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BY

PANSY Epseud. 7

Author of Chrissy's Endeavor Judge Burnham's Daughters Little Fishers and their Nets Christie's Christmas Ester Ried Four Girls at Chautauqua

EIsabella M. Alden 3

ILLUSTRATED

Toronto:

WILLIAM BRIGGS, WESLEY BUILDINGS.

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Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAMILY GATHERING.

Daisy Bryant sat on a low chair in front of the fire, staring into the blaze. Her hands were folded idly in her lap, and her eyes had in them a look which the others called "far away."

Daisy was thinking. She did a good deal of thinking for a girl only eight years old. The chair she sat in was a little old-fashioned splint-bottomed one, whose legs had been cut off, on purpose to make it a comfortable height for Daisy's little legs when they were shorter than at the time of which I write. Daisy still liked the chair very much, and always sat in it when she was thinking. The other furniture in the room matched Daisy's chair. That is, it was

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neither newer nor nicer in any way. was not a great deal of it. The floor had a neat strip of rag carpeting over in the part which Daisy called "the study." There was also a little square table over there, with the Bible on it, and Daisy's geography, and Ben's arithmetic, and a tiny basket that held Line's crochet work. At first, Daisy had objected to the crochet work — that it did not belong to a study — but one evening, in the very middle of Miss Sutherland's study table, what did she see but a fluffy ruffle with Miss Sutherland's needle set in its hem, and her thimble lying beside it! Since that time the crochet basket had held peaceable possession.

In front of the stand was a high-backed chair, also of the old-fashioned kind. It used to have arms, but one of them had been broken in moving, and one day the other slipped out of place and fell on the floor.

What Mrs. Bryant said when she saw it was, "Now if those rods which used to support the arms were taken out, that would make a good sewing chair." So Ben took the rods out, and a sewing chair it became. Ben had also contrived a neat little place under the stand, into

which Mrs. Bryant's work basket would fit. That work basket was really a sore trial to Daisy; she felt very sure it ought not to be part of the furniture of a study. But of course mother must sit with them in the long winter evenings, and part of mother's life was that never-empty basket. One day a bright thought came to Daisy, or rather to Ben. "They have waste baskets in studies always, I guess," Daisy said, looking . thoughtfully at the offending "At least Miss Sutherland does, and basket. I suppose they all do; I can see how they But then, yours isn't a would need them. waste basket, is it, mother?"

"I don't know about that," Ben had said, just as the last quarter of his slice of bread was going into his mouth. "I think there's a good deal wasted out of my stockings by the time they are popped in there; the pair I wore last week were wasted so badly that my two big toes were nothing to speak of, the last two days."

"And I should say there was considerable waste to the elbow of your brown dress that went into the basket last night," Line said, reaching for a second baked potato, then deciding she would leave it to "warm up."

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Line was eleven, and had to do her share of the thinking.

Daisy turned beaming eyes on her mother.

"There is a sense in which it is a waste basket, after all. Don't you think so, mother?"

"Seems to be," said the mother, trying not to smile at Daisy's large phrases.

"Seams to sew, you mean, mother," said Ben, who was always making puns, "to spice the dinner with," he sometimes told Line when they were having an unusually dry meal. Then they all laughed, and the question of the waste work-basket was comfortably settled. study had almost no other furniture of its own - unless a pleasant window where the afternoon sun shone in, and lovely sunsets exhibited, may be called furniture. It had a p white curtain, made of the better half of a sheet, the other part having "wasted" away. evening when the work was done, Daisy's low chair, and Line's green painted wooden one, and Ben's, from which the back was gone, moved into the study, where the arithmetic and geography, and sometimes a spelling-book, held close attention, Line's swift fingers weaving her web of crochet while she studied. Daisy had dreams of a different study from this; she never peeped into Miss Sutherland's on the hill—whither she was often sent on errands, either to take home the new strip of crochet work, or the pile of fresh handkerchiefs her mother had ironed—but she told herself, "One of these days we'll have a study just like this, hammock and all." For one of the things which especially took her fancy, was that lovely gold-colored hammock which swayed gracefully to and fro, with Miss Sutherland looking lovely

book in hand.

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The two great cottages of chairs which were always in this room, Daisy decided should be one for mother, and one for company; but as for Line and Ben and herself, she could never be quite sure just what sort of chair would be the best to read and study in. "I don't quite like the cottages for studying," she would say reflectively, "because, you see, they are so soft and fluffy, that all I want to do when I get into one is to curl up in a nice ball, and think; and I can't ever study well when I want to think."

There was a shout of laughter over this; and

Ben said that because Daisy did her studying

in her white cashmere wrapper, lounging in it,

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without any thinking, must be the reason why she always wanted to spell believe "e i," instead of "i e." But Mrs. Bryant took Daisy's part, declared she understood her perfectly, and that she did not think Miss Sutherland's "cottages" were good chairs for studying. So that matter was still unsettled. As to the part of the room where Daisy sat, which did not belong to the study, there was a cook-stove, which at this moment was aglow; not so much because the day was unusually cold, as because Mrs. Bryant needed some irons heated just right for very fine ironing. Her table and ironing-board occupied quite a large space; certain shelves ranged along the wall held all the dishes the small house owned, and these were hidden from dust behind neat calico curtains, drawn close. For the rest, there was another table where the kitchen work was done, with a little "house" under it where the pots and kettles and pans lived, curtained in. A chair apiece for the four who belonged to the family, a beautifully clean floor, a bush in the south window that occasionally put forth a red rose — that was all.

Poor? Well, Mrs. Bryant and Ben and Line knew that they were. Sometimes Daisy

shrewdly suspected it; though the burdens of poverty were kept from her young shoulders as much as possible. She knew that their house was very small — ridiculously so — when compared with the Sutherland home. In fact I will give you a glimpse of that little cottage as it shrank away from view behind the hill, on that November day. Just a queer little cabin, with old-fashioned windows and doors. intended for a house at all, in the first place; but it had grown into one, because of Mrs. Bryant's needs. Daisy knew that her mother had to work very hard to furnish even this small home with the necessaries of life. knew, also, that in the busy season Line and Ben had to work as hard as their mother; and as the busy season reached quite beyond the time for the schools to re-open in the fall, Line and Ben had been always behind in their studies, which had been a sore trial, not only to them, but to Daisy, ever since she could remember, because she saw an intimate connection between that and her mother's sorrowful face and occasional tears.

Now you are anxious to know what made "the busy season," and what sort of work it

was in which all, even Daisy, during this last year, could help.

Why, you must know that Mrs. Bryant lived in a village where was a large canning factory. Here were canned all sorts of fruits and vegetables — peas and beans and corn and tomatoes — and some of the various sorts had a fashion of getting themselves ripe at the same time, and of crowding themselves into the factory with a determined air that said, "Take us now, We'll decay, we'll sour, we'll dry or not at all. up, we'll ruin ourselves in some way, unless you give us immediate attention."

And so true to their word were they, that all the village grew into the habit of heeding their warning, and peaches were pared, and corn husked, and the little mill which cut it from the cob was fed as fast as two busy pairs of hands could push in the corn; and the great engine wheel whizzed around, and the great iron furnaces capable of taking care of several hundred cans at once, were heated; and for days and days people flew around that great building as though everything that was worth caring for in this world was corn and tomatoes, and a few such things.

Within the last year Daisy had been promoted, and allowed to work a few hours of each day in the factory. What do you think she did? You would never guess in the world, I believe, so I will have to tell you.

Hour after hour were her small neat fingers kept busy laying shining little tin covers on the filled cans, ready for the hands of the man who sealed them on! Now confess, didn't you suppose you could cover all the tin cans there were in the world, in the space of an hour or two? Yet here was spry little Daisy working at it, day after day!

Ah! but you see you don't begin to realize how many tin cans there are in the world. When it comes to half a million being sent out from just one factory, then you are prepared to open your eyes wide and do some thinking.

One of the trying features of this business was, that it would persist in crowding itself into a few weeks of time, making everybody work day and night, as though work was all there could be of life, and then suddenly shutting down for a long winter, when the engine and the furnaces lay cold and still, and many of the busy workers found nothing to do. It

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was at this season of the year that Mrs. Bryant's ironing board came into service. For work as she would during the busy season to lay up for the winter, she found it a trying time.

Harder than usual on this winter of which I write, because, in the very midst of the busiest season, Daisy herself had been taken sick, and lay very ill for days; and her mother had promptly turned away from the drying corn and wasting peaches, as though they were of the very smallest consequence, and hung over her little daughter day and night, and "brought her through with good nursing, if ever a woman did," the doctor had said, as he drew on his gloves at that last visit. All this Daisy knew, as well as any of them, made this winter harder than any which had been since that one when the snow first fell on her father's grave. Ben had left school and gone into one of the stores as general errand boy, and some-When Daisy asked him if he had times clerk. left school "for good" he answered cheerily, "Why, of course, Daisilinda; I hope you did not think it was 'for bad.'" Then he had whistled a little, to keep a troublesome lump from rising in his throat.

Line, too, had left school, and was doing the most of the work, that her mother might have all the more time for fine ironing.

"It doesn't matter so much," Line had said cheerfully, to her mother. "You see we got so far behind, during the busy season, that we could not go on with our classes, anyway. And Ben and I mean to study every evening, and get ahead of the class by spring." And the mother had smiled and said, "I am blessed in my children." And they had all known that she cared very much.

