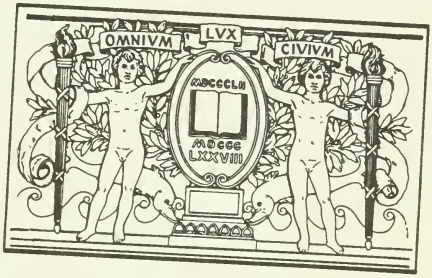
Dorothy Dainty

By Amy Brooks



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Natalie Jones
from auntie May

"She saw two little smiling faces peering at her." — *Page 3.*

DOROTHY DAINTY

BY

AMY BROOKS

AUTHOR OF "RANDY'S SUMMER," "RANDY'S WINTER"
"RANDY AND HER FRIENDS," "A JOLLY CAT TALE"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE AND SHEPARD CO.

Dorothy Dainty.

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DOROTHY DAINTY

CHAPTER I

AT THE GARDEN GATE

THE old stone house had a tenant! How the news flew around the neighborhood; and such a tenant, too, after two long years of vacancy.

Two little girls were trudging along the sunny road, each with an arm about the other's waist, their feet keeping time to the lively little tune which they were humming.

Suddenly the humming ceased as one little girl released herself from her companion's embrace. "I'm going to peep

through the big gate, Flossie," she cried, "and see if the roses are all gone yet."

"Sh——h," she whispered, while she raised a beckoning finger; "just come here!"

Flossie ran to see what it was which so excited Molly.

"My!" exclaimed Flossie, in a loud whisper; "I wonder who she is!"

"I'd like to speak to her, but I don't know what her name is," whispered Molly.

"Why can't we speak to her vewy sweetly if we *don't* know what her name is?" asked Flossie. "Oh, isn't she pwetty!"

It was, indeed, a pretty picture which the children saw, as they stood peeping through the great gate.

The little girl was seated at the foot of a tall garden vase, her doll upon her

lap, and her broad-brimmed hat lying upon the grass beside her. The light breeze blew the curls about her beautiful little face, and fluttered the ruffles of her dainty muslin frock. She was placing some tiny blossoms in her doll's flaxen hair, when she heard the children's voices as they were trying to decide how best to address her.

Looking toward the gate, she saw two little, smiling faces peering at her. Picking up her doll, she took a few steps toward the children, then hesitated.

"We're glad to see you," called Molly, sweetly.

"And we'd like to come in and play wiv you a little while," added Flossie.

A moment more the little girl hesitated, then, walking down to the gate, she said, "I'm glad you came to see me.

I wish I could let you in, but I can't. The gate's too heavy, and the latch is too high; 'sides it's locked."

The lower half of the gate was an iron panel, so the little girls peeped at each other over the solid barrier and between the rails of which the upper part was formed.

"Molly and me has often looked frough this gate," said Flossie, "but we didn't know anybody lived here."

"Well, there didn't anybody live here 'til mamma and me came, and we've only been here since day before yesterday," said the little girl.

"Wouldn't your mamma open the gate if she knew we had comed to see you?" questioned Molly.

The little girl twisted a curl over her forefinger; then she said, evidently wish-

ing to be truthful, and at the same time very polite, "I'm 'most sure she would if she *saw* you, but she's unpacking some things, and she said I mustn't 'sturb her while she's so busy, but just 'muse myself."

She held up her doll for her new friends to admire; then, when conversation flagged, she said, "I wish you'd come 'most every day and talk to me; just wait a minute, and I'll give you both some roses to take home to dress your dolls with, same's I was dressing mine. I pull off the teenty little buds, and stick them in her hair, and it makes her look beautiful."

So saying, she left her little new friends where they stood peering at her receding figure, and ran to the clambering rose-vine and commenced to pick those roses which she could reach. Soon her little hands were well filled, and she hastened

back to the gate, where she thrust them through the bars, saying, "They've got little prickers on them, but they're sweet."

"Thank you," said Molly, "I'm going to take them right home to mamma; she loves roses dearly."

"That's the vewy thing *I'm* going to do," said Flossie, who usually echoed Molly.

"I guess we'll call again," announced Molly, "if you'll tell us what your name is."

"It's Dorothy Dainty," said the little girl, "but mamma calls me 'Girlie.' What's your names?"

"Mine's Molly Merton, and hers is Flossie Barnet," said Molly, quite forgetting that Flossie could answer for herself.

"I guess we'd better be going," said Molly.

"Yes, *I* guess so, too," said Flossie,

"maybe our mammas will be wondering where we are."

Molly was usually the first to start, Flossie following wherever she went; but this time Molly lingered, while with the toe of her shoe she pushed the pebbles into little hills, at the same time looking furtively at Dorothy.

The little girl came very close to the gate. "Did you wish to say something 'fore you go?" she asked.

"Yes," said Molly; "I was going to say that if you came *very* close to the bars we could — we could kiss you good-by, both of us could."

"Yes, bof of us," said Flossie, charmed to second Molly's suggestion, for the little girl on the other side of the gate was very winsome; and besides, had she not given them some of her roses?

True, Molly and Flossie had beautiful flowers at their own homes, but Dorothy's flowers possessed the charm of novelty. They were the old-fashioned climbing roses, and the little girls now held in their hands the blossoms which they had always seen beyond the garden gate.

It was now Dorothy's turn to hesitate, and proud little Molly's lip quivered as she said, "You needn't let us if you don't wish to."

"Oh, I *do*, I *do*," said Dorothy; "I was only wondering if the holes between the bars were wide enough. I'm so glad you came that I'll kiss you now if you'll both say you'll come real soon."

"Yes, indeed, we will," said Flossie and Molly together.

Dorothy pressed her little face against the bars, and a cunning picture they made

as the two little girls kissed her. Then they turned toward home, often looking back to wave their hands or throw a kiss.

Dorothy thrust her hand between the bars, waving it vigorously, at the same time looking wistfully after the two little girls. Then she turned toward the house, a bit lonely in her great garden filled with flowers.

"There's *two* of them to play," she said, "and there's only *one* of *me*."

Then seeing her doll lying prone upon the grass, she picked her up, carefully brushing her dress and arranging her sash.

"I wish I could have let them in, Queenie," said she; "but you see I couldn't unlock the gate."

Queenie's bisque face smiled encouragingly, and Dorothy continued: "They

were nice little girls, too. Mamma said she didn't know anybody in this town, and now, Queenie, you and I do. We know *two* peoples. Their names were Molly and Flossie. What's their other names, Queenie?"

The doll only smiled serenely, and made no reply. "I guess we'll go and see if mamma isn't 'most done being busy," said Dorothy, "and we'll tell her all about Molly and Flossie." So she trudged up the broad driveway, and clambered up the steps and in at the open door.

CHAPTER II

A NEW FRIEND AND WHAT HAPPENED

IT seemed as if the birds and butterflies had spread the news abroad of little Dorothy's coming, for all the children of the neighborhood were chattering about her lovely garden, its wealth of roses, its fine nooks for playing hide-and-seek, as seen through the grating of the massive gate, and most of all, they talked and talked of the little girl herself.

Of all the children who wished to know and play with Dorothy, the one the least likely to be welcomed at the great stone house was Nancy Ferris. Nancy was a little social outcast in the village, and she

looked it, as she stood listening to the chatter of a group of children who seemed like a flock of sparrows, so blithe and talkative were they.

Her dress was a faded green, of some flimsy material, and its skirt hung in various lengths about her lanky little figure. The fact that the skirt was ripped from the waist in one or two places, accounted for the eccentric hang of the garment.

Nancy's father was seldom at home, from the fact that he usually found almost any other place more interesting, and very little care he gave to his family. Her mother, or rather, her stepmother also possessed a roving disposition, and her wanderings among the gossips of her own neighborhood left little time for the care of Nancy's wardrobe or Nancy's self. The

consequence was that the little girl's appearance was, at all times, untidy, and her disposition was allowed to run wild and untrained like some thorny weed.

As she stood listening to the merry voices, and the guessing as to which one should "know her *first*," her small black eyes gleamed, and she swung her sunbonnet back and forth by a single string as she ejaculated, "Shouldn't wonder if I knew her *fust*, 'fore any of yer!"

The children looked in amazement at the speaker, and then commenced talking in subdued tones among themselves. They dared not answer her, for Nancy sometimes had a few pins upon her waist, and she had been known to use them as weapons when some luckless child made a remark which displeased her.

The worst of it was, that one could

never tell what might provoke Nancy, and the children feared her as she was easily annoyed, and quick to punish any little girl whom she considered an offender. She was never invited to play with them, but that did not disturb her, — she invited herself.

Finding herself left out of the gossip of the merry group, Nancy placed the sun-bonnet upon her unkempt locks and moodily walked down the road toward the village.

"P'raps we'd ought to have talked to her," said Katie Dean, a sweet-faced, gray-eyed, little girl, as she looked pityingly after the forlorn little figure.

"No, we oughtn't," said Jeanette Earl, decidedly; "my mamma won't let me, — I mean she'd rather I didn't."

"Teacher said last Sunday that we

ought to try to get children to come to Sunday-school, — I mean the ones that 'most always don't go," said Inez Meredith, regardless of grammar, "so I asked Nancy, and I wished I hadn't."

"Why?" cried all the girls in chorus. "Because," said Inez, "she told me she didn't want to go; she said she guessed she was as good as I was, and she walked down the road laughing and mocking the way she said I walked; — why, what are you laughing at, girls?"

"Oh, nothing much," answered one of the group, "only you *do* switch your skirts some, 'specially on Sundays, on the way to church."

"I *do not!*" answered Inez, hotly; "and if I did, it wouldn't be any wickeder than reaching over the pew to show me your new silver bangle when the minister

was preaching. I wouldn't have dared to do *that*, 'specially if my father'd been a deacon."

The quick, hot flush on her cheek showed the other's annoyance as she replied quickly, "I did not show you my bracelet, I pointed out on your book which hymn it was they were singing, and you happened to notice my bangle."

"Oh, never mind, Inez," said Katie Dean, "your new bangle *is* lovely, and we all think so. Let's go and play, and forget about Nancy."

So the girls locked arms about each other's waists and walked up the road toward Katie Dean's shady lawn. If the girls forgot Nancy, did Nancy forget them? Not a bit of it! As she walked down the dusty road, her head hanging, and her limp sunbonnet nearly hiding her face,

her little brain was busy with plans for gaining entrance to that beautiful garden at the stone house, and at the same time becoming acquainted with the lovely little girl whom she had eagerly watched through the gate.

Nancy's home, if such it could be called, was on the outskirts of the village, and a very long, hot walk it was through the town to reach it. When she reached the house its sagging door stood open, and on entering, Nancy saw on the kitchen table a brown bowl half filled with milk and a part of a loaf of dry bread. Near the bread lay a piece of brown paper on which was scrawled this bit of information: —

"U can eet the bred & milk its sames I had. i got to go & heer about the man what waz drown larst nite."

It was not the first time that little Nancy had found a note and a cold lunch awaiting her at noontime, so she was not at all disturbed. She liked the milk; the bread she would have preferred a little less dry; but she had never had dainty fare, and while she would have liked something nicer, the milk in the coarse bowl and the bread on the bare table were not revolting.

Early that afternoon Nancy trudged along the sunny road toward the stone house, a smile upon her little dark face, and a joyous spring in her step. She had evidently made an attempt to improve her appearance, for her dress skirt had been pinned wherever the gathers had been ripped from the waist, her hair had been wet and brushed into some semblance of neatness. Nancy preferred a

brush to a comb, because a comb attacked the snarls, while the brush only slipped over the surface of her untidy mop of hair.

It sometimes seemed as if luck favored Nancy in her bold schemes, and that afternoon was no exception to the rule; for when she arrived at the garden gate it stood open. Not wide open to be sure, but just wide enough for her wiry little figure to slip through.

A careless servant had gone out on some errand and had, contrary to instructions, left the gate open for any one who might choose to enter.

Without a moment's hesitation Nancy stepped in, and for an instant stood lost in admiration of the little girl who, in a pretty muslin frock, walked up and down the gravel path singing a lullaby to the doll in her arms.

At last she found her voice.

"I've come to play with yer," she said.

Dorothy turned, and saw the queer little figure just inside the gate.

"I've come to play with yer," repeated Nancy, for the first time in her life not daring to move unless she was bidden.

Dorothy hurried toward her, aware of Nancy's uncouth appearance, but sure that mamma would wish her to be polite to any child who had come to be her little company.

"You were nice to come," she said; "how did you know I was lonesome?"

"I *didn't* know," answered Nancy; "but I knew *I* was, so I just come."

Dorothy was not sure how her strange-looking guest would like to be amused. "Would you like to see my pretty little pond?" she ventured.

Yes, Nancy would like to see it; so the two children walked across the lawn to the pretty grove at the back of the house, and soon were seated beside the clear pool over which the stone Faun seemed to keep guard.

When the servant returned, she was startled to see that she had left the gate, not only unlocked, but open. A hasty glance revealing no intruder, she ejaculated, "Lucky for me!" and locked the gate behind her.

Meanwhile, Dorothy if not charmed with her guest, at least was glad not to be alone.

"In my fairy books," she was saying, "little green elves live under the big leaves, and, of course, I don't truly believe it, but," catching Nancy's sleeve, "you just 'make believe' and peek under

this leaf, just as if there *might* be fairies there."

Nancy looked, charmed by the eager light in Dorothy's eyes, but her mind could not grasp imaginary beauties, and she only stared stupidly.

"I don't see nothin'," she said.

Dorothy was disappointed.

"Neither do I," said she, "but I like to just play I do. Well, anyway," she continued, "just see this cunning little place close to the edge of the water. See the sun on the sand at the bottom? When I poke my finger down, oh, ever so deep in the sand, little bubbles come up, and I look quick, quick, just to make believe see if a fairy threw them up to me."

"My, what nonsense!" retorted Nancy. "Say! ain't you 'fraid of that big image?"

she queried, looking for the first time up into the grinning face of the Faun.

"I was awful 'fraid of him," confessed Dorothy, "the first day we came, but since I've played to him, I think he looks pleasanter."

"Since yer played to him?" repeated Nancy. "What do yer mean?"

"Why, I get my papa's mandolin and I just sit down by the water and play and sing to him 'til I think he looks smiling," said Dorothy.

"What's a manderlin?" asked Nancy.

"Oh," said Dorothy, gayly, "it's the funniest little thing with strings on it what you pick with a little silver pin, and it sounds *lovely*. My papa used to make lovely music on it, when he was here."

"Where is yer father?" was Nancy's next question.

"He's away, oh, ever so far, and me and mamma don't know how soon he'll be back," answered Dorothy, her voice losing its joyous ring.

"Mother and I *never* know when father'll get home," said Nancy; "but we don't mind," she added cheerfully, remembering that home was much pleasanter before, than after, his return.

Dorothy looked amazed, and Nancy thought best to change the subject.

"Go get yer manderlin, or whatever it is," she commanded, "and let's hear yer play it."

Now Dorothy was not sure that mamma would approve of her handling the dainty instrument. Her mother had been very busy, with the help of the maid, arranging her belongings in her new home, and Dorothy made the little excuse to herself

that mamma was busy, a reason for not asking if she might take it from its corner in the parlor. The little girl was not sure that she was naughty in taking it; however, she had been careful not to let her mamma see her take it out into the great garden.

Nancy saw that Dorothy hesitated, and sly little girl that she was, she believed that Dorothy had no mandolin to get; so she said, rudely, "I don't b'lieve yer got a manderlin, ef yer had, yer'd get it!"

The quick tears sprang up in Dorothy's blue eyes, and a flush crept upon her soft cheek.

"Oh, I have, I have," she cried, "I'll get it, truly."

Leaving Nancy seated on the grass, Dorothy quickly ran along the gravel

walk, and mounting the steps, ran in at the open door, and yet farther on to the cool, shady parlor. Snatching the mandolin, she hastened out upon the terrace just as the maid passing through the hall espied her with the instrument in her hand.

"I don't believe your mamma would like to have you play with that, Miss Dorothy," she called, but Dorothy was out of hearing by that time, around the corner of the house.

Of course the little girl could not properly play the mandolin, but she made a very sweet picture, which even Nancy could not but admire, as she seated herself on the grass, and looking up into the face of the Faun she sang, picking the strings for a funny little accompaniment.

"She seated herself on the grass and looking up into the face of the Faun she sang."

"That sounds fine," said Nancy.

"Yes, doesn't it?" said Dorothy, pleased that her queer little friend should approve of her music.

Meanwhile the maid had told Mrs. Dainty that Miss Dorothy had gone out to play with that "guitar thing" of her papa's, and Mrs. Dainty had sent Catherine out into the garden to call Dorothy in.

