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JACK *and* JILL

LOUISA · M · ALCOTT

Part 2

Chapters 11-16

Chapter 11 - "Down Brakes"

The greatest people have their weak points, and the best-behaved boys now and then yield to temptation and get into trouble, as everybody knows. Frank was considered a remarkably well-bred and proper lad, and rather prided himself on his good reputation, for he never got into scrapes like the other fellows. Well, hardly ever, for we must confess that at rare intervals his besetting sin overcame his prudence, and he proved himself an erring, human boy. Steam-engines had been his idols for years, and they alone could lure him from the path of virtue. Once, in trying to investigate the mechanism of a toy specimen, which had its little boiler and ran about whistling and puffing in the most delightful way, he nearly set the house afire by the sparks that dropped on the straw carpet. Another time, in trying experiments with the kitchen tea-kettle, he blew himself up, and the scars of that explosion he still carried on his hands.

He was long past such childish amusements now, but his favorite haunt was the engine-house of the new railroad, where he observed the habits of his pets with never-failing interest, and cultivated the good-will of stokers and brakemen till they allowed him many liberties, and were rather flattered by the admiration expressed for their iron horses by a young gentleman who liked them better even than his Greek and Latin.

There was not much business doing on this road as yet, and the two cars of the passenger-trains were often nearly empty, though full freight-trains rolled from the factory to the main road, of which this was only a branch. So things went on in a leisurely manner, which gave Frank many opportunities of pursuing his favorite pastime. He soon knew all about No. ii, his pet engine, and had several rides on it with Bill, the engineer, so that he felt at home there, and privately resolved that when he was a rich man he would have a road of his own, and run trains as often as he liked.

Gus took less interest than his friend in the study of steam, but usually accompanied him when he went over after school to disport himself in the engine-house, interview the stoker, or see if there was anything new in the way of brakes.

One afternoon they found No. 11 on the side-track, puffing away as if enjoying a quiet smoke before starting. No cars were attached, and no driver was to be seen, for Bill was off with the other men behind the station-house, helping the expressman, whose horse had backed down a bank and upset the wagon. "Good chance for a look at the old lady," said Frank, speaking of the engine as Bill did, and jumping aboard with great satisfaction, followed by Gus.

"I'd give ten dollars if I could run her up to the bend and back," he added, fondly touching the bright brass knobs and glancing at

the fire with a critical eye.

"You couldn't do it alone," answered Gus, sitting down on the grimy little perch, willing to indulge his mate's amiable weakness.

"Give me leave to try? Steam is up, and I could do it as easy as not"; and Frank put his hand on the throttle-valve, as if daring Gus to give the word.

"Fire up and make her hum!" laughed Gus, quoting Bill's frequent order to his mate, but with no idea of being obeyed.

"All right; I'll just roll her up to the switch and back again. I've often done it with Bill"; and Frank cautiously opened the throttle-valve, threw back the lever, and the great thing moved with a throb and a puff.

"Steady, old fellow, or you'll come to grief. Here, don't open that!" shouted Gus, for just at that moment Joe appeared at the switch, looking ready for mischief.

"Wish he would; no train for twenty minutes, and we could run up to the bend as well as not," said Frank, getting excited with the sense of power, as the monster obeyed his hand so entirely that it was impossible to resist prolonging the delight.

"By George, he has! Stop her! Back her! Hold on, Frank!" cried Gus, as Joe, only catching the words "Open that!" obeyed, without the least idea that they would dare to leave the siding.

But they did, for Frank rather lost his head for a minute, and out upon the main track rolled No. 11 as quietly as a well-trained horse taking a familiar road.

"Now you've done it! I'll give you a good thrashing when I get back!" roared Gus, shaking his fist at Joe, who stood staring, half-pleased, half-scared, at what he had done.

"Are you really going to try it?" asked Gus, as they glided on with increasing speed, and he, too, felt the charm of such a novel adventure, though the consequences bid fair to be serious.

"Yes, I am," answered Frank, with the grim look he always wore when his strong will got the upper hand. "Bill will give it to us, anyway, so we may as well have our fun out. If you are afraid, I'll slow down and you can jump off," and his brown eyes sparkled with the double delight of getting his heart's desire and astonishing his friend at the same time by his skill and coolness.

"Go ahead. I'll jump when you do"; and Gus calmly sat down again, bound in honor to stand by his mate till the smash came, though rather dismayed at the audacity of the prank.

"Don't you call this just splendid?" exclaimed Frank, as they rolled along over the crossing, past the bridge, toward the curve, a mile from the station.

"Not bad. They are yelling like mad after us. Better go back, if you can," said Gus, who was anxiously peering out, and, in spite of his efforts to seem at ease, not enjoying the trip a particle.

"Let them yell. I started to go to the curve, and I'll do it if it costs me a hundred dollars. No danger; there's no train under twenty minutes, I tell you," and Frank pulled out his watch. But the sun was in his eyes, and he did not see clearly, or he would have discovered that it was later than he thought.

On they went, and were just rounding the bend when a shrill whistle in front startled both boys, and drove the color out of their cheeks.

"It's the factory train!" cried Gus, in a husky tone, as he sprang to his feet.

"No; it's the five-forty on the other road," answered Frank, with a queer thrill all through him at the thought of what might happen if it was not. Both looked straight ahead as the last tree glided by, and the long track lay before them, with the freight train slowly coming down. For an instant, the boys stood as if paralyzed.

"Jump!" said Gus, looking at the steep bank on one side and the river on the other, undecided which to try.

"Sit still!" commanded Frank, collecting his wits, as he gave a warning whistle to retard the on-coming train, while he reversed the engine and went back faster than he came.

A crowd of angry men was waiting for them, and Bill stood at the open switch in a towering passion as No. 11 returned to her place unharmed, but bearing two pale and frightened boys, who stepped slowly and silently down, without a word to say for themselves, while the freight train rumbled by on the main track.

Frank and Gus never had a very clear idea as to what occurred during the next few minutes, but vaguely remembered being well shaken, sworn at, questioned, threatened with direful penalties, and finally ordered off the premises forever by the wrathful depot-master. Joe was nowhere to be seen, and as the two culprits walked away, trying to go steadily, while their heads spun round, and all the strength seemed to have departed from their legs, Frank said, in an exhausted tone,
"Come down to the boat-house and rest a minute."

Both were glad to get out of sight, and dropped upon the steps red, rumpled, and breathless, after the late exciting scene. Gus generously forebore to speak, though he felt that he was the least

to blame; and Frank, after eating a bit of snow to moisten his dry lips, said, handsomely,
"Now, don't you worry, old man. I'll pay the damages, for it was my fault. Joe will dodge, but I won't, so make your mind easy.

"We sha'n't hear the last of this in a hurry," responded Gus, relieved, yet anxious, as he thought of the reprimand his father would give him.

"I hope mother won't hear of it till I tell her quietly myself. She will be so frightened, and think I'm surely smashed up, if she is told in a hurry"; and Frank gave a shiver, as all the danger he had run came over him suddenly.

"I thought we were done for when we saw that train. Guess we should have been if you had not had your wits about you. I always said you were a cool one"; and Gus patted Frank's back with a look of great admiration, for, now that it was all over, he considered it a very remarkable performance.

"Which do you suppose it will be, fine or imprisonment?" asked Frank, after sitting in a despondent attitude for a moment.

"Shouldn't wonder if it was both. Running off with an engine is no joke, you know."

'What did possess me to be such a fool?" groaned Frank,

repenting, all too late, of yielding to the temptation which assailed him.

"Bear up, old fellow, I'll stand by you; and if the worst comes, I'll call as often as the rules of the prison allow," said Gus, consolingly, as he gave his afflicted friend an arm, and they walked away, both feeling that they were marked men from that day forth.

Meantime, Joe, as soon as he recovered from the shock of seeing the boys actually go off, ran away, as fast as his legs could carry him, to prepare Mrs. Minot for the ioss of her son; for the idea of their coming safely back never occurred to him, his knowledge of engines being limited. A loud ring at the bell brought Mrs. Pecq, who was guarding the house, while Mrs. Minot entertained a parlor full of company.

"Frank's run off with No. 11, and he'll be killed sure. Thought I'd come up and tell you," stammered Joe, all out of breath and looking wild.

He got no further, for Mrs. Pecq clapped one hand over his mouth, caught him by the collar with the other, and hustled him into the ante-room before anyone else could hear the bad news.

"Tell me all about it, and don't shout. What's come to the boy?" she demanded, in a tone that reduced Joe to a whisper at once.

"Go right back and see what has happened to him, then come and tell me quietly. I'll wait for you here. I wouldn't have his mother startled for the world," said the good soul, when she knew all.

"Oh, I dar'sn't! I opened the switch as they told me to, and Bill will half kill me when he knows it!" cried Joe, in a panic, as the awful consequences of his deed rose before him, showing both boys mortally injured and several trains wrecked.

"Then take yourself off home and hold your tongue. I'll watch the door, for I won't have any more ridiculous boys tearing in to disturb my lady."

Mrs. Pecq often called this good neighbor "my lady" when speaking of her, for Mrs. Minot was a true gentlewoman, and much pleasanter to live with than the titled mistress had been. Joe scudded away as if the constable was after him, and presently Frank was seen slowly approaching with an unusually sober face and a pair of very dirty hands.

"Thank heaven, he's safe!" and, softly opening the door, Mrs. Pecq actually hustled the young master into the ante-room as unceremoniously as she had hustled Joe.

"I beg pardon, but the parlor is full of company, and that fool of a Joe came roaring in with a cock-and-bull story that gave me quite a turn. What is it, Mr. Frank?" she asked eagerly, seeing that

something was amiss.

He told her in a few words, and she was much relieved to find that no harm had been done.

"Ah, the danger is to come," said Frank, darkly, as be went away to wash his hands and prepare to relate his misdeeds.

It was a very bad quarter of an hour for the poor fellow, who so seldom had any grave faults to confess; but he did it manfully, and his mother was so grateful for the safety of her boy that she found it difficult to be severe enough, and contented herself with forbidding any more visits to the too charming No. 11.

"What do you suppose will be done to me?" asked Frank, on whom the idea of imprisonment had made a deep impression.

"I don't know, dear, but I shall go over to see Mr. Burton right after tea. He will tell us what to do and what to expect. Gus must not suffer for your fault."

"He'll come off clear enough, but Joe must take his share, for if he hadn't opened that confounded switch, no harm would have been done. But when I saw the way clear, I actually couldn't resist going ahead," said Frank, getting excited again at the memory of that blissful moment when he started the engine.

Here Jack came hurrying in, having heard the news, and refused to believe it from any lips but Frank's. When he could no longer doubt, he was so much impressed with the daring of the deed that he had nothing but admiration for his brother, till a sudden thought made him clap his hands and exclaim exultingly, "His runaway beats mine all hollow, and now he can't crow over me! Won't that be a comfort? The good boy has got into a scrape. Hooray!"

This was such a droll way of taking it, that they had to laugh; and Frank took his humiliation so meekly that Jack soon fell to comforting him, instead of crowing over him.

Jill thought it a most interesting event; and, when Frank and his mother went over to consult Mr. Burton, she and Jack planned out for the dear culprit a dramatic trial which would have convulsed the soberest of judges. His sentence was ten years' imprisonment, and such heavy fines that the family would have been reduced to beggary but for the sums made by Jill's fancy work and Jack's success as a champion pedestrian.

They found such comfort and amusement in this sensational programme that they were rather disappointed when Frank returned, reporting that a fine would probably be all the penalty exacted, as no harm had been done, and he and Gus were such respectable boys. What would happen to Joe, he could not tell, but he thought a good whipping ought to be added to his share.

Of course, the affair made a stir in the little world of children; and when Frank went to school, feeling that his character for good behavior was forever damaged, he found himself a lion, and was in danger of being spoiled by the admiration of his comrades, who pointed him out with pride as "the fellow who ran off with a steam-engine."

But an interview with Judge Kemble, a fine of twenty-five dollars, and lectures from all the grown people of his acquaintance, prevented him from regarding his escapade as a feat to boast of. He discovered, also, how fickle a thing is public favor, for very soon those who had praised began to tease, and it took all his courage, patience, and pride to carry him through the next week or two. The lads were never tired of alluding to No. 11, giving shrill whistles in his ear, asking if his watch was right, and drawing locomotives on the blackboard whenever they got a chance.

The girls, too, had sly nods and smiles, hints and jokes of a milder sort, which made him color and fume, and once lose his dignity entirely. Molly Loo, who dearly loved to torment the big boys, and dared attack even solemn Frank, left one of Boo's old tin trains on the door-step, directed to "Conductor Minot," who, I regret to say, could not refrain from kicking it into the Street, and slamming the door with a bang that shook the house. Shrieks of laughter from wicked Molly and her coadjutor, Grif, greeted this explosion of wrath, which did no good, however, for half an hour

later the same cars, all in a heap, were on the steps again, with two headless dolls tumbling out of the cab, and the dilapidated engine labelled, "No. 11 after the collision."