As for Daisy, she knew that Line cried once in a while, when she thought nobody saw her, and she knew that the doctor's bill was very long, so she thought a great deal during these days, and silently gave up some plans that she had hoped to begin to carry out. She was resolved that the others should not have all the sacrifice; for was she not eight years old? Among other schemes which she quietly gave up was that one of having a square of carpet, with a border to it, for the study. It had seemed to her that this would be beginning to be a little like Miss Sutherland's study. How much of a beginning it would have really been,

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you might perhaps realize more fully, could you take a careful look at the room which was Daisy's model. But Daisy realized fully that more carpet was quite out of the question this year.

There had been another plan to have a motto for her study, and to have it by Thanksgiving morning. Not a lovely painted one like Miss Sutherland's, which had been very lately sent to her, and was one of the first things Daisy had seen the other day while she waited for the "change," but one worked on card-board, such as she had seen in the stores—such as she knew she could buy for ten cents, and the silks to work it for five cents more. "But where are the fifteen cents to come from?" Daisy asked herself with an exceedingly thoughtful The more she thought, the more sure she was that the motto would have to be given up. She did not know that any one understood her sacrifice; but there were more things understood in that house than Daisy dreamed of.

Just the evening before Thanksgiving the family were gathered in the study, mother sewing, as usual, Ben and Line studying, Daisy thinking. Suddenly she broke forth: "Mother,

"Thankful for!" repeated the mother in a mildly astonished tone, while Ben looked up from his book and whistled softly, and Line laughed. But Daisy held her ground. "Why, yes; oughtn't we to think up things and be ready? It isn't as though we had a great many, you know."

"I think we have a great many, and I think thinking them up is a very good idea," said Mrs. Bryant, as she sewed and smiled. whole family were taken with the idea. engaged to "do the example" in his note book, and the list began. "You give the first one, mother," Daisy said.

"Well, in the first place we are all well, and all together."

"Four healthy Bryants," wrote Ben with a flourish, only Daisy keeping her gravity the while. She was very much in earnest.

"I'm thankful for this history," said Line, hugging her second-hand book; "I thought I should have to make one of my own, before I heard of this."

And "One history old as the United States

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and good as new," went down on Ben's list. For his first item he wrote "Fifty cents a week," explaining that it stood for his promotion in the store, by which he earned just so much more a week. As for Daisy, she said promptly, "A chicken most as big as a turkey." "It isn't because I want so much," she explained with a flush on her cheek, "but I like it to be big, because it might almost be called a turkey; and I like the name turkey very much, for Thanksgiving."

It was intensely interesting work; more than one exclamation was made over the length of the list.

"Mother," said Daisy, hesitating over her turn, "could you put down something that you hadn't got, and be thankful for that?"

"Of course," said Ben, answering promptly. "Daisy Bryant hasn't the small-pox. Will that do?"

"No, I don't mean that. I don't quite know how to tell what I do mean. But, mother, if you might have had a thing, and wouldn't buy it, because you thought it was right not to use the money for it, wouldn't it be a thing to be thankful for?" "It certainly would," said Mrs. Bryant decidedly. "A prudent mind, or an unselfish heart, is a great cause for gratitude."

"Then, Ben, you may put down for me, Saved fifteen cents." Daisy drew a long sigh of relief, as though some important matter was settled.

At this mother and older daughter exchanged glances. They knew that Daisy's own tin bank contained just fifteen cents, the sum of all her wealth, which had been accumulating for months and months. They knew just how she had been tempted to spend it, letting Sunday-school money and benevolences of all sorts, to say nothing of household needs, go to the winds. Ben knew about it, too; and he leaned over and kissed his little sister squarely on the nose before he made the record.

But mother and older daughter also knew a delicious little secret, which made them smile at each other, although there was something in the mother's eyes that glistened.

Presently Ben gave a short, sharp whistle. "See here," he said, "how am I ever to get the sum of all these things? People, and books, and chicken, and house rent, all mixed up to-

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gether. It is compound addition with a vengeance! The things won't add!"

"Suppose you let me do the summing up," Mrs. Bryant said, and she took the note book, and wrote at the bottom of the page in her neat, plain fashion:—

"How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O, God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand." ge-

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CHAPTER II.

THE "DELICIOUS SECRET."

THE way Mrs. Bryant and Line had come to understand some of Daisy's wishes was in this fashion: Daisy, in one of her thoughtful hours had asked, "Mother, what does troth mean?"

"Troth!" repeated Ben, looking puzzled. "Don't you mean trough?"

Daisy put down her head on her mother's arm to laugh, before she answered. She knew what trough meant, and felt sure her word was very different.

"Tell me how you have seen it used?" said Mrs. Bryant, musing how best to explain the word to her eight-year-old daughter.

"Why, in Miss Sutherland's study there is a motto hanging on the wall — a new one; it was not there last week. And it says on it in lovely gold and brown letters, 'Keep Troth.'"

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"Oh!" said Mrs. Bryant. "Why, Daisy, suppose you and somebody you love very much had promised each other some dear and pleasant thing, and your friend to keep you always reminded of your promise, should buy or paint for you a motto with those words on it. If you understood the words, as often as you looked at them, they would say to you, 'Be faithful to your pledge.'"

Daisy's eyes were shining.

"Why, mother," she said, "I think that is lovely. Couldn't anybody think it was a motto from Jesus, to remind us of our promises to Him?"

It was a very pleasant smile that Mrs. Bryant gave Daisy, then; her little daughter certainly had some choice thoughts.

"I think 'anybody' might," she said, "that is, if anybody thought of it." And she wondered how many who used the word thought of Jesus, and the pledges he was willing to exchange with them.

Silence for a few minutes; Ben had gone back to his arithmetic; but he was still thinking of the new word. Its meaning was certainly very different from that of trough.

Presently Daisy, prefacing her words with a gentle little sigh which she often used, - "I think mottoes are levely. They seem to belong to studies; they fit them a great deal better than pictures, I think. They say things to you, you know. Well, so do pictures, some of them; but I would just love to have a motto for our study. I could make a cardboard one if I had the cardboard; but they cost ten cents apiece; and then, there's the silk."

The sentence closed with another little sigh. That was the first the family heard of the motto, but not the last; Daisy often spoke of She did not know she thought aloud so much; she did not dream that her pitiful little sacrifice at last, of her dear plan, almost broke her mother's heart. Then Line went to thinking and planning; and the mother helped, and Ben helped, and on Thanksgiving morning what did Daisy's astonished eyes behold when she entered the "study" but a motto in a lovely frame, hanging by a crimson cord, in just the right place on the wall!

Peace and Plenty were the words which smiled down on her; but there was more to the motto than this. It was decorated with leaves

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and flowers, and the centre piece was a figure which Daisy promptly named an angel, scattering flowers, or fruits, or something, over the land. It is true the lettering on this centre piece spelled September, and the month was November.

That word had been a trial to Line and Ben for a week; they had discussed and abandoned various plans for covering it. But Daisy, after she had exulted over every pretty thing about it, had hinted that she plainly saw the trouble-some word, by saying "Peace and Plenty, those just exactly fit Thanksgiving, don't they? And how pretty that word September will be next fall! Because, you know, mottoes are for all the year round." At which both Line and Ben had laughed, as they kissed her; and Ben said she ought to be named Sunshine instead of Daisy.

Where did the motto come from? Why, it was cut out of an old magazine that a boy in the store had given to Ben, and pasted on the cover of an old box, and covered neatly by Line with some white satin paper given her at the paper factory, and banded with gilt strips which came from the same place. As for the

crimson cord, Mrs. Bryant had produced it from a packed-away box of long-ago treasures.

"It used to belong to an old picture that has faded out now," she said with a smile which played around lips that quivered.

And Line and Ben handled the cord tenderly, and spoke low for the next few minutes. But what a joy that motto was to Daisy!

"It is so true!" she said, dancing about it gleefully, that Thanksgiving morning. "We are just as peaceful as we can be; not a bit of trouble anywhere, have we, mother? And as for plenty—you know the chicken is very big, and you know there are to be mashed potatoes, and baked sweet apples and milk, and the chicken is to be stuffed, just like a turkey. I'm sure the motto fits."

In fact, I don't suppose you can understand what the surprise was to Daisy, unless you love beauty as well as she did, and have as few things with which to gratify the taste.

Moreover, the motto had a mission; it was suggestive. The walls of the little cottage were not lathed and plastered; were not even painted; their weather-stained unsightliness had been among Daisy's trials. On that very

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afternoon, when the work was all done, the kitchen in exquisite order and deserted, and the family were gathered at leisure in the study, Mrs. Bryant having promised not to sew a stitch, because it was Thanksgiving, Daisy, gazing at the beloved motto, exclaimed,—

"Mother, O, mother! why couldn't we cover the walls with pictures?"

Mrs. Bryant laughed. "You dear little dreamer," she said, "where do you suppose the pictures are to come from, and how much paste and time do you suppose it would take?"

"Oh! but I don't mean all at once. Be a long, long time, you know; and take just a tiny teaspoonful of flour at a time; we could afford that, couldn't we? When we found a real pretty picture anywhere, paste it up in a nice place, and in a g-r-e-a-t many months the walls would be covered."

It was impossible not to laugh at the bright face and dancing eyes, and there was something so funny about it to Line and Ben, that they laughed loud and long.

Mrs. Bryant was the first to recover voice. "It is a pretty thought," she said, "and I will certainly try to furnish the spoonful of flour

for my share; but we have almost no chances for pictures, darling, and I'm afraid you will be old and gray before the walls are covered."

"Well," said Daisy cheerily, "then I will put on my spectacles and sit down and enjoy them."

