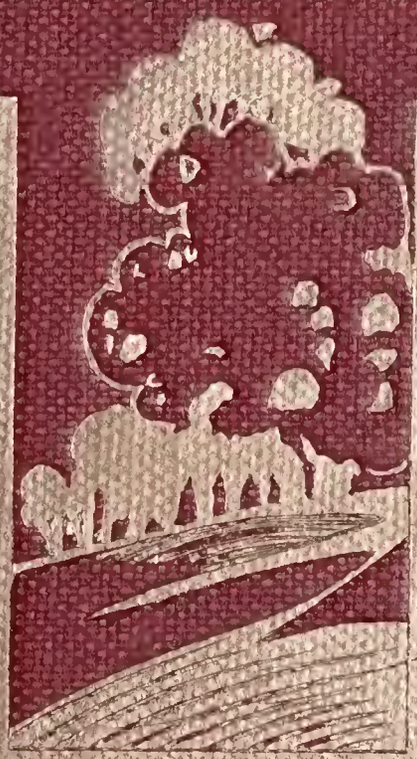
Four Months at Glencairn



Katharine T. Obear

FOUR MONTHS AT GLENCAIRN

By

Katharine T. Obear

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To My Sister

This old chronicle of the sayings and doings of these small country children during a short period of their lives was written by the oldest of them at a time when they stood in great need of money.

The story explains this.

The manuscript was unearthed from a pile of old papers, packed into a cast-off secretary, long since forgotten, in a dark corner of a spacious garret.

Every member of the author's large family clamored for a copy, and thus it saw the light of day.

H. THEYDON.

Four Months at Glencairn

CHAPTER I.

THEYDON HALL.

August 1, 1876, was a memorable day in our family, because it was a dividing line in our lives.

Everything was going on just as usual, and as things had been going on for years. We were in the schoolroom saying our lessons, when Mother suddenly called Cousin John, our tutor, in tones of the wildest alarm.

We all rushed—for Mother was evidently frightened. There, out in the hall, on their knees, were Mother and Mauma, trying to lift Father, who was stretched on the floor.

We thought he was dead—and so did Mother. We began to cry and scream, while Cousin John and Daddy Cæsar, who had come in, got him on the sofa, and what with rubbing, and with water, camphor, and all the other things that country people always keep in the house, because the doctor lives

so far away, they got him, at last, to open his eyes and to look at us.

Cousin John thought the sun had been too much for him, for Father had been out riding over the plantation since breakfast, and the day was very hot; but Mother said he had not been quite well for weeks, and even when Father got up, and sat in his arm-chair, she still looked distressed and wanted to send to the city for a doctor.

Father laughed at her and said he was all right—not to be worried.

But he wasn't all right at all, for after dinner he fainted again and Mother and Cousin John were a long time restoring him.

Then Mother didn't ask Father, but wrote the note herself, and sent it to the doctor.

It was well she did, for Father just kept on fainting; and when the doctor came next day he said he had been sent for just in time—that Father had a nervous breakdown, and that it was absolutely imperative that he should drop all business and worry, and go away from home for at least five or six months.

If Father followed this advice, he assured him he would be a well man at the end of that time.

Then he left, leaving many prescriptions.

But how doctors do talk! Here was Father worrying himself sick because of his tangled finances, and to be told to drop everything—and in the fall, too, of all times—and to take a rest of five or six months—it was simply nonsense—so he told Mother.

But Mother and Cousin John talked reason to him until they got him reluctantly to consent.

Cousin John came grandly to the front. He offered to take care of the house, and of all of us; to oversee everything on the plantation—the hands and

the crops—in fact, he was a true friend in this time of need.

But Mother was miserable, as she was not satisfied with this arrangement at all.

She felt obliged to go with Father, as he still fainted upon the slightest exertion. She would not allow him to get out of her sight.

But to leave her seven children in the care of so young a man as Cousin John, even with Mauma here to help, didn't meet with her approval. She was certainly torn between her two duties.

Then, to the astonishment of the whole family, Grandmother Chase wrote to announce that she herself would come and take charge of us.

Thanks to Mauma, our colored nurse, we had long since found out from scraps of kitchen conversation indulged in while we were around, that when in the long ago Father had gone courting Mother, Grandmother Chase had "turned up her nose" at him.

Mauma was authority, for she had been Mother's maid before she married Father; so, being on the spot, she had taken notes.

She also told that there was a Mr. Roderick living in Atlanta, immensely rich, who thought a lot of Mother, and Grandmother had picked him out for her son-in-law; so that when Father came, a poor planter, she did not relish the idea of Mother's marrying him in the least, no matter what his family was.

Well, she held out, and Mother fretted until Grandfather Chase, who was living then, interfered.

"Ole Marster could tell a man wen 'e saw 'em; so 'e said, if Mistiss wanted to marry Marse Philip T'eydon 'e gib 'e consent."

That was all Mother wanted, so the engagement was announced and Grandmother gave in, but not gracefully. She would not give Mother a grand

wedding or anything; but this exactly suited Father, who really had but little money, and so was spared unnecessary expense. Grandmother said "Nannie had made 'e bed and should lie on it," was another of Mauma's yarns; so very little help had she ever given, even when after Grandfather's death she had plenty to spare.

When we repeated all this, we got well lectured by Mother for listening to kitchen gossip, and we believe Mauma got hauled over the coals, too.

So when this letter came from Grandmother saying she was coming, no one knew what to make of it.

The news was received with undisguised dismay by us. Grandmother had openly disapproved of all of us, except Bessie, who is just like her, and therefore she is not a favorite among the young people of Theydon Hall.

On her few previous visits to us, our lives were made miserable at the unfavorable contrasts drawn between us and those marvelous, immaculate little Rodericks, that lived near her. The magnificent Roderick establishment, their finely trained servants, the accomplishments of their children, their courtly manners, was the everlasting theme of her conversation, all meaning, to put it in our language, "Now, Nannie, you see what you have lost."

But Mother was game, and never seemed to mind it in the least, and as for those children, she told Grandmother she would not have hers such prigs for worlds.

There was one little bit of comfort, though. Auntie was coming, too. She had just graduated and needed a change after her busy year at college.

We had not seen Aunt Eva for years, not since she was a little girl herself, and used to be proud when we called her "Auntie."

Well, one morning the telegram came saying they would arrive on that very day.

Cousin John lived with us, and while Father was sick it was very nice to have any one so strong and kind to lean on.

Father was lots better. The medicines the doctor had prescribed had done him good, and then the weather was a little cooler, so we began to see some fun in all this, and our spirits began to rise.

Before lessons we had been out in the grove, and each of us boys had chosen an old tree, and, calling it after one of those Roderick children, we had chunked it well, so as to get rid of some of the wrath that their very names called up in us—and well we knew their praises would be chanted to us.

Lessons were short that morning. We were dismissed in good time for scrubs and clean clothes.

Grumbling at our hard luck, we had slicked down our unruly locks and were ready to greet our guests, when Bessie called that they had turned the curve in the road and were driving into the avenue.

Father went down the steps to help them out of the carriage, and Mother, just behind him, stood ready to embrace them.

Mauma had planted herself in the way, to show off Margaret, who had been added to our family since Grandmother's last visit.

Bessie and Tom were on the steps, while we four were on the piazza, having a lively scuffle, under cover of the confusion, to see which one should be the foremost and get the first kiss.

Phil had Paul by the band of his knickerbockers, held firmly in front of him; Paul was revenging himself by rapid backward kicks. But "Look out," I whispered, "Grandmother is ascending the steps now."

We quieted down and received our kiss and also our snub.

"My! how tanned these children are, Daughter."

But sweet Auntie caught all four of us in a loving hug and kissed the "brown berries" with all her heart.

Then in the cool sitting room we sat for a few minutes, while Grandmother expressed great surprise to see how well Father looked.

Mother said he had improved wonderfully since she last wrote, that the tonic he was taking was acting like a charm.

"Why, yes, Daughter, you have alarmed me unnecessarily. I am sorry, for it certainly did not suit me to leave home this fall."

"But the doctor says he must have a change," said Mother.

We were very shy, and sat with our eyes riveted on Auntie, who was the loveliest piece of mortal flesh we had ever seen. She was busy talking to Father.

Then Cousin John came in and was introduced. He must have thought Auntie very beautiful, too, for he was forever stealing a look at her.

Well, we had the grandest week that had ever come into our lives. Auntie just devoted herself to us.

We had holiday, and every day after breakfast we all went to the grove with Auntie and Cousin John, and there we had so much fun. Cousin John could play and joke and tell such funny stories. Then he would read poetry to Auntie, and they would fuss over how some passages should be read. She would take the book and read it herself in her sweet voice, and he would give in always—she was always right—and to think how we had thought he couldn't do anything but teach, and keep us afraid of him; we

never dared to enter that schoolroom without having our lessons well prepared, Phil excepted. We had even doubted if he could laugh. It was certainly a revelation.

Well, after a week of all this, while Father and Mother were preparing for the four months' trip, and Grandmother was fuming and fretting and ordering all the servants about the place, it suddenly came to an end, this way:

I had gone up to the house for a copy of Tennyson for Auntie. Grandmother and Mother were sitting in the hall, sewing, and Father lying on the sofa out there.

"What do you want with Tennyson, Harold?" asked Grandmother.

I told her Auntie wanted it to read something to Cousin John.

"Where is Eva?" she asked.

"In the grove, Grandmother."

She arose, got the field glass, and stood at the window looking down the grove. She looked a long time, and she didn't seem to be pleased, but I didn't see anything to be mad about.

I heard Father chuckle softly under his breath, but I didn't know what it meant.

I hurried on with the book, for they were waiting for me. We stayed out in the grove playing and listening to them read until the sun found our shady place and drove us in.

Grandmother was still looking severe, but we discreetly kept well out of her way.

Father and Mother were expecting to leave on Friday, and this was Wednesday.

We had been well instructed as to our behavior during their absence. School was to begin again on Monday, so that would help to keep us out of mischief.

So imagine the consternation of the family when on Thursday morning Grandmother announced at breakfast that she had decided to return to Atlanta —going that very day. She was all packed then. There was nothing the matter with Father, she said —the heat had only prostrated him that morning he had been taken sick, and a change for him was entirely unnecessary.

We nearly clapped our hands with delight.

"Yes, Grandmother," Paul piped, "the country is too dull for you, and Auntie can take care of us just as well. You can go home."

But Grandmother withered him with a look.

Father and Mother were too outdone to talk. Auntie, I believe, had been crying, for her face was flushed; while Cousin John was struck dumb with astonishment; so Grandmother had all the conversation to herself, but she was equal to it.

Well, go she did, and Auntie with her; and now we were in the same dilemma again.

"What was to be done with the children?"

But on Sunday the trouble seemed settled for us. Father suddenly fainted again, and it took Mother and Cousin John a long, long time to bring him back to consciousness.

Cousin John wrote for the doctor, the same one from the city, and fortunately he got to us that afternoon, for Father did not look right at all. The doctor shook his head, asked many questions, then said to Mother, "Why did you delay? Why did you not go at once? I told you it was important, and here you have delayed two weeks. This is serious now. Your husband is an ill man, madam."

Poor Mother looked as if he had struck her.

The doctor stayed all night, but Father grew worse, rather than better, and by morning he was so ill the doctor told Cousin John if there were any rel-

atives at a distance, who might wish to come, a telegram should be sent at once.

So Mother told Cousin John to telegraph for Uncle James Theydon, Father's only brother.

School did not begin, for Cousin John did not leave Father's bedside, and sorrowful and awfully lonesome days those were for us.

Uncle James came Tuesday afternoon.

Father was still living, but unconscious. He did not notice Uncle.

Mother, I believe, forgot that she had any children during that dreadful time.

Mauma looked after us right well though, but oh! we were utterly miserable.

One afternoon in the following week Uncle James strolled into the schoolroom, which was a basement room opening into the garden.

We four were in there, trying to keep still and feeling especially unhappy.

We had hardly seen him up to this afternoon, for at meal times he would send Cousin John out and stay with Father himself, "lest there be two to nurse," he said. Cousin John was getting thin and pale.

Well, this afternoon, Uncle walked in, and, seeing us all sitting in the deserted room, limp and listless, his eyes shone suddenly, as if tears had come into them, and, sweeping us all up in one grasp, he said, "Poor little youngsters! Don't you be so miserable. Father is not dead, and I don't believe he is going to die. Something in here tells me so," tapping his heart. "Nothing has ever downed him yet, and I don't believe this will. He is so plucky. Cheer up! Don't cross the bridge till you get there. I think he is better to-day. I bet you anything the doctor will say so, too, when he comes."

He was so confident, and looked so big and hand-

some, we felt roused immediately, and ever so much relieved. Uncle infused his faith into us, and I wanted to run and tell Mother right away that Father wasn't going to die, but he wouldn't let me."

And Uncle was right. The doctor did say that very thing, and Father began to rally and improve from that day; and he (the doctor) preached rest, and a trip abroad once more.

Mother needed a change, too, now; besides, she never would have let him go alone; so there seemed nothing for it but that they would have to leave us at Theydon Hall with Cousin John and Mauma. Indeed, such was their plan, when the doctor knocked that up by saying to Cousin John, "You look to me like a candidate for fever, young man. Take my advice and freshen up a few weeks in the mountains, or go with Mr. Theydon."

Then all noticed how badly Cousin John did look, and insisted that he should go.

"What shall we do with the children?" was the one thought with our parents during those convalescent days.

Finally Grandmother Chase wrote that she would take the three youngest children if Mauma came along to care for them.

Uncle James was never present while these discussions were going on.

"It would look too much like a hint," Father said.

Uncle was busy seeing after the plantation affairs.

But one day he said to Father, "Don't you feel strong enough for your trip yet, Brother? Why don't you go?" Then Father told him.

"Well, that's just like me," he exclaimed. "So stupid! Why didn't I think? It's because Sarah does all the thinking for me, I guess. Well, don't let that keep you another day. I'll take them all

back to Glencairn when I go. I'll be delighted to have them, too; so, don't you have a moment's uneasiness about them, for they'll be taken care of all right."

And Father and Mother were thankful to have it so; only Mother said, not seven—only four, should go—we four—to Glencairn, and the three little ones to Grandmother in Atlanta.

But it wasn't settled yet. Uncle James and Bessie had struck up a mighty affection for one another—her beauty always charmed strangers—and he wouldn't hear of her not coming with us.

"We have a big house and plenty of servants. It won't worry us in the least, and I particularly want Bessie."

Grown up people never know how much they bother children. Now, in our home, there was a distinct division between those in the schoolroom and those in the nursery.

The schoolroom children were known as "Us"—and the nursery as "They,"—and to have a "They" tagging on after "Us" would be horrible, to say the least, and Bessie especially.

We retired to our schoolroom to grumble over it, when in she walked, feeling large and supposing herself promoted to "Us."

"Did you know that I am going with you to Glencairn? Uncle James wants me particularly."

"Bessie, if I were you," I said persuasively, "I'd go to Atlanta. You'll have lots more fun there."

"Besides," added Phil, opening his eyes and speaking in mysterious tones, "Did you know, Bessie, that Aunt Sarah is a Yankee? *Yankee*—mind you," in most impressive tones.

"What is a Yankee?" she asked, opening her eyes wide and growing very serious.

"It's a—a—I just don't quite know, but I think it's

a kind of a beast," piped Paul. "It takes your things from you—I know that. It took Father's fine horses and all the old silver and beautiful furniture, and stuck bayonets through the pictures. I wouldn't go there, if I were you, for anything in this world. We are big and can defend ourselves, but you are so little."

"Will she take my doll if I go?" she half whispered, evidently very much impressed, but a hearty laugh at the window made us turn, then duck our heads and flush crimson, for there stood Uncle James.

This was the reason why Uncle James was a stranger to us, though living in the same state. Uncle had gone north just after the war and had married Miss Sarah Chadwick, a New York woman, whom he had met years before when he was at West Point and she a mere girl on a visit there.

Father's home and plantation had suffered greatly at the hands of the marauding army, and he was still so irascible over it that upon hearing of this forthcoming marriage to a "Yankee woman" he had written a letter to Uncle that made him furious; and his reply had incensed Father in return, so that all communication between them had ceased; and they had neither seen nor heard of each other from that time, now nine years ago, until the telegram came summoning Uncle to Father's bedside.

There were only these two, and they had been devoted brothers; and glad they were to clasp hands and to meet once more in the same old close relationship.

No questions were asked about Aunt Sarah neither had Uncle been communicative.

Well, as I said, there stood Uncle James at the open window, just behind us, and he had evidently heard all we had been saying.

"We were just teasing Bessie," I said, as soon as I recovered from my confusion.

"You naughty children," he laughed. Then, turning to Bessie, he said, "Don't you be afraid to come, little Beauty. Aunt Sarah is tame—pretty tame. I have her well in hand. I'll shake my finger at her, if she so much as dares to touch your doll." Then, whistling softly, he walked away.

When Bessie told Mother all of this, she was simply shocked, and scolded us roundly.

We were to make no allusion to Aunt Sarah being from the north, and were to remember that we were her guests.

She apologized to Uncle James for us, and said we were such little ignoramuses he would have to overlook and excuse many things.

We did not succeed in scaring Bessie off, though. Phil declared he would not go if she did.

"Will you kindly tell me how you are going to manage this, my son?" I asked, laughing.

"Oh, don't let us worry any more about this," said Nan, "Bessie is not so bad." And as it was inevitable, we took her advice.

So now, after one month's delay, it was all settled.

Grandmother did a great thing for us; it made us all forgive her. She sent an immense box of new, pretty, stylish clothes for each one of us in it.

" 'E bite ain't as bad as 'e bark," said sage Mauma, which Mother said was impertinence.

"We hurt her pride," Father laughed.

We had never thought much about clothes until Grandmother's visit. She and Auntie had made themselves merry over their fit and styles.

"Do you feel yourself above patterns, Sister?" asked Aunt Eva—and another time "Have you lost

your shears? You use a hatchet to cut their clothes out with, don't you?"

And we heard Grandmother say, "Boys' pants are never gathered into a band, Daughter."

Mother always laughed good naturedly and said she didn't worry about our clothes; these were good enough for the plantation—they were clean, at any rate, but that she had always taught us to take care of our hair, teeth and nails, and no fault could be found with us in that respect, she was sure.

But these criticisms had made us self conscious as to our clothes, and consequently we hailed this grand box with delight.

This visit to Glencairn was a great event in the lives of all of us. We had not been from Theydon Hall since before the twins, Nan and Phil, were born.

Mother felt very nervous at the thought of our separation from her and anxious, too, about our behavior when at Uncle's; in fact, this became a subject of jest at home before we left.

If Mother happened to pass through a room where we were, she would stop and most earnestly impress on us how good we must be, and not to give any trouble while at Glencairn.

"Remember," she would say, "your Aunt Sarah is not accustomed to children. Now, my darlings, don't disgrace yourselves."

And we promised, for the thousandth time, that we would be as immaculate as the little "Rodericks."

At last Father said, irritably, "Good gracious, Nannie, why are you worrying yourself so? What on earth do you expect the children to do?"

"Oh, I am so afraid they will annoy Mrs. Theydon. You don't know how badly I feel about this visit, Philip. It's an outrage, nothing more nor less,

for us to send five children to stay four months, perhaps longer, under the care of a woman that we have decidedly ignored all these years, and nothing but actual necessity ever induced me to consent."

"Oh, no," said Father, "I don't feel badly about it at all. It's Jim's home, and naturally he wants my children to be with him."

"Yes," said Mother, "it's his home, but Mrs. Theydon is the mistress there, and she is the one to bear all the trouble they are sure to give."

"Pshaw," said Father, "it will do them good to have some young people in the house. I have always wished that my children knew Glencairn."

"They are noisy and wild," continued Mother, not at all convinced, "and we have allowed them so much liberty that I do feel anxious about their behavior away from us. Brother James is very kind, but I see he will never hold them in check."

"Well," said Father, "take warning, children, any wild pranks complained of at Glencairn—positively no Santa Claus at Christmas."

And we promised again, as we had done dozens of times before, to be, oh, so good.

We had a great many pets—birds, squirrels, rabbits, lambs, dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, colts and ponies.

We told Daddy Cæsar and Maum Hannah over and over again how to care for them.

They assured us we would find them all there on our return.

We wanted to take the dogs with us to hunt, but Mother said, "No, indeed."

We were allowed to take our guns, and the girls their favorite dolls.

We were wildly excited over the packing of our trunks, and helped to carry them out into the hall, ready to begin our journey the next day.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIP.

But little sleep came to us that night, and early morning found us up and stirring.

After breakfast, time hung a little heavily, we were so impatient to begin our journey—our very first.

We went the round of our pets, stroking, patting and kissing them our farewell.

There were many final instructions to be given to Daddy Cæsar and Maum Hannah, for they were to be the caretakers of all about the house and premises, and to Daddy George, who was to oversee the crops.

At last, we were sent off to dress. When we gathered in the hall, there was much amusement on the part of the grown people over our admiration of ourselves in our new suits.

"I am sure," shouted Nan, frisking about us, "that we must look just exactly like those little Rodericks."

"Your aunt has shown great taste in her selection of your suits," Cousin John said very gravely.

Which remark made Father and Uncle James exchange glances and laugh behind Cousin John's back.

But I didn't see anything funny about it.

Finally we set off. Father, Mother, Uncle James, Cousin John, Nan, Bessie and Tom in the huge old-fashioned family coach, while we three boys went

in the wagon with the trunks. Mauma, with the baby, sat outside with Daddy George, who is our coachman.

The servants and the plantation hands came to the grove to bid us all "good bye," and to express their wishes that Father would come back home again well and strong.

As we made a turn in the road—the last place from which our house could be seen, I took a farewell look at the dear old place. There it stood—the big, brick house set in a grove of magnificent oaks, with long, gray moss swinging from the branches.

I felt that great things were going to take place before I saw those walls again. What, I couldn't imagine.

All of our lives, up to four weeks back, had just been a perpetual round of a little study and a little play—and I could remember when we numbered three, then four, five, six, and now seven. These were events, varied by sundry birthdays and Christmases, that were always made gala days.

But all that was just Theydon Hall—and now the gates had suddenly swung open and we were going into the great, big world to untried experiences.

All these thoughts were running through my mind while we were driving down to the river landing, eight miles from the Hall.

We had often been there, alone, and with Father.

The boat was waiting, and we sailed down the river to the city.

Mother had hoped that Tom would go to sleep, but instead "Little Sunbeam," as we all called him at home, was grieving at the coming separation.

"Look at Tom, Mother," whispered Nan. And there he sat by Mauma, who had Margaret in her

arms, with quivering lips and great tears hanging on his lashes and dropping on his cheeks.

"Bring my darling to me, Nan," said Mother, and then he began to sob in earnest, with his face hidden against her shoulder.

We all came crowding around to comfort him. He is the household idol, adored by white and black, this beautiful little child, who has never been naughty, who is always sunny and bright, and who loves everybody and everything—and is, withal, so lovely to look at, with his fair skin, big blue eyes and golden curls.

It hurt us to see him cry. Simultaneously we three boys stood up and began to search in various pockets for those dead mice and dead frogs, fish hooks and lines, marbles, cake crumbs and apple cores that tradition says boys always carry in their pockets; but, alas, the suits were brand new—nothing could we find to divert him, nothing there but our clean handkerchiefs. Sighing, we sat down again.

But Uncle had been searching, too. Here he came with a shining dollar, telling him to get Auntie to take him to a toy store and let him spend that money himself.

Father took him on his knee and petted him, and told him to get Auntie to write out a long list of pretty things he wanted Santa Claus to bring him at Christmas. Mother took him back and hugged and kissed him and wiped the tears from his eyes.

Nan dived into our lunch basket and brought out a cake for him. Then the smiles came back to his sweet little face.

It was late in the afternoon and we were near the city. The spires of the churches and the taller public buildings could plainly be seen.

There we were to separate into three parties—

Mauma, Tom and Baby were to take one train going west; Uncle James and we five children another, northbound for Glencairn, while later Father, Mother and Cousin John, who had decided to go with them, so as to assist Mother in nursing, would board a steamer and begin their voyage on the water.

When we landed in the city, whom should we meet but Auntie and Uncle Richard Chase, Mother's brother.

"We have come for the chicks," said Auntie gaily. "We didn't see how Nursie could manage with two babies all alone."

"I am so relieved," said Mother. "You are so thoughtful and kind. It is good of you, Ritchie. How could you get away?"

Uncle Ritchie is a doctor with a large practice. His wife is dead, and he has only one son, much older than I am, so he lives with Grandmother. We know him and Cousin Henderson, for they come quite frequently to Theydon Hall to hunt and fish for a rest, but they never can stay long.

There was only time for a kiss or two, a handshake, a word or two with Father, Uncle James and Cousin John, when up came the train they were going to take. All the gentlemen helped them on.

Bessie was crazy to go, too, when she saw Auntie, but it was too late to change her mind now. The whistle blew, Father and all got off, and slowly they pulled away.

"There is Tom in Auntie's lap at the window," whispered Nan.

"He is laughing now, Mother," said Paul, comforting her.

Kisses were thrown, hands waved, and they disappeared into the twilight, which was fast deepening into night.

"Here comes our train now," said Uncle James,

pointing to a long streak of smoke in the distance. "Better get ready."

We began to grow excited. We kissed our parents and listened with thoughts far away to their oft-repeated injunctions.

Phil and I tried to look cool and unconcerned, but we did feel so jolly.

Nan and Paul frisked like kittens, while Bessie looked rather demure and still clung to Mother's hand.

At last the train came puffing and blowing to the station.

"Oh, jubilee!" shouted Paul. "Aren't you glad it's come at last!"

Phil and I forgot all about our manliness, and showed only too plainly by our grins of delight that this was an entirely new experience to us.

They had spoken of our regularly undressing and going to sleep.

"Sleep!" we shouted; "sleep on our first trip! No, no," and then, remembering that Uncle James would be alone with five undressed, sleepy children, they let us have our way; and up we were—seated—and very much awake, too.

Some friends of Uncle were on the train, so he went into the smoking car to talk with them, leaving us all alone.

We kept quiet for a time, then began to giggle. We looked out of the windows, at each other, at the people in the cars, and giggled, and giggled, and giggled.

Presently a young man who was sitting near us put down the paper that he was trying to read, and began to giggle, too.

"What is the matter with you all?" he said, and then, seeing no grown person near us, he remarked,

"If you don't stop that laughing, I'll get the conductor to put you off when he comes in."

Bessie wanted to move from one side of the coach to the other, and little "Miss Propriety," not being accustomed to walking on a moving floor, over she went upon her hands, and that looked so funny it set us off again.

Paul saw a man getting water, and, feeling he had been still long enough, off he sauntered for some, too, and after filling the cup and drinking he stood there fumbling with the faucet, then came back without closing it.

"Harold," he whispered, "the old thing sticks. I can't shut it."

I was just going to see about it, when a man came in and closed it, frowning when he saw the wet floor. Then he began going from seat to seat.

Paul thought he was asking who left the faucet open, and squeezed in on the other side of Nan.

When the man came to us he stretched out his hand, but didn't say a word.

He looked at Phil, and, thinking he had been spoken to, he answered, "It stuck. He couldn't shut it."

Our young man threw back his head and shouted. But Uncle came in just then and gave him, the conductor, our tickets.

Uncle found Bessie getting sleepy, so he fixed her comfortably on the opposite seat, then went back to the smoking car.

"Where are you going?" asked our young man. "To Europe?"

"No," answered Paul. "To Glencairn."

"And where may that be? I don't know any such town."

"Oh, that is Uncle's plantation," I put in. "It's near Winfield."

"Oh, yes," he laughed. "I know that little old mossy town."

"Is it mossy?" asked Nan in surprise.

"Just green," he laughed.

"What's your name?" asked Paul, after a long, scrutinizing gaze at his very red hair.

"Jack Frost," he said, but I don't know whether he told the truth or not.

Mother had given us a big lunch basket. We hauled it out, and found lots of buttered rolls and fried chicken. We offered it to Jack Frost.

"Sure," he said, and he thought the lunch as good as we did.

We had lots of fun eating supper near midnight.

Every now and then one of us would get sleepy and nod. That would be the signal for vigorous punches in the side. Then we would flatten our noses against the panes, trying to get the first glimpse of the city.

When we did see it, we gave such a shout that it roused more old grumblers in the coach than we bargained for.

"Can't you brats keep still?" one old sleepy fellow said.

After that we tried to control ourselves, and did pretty well all the rest of the way, which was not long, as we were near the city.

Uncle came in and roused Bessie, who immediately began to whimper for Mother, but no one heeded her, we were in such confusion just then, getting all of our traps together.

Somehow we were all landed on the platform outside. Our young man got off here, too, and helped Uncle James with us.

We were all wide awake now, listening in astonishment to the hubbub around us.

It was the porters and cabmen shouting all together the names of their hotels and cabs.

Uncle put us in an omnibus, then we went rolling along the city streets. The stores were closed, for it was after midnight. How we did wish that Uncle James lived there.

Phil was so excited he somewhat lost his head. He got the idea that the omnibus was divided into two compartments and he thought the mirror in the back was a window, through which he could see the people riding in the other side. He did not notice that they were our own reflections.

"The other side has lots of children in it, too," he shouted.

"The other side of what?" I asked.

"In yonder. Don't you see?" And he pointed to the mirror.

I looked, and instantly saw his mistake.

"They see us, too," said Phil. "See, they are pointing at us."

"What sort of looking children are they, Phil?" asked Uncle.

"Nice looking children, I think. Don't you, Harold? I wonder where they are going."

"Tap on the window and ask them," said Uncle, his eyes just twinkling with amusement.

Phil got up to do so, and as he walked towards the mirror saw his mistake and took his seat again, blushing like a girl with confusion. Everybody laughed.

"Harold did not know either," Phil said.

"I did," I exclaimed indignantly.

"Well, if you did," said Nan, coming to her twin's rescue, as usual, "it is not surprising, for you and Bessie are always gazing at yourselves in the glass."

"There now," said Uncle, laughing.

"Mother said we were greenhorns," drily remarked Paul.

We had to wait for our train one hour, so we went to a hotel. Such a long, wide flight of stairs in that building. We went into the deserted parlor, all littered and uncomfortable, for it was chilly at that late, or early, hour.

There was nothing to amuse us, and we suddenly found ourselves tired and sleepy.

We lounged on the sofas and chairs, but couldn't sleep. Bessie wailed, and we felt cross. But our journey was near its end now.

The train came, and in an hour we were at Winfield. Uncle's carrriage was there, waiting for us, and in twenty minutes more, just about day dawn, we drove round to the back door at Glencairn.

We followed Uncle James in, our hearts, I must confess, going pit-a-pat at the thought of meeting our Yankee Aunt.

Much we had thought of her ever since we knew we were to come out here.

We didn't like her name. We associated it with a Sarah we knew, who lived on a farm near the river. She was the daughter of one of Theydon Hall's former overseers. She was sandy-skinned, sandy-haired, raw-boned and lanky. She talked through her nose and was as unpleasant in her speech as she was in her person.

It was just such an individual we expected now to meet in Aunt Sarah. But there was no Aunt Sarah to meet us.

Uncle called Christiana, and a sleepy, tall, mulatto woman appeared, Aunt Sarah's maid, we afterwards found.

Uncle left us with her. She took us upstairs and, leaving us in the room to the left of the hall, carried

the girls off to the room just opposite, where we could hear Bessie wailing.

We boys threw ourselves across the bed, too sleepy to undress, and in a second we were sound asleep.

CHAPTER III.

GLENCAIRN.

I think it was Bessie that roused us at last. I am sure we heard her plainly enough when we did wake up.

"Still wailing," groaned Phil. "I wish she had gone to Atlanta, that I do."

We sat up, and the first thing we thought of was that in a few minutes we would meet that aunt.

"I wish it was over, don't you?" said Phil. "We are too big to be kissed, are we not, Harold? But, ha! ha! ha! She will kiss old Paul, though."

Paul had tumbled off his bed with "Gee, ain't I glad I'm dressed," and we had to threaten to hold him down and wash his face for him before we could make him "ablute." He was now standing in the middle of the floor brushing his short crop of curls with all his might, when this terrible possibility reached his ears.

"No, she won't either," he said, stoutly. "If she dares, I'll—I'll——"

"Hush up," I said, applying my toe to him, "and hurry."

Just then a tap at the door quieted us immediately.

"There she is, now," whispered Phil.

"Come in," I called faintly, and in walked Nan, who exploded, when she saw our scared faces and rolling eyes. She almost laughed herself into hysterics.

"You did look so funny! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" she cried, rocking back and forth on the edge of the bed, the tears actually running down her cheeks.

"What did you scare us in that way for?" laughed Phil, taking hold of her shoulders and shaking her. "We thought you were Aunt Sarah."

We all had to laugh, for I saw Phil, and Phil saw me, and we both saw Paul.

Nan straightened us here and there, smoothed us down, retied Paul's necktie, and pronounced us ready for the ordeal.

Slowly we went downstairs, the padded steps deadening our footfalls.

In the hall below, seeing no one, we walked toward the front room, where we heard voices.

It was Uncle speaking in contrite tones.

"If I had known, Sarah, that you were going to be so piping hot about it, I would have thought twice before I spoke. But, really, I don't see what I can do now. They are here, and their parents on the water by this time; so, dear, try to put up with them for my sake. I understand just how you feel about it, and think you have every reason to be angry. I just didn't know how to get out of it—and it does seem only natural to have Brother's children here, too. Now, I promise you it shall not give you the least annoyance. I will assume all responsibility and the management of them myself; so—— There they are now," he whispered, as he looked up and saw us standing in the doorway. Then, in quite another tone, he called to us: "Here you are at last. I have been waiting for the last half hour to introduce you to Aunt Sarah. Come and speak to her."

We stood for a minute rooted to the spot. First, we felt mortified to the quick by what we had overheard, and, second, the Aunt Sarah of our imagination clapped her wings and sailed away, leaving in

her place a tall, slender lady, dressed in white, not much older looking than Auntie, graceful, erect and very angry—we could see that by the poise of her head and flushed cheeks.

Uncle introduced us, and she got control of herself sufficiently to receive us with cold courtesy.

She did not clasp Paul's skinny little frame to her bosom, nor imprint any kisses on his angelic brow, nor on Nan's, either, for that matter, which oversight caused Paul's face suddenly to spread into a grin of delight, as surreptitiously he put his tongue into his cheek and winked his eye at me.

But he missed his angle and Aunt Sarah caught him at it and looked disgusted.

"Where is my pet?" asked Uncle.

"Christiana is dressing her," Nan answered timidly.

Then Uncle went out.

We four were completely crushed by Aunt Sarah's dignity, bashful and ill at ease. Little Paul assumed his expression of "my last friend gone," shut his long mouth, turned down the corners and gazed into space with agonized eyes of woe.

Nan was on the verge of hysterics. I was in misery lest we should fall into giggles from sheer nervousness.

