, softly, emphatically, tenderly, and then hushed almost to a whisper they died away,—

"Shall save His people from their sins."

There was such a long silence afterwards that Angelo looked up anxiously into his guardian's face.

"Don't you like it?"

"What book have you got hold of?"

"It's called the Bible. It is full of stories. I bought it with the money you gave me."

The count uttered a fierce ejaculation in Italian. Then he seemed to try to control himself, for Angelo was looking frightened.

"That is not a book for little boys. Bring it here."

Angelo left the room with a bewildered face. He brought his treasure, and placed it on the count's knee with mingled feelings of importance and dismay.

"I shall understand it, Guardian," he said, with a

wise little nod, "for Brownie does, and she has told me a lot of things out of it."

"Leave me," the count said sharply. "If I had wanted you to have a Bible, I should have given you one before this."

"Are you going to take it away from me?" asked Angelo piteously.

The count made no answer, but pointed to the door, and Angelo crept away in bitter disappointment at the loss of his book.

Some days passed, and the boy did not see his guardian. Then one afternoon Pierre came to him.

"The count, he want you badly, Master Angelo; he very low to-day, and he feel, what do you call it? A trouble in his heart? Heart-aching, and *fatigué*. Cheer him, and tell him he get quite well again very quickly. I say three, four, five times every day the same, but he shake his head, and call me 'old fool.' That is English word I very much dislike. The count, he feel so bad, he tell me at last to fetch a doctor, and I fly; but you, Master Angelo, you sing brightly to him, and he will be better."

The count indeed had been having a bad time of it. He had more than once decided to send for Angelo, but he shrank from his songs. The words were still ringing in his ears, and would never leave him,—

"For He shall save His people from their sins.  
Thou shalt call His name Jesus,  
For He shall save His people from their sins!"

The scoffer was awakening to the fact, as he began to tread the valley of the shadow of death, that he was a sin-burdened man.

It was not a peaceful experience; his wasted past began to bring bitter remorse, his unknown future dark forebodings.

And through it all the sweet notes sounded—

"He shall save His people from their sins."

Angelo came in brightly. He had bravely got over his disappointment about his Bible.

"Dear Guardian, I hope you're better. You're going to get well very soon, Pierre says."

The count shook his head impatiently, then held out his hand to the boy.

"Come here. I have fears for you, my child. Your future is so uncertain. I have not been prudent. Ah, no, I have been wrong from beginning to end, and my heart is heavy. Who will be to you a protector and friend when I am gone? You will be a homeless orphan, deserted and alone!"

"Oh, no, Guardian! Let me tell you! I have been unhappy, too; but I am not unhappy now. I hope you won't go away from me. I love you. But I have found some one who is going to take care of me, and give me money and food, and everything I want. I have asked Him about it, and I know He will."

"Whom have you been telling your story to?" asked the old man, with an angry flash in his eyes.

"To Jesus," said Angelo softly and reverently. "He is going to live with me. I have asked Him. He will give me all I want. I've got Him as a Friend already. And He loves me, and He makes me glad, like the hymn says. May I sing to you about it?"

The count was so taken aback that he said nothing. Then Angelo sang again, and as he sang the old man felt his eyes get moist with feeling. Why did such simple, childish words touch him so?—

"If I come to Jesus  
He will make me glad,  
He will give me pleasure  
When my heart is sad.  
If I come to Jesus  
Happy I shall be;  
He is gently calling  
Little ones like me.

## BROWNIE

If I come to Jesus  
 He will hear my prayer,  
 He will love me dearly,  
 He my sins will bear.  
 If I come to Jesus, etc.

If I come to Jesus  
 He will take my hand,  
 He will kindly lead me  
 To a better land."

"Stop, boy, stop. I can hear no more!" interrupted the count.

Angelo stood still and waited. A silence fell.

"Does my singing make you feel better, Guardian?" asked Angelo, presently.

The count stretched out his hand feebly to him.

"You're a good little lad. I will see the—  
 the minister here to-morrow. He will advise. Go now, my  
 child, and send Pierre quickly."

Angelo went, and as Pierre was out, Ninette went up to her master.

She came down a little later, looking anxious.

"He will die! He has it in his face! I see the sign, and he will not—no, he will not get into the bed. He sends me away; he will be alone. Oh, Pierre, why come you not?"

Pierre came with the doctor an hour after. They entered the count's room, and found him in his easy chair with a book upon his knee. His grey head had fallen forward, but his fingers were touching the verse,—

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

The count had been called away from earth, but the last sight his dim eyes saw in this world was the grand central truth of the glorious Old Book before him,—

"He shall save His people from their sins."

## CHAPTER X

### A "Little Elijah!"

"**B**ROWNIE, when did you see your little foreign friend last? Hester tells me the old gentleman he lives with is dead."

Mrs. Eustace was giving her children their breakfast when she spoke.

Brownie looked up with big eyes at once.

"I haven't seen him for several days, mother. But he told me the count was going to die. Poor Angel!"

"Poor little fellow!" echoed Mrs. Eustace. "Has he any relations, Brownie? Did he tell you anything about his family?"

"He has no family, mother; he was very sad, because he said he would have no guardian, no one to look after him: but he knows better now."

"What does he know?"

"Oh, he knows Jesus will look after him, won't he, mother?"

"And Jesus will send him some dinner by the ravens!" exclaimed Buffy delightedly; "that's what Brownie told him."

Mrs. Eustace made no answer.

Brownie continued,—

"Angel will have no servants, and no money, and no house. And God will have to do everything for him. I wonder where he will sleep?"

Mrs. Eustace changed the subject. She appeared to

be ill at ease that morning, and suddenly, in the middle of the lessons, she shut the books up and got up from her seat.

“Run out into the garden, children, and stay there. We will do no more lessons this morning. I am going out.”

Brownie and Buffy were too delighted with this unexpected holiday to ask any questions, and Mrs. Eustace hastened up the road in the direction of “The Hermitage.”

She came back in time for early dinner, leading Angelo by the hand. He looked white and frightened, and was very silent. When Brownie saw him she put her little arms round his neck and kissed him, and then Angelo burst into tears.

“He is going to stay with us for a few days, till things are settled,” said Mrs. Eustace. “Don’t be frightened, my boy ; we will look after you.”

After dinner Mrs. Eustace went out to the kitchen to her faithful servant, Hester.

“Well, Hester, what do you think of him ?”

“I’m hoping it will not be for long,” said Hester, with a furtive glance at her mistress. “It will be another mouth to feed.”

“Oh, no,” said Mrs. Eustace quickly and a little nervously. “But what could I do, Hester ? I thought I must go to the house and enquire for him ! He is such a little child to be left alone at such a time, and he and Miss Brownie seem to have been arranging such plans for his future. I saw a nice young Frenchwoman, and the vicar and doctor were both there. But the count seems to have died so suddenly that everything is in confusion. The Frenchwoman and her husband cannot take care of the child, they say. They are returning to France almost directly. Mr. Gaywörthy will do something, I suppose, but till after the funeral I



have promised to keep him with me. I could do no less, Hester, could I?"

Hester shook her head doubtfully.

"'Tis to be hoped his friends will turn up before the funeral," she said. "I'll do my best for him, ma'am, up to that!"

Mrs. Eustace gave a sigh of relief, and then she went back to her writing.

Angelo accepted his present position very quietly. He asked no questions, and Brownie and Buffy were too happy with their new playmate to have any speculations about his future. Mrs. Eustace watched Angelo with keen eyes, but she could detect nothing in his manner or conversation that made her fear for her children; and the little fellow's quiet, unassuming sadness touched her to the heart.

When the funeral was over Mr. Gayworthy came to see her.

"It is a very difficult case," he said. "There seems to be no will. I have written to the relative who appears to have supplied him with money, and we must wait till we hear from her. The only thing that the count has left is this memorandum. I should like to read it to you:—

"I write this, knowing my strength is failing, and soon Angelo will be left without a guardian. His childish faith in an Almighty Guardian will surely be rewarded. I promised his mother he should never appear on the stage in public. If Monsieur Capello offers to take him, he must do so only on condition that this promise will be kept.

'ALPHONSE MATALIO.'

"Who is this Monsieur Capello?" asked Mrs. Eustace. "Has he been written to?"

"No, for no one knows his address. The French

maid told me that the little boy lives in dread of him. He inspires him with terror. She begged me with tears in her eyes not to hand him over to his tender mercies. But what is one to do? There is the workhouse or an orphanage; that is the only fate for him."

Mrs. Eustace looked troubled.

"He is such a delicate little fellow, and he has a most wonderful voice."

"Can I see him?" asked Mr. Gayworthy. "He may be able to tell us something about his guardian's affairs."

Angelo was called in from the garden. The good vicar looked at his frail little figure and sensitive face with grave doubts as to whether an orphanage would be a wholesome atmosphere for him.

"Now, my boy," he said cheerfully, "can you tell us whether your 'guardian,' as you call him, had any plans for you? Have you no friends that would take you to live with them?"

"No," said Angelo gravely. "Guardian told me I would be without a friend in the world when he died."

There was silence.

Mr. Gayworthy shook his head.

"We don't know what is to become of you," he said perplexedly.

Angelo looked up with a quiet little smile.

"You needn't mind," he said. "When Mrs. Eustace doesn't want me here any more it will be all right. I've got another Guardian now, and He is going to live with me, and take care of me."

"Who is that?"

"The Lord Jesus," responded the boy with cheerful assurance.

Mr. Gayworthy looked across at Mrs. Eustace.

"Where will you live?" he asked. "When Mrs. Eustace has had enough of you, where will you go?"

Your guardian's house will be empty. It is going to be sold to another tenant."

Mrs. Eustace was about to speak, when the old vicar put up his hand to stop her.

Angelo looked doubtful for a moment.

"I think I will live in the wood, and sleep in that little ruined room in the tower. I shan't feel alone, you see—at least, I hope I shan't. Brownie and I have been reading about Elijah again to-day. He sat by a little brook, and God sent his dinners to him. He will be sure to do the same to me, won't He?"

The vicar murmured under his breath, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

But Mrs. Eustace rose to her feet impulsively.

"I remember Elijah's story," she said; "and I also remember that he was sent to a widow woman whom God commanded to sustain him. My little Elijah has been brought to the widow woman's house, and if her cruse of oil is nearly failing, she will not turn him out, for the never-changing God will still provide."

She drew Angelo into her arms and kissed him.

"You are going to be one of my little children now. Run out and tell Brownie and Buffy that this will be your home."

"My dear Mrs. Eustace," said the Vicar, "you shame me! But my wife and I are old, and we do not understand young folks. But still, if we can help towards his——"

"No, no, Mr. Gayworthy. It must be all or nothing. Thank you very, very much, though, all the same. I have been thinking about it for some days. He is such a little fellow, and my children are so fond of him, that I am sure I shall not regret this step."

"It will be a great relief to all of us. And of course some one may yet come upon the scene and provide for him."

So Angelo's future was settled, and the only person who seemed averse to it was Hester. But even she, after a week or so, admitted to her mistress that the boy gave wonderfully little trouble, and "didn't eat much more than a fly."

Angelo himself was very happy. He did not forget his guardian, and at times longed to be back in the quaint old parlour, singing to the erratic and excited music of the old man.

He sang and played in Mrs. Eustace's little room sometimes, and she taught him some fresh songs, and attempted one or two anthems with him ; but though she was a skilful musician, she was not a genius, and Angelo was conscious of the difference.

One afternoon, about three weeks after the count's death, Mrs. Eustace was quietly writing in her room, when the door burst open and Angelo rushed in with a terror-stricken face. "Oh, save me! save me!" he cried. "Monsieur Capello is outside the door. He has come to take me away. Don't let me go!"

The next minute, a tall, dark man was ushered into the room by Hester.

Mrs. Eustace rose to receive him, holding Angelo's trembling little hand.

He bowed and smiled, but it was not difficult to fathom the reason for Angelo's fear. His face was a peculiarly crafty and sinister one, and his smile, instead of softening his expression, hardened it.