No one ever saw that ruin again, and for days Frank was utterly unconscious of Molly's existence, as propriety forbade his having it out with her as he had with Grif. Then Annette made peace between them, and the approach of the Twenty-second gave the wags something else to think of.

But it was long before Frank forgot that costly prank; for he was a thoughtful boy, who honestly wanted to be good; so he remembered this episode humbly, and whenever he felt the approach of temptation he made the strong will master it, saying to himself "Down brakes!" thus saving the precious freight he carried from many of the accidents which befall us when we try to run our trains without orders, and so often wreck ourselves as well as others.

Chapter 12 - The Twenty-Second of February

Of course, the young ladies and gentlemen had a ball on the evening of that day, but the boys and girls were full of excitement about their "Scenes from the Life of Washington and other brilliant tableaux," as the programme announced. The Bird Room was the theatre, being very large, with four doors conveniently placed. Ralph was in his element, putting up a little stage, drilling boys, arranging groups, and uniting in himself carpenter, scene-painter, manager, and gas man. Mrs. Minot permitted the house to be turned topsy-turvy, and Mrs. Pecq flew about, lending a hand everywhere. Jill was costumer, with help from Miss Delano, who did not care for balls, and kindly took charge of the girls. Jack printed tickets, programmes, and placards of the most imposing sort, and the work went gayly on till all was ready.

When the evening came, the Bird Room presented a fine appearance. One end was curtained off with red drapery; and real footlights, with tin shades, gave a truly theatrical air to the little stage. Rows of chairs, filled with mammas and little people, occupied the rest of the space. The hall and Frank's room were full of amused papas, uncles, and old gentlemen whose patriotism brought them out in spite of rheumatism. There was a great rustling of skirts, fluttering of fans, and much lively chat, till a bell rang and the orchestra struck up.

Yes, there really was an orchestra, for Ed declared that the national airs must be played, or the whole thing would be a failure. So he had exerted himself to collect all the musical talent he could find, a horn, a fiddle, and a flute, with drum and fife for the martial scenes. Ed looked more beaming than ever, as he waved his baton and led off with Yankee Doodle as a safe beginning, for everyone knew that. It was fun to see little Johnny Cooper bang away on a big drum, and old Mr. Munson, who had been a flEer all his days, blow till he was as red as a lobster, while everyone kept time to the music which put them all in good spirits for the opening scene.

Up went the curtain and several trees in tubs appeared, then a stately gentleman in small clothes, cocked hat, gray wig, and an imposing cane, came slowly walking in. It was Gus, who had been unanimously chosen not only for Washington but for the f ather of the hero also, that the family traits of long legs and a somewhat massive nose might be preserved.

"Ahem! My trees are doing finely," observed Mr. W., senior, strolling along with his hands behind him, casting satisfied glances at the dwarf orange, oleander, abutilon, and little pine that represented his orchard.

Suddenly he starts, pauses, frowns, and, after examining the latter shrub, which displayed several hacks in its stem and a

broken limb with six red-velvet cherries hanging on it, he gave a thump with his cane that made the little ones jump, and cried out, "Can it have been my son?"

He evidently thought it was, for he called, in tones of thunder, "George! George Washington, come hither this moment!"

Great suspense on the part of the audience, then a general burst of laughter as Boo trotted in, a perfect miniature of his honored parent, knee breeches, cocked hat, shoe buckles and all. He was so fat that the little tails of his coat stuck out in the drollest way, his chubby legs could hardly carry the big buckles, and the rosy face displayed, when he took his hat off with a dutiful bow, was so solemn, the real George could not have looked more anxious when he gave the immortal answer.

"Sirrah, did you cut that tree?" demanded the papa, with another rap of the cane, and such a frown that poor Boo looked dismayed, till Molly wispered, "Put your hand up, dear." Then he remembered his part, and, putting one finger in his mouth, looked down at his square-toed shoes, the image of a shame-stricken boy.

"My son, do not deceive me. If you have done this deed I shall chastise you, for it is my duty not to spare the rod, lest I spoil the child. But if you lie about it you disgrace the name of Washington forever."

This appeal seemed to convulse George with inward agony, for he squirmed most effectively as he drew from his pocket a toy hatchet, which would not have cut a straw, then looking straight up into the awe-inspiring countenance of his parent, he bravely lisped,
"Papa, I tannot tell a lie. I'd id tut it with my little hanchet."

"Noble boy--come to my arms! I had rather you spoilt all my cherry trees than tell one lie!" cried the delighted gentleman, catching his son in an embrace so close that the fat legs kicked convulsively, and the little coat-tails waved in the breeze, while cane and hatchet fell with a dramatic bang.

The curtain descended on this affccting tableau; but the audience called out both Washingtons, and they came, hand in hand, bowing with the cocked hats pressed to their breasts, the elder smiling blandly, while the younger, still flushed by his exertions, nodded to his friends, asking, with engaging frankness, "Wasn't it nice?"

The next was a marine piece, for a boat was seen, surrounded by tumultuous waves of blue cambric, and rowed by a party of stalwart men in regimentals, who with difficulty kept their seats, for the boat was only a painted board, and they sat on boxes or stools behind it. But few marked the rowers, for in their midst, tall, straight, and steadfast as a mast, stood one figure in a cloak, with folded arms, high boots, and, under the turned-up hat, a

noble countenance, stern with indomitable courage. A sword glittered at his side, and a banner waved over him, but his eye was fixed on the distant shore, and he was evidently unconscious of the roaring billows, the blocks of ice, the discouragement of his men, or the danger and death that might await him. Napoleon crossing the Alps was not half so sublime, and with one voice the audiencc cried, 'Washington crossing the Delaware!" while the band burst forth with, "See, the conquering hero comes!" all out of tune, but bound to play it or die in the attempt.

It would have been very successful if, all of a sudden, one of the rowers had not "caught a crab" with disastrous consequences. The oars were not moving, but a veteran, who looked very much like Joe, dropped the one he held, and in trying to turn and pummel the black-eyed warrior behind him, he tumbled off his seat, upsetting two other men, and pulling the painted boat upon them as they lay kicking in the cambric deep. Shouts of laughter greeted this mishap, but George Washington never stirred. Grasping the banner, he stood firm when all else went down in the general wreck, and the icy waves engulfed his gallant crew, leaving him erect amid a chaos of wildly tossing boots, entangled oars, and red-faced victims. Such god-like dignity could not fail to impress the frivolous crowd of laughers, and the curtain fell amid a round of applause for him alone.

"Quite exciting, wasn't it? Didn't know Gus had so much presence of mind," said Mr. Burton, well pleased with his boy.

"If we did not know that Washington died in his bed, December 14, 1799, I should fear that we'd seen the last of him in that shipwreck," laughed an old gentleman, proud of his memory for dates.

Much confusion reigned behind the scenes; Ralph was heard scolding, and Joe set everyone off again by explaining, audibly, that Grif tickled him, and he couldn't stand it. A pretty, old-fashioned picture of the "Daughters of Liberty" followed, for the girls were determined to do honor to the brave and patient women who so nobly bore their part in the struggle, yet are usually forgotten when those days are celebrated. The damsels were charming in the big caps, flowered gowns, and high-heeled shoes of their great-grandmothers, as they sat about a spider-legged table talking over the tax, and pledging themselves to drink no more tea till it was taken off. Molly was on her feet proposing, "Liberty forever, and down with all tyrants," to judge from her flashing eyes as she held her egg-shell cup aloft, while the others lifted theirs to drink the toast, and Merry, as hostess, sat with her hand on an antique teapot, labelled "Sage," ready to fill again when the patriotic ladies were ready for a second "dish."

This was much applauded, and the curtain went up again, for the proud parents enjoyed seeing their pretty girls in the faded finery of a hundred years ago. The band played "Auld Lang Syne," as a gentle hint that our fore-mothers should be remembered as well as the fore-fathers.

It was evident that something very martial was to follow, for a great tramping, clashing, and flying about took place behind the scenes while the tea-party was going on. After some delay, "The Surrender of Cornwallis" was presented in the most superb manner, as you can believe when I tell you that the stage was actually lined with a glittering array of Washington and his generals, Lafayette, Kosciusko, Rochambeau and the rest, all in astonishing uniforms, with swords which were evidently the pride of their lives. Fife and drum struck up a march, and in came Cornwallis, much cast down but full of manly resignation, as he surrendered his sword, and stood aside with averted eyes while his army marched past, piling their arms at the hero's feet.

This scene was the delight of the boys, for the rifles of Company F had been secured, and at least a dozen soldiers kept filing in and out in British uniform till Washington's august legs were hidden by the heaps of arms rattled down before him. The martial music, the steady tramp, and the patriotic memories awakened, caused this scene to be enthusiastically encored, and the boys would have gone on marching till midnight if Ralph had not peremptorily ordered down the curtain and cleared the stage for the next tableau.

This had been artfully slipped in between two brilliant ones, to show that the Father of his Country had to pay a high price for his glory. The darkened stage represented what seemed to be a camp in a snow-storm, and a very forlorn camp, too; for on "the cold,

cold ground" (a reckless display of cotton batting) lay ragged soldiers, sleeping without blankets, their worn-out boots turned up pathetically, and no sign of food or fire to be seen. A very shabby sentinel, with feet bound in bloody cloths, and his face as pale as chalk could make it, gnawed a dry crust as he kept his watch in the wintry night.

A tent at the back of the stage showed a solitary figure sitting on a log of wood, poring over the map spread upon his knee, by the light of one candle stuck in a bottle. There could be no doubt who this was, for the buff-and-blue coat, the legs, the nose, the attitude, all betrayed the great George laboring to save his country, in spite of privations, discouragements, and dangers which would have daunted any other man.

"Valley Forge," said someone, and the room was very still as old and young looked silently at this little picture of a great and noble struggle in one of its dark hours. The crust, the wounded feet, the rags, the snow, the loneliness, the indomitable courage and endurance of these men touched the hearts of all, for the mimic scene grew real for a moment; and, when a child's voice broke the silence, asking pitifully, "Oh, mamma, was it truly as dreadful as that?" a general outburst answered, as if everyone wanted to cheer up the brave fellows and bid them fight on, for victory was surely coming.

In the next scene it did come, and "Washington at Trenton" was

prettily done. An arch of flowers crossed the stage, with the motto, "The Defender of the Mothers will be the Preserver of the Daughters"; and, as the hero with his generals advanced on one side, a troop of girls, in old-fashioned muslin frocks, came to scatter flowers before him, singing the song of long ago:

"Welcome, mighty chief, once more
Welcome to this grateful shore;
Now no mercenary foe
eyes as she held her egg-shell cup aloft, while the others lifted theirs to drink the toast, and Merry, as hostess, sat with her hand on an antique teapot, labelled "Sage," ready to fill again when the patriotic ladies were ready for a second "dish."

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Aims again the fatal blow,
Aims at thee the fatal blow.

"Virgins fair and matrons grave,
Those thy conquering arm did save,
Build for thee triumphal bowers;
Strew, ye fair, his way with flowers,
Strew your hero's -way with flowers."

And they did, singing with all their hearts as they flung artificial roses and lilies at the feet of the great men, who bowed with benign grace. Jack, who did Lafayette with a limp, covered himself with glory by picking up one of the bouquets and pressing it to his heart with all the gallantry of a Frenchman; and when Washington lifted the smallest of the maids and kissed her, the audience cheered. Couldn't help it, you know, it was so pretty and inspiring.

The Washington Family, after the famous picture, came next, with Annette as the serene and sensible Martha, in a very becoming cap. The General was in uniform, there being no time to change, but his attitude was quite correct, and the Custis boy and girl displayed the wide sash and ruffled collar with historic fidelity. The band played "Home," and everyone agreed that it was "Sweet!"

"Now I don't see what more they can have except the deathbed, and that would be rather out of place in this gay company," said the old gentleman to Mr. Burton, as he mopped his heated face after pounding so heartily he nearly knocked the ferule off his cane.

"No; they gave that up, for my boy wouldn't wear a night-gown in public. I can't tell secrets, but I think they have got a very clever little finale for the first part--a pretty compliment to one person and a pleasant surprise to all," answered Mr. Burton, who

was in great spirits, being fond of theatricals and very justly proud of his children, for the little girls had been among the Trenton maids, and the mimic General had kissed his own small sister, Nelly, very tenderly.