But Daisy's ideas were not generally allowed to drop; she kept eagerly at hers until the others absorbed a little of her enthusiasm; and Mrs. Bryant confessed that she had a picture laid away in a box which she had kept for a long time.

The box was brought out, and its contents turned over and enjoyed; it was a queer collection of old half-worn treasures — a shoe that belonged to the baby who died, the tiny waist of the first dress Line ever wore, a queer little tintype of Daisy herself, when she was a wee baby; in it she had many fingers, because she would wiggle them.

But the picture on which Daisy's fingers immediately pounced, was one of a mother bending over an old-fashioned cradle in which lay a sleeping baby; while outside in the dooryard and in the distance, away up the hillside, many sheep and lambs were resting on the grass, or frisking about in the sunshine.

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"What a lovely, lovely picture," Daisy said.
"How very pretty it would be for Christmas. If we could only get it framed and hung by Christmas time, wouldn't it be splendid? We couldn't have it so nice as my beautiful Peace and Plenty picture, of course; but couldn't we make some kind of a frame, don't you think? There's the baby and the sheep; and there's one shepherd. It just fits.

'While shepherds watched their flocks by night, All seated on the ground,'

you know; only He didn't have such a cradle, did He, mother? because you know it says,—

'For his cradle was a manger, And his softest bed was hay.'

Don't you believe, Line, we could fix it up?"
Subjects were very much mixed in our little
Daisy's mind; but she knew exactly what she
meant; so did her listeners; she was so eager
and happy and resolute, that it was impossible
not to enter into the spirit of the matter with
her, and before the family went to bed on that
Thanksgiving night, a wonderful frame had

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been planned, and the place selected for the Christmas picture to hang.

But though Daisy Bryant's heart was so set on furnishing a study, she thought of other things beside books. Never a little girl of eight who loved her dollie better than Daisy did her Arabella Aurelia. Much of her thinking was done with this treasure in her arms, and between the pauses of her wisest remarks, she frequently bent over and kissed her darling.

You would like me to stop just here and describe that doll baby. "Was it china, or wax, or just common cloth?" That is one of the questions you know you want answered. Very well, I will tell you.

It was neither cloth, nor china, nor yet wax, but just plain wood.

A wooden dollie! You never heard of such a thing! "How could its nose and eyes and ears be made? Were they carved or only painted?"

Alas, I shall have to admit the sorrowful fact; it had no eyes, nor ears, nor nose, nor even mouth; though I'm afraid it would have grieved its little mother to the heart to have had these defects talked about. The truth was, that Arabella Aurelia was once the arm of that large old-fashioned rocker which I told you had become Mrs. Bryant's sewing chair! She wore, for every day, a neat dark calico apron of Mrs. Bryant's; and on full-dress occasions a ruffled white dress which had been Daisy's own until time had worn it into shabbiness, besides making it too short and too narrow for Daisy; but Arabella Aurelia was very thin, so the worn places in the waist folded in out of sight, and not having any arms of her own, the fact that there were no sleeves left to the dress, did not trouble her at all; she really looked very nicely in it.

Daisy loved her much, as I said, and kissed her often, but it became evident in the course of time that she had many thoughts about her. For instance, one evening, when the child lay flat on her lap, and she was regarding it gravely, she said, "Mother, if I had a really truly baby, what do you suppose I'd name it?"

"What do you mean, Daisy — a little sister or brother?"

"Ono! I mean a doll baby; but a really one."

"Why, I don't know; you would name it Arabella Aurelia after this one, wouldn't you?"

Daisy shook her head emphatically. mother! I never should. I wouldn't like those Why, you know "names for a truly dollie. she began again after a thoughtful pause, during which time she seemed to be trying to put into shape some ideas which puzzled her -"I don't know that I can explain it; but of course this is not a really doll baby; she nasn't any eyes, nor mouth, and I have to make believe about her all the time." Daisy sank her voice almost to a whisper, apparently "making believe" that Arabella Aurelia could hear, and not wishing to hurt her feelings. "But if I had a real doll with all those things" — which term covered the accidents of eyes, mouth and other features - "why, I wouldn't name her such a sort of make-believe name. You know, mother, you wouldn't like to name your own daughter Arabella Aurelia, now would you?"

"I don't believe I should," said Mrs. Bryant, laughing, although there did seem something pitiful in the fact that the wooden dollie, beloved though she was, had after all so little genuineness about her, even to Daisy's imagination.

"Well," said Daisy, with a quickly-smothered

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"Wasn't that just too pitiful for anything," Line said, after Daisy was sound asleep for the night, "to hear that mouse go on about that old wooden arm? Mother, I do wish we could get Daisy a truly dollie for Christmas."

Mrs. Bryant sighed and sewed and shook her head. "We might make a body," she said, "if we could get a pattern; and we could make a suit of clothes for it at odd minutes, but I'm afraid we can't manage the head this year, Line; it is going to be close work, you know."

Yes, Line knew it; and Ben knew it. He looked at the patches on his shoes, and at the place where more patches were needed, and shook his head and said nothing. He needed new shoes; but at that minute, he felt willing to wear patched ones forever, if he could only get a truly dollie for Daisy.

The little girl hugged her wooden one close, and kissed it more rapturously, if possible, than ever, but put no more of her thoughts about it into words intended for the family. Yet what was in her heart found occasional vent in words murmured to Arabella Aurelia. "You are a dear good dollie, if you are made of wood," she sometimes said between tender kisses. "You never cry, and you never pull my hair, like some babies; to be sure you can't, because you have no arms nor mouth; but then I don't believe you would if you could."

One morning she came from Miss Sutherland's with a package of soiled linen wrapped in a half-sheet of newspaper. Having disposed of the contents, she retired with her newspaper to the study, whither she always went to read, no matter what hour of the day it was.

Here she sat long, reading at first, then, with hands folded in her lap, eyes on the floor, thinking. Mrs. Bryant, who was hurrying about preparing to take her collars and cuffs from their foamy bath, glanced at her occasionally, and wondered what was being planned.

Presently came the earnest little voice, which very often had a wistful note in it that went to the mother's heart, —

"Mother, do you suppose anybody would want to name a dollie after me?"

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"I should think almost anybody might be glad to," Mrs. Bryant said, looking at the neat little figure in dark-blue calico, with a ruffle at her throat.

- "My whole name, Daisy Isabelle Bryant?"
- " Why not?"
- "Well, but it might not go well with her last name — the dollie's mother's name, you know."
- "And then again it might," said Mrs. Bryant, smiling now, in spite of her efforts to carry on her part of the conversation with becoming gravity. "What has put that idea into your mind?"

"Why, I was thinking that it was almost Christmas time, and there would be a great many new dollies, and a great many names would have to be found for them, and I was thinking what if some very nice little girl should have a lovely dollie and name her after me, it would be almost like me having one."

The sentence ended with a patient little sigh; it was some minutes before Mrs. Bryant could make any answer; then she said, "That is a very nice thought, and as people generally make presents to their namesakes, perhaps during the winter you could make some pretty little thing

for her to wear. For instance, I have something which I think would make her a hat. Do you know any little girls who are going to have new dollies?"

Daisy's eyes had danced as she listened, but over this question she grew grave.

"Yes'm," she said, "but I don't mean any of them. I should like my namesake to live in a house where there was a piano, and a room made of glass, all for flowers, and a study; not like ours, you know, but a truly one. Well, ours is truly, what there is of it, because we do have books"—she looked approvingly at the Bible, arithmetic and history—"and we study there; but I mean a real large study, with rows and rows of books, and maps and history pictures, and—O, mother! you know just what I mean, don't you? It seems as though I must have my namesake live in such a house as that."

"But you don't know any little girls who live in such houses, darling."

"No, ma'am; I wasn't thinking of any little girls whom I know. In this paper I brought home there are ever so many letters from girls and boys, some of them younger than I am; they write to the editor of the paper and ask

questions, and tell things. I was wondering if I couldn't write to him and ask him to speak about it to the little girls who take his paper."

Now Daisy's writing was much crookeder than her thoughts generally were.

Truth to tell, she did not like to write very well; the process was so much slower than thinking, and the lines were so determined to be crooked, that by the time the third one from the copy was written, it looked like this:—



As for Daisy, by the time the writing-lesson was done, she looked utterly discouraged. Her mother had often wished that her little girl had some correspondent, that she might become interested in letter writing; but she had not expected any scheme like this.

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There were many difficulties in the way, and Daisy was particular as to the style of paper to be used; but she was, as usual, persevering; in the course of two or three days there was written, signed and sealed, the following letter:

DEAR MR. EDITOR:

I am a little girl eight years old. My hair is brown; so are my eyes. I have no dollie, only a wooden arm to the old rocking chair; it broke off and couldn't be mended, so we made a dollie of it. She is very nice; I love her dearly, but of course she has no mouth, nor eyes, nor anything of that kind. Her name is Arabella Aurelia; she had to be named kind of queerly, on account of being queer herself.

But what I wanted to write to you about is to know if you would ask the little girls who take your paper, if they would not be so kind — only one of them, of course — as to name a new Christmas dollie after me; my name is Daisy Isabelle Bryant. I think that would be a pretty name for a dollie, only perhaps rather long, unless the last name was quite short; I suppose the Isabelle might be left out, and have only Daisy Bryant, only I like Isabelle very much. I would have named Arabella Aurelia after me, but I couldn't quite like to, on account of her not having eyes nor arms. I don't expect to have a new dollie myself ever, because there are a great many things to get first, and by the time they are all got, I suppose I shall be too old for dolls; so I thought I would ask this favor of your little girls. If it can be done, just as well as not, I would like my namesake to live in a house which has a study, where they keep a great many books; because I like books myself, and we have a beginning of a study ourselves in the front part of mother's kitchen, only it has but three books in it yet; our books were burned in the fire, but I am very fond of them, and I mean to have rows and rows of them some day; so I thought I'd like to have my namesake grow up among them.

