ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1880

JACK *and* JILL

LOUISA · M · ALCOTT

Part 1

Chapters 1-10

Louisa May Alcott - Biography

Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888), American author wrote *Little Women* (1868);

> “Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents,” grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.
>
> “It's so dreadful to be poor!" sighed Meg, looking down at her old dress.
>
> "I don't think it's fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all," added little Amy, with an injured sniff.
>
> "We've got Father and Mother, and each other," said Beth contentedly from her corner.

Protagonist Jo March’s character is based on Alcott herself and her sisters form the basis for her other characters whose adventures and lives she recounts in this tale set in New England during the American Civil War. Highly successful upon publication and subsequently inspiring numerous adaptations to the screen, *Little Women* is still one of the most popular novels read by people of all ages. Alcott wrote many other highly acclaimed works in her time and was an active supporter of the women’s suffrage and abolition movements, but it is her wholesome tales penned from

her own experiences growing up that she is best remembered.

Born on 29 November 1832 in Germantown (now part of Philadelphia), Pennsylvania, Louisa May Alcott was the second daughter of Abigail `Abba' May (1800-1877), women's suffrage and abolitionist advocate and Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1893), transcendentalist philosopher and education and social reformer who helped found the controversial and pioneering Temple School in Boston, Massachusetts in 1834. Amos played an active role in the education of Louisa and her three sisters Anna, Elizabeth, and May.

After a failed experiment of living at the communal Fruitlands farm, a result of which was Alcott's *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1876), the family moved to `Hillside' in Concord, Massachusetts. Alcott had become friends with fellow transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose vast library she regularly frequented, and Henry David Thoreau, whom she accompanied on walks in the countryside. Margaret Fuller and Nathaniel Hawthorne and his family were also amongst the Alcott's varied and intellectual social circle of New England.

By 1858 the Alcotts were living at The Orchard House on Lexington Road in Concord, which is now a National Historic Landmark. Surrounded by acres of apple trees, the rambling and dignified home would be the setting for her future novel *Little*

Women. Its sequels are *Good Wives* (1869), *Little Men* (1871), and *Jo's Boys* (1886).

Amos' idealist and unconventional pursuits were not especially lucrative so around the age of fifteen Alcott started to contribute to the family income with various positions including teacher, seamstress, and servant which inspired her later novel *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873). While she kept a journal from a very early age, she was also encouraged by family and friends to write poems, sketches and plays, acted out by her and her sisters. Some of her first poems were published anonymously or under the pseudonym `A.N. Barnard' and her first collection of works, written for Emerson's daughter Ellen, *Flower Fables* was published in 1854.

In 1856 Elizabeth Alcott died of scarlet fever, and Anna married. Louisa and her mother were a great support to each other in this time of loss and change. She was writing for the *Atlantic Monthly* when the Civil War broke out and she enlisted as a nurse and went to the Union Hospital in Washington, D.C. in 1862. *Hospital Sketches* (1863) is a result of her letters home and was critical to her success as an author. She had contracted typhoid fever during her service and the treatment for it which included mercury would hamper her health for the rest of her life.

Alcott became involved with the same reform movements her mother was active in including abolition of slavery and women's

rights. She was also an accomplished writer now achieving wide acclaim and supporting the family financially. Works to follow *Sketches* were *The Rose Family: A Fairy Tale* (1864), *Moods* (1865), and the potboiler *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (1866). Her publisher Thomas Niles requested `a girl's story' from her and the result was *Little Women*, followed by further development of the March sisters' lives in *Good Wives* (1869). *An Old-fashioned Girl* (1870) was one of her next publications followed by *Little Men* (1871), *Eight Cousins* (1875) and its sequel *Rose in Bloom* (1876). Other Alcott works include *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), *Under the Lilacs* (1879), and *Jack and Jill* (1880).

Alcott's mother Abigail had died in 1877 and in 1878 her sister May married and had a daughter named after her, Louisa `Lulu' May. May died a year later. Shortly after Alcott moved to Boston where she continued to write novels including *Jo's Boys* (1886), *Lulu's Library*, written between 1886 and 1888 for her niece Lulu, and *A Garland for Girls* (1888).

Amos Bronson Alcott died in 1888 and just two days later, on 6 March 1888 Louisa Alcott died in Boston, Massachusetts. She lies buried on Authors Ridge of the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts near her family and friends Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau.

> "These stories were written for my own amusement during a period of enforced seclusion.

> The flowers which were my solace and pleasure suggested titles for the tales and gave an interest to the work.
> If my girls find a little beauty or sunshine in these common blossoms, their old friend will not have made her Garland in vain." (Alcott from the Preface of *A Garland for Girls*)

Jack and Jill

Chapter 1 - The Catastrophe

"Clear the lulla!" was the general cry on a bright December afternoon, when all the boys and girls of Harmony Village were out enjoying the first good snow of the season. Up and down three long coasts they went as fast as legs and sleds could carry them. One smooth path led into the meadow, and here the little folk congregated; one swept across the pond, where skaters were darting about like water-bugs; and the third, from the very top of the steep hill, ended abruptly at a rail fence on the high bank above the road. There was a group of lads and lasses sitting or leaning on this fence to rest after an exciting race, and, as they reposed, they amused themselves with criticising their mates, still absorbed in this most delightful of out-door sports.

"Here comes Frank Minot, looking as solemn as a judge," cried one, as a tall fellow of sixteen spun by, with a set look about the mouth and a keen sparkle of the eyes, fixed on the distant goal with a do-or-die expression.

"Here's Molly Loo
And little Boo?

sang out another; and down came a girl with flying hair, carrying a small boy behind her, so fat that his short legs stuck out from

the sides, and his round face looked over her shoulder like a full moon.

"There's Gus Burton; doesn't he go it?" and such a very long boy whizzed by, that it looked almost as if his heels were at the top of the hill when his head was at the bottom!

"Hurrah for Ed Devlin!" and a general shout greeted a sweet-faced lad, with a laugh on his lips, a fine color on his brown cheek, and a gay word for every girl he passed.

"Laura and Lotty keep to the safe coast into the meadow, and Molly Loo is the only girl that dares to try this long one to the pond. I wouldn't for the world; the ice can't be strong yet, though it is cold enough to freeze one's nose off," said a timid damsel, who sat hugging a post and screaming whenever a mischievous lad shook the fence.

"No, she isn't here's Jack and Jill going like fury."

"Clear the track
For jolly Jack!"

sang the boys, who had rhymes and nicknames for nearly everyone.

Down came a gay red sled, bearing a boy who seemed all smile

and sunshine, so white were his teeth, so golden was his hair, so bright and happy his whole air. Behind him clung a little gypsy of a girl, with black eyes and hair, cheeks as red as her hood, and a face full of fun and sparkle, as she waved Jack's blue tippet like a banner with one hand, and held on with the other.

"Jill goes wherever Jack does, and he lets her. He's such a good-natured chap, he can't say No."

"To a girl," slyly added one of the boys, who had wished to borrow the red sled, and had been politely refused because Jill wanted it.

"He's the nicest boy in the world, for he never gets mad," said the timid young lady, recalling the many times Jack had shielded her from the terrors which beset her path to school, in the shape of cows, dogs, and boys who made faces and called her "Fraidcat."

"He doesn't dare to get mad with Jill, for she'd take his head off in two minutes if he did," growled Joe Flint, still smarting from the rebuke Jill had given him for robbing the little ones of their safe coast because he fancied it.

"She wouldn't! she's a dear! You needn't sniff at her because she is poor. She's ever so much brighter than you are, or she wouldn't always be at the head of your class, old Joe," cried the girls,

standing by their friend with a unanimity which proved what a favorite she was.

Joe subsided with as scornful a curl to his nose as its chilly state permitted, and Merry Grant introduced a subject of general interest by asking abruptly,
"Who is going to the candy-scrape to-night?"

"All of us. Frank invited the whole set, and we shall have a tiptop time. We always do at the Minots'," cried Sue, the timid trembler. "Jack said there was a barrel of molasses in the house, so there would be enough for all to eat and some to carry away. They know how to do things handsomely"; and the speaker licked his lips, as if already tasting the feast in store for him.

"Mrs. Minot is a mother worth having," said Molly Loo, coming up with Boo on the sled; and she knew what it was to need a mother, for she had none, and tried to care for the little brother with maternal love and patience.

"She is just as sweet as she can be!" declared Merry, enthusiastically.

"Especially when she has a candy-scrape," said Joe, trying to be amiable, lest he should be left out of the party.

Whereat they all laughed, and went gayly away for a farewell

frolic, as the sun was setting and the keen wind nipped fingers and toes as well as noses.

Down they went, one after another, on the various coasts solemn Frank, long Gus, gallant Ed, fly-away Molly Loo, pretty Laura and Lotty, grumpy Joe, sweet-faced Merry with Sue shrieking wildly behind her, gay Jack and gypsy Jill, always together one and all bubbling over with the innocent jollity born of healthful exercise. People passing in the road below looked up and smiled involuntarily at the red-cheeked lads and lasses, filling the frosty air with peals of laughter and cries of triumph as they flew by in every conceivable attitude; for the fun was at its height now, and the oldest and gravest observers felt a glow of pleasure as they looked, remembering their own young days.

"Jack, take me down that coast. Joe said I wouldn't dare to do it, so I must," commanded Jill, as they paused for breath after the long trudge up hill. Jill, of course, was not her real name, but had been given because of her friendship with Jack, who so admired Janey Pecq's spirit and fun.

"I guess I wouldn't, It is very bumpy and ends in a big drift; not half so nice as this one. Hop on and we'll have a good spin across the pond"; and Jack brought "Thunderbolt" round with a skilful swing and an engaging air that would have won obedience from anybody but wilful Jill.

"It is very nice, but I won't be told I don't 'dare by any boy in the world. If you are afraid, I'll go alone." And, before he could speak, she had snatched the rope from his hand, thrown herself upon the sled, and was off, helter-skelter, down the most dangerous coast on the hill-side.

She did not get far, however; for, starting in a hurry, she did not guide her steed with care, and the red charger landed her in the snow half-way down, where she lay laughing till Jack came to pick her up.

"If you will go, I'll take you down all right. I m not afraid, for I ve done it a dozen times with the other fellows; but we gave it up because it is short and bad," he said, still good-natured, though of cows, dogs, and boys who made faces and called her "Fraidcat. "He doesn't dare to get mad with Jill, for she'd take his head off in two minutes if he did," growled Joe Flint, still smarting horn the rebuke Jill had given him for robbing the little ones of their safe coast because he fancied it.

"She wouldn't! she's a dear! You needn't sniff at her because she is poor. She's ever so much brighter than you are, or she wouldn't always be at the head of your class, old Joe," cried the girls, standing by their friend with a unanimity which proved what a favorite she was.

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Whereat they all laughed, and went gayly away for a farewell frolic, as the sun was setting and the keen wind nipped fingers and toes as well as noses.

A little hurt at the charge of cowardice; for Jack was as brave as a

little lion, and with the best sort of bravery the courage to do right.

"So it is; but I must do it a few times, or Joe will plague me and spoil my fun to-night," answered Jill, shaking her skirts and rubbing her blue hands, wet and cold with the snow.

"Here, put these on; I never use them. Keep them if they fit; I only carry them to please mother." And Jack pulled out a pair of red mittens with the air of a boy used to giving away.

"They are lovely warm, and they do fit. Must be too small for your paws, so I'll knit you a new pair for Christmas, and make you wear them, too," said Jill, putting on the mittens with a nod of thanks, and ending her speech with a stamp of her rubber boots to enforce her threat.

Jack laughed, and up they trudged to the spot whence the three coasts diverged.

"Now, which will you have?" he asked, with a warning look in the honest blue eyes which often unconsciously controlled naughty Jill against her will.

"That one!" and the red mitten pointed firmly to the perilous path just tried.

"You will do it?"

"Come on, then, and hold tight."

Jack's smile was gone now, and he waited without a word while Jill tucked herself up, then took his place in front, and off they went on the brief, breathless trip straight into the drift by the fence below.

"I don't see anything very awful in that. Come up and have another. Joe is watching us, and I d like to show him that we aren't afraid of anything," said Jill, with a defiant glance at a distant boy, who had paused to watch the descent.

"It is a regular 'go-bang, if that is what you like," answered Jack, as they plowed their way up again.

"It is. You boys think girls like little mean coasts without any fun or danger in them, as if we couldn't be brave and strong as well as you. Give me three go-bangs and then we'll stop. My tumble doesn't count, so give me two more and then I'll be good."

Jill took her seat as she spoke, and looked up with such a rosy, pleading face that Jack gave in at once, and down they went again, raising a cloud of glittering snow-dust as they reined up in fine style with their feet on the fence.

"It's just splendid! Now, one more!" cried Jill, excited by the cheers of a sleighing party passing below.

Proud of his skill, Jack marched back, resolved to make the third "go" the crowning achievement of the afternoon, while Jill pranced after him as lightly as if the big boots were the famous seven-leagued ones, and chattering about the candy-scrape and whether there would be nuts or not.

So full were they of this important question, that they piled on hap-hazard, and started off still talking so busily that Jill forgot to hold tight and Jack to steer carefully. Alas, for the candy-scrape that never was to be! Alas, for poor "Thunderbolt" blindly setting forth on the last trip he ever made! And oh, alas, for Jack and Jill, who wilfully chose the wrong road and ended their fun for the winter! No one knew how it happened, but instead of landing in the drift, or at the fence, there was a great crash against the bars, a dreadful plunge off the steep bank, a sudden scattering of girl, boy, sled, fence, earth, and snow, all about the road, two cries, and then silence.

"I knew they'd do it!" and, standing on the post where he had perched, Joe waved his arms and shouted: "Smash-up! Smash-up! Run! Run!" like a raven croaking over a battlefield when the fight was done.

Down rushed boys and girls ready to laugh or cry, as the case

might be, for accidents will happen on the best-regulated coasting-grounds. They found Jack sitting up looking about him with a queer, dazed expression, while an ugly cut on the forehead was bleeding in a way which sobered the boys and frightened the girls half out of their wits.

"He's killed! He's killed!" wailed Sue, hiding her face and beginning to cry.

"No, I m not. I'll be all right when I get my breath. Where's Jill?" asked Jack, stoutly, though still too giddy to see straight.

The group about him opened, and his comrade in misfortune was discovered lying quietly in the snow with all the pretty color shocked out of her face by the fall, and winking rapidly, as if half stunned. But no wounds appeared, and when asked if she was dead, she answered in a vague sort of way,
"I guess not. is Jack hurt?"

"Broken his head," croaked Joe, stepping aside, that she might behold the fallen hero vainly trying to look calm and cheerful with red drops running down his cheek and a lump on his forehead. Jill shut her eyes and waved the girls away, saying, faintly, "Never mind me. Go and see to him."

"Don't! I m all right," and Jack tried to get up in order to prove that headers off a bank were mere trifles to him; but at the first

movement of the left leg he uttered a sharp cry of pain, and would have fallen if Gus had not caught and gently laid him down.

"What is it, old chap?" asked Frank, kneeling beside him, really alarmed now, the hurts seeming worse than mere bumps, which were common affairs among baseball players, and not worth much notice.

"I lit on my head, but I guess I've broken my leg. Don't frighten mother," and Jack held fast to Frank's arm as he looked into the anxious face bent over him; for, though the elder tyrannized over the younger, the brothers loved one another dearly.

"Lift his head, Frank, while I tie my handkerchief round to stop the bleeding," said a quiet voice, as Ed Devlin laid a handful of soft snow on the wound; and Jack's face brightened as he turned to thank the one big boy who never was rough with the small ones.

"Better get him right home," advised Gus, who stood by looking on, with his little sisters Laura and Lotty clinging to him.

"Take Jill, too, for it's my opinion she has broken her back. She can't stir one bit," announced Molly Loo, with a droll air of triumph, as if rather pleased than otherwise to have her patient hurt the worse; for Jack's wound was very effective, and Molly had a taste for the tragic.

This cheerful statement was greeted with a wail from Susan and howls from Boo, who had earned that name from the ease with which, on all occasions, he could burst into a dismal roar without shedding a tear, and stop as suddenly as he began.

"Oh, I am so sorry! It was my fault; I shouldn't have let her do it," said Jack, distressfully.

"It was all my fault; I made him. If I d broken every bone I've got, it would serve me right. Don't help me, anybody; I m a wicked thing, and I deserve to lie here and freeze and starve and die!" cried Jill, piling up punishments in her remorseful anguish of mind and body.

"But we want to help you, and we can settle about blame by and by," whispered Merry with a kiss; for she adored dashing Jill, and never would own that she did wrong.

"Here come the wood-sleds just in time. I'll cut away and tell one of them to hurry up." And, freeing himself from his sisters, Gus went off at a great pace, proving that the long legs carried a sensible head as well as a kind heart.

As the first sled approached, an air of relief pervaded the agitated party, for it was driven by Mr. Grant, a big, benevolent-looking farmer, who surveyed the scene with the sympathetic interest of a man and a father.

"Had a little accident, have you? Well, that's a pretty likely place for a spill. Tried it once myself and broke the bridge of my nose," he said, tapping that massive feature with a laugh which showed that fifty years of farming had not taken all the boy out of him.

"Now then, let's see about this little chore, and lively, too, for it's late, and these parties ought to be housed," he added, throwing down his whip, pushing back his cap, and nodding at the wounded with a reassuring smile.

"Jill first, please, sir," said Ed, the gentle squire of dames, spreading his overcoat on the sled as eagerly as ever Raleigh laid down his velvet cloak for a queen to walk upon.

"All right. Just lay easy, my dear, and I won't hurt you a mite if I can help it."

Careful as Mr. Grant was, Jill could have screamed with pain as he lifted her; but she set her lips and bore it with the courage of a little Indian; for all the lads were looking on, and Jill was proud to show that a girl could bear as much as a boy. She hid her face in the coat as soon as she was settled, to hide the tears that would come, and by the time Jack was placed beside her, she had quite a little cistern of salt water stored up in Ed's coat-pocket.

Then the mournful procession set forth, Mr. Grant driving the oxen, the girls clustering about the interesting invalids on the

sled, while the boys came behind like a guard of honor, leaving the hill deserted by all but Joe, who had returned to hover about the fatal fence, and poor "Thunderbolt," split asunder, lying on the bank to mark the spot where the great catastrophe occurred.

Chapter 2 - Two Penitents

Jack and Jill never cared to say much about the night which followed the first coasting party of the season, for it was the saddest and the hardest their short lives had ever known. Jack suffered most in body; for the setting of the broken leg was such a painful job, that it wrung several sharp cries from him, and made Frank, who helped, quite weak and white with sympathy, when it was over. The wounded head ached dreadfully, and the poor boy felt as if bruised all over, for he had the worst of the fall. Dr. Whiting spoke cheerfully of the case, and made so light of broken legs, that Jack innocently asked if he should not be up in a week or so.

"Well, no; it usually takes twenty-one days for bones to knit, and young ones make quick work of it," answered the doctor, with a last scientific tuck to the various bandages, which made Jack feel like a hapless chicken trussed for the spit.

"Twenty-one days! Three whole weeks in bed! I shouldn't call that quick work," groaned the dismayed patient, whose experience of illness had been limited.

"It is a forty days job, young man, and you must make up your mind to bear it like a hero. We will do our best; but next time, look before you leap, and save your bones. Good-night; you'll feel

better in the morning. No jigs, remember"; and off went the busy doctor for another look at Jill, who had been ordered to bed and left to rest till the other case was attended to.

Anyone would have thought Jack's plight much the worse, but the doctor looked more sober over Jill's hurt back than the boy's compound fractures; and the poor little girl had a very bad quarter of an hour while he was trying to discover the extent of the injury,
"Keep her quiet, and time will show how much damage is done," was all he said in her hearing; but if she had known that he told Mrs. Pecq he feared serious consequences, she would not have wondered why her mother cried as she rubbed the numb limbs and paced the pillows so tenderly.

Jill suffered most in her mind; for only a sharp stab of pain now and then reminded her of her body; but her remorseful little soul gave her no peace for thinking of Jack, whose bruises and breakages her lively fancy painted in the darkest colors.

"Oh, don't be good to me, Mammy; I made him go, and now he's hurt dreadfully, and may die; and it is all my fault, and everybody ought to hate me," sobbed poor Jill, as a neighbor left the room after reporting in a minute manner how Jack screamed when his leg was set, and how Frank was found white as a sheet, with his head under the pump, while Gus restored the tone of his friend's nerves, by pumping as if the house was on fire.