Aunt Sarah was opening the mail that lay on the table before her. She picked up a letter and scrutinized the handwriting as if it was not familiar, then looked at the postmark.

I recognized Mother's writing and remembered that the night before we left home she had gone to the library, saying to Father and Cousin John that she had "the letter of her life to write."

This must have been it. I saw a curious expression flit over Aunt Sarah's face, and I wanted her to break the seal and read it at once, so that I could

judge by her countenance what she thought of it; but the door opened and in walked tearful Bessie and diverted attention from the letter and from us.

Bessie, having always been a pet, and never dreaming that her presence was not agreeable to everybody, at all times, walked straight to Aunt Sarah and held up her little wet face to be kissed—so immediately found her way towards the heart of our Yankee Aunt and got the advantage of us as usual.

Mother says we are jealous of Bessie, that she really has wonderful tact; but Mother is soft on Bessie. We know she is an exasperating little thing, and tries our patience dreadfully.

Of course, we see she is a remarkably beautiful child, and we have heard strangers rave over her complexion, her hair, her eyes, her features and her lovely grace and manners; but so has she, and there lies the trouble—she thinks only of herself. She never romps, she never soils her clothes or hands. She always looks, as the saying is, as if "she has just come out of the bandbox."

But what is that to us? Give us Nan, who is as good a boy as any of us; "Little Tomboy," Father calls her.

She is worth twenty Bessies, "Little Cry-baby" we call her. Paul says he can't see why she hasn't melted long ago.

Uncle came back and took her on his knee, fondling her and asking Aunt Sarah if she wasn't a darling—so Miss Bessie dried her eyes and became quite animated, endearing herself every moment more and more by her pretty ways.

We noticed, however, that Aunt Sarah was not particularly enthusiastic.

"You are quite ready for breakfast now, are you not?" said Uncle.

He rang for Christiana, and when she came he

told us to go with her to the dining room and that she would attend to us.

Glad were we to get out of that room. The woman hastened on before us, giving Paul an opportunity to revive his drooping spirits and to gratify his love of teasing Bessie by remarking in a low tone to her that Christiana was going to be her Ma now.

This brought forth loud wails, intended for Uncle's and Aunt Sarah's ears.

Phil, more emphatically than elegantly, told her to "dry up," and, taking hold of her, we retreated in haste to the dining room.

"We's in for a bad time, Mr. Gourdine," remarked Christiana to the butler, as we came in.

"So I poceives, Miss White," he sympathetically acquiesced.

After breakfast we went on the piazza. Uncle was there, waiting to take Bessie to town with him. She went off in high glee, and we began to reconnoiter and acquaint ourselves with Uncle's premises.

The house at Glencairn was built on quite an elevation. From the piazza we looked upon a wide expanse of woods and fields whitening with cotton. In front of the house was a beautiul lawn ornamented here and there with magnificent trees.

The public road lay beyond, then rolling hills, covered with woods of oak, hickory, walnut, maple and pine.

There was a broad gravel carriage drive from the front gates to the steps of the house, and a narrow one to the left of the lawn, made by Uncle, who persisted in driving round to the back of the house whenever he chose.

The lawn extended far around to the left, then sloped gently down to a little stream that ran purling and gurgling to the pond. Beyond the stream

lay acres of cotton fields, the pickers, with their bags slung from their shoulders, going from row to row.

It was so quiet we could hear them sing and laugh.

To the right of the house lay the garden and orchard, two or three acres, filled with flowers, bushes, vegetables and fruit.

Everywhere there was evidence of wealth.

We had heard Father say everything Uncle put his hand to was a success.

It was all very charming, but we wanted to talk, where no one could possibly overhear us.

So we ran down to the brook.

There we began to talk all at once.

"Isn't she beautiful?"

"To think Aunt Sarah should look like that."

"Why, she is what Mother calls a girl."

"Isn't it dreadful to be where you are not wanted?"

"Hasn't she beautiful black hair? So soft and dusky!"

"Her hands and feet are so small and slender. I like small feet; they look so dainty."

"Do you think she is not going to speak at all?"

"We had better keep out of her way. You heard what Uncle said. He was not going to let us annoy her in the least."

"What made her mad? I don't see," asked Paul, who didn't quite understand.

"I think," said Nan, who has a keen sense of justice, "I'd be mad, too. I think I like her for getting so angry."

"I didn't think a Yankee looked like that."

"Wasn't that a pretty dress she wore?"

"I wish I knew what Mother wrote."

"Excuse my blunderbusses," mimicked Phil, at which we laughed, but also exclaimed, "For shame, Phil!"

"If she's going to be mean, I want to go home," said Paul.

"Just keep out of her way, Paul."

"Four whole months," sighed Nan. "Our visit is spoiled."

"No, it isn't," I said. "We are here. We can't help it. It is Uncle's home, and he had a right to bring us here, though he did say he couldn't get out of it. So I say, let us keep out of her way and try to get as much fun out of this visit as we can. Those woods look fine. Let's go over there."

So saying, we crossed the branch, walked to the road, and then went on into the woods.

So it happened that we were far away when the vigorous ringing of a bell fell upon our ears.

"Dinner," exclaimed Nan, aghast, "and we are going to keep her waiting."

"Don't disturb yourself," I laughed. "She'll not wait on us.

At the house we met Christiana, who told us sharply that dinner was nearly over. She wouldn't hear of our going to our rooms to make ourselves more tidy.

"Can't wait on a parcel of chilluns all day," she growled, as she opened the door and ushered us in.

Aunt Sarah's eyes fell immediately on our rather soiled hands, for we had been playing in the branch, and with a little twitch of an eyebrow she seemed to be saying to herself: "How can I stand this?"

We were nervous. We thought she was criticizing every movement, and I could but remember Mother's many injunctions not to disgrace ourselves. Our table manners were not so bad; we knew how to use knives and forks properly, although, sometimes, we preferred our fingers.

But Phil is not to be depended upon. We knew it

would come sooner or later—and it came very much sooner.

When ill at ease, he has the funniest little flourishing movements imaginable. The gravy was passed to him. Up went the ladle with this flourish, splash went the gravy, mostly outside his plate, upon the spotless tablecloth.

It was awful!

We turned as red as he did, all but Bessie, who murmured in honeyed tones: "Aunt Sarah, you must really excuse him. He is such a careless boy."

"O, pshaw," said Uncle. "Tablecloths can wash. I soil them myself sometimes—used to," he added, as he caught Aunt Sarah's gaze.

Poor Phil was too embarrassed to say a word. It is an everyday occurrence at home.

We call him "the man with the dropsy."

But you should see Bessie at the table. The daintiness with which she holds a cup or goblet—the little finger quirled out—wiping her rosebud lips before and after drinking—can only be seen to be appreciated. We had passed many a meal at home choking down suppressed merriment caused by Paul, who was slyly mimicking her, his face as demure as a saint's, copying, with exact exaggeration, every motion, until she had to be carried away in wails and Paul sent off in disgrace.

After dinner we went to the back of the house to get acquainted with that part of the premises.

Out there we found Ike, a colored boy, and struck up a friendship with him.

He took us to see the horses, cows, sheep, pigs, goats, mules, donkeys, turkeys, ducks, chickens, pigeons, pheasants, dogs, cats—what didn't Uncle have?

He pointed out the peacocks perched on a tree in the garden. We had only seen pictures of these birds and were delighted to think we could now see

them fan out their brilliant tail feathers and strut about with our own eyes.

Everything about the place was in perfect order, from the barns and stables, to the dog kennels and pigeon cotes.

Ike told us of the fox hunts that Uncle would have in the winter.

"I lies in bed," he said, "an' I hears de horns just a-tooting, an' I hears Mars Jeems an' de dogs an' de udder gemmans just a-goin' by, an' I says, 'Mar, Marse Jeems gwine ketch sumptin' dis mornin'."

We hoped Uncle would let us go, too, sometimes.

"Marse Jeems got de bes' horses an' de bes' hounds in de country," he proudly asserted.

He took us to see Aunt Sarah's own horse—the prettiest on the plantation.

Then he led us to the pond and told us great tales of the fishing that had taken place there.

So, altogether, we returned to the house very much pleased that this was to be our home for the next four months, and forgetting that Aunt Sarah, the mistress of it all, heartily wished us ten thousand miles away.

The cotton wagons were coming in from the fields when we returned to the house, crowded with the pickers and their baskets, all going to have their days' work weighed and checked up for their Saturday payments.

They were singing negro melodies, which sounded very sweet.

As the sun had set, we went to the house.

On the front piazza sat Aunt Sarah and Bessie.

We went upstairs and fixed up, for we did not wish to shock her again.

When we returned to the piazza, I sat down on the steps and took a good look at our aunt. She was reclining in her chair, her hands lying idle in her

lap, absolutely unconscious of our presence. Her face was very, very sad, as if her thoughts gave her pain.

I wondered what she was thinking about.

I thought her the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, even more beautiful than Auntie.

I don't count Mother with other ladies—she's Mother—always just what she ought to be. I never stop to think about how she looks.

She is always lovely to me.

But here was fine clothes, fair, white skin, beautiful hair and eyes, beautiful hands and feet, an exquisite mouth and chin, and, with it all, what is meant when you call a person graceful or say that she has a gracious manner.

Anyway, she sat in that chair in a way I liked. But I was curious to know what made her look so sad. Every trace of anger was gone.

Uncle came on the piazza before she roused from her reverie, and I think he knew, for he went up to her and kissed her so tenderly, then she smiled, but her eyes were full of tears.

I liked Aunt Sarah. "She's square," I thought. "She doesn't like children much, and she was as mad as she could be that Uncle had brought us home with him—but she is not mean."

Uncle sat down and immediately lifted Bessie to his knee. He was so jolly, and we were beginning to feel a little homesick, that we wanted to hang about him, but we were afraid of Aunt Sarah.

Presently the tea bell rang and he shook Bessie, saying, "There, little girl, do you hear that? My! I do believe she is sound asleep."

So Christiana was called, and the child carried off, too sleepy, this time, to wail.

At tea Uncle did most of the talking. We had been trained to be quiet at meal times, listening,

rather than making ourselves heard. No one noticed the misdemeanors of the "Man with the dropsy," though they were apparent to all that had eyes to see.

Aunt Sarah was silent, still in mind far away. Uncle, after trying to interest her, addressed the conversation to us, asking us where we had been and what we had seen.

After tea we went out on the piazza again. It was a lovely night. The full moon was just rising above the tops of the trees.

We children sat down on the steps and watched the trees become silvered and the long shadows fall upon the grass.

It was peaceful and quiet, but, oh! our little hearts were aching with homesickness. Paul slipped his hand into Nan's, and we all sat close together.

Uncle and Aunt Sarah were walking up and down the long piazza talking.

We were so quiet—indeed, we were struggling with our tears—that Uncle, at last, asked if we were asleep, then sent us off to bed.

So we said "good-night" and went upstairs.

So ended our first day at Glencairn.

I lay awake for some time, then I must have dozed, for I had a dream about angels singing, and at last found myself wide awake listening to the most heavenly music that had ever fallen on my ears. I did not know the song, nor could I hear the words, but the voice went to my heart.

I wondered if it could be Aunt Sarah.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SKIRMISH.

The next morning we were wakened by a mournful pit-a-patter on the roof.

"I do believe it is raining," said Paul.

"That's just what it's doing," I answered.

"What will we do all day?" asked Phil in dismay.

"Keep out of her way," said Paul.

It was late, so we got up and dressed.

"I bet you she'll be cranky about muddy feet," said Phil.

"That she'll be," I assented. "We had better be sure to remember the door mats."

Down stairs we found a cheerful fire in the dining room.

Breakfast was on the table, and Daddy Stephen told us to sit down, for Aunt Sarah would take her breakfast in her room and Uncle had gone to town early.

We ate hastily, then donning our raincoats, proceeded to enjoy ourselves out of doors.

But the day grew more and more disagreeable, and forced us to return to the house.

We stood at the window of the upper hall, looking out on the melancholy scene.

The wind came sweeping in gusts around the house, the low clouds went scudding from the east, the rain dashed against the panes, while a heavy mist

shrouded the woods that surrounded the premises.

It certainly was calculated to make us more homesick than ever, for the house was so still; not a soul seemed to be stirring.

Such days at Theydon Hall were in perfect contrast to this. Mother always contrived to make them especially delightful for us.

She said they were her days for getting intimately acquainted with her children.

She often got Cousin John to shorten our lessons, so as to have a half holiday.

We would make candy and Maum Hannah would cook little cakes and Mother would play with us, and it was so, so nice.

We would even have been thankful to have had lessons to occupy us this morning. It was dreadful! There was actually nothing to do, nothing to read, nothing to play with, nobody to talk to.

We don't know just exactly how it began, but we certainly did drift, before the morning was over, into the most hilarious, lawless game of romps that we had enjoyed for a long time.

We forgot it was Glencairn, we forgot all about Aunt Sarah, we chased each other all over our room, up and down our hall, up the attic stairs, into Nan's room, had pillow fights, yelled like wild Indians, slid down the attic banisters; in fact, turned our rooms topsy turvy.

Phil was standing on his bed with the bolster held high, daring us to come on, when the door flew open and Christiana, infuriated, made her appearance.

"Stop dis noise!" she shouted. "Stop dis noise directly. What doin's is dis!"

Then, glancing around the room, she threw up her hands in horror, exclaiming, "O, my Lord! What would Miss Sarah say ef she could see dis room now. And look at dem muddy foots all over dese

nice, white bedspreads. We never seen de like ob dis sence I been in dis house. Get off dat bed dis minute."

"Did Aunt Sarah send you here to bluster around in this way?" I asked.

"No, I comed ob myself. I ain't goin' let no chilluns run ober me. You just wait till Marse Jeems come. I'll deport you to him, an' we'll see w'at he say to all dis'.'

"Now, look here," I said, for I was mad. "It makes a great deal of difference whether Aunt Sarah sent you or not. You are crazy, if you think we are going to obey you. Say, now, did she send you or not?"

"Go on! Go on!" she said in exasperating tones. "Just tear up eberyt'ing."

"Hit her on the head with your bolster, Phil," I said.

No sooner said than done. Away flew the bolster. "Bang!" it took one side, and, before she had time to recover, Paul's pillow came flying from the other bed.

"You nasty buzzards!" she yelled, "I'll box your jaws," and she flew like a tigress straight at Phil, who quickly, as well as the rest of us, got on the other side of the bed.

Then began a lively chase, always keeping the bed between us. When she jumped on the bed, we rushed behind the headboard.

Such fun as we had! Real sport. For she would have given us something to remember, if she could have caught us.

But we were not called the "fleet-footed little Theydons" for nothing.

At last, tired out and baffled, she went off, nearly in tears, saying either she or we had to leave that

house; she would not stand "such doin's as dese" one day longer.

We held a consultation after her departure, for our spirits were somewhat dampened by the interruption.

We thought I had better go down and apologize to Aunt Sarah, so in some trepidation I descended and rapped upon the sitting room door. Receiving no answer, I went to the library, where I found Daddy Stephen dusting. He told me with an air of resignation that Aunt Sarah was in her room, ill with a nervous headache.

I returned to the children considerably crestfallen, and in addition informed them Uncle James had come and was on his way to the house.

We immediately became very quiet, speaking in whispers, moving about on tiptoe, and hastened to put our room in order.

When we went down to lunch we found Christiana in a towering rage "deporting" us to Uncle.

"Miss Sarah has a headache?" he asked in much concern.

"The worstest she has ever had—nothing but them chilluns," Christiana went on.

But Uncle left her with her complaints unfinished and went to Aunt Sarah.

And we, at a safe distance, executed a noiseless war dance, for her benefit, calculated to exasperate her still more.

Uncle looked worried when he came back.

After lunch he called us into the library and said, "Look here, children. Positively you must keep quiet this afternoon. Aunt Sarah is suffering dreadfully."

"O, Uncle, we are so sorry," we hastened to apologize.

"We didn't know noise could hurt well people."

"We forgot we were not at home."

"We are going to be as still as mice now."

"I doubt if the noise made her sick. Dear Sarah," he said, gazing into the coals and looking as if he had forgotten us, "I was afraid she would have a nervous headache this morning."

It is needless to say that Bessie had not been in the melêe. No, indeed. She had been playing quietly with Nan's doll in a corner of their room. No romps for Bessie.

Uncle proposed after dinner that we all should write to Father and Mother.

So we spent a very quiet and comfortable afternoon in the library, writing, at his suggestion, "a round robin" to them, each one trying to put into it everything that had happened, and to describe every one we had met since we told them "good bye" last Thursday night.

It seemed like a month ago.

Towards dusk Uncle came to see how we were getting on. He seated himself and took out his pipe for a smoke.

We came crowding around, not being restrained by Aunt Sarah's presence, for we were a little homesick again.

Bessie got in his lap, Paul sat on one arm of his chair and Nan on the other, while we were on hassocks at either knee.

He saw it made us happier to hang about him, so he did not repulse us.

I think he was feeling a little lonesome himself, without his "Sarah."

He puffed away in silence, nearly suffocating us with smoke, then said, "Children, I have been thinking. You know, I am afraid I'll have to send you to school. Will you mind very much? Mt. Jericho is a very good school, and every one speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Marks as a teacher.

"You see, Aunt Sarah has never been accustomed

to boys, and I can't let you annoy her. School will help to keep you out of mischief, and then there will be the lessons to prepare. I won't be at home in the mornings for some weeks now, to keep you in order.

"You see it will be quite after four when you get back from school.

"What do you say? Don't you think you will like it?"

We acquiesced at once, and showed such a thorough appreciation of the situation that it somewhat disconcerted him.

So it was arranged that on Monday next Uncle was to take us to Winfield and enter us as pupils at Mt. Jericho.

Uncle sent us to bed early, as he wanted the house perfectly quiet.

Before we began to undress Nan came in, evidently much wrought up; in fact, she had had something on her mind all evening.

"Philip Theydon," she began sternly, "positively this thing is to stop."

"Why, what's up now, Nan?" we exclaimed.

"Are you aware, Phil?" shaking her finger at him, "that Aunt Sarah has had to change the tablecloth six times since we have been here? Think of it! A clean cloth for every meal, because you spill something on it every day. It is outrageous!"

"Aren't you ashamed, Phil, to be such a baby!" I put in.

"She'll send you to the kitchen for meals, first thing you know," piped Paul.

"Don't you all jump on me at once," Phil said. "I can't help it."

"Well, you just have to help it," we all chimed. "You know what happens when you don't come up to requirements. Well, look out! The next time you soil the cloth we'll do it."

"Well, don't come down on me so suddenly," he whined, still defending himself. "I told you I couldn't help it."

"Yes, you can help it, and I won't have this reflection on Mother," I said.

"Well, don't cut me down to one, Harold. Give me three," he whined.

"Yes, Harold," said Nan, relenting, "give him three. And, Phil, you must be more careful."

"It's because you are so silly, Phil," added Paul. "Look here. This is not the way to use a spoon," imitating Phil's flourishes exactly, "but so," this time more on the order of Bessie's movements.

"Well, why doesn't she just wash it out, and use the same one over, as Mother does," Phil kept whining.

"She's not your mother, boy, to wash after you."

"If Mother had paddled you, instead of washing out the stains, you would have broken yourself of this bad habit long ago," I said. "We will give you three cloths a week, and if you go over that your punishment is sure. It's got to stop."

And Phil knew it had. He had run up on this threat before.

This was the punishment. We called it "Sending you to Coventry." It meant that the one in disgrace was not to be allowed to associate with the other three until he wrote a note promising to make amends for his faults, and to try to do better.

We had all been there, at different periods, and it was something of a dose.

So Nan, feeling that she had saved Mother's reputation, retired to her room.

No one went into Winfield to church next day, as the weather was still unsettled, and Aunt Sarah was feeling pretty weak and badly after her sick day.

Uncle was glad to stay at home with her.

We managed to put in a very quiet day, so full of interest were we at this entirely new experience that had come to us.

We could talk of nothing else.

CHAPTER V.

MT. JERICHO.

We were up and dressed early Monday morning. It was arranged that Daddy Stephen should serve us breakfast, for we had such a drive before us we would be gone long before Aunt Sarah came out of her room.

But this morning Uncle was with us, as he was going to enter us himself.

Our tongues flew so fast we could hardly eat. A lunch was put up for us. The old-time carryall was brought out and brushed up, old Jerry harnessed, and then we started. The morning was fine, and as we rolled along Uncle kept us amused by telling us of the days when Father and himself went to this same school. We got so wrought up we forgot to be shy when we drove up and were eyed by over one hundred children.

Well, Mr. Marks graded us low, greatly to our joy, for we were sent there to kill time, rather than for any improvement expected or desired.

Uncle told us where to buy our books, bags and other accessories, and where to find the horse and carryall.

We knew absolutely nothing about children. Father and Mother had friends that visited us occasionally, but if they had children they did not bring them.

The boys surrounded us at recess, sounding us, I

suppose. Many were the questions asked. Perhaps we stood the test very well, for they were friendly enough.

On the whole, we were very much pleased.

After school we walked to Dr. Springs' drug store, where we found Uncle waiting for us. He bought all that was required for us, and then we set off home, giving him on the way our impressions of the school and teachers.

There is an old town clock in Winfield. You pass it just as you turn out of Main Street. Uncle said he would take us up to the little piazza, away at the top, some day. The view up there is fine, he says.

Just beside the clock is the jail, and there were prisoners looking out between the iron bars in the windows on the third story.

It was dreadful! Nan was so sorry for them Uncle wasn't, though.

Opposite the jail is the Court House, where these prisoners are tried.

While we were in Dr. Springs' store a man came on the piazza of the Court House and called in a loud voice, "Oyez! Oyez! George Washington Anderson, come into court. George Washington Anderson, come into court."

Uncle said a case was being tried—it was court week—and this witness was wanted.

We had never thought much about courts and prisoners and jails on the plantation, and we were very curious.

Uncle answered all of our questions, and we got a new view into life.

It was late in the afternoon when we got home.

The plan was that we should drive ourselves to school, and stop at Mrs. Foster's, drive into her lane, and leave our carryall in her carriage house, and turn old Jerry loose in the lot.

Mrs. Foster was Aunt Sarah's and Uncle's friend. She lives in a fine house, almost on the outskirts of the town. Her garden is one of the prettiest things in Winfield.

This would leave us a walk of almost a mile each way.

"Uncle has done this in malice, just to tire us down, so that we won't have spirit enough to be noisy," growled Phil.

He alone did not feel particularly hilarious over this school business.

Father and Cousin John say that he is the brightest of us all, but he does not like to apply himself, and abhors confinement.

Ha! Ha! It would take more than two miles to wear out the little Theydons.

The plan worked beautifully all week. We saw Aunt Sarah only late in the afternoon, when she usually came out on the front piazza and with Uncle James waited for dinner.

We were about ready then to be quiet.

We liked the boys in our room, and Nan was enthusiastic over some of the girls in hers. Paul, alone, had complaints to make.

There was a Ritchie Claiborne in his class that absolutely tormented him all week.

He soon found out that Paul was from the country, and made him the butt of all his jokes, to which the little fellow submitted with such docility he was put down as a coward. Paul is really a very jolly, good-natured little fellow, and he did not quite understand teasing of the sort that Ritchie tried.

As I said before, we none of us knew the ways of boys, Paul least of all.

He was nine years old, and in some respects wise for his years, and in others almost a baby.

Well, Friday of this very first week, as bad luck

would have it, Dick, one of Uncle's hands, came in with the wagon for groceries just as we were driving out of Mrs. Foster's lane.

"Git out, Paul. Git out, an' wait fer me. I ain't goin' to be gone long. You come go back wid me," he shouted.

Nothing loth, Paul got out, and so we left him.

About an hour later he came from the back yard, through the side piazza, round to the front, where we were all sitting, Aunt Sarah, Uncle James and ourselves.

He was holding a handkerchief to his eye, and was evidently much disturbed.

"What is the matter, Paul?" Nan asked.

He was crying, but we heard through the sobs, "Ritchie hit me."

"Where did you see Ritchie?" I asked.

"Hit you with a rock?" asked Uncle.

"No, with a walking cane."

"What made him?" I asked.

"Tell us how it happened," said Nan.

So we got out of him, between his sobs and infuriated grinding of his teeth, that after we left, Mrs. Foster, who was walking in her garden and had heard Dick call to him, asked him, while he was waiting, if he would mind taking a pair of shoes to the shoemaker for her, two squares down the street.

Of course he made no objection, and her maid brought them to him wrapped in paper.

He was to tell the shoemaker to remove the heels, and just to leave them there with him.

At the very next house there was a children's party going on, and whom should he meet but Ritchie, in his fine clothes, walking cane and all, going to it.

"He came swaggering up to me," Paul told, "and said, 'Where you going, Paul Theydon?'

"And I told him, 'Up town, for Mrs. Foster.'

"Then he said, 'Open that bundle, and let me see what's inside,' and I opened it.

"And then he looked at me and just whooped and said, 'Paul Theydon, you ought to be knocked over for being such a fool as to show me those shoes.' Then I got mad, and I said, 'Well, knock me over, then. I dare you to do it.'

"Then he laughed again, and said he could knock me down with his little finger, and he was going to do it, too.

"Then he began to take off his coat to fight me, but he remembered he had on his best clothes, lace all down the front of his blouse, just like a girl's, and he put it back on and snapped his fingers right in my face, and said, 'When I fights, I fights boys, not little cowardly fools, like you.'

"Then I told him I dared him to strike me; that *he* was the coward, because he wouldn't take my dare.

" 'You take that for your impudence,' he said, and he cut me right across my face with his cane.

"It hurt so I put my hand up to my face, and when I turned round he was jeering me from the piazza.

"And I'm going to beat him on Monday," Paul wailed, shutting up the other eye and crying in wrath as well as pain and with his clenched fists pounding the air.

"I'm going to beat him Monday, if he kills me."

"I would," said Uncle hotly, "and I'll give you fifty cents if you do."

"O, Col. Theydon! What morals!" laughingly protested Aunt Sarah.

"Yes, Sarah, I would beat him. I would," Uncle assured her, "and I will give him fifty cents if he beats him—but that eye needs attention. What have we, Sarah, to put on it?"

"Witch hazel," she said; "in the medicine chest."

So Uncle went off to get it and returned with the bottle and two of his handkerchiefs.

But Uncle was not meant for a doctor or a nurse. His touch is not gentle. Paul winced under his vigorous splashes of "witch," and at last Aunt Sarah so far forgot her dignity as to take it from him and to proceed to bathe his eye and to bandage it herself.

When she was through Paul lifted his head and opened his other eye to look up at her while he thanked her for her kindness—and Aunt Sarah looked so queer.

She slipped her hand under his chin quickly, and gazed steadily at him, while her eyes filled with tears.

Uncle was seated near, smoking, and he said to her, "Ah, you notice it, too! I have, from the first."

We thought it so strange. The next day we looked Paul over thoroughly, even took the magnifying glass, to see if there could be an incipient cataract, or something of that kind, they saw. But we could discover nothing.

We could scarcely wait till Monday, we were so wrought up over the coming combat.

Paul was simply furious whenever he thought of Ritchie.

We were not sure of the outcome of this battle, but we knew Paul was remarkably strong for so slight a boy and as active as a wild cat.

On Monday, all during school hours, he was very quiet, but evidently had no notion of backing out.

As for Claiborne, he apparently had forgotten all about the occurrence of the afternoon of the party.

But when school was out, Paul ran up to Ritchie and told him he wanted to get square with him, so to come behind the college and have it out.

"All right," laughed Ritchie, confidently. "Boys, come and see me lick Paul Theydon within an inch of his life."

"A fight! A fight!" shouted the boys.

"What's it all about?" asked one.

"Ritchie is lots bigger than you, Paul. He'll break your head, sure," said another.

And with many other such reassuring remarks the boys followed Paul to an open spot shielded by low bushes and buildings from the college.

Ritchie's contemptuous, taunting manner was incensing Paul greatly, as well as the boy's doubts of his ability to cope with his antagonist.

Ritchie threw his school bag on the ground with a resounding thud—then they grappled each other and the contest began.

It was almost impossible to throw Paul, on account of his agility, while Ritchie was like a young sapling growing out of the ground, such sturdy legs did he possess.

They struggled and swayed, panted and puffed, but neither got any decided advantage over the other.

From the onset the tone of the boys changed. It was "Hurrah for Theydon!" "Who would have thought it!" "Go for him, Theydon!" "Well done, Paul!" and the like, for Ritchie was something of a bully, and all boys enjoy seeing his kind get the worst of it.

Blows were falling fast and furious, when a well directed thrust from Paul brought blood from Ritchie's nose and tears from his eyes.

He burst into a rage of weeping, roused by the boys' shouts of derision, and blindly groped about for a brick bat, which he flung at Paul, then hurled others at the group of boys, until the single fight seemed in a fair way to become a general row.

"Look out, Claiborne, who you are hitting," shouted one in the crowd.

"We ain't done anything to you, Claiborne," from another.

"I don't care who I hit. I'll kill some of you if you don't let me alone!" yelled Ritchie.

"Ha! ha! ha!" from a chorus of boys, dancing in excitement.

Brick bats flew thicker than ever and ugly words, too, and a grand hubbub we made, when some one gave the warning, "Here comes Mr. Marks."

We youngsters picked up books, hats and coats and scattered like leaves before a November blast.

We found Uncle on the piazza smoking, eager for the news.

"Well," he asked, as we ran around the corner, "who whipped?"

"Paul! Paul!" we shouted.

"Why, I don't know, Uncle," said Paul. "I made Ritchie's nose bleed, and the boys laughed at him for crying, and that made him so mad he stopped fighting me to throw stones at them. Then Mr. Marks found out that we were fighting, and when we saw him coming we all ran away. I got even with him, though—that was all I wanted. No, Uncle, I don't want the fifty cents," for Uncle was feeling in his pockets for it.

"No, don't take it," said Aunt Sarah. "I don't like the idea of your paying him for coming out the victor in a fight, Jim. You are nothing but a boy yourself," she laughed, looking at him, though, as if she thought him a very nice boy.

"Yes, ma'am," Uncle said, reaching for his pipe and beginning to smoke.

"Give it to him for anything else, but not for fighting."

"I thought you told us, Uncle, you had Aunt Sarah well in hand," remarked Phil.

"What's that?" asked Aunt Sarah.

"Now you tell her what brought forth that statement," said Uncle.

"No! No! No!" we said, turning very red.

"We only said that to get Bessie to go to Atlanta with Tom and Margaret," I said.

"They said you were a Yankee, Aunt Sarah, and that you would steal things from people, and that you would take my doll from me, and Uncle said he could manage you, I needn't be afraid to come," piped Miss Bessie, thankful for revenge.

Aunt Sarah did not know whether to be provoked or to laugh.

"Did they really think——" she began.

"No, no, Aunt Sarah; we were only teasing Bessie," we made haste to assure her, while Uncle roared, and then she laughed, too, but her face flushed.

CHAPTER VI.

PHIL GOES TO COVENTRY.

On Tuesday, the next day, Phil had become so far accustomed to the novelty of school as to begin to annoy Mr. Marks as he did Cousin John.

He had been very full of himself all morning.

At his best, he had never been much at Math. Father and Cousin John think he is too restless to concentrate his thoughts.

But there is one thing that he can do pretty well. He can draw the funniest pictures of people and animals.

Well, Mr. Marks sent him this morning to the board to work out an example. He stood so as to conceal one part of the board from Mr. Marks. Every few minutes, in this space, he would, with the quickest motion of his hand, make a line, then go on with his example, then dash another line or two, and in a few minutes, down in the space, grew a pig standing up teaching little pigs, and the pig certainly resembled Mr. Marks.

It was as funny as could be, and so quickly done; but the example was suffering.

Though he concealed the picture, he could not hide the children's faces.

Deeper interest than an example in percentage is wont to bring forth sat upon their countenances.

Mr. Marks moved his position to see what was

amusing his class, and, finding out, administered a wrathy lecture.

But Phil is at times incorrigible. The very next day he tried the same performance again, only this time it was a rooster and chickens.

Mr. Marks was mad, I tell you. Phil had paid so little attention to the lesson he was completely at sea.

But Mr. Marks controlled his temper, and patiently went slowly and clearly over each detail three times.

Phil was standing, apparently listening to him, but his hand was drawing imaginary pictures in the air.

"Now do you understand?" asked Mr. Marks.

"I think I do," Phil answered.

Then Mr. Marks gave eight examples under the rule he had been explaining, and, knowing perfectly well from Phil's expression that he hadn't taken in one word he had been saying, lost his temper again and assured him that if he failed the next day he certainly would give him a taste of his hickory.

Phil knew he would do it, too, and was at last impressed—but not for long.

When school was out we found there was the blackest cloud gathering in the west.

Long before we reached Mrs. Foster's house the lightning began to flash and deafening peals of thunder to roll and crash. Then came the wind, blowing furiously.

We ran as fast as we could.

Mrs. Foster's maid was on the lookout for us, to call us into the house.

We were glad to go in, for a wild storm was upon us, and Nan and Phil were so afraid of lightning.

She took us to the room where Mrs. Foster was

sitting. She is a very nice old lady, and so dear and good.

She amused us during the storm by telling us about some very religious children she had known, who grew up to be ministers of the gospel; and how much good they did, and how they turned bad boys' hearts to Christ.

Then she said she hoped we were good children and didn't neglect our prayers.

We liked to talk about prayers, while the house was trembling and the trees lashing their branches together, and the lightning blinding us and the thunder deafening us.

We had a very good talk.

Then she sent her maid for cake.

She told us she remembered Father when he was a boy; that he was a great friend of her boys and that he and Uncle were constantly at her house in those days.

When the storm was over and we were preparing to go home, she gave us "for keeps" each a book.

To me she gave "Settlers in Canada," to Phil "Edgar Clifton's School Days," to Nan "Lilian's Golden Hours," and to Paul "The American Boy's Book of Sports."

We were delighted with our presents. Mrs. Foster told us that they had belonged to her children, now in heaven, and whenever we saw the books we must think of what she had told us about saying our prayers.

Uncle was that glad to see us safe and sound he almost kissed us. It was all Aunt Sarah could do to keep him from setting out after us in all that storm.

It was almost dinner time when we reached home. The bell rang before we quite finished brushing up.

It was still raining, so the lamps were lighted early, and we were soon absorbed in our new books and

read till Uncle sent us off to bed. We got them out again next morning as soon as it was light enough to read. In consequence we were not ready for school until twenty minutes of nine.

We were just getting into the carriage when Phil exclaimed, his eyes nearly popping out of his head, "O, Goody! Those examples!"

"You're in for it now, my brother," I laughed unsympathetically.

"I can't go to school! Where's Uncle?"

"Gone to town."

Aunt Sarah was still in her room, and, anyway Phil was afraid to ask her for an excuse, so we sent him off to put on extra clothing. Nan ran off, too.

When we did start we had only ten minutes, and it is a good thing Uncle was where he could not see how we drove old Jerry over those country roads.

Of course we were late. It was after nine when we left Mrs. Foster's house.