Mother thinks you probably won't print this letter, because,

in the first place, we don't take your paper, and in the second place it is too long. I mean the letter is, you know, but I couldn't make it any shorter, and tell you the things you need to know, could I? And we don't take any paper at all since my father died; so if you will just please tell the little girls about it, maybe some of them will; and I thank you very much indeed.

I am your true friend,

DAISY ISABELLE BRYANT.

Over this letter there were many family councils, and, on the part of Line and Ben, more or less objections; but Mrs. Bryant was disposed to let her little girl have her own way in the matter. So at last the letter was addressed and stamped and dropped in the post-box.

"That is the last you'll ever hear of that," said skeptical Ben.

"I can think about a dollie who is perhaps my namesake; and when I'm a grown-up woman, I may meet her. I should love her all the same, even if it didn't happen until I was twenty years old."

CHAPTER III.

"AREN'T THINGS QUEER ?"

THE study in which Judge Dunmore sat reading, would certainly have satisfied Daisy Bryant's book-loving heart. Rows and rows and rows of books! In open book-cases and in closed book-cases; reaching to the ceiling and reaching to the floor. was an elegant study table, and a wide oldfashioned lounge, with cushiony arms, where little Dee Dunmore often curled herself for an afternoon nap. Oh! it was a delightful room. On the evening of which I write the family were gathered in it, and work was going on which would have relieved Daisy's mind. Mrs. Dunmore had her sewing, and Miss Edith was crocheting a new style of fascinator. if sewing and crocheting could venture into this study, Daisy need worry no more about her mother's work-basket.

At a side table under a drop-light, the only student the room now contained, a young fellow of perhaps fourteen or fifteen, bent over his Latin grammar.

Little Miss Dee sat almost in the centre of the room, caressing a new dollie. It still lacked nearly a week of Christmas, but the dollie had arrived by express from an auntie in Paris, and of course could not be left packed all that time. Judge Dunmore was reading the evening paper. Presently he looked up, and sent his eyes in search of Dee.

"Is that dollie named yet, daughter?"

"No, sir. We can't decide on a name. Edith wants her to be named Dee, after me; but I don't quite want two Dee Dunmores in the same family. Edith wants it because she likes litter"—a pause, and a slightly added flush on her cheeks over the unusual word; then the little woman went boldly on—"littershun."

A shout of laughter followed, but Mrs. Dunmore made haste to say, "Alliteration, dear; you had it right, all but the beginning, and a little letter in the middle."

"Well, here is a chance for you, 'littershun,'

and all. My son, will you excuse the interruption while I read aloud a short letter?"

Whereupon he read Daisy Bryant's letter to the editor quite through. Something was the matter with his glasses by the time he had finished. He took them off and gave them a vigorous rubbing.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Dunmore; and her voice trembled.

"It is a lovely name," Edith said. "Daisy Isabelle Bryant. Dee, that's the very name for your dollie—'Daisy Isabelle Bryant Dunmore.' Nothing could be more elegant. If I were you, I would write to her at once, and tell her all about the dollie and describe the study; the number of books would suit her, I think."

"I shouldn't wonder if she would make a good little correspondent," Judge Dunmore said. "The editor has given us a fac-simile of her letter. The writing is rather crooked, but the spelling is perfectly correct, and the ideas are certainly well expressed."

"It is very pathetic, I think," said Mrs. Dunmore. Amid all this talk Dee sat with her arms clasped tightly around her dollie, her eyes meantime looking into space. Dee was doing some very grave thinking on her own account.
Suddenly she burst forth: —

"That child ought to have a new dollie of her own. The idea of her having nothing but an old wooden arm of a chair to love and kiss and put to bed! O, dear me! Papa, couldn't we send her a dollie for Christmas?"

"I really don't know, daughter. Could we? How much are you willing to give toward it?"

This was bringing philanthropy down to a fine point. Miss Dee had her own small purse, and was required to supply herself with certain cheap necessaries, such as lead-pencils, pens, pins, and the like, and was rigidly held to cash accounts and monthly settlements. She looked very sober over her father's question; her mother tried to relieve her anxiety.

"A neat little dollie such as the child would consider a treasure, would cost but a trifle. A dollar ought to buy one."

A quick, resolute shake of the head came from Dee. "Oh! no, mamma; if you please, I shouldn't like that at all; my dollie is so lovely, I wouldn't want to have such a great difference between them; a little girl who could plan about a study and all those things, would know what

a truly nice dollie was. Don't you think so?"

"Oh! I haven't a doubt of it; but could you afford an expensive dollie just now, dear?"

Dee looked troubled again. "Why, I could help," she said. "It is so near to Christmastime that I am rather poor, but I think—wouldn't you help buy it, dear mamma? It is benevolence, you know."

"How can you prove that, Dee?" It was the Judge who spoke now. "A dollie is a sort of luxury, you see; and to give luxuries to the poor, is not benevolence, is it?"

"Oh! no, indeed, papa; a dollie is not a luxury, it is a necessity; that is, in houses where there are no real babies; of course I would rather have a little brother or sister a hundred times; but I haven't, you know, and this Daisy hasn't, of course, or she would say so; and, papa, a little girl couldn't go to sleep without a dollie; she couldn't, really. And besides, mamma says my dollie helps me to learn to sew, and to care for clothing, and plan what is needed in different seasons. It helps you in a good many ways, doesn't it, mamma?"

Judge Dunmore laughed. "Very well argued,"

he said. "You have won your case; as soon as I learn what your desires are, and how much you propose to give towards it yourself, I will add my contribution."

"Well, papa, you know I said I was poor, and I cannot do much; but there is a lovely dollie in Mrs. Streator's store, and she is good, Mrs. Streator is. I think she will let us have it for what it cost her. She told me it cost her five dollars. That would be just the same as her giving something towards it, you know. I have only twenty-five cents, though, of my own to give, and that's dreadful little. Do you think we could raise five dollars, papa?"

"Try it," said Judge Dunmore. "Let us see how good an operator you are. I will give one dollar towards it."

"O papa! that's a nice beginning. Mamma, how much will you help?"

"Aren't papa and I one?" Mrs. Dunmore asked, smiling.

Dee was ready with her answer: "If you are, mamma, you ought to do exactly what papa does, I should think."

There was a sound of clapping of hands from the Judge's corner, and amid much laughing, Mrs. Dunmore declared this logic was overpowering, and she might be counted on for a dollar.

Then Edith and the young student were assailed, and after some bantering agreed to give fifty cents each.

"It is getting on beautifully," Dee said. Her doll laid flat on the floor, while her mistress counted her chubby fingers to make sure of the result. "I know we shall get it all, but I'm sorry my part is so small. I wanted to ask her to name her dollie for me, and I don't like to give only twenty-five cents."

"I could put you in the way of making it a dollar, if you chose," said Mrs. Dunmore quietly.

"O, mamma! how? Wouldn't that be just lovely?"

"The difference between the buttons you chose for your suit, and the ones I said would answer is just seventy-five cents."

Dee looked grave and business-like. "But that wouldn't be my money, mamma?"

"Oh! you may do what you please with the seventy-five cents. I gave you permission to select the buttons, and you have done so. If

you choose now to take cheaper ones, the money thus saved becomes yours."

Dee clasped and unclasped her hands thoughtfully. "Mamma, those buttons were very ugly. They didn't shine a bit."

"They were not so pretty as the more expensive ones, of course; but they are neat and appropriate."

Silence and perplexity on the part of one; then a long-drawn sigh, as she stooped to pick up her dollie.

"I hate dull buttons, and I don't believe I ever quite like things that are only appropriate. If I hadn't bought that blue satin cushion, and that queer-shaped little box which broke as soon as I got home, I needn't do it, but I'm going to. You can order the dull buttons, mamma, and give me the seventy-five cents. But won't I be the only one who has made a sacrifice?"

"No, indeed," declared Miss Edith. "It was a very great sacrifice for me to give fifty cents. I had at least fifty ways of spending it, and as for Max, he is always poor, aren't you, Max?"

"I am," said the student, "but I am a great admirer of Daisy Isabelle Bryant." "Besides," said the mother, "you ought to be the one to sacrifice, if it is to be done; this is your scheme, you know. But what about the other dollar?"

"I can get that easy enough," said Dee, nodding her head in an assured way. "There's Grandma. I don't feel the least bit in the world afraid but that she'll give it. Now, if Mrs. Streator will do her part we are all right. I'm going to name my dollie after her. I'll write and tell her so; and I mean to ask her to write letters to me; may I, papa?"

"I don't know, daughter. Mrs. Streator seems to me a strange name to call a doll; and I should think you would prefer conversing with her rather than correspondence."

"Oh! why, papa, papa! Don't you know I mean the little girl?"

"You didn't say so, my dear. Now, I have a little plan, if yours is arranged to your mind. It is easy to read between the lines in that little girl's letter, though she didn't intend it. There are other than doll's wardrobes needed there, I imagine. What if we should put the dollie in Mrs. Streator's window, dressed ready for traveling, hang a purse on her arm, and pin the

little girl's letter to her dress, to tell its story? Wouldn't that be suggestive enough, mamma?"