"Whist, my lass, and go to sleep. Take a sup of the good wine Mrs. Minot sent, for you are as cold as a clod, and it breaks my heart to see my Janey so."

"I can't go to sleep; I don't see how Jack's mother could send my anything when I've half killed him. I want to be cold and ache and have horrid things done to me. Oh, if I ever get out of this bed I'll be the best girl in the world, to pay for this. See if I ain t!" and Jill gave such a decided nod that her tears flew all about the pillow like a shower.

"You d better begin at once, for you won't get out of that bed for a long while, I m afraid, my lamb," sighed her mother, unable to conceal the anxiety that lay so heavy on her heart.

"Am I hurt badly, Mammy?"

"I fear it, lass."

"I'm glad of it; I ought to be worse than Jack, and I hope I am. I'll bear it well, and be good right away. Sing, Mammy, and I'll try to go to sleep to please you."

Jill shut her eyes with sudden and unusual meekness, and before her mother had crooned half a dozen verses of an old ballad, the little black head lay still upon the pillow, and repentant Jill was fast asleep with a red mitten in her hand.

Mrs. Pecq was an Englishwoman who had left Montreal at the death of her husband, a French Canadian, and had come to live in the tiny cottage which stood near Mrs. Minot's big house, separated only by an arbor-vitae hedge. A sad, silent person, who had seen better days, but said nothing about them, and earned her bread by sewing, nursing, work in the factory, or anything that came in her way, being anxious to educate her little girl. Now, as she sat beside the bed in the small, poor room, that hope almost died within her, for here was the child laid up for months, probably, and the one ambition and pleasure of the solitary woman's life was to see Janey Pecq's name over all the high marks in the school-reports she proudly brought home.

"She'll win through, please Heaven, and I'll see my lass a gentlewoman yet, thanks to the good friend in yonder, who will never let her want for care," thought the poor soul, looking out into the gloom where a long ray of light streamed from the great house warm and comfortable upon the cottage, like the spirit of kindness which made the inmates friends and neighbors.

Meantime, that other mother sat by her boy's bed as anxious but with better hope, for Mrs. Minot made trouble sweet and helpful by the way in which she bore it; and her boys were learning of her how to find silver linings to the clouds that must come into the bluest skies.

Jack lay wide awake, with hot cheeks, and throbbing head, and all

sorts of queer sensations in the broken leg. The soothing potion he had taken did not affect him yet, and he tried to beguile the weary time by wondering who came and went below. Gentle rings at the front door, and mysterious tappings at the back, had been going on all the evening; for the report of the accident had grown astonishingly in its travels, and at eight o clock the general belief was that Jack had broken both legs, fractured his skull, and lay at the point of death, while Jill had dislocated one shoulder, and was bruised black and blue from top to toe. Such being the case, it is no wonder that anxious playmates and neighbors haunted the doorsteps of the two houses, and that offers of help poured in.

Frank, having tied up the bell and put a notice in the lighted side-window, saying, "Go to the back door," sat in the parlor, supported by his chum, Gus, while Ed played softly on the piano, hoping to lull Jack to sleep. It did soothe him, for a very sweet friendship existed between the tall youth and the lad of thirteen. Ed went with the big fellows, but always had a kind word for the smaller boys; and affectionate Jack, never ashamed to show his love, was often seen with his arm round Ed's shoulder, as they sat together in the pleasant red parlors, where all the young people were welcome and Frank was king.

"Is the pain any easier, my darling?" asked Mrs. Minot, leaning over the pillow, where the golden head lay quiet for a moment.

"Not much. I forget it listening to the music. Dear old Ed is

playing all my favorite tunes, and it is very nice. I guess he feels pretty sorry about me."

"They all do. Frank could not talk of it. Gus wouldn't go home to tea, he was so anxious to do something for us. Joe brought back the bits of your poor sled, because he didn't like to leave them lying round for anyone to carry off, he said, and you might like them to remember your fall by."

Jack tried to laugh, but it was rather a failure, though be managed to say, cheerfully,
"That was good of old Joe. I wouldn't lend him 'Thunderbolt for fear he d hurt it. Couldn't have smashed it up better than I did, could he? Don't think I want any pieces to remind me of that fall. I just wish you d seen us, mother! It must have been a splendid spill to look at, anyway."

"No, thank you; I d rather not even try to imagine my precious boy going heels over head down that dreadful hill. No more pranks of that sort for some time, Jacky"; and Mrs. Minot looked rather pleased on the whole to have her venturesome bird safe under her maternal wing.

"No coasting till some time in January. What a fool I was to do it! Go-bangs always are dangerous, and that's the fun of the thing. Oh dear!"

Jack threw his arms about and frowned darkly, but never said a word of the wilful little baggage who had led him into mischief; he was too much of a gentleman to tell on a girl, though it cost him an effort to hold his tongue, because Mamma's good opinion was very precious to him, and he longed to explain. She knew all about it, however, for Jill had been carried into the house reviling herself for the mishap, and even in the midst of her own anxiety for her boy, Mrs. Minot understood the state of the case without more words. So she now set his mind at rest by saying, quietly.

"Foolish fun, as you see, dear. Another time, stand firm and help Jill to control her headstrong will. When you learn to yield less and she more, there will be no scrapes like this to try us all."
"I'll remember, mother. I hate not to be obliging, but I guess it would have saved us lots of trouble if I'd said No in the beginning. I tried to, but she would go. Poor Jill! I'll take better care of her next time. Is she very ill, Mamma?"

"I can tell you better to-morrow. She does not suffer much, and we hope there is no great harm done."

"I wish she had a nice place like this to be sick in. It must be very poky in those little rooms," said Jack, as his eye roved round the large chamber where he lay so cosey, warm, and pleasant, with the gay chintz curtains draping doors and windows, the rosy carpet, comfortable chairs, and a fire glowing in the grate.

"I shall see that she suffers for nothing, so don't trouble your kind heart about her to-night, but try to sleep; that's what you need," answered his mother, wetting the bandage on his forehead, and putting a cool hand on the flushed cheeks.

Jack obediently closed his eyes and listened while the boys sang "The Sweet By and By," softening their rough young voices for his sake till the music was as soft as a lullaby. He lay so still his mother thought he was off, but presently a tear slipped out and rolled down the red cheek, wetting her hand as it passed. "My blessed boy, what is it?" she whispered, with a touch and a tone that only mothers have.

The blue eyes opened wide, and Jack's own sunshiny smile broke through the tears that filled them as he said with a sniff, "Everybody is so good to me I can't help making a noodle of myself.

"You are not a noodle!" cried Mamma, resenting the epithet. "One of the sweet things about pain and sorrow is that they show us how well we are loved, how much kindness there is in the world, and how easily we can make others happy in the same way when they need help and sympathy. Don't forget that, little son,"

"Don't see how I can, with you to show me how nice it is. Kiss me good-night, and then 'I'll be good, as Jill says."

Nestling his head upon his mother's arm, Jack lay quiet till, lulled by the music of his mates, he drowsed away into the dreamless sleep which is Nurse Nature's healthiest soothing sirup for weary souls and bodies.

Chapter 3 - Ward No. I

For some days, nothing was seen and little was heard of the "dear sufferers," as the old ladies called them. But they were not forgotten; the first words uttered when any of the young people met were: "How is Jack?" "Seen Jill yet?" and all waited with impatience for the moment when they could be admitted to their favorite mates, more than ever objects of interest now.

Meantime, the captives spent the first few days in sleep, pain, and trying to accept the hard fact that school and play were done with for months perhaps. But young spirits are wonderfully elastic and soon cheer up, and healthy young bodies heal fast, or easily adapt themselves to new conditions. So our invalids began to mend on the fourth day, and to drive their nurses distracted with efforts to amuse them, before the first week was over.

The most successful attempt originated in Ward No. I, as Mrs. Minot called Jack's apartment, and we will give our sympathizing readers some idea of this place, which became the stage whereon were enacted many varied and remarkable scenes.

Each of the Minot boys had his own room, and there collected his own treasures and trophies, arranged to suit his convenience and taste. Frank's was full of books, maps, machinery, chemical

messes, and geometrical drawings, which adorned the walls like intricate cobwebs. A big chair, where he read and studied with his heels higher than his head, a basket of apples for refreshment at all hours of the day or night, and an immense inkstand, in which several pens were always apparently bathing their feet, were the principal ornaments of his scholastic retreat.

Jack's hobby was athletic sports, for he was bent on having a strong and active body for his happy little soul to live and enjoy itself in. So a severe simplicity reigned in his apartment; in summer, especially, for then his floor was bare, his windows were uncurtained, and the chairs uncushioned, the bed being as narrow and hard as Napoleon's. The only ornaments were dumbbells, whips, bats, rods, skates, boxing-gloves, a big bath-pan and a small library, consisting chiefly of books on games, horses, health, hunting, and travels. In winter his mother made things more comfortable by introducing rugs, curtains, and a fire. Jack, also, relented slightly in the severity of his training, occasionally indulging in the national buckwheat cake, instead of the prescribed oatmeal porridge, for breakfast, omitting his cold bath when the thermometer was below zero, and dancing at night, instead of running a given distance by day.

Now, however, he was a helpless captive, given over to all sorts of coddling, laziness, and luxury, and there was a droll mixture of mirth and melancholy in his face, as he lay trussed up in bed, watching the comforts which had suddenly robbed his room of its

Spartan simplicity. A delicious couch was there, with Frank reposing in its depths, half hidden under several folios which he was consulting for a history of the steam-engine, the subject of his next composition.

A white-covered table stood near, with all manner of dainties set forth in a way to tempt the sternest principles. Vases of flowers bloomed on the chimney-piece gifts from anxious young ladies, left with their love. Frivolous story-books and picture-papers strewed the bed, now shrouded in effeminate chintz curtains, beneath which Jack lay like a wounded warrior in his tent. But the saddest sight for our crippled athlete was a glimpse, through a half-opened door, at the beloved dumb-bells, bats, balls, boxing-gloves, and snow-shoes, all piled ignominiously away in the bath-pan, mournfully recalling the fact that their day was over, now, at least for some time.

He was about to groan dismally, when his eye fell on a sight which made him swallow the groan, and cough instead, as if it choked him a little. The sight was his mother's face, as she sat in a low chair rolling bandages, with a basket beside her in which were piles of old linen, lint, plaster, and other matters, needed for the dressing of wounds. As he looked, Jack remembered how steadily and tenderly she had stood by him all through the har4 times just past, and how carefully she had bathed and dressed his wound each day in spite of the effort it cost her to give him pain or even see him suffer.

"That's a better sort of strength than swinging twenty-pound dumb-bells or running races; I guess I'll try for that kind, too, and not howl or let her see me squirm when the doctor hurts," thought the boy, as he saw that gentle face so pale and tired with much watching and anxiety, yet so patient, serene, and cheerful, that it was like sunshine.

"Lie down and take a good nap, mother dear, I feel first-rate, and Frank can see to me if I want anything. Do, now," he added, with a persuasive nod toward the couch, and a boyish relish in stirring up his lazy brother.

After some urging, Mamma consented to go to her room for forty winks, leaving Jack in the care of Frank, begging him to be as quiet as possible if the dear boy wished to sleep, and to amuse him if he did not.

Being worn out, Mrs. Minot lengthened her forty winks into a three hours nap, and as the "dear boy" scorned repose, Mr. Frank had his hands full while on guard.

"I'll read to you. Here's Watt, Arkwright, Fulton, and a lot of capital fellows, with pictures that will do your heart good. Have a bit, will you?" asked the new nurse, flapping the leaves invitingly for Frank bad a passion for such things, and drew steam-engines all over his slate, as Tommy Traddles drew hosts of skeletons when low in his spirits.

"I don't want any of your old boilers and stokers and whirligigs. I m tired of reading, and want something regularly jolly," answered Jack, who had been chasing white buffaloes with "The Hunters of the West," till he was a trifle tired and fractious.

"Play cribbage, euchre, anything you like"; and Frank obligingly disinterred himself from under the folios, feeling that it was hard for a fellow to lie flat a whole week.

"No fun; just two of us. Wish school was over, so the boys would come in; doctor said I might see them now."

"They'll be along by and by, and I'll hail them. Till then, what shall we do? I'm your man for anything, only put a name to it. "Just wish I had a telegraph or a telephone, so I could talk to Jill. Wouldn't it be fun to pipe across and get an answer!"

"I'll make either you say"; and Frank looked as if trifles of that sort were to be had for the asking.

"Could you, really?"

"We'll start the telegraph first, then you can send things over if you like," said Frank, prudently proposing the surest experiment.

"Go ahead, then. I'd like that, and so would Jill, for I know she wants to hear from me."

"There's one trouble, though; I shall have to leave you alone for a few minutes while I rig up the ropes"; and Frank looked sober, for he was a faithful boy, and did not want to desert his post.

"Oh, never mind; I won't want anything. If I'd o, I can pound for Ann."

"And wake mother. I'll fix you a better way than that"; and, full of inventive genius, our young Edison spliced the poker to part of a fishing-rod in a jiffy, making a long-handled hook which reached across the room.

"There's an arm for you; now hook away, and let's see how it works," he said, handing over the instrument to Jack, who proceeded to show its unexpected capabilities by hooking the cloth off the table in attempting to get his handkerchief, catching Frank by the hair when fishing for a book, and breaking a pane of glass in trying to draw down the curtain. –

"It's so everlasting long, I can't manage it," laughed Jack, as it finally caught in his bed-hangings, and nearly pulled them, ring and all, down upon his head.

"Let it alone, unless you need something very much, and don't bother about the glass. It's just what we want for the telegraph wire or rope to go through. Keep still, and I'll have the thing running in ten minutes"; and, delighted with the job, Frank

hurried away, leaving Jack to compose a message to send as soon as it was possible.

"What in the world is that flying across the Minots' yard a brown hen or a boy's kite?" exclaimed old Miss Hopkins, peering out of her window at the singular performances going on in her opposite neighbor's garden.

First, Frank appeared with a hatchet and chopped a clear space in the hedge between his own house and the cottage; next, a clothes line was passed through this aperture and fastened somewhere on the other side; lastly, a small covered basket, slung on this rope, was seen hitching along, drawn either way by a set of strings; then, as if satisfied with his job, Frank retired, whistling "Hail Columbia."

"It's those children at their pranks again. I thought broken bones wouldn't keep them out of mischief long," said the old lady, watching with great interest the mysterious basket travelling up and down the rope from the big house to the cottage.

If she had seen what came and went over the wires of the "Great International Telegraph," she would have laughed till her spectacles flew off her Roman nose. A letter from Jack, with a large orange, went first, explaining the new enterprise:

"Dear Jill-It's too bad you can't come over to see me. I am pretty

well, but awful tired of keeping still. I want to see you ever so much. Frank has fixed us a telegraph, so we can write and send things. Won't it be jolly! I can't look out to see him do it; but, when you pull your string, my little bell rings, and I know a message is coming. I send you an orange. Do you like gorver jelly? People send in lots of goodies, and we will go halves. Good-by. Jack"

Away went the basket, and in fifteen minutes it came back from the cottage with nothing in it but the orange.

"Hullo! Is she mad?" asked Jack, as Frank brought the despatch for him to examine.

But, at the first touch, the hollow peel opened, and out fell a letter, two gum-drops, and an owl made of a peanut, with round eyes drawn at the end where the stem formed a funny beak. Two bits of straw were the legs, and the face looked so like Dr. Whiting that both boys laughed at the sight.

"That's so like Jill; she'd make fun if she was half dead. Let's see what she says"; and Jack read the little note, which showed a sad neglect of the spelling-book:

"Dear Jacky-I can't stir and it's horrid. The telly graf is very nice and we will have fun with it. I never ate any gorver jelly. The orange was first rate. Send me a book to read. All about bears and

ships and crockydiles. The doctor was coming to see you, so I sent him the quickest way. Molly Loo says it is dreadful lonesome at school without us. Yours truly,
Jill"

Jack immediately despatched the book and a sample of guava jelly, which unfortunately upset on the way, to the great detriment of "The Wild Beasts of Asia and Africa." Jill promptly responded with the loan of a tiny black kitten, who emerged spitting and scratching, to Jack's great delight; and he was cudgelling his brains as to how a fat white rabbit could be transported, when a shrill whistle from without saved Jill from that inconvenient offering.

"It's the fellows; do you want to see them?" asked Frank, gazing down with calm superiority upon the three eager faces which looked up at him.

"Guess I'd o!" and Jack promptly threw the kitten overboard, scorning to be seen by any manly eye amusing himself with such girlish toys.

Bang! went the front door; tramp, tramp, tramp, came six booted feet up the stairs; and, as Frank threw wide the door, three large beings paused on the threshold to deliver the courteous "Hullo!" which is the established greeting among boys on all social occasions.

"Come along, old fellows; I'm ever so glad to see you!" cried the invalid, with such energetic demonstrations of the arms that he looked as if about to fly or crow, like an excited young cockerel. "How are you, Major?"

"Does the leg ache much, Jack?"

"Mr. Phipps says you'll have to pay for the new rails."

With these characteristic greetings, the gentlemen cast away their hats and sat down, all grinning cheerfully, and all with eyes irresistibly fixed upon the dainties, which proved too much for the politeness of ever-hungry boys.

"Help yourselves," said Jack, with a hospitable wave. "All the dear old ladies in town have been sending in nice things, and I can't begin to eat them up. Lend a hand and clear away this lot, or we shall have to throw them out of the window. Bring on the doughnuts and the tarts and the shaky stuff in the entry closet, Frank, and let's have a lark."

No sooner said than done. Gus took the tarts, Joe the doughnuts, Ed the jelly, and Frank suggested "spoons all round" for the Italian cream. A few trifles in the way of custard, fruit, and wafer biscuits were not worth mentioning; but every dish was soon emptied, and Jack said, as he surveyed the scene of devastation with great satisfaction,

"Call again to-morrow, gentlemen, and we will have another bout. Free lunches at ~ P.M. till further notice. Now tell me all the news."

For half an hour, five tongues went like mill clappers, and there is no knowing when they would have stopped if the little bell had not suddenly rung with a violence that made them jump. "That's Jill; see what she wants, Frank"; and while his brother sent off the basket, Jack told about the new invention, and invited his mates to examine and admire.

They did so, and shouted with merriment when the next despatch from Jill arrived. A pasteboard jumping-jack, with one leg done up in cotton-wool to preserve the likeness, and a great lump of molasses candy in a brown paper, with accompanying note:
"Dear Sir-I saw the boys go in, and know you are having a nice time, so I send over the candy Molly Loo and Merry brought me. Mammy says I can't eat it, and it will all melt away if I keep it. Also a picture of Jack Minot, who will dance on one leg and waggle the other, and make you laugh. I wish I could come, too. Don't you hate grewel? I'do. In haste,
J.P. "

"Let's all send her a letter," proposed Jack, and out came pens, ink, paper, and the lamp, and everyone fell to scribbling. A droll collection was the result, for Frank drew a picture of the fatal fall with broken rails flying in every direction, Jack with his head

swollen to the size of a balloon, and Jill in two pieces, while the various boys and girls were hit off with a sly skill that gave Gus legs like a stork, Molly Loo hair several yards long, and Boo a series of visible howls coming out of an immense mouth in the shape of o s. The oxen were particularly good, for their horns branched like those of the moose, and Mr. Grant had a patriarchal beard which waved in the breeze as he bore the wounded girl to a sled very like a funeral pyre, the stakes being crowned with big mittens like torches.

"You ought to be an artist. I never saw such a dabster as you are. That's the very moral of Joe, all in a bunch on the fence, with a blot to show how purple his nose was," said Gus, holding up the sketch for general criticism and admiration.

"I'd rather have a red nose than legs like a grasshopper; so you needn't twit, Daddy," growled Joe, quite unconscious that a blot actually did adorn his nose, as he labored over a brief despatch. The boys enjoyed the joke, and one after the other read out his message to the captive lady:

"Dear Jill-Sorry you ain't here. Great fun. Jack pretty lively. Laura and Lot would send love if they knew of the chance. Fly round and get well.
Gus"

"Dear Gilliflower-Hope you are pretty comfortable in your

'dungeon cell. Would you like a serenade when the moon comes? Hope you will soon be up again, for we miss you very much. Shall be very happy to help in anyway I can. Love to your mother. Your true friend,

E.D."