While walking along, I asked Phil about something that had happened in the school the day before. Nan answered, while Phil didn't seem to know what I was talking about.

As we drew near the college, Phil got very nervous, and declared he could not go in, while Nan behaved as I had never seen her before.

Such walking! switching her skirts around in a way I didn't like at all.

Then Paul screamed, "Harold, look here! Nan and Phil have changed clothes."

And sure enough they had.

"My goodness!" I said, "you all had better go right back home."

"Too late, now," said Phil, who was in a perfect gale, while Nan was shrinking into herself.

He was right. It was too late, for Mr. Marks was standing in the door and had seen us.

So Nan followed me into Mr. Marks' room, while Phil and Paul went to their respective grades.

Nan sat perfectly still at Phil's desk, and as the recitations went on I began to think the change would pass unnoticed, for the twins were as like as two peas.

Neither of us left the room at recess.

When the hour for arithmetic came, and with it the girls from their room, then my heart sank. Nan left her desk and took Phil's seat in the class, and he hers.

But, Good Mercy! Phil! He had come flouncing into the room in a disgraceful manner. He punched one boy on the sly, pulled the hair of another, and tried to kiss still another on his way to the recitation bench, bringing grins to all who saw it.

One whispered, and I heard him, "Nan Theydon is getting fresh."

Nan, in vain, shook her head at Phil. He sat horribly; he lounged and crossed his knees. He giggled. He wasn't still one minute, and he was attracting everybody's attention and causing Mr. Marks to be reproving him continually.

Poor Nan's cheeks were crimson as she watched his antics.

Mr. Marks called on Phil Theydon to go to the board, and poor, embarrassed Nan moved forward.

I saw directly that Phil's behavior had completely scattered her wits. I doubt if the poor child could collect her thoughts sufficiently to remember under what rule the class was working.

She utterly failed, but I didn't realize until it was too late that Mr. Marks had taken a stout hickory rod and was using it in wrath upon her.

I started up in dismay, crying, "O, don't do that, Mr. Marks," while Phil electrified the school by shouting, "Stop hitting my sister!"

Nan was writhing in agony. It was the very first time in her life that she had been punished in that way.

Mr. Marks sent Phil out of the room and Nan to his desk, where she stayed crying the rest of the day.

I don't think Mr. Marks thought much of the Theydon children. He looked very curiously at Nan every now and then, and so did the boys; but I fastened my thoughts on my book, for I didn't want to catch the eye of any of them.

Four angry, weeping children rushed tempestuously around the corner of the house and up the steps, straight to the end of the piazza where Uncle and Aunt Sarah were usually found at this hour enjoying these last warm afternoons of summer.

Nan's sobs broke out afresh as she threw herself into Uncle's arms and hid her head on his shoulder.

Paul and I were explaining in indignant tones that Nan had been whipped at school, while Phil, a caricature indeed, with his skirts all awry, and in his excitement waving his hand in the air to attract attention, hastened to apologize by protesting, "I know it was wrong, Uncle. I'm just as sorry as I can be, and just as ashamed. I didn't have time to think, and——"

"For mercy's sake, what is all this?" said poor Uncle, laying aside his beloved pipe and looking at us in amazement, while even Aunt Sarah looked astonished. "What has happened, Nan? You have had a whipping at school? Why, what have you been doing, child?"

He took hold of Phil.

"That's not Nan," said Paul. "Here's Nan. Poor little Nan," he said, stroking her down in his sympathy. He adores his sister, and is always distressed

if she is in trouble. "She dressed up in Phil's clothes this morning."

"Who? Nan?" exclaimed Uncle.

"Yes, to save Phil from the beating Mr. Marks said——"

"And this is Nan, dressed as a boy? And she's been to school in these clothes? Here, wait—don't all talk at once. Explain what this means. Now, let Harold tell me."

So I told him, and I didn't spare Phil either, for I was mad with him.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself! You coward!" exclaimed Uncle, with blazing eyes.

"Yes, I am," sobbed Phil. "I am ashamed, Uncle, but I thought Nan knew how to work the examples. I didn't once think she would get whipped. She always could work——"

"And she could to-day," I interrupted, "if you had only behaved yourself. You confused her. She knew no girl ought to act as you were doing."

Uncle looked so disgusted with Phil I began to feel a little sorry for him.

He had been quieting Nan by gently pressing her to him and kissing the top of her head, and her sobs gradually grew more subdued.

"I don't ever want to go into that school room again," said Paul.

"I don't either," I emphatically agreed.

"Nor I," said Phil.

"I never can go again," said Nan, and she began to sob once more.

"I don't know that I am particularly anxious for you to go back myself," said Uncle, "but I declare I don't know what to do with you children!"

And his tone was so concerned, and he looked so helpless, we were real sorry we were so bad.

Aunt Sarah suddenly leaned back in her rocking

chair and held the corners of her handkerchief out before her face to hide it.

Uncle looked round at her and caught her.

"Come from behind that handkerchief, Miss Sarah. I know what you are laughing at. It's the truth, though; I really don't know what to do with them."

"Why, I think you are managing beautifully, Col. Theydon. I have never admired you more than I have these two past weeks," said Aunt Sarah.

Uncle looked at her as if he didn't quite know whether she was guying him or not; all the same, he laughingly made her a courteous salute, which would do either way.

"Now go and make yourselves decent for dinner," he said.

So we all ran up stairs, poor Nan staggering across the piazza.

When we came down to dinner we had to leave her. She had gone regularly to bed with a bad headache.

It was a very sorrowful meal for us. Uncle and Aunt Sarah were talking politics over our heads, and as we knew we should not chatter when grown people were conversing we sat absorbed in our own thoughts.

After dinner Phil went to sit by Nan, and Paul and I strolled out on the lawn.

"Harold," said Paul, most earnestly, "do you think Phil has good sense?"

"Yes," I laughed, "he has all the sense he needs. What's the matter with Phil is that he is just dying for a whipping."

"If you could have seen him," continued Paul. "It was all I could do to keep from taking my geography and bamming it over his head. So silly."

"Well, never mind. He goes into Coventry," I said,

"He knows it, too," laughed Paul. "That's why he has gone upstairs."

Nan did not come down to tea either.

After tea Uncle, instead of going out on the piazza, as usual, kept walking about the dining room, just as restless as he could be. He would come and look over the tea table as if he wanted something, then begin to walk again. I saw Aunt Sarah laughing to herself.

Presently she went into the pantry and returned in a few minutes bringing a little tray, with a cup of tea with some toast and nice wafers upon it.

As soon as Uncle saw the tray his face brightened, and he just hugged her, saying, "Yes, that's it. You are a perfect darling, Sarah."

Aunt Sarah laughed at him and said, "Don't make me spill the tea, Col. Theydon."

Then she went upstairs to Nan.

Phil was there, sitting quietly by her bedside. His penitence was too late.

Nan had a dreadful headache, and was still crying.

Aunt Sarah put the tray down and knelt by Nan, petting and comforting her.

After a while her tears stopped flowing.

Then Aunt Sarah brought a basin of cool water and gently bathed the poor child's smarting eyes and flushed face. Then she brushed the tangles out of her curls and put her arms around her and kissed her just as Mother would have done.

Aunt Sarah stood very near to Mother in Nan's heart after this night.

After she had eaten her supper she felt much better.

Then Aunt Sarah sent Phil away and sat by her, talking till she fell asleep.

Phil did not come down stairs, though. He knew better. When we went to bed we found him there

already, and if he was not fast asleep, he was feigning to be.

Next day Uncle told us we need not go back to school, unless we got rowdy again.

Nan was feeling the effects of yesterday's excitement, and Aunt Sarah told her she had better keep quiet, so she played dolls with Bessie.

Phil was proud and would play with neither, but pretended he was very much interested in his new book. We noticed, though, that the pages did not turn very fast.

Paul and I were lonely, but we meant old Phil to feel that he was in disgrace, and the way is, when one of us is in Coventry, that he has to stay there till he writes a note to say that he is sorry and has had enough, then we let him come back.

Leaving Phil with his book, we went to walk. There is enough at Glencairn to amuse you. We went with Daddy Ben to see the poultry fed. Uncle has some fine birds. He is getting them ready for the State Fair.

Daddy Ben told us the names of the different breeds and showed the points of each. He seemed as much interested as if he owned them. He keeps the yards and houses clean, feeds them and attends to them generally. He is an old, lame negro, so this work suits him exactly.

There were some young puppies to claim our attention next; and from there we went to the gin house, where they were ginning cotton with an engine instead of in the old way.

They told us to get out, for fear we might get hurt in the machinery. So we looked from the outside with great interest.

From there we wandered back through the gardens and orchard. Here we found Aunt Sarah and the girls. She had on a big sun hat and long gloves, and

was as busy among her flowers and plants as she could be.

There is a large hot house in the garden with many a queer and beautiful flower in it that I never had seen before.

Aunt Sarah told us, if we wanted to, we might gather some of the ripe apples in the orchard and bring them in for lunch.

Ready to obey her slightest behest, we ran to the house for a basket and soon filled it.

At lunch Phil's sprightly gayety did not in the least deceive us. He had been bored to death, but still pride was conquering him. He left us as soon as the meal was over, going to the branch with a vigorous swing, as if he had great projects afoot.

We did not follow him, though we wanted to.

Going to church on Sunday was a sore trial to Nan, but Uncle and Aunt Sarah seemed to have forgotten all about the escapade. Not so our companions. We saw from their looks of amusement that they were thinking how Nan Theydon got a whipping that was meant for old Phil.

Nan sat close to Uncle, who somewhat shielded her by putting his arm on the back of the pew behind her. She did not lift her eyes from her prayer book during the whole service.

On Monday Phil was still too proud to write the note, so we left him to his own devices, and as Uncle had charged us not to disturb Aunt Sarah we three decided to go hunting.

We put on our leggings, hunting belts and caps. Paul and I each had a gun, and Nan the lunch, put up in one of the discarded book bags, strapped on her back, knapsack fashion.

Phil was nowhere to be seen when we left.

We saluted Aunt Sarah as we crossed the lawn. She smiled and waved her hand at us.

The day was delightful in the woods, and we enjoyed ourselves so much. We had two of Uncle's bird dogs with us, and it was fun to see our strings of partridges grow longer and heavier.

We hoped Aunt Sarah and Uncle would welcome us when they saw us coming home.

As usual, they were on the piazza.

"See what we have brought!" we called when we reached the piazza.

"Hurrah for our Nimrods!" said Uncle enthusiastically.

"Uncle, they are just thick in your woods," said Nan.

"I know it. I haven't had much time for hunting lately. I am glad you are such sportsmen, for we are fond of quail on toast out here. Run and give them to Suckey."

Phil went upstairs, and there we found him, stretched out on his bed with his head under his pillow; whether crying or sulking I don't know—sulking, I guess, for he looked pretty glum both at dinner and tea.

Nan was awfully sorry for him, and, I believe, managed to have a little talk with him. Anyway, by next morning, just as we were setting out for another day in the woods, she came running, waving the note and announcing, "He has had enough. He is coming, too."

And glad we were to see him coming toward us, with gun, belt, leggings, cap and all, for Phil is great fun.

CHAPTER VII.

WE BECOME HOUSE HOLDERS.

The weather favored us for a week, and we supplied Aunt Sarah with all the partridges she could use, and besides had jolly, free good times ourselves, wandering around Uncle's beautiful plantation.

But alas! the wind changed and began to blow from the east; the clouds gathered and the woods thickened with mist.

We were worried, for we were honestly afraid of ourselves if we should be shut up long. But Paul had an inspiration. On coming back from the woods, we once took the path that skirts the gardens. These gardens are separated from the woods by a long lane with high privet hedges on either side.

At the end of the lane, on the outskirts of the woods, is an old, dilapidated building that looks as if it was past use. It struck Paul that, if Uncle would allow us, we might play out there, and be too far from the house to annoy Aunt Sarah with our noise.

The day was not inviting for a stroll, so we hunted up Uncle to make our request.

He went with us to see what condition it was in.

He said he really did not know for what purpose it had been built, but his mother had used it for a cotton house. He had intended to pull it down, but somehow he had forgotten all about its being there.

It was a long, narrow, low-ceiled room.

"It looks like a bowling alley," said Phil.

"We will make it one," said Uncle. "It will be a splendid play room for you. It needs a new sill, some shingles and window sashes. I'll send a carpenter out, right away, as soon as I get to town, and have him fix it for you to-day."

Sure enough, during the morning, there came the man with his tools, and began to work on it at once. He put it in good order and gave us a lock and key, too.

The next day Uncle had Dick whitewash it and scour the floor and windows clean.

It had been drizzling all day, but by next morning there was a regular downpour, and we had to put on our raincoats to go over there.

We felt almost like grownups, with our own house, with its lock and key.

There were three large windows, all on the south side, looking into the woods. These gave us plenty of light, and on bright, cold days plenty of sunshine.

Two or three days after we had possession of it Uncle brought back from town a bowling outfit. The next day he had the carpenter to come back and fix it up complete.

We were just as happy as we could be. Even the rolling and hitting of the balls didn't reach Aunt Sarah's ears, and for a week we enjoyed ourselves to the utmost.

Indeed, we didn't see anything of Aunt Sarah that week, except at meals and after tea, in the sitting room; so we didn't bother her one bit.

Ike, a little colored boy that waited in the house, found our quarters very fascinating. He was the one that showed us around the day we came. Really we did not object to him, but Aunt Sarah did not want us to play with him. I suppose she was preju-

diced because she was from the north. So we didn't let him in very often.

But one day, instead of going to school, we found him crouching in the privet lane.

"What are you doing, Ike?" I asked.

"La! Harold. Don't holler so loud! Mammy'll hear you. An' ef she do, she'll skin me ef she sees me here."

So we went to see what he was doing.

"I ain't goin' to school. I wants to play in you-all's house. I don l'arn nuttin' no way. Mammy jus' sen' me kase all de oders go."

So, feeling rather tender on the school question, we admitted him, and he rewarded us by relating in the most delightful manner all of the "Brer Rabbit" stories he knew.

Letters had come again from Father and Mother. Father was improving right along, and Mother was having such a nice time.

Bessie was so homesick after hearing the letters read that we were forced to amuse her to keep her from crying.

I took her on my back and trotted her up and down the hall, the others following on tiptoe.

Then we played a noiseless game of "Toucher," and played out there till the tea bell rang.

When we were seated, Uncle said, "You have had a splendid romp, haven't you?"

"Did we disturb you, Uncle?"

"Not at all. I love to hear your merry laughter." Then he sighed, and for a few minutes seemed to be thinking of something that made him very sad.

But after a while he roused, and asked Aunt Sarah if she had read a certain article in the *Courier* that morning.

She had read it, and then they began to discuss politics.

Something very exciting was taking place in our state this fall. The Democrats were determined to put down misrule, to elect their own governor, and to restore order.

Uncle was deeply interested. We had seen him several times lately, ride off, in a red shirt, to attend meetings of the different clubs, and Aunt Sarah always looked, after he left, as if she were worried to death.

Well, so absorbed were they in conversation over this piece of news in the day's paper they forgot our existence.

It seemed to us as if they would sit there forever. We ate twice as much as we ought to fill up the time. We had all, in turn, asked to be excused, but we were not heard in the animated conversation going on.

Then we sighed heavily. We talked by signs. Paul assumed his woe-begone expression, but still that discussion went on.

Then Bessie's head began to nod and her eyes to draw straws, but no one noticed her. Her head began to bob up and down, back and forth, and still they talked, seeming to be getting more absorbed, if anything.

Paul clasped his hands in dumb entreaty and gave us a pantomime show, one minute appealing to Aunt Sarah, then to Uncle, in a manner that was perfectly irresistible, it was so funny, and though we shook with silent laughter till the tea cups rattled, no one noticed. There was one amused witness, however, besides ourselves—Ike—who, in white apron and cap, was being broken in as a waiter.

He gave audible expression to his mirth, and was led to the pantry by his ear, held in the grasp of the wrathy Stephen.

All silently, however, and still the conversation went on.

Bessie's nods now became more emphatic. Occasionally, as she bowed especially low, her hands would fly about, like a baby's with hiccoughs, and we would merrily shake.

Lucky for us that we had had that romp, or we would have followed suit.

At last, Bessie gave a tremendous lurch backwards in her chair, not only throwing out her hands, but bringing her feet, with a sounding thud against the table, making the dishes rattle loud, and thus broke up the political party.

"Bless these chicks," said Uncle. "How long have we been sitting here?"

Bessie opened her sleepy eyes, and began to cry. Christiana was sent for, and tea was over.

When we were all sitting round the open fire in the sitting room, for it was chilly in the evenings now, Uncle asked Nan if she took music lessons.

Nan told him that Mother had taught her the notes, and that she could play a good many exercises.

"Just one, two, three, four—and one and, two and, three and, four and, Uncle," said Paul, who does not think much of Nan's music.

"There are so many interruptions," continued Nan, "and the little children take up so much of Mother's time, she can't be very regular about the lessons; but I practice nearly every day."

"Yes," went on Paul, "but we can sing, Uncle."

"You can?" said Uncle. "That's fine! Let's have a concert. What can you sing?"

"Father taught us lots of rounds," he said.

"The very same ones your father and I learned when we were little chaps at Miss Finney's school, I wager," laughed Uncle.

"Scotland's a Burning," I said.

"The Bell Doth Toll," said Nan.

"O, yes," said Uncle. "The very ones, and 'A

Glass, a Glass, but not of Sherry,' 'Here's a Health to All Young Lassies——' "

"Yes," said Paul, "we know all those, and 'Over Hills and Over Valleys' is another."

"Well, let's sing them all," said Uncle.

And we did, glad to exercise our voices after our long silence.

Uncle clapped and applauded. I don't know why Aunt Sarah did not put her fingers into her ears, but she did not. Instead, she sat there smiling as if she liked it.

She looked so pretty. She takes as much pains to be becomingly dressed out here, just for Uncle, as if she expected a house full of company. Uncle does, too, for that matter. He is always spic and span, and as immaculate, shall I say, as the little Rodericks.

Well, we enjoyed the concert immensely, and would have liked to have prolonged our performance, had we been asked to do so, but Uncle walked over to the piano, opened it, and called Aunt Sarah to come and sing.

Then the concert began in earnest. They sang duets and solo after solo.

We were entranced. We had brought out the parchesi board to play a game, but we stopped so often to listen that our interest in it flagged.

Paul had been complaining all day of being so tired, and now he stretched himself upon the hearth rug and fell fast asleep.

They finished up their concert by Uncle singing a solo called "My Angel," and it was perfectly lovely. The last verse begins:

" 'Tis an angel pure and fair
That receives my constant care,"

and ends:

"Thee I greet with love sincere,
Thou, to me, art ever dear."

When Uncle had sung the last word, he stooped and kissed Aunt Sarah on the top of her head; indeed he had been looking at her all the time he was singing, as if he meant every word he was saying for her.

It was very late when they closed the piano and came back to the fire.

"You, children, up yet?" said Uncle. "What's this? Paul asleep?" Then, putting him on his feet, he said, "Wake up, little man, it's time to go to bed."

So we said "Good night" and went upstairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAUL.

To bed we went, but not to sleep. Such a night as we spent! It was cold, very cold for so early in the season, and not a blanket nor comfort could we find in our room.

There had been blankets on each bed, and we did not find that they had been removed until we put the lamp out; then we groped all about the room, hunting for them and the matches, but could find neither.

We all got into one bed, trying to keep warm in that way. Paul began to fret with a sore throat. We couldn't sleep to save us, till nearly morning. We dozed a little then, for we were completely worn out. We woke when Christiana came in, bringing the fresh water. We asked her for a fire, and her reply was that if we wanted a fire we could go downstairs and get the wood and make it ourselves.

Christiana had not given warning, as she had threatened, but she had no love for us.

"I'm not going to get up till I do get a fire," said Phil, in a temper. "I wonder where all those blankets are that were on our beds. I am not going to get up without a fire."

"Then I am afraid that you'll stay in bed all day," I said.

It was stinging cold, but I got up and began dress-

ing. A tap on the door, and Nan wanted to know why we were so quiet. Were we all asleep?

"O, Nan, come in," I said. "Just look here. We are nearly dead. We have no fire, no blankets nor comforts on our beds, and we hardly slept all night long, and Paul is sick."

Nan was all sympathy. She told us to go into her room, where there was a good fire. Bessie had already gone down stairs.

We ran in there, and hastily dressed, just in time for breakfast.

Paul was so white I wondered that no one noticed him. He helped himself to food, but made no attempt to eat; in fact, he was shivering so he could hardly hold his fork steady.

Uncle was absorbed in his own affairs. He was to make a speech at a campaign meeting during the morning, and was probably thinking about that.

At last Aunt Sarah saw that he was eating no breakfast, and called Uncle's attention to it, and also to the child's pallor.

"What's the matter, son? Why, aren't you shivering? Come here," said Uncle.

Paul came, but hid his face against Uncle's shoulder to hide his tears. He felt so badly.

Uncle was very much concerned. He sent Daddy Stephen off with a message to Dick, to go at once for Dr. Rivers.

"I have thought for some time," said Aunt Sarah, "that Paul needed a tonic."

Paul kept shivering, so Uncle and Daddy Stephen drew up the lounge before the fire, and then Uncle made him lie down and covered him up comfortably. Nan was so indignant at our having spent such a miserable night she could not help speaking about those blankets.

"What has become of them?" asked Aunt Sarah.

"No fire, either," said Nan.

"Sarah——" began Uncle. Then, remembering that he had assumed all management of us, he stopped.

After breakfast Nan heard Aunt Sarah asking Christiana about the covering of our beds, and at last got from her that she didn't like to bother over "dem boys'" beds, any way. She didn't think boys were ever cold, so she had taken off all the blankets and comforts and locked them up in the closet.

This was her way of taking out her spite upon us.

Nan said Aunt Sarah gave her a sharp reprimand, and that covering was brought back, and, what's more, we had a fire every night and morning while we were at Glencairn, only Aunt Sarah compromised enough with Christiana to let it be Ike's duty, and not hers, to bring up the wood and make the fires.

In an hour's time Dr. Rivers came. We liked the old gentleman the minute we saw him; he had such nice blue eyes. We were all introduced to him as "Brother's children." He was interested.

He looked at Paul, then at Paul's throat. He said he was in rather a bad shape, and had a very ugly throat.

He advised Uncle to keep us away from him, for, while he did not think it was diphtheria, there were so many cases of it in town that it would be prudent to quarantine the child.

He asked for a glass and water, dropped out something, and told Paul to drink it.

Ah! He didn't know it took the combined household to get medicine down Paul's throat at home, and we looked on curiously.

Paul's lips gripped.

"Take it, son," said the doctor, kindly.

A shake of the head was the only reply.

"Come, Paul," said Uncle, "be a man. Take it."

No answer.

"But you must take it," said Uncle.

"You certainly must," said the doctor. Paul wouldn't ungrip his mouth even to answer.

Uncle was getting mad, but he still tried persuasion.

"I'l give you fifty cents if you'll take it like a man."

Still no answer.

The men looked at each other, then at the small, skinny, little chap in front of them, and appeared to be at their wit's end.

"We will be obliged to hold you, Paul, and open your mouth by force and give you this medicine," said Uncle, real mad now.

But just then Aunt Sarah came in, and, taking in the situation, she quietly took the glass from Dr. Rivers, put her hand for a minute on Paul, and gently said, "Now, take it," and Paul opened his mouth and gulped it down.

"Sheer magnetism, Mrs. Theydon. You hypnotized the boy," laughed the doctor, while Uncle took a long breath of relief.

After the doctor left, it was funny to see Uncle preparing to manage. He didn't know how to set about it, any better than we would have done. He wanted Aunt Sarah to help him, any one could see that, but she was not in the room.

"Which room shall I put him in, I wonder," he was saying to himself. Then, "Good gracious! I will be obliged to leave him in a few minutes now. What shall I do?" His tone was annoyed.

"I couldn't help getting sick," Paul wailed.

"No, dear child," said Uncle, getting kind right away, "I know that, but I am afraid I was not cut out for a nurse, and that you'll have such a bad time of it."

Poor little, sick Paul began to cry softly at the

thought of the bad time he was going to have at Uncle's hands, and he yearned most pitifully for his dear Mother.

His eyes were getting bright, and his cheeks red, as if he had fever.

Uncle was gazing into the fire, thinking hard, when Aunt Sarah came in, and, standing behind his chair, with her hands clasped loosely in front of him, she asked, "What are your plans for the invalid, Col. Theydon?"

"Well, I thought, Sarah," said Uncle, slowly, still gazing in the fire, "that I'd put him in the south-east chamber upstairs,—that's well separated from the children's room,—and get Dutchie to come and nurse him."

"What a nightmare!" ejaculated Aunt Sarah.

Uncle looked very much disturbed, but said nothing.

Presently Aunt Sarah said, "Do you think me cruel Jim?"

Then Uncle took hold of her hands and drew her round to his knee, and said, "I have always thought you perfection, Mrs. Theydon; but I'm seeing you in a new role these days. I didn't know how far your resentment would carry you."

"Not to the extent of seeing that poor little sick boy left to the tender mercies of Dutchie. I think I will have to interfere, Col. Theydon, and take charge of your patient myself."

"O, Sarah! If you only would! You can't imagine what a relief it would be to me. I know I'm nothing of a nurse."

"I don't know about that," said Aunt Sarah. "I have always found you the kindest and best. But let me go and arrange for him."

"Where are you going to put him?"

"In our dressing room, where we both can attend to him."

"Yes," said Uncle, "the very place. O, there is nobody like you."

Then Aunt Sarah went out, and in a very short time Christiana came to tell Uncle to bring Paul.

If Uncle was grateful, so were we, for now we knew he was in safe hands.

I believe we were beginning to worship Aunt Sarah.

Uncle then went to town to make his speech, and I am sure his heart was lighter and more at ease than if he had put Paul in the southeast chamber with Dutchie watching over him.

Dutchie is a big, fat, greasy black woman, who talks fast in a loud, noisy manner all the time.

Aunt Sarah stayed with Paul until Dr. Rivers said all danger from diphtheria was over.

But we didn't see Paul again for a week, for he was quite sick.

When he did get out again, he had great tales to tell us of how nice Aunt Sarah had been to him.

She had played games with him and had read hours at a time to amuse him, and had told him stories that she had read. He was profoundly impressed with Aunt Sarah's knowledge, and we, with her goodness.

We knew we were not welcome guests; that she had been really angry that morning Uncle had unexpectedly brought us home with him; yet, whenever we got into trouble, she sympathized with us and comforted us; and because she loves Uncle and is so sweet and good, she had been just lovely to poor, little, sick Paul all this past week. We longed so much to do something for her.

Paul looked a great deal better. Uncle said he believed he was going to put on some flesh now; but

we noticed Aunt Sarah so often looking at him with such sad eyes.

Nan got anxious about it, and told us she knew Aunt Sarah thought he was going to die. It worried her so, she at last took courage to ask her about it.

"Paul?" asked Aunt Sarah in surprise, "why, he is all right again, Nan. He hasn't his strength back yet, but he looks much better than when he came."

Nan longed to ask her then why did she look at him so sadly; but it is not easy to ask Aunt Sarah impertinent questions.

CHAPTER IX.

MARTHA LANE.

A few days after Paul got out again Aunt Sarah received a letter from her niece informing her that she and her sister were coming on a visit soon.

We learned by listening to the conversation at the table that these nieces were young ladies just through college; that their names were Alice and May Faulkner, daughters of Aunt Sarah's only sister, and that they were frequent visitors at Glencairn.

Miss Alice was going to be married in February, and this was to be her farewell visit to Aunt Sarah before that event took place.

We thought a great deal about these young ladies, and were looking forward to the day of their arrival as eagerly as the grown folks.

Dr. Rivers came every now and then to see how Paul was getting on.

One cool afternoon, between dinner and tea, we were all in the sitting room as comfortable as could be. Uncle was reading, Aunt Sarah embroidering, Nan and Bessie were in one corner playing dolls—Bessie had no end of them by this time—we two older boys were reading, as usual, and Paul, still an invalid, was snoozing on the davenport near the fire among the cushions; when we heard a vehicle drive up to the house on the lawn.

Immediately some one came rushing up the steps and threw open the hall door, then a merry voice called out, "Any one at home?"

Before either Aunt Sarah or Uncle could rise or answer, there was a tap at the sitting room door, which was instantly opened, and in walked a tall, slender young lady, whose jaunty hat, set on one side, showed beneath pretty, fluffy, light hair, drawn back into a shapely knot.

We thought rightly that it was one of Dr. River's daughters, for he was with her.

"O, it's been so long since I have had an opportunity to come out here. I'm so glad the boy is sick, so Father had to come. I wanted to see you so much, to hear about the girls.

"Father told me you expected them soon," she said, talking rapidly, in a sprightly manner.

Aunt Sarah drew her down to a chair beside her.

"How d'ye do children," went on the young lady, nodding to us. "Are you the sick one?" glancing over at Paul. "O, doesn't he look comfortable this cold afternoon. Worried to death?" she inquired of Aunt Sarah in an undertone.

"Remarkably good," answered Aunt Sarah in the same voice.

"Tell me about Alice,—she's engaged, Father says."

Then she and Aunt Sarah began to discuss Miss Alice's affairs at length.

Miss Diana, for that was her name, was the merriest young lady I had ever seen. She was just overflowing with high spirits. She talked so fast I couldn't catch on to half she said, but Uncle did, for he kept one ear listening to her, though apparently absorbed in the doctor's political conversation.

"When the girls come, Dian," he said, "I promise you and Peno another famous hunt."

"If we are not all burnt out or murdered by that time," laughed Aunt Sarah.

Judging from what we could understand when politics were under discussion, the grown people were

awfully apprehensive of something dreadful happening at the election next month.

"I am not the least afraid, Mrs. Theydon. Are you?" asked Miss Dian.

"I will be very glad when the election is over. When Col. Theydon doesn't come home at the usual hour, I get very nervous about him, and fancy everything dreadful that can be imagined."

Now I knew why Aunt Sarah kept going to the window that looked upon the road so often just about dinner time, when Uncle was late.

Dr. Rivers and Miss Dian would not stay to tea, for he said his wife would make herself miserable, too, if they were late in returning.

When we went upstairs Nan stopped long enough in our room for the four of us to embrace each other and to dance over "Remarkably good."

"Good! Think of our being good and Aunt Sarah saying so!"

It was another week before Paul was well enough to stir out again. If the weather had been fine, he was not so sick but that he might have gone about in the middle of the day; but it was a week of continued rain and cold northeast winds.

Even our play room was cold without the sun to warm it.

We had not long been confined to the house before we discovered that the garret had delights. O, the rubbish that accumulates in an old house! This garret had stationary ventilators; so I doubt if Aunt Sarah paid many visits up there.

Having been permitted to explore its contents, we spent many an hour of that rainy week in the closets and old chests of drawers.

Glencairn had been Grandmother Theydon's home when she was a girl. It had been in her family for

generations. As she was the only child, it became her property after her father's death.

Grandfather Theydon died when Father and Uncle were little boys.

After his death Grandmother came back to her old home to live and leased Theydon Hall until Father became of age.

Uncle says the Glencoes have always had a mania for keeping old things; so that accounts for the curious and quaint collections of garments, pictures, furniture, and I don't know what all we found up there. We were told we could overhaul everything, provided we put them all away again.

We arrayed ourselves in these old-fashioned fineries of days gone by, and had tableaux and theatricals, we ourselves being the only spectators, barring Larry, the big Maltese cat. He always came up with us, and, blinking gravely, no doubt wished us thousands of miles away, and the stage cleared for the antics of the rats and mice, whose scamperings in the walls must have tantalized him dreadfully.

Our stage was a trundle bed, hauled out before a large mirror that had a crack in one corner. In this mirror we could view the tableaux with great satisfaction.

Phil did all the arranging, for he had a natural gift for anything of the kind.

Then there were piles of magazines and old papers. We were every one of us fond of reading, with the exception of Paul, who loved to look at pictures.

We would ensconce ourselves in the comfortable, faded old chairs, and I would read aloud to them for hours.

I am afraid the stories were not exactly in the line Mother and Father would have chosen for us.

Love stories were a new feature in our literature, but we found them highly entertaining.

Altogether, we had a gorgeous week of pleasure, and I am sure Uncle Jim and Aunt Sarah were amazed that we were able to keep so quiet. Uncle was surprised that we did not want to be out at our house.

"Now, that's just like children," he said. "A few days ago you were crazy over that house, and could think of nothing else, and, now that it is yours, you don't care for it in the least."

"You are mistaken, Uncle. We do care, but Paul wasn't strong enough to play at bowling or romping, and we found so much to amuse us in the garret. Besides, we wanted to read, and there is nothing to sit on out there," we said.

"That's so," said Uncle. "Sarah, are there not some old chairs and tables in the garret that they can have in their house?"

She had no objection to our having anything we wanted from up there; so Uncle made Dick take us out a table, a little bookcase and several chairs, and when he came back from town he brought us a hammock, which he swung up in a sunny corner, and a box of books suitable to our years.

Uncle certainly was lovely to us.

We were rejoiced when the sun shone again once more. As is usual in our climate in October, bright days generally mean warm ones.

It was Saturday, and a number of the boys from Winfield came out to see us and to hunt. They brought their guns and we took the dogs.

Nan rushed for the house as soon as she sighted them in the distance, too put out for anything.

We went at once to the woods. Partridges were so numerous that fall there were plenty for us all. We gathered a lot of hickory and walnuts.

The boys had a little menagerie in the town, and were full of it. Hol had a black snake, Davis and John each a young fox, Harty a white mouse, Henry a lizard, and Fitz two rabbits. They kept them at Davis's home, away down in the back lot.

They wanted a crow to teach it to talk, and so we promised to be on the lookout for one.

They were going 'possum hunting soon, and hoped to catch a mother 'possum with her pouch full of little ones.

We had left Paul with Nan. As soon as the boys left we hurried home. We had enjoyed their company very much, but still we missed Paul and Nan. As I said before, we were not used to the companionship of other children.

We found the stay-at-homes in our house with Ike. Paul was lazily swinging himself in the hammock, Ike was on the floor sunning himself in a broad patch of sunshine from the window, while Nan had curled herself up in the arm chair to read, but the book was on the floor and both Paul and herself seemed deeply interested in something Ike was telling them.

"O, Harold!" they exclaimed, as we entered, "are there witches?"

"No," I said, "why?"

"Ike says he's seen one," said Paul.

"Ike is fibbing," I said.

"Where, Ike?" asked Phil.

"Dat I has seen 'em," asserted Ike. "You kin ax Marse Jeems ef dere ain't one down to Glen Hollow Swamps."

"Pshaw!" I said incredulously.

"I don' care w'at you say, Harold. I done seen 'em, I has. Lots of folks roun' here been seen 'em. Marse Jeems done seen 'em. Sometimes, she great tall 'ooman; sometimes she look lake squeechy lil'

gal. Dar ain't no one, w'ite or black, w'at could cross dat branch for to git to see 'em. Ole Mr. Craymout, he know her, but he mos' as bad as she be. Him hab links wid ole Satan, too."