Dorothy's back was turned, but Nancy saw the maid approaching, and knowing that she had ventured in uninvited, and seeing her escape by the gate cut off, she looked about hastily, and then to avoid being *put* out, she climbed a slender tree which grew close to the wall, crept out upon a branch like a cat, and dropping to the ground upon the other side, ran at high speed toward home. Never once did she turn, so sure was she that the gaunt-

looking maid had climbed the tree as she had and was pursuing her.

Poor Nancy! She knew she had done no wrong, but she realized the difference between Dorothy and Dorothy's home and herself, a little village arab, whose home was so unsightly.

CHAPTER III

DOROTHY'S GARDEN PARTY

IT was now the heart of summer, and while Mrs. Dainty had made charmingly welcome at her home the ladies who had called, Dorothy had eagerly claimed their little daughters for her friends; and what games they played, what fine times they had in the old garden!

And now there was a great flutter of excitement among the small people of the neighborhood.

Early one morning a host of little girls were made happy by the arrival of an invitation from Dorothy's mamma, to a

garden party to be given in honor of her little daughter on her sixth birthday.

"Days and days to wait," said Molly, when she had been shown the invitation, and the tinted envelope in which it was enclosed.

"Just days and days to wait," she repeated. "Mamma, how long is it before the party?"

"Ten days," answered mamma, smiling at the eager little face.

"Ten days," said Molly, who could not have said it more vehemently had it been ten years; but her face brightened as she thought of her new dress which mamma had just finished, and she hastened from the room to greet Flossie, who came running across the lawn.

"Did you get an invitation?" questioned Flossie, as Molly ran to meet her.

"Oh, yes," said Molly; "but isn't it awful to wait ten whole days?"

"Howid," said Flossie; "I don't see how I ever can."

"We'll *have* to," was Molly's comforting answer.

"I'll tell you what let's do," said Flossie. "Let's go and find the other little girls and talk about the party. P'raps that will make it seem sooner."

So the two little girls ran off to find Katie Dean, and when they found her, Inez was with her, and while they were talking, Belle Martin and Nina and Jeanette Earl came to play with Katie, and a merry little group of girls sat down to talk about the party.

"What are you going to wear?" said Belle Martin to Katie.

"I'm going to wear my white muslin,"

said Katie. "What are you going to wear?"

"Oh, I shall wear a new dress that my aunt sent me from New York," said Belle, grandly. "It has flowers all over it, and lots of lace edging on the ruffles, and everything. What are you going to wear?" she continued, eying little Flossie, the youngest of the group.

"I don't know what dwess mamma will wish me to wear, but she said when I asked her this morning that I could wear my stockings wiv holes in them."

All the girls laughed, and Flossie looked at them in great surprise. "What makes you laugh?" she asked, sweetly, not in the least offended; "they are just full of holes and they're weal pwetty."

Flossie was always prettily dressed, and that she should intend to go to a

party with stockings full of holes, puzzled her little friends completely; but as Inez Meredith turned to question her, a sharp, shrill little voice caused the girls to turn that way as it demanded, "How many of yer are goin' to the party?"

There stood Nancy Ferris shifting from one foot to the other, and eying the group with her black bead-like eyes.

After a moment Inez spoke. "We're *all* going," she said.

"Well so be I," said Nancy, staring at the girls to see the effect of her speech.

"I'm 'quainted with her, and I've played with her, and I'm goin' to the party!" was Nancy's next speech. The children stared at her in blank amazement, and the silence became awkward.

For a moment Nancy stood there undecided what she should do next, then, feel-

ing sure that she could say nothing more surprising than this last speech, she abruptly turned, and hurrying away from the children was soon lost to view in a little grove back of Katie's house.

"I don't believe it," said Belle, when she found her voice. "Mrs. Dainty wouldn't invite such a horrid girl as Nancy Ferris."

"But she said that she knew Dorothy and had played with her," said Katie Dean.

"Well, I don't believe that, either," said Jeanette Earl.

"She doesn't look as if she'd be invited to a party. Look at her clothes! What would she wear, I'd like to know," said Inez Meredith, who was a trifle too fond of dress for a girl so young.

"Mamma says, 'Katie, you must re-

member that some naughty little girls are prettily dressed, while some very good children have to wear old clothes,'" said Katie Dean.

"But Nancy's naughty, and doesn't wear pretty clothes, either. She put a caterpillar down my neck the other day, 'cause I wouldn't play with her," said Nina Earl.

Now Nancy had a very good reason for running away as soon as she had startled the girls by saying that she would attend Dorothy's party. Since the day when, having spent a delightful hour with Dorothy in the garden, she had made a hasty retreat by means of the elm tree which grew close to the wall, she had not dared to venture near the house.

She wondered if the girls knew that she had crept into the garden, uninvited,

and whether they knew how she ran when she saw the maid coming.

Fearing that they would ask how she meant to attend the party, she left before they could question her, and the children speculated much as to what Nancy could have meant.

On that memorable day, the maid had taken the mandolin in her hand and, followed by Dorothy, had gone at once to Mrs. Dainty.

"There was a little gypsy critter sitting on the lawn and listening while Miss Dorothy played the guitar thing, and when I went out to call Miss Dorothy the little imp saw me coming, and, before I could speak to her, marm, she was up a tree and over the wall like a monkey. She's an outlandish-looking child, and I don't know where she belongs. When I looked

over the wall, she was running down the road as if she thought I was after her."

The maid was reproved when she admitted having left the gate open, and Dorothy was told not to talk with the strange little girl until Mrs. Dainty should know who she was; not to wander out if the gate should chance to be open, and not to invite any strangers in.

"I will see that you have some little friends, but for just a little while you must be contented to play with Queenie," she said kindly.

Mrs. Dainty was quite wise to insist that the gate be locked, as the grounds about the stone house formed a large park, and there were many nooks in which a tramp might hide if by stealthy watching he found the gate open.

By the time that Dorothy became acquainted with the other children she had almost forgotten Nancy, and had never told them of Nancy's visit and hasty flight.

At last the day of the party arrived. The sky was never bluer, the flowers never brighter than on that afternoon.

A troop of happy, gayly dressed little guests hastened through the gateway, and were sweetly greeted by Dorothy, who stood beside her mother to receive them. How beautiful the little hostess looked as she welcomed her friends, her bright hair crowned with a large hat, and her muslin dress matching her blue eyes.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you all," said Dorothy, "and oh, do you know, to-day we had a long letter, my mamma and me, and my papa is coming home in just a

few months. Wasn't it nice to hear that on my birthday?"

All the children were pleased to see Dorothy so happy, although they all thought a few months was a long time to wait to see one's own papa. Another troop of laughing children were coming up the walk, and behind them yet another gayly chattering crowd, until the old garden looked wholly alive as the children ran here and there, admiring the flowers, the pond, and the fountain, played games or danced, as their fancy led them.

An orchestra in the grove discoursed sweet music, and tiny, nimble feet kept time to the witching measures.

The feast for the children was spread on little tables on the broad piazzas, and at each four little friends could sit.

How they talked and laughed as they chose their places.

How inviting the tables looked with a mass of roses in the centre of each white cloth, and a bunch of forget-me-nots, Dorothy's favorite flower, beside each plate.

Such a happy little company to serve! One glance at the merry faces assured Mrs. Dainty that she had been wise in her efforts to cater to children's pleasure. The cakes and ices, the fruits and bonbons disappeared as if by magic, and soon the children were again ready for play.

Later in the afternoon a group of children stood talking together near a large statue. Between the shrubbery little figures could be seen dancing about in the sunshine like so many butterflies.

"Why, Flossie Barnet," Inez was saying,

"are those the stockings that you said were full of holes?"

"Yes," said Flossie, looking down at the open-work hose. "These are the vewy ones, and I like them better than the other kind that doesn't have holes in them."

"Of course you do," said Inez, laughing, "they are lovely; but who knew you meant *lace* stockings?"

"Well, I didn't," insisted little Flossie, "they are full of holes and not lace 't all. Hark! Hear that musics! Hear the pretty bells!" It was the sweet tones of the triangle that delighted Flossie. While they were listening to the soft strains of the music, a cry and a sound of hurrying feet caused the little group to rush away to see what had happened.

It proved to be nothing more serious than the loss of a charming hat, which a

light breeze had stolen from its owner's pretty head and deposited in the pond near the garden wall.

The little girl stood at the brink of the pool and clasped her tiny hands as she saw her pretty feather-trimmed hat spinning about like a boat on the surface of the water.

Mrs. Dainty was talking with a few of the children who were seated upon the piazza, and did not dream of the excitement down by the pond until Dorothy came running to her, saying, "Oh, mamma! mamma! come quick! One of the littlest girls has lost her hat in the water."

Before Mrs. Dainty could reach the pond, help came from the most unexpected quarter.

Just as the tiny owner of the beautiful hat commenced to cry, a voice from the

overhanging branches of the trees exclaimed, "I can get it for yer; I can, truly."

It was Nancy, who had been watching the party from her perch in the branches which overhung the pond. Like a cat she crept out upon the stoutest limb of the tree, which bent with her weight, and then, holding fast with her wiry little hands and clasping her slender legs around it, she made her way out near the end, hoping that her weight would bend the bough so low over the water that she could free one hand and reach the hat.

Her idea was a clever one, and her efforts brave, but the branch was too short, and as Nancy reached yet a bit further in a wild effort to capture the hat, there was a loud crash where the limb joined the tree trunk, which so startled Nancy

that she lost her hold, and, with a splash, she landed in the pond beside the hat which she had meant to rescue. The children screamed, and Nancy was the only one who did not make a sound.

The pond was very shallow, and Nancy, cat-like, landed upon her feet, and when Mrs. Dainty arrived with the gardener, who carried a long pole with which to secure the floating hat, she found the excited children around the margin of the pond, while in the pool a forlorn little girl stood, holding the dripping hat in her hand, and apparently wondering what to do next.

When Nancy saw Mrs. Dainty approaching, followed by the rough-looking man with a long pole, a sudden terror seized her, and, believing that in some dreadful way the man was coming to punish her

for sitting in the tree and watching the party, she cowered where she stood, expecting every moment that the long pole would descend upon her. In all her wild escapades in the neighborhood she had never been caught, but now she could not escape. Oh, what would they do to her!

Imagine her surprise when Mrs. Dainty said sweetly, "Why, little girl, how did this happen? Hand her your pole, John, and help her out."

So Nancy grasped the pole tightly, and guided by John's strong arm, she soon stood upon dry land, a dripping, bedraggled little figure.

The children crowded about her, and each vied with the other in trying to tell Mrs. Dainty how brave Nancy had been.

Nancy stood silent until the children became quiet, when she said, looking up

in Mrs. Dainty's face, "I wasn't doin' no harm at all. I was up the tree, just lookin' at the party and hearin' the music."

Dorothy's mother looked at the forlorn figure of the little girl who had longed to "just look at the party," and she could not but pity the poor, neglected child.

"Come with me," she said kindly, "and we will see if we can find some dry clothing for you;" and, reassured by the pleasant voice and smiling face, Nancy followed Mrs. Dainty up the walk and into the great house.

When she came out upon the lawn again I doubt if any one would have known her. Dorothy's mamma had ordered the maid to wash Nancy and to brush her hair neatly, and choosing one of Dorothy's pretty dresses which had become some-

what worn, a pair of shoes which were still serviceable, some stockings, and underclothing, she gave them to the maid for Nancy, and went out to speak to the children.

"Dear little friends," said she, "the little girl who tells me her name is Nancy Ferris has, through trying to do a kindly act, met with a mishap. My maid is dressing her in some dry clothing, and when she comes out Dorothy wishes her to stay a little while and enjoy the party, hear the music, and have a little treat at one of the tables."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the children. "Let's make her have a lovely time, just as if she'd been 'vited," said Flossie; and while the happy children clamored, Nancy appeared upon the lawn, walking shyly up to Mrs. Dainty.

"You look very nice," said Mrs. Dainty; "now let Dorothy entertain you."

"Can I *stay?*" cried Nancy, whose delight in possessing the pretty dress seemed to be as much as she could expect.

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy, taking her by the hand, "come and have some ice-cream at one of my little tables," and Nancy, half wild with delight, was hurried away to the piazza where Dorothy plied her with every goody within reach.

When she could eat no more, she listened rapturously to the music, and when the orchestra played a brilliant polka she could sit still no longer; and, slipping to her feet, she astonished the children by dancing, with a strange grace all her own, a most fantastic figure. She marked the time by snapping her fingers,

and stopped only when, flushed and out of breath, she dropped upon the grass.

"Wherever did you learn to dance like that?" asked Molly and Flossie, who were standing together.

"I didn't learn," said Nancy; "I knew how myself."

Nancy had never enjoyed anything like that party. When the time came for the little guests to depart, they assured Dorothy that they had had a delightful time. Nancy expressed herself in her usual blunt manner. "I'm glad I got ducked," she said, "because I've had such a nice time to pay fer it." And as Molly and Flossie walked home together, Flossie said, "Well, Nancy did *twuly* go to the party, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Molly, "but who'd 'a' s'posed she'd go that way?"

CHAPTER IV

NANCY ENTERTAINS

ONE bright afternoon Mrs. Dainty sat in her long, cool parlor entertaining Molly's mamma, and Nancy Ferris was the subject of their conversation.

"The poor child seems like a little wild creature," said Mrs. Dainty. "Do you know she actually feared that I wished John to punish her for falling from the tree into our pond. Then when she was invited to stay, she seemed so thankful for the afternoon's pleasure that I really think something ought to be done for her."

"I know," said Mrs. Merton, "and we have often tried to help her, but while Nancy is obliged to remain at home I fear that she will be the same Nancy whatever we do.

"I do not like to have Molly play with her; for, while I am sorry for Nancy, I do not think that her wild pranks are a good example for any little girl."

What would the two ladies have thought if they had known just at that moment where their little daughters were?

For some days after Dorothy's party Nancy had thought of little else, and she had become possessed of the idea that she would like, in some way, to entertain. Never had Nancy felt so poor. Her home was out of the question; what *could* she devise which would please the children? At last an idea flashed through her mind

which startled her with its daring and magnificence. Could she carry it into execution? Would the children accept?

She pondered long upon the scheme, and the longer she thought about it, the finer it seemed and the more feasible to accomplish.

On that afternoon when Mrs. Merton and Mrs. Dainty were talking of Nancy, Nancy was urging the girls to accept her invitation to the feast which she insisted that she did have, "truly honest."

Dorothy was spending the afternoon with Molly and Flossie, and while they were talking, Inez Meredith and Jeanette Earl joined the little group.

"What are you all talking about?" asked Jeanette.

"They're talkin' 'bout my party what I've invited them to, and you can come,

too, if yer want to. I'd like to have yer," said Nancy, who stood looking with eager eyes from one face to another, wondering if her pleading would prevail.

"Where are you going to have your party?" asked Inez.

"It's a peach party," announced Nancy, grandly, "so of course it's got to be in a peach orchard."

"You haven't a peach orchard, Nancy Ferris," said Jeanette, impatiently, for she believed that Nancy was planning to invite them to something fine, only to laugh at them if they seemed to believe her.

"Who said I had?" snapped Nancy, now thoroughly provoked.

"There's a man what's got a big peach orchard next to my house, and the boys plagued him just awful, gettin' in and

stealin' the peaches. They're big enough and han'some enough to make anybody want to steal 'em; but *we* haven't got to," she cried triumphantly.

"The man said if I would watch the place, and yell at the boys and drive them off when they came to steal, I could invite some nice little girls, that is, real nice little girls, into the orchard, and we could call it a party, and have all the peaches we want.

"It's a lovely place, the peaches are all red and yellow; I do wish yer'd come. It's all the kind of party I can give," she added, with a little choke in her voice.

The little girls looked at each other.

"What would you do?" asked Inez, her face showing plainly that she wished to go.

"I 'most think we'd ought to go," ventured Molly, who had no idea how far away Nancy lived; besides, she thought it would be delightful to eat some of the luscious peaches, and, at the same time, please Nancy, whom she pitied in her kind little heart.

"I'm sure we'd better go," said Jeanette; but little Flossie looked doubtful.

"Hadn't we better ask our mammas first?" she asked, her blue eyes very round, and her little hands clasping and unclasping eagerly.

"Oh, there won't be time!" said Nancy, "there won't be time! You'll have to come right along *now*, 'thout waitin' for *anything*, or you'll be too late for the party!"

Her face showed such an eager anxiety that the little girls concluded to go at

once, and Nancy seemed relieved when they were trudging along toward the other side of the town. Not one of the children had any idea where Nancy lived, so they trotted along a bit behind her, thus allowing her to show them the way.