"Miss Pecq.

"Dear Madam-I am happy to tell you that we are all well, and hope you are the same. I gave Jem Cox a licking because he went to your desk. You had better send for your books. You won't have to pay for the sled or the fence. Jack says he will see to it. We have been having a spread over here. First-rate things. I wouldn't mind breaking a leg, if I had such good grub and no chores to do. No more now, from yours, with esteem,
Joseph P. Flint"

Joe thought that an elegant epistle, having copied portions of it from the "Letter Writer," and proudly read it off to the boys, who assured him that Jill would be much impressed.

"Now, Jack, hurry up and let us send the lot off, for we must go," said Gus, as Frank put the letters in the basket, and the clatter of tea-things was heard below.

"I'm not going to show mine. It's private and you mustn't look,"

answered Jack, patting down an envelope with such care that no one had a chance to peep.

But Joe had seen the little note copied, and while the others were at the window working the telegraph he caught up the original, carelessly thrust by Jack under the pillow, and read it aloud before anyone knew what he was about.

"My Dear-I wish I could send you some of my good times. As I can't, I send you much love, and I hope you will try and be patient as I am going to, for it was our fault, and we must not make a fuss now. Ain't mothers sweet? Mine is coming over to-morrow to see you and tell me how you are. This round thing is a kiss for good-night.
Your Jack"

"Isn't that spoony? You d better hide your face, I think. He's getting to be a regular mollycoddle, isn't he?" jeered Joe, as the boys laughed, and then grew sober, seeing Jack's head buried in the bedclothes, after sending a pillow at his tormentor.

It nearly hit Mrs. Minot, coming in with her patient's tea on a tray, and at sight of her the guests hurriedly took leave, Joe nearly tumbling downstairs to escape from Frank, who would have followed, if his mother had not said quickly, "Stay, and tell me what is the matter."

"Only teasing Jack a bit. Don't be mad, old boy, Joe didn't mean any harm, and it was rather soft, now wasn't it?" asked Frank, trying to appease the wounded feelings of his brother.

"I charged you not to worry him. Those boys were too much for the poor dear, and I ought not to have left him," said Mamma, as she vainly endeavored to find and caress the yellow head burrowed so far out of sight that nothing but one red ear was visible.

"He liked it, and we got on capitally till Joe roughed him about Jill. Ah, Joe's getting it now! I thought Gus and Ed would do that little job for me," added Frank, running to the window as the sound of stifled cries and laughter reached him.

The red ear heard also, and Jack popped up his head to ask, with interest,
'What are they doing to him?"

"Rolling him in the snow, and he's howling like fun."

"Serves him right," muttered Jack, with a frown. Then, as a wail arose suggestive of an unpleasant mixture of snow in the mouth and thumps on the back, he burst out laughing, and said, good-naturedly, "Go and stop them, Frank; I won't mind, only tell him it was a mean trick. Hurry! Gus is so strong he doesn't know how his pounding hurts."

Off ran Frank, and Jack told his wrongs to his mother. She sympathized heartily, and saw no harm in the affectionate little note, which would please Jill, and help her to bear her trials patiently.

"It isn't silly to be fond of her, is it? She is so nice and funny, and tries to be good, and likes me, and I won't be ashamed of my friends, if folks do laugh," protested Jack, with a rap of his teaspoon.

"No, dear, it is quite kind and proper, and I'd rather have you play with a merry little girl than with rough boys till you are big enough to hold your own," answered Mamma, putting the cup to his lips that the reclining lad might take his broma without spilling.

"Pooh! I don't mean that; I'm strong enough now to take care of myself," cried Jack, stoutly. "I can thrash Joe any day, if I like. Just look at my arm; there's muscle for you!" and up went a sleeve, to the great danger of overturning the tray, as the boy proudly displayed his biceps and expanded his chest, both of which were very fine for a lad of his years. "If I'd been on my legs, he wouldn't have dared to insult me, and it was cowardly to hit a fellow when he was down.

Mrs. Minot wanted to laugh at Jack's indignation, but the bell rang, and she had to go and pull in the basket, much amused at

the new game.

Burning to distinguish herself in the eyes of the big boys, Jill had sent over a tall, red flannel night-cap, which she had been making for some proposed Christmas plays, and added the following verse, for she was considered a gifted rhymester at the game parties:

"When it comes night,
We put out the light.
Some blow with a puff,
Some turn down and snuff;
But neat folks prefer
A nice extinguisher.
So here I send you back
One to put on Mr. Jack."

"Now, I call that regularly smart; not one of us could do it, and I just wish Joe was here to see it. I want to send once more, something good for tea; she hates gruel so"; and the last despatch which the Great International Telegraph carried that day was a baked apple and a warm muffin, with "J. M.'s best regards."

Chapter 4 - Ward No. 2

"I do believe the child will fret herself into a fever, mem, and I m clean distraught to know what to do for her. She never used to mind trifles, but now she frets about the oddest things, and I can't change them. This wall-paper is well enough, but she has taken a fancy that the spots on it look like spiders, and it makes her nervous. I've no other warm place to put her, and no money for a new paper. Poor lass! There are hard times before her, I'm fearing.

Mrs. Pecq said this in a low voice to Mrs. Minot, who came in as often as she could, to see what her neighbor needed; for both mothers were anxious, and sympathy drew them to one another. While one woman talked, the other looked about the little room, not wondering in the least that Jill found it hard to be contented there. It was very neat, but so plain that there was not even a picture on the walls, nor an ornament upon the mantel, except the necessary clock, lamp, and match-box. The paper was ugly, being a deep buff with a brown figure that did look very like spiders sprawling over it, and might well make one nervous to look at day after day.

Jill was asleep in the folding chair Dr. Whiting had sent, with a mattress to make it soft. The back could be raised or lowered at will; but only a few inches had been gained as yet, and the thin

hair pillow was all she could bear. She looked very pretty as she lay, with dark lashes against the feverish cheeks, lips apart, and a cloud of curly black locks all about the face pillowed on one arm. She seemed like a brilliant little flower in that dull place for the French blood in her veins gave her a color, warmth, and grace which were very charming. Her natural love of beauty showed itself in many ways: a red ribbon had tied up her hair, a gay but faded shawl was thrown over the bed, and the gifts sent her were arranged with care upon the table by her side among her own few toys and treasures. There was something pathetic in this childish attempt to beautify the poor place, and Mrs. Minot's eyes were full as she looked at the tired woman, whose one joy and comfort lay there in such sad plight.

"My dear soul, cheer up, and we will help one another through the hard times," she said, with a soft hand on the rough one, and a look that promised much.

"Please God, we will, mem! With such good friends, I never should complain. I try not to do it, but it breaks my heart to see my little lass spoiled for life, most like"; and Mrs. Pecq pressed the kind hand with a despondent sigh.

"We won't say, or even think, that, yet. Everything is possible to youth and health like Janey s. We must keep her happy, and time will do the rest, I'm sure. Let us begin at once, and have a surprise for her when she wakes."

As she spoke, Mrs. Minot moved quietly about the room, pinning the pages of several illustrated papers against the wall at the foot of the bed, and placing to the best advantage the other comforts she had brought.

"Keep up your heart, neighbor. I have an idea in my head which I think will help us all, if I can carry it out," she said, cheerily, as she went, leaving Mrs. Pecq to sew on Jack's new night-gowns, with swift fingers, and the grateful wish that she might work for these good friends forever.

As if the whispering and rustling had disturbed her, Jill soon began to stir, and slowly opened the eyes which had closed so wearily on the dull December afternoon. The bare wall with its brown spiders no longer confronted her, but the colored print of a little girl dancing to the tune her father was playing on a guitar, while a stately lady, with satin dress, ruff, and powder, stood looking on, well pleased. The quaint figure, in its belaced frock, quilted petticoat, and red-heeled shoes, seemed to come tripping toward her in such a life-like way, that she almost saw the curls blow back, heard the rustle of the rich brocade, and caught the sparkle of the little maid's bright eyes.

"Oh, how pretty! Who sent them?" asked Jill, eagerly, as her eye glanced along the wall, seeing other new and interesting things beyond: an elephant-hunt, a ship in full sail, a horse-race, and a ball-room.

"The good fairy who never comes empty-handed. Look round a bit and you will see more pretties all for you, my dearie"; and her mother pointed to a bunch of purple grapes in a green leaf plate, a knot of bright flowers pinned on the white curtain, and a gay little double gown across the foot of the bed.

Jill clapped her hands, and was enjoying her new pleasures, when in came Merry and Molly Loo, with Boo, of course, trotting after her like a fat and amiable puppy. Then the good times began; the gown was put on, the fruit tasted, and the pictures were studied like famous works of art.

"It's a splendid plan to cover up that hateful wall. I'd stick pictures all round and have a gallery. That reminds me! Up in the garret at our house is a box full of old fashion-books my aunt left. I often look at them on rainy days, and they are very funny. I'll go this minute and get everyone. We can pin them up, or make paper dolls"; and away rushed Molly Loo, with the small brother waddling behind, for, when he lost sight of her, he was desolate indeed.

The girls had fits of laughter over the queer costumes of years gone by, and put up a splendid procession of ladies in full skirts, towering hats, pointed slippers, powdered hair, simpering faces, and impossible waists.

"I do think this bride is perfectly splendid, the long train and vail

are so sweet," said Jill, revelling in fine clothes as she turned from one plate to another.

"I like the elephants best, and I'd give anything to go on a hunt like that!" cried Molly Loo, who rode cows, drove any horse she could get, had nine cats, and was not afraid of the biggest dog that ever barked.

"I fancy 'The Dancing Lesson ; it is so sort of splendid, with the great windows, gold chairs, and fine folks. Oh, I would like to live in a castle with a father and mother like that," said Merry, who was romantic, and found the old farmhouse on the bill a sad trial to her high-flown ideas of elegance.

"Now, that ship, setting out for some far-away place, is more to my mind. I weary for home now and then, and mean to see it again some day"; and Mrs. Pecq looked longingly at the English ship, though it was evidently outward bound. Then, as if reproaching herself for discontent, she added: "It looks like those I used to see going off to India with a load of missionaries. I came near going myself once, with a lady bound for Siam; but I went to Canada with her sister, and here I am."

"I'd like to be a missionary and go where folks throw their babies to the crocodiles. I'd watch and fish them out, and have a school, and bring them up, and convert all the people till they knew better," said warm-hearted Molly Loo, who befriended every

bused animal and forlorn child she met.

"We needn't go to Africa to be missionaries; they have 'em nearer home and need 'em, too. In all the big cities there are a many, and they have their hands full with the poor, the wicked, and the helpless. One can find that sort of work anywhere, if one has a mind," said Mrs. Pecq.

"I wish we had some to do here. I'd so like to go round with baskets of tea and rice, and give out tracts and talk to people. Wouldn't you, girls?" asked Molly, much taken with the new idea. "It would be rather nice to have a society all to ourselves, and have meetings and resolutions and things," answered Merry, who was fond of little ceremonies, and always went to the sewing circle with her mother.

"We wouldn't let the boys come in. We d have it a secret society, as they'd o their temperance lodge, and we d have badges and pass-words and grips. It would be fun if we can only get some heathen to work at!" cried Jill, ready for fresh enterprises of every sort.

"I can tell you someone to begin on right away," said her mother, nodding at her. "As wild a little savage as I'd wish to see. Take her in hand, and make a pretty-mannered lady of her. Begin at home, my lass, and you'll find missionary work enough for a while."

"Now, Mammy, you mean me! Well, I will begin; and I'll be so good, folks won't know me. Being sick makes naughty children behave in story-books, I'll see if live ones can t"; and Jill put on such a sanctified face that the girls laughed and asked for their missions also, thinking they would be the same.

"You, Merry, might do a deal at home helping mother, and setting the big brothers a good example. One little girl in a house can do pretty much as she will, especially if she has a mind to make plain things nice and comfortable, and not long for castles before she knows how to do her own tasks well," was the first unexpected reply.

Merry colored, but took the reproof sweetly, resolving to do what she could, and surprised to find how many ways seemed open to her after a few minutes thought.

"Where shall I begin? I'm not afraid of a dozen crocodiles after Miss Bat"; and Molly Loo looked about her with a fierce air, having had practice in battles with the old lady who kept her father's house.

"Well, dear, you haven't far to look for as nice a little heathen as you d wish"; and Mrs. Pecq glanced at Boo, who sat on the floor staring hard at them, attracted by the dread word "crocodile." He had a cold and no handkerchief, his little hands were red with chilblains, his clothes shabby, he had untidy darns in the knees of

his stockings, and a head of tight curls that evidently had not been combed for some time.

"Yes, I know he is, and I try to keep him decent, but I forget, and he hates to be fixed, and Miss Bat doesn't care, and father laughs when I talk about it."

Poor Molly Loo looked much ashamed as she made excuses, trying at the same time to mend matters by seizing Boo and dusting him all over with her handkerchief, giving a pull at his hair as if ringing bells, and then dumping him down again with the despairing exclamation: "Yes, we re a pair of heathens, and there's no one to save us if I don't."

That was true enough; for Molly's father was a busy man, careless of everything but his mills, Miss Bat was old and lazy, and felt as if she might take life easy after serving the motherless children for many years as well as she knew how. Molly was beginning to see how much amiss things were at home, and old enough to feel mortified, though, as yet, she had done nothing to mend the matter except be kind to the little boy.

"You will, my dear," answered Mrs. Pecq, encouragingly, for she knew all about it. "Now you ve each got a mission, let us see how well you will get on. Keep it secret, if you like, and report once a week. I'll be a member, and we'll do great things yet."

"We won't begin till after Christmas; there is so much to do, we never shall have time for any more. Don't tell, and we'll start fair at New Year s, if not before," said Jill, taking the lead as usual. Then they went on with the gay ladies, who certainly were heathen enough in dress to be in sad need of conversion to common-sense at least.

"I feel as if I was at a party," said Jill, after a pause occupied in surveying her gallery with great satisfaction, for dress was her delight, and here she had every conceivable style and color. "Talking of parties, isn't it too bad that we must give up our Christmas fun? Can't get on without you and Jack, so we are not going to do a thing, but just have our presents," said Merry, sadly,

as they began to fit different heads and bodies together, to try droll effects.

"I shall be all well in a fortnight, I know; but Jack won t, for it will take more than a month to mend his poor leg. Maybe, they will have a dance in the boys big room, and he can look on," suggested Jill, with a glance at the dancing damsel on the wall, for she dearly loved it, and never guessed how long it would be before her light feet would keep time to music again.

"You d better give Jack a hint about the party. Send over some smart ladies, and say they have come to his Christmas ball,"

proposed audacious Molly Loo, always ready for fun.

So they put a preposterous green bonnet, top-heavy with plumes, on a little lady in yellow, who sat in a carriage; the lady beside her, in winter costume of velvet pelisse and ermine boa, was fitted to a bride's head with its orange flowers and veil, and these works of art were sent over to Jack, labelled "Miss Laura and Lotty Burton going to the Minots' Christmas balI" a piece of naughtiness on Jill's part, for she knew Jack liked the pretty sisters, whose gentle manners made her own wild ways seem all the more blamable.

No answer came for a long time, and the girls had almost forgotten their joke in a game of Letters, when "Tingle, tangle!" went the bell, and the basket came in heavily laden. A roll of colored papers was tied outside, and within was a box that rattled, a green and silver horn, a roll of narrow ribbons, a spool of strong thread, some large needles, and a note from Mrs. Minot: "Dear Jill-I think of having a Christmas tree so that our invalids can enjoy it, and all your elegant friends are cordially invited. Knowing that you would like to help, I send some paper for sugar-plum horns and some beads for necklaces. They will brighten the tree and please the girls for themselves or their dolls. Jack sends you a horn for a pattern, and will you make a ladder-necklace to show him how? Let me know if you need anything.

Yours in haste,

Anna Minot"

"She knew what the child would like, bless her kind heart," said Mrs. Pecq to herself, and something brighter than the most silvery bead shone on Jack's shirt-sleeve, as she saw the rapture of Jill over the new work and the promised pleasure.
Joyful cries greeted the opening of the box, for bunches of splendid large bugles appeared in all colors, and a lively discussion went on as to the best contrasts. Jill could not refuse to let her friends share the pretty work, and soon three necklaces glittered on three necks, as each admired her own choice.

"I'd be willing to hurt my back dreadfully, if I could lie and do such lovely things all day," said Merry, as she reluctantly put down her needle at last, for home duties waited to be done, and looked more than ever distasteful after this new pleasure.
"So would I! Oh, do you think Mrs. Minot will let you fill the horns when they are done? I'd love to help you then. Be sure you send for me!" cried Molly Loo, arching her neck like a proud pigeon to watch the glitter of her purple and gold necklace on her brown gown.

"I'm afraid you couldn't be trusted, you love sweeties so, and I m sure Boo couldn't. But I'll see about it," replied Jill, with a responsible air.

The mention of the boy recalled him to their minds, and looking

round they found him peacefully absorbed in polishing up the floor with Molly's pocket-handkerchief and oil from the little machine-can. Being torn from this congenial labor, he was carried off shining with grease and roaring lustily.

But Jill did not mind her loneliness now, and sang like a happy canary while she threaded her sparkling beads, or hung the gay horns to dry, ready f or their cargoes of sweets. So Mrs. Minot's recipe for sunshine proved successful, and mother-wit made the wintry day a bright and happy one for both the little prisoners.

Chapter 5 - Secrets

There were a great many clubs in Harmony Village, but as we intend to interest ourselves with the affairs of the young folks only, we need not dwell upon the intellectual amusements of the elders. In summer, the boys devoted themselves to baseball, the girls to boating, and all got rosy, stout, and strong, in these healthful exercises. In winter, the lads had their debating club, the lasses a dramatic ditto. At the former, astonishing bursts of oratory were heard; at the latter, everything was boldly attempted, from Romeo and Juliet to Mother Goose's immortal melodies. The two clubs frequently met and mingled their attractions in a really entertaining manner, for the speakers made good actors, and the young actresses were most appreciative listeners to the eloquence of each budding Demosthenes.

Great plans had been afoot for Christmas or New Year, but when the grand catastrophe put an end to the career of one of the best "spouters," and caused the retirement of the favorite "singing chambermaid," the affair was postponed till February, when Washington's birthday was always celebrated by the patriotic town, where the father of his country once put on his nightcap, or took off his boots, as that ubiquitous hero appears to have done in every part of the United States.

Meantime the boys were studying Revolutionary characters, and

the girls rehearsing such dramatic scenes as they thought most appropriate and effective for the 22d. In both of these attempts they were much helped by the sense and spirit of Ralph Evans, a youth of nineteen, who was a great favorite with the young folks, not only because he was a good, industrious fellow, who supported his grandmother, but also full of talent, fun, and ingenuity. It was no wonder everyone who really knew him liked him, for he could turn his hand to anything, and loved to do it. If the girls were in despair about a fire-place when acting "The Cricket on the Hearth," he painted one, and put a gas-log in it that made the kettle really boil, to their great delight. If the boys found the interest of their club flagging, Ralph would convulse them by imitations of the "Member from Cranberry Centre," or fire them with speeches of famous statesmen. Charity fairs could not get on without him, and in the store where he worked he did many an ingenious job, which made him valued for his mechanical skill, as well as for his energy and integrity.

Mrs. Minot liked to have him with her sons, because they also were to paddle their own canoes by and by, and she believed that, rich or poor, boys make better men for learning to use the talents they possess, not merely as ornaments, but tools with which to carve their own fortunes; and the best help toward this end is an example of faithful work, high aims, and honest living. So Ralph came often, and in times of trouble was a real rainy-day friend. Jack grew very fond of him during his imprisonment, for the good youth ran in every evening to get commissions, amuse the boy

with droll accounts of the day's adventures, or invent lifts, bed-tables, and foot-rests for the impatient invalid. Frank found him a sure guide through the mechanical mysteries which he loved, and spent many a useful half-hour discussing cylinders, pistons, valves, and balance-wheels. Jill also came in for her share of care and comfort; the poor little back lay all the easier for the air-cushion Ralph got her, and the weary headaches found relief from the spray atomizer, which softly distilled its scented dew on the hot forehead till she fell asleep.