"Where did she come from?"

"How long has she been there?"

"Where is the swamp?" we all asked, getting interested.

"Daddy say she been here always. Dey call 'em witch w'en he been li'l boy. Dere ain't nobody kin go dere," he continued, sitting up and getting more excited. "De quicksands! Dey so bad! One man say he gwine ober dere, and he sink, he sink, tell he gone! gone under de san'," and Ike rolled his eyes with horror. "Nobody kin cross dem san's, 'cepen dat ole witch. You kin ax anybody, and dey tell you dis same t'ing. She spells eberybody w'at try to come dere. Dey gits sick, dey gits lame, somet'ing happen ebery time dey goes dere. Folks jist lets 'em alone now. Dey won't go 'bout dere for nuttin' No, sir!"

Of course, we asked Uncle about her as soon as he came home.

"Old Martha Lane!" he exclaimed. "I declare, I had forgotten about her existence. Well, there is no doubt about the quicksands being most treacherous, but Martha is no witch; just a poor criminal evading the law. It was believed she killed her husband; at any rate, he was found dead—had been dead for days—he had been shot, and she had taken her departure, no one knew where.

"After a while, some one discovered a small house that had just been built in the middle of the swamp lands, on an elevated spot, where the quicksands circle all around it.

"It was ascertained that she had taken refuge over there.

"The sheriff tried to get her, but the men sank to their armpits in the sands and were drawn out with difficulty.

"Then they tried to starve her out, but she must have taken with her immense quantities of provisions.

"At last they left her in disgust, and there she has stayed all these years. She must be a very old woman by this time."

"But, Uncle, Ike says sometimes she looks like a little girl," Nan said.

"O," laughed Uncle, "the darkeys around here are so afraid of her they can't see straight, if they ever happen to be in her neighborhood."

"The provisions must have given out long ago. How do you suppose she supports herself?" asked Aunt Sarah, who was hearing all this now for the first time, though she had been living at Glencairn for nine years.

"It is a mystery. Really, I believe every one has forgotten old Martha. I haven't thought about her for years. Dear Mother used to be distracted because Brother and I loved to prowl around there; and she did, in truth, shoot right and left if she thought any one was spying upon her. I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't get supplies through Craymouth, that old mulatto, who lives on the other side of the swamp. He was thought to have been an accomplice in the murder, but at the trial nothing could be proved. Old Luther Lane was a dreadful old reprobate, and the county was not particularly grieved at his sudden taking off. He owned all that swamp land, and a good deal more, adjoining Glencairn."

"Why, how far away does she live?" asked Aunt Sarah.

"About eight or nine miles, out toward the southeast," Uncle replied.

"Oh," said Aunt Sarah, and I thought she looked relieved.

Well, you know we were just dying with curiosity. We wanted to see old Martha with our own eyes. We danced with glee, when we went upstairs, because Uncle had not forbidden us to go there.

We wondered why Father had never spoken of old Martha to us; but then, we remembered, that everything connected with Uncle James had been a painful subject to him, and he hardly ever referred to his old life at Glencairn.

The very first chance we have, there is where we will go, we all agreed.

CHAPTER X.

GLEN HOLLOW SWAMP.

The opportunity came pretty soon. Uncle had to go away speech making, and Aunt Sarah and Bessie were invited to spend the day with the Raymonds in Winfield.

So we decided to spend the day in the woods.

Paul had been getting back his strength daily, and felt himself able to go, too; only we wouldn't let him take his gun.

We had a bountiful supply of lunch. Daddy Stephen had given us sandwiches, buttered biscuits, fruit cake, oranges and bananas. Maum Suckey had added raw potatoes and a small bucket of molasses to make candy. We took a box of matches to make a fire to roast the sweet potatoes and to boil the syrup.

Maum Suckey laughed when she saw the old bag filled with all this, and said to us:

"Marse Jeems done sen' out de funeral invitation, enty?"

We had put on our oldest clothes, so, strapping on our leggings and belts, with guns and lunch we set off joyfully.

Not a cloud was to be seen. The sunshine was delightful, and the air so cool and crisp that our spirits effervesced like champagne. Paul struck up "The Mulligan Guards," and we all joined in, singing at the top of our voices.

We passed Maum Suckey, standing in her cabin

door, saying to herself, "Chillun is so happy," while her face was decorated with a broad smile.

We walked across into the woods, Ike having given us directions.

We took one dog with us.

It was a long, long tramp, and our guns got very heavy, but our excitement was great, for we were not going home again without having seen something to satisfy our curiosity. About one o'clock, I guess, we found ourselves tired enough to rest. Paul had held out splendidly, and was as gay as a lark.

"I think we are almost there," I said. "See how wet the ground is."

We sat down on a fallen tree trunk to eat our lunch. Then we gathered sticks and made a fire in a safe place, for we had no mind to set Uncle's woods in a blaze.

Soon we put in the potatoes, and fixed some sticks to hold Nan's molasses bucket over the fire.

Then we sat down again to eat and talk. We were near the branch; we could hear it gurgle over the stones.

Nan's thoughts were in her bucket now, for the molasses was beginning to boil.

When it was done she put it aside to cool, and sat down on the log with us to wait for the potatoes.

Having satisfied our hunger, we decided to leave the potatoes in the ashes, and the molasses to cool until we came back, and to go on now to the swamp.

We walked quite a distance, then we noticed that the ground was becoming soft and spongy.

We were getting to the edge of the thick wood lands. We climbed a high tree to reconnoiter. Just beyond the woods grew a broad strip of willows, beyond the willows a thicket of canes and cat-tails, then came the branch, that was almost like a river at this place, wide but shallow, and spread out and divided

in the middle by the sweep of treacherous sands. Then came another thicket of canes and willows, and beyond this the elevation of solid land, about four acres, I suppose, in the center of which stood the hut, surrounded by so high a palisade of pickets that nothing could be seen of it but the roof and the chimney.

It was very desolate. We looked and looked for quite a time, but could neither see nor hear anything. Then we came down from the tree. I am not afraid of witches, but this was a very uncanny place to be in. We were four miles away from any human habitation, and we did not feel quite as brave as we had done while fastening on our leggings in our own room at Uncle's house.

Beppo, the hound, had been lying quietly under the tree. Just as we stood on the ground again he pricked up his ears, gave a short, quick bark and sprang forward.

I grasped him with all my might, while the others fled into the woods. I pulled him along and ran to catch up with them.

We had seen the old witch, and she had evidently seen us. We ran as fast as our legs could carry us.

When we reached the place where we had made our fire we were forced to stop to rest, for Paul had given out.

We thought we were at a safe distance, for, after listening a while, we could hear nothing, so, setting Beppo on guard, we took out our potatoes and sat down on the log to eat them.

"Isn't she awful?" said Phil.

"Did you see her distinctly?" I asked.

"She is a little bit of thing."

"She had on a long blackish, grayish dress."

"Her hair stood out all around her head."

"It is nothing but a hideous tangle."

"She is perfectly frightful!" they all exclaimed at once.

Our fire had nearly gone out, so I pulled it to pieces and stamped out what was left.

We hadn't thought of our candy. Indeed, we didn't feel secure enough to be pulling it out there. We jumped at the slightest sound, but Paul had to rest.

Suddenly Beppo gave a bark, and Phil, in the wildest alarm, sprang to his feet, pointing to the woods between us and the swamps, exclaiming, "Here she comes! Here she comes! She's after us! Let's run."

We were all on our feet, looking where he pointed, and we did see something scuttling off away from us.

"She's as much afraid of us as we are of her," laughed Paul, who is afraid of nothing.

But Phil had picked up his gun, and was already at a distance from us, shouting, "She's gone for her gun. She'll shoot you! Come on!"

Fearing this might be so, we got away in haste, nor did we stop until we were within sight of the pond on Uncle's place.

We were safe now, so we walked on leisurely, to give Paul a breathing space.

"O, look!" he exclaimed, as a large slate-colored bird flew out of the weeds near the water.

"It's a crane," I said. I fired, and down it fell, almost at our feet. Beppo caught it. It was hardly grazed by the shot, and Phil and I had a time of it binding its wings down with our combined handkerchiefs and the doilies.

We were delighted with the prize, and decided to fasten it under our house, and to keep it there until we went back to Theydon Hall.

We had to carry it very carefully, for it was cross,

and would stretch out its long neck and nip at our faces and hands.

Nan thought it beautiful, and wanted to help carry it, but we were afraid she might let it go. So I got her to take my gun instead, and Paul helped me with it.

It was dinner time when we got home. Nan ran into the house to get a piece of cord, then we securely fastened the crane by the leg to the knob of our door and pushed it under the house for the night.

Leaving it a lot of bread to comfort it during the long, weary hours, we hastened upstairs to get ready for dinner.

When we came down to breakfast next morning Uncle was standing near the fire. In his hand he held a vase, which he had taken from the mantelpiece.

"See this vase?" he said to us. "It belonged to your great, great, great-grandmother. I wouldn't take anything for it," he went on, handling it lovingly. "Isn't it beautiful?" holding it out at arm's length.

We really did not admire it much. We thought it a very queer looking affair.

We were interested, however, in what Uncle told us about it. It had come into the family as a gift from a friend, who was a great traveler. He brought it from Italy.

Then Uncle put it back, and, taking Nan under the chin, he turned up her face, saying to Aunt Sarah, "When I see these two, Nan and Phil, I can hardly persuade myself that I am not looking at the little chap who used to gaze back at me from the mirror, some thirty odd years ago."

"They certainly are like you," she assented.

"Yes, they are perfect Glencoes,"

CHAPTER XI.

LEONORA, MY BELOVED.

Sunday being a pleasant day, we all went in to Winfield to church.

Aunt Sarah wore a new winter's suit and hat, and she did look so handsome we were proud of being the nieces and nephews of our "Yankee Aunt."

There was to be a special service in the afternoon, so Mrs. Rivers asked Uncle and Aunt Sarah to remain over for it and to come home and dine with them. Bessie was to go also.

We got into the carryall and drove back to Glencairn alone.

At lunch we found that Daddy Stephen, seeing we would be the only ones at that meal, had taken himself off, and delegated Christiana to be mistress of ceremonies.

We took our seats and she poured out the chocolate, first nearly filling all of the cups with milk.

"Christiana," I said, "don't do that; don't put any more milk in the chocolate."

But beyond pursing her lips, she took no notice of my request.

"Christiana, throw that out. I'm not going to drink it," said Phil.

"It's dat or none, Phil. Dere's mor'n you to drink dis chocolate."

We nearly choked with wrath.

"There is no butter on the table, Christiana," said Nan.

But Christiana was warming herself at the fire.

"Don't you hear, Christiana?"

"O, eat your lunch, chilluns, and stop pestering me so; dere is nuttin' more dan w'at you sees on de table. I allus did hate sassy chilluns, Mr. Gourdine," addressing Daddy Stephen, who was passing through the room.

"So dus I, Miss White."

"Christiana, if you and Daddy Stephen can't attend to your business, you can leave the room. We much prefer helping ourselves to hearing you converse," I said, with great dignity.

"Mind your business yourself, Harold," she snapped; which so exasperated Paul that he picked up a table mat and threw it at her.

In a fury, she rushed at Paul, evidently intending to box him, but Daddy Stephen interfered. Taking hold of her, he said, "Look here, Miss White. Don't you be getting in no fight wid dese here chilluns. Marse Jeems so saft on dem, dere will be trouble sure, ef you does," and carried her off, she looking coy and coquettish at his attentions.

As the door closed upon them, Nan got up and brought butter, cheese and preserves from the sideboard, and we finished our repast at our own leisure.

Then we rang for the table to be cleared, after which we sat quietly reading in the comfortable dining room.

The servants had all gone to church and we kept the castle. The silence could almost be felt. The clock tick-tocked, and chimed two or three halves.

It was not to be expected that healthy children could keep quiet longer than that.

We grew restless.

"I wonder what the old crane is doing?" I said. "I think I'll run out and see."

"I wish I could see it," said Nan. "I am just crazy

to, but I am so tired to-day I feel as if I never wanted to move again.

"I'll bring it in for you to see," I said.

"I wish you would, Harold."

"It's a wonder you and Paul are not both laid up, after that long run we had on Friday. I'm tired myself."

So I went for the crane.

O, how ridiculous it did look—just—a coming. I ran it fast. I was in for fun.

When I got it to the dining room, I entered with my arm lovingly encircling its neck, calling it my sweetheart, and walked around the dining table, flirting with it and carrying on, just as they did in those garret stories we had been reading.

Down went all the books, and the children began screaming with laughter.

The crane was very much disturbed by the noise.

Round and round the table I trotted it, so fast it kept tripping on its own toes.

"She is so bashful, so shy," murmured Phil, quoting from the garret literature.

"Leonora, my love, speak to me. Do not turn from me," I entreated, casting languishing eyes upon her.

She spoke with a vicious peck at my face.

"Remember that she is dangerous if ill treated," said Nan.

"I'd rather thrust my hand into the hottest fire than let her lips touch mine," said Phil.

"I love you," I whispered. "I love you with that intensity that few men possess."

A horrible expression flashed through her eyes.

"O, forgive me," I said. "I forgot for the moment that you were not an ordinary woman."

She squawked.

"Leonora, my beloved, be brave. There are others

here weaker than we, who need support from our calmness."

Again she squawked and struggled to get free.

"My darling, pray do not apologize. I quite understand."

"Harold, how can you remember all that nonsense?" asked Nan, laughing.

She stopped, and positively refused to take another step, almost hissing in wrath and terror.

"Leonora, my beloved, I fail to comprehend you. What makes you stare at me so oddly? Is it—Good gracious! Catch it! Catch it!" I yelled, frightened almost out of my senses, for suddenly, while I was laughing, it slipped from my grasp, and, without any warning, had stretched its long wings and sailed upward in, as I remembered at the instant, Aunt Sarah's beautiful dining room, with all its cut glass and china.

I sprang on the table and the others on chairs.

My good angel gave me its toe, which was stretched out behind it. I grasped it and hung on for dear life; then slipping my other hand over its leg, I dragged it down to the floor, she lashing her wings up and down and uttering discordant cries.

The chandelier swayed alarmingly. Great clouds of smoke, ashes and sparks filled the room, blinding us so that we were unable to see what had crashed upon the hearth.

It was bedlam let loose in that dining room.

I had to sit on her, for she was getting furious, in her fright, and the others had to help bind her wings again.

Phil and I carried her out in haste, and tied her up; then rushed back to put that room in order before Uncle and Aunt Sarah came home.

"What broke?" I asked, as I opened the door.

"Uncle's vase," was their horrified answer.

It had struck on the andiron and lay in about one thousand pieces.

We looked at each other in silence for about five seconds, and then the chorus broke forth.

"Harold, what did you bring that old crane in here for, any way?"

"Nan asked me to."

"I didn't dream you would do it, though."

"What will Uncle say?"

"You are in for it now, boy."

"Why should it have struck that one old, ugly thing in all this room?"

"I thought the chandelier was gone."

"Do you think Uncle will punish us?"

"Just look at Aunt Sarah's dining room. Turn to, and help clean it up."

We got brooms and dusters, and did the best we could; but everything was so covered with ashes it would take Daddy Stephen half a day to get it perfectly clean.

I was in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. My conscience was pricking me. I knew we had not been good, and I had led the others into mischief.

We picked up all the pieces of the vase and put them into a handkerchief. Then we went upstairs.

Nan said, "Now, don't let us put all the blame on Harold. I know I am as much to blame, and you, Phil and Paul, were enjoying the fun as much as we were."

So they generously said, "Let's say 'we did it'."

We quaked a little when we heard the phaeton wheels on the gravel driveway.

We consulted upon the best way to break the news.

We waited until we heard Uncle get settled in the sitting room—probably smoking—then decided that what had to be done had better be done quickly.

Father had taught us a little handkerchief play, in

which you dress up your hands to represent a Father Confessor and a sinner. We thought Uncle would be sure to know this, too, as Father had learned it in his nursery days.

So we took long bath towels and draped and pinned them about our heads and bodies, making them look as much as possible like the "sinner" in the handkerchief.

Miserable as we were, we could not help giggling over the apparitions that we saw in the looking glass; then, with beating hearts, each carrying a handful of the precious vase, we went down to the sitting room.

We stood some minutes before we had the courage to turn the knob, then we filed in. Aunt Sarah saw us first, and in astonishment said, "Why, children!"

Uncle ejaculated, "What in this world!"

Miss Bessie murmured reprovingly, "Don't you know this is Sunday?"

But, heeding no one, we approached Uncle, and, bowing low, I said, "Father, I have come to confess."

Uncle looked at us in a puzzled manner for a minute, then, divining that we were there to apologize for some mischief done, fell in with our humor—we were sure he knew it—bent his head benevolently and spoke in deep sepulchral tones, "Well, child, well."

"We caught a crane last week," went on Phil.

Uncle again bowed and said, "Well, child, well."

"I desired to have him in," continued Nan.

"Well, child, well," Uncle reiterated, but this time in abstracted tones, as if he were wondering what was coming next.

"He got away from us," piped Paul, "and smashed your lovely vase."

"In the dining room?" asked Uncle hastily. "You mean to say you had the crane in the dining room,

and it broke the Glencoe vase? What possessed you!" and, Mercy! he was mad, and we were scared!

"Opportunity is the mother of mischief," said Aunt Sarah gently. "We should not have left them alone."

"You mean to say they need a nurse?" Uncle asked angrily. "The Glencoe vase. I valued it so highly."

"Uncle, Uncle," said Nan, bursting into tears and throwing her arms around his neck, "I am so sorry. I'd give you everything I have in the world if I could put it together again."

"Uncle," I said, "it was my fault entirely. I will submit to any punishment, for, indeed, I am too sorry."

There was a moment's silence, then Uncle said in a patient, sad tone, "Well, it's gone; no use to say any more about it."

"These children are certainly old enough to know better," Bessie sweetly remarked, "and I hope, Uncle, you will punish them most severely."

Aunt Sarah almost giggled.

"Go upstairs now, and take off all that toggery, for dinner is waiting," said Uncle, taking no notice of Bessie's advice. "You surely know how to wheedle yourselves into the good graces of any one," he continued, recovering his usual good humor.

We deposited the scraps of the ill-fated vase upon the coals, then ran upstairs.

At dinner Uncle looked all about the room and said, "To think of your bringing that crane in here. I don't see why anything is left."

Nor did we, either, but we didn't say so.

"I feel mightily tempted," said Uncle, "to emulate the famous old dame of the shoe, and whip you all soundly and send you to bed."

"Wait, then, till we eat our broth, Uncle," said Paul, "for I'm awfully hungry."

And so they let it pass, and we inwardly blessed the stars that had sent us to such kind relatives.

What wouldn't Grandmother Chase have done to us if the vase had been hers!

CHAPTER XII.

"TRAPPED."

The very next opportunity we had, we set off to the swamps again.

We earnestly desired to catch another glimpse of the old witch; besides, there was Maum Suckey's bucket that we had left in the woods. We either had to get that one or buy her another.

This time we left all of the dogs at home, for they attracted attention by barking.

Daddy Stephen gave us only biscuits for lunch. He was stingy, for he was mad with us. He had been obliged to spend all of Monday morning beating ashes out of the carpet and curtains and polishing the smoke from the glass, and at each whack of the stick I think he was imagining that he had one of "dem beatenest chillun" thrashing him well.

Uncle had gone to a political meeting. Aunt Sarah was embroidering a beautiful little dress for Bessie. She was all alone in the sitting room. As we came round the side piazza, we could distinctly see her through the open doors, but she did not see us. And to our astonishment, she was crying hard. My first impulse was to run in and ask her what was the matter, but Paul said I had better not, he was sure she wouldn't like it.

Twice, while he was sick, she had cried in this way, when she thought him asleep, and on hearing Uncle coming had dried her eyes and was as bright as could be when he came in.

We wondered what could be wrong.

No one asked us where we were going. If we announced that we were going to take a day off in the woods, we were told to ask Daddy Stephen to put up our luncheon.

We set off full of the idea that perhaps we might see the old witch again.

We could not believe we had been deceived when she appeared to us no larger than Bessie, and yet Uncle had said that Martha Lane was a very tall, old woman.

"This is the way of it," said Nan. "Uncle hasn't seen her for years, and she has shrunk. All old people do, Maum says."

"Look here, I dreamed she came up to my bed last night, Harold," said Paul, "and her neck just kept on growing longer and longer, and she looked just like this. See here!" and Paul twisted his little slim body, clutched his fingers, bulged his eyes in his head and grinned his teeth at us.

"Good gracious!" screamed Nan, "don't look so hideous, Paul! I never saw anything so ugly. The witch would be frantic with envy if she could see you."

"That is the very way she looked, Nan. It scared me most to death."

We all laughed at him, and Phil told him it was those big saucers of ice cream that were responsible for those dreams.

"The madam lives so far," sighed Phil, after we had walked miles.

"We will soon be there now," I said. "Yonder is the place where we made the fire."

"Our bucket!" said Nan.

We found it, but every bit of the thick molasses was gone. We could see the marks of fingers on the side.

"The witch has very little fingers," said Paul, "if she took it."

"And little feet, too," I said, pointing to little barefoot tracks all about in the soft earth.

We picked up the bucket, and walked very cautiously towards the swamps.

Soon we came almost directly in front of the place.

The silence was profound. Nearer and nearer we crept. We passed a pile of little fagots and branches gathered up for firewood. Paul's quick eye noticed a small, round hole in one end.

"Looks as if some one hid in here," he said.

We stooped, and looked in the hole. There was a nice little space in the center, where the sticks had been pushed aside.

Paul ventured in, and came back to tell us we ought to see in there.

Then we crawled in.

The ground was covered with soft moss, just like a carpet. Little grass strings of haws and berries hung on the sharp points of the fagots, and feathers and chicken wings were placed here and there.

In one corner was a little nest of pine bark, lined with leaves, and in it was some of our molasses candy, orange peel and pieces of biscuits and sandwiches—the remnant of our feast.

Plenty of light came through the crevices of the loosely piled branches, though the person within was completely hidden, and no one but Paul or an Indian could ever have discovered that small, round hole.

We wondered what all this could mean. We kept a sharp lookout for the old witch, though.

At last, feeling rested, we crawled out again, then stood still and listened.

Not a sound, except the falling of a nut at inter-

vals from the trees and the sighing of the wind in the pines.

We climbed up a tree, the branches of which completely hid us from view, and gazed at the high fence and closed gate.

From the chimney a thin stream of smoke went curling up into the clear, blue sky.

We sat up in our perch, each silently imagining how the hut looked inside.

I saw the old witch bending over a seething cauldron, mixing her charms, and chanting her incantations to the owls and bats, like the witches in Macbeth, whose pictures we had often seen in Father's Shakespeare, when suddenly our reveries were broken in upon by an ear splitting shout from Paul.

"Halloo, there, old witch! What are you doing? Come out here, and let us look at you. Halloo, I say!"

It reverberated through the forest, and echoed from the palisades.

We were paralyzed with fright.

"Boy, are you crazy?" I cried.

The little wretch was shaking with laughter, but his grins quickly disappeared when the large gate slowly swung open and out stepped the witch, tall and gaunt, bearing in one hand the gun, and with the other shading her eyes and peering in every direction to discover the venturesome creature who dared intrude upon her solitude.

Did we slip out of that tree in haste? I believe you we did. Then we merited our name of "The Fleet Footed Theydons" by covering the ground between us with incredible speed.

It took her some time to cross the branch and sands and we were not in the position to spy out her methods, as we should like to have done.

Looking over my shoulder, I saw the woman com-

ing rapidly toward us, evidently directed by the sound of the underbrush, which crackled loudly under our retreating feet.

We sped on then like arrows cutting the wind.

"Bang! bang!" went a gun, and a bullet went whizzing over our heads.

We began to be scared in truth now.

"Fleet Footed Nannie" led us all, and, thinking of nothing but to escape from another bullet, what did she do but run straight to the witch's pile of fagots, then fall on her knees and crawl in.

Phil followed, then Paul, so there was nothing left for me to do but to go in, too.

"Now we are trapped. What in the world made you come in here?" I asked.

We could hear our hearts beat. Never in our lives had we been so frightened.

"This is just how rabbits feel," I thought. "If I ever get out of this, I'll never chase them again."

Through the crevices we watched the witch come striding straight towards us. Nan gave a little whimper. "For heaven's sake, hush," I whispered.

"Shall I shoot her?" I thought, and then I remembered I had left my gun in the woods, leaning against a tree.

She came up close to the fagot pile. We could see her plainly through the crevices of the branches. We could have touched her long, dirty, bare feet. She stood looking all around.

We shook so we stirred the branches. Our eyes were fastened on her, while we crouched close to the ground.

She went to the other side of the pile. Our thoughts became earnest prayers, for we were stiff with fright.

I wondered if she would drag us out by our hair; and it almost stood up on end at the thought.

Then I wondered what they would do at Glencairn if we never returned.

I didn't see how we could escape. She would have no mercy. Wasn't she a murderess! Hadn't she killed her own husband!

We scarcely breathed.

She walked round and round the pile. She was an old, old hag, with rough, wild, uncombed hair as white as snow, straggling all about her wrinkled face; and the nails on the hand that held the gun looked like claws.

She stooped down and peered back into the woods through the underbrush. Then she stood up, folded her gun in her arms, shook her old head, and muttered, "This beats all! Whatever has become of them varmints!"

She pulled off a fagot from the pile, then turned and went back to the swamps.

Could it be possible that she had forgotten the little opening, or were there two of them?

We were four grateful children for deliverance, and we resolved never again to risk our lives out here.

But even after she had disappeared we were afraid to move, lest she should be hiding somewhere near, and hear us and return.

After a long, long time we were too cramped, cold and weary to stand it any longer, so out, on our hands and knees, we came, and crawled away for a long distance, stopping every minute to listen, until we were sure we were quite out of danger, then we made a bee line for home, nor did we stop until within calling distance of the colored people's cabins.

Here we dropped to a walk, and slowly dragged ourselves along towards the house, stumbled up the front steps and threw ourselves flat upon the piazza floor.

O, how delightful the feeling of safety!

We saw a carriage under the trees and knew Aunt Sarah had company, but we could not stir. Never before had we been so exhausted.

We lay with our heated faces flat against the cold floor, our eyelids closed, panting, when the door opened and Aunt Sarah and her guests came out.

They gazed at us in astonishment.

"Why, children!" exclaimed Aunt Sarah involuntarily, surprised at our lack of manners. "Stand up."

We exerted ourselves, and managed to get upon our feet.

"What have you been doing? Where have you been?" the ladies asked, shocked at our appearance.

"We—have—have—bee—been—run—run — running," we panted.

"From what?" the ladies asked; but we began to laugh hysterically.

Aunt Sarah glanced down at our clothes, and then we discovered, for the first time, that we were in a dreadful plight. What with the rents and slits, we looked as if we belonged to that tattered family of beggars who went to town.

Our faces and hands were smeared with mud and blood, from the numerous scratches and cuts we had received as we crawled rapidly, on all fours, away from our hiding place.

Aunt Sarah is a wise woman. We could see she knew we had been in some mischief again; but she asked no more questions.

She told us, however, to go upstairs and change our clothes, then to lie down and rest.

We went upstairs as we were told, but, too wearied to change our rags, we threw ourselves upon my bed.

But we were not destined to be left in peace. Small

Bessie had seen us, and curiosity soon led her steps to our room.

She came to the bedside and stood looking at us in silence with very disapproving eyes.

"I really should like very much to know what mischief you children have been in now," she said at length, in tones of great severity.

Phil on his back murmured, "Would you really, now."

"Just look at your clothes—those nice new clothes," she continued. "You will look disgraceful when Aunt Sarah's nieces come, and we will be so ashamed of you. Poor Mother!" she went on, "she tries so hard to make you decent, but you fustrates all her efforts."

"Fustrates," teased Paul. "Has Christiana been giving you lessons. Boys, did I not tell you Christiana was going to be Bessie's Ma now."

"She is not going to be my Ma," she replied angrily. "She is much more yours, for Aunt Sarah does notice me sometimes, and you know no one but Christiana ever does anything for you. And that's what you deserve"—shaking her finger at us—"for you are, not one of you, much better than Ike."

We were so tired and cross that we couldn't help getting angry with this little chit of a child scolding us as if she were our mother.

So, rising on my elbow and pointing to the door, I said, "Bessie, do you see that door? Now, walk! We are tired of you."

"I will go when I please, Harold," she answered, planting herself more firmly against the bed and looking at us in a most exasperating manner.

"Yes, you will, too," said Phil. "Go this minute, or I'll make you."

"Run, Bessie, darling," said Nan in a conciliatory

voice, anxious to keep the peace. "Run on, we are so tired."

But Bessie began to quietly hum a tune. Paul and Phil, with one impulse, sprang off the bed and, rushing at "My Lady," seized her and began forcibly to take her out.

She struggled and screamed, but in vain. She was not strong enough to resist them.

When she found herself actually outside the door, in a rage she caught Phil's hand and bit it till she drew the blood, only letting go when he dealt her a resounding blow on her cheek.

Louder and louder she screamed for Aunt Sarah and Uncle James. No one came to the rescue, so the boys took her and seated her on the lowest step leading to the garret.

As soon as they let go of her they made a rush for the door, followed by her.

They reached the door first, and, slipping in, they slammed it with all their might. They saw Bessie's hand, but too late to prevent the door from closing on it, so were not surprised to hear the screams of anger change into shrieks of agony.

"What have you done to her?" Nan and I exclaimed, springing from the bed.

The boys had opened the door and were gazing at Bessie with countenances where anger, shame and remorse were wonderfully mingled. Nan ran to the child, who, with her hand clasped close to her, was crouching upon the floor, rocking to and fro, screaming.

Nan took her in her arms and hugged and kissed her, and begged her not to cry, and Bessie's cries did become fainter, then stopped altogether, and suddenly her head fell over upon Nan's shoulder.

We were sure she was dying, she was so white,

and in dreadful alarm we all called at once for Uncle and Aunt Sarah.

"Paul rushed down stairs yelling, "O, Aunt Sarah! Aunt Sarah! Hurry! Hurry! Bessie is dying! She's dying!"

Uncle was just coming in the back door, and, not stopping to take off his gloves nor to put down his riding whip, came bounding up the steps three at a time, followed by Aunt Sarah, Christiana and Molsey, the housemaid.

Paul ran before them to our room, where Nan was still holding Bessie.

"Why, she has fainted!" said Aunt Sarah. "What has happened?"

Then Uncle ran for water, and Christiana scuttled down stairs for smelling salts and camphor.

They soon revived her, but she moaned piteously and began to cry again.

Her hand was bundled up in her dress, and there was still too much confusion to tell what hurt her.

Uncle asked, "Where did she fall from? How did it happen?"

"It is her hand that is hurt, Uncle. She mashed it in the door," explained Nan.

"Paul and Phil slammed the door on it," Bessie now began to wail.

"She bit me," growled Phil.

Aunt Sarah had now got the wounded hand out from the dress, and the sight of it aroused pity in us all, and indignation in the grown people.

Bessie wailed louder than ever when she saw the hand. It was dreadfully discolored already and swollen, and her ring was crushed in the soft flesh of her third finger.

Uncle could not get the ring off, so he sent a servant for Dr. Rivers, who had been at the Mill House just before Uncle came in.

"Paul and Phil did it on purpose," Bessie kept wailing.

Uncle was furious. He seized Phil firmly with one hand, while the other still held the whip, and in another minute I believe he would have struck him, if Aunt Sarah had not laid her hand on his arm and said, "Don't, Jim. Wait till you hear how it happened."

I then told him how it happened. The wonder was that Bessie's hand had not been broken, but the truth was her small body had received the brunt of the blow; only the pain in the hand was so great she did not complain of those bruises until the next day.

Finding that Bessie was not going to die, we four slipped off to change our clothes before the excitement cooled enough for our rags to be noticed by Uncle.

Dr. Rivers came right over from the Mill House, and Christiana brought him up stairs.

Uncle had Bessie on his knee trying to soothe her. She was still wailing that Paul and Phil had done it on purpose, and Uncle was itching to wallop Phil.

"What's the matter now?" asked the doctor. "My, Jim, but you look fierce," and the doctor laughed till he coughed.

"Well, look at this hand? Isn't that enough to make me angry? The boys slammed the door on it."

The doctor was all concern, and went to work at once to remove the ring without causing too much pain.

The poor little child suffered dreadfully, though.

At last it was dressed and put into a sling. Then Bessie got sleepy, and Uncle took her down stairs and laid her on the davenport in the sitting room.

We were thoroughly worn out with fatigue and fright, and went to bed just after tea.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUESTS.

The next few days we devoted ourselves to Bessie. Her hand was very painful, but it was yielding readily to treatment.

We felt quite remorseful. She accepted our attentions very well on the whole; at any rate, it pleased Uncle and Aunt Sarah.

Aunt Sarah did not devote herself to her entirely, as she had to Paul, and that was a great surprise to Bessie.

Uncle, however, was all her heart could desire. Every afternoon he came home with something for her in his pockets, and she was becoming very, very spoiled.

Aunt Sarah expected those nieces daily now, and as Uncle was away nearly every day that week, speech-making in the country around, we had to go to Winfield every afternoon to meet them.

Miss Alice did not specify any day in her last letter, but only wrote "some day during the week."

"Just like her," laughed Uncle.

On Friday Aunt Sarah said that without doubt they would come that afternoon.

We wanted to make a good impression on the young ladies. We put on our best suits, had our shoes polished till they shone like mirrors, carefully arranged our neckties, brushed down our wretched curls, then took a long look in the glass.

The boys said I winked approbation at my reflection, but they fibbed, I believe.

We were not going in the old carryall, but in the handsome carriage, with Daddy Frank, Uncle's coachman, in all his finery, driving the frisky blacks.

Phil and I thought Paul was too small to do the honors on this occasion, and wanted to leave him at home, but, seeing how dreadfully disappointed he looked, we allowed him to come, provided he promised to return outside with Daddy Frank.

We drove through Winfield in style, around that old town clock to the station.

There we got out and strutted up and down the platform, feeling, I will confess it, rather large.

Presently we heard the whistle of the train and it came thundering around the curve into sight.

All the men and boys in Winfield rush down to the depot when the train comes in.

We tried to press through the crowd of men, but before we could get near the train, being so often pushed aside, we were crushed, we were mortified at seeing two young ladies, evidently our expected guests, being escorted from the platform by five or six young men, who seemed delighted to see them.

We ran to catch up, but feeling a little abashed at the idea of introducing ourselves before so many strangers, fell behind them.

"O, yes," we heard one of the gentlemen say, "Col. Theydon's carriage is just around the corner."

"Is Uncle Jim here?" one of the ladies asked, in a voice like Aunt Sarah's.

"I think not," another answered. "He is always away on political business these days."

"How do you do, Miss Alice, Miss May. I'm mighty glad to see you again," and here were more men coming to welcome them.