Nancy tried to dazzle them with rather wild tales regarding the size of the peaches and the great quantity of fruit with which the trees were laden, but it was a silent little troop to whom she talked.

The truth was, that each little girl knew she was doing very wrong to go away with Nancy without asking permission, and while they walked steadily forward toward the promised fruit, each had an uncomfortable feeling that she was really very naughty.

The sun was very hot, the road was

white and dusty, and soon the children began to feel that they were getting too far from home.

Dorothy was the first to speak.

"Aren't we very far from home, Nancy?" said she, glancing furtively over her shoulder and seeing not even a turret of the stone house.

"No, 'ndeed," said Nancy, cheerfully, "we ain't far 't all, yet." Then, seeing Dorothy's hasty backward glance, she said, "The reason yer can't see yer house is 'cause this road bends so."

"I suppose that's it," said Dorothy; "but, Nancy," she continued, "is the peach party much farther now?"

Nancy hesitated; then a bright idea came into her crafty little mind. "See that little red house over there? way over in among those trees, I mean."

"Oh, yes," they could all see that plainly.

"Well, the peach orchard is right next to that; so that ain't far, is it?" she queried.

"Why," said Inez, "that's ever so much farther than we've come yet."

"No, 'tain't," said Nancy, bluntly; "anything you can see can't be very far off, can it, Molly?"

"Oh, no," answered Molly, cheerfully, who really was very eager to go, and very much afraid that the others would turn back. "I can see that little red house just as plain as anything," said she.

"'Course you can," was Nancy's answer; and again they trudged on.

Once they stopped while Flossie took off her shoe and shook out a "rock," as

she called the pebble, which, no doubt, felt very large inside her shoe.

At last Jeanette became impatient. "Look here, Nancy Ferris," said she, "I've kept looking and looking at that little red house, and I b'lieve the more we walk the farther off it is."

"Well, it ain't," said Nancy, stoutly; "it's nearer and nearer all the time, and when yer see the peaches yer'll be glad yer came, see 'f yer ain't!"

Again the children plucked up their courage. It was so hot and dusty, and they were so tired; but a whole beautiful orchard of peaches! For a time they walked in silence, when suddenly Nancy uttered a resounding "Hi, Jimmy!"

A boy with patched overalls and a straw hat with a torn brim stood peering over the wall.

"What yer want, Nancy?" he asked.

"Is he gone?" she asked.

"Yep," answered the boy, with a grin, "but won't you catch it! My!"

"Be still," said Nancy, "or I'll —" but Jimmy did not wait for her.

The moment that she turned toward him, her eyes blazing and her hand uplifted, he dropped behind the wall, and Nancy resumed her walk as if nothing had happened.

"I'll tell you what," whispered Molly to Dorothy, "I don't b'lieve there's going to be any peaches."

"Oh-o-o! do you s'pose she'd say there were if there weren't, Molly?" said Dorothy.

"I don't know," said Molly, "but just see how far we've walked and there's no —"

"Yer have ter turn off here," called Nancy, who was walking ahead, and turning into a pretty little lane, the children saw the peach orchard just before them.

How large and ripe they looked! How like red and yellow velvet they gleamed among their green foliage.

"What did I tell yer?" asked Nancy, triumphantly; "didn't I say they were just the biggest, han'somest peaches yer ever saw? Now come right in," she continued. "Yer'll have ter crawl under the bars, the man forgot ter open the gate for me, but we don't mind that."

So the children entered the orchard, and when they were seated on the grass, Nancy, as hostess, began to pick the peaches and to toss them into the laps of her guests. They were talking and

laughing gayly now. It was cool and shady where they sat, and their feast of delicious fruit made them forget, for a time, their aching feet.

"See this peach," said Dorothy, "see the sharp crease in it as if it had a string tied around it."

"Yes, and see this one," said Flossie; "one side is red and the other side is yellow. I'm going to eat the yellow side first."

"Oh, Nancy!" Inez was saying, "this party is just the — "

"Here, here! you little beggars, what are you doing in my orchard?" cried a loud, angry voice, which so terrified the little girls that they sat, white-faced; the fruit which they had been eating dropped from their hands, and they were for a moment too frightened to stir.

Nearer and nearer came the heavy footsteps until, between the trees, they saw a tall, dark man who scowled as he asked again, "What are you doing in my orchard?"

The children ran this way and that, half wild to make their escape; but in their fright they forgot where the bars were through which they gained entrance, so they stood huddled in a little frightened group in an angle of the fence.

No one was more frightened than Nancy. At the first sound of that voice she scaled the fence like a monkey, so agile was she, and left the children to take the rebuke which she so richly deserved.

The owner of the orchard heard the children's voices and expected to find a lot of little ragamuffins helping them-

selves to his fruit, and when he stood before a group of pretty, well-dressed children, he was simply amazed.

"You do not look like the children who would be likely to steal peaches. What do you mean by coming into my orchard like this?"

Dorothy stepped forward bravely, although her lip quivered. "We *didn't* steal," said she, proudly; "we were *invited* to this peach party. Nancy Ferris gave the party."

"Nancy Ferris, eh? So this was Nancy's doings. Well, I'll settle with her later," said the tall, dark man. "Now, little girls, suppose you tell me all about this. You don't look like children whose folks would like to have you play with such a girl as Nancy."

His voice sounded kindly, and Jeanette

found her own voice. "We didn't play with Nancy Ferris," said she. "We never play with her, but this morning she came over where we live and said that the man who had the peach orchard said that if she'd help him keep the boys *out* of the orchard she might invite some little girls *in*, and she made us walk ever so far from home, and she hurried us like everything."

"I never said so," said the man; "Nancy ought to be ashamed to tell you so. She probably thought I had gone to market and would be gone all the after noon, but I only went down to the town, and came back sooner than I expected. She thought she had plenty of time to get into the orchard and out again, and that I should never know it. I'll let you through the gate this time, and, stay a

moment, I'll give you some peaches to take with you, since you meant no wrong, and I'll settle with Nancy later."

So each little girl was given three of the largest peaches, and let out through a great gate which they had not before noticed.

A moment Dorothy hesitated; the man smiled and asked her what she wanted.

"You won't hurt Nancy, will you?" she asked, a world of pity in her blue eyes; "mamma says that Nancy's mother never tells her how to be good."

"Dear little girl," was the answer; "I have no idea of hurting Nancy, but I shall have to talk with her father and see if she can't be kept out of my orchard after this."

Dorothy, Molly, and Flossie turned toward home, Inez and Jeanette walking behind them.

"There's that Jimmy boy," said Jeanette; "let's ask him where Nancy lives."

"Oh, yes," said Inez, "but what's the use? we wouldn't ever go there."

"I *shall* go there this minute if he tells me where it is," answered Jeanette.

"What for?" asked the others in dismay. Were they not sufficiently tired to long to see their own homes instead of hunting for Nancy?

"Because," said Jeanette, "I shall tell her what the man told us, and that it was horrid to tell us it was a *party* when it was just *stealing*."

"Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy!" she shouted, as the boy who approached them vaulted over the fence, and with fishing-rod over his shoulder was walking away toward the little stream which sparkled in the sun, whistling as he went.

"*Jim — my!*" shouted Jeanette and Inez together.

Jimmy turned. "Hello!" said he; "are ye fond er peaches?"

"Oh, wasn't she horrid!" said Jeanette. "She told us the man said she could invite us, and he didn't. He said he didn't; and when she saw him coming, she climbed the gate and ran away as fast as ever she could, and left us there; and the man was going to scold, but he found we didn't know we were stealing, but just thought it was a party, and he let us out and gave us these peaches.

"I don't like peaches as well as I did. Here, you can have these if you want them, if you'll just tell me where Nancy's house is."

Jimmy took the peaches — what boy would not? He took an enormous bite

out of one of them, and as well as he could, around such a mouthful, directed them to Nancy's house.

"See that piece er fence with a birch tree hanging over it? And see a little shed jest beyond that? Well, that's the end of Nancy's house."

Dorothy, Molly, and Flossie sat on the wall by the side of the road while Jeanette and Inez walked to where the white birch hung over the fence and then disappeared around the little old shed.

They were not gone long when Dorothy cried, "There they come; I guess Nancy wasn't at home. Didn't you find her?" said Dorothy, when they were near enough to hear.

"I guess we did! The first thing, when we walked 'round her house, we saw a door open which led into a cellar,

and we heard a noise that made us look in, and there was Nancy in a barrel, — no, I mean a hogshead, — well, I don't know which it was, but anyway it was big, and we scared her like anything," and Jeanette stopped to catch her breath.

"And she had an old iron poker in her hand to poke the man with, for she thought he was just coming after her," said Inez, half laughing; "you don't know how funny she looked standing in that barrel with just her head and that poker sticking up over the edge."

"She must have looked funny," said Dorothy; "but let's be going home." So the tired, dusty little girls trudged along, and all the way they talked of Nancy's naughtiness, quite forgetting that they were at fault in consenting to go from home without permission.

CHAPTER V

NANCY AT HOME

THE light breeze blew around the old weather-beaten house, and tossed Nancy's dark locks and her fluttering skirts as she spun around in a mad little dance of her own invention.

Once she stamped her foot to mark the measure, but often she snapped her brown fingers like castanets. Her lithe little body swayed to the wild song which she was singing, and she looked a perfect gypsy as she skipped across the grass. Her flying figure made an odd shadow upon a patch of clover, and Nancy, bending to it, danced toward, then away from,

the spot, the shadow ever following her flying feet.

"Here you, Nancy!"

Nancy paused, her hand still raised, as if she were about to snap the fingers. Had some one called her?

"Nancy! Where on airth are ye? Oh, there ye be, a tearing 'round as usual. You come right in an' put on some pertaters, an' you *stay* in 'til they're cooked and ye've peeled them. Do ye hear? I've got to go down street a spell, an' I want them pertaters for dinner; after that I don't keer *where* ye go."

Having thus directed Nancy, Mrs. Ferris sallied forth to glean the latest gossip, and to add any bit which she had acquired. Nancy looked after the retreating figure, a strange tumult raging in her wild little heart.

"She wants me to boil the pertaters, an' then she says she don't care *where* I go. Yes, that's just it. I wish there was somebody who *did* care where I went, or what I did."

With a sigh the little girl turned from the doorway, and going back into the grimy kitchen, proceeded to fill a rusty kettle with the potatoes, and to stir the smouldering fire that there might be heat enough to cook them.

Some little blue flames rewarded her efforts, and soon the water was boiling vigorously. Nancy sat upon a rickety chair which had once boasted a back, but which now had but a seat and three legs, and upon this she tilted back and forth while she waited to see the steam rise from the kettle. Then she bounded to the floor, and out into the yard again,

where the sunlight still lay in golden patches upon the clover.

Great burdocks grew next the weather-beaten fence, their broad leaves coated with dust, and their purple blossoms tempting the great yellow and black bumblebees. Nancy watched the bees and tried to mock their droning song.

"I wish she looked like Dorothy's mother," thought the little girl. "Dorothy's mother walks like this," and indeed it would have been difficult to find two people more unlike than Mrs. Dainty and Mrs. Ferris.

"I b'lieve I'll find something to dress up in and play I'm Mrs. Dainty," said Nancy, and into the house, and up the creaking stairway she hurried, in a wild search for something which should look sufficiently fine and ladylike, as she imag-

ined, to make her little self appear like Dorothy's mother.

A search in the closets revealed nothing which to Nancy seemed suitable. At last she decided that an old shawl, which had long been used as a counterpane, would do for a train, if pinned securely at the waist, but something nice must be found for the shoulders to make her appear really fine. A train was not nearly enough.

"P'raps there's something in the attic," said Nancy, half aloud.

Up the dark attic stairs she crept, dragging the plaid shawl after her. At the head of the stairs she paused to look about her. She had never before ventured to explore the attic. Its dusky light and web-hung rafters had no charm for her, but to-day she was in search of something which the rest of the house did not afford.

Was it likely that there would be anything fine in this musty, dingy place?

Her eyes were now accustomed to the light which crept in at the one dirty window, and Nancy for the first time saw a strong wooden box which had been pushed well in under the eaves. She took one step toward it and promptly stumbled into the shawl. Quickly scrambling to her feet she was soon at the box, trying to turn the key which was in the lock. It was rusty and resisted Nancy's efforts, until one final tug caused the key to turn, and the box stood open before her.

She found a number of parcels, carefully wrapped in papers, and printed programmes were tacked to the inside of the box cover.

Nancy's own mother had been a *danseuse*, which accounted for the little girl's

natural grace in the wild little dances which she executed.

The box, which she now knelt beside, had belonged to her mother, and contained costumes, or parts of costumes, which she had worn during her career upon the stage.

Nancy's stepmother had no housewifely instincts. House-cleaning was a thing unheard of in her home, if such it could be called, and the old cobwebbed wooden box in the attic had never been disturbed by her. The attic and the cellar were two places about which Mrs. Ferris never troubled herself.

The first parcel which Nancy unfolded contained play bills, and she laid that aside and took up a larger bundle which seemed to have many wrappings. When at last the papers were removed, Nancy

stared with wide eyes and parted lips at the dazzling garment which she held in her hand.

It was a skirt of rose-colored gauze, covered with many spangles which even in the dim light of the attic glistened and sparkled like brilliant gems. Nancy laid it carefully upon the wrapping paper and proceeded to open another parcel. This contained a blue satin jacket having a wonderful pattern embroidered about its edge, the scrolls and flowers wrought in crystal beads. "How came these beautiful things to be in our attic?" thought Nancy.

Cautiously she slipped one arm into the sleeve of the jacket and paused to note the beauty of the embroidery; then thrusting the other arm into the sleeve she moved nearer to the window to see

the garment in a brighter light. It was indeed beautiful. In disgust she unpinned the old shawl and let it drop upon the floor. Then throwing the pink gauze skirt over her head she fastened it beneath the satin jacket, and stood for a moment looking down at the rosy gauze and the glittering spangles. Then, gathering the soft pink folds in her hands lest she should trip and tear them, she danced, as she had never danced before, across the uneven floor, with footsteps so light that they were almost noiseless. Back and forth she flew as if the bright-hued dress had lent wings to her feet.

Suddenly a door was loudly slammed, an odor of something burning found its way to the attic, and Nancy, revolving rapidly upon her toes, paused with sudden recollection.

"*The pertaters!*" she exclaimed.

"*Nancy! Nancy!*" called a loud, angry voice.

"Ye've let the pertaters burn to a *crisp!* Land! where *is* the child?"

Again the door closed with a bang, and Nancy, crouching beside the box, waited in breathless silence lest a movement upon her part should be heard and make known her hiding-place.

After a few moments Nancy ventured to rise from her cramped position, and commenced to remove her finery, and to replace it in the paper from which she had taken it. Carefully she put the parcels back into the box and turned the rusty key. She would visit the attic again some day and wear the pretty, sparkling garments which had so filled her with delight.

"'*Nancy! Nancy!*' called a loud, angry voice."

Folding the old shawl she placed it upon the box for a cushion, and sat down to wait until it should be safe to go downstairs.

"I oughtn't to have burned the pertaters," she said to herself; "but how did I know they'd burn. I put in lots of water. I don't b'lieve I want any dinner," she continued; then laughing impishly, she said: "It wouldn't be very pleasant to eat dinner with her *now*. Didn't she holler as if she was mad, though!"

A long time Nancy sat upon the old box, hoping to hear the street door close, and then the sound of shuffling footsteps down the walk; but, although she listened intently, no sound reached the attic, and she began to think that she would have to stay in the garret all the afternoon.

"She never stays in," said Nancy, in a whisper, "not even when it's stormy. I wonder if she knows I'm up here, and is staying in to catch me when I come down? I wonder if those things in the box b'longed to her? I don't b'lieve they do. She never comes up here, and she would if those dresses were her own. I'd like to know how they came here."

The old box, cushioned with the shawl, made quite a luxurious seat, and Nancy swung her thin little legs and softly hummed, forgetting the fear of detection.

"'F I dared to, I'd dance again; but if she caught me dancing I don't know *what* she'd do. Why *don't* she go off down street? I'm tired of staying up here."

Hark! Nancy held her breath. Yes, some one was talking down at the gate. Softly she crept along the floor, and hold-

ing her skirts back she peeped cautiously out of the window. Yes, there they were at the gate, Mrs. Ferris and Mrs. Harkins, the one intently listening, the other talking rapidly and shaking her head as if very much in earnest.

"I tell you what 'tis," the neighbor was saying, "I'd whip her well if she was my child for running off an' lettin' them things burn on. I think yer too easy with her, a-letting her run all over creation. Ye never know where she is, and I do say it was aggrivating fer her ter run off to-day and burn yer pertaters to a crisp.