Round the beds of Jack and Jill met and mingled the schoolmates of whom our story treats. Never, probably, did invalids have gayer times than our two, after a week of solitary confinement; for school gossip crept in, games could not be prevented, and Christmas secrets were concocted in those rooms till they were regular conspirators dens, when they were not little Bedlams. After the horn and bead labors were over, the stringing of pop-corn on red, and cranberries on white, threads, came next, and Jack and Jill often looked like a new kind of spider in the pretty webs hung about them, till reeled off to bide their time in the Christmas closet. Paper flowers followed, and gay garlands and bouquets blossomed, regardless of the snow and frost without. Then there was a great scribbling of names, verses, and notes to accompany the steadily increasing store of odd parcels which were collected at the Minots', for gifts from everyone were to ornament the tree, and contributions poured in as the day drew near.

But the secret which most excited the young people was the deep mystery of certain proceedings at the Minot house. No one but Frank, Ralph, and Mamma knew what it was, and the two boys nearly drove the others distracted by the tantalizing way in which they hinted at joys to come, talked strangely about birds, went measuring round with foot-rules, and shut themselves up in the Boys Den, as a certain large room was called. This seemed to be the centre of operations, but beyond the fact of the promised tree no ray of light was permitted to pass the jealously guarded doors, Strange men with paste-pots and ladders went in, furniture was dragged about, and all sorts of boyish lumber was sent up garret and down cellar. Mrs. Minot was seen pondering over heaps of green stuff, hammering was heard, singular bundles were smuggled upstairs, flowering plants betrayed their presence by whiffs of fragrance when the door was opened, and Mrs. Pecq was caught smiling all by herself in a back bedroom, which usually was shut up in winter.

"They are going to have a play, after all, and that green stuff was the curtain," said Molly Loo, as the girls talked it over one day, when they sat with their backs turned to one another, putting last stitches in certain bits of work which had to be concealed from all eyes, though it was found convenient to ask one another's taste as to the color, materials, and sizes of these mysterious articles.

"I think it is going to be a dance. I heard the boys doing their steps when I went in last evening to find out whether Jack liked

blue or yellow best, so I could put the bow on his pen-wiper," declared Merry, knitting briskly away at the last of the pair of pretty white bed-socks she was making for Jill right under her inquisitive little nose.

"They wouldn't have a party of that kind without Jack and me. It is only an extra nice tree, you see if it isn't," answered Jill from behind the pillows which made a temporary screen to hide the toilet mats she was preparing for all her friends.

"Everyone of you is wrong, and you d better rest easy, for you won't find out the best part of it, try as you may." And Mrs. Pecq actually chuckled as she, too, worked away at some bits of muslin, with her back turned to the very unsocial-looking group.

"Well, I don't care, we ve got a secret all our own, and won't ever tell, will we?" cried Jill, falling back on the Home Missionary Society, though it was not yet begun.

"Never!" answered the girls, and all took great comfort in the idea that one mystery would not be cleared up, even at Christmas.

Jack gave up guessing, in despair, after he had suggested a new dining-room where he could eat with the family, a private school in which his lessons might go on with a tutor, or a theatre for the production of the farces in which he delighted.

"It is going to be used to keep something in that you are very fond of," said Mamma, taking pity on him at last.

"Ducks?" asked Jack, with a half pleased, half puzzled air, not quite seeing where the water was to come from.

Frank exploded at the idea, and added to the mystification by saying,
"There will be one little duck and one great donkey in it." Then, fearing he had told the secret, he ran off, quacking and braying derisively.

"It is to be used for creatures that I, too, am fond of, and you know neither donkeys nor ducks are favorities of mine," said Mamma, with a demure expression, as she sat turning over old clothes for the bundles that always went to poor neighbors, with a little store of goodies, at this time of the year.

"I know! I know! It is to be a new ward for more sick folks, isn't it, now?" cried Jack, with what he thought a great proof of shrewdness.

"I don't see how I could attend to many more patients till this one is off my hands," answered Mamma, with a queer smile, adding quickly, as if she too was afraid of letting the cat out of the bag: "That reminds me of a Christmas I once spent among the hospitals and poor-houses of a great city with a good lady who,

for thirty years, had made it her mission to see that these poor little souls had one merry day. We gave away two hundred dolls, several great boxes of candy and toys, besides gay pictures, and new clothes to orphan children, sick babies, and half-grown innocents. Ah, my boy, that was a day to remember all my life, to make me doubly grateful for my blessings, and very glad to serve the helpless and afflicted, as that dear woman did."

The look and tone with which the last words were uttered effectually turned Jack's thoughts from the great secret, and started another small one, for he fell to planning what he would buy with his pocket-money to surprise the little Pats and Biddies who were to have no Christmas tree.

Chapter 6 – Surprises

"Is it pleasant?" was the question Jill asked before she was fairly awake on Christmas morning.

"Yes, dear; as bright as heart could wish. Now eat a bit, and then I'll make you nice for the day's pleasure. I only hope it won't be too much for you," answered Mrs. Pecq, bustling about, happy, yet anxious, for Jill was to be carried over to Mrs. Minot s, and it was her first attempt at going out since the accident.

It seemed as if nine o clock would never come, and Jill, with wraps all ready, lay waiting in a fever of impatience for the doctor's visit, as he wished to superintend the moving. At last he came, found all promising, and having bundled up his small patient, carried her, with Frank's help, in her chair-bed to the ox-sled, which was drawn to the next door, and Miss Jill landed in the Boys Den before she had time to get either cold or tired. Mrs. Minot took her things off with a cordial welcome, but Jill never said a word, for, after one exclamation, she lay staring about her, dumb with surprise and delight at what she saw.

The great room was entirely changed; for now it looked like a garden, or one of the fairy scenes children love, where in-doors and out-of-doors are pleasantly combined. The ceiling was pale blue, like the sky; the walls were covered with a paper like a rustic

trellis, up which climbed morning-glories so naturally that the many-colored bells seemed dancing in the wind. Birds and butterflies flew among them, and here and there, through arches in the trellis, one seemed to look into a sunny summer world, contrasting curiously with the wintry landscape lying beyond the real windows, festooned with evergreen garlands, and curtained only by stands of living flowers. A green drugget covered the floor like grass, rustic chairs from the garden stood about, and in the middle of the room a handsome hemlock waited for its pretty burden. A Yule-log blazed on the wide hearth, and over the chimney-piece, framed in holly, shone the words that set all hearts to dancing, "Merry Christmas!"

"Do you like it, dear? This is our surprise for you and Jack, and here we mean to have good times together," said Mrs. Minot, who had stood quietly enjoying the effect of her work.

"Oh, it is so lovely I don't know what to say!" and Jill put up both arms, as words failed her, and grateful kisses were all she had to offer.

"Can you suggest anything more to add to the pleasantness?" asked the gentle lady, holding the small hands in her own, and feeling well repaid by the child's delight.

"Only Jack"; and Jill's laugh was good to hear, as she glanced up with merry, yet wistful eyes.

"You are right. We'll have him in at once, or he will come hopping on one leg"; and away hurried his mother, laughing, too, for whistles, shouts, thumps, and violent demonstrations of all kinds had been heard from the room where Jack was raging with impatience, while he waited for his share of the surprise.

Jill could hardly lie still when she heard the roll of another chair-bed coming down the hail, its passage enlivened with cries of "Starboard! Port! Easy now! Pull away!" from Ralph and Frank, as they steered the recumbent Columbus on his first voyage of discovery.

"Well, I call that handsome!" was Jack's exclamation, when the full beauty of the scene burst upon his view. Then he forgot all about it and gave a whoop of pleasure, for there beside the fire was an eager face, two hands beckoning, and Jill's voice crying, joyfully.

"I'm here! I'm here! Oh, do come, quick!" Down the long room rattled the chair, Jack cheering all the way, and brought up beside the other one, as the long-parted friends exclaimed, with one accord,
"Isn't this jolly!"

It certainly did look so, for Ralph and Frank danced a wild sort of fandango round the tree, Dr. Whiting stood and laughed, while the two mothers beamed from the door-way, and the children,

not knowing whether to laugh or to cry, compromised the matter by clapping their hands and shouting, "Merry Christmas to everybody!" like a pair of little maniacs.

Then they all sobered down, and the busy ones went off to the various duties of the day, leaving the young invalids to repose and enjoy themselves together.

"How nice you look," said Jill, when they had duly admired the pretty room.

"So do you," gallantly returned Jack, as he surveyed her with unusual interest.

They did look very nice, though happiness was the principal beautifier. Jill wore a red wrapper, with the most brilliant of all the necklaces sparkling at her throat, over a nicely crimped frill her mother had made in honor of the day. All the curly black hair was gathered into a red net, and a pair of smart little moccasins covered the feet that had not stepped for many a weary day. Jack was not so gay, but had made himself as fine as circumstances would permit. A gray dressing-gown, with blue cuffs and collar, was very becoming to the blonde youth; an immaculate shirt, best studs, sleeve-buttons, blue tie, and handkerchief wet with cologne sticking out of the breast-pocket, gave an air of elegance in spite of the afghan spread over the lower portions of his manly form. The yellow hair was brushed till it shone, and being parted

in the middle, to hide the black patch, made two engaging little "quiris" on his forehead. The summer tan had faded from his cheeks, but his eyes were as blue as the wintry sky, and nearly every white tooth was visible as he smiled on his partner in misfortune, saying cheerily.

"I'm ever so glad to see you again; guess we are over the worst of it now, and can have good times. Won't it be fun to stay here all the while, and amuse one another?"

"Yes, indeed; but one day is so short! It will be stupider than ever when I go home to-night," answered Jill, looking about her with longing eyes.

"But you are not going home to-night; you are to stay ever so long. Didn't Mamma tell you?"

"No. Oh, how splendid! Am I really? Where will I sleep? What will Mammy do without me?" and Jill almost sat up, she was so delighted with the new surprise.

"That room in there is all fixed for you. I made Frank tell me so much. Mamma said I might tell you, but I'd idn't think she would be able to hold in if she saw you first. Your mother is coming, too, and we are all going to have larks together till we are
The splendor of this arrangement took Jill's breath away, and before she got it again, in came Frank and Ralph with two

clothes-baskets of treasures to be hung upon the tree. While they wired on the candles the children asked questions, and found out all they wanted to know about the new plans and pleasures. 'Who fixed all this?"

"Mamma thought of it, and Ralph and I'd id it. He's the man for this sort of thing, you know. He proposed cutting out the arches and sticking on birds and butterflies just where they looked best. I put those canaries over there, they looked so well against the blue"; and Frank proudly pointed out some queer orange-colored fowls, looking as if they were having fits in the air, but very effective, nevertheless.

"Your mother said you might call this the Bird Room. We caught a scarlet-tanager for you to begin with, didn't we, Jack?" and Ralph threw a hon-hon at Jill, who looked very like a bright little bird in a warm nest.

"Good for you! Yes, and we are going to keep her in this pretty cage till we can both fly off together. I say, Jill, where shall we be in our classes when we do get back?" and Jack's merry face fell at the thought.

"At the foot, if we don't study and keep up. Doctor said I might study sometimes, if I'd lie still as long as he thought best, and Molly brought home my books, and Merry says she will come in every day and tell me where the lessons are. I don't mean to fall

behind, if my backbone is cracked," said Jill, with a decided nod that made several black rings fly out of the net to dance on her forehead.

"Frank said he'd pull me along in my Latin, but I've been lazy and haven't done a thing. Let's go at it and start fair for New Year," proposed Jack, who did not love study as the bright girl did, but was ashamed to fall behind her in anything.

"All right. They ve been reviewing, so we can keep up when they begin, if we work next week, while the rest have a holiday. Oh, dear, I do miss school dreadfully"; and Jill sighed for the old desk, every blot and notch of which was dear to her.

"There come our things, and pretty nice they look, too," said Jack; and his mother began to dress the tree, hanging up the gay horns, the gilded nuts, red and yellow apples and oranges, and festooning long strings of pop-corn and scarlet cranberries from bough to bough, with the glittering necklaces hung where the light would show their colors best.

"I never saw such a splendid tree before. I'm glad we could help, though we were ill. Is it all done now?" asked Jill, when the last parcel was tied on and everybody stood back to admire the pretty sight.

"One thing more. Hand me that box, Frank, and be very careful

that you fasten this up firmly, Ralph," answered Mrs. Minot, as she took from its wrappings the waxen figure of a little child. The rosy limbs were very life-like, so was the smiling face under the locks of shining hair. Both plump arms were outspread as if to scatter blessings over all, and downy wings seemed to flutter from the dimpled shoulders, making an angel of the baby.

"Is it St. Nicholas?" asked Jill, who had never seen that famous personage, and knew but little of Christmas festivities.

"It is the Christ-child, whose birthday we are celebrating. I got the best I could find, for I like the idea better than old Santa Claus; though we may have him, too," said Mamma, holding the little image so that both could see it well.

"It looks like a real baby"; and Jack touched the rosy foot with the tip of his finger, as if expecting a crow from the half-open lips. "It reminds me of the saints in the chapel of the Sacred Heart in Montreal. One little St. John looked like this, only he had a lamb instead of wings," said Jill, stroking the flaxen hair, and wishing she dared ask for it to play with.

"He is the children's saint to pray to, love, and imitate, for he never forgot them, but blessed and healed and taught them all his life. This is only a poor image of the holiest baby ever born, but I hope it will keep his memory in your minds all day, because this

is the day for good resolutions, happy thoughts, and humble prayers, as well as play and gifts and feasting."

While she spoke, Mrs. Minot, touching the little figure as tenderly as if it were alive, had tied a broad white ribbon round it, and, handing it to Ralph, bade him fasten it to the hook above the tree-top, where it seemed to float as if the downy wings supported it.

Jack and Jill lay silently watching, with a sweet sort of soberness in their young faces, and for a moment the room was very still as all eyes looked up at the Blessed Child. The sunshine seemed to grow more golden as it flickered on the little head, the flames glanced about the glittering tree as if trying to climb and kiss the baby feet, and, without, a chime of bells rang sweetly, calling people to hear again the lovely story of the life begun on Christinus Day.

Only a minute, but it did them good, and presently, when the pleasant work was over, and the workers gone, the boys to church, and Mamma to see about lunch for the invalids, Jack said, gravcly, to Jill,
"I think we ought to be extra good, everyone is so kind to us, and we are getting well, and going to have such capital times. Don't see how we can do anything else to show we are grateful."

"It isn't easy to be good when one is sick," said Jill, thoughtfully.

"I fret dreadfully, I get so tired of being still. I want to scream sometimes, but I don't, because it would scare Mammy, so I cry. Do you cry, Jack?"

"Men never do. I want to tramp round when things bother me; but I can t, so I kick and say, 'Hang it! and when I get very bad I pitch into Frank, arid he lets me. I tell you, Jill, he's a good brother!" and Jack privately resolved then and there to invite Frank to take it out of him in any form he pleased as soon as health would permit.

"I rather think we shall grow good in this pretty place, for I don't see how we can be bad if we want to, it is all so nice and sort of pious here," said Jill, with her eyes on the angel over the tree. "A fellow can be awfully hungry, I know that. I didn't half eat breakfast, I was in such a hurry to see you, and know all about the secrets. Frank kept saying I couldn't guess, that you had come, Jack and Jill lay silently watching, with a sweet sort of soberness in their young faces, and for a moment the room was very still as all eyes looked up at the Blessed Child. The sunshine seemed to grow more golden as it flickered on the little head, the flames glanced about the glittering tree as if trying to climb and kiss the baby feet, and, without, a chime of bells rang sweetly, calling people to hear again the lovely story of the life begun on Christmas Day.

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and I never would be ready, till finally I got mad and fired an egg at him, and made no end of a mess."

Jack and Jill went off into a gale of laughter at the idea of dignified Frank dodging the egg that smashed on the wall, leaving an indelible mark of Jack's besetting sin, impatience.

Just then Mrs. Minot came in, well pleased to hear such pleasant sounds, and to see two merry faces, where usually one listless one met her anxious eyes.

"The new medicine works well, neighbor," she said to Mrs. Pecq, who followed with the lunch tray.

"Indeed it does, mem. I feel as if I'd taken a sup myself, I'm that easy in my mind."

And she looked so, too, for she seemed to have left all her cares in the little house when she locked the door behind her, and now stood smiling with a clean apron on, so fresh and cheerful, that Jill hardly knew her own mother.

"Things taste better when you have someone to eat with you," observed Jack, as they'd evoured sandwiches, and drank milk out of little mugs with rosebuds on them.

"Don't eat too much, or you won't be ready for the next surprise,"

said his mother, when the plates were empty, and the last drop gone down throats dry with much chatter.

"More surprises! Oh, what fun!" cried Jill. And all the rest of the morning, in the intervals of talk and play, they tried to guess what it could be.

At two o clock they found out, for dinner was served in the Bird Room, and the children revelled in the simple feast prepared for them. The two mothers kept the little bed-tables well supplied, and fed their nurslings like maternal birds, while Frank presided over the feast with great dignity, and ate a dinner which would have astonished Mamma, if she had not been too busy to observe how fast the mince pie vanished.

"The girls said Christmas was spoiled because of us; but I don't think so, and they won't either, when they see this splendid place and know all about our nice plans," said Jill, luxuriously eating the nut-meats Jack picked out f or her, as they lay in Eastern style at the festive board.

"I call this broken bones made easy. I never had a better Christmas. Have a raisin? Here's a good fat one." And Jack made a long arm to Jill's mouth, which began to sing "Little Jack Homer" as an appropriate return.

"It would have been a lonesome one to all of us, I'm thinking, but

for your mother, boys. My duty and hearty thanks to you, mem," put in grateful Mrs. Pecq, bowing over her coffee-cup as she had seen ladies bow over their wine-glasses at dinner parties in Old England.

"I rise to propose a health, Our Mothers." And Frank stood up with a goblet of water, for not even at Christmas time was wine seen on that table.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" called Jack, baptizing himself with a good sprinkle, as he waved his glass and drank the toast with a look that made his mother's eyes fill with happy tears.

Jill threw her mother a kiss, feeling very grown up and elegant to be dining out in such style. Then they'd rank everyone's health with much merriment, till Frank declared that Jack would float off on the deluge of water he splashed about in his enthusiasm, and Mamma proposed a rest after the merry-making.

"Now the best fun is coming, and we have not long to wait," said the boy, when naps and rides about the room had whiled away the brief interval between dinner and dusk, for the evening entertainment was to be an early one, to suit the invalids bedtime. "I hope the girls will like their things. I helped to choose them, and each has a nice present. I don't know mine, though, and I'm in a twitter to see it," said Jill, as they lay waiting for the fun to begin.

"I do; I chose it, so I know you will like one of them, anyway."

"Have I got more than one?"

"I guess you'll think so when they are handed down. The bell was going all day yesterday, and the girls kept bringing in bundles for you; I see seven now," and Jack rolled his eyes from one mysterious parcel to another hanging on the laden boughs.

"I know something, too. That square bundle is what you want ever so much. I told Frank, and he got it for his present. It is all red and gold outside, and every sort of color inside; you'll hurrah when you see it. That roundish one is yours too; I made them," cried Jill, pointing to a flat package tied to the stem of the tree, and a neat little roll in which were the blue mittens that she had knit for him.

"I can wait"; but the boy's eyes shone with eagerness, and he could not resist firing two or three pop-corns at it to see whether it was hard or soft.

"That barking dog is for Boo, and the little yellow sled, so Molly can drag him to school, he always tumbles down so when it is slippery," continued Jill, proud of her superior knowledge, as she showed a small spotted animal hanging by its tail, with a red tongue displayed as if about to taste the sweeties in the horn below.

"Don't talk about sleds, for mercy's sake! I never want to see another, and you wouldn't, either, if you had to lie with a flat-iron tied to your ankle, as I do," said Jack, with a kick of the well leg and an ireful glance at the weight attached to the other that it might not contract while healing.

"Well, I think plasters, and liniment, and rubbing, as bad as flat-irons any day. I don't believe you have ached half so much as I have, though it sounds worse to break legs than to sprain your back," protested Jill, eager to prove herself the greater sufferer, as invalids are apt to be.

"I guess you wouldn't think so if you d been pulled round as I was when they set my leg. Caesar, how it did hurt!" and Jack squirmed at the recollection of it.

"You didn't faint away as I'd id when the doctor was finding out if my vertebrums were hurt, so now!" cried Jill, bound to carry her point, though not at all clear what vertebrae were.

"Pooh! Girls always faint. Men are braver, and I didn't faint a bit in spite of all that horrid agony."