A great deal of interest was felt as to what this surprise was to be, and a general "Oh!" greeted the "Minute Man," standing motionless upon his pedestal. It was Frank, and Ralph had done his best to have the figure as perfect as possible, for the maker of the original had been a good friend to him; and, while the young sculptor was dancing gayly at the ball, this copy of his work was doing him honor among the children. Frank looked it very well, for his firm-set mouth was full of resolution, his eyes shone keen and courageous under the three-cornered hat, and the muscles stood out upon the bare arm that clutched the old gun. Even the buttons on the gaiters seemed to flash defiance, as the sturdy legs took the first step from the furrow toward the bridge where the young farmer became a hero when he "fired the shot heard 'round the world."

"That is splendid!" "As like to the original as flesh can be to bronze." "How still he stands!" "He'll fight when the time comes, and die hard, won't he?" "Hush! You make the statue blush!" These very audible remarks certainly did, for the color rose visibly as the modest lad heard himself praised, though he saw but one face in all the crowd, his mother's, far back, but full of love and pride, as she looked up at her young minute man waiting for the

battle which often calls us when we least expect it, and for which she had done her best to make him ready.

If there had been any danger of Frank being puffed up by the success of his statue, it was counteracted by irrepressible Grif, who, just at the most interesting moment, when all were gazing silently, gave a whistle, followed by a "Choo, choo, choo!" and "All aboard!" so naturally that no one could mistake the joke, especially as another laughing voice added, "Now, then, No. 11!" which brought down the house and the curtain too.

Frank was so angry, it was very difficult to keep him on his perch for the last scene of all. He submitted, however, rather than spoil the grand finale, hoping that its beauty would efface that ill-timed pleasantry from the public mind. So, when the agreeable clamor of hands and voices called for a repetition, the Minute Man reappeared, grimmer than before. But not alone, for grouped all about his pedestal were Washington and his generals, the matrons and maids, with a background of troops shouldering arms, Grif and Joe doing such rash things with their muskets, that more than one hero received a poke in his august back. Before the full richness of this picture had been taken in, Ed gave a rap, and all burst out with "Hail Columbia," in such an inspiring style that it was impossible for the audience to refrain from joining, which they did, all standing and all singing with a heartiness that made the walls ring. The fife shrilled, the horn blew sweet and clear, the fiddle was nearly drowned by the energetic boom of the drum,

and out into the starry night, through open windows, rolled the song that stirs the coldest heart with patriotic warmth and tunes every voice to music.

"'America!' We must have 'America!' Pipe up, Ed, this is too good to end without one song more," cried Mr. Burton, who had been singing like a trumpet; and, hardly waiting to get their breath, off they all went again with the national hymn, singing as they never had sung it before, for somehow the little scenes they had just acted or beheld seemed to show how much this dear America of ours had cost in more than one revolution, how full of courage, energy, and virtue it was in spite of all its faults, and what a privilege, as well as duty, it was for each to do his part toward its safety and its honor in the present, as did those brave men and women in the past.

So the "Scenes from the Life of Washington" were a great success, and, when the songs were over, people were glad of a brief recess while they had raptures, and refreshed themselves with lemonade.

The girls had kept the secret of who the "Princess" was to be, and, when the curtain rose, a hum of surprise and pleasure greeted the pretty group. Jill lay asleep in all her splendor, the bonny "Prince" just lifting the veil to wake her with a kiss, and all about them the court in its nap of a hundred years. The "King" and "Queen" dozing comfortably on the throne; the maids of

honor, like a garland of nodding flowers, about the couch; the little page, unconscious of the blow about to fall, and the fool dreaming, with his mouth wide open.

It was so pretty, people did not tire of looking, till Jack's lame leg began to tremble, and he whispered: "Drop her or I shall pitch." Down went the curtain; but it rose in a moment, and there was the court after the awakening: the "King" and "Queen" looking about them with sleepy dignity, the maids in various attitudes of surprise, the fool grinning from ear to ear, and the "Princess" holding out her hand to the "Prince," as if glad to welcome the right lover when he came at last.

Molly got the laugh this time, for she could not resist giving poor Boo the cuff which had been hanging over him so long. She gave it with unconscious energy, and Boo cried "Ow!" so naturally that all the children were delighted and wanted it repeated. But Boo declined, and the scenes which followed were found quite as much to their taste, having been expressly prepared for the little people.

Mother Goose's Reception was really very funny, for Ralph was the old lady, and had hired a representation of the immortal bird from a real theatre for this occasion. There they stood, the dame in her pointed hat, red petticoat, cap, and cane, with the noble fowl, a good deal larger than life, beside her, and Grif inside, enjoying himself immensely as he flapped the wings, moved the

yellow legs, and waved the long neck about, while unearthly quacks issued from the bill. That was a great surprise for the children, and they got up in their seats to gaze their fill, many of them firmly believing that they actually beheld the blessed old woman who wrote the nursery songs they loved so well.

Then in came, one after another, the best of the characters she has made famous, while a voice behind the scenes sang the proper rhyme as each made their manners to the interesting pair. "Mistress Mary," and her "pretty maids all in a row," passed by to their places in the background; "King Cole" and his "fiddlers three" made a goodly show; so did the royal couple, who followed the great pie borne before them, with the "four-and-twenty blackbirds" popping their heads out in the most delightful way.

Little "Bo-Peep" led a wooiiy lamb and wept over its lost tail, for not a sign of one appeared on the poor thing. "Simple Simon" followed the pie-man, gloating over his wares with the drollest antics. The little wife came trundling by in a wheelbarrow and was not upset; neither was the lady with "rings on her fingers and bells on her toes," as she cantered along on a rocking-horse. "Bobby Shafto's" yellow hair shone finely as he led in the maid whom he came back from sea to marry. "Miss Muffet," bowl in hand, ran away from an immense black spider, which waggled its long legs in a way so life-like that some of the children shook in their little shoes. The beggars who came to town were out in full force, "rags, tags, and velvet gowns," quite true to life. "Boy

Blue" rubbed his eyes, with hay sticking in his hair, and tooted on a tin horn as if bound to get the cows out of the corn. Molly, with a long-handled frying-pan, made a capital "Queen," in a tucked-up gown, checked apron, and high crown, to good "King Arthur," who, very properly, did not appear after stealing the barley-meal, which might be seen in the pan tied up in a pudding, like a cannon-ball, ready to fry.

But Tobias, Molly's black cat, covered himself with glory by the spirit with which he acted his part in,
"Sing, sing, what shall I sing?
The cat's run away with the pudding-bag string."

First he was led across the stage on his hind legs, looking very fierce and indignant, with a long tape trailing behind him; and, being set free at the proper moment, he gave one bound over the four-and-twenty blackbirds who happened to be in the way, and dashed off as if an enraged cook had actually been after him, straight downstairs to the coal-bin, where he sat glaring in the dark, till the fun was over.

When all the characters had filed in and stood in two long rows, music struck up and they'd anced, "All the way to Boston," a simple but lively affair, which gave each a chance to show his or her costume as they pranced down the middle and up outside. Such a funny medley as it was, for there went fat "King Cole" with the most ragged of the beggar-maids. "Mistress Mary," in

her pretty blue dress, tripped along with "Simple Simon" staring about him like a blockhead. The fine lady left her horse to dance with "Bobby Shafto" till every bell on her slippers tinkled its tongue out. "Bo-Peep" and a jolly fiddler skipped gayly up and down. "Miss Muffet" took the big spider for her partner, and made his many legs fly about in the wildest way. The little wife got out of the wheelbarrow to help "Boy Blue" along, and Molly, with the frying-pan over her shoulder, led off splendidly when it was "Grand right and left."

But the old lady and her goose were the best of all, for the dame's shoes-buckles cut the most astonishing pigeon-wings, and to see that mammoth bird waddle down the middle with its wings half open, its long neck bridling, and its yellow legs in the first position as it curtsied to its partner, was a sight to remember, it was so intensely funny.

The merry old gentleman laughed till he cried; Mr. Burton split his gloves, he applauded so enthusiastically; while the children beat the dust out of the carpet hopping up and down, as they cried: "Do it again!" "We want it all over!" when the curtain went down at last on the flushed and panting party, Mother G---- bowing, with her hat all awry, and the goose doing a double shuffle as if it did not know how to leave off.

But they could not "do it all over again," for it was growing late, and the people felt that they certainly had received their money's

worth that evening.

So it all ended merrily, and when the guests departed the boys cleared the room like magic, and the promised supper to the actors was served in handsome style. Jack and Jill were at one end, Mrs. Goose and her bird at the other, and all between was a comical collection of military heroes, fairy characters, and nursery celebrities. All felt the need of refreshment after their labors, and swept over the table like a flight of locusts, leaving devastation behind. But they had earned their fun: and much innocent jollity prevailed, while a few lingering papas and mammas watched the revel from afar, and had not the heart to order these noble beings home till even the Father of his Country declared "that he'd had a perfectly splendid time, but couldn't keep his eyes open another minute," and very wisely retired to replace the immortal cocked hat with a night-cap.

Chapter 13 - Jack Has a Mystery

"What is the matter? Does your head ache?" asked Jill, one evening in March, observing that Jack sat with his head in his hands, an attitude which, with him, meant either pain or perplexity.

"No; but I'm bothered. I want some money, and I don't see how I can earn it," he answered, tumbling his hair about, and frowning darkly at the fire.

"How much?" and Jill's ready hand went to the pocket where her little purse lay, for she felt rich with several presents lately made her.

"Two seventy-five. No, thank you, I won't borrow."

"What is it for?"

"Can't tell."

"Why, I thought you told me everything."

"Sorry, but I can't this time. Don't you worry; I shall think of something."

"Couldn't your mother help?"

"Don't wish to ask her."

"Why! can't she know?"

"Nobody can."

"How queer! Is it a scrape, Jack?" asked Jill, looking as curious as a magpie.

"It is likely to be, if I can't get out of it this week, somehow."

"Well, I don't see how I can help if I'm not to know anything"; and Jill seemed rather hurt.

"You can just stop asking questions, and tell me how a fellow can earn some money. That would help. I've got one dollar, but I must have some more"; and Jack looked worried as he fingered the little gold dollar on his watch-guard.

"Oh, do you mean to use that?"

"Yes, I do; a man must pay his debts if he sells all he has to do it," said Jack sternly.

"Dear me; it must be something very serious." And Jill lay quite

still for five minutes, thinking over all the ways in which Jack ever did earn money, for Mrs. Minot liked to have her boys work, and paid them in some way for all they did.

"Is there any wood to saw?" she asked presently, being very anxious to help.

"All done." "Paths to shovel?"

"NO snow. "Lawn to rake, then?"

"Not time for that yet."

"Catalogue of books?"

"Frank got that job."

"Copy those letters for your mother?"

"Take me too long. Must have my money Friday, if possible."
"I don't see what we can do, then. It is too early or too late for everything, and you won't borrow."

"Not of you. No, nor of anyone else, if I can possibly help it. I've promised to do this myself, and I will"; and Jack wagged his head resolutely.

"Couldn't you do something with the printing-press? Do me some cards, and then, perhaps, the other girls will want some," said Jill, as a forlorn hope.

"Just the thing! What a goose I was not to think of it. I'll rig the old machine up at once." And, starting from his seat, Jack dived into the big closet, dragged out the little press, and fell to oiling, dusting, and putting it in order, like one relieved of a great anxiety.

"Give me the types; I'll sort them and set up my name, so you can begin as soon as you are ready. You know what a help I was when we did the programmes. I'm almost sure the girls will want cards, and I know your mother would like some more tags," said Jill, briskly rattling the letters into the different compartments, while Jack inked the rollers and hunted up his big apron, whistling the while with recovered spirits.

A dozen neat cards were soon printed, and Jill insisted on paying six cents for them, as earning was not borrowing. A few odd tags were found and done for Mamma, who immediately ordered four dozen at six cents a dozen, though she was not told why there was such a pressing call for money.

Jack's monthly half-dollar had been spent the first week twenty-five cents for a concert, ten paid a fine for keeping a book too long from the library, ten more to have his knife ground, and five in

candy, for he dearly loved sweeties, and was under bonds to Mamma not to spend more than five cents a month on these unwholesome temptations. She never asked the boys what they did with their money, but expected them to keep account in the little books she gave them; and, now and then, they showed the neat pages with pardonable pride, though she often laughed at the queer items.

All that evening Jack & Co. worked busily, for when Frank came in he good-naturedly ordered some pale-pink cards for Annette, and ran to the store to choose the right shade, and buy some packages for the young printer also.

"What do you suppose he is in such a pucker for?" whispered Jill, as she set up the new name, to Frank, who sat close by, with one eye on his book and one on her.

"Oh, some notion. He's a queer chap; but I guess it isn't much of a scrape, or I should know it. He's so good-natured he's always promising to do things for people, and has too much pluck to give up when he finds he can't. Let him alone, and it will all come out soon enough," answered Frank, who laughed at his brother, but loved him none the less for the tender heart that often got the better of his young head.