"As I say, ef she was mine, I'd whip her well to pay fer it;" and the woman looked as if she thought she had given good advice.

"Well, fer one thing, she *ain't* my child.

I'm only her stepmother, and I don't think it would do any good if I did whip her. I'm willin' ter say I don't understand Nancy.

"Talkin' to her don't do any good, and, as I said, I don't think beatin' would either. I guess it would puzzle most any one to tell how to deal with Nancy; she's a ticket I tell ye."

"Well, Jimmy and 'Mandy have ter have a stout switchin' just 'bout so often," declared Mrs. Harkins.

"An' they ain't neither of 'em what ye'd exactly call *patterns*," said Mrs. Ferris, with a grim smile.

"But neither one of 'em is such an imp as Nancy Ferris, I'll say that for 'em," replied Mrs. Harkins.

"Well, Nancy's a puzzle," said Mrs. Ferris, "and I will say, I don't know

what to do with her. I'm 'bout ready to give up trying ter do anything with her, or ter keep things together. Ever since Ferris went off this spring, it has seemed as ef I didn't know which way ter turn, and every time Nancy's played one of her pranks I've declared I'd — " but here the speaker's voice dropped to a lower key, and Nancy wondered what her stepmother could have threatened. Whatever it was, it surprised Mrs. Harkins, who lifted her hands and let them fall without saying a word.

" Well, I've been trying to make something out of her," said Mrs. Ferris, " but I declare I don't know how ter do it. Fer one thing I don't have much time."

It was Mrs. Harkins who smiled this time, for every one knew that if Nancy's stepmother spent more time at home,

the little girl would have less reason to roam about the town.

"Well, I must be goin'," remarked Mrs. Harkins, "and I must say, I hope you'll find Nancy sometime between now and to-morrow mornin'."

"I guess I'll go along with ye," said Mrs. Ferris, "and p'raps I'll find Nancy on the way, and make her come home."

The gate latch clicked and the two women walked down the street; while Nancy danced a wild little jig, and laughed to think that while at the attic window she looked after their retreating figures, they were wondering where she was, and if they might meet her as they strolled through the town.

Nancy turned toward the stairway, but retraced her steps to peep once more from the window. What if Mrs. Ferris

should change her mind and come back! No, she could plainly see the figures of the two women just disappearing around a bend at the end of the long road. She looked longingly at the box which held the bright garments in which she had danced so gayly early in the afternoon.

"I'll come up here every chance I get and wear those pretty things, and dance and dance until I have to sit down to get my breath. It'll have to be when she's out though. If she caught me dancing up here, she'd take that box and all the things in it and put it where I couldn't ever find it. I just know she would."

The little girl had now reached the lower stair, and very cautiously she opened the door and looked about, so great was her fear of being caught and her hiding-place known. True, she had

seen the two women walking away from the house, but she could not help wondering if, by any chance, they had returned.

Hearing no sound of voice or footstep Nancy gained courage and ran lightly down the second flight of stairs to the kitchen.

Upon the table, which was covered with a tattered cloth, was an old blue-edged pie plate which held a part of a loaf of very dry bread and a small piece of ham which was nearly all fat. On the hearth of the stove stood the old rusty kettle, the burned potatoes still in it.

Nancy ate the ham, nibbled at the piece of hard, dry bread, and then, deciding that she was not very hungry, she ran out into the yard and up the road in the opposite direction to that which Mrs. Ferris had taken.

"Hello, Nancy! Where're ye goin'?" shouted a voice from behind a clump of bushes.

"Nowhere," said Nancy, as she hastened toward the place where the voice seemed to be.

"Just where I'm goin'. Come along," and Jimmy Harkins laughed gleefully.

He was perched upon a big rock by the side of the road, and the tall bushes had hidden him so that Nancy, at first, had been unable to see him. Now, she climbed upon the great rock beside him, glad to find some one to talk to after her long stay in the attic.

"What yer settin' up here fer?" demanded Nancy, as she pulled a long slender twig from the bush beside the rock and began to strip off the leaves.

"I'm settin' up here," said Jimmy.

"because I don't keer ter go home. Mother told me to split some kindlin' and I fergot to, and when she sent me out fer water, I lost the pail down the well. That made her pretty mad, and she said if I didn't find some way to fish that pail up, she'd whip me."

"Did you try to, Jimmy?" asked Nancy.

"Guess I did," said Jimmy. "I went'n got my fishin' line, and rigged a sorter hook; but the old thing wouldn't come up, so I climbed the fence and came over here. Now I *won't* go home, fer I tore my pants gettin' over the fence, and I don't know what she'll do when she sees them. I ain't goin' home to-night."

Nancy laid her hand on Jimmy's arm and looked earnestly into his face as she said, "You'll be afraid to stay here all night, Jimmy Harkins."

"Shan't stay on this rock," answered Jimmy, stoutly. "I'll get into an old barn up the road a little way. P'raps it'll scare her some ef I don't come home to-night, and maybe she won't feel so mad by to-morrow. Anyhow, I *won't* go home to-night."

Jimmy tried to whistle carelessly, but Nancy knew that he was watching the bend in the road anxiously, all the time fearing that at any moment he might see his mother coming toward them. Suddenly he stopped whistling.

"Look here, Nancy," he said, "you're looking down that road as much as I am. I don't want to see mother comin' 'round the corner; that's why I'm lookin'. What *you* watchin' fer? What *you* been doin'?"

"I let the pertaters burn up this noon,"

said Nancy. "I went up in the attic to look for — oh, just to look for something, and I forgot all about them. She came home while I was up there, and I heard her tell your mother that she was tired of takin' care of me.

"She hollered upstairs to me, but I didn't answer, an' she's gone down town with your mother. I wouldn't dare to stay outdoors all night; I don't see how you dare to, Jimmy Harkins. Won't you be scared before mornin'?"

"Pooh, no! *I'm a boy*," declared Jimmy.

"Well," said Nancy, "I'm goin' to stay out just as long as I dare to, 'til it's most dark; then I'll have to go home."

She flicked the dust from her shabby shoes with the little birch switch, and in her heart wished she were a boy like

Jimmy. Then she would dare to stay in a barn all night; only, she reflected, as she looked at Jimmy's sturdy figure, "If I was a boy I wouldn't go home *at all.*"

CHAPTER VI

DOROTHY IMPERSONATES THE LORELEI

THE great garden was full of sunshine, the butterflies chased each other across the lawn, and over the gravel walks the swaying branches of the trees cast long, cool shadows.

In the loveliest spot in the garden three little girls were trying to decide what they would play.

"I wish we could think of some lovely *new* game, but I can't. Would you like to play tag?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, it's too warm to play that; we'll roast," said Molly.

"S'pose we play hide-and-seek," suggested Flossie.

Dorothy impersonates the Lorelei.

"We played that yesterday," objected Molly.

"Well, never mind if we did," said Dorothy; "we'll play it a little while because Flossie wants to, and then we'll play something else."

"All right," said Molly; "lemme count and see who'll be *it*."

So Dorothy and Flossie stood side by side, while Molly commenced in a funny little sing-song to count: —

"In a minute,
In a minute,
'Tis a game, and you are in it;
Counting straight,
And counting true,
Every one is out but you."

"That's *me*," said Flossie. "All wight, I'll blind my eyes and count some, and then you'll be weady."

Now Flossie could not count correctly, but she wished to play "fair," so she kept her eyes covered (nothing would have induced her to peek), and saying over and over again the few numbers which she knew, she waited until she thought she had given Dorothy and Molly plenty of time to hide.

Then off she scampered to find them. She ran this way and that, looking in every place she could think of, but no Molly or Dorothy could she find. She looked behind the large tree-trunks and the hedges. She peeped into the summer-house, and ran across the lawn to the tall hollyhocks to see if the little girls were hiding there. She hunted in many places where she thought they might be, and countless places where they could not possibly be, until at last she cried, "Oh,

Dorothy! Molly! I don't know *where* you are! You'll have to find yourselves."

Then two little laughing faces peeped out from behind the rose-covered pillars of the piazza where they had been hiding, and Flossie laughed as she said, "Oh, that's the vewy place I forgot to look in."

"Wasn't it a fine place to hide in, though," said Molly. "We stood behind the pillars, and just held our dresses back real tight, and we could see you all the time between the vines, when you couldn't see us."

"It was a nice place to hide in," agreed Flossie; "but. I guess I'd rather play something else, if I did want to play this first. There's lots and lots of weal nice places to hide in here, but they're such vewy hard places that you can't ever find anybody what hides."

Molly chose the next game, saying, "Let's play puss-in-the-corner." They played it with a will until they began to feel very warm, and they seated themselves upon the grass. Dorothy took off her hat and fanned her flushed face so vigorously that her curls were blown into yellow tangles that seemed to catch the sunlight in their meshes. Molly took off her hat and laid it beside her on the grass, and Flossie, as usual, removed hers because the others did.

"How warm it is!" said Molly. "It's too warm to play, and I 'spise to sit still."

"You what?" asked Flossie.

"I 'spise to sit still," repeated Molly. "Don't you know what 'spise means, Flossie Barnet? Our girl says it, only she 'spises pedlers and ragmen and things. *I* 'spise sitting still."

"Well, I'll tell you a story that you won't 'spise," said Dorothy. "You'll like it, I know you will. It's a story my mamma told me one day when it rained and I couldn't go out to play."

"Oh, do tell it! do tell it!" said Molly and Flossie together. "What's it 'bout?"

"It's 'bout a lady whose picture hangs in our parlor," answered Dorothy.

"In the picture the lady's got lots and lots of yellow hair, and she's got a sort of a muslin sash on, and she has no shoes or stockings, but her feet are lovely, and her face is pretty, too. Her name's Lolly."

"Oh, what a funny name!" cried Flossie. "Did you say it was Lolly?"

"Yes, *Lolly*," answered Dorothy, "though it doesn't sound just like that when mamma says it. Seems if it sounded more like 'Lorly,' but I can't remember.

Mamma says Lolly was a sort of fairy lady that lived in the Rhine, that's a big river that — oh, I've forgotten where, but it's ever so far away, and she used to come up out of the water and sit on the rocks and look, oh, so beautiful, that all the people in boats on the river looked and looked at her, 'til they 'most couldn't look at anything else.

"Then she used to comb her shining hair with a gold comb. Oh, yes, and I 'most forgot to tell you she had a sweet, *sweet* voice, and she sang and sang till the fishermen got too near where she was sitting, and the boats went on to the big rocks, and they got lost. I don't like *that* part of it, but the part where she sings and sings and combs her golden hair is just beautiful, isn't it?"

"It's a splendid story," said Flossie.

"Wouldn't you like to have seen her combing her hair wiv a gold comb?"

"Guess I *would*," said Molly. "Oh, let's *play* it," she cried a moment later.

"Play what?" asked Dorothy in surprise.

"Let's play that story. We said we didn't know what to play. You be Lolly, Dorothy, your hair's so yellow, and Flossie and me'll be the fishermens."

"Oh, I'd like to play it, but I haven't any comb. You wait here and I'll go and get one."

"All right," said Molly, and "all wight," called Flossie. "We'll be thinking where'll be the pwettiest place to play it." So while Dorothy ran toward the house, the two little girls began to look for a suitable place in which to play their lovely new game.

Dorothy ran up the steps and hastened across the hall; then up the long stairway to her own little room. From her pretty dressing-case she took the slender comb, and hesitated a moment as she tried to think if she should take the brush, too. "No, mamma didn't say Lolly had a brush at all. She just said comb," said Dorothy, "so I'll leave the brush here."

The maid looked after Dorothy's flying figure as she ran along the path to where Molly and Flossie were sitting. "Sure there's never a chance of mischief when that Ferris child stays away," said she, and away to the attic she sped to help Mrs. Dainty with some work which had been planned for that day; so mistress and maid were busily occupied, and the children held high carnival in the garden.

"This comb has some gilt on it," said Dorothy, as she joined her playmates, "so we'll play it's *all* gold. Now where'll I sit to sing and comb my hair?"

"We didn't find a place pretty enough," said Molly. "We could play the grass was water if we just had a stone for you to sit on, like Lolly did."

For a moment the children looked about, but no place in all the garden seemed just fitting for the game, until they came to the little pond, when Dorothy cried, "Why not play it here with real water?"

"So we can," agreed Molly; "and you could sit on the rocks in the middle where the fountain is, if you could get there."

"I *can* get there," said Dorothy, gayly; "it's the very thing."

"You'll wet your feet," said Flossie,

"and then your mamma will be weal povoked."

"It won't hurt me to wet my *feet;* you get cold when you wet your *shoes*, and I shan't wet my shoes; I'm going to take them off."

This speech was received with shouts of delight. "Oh, you'll look more like Lolly then, because she didn't have shoes or stockings on."

Dorothy sat down upon the grass and began to tug at the buttons on her boots.

On the day of the party the fountain in the centre of the tiny pond sent a number of crystal jets playing high into the air, as if from the heart of the great rock, and the water in the pool came nearly to Nancy's waist when she stood waiting to be helped out; but on this day the fountain was not playing, and the water in the

pond was only a few inches deep, having been allowed to run off in order that some workmen from the village might make some repairs which were needed on the basin of the pond. The workmen, however, had decided to finish some repairs on another place, so the children had the garden and the pond all to themselves.

When Dorothy's shoes and stockings were removed, she lifted her skirts, although they could not possibly touch the shallow water, and, stepping carefully, she made her way to the great rock, and, seating herself upon it, she posed as nearly like the figure in the picture as possible, and commenced to comb her hair. Suddenly she stopped. "I ought to be singing," said she.

"Oh, yes," cried Molly, "that's what you said. You said Lolly sang all the

time; you'd ought to sing to make it seem like it."

"If she singed all the time she must have got tired, mus'n't she, Dorothy?" said Flossie.

"I don't know, mamma didn't say. But what would you sing?"

"Sing 'Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?'" said Molly, "you sang that to me the other day, and it sounded lovely."

"But the Lolly lady wouldn't sing that," said Dorothy, in fine contempt.

"What would she sing, do you s'pose?" asked Molly.

That was a difficult question to answer. Dorothy thought a moment, and then said, "As long as I can't think what words she'd sing, — and perhaps she didn't sing any, — I'll just hum a pretty tune, and after I sing awhile, you must come out to me."

"We haven't any boats like the fishermens," objected Flossie.

"We'll take *our* shoes and stockings off, and walk to her; we can make believe we're in boats, Flossie," said Molly.

That was a charming idea. Off came the stockings and shoes, and into the water stepped the two little girls, as fishermen, looking ever toward the pretty little nymph who sat singing, and combing her hair in the sunlight. It was a funny little tune which she sang, but Molly and Flossie admired it.

"I think that must be just like what Lolly did twuly sing," said Flossie.

"Yes, that's what I think," said Molly. "But Dorothy," she cried, "we're almost to you now. What'll we do when we play our boats got lost? If we sit down the least bit, we'll get awful wet."

"Oh, we mus'n't get wet," said Dorothy. "If we get wet, I don't know what mamma—"

Fizz! An umbrella-shaped shower descended upon them, soaking the Rhine fairy and the two tiny fishermen, and frightening them nearly out of their wits. Dorothy scrambled down from the rocks, and, clasping hands, the three dripping little figures wended their way toward the house.

The gardener, quite unaware of the plans for repairing the bed of the pond, had turned the screw up at the house which set the fountain playing, and thus unintentionally spoiled the new game.

As the children reached the house, the maid was just sweeping the piazza.

"Where's mamma?" said Dorothy, in a very tearful voice.

"Land sakes, Miss Dorothy, ain't you and them two little girls a sight! Your mamma's in the dining room, and I'll speak to her," and she hastened in to tell her mistress of this latest piece of mischief.

"Why, Dorothy! why, children! where *have* you been, and what have you been doing?"

Dorothy ran to her mamma, and between her sobs she cried, "Oh, mamma, I told Molly and Flossie about the Lolly, and we were just playing it, when the fountain commenced to play, and we didn't know it was going to, and so we got all wet."

"*What* were you playing?" asked Mrs. Dainty, a puzzled look on her fine face.

"*Lolly*, sitting on the rock, and I was just singing and combing my hair," she finished with a sob. Dorothy was a ner-

vous child, and the sudden playing of the fountain had frightened her.

It was with difficulty that Mrs. Dainty could help laughing as she thought of the little nymph combing her golden hair.

"And we were fishermens, only we didn't get lost in the water," said Flossie.

"I should think we '*most* got lost in it," said Molly, as she tried to squeeze some water from her skirt.

Dorothy sat just where she caught the full force of the fountain, but Molly and Flossie were drenched in quite another way. The sudden playing of the fountain, together with Dorothy's frightened scream, made them start back suddenly, and losing their balance, they promptly sat down in the pool, and when they scrambled to their feet it would have been very hard

to say which little girl had sat under the fountain.