"You howled; Frank told me so. Doctor said I was a brave girl, so you needn't brag, for you'll have to go on a crutch for a while. I know that."

"You may have to use two of them for years, maybe. I heard the doctor tell my mother so. I shall be up and about long before you will. Now then!"

Both children were getting excited, for the various pleasures of the day had been rather too much for them, and there is no knowing but they would have added the sad surprise of a quarrel to the pleasant ones of the day, if a cheerful whistle had not been heard, as Ralph came in to light the candles and give the last artistic touches to the room.

"Well, young folks, how goes it? Had a merry time so far?" he asked, as he fixed the steps and ran up with a lighted match in his hand.

"Very nice, thank you," answered a prim little voice from the dusk below, for only the glow of the fire filled the room just then. Jack said nothing, and two red sulky faces were hidden in the dark, watching candle after candle sputter, brighten, and twinkle, till the trembling shadows began to flit away like imps afraid of the light.

"Now he will see my face, and I know it is cross," thought Jill, as Ralph went round the last circle, leaving another line of sparks among the hemlock boughs.

Jack thought the same, and had just got the frown smoothed out

of his forehead, when Frank brought a fresh log, and a glorious blaze sprung up, filling every corner of the room, and dancing over the figures in the long chairs till they had to brighten whether they liked it or not. Presently the bell began to ring and gay voices to sound below: then Jill smiled in spite of herself as Molly Loo's usual cry of "Oh, dear, where is that child?" reached her, and Jack could not help keeping time to the march Ed played, while Frank and Gus marshalled the procession.

"Ready!" cried Mrs. Minot, at last, and up came the troop of eager lads and lasses, brave in holiday suits, with faces to match. A unanimous "o, o, o!" burst from twenty tongues, as the full splendor of the tree, the room, and its inmates, dawned upon them; for not only did the pretty Christ-child hover above, but Santa Claus himself stood below, fur-clad, white-bearded, and powdered with snow from the dredging-box.

Ralph was a good actor, and, when the first raptures were over he distributed the presents with such droll speeches, jokes, and gambols, that the room rang with merriment, and passers-by paused to listen, sure that here, at least, Christmas was merry. It would be impossible to tell about all the gifts or the joy of the receivers, but everyone was satisfied, and the king and queen of the revels so overwhelmed with little tokens of good-will, that their beds looked like booths at a fair. Jack beamed over the handsome postage-stamp book which had long been the desire of his heart, and Jill felt like a millionaire, with a silver fruit-knife, a

pretty work-basket, and oh! coals of fire on her head a ring from Jack.

A simple little thing enough, with one tiny turquoise forget-me-not, but something like a dew-drop fell on it when no one was looking, and she longed to say, "I'm sorry I was cross; forgive me, Jack." But it could not be done then, so she turned to admire Merry's bed-shoes, the pots of pansies, hyacinths, and geranium which Gus and his sisters sent for her window garden, Molly's queer Christmas pie, and the zither Ed promised to teach her how to play upon.

The tree was soon stripped, and pop-corns strewed the floor as the children stood about picking them off the red threads when candy gave out, with an occasional cranberry by way of relish. Boo insisted on trying the new sled at once, and enlivened the trip by the squeaking of the spotted dog, the toot of a tin trumpet, and shouts of joy at the splendor of the turn-out.

The girls all put on their necklaces, and danced about like fine ladies at a ball. The boys fell to comparing skates, balls, and cuff-buttons on the spot, while the little ones devoted all their energies to eating everything eatable they could lay their hands on.

Games were played till nine o clock, and then the party broke up, after they had taken hands round the tree and sung a song written by one whom you all know so faithfully and beautifully does she

love and labor for children the world over.

THE BLESSED DAY

"What shall little children bring
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
What shall little children bring
On Christmas Day in the morning?
This shall little children bring
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Love and joy to Christ their king,
On Christmas Day in the morning!
"What shall little children sing
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
What shall little children sing
On Christmas Day in the morning?
The grand old carols shall they sing
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
With all their hearts, their offerings bring
On Christmas Day in the morning."

Jack was carried off to bed in such haste that he had only time to call out, "Good-night!" before he was rolled away, gaping as he went. Jill soon found herself tucked up in the great white bed she was to share with her mother, and lay looking about the pleasant chamber, while Mrs. Pecq ran home for a minute to see that all was safe there for the night.

After the merry din the house seemed very still, with only a light step now and then, the murmur of voices not far away, or the jingle of sleigh-bells from without, and the little girl rested easily among the pillows, thinking over the pleasures of the day, too wide-awake for sleep. There was no lamp in the chamber, but she could look into the pretty Bird Room, where the fire-light still shone on flowery walls, deserted tree, and Christ-child floating above the green. Jill's eyes wandered there and lingered till they were full of regretful tears, because the sight of the little angel recalled the words spoken when it was hung up, the good resolution she had taken then, and how soon it was broken.
"I said I couldn't be bad in that lovely place, and I was a cross, ungrateful girl after all they ve done for Mammy and me. Poor Jack was hurt the worst, and he was brave, though he did scream. I wish I could go and tell him so, and hear him say, 'All right. Oh, me, I've spoiled the day!"

A great sob choked more words, and Jill was about to have a comfortable cry, when someone entered the other room, and she saw Frank doing something with a long cord and a thing that looked like a tiny drum. Quiet as a bright-eyed mouse, Jill peeped out wondering what it was, and suspecting mischief, for the boy was laughing to himself as he stretched the cord, and now and then bent over the little object in his hand, touching it with great care.

"Maybe it's a torpedo to blow up and scare me; Jack likes to play tricks. Well, I'll scream loud when it goes off, so he will be satisfied that I'm dreadfully frightened," thought Jill, little dreaming what the last surprise of the day was to be.

Presently a voice whispered,
Are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Anyone there but you?"

"Catch this, then. Hold it to your ear and see what you'll get."

The little drum came flying in, and, catching it, Jill, with some hesitation, obeyed Frank's order. Judge of her amazement when she caught in broken whispers these touching words:

"Sorry I was cross. Forgive and forget. Start fair to-morrow. All right. Jack."

Jill was so delighted with this handsome apology, that she could not reply for a moment, then steadied her voice, and answered back in her sweetest tone,
"I'm sorry, too. Never, never, will again. Feel much better now. Good-night, you dear old thing."

Satisfied with the success of his telephone, Frank twitched back the drum and vanished, leaving Jill to lay her cheek upon the hand that wore the little ring and fall asleep, saying to herself, with a farewell glance at the children's saint, dimly seen in the soft gloom, "I will not forget. I will be good!"

Chapter 7 - Jill's Mission

The good times began immediately, and very little studying was done that week in spite of the virtuous resolutions made by certain young persons on Christmas Day. But, dear me, how was it possible to settle down to lessons in the delightful Bird Room, with not only its own charms to distract one, but all the new gifts to enjoy, and a dozen calls a day to occupy one's time?

"I guess we'd better wait till the others are at school, and just go in for fun this week," said Jack, who was in great spirits at the prospect of getting up, for the splints were off, and he hoped to be promoted to crutches very soon.

"I shall keep my Speller by me and take a look at it every day, for that is what I'm most backward in. But I intend to devote myself to you, Jack, and be real kind and useful. I've made a plan to do it, and I mean to carry it out, anyway," answered Jill, who had begun to be a missionary, and felt that this was a field of labor where she could distinguish herself.

"Here's a home mission all ready for you, and you can be paying your debts beside doing yourself good," Mrs. Pecq said to her in private, having found plenty to do herself.

Now Jill made one great mistake at the outset--she forgot that

she was the one to be converted to good manners and gentleness, and devoted her efforts to looking after Jack, finding it much easier to cure other people's faults than her own. Jack was a most engaging heathen, and needed very little instruction; therefore Jill thought her task would be an easy one. But three or four weeks of petting and play had rather demoralized both children, so Jill's Speller, though tucked under the sofa pillow every day, was seldom looked at, and Jack shirked his Latin shamefully. Both read all the story-books they could get, held daily levees in the Bird Room, and all their spare minutes were spent in teaching Snowdrop, the great Angora cat, to bring the ball when they dropped it in their game. So Saturday came, and both were rather the worse for so much idleness, since daily duties and studies are the wholesome bread which feeds the mind better than the dyspeptic plum-cake of sensational reading, or the unsubstantial bon-bons of frivolous amusement.

It was a stormy day, so they had few callers, and devoted themselves to arranging the album; for these books were all the rage just then, and boys met to compare, discuss, buy, sell, and "swap" stamps with as much interest as men on 'Change gamble in stocks. Jack had a nice little collection, and had been saving up pocket-money to buy a book in which to preserve his treasures. Now, thanks to Jill's timely suggestion, Frank had given him a fine one, and several friends had contributed a number of rare stamps to grace the large, inviting pages. Jill wielded the gum-brush and fitted on the little flaps, as her fingers were skilful at

this nice work, and Jack put each stamp in its proper place with great rustling of leaves and comparing of marks. Returning, after a brief absence, Mrs. Minot beheld the countenances of the workers adorned with gay stamps, giving them a very curious appearance.

"My dears! what new play have you got now? Are you wild Indians? or letters that have gone round the world before finding the right address?" she asked, laughing at the ridiculous sight, for both were as sober as judges and deeply absorbed in some doubtful specimen.

"Oh, we just stuck them there to keep them safe; they get lost if we leave them lying round. It's very handy, for I can see in a minute what I want on Jill's face and she on mine, and put our fingers on the right chap at once," answered Jack, adding, with an anxious gaze at his friend's variegated countenance, "Where the dickens is my New Granada? It's rare, and I wouldn't lose it for a dollar."

'Why, there it is on your own nose. Don't you remember you put it there because you said mine was not big enough to hold it?" laughed Jill, tweaking a large orange square off the round nose of her neighbor, causing it to wrinkle up in a droll way, as the gum made the operation slightly painful.

"So I'd id, and gave you Little Bolivar on yours. Now I'll have

Alsace and Lorraine, 1870. There are seven of them, so hold still and see how you like it," returned Jack, picking the large, pale stamps one by one from Jill's forehead, which they crossed like a band.

She bore it without flinching, saying to herself with a secret smile, as she glanced at the hot fire, which scorched her if she kept near enough to Jack to help him, "This really is being like a missionary, with a tattooed savage to look after. I have to suffer a little, as the good folks did who got speared and roasted sometimes; but I won't complain a bit, though my forehead smarts, my arms are tired, and one cheek is as red as fire."

"The Roman States make a handsome page, don't they?" asked Jack, little dreaming of the part he was playing in Jill's mind. "Oh, I say, isn't Corea a beauty? I'm ever so proud of that"; and he gazed fondly on a big blue stamp, the sole ornament of one page.

"I don't see why the Cape of Good Hope has pyramids. They ought to go in Egypt. The Sandwich Islands are all right, with heads of the black kings and queens on them," said Jill, feeling that they were very appropriate to her private play.

"Turkey has crescents, Australia swans, and Spain women's heads, with black bars across them. Frank says it is because they keep women shut up so; but that was only his fun. I'd rather have a good, honest green United States, with Washington on it, or a

blue one-center with old Franklin, than all their eagles and lions and kings and queens put together," added the democratic boy, with a disrespectful slap on a crowned head as he settled Heligoland in its place.

"Why does Austria have Mercury on the stamp, I wonder? Do they wear helmets like that?" asked Jill, with the brush-handle in her mouth as she cut a fresh batch of flaps.

"Maybe he was postman to the gods, so he is put on stamps now. The Prussians wear helmets, but they have spikes like the old Roman fellows. I like Prussians ever so much; they fight splendidly, and always beat. Austrians have a handsome uniform, though."

"Talking of Romans reminds me that I have not heard your Latin for two days. Come, lazybones, brace up, and let us have it now. I've done my compo, and shall have just time before I go out for a tramp with Gus," said Frank, putting by a neat page to dry, for he studied every day like a conscientious lad as he was.
"Don't know it. Not going to try till next week. Grind away over your old Greek as much as you like, but don't bother me," answered Jack, frowning at the mere thought of the detested lesson.

But Frank adored his Xenophon, and would not see his old friend,

Caesar, neglected without an effort to defend him; so he confiscated the gum-pot, and effectually stopped the stamp business by whisking away at one fell swoop all that lay on Jill's table.

"Now then, young man, you will quit this sort of nonsense and do your lesson, or you won't see these fellows again in a hurry. You asked me to hear you, and I'm going to do it; here's the book."

Frank's tone was the dictatorial one, which Jack hated and always found hard to obey, especially when he knew he ought to do it. Usually, when his patience was tried, he strode about the room, or ran off for a race round the garden, coming back breathless, but good-tempered. Now both these vents for irritation were denied him, and he had fallen into the way of throwing things about in a pet. He longed to send Caesar to perpetual banishment in the fire blazing close by, but resisted the temptation, and answered honestly, though gruffly: "I know I'd id, but I don't see any use in pouncing on a fellow when he isn't ready. I haven't got my lesson, and don't mean to worry about it; so you may just give me back my things and go about your business."

"I'll give you back a stamp for every perfect lesson you get, and you won't see them on any other terms"; and, thrusting the treasures into his pocket, Frank caught up his rubber boots, and went off swinging them like a pair of clubs, feeling that he would give a trifle to be able to use them on his lazy brother.

At this high-handed proceeding, and the threat which accompanied it, Jack's patience gave out, and catching up Caesar, as he thought, sent him flying after the retreating tyrant with the defiant declaration,
"Keep them, then, and your old book, too! I won't look at it till you give all my stamps back and say you are sorry. So now!"

It was all over before Mamma could interfere, or Jill do more than clutch and cling to the gum-brush. Frank vanished unharmed, but the poor book dashed against the wall to fall half open on the floor, its gay cover loosened, and its smooth leaves crushed by the blow.

"It's the album! O Jack, how could you?" cried Jill, dismayed at sight of the precious book so maltreated by the owner.

"Thought it was the other. Guess it isn't hurt much. Didn't mean to hit him, anyway. He does provoke me so," muttered Jack, very red and shamefaced as his mother picked up the book and laid it silently on the table before him. He did not know what to do with himself, and was thankful for the stamps still left him, finding great relief in making faces as he plucked them one by one from his mortified countenance. Jill looked on, half glad, half sorry that her savage showed such signs of unconverted ferocity, and Mrs. Minot went on writing letters, wearing the grave look her sons found harder to bear than another person's scolding. No one spoke for a moment, and the silence was becoming awkward

when Gus appeared in a rubber suit, bringing a book to Jack from Laura and a note to Jill from Lotty.

"Look here, you just trundle me into my den, please, I'm going to have a nap, it's so dull to-day I don't feel like doing much," said Jack, when Gus had done his errands, trying to look as if he knew nothing about the fracas.

Jack folded his arms and departed like a warrior borne from the battle-field, to be chaffed unmercifully for a "pepper-pot," while Gus made him comfortable in his own room.

"I heard once of a boy who threw a fork at his brother and put his eye out. But he didn't mean to, and the brother forgave him, and he never did so any more," observed Jill, in a pensive tone, wishing to show that she felt all the dangers of impatience, but was sorry for the culprit.

"Did the boy ever forgive himself?" asked Mrs. Minot.

"No, 'm; I suppose not. But Jack didn't hit Frank, and feels real sorry, I know."

"He might have, and hurt him very much. Our actions are in our own hands, but the consequences of them are not. Remember that, my dear, and think twice before you do anything."

"Yes, 'm, I will"; and Jill composed herself to consider what missionaries usually did when the natives hurled tomahawks and boomerangs at one another, and defied the rulers of the land.
Mrs. Minot wrote one page of a new letter, then stopped, pushed her papers about, thought a little, and finally got up, saying, as if she found it impossible to resist the yearning of her heart for the naughty boy,
"I am going to see if Jack is covered up, he is so helpless, and liable to take cold. Don't stir till I come back."

"No, 'm, I won't."

Away went the tender parent to find her son studying Caesar for dear life, and all the more amiable for the little gust which had blown away the temporary irritability. The brothers were often called "Thunder and Lightning," because Frank lowered and growled and was a good while clearing up, while Jack's temper came and went like a flash, and the air was all the clearer for the escape of dangerous electricity. Of course Mamma had to stop and deliver a little lecture, illustrated by sad tales of petulant boys, and punctuated with kisses which took off the edge of these afflicting narratives.

Jill meantime meditated morally on the superiority of her own good temper over the hasty one of her dear playmate, and just when she was feeling unusually uplifted and secure, alas! like so many of us, she fell, in the most deplorable manner.

Glancing about the room for something to do, she saw a sheet of paper lying exactly out of reach, where it had fluttered from the table unperceived. At first her eye rested on it as carelessly as it did on the stray stamp Frank had dropped; then, as if one thing suggested the other, she took it into her head that the paper was Frank's composition, or, better still, a note to Annette, for the two corresponded when absence or weather prevented the daily meeting at school.

"Wouldn't it be fun to keep it till he gives back Jack's stamps? It would plague him so if it was a note, and I do believe it is, for compo's don't begin with two words on one side. I'll get it, and Jack and I will plan some way to pay him off, cross thing!" Forgetting her promise not to stir, also how dishonorable it was to read other people's letters, Jill caught up the long-handled hook, often in use now, and tried to pull the paper nearer. It would not come at once, for a seam in the carpet held it, and Jill feared to tear or crumple it if she was not very careful. The hook was rather heavy and long for her to manage, and Jack usually did the fishing, so she was not very skilful; and just as she was giving a particularly quick jerk, she lost her balance, fell off the sofa, and dropped the pole with a bang.

"Oh, my back!" was all she could think or say as she felt the jar all through her little body, and a corresponding fear in her guilty little mind that someone would come and find out the double mischief she had been at. For a moment she lay quite still to

recover from the shock, then as the pain passed she began to wonder how she should get back, and looked about her to see if she could do it alone. She thought she could, as the sofa was near and she had improved so much that she could sit up a little if the doctor would have let her. She was gathering herself together for the effort, when, within arm's reach now, she saw the tempting paper, and seized it with glee, for in spite of her predicament she did want to tease Frank. A glance showed that it was not the composition nor a note, but the beginning of a letter from Mrs. Minot to her sister, and Jill was about to lay it down when her own name caught her eye, and she could not resist reading it. Hard words to write of one so young, doubly hard to read, and impossible to forget.

"Dear Lizzie, Jack continues to do very well, and will soon be up again. But we begin to fear that the little girl is permanently injured in the back. She is here, and we do our best for her; but I never look at her without thinking of Lucinda Snow, who, you remember, was bedridden for twenty years, owing to a fall at fifteen. Poor little Janey does not know yet, and I hope"-- There it ended, and "poor little Janey's" punishment for disobedience began that instant. She thought she was getting well because she did not suffer all the time, and everyone spoke cheerfully about "by and by." Now she knew the truth, and shut her eyes with a shiver as she said, low, to herself,
"Twenty years! I couldn't bear it; oh, I couldn't bear it!"

A very miserable Jill lay on the floor, and for a while did not care who came and found her; then the last words of the letter-- "I hope"--seemed to shine across the blackness of the dreadful "twenty years" and cheer her up a bit, for despair never lives long in young hearts, and Jill was a brave child.

"That is why Mammy sighs so when she dresses me, and everyone is so good to me. Perhaps Mrs. Minot doesn't really know, after all. She was dreadfully scared about Jack, and he is getting well. I'd like to ask Doctor, but he might find Out about the letter. Oh, dear, why didn't I keep still and let the horrid thing alone!"

As she thought that, Jill pushed the paper away, pulled herself up, and with much painful effort managed to get back to her sofa, where she laid herself down with a groan, feeling as if the twenty years had already passed over her since she tumbled off.
"I've told a lie, for I said I wouldn't stir. I've hurt my back, I've done a mean thing, and I've got paid for it. A nice missionary I am; I'd better begin at home, as Mammy told me to"; and Jill groaned again, remembering her mother's words. "Now I've got another secret to keep all alone, for I'd be ashamed to tell the girls. I guess I'll turn round and study my spelling; then no one will see my face."

Jill looked the picture of a good, industrious child as she lay with her back to the large table, her book held so that nothing was to

be seen but one cheek and a pair of lips moving busily.