"Madam," he commenced, "I am overwhelmed with gratitude and thanks to you for the love and care you have rendered to my little friend. I have hastened my steps thither, since I heard the sad tidings of my dear old companion's death. He has gone, and I have only his legacy left me to comfort my troubled heart. Come, little one, and embrace me. Have you so soon transferred your affection to strangers?"

Angelo clasped Mrs. Eustace's hand the tighter. Then, before she could speak, he threw up his little head with a quick, proud gesture.

"I do not love you, Monsieur Capello," he said defiantly, though his whole body was quivering with agitation. "This is my home; I told Guardian I did not want to go away with you."

Monsieur Capello did not appear disconcerted by this reception. He turned to Mrs. Eustace.

"I have seen the good pastor. He directed me here. He showed me my dear friend's written wish. He was over-sensitive, and led a recluse's life. The public to him were roaring lions, seeking to tear in pieces and devour all who ministered to their recreation, their amusement. The stage was a black pit, swallowing alive the ones who set their feet upon it. We who know the world can afford to smile. But I must pass my word before I take the boy, is it not so? Ah well, and I have done it. And many fervent and grateful thanks must I give you, dear madam, for your goodness of heart to the little bereaved one. It is with difficulty I tore myself away from my duties. I return quickly—to-night. Can I beg the favour of his clothes to be packed? and we will go to take the train that leaves the station here at five o'clock."

Mrs. Eustace gathered all her strength and dignity together for the coming conflict. Her young hot blood resented the cool indifference of the stranger to poor Angelo's feelings.

"I am sorry, sir," she said, "that you should have troubled about Angelo's future. I know that it troubled his guardian much. His great anxiety was to find a true home for him, but that wish has been fulfilled. I have given him a home, and Angelo is now in my charge. I intend to bring him up as his guardian would have wished. He has no claim upon you, as I understand you are not a relative."

“He certainly has no claim on you, madam, an Englishwoman! Ah, it is enough to make my good friend turn in his grave to think his little one is in the keeping of a stranger who has taken him from pity’s sake, is it not so? I must take the boy, madam, out of love to my old friend, and quickly, please!”

“No, sir; you will not take him. You inspire him with terror and dread, and I will not allow him to leave me.”

Monsieur Capello gazed at this intrepid young woman in amazement, then lost his temper and broke forth in voluble Italian,—

“These cold-blooded Englishwomen with their bold obstinacy. Who would have thought that I should have had trouble in getting this little singer away? But he is mine, he shall be mine; and I have almost made arrangements for his appearance in Vienna. He will make my fortune with his voice, and he shall not escape me!”

This was ejaculated fiercely to himself; but he was still more amazed when Mrs. Eustace addressed him in his own language.

“You have betrayed yourself, sir. I understand Italian, and it is only what we feared. You have no love for this child; you desire to use him as a tool towards your support. His guardian’s one fear was that you should make him appear in public, and nothing shall induce me to give him up to you now.”

Monsieur Capello stormed away, but Mrs. Eustace never wavered in her decision; and at last he left the house, declaring he would have the law on his side, and return very soon again to claim his right.

Angelo still clung to his protector.

“You will never let me go to him, will you?” he pleaded.

“Never, dear,” was the firm reply.

And Angelo rejoined his little playmates comforted.

## CHAPTER XI

### “The Cruse of Oil Failing”

“**B**ROWNIE! Where are you?”  
“Oh, don’t bother, Buffy! Angel and me are making up a beautiful story. I am going to write books like mother does one day. You must play by yourself.”

“I’m tired of playing alone. I’ll come and make up a story too. I can tell lovely ones.”

Buffy trotted towards his sister, who was lying by a little stream that ran through their favourite wood.

Angelo and Brownie were fast friends, but Buffy sometimes felt a little neglected. His sister was apt to be impatient with him.

“Oh, you are so stupid, Buffy! Can’t you understand like Angelo does?”

And Buffy would reply stolidly,—

“I does understand quite properly. You’re cross, that’s what you are!”

As he approached the little daydreamers now, they were entirely engrossed in their flights of imagination. Angelo was lying on his back in the grass, thoughtfully chewing some long stalks in his mouth, and Brownie, supporting her chin in her hands, was gazing across the stream for inspiration. This was the style of their story.

*Brownie.* “They wandered on hand in hand; it got darker and darker. They heard the crackling of horse’s

feet behind them, and they ran for their lives. They knew it was their enemy."

*Angelo.* "And the white dove flew on an oak tree, and they knew they must stop. The horseman came nearer and nearer, and what were they to do? The dove fluttered and called 'Coo! Coo! Come up, do!' So then they began to climb. Albert went first, but Hilda couldn't climb so fast."

*Brownie.* "Oh, yes, she could. She could really climb better than Albert, because he was fat, and she was thin. She climbed past Albert and sat on the same branch as the dove. Suddenly——"

"Bang! Bang!" shouted Buffy in her ear.

Brownie sprang to her feet indignant at the interruption. "Go away, you naughty boy! You're always spoiling everything!"

She gave him an angry push. Buffy's underlip drooped.

"Come and play 'Perils.' I want to be a robber on the top of the tower, like we played the other day. I shall play it by myself if you don't come!"

"We're not coming! Play by yourself!"

Buffy ran away. The story continued. Albert's and Hilda's adventures were most exciting; but at last the brains were tired, and the children got upon their feet.

"Where is Buffy?"

Brownie's conscience began to prick her now. She ran to the foot of the tower. Suddenly a scream made her look up. Adventurous Buffy was creeping round the edge of a wall, where even Brownie had never dared to go. A stone under his foot gave way. He screamed, then, with a crash and a dreadful thud, the child lost his balance, and fell to the ground. Brownie never forgot that moment all her life long. Her heart almost stopped beating. Angelo was the first to reach the unconscious



form ; he tried to lift him, but the little fellow seemed a dead weight. When Brownie crouched on her knees by his side, she saw from the way one of his legs was doubled under him how dreadfully he was hurt.

"Is he dead?" she gasped.

"I don't know," said Angelo. "He doesn't move or speak. What shall we do?"

"I've killed him!" said Brownie, bursting into terrified sobs. "It's my fault! I never looked after him. Oh, mother, mother, what will you say to me?"

"I will run to that cottage over there!" said Angelo. "Some one must carry him home."

He darted away, and Brownie sat still, looking at her unconscious brother with bitter sorrow and remorse.

"Oh, Buffy, forgive me! Oh, do open your eyes, and don't die! I have been cross, and unkind and selfish! I haven't been a proper guardian. But I will be better to you now, I promise I will. Oh, Buffy, do speak one word!"

But not a word came from Buffy's white lips.

And Brownie sobbed on in terrified distress.

An hour later Mrs. Eustace received her unconscious boy from the hands of a labourer. The doctor was sent for, and an anxious time followed.

Concussion of the brain and a broken leg was the verdict, but for days Buffy's little life hung by a thread. Not one word of reproach was given to Brownie. Her punishment already seemed greater than she could bear. She and Angelo wandered about with white faces and heavy hearts. Mrs. Eustace left her writing, and nursed her boy day and night. He was a restless, excitable little patient. The limb had to be set in plaster of Paris, and the doctor watched the case anxiously.

But at length the happy day came when the worst was over, and the patient showed signs of recovery. It would be a long and tedious illness ; he would need the

greatest care, the doctor said, but he hoped that the leg would heal perfectly in time.

That brought comfort to poor Brownie.

"I made sure he would be a cripple," she confided to Angelo. "I thought he would always be on crutches!"

"But we asked God not to make him one," said Angelo.

"Yes. Do you think God has quite forgiven me by this time, Angel?"

"I think He has," Angelo responded gravely. "You see, I feel I was just as bad as you. When Buffy gets well, we will always do what he likes first, and then ourselves next."

"Yes, I will never speak crossly to him again!"

These were very good resolutions, but when Brownie was allowed to sit by her little brother's bedside, and relieve her mother for a short time, she began to find that she wanted all her strength to keep these resolutions. Buffy was irritable, restless, and cross. At first she found it easy to soothe and quiet him by gentle, loving words. But after a time he would not listen to her. "I want to get up! I want to go out!" was his one cry.

At last, one day, Brownie began to reason with him.

"I always thought little sick boys were good," she said to him. "You're not like a story-book boy at all."

"Don't want to be!" growled Buffy. "Want to get up."

"They lie in bed," said Brownie, calling to her mind a favourite hero of hers, "like this. 'His blue eyes were raised towards heaven, his fragile blue veined hands were clasped across his breast. His patience and sweetness through all his sufferings was a marvel to all who saw him.'"

"Nasty boy!" muttered Buffy.

"He wasn't. He was a dear little boy. Shall I read to you about him? He died and went to heaven."

“I shan’t die!” said Buffy stubbornly.

“I hope you won’t,” Brownie said, looking at his rough, tumbled head with some dissatisfaction. “We don’t want you to die, Buffy.”

“I shouldn’t die if you did want me to,” retorted Buffy. “You aren’t kind to me, like mother; I want mother!”

“Mother is writing. You mustn’t call her, Buffy. Poor mother says she hasn’t had time to do a lot of things she promised, and she has lost a lot of money!”

“Where has she lost it?”

“Oh, you don’t understand! She might have had some money if she had written more, and now she can’t!”

Buffy was silent a minute, and then he went back to his old cry,—

“I want to get up!”

“Perhaps the doctor will let you soon,” said Brownie, trying to cheer him. “And when you are quite well, Angel and I are going to let you always choose our games for us.”

“I want to play ‘Perils’ now,” said Buffy.

“Oh, Buffy, you can’t! I don’t like ‘Perils’ now. It was playing ‘Perils’ made you get up the tower, and fall and nearly kill yourself.”

“I’ll do it again d’reckly I go out!”

This style of conversation was difficult to maintain with perfect composure. Sometimes, but rarely, Buffy would have an angelic fit; but this was generally with his mother.

“Mother dear, let me lie my head on your shoulder. Tell me how ill I’ve been. Did I nearly go to heaven?”

“Very nearly, darling. Mother thought you were going to leave her one night.”

“Did you cry, mother?”

“Yes, I think I did, and I asked God to let my little boy stay with me longer if it was His will.”

"I suppose," said Buffy slowly, "that God was cur'ous to see me! Was He very disappointed, mother, when I didn't go to heaven?"

"God sees you just as well where you are as if you were in heaven," said Mrs. Eustace, trying to suppress a smile. "He wants you to be a good boy down here, and grow up to be a comfort to your mother."

"I would like to have gone to heaven," said Buffy reflectively, "just on a visit, mother. Wouldn't God let me come back to you if I wanted to?"

"I think you would have been so happy there that you would not have wanted to come back to us."

"Yes, I think I should like heaven. And I do love God, don't I, mother? And I'm going to be *such* a good boy when I get up!"

"Try to be good now, darling, without waiting for that time."

And Buffy assured his mother he would.

Just as he was really getting convalescent, Hester, who had been ailing in health for some time, collapsed, and had to go to bed. Poor Mrs. Eustace had her hands full. She never knew how much she leant upon Hester until she was set aside. It was not a dangerous illness, but a tedious one; and the doctor asked if she could not be sent to her friends. This Mrs. Eustace said was impossible. Hester had been with her ten years; she had come to her when first married, and had never left her. She had a brother in Canada, but no relatives in England, and Mrs. Eustace felt that she could not let her leave her roof. She managed to get a girl in from the village, but superintending household matters, nursing and keeping three children in order did not leave much margin for writing. She never needed money more than she did now, and the future looked dark indeed. Often did Mrs. Eustace wish that she had saved a small sum for sickness, but it had always seemed

impossible. Every penny that could be spared was set aside at once towards the settlement of her husband's debt, that weighed so heavily upon her. Buffy's illness had been an expensive one; and now the winter was coming on, with the extra firing and warm clothes for the children, Mrs. Eustace wondered how she would face it. She was not a good housekeeper, and the wastefulness and inexperience of her temporary servant, in a house where every penny had to be considered, made itself soon felt.