But imagine our dismay when we saw them escort

the ladies to the carriage, help them in, then close the door, and Daddy Frank gather up the reins, preparing to drive off.

"Hold on, there," shouted Paul, his face flushed and screwed with anxiety. "You don't expect us to walk home, do you?"

The gentlemen turned, and Mr. Rivers, the doctor's son, said, "Here are Col. Theydon's nephews now. I expect they are looking for you."

"Yes, we came in for them," I said.

We got in.

"I didn't know Uncle Jim had any relatives," said Miss May, the younger of the ladies.

"Are you staying at Glencairn?" Miss Alice asked.

"Yes, we will be there till Christmas, I suppose."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Miss May.

We drove quite through town before we could summon up courage to speak another word to the ladies.

They were discussing the young men they had met at the station with great animation.

At last Miss Alice, the one like Aunt Sarah, said, "We are almost cousins, are we not? And here we have been driving more than a mile, and neither May nor I know even your names. Come, introduce yourselves."

I had prepared a fine introduction to be delivered at the depot, but, being so unexpectedly called upon, the color rushed to my face, and I had only presence of mind enough to say, "My name is Harold, he is Phil, and that's Paul," for Paul had not kept his promise, but had ensconced himself inside.

"Theydon?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, "Father is Uncle James's brother."

"What in the world does Aunt Sarah mean by filling up the house with brats when she expected us?" Miss May rudely asked.

"O, May, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" laughed Miss Alice.

"Father is sick, and had to leave home; so Uncle brought us here," I laconically explained.

"I wish your father had chosen another time for his illness. The small boy is my bête noir," continued Miss May.

"We are not going to bother you," snapped Paul, glowering at her, for which I punched my elbow into his side.

"Quit, Harold," he said, shrugging up his shoulders and looking as saucy as a kitten.

"May has a bad headache, boys. Riding on the train always makes her sick, so you must excuse her," apologized Miss Alice.

"Yonder goes Dick with the trunks," said Paul, "I wish I had gone back with him in the wagon."

"How is Aunt Sarah?" asked Miss Alice, trying to be pleasant.

"Now we will see Glencairn soon. How I love it. Yes, there it is, and dear Aunt Sarah on the piazza, and two little girls. Are they visiting here, too?"

"Yes, there are five of us."

Miss May looked disgusted.

Aunt Sarah was charmed to see her nieces, and they went into the house chatting gaily. We had never seen her so lively before.

Neither of the ladies noticed the girls, which miffed little Miss Bessie very much.

We went into the cozy sitting room and waited for them to come down, but they were not in a hurry to do so.

Aunt Sarah was with them, and they were probably telling her all the news from her home.

We rose, as we had seen Father and Uncle do, when the ladies entered the room. Miss Alice is very much like Aunt Sarah, the same shaped face,

color of the hair and eyes, small feet and hands, slender, with quick, graceful movements, but she hasn't the finished look Aunt Sarah has. I liked her at once.

Miss May is broader, taller, stouter, altogether made on a larger scale; and I didn't like her at all.

"She is probably a Faulkner," I thought, "for she doesn't look the least like her sister nor Aunt Sarah."

Presently we heard Uncle coming along the hall. Both of them ran to meet him, but Miss Alice got ahead, and Uncle caught her and kissed her as if she had been his own daughter. He kissed Miss May also, but I knew which one was his favorite.

Uncle just carried on with them like a boy; teased Miss Alice to his heart's content, and teased Aunt Sarah, too, as much as he dared.

I have always enjoyed seeing grown people on their own level. They reach down to us, and are not their real selves.

But here Uncle was too nice. Always just as courteous as he could be, but so bad and funny.

We had a good time, though we were unnoticed. Finally Bessie could stand this no longer, so arose and stood by Uncle.

He lifted her to his knee and kissed her, and then the young ladies, Miss May especially, exclaimed, "O, what a perfectly beautiful child! Such hair! I adore that color. And those eyes! Come here, you darling!" and Bessie, having become the center of attraction, waxed charming, and got stuffed with compliments.

After tea they went into the drawing room. We, having felt Miss May's snubs rather keenly, didn't follow, indeed, we were not asked to do so.

We remained in the sitting room, inclined to be sulky, till Nan, who is never anything but cheerful, got up and silently, with those nimble feet of hers,

began to execute the shadow dance. One by one we joined in, and in joyous motion forgot our ill temper, and went off to bed in good humor.

The arrival of these guests made a great change at Glencairn. Every day young ladies would drive out and dine or stay to lunch, and every evening crowds of gentlemen would come calling, while there was very often some one staying over night.

We didn't see much of this company, though. They had no idea of being bothered by brats, small fry, or infants, as Miss May called us. We were certainly jostled aside. We admired their handsome clothes, we enjoyed the scraps of conversation that reached our ears, but they ignored our very existence.

One afternoon, the day being warm and sunny, all the household moved out on the piazza after dinner, just as we had done when we first came. Uncle and his pipe were there, too.

Bessie had been pining for taffy for many days. Leaving the circle, she stole out on the lawn. She had on a little wrap with long, loose sleeves.

Out there, she began to float gracefully over the grass, waving her arms with a slow, lazy movement.

"Behold," said Phil, " 'The Human Butterfly.' "

Every eye turned towards the little girl. She really was beautiful, but her eyes wandering again and again to the piazza showed that all this was done for effect.

"My beauty," Uncle said to gratify her.

"She is perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Miss Alice enthusiastically.

"I never have seen anything prettier," said Miss May.

"So self conscious, though," remarked Aunt Sarah.

"Fly up here, little darling, and let us kiss you," called out Miss Alice.

That night at tea, Paul, sitting just opposite Bes-

sie, with his hands gave a mimic pantomime of "The Butterfly" over his plate.

He copied her motions exactly, giving her upward glances for approval, and looking so funny, we couldn't help giggling, though there was company present, Mr. Rivers and Dr. Springs having come at dusk.

Presently we found Bessie in a new rôle. She was silently, gracefully weeping in her handkerchief. It upset Phil, who was drinking tea, and he spilled some on the tablecloth.

I immediately glowered a warning at him.

"Just three, Harold," he whispered, nodding his head vigorously at me. "Just——," waving three fingers across the table.

"What are these children up to, any how," exclaimed Miss May. "Here's one crying, and the others making signs to one another. What are you doing?" she asked, turning around suddenly to me. I sat next to her.

But Miss Alice had caught on, and was tickled to death.

"They are being naughty," said Uncle. 'I think Aunt Sarah will have to excuse them, and they can leave the table." Which brought us to our senses immediately, and we behaved ourselves.

One morning, coming in from the woods, where we had been playing, we found Miss Diana and Miss Penelope Rivers spending the day.

We sat down a few minutes in the sitting room listening to them talk, all of them at once. We couldn't understand anything, but they seemed to be having a jolly good time.

Presently Miss May remarked that if there was a fire in the dining room, the infants had better take themselves off.

"I can't stand children around," she whispered to Miss Diana.

So we left in dudgeon.

"Now, don't you come in here, chilluns. I am goin' to sweep an' dus'," said Daddy Stephen in the dining room.

So to the library we went. Aunt Sarah, at the writing desk, turned round and said, "If you are coming in here, children, you must be perfectly quiet, for I am copying something for Uncle James and can't be disturbed. You had better go to the sitting room."

So, in anything but sweet tempers, we went out to our own house and sat down to sulk. We hoped we would all have meningitis, sitting out there in the cold—the sun was not shining—then when they all had to nurse us they would be sorry they had treated us so badly.

"I despise grown folks," I growled.

"Always saying, 'Little Pitchers,' 'A chile amang ye,' 'Children should neither be seen nor heard'," Nan added sarcastically.

"Just want to talk about their beaux. That's all I've heard since they came here," went on Phil.

"Wish they would go home. Spoiling all our holidays," muttered Paul.

"Can't understand a word they say—all talking at once," said Phil.

"Not worth understanding," I added.

"I hope I'll never be grown up," said Paul.

"Well, if you have meningitis, maybe you won't," said sensible Nan.

"Does it hurt?"

"So they say."

"Well, don't let us have it. Just let's have croup."

"That hurts, too."

"You'll have to take something nasty, if you get sick, Paul."

"Well, don't let's have anything."

Whereupon we all shouted with laughter, and felt so much better we returned to the house.

At dinner they discussed a fox hunt that Uncle proposed for next morning.

He had invited four gentlemen, and Miss Diana and Miss Peno must stay all night.

"O, let us go. Please, please, Uncle, darling, let us go. We can ride. Can't we, Uncle?" all of us pleaded.

But, no, we couldn't go. There were no horses for us to ride.

"Well, we can go on the mules."

"Now, wouldn't that be a stylish turnout. Half a dozen children jogging on behind on mules," laughed Miss Alice.

"And every minute or two screaming out, 'Wait! Wait! Don't go on so fast! Uncle, please whip up this mule; he won't go'," teased Uncle.

"No, we wouldn't, either," we murmured, for we saw we were to be left behind.

"I think you might," whined Paul.

"And be thankful," said Miss Peno, adding her little say, "if you don't have to go back, carrying a deceased child, precipitated over the mule's head."

"Or smashed under its lively heels," finished Miss Dian.

The grown folks were quite merry at our expense, but very decided, nevertheless, upon our not being of the party.

We were dreadfully "cut up" over it, but we saw we might as well make the best of it, and at least enjoy the preparations and listen to their plans.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HUNT.

Next morning we got up when the first sound of stirring in the house was heard, and came down long before the young ladies. Uncle was up, though, ready to receive the gentlemen.

He laughed when he saw us, and promised we should go with him some time soon.

It was pitch dark outside. In the dining room there was a blazing fire burning. The table was set for the early breakfast, and Christiana and Daddy Stephen were up, passing in and out, making preparations for that meal and mightily provoked at seeing "dem chillun up so early."

"They will be here directly, now," said Uncle. "Nan, go and see if Aunt Sarah is awake, and tell her it is time to get up now."

Nan skipped off to obey.

"Well," he said, as she returned, "did you wake her?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"Is she getting up?"

"No, Uncle."

"How do you know she is awake?"

"She answered me."

"Pshaw, child, she's not awake. Go back, and try again. Shake her, this time. Sarah surely loves her morning's nap."

"O, Uncle, I can't," said Nan. "I'm afraid she wouldn't like it."

"I can, Uncle. Let me try," said Paul.

"All right. Just so somebody wakes her, I don't care who it is. Here they come now. Tell her to hurry, and then go and wake the girls."

So saying, he went out to greet his guests, while we tiptoed after Paul, anticipating some fun.

How would he wake her? There was a lamp burning in the room, and we could see Aunt Sarah, sweetly sleeping.

Paul stepped in, then, going up to the bed, he boldly put his hands upon her shoulders, then, turning to grin at us, shook her briskly.

But he didn't wake her.

We nearly collapsed as we watched him give her another shake, and when he did finally rouse her, we laughed aloud at the look of surprise and indignation she gave him, met on his part with stout defiance.

"Uncle sent me, Aunt Sarah. He told me to shake you till I got you awake. It is well you woke up just then, Aunt Sarah. Do you know what I was going to do? I was going to put the wet wash rag on your face. What would you have done to me, Aunt Sarah?"

"I am afraid I would have slapped you, Paul."

Aunt Sarah was wide awake now and laughing.

"Now I have to go and wake up the girls," and he lightly scampered off in glee, followed by all of us on tiptoe.

We listened at the door, but heard nothing. We opened the door and called, but no one answered.

Then Paul went in, feeling his way to the bedside. Then we heard a kiss, then another, then Miss Alice say hurriedly, "Dian!"

"Yes," said Miss Dian, sleepily.

"Did you touch me just now?"

"No. Why?" waking up now.

"I thought some one kissed me."

"O, Alice, you are dreaming," and Miss Dian laughed.

"No, positively. Some one did kiss me."

They moved as if they were sitting up to listen, and they heard Paul snicker.

"Who's there?" demanded Miss Alice in brave tones. "Answer, or I'll call."

Then Paul threw his arms around her and kissed her and kissed her, while both of the ladies, or girls, as Uncle calls them, shrieked, and we jumped and shouted with laughter.

"What do you little scamps mean?" she asked angrily. "I'll tell Uncle Jim if you ever dare to frighten us in this way again."

"Why," drawled Paul, demurely, "Uncle sent me, Miss Alice. He told me to wake you. I called and called, but you wouldn't answer, so I had to kiss you to wake you up. Well, I must go and wake Miss May and Miss Peno now."

"Well, young man, you had better not try to kiss her."

Paul went softly into the adjoining room, and though the door between was open, neither stirred as he went softly up to the bed. He stooped to kiss Miss May, when suddenly she threw her strong arm around him, sat up in bed and laid him across her knee, whereupon there arose a sound of thumps and screams of laughter from Paul.

"O, Miss Alice, make Miss May stop!" he shouted. "She's got a hair brush, and she is just b-e-a-ting me."

"That's right, May. Just give it to him," from Miss Alice's room.

"O, Miss May! I'm not going to kiss you any more! O, Miss May! O, Miss May!" each time in a higher key, while the paddling went on vigorously, and the "girl ladies" shrieked with laughter.

"I'll teach you a lesson, young man," and I doubt if Paul ever had a more painful one, though he was game and took it good-naturedly.

Just then Uncle blew a long blast on his horn in the lower hall, and the hounds began to bay, which sounds roused the young ladies effectually.

"O, it's the hunt!" they exclaimed. "Have the gentlemen come? Light the lamp, Nan. Run away, boys, and tell Uncle Jim we'll be ready in a few minutes. Send Molsey to us, Nan."

Another blast, and we went flying down stairs, singing at the top of our voices:

"A southerly wind, and a cloudy sky,
Proclaim it a hunting morning.
Before the sun rises, away we fly,
Dull sleep and a drowsy bed scorning.
Hark! Hark! Forward!
Tan-ta-ra, Tan-ta-ra, Tan-ta-ra.
Hark! Hark! Forward!
Tan-ta-ra, Tan-ta-ra, Tan-ta-ra."

"Who taught you that?" asked Aunt Sarah, who was just leaving her room, looking perfectly charming in her riding habit.

"Auntie taught it to us."

"It's pretty," she said.

We watched her as she shook hands with the gentlemen. She was so graceful and handsome. Uncle looked at her as if he thought, too, she was the loveliest lady in the land.

The girls, as Uncle calls them, were looking fine, too.

We were not expected at the breakfast, but we could hear they were a very merry party in there.

After breakfast we went on the piazza to see them off.

The horses were pawing and champing, the dogs baying and running back and forth, the ladies and gentlemen laughing and chatting.

It all sounded so nice to poor little us.

Major Carlisle rode away with Aunt Sarah, Uncle and Miss Diana, Mr. Rivers and Miss Alice, Dr. Springs and Miss May, and Mr. Charlton with Miss Peno.

We stood watching them until they were out of sight, then returned to the deserted house.

To be left behind! It was too bad!

Aunt Sarah had commissioned Christiana to make some purchases in Winfield, so she and Daddy Stephen intended, as soon as it was light enough, to drive to town.

Nan promised Christiana to help Bessie dress when she woke up.

Daddy Stephen told us to sit down and eat our breakfast, as he wanted to clear the table.

We did so, and except that Christiana and himself would keep up a conversation, they behaved themselves much better than on the Sunday when we last kept the castle.

Christiana was loud in her praises of Aunt Sarah. "She was the beautifullest, bountifullest, complaisantfullest, elegantist lady what ever have been seen. And the piousest, too, Mr. Gourdine. I'll wager you a kiss, that them knees of hern was bent in prayer this very same hunting morning."

"Jest so, Miss White. Jest so——" and so on.

They finished up their necessary work in the house, and, taking Molsey, they set off for Winfield in the carryall.

All alone, we sat quietly by the dining room fire, talking for a long time.

We were discussing the hunting party, of course, guessing who would kill the fox, grumbling a little

that we had been left behind; then fell to wondering how rich Uncle could be, and comparing Glencairn with Theydon Hall.

We greatly admired Glencairn, but were loyal to our own Theydon Hall.

"I have been in every room in this house but one," said Paul. "Did you know there is a room back of Aunt Sarah's?"

"Why, no," we all exclaimed.

"When I was sick I tried to get in there one day, but the door was locked—it was always locked."

"I wonder if it is open now," said Phil.

"Let's go and see," said Nan.

"Nobody to say us nay," said I.

So up we jumped, and went across the hall, and walked into Aunt Sarah's room—naughty chidren that we were.

Everything was in perfect order. Paul's little sensitive nostrils sniffed as the faint odor of violets assailed them, but, beautiful as the room was, it was not for its inspection that we had intruded there.

We stood before the closed door, we tried the knob, and, daft with curiosity, began to rummage about for the key.

"We are regular Fatimas in Blue Beard's castle," laughed Phil.

There was no key anywhere about the room. Nan boldly opened the closet, and shouted with glee as she took down a key, and, flitting across, tried it in the lock.

"Look out, dear lady, for the blood stains," warned Phil.

The key turned; we opened the door and entered.

We did not see a row of dangling wives, but what we did see astonished us as much as if we had.

The room was a charming nursery, in blue and

white. A soft blue carpet covered the floor, with rugs matching in color. A high brass fender was before the fireplace. Pictures of darling children were on the walls. Over the mantlepiece hung a portrait of a dear little girl with a puppy in her arms. The face seemed familiar.

"It looks like—like some one. Who is it?" asked Nan.

"Like Paul," I said. "The eyes are just like his."

"Yes, it does," said Nan, covering the lower part of his face and gazing steadily at him, "that's exactly who it is like."

"I wonder who she is?" said Phil.

A clock on the mantel was supported by two little bronze figures of children. There were exquisite vases that would just charm a child.

"I wonder if Aunt Sarah ever had a little girl," said Nan, in astonishment.

"I have never heard of any," I said, "but they might, for all we knew of them, way back then."

"Now, Nan, don't you go and ask anybody. They'll know exactly where we have been, if you do."

"All better mind," said I.

On one side of the fireplace were shelves fitted up as a doll's house, and on the other side were shelves filled with toys of every description and piles of linen books.

There was a little white bed, a small table, little chairs, and a larger rocking chair, a bureau, a wardrobe and washstand, all small and white. It was the most beautiful room we could imagine. We looked at everything, but dared not touch, only Nan drew out one of the drawers and we saw piles of little white garments, lace trimmed and ruffled, that were turning a little yellow.

On the table was a triple photo frame with three

pictures, taken at different ages, of the same child, whose portrait hung over the mantle.

There was a Bible and prayer book, besides other little books that looked religious, lying on the table, and a vase of fresh cut, hot house blooms that made the room fragrant. On the table lay a handkerchief with Aunt Sarah's name on it.

"O, she comes in here to cry," said Nan, all sympathy, "and to read her Bible. Of course, she must have had that darling child, and it died. Why, that's what makes her cry so much. O, I am so sorry for dear Aunt Sarah."

And we all were.

By the bed was a doll's crib, with the prettiest bedclothes and pillows, and in the crib a lovely wax baby lay asleep, with its eyes closed.

"Maybe Aunt Sarah still loves to play with dolls," said Paul. 'Don't you reckon that's it?"

"No, we don't," we shouted.

"It's just too nice for anything," said Nan. "I would dearly love to play in this room."

"We had better hurry now. Bessie will be coming down to see what has become of everybody."

We had put Bessie's breakfast on the hearth, and covered it over to keep it warm, for the child's sleep was as the sleep of the just—nothing awakened her but her usual hour for rising.

So, leaving the room, we locked it again and carefully hung the key back on its nail in the closet then we went upstairs. Bessie had not stirred, so we left her and went into Miss Alice's room.

Christiana and Molsey had been in too much haste to be off to do more than the necessary straightening of the other rooms, so we did not find the same order here as in Aunt Sarah's room.

Laces and ribbons were scattered all over the bureau, and the top drawer looked as if a cyclone had

mixed up things in there. In the confused heap we saw the photograph of a young man.

"O, look here," I said. "I bet you anything this is the one Miss Alice is going to marry."

"What's that name written on the back?" asked Phil.

"Thomas Keating," I read.

"Yes, that's it. That is the very man," said Nan. "I hear Aunt Sarah and Miss Alice talking about Tom."

"Yes, it is Dear Tom," piped Paul.

"I wish I were engaged," said Nan. "It must be so much fun. Grown people have such a nice time, don't they?" At which we laughed.

We saw an open letter on the bureau, but we didn't touch it. We drew the line at that.

"I hear Bessie," said Nan. "Listen, don't I?"

We certainly did; so, going to Nan's room, we found her nearly exhausted with weeping and calling. The poor little thing had become tired out waiting, and was up, trying to dress herself, but her hand was still tender, and she was not very expert.

Nan, as usual, lent a helping hand and completed the toilet.

We boys sat down to wait.

"Do you all know where Bessie has been this morning?" asked Paul.

"No," we exclaimed, "has she been anywhere?"

"Why, of course. It's a riddle. Guess. Where has she been?"

"In bed is the only place I know of," said Phil.

"O, I always knew you were 'kin to the Grampus.' You give it up? Why, in Wales."

A prolonged groan was our only answer.

"I—ha-ven't-t n-o-w, Paul," whimpered our injured innocent.

"And she contemplates returning to that country. It is——"

How much longer Paul would have kept up his teasing, I cannot tell, but we heard, just then, the door bell ring.

At first we did not remember that all of the servants were away, and it was not until it was rung three times, followed by a thundering rap, that Nan remarked that one of us had better go down.

"It might be a tramp," said Phil. "Let's all go together."

So we started, leaving Bessie dancing a hornpipe or something to her own music.

The better to defend ourselves, if it should be a tramp, Nan took a broom, I the tongs, Phil the shovel, and Paul a riding whip.

The gong had sounded five times before the procession reached the front door.

Whoever was there was determined to get in, if possible.

We unlocked the door, and there stood, not a tramp, but a gentleman, who seemed much amused and surprised at our turnout.

"This is Col. Theydon's residence, is it not?" he inquired in a pleasant voice.

"Yes," I said.

"Will you give this card to Miss Faulkner?"

I took the card and read "Thomas Keating."

"They are all out hunting this morning, but come in. I think they will be at home now, very soon."

So, dropping all of our weapons, we took him in the sitting room, and drew up a chair before the fire, for it was a pretty cold day.

"And you are left alone, eh?"

"Yes," we laughed, "we thought you might be a tramp, so we meant to defend ourselves."

He laughed good-humoredly at our great defence, then asked something about the hunt.

"Miss Alice is all right," said Paul.

He actually blushed a little at this, for it showed so plainly that we knew all about his engagement.

Nan, feeling that the duties of hostess fell upon her shoulders in the absence of Aunt Sarah, and it being still very early in the morning, asked if he had been to breakfast, and, finding that he had not, went off, taking Bessie with her to explain why she took her warm breakfast away from her and gave it to the stranger.

Bessie, being at all times a little lady, acquiesced, and was satisfied with the cold biscuits and ham Nan found for her in the safe.

Soon Nan came back, bringing the tray with breakfast.

Mr. Keating praised her housewifery, and, being hungry, quickly cleared the tray, after which he insisted upon kissing Nan, by way of thanks. She held back, blushing, but the kiss was given for all that.

"That's all right," said Paul. "That's nothing but fair. I saw a gentleman, a relative of my sister's, kiss Miss Alice only this morning."

"I know that's not so," said Mr. Keating quickly; but he did look so funny.

"I give you my word."

"Who was it?"

"I can't tell you. There might be angry words, pistols, and somebody might get hurt," Paul murmured mysteriously, screwing up his mischevious little face into an important, serious expression.

'What foundation has he for this fib?" the stranger asked, turning to us.

"Couldn't tell."

He looked annoyed, but evidently did not relish

being teased by children, so arose, whistling, and looked out on the lawn.

We heard the dogs, and knew the hunting party was homeward bound. Soon we heard them galloping towards the house by the back way.

"Would you like to meet them, Mr. Keating?" asked Paul.

He said he would.

"Come on, then," and Paul led him out.

"This way," leading him to a little side entry towards a door.

"Just walk in, and presently you will come to a door. It opens on the lawn. We are going around the back way, and will send Miss Alice to you. It is very dark in there, but I guess you can grope your way through."

So the unsuspecting young man stepped through the door, which Paul quickly fastened, leaving the stranger to stumble about in a little, narrow closet under the stairs.

The hunting party separated at the back door, and the ladies came merrily forward, all blooming from their early ride in the fresh air.

Miss Alice wore the brush, gracefully drooping from one side of her hat.

They had all, evidently, enjoyed the chase immensely. Even Aunt Sarah was laughing and talking like the girls.

While the gentlemen were making their farewell speeches Paul took Miss Alice aside and in a low tone asked her to come and see what was in the closet under the stairs.

She came, asking him what it sounded like.

"Just listen," said Paul.

We stood still, and could hear the poor prisoner bump, bumping against the walls.

In great surprise she opened the door, and out

walked Mr. Keating, looking very wrathy and cobwebby.

"Tom!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands. "What does this mean? How did you get in there? Where did you come from?"

He explained, while we giggled joyfully.

They were just delighted to see one another. Then she brushed him off and took him to be introduced to Aunt Sarah.

It seemed he had been invited, and told to come right out before breakfast; but his letter accepting had miscarried and came afterwards.

They were allowed to have the sitting room to themselves pretty much all morning.

Paul must have annoyed them very much, for he took every opportunity for going in there; he wanted a book, he had left his knife, and so on, bringing us, each time, bits of information as to how lovers behaved themselves.

Finally we all went in, and blundered upon a little discussion about a kiss—that is Mr. Keating was mad, but Miss Alice, we saw, had caught on, and was teasing him royally. She said Paul had done exactly right not to tell.

After an hour or two the ladies came into the room and the conversation became general.

But Miss Alice's "Tom" was not distinguishing himself; on the contrary, he looked so absorbed and moody that Miss May rallied him and said she believed they had been quarreling.

Miss Alice admitted they had.

"And now guess what about?" she said.

No one could think, not even Uncle, who had come in just in time to hear Miss May's remark.

At last Paul suggested, with one uplifted eyebrow, "Was it a kiss?"

"A kiss," assented Miss Alice. "You may very

well suggest it, seeing that it was you that betrayed me."

The ladies looked amused, Uncle curious and amused, Mr. Keating very much embarrassed, while Miss Alice overflowed with teasing fun.

But Nan's kind heart could stand it no longer. Putting her hand on Paul's curly head, she put an end to the whole thing by saying, "Here is the gentleman, Mr. Keating, who kissed Miss Alice."

At which everybody laughed at Mr. Keating's expense, his laugh now being the heartiest of all.

At dinner Mr. Keating and Miss Alice and Miss May were talking about some one they called Eva.

Presently one of them spoke of her as Eva Chase.

"Eva Chase!" we exclaimed. "Eva Chase of Atlanta?"

"Why, yes," said Miss Alice. "What do you know of her?"

"Why, she's Auntie," said Paul.

"Their mother's sister," explained Uncle.

"Then these are not your children?" asked Mr. Keating, turning to Uncle.

"No, they are my brother, Philip Theydon's children."

"Why, look here. These must be Cousin Nannie's children. Didn't you know I am your kinsman? Your mother's own first cousin?"

"We knew Mother had Keating relatives living in Atlanta, but we never once thought of your being one of that family. We thought you came from New York."

"And now I know who it is Harold looks so much like," said Miss Alice. "It has puzzled me ever since I first saw him. He is the image of Eva; isn't he, May?"

"Moderate your transports, young man," admonished Phil, patting me on the back.

"Who is that John Glencoe that Eva met down there at your house?" asked Cousin Tom. "I tell you he made an impression on her," turning to Miss Alice.

"Is she going to marry him?" we shouted.

"Now I know! Now I know what it was took Grandmother home in such a hurry," I said, light breaking in upon me.

"What will Grandmother do?" sighed poor Nan. "Mother would marry poor Father, and if Auntie marries poor Cousin John life won't be worth living for her."

"She is giving Eva a royal good time this fall. I wish you girls had been there last month. Aunt Elizabeth certainly tried herself."

"To wipe out John," Uncle drily interposed.

"Well, she'll not do it; Eva is in a dream all the time," he replied.

"Well," said Uncle, "if she gets John, she'll get an uncommonly fine fellow."

"Where did you all meet Auntie? And do you know Grandmother?"

"Aunt Elizabeth! Ah, she's great!" said Mr. Keating.

"Then perhaps you know the little Rodericks?" asked Nan.

"Of course we do. We spent our last winter's holidays with Eva in Atlanta," said Miss May. "We were chums at college. O, yes, we are acquainted with all of their friends. Do you know the Rodericks?"

"Their virtues and graces have been chanted to us ever since we were born," I said.

"By whom?" asked Uncle.

"By Grandmother," we answered vehemently.

"Theodore Roderick!" exclaimed Miss Alice. "There never lived a more adorable boy. Such man-

ners to his mother and sisters! So handsome and intelligent! I tell you, had Theodore been a few years older Thomas Keating wouldn't have had a shadow of a chance."

We were very quiet after that. Could it be possible that those Roderick children were really so far superior to us. It seemed a reflection on Father.

We resolved to be more courteous to Nan, and our attentions to her for the next few days were so overwhelming that she at last asked what it meant, and begged us to behave ourselves.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RECEPTION.

Cousin Tom's visit was a source of much pleasure to his small relatives.

Whenever Miss Alice was otherwise engaged, he devoted himself to our amusement.

We took him on all of our favorite walks but one, and, being a good shot, we had fine sport, and furnished Aunt Sarah's table with not partridges only, but with wild turkeys.

While he was at Glencairn Aunt Sarah gave a reception, and although we were accounted little nuisances, we managed to get much amusement from the entertainment.

The weather was unusually warm for October, and the young ladies thought an outdoor afternoon party would be more enjoyed than a reception.

Aunt Sarah agreed, though Uncle said while they were arranging seats under awnings not to trouble themselves to put many for the guests would be only too glad to feel the generous rays of the sun by evening.

But the ladies declared it to be an exceedingly warm day, and assured Uncle that he was too provoking.

"Well," said Uncle, "you be sure to have good blazing fires in all the rooms, for they certainly will be needed, and don't dream of asking people to come away out here in the country just for an hour

or two in the afternoon, have it a night affair, too," and as he always had his way when he wanted anything, the ladies gave in.

"We will have fires in all the rooms in the house, Uncle Jim, and the guests can stay just as late as they please, but don't bother us any more now," said Miss May.

"O, but, Uncle Jim," said Miss Alice. "Come back! What about the bateaux? You will let us have them now, surely."

We opened our eyes when we saw two beautiful little boats that had been kept all these weeks secure under lock and key.

"O, Uncle," we exclaimed. "We didn't know you had these boats? Why do you lock them up?"

"For the best reason in the world."

"To keep them from us, Uncle?"

"That's right."

"We would have enjoyed them so much," I said.

"Can we go with Cousin Tom?" asked Nan.

"That depends on the experience Mr. Keating may have had upon the water. If he knows anything about rowing and swimming, and is willing to take you, I have no objection. But now, children, promise me that you will not venture in by yourselves."

We promised and Uncle walked off.

And this to us, genuine fish that we were, paddling, rowing and swimming in the river ever since we could remember.

Grown folks are so queer.

Wherever we went, they told us to run away. So we were forced to seek our own establishment, being not a little miffed that our services had been so little appreciated.

At lunch Uncle wanted to know who was expected.

"All of our friends," said Miss Alice.

"Is 'My Lord' coming?"

"That he is not," snapped Miss May.

"Who is he?" inquired Cousin Tom.

"May's very especial friend, Tom," teased Miss Alice.

Miss May's upper lip nearly curled over her nose with scorn.

"A clever fellow, too," said Uncle. "He certainly will get on in this world. He has brains enough, and brass enough, to carry him through anything."

"A perfect gentleman, also, I suppose, Uncle Jim?"

"I don't know. He does very well, as gentlemen go these days. I believe I'll send a note, asking him out, just for the fun of seeing May cut up. What do you say, Alice? He won't mind receiving an invitation at the eleventh hour, do you think?"

"Suppose you do, Uncle," said Miss Alice. "I just know he would come. Tell him how sorry you are that he was overlooked."

Uncle told Nan to run to the library for paper, pens and ink.

The ladies looked aghast. "Uncle Jim, are you in earnest?"

"Why, yes; aren't you? Well, tell me who you expect, any way."

"Dian and Peno Rivers and their brothers, Alice, Ursula and Jacky Thorpe and their brother; Helen, Fay and Mollie Raymond and their brothers; Sibyl McIlvaine and her brothers; Mr. Dorris and Stella, Mr. Carter and——"

"Hold on; that will do. I know the rest."

"And Maj——"

"I know. I know. Salome and Joan Charlton and Lowell, Dr. Springs; in fact, everybody except 'My Lord'."

"Why, Col. Theydon, if you had let us know you

wished him invited so very much, we would have been pleased to have extended an invitation to him," said Aunt Sarah. "But why are you so anxious to have him here? Political reasons?" Then, glancing at him, she exclaimed, "I dare say, if the truth were known, you have already given him an invitation yourself, and don't quite know how to break it to us. Look at him, girls; I believe he has. Now, haven't you, Jim?"

Uncle threw back his head and shouted with laughter. "I just couldn't help it, Sarah, really, really. The fellow pushed me up to it."

"What did he say?" asked Miss Alice.

"He met me at the bank, and, coming up to me, he said, 'Well, Colonel, I hear you are going to have a grand to-do down at your place this afternoon'."

"Yes," I answered carelessly. "I believe there is to be some sort of an entertainment there." Then to fill up an awkward pause, I said, 'I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing you.' 'Thank you,' he promptly said, 'I haven't received an invite; but I suppose there was some mistake'."

"I have a great mind to write him a note telling him he was quite right about there being a mistake, but it was altogether of his making. He will not be expected at Glencairn this afternoon. He will spoil everything if he comes," said Miss May excitedly.

"Now, now, May; don't you know that's the way girls show their interest in a man?" teased Uncle.

"I despise him," she said vehemently, and Uncle laughed so provokingly that Miss May was about to leave the table in wrathy tears when Aunt Sarah interposed, "Stop teasing May. You bad boy!"

Cousin Tom looked tickled to death, and we were delighted with the grown people's behavior.

After lunch, while the ladies were putting in the finishing touches to the rooms, Miss May picked up

Uncle's old pipe and suggested to Aunt Sarah that this would be a good time to throw it away.

"Not for your life," Aunt Sarah replied. "Why, if it were not for that pipe, I would know Jim's wings were sprouting. Smoking is his one bad habit."

"Alice!" called Miss May.

"Who-oo-oo!" answered Miss Alice from another room.

"Aunt Sarah is uneasy about Uncle Jim's wings."

"Tell her to allay her anxious fears; there is no danger of their appearing yet."

"You saucy girls!" exclaimed Aunt Sarah, half provoked; "do you mean to say you don't think your uncle good?"

"Just lovely, Aunt Sarah. But no fear of wings," laughed Miss May.

"Why, Aunt Sarah, he isn't half as good as Tom; now is he, May?"