Mrs. Dainty and the maid took the three little girls in hand and found dry clothing for them, while the children vied with each other in describing the beauties of their new game "before it was spoiled by that horrid wet old fountain," as Dorothy called it.

When again the children stepped out into the garden and walked down to the great gate, Molly said, "The next time let's play Lolly on dry land."

"Yes, indeed," said Flossie, "it was a weal nice game."

"So it was," said Dorothy; "and the next time we'll play it on the other side of the garden, just as far from that old fountain as we can be."

CHAPTER VII

NANCY

IT was some time since the children had seen Nancy Ferris, when one morning a story was circulated through the village that made every one pity Nancy as she had never been pitied before.

It was well known that Nancy's father had gone away early in the summer, leaving his wife and Nancy to take care of themselves as best they could, and later, news of his death reached the town.

One morning Nancy found herself deserted. Her stepmother, finding it very hard to support two, and having little or no interest in Nancy, decided to care only

for herself, and accordingly went her way, leaving Nancy alone in the dilapidated old house, with food enough to last possibly three days, and then — perhaps some one would care for her; and some one did.

How the children pitied Nancy, and not one of them more deeply than did Dorothy.

"Oh, mamma!" she cried, her eyes filled with tears, "can't we do something for Nancy? It must be so lonesome in that old house, with no mamma to love her."

Mrs. Dainty did not tell Dorothy that Nancy's stepmother never had loved her. She thought that too dreadful for Dorothy to hear; but she promised to see what could be done for Nancy, and that made Dorothy happy. She knew that mamma always kept her promises.

Nancy was not an attractive child, and while the people of the village were unanimous in declaring that something must be done for her, no one seemed anxious to assume the task.

There was not a woman in the neighborhood of Nancy's home who did not think that some other woman ought to take the little girl, at least for a time. At the same time every woman applied to declared herself to be too busy, too nervous, endowed with a family already too large, and in fact it would be impossible to name the countless excuses made for leaving Nancy for "some one else" to care for.

Learning how matters stood, Mrs. Dainty realized that something must be done for the little girl beside talking of her condition.

Almost at the boundary line of the grounds surrounding the stone house stood a tiny stone cottage, which also belonged to the Daintys. Now, Mrs. Dainty had just received a letter from a lady who had been her governess years ago, in which she told her friend and former pupil that she had been able to save sufficient money to enable her to be nearly independent, adding that had she been able to keep the little home which she once owned, she would have been *so* happy.

Mrs. Dainty was reading the letter the second time, and wondering how she could, in some delicate manner, offer to assist her old governess, when a bright idea occurred to her. Why not ask her to make her home at the cottage, and in place of the rent, which she would find it

difficult to meet, take Nancy under her care and instruction.

"You will be conferring a great favor upon me," wrote Mrs. Dainty, "if you will accept my offer of the use of the little cottage, and lift an anxiety from my mind at the same time by caring for and teaching this little waif.

"She is a child, I believe, whom you, with your tact, which I so well remember, can train to be a good and useful little girl. I am not strong enough to care for her myself, but will, of course, meet all expenses, and shall feel very happy thus to have had a hand in making this poor child comfortable."

The letter was mailed early one morning, and at night a telegram arrived, saying: "Will be more than willing to accede. Am so thankful. Expect me to-morrow."

Mrs. Dainty with Dorothy drove over to the old house, which had been Nancy's home, and found the little girl sitting upon the steps, her hands clasped around her knees and a look of utter loneliness upon her little dark face.

On the walk facing her stood an angular woman who was evidently trying to induce Nancy to do something which she was very unwilling to do. The woman's back was toward the street, so she did not see the approaching carriage.

Nancy saw it and leaned forward with but slight interest. Nobody in a carriage had ever stopped at her door.

"I tell ye," shrieked the woman, "ef ye'd been any kind of a child, ye wouldn't 'a' been left alone, and as it is, I think pretty well of myself that I offer to take ye off the town and let ye help me

round the house in payment for yer keep."

Nancy sprang up excitedly, her black eyes blazing.

"I don't know what I'm goin' to do," she cried, "but I know what I *ain't* goin' to do. I ain't a-goin' to live with you. I've always known how you beat Jimmy and Mandy. Mother never *beat* me, if she has gone and left me now."

By this time the carriage had stopped, and Mrs. Dainty was walking rapidly up the path. Nancy and the angry woman were standing. Much abashed, the woman stepped aside, and Nancy, hardly knowing what she did, stretched out her hands to Mrs. Dainty.

"Nancy, I have come to bring you some good news. Will you go home with me to-night, and to-morrow let me tell

you what it is? I have made a nice home for you with a good, kind woman, a friend of mine, who will try in every way to be a mother to you. You will have good clothing and a pleasant home near Dorothy and me. To-morrow I will tell you all about it. Will you come?" asked Mrs. Dainty.

"In the *carriage* with you?" asked Nancy. "Oh, Mrs. Dainty, I'd go anywhere with you."

"Then come quickly, it is getting rather late for Dorothy to be out. Have you any things that you would like to bring with you?"

"I haven't any things to take with me, except an old box that's way up in the attic. It's got some pretty things in it; I'd like to take that." Mrs. Dainty ordered the coachman to get the box, and

Nancy walked before him, carrying an old lamp that he might find his way up the garret stairs.

When later, Nancy showed the contents of the box to Mrs. Dainty, a programme fluttered to the floor. Picking it up and glancing over the list of performers, the name, Nannette Ferris, arrested her attention. It sounded familiar, and at last, very clearly, Mrs. Dainty remembered where she had heard it. She had read some years before the story of a young woman of that name, who had been, for a brief season, a theatrical dancer, the wife of one James Ferris, a stage carpenter. That she had possessed a lovely character, and died leaving a baby girl over whom there was much speculation as to whether this mite of humanity would inherit her mother's marvellous grace.

Mrs. Dainty wisely decided to keep the programme until Nancy should be a few years older to tell her of her own mother's career. Nancy had the costumes to play with, however, and on many a stormy day she dressed in the spangled gauze and satin jacket and danced for the amusement of her little friends.

The man placed the box beside him and gathered up the reins.

Once in the carriage, Dorothy clasped Nancy's brown hand in both her own and said, "Oh, Nancy, my mamma *said* she'd do something nice for you, she *promised* me; and to-morrow I'm to go with you when you see your pretty new home."

"Seem's though I couldn't hardly b'lieve it," said Nancy, her hand still in Dorothy's and a very large lump in her throat.

It was the first time that any one had ever been kind to Nancy Ferris. Was it strange that she was almost dumb with wonder and delight?

That night, after a supper in which to her the most important thing was the luscious strawberries and cream, Nancy was given a little room next to Dorothy's, and in her dreams throughout the night she rode with Dorothy beside her in a gilded chariot, such as she had seen in a circus procession, and Mrs. Dainty guided the horses of which there seemed to be an endless string. The bright sun coming in at the window, and the light tap of the maid, awoke Nancy, who sat upright in bed and rubbed her eyes to make sure that she was not dreaming.

"It's time to rise," said the maid; "and Mrs. Dainty gave me these things for you,

and told me to help you dress," and she spread upon the bed for Nancy's inspection a pretty gingham dress, some new stockings, and a pair of new shoes.

"All *new!*" said Nancy, with sparkling eyes; "I don't remember of ever having anything that was really new."

The maid had privately told the cook and the gardener that "for her part, she hadn't much interest in the Ferris girl"; but Nancy's bright face and evident delight in the simple clothing because it was new, moved the woman strangely, and her rather grim face relaxed into a smile.

"It's a real lady that's goin' to have the care of you," remarked the maid. "She only came last night, to be sure, but the minute I saw her face I could tell; and when I heard her voice I was sure. Ye'd ought to try to be good, for Mrs.

Dainty's sake," she added, emphasizing her last remark by a smart tug of the comb through one of the many snarls in Nancy's hair.

"I *mean* to," answered Nancy, accenting the word at which the pull had been inflicted. She bore the washing, combing, and brushing with wonderful patience, and when at last she stood arrayed in her new costume, she could look at nothing but her new, shining shoes. Hearing Dorothy's voice, Nancy ran out into the hall and down the stairs.

"Dorothy! Dorothy! where are you?" she cried. Dorothy was out on the piazza, having a frolic with Bijou, the white poodle.

"Now, Bijou," she was saying, "be a little gentleman and bring me the ball";

but the little scamp thought it more amusing to stay where he was, holding the tiny ball in his mouth, and wagging his little tail, which Dorothy declared looked just like a white pompon.

"Bijou," she cried, impatiently tapping the toe of her little shoe, "if you don't bring my ball right back, I won't love — yes, I will too, Bijou, I'll love you just the same, but I do wish you would be good."

As if he felt the reproof in her voice, Bijou came slowly forward and laid the ball at Dorothy's feet.

"Oh, you darling little white rogue," she cried, seizing the puppy and vigorously hugging him.

Nancy had been watching them from behind the screen door, and thinking that there never was a little girl as lovely as

Dorothy Dainty, nor a little pet so charming as this white, fluffy puppy, with his huge pink satin bow upon his collar. Pushing open the screen, she stepped out upon the piazza.

"Oh, Nancy! Nancy!" cried Dorothy, "I'm glad you came down. I wanted to show you my new pet. Isn't he lovely? I've had him only a week, and he knows his name, and brings my ball, 'most always, and isn't he the dearest little dog you ever saw?"

"He's a beauty," said Nancy, "and I'm glad you've got him; you have lots of things, but I ain't ever had anything that made me go glad as these new shoes. See how they shine! I never had a new pair before."

"Oh, Nancy," said Dorothy, "you're always going to have pretty things now,

my mamma said so, and I'm so glad. Oh, here's mamma."

Turning, Nancy saw Mrs. Dainty and another lady coming toward them, along a shady garden-path. Was that the lady who was to care for her? What a sweet, gentle face, what an air of — Nancy could not find the word.

The child felt the evident refinement of the lady's bearing, and in her heart she thought, "Will she like to be in a house with me, just Nancy Ferris?"

"Oh, Nancy," said Mrs. Dainty, "will you come and speak to this friend of mine? This is Mrs. Greyson, Nancy, who is to make a pleasant home for you. She used to be my teacher, and a very kind teacher she was. Don't you think you can be friends, dear?"

Nancy stood abashed, and blushing un-

comfortably. She knew at a glance that she should like this pleasant, kindly woman, but she did not dare to say so.

"I have always wanted a little girl of my own," said Mrs. Greyson, "so I shall be very, very happy to have you in my little home with me; and I shall do everything to make you happy. I know that we shall be friends."

But what had come over Nancy Ferris? For a moment she stood irresolute, the tears in her eyes, a lump in her throat, and her wiry little brown hands twisting and untwisting a fold in her skirt. A moment longer she hesitated. Then she rushed down the steps to the walk where the two ladies were standing, and grasping Mrs. Greyson's hand in both her own, at the same time hiding her flushed face

in the folds of the lady's dress, she cried, "Oh I *shall* like you, I *do* like you *now*. I only couldn't say it, 'cause I was thinking I was afraid you wouldn't like me."

Mrs. Greyson passed her hand lightly over Nancy's dark hair, and when the little girl's face peeped shyly out from its hiding-place, it had become a very smiling, happy face to look upon.

Then Mrs. Dainty, Mrs. Greyson, Dorothy, and Nancy went over to see the little house in which Nancy and Mrs. Greyson were to live.

Mrs. Dainty and her friend walked together along the path which the tall tree shaded, and the little girls walked just behind them, chattering all the way.

"Your house is going to be a stone house, same's mine is," said Dorothy, "and it's got a garden full of flowers."

"The old house where I used to live didn't ever have any garden," said Nancy. There was no note of regret for the old home in her voice. She seemed glad to tell what the old house had not, as if in so doing she made more evident the charm which the new home possessed.

Mrs. Greyson had seen the cottage the day before, but it was all very new and delightful to Nancy. She was wild with admiration for the tiny cottage, with its little portico, over which the climbing roses hung in clusters of every shade of pink, and the little parlor — what a dainty, pretty room it seemed to Nancy! In the dining room they found a tempting breakfast awaiting them, and Mrs. Greyson, taking Nancy's hand, said, "Since you are my little girl you may sit beside me, and we will have our first breakfast

in our new home, with Mrs. Dainty and Dorothy for our guests."

How Nancy's eyes sparkled! How fine it seemed to have a pretty home in which to entertain! For a time Nancy was silent, but when Dorothy said softly, "Don't you think that Mrs. Greyson will be 'most as nice as a truly mother?" Nancy's answer was rather startling.

"I don't know," she said, "I never had a *truly* mother."

"Why, Nancy Ferris!" exclaimed Dorothy, in surprise. "That woman that went away and left — that went away —"

Dorothy stopped abruptly, as her mother glanced reprovingly at her to remind her that she had promised not to speak of Nancy's desertion, for fear of making her feel badly. But Nancy was not at all hurt.

"*She* wasn't my mother," she said. "She was married to my father when I was 'bout two years old; she told me so. She was always saying, when I was naughty, 'Nancy Ferris, sometime you'll wake up in the morning and find I've gone and left you,' but I didn't think she meant it."

"Poor child," said gentle Mrs. Greyson, a world of pity in her kindly eyes.

"She did mean to leave me, just the same," continued Nancy, "for the woman what lived next door to us said she'd said lots of times that she was real tired of taking care of me, and that sometime she b'lieved she'd go off and stay.

"The night before I found her gone, she went up the street with a bundle in her hand, and that's the last time I saw her;" and as Nancy finished this speech,

she seemed quite unaware of anything sad or forlorn in the tale, and with a cheerful face glanced about at the pretty table service, the pictures upon the wall, and lastly at Dorothy, whose dear little face wore a look of mingled sympathy and regret.

"What makes you feel bad, Dorothy?" said Nancy, whose mind was filled with naught but cheerful thoughts.

"Say, Dorothy, what is it? Oh, I know," she said, as Dorothy did not answer. "It's because we left Bijou outside; let's bring him in to breakfast," and she started to run from the table, her napkin still tucked in her neck.

Mrs. Greyson laid a detaining hand upon Nancy's arm. "Stop and fold your napkin first, and then ask to leave the table, Nancy," she said.

"Yes, I'll fold the napkin, but who'll I ask, and why'll I ask to go out doors?" She asked it, not unpleasantly at all, but just in wonder. In her own home her father had always pushed back his chair as noisily as possible, and his wife, when by a rare chance she was at home at meal time, left the table when it pleased her to do so, and allowed Nancy to do the same.

"Ask me, Nancy, if you are dining with me," said Mrs. Greyson, "and some other time we will have a nice little talk about some things which you will like to know."

"All right," answered Nancy, cheerfully. "I'll like to know 'em whenever you want to tell me."

Mrs. Greyson was amused at the cheerful manner in which Nancy bore the first rebuke; and in order that the children

might not see her smile, she turned toward Mrs. Dainty and proposed that they talk over a few plans which they had been making in regard to Nancy, while the children romped upon the lawn and laughed at Bijou's antics.

CHAPTER VIII

HIDE THE THIMBLE

IT was not to be expected that Nancy Ferris, placed in a new home, would at once become a model child. One thing, however, was evident. She was very eager to be taught, and quick to learn; and if at any time a light task given her seemed irksome, a gentle reminder that in doing it she would please Mrs. Dainty would be all that was necessary to set Nancy working with a will.

In the old home nothing was ever done which could be avoided; rooms were swept only on rare occasions, dusting was a thing unheard of, dishes were washed when the

last one had been used, and a garment was mended and buttons sewed on, when it could not be worn unless a few stitches were taken.

Was it strange, then, that Mrs. Greyson's orderly ways seemed tiresome to Nancy?

"We do these same things over every single day," was a comment which she frequently made.

"Mrs. Dainty gave us this pretty home," Mrs. Greyson would answer, "and I should not wish her to think that we cared so little for it that we were not willing to take care of it, should you, Nancy?"

"Why, no," said Nancy; "but she knows we care for it."

Mrs. Greyson felt that something must be said which would assure the little girl that the tasks were done not for the sake of doing them, and to convince her that

the home would not look the same if left in disorder.

"I never saw your old home, Nancy," she said, gently, "but you have often told me that you never did any of the little things which you now do to help me. Try to think, Nancy, if the old home looked as cheerful and cosey as this one does."

Nancy glanced hastily around the pretty sitting room. "Oh, no, indeed," she cried, "it wasn't anything like this."

"But if you went back there to live, you would never have to do any of the things which you dislike to do here," said Mrs. Greyson.