Late into the small hours of the night, she sat at her desk writing; but it was little wonder that her anxieties at home had an effect upon her style, and the crowning blow of all seemed to be when her latest production was returned to her from her publisher, saying that he could not, for the credit of her name, bring it before the public.

“My cruse of oil is indeed failing!” she said to herself despondently; and on her knees she again besought for the strength and courage she so much needed at this crisis of her affairs.

Meanwhile the children innocently played and talked, utterly unconscious of the strain on their mother's mind. Angelo had captured and trained a young jackdaw, which had fallen out of his nest in the tower, and this bird proved a never-ending pastime and interest to the three of them. Buffy was still unable to walk, and Mrs. Eustace often wished she could hire or buy an invalid chair for him, as he grew so tired of lying on his couch. The jackdaw, tied by the leg to his perch, was not more crippled than Buffy, but he made a pleasant diversion in the little boy's monotonous life, and the two were soon great friends.

Miss Bernard and her brother were abroad. The vicar and his wife were also away on their annual autumn holiday, and only the curate from the next

parish came over to take the Sunday services. Iris Monteith came occasionally to enquire after Buffy, and once or twice she brought him grapes ; but it had never entered her head that Mrs. Eustace was badly off, and she was the last one in whom the young widow would have confided.

One morning, Mrs. Eustace went to the village to do some shopping. She took Angelo with her, and was returning with a very light basket, and a still lighter purse, when Brownie came flying out to meet her.

“Oh, mother, quick ! quick ! something dreadful has happened ! Choocaw [the jackdaw] has been flying about your room. He hopped on your table, and took your silver pen in his mouth, and flew out into the garden with it. I don't know where he has gone, and I've been looking for him ever so long !”

“Everything seems going wrong !” sighed Mrs. Eustace ; and putting down her basket, she and Angelo joined in the search.

“His wings have grown so,” said Angelo. “I saw he was flying very high yesterday. Perhaps he has gone quite away.”

“He is on the common somewhere,” said Mrs. Eustace, looking over the stone wall. “I am afraid I shall never see my pen again !”

This was much more tragic to Brownie than to her mother, for she regarded that pen with the greatest veneration.

“How would mother ever be able to make money without the pen that did it ?”

She was worrying over it as she hunted amongst the bushes, and then suddenly Buffy shouted out excitedly from his couch,—

“There he is ! hiding behind the bucket near the well !”

Sure enough, his head on one side, Choocaw was watching the anxious seekers with great amusement in

his eye. When he saw he was discovered, he strutted forward, his head in the air, with the utmost impudence and assurance. But no pen was to be seen; the bucket was moved, and the well searched, but no sign of it was to be seen.

At last Mrs. Eustace went indoors, and the three children held consultation with one another about it.

“If I thought he had done it on purpose, I would punish him,” said Angelo seriously.

“Squaw-w!” went Choocaw contemptuously, looking up from a fat worm he was digging out of the ground.

“He is a wicked, wicked thief!” exclaimed Brownie angrily. “And if he doesn’t bring it back, we shall all be starved to death! Mother can’t make any money till she gets her pen.”

“You told me God could send money when it was wanted,” said Angelo thoughtfully.

“Ah,” said Brownie, “that’s only to very particular people like Peter and Elijah, and people who live alone. I think we ought to tie Choocaw up by the leg again.”

Choocaw gave a chuckle, then thought discretion was the best part of valour, so retired with great alacrity to a yellow gorse bush at the extreme end of the garden. Getting well underneath it, he put his head out and uttered again one of his derisive chuckles.

“He says, ‘Touch me if you dare!’” said Angelo, laughing. “We had better watch him very carefully, Brownie. I’m sure he knows what he has done with it, and he may go to find it again.”

When Mrs. Eustace remarked cheerfully at dinner that day,—

“We must have some bread and jam instead of pudding, children,” Brownie looked across at her sorrowfully.

“We shall never be able to have pudding again, shall we, mother? Not till Choocaw brings back your pen!”

## CHAPTER XII

### “Kidnapped”

THOSE were indeed anxious days. Mrs. Eustace often wondered afterwards how she had got through them. When rent-day came round, and she had paid the amount due, she went up to Hester's bedroom.

Hester was sitting up, fretting at her inability to work. She gazed up at her mistress when she entered, and noted how worn and tired she was looking.

“I am coming to tell my troubles to you, Hester,” Mrs. Eustace said, with an unsteady laugh. “Let me show you my purse. I have absolutely nothing more than five shillings left.”

“Till when, ma'am?”

“Till the end of next month. What am I to do?”

Hester considered. She was not a good hand at saving herself, and spent her wages as soon as she was paid them.

“Couldn't Miss Bernard——”

“She is away travelling with her brother on the Continent, and I have not their present address.”

“Your publisher, ma'am?”

“No, there is nothing due to me. He has returned my last book. I cannot ask him to advance me anything. I have been trying to write all this week, but my brain seems paralyzed. I cannot do it. I am wondering if I ought to have taken Master Angelo.



He is beginning to feel the cold, and wants a warm set of clothes. It is dreadful to be at one's last penny.”

“There's Miss Monteith,” suggested Hester.

Mrs. Eustace flushed up at once.

“I couldn't beg, Hester. What are you thinking of? No, you must just pray I may be given something to write. I am going to make another attempt this afternoon.”

Mrs. Eustace took Brownie into her confidence before she began to write.

“Now, girlie, I look to you to help me. I am going to lock myself into my room for fear of interruption. I want you to look after Buffy and Angelo, and help Jenny to get your tea. Go up and see Hester, and take her her tea after you have had yours; but whatever happens don't come to me. A great deal depends on my having a quiet afternoon. We are very, very poor just now. I tell you this so that you may understand; but, of course, you must not talk about it. I have not been able to write lately, and unless I do something to-day I shall have no money at all to go on with. Will you try and help me, darling?”

“Oh, yes, indeed I will, mother, and I won't let any one come near you! It is all because you have lost your pen, I know it is!”

Mrs. Eustace smiled, but said nothing; and, full of importance, Brownie joined the boys, who were in the back garden. The weather was getting chilly, but the children were never happy indoors, and they had warm wraps on. Angelo looked very quaint in a thick woollen shawl tied round his little body, but he was comfortable, and he did not mind it.

Brownie repeated her mother's conversation in an emphatic whisper to him.

“We are not to talk about it, but it's all Choocaw's fault. He has stolen mother's pen, and she can't write

properly without it; and whatever happens we are not to go near mother till she comes out of her room, for she won't be able to make any money at all if we do!"

Buffy was off his couch now, and, except for a slight limp, was nearly well again. He put his word in eagerly, catching a few words of this speech.

"So we'll have tea by ourselves, shan't we? And I'll have three lumps of sugar in my tea, because I haven't had sugar for three days; the basin is always empty now."

"You'll be a good boy, won't you, Buffy?"

"Yes, I promise I will."

They were all amusing themselves by a game of "touch-wood," when suddenly a low whistle startled them, and looking up, to Angelo's horror, he confronted Monsieur Capello. He was standing outside the low garden wall, on the common.

"Good-day, my little friend. Do not look so frightened. I will not eat you. Are you still happy here?"

For an instant Angelo thought of flying to Mrs. Eustace, and seeking her protection; then he remembered her words to Brownie, and he began to tremble.

Brownie looked up boldly.

"Angelo is very happy with us," she said.

"He does not look well," said Monsieur Capello, leaning over the wall, and gazing at the frightened boy. "He is not being fattened up at your home. I have come to say good-bye to him, before I go back to my country, and to make him a little present."

Angelo looked up in a puzzled sort of way.

Monsieur Capello smiled.

"Come, little singer, have you forgiven me for loving you so much that I desired to have you for my own? What would you like me to give you? Is not your

kind, dear, adopted mother here to-day? Can I see her?”

“No,” said Brownie stoutly; “she is locked in her room, and particularly busy; and no one is to disturb her.”

“That is a misfortune indeed. I have a little gift of money to make to her in return for what she has given little Angelo. Can you come to fetch it for her?”

“Oh, Angel,” whispered Brownie, “how kind of him! How glad mother will be!”

“Where is it?” asked Angelo, in a troubled tone.

“I was driving round to the front road,” said Monsieur Capello, “in a carriage that did bring me to this part, and I caught sight of you inside this garden, so I walked across this common. Do you see my carriage there? I have left my purse. Will you come and bring it back to the kind lady here with my best respects?”

“If Brownie comes with me, I will,” said Angelo. Monsieur Capello agreed to this; and, delighted at the thought of having such a present to give her mother, Brownie scrambled over the wall, Angelo following her. They had not far to go, for a road crossed the common very near, and, as Monsieur Capello said, his carriage was waiting there. He took hold of Angelo’s hand as they approached it, and then in less than a minute of time, before the boy could even cry or struggle, he lifted him in, sprang in himself, slammed the door, and away the carriage went, the driver lashing his whip, and driving furiously along, unheeding Brownie’s piercing cries.

The little girl, with the vague hope of saving him, ran after the carriage for some distance. But it soon left her far behind, and was lost to sight. Brownie retraced her steps home, sobbing bitterly. She wondered if she had been false to her trust again, whether it was her fault that poor little Angelo had been carried off. And

when she got back and rejoined Buffy, she startled him by her distress.

"Oh, what shall I do! I can't go to mother, and nobody will ever catch him. He has been taken away, and I expect that wicked man will kill him."

"Let's send a policeman after him," suggested Buffy, with big eyes.

"Come and tell Hester," said Brownie, trying to restrain her sobs.

They made their way up to Hester's sick room, and that worthy woman received their news with horror and indignation.

"The black villain! Whatever is to be done? Oh, was there ever such an unfortunate creature as me! Nothing can be done, as I sees! And 'tis no good runnin' to your mother, for she's but a poor weak woman, and hasn't even the law on her side, for she's no relative, and 'tis just a toss up between 'em which ought to have the boy! But if I was on my legs, I'd be off to the vicar. He could do something, bein' a man, surely!"

"Shall I go?" asked Brownie breathlessly.

"No; you'd best leave it be till your mother's told. The vicar would be wonderin' what she's doing, and she would be vexed she wasn't informed of it first."

"But it's dreadful!" exclaimed Brownie excitedly. "Poor Angel will die if he isn't treated kindly, and he looked a cruel, wicked man!"

When Mrs. Eustace came out of her room two hours later, with a packet ready for the post and a light in her eye, she was met by her little daughter outside her door with the bad news.

And, utterly unprepared as she was for such tidings, and unstrung by her frantic literary effort, she turned upon Brownie and spoke really sharply to her.

"Why didn't you come to me directly you saw that

man? You have no more sense than a baby! I left him in your charge, and you deliberately walk away with a stranger. It is quite hopeless my putting any responsibility on your shoulders. First Buffy comes to grief, and now it is Angelo. You think of nothing but your idle dreams and fancies, and neglect every duty that I give you."

And leaving Brownie with white face and quivering lip, Mrs. Eustace dashed upstairs to take counsel with Hester. She came down very soon in her walking things, and taking her parcel to the post, went straight on to the vicarage. The vicar had just returned from his holiday. He was troubled and dismayed at the news, but hardly knew what to do, and annoyed Mrs. Eustace by saying,—

"After all, my dear Mrs. Eustace, you have no claim upon him. This foreign gentleman is at least his own nationality. He will not be ill-treated; he will be provided for. We cannot trace him now. It will give you a lot of trouble if you put it into the hands of the police; and then if he is found, I doubt whether they would be able to take him away."

"But, Mr. Gayworthy, you do not know the child. His sweet, winning ways have endeared him to me. I know his little sensitive, highly-strung nature, and he has a horror of this man. I can't bear to think of him in his clutches. I promised him to keep him safely from Monsieur Capello, and I have broken my promise. Will you come with me to the police-station, and see what we can do? At all events, I must know where he has taken him. They must be able to trace them."