But for once Frank was mistaken; the mystery did not come out, and Jack worked like a beaver all that week, as orders poured in

when Jill and Annette showed their elegant cards; for, as everybody knows, if one girl has a new thing all the rest must, whether it is a bow on the top of her head, a peculiar sort of pencil, or the latest kind of chewing-gum. Little play did the poor fellow get, for every spare minute was spent at the press, and no invitation could tempt him away, so much in earnest was our honest little Franklin about paying his debt. Jill helped all she could, and cheered his labors with her encouragement, remembering how he stayed at home for her.

"It is real good of you to lend a hand, and I'm ever so much obliged," said Jack, as the last order was struck off, and the drawer of the type-box held a pile of shining five and ten cent pieces, with two or three quarters.

"I love to; only it would be nicer if I knew what we were working for," she said demurely, as she scattered type for the last time; and seeing that Jack was both tired and grateful, hoped to get a hint of the secret.

"I want to tell you, dreadfully; but I can't, because I've promised."

"What, never?"

"Never!" and Jack looked as firm as a rock.

"Then I shall find out, for I haven't promised."

"You can't."

"See if I don't!"

"You are sharp, but you won't guess this. It's a tremendous secret, and nobody will tell it."

"You'll tell it yourself. You always do."

"I won't tell this. It would be mean."

"Wait and see; I can get anything out of you if I try"; and Jill laughed, knowing her power well, for Jack found it very hard to keep a secret from her.

"Don't try; please don't! It wouldn't be right, and you don't want to make me do a dishonorable thing for your sake, I know."
Jack looked so distressed that Jill promised not to make him tell, though she held herself free to find out in other ways, if she could.

Thus relieved, Jack trudged off to school on Friday with the two dollars and seventy-five cents jingling in his pocket, though the dear gold coin had to be sacrificed to make up the sum. He did his lessons badly that day, was late at recess in the afternoon, and, as soon as school was over, departed in his rubber boots "to take a walk," he said, though the roads were in a bad state with a spring

thaw. Nothing was seen of him till after tea-time, when he came limping in, very dirty and tired, but with a reposeful expression, which betrayed that a load was off his mind. Frank was busy about his own affairs and paid little attention to him, but Jill was on tenter-hooks to know where he had been, yet dared not ask the question.

"Merry's brother wants some cards. He liked hers so much he wishes to make his lady-love a present. Here's the name"; and Jill held up the order from Harry Grant, who was to be married in the autumn.

"Must wait till next week. I'm too tired to do a thing to-night, and I hate the sight of that old press," answered Jack, laying himself down upon the rug as if every joint ached.

"What made you take such a long walk? You look as tired as if you'd been ten miles," said Jill, hoping to discover the length of the trip.

"Had to. Four or five miles isn't much, only my leg bothered me"; and Jack gave the ailing member a slap, as if he had found it much in his way that day; for, though he had given up the crutches long ago, he rather missed their support sometimes. Then, with a great yawn, he stretched himself out to bask in the blaze, pillowing his head on his arms.

"Dear old thing, he looks all used up; I won't plague him with talking"; and Jill began to sing, as she often did in the twilight. By the time the first song ended a gentle snore was heard, and Jack lay fast asleep, worn out with the busy week and the walk, which had been longer and harder than anyone guessed. Jill took up her knitting and worked quietly by firelight, still wondering and guessing what the secret could be; for she had not much to amuse her, and little things were very interesting if connected with her friends. Presently Jack rolled over and began to mutter in his sleep, as he often did when too weary for sound slumber. Jill paid no attention till he uttered a name which made her prick up her ears and listen to the hroken sentences which followed. Only a few words, but she dropped her work, saying to herself,
"I do believe he is talking about the secret. Now I shall find out, and he will tell me himself, as I said he would."

Much pleased, she leaned and listened, but could make no sense of the confused babble about "heavy boots"; "All right, old fellow"; "Jerry's off"; and "The ink is too thick."

The slam of the front door woke Jack, and he pulled himself up, declaring that he believed he had been having a nap.

"I wish you'd have another," said Jill, greatly disappointed at the loss of the intelligence she seemed to be so near getting.

"Floor is too hard for tired bones. Guess I'll go to bed and get

rested up for Monday. I've worked like fury this week, so next I'm going in for fun"; and, little dreaming what hard times were in store for him, Jack went off to enjoy his warm bath and welcome bed, where he was soon sleeping with the serene look of one whose dreams were happy, whose conscience was at rest.
"I have a few words to say to you before you go," said Mr. Acton, pausing with his hand on the bell, Monday afternoon, when the hour came for dismissing school.

The bustle of putting away books and preparing for as rapid a departure as propriety allowed, subsided suddenly, and the boys and girls sat as still as mice, while the hearts of such as had been guilty of any small sins began to beat fast.

"You remember that we had some trouble last winter about keeping the boys away from the saloon, and that a rule was made forbidding any pupil to go to town during recess?" began Mr. Acton, who, being a conscientious man as well as an excellent teacher, felt that he was responsible for the children in school hours, and did his best to aid parents in guarding them from the few temptations which beset them in a country town. A certain attractive little shop, where confectionery, baseballs, stationery, and picture papers were sold, was a favorite loafing place for some of the boys till the rule forbidding it was made, because in the rear of the shop was a beer and billiard saloon. A wise rule, for the picture papers were not always of the best sort; cigars were to be had; idle fellows hung about there, and some of the lads, who

wanted to be thought manly, ventured to pass the green baize door "just to look on."

A murmur answered the teacher's question, and he continued, "You all know that the rule was broken several times, and I told you the next offender would be publicly reprimanded, as private punishments had no effect. I am sorry to say that the time has come, and the offender is a boy whom I trusted entirely. It grieves me to do this, but I must keep my promise, and hope the example will have a good effect."

Mr. Acton paused, as if he found it hard to go on, and the boys looked at one another with inquiring eyes, for their teacher seldom punished, and when he did, it was a very solemn thing. Several of these anxious glances fell upon Joe, who was very red and sat whittling a pencil as if he dared not lift his eyes. "He's the chap. Won't he catch it?" whispered Gus to Frank, for both owed him a grudge.

"The boy who broke the rule last Friday, at afternoon recess, will come to the desk," said Mr. Acton in his most impressive manner. If a thunderbolt had fallen through the roof it would hardly have caused a greater surprise than the sight of Jack Minot walking slowly down the aisle, with a wrathful flash in the eyes he turned on Joe as he passed him.

"Now, Minot, let us have this over as soon as possible, for I do not

like it any better than you do, and I am sure there is some mistake. I'm told you went to the shop on Friday. Is it true?" asked Mr. Acton very gently, for he liked Jack and seldom had to correct him in any way.

"Yes, sir"; and Jack looked up as if proud to show that he was not afraid to tell the truth as far as he could.

"To buy somethin?"

"No, sir."

"To meet someone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it Jerry Shannon?"

No answer, but Jack's fists doubled up of themselves as he shot another fiery glance at Joe, whose face burned as if it scorched him.

"I am told it was; also that you were seen to go into the saloon with him. Did you?" and Mr. Acton looked so sure that it was a mistake that it cost Jack a great effort to say, slowly,
"Yes, sir."

Quite a thrill pervaded the school at this confession, for Jerry was one of the wild fellows the boys all shunned, and to have any dealings with him was considered a very disgraceful thing.

"Did you play?"

"No, sir. I can't."

"Drink beer?"

"I belong to the Lodge"; and Jack stood as erect as any little soldier who ever marched under a temperance banner, and fought for the cause none are too young nor too old to help along.

"I was sure of that. Then what took you there, my boy?"
The question was so kindly put that Jack forgot himself an instant, and blurted out,
"I only went to pay him some money, sir."

"Ah, how much?"

"Two seventy-five," muttered Jack, as red as a cherry at not being able to keep a secret better.

"Too much for a lad like you to owe such a fellow as Jerry. How came it?" And Mr. Acton looked disturbed.

Jack opened his lips to speak, but shut them again, and stood looking down with a little quiver about the mouth that showed how much it cost him to be silent.

"Does anyone beside Jerry know of this?"

"One other fellow," after a pause.

"Yes, I understand"; and Mr. Acton's eye glanced at Joe with a look that seemed to say, "I wish he'd held his tongue."

A queer smile flitted over Jack's face, for Joe was not the "other fellow," and knew very little about it, excepting what he had seen when he was sent on an errand by Mr. Acton on Friday.

"I wish you would explain the matter, John, for I am sure it is better than it seems, and it would be very hard to punish you when you don't deserve it."

"But I do deserve it; I've broken the rule, and I ought to be punished," said Jack, as if a good whipping would be easier to bear than this public cross-examination.

"And you can't explain, or even say you are sorry or ashamed?" asked Mr. Acton, hoping to surprise another fact out of the boy.

"No, sir; I can't; I'm not ashamed; I'm not sorry, and I'd do it

again to-morrow if I had to," cried Jack, losing patience, and looking as if he would not bear much more.

A groan from the boys greeted this bare-faced declaration, and Susy quite shivered at the idea of having taken two bites out of the apple of such a hardened desperado.

"Think it over till to-morrow, and perhaps you will change your mind. Remember that this is the last week of the month, and reports are given out next Friday," said Mr. Acton, knowing how much the boy prided himself on always having good ones to show his mother.

Poor Jack turned scarlet and bit his lips to keep them still, for he had forgotten this when he plunged into the affair which was likely to cost him dear. Then the color faded away, the boyish face grew steady, and the honest eyes looked up at his teacher as he said very iow, but all heard him, the room was so still,
"It isn't as bad as it looks, sir, but I can't say any more. No one is to blame but me; and I couldn't help breaking the rule, for Jerry was going away, I had only that time, and I'd promised to pay up, so I did."

Mr. Acton believed every word he said, and regretted that they had not been able to have it out privately, but he, too, must keep his promise and punish the offender, whoever he was.

"Very well, you will lose your recess for a week, and this month's report will be the first one in which behavior does not get the highest mark. You may go; and I wish it understood that Master Minot is not to be troubled with questions till he chooses to set this matter right."

Then the bell rang, the children trooped out, Mr. Acton went off without another word, and Jack was left alone to put up his books and hide a few tears that would come because Frank turned his eyes away from the imploring look cast upon him as the culprit came down from the platform, a disgraced boy.

Elder brothers are apt to be a little hard on younger ones, so it is not surprising that Frank, who was an eminently proper boy, was much cut up when Jack publicly confessed to dealings with Jerry, leaving it to be supposed that the worst half of the story remained untold. He felt it his duty, therefore, to collar poor Jack when he came out, and talk to him all the way home, like a judge bent on getting at the truth by main force. A kind word would have been very comforting, but the scolding was too much for Jack's temper, so he turned dogged and would not say a word, though Frank threatened not to speak to him for a week.

At tea-time both boys were very silent, one looking grim, the other excited. Frank stared sternly at his brother across the table, and no amount of marmalade sweetened or softened that reproachful look. Jack defiantly crunched his toast, with

occasional slashes at the butter, as if he must vent the pent-up emotions which half distracted him. Of course, their mother saw that something was amiss, but did not allude to it, hoping that the cloud would blow over as so many did if left alone. But this one did not, and when both refused cake, this sure sign of unusual perturbation made her anxious to know the cause. As soon as tea was over, Jack retired with gloomy dignity to his own room, and Frank, casting away the paper he had been pretending to read, burst out with the whole story. Mrs. Minot was as much surprised as he, but not angry, because, like most mothers, she was sure that her sons could not do anything very bad.

"I will speak to him; my boy won't refuse to give me some explanation," she said, when Frank had freed his mind with as much warmth as if Jack had broken all the ten commandments. "He will. You often call me obstinate, but he is as pig-headed as a mule; Joe only knows what he saw, old tell-tale! and Jerry has left town, or I'd have it out of him. Make Jack own up, whether he can or not. Little donkey!" stormed Frank, who hated rowdies and could not forgive his brother for being seen with one.

"My dear, all boys do foolish things sometimes, even the Wisest and best behaved, so don't be hard on the poor child. He has got into trouble, I've no doubt, but it cannot be very bad, and he earned the money to pay for his prank, whatever it was."

Mrs. Minot left the room as she spoke, and Frank cooled down as

if her words had been a shower-bath, for he remembered his own costly escapade, and how kindly both his mother and Jack had stood by him on that trying occasion. So, feeling rather remorseful, he went off to talk it over with Gus, leaving Jill in a fever of curiosity, for Merry and Molly had dropped in on their way home to break the blow to her, and Frank declined to discuss it with her, after mildly stating that Jack was "a ninny," in his opinion.

"Well, I know one thing," said Jill confidentially to Snow-ball, when they were left alone together, "if everyone else is scolding him I won't say a word. It's so mean to crow over people when they are down, and I'm sure he hasn't done anything to be ashamed of, though he won't tell."

Snow-ball seemed to agree to this, for he went and sat down by Jack's slippers waiting for him on the hearth, and Jill thought that a very touching proof of affectionate fidelity to the little master who ruled them both.