"Oh, I'd rather be here if I had to do twice as many things to help you," cried Nancy; and she began to wield the duster with furious zeal.

"Nancy saw Dorothy's sunny face peeping over the wall."

Nancy really had very little to do,—only a few trifling tasks each morning, and then she was free to play all day.

Her dusting finished, Nancy ran out to gather a few bright blossoms for the dining room.

"Oh, Nancy," called a cheery voice, "come over and play with us," and, looking up, Nancy saw Dorothy's sunny face peeping over the wall.

"In a minute," answered Nancy; "I'll come as soon as I've put the flowers in water." Nancy ran into the house, and, hastily plunging the stems of the blossoms into a large glass bowl, which stood upon the dining-room table, she turned to leave the room.

"Oh, dear! I didn't put any water in that bowl, did I? No, I didn't," she said, thus answering herself. She took the

bowl of flowers, and, running to the sideboard, grasped the water pitcher, and tilting it, she sent a great stream of ice water into the bowl. "Guess that's enough," she said, settling the pitcher into its place with a jerk.

The bowl, filled to the brim, she placed upon the table, where it made a wet ring upon the cloth. She had splashed the sideboard with water, and now noticed that the carpet was wet. Snatching her handkerchief, she sopped the pool upon the carpet, and then, thinking the hankerchief too wet to put in her pocket, left it lying upon the floor, and ran out to join Dorothy and her friends.

It sometimes seemed to Mrs. Greyson to be an impossible thing to teach Nancy to be orderly. Ever since she could remember, Nancy had left, hanging upon a

chair or lying upon the floor, any article which she did not for the moment need; and, while she loved Mrs. Greyson dearly, she could not help thinking her far too particular. It was with difficulty that Mrs. Greyson restrained a smile, when, having asked Nancy to hang her hat in the hall, the little girl replied: "I hope I won't have to hang myself up some day, for fear I'll be lost, same's I lost my hat yesterday. My! wouldn't you look funny, hanging on the hat tree, Aunt Charlotte?"

Nancy had begged to call her new friend by this name. "Just Mrs. Greyson sounds 's if I didn't love you," said Nancy, one day, "and I do truly love you. You aren't my mother, so I'd feel queer to call you that; 'sides you're lots nicer than she was. What can I call you that will sound nice?"

she asked, as she turned a puzzled face toward Mrs. Greyson.

Mrs. Greyson smiled as she said, "My name is Charlotte. You may call me Aunt Charlotte if you like, dear," and Nancy was only too happy to do so.

To-day, however, she forgot how earnestly Aunt Charlotte wished her to be orderly, and ran out, leaving her wet handkerchief upon the floor.

Out upon the tiny piazza and down the steps she ran, and along the garden walk, where she joined Dorothy; and the two little girls ran to the arbor, where Molly, Flossie, Inez, Nina, and Jeanette were waiting for them. "It's Inez's birthday," said Dorothy, "so we'll play whatever she wants to play to-day."

"Oh, so we will," cried the children, as if with one voice.

"What do you choose first?" asked Nina.

"I choose to play 'Hide-the-thimble,'" said Inez, "and we'll hide my new thimble. You weren't here, Nancy Ferris, when the others saw it. You can look at it now, if you want to."

Nancy seemed not to notice how unpleasant the little voice sounded which invited her to look at the gift, nor did she seem to see the frown upon Inez's pretty face, so she peeped into the little satin-lined box, and looked with bright, admiring eyes upon the tiny gold thimble which it held.

"It's a beauty," said Nancy; "I'm real glad you've got it. I should 'most think you'd like to sew, just so as to wear it."

Inez said something about not liking

to sew, and moved away toward where Nina and Jeanette were standing.

"Aren't you afraid to play hide that pretty thimble?" asked Molly.

"No, indeed," said Inez. "Come; all shut your eyes, and I'll hide it first."

So the game began, and such fun as they had playing it.

Inez hid it in the cup of a tall lily; and when no one could think where it was, she laughed, and shaking the blossom, let the bright little thimble drop out.

Then it was Flossie's turn to hide it, and she placed it upon the finger of a little marble cupid, which stood in the centre of a round garden-bed. How she laughed when no one could find it!

"You look everywhere 'cept where it twuly is," cried Flossie, dancing about and laughing to think that she had been able

to put it in plain sight and yet no one could find it; but just as she turned to see it, glittering upon the cupid's finger, Nina looked that way, too, and at once discovered it.

"Now it's my turn," said Dorothy, "and I know such a funny place for it. Shut your eyes, 'til I say ready." So the little girls shut their eyes very tightly, and Dorothy hid it in just the finest place.

How the children hunted, until at last they cried, "We give it up."

Then Dorothy led them to where a little stone dolphin, which had been a fountain, stood, his tail twisted into scrolls, and his curling lips apart. With a merry laugh she pointed to his wide-open mouth, where, upon looking in, they saw the tiny thimble.

Again and again, that bright afternoon, they hid it, and when they became warm and tired they sat upon the lawn, a happy little group.

"Somebody's calling you, Nancy," said Molly.

"I don't hear any one," said Nancy. "Oh, yes, I do," she said a moment later, as a sweet voice called: —

"Nancy! Nancy!"

"I'm coming, Aunt Charlotte," answered Nancy; and hastily saying "good-by" to the children, she ran to see why Mrs. Greyson was calling her.

It proved to be an errand which Aunt Charlotte wished to have done at once; so taking a pretty basket in her hand, she started off down the road, humming a funny little tune, to which she kept time with light, dancing feet.

Nancy had many faults to overcome, but so eager was she to be "nice," like Dorothy, as she often said, that she learned very quickly the many things which Mrs. Greyson so patiently tried to teach her. As she skipped along in the sunlight, swinging the basket and softly singing, her mind was full of happy thoughts.

"She teaches me to be nice and never to be rude," thought Nancy; "and she likes me to be with her, — she says so, — and I live in a pretty house now and play with dear little girls, and best of all, with Dorothy in her garden. I like them all, but I like Dorothy best. She is the loveliest!"

Her love and admiration for Dorothy made Nancy's black eyes sparkle; and it happened that just at that moment, when Nancy's heart was full of loving thoughts

of Dorothy, Dorothy was proving herself to be Nancy's best friend among the little playmates in the garden. Inez was saying petulantly, "Well, anyway, I can't find my thimble, and you've all helped to hunt for it, and you see we can't any of us find it."

"But mamma will get John to hunt for it," said Dorothy, "and he always finds things when I lose them."

"Did you put it in the little box after we hid it and found it the last time?" asked Jeanette.

"Of course I did," said Inez, "and I can't find the box or the thimble either." While the others were talking, little Flossie was thrusting a long stick among the flowering plants and shrubs, hoping to find the lost thimble.

"My aunt gave it to me, and she said

in the letter that she sent with it, that she thought p'r'aps it would make me like to sew. It wouldn't, though. I hate to sew, even dolls' clothes. Won't she be vexed to think I lost it the first thing!" said Inez.

"S'pose she'll be p'ovoked?" asked Flossie.

"Of course she will," said Inez.

In choosing to play "Hide the thimble," she chose the game, in her heart hoping that the thimble might be lost. She disliked sewing, and never took a needle into her hand if she could help it. She made dresses for *paper* dolls, because she could put them together without taking a stitch, while her beautiful wax and bisque dollies longed in vain for pretty clothes.

On the morning of her birthday, she found among her gifts a tiny box, marked,

"From Aunt Celia," and thinking that it must contain a ring, she opened it, and the bright smile left her face.

"A thimble!" was all that she said, but her face plainly showed her disappointment. However, now that the thimble really seemed to be lost, she began to wonder what Aunt Celia would think, and what mamma would say; and, although she did not care for the gift, she earnestly wished that it might be found.

Flossie was still thrusting her long stick among the plants, often drawing it out to see if the box would come with it.

"I've hunted in fwee garden beds," she said, "and I haven't found it yet, and I guess it, — oh, oh, here's the box! here's the box!" and, sure enough, there *was* the dainty box, — a bit less dainty, to be sure.

"We've found it! We've found it!" cried the children, and hastily picking it up, Inez opened it — it was empty!

For a moment she stood looking at it; then a bright flush spread over her cheek, and she stamped her foot angrily, as she said, "I know where it is! I know where it is! Nancy Ferris has got it, and she's gone off with it!"

Dorothy's sweet eyes were wide open with amazement. Nancy accused of taking it! She could hardly believe what she heard.

"That's just where my thimble is," said Inez. "I put it in the box when we stopped playing, and I never put my box in that garden bed. Now the box is empty. She took the thimble, and threw the box away."

"She never did it! I know she didn't!

She's a good little girl; she's trying all the time to be good, to please Mrs. Greyson and my mamma, and I won't let you speak so about her in my garden."

Could it be Dorothy, Dorothy Dainty, who looked and spoke like that?

She had stepped out from the group of children and stood in the bright sunlight, a resolute little figure, with flashing eyes and quivering lips.

"I mean, I *think* she took it," murmured Inez, abashed by Dorothy's words.

All the children had moved toward Dorothy, as if to show her that they felt as she did, and Inez found herself standing alone.

"I meant she *might* have taken it," faltered Inez.

"Well, you needn't even *think* she took it," said Dorothy. "When she came to

the little stone house to live, mamma told me to be her little friend, and I'm going to be; and all these little girls I asked to be friends with her promised, too. They *all* promised but *you*, Inez. *You wouldn't.*"

"Well, I won't promise *now!*" said Inez, angrily. "I don't like her, and I believe she's got my thimble, and I'm going straight home."

The children looked from Inez to Dorothy, but no one spoke; and Inez, having said that she was going home, saw nothing to do but to go. So she ran along the path to the gate, and down the sunny road toward home.

The little happening had taken the brightness out of the morning, and the children had lost their interest in play. For a time they stood talking of Inez's anger, and of how very badly Nancy

would feel if she knew what Inez thought of her; then Dorothy proposed that they again hunt for the thimble.

"If we could just find it, Inez would have to know that Nancy didn't have it," said Dorothy; and that incited them to search with a will. But although they hunted long and carefully, the missing thimble could not be found; and the children, when they left Dorothy, promised to come again in the afternoon and resume their search. Dorothy walked slowly toward the house, determined to tell mamma all about it, saying softly to herself, "I'm to be Nancy's friend, mamma said so. Nancy is a good girl, mamma says, and I guess she knows."

CHAPTER IX

FLOSSIE MAKES A CALL

IT was now a week since Inez had left the garden, angrily insisting that Nancy had taken her thimble. Mrs. Dainty had ordered a thorough search for the missing trinket. The gardener had raked over every inch of garden-bed and gravel walk, peeped into every crevice, and poked into shadowy corners, and had at last been obliged to confess that it could not be found.

Mrs. Dainty felt that not a word should be said to Nancy until it had been proven that the thimble was not in the garden; but now that John had declared that it

was not to be found, she thought best to speak to Mrs. Greyson about the matter, and let her question Nancy.

"Nancy has been very honest in every way," said Mrs. Greyson, "her only fault seeming to be a lack of order, and even that she tries to overcome. I will question her, however; but I shall have to do it very carefully, for Nancy is proud, and I think would feel hurt if accused of taking something which did not belong to her. I have tried to be very just to her at all times, and now I do believe — indeed, I am sure — she is innocent."

Nancy was energetically pulling bastings from a new dress which Mrs. Greyson had finished for her the day before, and the little girl turned a bright face toward the door, saying, as Mrs. Greyson entered, "Just see, Aunt Charlotte, how pretty it

looks with all those white threads pulled out; isn't it lovely?"

"It is quite as pretty as I meant it should be," said Mrs. Greyson, smiling, "and I am glad that it pleases you. I know of one little girl, Nancy, who is not feeling quite as happy as you do this morning."

"Who is that, Aunt Charlotte?" asked Nancy, turning quickly from the window where she had been looking out.

"Inez Meredith," said Aunt Charlotte.

"Inez!" exclaimed Nancy, in genuine surprise. "Why isn't she happy?"

"Didn't you know that she lost her gold thimble?" queried Mrs. Greyson.

"Why, yes," said Nancy, frankly, "she lost it after I left the garden to do the errand for you. Nina told me so, but I didn't know that she hadn't found it yet."

Nancy's answer was so straightforward, and her eyes so innocent as she looked in wonder at Mrs. Greyson, that that good woman decided then and there not to tell her that Inez had accused her, and to patiently wait and see if even yet the thimble might be found.

"I do hope some thoughtless child will not tell her," thought Mrs. Greyson. Just then some one tapped lightly on the lower panel of the door, and, upon opening it, Nancy found Flossie Barnet, with three dolls in her arms and a very bright smile on her sunny face.

"I've come to play wiv you," said the little caller, "and I've bwinged my fwee best dolls."

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come," said Nancy.

"Yes, I thought you'd be," said Flossie,

cheerfully. "Let's play house on the piazza," she continued. So the two children went out to set up housekeeping. Nancy had a very pretty doll, which Mrs. Dainty had given her, and which Nancy had at once named Dorothy.

"This biggest doll," said Flossie, "has got the biggest name. My uncle Hawy named her. He told me to call her Victowia Montmowency," said Flossie, "and it is her *twuly* name; but it takes too long to say it, so I just call her Monty, wouldn't you?"

Nancy thought she would.

"And this one," continued Flossie, holding up a doll a trifle smaller than "Monty," "this one is Awethusa de Bellville. I call her Thusie. I can't stop to say such a long name. Papa says these names are just outwageous; but Uncle Hawy knows,

'cause he's just comed home from college. He just laughs when I say those big names, and when he stops laughing he says, 'Say them again, Flossie,' and I do, 'cause I like Uncle Hawy, he's such a pwetty man."

Nancy laughed at this speech, and Flossie laughed with her, although she could not have told why.

"What's the *little* doll's name?" asked Nancy.

"She hasn't any name yet," said Flossie, "so I just call her Baby. Uncle Hawy says he's twying to think of a name that's fine enough for her. Now I'm coming to see you," announced Flossie, taking her smallest doll in her arms. "How do you do, Mrs. Fewis, and how is your little girl?"

"She's quite well," answered Nancy,

"but she plagues me some, because she won't practise her music lessons. I set her on the stool and put her hands on the keys, but she won't move them, Mrs. Barnet; she won't play at all."

"How vewy naughty," responded little Mrs. Barnet. "She looks weal pleasant. I wouldn't think she'd be so naughty. This baby of mine is sick wiv her teef. I think she's got to have them all pulled out."

"My!" exclaimed Nancy, "they wouldn't pull them *all* out, would they?"

"Why, yes, I guess so," said Flossie, earnestly. "There was a old lady staying at Nina Earle's one time, and one day the old lady told Nina's mother that her teef plagued her, and Nina said that night the old lady pulled them all out."

"Oh, I don't believe that, do you, Flossie?" said Nancy, looking at her little friend in wide-eyed wonder.

"Why, yes, I s'pose so," answered Flossie. "Nina said she was going by her room, and there was the old lady standing by a window wiv all her teef in her hand."

Nancy thought this was a very queer story, but she knew that Flossie was very truthful, and so thinking that the little girl must be mistaken, she said no more about it, and resumed the game.

"Let's play your doll was so sick she died," said Nancy. "Then we can dig a hole in the garden and bury her, and then we can dig her up again to play with afterward."

"I don't mind putting her in a hole as long as we can dig her up," said Flossie;

so Nancy found a stick and dug a deep hole under a large rose-bush, and then covering the bottom with rose leaves, they placed the little china doll upon them. They found more petals and covered her with them; then they filled the hole with the dirt and planted a spray of rose geranium on the top of the mound.

"What shall we do next?" asked Flossie.

"We ought to play we feel so bad we have to cry," said Nancy. So the two little girls covered their eyes with their handkerchiefs, and pretended to sob violently for a few moments. Then Flossie peeped at Nancy, her eyes still partly covered, but finding Nancy still crying, she uttered a very loud sob, and again peeping at Nancy, she asked, "Haven't we cwied 'most long enough, now?"

Nancy thought that they had, and it was surprising to see what smiling faces had been hidden behind the handkerchiefs.

"You cwied just splendid," said Flossie. "Did I cwy good, Nancy?"

"Yes, indeed," said Nancy, "you cried as if you felt just awful. Now let's have a party for the dolls; and we'll have to dig your baby up now, so as to have dolls enough. I'll bring out my little table and some candy that Aunt Charlotte brought me yesterday, and we'll have a fine time;" and away Nancy ran to the house. Soon she reappeared with the tiny table, which she placed upon the grass, just in the shadow of the hollyhocks.

"I didn't bring my dishes out," she said, "because I think that rose leaves

will make sweet little plates; besides, I have to wash my tea-set every time I use it, and that isn't any fun. The rose leaves we can throw away."