"Of course he is," we interposed, taking up the cudgels for Aunt Sarah. "He is just as good as he can be; why, he is nearly as good as Father."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Aunt Sarah. "I see there is no settling this question. But leave that pipe just where it is, May."

After a while we went upstairs to rest before arraying ourselves in our very best.

The company was expected at four. Uncle was still laughing over a lawn party in October.

Miss Alice brought us boys some pretty little buttonhole bouquets.

Paul did his hair in style, that is, he brushed it all up into a rooster on the top of his head, but, being induced to give it a more critical inspection, he was persuaded to lower his crest.

He surprised Miss Alice and Cousin Tom in a little kissing scene within the recess on the upper

hall. Not wishing to embarrass them, he turned his head aside, but Miss Alice caught him, as he passed, and, hugging him, asked Cousin Tom if he had ever seen a dearer little scamp.

We ran down to the lawn and perched ourselves in the background, where we could watch the guests arrive.

We didn't know many of them except the Rivers. We had seen several of them at church, though.

This was our first reception. We had never seen a number of finely dressed ladies before, and we thought it a beautiful sight.

"Aunt Sarah is the Queen of all," we proudly asserted, "and Miss Alice, Princess Royal——"

"Yonder he comes, sure!" shouted Paul.

"Who?" said Miss Dian, who was sitting near us, talking to Miss Alice.

"My Lord," said Paul; "don't you all see him?"

"Hush, honey; he'll hear you," exclaimed Miss Alice in a warning whisper.

"He's going right straight to Miss May," snickered Paul, hiding his mouth with his hands.

And, sure enough, he sought her out immediately and began talking to her, while we could see she was so mad she could scarcely speak.

What made it all the more provoking was that Miss Alice and Miss Dian, with Mr. Rivers and Mr. Lowell, were standing just behind her and nearly choking to keep themselves from laughing aloud.

And Miss May knew this.

We got tired of sitting so still, so got down and went to the pond, where the two boats, filled with couples, were slowly drifting about.

We longed so to be with them, but no one noticed us, so, finding it too tantalizing, we returned to the lawn.

It turned out pretty much as Uncle had predicted.

Before sunset the company had mostly gathered in the warm rooms.

They all seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Uncle had the colored string band from Winfield, also an old colored man that the gentlemen called "Horace Greeley," who was to pat time and call out the figures in the dances. They were stationed at the end of the long hall, and the younger guests were just getting ready to dance when we came up.

Then, in the drawing room, the elderly people and those who did not care about dancing, were gathered in little groups, talking and laughing.

In the library there were a few couple playing cards, and some pretending to be looking at pictures and talking very low.

While in the sitting room the elderly gentlemen had congregated to discuss politics.

Refreshments were served all evening in the dining room, where any one could stroll in or order whatever they wished to be carried to any part of the house or lawn.

We stepped into the dining room and helped ourselves, then, going into the side entry, near where the musicians were playing, had a private dance.

"The Fleetfooted Theydons" had been taught to trip on the light fantastic toe by their father and mother, accounted beautiful dancers in their young days.

There was a harvest moon that night, and the dancers promenaded upon the lawn a great deal.

"My Lord" was everywhere. I wondered if all the young ladies felt towards him as Miss May did.

We children separated after a while, with the understanding that if anything occurred that was amusing a signal whistle would call the others to come and enjoy it.

The band was fine, and "Horace Greeley's" patting

so inspiring that it alone would have sufficed to have kept us awake until midnight. He grew wilder and wilder, and was fairly in transports of motion.

We lost Paul. After searching for him some time and asking every one we knew where he was Mr. Rivers called us and said, "Here he is. Come and look at him."

And there he was, dancing with Miss May, of all people.

We were astonished.

They glided through the figures most gracefully.

Uncle James and Major Carlisle came out of the sitting room and stood watching them.

They were forming another set at the other end of the hall.

"Come, Miss Nan," said the Major, "we will dance this set," and he took her off. While we stood watching her, Paul came up.

"Fellows, did you see me dance?"

"Well, now, didn't we! How did it happen?"

"My Lord! My Lord! You see, he came along and wanted to dance with Miss May, but she said she was engaged. She was, too, to Mr. Charlton; but Miss Raymond, who came with him, had to go home early, and he was not there when the set was formed. 'My Lord' looked at her as if he intended asking her again, so she just asked me."

"Took, you mean, don't you?"

"Well, it's all the same. I'm so glad they taught us to dance at home. Miss May says I'm a pretty dancer. I believe I'll go and stand around again. Some other lady might prefer me to 'My Lord'."

Shortly after we saw him tripping along with Miss Fay Raymond.

"How did you manage that?" we asked, when he came back to us.

"My Lord, again. Miss May was talking to Miss

Fay, when they saw him coming through the crowd towards them. 'It's your time, now, Fay. Surely he will not ask me again, after the snubbing I gave him. Are you engaged for this dance'?"

"No, but I'm not going to dance with him."

"Do as I did. Dance with Paul."

"So I had another dance. I wish they would invite me to all their dances in the town, and have it understood among the ladies that I'm 'My Lord's' substitute."

"What did you talk about, Paul?" I asked.

Paul stopped to think. "They didn't talk much; I guess they were thinking."

"I reckon," said Phil.

The company stayed late. It was long after midnight when the last buggy drove off.

We stood on the piazza and watched them, and wished we were going, too, the night was so beautiful.

We were nearly asleep, when Nan came rushing into our room, barefooted and in her nightgown, asking excitedly, "Boys, have you seen Bessie?"

We hadn't seen her all evening.

"Isn't she in bed, Nan?"

"Why, of course not, for then I wouldn't have been looking for her.

We heard her run down stairs and rap at Uncle's door and tell him that Bessie had not come in.

Uncle sent her back to dress, for fear of her taking cold; then took a lamp and began to look for Bessie.

Then we got up and dressed and went down with Nan.

We looked under every chair and table, into every nook and corner, but in vain. We called her, but no Bessie answered.

Aunt Sarah, Miss Alice and Miss May and Cousin

Tom had all come to help in the search. Uncle roused all the servants, but no one knew where she was.

"Where was she last seen?" Uncle asked. We thought. "At the pond," I gasped. "She went with us to see the rowing, and I haven't seen her since."

"She came back with us," said Nan.

"No, she didn't," said Phil.

"I don't remember," said Paul.

Uncle turned very pale. He was frightened. He hurried out, followed by Cousin Tom, and called the colored men to bring torches. He would not let us follow. We wandered about the house, feeling too miserable and anxious for anything. Nan was standing with her arms clasped around one of the pillars out on the piazza, sobbing bitterly. She was sure the child had fallen into the pond.

Aunt Sarah was trying to comfort her, but looking anything but assured herself. Oh! suppose Bessie was drowned! I imagined Uncle bringing her in, with her wet clothes clinging around her, the water dripping from her long curls; those lovely eyes closed forever.

I felt as if I could scream. My conscience told me I had not been very kind to my little sister, and I restlessly walked up and down the piazza, awaiting their return. I thought of the gay music and the dancing; it seemed horrible to think that perhaps she was lying then dead at the bottom of that water.

"I can't help thinking," said Miss May, "that all this excitement is unnecessary. That child has just fallen asleep somewhere, and will turn up all right to-morrow."

"Not if she sleeps on this cold ground," said Miss Alice.

We saw the glimmer of the torches, and my heart began to beat rapidly.

We shouted as soon as they came in sight, "Found her?"

"No," they answered; and we all felt somewhat relieved.

"We saw no trace of her. Her hat, at least, would have floated. We rowed over the pond, and followed the stream as far as the mill race, but saw nothing of it."

"She didn't have on a hat," wailed Nan.

He looked dejected again. He went out on the lawn to look there once more.

They searched the gardens. We went upstairs, in the garret, and in all of the rooms, and Nan, remembering the story of "Genevra," opened every trunk, drawer and chest in the rooms. But no Bessie could be found.

While we were standing out on the cold piazza, thinking what next to do, we heard a horse and buggy coming rapidly towards the house. Soon the glare of the torchlight fell upon a double seated buggy, in which sat Mr. Rivers, holding in his arms a bundle.

"Ah!" he shouted. "You missed her. I have driven as rapidly as I could, for I knew how anxious you would be. I made away with your little girl. I didn't discover it until I got to town. She was snugly stowed away under the back seat, fast asleep, and made no sound till we jolted over a rail lying in the road. It was so late I didn't like to ask Miss Salome to return with me, but took her home first."

"I told you so!" triumphantly cried Miss May.

"Did she cry?" asked Paul.

"Well, didn't she!"

Uncle was the most thankful man you ever saw.

Aunt Sarah asked Mr. Rivers to spend the night, but he said his mother would be anxious if he didn't return, and might rouse the neighborhood.

Aunt Sarah expressed great sympathy with Mrs. Rivers.

Although everything seemed to be moving on all right, as far as we could see, there was great political excitement and anxiety under it all, and race riots often seemed imminent.

"Mrs. Theydon thinks if I don't come home punctually at six that I have most certainly been waylaid and murdered," laughed Uncle.

"Well, Mrs. Theydon," said the young man, with great confidence, "in a few weeks we will have this government in our own hands, and order will prevail in this state once more. But I am keeping you out in this cold night air."

Uncle and Aunt Sarah again thanked him for the trouble he had taken so good humoredly.

Then he drove off, and we all went to bed again. Nan undressed Bessie without questioning her.

Uncle told us to get to sleep as soon as possible.

We heard Aunt Sarah come up and step into Nan's room to see if all was right.

I couldn't sleep. My head was ringing with the music, and whenever I dozed off I dreamed that they were bringing Bessie in, all dripping, and Mother was looking at me with such reproachful agony in her eyes.

It struck four o'clock before I fell sound asleep.

The next day those bateaux were locked up again safe and sound, so that none of us should even have the temptation to stray off to the pond.

I think Uncle would have liked to have had us under lock and key, too.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ACCIDENT.

Everything at Glencairn moves like clockwork, so, tired as we were, the usual hour found us gathered in the dining room for breakfast.

All traces of last night's festivities had disappeared, so well were the servants trained out here.

Of course the fright Bessie had given us was the subject of conversation.

Miss May was wrathy, and thought she should be severely punished.

Aunt Sarah was silent, leaving Uncle to do as he thought best.

He was kind, and Miss Bessie in pouts, none the worse for her midnight ride.

Miss Alice and Cousin Tom were trying to make her tell why she had gone under the buggy seat.

"To keep warm," she said.

"For pity's sake," I said. "Why didn't you come into the house, then?"

"I wanted to see the moonlight."

"From under the buggy seat!" we all shouted.

"Honor Bright, now, Bessie. You were hiding from Christiana, were you not?"

She nodded her curly head.

"Naughty little girl!" said Uncle. "You gave us a terrible fright."

"Bessie, we all thought you were drowned," said Paul soberly. "Suppose you had been? She'd have

been in heaven to-day, wouldn't she, Uncle? Would you have liked that, Bessie?"

"N-o-o-o," she wailed, beginning to cry, for she did not relish notice of this kind, "I want to stay right here."

"Better keep away from the pond, then," said Phil.

"And not sleep out of doors on cold nights," said Nan.

Cousin Tom's visit was up, and he expected to leave during the morning. He and Miss Alice were going to walk after breakfast, and Miss May said we were not to tag along after them.

About nine o'clock Uncle came out of his room in his red shirt. That meant something stirring, though he hadn't much to say about it, because it worried Aunt Sarah so.

When he was leaving, Aunt Sarah walked out on the piazza with him.

After kissing her good-bye, he mounted his spirited horse and rode off rapidly, turning once to wave his hand at her.

Her eyes filled with tears, and she looked so miserable that my heart gave a great thump.

Suppose, after all, she was right, and his joking only a bluff to reassure her.

Dear, good, handsome Uncle! How kind and patient he had been with us. If something should happen to him!

I moved nearer to her and said softly, "Is Uncle really in danger, Aunt Sarah?"

"Yes, he is, Harold," she answered, drawing me closer and laying her cheek against my head. I could feel her tremble and one or two tears fell on my forehead.

But in a moment she got control of herself, and,

kissing me for my sympathy, gave me a sad little smile and went back into the house.

Miss Alice and Cousin Tom returned from their walk. He made all his pretty speeches in appreciation of the hospitality extended to him—how he had enjoyed his visit and so on—bade us all good-bye and took his departure.

As he was leaving he called out, teasingly, "O, Nan; did I understand you to say please give your best love to Master Theodore Roderick?"

"And ours to Grandmother!" we shouted.

"I hope to meet you youngsters again on some future occasion"—and then he was gone.

Miss May said that we were more distressed at his leaving than Miss Alice.

"Of course," we answered. "We are not going to marry him."

"Well," said Miss Alice, comforting us, "some of these days, you shall all come and pay us a long visit in our own home."

We opened our eyes with delight.

"I will be your cousin, then, you know."

It was not pleasant out of doors. An east wind had sprung up, and the sitting room fire felt very comfortable.

Aunt Sarah was embroidering pretty things for Miss Alice, and she and Miss May were occupied in the same way. We children were pretending to read, and Bessie had her family of dolls in the corner.

We were very quiet. There was a spirit of gloom in the room; reaction, Mother would have called it.

It was too much for Paul. After trying in vain to induce us to join him, he set off by himself to find some amusement outside.

Miss May began to talk about the party, and she was so funny we couldn't help listening to her.

Miss Alice noticed how rapidly we turned over the pages, and asked us what we were reading.

I think I had read a paragraph over about twenty times without taking in the meaning.

"They are just listening to us," said Miss May. "I'm watching them."

The door flew open violently, and in came Paul, forgetting in his excitement to close it, his big gray eyes round and troubled with apprehension.

"What is the matter with you, Paul?" we asked.

"Aunt Sarah?" he said, going up to her and actually putting his hands on her in his excitement, "Aunt Sarah, is this so? Ike says that on Election Day there's going to be a fight in Winfield between the Radicals and Democrats, and——"

"Ike doesn't know what he's talking about, child," she interrupted, half pushing him away.

But you might as well try to stop water running down hill with your hand as to hush Paul up when he has something to say.

"Well, Ike says——" he began again.

"Never mind, Paul. We don't care to hear Ike's conversation repeated."

"Well, Miss Alice, Ike says——"

"O, run away, Paul. Go and play. We all know Ike talks a lot of nonsense," she said.

"Well, Miss May," turning to her in desperation. "Ike says——"

"O, botheration, Paul! Who cares what Ike says."

"But just tell me if it is true?"

"No, it is not true. We can safely make that assertion."

"But you haven't heard it yet. You don't know," he persisted. "Some of you all just got to listen to me now!" and he stamped his foot with vehemence.

"Well, do, for peace sake, let him tell us then,"

said Miss Alice, laughing. "What is it your oracle says?"

"He says there is going to be a big fight in Winfield on Election Day, and that all the colored men are going to kill all the white men—they are going to take them by surprise—and while all the men are fighting, the colored women and children are going to kill all the ladies and children, and that they have gathered lots of razors and knives and hatchets. He says they are going to cut them all to pieces.

"He says he was down at Black Ann's house last night and he heard them talking about it there. He says Black Ann has picked you for the one she is going to kill, Aunt Sarah, because she does hate to see you put on so many airs——"

"Hush, Paul," said Aunt Sarah, angrily. "Don't repeat any more of Ike's impertinence."

"And because she wants your clothes," finished Paul.

"I noticed that woman the other day, Aunt Sarah," said Miss Alice. "I don't like her at all."

"No one does," she answered. "Ann and her husband are both bad and give Colonel Theydon a great deal of trouble. He has threatened to send them off, and that is why they are so violent."

"And Daddy Stephen said," continued Paul, "that Black Ann would have to step over his dead body first, then."

"I wish I were at home," said Nan. "I want Father."

"And I want Mother," whimpered Bessie.

"You needn't be afraid," we said. "All of us have guns here."

"Yes," said Paul, who was greatly disturbed, "I will shoot any one dead that comes near this house, that I will."

"I don't think you will be called upon to make such a display of valor, boys," said Miss Alice.

"These colored people are cowards," said Miss May, "and I think Election Day will pass as quietly as any other day. Out here, I doubt if we shall even hear a shout."

"And Ike says Chamberlain shall be governor, and he sings all the time 'Hold the Fort, for Chamberlain's Coming'," Paul went on, still troubled.

"Didn't your uncle tell you not to play with any of the colored children on the plantation?" asked Aunt Sarah.

Paul said nothing, but took a book and sat down. He preferred our company just then.

We all began to work and read once more, but we did not feel very gay.

Bessie had come from the corner and had seated herself on the rug within the circle.

"I do think, girls," Aunt Sarah said, after we had been sitting in silence for some time, "that you ought to go home. If your mother knew the state of affairs down here, I know she wouldn't be willing for you to remain another day."

"Well, don't let her know, Aunt Sarah, for we are not going. If ever there was a time that you needed company, it is this fall.

"Now, if you could go back with us that would be another thing; but I know we couldn't persuade you to leave Uncle Jim now, and, besides, here are all these children. And, anyway, I am certain that if Mamma did know the circumstances, she never would consent to your being left alone out here in the country, while Uncle is away so much of the time and——"

The door opened, and this time it was Ike, the varlet, himself, who thrust his woolly head in, and in tones of calm surprise said, "Miss Sarah, you da

sit here so quiet for sew, w'en dey da bring Marse Jeem's daid body long de big road?"

We all sprang to our feet. Miss May caught hold of Ike, and, shaking him, said, "What do you mean by frightening Miss Sarah so? Who told you?"

"Ben seen dem coming an' he run 'long wid de news, Miss May."

Every vestige of color left Aunt Sarah's face. She went out on the piazza, we following her. Miss Alice put her arm around her, and together they stood, both looking down the public road.

"I don't believe there is a word of truth in what he says, dear. Don't be so distressed," she said.

But Aunt Sarah stood still, watching.

We boys ran down the road to see if we could hear anything.

Had the fight begun?

We saw Dr. Rivers coming on horseback, but he reached the piazza almost as soon as we did.

He sprang from his horse, exclaiming, "Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Theydon. Jim begged me to ride ahead and tell you of the accident.

"He was afraid you would be frightened when you saw the litter."

"Then he is hurt?" asked the ladies faintly.

"Then he is not dead?" we shouted, greatly relieved.

"Why, no, no," he answered quickly. "But you must get his room ready. He is in a pretty bad fix, though not seriously injured, I hope."

Soon we saw a crowd coming, and we ran to meet it.

Uncle, as white as a sheet, was stretched out on the litter. Several of his friends were with him.

He asked us if Aunt Sarah had been much alarmed.

"Yes," said Phil. "Ike told her you were dead."

As they came up the piazza steps poor Uncle called out gaily, "Well, Sarah, the long looked-for has happened at last. You almost got rid of your good-for-nothing husband this time."

Aunt Sarah smiled with trembling lips, for any one could see that he was suffering dreadfully, and was just trying to cheer her a little.

They took him to his room and made him comfortable in bed.

After a long time Dr. Rivers came to the sitting room, where Miss Alice and Miss May were, and, after claiming a kiss from all the girls, told them how the accident had happened.

It was a great campaign day in Winfield. There were going to be many speeches made by the Republican Party. Some of their most noted men were coming from the capital to speak to them, and crowds had been coming into the town since before daylight, mostly colored people, who were trying their best to bring about a riot.

Uncle was riding rapidly, and when at the branch, just where the road is so rocky and hilly, a crowd of men came rushing across the road from out of the woods, yelling and cheering, waving a great white flag, and his horse became terrified, and, rearing up suddenly, stumbled over one of the rocks and fell backwards on Uncle's leg, which was broken. He did not think now that Uncle was internally injured, but he was badly bruised.

Fortunately, some members of his club came riding up just then and carried him on to town to Dr. Springs' office, where his leg was set, splintered and bandaged, and a litter made; then some of his good friends volunteered to bring him out home, where he much desired to be.

But Dr. Rivers was anxious to get back to town,

so, after seeing Uncle once more, he rode away in haste.

"How I wish Tom hadn't left before this happened," said Miss Alice.

"He would have been a great comfort to Aunt Sarah," Miss May assented.

"Such a miserable day as we have had. Poor Uncle, it is too bad.

"He will not be a model patient," laughed Miss May.

"But I know who will be a model nurse."

Uncle was under the influence of an anodyne, so we had to keep very quiet. Somehow, we were getting accustomed to that, though.

We saw neither Uncle nor Aunt Sarah for three or four days. Miss Alice was the only one allowed in the room. She told Miss May that the "man with the sprouting wings" was perfectly awful. He was fairly foaming at being a prisoner at such a time.

He asked the doctor to tell him about the speeches and all that had occurred in Winfield on the day of his accident.

So the doctor gave him a detailed account of everything, beginning at dawn, when the crazed negroes began to gather in hordes awaiting the train that would bring the orators of the day. They thronged the streets, turbulent, insolent, using insulting language, thirsting for bloodshed. Then he described the quieting effects of the sudden appearance of "The Red Shirts" upon the scene; and as he went on telling how this mere handful of men had intimidated and kept down that immense mob by merely walking their muffled shod horses in rigid silence all day, from street to street, Uncle began to rave, and got more and more rebellious and obstreperous, until the doctor, who had known him ever since he was born, gave him a good scolding,

and told him he would fret himself ill if he didn't control his temper, and to remember Aunt Sarah and to behave himself for that reason, if for no other.

But, though Aunt Sarah looks worn and tired, she doesn't look as anxious as she did. I believe, if the truth were known, she prefers having Uncle under his own roof these unsettled days, even if it is a broken leg that keeps him—anyway till after election—and she knows she could keep him no other way.

Miss Alice said that the doctor's lecture had done Uncle good, and that he was trying to behave himself.

This was the first time in all his life that he had been obliged to keep to his bed. He had been blessed with perfect health.

It was very lonesome in the house without him, and we missed dear Aunt Sarah, too. Miss Alice took charge of everything for her, and kept an eye on us. She must have been a great comfort, for she was so cheerful and sweet. She was not as reserved as Aunt Sarah, so we didn't mind hanging about her in the least.

Nan stole in one day to see Uncle when he was feeling better, and behaved so well, talking to him and petting him, that every day after, if she did not come, he would ask, "Where is Nan?"

He says she is a born nurse, with her pleasant voice, light footsteps and sunshiny temper. Then she is deft in handling things, too.

Father says she is going to make a grand woman one of these days.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE INVESTIGATE.

One afternoon Dr. Rivers came and paid such a very long visit we thought Uncle must be much worse.

After a while Nan, who was in his room, came into the sitting room where we were.

"What is the matter? Is Uncle worse this evening?" we asked.

"No, he is much better. But, boys, I wish you had been in there. They were talking about Martha Lane, in the Glen Hollow Swamps. Dr. Rivers told Uncle that the colored man, Craymouth, dropped dead in Dr. Springs' drug store yesterday, and, if it is true, as they say, that old Martha got all her supplies through him, she will either starve to death or be obliged to give herself up to the sheriff. He says she must be nearly ninety years old, for all that about her killing her husband took place before he was born; and when he was a child he and the boys of the town used to delight to go to the Swamps and bedevil her till she took to shooting across promiscuously, and one boy nearly lost his life.

"But he says her very existence has been forgotten, and that he had not thought of her for twenty years until yesterday. He says the immediate cause of old Craymouth's death was laudanum, but that he was in a desperate condition. He was all swollen with dropsy, and must have known he couldn't live

much longer. The wonder is how he ever could have walked so far.

"He must have exerted himself because he knew of his condition, and was afraid of dying alone in the lonely spot where his house stands, and so came to town and put an end to his life."

We let Nan talk herself out, but the result of this news was to fire us up to determine upon another long tramp to the Swamps, to see what we could find out about Martha Lane ourselves.

Accordingly, at breakfast next morning, we told Miss Alice we were going to play out in the woods all day, so not to expect us home to lunch.

Daddy Stephen supplied us with biscuits, sandwiches and ginger snaps. We hunted up the old suits, that Aunt Sarah had made Christiana darn and clean, buttoned on our leggings, strapped on our hunting belts, took our guns, lunch bags and so forth, and started on our tour of investigation. We heard Miss Alice say to Miss May, as we passed through the hall, "Aren't they darlings?" to which she replied laconically, "They'll do."

We walked briskly. We soon found that curiosity must have taken many out in that direction since Craymouth's death.

We passed crowds in couples and groups, going and coming, all taking about Martha Lane and the fire.

We knew the way, for we had lived in the woods from babyhood, and never forgot directions and landmarks, so we got away from most the men and boys into a path known only to ourselves. There were no roads then through Uncle's thick forests.

But when at last we did reach the Swamps, we found several on the spot who had evidently been able to find their way through the wilderness. Three of the boys we had met at Mt. Jericho were there,

Fitz, Allie and Pat. They climbed the trees as we did and looked beyond the willows.

The palisade, the hut, everything on the little rocky island, was in ashes, smoking still.

The treacherous sands kept the secret, for no one dared to cross over to make an examination. A few had gone to the edge, peering through and keeping fast hold of the thick, stout canes that grew between the willows and the sands.

The boys had never heard of Martha until yesterday. We told them that the negroes on Uncle's plantation called her a witch, and that they said she could make herself tall or small, just at will, and that we had seen her once as tall as a man, and another time when she looked no larger than a child of five years.

But the boys laughed at us, and evidently thought we were fibbing.

There was not a thing to be seen, though from our perch we looked in every direction.

The boys all dined at two o'clock, so had to leave, as did all the others, their curiosity being gratified. We were not sorry when they left, for we wanted to do a little investigating on our own part.

We had not spoken of the fagot pile, and no one had noticed it, but had walked right past it.

After they were all out of sight, we sat down near it to rest. The sun shone down on a little open space behind it, and it kept off the cold wind. We were very still, for we were thinking. We heard a slight crackling sound that came from the other side of the pile. We jumped to our feet, for if it was Martha Lane we had better put our fleetness to the test.

But not a thing could we see.

We sat down again, and took out our sandwiches and began our lunch. We were eating fast, for we

were hungry, and not talking, when we heard the noise again.

There was a great deal of underbrush around there, and I thought it might be a wild cat. So we jumped up again, and I, being taller than the others, thought I saw a figure moving through the brush.

The others noticed that I looked startled, and strained their eyes to see, too.

Just then we all saw the small witch move quickly behind a tree.

With a wild scream, we ran harum scarum away from the spot.

Seeing that she did not follow us, I stopped and got up in a tree to see what had become of her.

There she was, near the spot where we had been sitting, lying flat on the ground, face downward.

I called to the others to stop and listen, but no one heard me except Paul—the others had run too far ahead.

But he came back, and we listened.

A faint cry or wail reached us. It sounded like a little child, crying piteously.

I said, "Paul, are you afraid? Let us go up close."

He rather hesitated, but at last I persuaded him; so, picking up a stout stick and leaving our guns, we moved in the direction of the sound.

We advanced so stealthily that we stole nearly upon her, when she raised her head, saw us, and sprang to her feet.

She stood one moment looking intently at us, for we had stopped walking and were watching to see what she would do.

We neither of us moved for some seconds, but restless Paul could not stand that long, and gave the stick a twirl.

This must have frightened her, for with one

bound she was off into the darkest, thickest part of the woods.

We didn't know what to do. It was getting late, we had no time to follow her even if we felt inclined to do so; besides, the others were calling us and trying to screw up their courage to come and meet us. "What have you been doing?" they exclaimed "I never saw such boys. Do you want that old witch to kill you?"

"There isn't a bit of danger," said Paul. "She hasn't any gun, and she is just as scared of us as she can be."

"She ran back into the woods so fast she might be a 'Fleetfooted Theydon'," said I. "She just skedaddled."

"And crying like a baby, too," said Paul.

"I can't make it out," I said. "We have to go home now, but do let's come again to-morrow."

So we turned back.

At the pasture gate we met Ike, evidently on the lookout for us. Uncle had positively forbidden us to play with him after his conversation with Paul; while Daddy Stephen had thrashed him soundly for trying to frighten the ladies, so he was mightily incensed.

"Harold," he called, "did you know your ole crane done gone?"

"No, where?"

"Don' know. Done bite de string an' gone."

We looked under our house, and the old fellow was gone, sure enough; but it didn't bite the string, it was all there, knot and all.

We turned to accuse Ike, but he had run off. This, no doubt, was his revenge.

We hoped that "Leonora, My Beloved," had returned to her swamps. Our thoughts were too full of what we had seen to grieve much over her.

After tea, when all of the grown people were in Uncle's room, we crouched on the rug before the sitting room fire and laid our plans for the next day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHILD.

We got up early next morning, impatient for breakfast. If Aunt Sarah had still been absent from the table I am not sure that we would have waited for it.

Daddy Stephen put up another lunch for us, not sorry that we were going to absent ourselves for another day.

"You are the toughest little mortals I have ever seen," Miss May said, when we announced that we were in for another long day in the woods. "Does nothing tire you?" which came nearer being a complimentary speech than any we had ever heard from her.

We ran much of the way in our eagerness to get back to the fagot pile.

Nan and Phil still felt a little timid. They were not afraid of the little witch, but they feared the old one with her gun might be in hiding.

I assured them that there was no such thing as a witch, and I knew that what we had seen was a child.

"Perhaps she is just trolling us that way," suggested Phil, still unconvinced.

"Well, if you are afraid, Phil, you and Nan can stay at home, and Paul and I will go alone."

Nan stoutly denied being afraid, so we trudged on.

When we reached the fagot pile we began to whistle "Mulligan Guards" to attract attention. After a while, from behind a large tree, stole the small figure, standing where the sunlight made her perfectly distinct. Such a haggard, little old face! Was she very, very old, or was she a child? Was she black or was she white? We could not tell.

We were much nearer to her than the last time; near enough to see that she was distressed. Her face was black or smeared with dirt, and the dress she wore made her a most ludicrous little figure.

Whenever we moved nearer she would run, but she would stop whenever we stood still.

"Maybe she's hungry," said I. "Let us try her."

So Nan took a sandwich from the bag and held it out to her.

"Come and get it," we called. Her little face became eager, but she did not stir.

"She is hungry," I said.

We moved nearer still, holding out the sandwich, but she fled into the woods.

Then we went to the place where she had been standing, having lost all fear of her now, and put the sandwich upon a fallen tree; then ran back and hid to see what she would do.

We waited so long our patience gave way, and we were just getting ready to come out when we saw her stealing behind the trees coming towards it.

"Now be still. Don't let's scare her," I whispered.

When she was pretty near she made a dash, and, snatching the sandwich, ran back into the woods. There she devoured it.

"Why, she's swallowing it whole," said Nan. "That ham will kill her."

"She must be famished," I said.

Nan wouldn't let us give her any more ham, so

we tried putting biscuits on the log several times, and each time as she snatched it off she would run to the woods to eat it, but we were stealing a march on her. While she was intent on getting the fourth biscuit Paul and I had stolen round so as to get behind her, intending to catch her and hold her fast until the others came up. And we succeeded, too, for she saw nothing but the biscuit in her hand, and rushed back almost into our arms. We held her firmly and the others ran up.

We had captured her, but mercy! she fought like a fury. She made us think of a mad kitten. She bit, she scratched, she fought, she kicked and struggled to get away, frantic with terror, but we held on for dear life. It was the best sport we had ever had.

She was a little child—a white one, too—for Phil had moistened his finger in his mouth and rubbed her bare knee to find out, and she was not much bigger than Bessie, and ever so much thinner. We could see that while we clutched her.

When she found all her efforts to get away were unavailing, she began to cry most piteously and stopped struggling.

Indeed, I think her strength gave way and she was forced to succumb.

She kept wailing, "I want my Granny! I ain't got no Granny! I ain't got no home! I ain't got nobody!" over and over.

This touched our hearts. While we still held her skirts in a tight grasp, Nan tried to quiet her fears by talking gently to her. "Poor little thing," she said. "You've got no Granny? And you are so little and cold and hungry! Poor little thing!"

Her tone attracted the child at once.

She stopped crying to look at Nan. She wouldn't answer any of our questions.

Such a looking thing as she was! If she had ever had a bath in her life her skin showed no evidence of it. And as for her hair! It was frightful!—long, black, tangled, frowzy, all matted together in almost one solid mass. Her cheeks were hollow and her eyes red from weeping.

But her dress was perhaps the queerest thing about her. It must have been her granny's once, but the skirt had been cut off and the sleeves also, to make it short enough. She had the front of it crossed over to the shoulder and pinned with locust thorns. It was faded and filthy—and the only garment she wore. Her feet were bare and blue with cold.

To glance at her she was not prepossessing in her appearance, and yet in a few minutes we found there was something about her too cute for anything, something in the way she turned her little head and looked at us and in her quick, graceful motions. We couldn't help being interested, in spite of that mantle of hair.

Then she was so forlorn and miserable.

Nan soon won her confidence, and, finding we had no intention of harming her, she became perfectly quiet and friendly.

"What is your name?" I asked. But she would pay no attention to me.

"Tell us what's your name, won't you?" asked Nan, in her most wheedling tones.

She looked down, but wouldn't answer.

"My name is Nan. Now what is yours?"

She dug a little hole in the soft loam with her toe. Presently she looked up at Nan and said "Child," in the sweetest voice, showing a little row of even white teeth as she smiled.

"But what is your real name?"

"Granny called me Child." Then, looking over

towards the Swamps, the tears began to flow again and she sobbed, "I want my Granny! I ain't got no Granny! I ain't got no home! I ain't got nothing!"

We looked at her, and then at one another. We had caught her, but what on this green earth were we to do with her? Nan tried to console her again.

"Where did you sleep last night?"

The child pointed to the fagot pile.

"Out in these woods all by your little self! Oh, you poor little mite!"

"Had Tay," she said.

"Who's Tay?" asked Paul.

"My baby," she said.

"Where are you going to sleep to-night?" I asked.

"Weren't you scared to death?" asked Phil.

"I'm going wif you," she said, answering me.

"You can't," I said. "We can't take you with us."

"Let me go wif you; pease, pease," she pleaded, wringing her hands. "I'm 'f'aid to stay out here in the dark."

She was so frightened at the thought of being left alone another night in the woods that her eyes had an agonized expression.

We were at our wit's end. What were we to do? She reached out and clutched Nan's skirt in her tiny hand, exactly as we had held hers.

"We can't," I said. 'We are not at our own home."

But she evidently didn't understand.

"Aunt Sarah would be too provoked for anything if we should bring such a looking child into her house," I said to the others.

"Aunt Sarah isn't well, anyhow," said Paul. "I heard Miss Alice say so."

"No wonder, the way Uncle keeps her hopping," Nan said, sympathetically.

"If Uncle was all right again, I wouldn't mind going to him about her; but I can't bother Aunt Sarah. So I'm sure I don't know what to do."

"I do, though. I know exactly!" cried Nan, springing to her feet, and jumping in transports. "We will adopt her for our own truly child."

"I don't want any such looking child as that, thank you, ma'am," interrupted Phil. "Look how black she is."

"Bless you, Phil, she can be washed. And then we can take her to our own little house, and keep her there, till Father comes for us; it will only be about five or six weeks now; and nobody will ever know anything about it, for no one ever goes there except Ike, and he must be kept away."