When he came, it was evident that he had found it harder to refuse his mother than all the rest. But she trusted him in spite of appearances, and that was such a comfort! For poor Jack's heart was very full, and he longed to tell the whole story, but he would not break his promise, and so kept silence bravely. Jill asked no questions, affecting to be anxious for the games they always played together in the evening, but while they played, though the

lips were sealed, the bright eyes said as plainly as words, "I trust you," and Jack was very grateful.

It was well he had something to cheer him up at home, for he got little peace at school. He bore the grave looks of Mr. Acton meekly, took the boys' jokes good-naturedly, and withstood the artful teasing of the girls with patient silence. But it was very hard for the social, affectionate fellow to bear the general distrust, for he had been such a favorite he felt the change keenly.

But the thing that tried him most was the knowledge that his report would not be what it usually was. It was always a happy moment when he showed it to his mother, and saw her eye brighten as it fell on the 99 or moo, for she cared more for good behavior than for perfect lessons. Mr. Acton once said that Frank Minot's moral influence in the school was unusual, and Jack never forgot her pride and delight as she told them what Frank himself had not known till then. It was Jack's ambition to have the same said of him, for he was not much of a scholar, and he had tried hard since he went back to school to get good records in that respect at least. Now here was a dreadful downfall, tardy marks, bad company, broken rules, and something too wrong to tell, apparently.

'Well, I deserve a good report, and that's a comfort, though nobody believes it," he said to himself, trying to keep up his

spirits, as the slow week went by, and no word from him had cleared up the mystery.

Chapter 14 - And Jill Finds It Out

Jill worried about it more than he did, for she was a faithful little friend, and it was a great trial to have Jack even suspected of doing anything wrong. School is a child's world while he is there, and its small affairs are very important to him, so Jill felt that the one thing to be done was to clear away the cloud about her dear boy, and restore him to public favor.

"Ed will be here Saturday night and maybe he will find out, for Jack tells him everything. I do hate to have him hectored so, for I know he is, though he's too proud to complain," she said, on Thursday evening, when Frank told her some joke played upon his brother that day.

"I let him alone, but I see that he isn't badgered too much. That's all I can do. If Ed had only come home last Saturday it might have done some good, but now it will be too late; for the reports are given out to-morrow, you know," answered Frank, feeling a little jealous of Ed's influence over Jack, though his own would have been as great if he had been as gentle.

"Has Jerry come back?" asked Jill, who kept all her questions for Frank, because she seldom alluded to the tender subject when with Jack.

"No, he's off for the summer. Got a place somewhere. Hope he'll stay there and let Bob alone."

"Where is Bob now? I don't hear much about him lately," said Jill, who was constantly on the lookout for "the other fellow," since it was not Joe.

"Oh, he went to Captain Skinner's the first of March, chores round, and goes to school up there. Captain is strict, and won't let Bob come to town, except Sundays; but he don't mind it much, for he likes horses, has nice grub, and the Hill fellows are good chaps for him to be with. So he's all right, if he only behaves."

"How far is it to Captain Skinner's?" asked Jill suddenly, having listened, with her sharp eyes on Frank, as he tinkered away at his model, since he was forbidden all other indulgence in his beloved pastime.

"It's four miles to Hill District, but the Captain lives this side of the school-house. About three from here, I should say."

"How long would it take a boy to walk up there?" went on the questioner, with a new idea in her head.

"Depends on how much of a walkist he is."

"Suppose he was lame and it was sloshy, and he made a call and

came back. How long would that take?" asked Jill impatiently.

"Well, in that case, I should say two or three hours. But it's impossible to tell exactly, unless you know how lame the fellow was, and how long a call he made," said Frank, who liked to be accurate.

"Jack couldn't do it in less, could he?"

"He used to run up that hilly road for a breather, and think nothing of it. It would be a long job for him now, poor little chap, for his leg often troubles him, though he hates to own it."

Jill lay back and laughed, a happy little laugh, as if she was pleased about something, and Frank looked over his shoulder to ask questions in his turn.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Can't tell."

"Why do you want to know about Hill District? Are you going there?"

"Wish I could! I'd soon have it out of him."

"Who?"

"Never mind. Please push up my table. I must write a letter, and I want you to post it for me to-night, and never say a word till I give you leave.

"Oh, now you are going to have secrets and be mysterious, and get into a mess, are you?" and Frank looked down at her with a suspicious air, though he was intensely curious to know what she was about.

"Go away till I'm done. You will have to see the outside, but you can't know the inside till the answer comes"; and propping herself up, Jill wrote the following note, with some hesitation at the beginning and end, for she did not know the gentleman she was addressing, except by sight, and it was rather awkward:

"Robert Walker
"Dear Sir, I want to ask if Jack Minot came to see you last Friday afternoon. He got into trouble being seen with Jerry Shannon. He paid him some money. Jack won't tell, and Mr. Acton talked to him about it before all the school. We feel bad, because we think Jack did not do wrong. I don't know as you have anything to do with it, but I thought I'd ask. Please answer quick. Respectfully yours,
Jane Pecq"

To make sure that her despatch was not tampered with, Jill put a great splash of red sealing-wax on it, which gave it a very official

look, and much impressed Bob when he received it.

"There! Go and post it, and don't let anyone see or know about it," she said, handing it over to Frank, who left his work with unusual alacrity to do her errand. When his eye fell on the address, he laughed, and said in a teasing way,
"Are you and Bob such good friends that you correspond? What will Jack say?"

"Don't know, and don't care! Be good, now, and let's have a little secret as well as other folks. I'll tell you all about it when he answers," said Jill in her most coaxing tone.

"Suppose he doesn't?"

"Then I shall send you up to see him. I must know something, and I want to do it myself, if I can."

"Look here; what are you after? I do believe you think----" Frank got no farther, for Jill gave a little scream, and stopped him by crying eagerly, "Don't say it out loud! I really do believe it may be, and I'm going to find out."

"What made you think of him?" and Frank looked thoughtfully at the letter, as if turning carefully over in his mind the idea that Jill's quick wits had jumped at.

"Come here and I'll tell you."

Holding him by one button, she whispered something in his ear that made him exclaim, with a look at the rug,
"No! did he? I declare I shouldn't wonder! It would be just like the dear old blunder-head."

"I never thought of it till you told me where Bob was, and then it all sort of burst upon me in one minute!" cried Jill, waving her arms about to express the intellectual explosion which had thrown light upon the mystery, like sky-rockets in a dark night.
"You are as bright as a button. No time to lose; I'm off"; and off he was, splashing through the mud to post the letter, on the back of which he added, to make the thing sure, "Hurry up.
F. M."

Both felt rather guilty next day, but enjoyed themselves very much nevertheless, and kept chuckling over the mine they were making under Jack's unconscious feet. They hardly expected an answer at noon, as the Hill people were not very eager for their mail, but at night Jill was sure of a letter, and to her great delight it came. Jack brought it himself, which added to the fun, and while she eagerly read it he sat calmly poring over the latest number of his own private and particular "Youth's Companion."
Bob was not a "complete letter-writer" by any means, and with great labor and much ink had produced the following brief but highly satisfactory epistle. Not knowing how to address his fair

correspondent he let it alone, and went at once to the point in the frankest possible way:

"Jack did come up Friday. Sorry he got into a mess. It was real kind of him, and I shall pay him back soon. Jack paid Jerry for me and I made him promise not to tell. Jerry said he'd come here and make a row if I didn't cash up. I was afraid I'd lose the place if he did, for the Capt. is awful strict. If Jack don't tell now, I will. I ain't mean. Glad you wrote.
R. O. W."

"Hurrah!" cried Jill, waving the letter over her head in great triumph. "Call everybody and read it out," she added, as Frank snatched it, and ran for his mother, seeing at a glance that the news was good. Jill was so afraid she should tell before the others came that she burst out singing "Pretty Bobby Shafto" at the top of her voice, to Jack's great disgust, for he considered the song very personal, as he wa.s rather fond of "combing down his yellow hair," and Jill often plagued him by singing it when he came in with the golden quiris very smooth and nice to hide the scar on his forehead.

In about five minutes the door flew open and in came Mamma, making straight for bewildered Jack, who thought the family had gone crazy when his parent caught him in her arms, saying tenderly,

"My good, generous boy! I knew he was right all the time!" while Frank worked his hand up and down like a pump-handle, exclaiming heartily,
"You're a trump, sir, and I'm proud of you!" Jill meantime calling out, in wild delight,
"I told you so! I told you so! I did find out; ha, ha, I did!"

"Come, I say! What's the matter? I'm all right. Don't squeeze the breath out of me, please," expostulated Jack, looking so startled and innocent, as he struggled feebly, that they all laughed, and this plaintive protest caused him to be released. But the next proceeding did not enlighten him much, for Frank kept waving a very inky paper before him and ordering him to read it, while Mamma made a charge at Jill, as if it was absolutely necessary to hug somebody.

"Hullo!" said Jack, when he got the letter into his own hand and read it. "Now who put Bob up to this? Nobody had any business to interfere--but it's mighty good of him, anyway," he added, as the anxious lines in his round face smoothed themselves away, while a smile of relief told how hard it had been for him to keep his word.

"I did!" cried Jill, clapping her hands, and looking so happy that he could not have scolded her if he had wanted to.
"Who told you he was in the scrape?" demanded Jack, in a hurry to know all about it now the seal was taken off his own lips.

"You did"; and Jill's face twinkled with naughty satisfaction, for this was the best fun of all.

"I didn't! When? Where? It's a joke!"

"You did," cried Jill, pointing to the rug. "You went to sleep there after the long walk, and talked in your sleep about 'Bob' and 'All right, old boy,' and ever so much gibberish. I didn't think about it then, but when I heard that Bob was up there I thought maybe he knew something about it, and last night I wrote and asked him, and that's the answer, and now it is all right, and you are the best boy that ever was, and I'm so glad!"

Here Jill paused, all out of breath, and Frank said, with an approving pat on the head,
"It won't do to have such a sharp young person round if we are going to have secrets. You'd make a good detective, miss."

"Catch me taking naps before people again"; and Jack looked rather crestfallen that his own words had set "Fine Ear" on the track. "Never mind, I didn't mean to tell, though I just ached to do it all the time, so I haven't broken my word. I'm glad you all know, but you needn't let it get out, for Bob is a good fellow, and it might make trouble for him," added Jack, anxious lest his gain should be the other's loss.

"I shall tell Mr. Acton myself, and the Captain, also, for I'm not going to have my son suspected of wrong-doing when he has only tried to help a friend, and borne enough for his sake," said Mamma, much excited by this discovery of generous fidelity in her boy; though when one came to look at it calmly, one saw that it might have been done in a wiser way.

"Now, please, don't make a fuss about it; that would be most as bad as having everyone down on me. I can stand your praising me, but I won't be patted on the head by anybody else"; and Jack assumed a manly air, though his face was full of genuine boyish pleasure at being set right in the eyes of those he loved.

"I'll be discreet, dear, but you owe it to yourself, as well as Bob, to have the truth known. Both have behaved well, and no harm will come to him, I am sure. I'll see to that myself," said Mrs. Minot, in a tone that set Jack's mind at rest on that point.

"Now do tell all about it," cried Jill, who was pining to know the whole story, and felt as if she had earned the right to hear it.

"Oh, it wasn't much. We promised Ed to stand by Bob, so I did as well as I knew how"; and Jack seemed to think that was about all there was to say.
"I never saw such a fellow for keeping a promise! You stick to it through thick and thin, no matter how silly or hard it is. You remember, mother, last summer, how you told him not to go in a

boat and he promised, the day we went on the picnic. We rode up, but the horse ran off home, so we had to come back by way of the river, all but Jack, and he walked every step of five miles because he wouldn't go near a boat, though Mr. Burton was there to take care of him. I call that rather overdoing the matter"; and Frank looked as if he thought moderation even in virtue a good thing.

"And I call it a fine sample of entire obedience. He obeyed orders, and that is what we all must do, without always seeing why, or daring to use our own judgment. It is a great safeguard to Jack, and a very great comfort to me; for I know that if he promises he will keep his word, no matter what it costs him," said Mamma warmly, as she tumbled up the quirls with an irrepressible caress, remembering how the boy came wearily in after all the others, without seeming for a moment to think that he could have done anything else.

"Like Casabianca!" cried Jill, much impressed, for obedience was her hardest trial.

"I think he was a fool to burn up," said Frank, bound not to give in.

"I don't. It's a splendid piece, and everyone likes to speak it, and it was true, and it wouldn't be in all the books if he was a fool. Grown people know what is good," declared Jill, who liked heroic

actions, and was always hoping for a chance to distinguish herself in that way.