Fortunately, it is difficult for little sinners to act a part, and, even if the face is hidden, something in the body seems to betray the internal remorse and shame. Usually, Jill lay flat and still; now her back was bent in a peculiar way as she leaned over her book, and one foot wagged nervously, while on the visible cheek was a Spanish stamp with a woman's face looking through the black bars, very suggestively, if she had known it. How long the minutes seemed till someone came, and what a queer little jump her heart gave when Mrs. Minot's voice said, cheerfully, "Jack is all right, and, I declare, so is Jill. I really believe there is a telegraph still working somewhere between you two, and each knows what the other is about without words."

"I didn't have any other book handy, so I thought I'd study awhile," answered Jill, feeling that she deserved no praise for her seeming industry.

She cast a sidelong glance as she spoke, and seeing that Mrs. Minot was looking for the letter, hid her face and lay so still she could hear the rustle of the paper as it was taken from the floor. It was well she did not also see the quick look the lady gave her as she turned the letter and found a red stamp sticking to the under side, for this unlucky little witness told the story.

Mrs. Minot remembered having seen the stamp lying close to the

sofa when she left the room, for she had had half a mind to take it to Jack, but did not, thinking Frank's plan had some advantages. She also recollected that a paper flew off the table, but being in haste she had not stopped to see what it was. Now, the stamp and the letter could hardly have come together without hands, for they lay a yard apart, and here, also, on the unwritten portion of the page, was the mark of a small green thumb. Jill had been winding wool for a stripe in her new afghan, and the green ball lay on her sofa. These signs suggested and confirmed what Mrs. Minot did not want to believe; so did the voice, attitude, and air of Jill, all very unlike her usual open, alert ways.

The kind lady could easily forgive the reading of her letter since the girl had found such sad news there, but the dangers of disobedience were serious in her case, and a glance showed that she was suffering either in mind or body--perhaps both.
"I will wait for her to tell me. She is an honest child, and the truth will soon come out," thought Mrs. Minot, as she took a clean sheet, and Jill tried to study.

"Shall I hear your lesson, dear? Jack means to recite his like a good boy, so suppose you follow his example," she said, presently.

"I don't know as I can say it, but I'll try."

Jill did try, and got on bravely till she came to the word

"permanent"; there she hesitated, remembering where she saw it last.

"Do you know what that means?" asked her teacher, thinking to help her on by defining the word.

"Always--for a great while--or something like that; doesn't it?" faltered Jill, with a tight feeling in her throat, and the color coming up, as she tried to speak easily, yet felt so shame-stricken she could not.

"Are you in pain, my child? Never mind the lesson; tell me, and I'll do something for you."

The kind words, the soft hand on her hot cheek, and the pity in the eyes that looked at her, were too much for Jill. A sob came first, and then the truth, told with hidden face and tears that washed the blush away, and set free the honest little soul that could not hide its fault from such a friend.

"I knew it all before, and was sure you would tell me, else you would not be the child I love and like to help so well."

Then, while she soothed Jill's trouble, Mrs. Minot told her story and showed the letter, wishing to lessen, if possible, some part of the pain it had given.

"Sly old stamp! To go and tell on me when I meant to own up, anti get some credit if I could, after being so mean and bad," said Jill, smiling through her tears when she saw the tell-tale witnesses against her.

"You had better stick it in your book to remind you of the bad consequences of disobedience, then perhaps this lesson will leave a permanent impression on your mind and memory, answered Mrs. Minot, glad to see her natural gayety coming back, and hoping that she had forgotten the contents of the unfortunate letter. But she had not; and presently, when the sad affair had been talked over and forgiven, Jill asked, slowly, as she tried to put on a brave look,
"Please tell me about Lucinda Snow. If I am to be like her, I might as well know how she managed to bear it so long."

"I'm sorry you ever heard of her, and yet perhaps it may help you to bear your trial, dear, which I hope will never be as heavy a one as hers, This Lucinda I knew for years, and though at first I thought her fate the saddest that could be, I came at last to see how happy she was in spite of her affliction, how good and useful and beloved."

"Why, how could she be? What did she do?" cried Jill, forgetting her own troubles to look up with an open, eager face again.
"She was so patient, other people were ashamed to complain of their small worries; so cheerful, that her own great one grew

lighter; so industrious, that she made both money and friends by pretty things she worked and sold to her many visitors. And, best of all, so wise and sweet that she seemed to get good out of everything, and make her poor room a sort of chapel where people went for comfort, counsel, and an example of a pious life. So, you see, Lucinda was not so very miserable after all."

"Well, if I could not be as I was, I'd like to be a woman like that. Only, I hope I shall not!" answered Jill, thoughtfully at first, then coming out so decidedly with the last words that it was evident the life of a bedridden saint was not at all to her mind.

"So do I; and I mean to believe that you will not. Meantime, we can try to make the waiting as useful and pleasant as possible. This painful little back will be a sort of conscience to remind you of what you ought to do and leave undone, and so you can be learning obedience. Then, when the body is strong, it will have formed a good habit to make duty easier; and my Lucinda can be a sweet example, even while lying here, if she chooses."

"Can I?" and Jill's eyes were full of softer tears as the comfortable, cheering words sank into her heart, to blossom slowly by and by into her life, for this was to be a long lesson, hard to learn, but very useful in the years to come.

When the boys returned, after the Latin was recited and peace restored, Jack showed her a recovered stamp promptly paid by

Frank, who was as just as he was severe, and Jill asked for the old red one, though she did not tell why she wanted it, nor show it put away in the spelling-book, a little seal upon a promise made to be kept.

Chapter 8 - Merry and Molly

Farmer Grant was a thrifty, well-to-do man, anxious to give his children greater advantages than he had enjoyed, and to improve the fine place of which he was justly proud. Mrs. Grant was a notable housewife, as ambitious and industrious as her husband, but too busy to spend any time on the elegancics of life, though always ready to help the poor and sick like a good neighbor and Christian woman. The three sons--Tom, Dick, and Harry--were big fellows of seventeen, nineteen, and twenty-one; the first two on the farm, and the elder in a store just setting up for himself. Kind-hearted but rough-mannered youths, who loved Merry very much, but teased her sadly about her "fine lady airs," as they called her dainty ways and love of beauty.

Merry was a thoughtful girl, full of innocent fancies, refined tastes, and romantic dreams, in which no one sympathized at home, though she was the pet of the family. It did seem, to an outsider, as if the delicate little creature had got there by mistake, for she looked very like a tea-rose in a field of clover and dandelions, whose highest aim in life was to feed cows and help make root beer.

When the girls talked over the new society, it pleased Merry very much, and she decided not only to try and love work better, but to convert her family to a liking for pretty things, as she called her

own more cultivated tastes.

"I will begin at once, and show them that I don't mean to shirk my duty, though I do want to be nice," thought she, as she sat at supper one night and looked about her, planning her first move. Not a very cheering prospect for a lover of the beautiful, certainly, for the big kitchen, though as neat as wax, had nothing lovely in it, except a red geranium blooming at the window. Nor were the people all that could be desired, in some respects, as they sat about the table shovelling in pork and beans with their knives, drinking tea from their saucers, and laughing out with a hearty "Haw, haw," when anything amused them. Yet the boys were handsome, strong specimens, the farmer a hale, benevolent-looking man, the housewife a pleasant, sharp-eyed matron, who seemed to find comfort in looking often at the bright face at her elbow, with the broad forehead, clear eyes, sweet mouth, and quiet voice that came like music in among the loud masculine ones, or the quick, nervous tones of a woman always in a hurry. Merry's face was so thoughtful that evening that her father observed it, for, when at home, he watched her as one watches a kitten, glad to see anything so pretty, young, and happy, at its play.

"Little daughter has got something on her mind, I mistrust. Come and tell father all about it," he said, with a sounding slap on his broad knee as he turned his chair from the table to the ugly stove,

where three pairs of wet boots steamed underneath, and a great kettle of cider apple-sauce simmered above.

"When I've helped clear up, I'll come and talk. Now, mother, you sit down and rest; Roxy and I can do everything," answered Merry, patting the old rocking-chair so invitingly that the tired woman could not resist, especially as watching the kettle gave her an excuse for obeying.

"Well, I don't care if I'd o, for I've been on my feet since five o'clock. Be sure you cover things up, and shut the buttery door, and put the cat down cellar, and sift your meal. I'll see to the buckwheats last thing before I go to bed."

Mrs. Grant subsided with her knitting, for her hands were never idle; Tom tilted his chair back against the wall and picked his teeth with his pen-knife; Dick got out a little pot of grease, to make the boots water-tight; and Harry sat down at the small table to look over his accounts, with an important air--for everyone occupied this room, and the work was done in the out-kitchen behind.

Merry hated clearing up, but dutifully did every distasteful task, and kept her eye on careless Roxy till all was in order; then she gladly went to perch on her father's knee, seeing in all the faces about her the silent welcome they always wore for the "little one.

"Yes, I do want something, but I know you will say it is silly," she began, as her father pinched her blooming cheek, with the wish that his peaches would ever look half as well.

"Shouldn't wonder if it was a doll now"; and Mr. Grant stroked her head with an indulgent smile, as if she was about six instead of fifteen.

"Why, father, you know I don't! I haven't played with dollies for years and years. No; I want to fix up my room pretty, like Jill's. I'll do it all myself, and only want a few things, for I don't expect it to look as nice as hers."

Indignation gave Merry courage to state her wishes boldly, though she knew the boys would laugh. They did, and her mother said in a tone of surprise,
"Why, child, what more can you want? I'm sure your room is always as neat as a new pin, thanks to your bringing up, and I told you to have a fire there whenever you wanted to."

"Let me have some old things out of the garret, and I'll show you what I want. It is neat, but so bare and ugly I hate to be there. I do so love something pretty to look at!" and Merry gave a little shiver of disgust as she turned her eyes away from the large greasy boot Dick was holding up to be sure it was well lubricated all round.

"So do I, and that's a fact. I couldn't get on without my pretty girl here, anyway. Why, she touches up the old place better than a dozen flower-pots in full blow," said the farmer, as his eye went from the scarlet geranium to the bright young face so near his own.

"I wish I had a dozen in the sitting-room window. Mother says they are not tidy, but I'd keep them neat, and I know you'd like it," broke in Merrry, glad of the chance to get one of the long-desired wishes of her heart fulfilled.

"I'll fetch you some next time I go over to Ballad's. Tell me what you want, and we'll have a posy bed somewhere round, see if we don't," said her father, dimly understanding what she wanted.

"Now, if mother says I may fix my room, I shall be satisfied, and I'll do my chores without a bit of fuss, to show how grateful I am," said the girl, thanking her father with a kiss, and smiling at her mother so wistfully that the good woman could not refuse.

"You may have anything you like out of the blue chest. There's a lot of things there that the moths got at after Grandma died, and I couldn't bear to throw or give 'em away. Trim up your room as you like, and mind you don't forget your part of the bargain," answered Mrs. Grant, seeing profit in the plan.

"I won't; I'll work all the morning to-morrow, and in the

afternoon I'll get ready to show you what I call a nice, pretty room," answered Merry, looking so pleased it seemed as if another flower had blossomed in the large bare kitchen.

She kept her word, and the very stormy afternoon when Jill got into trouble, Merry was working busily at her little bower. In the blue chest she found a variety of treasures, and ignoring the moth holes, used them to the best advantage, trying to imitate the simple comfort with a touch of elegance which prevailed in Mrs. Minot's back bedroom.

Three faded red-moreen curtains went up at the windows over the chilly paper shades, giving a pleasant glow to the bare walls. A red quilt with white stars, rather the worse for many washings, covered the bed, and a gay cloth the table, where a judicious arrangement of books and baskets concealed the spots. The little air-tight stove was banished, and a pair of ancient andirons shone in the fire-light. Grandma's last and largest braided rug lay on the hearth, and her brass candlesticks adorned the bureau, over the mirror of which was festooned a white muslin skirt, tied up with Merry's red sash. This piece of elegance gave the last touch to her room, she thought, and she was very proud of it, setting forth all her small store of trinkets in a large shell, with an empty scent bottle, and a clean tidy over the pincushion. On the walls she hung three old-fashioned pictures, which she ventured to borrow from the garret till better could be found. One a mourning piece, with a very tall lady weeping on an urn in a grove of willows, and

two small boys in knee breeches and funny little square tails to their coats, looking like cherubs in large frills. The other was as good as a bonfire, being an eruption of Vesuvius, and very lurid indeed, for the Bay of Naples was boiling like a pot, the red sky raining rocks, and a few distracted people lying flat upon the shore. The third was a really pretty scene of children dancing round a May-pole, for though nearly a hundred years old, the little maids smiled and the boys pranced as gayly as if the flowers they carried were still alive and sweet.

"Now I'll call them all to see, and say that it is pretty. Then I'll enjoy it, and come here when things look dismal and bare everywhere else," said Merry, when at last it was done. She had worked all the afternoon, and only finished at supper time, so the candles had to be lighted that the toilette might look its best, and impress the beholders with an idea of true elegance.

Unfortunately, the fire smoked a little, and a window was set ajar to clear the room; an evil disposed gust blew in, wafting the thin drapery within reach of the light, and when Merry threw open the door proudly thinking to display her success, she was horrified to find the room in a blaze, and half her labor all in vain.

The conflagration was over in a minute, however, for the boys tore down the muslin and stamped out the fire with much laughter, while Mrs. Grant bewailed the damage to her carpet, and poor Merry took refuge in her father's arms, refusing to be

comforted in spite of his kind commendation of "Grandma's fixins."

The third little missionary had the hardest time of all, and her first efforts were not much more satisfactory nor successful than the others. Her father was away from morning till night, and then had his paper to read, books to keep, or "a man to see down town," so that, after a hasty word at tea, he saw no more of the children till another evening, as they were seldom up at his early breakfast. He thought they were well taken care of, for Miss Bathsheba Dawes was an energetic, middle-aged spinster when she came into the family, and had been there fifteen years, so he did not observe, what a woman would have seen at once, that Miss Bat was getting old and careless, and everything about the house was at sixes and sevens. She took good care of him, and thought she had done her duty if she got three comfortable meals, nursed the children when they were ill, and saw that the house did not burn up. So Maria Louisa and Napoleon Bonaparte got on as they could, without the tender cares of a mother. Molly had been a happy-go-lucky child, contented with her pets, her freedom, and little Boo to love; but now she was just beginning to see that they were not like other children, and to feel ashamed of it.

"Papa is busy, but Miss Bat ought to see to us; she is paid for it, and goodness knows she has an easy time now, for if I ask her to do anything, she groans over her bones, and tells me young folks

should wait on themselves. I take all the care of Boo off her hands, but I can't wash my own things, and he hasn't a decent trouser to his blessed little legs. I'd tell papa, but it wouldn't do any good; he'd only say, 'Yes, child, yes, I'll attend to it,' and never do a thing."

This used to be Molly's lament, when some especially trying event occurred, and if the girls were not there to condole with her, she would retire to the shed-chamber, call her nine cats about her, and, sitting in the old bushel basket, pull her hair about her ears, and scold all alone. The cats learned to understand this habit, and nobly did their best to dispel the gloom which now and then obscured the sunshine of their little mistress. Some of them would creep into her lap and purr till the comfortable sound soothed her irritation; the sedate elders sat at her feet blinking with such wise and sympathetic faces, that she felt as if half a dozen Solomons were giving her the sagest advice; while the kittens frisked about, cutting up their drollest capers till she laughed in spite of herself. When the laugh came, the worst of the fit was over, and she soon cheered up, dismissing the consolers with a pat all round, a feast of good things from Miss Bat's larder, and the usual speech:
"Well, dears, it's of no use to worry. I guess we shall get along somehow, if we don't fret."

With which wise resolution, Molly would leave her retreat and freshen up her spirits by a row on the river or a romp with Boo,

which always finished the case. Now, however, she was bound to try the new plan and do something toward reforming not only the boy's condition, but the disorder and discomfort of home.

"I'll play it is Siam, and this the house of a native, and I'm come to show the folks how to live nicely. Miss Bat won't know what to make of it, and I can't tell her, so I shall get some fun out of it, anyway," thought Molly, as she surveyed the dining-room the day her mission began.

The prospect was not cheering; and, if the natives of Siam live in such confusion, it is high time they were attended to. The breakfast-table still stood as it was left, with slops of coffee on the cloth; bits of bread, egg-shells, and potato-skins lay about, and one lonely sausage was cast away in the middle of a large platter. The furniture was dusty, stove untidy, and the carpet looked as if crumbs had been scattered to chickens who declined their breakfast. Boo was sitting on the sofa, with his arm through a hole in the cover, hunting for some lost treasure put away there for safe keeping, like a little magpie as he was. Molly fancied she washed and dressed him well enough; but to-day she seemed to see more dearly, and sighed as she thought of the hard job in store for her if she gave him the thorough washing he needed, and combed out that curly mop of hair.

"I'll clear up first and do that by and by. I ought to have a nice little tub and good towels, like Mrs. Minot, and I will, too, if I buy

them myself," she said, piling up cups with an energy that threatened destruction to handles.

Miss Bat, who was trailing about the kitchen, with her head pinned up in a little plaid shawl, was so surprised by the demand for a pan of hot water and four clean towels, that she nearly dropped her snuff-box, chief comfort of her lazy soul.

"What new whimsey now? Generally, the dishes stand round till I have time to pick 'em up, and you are off coasting or careering somewhere. Well, this tidy fit won't last long, so I may as well make the most of it," said Miss Bat, as she handed out the required articles, and then pushed her spectacles from the tip of her sharp nose to her sharper black eyes for a good look at the girl who stood primly before her, with a clean apron on and her hair braided up instead of flying wildly about her shoulders.

"Umph!" was all the comment that Miss Bat made on this unusual neatness, and she went on scraping her saucepans, while Molly returned to her work, very well pleased with the effect of her first step, for she felt that the bewilderment of Miss Bat would be a constant inspiration to fresh efforts.

An hour of hard work produced an agreeable change in the abode of the native, for the table was cleared, room swept and dusted, fire brightened, and the holes in the sofa-covering were pinned up till time could be found to mend them. To be sure, rolls of lint

lay in corners, smears of ashes were on the stove hearth, and dust still lurked on chair rounds and table legs. But too much must not be expected of a new convert, so the young missionary sat down to rest, well pleased and ready for another attempt as soon as she could decide in what direction it should be made. She quailed before Boo as she looked at the unconscious innocent peacefully playing with the spotted dog, now bereft of his tail, and the lone sausage with which he was attempting to feed the hungry animal, whose red mouth always gaped for more.

"It will be an awful job, and he is so happy I won't plague him yet. Guess I'll go and put my room to rights first, and pick up some clean clothes to put on him, if he is alive after I get through with him," thought Molly, foreseeing a stormy passage for the boy, who hated a bath as much as some people hate a trip across the Atlantic.

Up she went, and finding the fire out felt discouraged, thought she would rest a little more, so retired under the blankets to read one of the Christmas books. The dinner-bell rang while she was still wandering happily in "Nelly's Silver Mine," and she ran down to find that Boo had laid out a railroad all across her neat room, using bits of coal for sleepers and books for rails, over which he was dragging the yellow sled laden with a dismayed kitten, the tailless dog, and the remains of the sausage, evidently on its way to the tomb, for Boo took bites at it now and then, no other lunch being offered him.

"Oh dear! why can't boys play without making such a mess," sighed Molly, picking up the feathers from the duster with which Boo had been trying to make a "cocky-doo" of the hapless dog.

"I'll wash him right after dinner, and that will keep him out of mischief for a while," she thought, as the young engineer unsuspiciously proceeded to ornament his already crocky countenance with squash, cranberry sauce, and gravy, till he looked more like a Fiji chief in full war-paint than a Christian boy.

"I want two pails of hot water, please, Miss Bat, and the big tub," said Molly, as the ancient handmaid emptied her fourth cup of tea, for she dined with the family, and enjoyed her own good cooking in its prime.

"What are you going to wash now?"

"Boo--I'm sure he needs it enough"; and Molly could not help laughing as the victim added to his brilliant appearance by smearing the colors all together with a rub of two grimy hands, making a fine Turner, of himself.

"Now, Maria Louisa Bemis, you ain't going to cut up no capers with that child! The idea of a hot bath in the middle of the day, and him full of dinner, and croupy into the bargain~ Wet a corner of a towel at the kettle-spout and polish him off if you like, but you won't risk his life in no bath-tubs this cold day."

Miss Bat's word was law in some things, so Molly had to submit, and took Boo away, saying, loftily, as she left the room,
"I shall ask father, and do it to-night, for I will not have my brother look like a pig."