"He won't come again," I said. "He is afraid of us now, on account of the crane."

"And we can give her our lunch, and she can wear Bessie's clothes—and it will be perfectly grand," and Nan clapped her hands and jumped up and down at the delight of owning a real flesh and blood doll; one that she could do with just as she pleased.

It seemed right interesting to me, too. Paul and Phil were not ecstatic, on account of her rags and filth, but Nan assured them she would see to all that next day, and they got interested also.

"Now, look here," I said, "we will all have to work hard for her if we adopt her. For if she is to be ours we must clothe her and pay for her food, too, even after we go back to Theydon Hall."

"What can we do?" they asked.

"We will have to think," I said. "Nan and I are going to be Mother and Father, and you can be either brothers or uncles."

"Let's be uncles, Phil," said Paul.

"All right," he replied, but not enthusiastically.

"Will the uncles have to work?"

"Sure," I said.

"O, it's a fine scheme," said Nan.

"Then we will have to educate her, too," I said. "We'll have to work very hard.

"I think," Phil laconically replied.

"I know we can carry it through, though," said Nan.

The little child did not understand all of this exactly, but she was pretty certain that she was not to be left alone in the woods another night, and was comforted.

We stayed out in the woods till it was dark, so as to get her into our house without any one knowing it.

If you only could have seen the small mortal trudging along beside us.

She was tired to death, but so dirty that none of us could make up our minds to give her a lift.

But not a whimper did she make; she just walked along, as plucky as anything, till she would stumble with weariness and fall.

Her confidence in us was touching—she just gave herself completely into our hands.

When near our house, but still in the shadow of the woods, Nan stopped and begged Paul to run ahead and borrow a pair of scissors from Miss Alice. We imagined what she wanted to do with them, and Paul sped away, and soon returned with them.

"Snip, snip, snap, snip," and that mat of black hair lay on the ground.

"It would never have done to have taken that into our house," said Nan.

The child submitted to it without a word, and looked much more like a human being.

As we walked along we tried to impress her with the importance of silence while in the house. She must not cry aloud nor make any noise to attract attention, "For if you do," we said, "they will take you from us and carry you off to a place where they are just as mean to children as they can be."

We said all we could to frighten her into obedience; nor did our consciences disturb us in the least, for hadn't we heard Father say he would rather have us dead than at the mercies of the State Orphan Asylum?

She was so sleepy and worn out by the time we reached the house, that we were forced to lift her and put her in the hammock ourselves. Then we covered her up in the rugs and tucked her snugly in, and left her for the night.

Uncle was not well enough to be worried by boys yet, so they thought, and as the grown up people usually sat in his room after tea, our hours down stairs were short.

After we went to our room Nan ran over, and we sat on the rug before the fire making our plans.

"I have thought what I will do," I began. "I am going to write a little story, telling how we came up here, and how we found this child."

"O, Harold!" said Nan enthusiastically, "what nice things you do think of. It will be splendid! And with the money you get I can buy her clothes and make them myself; don't you think I can?"

"Just as well as Mother can, any way," said Phil, who was still smarting at Grandmother's and Auntie's amusement over our Dutch pantaloons.

"And then we can kill partridges and sell them—and walnuts, too," I said.

"Do you think Uncle will like that, Harold?" Nan asked.

We talked until our fire burnt low; then Nan skipped off to her room, and we went to bed.

I could scarcely sleep for thinking of that poor little child out there, all alone in our cold, dark house.

CHAPTER XIX.

FADER AND MODER.

We got up long before breakfast, and went out to see how our charge had spent the night.

Our early rising would have caused suspicion of mischief afoot, if things had been as usual, but Uncle was still in his room absorbing the thoughts of everybody.

We found the little child in the hammock, for the past two days of hunger and terror had exhausted her strength.

Nan told her to stay there until we came again, for she had to bathe her and put on clean clothes.

There was no way of warming the room, so she had to wait until the sun was high enough to shine in at our windows.

"Don't go left me," she pleaded. "Take me wif you."

"We can't," said Paul. "If you cry and go on Uncle will hear you, and then they'll put you in that Orphan Asylum we told you about, and you won't like that, I tell you."

"Please be a good little girl," I said. "Father and Mother are going to do the best they can for you."

In the meantime they didn't have so much as a biscuit to give her for breakfast, and it looked as if it was going to be difficult to get any for lunch.

Daddy Stephen had struck. "It is too much trouble puttin' up dat lunch ebery day. Why don'

yer stay home some?" and it was not until after much entreaty that we got a rather pitiful supply, that is, if it was to suffice for three meals for the little child and lunch for four hearty children. But Child was not very hungry.

Nan was full of the bath. She managed to bring from the house a pair of shoes and stockings belonging to Bessie, for although Child was the taller, her feet were extremely small and thin.

She also brought a complete suit of Bessie's clothes, the largest she could find, and one of her own night gowns, because, she said, Child could wrap up her feet and draw in her hands in that, and so keep warmer.

We borrowed a tub from Maum Suckey, who wondered what on earth we were up to now; then we filled it with water and put it in the little patch of sunshine in our house to heat a little.

While waiting we tried to induce Child to tell us something about her Granny.

But it started the tears to flowing again.

"Her was good to me," she said.

But little by little we got from her all the information we wanted.

It was through Craymouth that she got all of her supplies, which were exchanged for the chickens and eggs that she raised. She told us they had a house full of hens.

What nearly killed us was that they and the chickens were under the same roof.

The hut was divided—one room was where they lived, cooked and slept; the other room was the fowl house.

We dared not laugh, for it made her furious, and then it took lots of coaxing to get her to tell us anything more.

She talked like a baby, with many Swamp expressions thrown in.

They had all the eggs and chickens they could eat. They also raised sweet potatoes in quantities, so Granny did not starve her.

The old woman would put her chickens and eggs in a basket and take them over the quicksands, a little way down the branch, to a rocky closet hidden in the canes, that she had made there. Then Craymouth, who knew about it, would come, and in exchange put in flour, lard, sugar, coffee and molasses. Granny would then return for the basket and bring it home.

But the last time she brought it back there was a note in it from Craymouth saying he was sick and was sure to die, and that he was never coming again.

Granny did not go to bed all that night, but sat up smoking and crouching over the fire. The child said she could not sleep either, but lay awake listening to the pines "sing" and the owls "cry."

Early next morning Granny got up and went into the fowl house and drove away every one of the chickens. Then she told her to get up. After breakfast Granny folded up some food in a paper and told her to come along. She picked her up and carried her across the sands, clear over beyond the willows.

We said to her, "Why, you knew the way over."

"No, I didn't. I used to come over sometimes, but I'd sink most to my waist, and Granny would beat me every time she found it out."

Then she went on with her story.

After Granny brought her over, she pinned a paper on the inside of her dress, and told her to be sure not to lose it, but to keep it safe until somebody

came to take care of her, for the Good Lord would send some one soon she knew.

Then Granny said: "Now, stay here. Don't you try to come over them sands again."

Then, with one hand on her head, she stood a long time "just a thinking."

Then she stretched up her other hand and "she talked so hard she was just a shaking, talking to "Most Holy One," and she said, "Take this child," and just a lot more, but I done forget it."

"Then she lef' me, and gone back over cross the sands, and I ain't seen my Granny no more."

And the poor little thing began to cry again.

"Did you love your granny?" Paul asked in astonishment.

"Her was good to me," she pathetically said.

After her Granny left her, she went into the fagot pile to play, but after a while she thought how queer her granny had been, so crawled out to look over at her home.

It was all on fire! The flames were leaping up, and the thick black smoke rolling over the woods where she was standing.

She was frightened, and cried aloud for her granny, but she did not answer her.

That was all she could tell. She knew absolutely nothing more.

She fled to her fagot pile, when the crowd began to gather, but after they left and we came, she thought, perhaps we were the ones Granny had said the Good Lord would send, but she was so afraid we might hurt her she ran away. She remembered, too, that we had been there before.

When it began to grow dark she went back to the sands, and called and called for Granny, "but she didn't say one word, and I cried and hollered 'cause I was f'aid of the dark. Things was in the woods,

too, and I was f'aid of them, and it got dark and Granny wouldn't say nothing, so I ran back to my house and crawled in there."

"You poor little thing," Nan said, compassionately.

"Did you cry?" asked Phil.

She shook her head. "I was 'f'aid to cry loud, 'cause the things might hear me and come."

She looked too funny and cute for anything, while she was telling us all this, sitting on our table, with her feet tucked up under her, we standing around.

Then she told us that when we came the next day and gave her food she felt less afraid of us.

When we caught her she was terrified at first, and she fought her best to get away, but "Her," meaning Nan, "was so sweet" she thought it best to trust herself to her than to spend another frightful night alone in the woods, with "things smelling around."

"Is you the one the Good Lord sent, that Granny told me 'bout?"

It made us feel very solemn that God had used us as His instruments, but we felt sure he had, so we told her we were; and I determined to be such a good father to her that she would never cry again for her granny.

"Now, boys, it is time for the bath," said Nan. "Go to the woods and get Uncle's partridges; he won't like it if you forget him—he takes them as tokens of your affection for him, and he asks for them every day.

"But give Maum Suckey one for Child, and another for herself to pay her for cooking it.

"When we are ready for you to come back I will hang this handkerchief in the window."

So we were locked out and went off to do her bidding.

We had time to kill our partridges and to play in the pasture before the signal appeared. We came

at once. It was wonderful what Nan had done. A charming little girl stood before us. With all of that dirt washed from her skin, we found her fair with black hair and fine gray eyes with long lashes. Her mouth had seemed pretty even in the dirt, because her teeth were so white and even and her smile so sweet. The hair was quite clean.

There had evidently been a struggle, for tears were still hanging on her lashes, and poor Nan looked worn out.

"Responsibility makes you feel so old, boys," she said gravely, sitting down in a low chair and viewing her handiwork.

"You see, I don't think that hair has ever had a comb passed through it before. It is so thick. It is such a pity we had to cut it yesterday—it would have been as beautiful as Bessie's."

"Don' you ever comb it no more," said Child. "You hurt me."

"Yes," said Nan. "Mother is so sorry. But don't you think she looks nice, boys?"

"Bless me," cried Phil, slapping his leg with vehemence, "if she doesn't look like old Paul."

"I bet you she doesn't, sir," Paul answered indignantly, first impressions being very strong with him.

"Yes, she does, Paul," said his sister. "I thought of it all the time I was dressing her."

Bessie's clothes fitted her remarkably well. They were a little short, but all right in the neck and arms.

She was delighted with the shoes, the first she had ever worn that she could remember.

She was now as docile as any child could be, and agreed at once to call us by the names we gave her. I soon found they meant nothing to her. She had no idea of any relationship beyond Granny and Child.

She asked us where was our Granny, and we told her far away.

I asked her if she was hungry, and my ears were tickled by the reply, "Yes, Father."

Father ran off gayly to the kitchen for the partridge and returned with it smoking hot, and Child enjoyed it hugely, greatly to the delight of the entire family.

Everything went on with us very pleasantly for the next few days. Daddy Stephen gave us trouble, though. He didn't see why, when we were on the premises, we did not come to the table where lunch was served every day at one o'clock. He didn't mind putting it up for us when we were going to the woods to be gone all day, "'cause pat'tidge was something else," but when we were at home we ought to come in, and he was "goin' to ax Marse Jeems about it."

We knew pretty well what "Marse Jeems" would say, so we tried bribery. We promised to bring him two partridges for his own lunch every time he put up one for us.

The bargain worked well. My conscience, as well as my pride, hurt me that we were forced to feed our child on the sly from Uncle's table; until Nan straightened it all out by reminding us that we were nearly starving ourselves.

"I'm so hungry sometimes when I go in to dinner I'm right glad if Aunt Sarah is not at the table, for fear she will think me greedy."

"It is a pity," Paul said in his dry way, "that it is not Lent. We would be keeping it so well."

Nan brought Child her own doll to play with, and especially to keep her company at night. She was very much pleased with it, but said "I wish I had Tay."

"And who may that be?" asked Phil, who had forgotten.

"My beautiful baby," she sighed.

"And where is she?"

"I lef' her in my house."

We promised some time to go for her, also for that paper which Granny had given her, and which she said was hidden in Maum Suckey's bucket under moss and bark.

We loved her each day more and more.

She was so cute and her trust in us wonderful.

She was more obedient than we had ever been to our parents. Never a sound did she make night or day. Not a complaint did we hear, and she was usually very sweet.

She did have flashes of temper, but they never lasted long. Ridicule she could not stand; it always made her cry.

Nearly every day we gave her an airing in the woods. It was great fun getting her beyond observation. We managed it by throwing the rugs over our heads, allowing them to hang around us, and then all together to run for the underbrush, where we were sure not to be disturbed.

Paul was shocked to find she did not know her alphabet. Why, Bessie could read, and even Tom knew his letters.

We set about teaching her at once. She learned so fast. She never forgot any of her lessons. Nan on one side, I on the other, Phil and Paul sprawled on the table before her, all busy teaching her and all taking an absorbing interest in her improvement.

We also set to work to correct her Swamp expressions, and there, too, she was quick to learn.

Then, remembering hearing Father say once that a child's education was incomplete, without its having been instructed in Infant Classics, we told her the

stories of all we knew. Phil generally was the narrator because he has, Auntie says, great dramatic talent. He told them so well we ourselves could see Old Bluebeard and his dangling wives, poor Fatima and Sister Ann, the Giants would come striding into the room, and we almost trembled as much as little Jack. Red Riding Hood and the wolf pleased her the most of all. She had seen foxes and "things" in the woods. She liked to get up in my lap when he told this story or Beauty and the Beast. He acted it so well that sometimes, when he was particularly thrilling, she would turn and take my face between her hands with a quick little motion and cry out excitedly, "O, Fader, make him go away," but always wanted him back again if I sent him off.

She liked Cinderella, too. I think she thought herself very much like the poor little neglected maid. She told us when she woke up at night she thought of all the pretty things Phil told her; but she was afraid of the Giants, the Wolf and the Beast.

It worried us to have her all alone out there at night; but we did not know how else to manage.

To have a real live flesh and blood doll is the finest thing in the world.

Uncle was getting better now, and could walk a little on his crutches.

But Election Day came and he was still confined to his room. Early in the morning we could hear the noisy crowds tearing by on the public road shouting for "Chamberlain." Ike told us that as many as "two thousand or six hundred" had passed before breakfast.

From the side piazza we could see them riding in no sort of order, mounted on horses, mules and even oxen, hurrahing and shouting, carrying banners made of white cloth, with the name of Chamberlain stained on them with red ink or poke berries.

We were forbidden to leave the yard. Phil, meeting Ike in the yard, could not resist from sending a message by him to Black Ann. "Go and tell her," he said, "I dare her to come up here, and do what she threatened, and she'll find that instead of diking herself up in all of Aunt Sarah's fine clothes, she will be going flippity flop all the days of her life."

The whole day passed quietly, and though there was great anxiety, there was no disturbance, as Miss May prognosticated.

The sun set upon as peaceful a day as we had ever spent. We had loaded all of the guns, and were a little disappointed to be told to go out after dark and discharge them, without once having an opportunity of showing them how valiantly we could fight if called upon to do so.

Uncle was completely worn out by fuming before the day was half over. The ladies were quite as much fatigued with anxiety and with him, so we all retired at an early hour, thankful that we were still alive, or at least Aunt Sarah was.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL'S LARK.

I wrote on my story every day, giving all the time I could spare from Child's lessons and our partridge hunt for Uncle and for her.

The others were deeply interested, giving me much advice, some of which I took.

Bessie did not love to be in the cold, so bothered us not at all.

Her family of dolls increased every time any one went to town, and Miss May, who was very fond of Bessie, put in much of her idle time making pretty clothes for them.

One morning about a week after we had brought Child to our house Paul was missing. We called and hunted everywhere.

We did not give the alarm, for Paul knows pretty well how to take care of himself. We thought perhaps he had gone to town with Dick.

We were reading, when Molsey called to us that a little colored girl was at the house wanting to speak to us. We locked Child in and ran to see what she wanted.

She was an impudent little piece, with a basket on her arm. She asked us why we had taken the walnuts she had piled up under their trees. Her daddy had sent her to tell us we had to give them back or pay for them. It had taken the entire family two days to gather them.

Were we not mad, though! We had taken no walnuts, except those that Paul had knocked down and hulled, and we were sure we had gathered them from Uncle's trees only.

She got mad, too, and threatened, if we did not give back the nuts or pay for them, to tell the white folks that we had a child hidden in that house in the woods.

This rather startled us. The girl seemed so malicious. She meant to get the nuts or betray our secret.

We consulted, then I said, "Well, we will give you one bag if you won't tell about the child. But they are not your nuts, and you know it."

"Gim me two!" she demanded.

"We haven't any more," I told her. "The other bag belongs to my brother and he isn't here."

"Well, gim me dat one, den, an' I come back for de oder one soon."

So Phil got the bag and gave it to the darkey.

We were very much put out. As Paul was still missing we prepared to go out and search for him, for we were getting just a little uneasy. His hat was on the rack, so we knew he couldn't be very far off, but there was no finding him.

Lunch was served, and still he had not turned up. No one had seen him and though we thought it queer we did not like to bother Uncle about it. Aunt Sarah had her lunch in his room and the young ladies were in Winfield.

After lunch we went to our house and stood talking at the door.

Nan suddenly exclaimed, "There comes that hateful little darkey who got our nuts this morning, coming right down through the privet lane. What does she want? Just look at her, Harold!"

Flying down the lane came the little figure, clad in

the same long blue checked homespun dress and a long bonnet of the same material, with an empty basket swinging on her arm, coming straight to our house. We went in and locked the door.

"What do you think she wants? She is going to peep," said Phil.

Before we had time to answer she was pounding at the door.

"Open the door, Harold. Hurry! Hurry!"

It was Paul's voice.

"Listen!" said Nan.

"Hurry up, fellows. I want to get in."

We rushed to the door and opened it. In came the little blue girl, who, throwing her bonnet on the floor, disclosed to our wondering eyes no one else but little Paul, as brown as walnut juice could make him.

"O, such a lark! Such a lark!" he gasped, whisking about the room screaming with laughter. "And you didn't recognize me this morning. And weren't you mad, though!"

"I declare, Paul, you are the funniest little chap that ever lived. Where did you get that dress and bonnet?" I asked.

"You were so scared this morning I could hardly keep from laughing. Look here, I got fifty cents for those nuts. There were two pecks. If some one hadn't given me a lift I think I would have dropped in the road."

"How are you going to get that stain off your face?" asked Nan. 'It will never wash off, Paul."

"I don't want it to come off until I am through selling all of the nuts. I've got more engaged."

"Who bought them?" asked Phil.

"Miss Mollie Raymond. She was at the party. Don't you remember her? She wants some more next week."

"But where did you get the dress?" I asked.

"Miss Alice made it for me. She bought it with the money that Uncle gave me when I was sick, and made it for me herself. I begged her to keep it a secret."

"Suppose Uncle had seen you?"

"He did see me this morning when I was out in the yard. He came to the window and I said, "How d'ye do, Marse Jeemes,' and he said, 'Good morning.' And Miss Alice saw me, too. She and Miss May and Miss Dian and Miss Peno went down to the Fair this morning. I wanted Miss Alice to see me, so I was on the platform when the train came in. Just the same crowd was there, Harold, and they were all talking to Miss Alice.

"I couldn't get near her till the cars started. Then I walked out to the edge of the platform where nobody was standing and threw a kiss to her. She didn't know me at first, then she recognized the dress and laughed, leaned out of the window, waved her handkerchief and threw this rose to me," and Paul showed a beautiful Cloth of Gold.

"All of the gentlemen rushed for it, but I was before them, and, picking it up, I was over the fence into somebody's garden in a hurry. The men were so mad they called me 'little rascal' and 'little hussy.'

"I am going to put it in my Bible and keep it all the days of my life," he finished up sentimentally.

While we were talking he was slipping out of his dress. "I will hang it out here," he said, "to keep it from Christiana.

"Here is the fifty cents, Nan."

We were trying to get money to buy Child some shoes, for Christiana had accused Molsey, who had a child the same age, of having stolen Bessie's shoes. This made us feel very badly. She had missed the clothes, too, and was threatening to tell Aunt Sarah,

while poor Molsey was protesting she had never laid hands on them.

"Paul," Aunt Sarah exclaimed at tea, "my child, what have you been doing?"

"It's nothing, Aunt Sarah. Only walnut stain."

"Then you can't wash it off. What did you put it on for?"

"Just for fun, Aunt Sarah."

"What would your Uncle say?"

And he had his say, for he got tired of staying in his room and came out the next day. He seemed pleased to see us again, but when he saw Paul he was simply disgusted with him, telling him he was ashamed to have such a looking child sitting at the table with him, and half threatening to make him take his meals in the pantry until he cleared off.

Paul almost choked with mortification and laughter at having Uncle talk so crossly to him, but Uncle had been right badly spoiled these last days and we excused him.

Nan was afraid to take any more of Bessie's clothes, so had to wash out the suit Child had on when she needed a change.

She was afraid Aunt Sarah might dismiss Molsey if Christiana complained to her about the missing garments.

Nan began to look very serious.

"I really don't see how mothers stand it, boys, when they have more than one child. I mean to help Mother all I can when we go home again, for it's dreadful hard work to worry with children."

She, however, never shirked her duties. Never once did she fail to tuck her child snugly in the hammock at night, after hearing her say "Now I lay me," and she was always on hand to freshen her up in the morning as well as she could with her very limited conveniences.

She drew our attention to Child's appearance. She had been shut up in the house now for three weeks, never once having seen a fire in all that time, and fed very irregularly on food, sometimes such as we knew Aunt Sarah would never have allowed Bessie to eat.

She was perfectly colorless now, and her eyes looked like great stars. Nan's constant care was seen in the soft-wavy hair; and in our eyes she had become perfectly beautiful. But she was losing her spirits. She longed to go with us to the big house where we went every night. We talked at length of our lovely Granny, who was some day coming to take her away with us.

Each morning she would ask if this was the day we expected her.

She had taken a very bad cold when Nan had been obliged to put back on her the half dried clothes she had washed, for they kept freezing and would not dry.

"O, boys," Nan said to us, "if anything should happen to her, it would break my heart."

Paul had been to town again in his disguise selling walnuts, and this time he brought oranges to tempt her appetite because she hadn't eaten much for days.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPENSE.

The next day I will never forget. When we got up there was a zigzag of white dancing before the windows.

"What's going on?" I said. "This must be snow!"

We had never seen it before. We stood at the window fascinated, for several minutes; then Phil ran to the door and, opening it, shouted, "Snow, Nan!"

We heard her scream with delight, and in a few minutes she had put on clothes and was enjoying the sight from our window.

Soon the big flakes became smaller and the air thick with flying particles, while every now and then a dash of sleet would rattle against the windows.

It was awfully cold! Ike came up and made us a roaring fire. He was not ecstatic over the snow. It was no novelty to him. He had his legs and feet encased in crocus sacks strapped around with strips of cloth.

After breakfast, our first thought was Child. We put on our coats and rubbers and went over to the house.

She was sitting up in the hammock crying with the cold. She had the old stiff rug wrapped around her little shoulders.

Her eyes were bright, and she coughed incessantly,

and cried out with a pain which caught her breath when she coughed. Her cheeks were flushed and she breathed fast and short.

We had sense enough to know that she was very ill, but we were selfish enough to hesitate to go to Uncle about it, because we knew he would not let us keep her; then, besides, we felt that Uncle and Aunt Sarah had been troubled enough lately and we did not wish to bother them with our affairs.

So we tried to doctor her ourselves. Nan sent me for a bottle of vaseline that was in her room, and we put a thick coating of it upon her side and chest.

It was so cold it set her shivering after we applied it. Nan took her in her arms under her coat and tried to warm her. We took turns about rocking her and trying to soothe her.

We spent the whole morning till lunch time out there, too miserable to enjoy the snow, which by this time was four inches deep on the ground.

Child refused everything we had to give her to eat. We saw she was steadily growing worse, but kept hoping she would be better by and by.

She got very drowsy before lunch, and we were glad, for if she slept we didn't mind so much leaving her out there alone.

We covered her up and she didn't know when we left her.

After lunch Miss Alice and Miss May insisted upon initiating us in a game of snowballing. We couldn't help enjoying it in spite of our heavy hearts. Every now and then one of us would slip away to the house to report upon Child's condition, and it was always "Asleep." So we played until it was time to dress for dinner.

The sun set clear, and the wind, freshening up from the northwest, blew a perfect blizzard. It found entrance under doors and around window cas-

ings, making that side of the house chilly in spite of the roaring fires.

Uncle was around the house and yard again on his crutches, and had become his dear old jolly self once more.

He ate snow and cream and sugar with us, and enjoyed it as much as we did.

It was perfectly dark now at six in the afternoon. So after dinner the lamps were lighted in the sitting room and all of the grown people were in there prepared to have a grand old time.

Uncle told Aunt Sarah to let Daddy Stephen go, for he would be miserable until he got his head under cover.

Instead of tea, he proposed having an egg nog and cake, nuts and fruits in the sitting room. So we helped them bring in the big punch bowl, the eggs, sugar, whiskey and egg whips, cake and fruit and nuts.

Then Uncle brought out a big box of candy that he had brought from town, also a new novel to read aloud to the ladies while they embroidered. He piled on the wood and Miss Alice arranged the curtains to shut out all breezes. There was solid comfort in that room, in sharp contrast to the biting cold outside.

We would have been so happy if we could only have had dear little Child in here with us.

We had found in the garret an old game Uncle had when he was a boy—the Mansion of Happiness—and we intended to play this and listen to the story. But first we meant to go to our house and see once more how things were in there.

Uncle had lighted his pipe and settled himself back to indulge in his usual after dinner smoke before beginning to read.

We slipped out, and as they never kept as strict

an oversight of us here as they did at home, we walked out of the back door and sped away to our house in the woods.

I had never dreamed it could be so cold. The wind cut like a knife.

I had secured a pocket full of matches. We could easily find our way there by the starlight on the snow, but we had some difficulty in getting up the steps, which were steep and without railings and slippery with the frozen snow. The door stuck, but finally, with our united efforts, we burst it open.

'Child," we called, "are you asleep?"

But there was no answer.

I struck a match, and was horrified at the marble pallor of her face. I lifted her hand and it was as cold as the snow outside and fell limp when I dropped it.

"Darling," sobbed Nan. "Darling, why don't you speak to Moder?"

"Is she dead, Harold?" they all asked, beginning to cry, too.

I leaned over her and shook and called her, but I could not rouse her.

"Oh!" I said, bursting into tears myself. "We have waited too long! O, why didn't I tell Uncle about her this morning? We have just let her die."

Then in terror we rushed back to the house and burst into the sitting room, bringing all of the outdoors with us in snow and cold air.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" exclaimed Uncle. "Shut that door! Shut that door!"

"Oh, children," said the ladies, "Do look at your shoes! Don't bring all that snow in here!"

"Where have you been?'

"What is the matter?"

But, taking no notice of them, we fell upon Uncle.

"Oh, come! Do come! She's dead! She's dead!" we cried.

We were wringing our hands, too genuinely distressed not to impress them with the fact that something unusual had taken place.

"What in the world are you talking about?" Uncle asked, not much pleased at being disturbed. "Who is dead?"

"Our child, our own darling child!" we sobbed.

"Are you acting, or are you crazy?' he said, still puffing at his beloved pipe.

"O, Uncle, she may not be quite dead. Do please come!"

"I don't understand what you are talking about. Where is this child of yours, and who is she?"

"In our house, Uncle. Won't you come?"

"Where did you get her?"

"Oh, dear me! She will die! Out in the woods, Uncle."

"A true, live child?" asked Miss Alice.

"Oh, Uncle, do come at once," we pleaded.

"Colonel Theydon, don't go out in the snow. You know those crutches will slip and you will fall," said Aunt Sarah.

"How long have you had this child?" asked Uncle, still loth to move.

"Where did you find her?" they all asked.

"About four weeks ago and in the woods," we answered in despair.

Then, laying down his beloved pipe, Uncle exclaimed, "Children, I am not surprised that your father had nervous prostration."

"Come this minute!" exclaimed Paul in stern tones, his eyes blazing with sudden anger, stamping his foot in wrath.

It had the desired effect. Uncle rose, and, sending me for Daddy Stephen, threw his overcoat over

his shoulders, took his crutches, and, followed by all of the ladies, went out.

Aunt Sarah would not allow Paul and Nan to go back again.

I carried the lamp, and Uncle, Phil and Daddy Stephen followed behind.

We left Aunt Sarah still standing on the piazza, anxiously watching Uncle lest he should slip on the snow.

As we went in our house the wind blew the light out, but Daddy Stephen had seen where the hammock lay, and, going to it, lifted the child, all wrapped up in the rug, and brought her out, saying to Uncle, "She daid, sir."

Uncle asked many questions as we walked back about her. I told him she was Martha Lane's grandchild. Daddy Stephen nearly dropped her when he heard that. "Tis witch," I heard him say under his breath, as he quickened his steps.

Uncle had her brought to the sitting room and laid on the davenport. He felt her pulse and glanced at her, evidently at a loss to know what was to be done.

He went back to the piazza to stamp and brush the snow from his shoes.

After he left Aunt Sarah walked across the room to look at the child.

As she drew back the rug she gave a quick start, then dropped upon her knees and looked intently at her.

God knows I will never forget the cry Aunt Sarah gave.

We all jumped to our feet and hurried to her. Uncle heard her in the piazza, and came flying back on his crutches, exclaiming, "Sarah, my darling, what is the matter?"

"She has fainted, Uncle," said Miss Alice in alarm.

She had, and Uncle moved then. He called up Dick, had him harness the closed carriage and drive like Jehu for Dr. Rivers.

Christiana and Molsey came running down stairs, and among them all Aunt Sarah was taken to her room, and we were left alone with our little dead child.

Nan knelt by her, and as her tears fell upon her face she gave a little moan.

"Oh, Harold! Harold! she is not dead!" Nan cried.

We ran to her and together hung over her, rubbing her little cold hands, and wondering about Aunt Sarah. We could hear quick footsteps and voices, but no one thought of us nor the child.

After waiting all night, it seemed to us, Dr. Rivers came.

Uncle hurried him to Aunt Sarah's room, and then, long, long after, came into the sitting room and without answering any of our questions, picked up Child and carried her away

There we sat on the hearth rug, talking and nodding until after midnight, when Miss Alice came into the room.

"Bless your little hearts! Are you still up? Oh, you darlings! To think that you have found her!"

"What does it all mean, Miss Alice? Is Aunt Sarah very ill?"

"She is better now. It was the shock. Oh, to thing of Helen's being found! You darlings!" and she hugged us excitedly.

"Who is Helen?" we asked.

"Who is Helen! Do you mean to say you have never heard of her? Uncle Jim's and Aunt Sarah's only child! Oh, I remember now. Aunt Sarah was ignored in those days."

"Oh, please, Miss Alice, don't refer to that," we

said, blushing at the recollection of that nonsense. "But do tell us about her."

"Oh, it was dreadful. Dear Aunt Sarah nearly lost her mind. She was just beginning to be a little like her old self."

"What did she nearly lose her mind about?" asked Phil.

"Why, the child was stolen."

We were wide awake now. We crowded around her.

"It is nearly four and a half years ago now, and in all that time not one clue could they find to her mysterious disappearance. Grandpapa and Uncle Jim have spent a fortune advertising and employing detectives."

"And here she was at his door all of that time," I exclaimed.

"Old Martha Lane must have stolen her," said Phil.

"No; because it was from Grandpapa's summer home in New York that she was taken. Susan, the colored woman Aunt Sarah brought on with her, as her nurse, disappeared, too, and——"

"Oh, Miss Alice, do you think she will die?" interrupted Nan. "God surely would not take her from them now. Don't you think He will let her live, Miss Alice?"

"Ah," she said sadly, "that is what grieves us so. Dr. Rivers gives Uncle no encouragement at all. He says she has scarcely a spark of vitality left in her little body."

"Oh, if we had only brought her to Uncle when we found her," I said remorsefully.

"Ah, if you only had, dear boy."

"She isn't going to die," said Paul decidedly.

"How can Aunt Sarah be so sure, Miss Alice?" asked Phil.

"She hasn't changed so very much in these years. I think I would have known her. Then she roused from her stupor a few minutes ago, and Uncle Jim leaned over and asked her if she didn't remember Papa, and, as if the name had awakened some memory, she immediately murmured 'Sweetheart," that is what she used to call Aunt Sarah. She picked it up from Uncle Jim.

"Then Dr. Rivers pointed out the scar on her throat where he operated on her windpipe to remove a watermelon seed that she had swallowed. That happened the summer before she was stolen. She did not get her strength back and Aunt Sarah brought her to us for a change. She was the dearest little thing and we were perfectly delighted with her."

"I can well believe that," I said.

"The change benefited her greatly, and she was improving right along, when one morning Susan took her out for a walk and did not return. Search was made and everything possible done to recover her or to find out what had become of her, but until to-night it has remained a mystery. And even now I can't imagine how Martha Lane got hold of her."

We couldn't enlighten her.

"It certainly is wonderful," I said.

"I am so glad for dear Aunt Sarah," said Nan earnestly.

"Have you children had any tea?" Then, on hearing that we had not, she said, "Come into the dining room with me and get a glass of warm milk and some crackers. I am going to make coffee for Dr. Rivers and Uncle. They will not go to bed to-night. Step softly."

After we finished our light supper she sent us off to bed, coming up herself a half hour later to see if we were warm enough, for the fires in our rooms had died down hours before.

Oh, the scene from our bedroom window next morning! The sun was shining in a clear blue sky. Everything was beautiful in its soft covering of snow. Diamonds hung from twig and leaf. It was fairyland.

Never had we looked upon a more brilliant sight! It was simply superb!

We almost shouted, but remembered just in time.

When we came down to breakfast Uncle was alone in the dining room. He looked restless, excited and anxious to a degree.

His hair was more disordered than I had ever seen it. He evidently had been up all night.

"How are they this morning, Uncle?" we asked.

He shook his head sadly, then went to the window and stood with his back turned to us.

Miss Alice came in then, and, going up to him, she slipped her hand in his arm and said, "Uncle, you look completely worn out. Do try to eat something, or at least take a cup of coffee, and then lie down for a little while. Remember, you are not quite strong yet."

He turned his haggard face towards her and said, "You are a dear, good girl, Alice. You can never know what a comfort you have been to us these last few weeks. But, dear, I cannot eat. I am too miserable. If the child dies, and I do not see how she can possibly live, it will kill her mother, it will certainly kill her. I am frightened at the expression of her face; it is tense. God's ways are past finding out."

"Uncle, you must take a cup of coffee, then you will feel stronger and more hopeful. Sit down and let me pour it out for you."