"You admire 'The Charge of the Light Brigade,' and glow all over as you thunder it out. Yet they went gallantly to their death rather than disobey orders. A mistake, perhaps, but it makes us thrill to hear of it; and the same spirit keeps my Jack true as steel when once his word is passed, or he thinks it is his duty. Don't be laughed out of it, my son, for faithfulness in little things fits one for heroism when the great trials come. One's conscience can hardly be too tender when honor and honesty are concerned."
"You are right, mother, and I am wrong. I beg your pardon, Jack, and you sha'n't get ahead of me next time."

Frank made his mother a little bow, gave his brother a shake of the hand, and nodded to Jill, as if anxious to show that he was not too proud to own up when he made a mistake.

"Please tell on, Jack. This is very nice, but I do want to know all about the other," said Jill, after a short pause.

"Let me see. Oh, I saw Bob at church, and he looked rather blue; so, after Sunday School, I asked what the matter was. He said Jerry bothered him for some money he lent him at different times when they were loafing round together, before we took him up. He wouldn't get any wages for some time. The Captain keeps him short on purpose, I guess, and won't let him come down town

except on Sundays. He didn't want anyone to know about it, for fear he'd lose his place. So I promised I wouldn't tell. Then I was afraid Jerry would go and make a fuss, and Bob would run off, or do something desperate, being worried, and I said I'd pay it for him, if I could. So he went home pretty jolly, and I scratched 'round for the money. Got it, too, and wasn't I glad?"

Jack paused to rub his hands, and Frank said, with more than usual respect,
"Couldn't you get hold of Jerry in any other place, and out of school time? That did the mischief, thanks to Joe. I thrashed him, Jill--did I mention it?"

"I couldn't get all my money till Friday morning, and I knew Jerry was off at night. I looked for him before school, and at noon, but couldn't find him, so afternoon recess was my last chance. I was bound to do it and I didn't mean to break the rule, but Jerry was just going into the shop, so I pelted after him, and as it was private business we went to the billiard-room. I declare I never was so relieved as when I handed over that money, and made him say it was all right, and he wouldn't go near Bob. He's off, so my mind is easy, and Bob will be so grateful I can keep him steady, perhaps. That will be worth two seventy-five, I think," said Jack heartily.

"You should have come to me," began Frank.

"And got laughed at--no, thank you," interrupted Jack, recollecting several philanthropic little enterprises which were nipped in the bud for want of co-operation.

"To me, then," said his mother. "It would have saved so much trouble."

"I thought of it, but Bob didn't want the big fellows to know for fear they'd be down on him, so I thought he might not like me to tell grown people. I don't mind the fuss now, and Bob is as kind as he can be. Wanted to give me his big knife, but I wouldn't take it. I'd rather have this," and Jack put the letter in his pocket with a slap outside, as if it warmed the cockles of his heart to have it there.

"Well, it seems rather like a tempest in a teapot, now it is all over, but I do admire your pluck, little boy, in holding out so well when everyone was scolding at you, and you in the right all the time," said Frank, glad to praise, now that he honestly could, after his wholesale condemnation.

"That is what pulled me through, I suppose. I used to think if I had done anything wrong, that I couldn't stand the snubbing a day. I should have told right off, and had it over. Now, I guess I'll have a good report if you do tell Mr. Acton," said Jack, looking at his mother so wistfully, that she resolved to slip away that very evening, and make sure that the thing was done.

"That will make you happier than anything else, won't it?" asked Jill, eager to have him rewarded after his trials.

"There's one thing I like better, though I'd be very sorry to lose my report. It's the fun of telling Ed I tried to do as he wanted us to, and seeing how pleased he'll be," added Jack, rather bashfully, for the boys laughed at him sometimes for his love of this friend. "I know he won't be any happier about it than someone else, who stood by you all through, and set her bright wits to work till the trouble was all cleared away," said Mrs. Minot, looking at Jill's contented face, as she lay smiling on them all.

Jack understood, and, hopping across the room, gave both the thin hands a hearty shake; then, not finding any words quite cordial enough in which to thank this faithful little sister, he stooped down and kissed her gratefully.

Chapter 15 - Saint Lucy

Saturday was a busy and a happy time to Jack, for in the morning Mr. Acton came to see him, having heard the story overnight, and promised to keep Bob's secret while giving Jack an acquittal as public as the reprimand had been. Then he asked for the report which Jack had bravely received the day before and put away without showing to anybody.

"There is one mistake here which we must rectify," said Mr. Acton, as he crossed out the low figures under the word "Behavior," and put the much-desired 100 there.

"But I did break the rule, sir," said Jack, though his face glowed with pleasure, for Mamma was looking on.

"I overlook that as I should your breaking into my house if you saw it was on fire. You ran to save a friend, and I wish I could tell those fellows why you were there. It would do them good. I am not going to praise you, John, but I did believe you in spite of appearances, and I am glad to have for a pupil a boy who loves his neighbor better than himself."

Then, having shaken hands heartily, Mr. Acton went away, and Jack flew off to have rejoicings with Jill, who sat up on her sofa, without knowing it, so eager was she to hear all about the call.

In the afternoon Jack drove his mother to the Captain's, confiding to her on the way what a hard time he had when he went before, and how nothing but the thought of cheering Bob kept him up when he slipped and hurt his knee, and his boot sprung a leak, and the wind came up very cold, and the hill seemed an endless mountain of mud and snow.

Mrs. Minot had such a gentle way of putting things that she would have won over a much harder man than the strict old Captain, who heard the story with interest, and was much pleased with the boys' efforts to keep Bob straight. That young person dodged away into the barn with Jack, and only appeared at the last minute to shove a bag of chestnuts into the chaise. But he got a few kind words that did him good, from Mrs. Minot and the Captain, and from that day felt himself under bonds to behave well if he would keep their confidence.

"I shall give Jill the nuts; and I wish I had something she wanted very, very much, for I do think she ought to be rewarded for getting me out of the mess," said Jack, as they'd rove happily home again.

"I hope to have something in a day or two that will delight her very much. I will say no more now, but keep my little secret and let it be a surprise to all by and by," answered his mother, looking as if she had not much doubt about the matter.

"That will be jolly. You are welcome to your secret, Mamma. I've had enough of them for one while"; and Jack shrugged his broad shoulders as if a burden had been taken off.

In the evening Ed came, and Jack was quite satisfied when he saw how pleased his friend was at what he had done.

"I never meant you should take so much trouble, only be kind to Bob," said Ed, who did not know how strong his influence was, nor what a sweet example of quiet well-doing his own life was to all his mates.

"I wished to be really useful; not just to talk about it and do nothing. That isn't your way, and I want to be like you," answered Jack, with such affectionate sincerity that Ed could not help believing him, though he modestly declined the compliment by saying, as he began to play softly, "Better than I am, I hope. I don't amount to much."

"Yes, you do! and if anyone says you don't I'll shake him. I can't tell what it is, only you always look so happy and contented--sort of sweet and shiny," said Jack, as he stroked the smooth brown head, rather at a loss to describe the unusually fresh and sunny expression of Ed's face, which was always cheerful, yet had a certain thoughtfulness that made it very attractive to both young and old.

"Soap makes him shiny; I never saw such a fellow to wash and brush," put in Frank, as he came up with one of the pieces of music he and Ed were fond of practising together.

"I don't mean that!" said Jack indignantly. "I wash and brush till you call me a dandy, but I don't have the same look--it seems to come from the inside, somehow, as if he was always jolly and clean and good in his mind, you know."

"Born so," said Frank, rumbling away in the bass with a pair of hands that would have been the better for some of the above-mentioned soap, for he did not love to do much in the washing and brushing line.

"I suppose that's it. Well, I like it, and I shall keep on trying, for being loved by everyone is about the nicest thing in the world. Isn't it, Ed?" asked Jack, with a gentle tweak of the ear as he put a question which he knew would get no answer, for Ed was so modest he could not see wherein he differed from other boys, nor believe that the sunshine he saw in other faces was only the reflection from his own.

Sunday evening Mrs. Minot sat by the fire, planning how she should tell some good news she had been saving up all day. Mrs. Pecq knew it, and seemed so delighted that she went about smiling as if she did not know what trouble meant, and could not do enough for the family. She was downstairs now, seeing that

the clothes were properly prepared for the wash, so there was no one in the Bird Room but Mamma and the children. Frank was reading up all he could find about some Biblical hero mentioned in the day's sermon; Jill lay where she had lain for nearly four long months, and though her face was pale and thin with the confinement, there was an expression on it now sweeter even than health. Jack sat on the rug beside her, looking at a white carnation through the magnifying glass, while she was enjoying the perfume of a red one as she talked to him.

"If you look at the white petals you'll see that they sparkle like marble, and go winding a long way down to the middle of the flower where it grows sort of rosy; and in among the small, curly leaves, like fringed curtains, you can see the little green fairy sitting all alone. Your mother showed me that, and I think it is very pretty. I call it a 'fairy,' but it is really where the seeds are hidden and the sweet smell comes from."

Jill spoke softly lest she should disturb the others, and, as she turned to push up her pillow, she saw Mrs. Minot looking at her with a smile she did not understand.

"Did you speak, 'm?" she asked, smiling back again, without in the least knowing why.

"No, dear. I was listening and thinking what a pretty little story one could make out of your fairy living alone down there, and

only known by her perfume."

"Tell it, Mamma. It is time for our story, and that would be a nice one, I guess," said Jack, who was as fond of stories as when he sat in his mother's lap and chuckled over the hero of the beanstalk. 'We don't have fairy tales on Sunday, you know," began Jill regretfully.

"Call it a parable, and have a moral to it, then it will be all right," put in Frank, as he shut his big book, having found what he wanted.

"I like stories about saints, and the good and wonderful things they did," said Jill, who enjoyed the wise and interesting bits Mrs. Minot often found for her in grown-up books, for Jill had thoughtful times, and asked questions which showed that she was growing fast in mind if not in body.

"This is a true story; but I will disguise it a little, and call it 'The Miracle of Saint Lucy," began Mrs. Minot, seeing a way to tell her good news and amuse the children likewise.

Frank retired to the easy-chair, that he might sleep if the tale should prove too childish for him. Jill settled herself among her cushions, and Jack lay flat upon the rug, with his feet up, so that he could admire his red slippers and rest his knee, which ached. "Once upon a time there was a queen who had two princes."

"Wasn't there a princess?" asked Jack, interested at once.

"No; and it was a great sorrow to the queen that she had no little daughter, for the sons were growing up, and she was often very lonely.

"Like Snowdrop's mother," whispered Jill.

"Now, don't keep interrupting, children, or we never shall get on," said Frank, more anxious to hear about the boys that were than the girl that was not.

"One day, when the princes were out--ahem! we'll say hunting--they found a little damsel lying on the snow, half dead with cold, they thought. She was the child of a poor woman who lived in the forest--a wild little thing, always dancing and singing about; as hard to catch as a squirrel, and so fearless she would climb the highest trees, leap broad brooks, or jump off the steep rocks to show her courage. The boys carried her home to the palace, and the queen was glad to have her. She had fallen and hurt herself, so she lay in bed week after week, with her mother to take care of her--"

"That's you," whispered Jack, throwing the white carnation at Jill, and she threw back the red one, with her finger on her lips, for the tale was very interesting now.

"She did not suffer much after a time, but she scolded and cried, and could not be resigned, because she was a prisoner. The queen tried to help her, but she could not do much; the princes were kind, but they had their books and plays, and were away a good deal. Some friends she had came often to see her, but still she beat her wings against the bars, like a wild bird in a cage, and soon her spirits were all gone, and it was sad to see her."
"Where was your Saint Lucy? I thought it was about her, asked Jack, who did not like to have Jill's past troubles dwelt upon, since his were not.

"She is coming. Saints are not born--they are made after many trials and tribulations," answered his mother, looking at the fire as if it helped her to spin her little story. "Well, the poor child used to sing sometimes to while away the long hours--sad songs mostly, and one among them which the queen taught her was 'Sweet Patience, Come.'

"This she used to sing a great deal after a while, never dreaming that Patience was an angel who could hear and obey. But it was so; and one night, when the girl had lulled herself to sleep with that song, the angel came. Nobody saw the lovely spirit with tender eyes, and a voice that was like balm. No one heard the rustle of wings as she hovered over the little bed and touched the lips, the eyes, the hands of the sleeper, and then flew away, leaving three gifts behind. The girl did not know why, but after that night the songs grew gayer, there seemed to be more

sunshine everywhere her eyes looked, and her hands were never tired of helping others in various pretty, useful, or pleasant ways. Slowly the wild bird ceased to beat against the bars, but sat in its cage and made music for all in the palace, till the queen could not do without it, the poor mother cheered up, and the princes called the girl their nightingale."

"Was that the miracle?" asked Jack, forgetting all about his slippers, as he watched Jill's eyes brighten and the color come up in her white cheeks.

"That was the miracle, and Patience can work far greater ones if you will let her."

"And the girl's name was Lucy?"