This Mr. Gayworthy willingly did. Telegrams were sent along the line, and before night came, Mrs. Eustace heard that Monsieur Capello had arrived in London with his little charge: but further than that they could not at present be traced.

Brownie meanwhile was supremely miserable. Never had her mother spoken so sharply to her before. She felt that she was the real culprit, and repeated to herself again and again her mother's hasty words, "First Buffy came to grief, and now it is Angelo."

Creeping up to one of the empty attics, Brownie cast herself down on the floor, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"It's no good my being a guardian!" she wailed. "I've nearly killed Buffy, and lost Angelo, and mother will never trust me again. I'm no good to anybody, and I wish I could die right off."

By-and-by her mother came up, and found her there, and when she saw the child's grief Mrs. Eustace realized how much she had taken it to heart. She took her in her arms and comforted her, telling her she had spoken hastily, and had not meant what she said. And Brownie dried her tears and smiled again, but her last words to her mother that night as she was receiving a "good-night" kiss were,—

"Mother, Angel will have a better guardian than me now. He will have God Himself, won't he?"

The village was greatly disturbed at Angelo's disappearance; and, as is often the case, from being a poor, little friendless orphan, he now became the centre of every one's thoughts and talk. Some said he had been a little foreign prince in disguise; some that he was heir to a large property; and all were convinced that there was a great mystery attached to his history. Otherwise, why should a distinguished-looking foreigner take the trouble to come all the way from his country to kidnap him? This argument seemed unanswerable. After the first shock, Hester approached her mistress upon the subject in very much the same spirit as Mr. Gayworthy:

"You cannot say you have a greater right to him, ma'am, than the foreign gentleman has. And maybe

'tis all for the best. The good God knew your difficulties of finding food and clothing for him, and has taken him away to ease your burden a little.”

But Mrs. Eustace would not be comforted. Her mother's heart felt for the gentle child, and she longed to shield him from life's hardships.

Brownie and Buffy missed their little playmate very much, Brownie especially. Morning and night they prayed for his return, and every day they would wonder whether they would hear anything of him.

But as days went by and no tidings came from him, their hopes grew fainter and fainter.

“I'm sure he'll run away when he can,” said Brownie to her little brother one day, when talking over it. “But he'll have such a long way to come that it will take him a long time.”

“I should come by train,” said Buffy.

“But it costs money to do that, and Angel will have no money. And he can't walk very far without getting tired. He can't walk half as far as I do.”

“He's having 'perils,' isn't he?” said Buffy again.

“Yes”; and Brownie's face lighted up. “‘In journeyings often’—that's Angel—‘in perils of robbers’—that's the wicked man—‘in perils in the city’—that's London, where Angel was taken. But how I should like him to be here telling us all about it.”

“Yes,” said Buffy reflectively; “but I think I like it best sometimes when Angel isn't here, because you talk to me much better now he's away.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### “All Choocaw’s Fault !”

IT was a great relief to Mrs. Eustace when Hester was once more downstairs again, attending to the housekeeping. She was worn out herself in the struggle to make both ends meet ; and her writing suffered in consequence. The children found their mother irritable, and hasty in speech, especially at lesson time ; and Hester at length spoke seriously to her mistress.

“You ought to go away for a little, ma’am. Your nerves are unstrung. We shall have you ill next, and then what shall we do ?”

She said this one morning when Mrs. Eustace had dismissed the children from their lessons, and had come into the kitchen, asking Hester to make her a cup of tea, as her head was aching so badly.

Then Mrs. Eustace sat down, and surprised her faithful servant by bursting into tears.

“I am so worried, Hester. I feel I have come to the end of my tether ; and my writing, that used to be such a pleasure to me, is now a heavy burden and a ceaseless grind, from which there is no escape.”

“You want change of air and scene,” said Hester, with arms akimbo, surveying her mistress with great pity. “You see, ma’am, you are run down. Master Buffy’s accident, the shock it was to you, and all the nursing that followed ; then my breakdown, and the extra strain



and work that fell on you ; and Master Angelo’s disappearance ; all has shaken you. Is there no chance of your taking a rest ? ”

Mrs. Eustace looked up ; then made an effort to control herself.

“ I have had a ‘ chance,’ Hester, as you call it ; but I don’t see how I can take it. Miss Bernard and her brother are most anxious I should join them in Italy for a week or two. They want me to go as their visitor, and—I tell you this in confidence, as you know the straits we are reduced to—Miss Bernard offers to pay my travelling expenses there and back. Her letter came yesterday. I suppose thinking about it has made me feel extra tired and cross. I cannot bear speaking harshly to the children, but they seem to try my patience so. I don’t know how it is.”

“ But, ma’am,” said Hester, brightening up, “ you surely won’t refuse such an offer ! It is just sent to you at the right time. Can’t you trust me to take care of the children till you come back ? ”

“ I have never left them yet,” said Mrs. Eustace a little wistfully. “ I have honestly tried not to let my writing interfere with my duties as a mother. You know what a horror I have of a mother neglecting her children.”

“ But,” said Hester, “ if you were to be ill, and we were all brought to starvation, wouldn’t you wish you could have prevented it ? ”

They talked on, and at length Mrs. Eustace yielded to Hester’s persuasions and wrote accepting Miss Bernard’s invitation.

When the children heard of it they were inconsolable ; but when Hester represented to them that their mother’s health depended on her going they tried to be content.

“ It is all Choocaw’s fault,” said Brownie sorrowfully, as she watched their jackdaw’s antics one afternoon from the dining-room window. She and Buffy were kept in-

doors, for they had slight colds, and they were talking in miserable tones of the coming parting.

"Why is it Choocaw?" asked Buffy.

"Because he has taken away mother's pen, and she can't write without it. If only we could find it, Buffy, perhaps mother wouldn't need to go away. I'm sure she would get quite well if we could find her pen again!"

"I think I know where it is," said Buffy suddenly.

"Where?"

"I believe Choocaw dropped it down the well. I saw him take a little stone in his mouth yesterday and drop it in the water with a splash, and then he gave a kind of laugh, with his head on one side, and then he flew away."

"How could we ever get it up?" said Brownie thoughtfully. "Could we empty the well of water and climb down, I wonder?"

"I expect we could. Do let us try."

Buffy's face got rosy with excitement at the thought of such a delightful plan, and Brownie resolved to put it into execution as soon as possible. They were not allowed out for several days, and then the last day before Mrs. Eustace went abroad, when she was busy packing and Hester was helping her, they were sent into the garden.

This was their opportunity. Orders about touching the buckets had been relaxed lately, for more than once Brownie had drawn up some water for her mother during Hester's illness. She set to work with a will, drawing water and emptying it upon the flower-beds; but soon her little hands and arms ached with the exertion, and the well seemed as full as ever. Choocaw was very excited. He perched on the buckets and hopped to the very edge of the well, looking down with a knowing chuckle. At last Brownie said,—

"Do you know, Buffy, I think if I got into the bucket

and went down I might be able to reach the bottom—if you handed me the garden rake I could.”

Buffy clapped his hands.

“May I come, too?”

“No; you will have to turn the handle to bring me up again.”

“It’s playing ‘perils,’” said Buffy.

“Yes,” assented his sister; “and if I handed you up the pen and was drowned afterwards, I would be a—hero!”

The adventurous little maiden seated herself in the bucket. With her weight in it the handle turned by itself, the rope began to run, and Brownie found herself going down the well faster than she liked. The water was a good distance down, and fortunately for the child there was a projection in the brick wall, on which the bucket caught. Its progress was stayed, and Brownie found herself close to the water. She was a little frightened now. The well was green and slimy and cold, the water dark, and peer down as she did there was no sign of the pen. Buffy handed her down the garden rake with difficulty, but Brownie soon saw the danger of her position. The bucket began to sway, she nearly overbalanced herself, and at last she cried out in real fright:

“Pull me up, Buffy; quick, quick, or I shall be drowned!”

Poor little Buffy! Panting, breathless, with his chest thrown out and his sturdy legs planted close together, he tried in vain to turn the handle.

“I can’t do it; you’re too heavy,” he gasped.

“Call Hester, quick, or I shall be dead!”

So Buffy’s frantic shouts brought both Mrs. Eustace and Hester upon the scene. In an instant Hester was at the handle, and Mrs. Eustace stood white and trembling by. She hardly believed her child could be brought up alive, and when she saw her standing at last safe on the

ground, a dishevelled, wet little figure, covered with green slime, she fainted dead away. Hester, finding Brownie unhurt, turned the vials of her wrath full upon her.

"You naughty, wicked child! you're for ever in some piece of mischief; and of all days to choose for such a scrape as this, you choose it when your mother is least able to bear it. Go straight up to bed, and stay there. You have nearly killed your mother."

Hester turned her attention to her mistress, and when she had recovered led her indoors.

"It is so stupid of me, Hester. Go and see after Miss Brownie; she is only just recovering from a cold. How could she do such a thing? I am all right now. Leave me, and see to her. It is enough to make her very ill."

Hester marched upstairs, and found Brownie shivering and sobbing in bed, the picture of misery. She brought her a hot drink, wrapped a blanket round her, but was too angry to listen to her explanation.

Buffy downstairs was trying to tell his mother about it.

"She was trying to find your pen, mother, she really was. We thought Choocaw had dropped it in. And she said it wouldn't matter if she was drowned dead if she found your pen. She didn't mean to be naughty. And," said Buffy, his eyes sparkling as he went on with his recital, "it really was a lovely 'peril'! I made it up—at least, I thought of the well—I did really, mother; and I wanted to go down, too, only Brownie wouldn't let me."

"Oh, you children!" sighed his mother. "How can I leave you? Sometimes Brownie is a little old woman, sometimes an imp of mischief."

She went up to her little girl soon and heard the story. Mrs. Eustace had more sympathy with her than had Hester. She knew it was Brownie's earnest and intense feeling about everything that led her into such scrapes. She had a woman's determination and a child's thought-

lessness ; the two combined often brought about such results as these.

She flung her arms round her mother’s neck impulsively.

“Oh, forgive me, mother ! I’ll never be naughty again ; don’t go away angry. I always mean to be good, and then everything turns out wicked, and I don’t know why. Do forgive me !”

“It makes me anxious leaving you,” said Mrs. Eustace, a little despondently. “You are not old enough to be left so much alone. If only I could afford a governess who would be always with you.”

“Oh, mother, please don’t afford it. I promise—I promise never to get into a scrape again the whole time you are away. I will try not to be like a child, I will really. I will take care of Buffy, and I won’t play any games till you come back. Do trust me. Don’t say you can’t leave us !”

She was comforted at last, and Mrs. Eustace went back to her packing, a little shaken by her fright.

However, the next morning she plucked up courage, kissed her children, told Hester to write her a line every day, and departed, leaving a very dejected and tearful household behind her.

For the first few days the children were in such low spirits that Hester almost wished they would get into mischief ; then gradually life assumed its usual cheery aspect to them, and their laughter and mirth returned. It was only at night that Brownie missed her mother so, and Hester would often take up her work and sit with her till she fell asleep. Mr. and Mrs. Gayworthy sometimes came to see how they were getting on, and once invited them to the vicarage to tea. They were very kind in their way, but they did not understand children, and fidgeted them by so many admonitions as to what they were to do, and what they were not, that Brownie said to Hester on their return home, with a tired sigh,—

"We haven't enjoyed ourselves much, Hester. Mrs. Gayworthy confuses my head by telling me so many things to remember. We tried to do nothing when we were there, for everything else was wrong."

One afternoon she and Buffy were running along the road with their hoops when they met Iris Monteith. She was accompanied by an old gentleman, and she stopped to speak to them.

"These are little namesakes of yours, Sir George," she said. "Mrs. Eustace is one of my tenants, and is now abroad; she is the widow I was telling you about."

Sir George had white hair and very bushy eyebrows. He stopped and gazed hard at Buffy.

"A fine boy. How old is he?"