He did so and she brought him the cup. He wanted to swallow it at a gulp, but she wouldn't allow him. She stood by him smoothing down his rough hair. "Dear Uncle Jim," she said, "don't give up hope. I

can't think little Helen would have been restored to you only to be taken away again. God could not be so cruel. I believe she will live."

"I do, too," said Paul.

The memory of when Uncle came to us in the old schoolroom at Theydon Hall, and put new spirit in us, was stirring in his mind.

When Uncle left the room he promised to lie down for a while.

We were very unhappy. Just at first, we exulted in the thought that we had found the lost child of this uncle and aunt whom we had learned to love so dearly; but now we felt like culprits. We had caused her death—instead of bringing joy, we had brought sorrow to them. We, too, had no appetites for breakfast.

Then Dr. Rivers came in. Miss Alice asked about the patients, but she got no answers. Any one could see, however, that the doctor was not very jubilant over them. There was neither joking nor kissing as was usual with him. He ate his breakfast in silence. Miss May came in, and as she took her seat Phil remarked with his customary bluntness "Uncle thinks if Child dies it will kill Aunt Sarah, Miss May."

She glanced at the doctor, who had mechanically responded to her "Good morning," but, receiving no encouragement, withheld the question. He was no doubt, deep in his case: he didn't seem even to see us. Every now and then he would say, "Um, hum,—Um, hum," to himself under his breath.

"She isn't going to die," said Paul, calmly. His eyes were big and beautiful with some inward thought.

Paul is the saint of the family, and often surprises us with some deep or serious remark or question, showing that a great deal is going on beneath his gay exterior.

The doctor hastily finished his breakfast. He was going back to Winfield to see Dr. Springs, to whom he was leaving his other patients. Then his intention was to return to Glencairn and to remain until his services were needed no longer.

He was extremely fond of Uncle and Aunt Sarah, feeling for them the affection of a near kinsman, though he was only Uncle Jim's lifelong friend.

After breakfast Miss Alice told us we could do nothing to help in this trouble except to be good and to keep very quiet. We must take Bessie with us and keep her happy, for Christiana was needed in the sick room.

She went to the barnyard and told Dick to make us five little sleds out of some boxes and barrels she had seen out there, showing him just how to do it.

Then she bundled us up and sent us away to the north side of the lawn, where the slope was fine and we would be farthest from Aunt Sarah's room.

Here we experienced the delights of coasting. We enjoyed it—we just couldn't help it. It was not a long morning to us, for we were surprised when Daddy Stephen came out with the lunch, telling us Miss Alice said if we were not cold or very tired we could stay out there all day.

He reported Child no better.

Days like this went by, days almost without hope; for the good, kind doctor would only shake his head at any questions.

But Paul never gave in one iota from his first assertion. "She is not going to die," he would say.

"How do you know?" asked Phil.

"I don't know how I know, but I do know," he answered, his little thin lips closed tightly and his fine gray eyes dark and serious.

Uncle listened to him as if he thought him inspired, and took heart.

But one morning Uncle came out of the sick room bright and happy and said, oh, so thankfully, "Paul is right. She will not die."

Oh, how relieved we were. We did not feel like dancing and clapping our hands. We felt more as if we wished it was Sunday and that we might go to church.

Every one was now as much concerned about Aunt Sarah as for Child. She was as white as a sheet. But Dr. Rivers said he would have her all right again in a few weeks, just have patience. Her happiness in her little child was touching, Miss Alice said, but we had not been allowed to go to the sick room as yet.

Dr. Rivers had gone home again, and if the family loved him before, what did they not feel for him now.

Uncle said, "Richard is himself again," and had thrown away one crutch and used the other to punch us as much as to walk on.

The day we ran into lunch and found Aunt Sarah in the dining room was one for memory to treasure. We had not expected to find her there, and when we saw her sweet face so unexpectedly we rushed upon her, and we were not repulsed this time.

She had a loving kiss and caress for each one of us. She was more beautiful than ever, for her eyes had lost that sad, melancholy expression and her mouth smiled until it dimpled. She was white and thin, but, oh, so happy!

CHAPTER XXII.

CONVALESCENCE.

Uncle had plied us with questions about Child, and we had told him over and over all we knew. Now we had to repeat it for Aunt Sarah.

Little by little they had told Child who she was, and she herself had given them her account of her Swamp experience.

She had begged several times for "Tay." Aunt Sarah said that was the name of the rag doll she had in her arms the morning she disappeared. Its name was Sarah, but the baby called it Tay.

We told them we knew where it was, and then we remembered about the paper, and told Uncle of it.

He dispatched us at once for it.

We had not been to the pile since the day we found her there.

We talked about her, of course, all the way. We were sorry to lose her, but as Nan very seriously said, we were not quite old enough to be parents yet. Then to see Uncle and Aunt Sarah so happy was compensation enough for our loss.

We found everything there just as we had last seen it. No one disturbed those solitudes.

The rag doll, or what remained of it, for one arm and one leg had departed, lay upon a bed of moss in a cradle of pine bark. It was repulsively dirty.

"And is this the beautiful baby she has been telling us about all these weeks?" laughed Phil.

"I can't laugh, Phil. It must have seemed beautiful to her, because in some way that she could not understand it was associated in her mind with Aunt Sarah. Don't you think so, Harold?" asked Nan.

We hesitated to pick it up. Paul ran a stick up its rag of a dress and volunteered to carry it.

We found the molasses bucket, and inside lay the paper.

We then walked on to the Swamps, where my poor gun had been left weeks before, and found it rusty and pretty nearly done for.

With these we returned home.

Tay was given to Aunt Sarah, who almost wept at the sight of it.

"Yes, it is the very same one," she said. "I made it myself. It is a menace to health to have such a thing around, though. Little Helen cannot see her again.

So saying, she took the stick from Paul, and, after scrutinizing it for a few minutes, laid the filthy rag on the coals, where we watched it go up in smoke and flames.

The paper Uncle took. It gave all the proofs wanted.

Martha Lane had written it, stating that in August, 1871, a band of gypsies had camped in the woods near the Swamps. That after they left, she being near, heard a child crying, and found the little girl to whom she gave this paper.

The child was in a dying condition from what seemed to be scarlet fever, and had been abandoned by the tribe.

While she was wondering what to do with her, a gypsy woman suddenly appeared, saying pity for the little thing had compelled her to return to see what had become of it. She gave Martha money if she would keep the child.

The woman said it had been stolen from a rich man's home near New York City only a week before.

The child's negro nurse had been bribed and threatened into silence.

The band had plotted to abduct the child of this man, a noted millionaire, and little Helen had been taken by mistake.

They had intended to claim a reward for this child also, but they feared the contagion, and so had left her in the woods to die. Then Martha said she had taken her to the Swamps and nursed and cared for her, and that she had proved a great comfort in her lonely life.

"Oh!" said Uncle, "would that I could find but one bone of Martha Lane that I might give it decent burial."

"Do you think, Uncle, she deliberately burnt herself to death?"

"No," said Uncle. "I suppose she deliberately took her life in some way, poison probably, timing it so that she knew she would be perfectly dead before the flames reached her."

One morning Child asked, "Where's Fader? I want Fader."

Aunt Sarah told her he had gone to town and wouldn't be back till evening.

"I want him now," she fretted.

Aunt Sarah and Miss Alice tried every way to divert her, but she kept insisting she wanted him right away.

Dr. Rivers had told them not to let her cry or get agitated in any way, as she was still very weak. So Aunt Sarah dispatched a servant to town to tell Uncle to come home at once.

He came in an incredibly short time, driving in such haste that he gave his lame leg a pretty bad

jolting. He looked wild when he came in, stumping along so fast on his crutch I don't see why he didn't fall.

"What is it?" he asked, thinking something dreadful had happened.

"Helen desires to see her father," they told him.

I believe Job's patience was nothing to Uncle Jim's, for he didn't frown or say "Pshaw!" nor anything; but just laughed and turned to the sick room.

When he went up to the bedside, asking what his darling wanted of Papa, she threw herself back and cried, "Oh, I didn't want Papa! It's Fader I want."

Aunt Sarah thought her wandering, and immediately became very grave.

Uncle had the crazy thought that she might mean Craymouth.

They were both at their wit's end to quiet her.

Miss Alice thought to ask us if we knew any one she called "Father."

"Why, that's Harold," said Paul.

"Get up! Come along, young man," she said, tapping me on my shoulder and ushering me down the hall.

I took care to stuff down into my pockets all my paternal airs and prepared to greet her with only cousinly affection.

She was sitting up among the pillows, and what hadn't true mother love done for her these past weeks! She was as dainty and fresh as a snowdrop. Her eyes were shining like stars in her little white face.

The frail little body was arrayed in a lovely blue wrapper of some soft material. She was positively exquisite.

She held out her arms in genuine delight, exclaiming in rapturous tones, "There is my Fader!"

It seemed to strike Aunt Sarah's funny vein, for

she laughed and laughed as I had never seen her do in all the months we had been at Glencairn. Indeed, they all seemed to think it a good joke, and watched us with great interest.

After I had kissed her and petted her for a while she pointed to Aunt Sarah, and, turning to me, said, "She's my Mamma." Then, pointing to Uncle Jim, "and he's my Papa, and they are my Alice and May."

"This my room," sweeping her hand all around, then, sitting up and growing even more animated, she exclaimed, "This my house! I was borned here, Fader. He never going to send me to that 'sylum. I'm going to live here all the time!"

Presently she said, "Where's Moder? I want Moder."

"That's Nan, I suppose," said Uncle, tears of laughter in his eyes.

"Yes," I said.

He opened the door and called, "Nan, you're wanted."

And down the hall she came, skipping with glee, most delighted to see her small charge once more, and, having been motherly all her life, first to her dolls and then to Bessie, Tom and Margaret, she dropped none of her maternal solicitude, but was just her own natural self.

After Nan had sufficiently caressed and admired her, her ladyship next demanded Uncle Phil and Uncle Paul.

They came in at once. Bessie had, as usual, stolen a march upon us. Several days before she had quietly slipped under Dr. Rivers' arm, as he stood holding the door open, looking back talking to Aunt Sarah.

As she was such a mouse she was allowed to stay, and as Child derived much amusement watching her

play with her dolls, she spent hours in the room each day.

Helen was duly pleased to see her uncles.

The grown people were just sitting by the fire watching us. I was sitting on the bed and Helen had curled herself up in my arm, when, looking up at me, her face radiant with smiles and eyes shining with happiness, she said, pointing to Phil, "Fader, I want him to be the little girl and play the wolf."

Grinning, I gave the command.

Phil got behind Nan and shook his head vigorously at me.

"Yes, I want to see the wolf," demanded our little tyrant.

"Trot him out," said Uncle. "Don't make her cry."

So there was nothing for it but that Master Phil should make a display of his talents before his elders.

But Phil soon forgets himself in what he personates. His changes of facial expression are marvelous. You know before he opens his mouth who is going to speak.

The mother called up Little Red Riding Hood, she packed the basket, she fastened on the cloak, she gave the message to Grandmother—you could see it all.

Then, in altogether another voice, almost another face, he showed us the little girl wandering through the forest, which he described to us, talking aloud to herself as she gathered the flowers.

You almost wanted to kiss Phil, he was so sweet.

But when, as the wolf, he came bounding and galloping in on all fours towards the bed, Helen frantically clutched me around the neck, peered over at the monster, fascinated but half frightened, crying out, "O, Fader, make him go away from here."

She was absorbed in the dialogue between old

Granny and the wolf. But when he came to "What makes your teeth so long?" she took my face in both of her hands and in great excitement shrieked, "Fader! Fader! Don't let him eat her!"

"No," I said, "he is going to be killed himself."

And when finally the wolf lay in his death agony, convulsively gasping and kicking, she leaned over to look at him and took a long breath of relief.

As for those grown people, I never saw anything like it. Aunt Sarah almost had hysterics, and, having begun to laugh, it seemed as if she couldn't stop.

Uncle said, "Phil, you'll never want for money." And Miss Alice said she felt as if she had been to a vaudeville show.

But Uncle said we must not play any more, for Helen would be too exhausted. She protested against this, but Aunt Sarah, who had control of herself again, told her if she got over excited or tired, she would be ill again, and promised we should come in every day now, if she would only be good and obey.

So we returned to the sitting room, after having had a jolly good time.

But Phil's performance must have delighted the young ladies, for in the afternoon, when Miss Dian and Miss Peno called on them, Miss May came out and hunted us up and carried Phil off almost by force to tell another story from Infant Classics.

We followed, seating ourselves on the rug, watching both the actor and the ladies.

He chose this time "Beauty and the Beast."

They looked highly entertained as he personated each character in a different voice and expression. But when he came to the Beast, and he rolled in, bowing out his elbows as if his "tummy" was big and round, walking with his feet turned in and over almost on his ankles, with such an expression on his face that we ourselves felt the thrill of excitement,

they rolled in their chairs and wept tears of laughter.

They were a highly appreciative audience.

"Why didn't you let us know you had this remarkable gift before?" asked Miss May.

We spent some delightful hours in Helen's pretty nursery. She had there numbers of mechanical toys that gave us much pleasure.

When she found the linen books with the colored illustrations of the stories Phil had told she was wild with excitement. It was wonderful how she remembered them and, with the book open, she would pretend she was reading, greatly to Uncle Jim's delight.

She improved very rapidly when once she got out of her room.

The first day she was able to leave it, Aunt Sarah dressed her just before dinner and took her into the sitting room to surprise Uncle.

When he came in, Bessie, as she had done ever since she had been at Glencairn, ran forward with Helen to be kissed.

Uncle stooped and, taking Helen up, exclaimed, "O, to think of having you run to meet me once more, my darling!" and not even seeing Bessie, sat down with her on his knee.

Aunt Sarah, coming in just then, seated herself on the arm of his chair and they both became absorbed in Helen, kissing and playing with her, while she was laughing merrily.

This was a good thing for our little dethroned princess, for she was in the throes of jealousy. She stood dumbfounded, for the first time in her life forgotten and unobserved, looking at them with wide open eyes of astonishment and anger.

Nan, tender as usual towards her little pet, leaned forward, and, catching her by the hem of her dress, drew her backwards nearer her; then she seated her on her lap with her back turned to the merry group

and gently but surreptitiously wiped away the tears.

Aunt Sarah noticed her presently, and must have said something to Uncle. He stopped the frolic to call, "Come here, little Bessie. Uncle has another knee. Come, pet!" But she shook her head, struggling bravely with the wails she longed to give vent to, but of which Aunt Sarah's disapproval had gradually been teaching her to control.

We chatted to Uncle to turn his attention from her, because we were really sorry for the child, though we understood, of course.

"Uncle Paul," said Helen, "show Papa how I did when you caught me in the woods."

Whereupon Paul, standing in a clear space of the room, instantly became a tangle of feet and arms, emitting meanwhile little shrieks of terror.

Helen screamed with delight, and Uncle laughed, too, but he hugged her closer.

"I thought they were going to beat me," she said.

This amused Bessie so much she forgot her woes.

Helen loved to play games with us in the yard, and we instructed her in those that are dear to all children: Blind Man's Buff,—Hop Scotch,—Old Mother Hippytehop,—Chick, my Chick in a Train We Go, and all the others.

Sometimes when we were playing just as hard as we could she would say, "I'll be back in a minute, Fader." Then off she'd dance to look for Aunt Sarah.

Then, standing before her with her hands clasped, she would ask her most earnestly, "Mamma, do you really and truly love me?" and Aunt Sarah was never too busy to lay aside whatever she was doing to hug and kiss the child to her heart's content.

Uncle Jim said he thought it was too pathetic how hungry she was for mother love.

Aunt Sarah was busy those days making beautiful

garments for her. She said she was going to let her fare sumptuously and be clad in fine linen so as to eradicate as quickly as possible the memory of the Swamps. Uncle told her that what she had learned of evil there was but a pin scratch compared to the contamination that might have befallen her, for which she could not be too thankful.

The letters and telegrams that Uncle and Aunt Sarah received those days from their relatives and friends congratulating them upon the recovery of their child astounded us.

Helen was the center of attraction the first Sunday Aunt Sarah took her to church. After the service all their friends came crowding around to see the child. Aunt Sarah had her beautifully dressed and she was as pretty as a picture—and Uncle Jim as proud as Punch.

She was very shy, though. She had tight hold of her mother's hand and walked so close in front of her Aunt Sarah could scarcely move.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME AGAIN.

Miss Alice and Miss May were going home. How sorry we were.

Mrs. Faulkner had written that she couldn't spare them any longer, for Miss Alice was to be married in February.

Uncle Jim and Aunt Sarah and little Helen were going to the wedding. Mr. Chadwick was distracted to see his little grandchild again.

Miss Alice told us she had not forgotten her promise. Cousin Tom and herself both wanted us to pay them a visit after they were settled in their new home.

Miss May actually said as she was leaving, "I hope when next I pay Aunt Sarah a visit that you will all be here."

Now, wasn't that something!

It seemed very lonesome without them, because they always had so much company.

But Aunt Sarah had her little girl, and she could scarcely think of anything else.

We ourselves would be going soon.

We looked for a telegram any day telling us to pack up and be at the station to join them, for we knew their steamer was in.

One evening Uncle was late coming home to dinner. Now that the election was over and Hampton Governor, the excitement about riots had died down

and Uncle could stay in town as late as he wanted without Aunt Sarah getting sick with anxiety.

We were all dressed clean and brushed up for dinner and were playing with Helen in the sitting room, when we heard buggy wheels. Uncle still walked with a crutch.

He drove to the front instead of as usual driving round to the back, and more footsteps were on the piazza than his.

"Uncle has brought company," I said, when in he came with our own father and mother. Such a scream of joy as we gave! How we rushed to them to be half smothered in a close embrace.

Had we been so homesick? We didn't know it, but now we felt as if we could never, never, let them go from our sight again.

But the time had come for Mother to meet Aunt Sarah, who was standing near waiting till we were released.

She was only the gracious hostess as she stood there.

Mother came and took both of her hands in hers and looked at her; then an expression of contrition passed over her countenance that she had ever been unkind even in thought to one so lovely.

Then she impulsively took Aunt Sarah in her loving, motherly arms and kissed her warmly—and Aunt Sarah forgave her, and they became sisters there and then, much to Uncle Jim's delight, who had taken a great fancy to Mother while at Theydon Hall.

Father was as well as usual. He had never been robust, not even as a child. He, too, we could see, liked Aunt Sarah.

Bessie claimed her mother's lap. Gone was her jealousy now. Paul thrust himself under Mother's other arm. The twins took a knee each on Father's

lap, and I sat between them, being loved and caressed in turn by them both.

Our tongues all went at once, little Helen the theme. She had been duly introduced and now was seated on her father's knee watching us very gravely, for she knew she would lose her playmates and it grieved her sorely.

After dinner Father was very quiet. The ghosts of departed days were with him. Eighteen years had passed since he had last seen Glencairn. Here he had spent his boyhood, and, walking up and down the room, he was lost in reverie.

Every one seemed to comprehend, and he was not troubled with questions or annoyed in any way, even when he went into the library and sat before Grandmother's portrait, absorbed with memories of the past.

But after a while Uncle sent Nan for him to bring him back to the family circle, where a friendly battle was being fought.

Uncle and Aunt Sarah were insisting that we should all stay at Glencairn until after Christmas, and Mother protesting that we could not.

"I say, Brother," Uncle called out, as he came in, "here is Nannie breaking in upon all of our plans. The idea of not staying here for Christmas. This is the first Christmas within little Helen's memory, and we want it to be one never to be forgotten. It would break her heart if her cousins were not here."

Father smiled, but said, "My dear Jim, nothing would please me more, for you can't imagine how delighted I am to be here with you once more; but there are the babies, you see. Little Tom would lose faith in us forevermore if we should fail him now, after all the promises we have made to him about Christmas."

"It is almost impossible for me to stay away from them another day," added Mother.

"O, they'll not be left out. This is my plan, to telegraph to Mrs. Chase to pack them off to-morrow afternoon. Traveling all night, they will reach us the following afternoon, and I propose, Brother, that you and I take a day off and go down to the city to meet them. That's the only change they make.

"And so you see, Nannie, you have no further excuse."

Helen slipped from Uncle's knee and ran to Father and took hold of his hand. "Please, please, Uncle Brother," she pleaded. "Do stay. I want them so."

We ducked our heads at "Uncle Brother," but we didn't laugh for fear of a tantrum.

"Now that is the first request my child has ever made of you. Are you going to refuse her?"

Aunt Sarah came to a low chair by Mother and, taking her hand, said, "You will stay now, won't you?"

She told Mother afterwards that she had learned to love her through her children and had longed to know her, which Mother said to us was the prettiest compliment she had ever received.

Our parents could not withstand such a pressing invitation, and accordingly we stayed.

Father and Uncle went off to the city and we counted the minutes till the darlings came.

From one point in the distance the train can be seen if you happen to be looking in that direction. We seated ourselves to watch this point.

After what seemed an endless waiting some one saw the smoke, then like a serpent the cars passed this point and we knew they were almost at Winfield.

When we thought they must be near home, we four ran to meet them to be taken into the carriage. We left Bessie and Helen with Mother and Aunt Sarah.

They stopped when they saw us, and after squeezing Tom nearly to death, we left Nan inside the carriage on Father's knee playing with Tom who was in Uncle's lap. Then we climbed outside.

Sunbeam was simply delicious. He wore a pretty dark blue suit—kilt and *pants,* of which he was wonderfully proud.

The color set off his beautiful golden curls and fair skin to perfection. Aunt Sarah was charmed with him. He was entranced at seeing Mother and Bessie once more.

"Mover and Bethie,—Mover and Bethie," he kept saying, over and over again from sheer delight.

He was a little shy of Helen at first, but by the next day he had drawn her within the circle of his love and she was basking in it also.

Helen looked at little Margaret with the utmost astonishment. It was her first acquaintance with a baby, and her surprise at its not being able to talk or walk was so funny we couldn't help laughing.

Baby had forgotten all of us except Mother—perhaps. She wanted to stay in Mauma's arms.

Mauma filled us with delight. She had returned from her four months' sojourn in Atlanta with her snow-white turban piled a foot high upon her aristocratic old head and with all of her old mistress's airs and graces so adjusted to her she might have been born and bred in Grandmother's skin. When on the next morning she took us to task for some breach of etiquette, in not only the words but the tones of that estimable lady, we danced before her in mirthful derision.

But when she shook the *immaculate little Rodericks* at us, Phil and I took her by her shoulders and shook her till she declared she was going to tell Marse Philip.

Then seeing us laughing—defiant and overflowing

with fun, she caught us in her arms and hugged us till we squealed, the twinkle in her eye spreading all over her wrinkled old face, and calling us "little varmints" pushed us away from her and told us to "go 'long an' pester somebody else."

Dear old Mauma adores every one of her past charges, and would sooner cut off her finger than get one of us into trouble.

Aunt Sarah was delighted with her, for there were none of her kind at Glencairn.

Preparations for Christmas were going on rapidly now. Aunt Sarah and Mother were closeted and we shut out, while packages and bundles were brought in from under the buggy seat every time any one came from town.

Father and Uncle were having a good time—getting in the way, Aunt Sarah and Mother said.

Boxes that had been sent on to Theydon Hall were expressed back to Glencairn. A big box came from Grandmother, Uncle Ritchie and Auntie, and another from New York.

Our curiosity was intense and Helen thought life outside of the Swamps was great.

We counted the days, and at last the *day of days* came—and such a glorious day it was!

The tree on Christmas Eve was the first one Helen and Tom had ever seen. They were speechless with delight. It was a vision of beauty—all bright and glittering with its many colored candles and beautiful ornaments of glass and tinsel; and loaded to the floor with everything we had expressed a desire to possess.

The grown people had exchanged presents too and they were about as jolly as we.

Sunbeam was perfectly darling over it. He looked like an angel, with the lights falling on his upturned face as Father held him in his arms.

The servants had not been forgotten either. Their presents were put on chairs in the pantry; and our parents, knowing well we had bothered them, remembered them generously; and we had the fun of overhearing Christiana say to Daddy Stephen, "Dey is Quality, sure, Mr. Gourdine." And his reply, "Dat dey is, Miss White."

One of Tom's books on the tree was "The Night Before Christmas," and Helen, Bessie and himself were shouting over it, spread out before them on the hearth-rug.

I sat down and read it to them, the others listening.

"Oh, Fader," said Helen, clasping my face to look in my eyes, "Is *Santa* coming down our chimney *to-night?*"

"*Wid little reindeer?*" shouted Tom.

"Don't let us go to bed, Mamma; please let us sit up. I want to see him."

"He never comes unless you go to bed," I said.

Then we took the little ones into the library to help them hang up their stockings. We hung up ours too. We didn't feel too big.

Then when we went back, Uncle began to sing an old time Christmas carol that he learned when he was a boy. Father joined him, then Aunt Sarah and Mother, and our lovely evening closed in singing one after another all the Christmas hymns and carols we knew.

Santa Claus was seen by none of us for our eyelids were sealed soon after our heads touched our pillows.

By early dawn we were up and dressed. We ran to the library for our stockings. They were all bulging out with goodies and little presents that were too small for the tree, yet dear to the heart of a child.

After breakfast, into Winfield for the beautiful Christmas Service,—then home,—a short play,—a long, long dinner,—then around the fire, a delightful

time talking and listening to our elders "reminisce," —and Christmas 1876 was over.

Among the innumerable presents Child had received was a renovated Tay.

Aunt Sarah with wonderful skill had reproduced it almost exactly in brown linen, fashioning it minus one leg and arm, with faint daubs of paint where once its features were beautifully outlined.

Its clothes, though new, matched in color and in style those worn by the ill-fated doll of the Swamps.

We watched her curiously as it was handed to her. She was in raptures; though at first she looked upon it with suspicion.

"Since Tay came to Glencairn, she has improved as much in appearance as you have, hasn't she, darling?" said Nan to reassure her.

This satisfied her, and with her comforter clasped to her heart, she received all the beautiful dolls and costly toys sent to her by her relatives in New York; such dolls and such toys as we had never even dreamed of.

She was delighted with them, but Tay was not in that class of gifts at all.

Aunt Sarah must have felt fully repaid for the trouble she had taken.

Helen would not part with her even at bed time. Tay lay in her arms just as she lay in Aunt Sarah's in those days when she, with recovered consciousness, opened her eyes to find herself in what must have seemed to her a paradise.

Uncle Jim was one evening in the sitting room, resting his lame leg on the davenport, when the door opened and she came in with Tay.

The room was dark except for the firelight and the davenport in complete shadow so she thought herself alone.

She seated herself in the little rocking chair that

Santa had brought her and proceeded to rock her baby to sleep,—crooning meanwhile an air she could have picked up from no one but Granny.

Her thoughts must have been with the old woman, for Uncle heard her say aloud, "Her was good to us, Tay. I wonder where Her is now."

Uncle and Aunt Sarah to express their gratitude for the recovery of the Child made an offering that was to be used in building a home for orphan children. It was to be called "The Martha Lane Memorial Cottage."

They sent Dr. Rivers a fine present, too, but we didn't know what it was.

After Christmas packing began in earnest. We were sad and we were glad. Home had always been most delightful to us, and we longed to see everything and everybody there. Little Helen was grieving sadly and Aunt Sarah said she didn't see how she was going to console the child. She did wish mother lived near her, so that she could help her in training the little thing as she had trained us.

At last the day came that was to end our visitation.

It was a very unpleasant day, so Uncle Jim alone came into town with us.

The last we saw of little Helen, she was clinging to her mother weeping passionately, while dear Aunt Sarah was stooping down with her arms around her trying to comfort her.

Our trip home was quickly over. In the city we made close connection,—we merely changed cars.

That red-haired young man was on the train again. Father said he was a drummer. He tried to get us into a frolic; but we felt too badly at leaving dear Uncle and Aunt Sarah and little Helen behind.

After two or three ineffectual efforts to get us into conversation, he leaned forward and said, "Ah, I see. You have your bodyguard this time."

We nodded, and I really believe he thought us afraid to speak before Father and Mother—and we let it go at that.

We went to sleep when night came, and didn't wake till early next morning.

We crossed in the ferry boat. Daddy George with the carriage and Daddy Hector with the wagon were at the landing waiting for us.

In two hours more we were at home again, running from room to room, hugging old Maum Hannah and asking about our pets.

The dogs jumped up and licked our faces with joy at seeing us once more.

Bessie ran out to see her lamb,—her gentle, spotless lamb that followed her everywhere. He came bounding and butting, twice the size she had left him and so rough and rude he sent her sprawling, while her cries brought Father running.

Maum Hannah had taken good care of all our pets; we found them all there just as she had promised.

In the schoolroom we saw on the blackboard, executed in Phil's best style, with her name written in large letters below her, "Old Aunt Sal," as we had expected to find her. With a spring he seized the eraser and blotted her out forever.

"We had a lot to learn, didn't we?" I said.

* * * *

When jostled out of a rut, does life never run again in the same old groove?

I thought we would soon be living in the same old way—a little study and a little play.

Father was well again. We never heard any more about his tangled finances, so we think Grandmother or Uncle James must have helped him straighten them out.

We were all preparing to get everything into the

same running order as before Father's illness when the first shock came.

Cousin John was not coming back. Mr. Marks had resigned his position as principal of Mt. Jericho in Winfield, and he had been elected in his stead, the change to take place by April; so there would hardly be any use to begin with us.

This caused a considerable deal of trouble, because Father did not find it easy to get any one to fill his place. He was an uncommonly fine scholar and teacher and Father regretted his loss exceedingly.

Then the next thing we heard was Auntie's engagement to Cousin John.

"How did he manage it?" laughed Father.

"'E getten ol' an 'e stop pestering 'e chillun?" was Mauma's sage solution of it.

The wedding was to take place in March, as Cousin John wanted Aunt Eva when he went to Winfield.

"*And we all were to go to the wedding.*" And we would see Cousin Alice and Cousin Tom in their new home, perhaps stay some time with them."

"And we will see *those immaculate little Rodericks,*" laughed Nan.

Next came the letter from Cousin John proposing that Phil and I should come to them in Winfield, so as to continue our studies under him at Mt. Jericho.

Aunt Eva wanted all four of us to come, but Mother said she couldn't spare Nan, and Paul was too young; later on they might go, perhaps; but that they would gladly send us, as we were getting old enough to study in earnest now.

Then when Uncle heard of it, he and Aunt Sarah wrote that we must stay at Glencairn—they could easily get us into school each day.

But Father knew that Uncle was the grandest child spoiler that ever breathed, so preferred us to be with Cousin John during the week; but said we

could go out there every Friday afternoon and stay until Monday morning. And so that was the arrangement.

Nan was awfully distressed at the separation and so was Paul, but Mother told us we couldn't remain children always, and that now we had to prepare for our life's work.

Phil and I couldn't help being pleased at the change; it meant so much to us.

We couldn't but see, even during those short two weeks we were at Mt. Jericho how badly we needed to come in contact with other boys of our own age. But at the same time, our hearts were heavy at parting from those we love as our life.

* * * * *

March 30, 1877.

We leave this afternoon for Winfield.

We went to the wedding and had the grandest time. Grandmother was really lovely to us.

Auntie was perfectly exquisite as a bride, and Cousin John so proud, he forgot to be stern.

Cousin Alice was Dame of Honor, and Miss May one of the bridesmaids.

We stayed several days with Cousin Alice, and she and Miss May and Cousin Tom just devoted themselves to our amusement, and we surely had the time of our lives.

We saw the little Rodericks. We were silent. They really are *immaculate*.

* * * * *

I am finishing this story because it has been a part of my education to finish everything begun.

So when I write the word "Finis" to this, I will put it away in the old secretary in the library until I want it.

Helen needs it no longer. She has everything that heart can desire.

[Finis.]

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT THE YEARS HAVE BROUGHT.

October 25, 1912.

As I said in the Preface, while looking for an old law paper I came across this manuscript stowed away just where I had put it in the old secretary, which has long since been relegated to the garret.

Thirty-five years have passed since then—years, many of them filled to overflowing with joys, ambitions fulfilled, success, and quiet domestic happiness; others freighted with sorrow.

There is to be a great gathering of the family at Theydon Hall next week. The occasion is the marriage of our eldest daughter, Sarah, or "Tay" as she is very often called.

Uncle Jim and Aunt Sarah will be here, of course. Uncle is still a hale, strong man, as full of life and jokes as ever, and even more dependent on Aunt Sarah.

She is erect and slender and lovely in her crown of snowy hair.

James and Chadwick, their sons, with their wives and handsome youngsters are expected.

Cousin John will leave the university where he has the Chair of Mathematics, and with Auntie, their three children and four grandchildren, be our guests.

Uncle Ritchie and Henderson and his wife and children will be here.

Grandmother, whom we learned to love and esteem

when we reached years of discretion, left us long ago. And our circle is not unbroken. Sunbeam, our "Little Boy Blue," was the first to leave us. He had always more of Heaven than earth about him.

It was our first great sorrow, and Mother, darling Mother, comforted us while her own heart was breaking. Many years have passed since then, but his memory is fragrant to this day.

Then Father lost his health again, and was an invalid for many years before he, too, was taken.

Mother lives with her children in turn, each eager to claim her. She is still the dearest, most adorable mother and grandmother that ever blessed a family.

Cousin Tom and Cousin Alice, with their children and grandchildren, are coming.

I live at Theydon Hall. Helen is my wife, and most happy have we been.

She still calls me Father, and when excited takes my face between her hands in exactly the same old way. She looks much like her mother, but in our six children we have all the family types reproduced.

There are two Chadwicks, two Theydons, one Glencoe and one Chase.

Dear old Phil will be here, too. He is a famous surgeon in the Navy. Tay has arranged her wedding day to suit his convenience. We see him very seldom, but, being a fine correspondent, he keeps us in touch with him always. He has never married, and now, at forty-six, probably never will. His rare visits home are the signals for a family gathering at Theydon Hall.

He is generous to a fault, and comes laden with presents for all the youngsters, who look upon him as their special property.

To them Uncle Phil is the sun, around which all the rest of the family revolve.

And Nan, blessed sister! She fulfilled the promise

of her youth, and if there is a finer woman anywhere than Mrs. Theodore Roderick I would like to see her. Physically, morally, mentally, she is superb!

They will come with their seven fine and "Doubly Immaculate Young Rodericks."

Paul, his wife and three children will be among us, of course. Why, he will perform the ceremony, for the Rev. Paul has for many years now been located in the city, in charge of that historic old church, idolized by all who know him.

I think him beautiful in his manhood, and always feel better in every way after attending a service in his church.

Bessie, her husband and two children will try to come.

She is not as beautiful a woman as she promised to be. Many sorrows have come to her, and the years have left their mark upon her more decidedly than upon any of us.

"Little Margaret" will come if she possibly can. She is a handsome bachelor maid, highly educated, and proudly supporting herself in a large city far away from home.

She is an enthusiastic club woman, a member of the D. A. R's. and of the U. D. C's., and as great a bridge fiend as ever cursed the land.

She has been well bitten by modern ideas and is ill-fitted to any of us.

This glimpse I give of us all, and then close my volume.

[The End.]

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