Mrs. Dunmore agreed that it would certainly be very suggestive, and expressed her willingness to put some money in the purse.

As for Dee, she went into a perfect ecstasy of delight, half-smothering her papa with kisses, as a reward for his beautiful thought.

Being an energetic little woman, she lost no time, and by eleven o'clock of the following morning, both Grandmand Mrs. Streator having been found gracianhe extra dollar was secured, the dollie bought, and stood in a conspicuous centre of Mrs. Streator's showwindow.

That she was a lovely dollie, dressed in the perfection of modern style, no one could gainsay. Her elegant hat was a contribution from Miss Edith Dunmore, who stayed from the morning concert at Corning Hall to get it ready for my lady's first appearance. Truth compels me to tell that she found the feather in a box of castaway finery which had been made ready for the rag man, but when it was steamed, and curled with a dull-edged knife, it really looked elegant. Moreover, Miss Edith, getting deeper

and deeper into the spirit of the thing, summoned her young friends with their castaway boxes that very afternoon, and out of bits of ribbon and velvet and lace and silk and skill manufactured such a toilet as any fashionable young lady, the size of this one, might admire.

Meantime, in the show-window, Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant did her pretty work. When Judge Dunmore called, he selected a strong and pretty purse, and had it fastened to the ribbons of her jacket, and a streamer of white ribbon was attached to her hat, on which was printed:

"STOP AND READ MY STORY."

In her hand was placed Daisy Bryant's printed letter with a few added lines of explanation, which the Judge himself had written.

It was pretty to see how interested the people were in that show-window. It seemed as though almost everybody who came that way paused, smiling at the lovely face and curious streamer, read, smiled again, stepped inside, and gently took from her pretty kid hand, the "story," read it, asked questions of Mrs. Strea-

No, I am wrong; some of them lingered for more than that. They found Mrs. Streator polite and attentive. They found she had many useful and pretty things for sale, and sold them at reasonable prices; some of them discovered that she was a widow; that she was bravely trying to support herself and three children by means of this neat and well-kept store; that she belonged to the same church with themselves, and that, though they had never thought of it before, she certainly ought to have some of their patronage.

"That was a good thought of yours, my dear," said Mrs. Streator to Dee when, on the evening of that first eventful day, she called to see how her namesake was prospering. "I hope you will have more like it come into your pretty head. I don't know how much money has been dropped into the purse, but I know I have had to empty it three times into that strong locked box on the shelf there to make room for more. And I know I never sold so many things in one day before. People come

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in to see Miss Dollie, and see something that they like, and buy it; people who have never been inside my store before, Miss Dee; and more than that, some of them promise to be good customers of mine after this. I can well afford to let you have the dollie for just what I paid for it; and I'll add some things to the box she travels in, see if I don't. I laid awake nights bemoaning my folly in buying so expensive a dollie for my modest little store, and told myself a dozen times a night that I would never get my money back; and here it is the most useful person who ever looked out of my store window! I'll not forget the little lady, nor the one who named her."

"It is papa's thought, Mrs. Streator," said truthful Dee. "I thought about buying the dollie, but I never could have planned anything so nice as sending a present with her. Papa did every bit of that. He is a lawyer, you know; and lawyers always think of things."

To her mother Dee said: "Aren't things queer, mamma? You can't do the least little bit of good to anybody without doing good to a lot of other people. There's our dollie and Mrs. Streator; she says this is going to make her a

happy New Year, because it will make her square with the Old Year. She means she will not be in debt; mamma, I didn't understand about 'being square,' so I asked her. And Grandma says giving that dollar for the dollie made her think about those things she has had laid away so long to give to somebody, and she sent a bundle to old Mrs. Barnes this very day; and papa says when he looked at her little pink-andwhite face — the dollie's, I mean — it made him think of that little bit of a girl who lives over the wagon shop, and he sent her father a cartful of things for Christmas, because he is sick, you know, and can't earn them. Aren't things real mixed up and queer?"

"No man liveth to himself," quoted the Judge, who was in the library and overheard the talk. "That is what the little one means, though she doesn't know how to express it."

CHAPTER IV.

DEE DUNMORE BRYANT.

IN Mrs. Bryant's kitchen everything was in beautiful order, though it was still quite early. The household had been astir since long before daylight, Daisy finding it impossible to sleep, and her mother silently determining that a quart of oil should be sacrificed, if necessary, so that her little daughter might have the full benefit of the Christmas day.

It was a household in which kerosene oil, as well as everything else, was used most economically; but Christmas came but once a year, and Daisy would never be just eight years old again, so the lamp was lighted before six o'clock. The excitement of examining the stocking that hung all alone by the chimney corner, was well over, and an intense excitement it had been.

Almost everything in it had been a surprise to the little girl. Some of the things would

not go into the stocking at all, but hung in delightfully bulgy and mysterious packages, outside, with a cord attached to them, and pinned to the red stocking. For instance, Ben had, with a little help from the friendly carpenter around the corner, made for her the most complete little set of book-shelves that Daisy had ever seen. She felt certain there were none nicer in the world; and she may be sure that none were ever made with more painstaking care. Three shelves, beautifully smooth, and stained to look like the solid black walnut of Miss Sutherland's book-cases. were already hung, the three books placed upon them, and continually Daisy's eyes roved to that choice corner, and her heart gave strong little beats of happiness. Over the "bookcase," as Daisy assured them the shelves must be called, were hanging the Christmas pictures in their gay frames. On the upper shelf were arranged with great care certain smaller treasures from the stocking; a pretty heart-shaped pincushion from mother, stuck full of pins of different sizes; a neat little box, covered with gay pictures, and lined with pink cloth to make it strong enough for the three spools and the

speck of a needle-book, with five needles placed in shining rows on the bit of fine notched flannel inside.

There had been intense excitement over that box; for, in addition to the spools, and the needle-book, gifts from mother, there had gleamed before Daisy's astonished eyes a real truly silver thimble, of just the right size for her small finger. Miss Sutherland had called one morning with some collars and cuffs that she was in haste to have laundried, and had found Mrs. Bryant busy lining the box, taking advantage of Daisy's having been sent down town on errands. Miss Sutherland had admired the pink lining, and the bright pictures, and had asked several questions; and the night before Christmas had come this bit of a thimble, together with a box of choice grapes for Line, and a basket of apples for Ben.

But the crowning delight of Daisy's heart had been the united gift of mother, Line and Ben. This was nothing less wonderful than a bright patch-work curtain, some of the patches of silk, and some of soft bright wools; and being hung on a strong red cord that Ben had bought with the last cent he had in the world,

it was long enough and wide enough to curtain off the study; so that, on occasion, it could be entirely separated from the kitchen. Could anything ever be nicer than that? It was hard for Daisy to believe that she could ever be happier or more grateful than she was this morning. Truth to tell, I don't suppose she ever will be.

With all these wonders to admire and talk over — for to each belonged half a dozen separate stories — it had been hard work to eat any breakfast, though they had bread cakes and syrup, as well as baked potatoes.

"We'll be downright extravagant for once," said Line, "and have cakes, and baked potatoes, and apple sauce; and we are going to have a chicken again for dinner, larger than the one we had on Thanksgiving Day, I do believe. I tell you what, Daisy Bryant, it isn't every little girl who has such a time made over her being eight years old."

Daisy fully believed this, and was happy.

Now, at ten o'clock, with the kitchen in perfect order, with the delicious smell of roasting chicken already in the air, with the curtain drawn before the lovely little study, Daisy sat

in her own low chair, her wooden dollie on her lap, and looked about her with satisfied smiles on her face.

"Are you perfectly contented?" her mother asked, smiling on her, as she stopped on her way to the oven door to peep into the study and see what was going on.

"Yes'm, or — well, no, ma'am, not quite," said Daisy, with a little shamefaced laugh. "I did think that maybe there would some little girl write me a Christmas letter to tell me that she had named her dollie for me; but Ben went to the office, you know, when he took the applebasket home, and there wasn't anything."

"Perhaps it will come to-morrow," said her mother soothingly, "or to-night; but I wouldn't expect it too much, if I were you. This is a very busy world, and little girls don't write many letters. I think it more than likely that the little girl who named her new dollie for you, meant to write and tell you all about it, but she will keep putting it off, until by and by she will think it is too late."

"Then you think there is a dollie named for me?" said Daisy, with a bright face.

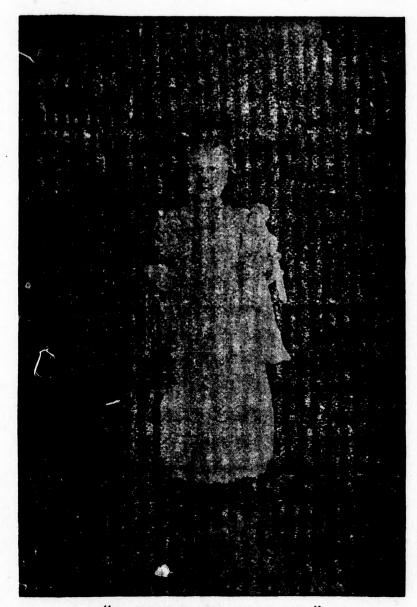
"Oh! I haven't a doubt of it," said Mrs.

Bryant, as she went in some haste toward the stove, for the apple sauce was sputtering as though it meant to boil over in less than another minute.