So the chocolates were heaped upon a big green hollyhock leaf, and a few fancy candies were spread upon the table, each one in a single rose petal.

"Now, Mrs. Barnet," said Nancy, "do eat some of this candy; the children must not eat too much or they will surely be sick. Chocolate gives some dolls 'flammation of the brain."

"Oh, does they?" said Flossie, in well-assumed alarm. "Why, Mrs. Fewis, don't you think they had better not eat *any* chocolates, then?"

So Mrs. Ferris and little Mrs. Barnet ate all the chocolates themselves.

Then Mrs. Barnet looked longingly at

the colored bon-bons and then at Mrs. Ferris. Then she said with a sweet smile: "Dear Mrs. Fewis, those pwetty candies sometimes makes dollies have just fearful 'ralgia."

"Oh, do they?" said Mrs. Ferris, with evident delight. "Then I guess we'd better eat the candies ourselves — they won't hurt *us*, I know." So the little ladies ate the bon-bons, and the smiling dollies seemed just as well pleased.

"Dorothy is away to-day," said Flossie. "She's coming home to-morwow, though."

While the little girls had been eating their candy, all unnoticed by them a sunburned face, crowned by an abundance of hay-colored hair and an old torn hat, had appeared just over the wall, and greedily eyed the party. It was the boy who, at her old home, had been Nancy's neigh-

bor, — the "Jimmy boy,"— who knew of Nancy's peach party. He had heard of her new home, and had also heard of something else. He had been watching the children a long time, and now a look of genuine alarm spread over his face, as it looked as if the last of the candy was about to disappear.

"Hi, Nancy," he shouted, "gim me some er that candy, will yer? You know me."

Indeed, Nancy did know him. "I haven't any now, Jimmy," she answered; "we've eaten it all."

"Go 'way," said the boy, rudely, "you've got some in that bag."

"I have not," said Nancy, "the paper bag's empty;" and she shook it to show that there was nothing in it.

Jimmy was angry, and fully believed that Nancy had more candy, which she

could give him if she chose; so he stood, trying to think what would be most likely to provoke her.

"You're mean not to give me some," he said suddenly; then with an unpleasant light in his eyes he cried: "I ain't forgot the peach party, Nancy Ferris. Does your new mother know 'bout that? And does she know you stole the thimble up at the big house?"

"What do you mean, Jimmy? I haven't any candy to give you, and I haven't stolen any thimble."

"Oh, no, p'r'aps not; but a little girl told me 'bout it, and —" But Jimmy never finished his taunting speech, for Aunt Charlotte appeared in the doorway, and Jimmy thought it time to leave. Mrs. Greyson had stepped to the door to tell Flossie that her mamma had called

for her, so Flossie ran to Nancy, and throwing her arms around her, she cried: "Oh, Nancy! You didn't touch the thimble, we all *know* you didn't; Jimmy's a bad boy to say so."

Then picking up her three dolls, she ran to the gate, where her mother stood waiting for her, and Nancy, her eyes full of tears, ran in to Aunt Charlotte, in whose white apron she hid her face, and cried as if her heart would break.

Mrs. Greyson laid her hand gently on Nancy's head, and waited to speak until the little girl was more quiet. Then Nancy told of Jimmy's accusation and finished by saying, "I never took it, Aunt Charlotte; I didn't, truly."

"I *know* that you didn't," was the gentle answer; "and when the thimble is found, as I believe it will be, we shall

know where it has been all this time. You must try to be glad that in your little heart you know that you are a good girl, and that we all believe in you, and that will help you to feel less hurt by Jimmy's naughty words."

Aunt Charlotte's kind and loving manner comforted Nancy; but she could not forget what Jimmy had said.

"Bijou bounding along as if trying to keep step with Dorothy's nimble feet."

CHAPTER X

THE THIMBLE IS FOUND

"PAPA'S coming home! Papa's coming home," sang Dorothy one sunny morning as she skipped down the garden walk, Bijou uttering sharp little barks, and bounding along as if he were trying to keep step with Dorothy's nimble feet.

"He's coming home to see mamma and me, and *you*, Bijou; think of that!"

"Wow!" ejaculated Bijou.

"Yes, you *are* glad," cried Dorothy. "He knows 'bout you, 'cause I put you in a letter. Did you know that, sir?"

"Wow, wow," again spoke Bijou.

"Oh, yes, you did know it. I forgot I told you," said Dorothy; for she always insisted that the puppy understood all that she said to him; and in proof she would sometimes say, if any one expressed a doubt, "Doesn't he answer me? Well, he wouldn't answer if he didn't know what I said."

"I put you in one of mamma's letters, the picture the man took, I mean, and you looked so beautiful in the picture, with your biggest bow on your collar, that I don't wonder papa wishes to come home and see you. You looked lots nicer than I did, and I had on my best dress, Bijou; not just my best, but my very best.

"Bijou, aren't you just wild to see him?"

The cute little fellow stood for an instant on his hind legs and commenced to whine, evidently thinking

that Dorothy's question was an invitation to beg.

"Oh, you cunning Bijou! You do want to see him, and I'll tell you something; he's going to bring you a fine collar, with little bells on it. Won't you be a proud puppy then?"

The poodle answered this question with a shrill bark, and catching him up, Dorothy hugged him, telling him, as she danced along, all the fine things which papa's letter had contained.

"He's had to stay all this long time, Bijou, because his tiresome old business *made* him; but now it will be only a few weeks before he'll be here. Mamma's laughing and talking this morning just the same as she used to, Bijou, and even you and me feels different, don't we?" The little dog laid his head lovingly

against Dorothy's shoulder; then, reaching up, tried to kiss her cheek.

"No! No! Bijou," she cried; "I love you, and I can squeeze you, and you can lay your cunning head on my shoulder, the way you're doing now, but I don't wish you to put your tongue upon my cheek. Now *don't* you feel hurt. Your pink tongue is real pretty; but it's to wash your paws with and not *my* face."

Bijou jumped from her arms to the walk, and Dorothy clapped her hands, saying: "Now, Bijou, run! See who'll reach the gate first, you or me."

Off started Bijou with little yelps of delight, and Dorothy, hat in hand, chased him, laughing as she ran.

Bijou was there first, and barked a welcome at Molly and Flossie, who were just coming in.

"Bijou and I had a race to see who'd get here first, and we got here just in time to meet you," said Dorothy.

"Me and Molly had a race down the road to see who'd get to your gate first, and we bof did. Wasn't it funny we were all wacing at once?" said Flossie.

"Yes; we were all racing, Flossie and I, and you and Bijou, and I was coming to tell you something," said Molly. "My aunt has just come home from New York, and she's brought me the finest doll I ever saw. It's got six dresses, and a hat to go with every dress, and a silk sunshade, and a truly trunk to keep her things in."

"Oh, I'm so glad you've got it," said Dorothy. "Why didn't you bring her?"

"I will the next time I come," said Molly. "I haven't seen her yet, myself.

She's in Aunt Hilda's trunk; but she told me all about her, and I came right over to tell you."

"And *I've* got something to tell, too," said Flossie. "My Uncle Hawy has come home from college, and he's going to be wiv us a whole month. He's the one that gives the big names to my dollies. I comed over to tell you my baby doll's name. You know the big name my two other dollies have got. Well, the baby doll has been waiting 'til Uncle Hawy came again. He said if I'd wait, he'd bwing the biggest name yet; and it took me last night and all this morning to learn it. It is Fwansesca Wosalie Pandowa de Wadcliffe. Isn't that fine! I wonder what makes Uncle Hawy laugh when I say it?"

"P'r'aps he thinks it's funny," ventured Molly.

"Well, it *isn't*," said Flossie, "it's *fine*."

"It *is* fine," agreed Dorothy. "I haven't a doll that has so long a name as that. I've got something nice to tell, too," she continued. "My papa is coming home in just a few weeks, now, and I had just told Bijou about it, before you came. I had the man that takes pictures take one of him, with his biggest bow on his collar, and I sent it to papa in one of mamma's letters. Papa is going to bring him a beautiful new collar, and lots of pretty things to mamma and me."

"Oh, show the pwetty things to us, won't you, Dorothy," said Flossie, "when you get them?"

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy, "I shall wish you to come up and see them. When my papa went to Paris, he brought mamma

some beautiful lace, and my biggest doll for me, but he didn't stay so long. This time it seems just ever so long since he went away."

"Our papas come home every night, and I don't know what we should do if we had to keep waiting to see them," said Molly.

"Well, I haven't got to wait much longer," said Dorothy; "it's just a little while, and then he will be here."

"Can you come over to my house?" said Molly. "I think my new doll must be unpacked by this time, and I want you and Flossie to see her as soon as I do."

"I guess I can; I'll ask mamma," said Dorothy; and away she ran, while her little friends tried to coax Bijou to wait with them, but the cunning little fellow freed

himself, and ran up the walk after his little mistress.

"Doesn't he look as if he was laughing when he has his mouf open and shows his cunning teef?" asked Flossie.

"So he does," laughed Molly. "Here's Dorothy," she cried.

"I can go," said Dorothy, as she ran toward them. "Come, Bijou, come too.

"We can show the doll to him, but you mustn't let him get very near it, because sometimes he's naughty. Only yesterday he got the gardener's hat, and he shook it until there wasn't a piece of it left that was bigger than my finger. John was angry, and I scolded Bijou, but I tell you truly, I think he was laughing all the time. His mouth was open, and he looked as if he thought, 'I know that you are scolding me, but, truly, it *is* funny.' His

eyes were twinkling; and when I had finished talking to him, what *do* you think he did?" Molly and Flossie could not guess. "Well, he just sneezed," said Dorothy. The two little girls agreed that that was not at all the proper way in which to receive a scolding, although they laughed merrily as they thought of funny little Bijou sneezing at Dorothy's reproof.

Just before they reached the gate Molly said: "Where's Nancy? I haven't seen her for so long."

"Nancy feels so badly about that horrid thimble," said Dorothy, "that she cries and cries, and she will not play at all. She didn't even touch it; but Inez said she took it, and she's awful naughty. She doesn't believe what Nancy says when she says she didn't."

"Oh, that's too bad," said Molly; "I don't wonder that Nancy cries."

"It's *weal* too bad," said Flossie. "Let's go and ask her to come and see your new doll. She knows we like her, and she knows we don't believe she ever took the fimble."

"That's just what we'll do," said Molly; and the three little friends turned from the gateway toward Nancy's house.

Poor little Nancy! That very morning she had taken her place at the cosey breakfast table with an aching head and no appetite for the nice food which was spread before her.

"It is no use, Aunt Charlotte," said Nancy, when Mrs. Greyson tried to coax her to eat. "I don't believe I shall ever want to eat, 'less somebody finds that horrid thimble or makes Inez b'lieve I never

saw it after the time she let me look at it."

Listlessly Nancy went out into the garden and wandered up and down the walks, looking at the bright flowers, and wishing that Dorothy would come to see her own little garden bed, which was looking gay with a wealth of scarlet geraniums and gorgeous nasturtiums.

Walking down to the little gate, she stood a moment looking out upon the sunny road; then hiding her little dark face in her hands, she cried softly, the sobs shaking her slender figure. So long she stood there, her face hidden in her hands, that she did not see her little friends or hear their footsteps as they hastened toward her.

Dorothy was the first to speak. "Why, Nancy," she cried, as she ran and threw

her arms about the forlorn little figure, "you mus'n't cry any more. It's Inez that's naughty, not you."

"And we all camed to see you, for we love you," said dear little Flossie. "And we want you to come over to my house to see my new doll what my Aunt Hilda has bringed me," said Molly.

"Oh, I can't," said Nancy. "You're just dear to come and ask me, but I don't want to go anywhere."

"But you *must*," insisted Dorothy; "we came just purpose to call for you."

After much coaxing, Nancy reluctantly walked along the road toward Molly's house, a silent little figure, while the other children chattered in an attempt to cheer her.

At last, when they were passing Dorothy's gateway, Nancy spoke.

"Where's Bijou?" she asked; "why didn't he come, Dorothy?"

"Well, I do wonder where he is," said Dorothy; "he always follows me wherever I go. I'll have to stop and look for him;" but just as the little party turned toward the great gate, out rushed Bijou, uttering little sharp barks and dancing about in the greatest excitement.

"How glad he is to see you," said Nancy. "Does he always run up the driveway and bark to you like that?"

"Why, no," said Dorothy. "What *does* he want?"

Indeed, the little fellow was acting very strangely. He ran to each little girl in turn, barking excitedly, and dancing wildly about. Then he scampered up the walk, rushing toward a large flower bed, raced about it, then down

the walk to where the three children stood.

"He wants us to come into the garden with him," said Dorothy. "Let's go with him just a minute, and see what he'll do, then we'll go to Molly's house."

So up the garden walk they ran, Bijou wild with delight, racing on ahead. Arrived at the garden bed, he jumped in among the plants, where he commenced to scratch with his white paws, throwing the soft loam about in every direction. Soon he stopped, and, thrusting his nose into the hole which he had made, he brought something to Dorothy, which he dropped at her feet.

Then he promptly sat up on his hind legs, expecting to be praised. Had he not brought Dorothy a present? The prize which he had found dropped in the grass.

Nancy saw a yellow gleam; and with a glad voice, she cried, "The thimble! the thimble!" She stooped to secure it, but Bijou objected. He intended it for his little mistress.

He had probably hidden it on the day when Inez had lost it, and now he had dug it up, as if it had been a choice bone, and it was his little mistress who should have it; so when Nancy stooped for it he snatched it from under her hand, and was trotting off to hide it again, when Dorothy cried, "Bijou! Bring it to me, sir; bring it to me!"

Very sheepishly the puppy trotted back, his ears down and fluffy tail drooping, and, laying the thimble at her feet, he sat upright, mutely asking to be petted and rewarded for what he considered very good behavior.

Nancy's eyes were wet this time with happy tears.

"What shall we do?" asked Dorothy. "He was naughty to dig a hole and hide it; but he's good to bring it back."

Nancy had already clasped the poodle in her arms, and was praising and caressing him in a way that made him wild with delight.

"Oh, Bijou darling," she cried; "what *made* you hide it, and let every one think I took it? And what made you think to bring it back, you cunning little fellow? Oh, I'll love you forever! I will, I will."

The white poodle knew that Nancy approved of him, and although he could not understand what she said, he knew the caressing tone of her voice. He knew of but one way to show his affection, and

he proceeded to demonstrate it by kissing her face and hands with his rough tongue.

Nancy laughed through her tears, and Bijou felt himself to be a very important puppy. Had he not changed a little girl's tears to laughter?

"Oh, Nancy," said Dorothy, "my Bijou's made you happy again. Let's run and tell mamma all about it."

"Yes, let's tell her now," said Molly. "You and me, and Flossie and Dorothy could come to my house any day and see a doll; but just to think that we've found that thimble!"

"And think of Bijou's taking a fimble! What *could* he want of a fimble?" asked Flossie.

"Oh, that's one of his funny, naughty tricks," said Dorothy. "He ran off with

one of mamma's spools once, and when he brought it back, a long time after, it was all muddy, where he'd hid it in a hole he'd made, down by the pond. The head came off of one of my old dolls. Bijou took it's wig in his mouth and was running off with it; but I saw him and I made him bring it back."

Flossie laughed to think how funny the poodle must have looked running along with the doll's head dangling from his mouth.

The children found Mrs. Dainty on the piazza and eagerly told her the delightful news; and "oh, mamma," said Dorothy, "*aren't* you glad for Nancy?"

"I am, indeed, delighted," said Mrs. Dainty; "and now suppose we celebrate the finding of the thimble. I will have the maid set a tiny table out under the

trees, and your little friends may stay and lunch with you and Nancy."

So a merry party gathered about the little feast, and Nancy was the happiest one among them.

CHAPTER XI

SAYING GOOD-BY

IN the long, cool parlor at the stone house were many beautiful things, but the finest, thought little Dorothy, were its pictures. The house had belonged to Grandpa Dainty, and his portrait, as well as many of his ancestors', adorned the walls; but it was not the portraits which delighted Dorothy. No, indeed! She declared that the ladies looked very stiff and uncomfortable in their flowered brocades, and that the gentlemen looked so funny with their waistcoats and high stocks that she could not help laughing whenever she looked at them.

The paintings were not all portraits, however; and the one which most delighted Dorothy was a very large one, which hung at one end of the room. It represented Diana and her nymphs, and Dorothy never tired of looking at it.

One morning she stood admiring the picture and singing softly to herself, —

> "Dina, Dina,
> Oh, my pretty Dina,"

when Nancy came running in, in the greatest excitement.