"Six," said Buffy stoutly; "and my clothes is getting smaller and smaller. Hester says I grow every day."

"Have you heard of your little Italian friend?" asked Iris.

Brownie answered sorrowfully,—

"No, but we're expecting to every day. But he will come back to us one day, I know he will."

"I should think your mother is thankful to be relieved of the charge of him."

"Mother loves Angel, and so do we," said Brownie, with flushed cheeks. "We want him back, and he wants to come."

"Little Spitfire!" laughed Iris. "I am always putting my foot into it with you. I don't think I should like to have the charge of you, or your brother. Run along!"

They passed on, but the next day, to the children's astonishment, the old gentleman knocked at the door and asked to see them.

"I am staying up at The Hall," he remarked to Hester. "I was introduced to your young people, and as I was passing by, I came in to see them."

Hester showed him into the dining-room, where the

children were playing with the jackdaw. "I suppose," she said to herself, "he is one of that sort that takes to children. Well, they'll be sure to take to him, for they don't know what shyness is."

And, to judge from the chattering of the little tongues, Hester was right in her conjecture. Sir George did not do much talking. He sat down and asked a few questions, but he was a good listener, and Brownie and Buffy were soon telling him all about Angelo, "Mother's wonderful pen," and the iniquity of Choochow.

"You see," said Brownie gravely, "it is so dreadful, because we can't punish him, and he is not a bit sorry. You can't punish a bird, can you? You can beat a cat or a dog, but you can't beat a bird, because they're so slippery. Choochow knows it was wrong to steal it, and I believe he knows where it is. Isn't it dreadfully naughty of him?"

"And Brownie got down the well in a bucket," put in Buffy eagerly, "and I couldn't pull her up again."

"Hester got me out," added Brownie. "I thought I might find the pen somewhere at the bottom. We shall never be rich till we find it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because mother told me it made the money she gets. I don't quite understand, but I know we've been dreadfully poor lately; for I was going to have a nice new jacket this winter, but mother said she couldn't buy me one, and Buffy had to stay home from church two Sundays because he hadn't got any boots."

Sir George looked round the room, and then at the children.

"Is this your only sitting-room?"

"No, there's mother's room," said Brownie; "but we don't go in it if she isn't here. Would you like to see it? It's a very pretty room."

She led the way proudly, and the old man followed her.

Brownie acted as show-woman, and pointed him out various articles and ornaments that she and Buffy admired. He looked at them all, but was most engrossed in a cabinet photograph in the centre of the mantelpiece.

"That's father and mother and me," explained Brownie, "and Buffy is the baby. Mother doesn't look like that now. She wears a white cap."

"Where's your father?" asked Sir George gruffly.

"In heaven," answered Buffy promptly. "We never saw him except in his picture. Mother looks sad when we talk about him, but I'm not sad. It's very nice in heaven, mother says so; and I nearly went there when I broke my leg. Mother says she's glad I didn't, but when I grow up a man I shall go. Only I'm going to buy a beautiful house for her first, and she will lie on a sofa all day and eat grapes and buns, and won't have to write and write all day, like she does now."

"And where will you get your money from to buy the house?" asked Sir George, looking down curiously at the little fellow.

Buffy looked round helplessly at Brownie.

"I expect it will come," he said.

"Oh, Buffy, of course it won't come, unless you work for it."

"Yes, I shall work," said Buffy, with a relieved face. "I shall be an engine-driver or a blacksmith. I think I should like to be a blacksmith, because he has such lovely red-hot pokers, and he can hammer as loud as he likes without anybody telling him to 'hush!'"

"Listen to me, boy," said Sir George sternly, "and remember this all your life! Easy living is brought by honest work. There are some who spend what others have earned, and those are disgraces to humanity! Good-day." The old man patted Buffy's head and marched out of the house. The children looked after him and wondered.



## CHAPTER XIV

“It is You at Last!”

AFTER this, Sir George would be continually meeting the children out and talking to them. Brownie and Buffy began to look upon him as an intimate friend. Their childish confidences were freely made to him, and if he did not always respond with warmth, he never laughed at them or scorned them.

One afternoon he came into the cottage to say good-bye.

“I am going away to-morrow,” he said.

“And will you never come back? Does Miss Monteith belong to you?” asked Brownie.

“I am her guardian.”

Brownie beamed all over.

“I am Buffy’s guardian,” she said; “mother tells me I am. I like to know you’re one too. Nora is a guardian to five little brothers and sisters; that’s awfully difficult, isn’t it? And Angel had a guardian, but he died; and then he had God for his guardian for a little time; and then mother was his guardian; and now he’s got no proper one.”

“Except God,” put in Buffy. “He’s got Him again.”

“Yes,” assented Brownie thoughtfully, “I suppose he has.”

“Have you got a guardian?” asked Buffy, taking hold of Sir George’s coat—a little trick of his when he was interested.

"No," said Sir George. "I am my own guardian."

"Grown-up people don't want guardians," said Brownie; "it's only children who can't take care of themselves. Fancy, if mother had any one to take care of her! Wouldn't it be funny?"

Sir George was talking to them in their mother's room. He now took an envelope out of his pocket and stepped across to their mother's writing-table. He opened a small drawer, and laid the envelope in it.

"When your mother comes home, you show her where I have put that," he said to Brownie.

"Is it a letter for her?"

"Yes."

"And shall we never see you again?" asked Brownie.

"Not unless," said Sir George, stopping short in the middle of the room, "you would like to come to my house and see me."

"But you live far away, and are going by train," objected Brownie.

Sir George sat down on a chair, and drew Buffy to him. His eyes seemed to sparkle under his bushy eyebrows.

"Would you like to come home with me now?" he said, putting his hand under Buffy's chin and turning his face up towards him.

Buffy's eyes grew round, then he uttered an emphatic "yes."

Sir George smiled.

"We will ask your nurse, and see if she can pack up your things; and I will bring you home again before your mother returns. I have a pony you could ride and a nice big dog."

But Brownie stepped forward like a little turkey-cock.

"I'll never let you take Buffy away!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Angel was stolen, but Buffy shan't be! You aren't a robber, are you? Oh, Buffy, how can you say you would like to go!"

“I would!” said Buffy sturdily, taking hold again of Sir George’s coat and looking him straight in the face. “I like you, and I’m tired of being here without mother. Take me away in your carriage like Angel was taken. It will be like ‘Perils.’ I shall like being taken by a robber!”

Sir George smiled again, and looked at Brownie.

“I could take him if I wanted to,” he said. “You couldn’t stop me.”

“Oh, I will! I will!” cried Brownie, getting quite excited; “and Hester would stop you. She wouldn’t let him go! He’s such a little boy, he doesn’t know what he is saying. You would have to kill me before you took him. I would never let him go!”

“Shall I try?” said the old gentleman.

Brownie immediately set up a shrill scream for Hester, and when that worthy appeared she found Buffy trying to extricate himself from his sister’s tight grip, while Sir George sat by as if enjoying the scene.

He turned to Hester with a twinkle in his eye.

“I am offering to relieve you of one of your charges,” he said. “He says he would like to come. His sister mustn’t be allowed to keep him back. What do you say?”

Hester smiled.

“We can’t spare him, sir. Now, Miss Brownie, don’t you see the gentleman is in fun? We’ve had one kid-napped, sir, so you mustn’t try her nerves too much.”

“Ah, well,” said Sir George, rising, “I will come back one day and claim him. Then he must come!”

“I promise I will!” shouted Buffy.

Brownie’s eyes were full of tears. Sir George looked at her, then stooped and kissed her.

“You are a brave little woman,” he said, his voice softening into tenderness. “You will be your mother over again!”

And then he went, and Hester went back to the

kitchen pondering over his words. Was he such a stranger after all as he pretended to be?

It was some time before Brownie got over the fright that Sir George had given her. She watched over Buffy with a lynx eye and anxious heart, and they never saw a strange carriage or fly drive along the road without her half expecting to see Sir George alight and attempt to carry off her brother.

Buffy himself delighted to dwell on such a possibility. He began to think himself of some importance, and would often threaten his sister.

"If you aren't very nice to me I shall go away with the old gentleman, and ride on his pony. I like him, and he likes me. He won't be cross to me, like you are."

One day Hester told them she would give them a treat if they were very good children. She was obliged to go into the neighbouring town to do some shopping, and she would take them with her. Daltoncaster was a cathedral town about nine miles away. Occasionally Mrs. Eustace or Hester went in by train to obtain what was necessary for the little household, but the children had never gone, and they were delighted at the prospect, especially when they knew that they were going for the day.

"We haven't seen proper shops since we were in London," said Brownie. "May I spend my three pennies, Hester? I've been saving them up for a long time. Because there is nothing very nice to buy here except sweets."

"What will you get?" asked Buffy with great interest. He could never save. He had given up trying. As sure as he had a penny given him, so surely would Mrs. Pratt see him arrive at her shop. "I want as many sweets as you can give me, please, for a penny!"

"I will get a present for mother," said Brownie promptly.

Buffy looked a little bit disappointed, then brightened up.

"I will help you to choose it, and we'll get it at a toy shop, won't we?"

It was a cold, bright morning when they started. Hester locked up the house and shut up Choocaw in the back kitchen, to his great discomfiture and rage. The children took leave of him as if they were going away for a month.

"He will feel very lonely," said Brownie sympathetically. "I hope he won't be frightened."

"He is frightened of nobody," said Hester indifferently. "Birds don't feel like human creatures!"

"But they feel like birds," said Brownie softly. "If a cat came down the chimney what would he do?"

"There are no cats near, thank goodness," was Hester's short reply, "and I would back Choocaw against any cat. He has impudence enough for a dozen of his size!"

The walk to the station was delightful, and the train even more so. It was a happy little couple that followed Hester down the High Street of the quiet old town.

"What a lot of people, and there's an organ-grinder!" exclaimed Buffy. "Oh, I wish we lived where we could see people out of the windows. We don't see nothing out of the dining-room but the poplars. I wish we lived here."

"I don't," said Brownie; "we should never be able to go in the wood and pick so many flowers."

"We never go to the wood now; it's so muddy," grumbled Buffy, "and the summer is all gone."

"But it will come back again," argued Brownie.

"It might forget to come," Buffy went on stubbornly.

"Oh, Buffy! God sends it. He never forgets nothing."

"He'll be too busy, and the winter will stay on and on for ever; I know it will; and we shan't see no Christ-

mas shops like London. And I don't like our cottage a bit."

Happily Buffy's discontent soon wore away in the excitement of accompanying Hester into the shops, and when, a little later, she gave him a penny to spend for himself, he was quite his merry self again. Brownie bought a marvellous shell pincushion with a picture of the cathedral on, which was "dirt cheap," the shopwoman assured her, but was a "reduction." And Buffy, with real self-denial, invested in a tiny china vase to put on "mother's" dressing-table when she came home. Then Hester took them to a confectioner's, and they each had a meat pie, a bun, and a glass of milk. After that excitement was over, she said she would take them to see the cathedral, for she had just half an hour to spare.

It lay back from the town with its quiet cloisters, and green turf surrounding it, bringing an atmosphere of rest to all the weary passers-by. Brownie gazed up the lofty walls and spacious aisles with wonder and awe. She said little as she wandered through it, Hester pointing out the coloured windows and quaint old monuments as they went, but her thoughts were busy. She felt she would be rather frightened of coming to church here. God felt so far away. Why was it so big and high? Would heaven be like it? Would the "great white throne" be up at the top under that beautiful window, and the angels with their harps in rows and rows on each side? Then where would she be? Right down at the bottom, perhaps, just inside the door; and then if God called her up to receive her crown, how could she walk up those long aisles with everybody looking at her? She could fancy her shoes making a clatter amidst the solemn hush that would surround her.

"I could never walk up," she said sorrowfully to herself; "I should be too frightened, unless Jesus came

and took me by the hand. If only I could be with mother! but she's so good that she would be up amongst the angels, and I should be far, far behind.”