"Yes; they did not call her a saint then, but she was trying to be as cheerful as a certain good woman she had heard of, and so the queen had that name for her, though she did not let her know it for a long time."

"That's not bad for a Sunday story, but there might have been more about the princes, seems to me," was Frank's criticism, as Jill lay very still, trying to hide her face behind the carnation, for she had no words to tell how touched and pleased she was to find that her little efforts to be good had been seen, remembered, and now rewarded in this way.

There is more.

"Then the story isn't done?" cried Jack.

"Oh dear, no; the most interesting things are to come, if you can wait for them."

"Yes, I see, this is the moral part. Now keep still, and let us have the rest," commanded Frank, while the others composed themselves for the sequel, suspecting that it was rather nice, because Mamma's sober face changed, and her eyes laughed as they looked at the fire.

"The elder prince was very fond of driving dragons, for the people of that country used these fiery monsters as horses."

"And got run away with, didn't he?" laughed Jack, adding, with great interest, "What did the other fellow do?"

"He went about fighting other people's battles, helping the poor, and trying to do good. But he lacked judgment, so he often got into trouble, and was in such a hurry that he did not always stop to find out the wisest way. As when he gave away his best coat to a beggar boy, instead of the old one which he intended to give.

"I say, that isn't fair, mother! Neither of them was new, and the boy needed the best more than I'd id, and I wore the old one all

winter, didn't I?" asked Jack, who had rather exulted over Frank, and was now taken down himself.

"Yes, you did, my dear; and it was not an easy thing for my dandiprat to do. Now listen, and I'll tell you how they both learned to be wiser. The elder prince soon found that the big dragons were too much for him, and set about training his own little one, who now and then ran away with him. Its name was Will, a good servant, but a bad master; so he learned to control it, and in time this gave him great power over himself, and fitted him to be a king over others."

"Thank you, mother; I'll remember my part of the moral. Now give Jack his," said Frank, who liked the dragon episode, as he had been wrestling with his own of late, and found it hard to manage.

"He had a fine example before him in a friend, and he followed it more reasonably till he grew able to use wisely one of the best and noblest gifts of God--benevolence."

"Now tell about the girl. Was there more to that part of the story?" asked Jack, well pleased with his moral, as it took Ed in likewise.

"That is the best of all, but it seems as if I never should get to it. After Patience made Lucy sweet and cheerful, she began to have a

curious power over those about her, and to work little miracles herself, though she did not know it. The queen learned to love her so dearly she could not let her go; she cheered up all her friends when they came with their small troubles; the princes found bright eyes, willing hands, and a kind heart always at their service, and felt, without quite knowing why, that it was good for them to have a gentle little creature to care for; so they softened their rough manners, loud voices, and careless ways, for her sake, and when it was proposed to take her away to her own home they could not give her up, but said she must stay longer, didn't they?"
"I'd like to see them saying anything else," said Frank, while Jack sat up to demand fiercely,
"Who talks about taking Jill away?"

"Lucy's mother thought she ought to go, and said so, but the queen told her how much good it did them all to have her there, and begged the dear woman to let her little cottage and come and be housekeeper in the palace, for the queen was getting lazy, and liked to sit and read, and talk and sew with Lucy, better than to look after things."

"And she said she would?" cried Jill, clasping her hands in her anxiety, for she had learned to love her cage now.

"Yes." Mrs. Minot had no time to say more, for one of the red slippers flew up in the air, and Jack had to clap both hands over his mouth to suppress the "hurrah!" that nearly escaped. Frank

said, "That's good!" and nodded with his most cordial smile at Jill who pulled herself up with cheeks now as rosy as the red carnation, and a little catch in her breath as she said to herself, "It's too lovely to be true."

"That's a first-rate end to a very good story," began Jack, with grave decision, as he put on his slipper and sat up to pat Jill's hand, wishing it was not quite so like a little claw.

"That's not the end"; and Mamma's eyes laughed more than ever as three astonished faces turned to her, and three voices cried out, "Still more?"

"The very best of all. You must know that, while Lucy was busy for others, she was not forgotten, and when she was expecting to lie on her bed through the summer, plans were being made for all sorts of pleasant changes. First of all, she was to have a nice little brace to support the back which was growing better every day; then, as the warm weather came on, she was to go out, or lie on the piazza; and by and by, when school was done, she was to go with the queen and the princes for a month or two down to the sea-side, where fresh air and salt water were to build her up in the most delightful way. There, now! isn't that the best ending of all?" and Mamma paused to read her answer in the bright faces of two of the listeners, for Jill hid hers in the pillow, and lay quite still, as if it was too much for her.

"That will be regularly splendid! I'll row you all about--boating is so much easier than riding, and I like it on salt water," said Frank, going to sit on the arm of the sofa, quite excited by the charms of the new plan.

"And I'll teach you to swim, and roll you over the beach, and get sea-weed and shells, and no end of nice things, and we'll all come home as strong as lions," added Jack, scrambling up as if about to set off at once.

"The doctor says you have been doing finely of late, and the brace will come to-morrow, and the first really mild day you are to have a breath of fresh air. Won't that be good?" asked Mrs. Minot, hoping her story had not been too interesting.

"Is she crying?" said Jack, much concerned as he patted the pillow in his most soothing way, while Frank lifted one curl after another to see what was hidden underneath.

Not tears, for two eyes sparkled behind the fingers, then the hands came down like clouds from before the sun, and Jill's face shone out so bright and happy it did one's heart good to see it. "I'm not crying," she said with a laugh which was fuller of blithe music than any song she sung. "But it was so splendid, it sort of took my breath away for a minute. I thought I wasn't any better, and never should be, and I made up my mind I wouldn't ask, it would be so hard for anyone to tell me so. Now I see why the

doctor made me stand up, and told me to get my baskets ready to go a-Maying. I thought he was in fun; did he really mean I could go?" asked Jill, expecting too much, for a word of encouragement made her as hopeful as she had been despondent before.

"No, dear, not so soon as that. It will be months, probably, before you can walk and run, as you used to; but they will soon pass. You needn't mind about May-day; it is always too cold for flowers, and you will find more here among your own plants, than on the hills, to fill your baskets," answered Mrs. Minot, hastening to suggest something pleasant to beguile the time of probation.
"I can wait. Months are not years, and if I'm truly getting well, everything will seem beautiful and easy to me," said Jill, laying herself down again, with the patient look she had learned to wear, and gathering up the scattered carnations to enjoy their spicy breath, as if the fairies hidden there had taught her some of their sweet secrets.

"Dear little girl, it has been a long, hard trial for you, but it is coming to an end, and I think you will find that it has not been time wasted, I don't want you to be a saint quite yet, but I am sure a gentler Jill will rise up from that sofa than the one who lay down there in December."

"How could I help growing better, when you were so good to me?" cried Jill, putting up both arms, as Mrs. Minot went to take

Frank's place, and he retired to the fire, there to stand surveying the scene with calm approval.

"You have done quite as much for us; so we are even. I proved that to your mother, and she is going to let the little house and take care of the big one for me, while I borrow you to keep me happy and make the boys gentle and kind. That is the bargain, and we get the best of it," said Mrs. Minot, looking well pleased, while Jack added, "That's so!" and Frank observed with an air of conviction, 'We couldn't get on without Jill, possibly."

"Can I do all that? I'd idn't know I was of any use. I only tried to be good and grateful, for there didn't seem to be anything else I could do," said Jill, wondering why they were all so fond of her. "No real trying is ever in vain. It is like the spring rain, and flowers are sure to follow in good time. The three gifts Patience gave Saint Lucy were courage, cheerfulness, and love, and with these one can work the sweetest miracles in the world, as you see," and Mrs. Minot pointed to the pretty room and its happy inmates.

"Am I really the least bit like that good Lucinda? I tried to be, but I didn't think I was," asked Jill softly.

"You are very like her in all ways but one. She did not get well, and you will."

A short answer, but it satisfied Jill to her heart's core, and that night, when she lay in bed, she thought to herself: "How curious it is that I've been a sort of missionary without knowing it! They all love and thank me, and won't let me go, so I suppose I must have done something, but I don't know what, except trying to be good and pleasant."

That was the secret, and Jill found it out just when it was most grateful as a reward for past efforts, most helpful as an encouragement toward the constant well-doing which can make even a little girl a joy and comfort to all who know and love her.

Chapter 16 - Up at Merry's

"Now fly round, child, and get your sweeping done up smart and early."

"Yes, mother."

"I shall want you to help me about the baking, by and by."

"Yes, mother."

"Roxy is cleaning the cellar-closets, so you'll have to get the vegetables ready for dinner. Father wants a boiled dish, and I shall be so busy I can't see to it."

"Yes, mother."

A cheerful voice gave the three answers, but it cost Merry an effort to keep it so, for she had certain little plans of her own which made the work before her unusually distasteful. Saturday always was a trying day, for, though she liked to see rooms in order, she hated to sweep, as no speck escaped Mrs. Grant's eye, and only the good old-fashioned broom, wielded by a pair of strong arms, was allowed. Baking was another trial: she loved good bread and delicate pastry, but did not enjoy burning her face over a hot stove, daubing her hands with dough, or spending

hours rolling out cookies for the boys; while a "boiled dinner" was her especial horror, as it was not elegant, and the washing of vegetables was a job she always shirked when she could.

However, having made up her mind to do her work without complaint, she ran upstairs to put on her dust-cap, trying to look as if sweeping was the joy of her life.

"It is such a lovely day, I'd id want to rake my garden, and have a walk with Molly, and finish my book so I can get another," she said with a sigh, as she leaned out of the open window for a breath of the unusually mild air.

Down in the ten-acre lot the boys were carting and spreading loam; out in the barn her father was getting his plows ready; over the hill rose the smoke of the distant factory, and the river that turned the wheels was gliding through the meadows, where soon the blackbirds would be singing. Old Bess pawed the ground, eager to be off; the gray hens were scratching busily all about the yard; even the green things in the garden were pushing through the brown earth, softened by April rains, and there was a shimmer of sunshine over the wide landscape that made every familiar object beautiful with hints of spring, and the activity it brings.

Something made the old nursery hymn come into Merry's head, and humming to herself,

"In works of labor or of skill
I would be busy too,"
she tied on her cap, shouldered her broom, and fell to work so energetically that she soon swept her way through the chambers, down the front stairs to the parlor door, leaving freshness and order behind her as she went.

She always groaned when she entered that apartment, and got out of it again as soon as possible, for it was, like most country parlors, a prim and chilly place, with little beauty and no comfort. Black horse-hair furniture, very slippery and hard, stood against the wall; the table had its gift books, albums, worsted mat and ugly lamp; the mantel-piece its china vases, pink shells, and clock that never went; the gay carpet was kept distressingly bright by closed shutters six days out of the seven, and a general air of go-to- meeting solemnity pervaded the room. Merry longed to make it pretty and pleasant, but her mother would allow of no change there, so the girl gave up her dreams of rugs and hangings, fine pictures and tasteful ornaments, and dutifully aired, dusted, and shut up this awful apartment once a week, privately resolving that, if she ever had a parlor of her own, it should not be as dismal as a tomb.

The dining-room was a very different place, for here Merry had been allowed to do as she liked, yet so gradual had been the change, that she would have found it difficult to tell how it came about. It seemed to begin with the flowers, for her father kept his

word about the "posy pots," and got enough to make quite a little conservatory in the bay-window, which was sufficiently large for three rows all round, and hanging-baskets overhead. Being discouraged by her first failure, Merry gave up trying to have things nice everywhere, and contented herself with making that one nook so pretty that the boys called it her "bower." Even busy Mrs. Grant owned that plants were not so messy as she expected, and the fanner was never tired of watching "little daughter" as she sat at work there, with her low chair and table full of books. The lamp helped, also, for Merry set up her own, and kept it so well trimmed that it burned clear and bright, shining on the green arch of ivy overhead, and on the nasturtium vines framing the old glass, and peeping at their gay little faces, and at the pretty young girl, so pleasantly that first her father came to read his paper by it, then her mother slipped in to rest on the lounge in the corner, and finally the boys hovered about the door as if the "settin'-room" had grown more attractive than the kitchen.

But the open fire did more than anything else to win and hold them all, as it seldom fails to do when the black demon of an airtight stove is banished from the hearth. After the room was cleaned till it shone, Merry begged to have the brass andirons put in, and offered to keep them as bright as gold if her mother would consent. So the great logs were kindled, and the flames went dancing up the chimney as if glad to be set free from their prison. It changed the whole room like magic, and no one could resist the desire to enjoy its cheery comfort. The farmer's three-cornered

leathern chair soon stood on one side, and mother's rocker on the other, as they toasted their feet and dozed or chatted in the pleasant warmth.