"Oh, Dorothy, Dorothy!" she cried, "is it true? It must be, because Aunt Charlotte said so. She says that you and your mamma and your papa, when he comes home, are going to leave this house 'til next summer, and go to live in the city; and that would have made me

feel awful, only that she says we are to go too, and be with you. Oh, did you know it, Dorothy?" and she clasped her little hands behind her and waited with sparkling eyes for Dorothy's answer.

"It's true, as true can be," laughed Dorothy, "and I was coming down to your house to ask you if you knew it yet; isn't it funny we both knew the very same morning?"

"Oh, Dorothy," said Nancy, "it has been fine to live in the little stone house so near you, and now just think! When you leave this house, I won't have to say good-by, for I'll be going too."

"I'm just as glad as you are," said Dorothy, sweetly; "and, Nancy, next summer, when we come back to this house, you're to come with us, to be in the cunning stone house again."

o

"So I shall," said Nancy. "But Dorothy," she cried, as she glanced up at the painting of Diana, before which Dorothy was standing, "you were looking at that big picture and singing when I ran in. What were you singing? It sounded pretty."

"I was singing, —

'Dina, Dina,
Oh, my pretty Dina,'

to the beautiful lady in the picture, — the one with the moon on her forehead," said Dorothy. "Her name's Dina, mamma says so. She's going to shoot deers, and those other pretty ladies are going with her."

"And what will they be doing while she's shooting?" asked Nancy, gazing at the picture, and very much impressed.

"I don't know," answered Dorothy; "p'r'aps they'll just dance around, and look pretty, same as they're doing in the picture."

"P'r'aps they'll help hunt for more deers," suggested Nancy.

"I've got a nice bow and arrow that the gardener made for me," said Dorothy. "The arrow is made so it wouldn't hurt anybody if I hit 'em with it. Come out to the barn and I'll show it to you."

So out they ran, nearly tumbling over little Bijou, who was running up the steps to hunt for Dorothy.

Across the lawn they ran, followed by Bijou, who thought the little girls had come out to play with him. On arriving at the barn, Nancy admired the fine bow and arrow, and begged Dorothy to show her how well she could shoot with it.

"I've had it a long time," said Dorothy, "but I haven't ever hit anything with it yet. If I did, it wouldn't hurt; see the ball on the end of the arrow? John made a ball on it instead of a point."

"Come out on the lawn," said Nancy; "and you be the Dina lady, and I'll dance all over the grass, so it will seem as if there were lots of ladies all about you, same's there is in the picture."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Dorothy; "and Bijou'll be the deer."

So Dorothy assumed the pose of Diana in the picture, and Nancy, true to her promise, danced wildly around her in every direction in her efforts to impersonate a *band* of nymphs. And Bijou! Was there ever such an obliging deer! Every arrow which was aimed at him he

brought back to her, that she might shoot again!

"Just see Bijou!" cried Dorothy, laughing. "In the picture the deer is running away as if he was frightened; but Bijou stands with his little mouth open and his pink tongue hanging out, waiting to see which way my arrow is going, so he can rush after it and pick it up."

"O John, John!" said Dorothy, as the gardener was about to pass them with his long rake over his shoulder; "see us playing with the arrow you made for me. I'm Dina an' Bijou is a deer."

"Sure it's a *pair* of deers ye are, whether you're Miss Dina or Miss Dorothy, an' you're the dearest av the two."

"And Nancy's a whole lot of nymphs," said Dorothy.

That was too much for John.

"Faith, that's hard," said he, laughing heartily. "It ud be hard enough for Miss Nancy to be called *one* imp, widout bein' called a hull band of 'em."

Dorothy tried to explain the difference between imp and nymph.

"I didn't say that Nancy was a imp," said she. "I said *nymph;* that's a fairy lady." But John walked away, laughing heartily over the odd game which the children were playing.

Even little Bijou seemed to think it funny. He rolled over and over on the lawn, his little mouth open, and Nancy declared that he was laughing just because the gardener did. While they were watching the puppy's antics, they heard merry voices calling them, and turning, saw Molly and Flossie running toward them.

"John said you were down in this part of the garden, so we came right over," said Molly. "We just heard you were going away to live in the city, and we were so sorry we came to tell you so."

"Are you going this vewy day?" said Flossie, anxiously.

"Not right away, but *real soon*," said Dorothy.

"Whatever'll Nancy do?" asked Molly.

"That's the best of it," said Nancy, eagerly. "I won't have to say good-by to Dorothy, because I'm going with her, and so is Aunt Charlotte."

"That's vewy, vewy nice," said Flossie, "and I'm weal glad. I'm sorwy to have you bof go; but you wouldn't like to stay here, Nancy, if Dorothy didn't, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't," said Nancy, decidedly. "I like you and Molly ever so much, you know I do; but it's Dorothy's mamma that made me have a nice home, you know, and it's Dorothy I live next to."

"Oh, we know that," said Molly, "and you ought to love them best; but, Nancy, don't forget when you're way off in the big city — don't forget to love Flossie and me, will you Nancy? O Dorothy, you'll remember us, won't you?" And Molly looked as if about to cry.

"Indeed I shall," said Dorothy. "I love you and Flossie ever so much, and so does Nancy; and only this morning my mamma said that I could invite you and Flossie to spend a week with us, and we'll have such a fine time; because, of course, your mammas will let you come.

Mamma said she'd send the maid to bring you safely on the train."

"Oh, that will be lovely," cried Molly and Flossie, as if with one voice.

"I'll bwing my biggest doll," said Flossie, "and have her name witten on a piece of paper and pinned to her dwess, because I can't wemember it."

The other little girls laughed.

"That's the way to do," she continued; "my Uncle Hawy said so. Somebody'll have to wead it to me, because I can't wead witing."

"My mamma will read it for you," said Dorothy.

"I told my mamma this morning how sorry I was to have you go, and she said, 'You must try to think how soon the summer will be here again, Molly, and then it will not seem so long to wait.'"

"I'm to have something lovely when next summer comes, — something which we all can play with. Guess what it is," said Dorothy.

"A vewy big doll?" asked Flossie.

"Oh, no, not a doll," said Dorothy; "something new which none of us ever had. Something to play out of doors with."

"A great big swing?" ventured Mollie.

"Not a swing," replied Dorothy; "oh, I shall have to tell you. You'd never guess. It's a goat team! A shaggy goat and a little carriage! We can drive all about our big garden and take our dolls out with us."

"What fun we'll have," said Mollie. "Oh, Dorothy, I wish it was next summer *now*."

And here we leave them, — Dorothy

and Nancy anticipating the winter's pleasures, and Molly and Flossie looking forward to the summer, when, with Dorothy's return, they will play their wildest games and fill the garden with the ring of their merry voices.

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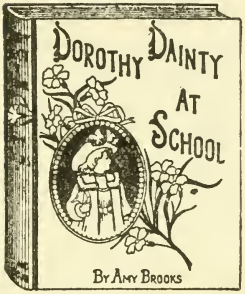

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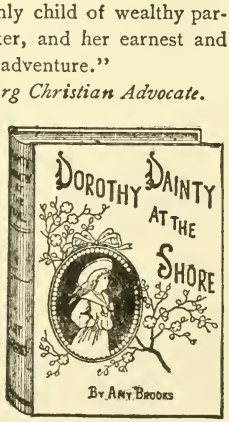

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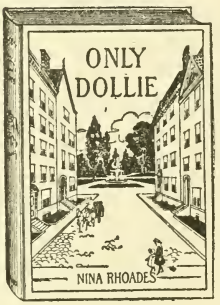

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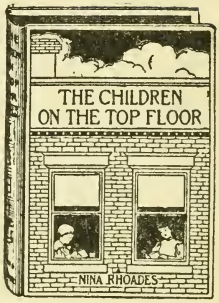

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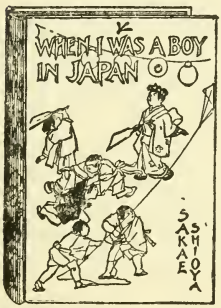


THE author was born fifty miles from Tokio, and at the age of twelve began the study of English at a Methodist school. Later he studied Natural Science in the First Imperial College at Tokio, after which he taught English and Mathematics. He came to America in 1901, received the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Chicago, and took a two years' post-graduate course at Yale before returning to Japan. No one could be better qualified to introduce the Japanese to those in America, and he has done it in a way that will delight both children and parents.

When I Was a Girl in Italy

By MARIETTA AMBROSI 12mo Cloth Illustrated $.75

THE author, Marietta Ambrosi, was born in Tyrol, having an American-born mother of Italian descent, and a Veronese father. Her entire girlhood was spent in Brescia and other cities of Northern Italy, and in early womanhood she came with her family to America. Her story gives a most graphic account of the industries, social customs, dress, pleasures, and religious observances of the Italian common people.

When I Was a Boy in China

By YAN PHOU LEE 12mo Cloth Illustrated from photographs $.75

NEW YORK INDEPENDENT says: "Yan Phou Lee was one of the young men sent to this country to be educated here, and finally matriculated at Yale, where he graduated with honor. 'When I was a Boy in China' embodies his recollections of his native country. It is certainly attractive, with more room for nature to operate and play in freely than is generally attributed to Chinese life."

For sale by all booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON

Cordelia's Pathway Out

By EDNA A. FOSTER Editor of Children's Page in the "Youth's Companion" Illustrated by Clara E. Atwood 12mo Cloth $1.00

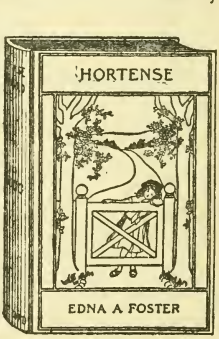
IN "Cordelia's Pathway Out" the writer has carried along the brilliant little Hortense and many of the characters of that story, but has brought into prominence the quiet Cordelia, whose admiration and love for Hortense act as an incentive to study and cultivate a desire for growth. Early in the story she is transplanted from the village in which we first find her, and comes into larger living and the bestowal of modest "advantages." She is a shy country-bred child, but she observes, imitates and applies the best of her own life and the exercise of loving and homely qualities brings her to a desirable plane.

"It is a perfect book for children from ten to fifteen years of age, or even older."—*Universalist Leader, Boston.*

"The book is a good one for growing girls. Would to Heaven there were more of which one might say the same. It is quite above the level of the ordinary book of its kind."—*Cincinnati Times Star.*

Hortense

By EDNA A. FOSTER Illustrated by Mary Ayer 12mo Cloth $1.00



MISS FOSTER has here a book of unusual excellence, whether viewed as a tale of entertainment for a child's reading or a valuable and suggestive study for the education of those who have to do with children. The impulsive little Hortense wins the reader's sympathy at once, and the experiences of the well-meaning young lady relative who attempts to train her up according to set rules for well-regulated children are very interesting.

"We would strongly advise all mothers of growing boys and girls to hasten to procure a copy of this delightful book for the home library—and, above all, to make a point of reading it carefully themselves before turning it over to the juveniles."—*Designer, New York, N. Y.*

"It is a truthful and discerning study of a gifted child, and should be read by all who have children under their care. It is probably the best new girl's book of the year."—*Springfield (Mass.) Republican.*

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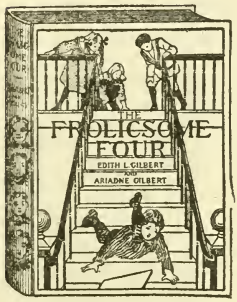
LOTHROP, LEE, & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON

THE FROLICSOME FOUR

By EDITH L. and ARIADNE GILBERT

Illustrated by JOSEPHINE BRUCE Large 12mo Price $1.00



The story of two brothers and two sisters who are as noble in character as they are enthusiastic in play. The authors have drawn wholesome child-life with remarkable effect, and this book will win a conspicuous place for that reason. Everyone will be interested in the fine scholarship of Larry, the jolly spirits of Gwen, and the tenderness of little Polly. And when finally Billy, well-meaning and awkward Billy, actually wins a prize in a most unexpected way, the charm of the story is complete. Miss Bruce has well caught the spirit of the story in her illustrations, and with its merry-looking cover, large, clear print, good paper and broad margins, this is exactly the book to choose for young boys and girls.

"The authors have woven a clever juvenile tale, portraying child-life with that truth that will appeal to the young reader." — *Providence News.*

"The story is happily told, and presents a pretty picture of vigorous and wholesome American child-life." — *Indianapolis Sentinel.*

"The story is a charming one, and the whole 'get up' of the book suits the contents." — *Episcopal Recorder, Philadelphia.*

"The adventures of two brothers and two sisters are happily told. They are funny, pathetic, and always lead the child reader or hearer to think of the real happiness of the dutiful and unselfish traits of character."—*New York Observer.*

"The book is natural and wholesome, and its attractive appearance in pictures and type will make it a favorite with children." — *Portland Express.*

For sale by all booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., Boston

Fifty Flower Friends

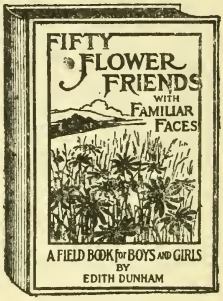
With Familiar Faces

By EDITH DUNHAM

A FIELD BOOK FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

With twelve full-page colored plates, decorations and fifty text illustrations from nature by W. I. BEECROFT $1.50

CHILDREN cannot too soon begin to know the wild flowers, and here they are told in a charming way where and when to look for each of fifty widely distributed common flowering plants; also how they get their names, and how to know them from the remarkably accurate drawings of Mr. Beecroft, a skilled botanist and superior artist. Each of the fifty flowers has a page of accurate botanical description in addition to its story. Thus the book is suited for varying ages.



"The greatest praise can be bestowed upon and every mother and father should have one and by it better educate their children in nature, which will prove not only an enjoyable study, but an instructive one."— *Providence News.*

"Good brief descriptions, good clear pictures, portraits almost, of each flower friend, a beautiful cover, convenient arrangement, and fine large print, make a perfect book to own, or to give to any one, especially a child."— *Universalist Leader.*

"If the children do not learn something new about flowers this summer it may be because their unkind parents have not bought them Miss Edith Dunham's 'Fifty Flower Friends.' "— *New York Times.*

"The boy or girl into whose hands this book is placed can hardly fail to acquire a real and lasting interest in our every-day wild flowers."— *The Dial.*

"It has no rival in books of its kind, either in text or illustration."— *Boston Budget.*

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SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS

LITTLE FOLKS ASTRAY

"This is a book for the little ones of the nursery or play-room. It introduces all the old favorites of the Prudy and Dotty books, with new characters and funny incidents. It is a charming book, wholesome and sweet in every respect, and cannot fail to interest children under twelve years of age." — *Christian Register.*

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"How she kept it, why she kept it, and what a good time she had playing cook, and washerwoman, and ironer, is told as only Sophie May can tell stories. All the funny sayings and doings of the queerest and cunningest little woman ever tucked away in the covers of a book will please little folks and grown people alike." — *Press.*

AUNT MADGE'S STORY

"Tells of a little mite of a girl, who gets into every conceivable kind of scrape and out again with lightning rapidity. through the whole pretty little book. How she nearly drowns her bosom friend, and afterwards saves her by a very remarkable display of little-girl courage. How she gets left by a train of cars, and loses her kitten and finds it again, and is presented with a baby sister 'come down from heaven,' with lots of smart and funny sayings." — *Boston Traveller.*

LITTLE GRANDMOTHER

"Grandmother Parlen when a little girl is the subject. Of course that was ever so long ago, when there were no lucifer matches, and steel and tinder were used to light fires; when soda and saleratus had never been heard of, but people made their pearl ash by soaking burnt crackers in water; when the dressmaker and the tailor and the shoemaker went from house to house twice a year to make the dresses and coats of the family."— *Transcript.*

LITTLE GRANDFATHER

"The story of Grandfather Parlen's little-boy life, of the days of knee breeches and cocked hats, full of odd incidents, queer and quaint sayings, and the customs of 'ye olden time.' These stories of Sophie May's are so charmingly written that older folks may well amuse themselves by reading them. The same warm sympathy with childhood, the earnest naturalness, the novel charm of the preceding volumes will be found in this." — *Christian Messenger.*

MISS THISTLEDOWN

"One of the queerest of the Prudy family. Read the chapter heads and you will see just how much fun there must be in it: 'Fly's Heart,' 'Taking a Nap,' 'Going to the Fair,' "The Dimple Dot,' 'The Hole in the Home,' 'The Little Bachelor,' 'Fly's Bluebeard,' 'Playing Mamma,' 'Butter Spots,' 'Polly's Secret,' 'The Snow Man,' 'The Owl and the Humming-Bird,' 'Talks of Hunting Deer,' and 'The Parlen Patchwork.'"

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