With these childish thoughts, the cathedral did not comfort Brownie, and she was glad when they once more came out into the bright sunshine.

They were walking through a quiet square in order to reach the High Street again, when suddenly they heard some singing, and Brownie's heart almost stood still as the voice rang out,—

“Do not talk of nature bright,  
For I see my own delight,  
She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way!”

Hester stopped short with open mouth.

“That's Master Angelo, as I'm a living soul!”

She hurried towards the spot from whence the voice came.

A little crowd had collected at the corner of the square. The voice had ceased, but the Dean of Dalton-caster, a tall, broad-shouldered man, was pushing his way through the centre of the small gathering. Like lightning Brownie sped after him, regardless of the on-lookers, and the next moment had flung her arms round the shabby little figure, now being interrogated by the dean.

“Oh, Angel, Angel! it is you at last!”

Yes, it was Angel, looking whiter and frailer than ever, but standing up with that proud, free carriage of his, as if he were singing in a drawing-room to a cultured assembly, instead of to a crowd of street loafers.

When Hester came up she found Brownie and Angelo clinging to each other passionately, and the crowd pressing forward in anticipation of a scene.

“Does this boy belong to you?” asked the dean, turning to Hester.

"Yes, sir ; he's been lost to us for over a month or so."

"Then come into my house with me. I want to speak to him."

The dean, who hated publicity in any shape, hurried Hester and her charges into The Deanery, which was close by. They were not allowed any choice in the matter ; and only when they were all in the dean's study did Hester seem to regain her breath.

"Now," said the dean, looking at Angelo, "were you singing in this square last night, just at dusk ?"

"Yes," said Angelo quietly.

"Could you sing again what you were singing then ?"

"I sang three or four songs."

"It was 'As pants the hart.'"

Angelo commenced it at once. It was one of the anthems that Mrs. Eustace had taught him.

The dean sat back in his chair and shaded his face with his hand as he listened.

"Thank you," he said briefly, when he had finished. "I should like your name and address, if you will favour me with them."

Then Hester rose to her feet with extreme dignity.

"If you please, sir, Master Angelo is not a public singer. My mistress would be quite shocked to hear him in the streets. I can't understand it, but he was taken away from us by an evil man, and I suppose he has put him up to it."

"No, Hester," said Angelo, flushing as he spoke. "I haven't been with Monsieur Capello for a long, long time. He got ill in London, and I ran away from him, and I've been singing to get money. I'll tell you all about it."

"Whatever you have been doing, you have been given a wonderful voice, which could be cultivated for God's honour," said the dean. "Now will you give me your name ?"



Angelo gave it, with Mrs. Eustace's address ; then the dean rang the bell, ordered some coffee and cake to be brought in ; and even Hester was mollified by his courteous interest in Angelo's past history.

“I know your vicar, Mr. Gayworthy,” he said. “I hope we shall meet again.”

Hester could hardly control the excited children on their return home. She was honestly glad to see Angelo, but at the same time she realized the extra expense he would be to her mistress.

It was not till after they had reached home, and she had given the children their tea, that she was able to get a coherent account from Angelo of his kidnapping. She made him sit down before her, and begin from the time he had been taken off in the carriage ; and Brownie and Buffy listened to the story with breathless interest, Brownie murmuring under her breath,—

“It's much better than stories in books !”

## CHAPTER XV

### “ Mother’s Pen is Found ! ”

“ I DON’T quite remember what I did,” said Angelo, “ when I was taken into the carriage. I screamed and struggled, and begged to be put down, but Monsieur Capello hurt my wrists and frightened me. He said I was in his power, and if I dared to utter a word more, he would gag my mouth. I didn’t know what that was, but I supposed he meant to suffocate me. So I stopped crying, and we drove to the station, and I couldn’t get away, for he never let go my hand, and it was quite red and sore all the next day ! It seemed quite late at night when we got to London ; it was dark, and all the lamps were lighted. We went to a very big house—an hotel, I think he said it was—and then we had some supper——”

“ What did you have ? ” asked Buffy.

“ I think I had some chicken and potato, and he made me drink some wine, which I didn’t like. It was hot to my head, and I got very sleepy. Then I went up to a big room where a little bed was in the corner, and I don’t remember anything more. I went fast asleep.”

“ And the next morning ? ” questioned Hester.

“ I was awake early, and Monsieur Capello was snoring in the big bed. I felt very unhappy, but I said my prayers, and I asked Jesus to be my guardian and keep me safe, for I didn’t want Monsieur Capello to be

my guardian. I told Jesus that. And then at last a man came into the room—‘Antonio,’ his name was—and he helped me to dress, and then he took me downstairs with him; and soon Monsieur Capello came down, and we had breakfast. After breakfast we went out to some shops, and Monsieur Capello got me a warm coat and another hat; and then he took me to see a friend of his. He called him a professor, and he made me sing to him. I sang quite a lot of songs to him, but I didn’t understand all they talked about, because they spoke Italian. Then we came back to the hotel. I forget quite every day after that, but I was always going to the professor to sing, and he taught me some new songs, and once I went for a walk with Antonio into a park. And then one day it rained very hard, and Monsieur Capello came in from a long walk very tired and wet, and he went straight to bed; and the next morning he could hardly breathe. He gasped, and I ran for Antonio, and the doctor came, and Antonio said he was very ill, and I wasn’t allowed to go near him. Then I was very dull, and one morning I had nothing to do, so I went out of doors, and then, quite sudden, I thought I would run away and come home.”

“Oh,” said Brownie, with clasped hands, “how did you do it?”

“I had half a crown in my pocket that Monsieur Capello had given me, and I went to a big railway station near, and I asked for a ticket to Daltoncaster. I remembered the name, because I had often heard you talk of it, and Pierre had taken me there once. And then the man told me it would cost ten shillings; so I asked him how far half a crown would take me. And he told me; so I got a ticket, and a porter showed me the train. And when the train went off I felt rather frightened.”

“You’ve got a head on your shoulders,” said Hester admiringly.

"Well," continued Angelo, "when I got out it was a very small station in the country, and I didn't know what to do, and then I prayed to Jesus to show me what to do. I hadn't any more money, and I didn't know where to go, so I walked towards some cottages, and then I thought I would sing; for I'd seen a boy in London do it, and he got a lot of money. So I sang the hymn you taught me, Brownie; and some women came to the doors, and when I'd finished they all gave me six pennies, and one woman took me into her cottage and gave me some supper and let me sleep there, and asked me where I was going; and I told her, and she took me to the station the next morning, and gave me three more pennies, so I was able to take a ticket for ninepence, and I felt I was getting nearer to you every day."

Here Angelo put his hand to his head.

"I can't remember every day as it came; but everybody seemed kind, and one night I slept in the waiting-room at a station; and another night in a coal shed—that was very cold; and every day I sang in the streets, and got some pennies, and I tried to save them all for the train, but I had to spend some in buying things to eat, so I could only go very little journeys. Sometimes I only got one penny ticket, and one day I couldn't go by train at all, and another day a porter gave me two-pence, but I wouldn't take it until I had sung to him, for I said I wasn't a beggar. I think most of the porters were very kind, and one took me home to his wife, and she gave me a nice little bed to sleep in. I kept praying to God every day, and I quite felt as if Jesus walked along with me, and held me by the hand, like the hymn says."

"Of course He did," said Brownie fervently. "He was your guardian."

"And at last," said Angelo, with a tired sigh, "I had

enough money to get a ticket to Daltoncaster, and I got there yesterday morning. It seems such a long time ago. I sang three times yesterday, once quite late in the evening; but some one threw me a shilling out of a window, so I went to a shop, and asked where I could sleep, and I showed them how much money I had, and they told me to go to a funny little house where an old woman took in lodgers. She was very kind, but she took my shilling for my tea, and bed, and breakfast, and then I had to begin to sing again. And then I was singing for the second time when you found me. But if you hadn't found me," Angelo finished triumphantly, "I should have got home to-night, for I asked at the station, and it was only ninepence, and I had just got eightpence when you came up."

"Well," said Hester, amazed at the quiet assurance of Angelo's story, "I fancy the mistress will be astonished to see you. You're a cleverer boy than I took you to be. But I know folks is always good to singers and such like."

And when the children were all in bed Hester sat down to her laborious task of writing all about Angelo's return to her mistress.

Angelo's home-coming caused quite a sensation in the village. Mr. Gayworthy was the only one who shook his head over it.

"The foreigner will only come back for him again," he said to his wife. "Mrs. Eustace has no claim on him, as I keep telling her."

"Why do you not go up to London and see this Monsieur Capello?" suggested his wife. "He is ill now, and might listen to you. Angelo will give you the name of the hotel he is at. You could have a talk with him, and show him the count's written wish about the boy. You have that paper in your possession, have you not?"

"I am an old man, my dear. A journey to London is very fatiguing."

But in the end Mr. Gayworthy went, and came back with a grave face. He found that Monsieur Capello had died after a week's illness. Double pneumonia had set in, and carried him off, before he had had time to miss Angelo.

"It seems like a judgment," said Mrs. Gayworthy.

"The Lord's hand is in 'it," said Mr. Gayworthy reverently. "He is the protector of the fatherless. I fancy no other relatives or friends will come forward to dispute Mrs. Eustace's claim."

When Angelo heard of the death of Monsieur Capello he was awed, and a little uncomfortable.

"Perhaps it was unkind of me to run away from him when he was ill," he said to Brownie.

"But you could never have got away from him if he had been well," said Brownie.

"No," Angelo replied reflectively; "and he laughed at me when I told him my mother did not want me to sing on a stage. He rubbed his hands and he said, 'That is going to be your privilege, little Angelo; you shall be trained for it, and my wishes shall be your wishes henceforth.' I was very unhappy, but he was not cruel to me, and I don't like to think he is dead."

"We didn't make him dead," argued Brownie unfeelingly; "God did, and what God does is always quite right; mother says so, and I'm very glad he can't come here and run away with you any more. I've been expecting him to come every day, and now you're quite safe for ever."

There was great rejoicing when Mrs. Eustace wrote saying she was on her way home; and when the actual day of her return arrived, Hester's patience was sorely tried by the children's restlessness and excitability.

The last thing they did was to tie a piece of red ribbon round Choocaw's neck, which made him most indignant. He strutted up and down the gravel path,

pecking furiously at the obnoxious ornament, and when with a final wrench he removed it with his beak, he dashed it to the ground, and clawing it with one foot, looked at it with the utmost disgust. Angelo called him, but he would take no heed, and finally seizing it in his beak, he flew on to a low hawthorn bush, where he stood cocking his head on one side, and looking very knowing.

“I believe he is going to hide the ribbon somewhere, but he won’t do it while we are looking at him,” said Brownie. “Let us come indoors, and just peep through a crack in the door and see what he will do.”

So they crouched down behind the garden door, and sure enough, after a few minutes, with a great deal of inspection on either side, Chocaw flew down from his perch, and waddling along the ground with a few backward looks, he suddenly dived into the middle of the gorse bush at the bottom of the garden. He was very quiet there for some minutes, then flew out without the ribbon, and gave vent to his feelings by a triumphant chuckle.

Brownie watched him breathlessly, then seized hold of Angelo.

“I do believe, Angel, he may have hidden mother’s pen there; he is always going there. Come and look.”

They rushed out, and, regardless of sharp prickles, Brownie plunged valiantly into the furze bush. Her hand came in contact with something hard; it was an old tin. She dragged it out, and there the children found a strange assortment: bits of coloured glass, a tin soldier, an empty reel of cotton, the red ribbon, and, to their intense delight, at the very bottom of the tin, Mrs. Eustace’s silver pen. It looked very tarnished and dirty, but what did that matter? With scratched and bleeding hands Brownie tore in to Hester brandishing it aloft.

"Oh, Hester! Hester! mother's pen is found, and we shall never be poor any more."

Hester took it very quietly. She seemed more distressed at Brownie's appearance than anything else.

"Just when I had made you so tidy, too! And look at your pinafore, covered with earth and mud, and your hands not fit to be seen!"