The boys' slippers were always ready on the hearth; and when the big boots were once off, they naturally settled down about the table, where the tall lamp, with its pretty shade of pressed autumn leaves, burned brightly, and the books and papers lay ready to their hands instead of being tucked out of sight in the closet. They were beginning to see that "Merry's notions" had some sense in them, since they were made comfortable, and good-naturedly took some pains to please her in various ways. Tom brushed his hair and washed his hands nicely before he came to table. Dick tried to lower his boisterous laughter, and Harry never smoked in the sitting-room. Even Roxy expressed her pleasure in seeing "things kind of spruced up," and Merry's gentle treatment of the hard-working drudge won her heart entirely.

The girl was thinking of these changes as she watered her flowers, dusted the furniture, and laid the fire ready for kindling; and, when all was done, she stood a minute to enjoy the pleasant room, full of spring sunshine, fresh air, and exquisite order. It seemed to give her heart for more distasteful labors, and she fell to work at the pies as cheerfully as if she liked it.

Mrs. Grant was flying about the kitchen, getting the loaves of

brown and white bread ready for the big oven. Roxy's voice came up from the cellar singing "Bounding Billows," with a swashing and scrubbing accompaniment which suggested that she was actually enjoying a "life on the ocean wave." Merry, in her neat cap and apron, stood smiling over her work as she deftly rolled and clipped, filled and covered, finding a certain sort of pleasure in doing it well, and adding interest to it by crimping the crust, making pretty devices with strips of paste and star-shaped prickings of the fork.

"Good-will giveth skill," says the proverb, and even particular Mrs. Grant was satisfied when she paused to examine the pastry with her experienced eye.

"You are a handy child and a credit to your bringing up, though I do say it. Those are as pretty pies as I'd wish to eat, if they bake well, and there's no reason why they shouldn't."

"May I make some tarts or rabbits of these bits? The boys like them, and I enjoy modelling this sort of thing," said Merry, who was trying to mould a bird, as she had seen Ralph do with clay to amuse Jill while the bust was going on.

"No, dear; there's no time for knick-knacks to-day. The beets ought to be on this minute. Run and get 'em, and be sure you scrape the carrots well."

Poor Merry put away the delicate task she was just beginning to like, and taking a pan went down cellar, wishing vegetables could be grown without earth, for she hated to put her hands in dirty water. A word of praise to Roxy made that grateful scrubber leave her work to poke about in the root-cellar, choosing "sech as was pretty much of a muchness, else they wouldn't bile even"; so Merry was spared that part of the job, and went up to scrape and wash without complaint, since it was for father. She was repaid at noon by the relish with which he enjoyed his dinner, for Merry tried to make even a boiled dish pretty by arranging the beets, carrots, turnips, and potatoes in contrasting colors, with the beef hidden under the cabbage leaves.

"Now, I'll rest and read for an hour, then I'll rake my garden, or run down town to see Molly and get some seeds," she thought to herself, as she put away the spoons and glasses, which she liked to wash, that they might always be clear and bright.

"If you've done all your own mending, there's a heap of socks to be looked over. Then I'll show you about darning the tablecloths. I do hate to have a stitch of work left over till Monday," said Mrs. Grant, who never took naps, and prided herself on sitting down to her needle at 3 P.M. every day.

"Yes, mother"; and Merry went slowly upstairs, feeling that a part of Saturday ought to be a holiday after books and work all the week. As she braided up her hair, her eye fell upon the reflection

of her own face in the glass. Not a happy nor a pretty one just then, and Merry was so unaccustomed to seeing any other, that involuntarily the frown smoothed itself out, the eyes lost their weary look, the drooping lips curved into a smile, and, leaning her elbows on the bureau, she shook her head at herself, saying, half aloud, as she glanced at Ivanhoe lying near,
"You needn't look so cross and ugly just because you can't have what you want. Sweeping, baking, and darning are not so bad as being plagued with lovers and carried off and burnt at the stake, so I won't envy poor Rebecca her jewels and curls and romantic times, but make the best of my own."

Then she laughed, and the bright face came back into the mirror, looking like an old friend, and Merry went on dressing with care, for she took pleasure in her own little charms, and felt a sense of comfort in knowing that she could always have one pretty thing to look at if she kept her own face serene and sweet. It certainly looked so as it bent over the pile of big socks half an hour later, and brightened with each that was laid aside. Her mother saw it, and, guessing why such wistful glances went from clock to window, kindly shortened the task of table-cloth darning by doing a good bit herself, before putting it into Merry's hands.

She was a good and loving mother in spite of her strict ways, and knew that it was better for her romantic daughter to be learning all the housewifery lessons she could teach her, than to be reading novels, writing verses, or philandering about with her head full of

girlish fancies, quite innocent in themselves, but not the stuff to live on. So she wisely taught the hands that preferred to pick flowers, trim up rooms and mould birds, to work well with needle, broom, and rolling-pin; put a receipt-book before the eyes that loved to laugh and weep over tender tales, and kept the young head and heart safe and happy with wholesome duties, useful studies, and such harmless pleasures as girls should love, instead of letting them waste their freshness in vague longings, idle dreams, and frivolous pastimes.

But it was often hard to thwart the docile child, and lately she had seemed to be growing up so fast that her mother began to feel a new sort of tenderness for this sweet daughter, who was almost ready to take upon herself the cares, as well as triumphs and delights, of maidenhood. Something in the droop of the brown head, and the quick motion of the busy hand with a little burn on it, made it difficult for Mrs. Grant to keep Merry at work that day, and her eye watched the clock almost as impatiently as the girl's, for she liked to see the young face brighten when the hour of release came.

"What next?" asked Merry, as the last stitch was set, and she stifled a sigh on hearing the clock strike four, for the sun was getting low, and the lovely afternoon going fast,
"One more job, if you are not too tired for it. I want the receipt for diet drink Miss Dawes promised me; would you like to run down and get it for me, dear?"

"Yes, mother!" and that answer was as blithe as a robin's chirp, for that was just where Merry wanted to go.

Away went thimble and scissors, and in five minutes away went Merry, skipping down the hill without a care in the world, for a happy heart sat singing within, and everything seemed full of beauty.

She had a capital time with Molly, called on Jill, did her shopping in the village, and had just turned to walk up the hill, when Ralph Evans came tramping along behind her, looking so pleased and proud about something that she could not help asking what it was, for they were great friends, and Merry thought that to be an artist was the most glorious career a man could choose.

"I know you've got some good news," she said, looking up at him as he touched his hat and fell into step with her, seeming more contented than before.

"I have, and was just coming up to tell you, for I was sure you would be glad. It is only a hope, a chance, but it is so splendid I feel as if I must shout and dance, or fly over a fence or two, to let off steam."

"Do tell me, quick; have you got an order?" asked Merry, full of interest at once, for artistic vicissitudes were very romantic, and she liked to hear about them.

"I may go abroad in the autumn."

"Oh, how lovely!"

"Isn't it? David German is going to spend a year in Rome, to finish a statue, and wants me to go along. Grandma is willing, as cousin Maria wants her for a long visit, so everything looks promising and I really think I may go."

"Won't it cost a great deal?" asked Merry, who, in spite of her little elegancies, had a good deal of her thrifty mother's common sense.

"Yes; and I've got to earn it. But I can--I know I can, for I've saved some, and I shall work like ten beavers all summer. I won't borrow if I can help it, but I know someone who would lend me five hundred if I wanted it"; and Ralph looked as eager and secure as if the earning of twice that sum was a mere trifle when all the longing of his life was put into his daily tasks.

"I wish I had it to give you. It must be so splendid to feel that you can do great things if you only have the chance. And to travel, and see all the lovely pictures and statues, and people and places in Italy. Flow happy you must be!" and Merry's eyes had the wistful look they always wore when she dreamed dreams of the world she loved to live in.

"I am--so happy that I'm afraid it never will happen. If I do go, I'll write and tell you all about the fine sights, and how I get on. Would you like me to?" asked Ralph, beginning enthusiastically and ending rather bashfully, for he admired Merry very much, and was not quite sure how this proposal would be received.

"Indeed I should! I'd feel so grand to have letters from Paris and Rome, and you'd have so much to tell it would be almost as good as going myself," she said, looking off into the daffodil sky, as they paused a minute on the hill-top to get breath, for both had walked as fast as they talked.

"And will you answer the letters?" asked Ralph, watching the innocent face, which looked unusually kind and beautiful to him in that soft light.

'Why, yes; I'd love to, only I shall not have anything interesting to say. What can I write about?" and Merry smiled as she thought how dull her letters would sound after the exciting details his would doubtless give.

"Write about yourself, and all the rest of the people I know. Grandma will be gone, and I shall want to hear how you get on." Ralph looked very anxious indeed to hear, and Merry promised she would tell all about the other people, adding, as she turned from the evening peace and loveliness to the house, whence came the clatter of milk-pans and the smell of cooking,

"I never should have anything very nice to tell about myself, for I don't do interesting things as you do, and you wouldn't care to hear about school, and sewing, and messing round at home."

Merry gave a disdainful little sniff at the savory perfume of ham which saluted them, and paused with her hand on the gate, as if she found it pleasanter out there than in the house. Ralph seemed to agree with her, for, leaning on the gate, he lingered to say, with real sympathy in his tone and something else in his face, "Yes, I should; so you write and tell me all about it. I didn't know you had any worries, for you always seemed like one of the happiest people in the world, with so many to pet and care for you, and plenty of money, and nothing very hard or hateful to do. You'd think you were well off if you knew as much about poverty and work and never getting what you want, as I do."

"You bear your worries so well that nobody knows you have them. I ought not to complain, and I won't, for I do have all I need. I'm so glad you are going to get what you want at last"; and Merry held out her hand to say good-night, with so much pleasure in her face that Ralph could not make up his mind to go just yet. "I shall have to scratch round in a lively way before I do get it, for David says a fellow can't live on less than four or five hundred a year, even living as poor artists have to, in garrets and on Crusts. I don't mind as long as Grandma is all right. She is away to-night, or I should not be here," he added, as if some excuse was necessary. Merry needed no hint, for her tender heart was

touched by the vision of her friend in a garret, and she suddenly rejoiced that there was ham and eggs for supper, so that he might be well fed once, at least, before he went away to feed on artistic crusts.

"Being here, come in and spend the evening. The boys will like to hear the news, and so will father. Do, now."

It was impossible to refuse the invitation he had been longing for, and in they went to the great delight of Roxy, who instantly retired to the pantry, smiling significantly, and brought out the most elaborate pie in honor of the occasion. Merry touched up the table, and put a little vase of flowers in the middle to redeem the vulgarity of doughnuts. Of course the boys upset it, but as there was company nothing was said, and Ralph devoured his supper with the appetite of a hungry boy, while watching Merry eat bread and cream out of an old-fashioned silver porringer, and thinking it the sweetest sight he ever beheld.

Then the young people gathered about the table, full of the new plans, and the elders listened as they rested after the week's work. A pleasant evening, for they all liked Ralph, but as the parents watched Merry sitting among the great lads like a little queen among her subjects, half unconscious as yet of the power in her hands, they nodded to one another, and then shook their heads as if they said,
"I'm afraid the time is coming, mother."

"No danger as long as she don't know it, father."

At nine the boys went off to the barn, the farmer to wind up the eight-day clock, and the housewife to see how the baked beans and Indian pudding for to-morrow were getting on in the oven. Ralph took up his hat to go, saying as he looked at the shade on the tall student lamp,
"What a good light that gives! I can see it as I go home every night, and it burns up here like a beacon. I always look for it, and it hardly ever fails to be burning. Sort of cheers up the way, you know, when I'm tired or low in my mind."

"Then I'm very glad I got it. I liked the shape, but the boys laughed at it as they did at my buirushes in a ginger-jar over there. I'd been reading about 'household art,' and I thought I'd try a little," answered Merry, laughing at her own whims.

"You've got a better sort of household art, I think, for you make people happy and places pretty, without fussing over it. This room is ever so much improved every time I come, though I hardly see what it is except the flowers," said Ralph, looking from the girl to the tall calla that bent its white cup above her as if to pour its dew upon her head.

"Isn't that lovely? I tried to draw it--the shape was so graceful I wanted to keep it. But I couldn't. Isn't it a pity such beautiful

things won't last forever?" and Merry looked regretfully at the half-faded one that grew beside the fresh blossom.

"I can keep it for you. It would look well in plaster. May I?" asked Ralph.

"Thank you, I should like that very much. Take the real one as a model--please do; there are more coming, and this will brighten up your room for a day or two."

As she spoke, Merry cut the stem, and, adding two or three of the great green leaves, put the handsome flower in his hand with so much good-will that he felt as if he had received a very precious gift. Then he said good-night so gratefully that Merry's hand quite tingled with the grasp of his, and went away, often looking backward through the darkness to where the light burned brightly on the hill-top--the beacon kindled by an unconscious Hero for a young Leander swimming gallantly against wind and tide toward the goal of his ambition.