"My patience! how the Siamese do leave their things round," she exclaimed, as she surveyed her room after making up the fire and polishing off Boo. "I'll put things in order, and then mend up my rags, if I can find my thimble. Now, let me see"; and she went to exploring her closet, bureau, and table, finding such disorder everywhere that her courage nearly gave out.

She had clothes enough, but all needed care; even her best dress had two buttons off, and her Sunday hat but one string. Shoes, skirts, books, and toys lay about, and her drawers were a perfect chaos of soiled ruffles, odd gloves, old ribbons, boot lacings, and bits of paper.

"Oh, my heart, what a muddle! Mrs. Minot wouldn't think much of me if she could see that," said Molly, recalling how that lady once said she could judge a good deal of a little girl's character and habits by a peep at her top drawer, and went on, with great success, to guess how each of the school-mates kept her drawer. "Come, missionary, clear up, and don't let me find such a gloryhole again, or I'll report you to the society," said Molly, tipping the whole drawer-full out upon the bed, and beguiling the tiresome job by keeping up the new play.

Twilight came before it was done, and a great pile of things loomed up on her table, with no visible means of repair--for Molly's work-basket was full of nuts, and her thimble down a hole in the shed-floor, where the cats had dropped it in their play. "I'll ask Bat for hooks and tape, and papa for some money to buy scissors and things, for I don't know where mine are. Glad I can't do any more now! Being neat is such hard work!" and Molly threw herself down on the rug beside the old wooden cradle in which Boo was blissfully rocking, with a cargo of toys aboard.

She watched her time, and as soon as her father had done supper, she hastened to say, before he got to his desk,
"Please, papa, I want a dollar to get some brass buttons and things to fix Boo's clothes with. He wore a hole in his new trousers coasting down the Kembles' steps. And can't I wash him? He needs it, and Miss Bat won't let me have a tub."

"Certainly, child, certainly; do what you like, only don't keep me. I must be off, or I shall miss Jackson, and he's the man I want"; and, throwing down two dollars instead of one, Mr. Bemis hurried away, with a vague impression that Boo had swallowed a dozen brass buttons, and Miss Bat had been coasting somewhere in a bath-pan; but catching Jackson was important, so he did not stop to investigate.

Armed with the paternal permission, Molly carried her point, and oh, what a dreadful evening poor Boo spent! First, he was decoyed

upstairs an hour too soon, then put in a tub by main force and sternly scrubbed, in spite of shrieks that brought Miss Bat to the locked door to condole with the sufferer, scold the scrubber, and depart, darkly prophesying croup before morning.

"He always howls when he is washed; but I shall do it, since you won't, and he must get used to it. I will not have people tell me he's neglected, if I can help it," cried Molly, working away with tears in her eyes--for it was as hard for her as for Boo; but she meant to be thorough for once in her life, no matter what happened.

When the worst was over, she coaxed him with candy and stories till the long task of combing out the curls was safely done; then, in the clean night-gown with a blue button newly sewed on, she laid him in bed, worn out, but sweet as a rose.

"Now, say your prayers, darling, and go to sleep with the nice red blanket all tucked round so you won't get cold," said Molly, rather doubtful of the effect of the wet head.

"No, I won't! Going to sleep now!" and Boo shut his eyes wearily, feeling that his late trials had not left him in a prayerful mood. "Then you'll be a real little heathen, as Mrs. Pecq called you, and I don't know what I shall do with you," said Molly, longing to cuddle rather than scold the little fellow, whose soul needed looking after as well as his body.

"No, no; I won't be a heevin! I don't want to be frowed to the trockindiles. I will say my prayers! oh, I will!" and, rising in his bed, Boo did so, with the devotion of an infant Samuel, for he remembered the talk when the society was formed.

Molly thought her labors were over for that night, and soon went to bed, tired with her first attempts. But toward morning she was wakened by the hoarse breathing of the boy, and was forced to patter away to Miss Bat's room, humbly asking for the squills, and confessing that the prophecy had come to pass.

"I knew it! Bring the child to me, and don't fret. I'll see to him, and next time you do as I say," was the consoling welcome she received as the old lady popped up a sleepy but anxious face in a large flannel cap, and shook the bottle with the air of a general who had routed the foe before and meant to do it again.

Leaving her little responsibility in Miss Bat's arms, Molly tired to wet her pillow with a few remorseful tears, and to fall asleep, wondering if real missionaries ever killed their pupils in the process of conversion.

So the girls all failed in the beginning; but they did not give up, and succeeded better next time, as we shall see.

Chapter 9 - The Debating Club

"Look here, old man, we ought to have a meeting. Holidays are over, and we must brace up and attend to business," said Frank to Gus, as they strolled out of the schoolyard one afternoon in January, apparently absorbed in conversation, but in reality waiting for a blue cloud and a scarlet feather to appear on the steps.

"All right. When, where, and what?" asked Gus, who was a man of few words.

"To-night, our house, subject, 'Shall girls go to college with us?' Mother said we had better be making up our minds, because everyone is talking about it, and we shall have to be on one side or the other, so we may as well settle it now," answered Frank, for there was an impression among the members that all vexed questions would be much helped by the united eloquence and wisdom of the club.

"Very good; I'll pass the word and be there. Hullo, Neddy! The D. C. meets to-night, at Minot's, seven sharp. Co-ed, &c.," added Gus, losing no time, as a third boy came briskly round the corner, with a little bag in his hand.

"I'll come. Got home an hour earlier to-night, and thought I'd

look you up as I went by," responded Ed Devlin, as he took possession of the third post, with a glance toward the schoolhouse to see if a seal-skin cap, with a long, yellow braid depending therefrom, was anywhere in sight.

"Very good of you, I'm sure," said Gus, ironically, not a bit deceived by this polite attention.

"The longest way round is sometimes the shortest way home, hey, Ed?" and Frank gave him a playful poke that nearly sent him off his perch.

Then they all laughed at some joke of their own, and Gus added, "No girls coming to hear us to-night. Don't think it, my son. "More's the pity," and Ed shook his head regretfully over the downfall of his hopes.

"Can't help it; the other fellows say they spoil the fun, so we have to give in, sometimes, for the sake of peace and quietness. Don't mind having them a bit myself," said Frank, in such a tone of cheerful resignation that they laughed again, for the "Triangle," as the three chums were called, always made merry music.

"We must have a game party next week. The girls like that, and so do I," candidly observed Gus, whose pleasant parlors were the scene of many such frolics.

"And so do your sisters and your cousins and your aunts," hummed Ed, for Gus was often called Admiral because he really did possess three sisters, two cousins, and four aunts, besides mother and grandmother, all living in the big house together. The boys promptly joined in the popular chorus, and other voices all about the yard took it up, for the "Pinafore" epidemic raged fearfully in Harmony Village that winter.

"How's business?" asked Gus, when the song ended, for Ed had not returned to school in the autumn, but had gone into a store in the city.

"Dull; things will look up toward spring, they say. I get on well enough, but I miss you fellows dreadfully"; and Ed put a hand on the broad shoulder of each friend, as if he longed to be a school-boy again.

"Better give it up and go to college with me next year," said Frank, who was preparing for Boston University, while Gus fitted for Harvard.

"No; I've chosen business, and I mean to stick to it, so don't you unsettle my mind. Have you practised that March?" asked Ed, turning to a gayer subject, for he had his little troubles, but always looked on the bright side of things.

"Skating is so good, I don't get much time. Come early, and we'll

have a turn at it."

"I will. Must run home now."

"Pretty cold loafing here."

"Mail is in by this time."

And with these artless excuses the three boys leaped off the posts, as if one spring moved them, as a group of girls came chattering down the path. The blue cloud floated away beside Frank, the scarlet feather marched off with the Admiral, while the fur cap nodded to the gray hat as two happy faces smiled at each other. The same thing often happened, for twice a-day the streets were full of young couples walking to and from school together, smiled at by the elders, and laughed at by the less susceptible boys and girls, who went alone or trooped along in noisy groups. The prudent mothers had tried to stop this guileless custom, but found it very difficult, as the fathers usually sympathized with their sons, and dismissed the matter with the comfortable phrase, "Never mind; boys will be boys." "Not forever," returned the anxious mammas, seeing the tall lads daily grow more manly, and the pretty daughters fast learning to look demure when certain names were mentioned.

It could not be stopped without great parental sternness and the danger of deceit, for co-education will go on outside of school if

not inside, and the safest way is to let sentiment and study go hand in hand, with teachers and parents to direct and explain the great lesson all are the better for learning soon or late. So the elders had to give in, acknowledging that this sudden readiness to go to school was a comfort, that the new sort of gentle emulation worked wonders in lazy girls and boys, and that watching these "primrose friendships" bud, blossom, and die painless deaths, gave a little touch of romance to their own work-a-day lives. "On the whole I'd rather have my sons walking, playing, and studying with bright, well-mannered girls, than always knocking about with rough boys," said Mrs. Minot at one of the Mothers' Meetings, where the good ladies met to talk over their children, and help one another to do their duty by them.

"I find that Gus is more gentle with his sisters since Juliet took him in hand, for he wants to stand well with her, and they report him if he troubles them. I really see no harm in the little friendship, though I never had any such when I was a girl," said Mrs. Burton, who adored her one boy and was his confidante. "My Merry seems to be contented with her brothers so far, but I shouldn't wonder if I had my hands full by and by," added Mrs. Grant, who already foresaw that her sweet little daughter would be sought after as soon as she should lengthen her skirts and turn up her bonny brown hair.

Molly Loo had no mother to say a word for her, but she settled matters for herself by holding fast to Merry, and declaring that

she would have no escort but faithful Boo.

It is necessary to dwell a moment upon this new amusement, because it was not peculiar to Harmony Village, but appears everywhere as naturally as the game parties and croquet which have taken the place of the husking frolics and apple-bees of olden times, and it is impossible to dodge the subject if one attempts to write of boys and girls as they really are nowadays. "Here, my hero, see how you like this. If it suits, you will be ready to march as soon as the doctor gives the word," said Ralph, coming into the Bird Room that evening with a neat little crutch under his arm.

"Ha, ha, that looks fine! I'd like to try it right off, but I won't till I get leave. Did you make it yourself, Ral?" asked Jack, handling it with delight, as he sat bolt upright, with his leg on a rest, for he was getting on capitally now.

"Mostly. Rather a neat job, I flatter myself."

"I should say so. What a clever fellow you are! Any new inventions lately?" asked Frank, coming up to examine and admire.

Only an anti-snoring machine and an elbow-pad, answered Ralph, with a twinkle in his eye, as if reminded of something funny.

"Go on, and tell about them. I never heard of an anti-snorer. Jack better have one," said Frank, interested at once.

"Well, a rich old lady kept her family awake with that lively music, so she sent to Shirtman and Codleff for something to stop it. They thought it was a good joke, and told me to see what I could do. I thought it over, and got up the nicest little affair you ever saw. It went over the mouth, and had a tube to fit the ear, so when the lady snored she woke herself up and stopped it. It suited exactly. I think of taking out a patent," concluded Ralph, joining in the boys' laugh at the droll idea.

"What was the pad?" asked Frank, returning to the small model of an engine he was making.

"Oh, that was a mere trifle for a man who had a tender elbow-joint and wanted something to protect it. I made a little pad to fit on, and his crazy-bone was safe."

"I planned to have you make me a new leg if this one was spoilt," said Jack, sure that his friend could invent anything under the sun.

"I'd do my best for you. I made a hand for a fellow once, and that got me my place, you know," answered Ralph, who thought little of such mechanical trifles, and longed to be painting portraits or modelling busts, being an artist as well as an inventor.

Here Gus, Ed, and several other boys came in, and the conversation became general. Grif, Chick, and Brickbat were three young gentlemen whose own respectable names were usually ignored, and they cheerfully answered to these nicknames.

As the clock struck seven, Frank, who ruled the club with a rod of iron when Chairman, took his place behind the study table. Seats stood about it, and a large, shabby book lay before Gus, who was Secretary, and kept the records with a lavish expenditure of ink, to judge by the blots. The members took their seats, and nearly all tilted back their chairs and put their hands in their pockets, to keep them out of mischief; for, as everyone knows, it is impossible for two lads to be near each other and refrain from tickling or pinching. Frank gave three raps with an old croquet-mallet set on a short handle, and with much dignity opened the meeting.

"Gentlemen, the business of the club will be attended to, and then we will discuss the question, 'Shall girls go to our colleges?' The Secretary will now read the report of the last meeting."

Clearing his throat, Gus read the following brief and elegant report:
"Club met, December I 8th, at the house of G. Burton, Esq.
Subject:
'Is summer or winter best fun?' A lively pow-wow. About evenly divided. J. Flint fined five cents for disrespect to the Chair. A

collection of forty cents taken up to pay for breaking a pane of glass during a free fight of the members on the door-step. E. Devlin was chosen Secretary for the coming year, and a new book contributed by the Chairman."

"That's all."

"Is there any other business before the meeting?" asked Frank, as the reader closed the old book with a slam and shoved the new one across the table.

Ed rose, and glancing about him with an appealing look, said, as if sure his proposition would not be well received, "I wish to propose the name of a new member. Bob Walker wants to join, and 1 think we ought to let him. He is trying to behave well, and I am sure we could help him. Can't we?"

All the boys looked sober, and Joe, otherwise Brickbat, said, bluntly, "I won't. He's a bad lot, and we don't want any such here. Let him go with chaps of his own sort."

"That is just what I want to keep him from! He's a good-hearted boy enough, oniy no one looks after him; so he gets into scrapes, as we should, if we were in his place, I'd are say. He wants to come here, and would be so proud if he was let in, I know he'd behave. Come now, let's give him a chance," and Ed looked at Gus and Frank, sure that if they stood by him he should carry his

point.

But Gus shook his head, as if doubtful of the wisdom of the plan, and Frank said gravely: "You know we made the rule that the number should never be over eight, and we cannot break it."

"You needn't. I can't he here half the time, so I will resign and let Bob have my place," began Ed, but he was silenced by shouts of "No, no, you shan't!" "We won't let you off!" "Club would go to smash, if you back out!"

"Let him have my place; I'm the youngest, and you won't miss me," cried Jack, bound to stand by Ed at all costs.

"We might do that," said Frank, who did object to small boys, though willing to admit this particular one.

"Better make a new rule to have ten members, and admit both Bob and Tom Grant," said Ralph, whereat Grif grinned and Joe scowled, for one lad liked Merry's big brother and the other did not.

"That's a good idea! Put it to vote," said Gus, too kind-hearted to shut the door on anyone.

"First I want to ask if all you fellows are ready to stand by Bob, out of the club as well as in, for it won't do much good to be kind

to him here and cut him at school and in the street," said Ed, heartily in earnest about the matter.

"I will!" cried Jack, ready to follow where his beloved friend led, and the others nodded, unwilling to be outdone by the youngest member.

"Good! With all of us to lend a hand, we can do a great deal; and I tell you, boys, it is time, if we want to keep poor Bob straight. We all turn our backs on him, so he loafs round the tavern, and goes with fellows we don't care to know. But he isn't bad yet, and we can keep him up, I'm sure, if we just try. I hope to get him into the Lodge, and that will be half the battle, won't it, Frank?" added Ed, sure that this suggestion would have weight with the honorable Chairman.

"Bring him along; I'm with you!" answered Frank, making up his mind at once, for he had joined the Temperance Lodge four years ago, and already six boys had followed his example.

"He is learning to smoke, but we'll make him drop it before it leads to worse. You can help him there, Admiral, if you only will," added Ed, giving a grateful look at one friend, and turning to the other.

"I'm your man"; and Gus looked as if he knew what he promised, for he had given up smoking to oblige his father, and kept his

word like a hero.

"You other fellows can do a good deal by just being kind and not twitting him with old scrapes, and I'll do anything I can for you all to pay for this"; and Ed sat down with a beaming smile, feeling that his cause was won.

The vote was taken, and all hands went up, for even surly Joe gave in; so Bob and Tom were duly elected, and proved their gratitude for the honor done them by becoming worthy members of the club. It was only boys' play now, but the kind heart and pure instincts of one lad showed the others how to lend a helping hand to a comrade in danger, and win him away from temptation to the safer pastimes of their more guarded lives.

Well pleased with themselves--for every genuine act or word, no matter how trifling it seems, leaves a sweet and strengthening influence behind--the members settled down to the debate, which was never very long, and often only an excuse for fun of all sorts.

"Ralph, Gus, and Ed are for, and Brickbat, Grif, and Chick against, I suppose?" said Frank, surveying his company like a general preparing for battle.

"No, sir! I believe in co-everything!" cried Chick, a mild youth, who loyally escorted a chosen damsel home from school every

day.

A laugh greeted this bold declaration, and Chick sat down, red but firm.

"I'll speak for two since the Chairman can't, and Jack won't go against those who pet him most to death," said Joe, who, not being a favorite with the girls, considered them a nuisance and lost no opportunity of telling them so.

Fire away, then, since you are up; commanded Frank.

"Well," began Joe, feeling too late how much he had undertaken, "I don't know a great deal about it, and I don't care, but I do not believe in having girls at college. They'd on't belong there, nobody wants 'em, and they'd better be at home darning their stockings." "Yours, too," put in Ralph, who had heard that argument so often he was tired of it.

"Of course; that's what girls are for. I don't mind 'em at school, but I'd just as soon they had a room to themselves. We should get on better."

"You would if Mabel wasn't in your class and always ahead of you," observed Ed, whose friend was a fine scholar, and he very proud of the fact.

"Look here, if you fellows keep interrupting, I won't sit down for half an hour," said Joe, well knowing that eloquence was not his gift, but bound to have his say out.

Deep silence reigned, for that threat quelled the most impatient member, and Joe prosed on, using all the arguments he had ever heard, and paying off several old scores by siy hits of a personal nature, as older orators often do.

"It is clear to my mind that boys would get on better without any girls fooling round. As for their being as smart as we are, it is all nonsense, for some of 'em cry over their lessons every day, or go home with headaches, or get mad and scold all recess, because something 'isn't fair.' No, sir; girls ain't meant to know much, and they can't. Wise folks say so and I believe 'em. Haven't got any sisters myself, and I don't want any, for they'd on't seem to amount to much, according to those who do have 'em."

Groans from Gus and Ed greeted the closing remarks of the ungallant Joe, who sat down, feeling that he had made somebody squirm. Up jumped Grif, the delight of whose life was practical jokes, which amiable weakness made him the terror of the girls, though they had no other fault to find with the merry lad.

"Mr. Chairman, the ground I take is this: girls have not the strength to go to college with us. They couldn't row a race, go on a lark, or take care of themselves, as we do. They are all well

enough at home, and I like them at parties, but for real fun and go I wouldn't give a cent for them," began Grif, whose views of a collegiate life were confined to the enjoyments rather than the studies of that festive period. "I have tried them, and they can't stand anything. They scream if you tell them there is a mouse in the room, and run if they see a big dog. I just put a cockroach in Molly's desk one day, and when she opened it she jumped as if she was shot."

So did the gentlemen of the club, for at that moment half-a-dozen fire-crackers exploded under the chair Grif had left, and flew wildly about the room. Order was with difficulty restored, the mischievous party summarily chastised and commanded to hold his tongue, under penalty of ejectment from the room if he spoke again. Firmly grasping that red and unruly member, Grif composed himself to listen, with his nose in the air and his eyes shining like black beads.

Ed was always the peace-maker, and now, when he rose with his engaging smile, his voice fell like oil upon the troubled waters, and his bright face was full of the becoming bashfulness which afflicts youths of seventeen when touching upon such subjects of newly acquired interest as girls and their pleasant but perplexing ways.

"It seems to me we have hardly considered the matter enough to be able to say much. But I think that school would be awfully dry

and dismal without--ahem!--any young ladies to make it nice. I wouldn't give a pin to go if there was only a crowd of fellows, though I like a good game as well as any man. I pity any boy who has no sisters," continued Ed, warming up as he thought of his own, who loved him dearly, as well they might, for a better brother never lived. "Home wouldn't be worth having without them to look after a fellow, to keep him out of scrapes, help him with his lessons, and make things jolly for his friends. I tell you we can't do without girls, and I'm not ashamed to say that I think the more we see of them, and try to be like them in many ways, the better men we shall be by and by."

"Hear! hear!" cried Frank, in his deepest tone, for he heartily agreed to that, having talked the matter over with his mother, and received much light upon things which should always be set right in young heads and hearts. And who can do this so wisely and well as mothers, if they only will?