But no amount of scolding could dim the happy light that sparkled in Brownie's soft eyes.

"Mother is coming home, and we've found Angel and her wonderful pen."

Nothing could damp her spirits.

When at last Mrs. Eustace arrived she was nearly overwhelmed by the embraces that she received, and excitable little Brownie burst into tears.

"Oh, mother," she said, clinging round her neck, "you'll never leave us again, will you? We can't get on without you."

"But I think you have got on very well," said Mrs. Eustace, with a bright smile. "You are all looking the picture of health."

Then, taking Hester's hand in hers, she said with feeling,—

"I am so glad to get home again, Hester. I have been longing for this time to come. I can't tell you how you have comforted me by your letters, but they always made me very homesick. I hope I shall never have to leave you again."

Angelo received a special greeting. Mrs. Eustace drew him to her and put her arms round him.

"You have come back to be my boy, haven't you?" she said, caressing his little dark, silky head; "and no one will take you away from me again."

"Never," repeated Angelo contentedly, as he nestled against her. "I will stay with you till I go to God."

The evening meal was a cheerful one. Hester had



made a cake, and roasted a chicken for her mistress. When Mrs. Eustace shook her head with a smile at this extravagance, Brownie looked up quickly.

“We’re never going to be poor again, mother,” she said, “for your pen is found, and everything will be all right now.”

“My wonderful pen!” said Mrs. Eustace, laughing; but after tea she called her daughter to her, and kissed the little scratched hands very tenderly.

“I don’t mind them, mother, really. I would do it again if your pen got there.”

“You have a heroine’s spirit, my girlie. May it never be wasted on an unworthy object.”

Brownie pondered over these words in bed that night, but could not understand them.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A Grandfather

IT was not till the next morning, when Brownie was helping her mother to arrange her writing-table in her room, that the child remembered the envelope that Sir George had placed in the drawer. She showed it to her mother, and Mrs. Eustace stood transfixed as she read its contents. She remained a long time with the letter in her hand, lost in thought, and then she turned to her little girl.

"Brownie, I want to speak to Hester. Ask her to come to me."

Brownie ran away, and Hester appeared at once.

"Hester, did you see the old gentleman who came to see the children when I was away?"

"Yes, ma'am. He seemed a very pleasant-spoken gentleman, and took a special interest in Master Buffy."

"Do you know who he was?"

"'Sir George,' he called himself. He was a friend of Miss Monteith's."

"He is my children's grandfather."

Hester looked astounded.

"I thought," she faltered, "you had no relatives on either side, ma'am."

"I never mentioned him to you, for he was very angry at our marriage, and disowned my husband altogether, though he was his only son. I went to see him after—I was left alone, and asked him to do something—not

for myself or the children ; I told him I could support my family by my writing. I had done it more or less, as you know, since my marriage. He refused to do what I asked him, and said some bitter things. I was proud and hasty, and answered him in the same tone. We have never met since, but this letter is from him, and he wants to be friendly. I have told you all this, as you have been with me through my darkest days. I feel now that brighter times are coming. If he calls again you will know who he is."

"I wish I had known before," said Hester slowly. "I wondered that he seemed to take such an interest in the children, and I thought he was a little too free in the questions he asked them. I was vexed that Miss Brownie brought him in here and showed him all your things, but I understand his ways now."

She left her mistress and went out to her kitchen, pondering over the news.

"She deserves to have good fortune if anybody does, for 't isn't many women could do what she's done."

Mrs. Eustace was reading her letter once more. It was not a long one :—

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW,—

"I suppose as one gets older one becomes less harsh in judgment. I acknowledge I was to blame in our last interview. My son had tried me sorely, and I had told him that I would never be responsible for his debts. When you left me saying that you would never see me again until those debts were cleared, I thought it was an idle boast. My lawyer tells me that you have steadily paid them off, and that only a matter of fifty pounds or so is lacking. May I congratulate you on your indomitable will and perseverance? I am thinking of taking a house in the neighbourhood of Daltoncaster, for my old friend Monteith left his daughter in my guardianship

until she married, and I want to be nearer her than I am at present. Will you send me a line to say you will let bygones be bygones, and welcome me as a relative when I am in your part again?

“ Believe me,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ GEORGE EUSTACE.”

As Mrs. Eustace sat down to write her reply, her heart felt full of gratitude and thankfulness to One who had helped and guided her these last five years since her husband's death. It had been a hard struggle, and at times she felt she could not bear the strain. She had denied herself and the children every luxury, and had provided only for them the bare necessities of life ; but month by month that load of debt had been growing lighter. She saw the dawn breaking at last. Her time in Italy had given her the fresh impetus she had so needed, and already she had received a handsome sum for a set of short sketches composed out there. She thanked God with all her heart that she would very soon now be enabled to clear her dead husband's name. And as for Sir George, all past feelings of anger and pride were gone. She wrote him a sweet little note, saying what a pleasure it was to hear from him, and asking him to come and see them all as soon as he could, for he had already won the hearts of his grandchildren. And then she came out of her room amongst the children with a serene and smiling face.

A few days after this Mrs. Eustace was surprised by a visit from the Dean of Daltoncaster. He came accompanied by Mr. Gayworthy, and Angelo was the object of their visit. The dean was an intensely musical man, and took the greatest interest in the choristers. Angelo's voice had made a great impression upon him, and he had come to offer him a vacancy in the school. At first

Mrs. Eustace hesitated, she could not make up her mind to part with him ; but as she saw the advantages of such an education and training she felt she dare not refuse such an offer. After a long talk Angelo was sent for, and the plan put before him.

The dean explained at some length the life of a chorister, and the pink colour stole into Angelo's cheeks.

"I should sing every day to God!" he exclaimed. "Oh, I should love to come! I should be like Samuel. Mother!"—he called Mrs. Eustace "mother" now—"will you let me go?"

"Indeed I will, my boy, if you think you will be happy." Angelo looked at her thoughtfully.

"I shall not like to leave you," he said ; "but I could come and see you sometimes."

"Every Saturday," said the dean cheerfully.

"I should be so happy," continued the child dreamily, "to sing every day as business, and not to amuse myself. I want to learn new songs, and all about God ; it would be almost as good as being in heaven."

"But you would have a few lessons thrown in, to remind you that you were still on earth," said the dean, with a smile. "And I am afraid choristers are pretty much the same as other boys. They are not all Angelos."

There was much further talk on the subject, but as soon as Angelo was released he rushed away to tell Brownie of his good fortune.

She listened with a perplexed and frowning brow.

"I don't like it at all," she said, "and you oughtn't to either. You have only just come back to us, and now you want to leave us again."

Angelo's face fell.

"I thought you would be pleased," he said ; "I shall sing in church every day, and have a master to teach me."

"Your mother didn't want you to sing to people," said Brownie, a little sullenly.

"But, Brownie, I'm not going to sing to people, but to God."

"There'll be a lot of people in that big church; I believe it's quite full on Sunday, Hester said it was."

"I shall sing to God," repeated Angelo firmly, "like the angels do in heaven, and I shan't look at the people."

Then Brownie threw her arms round him and burst into tears.

"I don't want you to go; I like talking to you, you understand better than Buffy. And it will be horrid here when you are gone."

"But I'll come back every Saturday, and what a lot I should be able to tell you! Oh, Brownie, you mustn't try to keep me back. I feel as if God is calling me. I shall be like Samuel, and always live close to God's House. I shall be close to Him always."

"You're close to God here. He lives in our house just as much as in church. He is here every day, and He is only in church on Sundays."

"But He will be in the cathedral every day, because people go to church there twice every day."

"They must be very good," said Brownie reflectively.

"I shall be at school part of the day," went on Angelo. "That is the part I don't like to think of. I hope the boys won't call me 'Frenchy.'"

"I wish I could go with you," sighed Brownie, changing her tactics. "I should like to be at a school and see a lot of boys and girls. Aren't there any girls? Why can't they sing in church like boys?"

"I don't think they ever do," said Angelo doubtfully; "I heard the boys sing the afternoon I was there. It did sound lovely. I put my ear to the door and listened, and one boy sang quite by himself. It made me cry, and then I went away and I sang in the street, but I

didn't feel I did it as well as that boy. Perhaps one day, Brownie, you may come and hear me sing. I would like that."

"But you wouldn't see us. You said yourself you wouldn't see any people, only God."

Brownie was not to be comforted. She was indignant with Hester, who said directly she heard the news, "The Lord be praised! He is indeed making the way clear before us."

"You want Angel to go away! It's very unkind of you!"

"He will be fed, and clothed, and educated, and there will be more to spare for you," was the callous reply.

And then Brownie fled sobbing to her mother.

"Oh, mother, I'll go without pudding for a year, and never have any sugar in my tea, if that will help to keep Angel with us."

Mrs. Eustace gently tried to comfort and explain.

"Angelo has a great talent, Brownie. He may not have such a voice when he grows up. I feel I cannot teach him properly; it is not fair to him, and he will be using his voice in God's service. It would not be right to keep him back."

"I wish I was Angel," sobbed Brownie. "I wish I had a beautiful voice, and could sing to God. I can't do anything at all."

"You can do things that Angelo cannot do," said Mrs. Eustace, kissing her. "You are my little comfort and help. Who would take care of Buffy if you went away? What would I do without you?"

Brownie's eyes wandered disconsolately round the room.

"The only thing that I ever did that was really useful," she said, her face brightening as she spoke, "was to find your pen in the gorse bush, mother."

"Yes, indeed, that was a wonderful find," said Mrs.

Eustace, smiling ; "and if I ever lose it again you must set to work to find it."

"Perhaps," said Brownie thoughtfully, "when I grow up I may be able to write books like you, mother. If you lent me your pen I might, don't you think so?"

But Mrs. Eustace replied as she had often done before—

"I wish you a better vocation than that, my child. Writing books is not an unmixed happiness."

There was a great deal to do before Angelo was ready for his school. Hester and her mistress sewed away at his outfit late at night, and Mrs. Eustace took him in for a day's shopping at Daltoncaster, where, rather against her inclination, she had his long, silky curls cropped off, and brought him home looking smaller than ever with his closely cropped head.

Brownie almost cried when she saw him, but Angelo rejoiced over it.

"I am going to be an English boy, and they don't wear curls ; they would only laugh at me if I had them," he said.

He was not to go till after Christmas, so the children enjoyed that season thoroughly. Perhaps the greatest delight of all was a Christmas hamper that arrived unexpectedly on Christmas Eve from Sir George. A turkey, plum pudding, a cake, boxes of candied fruits, and fancy biscuits, besides lots of other good things to eat, was not all its contents. There were toys for the children, and a sealskin jacket for their mother. Even Hester was not forgotten. A warm shawl was ticketed, "For the maid who was suspicious of a stranger's intentions." The children were very excited over their newly-found grandfather.

"I wish he belonged to you, Angel, too," said sympathetic little Brownie.

"Yes ; Angel has nobody at all," asserted Buffy.

"Well, he has always had guardians," said Brownie



consolingly, "and those are nearly as good as relations!"

Angelo looked a little wistful; then a smile lightened his face.

"I couldn't have anybody better than my real proper guardian," he said.

"That's mother."

"No, it isn't. My very real one is Jesus Christ. You couldn't have any one better than Him to take care of you and love you."

"Do you think you'll have Him at school with you?" asked Buffy, with round eyes.

Angelo nodded with assurance.

"I found a lovely verse in my Bible the other day that I sometimes sing to myself—'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' So I shall never be anywhere without Him!"

Brownie looked at him thoughtfully.

"You would do all right if you lived quite alone, and hadn't mother at all."

"I suppose I should; but I do love mother."

"And I should do all right if I lived alone," said Buffy with alacrity. "I don't want Brownie always taking care of me."

The question of guardianship was becoming involved. Brownie wisely changed the subject.