It was just then that Daisy heard an emphatic knock at the back door. She sat still and listened, for her mother's quick step moved toward the door. Then she heard the following remarkable conversation: "Good-morning, ma'am! Have you a party stopping with you by the name of Dee Dunmore Bryant?"

"Dee Dunmore Bryant!" repeated Mrs. Bryant wonderingly, "no; I don't know that name at all; there is no one stopping here but my own family."

"Well, this trunk is sent to your care, or to little Miss Daisy's. The card reads plainly enough; in fact, it's print: 'Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant, care of Miss Daisy Isabelle Bryant.' I kind of thought I'd like to see Miss 'Dee Dunmore,' if she was here, for judging from this trunk, I thought she must be about the size of my thumb." With a broad smile on his face, the village expressman stepped forward and landed in the middle of the little kitchen a trunk about two feet long, one foot wide, and



"A SWEET-FACED LITTLE GIRL,"

perhaps a little more than a foot high; a perfect trunk, studded with brass nails, and locked and strapped in the most business-like manner.

"Came by express, ma'am," said the man, his face seeming to grow broader while he looked first at Mrs. Bryant, then at the trunk. "I only hope 'Miss Dee Dunmore' isn't done up inside of it; for it is a well-made little thing, and there wouldn't be much chance for air inside."

By this time Daisy was in the kitchen, her eyes very large. There was certainly her name in neat print on the end of the dear little trunk. But who in the world was Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant, and how should they find her and let her know that they had her trunk? This was the question which troubled the Bryant household for some time. The expressman, who was a friend of Ben's, and who liked to do a good turn for his friends, went away laughing, declaring that there was nothing to pay; or at least if there was, he would wait until Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant put in an appearance before he presented his bill; for if she could get all her furbelows into a trunk of that size he would like mighty well to see her.

"I would open the thing," declared Ben, when he had come home and walked around it, and lifted it on his shoulder to try its weight, and wondered and studied as much as the others. "It is sent to Daisy's care, and it's our own name, and she doesn't know how to take care of it without knowing what is inside. Halloo! Look here. Tucked under this strap is the mite of a key, tied on with a cord! They mean you shall open it, and take care of the things; they may be flowers, or something that will Wouldn't you open it, mother?" spoil.

"I believe I would," said Mrs. Bryant, who began to have a theory of her own, to the effect that Miss Dee Dunmore might really be inside; but she kept her own counsel, and looked on, while Ben, with nervous haste, unstrapped the wee trunk, and Daisy, her fingers trembling so that she could hardly do it, turned the key and threw up the lid. A complete trunk inside as Fitted up in compartments, hatwell as out. box, shoe-box, toilet-box, everything complete, all carefully closed and fastened down. On the very top, however, was a letter addressed in a round hand to Miss Daisy Isabelle Bryant!

"Hurrah!" said Ben. "Here is a letter for

you, Daisalinda; now we will understand this mystery."

"Shut down the lid of the trunk," said her thoughtful and far-seeing mother, "and let Daisy read the letter before we go any farther; then if it is her duty to unpack the trunk, she can have the pleasure of doing it herself."

So Daisy broke the seal and read aloud: -

MY DEAR FRIEND, DAISY ISABELLE BRYANT:

["Mother, who can it be from? I have no friend to write to me."

"I don't know, dear; perhaps it is some one who has written in answer to the letter you sent to the paper."

"Read on," said Line, "then you will find out who it is."

"Yes, hurry up!" said Ben. "We can't stand such suspense as this very long." As he spoke, his eyes danced with pleasure; he had caught a gleam of his mother's thought. What a thing it would be if somebody had really sent Daisy a dollie! And Daisy read:

I am Dee Dunmore [exclamations of astonishment and pleasure from the listeners], a little girl pretty near nine years old; at least I was eight almost three months ago. Papa read your letter in the paper aloud to us, and as I had a new dollie come from Paris only a few weeks ago, and she hadn't any name, I named her for you right away; she is lovely; I have sent you her picture, so you can see for yourself. I sent mine, too, because I had none of dollie without me, and besides, I thought maybe you might like to see me, too. I am going to be your friend, you know; and to write letters to you if you will answer them. I don't write very well yet, but I am learning. Then I thought it was kind of lonesome to have only a dollie who had no mouth, nor eyes, nor any of those things; I don't mean that she isn't nice, and I know you love

her, because sometimes mamma rolls up a pillow for me for a dollie, and I find I love it very much; but then I couldn't get along with only that kind of a dollie, and I thought I ought to have a namesake, too; so we made up our minds to send you one named after me, and she is in the trunk, and we hope you will like her. ["O, mother!" said Daisy, stopping for breath, and almost ready to cry, in her surprise and delight, "O, mother! do you think there is a real truly dollie for me in this trunk?"

"I begin to think so," said Mrs. Bryant, and she turned away just then to look at the chicken in the oven, and wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Go ahead," said Ben, and Daisy read:]

Mamma helped, and papa, and grandma, and all of them; Mrs. Streator did, too; so it is a present from all of us; sister Edith and her friend made the clothes, and I really think the hat is lovely. The plume is a piece of one that my auntie sent from Paris. The purse on her arm is not Dee's, but yours; papa sent it with his love; and he says the things in it are from your friends who feel sure that you will make good use of them.

He says ever so many friends helped send them to you; that it is a trifle from each in memory of the Christmas time, and the dear Saviour who said it was more blessed to give than to receive; and you are to give our regards to your mother, and tell her we hope she will let you accept these gifts for His sake. Those are papa's very words; I had a great time writing them; I had to keep asking him over and over, what came next; it took me most all day to write this letter, and I had to copy it twice; once I blotted dreadfully, and once I got it all mixed up. It doesn't take me so long when I write just my own words, because I pick out the little bits of ones. I like to speak long words pretty well, but it is a good deal of trouble to write them; they have so many letters, you see.

Well, I hope you will love Dee Dunmore, and I'm sure you will; I hope you will like the name. I like Daisy Isabelle very much indeed. I never had a dollie in my life whose name I liked so well. Oh! I forgot to tell you that the dress in the bottom of the trunk is too large for Dee, and too small

for me, and mamma thought it possible it might fit you; she says if it doesn't, your mamma will know some little girl to give it to. Now I wish you merry Christmas, and I hope you will write to me.

Good-by.

DEM DUNMORE.

"Well, of all things in this world!" said Ben, the minute the letter was finished; though what "all things in this world" had to do with it, he did not explain.

As for Daisy, she sat like one stunned, staring at the letter in her lap.

"Why don't you open the trunk, dear, and give Dee a breath of fresh air?"

"Mother," said Daisy, "doesn't it seem almost too wonderful, some way?" Then she dived forward and raised the lid, and amid little squeals of delight, and exclamations of rapture, Miss Dee was drawn out from her wrappings and stood before them, smiling lips, blue eyes, curly hair, and all! Could I describe her, do you think, or her wardrobe, for that matter? It was, without doubt, the most elegant one that was ever unpacked in that little village.

"Do look at the silk dresses!" said Line.

"Miss Sutherland's wardrobe sinks into insignificance beside this one."

The purse had slipped from her delicate hand

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and lay just at her side, and was heavy. Ben took it in hand, and his face grew first red, then pale, as he said at last almost under his breath: "Mother, there are fifty dollars in that purse. What does it all mean?"

But Daisy had forgotten the purse and its contents; she was rapturously kissing the picture of a sweet-faced little girl, with a dollie in her arms.

CHAPTER V.

"DEE DUNMORE'S" RIVALS.

WHAT does it all mean?" asked Ben at last, his usually cheery face clouded over. "I don't understand it, mother. We may be poor, but we are surely not objects of charity."

"This isn't charity, my boy," said Mrs Bryant, with her brightest smile, "this is grace."

Then, seeing that Ben's face did not brighten, she added, speaking very kindly, but with a good deal of decision: "Ben, dear, don't allow yourself to be above receiving kindly and cordial lifts in this world, from your brothers and sisters. These are not strangers; they belong to our Father's family. We did not appeal to them for a Christmas gift, but our Father knows perfectly well that we are in closer quarters than usual this winter; and, while I had not reached the point of asking any one but

Him, I am more than thankful that he has put it into the hearts of some of our brothers and sisters to give us a lift towards the rent, and the new stove which seems almost a necessity."

"It seems just like beggars!" said Ben, and his voice was almost scornful.

"Why, none of us begged, my boy, though I hope our pride would not be above even that if it should be plainly shown that it was our duty. Look here, mother's boy, the feeling you are nursing now is beneath you; it looks just enough like real honest virtue for Satan to succeed in deceiving you; and I have no doubt he is very much tickled, this minute, about having done so.

"To go about asking for help, or even to be willing to receive help that is unnecessary, is to have a mean nature; but, on the other hand, to be above refusing a heartily offered and kindly meant lift, when one is really in need, shows a mean nature also. You will never be mean in one direction, Ben, and if I were you, I would see to it that Satan didn't outwit me at the other end of the line."

"Well, but, mother," here interposed Line, "it is so queer and strange to have such a

thing happen to us! Whoever heard of a lot of strangers starting up and sending money to people whom they don't know at all, and who didn't ask for any of their help?"

"It is strange," mused Mrs. Byrant, "when you talk about a lot of strangers, but when one thinks of Father, and the other children of the family, it isn't so strange, after all; it is just like Him."

Line laughed a little, and yet her laugh had almost a note of awe in it. Her mother's way of speaking about God was always wonderful and rather bewildering both to Ben and Line. Ben's face was clearing. He did not fully understand his mother, but he had great faith in her, and sense enough to see that her dignity was superior to his. He did not want to be mean, certainly. It was a new idea to him that it was possible for a person to be too small of nature to receive gifts graciously.