Feeling that his sentiments had been approved, and he need not be ashamed of the honest color in his cheeks, Ed sat down amid the applause of his side, especially of Jack, who pounded so vigorously with his crutch that Mrs. Pecq popped in her head to see if anything was wanted.

"No, thank you, ma'am, we were only cheering Ed," said Gus, now upon his legs, and rather at a loss what to say till Mrs. Pecq's appearance suggested an idea, and he seized upon it.

"My honored friend has spoken so well that I have little to add. I agree with him, and if you want an example of what girls can do, why, look at Jill. She's young, I know, but a first-rate scholar for her age. As for pluck, she is as brave as a boy, and almost as smart at running, rowing, and so on. Of course, she can't play ball--no girl can; their arms are not made right to throw--but she can catch remarkably well. I'll say that for her. Now, if she and Mabel--and-- and--some others I could name, are so clever and strong at the beginning, I don't see why they shouldn't keep up and go along with us all through. I'm willing, and will do what I can to help other fellows' sisters as I'd like to have them help mine. And I'll punch their heads if they'd on't"; and Gus subsided, assured, by a burst of applause, that his manly way of stating the case met with general approval.

"We shall be happy to hear from our senior member if he will honor us with a few remarks," said Frank, with a bow to Ralph. No one ever knew whom he would choose to personate, for he never spoke in his own character. Now he rose slowly, put one hand in his bosom, and fixing his eye sternly on Crif, who was doing something suspicious with a pin, gave them a touch of Sergeant Buzfuz, from the Pickwick trial, thinking that the debate was not likely to throw much light on the subject under discussion. In the midst of this appeal to "Me lud and gentlemen of the jury," he suddenly paused, smoothed his hair down upon his forehead, rolled up his eyes, and folding his hands, droned out Mr. Chadband's sermon on Peace, delivered over poor Jo, and

ending with the famous lines:
"Oh, running stream of sparkling joy,
To be a glorious human boy!"

Then, setting his hair erect with one comprehensive sweep, he caught up his coat-skirts over his arm, and, assuming a parliamentary attitude, burst into a comical medley, composed of extracts from Jefferson Brick's and Lafayette Kettle's speeches, and Elijah Pogram's Defiance, from "Martin Chuzzlewit." Gazing at Gus, who was convulsed with suppressed merriment, he thundered forth:

"In the name of our common country, sir, in the name of that righteous cause in which we are jined, and in the name of the star-spangled banner, I thank you for your eloquent and categorical remarks. You, sir, are a model of a man fresh from Natur's mould. A true-born child of this free hemisphere; verdant as the mountains of our land; bright and flowin' as our mineral Licks; unspiled by fashion as air our boundless perearers. Rough you may be; so air our Barrs. Wild you may be; so air our Buff alers. But, sir, you air a Child of Freedom, and your proud answer to the Tyrant is, that your bright home is in the Settin' Sun. And, sir, if any man denies this fact, though it be the British Lion himself, I defy him. Let me have him here!"--smiting the table, and causing the inkstand to skip--"here, upon this sacred altar! Here, upon the ancestral ashes cemented with the glorious blood poured out like water on the plains of Chickabiddy Lick. Alone I'd

are that Lion, and tell him that Freedom's hand once twisted in his mane, he rolls a corse before me, and the Eagles of the Great Republic scream, Ha, ha!"

By this time the boys were rolling about in fits of laughter; even sober Frank was red and breathless, and Jack lay back, feebly squealing, as he could laugh no more. In a moment Ralph was as meek as a Quaker, and sat looking about him with a mildly astonished air, as if inquiring the cause of such unseemly mirth. A knock at the door produced a lull, and in came a maid with apples. "Time's up; fall to and make yourselves comfortable," was the summary way in which the club was released from its sterner duties and permitted to unbend its mighty mind for a social halfhour, chiefly devoted to whist, with an Indian war-dance as a closing ceremony.

Chapter 10 - The Dramatic Club

While Jack was hopping gayly about on his crutches, poor Jill was feeling the effects of her second fall, and instead of sitting up, as she hoped to do after six weeks of rest, she was ordered to lie on a board for two hours each day. Not an easy penance, by any means, for the board was very hard, and she could do nothing while she lay there, as it did not slope enough to permit her to read without great fatigue of both eyes and hands. So the little martyr spent her first hour of trial in sobbing, the second in singing, for just as her mother and Mrs. Minot were deciding in despair that neither she nor they could bear it, Jill suddenly broke out into a merry chorus she used to hear her father sing:

"Faut jouer le mirliton,
Faut jouer le mirlitir,
Faut jouer le mirliter,
Mir--li--ton."

The sound of the brave little voice was very comforting to the two mothers hovering about her, and Jack said, with a look of mingled pity and admiration, as he brandished his crutch over the imaginary foes,

"That's right! Sing away, and we'll play you are an Indian captive being tormented by your enemies, and too proud to complain. I'll

watch the clock, and the minute time is up I'll rush in and rescue you."

Jill laughed, but the fancy pleased her, and she straightened herself out under the gay afghan, while she sang, in a plaintive voice, another little French song her father taught her:

"J'avais une colombe blanche,
J'avais un blanc petit pigeon,
Tous deu~ volaient, do branche en branche,
Jusqu'au falte de mon don geon:
Mais comme un coup do vent d'automne,
S'est abattu Za, I'per-vier,
Ft ma colombe si mignonne
Ne revient plus au colombier."

"My poor Jean had a fine voice, and always hoped the child would take after him. It would break his heart to see her lying there trying to cheer her pain with the songs he used to sing her to sleep with," said Mrs. Pecq, sadly.

"She really has a great deal of talent, and when she is able she shall have some lessons, for music is a comfort and a pleasure, sick or well," answered Mrs. Minot, who had often admired the fresh voice, with its pretty accent.

Here Jill began the Canadian boat-song, with great vigor, as if

bound to play her part of Indian victim with spirit, and not disgrace herself by any more crying. All knew the air, and joined in, especially Jack, who came out strong on the "Row, brothers, row," but ended in a squeak on a high note, so drolly, that the rest broke down. So the hour that began with tears ended with music and laughter, and a new pleasure to think of for the future.

After that day Jill exerted all her fortitude, for she liked to have the boys call her brave and admire the cheerful way in which she endured two hours of discomfort. She found she could use her zither as it lay upon her breast, and every day the pretty music began at a certain hour, and all in the house soon learned to love and listen for it. Even the old cook set open her kitchen door, saying pitifully, "Poor darlint, hear how purty she's singin', wid the pain, on that crewel boord. It's a little saint, she is. May her bed above be aisy!"

Frank would lift her gently on and off, with a kind word that comforted her immensely, and gentle Ed would come and teach her new bits of music, while the other fellows were frolicking below. Ralph added his share to her amusement, for he asked leave to model her head in clay, and set up his work in a corner, Corning to pat, scrape, and mould whenever he had a spare minute, amusing her by his lively chat, and showing her how to shape birds, rabbits, and queer faces in the soft clay, when the songs were all sung and her fingers tired of the zither.

The girls sympathized very heartily with her new trial, and brought all manner of gifts to cheer her captivity. Merry and Molly made a gay screen by pasting pictures on the black cambric which covered the folding frame that stood before her to keep the draughts from her as she lay on her board. Bright birds and flowers, figures and animals, covered one side, and on the other they put mottoes, bits of poetry, anecdotes, and short stories, so that Jill could lie and look or read without the trouble of holding a book. It was not all done at once, but grew slowly, and was a source of instruction as well as amusement to them all, as they read carefully, that they might make good Selections.

But the thing that pleased Jill most was something Jack did, for he gave up going to school, and stayed at home nearly a fortnight after he might have gone, all for her sake. The day the doctor said he might try it if he would be very careful, he was in great spirits, and limped about, looking up his books, and planning how he would astonish his mates by the rapidity of his recovery. When he sat down to rest he remembered Jill, who had been lying quietly behind the screen, while he talked with his mother, busy putting fresh covers on the books.

"She is so still, I guess she is asleep," thought Jack, peeping round the corner.

No, not asleep, but lying with her eyes fixed on the sunny window, beyond which the bright winter world sparkled after a

fresh snow-fall. The jingle of sleigh-bells could be heard, the laughter of boys and girls on their way to school, all the pleasant stir of a new day of happy work and play for the rest of the world, more lonely, quiet, and wearisome than ever to her since her friend and fellow-prisoner was set free and going to leave her.

Jack understood that patient, wistful look, and, without a word, went back to his seat, staring at the fire so soberly, that his mother presently asked: "What are you thinking of so busily, with that pucker in your forehead?"

"I've about made up my mind that I won't go to school just yet," answered Jack, slowly lifting his head, for it cost him something to give up the long-expected pleasure.

"Why not?" and Mrs. Minot looked much surprised, till Jack pointed to the screen, and, making a sad face to express Jill's anguish, answered in a cheerful tone, 'Well, I'm not sure that it is best. Doctor did not want me to go, but said I might because I teased. I shall be sure to come to grief, and then everyone will say, 'I told you so,' and that is so provoking. I'd rather keep still a week longer. Hadn't I better?"

His mother smiled and nodded as she said, sewing away at much-abused old Caesar, as if she loved him, "Do as you think best, dear. I always want you at home, but I don't wonder you are rather tired of it after this long confinement."

"I say, Jill, should I be in your way if I didn't go to school till the first of February?" called Jack, laughing to himself at the absurdity of the question.

"Not much!" answered a glad voice from behind the screen, and he knew the sorrowful eyes were shining with delight, though he could not see them.

"Well, I guess I may as well, and get quite firm on my legs before I start. Another week or so will bring me up if I study hard, so I shall not lose my time. I'll tackle my Latin as soon as it's ready, mother."

Jack got a hearty kiss with the neatly covered book, and Mamma loved him for the little sacrifice more than if he had won a prize at school. He did get a reward, for, in five minutes from the time he decided, Jill was singing like a bobolink, and such a medley of merry music came from behind the screen, that it was a regular morning concert. She did not know then that he stayed for her sake, but she found it out soon after, and when the time came did as much for him, as we shall see.

It proved a wise decision, for the last part of January was so stormy Jack could not have gone half the time. So, while the snow drifted, and bitter winds raged, he sat snugly at home amusing Jill, and getting on bravely with his lessons, for Frank took great pains with him to show his approbation of the little kindness,

and, somehow, the memory of it seemed to make even the detested Latin easier.

With February fair weather set in, and Jack marched happily away to school, with Jill's new mittens on his hands, Mamma nodding from the door-step, and Frank ready to give him a lift on the new sled, if the way proved too long or too rough.

"I shall not have time to miss him now, for we are to be very busy getting ready for the Twenty-second. The Dramatic Club meets to-night, and would like to come here, if they may, so 1 can help?" said Jill, as Mrs. Minot came up, expecting to find her rather low in her mind.

"Certainly; and I have a basket of old finery I looked up for the club when I was rummaging out bits of silk for your blue quilt," answered the good lady, who had set up a new employment to beguile the hours of Jack's absence.

When the girls arrived, that evening, they found Mrs. Chairwoman surrounded by a strew of theatrical properties, enjoying herself very much. All brought such contributions as they could muster, and all were eager about a certain tableau which was to be the gem of the whole, they thought. Jill, of course, was not expected to take any part, but her taste was good, so all consulted her as they showed their old silks, laces, and flowers, asking who should be this, and who that. All wanted to be

the "Sleeping Beauty," for that was the chosen scene, with the slumbering court about the princess, and the prince in the act of awakening her. Jack was to be the hero, brave in his mother's velvet cape, red boots, and a real sword, while the other boys were to have parts of more or less splendor.

"Mabel should be the Beauty, because her hair is so lovely," said Juliet, who was quite satisfied with her own part of the Queen. "No, Merry ought to have it, as she is the prettiest, and has that splendid veil to wear," answered Molly, who was to be the maid of honor, cuffing the little page, Boo.

"I don't care a bit, but my feather would be fine for the Princess, and I don't know as Emma would like to have me lend it to anyone else," said Annette, waving a long white plume over her head, with girlish delight in its grace.

"I should think the white silk dress, the veil, and the feather ought to go together, with the scarlet crape shawl and these pearls. That would be sweet, and just what princesses really wear," advised Jill, who was stringing a quantity of old Roman pearls.

"We all want to wear the nice things, so let us draw lots. Wouldn't that be the fairest way?" asked Merry, looking like a rosy little bride, under a great piece of illusion, which had done duty in many plays.

"The Prince is light, so the Princess must be darkish. We ought to choose the girl who will look best, as it is a picture. I heard Miss Delano say so, when the ladies got up the tableaux, last winter, and everyone wanted to be Cleopatra," said Jill decidedly.

"You choose, and then if we can't agree we will draw lots," proposed Susy, who, being plain, knew there was little hope of her getting a chance in any other way.

So all stood in a row, and Jill, from her sofa, surveyed them critically, feeling that the one Jack would really prefer was not among the number.

"I choose that one, for Juliet wants to be Queen, Molly would make faces, and the others are too big or too light," pronounced Jill, pointing to Merry, who looked pleased, while Mabel's face darkened, and Susy gave a disdainful sniff.

"You'd better draw lots, and then there will be no fuss. Ju and I are out of the fight, but you three can try, and let this settle the matter," said Molly, handing Jill a long strip of paper.

All agreed to let it be so, and when the bits were ready drew in turn. This time fate was evidently on Merry's side, and no one grumbled when she showed the longest paper.

"Go and dress, then come back, and we'll plan how we are to be

placed before we call up the boys," commanded Jill, who was manager, since she could be nothing else.

The girls retired to the bedroom and began to "rig up," as they called it; but discontent still lurked among them, and showed itself in sharp words, envious looks, and disobliging acts.

"Am I to have the white silk and the feather?" asked Merry, delighted with the silvery shimmer of the one and the graceful droop of the other, though both were rather shabby.

"You can use your own dress. I don't see why you should have everything," answered Susy, who was at the mirror, putting a wreath of scarlet flowers on her red head, bound to be gay since she could not be pretty.

"I think I'd better keep the plume, as I haven't anything else that is nice, and I'm afraid Emma wouldn't like me to lend it," added Annette, who was disappointed that Mabel was not to be the Beauty.

"I don't intend to act at all!" declared Mabel, beginning to braid up her hair with a jerk, out of humor with the whole affair.

"I think you are a set of cross, selfish girls to back out and keep your nice things just because you can't all have the best part. I'm ashamed of you!" scolded Molly, standing by Merry, who was

sadly surveying her mother's old purple silk, which looked like brown in the evening.

"I'm going to have Miss Delano's red brocade for the Queen, and I shall ask her for the yellow-satin dress for Merry when I go to get mine, and tell her how mean you are," said Juliet, frowning under her gilt-paper crown as she swept about in a red table-S cloth for train till the brocade arrived.

"Perhaps you'd like to have Mabel cut her hair off, so Merry can have that, too?" cried Susy, with whom hair was a tender point. "Light hair isn't wanted, so Ju will have to give hers, or you'd better borrow Miss Bat's frisette," added Mabel, with a scornful laugh.

"I just wish Miss Bat was here to give you girls a good shaking. Do let someone else have a chance at the glass, you peacock!" exclaimed Molly Loo, pushing Susy aside to arrange her own blue turban, out of which she plucked the pink pompon to give Merry. "Don't quarrel about me. I shall do well enough, and the scarlet shawl will hide my ugly dress," said Merry, from the corner, where she sat waiting for her turn at the mirror.

As she spoke of the shawl her eye went in search of it, and something that she saw in the other room put her own disappointment out of her head. Jill lay there all alone, rather tired with the lively chatter, and the effort it cost her not to repine

at being shut out from the great delight of dressing up and acting. Her eyes were closed, her net was off, and all the pretty black curls lay about her shoulders as one hand idly pulled them out, while the other rested on the red shawl, as if she loved its glowing color and soft texture. She was humming to herself the little song of the dove and the donjon, and something in the plaintive voice, the solitary figure, went straight to Merry's gentle heart.

"Poor Jilly can't have any of the fun," was the first thought; then came a second, that made Merry start and smile, and in a minute whisper so that all but Jill could hear her, "Girls, I'm not going to be the Princess. But I've thought of a splendid one!"

'Who?" asked the rest, staring at one another, much surprised by this sudden announcement.

"Hush! Speak low, or you will spoil it all. Look in the Bird Room, and tell me if that isn't a prettier Princess than I could make?" They all looked, but no one spoke, and Merry added, with sweet eagerness, "It is the only thing poor Jill can be, and it would make her so happy; Jack would like it, and it would please everyone, I know. Perhaps she will never walk again, so we ought to be very good to her, poor dear."

The last words, whispered with a little quiver in the voice, settled the matter better than hours of talking, for girls are tenderhearted creatures, and not one of these but would have gladly given all the

pretty things she owned to see Jill dancing about well and strong again. Like a ray of sunshine the kind thought touched and brightened every face; envy, impatience, vanity, and discontent flew away like imps at the coming of the good fairy, and with one accord they all cried,
"It will be lovely; let us go and tell her!"

Forgetting their own adornment, out they trooped after Merry, who ran to the sofa, saying, with a smile which was reflected in all the other faces, "Jill, dear, we have chosen another Princess, and I know you'll like her."

"Who is it?" asked Jill, languidly, opening her eyes without the least suspicion of the truth.

"I'll show you"; and taking the cherished veil from her own head, Merry dropped it like a soft cloud over Jill; Annette added the long plume, Susy laid the white silk dress about her, while Juliet and Mabel lifted the scarlet shawl to spread it over the foot of the sofa, and Molly tore the last ornament from her turban, a silver star, to shine on Jill's breast. Then they all took hands and danced round the couch, singing, as they laughed at her astonishment, "There she is! There she is! Princess Jill as fine as you please!

"Do you really mean it? But can I? Is it fair? How sweet of you! Come here and let me hug you all!" cried Jill, in a rapture at the surprise, and the pretty way in which it was done.

The grand scene on the Twenty-second was very fine, indeed; but the little tableau of that minute was infinitely better, though no one saw it, as Jill tried to gather them all in her arms, for that nosegay of girlish faces was the sweeter, because each one bad sacrificed her own little vanity to please a friend, and her joy was reflected in the eyes that sparkled round the happy Princess. "Oh, you dear, kind things, to think of me and give me all your best clothes! I never shall forget it, and I'll do anything for you. Yes! I'll write and ask Mrs. Piper to lend us her ermine cloak for the king. See if I don't!"

Shrieks of delight hailed this noble offer, for no one had dared to borrow the much-coveted mantle, but all agreed that the old lady would not refuse Jill. It was astonishing how smoothly everything went after this, for each was eager to help, admire, and suggest, in the friendliest way; and when all were dressed, the boys found a party of very gay ladies waiting for them round the couch, where lay the brightest little Princess ever seen.

"Oh, Jack, I'm to act! Wasn't it dear of the girls to choose me? Don't they look lovely? Aren't you glad?" cried Jill, as the lads stared and the lasses blushed and smiled, well pleased at the frank admiration the boyish faces showed.

"I guess I am! You are a set of trumps, and we'll give you a first-class spread after the play to pay for it. Won't we, fellows?" answered Jack, much gratified, and feeling that now he could act

his own part capitally.

"We will. It was a handsome thing to do, and we think well of you for it. Hey, Gus?" and Frank nodded approvingly at all, though he looked only at Annette.

"As king of this crowd, I call it to order," said Gus, retiring to the throne, where Juliet sat laughing in her red table-cloth.

"We'll have 'The Fair One with Golden Locks' next time; I promise you that," whispered Ed to Mabel, whose shining hair streamed over her blue dress like a mantle of gold-colored silk.

"Girls are pretty nice things, aren't they? Kind of 'em to take Jill in. Don't Molly look fine, though?" and Grif's black eyes twinkled as he planned to pin her skirts to Merry's at the first opportunity. "Susy looks as gay as a feather-duster. I like her. She never snubs a fellow," said Joe, much impressed with the splendor of the court ladies.

The boys' costumes were not yet ready, but they posed well, and all had a merry time, ending with a game of blind-man's-buff, in which everyone caught the right person in the most singular way, and all agreed as they went home in the moonlight that it had been an ususually jolly meeting.

So the fairy play woke the sleeping beauty that lies in all of us,

and makes us lovely when we rouse it with a kiss of unselfish good-will, for, though the girls did not know it then, they had adorned themselves with pearls more precious than the waxen ones they'd ecked their Princess in.