## CHAPTER XVII

### “The Little Stupid Servant”

IT was a fine afternoon in early spring. Mrs. Eustace with her children were walking towards the cathedral in Daltoncaster. They had come in for the day, but had been spending it at Dalton Priory, a sweet old house about half a mile out of the town, where Sir George now lived. He had only been there a month or two, and had taken a keen pleasure in showing his daughter-in-law over the house and grounds. The garden spread away at the back, with an old lawn surrounded by beeches nearly a hundred years old. Lilacs and laburnums were in full flower in the shrubberies, and the birds seemed to hold high carnival in the old-fashioned garden. Mrs. Eustace had looked at and admired everything that was shown her. One room especially struck her fancy, and Sir George had asked her for a good deal of advice about its furniture.

It was a sunny morning-room with a deep bay window looking out upon the green lawn. The walls were wainscotted in oak, and the old fireplace was a beautiful carved one. Mrs. Eustace had chosen the curtains and chintzes that were to convert it into a bright and cosy quarter, and she was much pleased with the result of her work.

“Perhaps it looks a little too much like a lady’s room for you,” she said to Sir George, as he took her in to see it. “But, you see, my taste is naturally a feminine one.”

"You shall use it when you come to stay with me," he said, "and I shall call it the 'Writer's Room' in honour of you."

Now, as he walked by her side to the cathedral, and the children ran on in front, he referred to the room again.

"Are you susceptible to your surroundings when writing?" he asked. "Would pretty things act as an incentive or as a distraction?"

"Oh, they would be a help, of course—never a hindrance!"

"Then I wonder if you could transplant yourself and little household to The Priory? There are so many empty rooms that I should like to see filled. I have furnished a study for you according to your liking. Will you come, my dear?"

Just for an instant Mrs. Eustace stopped short in their walk. She had thought her father-in-law was so wedded to his quiet, lonely life that such a possibility had never occurred to her. It took her breath away, and she considered it for some minutes in silence before she spoke.

"I do not know whether it would be fair to you," she said slowly. "I thank you with all my heart for such an offer. But the children might disturb you. And then there is Angelo. Of course, for the present he is at school, but I have promised to give him a home for the rest of his life."

"There is plenty of room for Angelo, too. I am an old man. I have bought the place, and though my property in the north will come to your boy after my death, this old Priory is going to be handed over to you. It will be your home, I hope, for as long as you may need it. Will you not take possession of it now, and make me happy by giving me a taste of family life? It has been my one hope since I settled near you."

Mrs. Eustace's brown eyes were full of tears. She put her hand gently on Sir George's arm.

"I will come," she said gently. "You will bring great happiness into our lives. I cannot thank you enough."

They had reached the cathedral by this time. People were quietly passing in to the afternoon service, and they followed them, getting front seats in the nave.

Brownie and Buffy were greatly excited. They had come in the hope of hearing Angelo sing, for he was going to take a solo in the anthem. When the clergy and choir came in they looked for Angelo breathlessly. Yes, there he was! not gazing about him as some of the choristers were doing, but walking with that sweet, rapt look upon his face that they remembered so well.

Brownie found her attention wandering in the service. Once she took hold of her mother's hand.

"I am frightened for Angelo in this big place," she whispered.

Mrs. Eustace put up her finger with a warning "hush." Brownie subsided. Buffy's thoughts were on a lower level. He wondered why Angelo wore his night-gown, why the roof was so high up, and concluded that God had built it Himself, as no one else would be tall enough to reach it.

His attention then became concentrated on some angels' heads sculptured above some pillars in front of him. Why had they no eyes? Were they blind or asleep? And where were their bodies? Was it possible that they might be real people whose heads had been cut off and put up there? and was that the reason they looked so dead and still?

What a lovely window! Such beautiful pictures! Who had painted them? He would try when he got home and mix some bright red paint in his paint-box like the dresses there. Then the pulpit struck him.

Why was it so big and grand? Perhaps long ago Jesus had stood in it and preached when He was in the world.

What a lovely bonnet a lady had who sat close to them! Red cherries dangled from it that made his mouth water. How he would like just to touch them, just to put his finger on one! Would any one see him if he did?

Out went the little finger, but Mrs. Eustace turned and shook her head at him. Buffy's thoughts got confused after that; he heaved a sigh when the music sounded. Now he should hear Angelo sing!

Brownie tried to fix her mind upon her Prayer-book, but it was difficult. She asked her mother once why Satan always made her think such *very* week-day thoughts when she was in church.

Now her one passionate desire was to be in the choir seats with Angelo, and be standing up to sing alone.

“I could die after, if I only could do it once,” she mused. “I expect God will give me a nice voice in heaven, but it is a long time to wait. I should think God must be very fond of angels. Angelo is just like an angel, so good and gentle, and then his singing! Oh, I wish, I wish I could do something, something great!”

At last the anthem came. The organ rolled out a peal which quite frightened Buffy, but slowly and softly it died away, and then clear and sweet Angelo's voice sounded through the building, bringing a solemn hush to the most irreverent of the worshippers there, and comfort and healing to many a weary, burdened soul.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,  
From whence cometh my help.  
I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from  
Whence cometh my help.  
My help cometh even from the Lord.  
My help cometh e-ven from the Lord,  
Who hath made heaven and earth, who  
Hath made heaven and earth.”

Then came a deep, rich bass voice, and Brownie, as she listened, imagined the singer to be speaking personally and solely to Angelo :—

“ The Lord Himself is thy keeper—the Lord  
Himself is thy keeper, the Lord is thy defence  
Upon thy right hand—the Lord is  
Thy defence upon thy right hand.”

Two treble voices took it up—

“ So that the sun shall not smite thee by day,  
Neither the moon by night—so that the  
Sun shall not smite thee by day, neither  
The moon by night—neither the moon by night.”

Then came Angelo's voice again, and Brownie felt a thrill run through her as she listened :—

“ My help cometh from the Lord,  
Which made heaven and earth,” etc.

And then a burst of gladness broke from the whole choir :—

“ The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, yea,  
It is He that shall keep thy soul.  
The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and  
Coming in, from this time forth, for evermore.  
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, yea,  
It is He that shall keep thy soul.  
From this time forth for evermore,  
From this time forth for evermore.

AMEN.”

Angelo's face as he sang was a picture. Many remarked upon it. Mrs. Eustace murmured to herself,—

“ He feels it to be so true !”

Sir George took off his glasses hastily, wiped them, and put them back again. Buffy was so carried away with delight that he forgot he was in church, and clapped his hands loudly at the end of it. Brownie leant her little head against her mother's shoulder and shed some silent tears. If only Angelo would go on singing for ever, how happy she would be !



"My help cometh from the Lord."

[See page 156.]





After the service was over, Angelo joined them; and presently, as they were walking up and down the cloisters, the dean himself came out and spoke to them.

"How does our little chorister look?" he asked.

"Very well," said Mrs. Eustace, smiling.

"Yes, I think he is happy. I was afraid he might find it wearing work. He puts such soul into his singing! Our organist says it is long since he has had a boy who grasps the spirit of the words so quickly as he does. And his voice is wonderful!"

"Were you frightened, Angelo?" asked Brownie, as she walked with him a few paces in front of the others.

"No; who should I be frightened of?"

"The people and the clergymen."

"I never think of them."

"Did you choose that hymn you sang?"

"Oh, no. I never choose any of them. It was an anthem, Brownie, not a hymn. Wasn't it a lovely one? I like it almost as well as that hymn you first taught me. It is the same kind of words, only put grander. I suppose some good man wrote that hymn, but God wrote this anthem Himself; it came straight out of the Bible, and that is what makes it so lovely."

Angelo began singing over softly to himself,—

"My help cometh from the Lord."

And then Mrs. Eustace and Sir George joined the children, and the subject was dropped.

Brownie and Buffy were very tired with their day when they reached home. Their little heads were full of all that they had heard and seen; and when they were told of Sir George's wish, and realized that they were going to live in that beautiful house, where they could see Angelo constantly, their cups of happiness seemed overflowing.

However, at last they were put to bed; and then Mrs.

Eustace talked over the move with Hester, who at first, thinking she would be wanted no longer, received the news in glum silence. But when Mrs. Eustace assured her that she could never part with her, and that she must come with them and act as nurse and maid, instead of having all the work of the house upon her shoulders, Hester broke down and sobbed.

"It will be the saving of me," she said. "Since my illness I haven't felt equal to all the work; but a lighter place will ease me wonderful."

Then Mrs. Eustace went upstairs to pay her usual "good-night" visit to her children. Buffy lay fast asleep with smiles on his rosy face, but Brownie was wide awake, and Mrs. Eustace saw from the anxious expression in her eyes that her busy brain was still hard at work.

"Well, my girlie, have you enjoyed your day?"

"Oh, *so* much, mother."

"Then you must go to sleep as fast as you can."

"But I'm thinking, mother."

"What about?" Brownie took hold of her mother's hand, and put it under her hot cheek.

"I wish, I wish, mother, that God had made me a little different. I don't think I am any use at all. If I could sing like Angelo I should be so happy, or if I could write wonderful books like you! I don't want to be just nobody. I want to do something that will be some good!"

Mrs. Eustace was silent for a moment. Then she said:—"Listen, Brownie; I am going to tell you a story. There was once a very good King who lived in a beautiful country, where the sun was always shining and the people were always happy. There was a river that ran round His country, and on the other side of it there was a country so different! Hardly any sun, and a great deal of rain and cold wind, and a wicked, cruel king who made everybody miserable. So the good King built a

long bridge over the river, and asked the unhappy people to come over and live with Him. The strange thing was that the people didn't want to come. They said they couldn't find the bridge, and it was too much trouble to go across, and some of them lived too far away from it to find it. So one day the King sent three of His servants over to show the people the way, and tell them about it. Two of these servants had a great talent ; the third thought herself very stupid, but she loved her King, and told Him she would do her best. The first one of the servants went into the unhappy country and began to sing to the people. She had a beautiful voice, and wherever she went the people gathered in crowds to hear her. She sang of the King and of the happy country over the bridge, and, as she sang, the people felt they wanted to go there. But sometimes when she stopped singing the people stopped wanting to go. And some only cared for her voice, and not for her message. The second servant reached even more people than the first, because she wrote her message, and she had a wonderful pen. Far, far away, people read her letters and writings, and they liked them, for she was given the power to touch their hearts. But sometimes she altered her message a little to please the people more, and the way across the bridge to the beautiful country was not mentioned so often ; sometimes it was nearly hidden altogether, and the people thought they could make their own country as nice as the other one, without troubling to go across the bridge. But she wrote on, and the singer sang on, and both were trying to obey their King.”

“And the little stupid servant?” asked Brownie breathlessly, as Mrs. Eustace paused, with rather a sad look on her face.

“ Ah, the third servant ! She couldn't sing, and she couldn't write, and she couldn't reach very many people. But her little heart was full of love to her King, and so

she talked about Him to every one who would listen to her. She wasn't clever, but she said a word here, and a word there, and she always kept pointing to the bridge. Little children found their way easily when she took them by the hand and led them. Old men and women leant on her arm and hobbled slowly towards it. She would whisper softly to the weeping ones ; she would explain slowly to the stupid ones, and everybody listened to her, because they said she was so simple and clear, and didn't confuse them. She only knew one bridge, and she always pointed to it, and talked of the good King.

"By-and-by the King called His servants home. When they came back He called out all those to whom they had shown the way. The singer was met by a little number who told her that they had found the bridge by her singing. The writer was met also by some who, far away, had read her message, and had been guided to the bridge by it. But the little stupid servant was surrounded by a crowd ! Her halting words had brought more over to the beautiful country than the wonderful messages of the clever ones. And the King smiled upon her, and said, 'The singer has done well, and so has the writer, but the little speaker has done the best of all !'"

Mrs. Eustace paused ; then she laid her hand on her little daughter's head.

"My Brownie has brought one little friendless boy over the bridge. She can bring others. And the King will one day speak to her like He did to His third servant."

Brownie said nothing, but she gave a little sob ; and then she turned round on her pillow and went fast asleep. She was comforted.



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