As for Daisy, she was still so absorbed in loving Miss Dee Dunmore, that she took no part in this conversation, and indeed did not give it her usual attention.

One sentence, however, had attracted her, and she gave over kissing Dee Dunmore and looked thoughtfully at her mother for a full minute before she asked her grave question:

"Mother, are we in need?"

"Yes," said Ben, "that's the question."

Mrs. Byrant was still for so long that Line looked at her in surprise, then gave Ben a half-reproachful glance, as much as to say, "See how you have made her feel, with your questionings!"

"Children," said Mrs. Bryant, and her voice trembled a little, despite her effort to control it, "mother doesn't tell you all her cares, because you are too young yet to bear their weight; but now that the blessed Father in heaven has come to us in so wonderful a way, perhaps you ought to know that there are a few debts, in spite of all I could do, pressing upon us; one, in particular, that I could see no way of meeting; it has troubled me night and day for weeks, though I have not let any of you know about it, because I knew you were doing all you could, now, and it seemed hard to give you any more burdens to think about. A few nights ago I was able to leave it in the hands of our Father, and to say to Him that I was willing to trust to His way of leading me,

though it should be quite in the dark. And it did seem dark, I can tell you. I puzzled my head all one night, trying to think of ways in which help might come; but I never thought of this one!"

"Mother," said Ben, his voice grave and respectful, "I did not understand; I mean I did not know you had a trouble."

Before Mrs. Bryant could open her lips to reply to this, something else astonishing happened. Another knock at the door, and another box on the steps; two of them, indeed, both directed very plainly to "Daisy Isabelle Byrant."

"What in the world!" said Ben, and then fell to work with hammer and axe, to find out. Daisy, pale with excitement, laid Dee Dunmore down very carefully, and came herself to lift the soft cotton from whatever precious thing lay underneath it. Another dollie! The loveliest little old-fashioned darling! Dressed in a round waist of rich embroidery, with a full baby skirt, and a broad embroidered collar and cuffs; with real hair on her head, and real shoes on her feet, and a card in her pretty hand, which read: "I am Nellie May, and I wish you

a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I've come to live with you."

"Mother!" said Daisy, her lips fairly trembling. "O, mother!" but that was just as much as the lips were capable of doing.

"Hold on," said Ben, "there's more things in this box. A whole raft of dresses and things, I suppose. No, as true as my name is Benjamin Foster Bryant, there's another doll!"

Sure enough, a lovely little woman in a long "newmarket" buttoned to her toes, and a charming little storm hood out of which the sweetest face peeped, as Daisy bent forward to make out the name: "From Alice Castleton to Daisy Isabelle Bryant, with happy New Year wishes."

There were many other things in that box. "A whole raft of dresses and things," as Ben had said. Also a cunning little bedstead, all made up, ready for "Nellie May" to sleep on, and a set of china dishes for her refreshments.

So eager were they all, in their admiring examination of the pretty things, that they almost forgot there was another box. Ben, being a boy, was ready for it first; but declared that he could tell before opening, what was in it. There was another doll, of course.

"O, no!" Daisy said, but her cheeks were very red again, and she came over to get the first peep when the cover was lifted. The fair baby who met her gaze, asleep on her little bed, with one chubby arm thrown back of her head, and one foot doubled under her, looked so much like life, that for a minute all four, after the first breathless exclamation from Daisy, stood and looked, saying nothing.

At last, Ben was equal to his favorite and most expressive remark: "Well, I never!"

Then they fell to unpacking. The baby was found to open its eyes as soon as it was stood on its feet. It also had brought its bed along, and a supply of lovely white "slips" Mrs. Bryant called them, and was "Little Emmeline, from New York." So a card under the pillow declared.

To undertake to describe the Bryant family for the remainder of that day, would be a task quite beyond my powers. Line declared she was but six years old, she was sure, and wanted to do nothing but dress and undress dollies; and Mrs. Bryant said she did not wonder; it was enough to make even her into a child again to see such an array of lovely dollies.

But if they said this at eleven o'clock, what do you think they said by seven that evening? When the afternoon express came in, no less than five boxes were brought to the little brown house, each of them addressed to Miss Daisy Isabelle Bryant," and each containing a dollie! With the five o'clock train came seven more boxes, and by six, the little study was literally overflowing with children, sitting on the new shelves, standing in rows against the walls, or lying on their own little beds.

One of the cunningest was named: "The little girl who will not be dressed." Sure enough, a little barefooted darling, with her hair in her eyes, and her hands spread out, and for clothing only a short striped skirt with straps over her shoulders.

When Line stood her against the wall, she declared that she looked for all the world like the rogue who was visiting at Dr. Priestley's, and who always ran away, the nurse said, before he was dressed in the morning.

But excitement though very great, did not really reach white heat until a box larger than the others, was opened, and found to contain a very remarkable family, five in number. Two great rag dolls with woolly heads, and thick red lips, and white eyes, dressed in the brightest colors imaginable; and three sweet-faced charmingly dressed dollies, exhibiting every variety of costume. The card which accompanied them read: "The Misses Cecelia Rosamonde, and Gabrielle Rushington and their two maids, Topsy and Turzy, who have all come to live with Daisy Isabelle Bryant, and bring with them the love and good wishes of the four little Cushman girls who live in Atlanta." What a pity I could not show you pictures of all those dollies! What a pity I could not photograph that study for you when they were all arranged for the night!

Thirty-five dolls in dignified rows around that astonished little room. Daisy had arranged and rearranged, with the help of her mother and Line; even Ben lent a hand when the family grew too numerous for management without him.

"Talk about the old woman who lived in her shoe!" he said to Daisy, poising one of the late comers, named "Greta from over the seas," on the palm of his hand as he made careful scrutiny of the shoes she wore, "why, she was nothing compared to you! What in the world will be done with them all? I'll have to build you an orphan asylum."

"No," said Daisy, stopping short in the midst of her anxious putting of the baby to bed, arranging her little arms in the same sweet way they were when she arrived, "don't say that, Ben; they are not orphans. I am their mother."

Whereupon Ben burst into the loudest laugh the little house had heard that day. "If she isn't ready to mother every one of them!" he said. "Why, Daisy, do you mean to say you are going to adopt even this little Dutch party? She hasn't been over from Germany a month, if she has a week. She is Dutch from her plastered-down hair, to her queer-looking feet!"

Daisy laid the baby down hastily, and came over to Ben, in her eyes a reproachful look.

"Give her to me," she said, with dignity.

"I don't like her made fun of, I don't really.

Seems as if she could understand. I like her, if she is Dutch; she cannot help not being as pretty as the others; but I shall love her all the same."

With a good deal of effort, Ben checked the laugh that wanted to peal forth again; it was

too queer, but Daisy was in as evident earnest as she had ever been in her life. She had opened her heart and taken in the whole company, Dutch girl, colored "maids" and all.

"She is the queerest little mixture of baby and grown-up woman I ever saw in my life!" he said, when Daisy was at last tucked away for the night, so worn out with the unusual excitement that her mother could not help feeling a little anxious about her. "Sometimes she has such wise thoughts that it seems as though she must be a great deal older than she is; and sometimes she is just a baby herself."

"You ought to go and look at her now, Ben," said Line. "She is sound asleep, with Dee Dunmore in her arms, and Nellie May's bedstead close beside her crib; and the Dutch girl you laughed at, lies with her square head on the other pillow! She said she should have to hold Dee in her arms, because she began to love her first, and could not help wanting her real close; but she was never going to let that Dutch dollie suppose that because she was so fleshy, and her clothes were not so pretty as the others, she did not think a great deal of her! Daisy is too funny for anything."

"You don't either of you know where Arabella Aurelia is," said Mrs. Bryant. "Come with me and I'll show you." So they all tiptoed in, to see. Mrs. Bryant turned down the sheet with careful hand, and there was Arabella Aurelia, the beloved arm-chair dollie, lying flat upon her mother's bosom, closer even than Dee Dunmore, with all her beauty.

"She asked me," said Mrs. Bryant, when they had tiptoed back again, "whether, if I had had a prettier little girl than she, come to live with me, I would give her her place?"

"I'd like to see you find a prettier girl," said Ben, with energy. Then, after a moment,—

"Mother, what in the world will she do with all these dolls?"

"I am sure I don't know," his mother said.

Then the Bryant family looked at one another and laughed.

CHAPTER VI.

"IFIONLYHAD!"

A ROUND the corner but a short walk from Mrs. Bryant's little cottage, lived a family whose young people were quite intimate friends of Ben and Line Bryant. Not that they were in the least like them, unless the likeness could be found in the fact that both mothers were widows and were working hard to take care of their children.

To Mrs. Bryant it seemed as if Mrs. Kedwin's life was much harder than hers. It is true Mrs. Kedwin had three sons while she had only one; but then Mrs. Kedwin's oldest son was gone to sea — they had not even heard from him in more than a year — and the second boy was wild and hard. Was not her own Ben worth a dozen such boys as that?

Mrs. Kedwin lived in a larger house than she, much larger in fact, and some of her rooms were duite fine; but that was because she kept boarders for a living and worked hard, day and night, almost, to keep the rooms looking as nice as she could, in order to satisfy her boarders. A "cheap boarding-house" the people further up-town called it, though the boarders themselves never thought the price they paid was small and grumbled a great deal about everything.

Poor Mrs. Kedwin often came for a few minutes to pour her troubles into Mrs. Bryant's sympathetic ears and to say she was "running behind" all the time; she was sure she did not know what was to become of them.

On the whole, Mrs. Bryant who did not see how her own family was to get through the winter, yet knew that she would not for a good deal have changed places with Mrs. Kedwin.

As for the young people, who were about the same age as Ben and Line, it must be admitted that those two sometimes envied them, for they were still in school studying the same lessons that the Bryant young people longed to master. Yet Line confessed herself as "vexed about half the time" with Fanny Kedwin.

"She ought to have been named 'IfIonly-

had," she said one day to Ben. "She is forever telling what she would do if she 'only had' this or that, and she lets slip chances that might amount to something, just because she hasn't something else that would be nice to put with them. I've no patience with her."

"Well," said Ben, "Rufus is just so. He hangs around Saturday mornings and tells what splendid paths he could make and how much money he could earn, if he only had one of those snow plows, while I go to work with my old worn-out snow shovel and earn a few shillings. Every little helps. But Rufus doesn't seem to think so; if he can't do a big thing he doesn't want to do anything."

One evening, not long after the arrival of the dolls, Rufus and Fanny Kedwin came to spend an hour or two with their friends. Mrs. Bryant had gone out for the evening on an errand which often took her from home. On Duane Street lived a young couple with their baby, in a lovely home all by themselves. They had discovered that if they could get Mrs. Bryant to bring her sewing and come and sit in their pretty little parlor with the door ajar into the bedroom, they could go to a lecture or concert

together, leaving their darling in her care and feel perfectly safe and comfortable about her. So many an honest penny did Mrs. Bryant earn in this pleasant way. Line and Ben were always glad to have her go, for they said it was a great deal easier way to earn money than to iron all the evening, or sit and sew.

"Besides," said Line, "she can sit and sew at the same time; be paid for staying there, as well as getting paid for the sewing — two earnings put into one."

Little Daisy was never able to reason about it in this philosophical manner. She made no complaints, but it was so nice and comfortable to have mother at home in the evening, and it was so lonesome to have her gone, that Daisy, as she sat in her own little chair, with Dee Dunmore Bryant on her lap and Arabella Aurelia at her feet, looked sober and made very few re-In fact she paid but little attention at marks. first to what was being said, until Fanny, who had silently watched Line's fingers flying for a few minutes — for Line was hemming ruffles with which to trim the skirts her mother was making for Mrs. Potter - made this remark:

"If we only had a machine I might earn some

money this winter. Miss Webster was asking mother to-day if she knew of any one who would make some plain underclothes for her. Mother said she didn't unless it was your mother, but she said she heard your mother say she had on hand all she could do now. If we had a machine I could do them as well as not; but there's no use in talking. I might as well wish for a piano and be done with it, as to wish for a sewing machine. I never expect to have either."

"Oh! yes, you will," said Ben; "Rufus will buy you both, one of these days, see if he doesn't."

Line was not giving very close attention to this. Her thoughts were on the sewing.

"Does she want her work done on a machine?" she asked presently.

"Why, no, I don't suppose she would care about that; but then, who would do it without a machine? Great long seams and lots of hemming. It would just be drudgery! I wouldn't do it for anything."

"I don't know," said Line, "it would be slow work, of course, but then, if one had nothing else to do—I'm about run out of knitting; I used up all my yarn; it is getting so late in the season mother thinks I could hardly get my money back if I bought more. I wouldn't mind sewing by hand if I could find anybody willing to wait until I got it done. There is very little on mother's sewing she will let me do, she does such fine work most of the time."

"Who is Miss Webster?" said Ben. "Why doesn't she do her own sewing?"

"Why, she can't," said Fanny, "she is sick, you know. She hurt her back when she was a girl, and she can't sew, not even enough to mend her clothes, without making it ache. She does not work at all."

"Oh! is she that one who rides around in a sort of hand carriage?" asked Ben. "I've seen her. I met her this morning out riding with her dog."

"She's got the cunningest dog out," said Rufus; "he knows everything you say to him; minds as well as a boy does."

"He and Willie are great friends," said Fanny; "he lets Willie maul him dreadfully and doesn't growl or look cross. This morning mother scolded Willie real hard; he would keep jumping on Ebon and it hurt him; he squealed out as if in pain, and at last mother gave Willie a box on his ear, and set him up on a chair where she told him to stay till he could behave himself. She spoke real cross, you know, and Ebon knew his playmate was being scolded. What did he do but get up slowly from the corner where he had gone to get away from Willie, walk across the room and hold out his paw to Willie to shake hands! We all shouted right out, it was so cute in the old fellow, and mother let Willie get down from his chair as soon as he said he was sorry. She said it would never do to have a dog more ready to forgive than she was herself."

Then Rufus had a story to tell.

"That is a great dog," he said; "I'd give a good deal if he was mine. Miss Webster tells us lots of funny stories about him. At home he is left to guard the stables a great deal of the time. They feel perfectly safe to leave fine harnesses and whips and everything out there, and the doors unlocked; because Ebon will not allow anything to be touched unless it is some one he has been told has a right. When they got a new man he had to be taken out and introduced to Ebon before he could go to work."

"Introduced," said Ben. "How do they manage that?"

"Why, just as they would introduce anybody, and tell Ebon he's come to stay and must be allowed to handle the robes and whips and things."

Ben was not much acquainted with dogs and laughed a good deal over this idea.

"I guess he wouldn't find much fault if a fellow should go to work who hadn't been introduced," he said.

"Oh! but he would," declared Rufus; "Miss Webster told us of a friend of hers with whom Ebon was well acquainted. He used to pet Ebon and play with him and Ebon liked him very But the man had never been in the much. stables, till one day he stopped there to speak to Miss Webster's brother who was upstairs looking for something they wanted. Nobody was there, only him and the dog, and he thought he would see how far the dog would let him go; so he took hold of the whip and started for the In an instant Ebon was at his side growling low, but in a way that meant business. Miss Webster said that man couldn't stir a step until he put down the whip. She said they used to tease the gentleman a great deal after

that. They told him they felt perfectly safe since Ebon evidently understood his character.

Whereupon Daisy spoke for the first time in some minutes. "Mr. Jones ought to have that dog for a clerk."

- "Why?" asked both girls at once, while the boys turned and looked curiously at her.
- "Because the clerk he has now lets the girls and boys take nuts out of the barrels when Mr. Jones is not there."
 - "Why-ee!" said Line. "That is stealing."
- "Pshaw!" said Rufus, his face growing red. "What's a nut or two, or an apple? They didn't take a whole handful."
- "I should say that 'a nut or two,' in a case like that, was a nut or two that belonged to Mr. Jones, and unless I had paid my money for them, I would much rather they would be in his hands than mine," said Ben.
- "I should think so," said Daisy gravely, but Rufus only laughed, though the flush stayed on his face.
- "I'd like to get Miss Webster's sewing," said Line.
- "I'd like to get Miss Webster's dog," said Ben, imitating Line's tone.

Then they all laughed.

"I can't arrange about the dog," said Fanny good naturedly, "but I should think we could about the sewing. She really wants some done, very much, I should think; she has spoken to mother about it two or three times. I might tell her you could do it and that your mother could help you if you came to places you didn't know how to do yourself; that is, if you really want it. But I never would; it is such dreadful slow work. It will take you ages to earn a dollar."

"It will not take me so long as it will to do nothing," said Line, smiling.

"I'll tell you what," said Fanny, "come over to-morrow and see her for yourself. She's real pleasant; not a bit stuck up, as some rich ladies are."

"Is she rich?" asked Ben.

"I guess she is. You ought to see her elegant things; silk wrappers and embroidered skirts. She doesn't think any more about wearing them than I do about wearing calico. I shouldn't think she would care whether she had pretty things or not, though, lame all the while as she is; still it must be nice to have lots of

She has been here for three winters. money. She always boarded at the Caryl House before, where they pay twenty dollars a week for board. Think of that, Line Bryant! Twenty dollars for what one person eats and sleeps in a week! She came down to this street because she wanted to be near the little gray church on the corner. The minister there is a friend of hers, and she says on pleasant Sundays she can leave her window open and hear them sing and imagine she hears them pray. That is the way she goes to prayer meeting. She told mother once that the hardest thing for her to give up was prayer Doesn't that seem queer? I can't imagine how a person can care so much for prayer meeting. It sounds awful wicked to say it, but I always think they are the dullest places in the world. If I had to go every week I don't know what would become of me."

"I don't enjoy them very well," said Line, "but I know people who do. Mother does, and she is always sorry when somebody must have ironing done on that evening. She always goes when she can."

"You don't go, do you?"

"Not very often," said Line, "this time of

year. I stay with Daisy because she is too young to be kept up. It is such a long walk from here, you know. Ben goes to take care of mother."

"I don't believe Ben likes it; do you, Ben?"

"Do I what?" asked Ben, who had been giving close attention to something Rufus was describing and had not heard what Fanny said.

"Do you like to go to prayer meeting? Line said you went to take care of your mother, and I said I didn't believe you liked it. Do you?"

"Not remarkably," said Ben, his face grave, his eyes fixed on the bit of board he was whittling.

"No more do I," said Rufus promptly. "I never go unless I can't help myself. One night when Mrs. Knox was boarding at our house there was no one to go with her and I had to, and I thought it was the dullest place out."

"Mother doesn't think so," said Daisy, in a tone that was meant to be reproachful.

"Oh! well, your mother is older than we are," said Rufus promptly. "I mean for young folks, of course."

"Some young folks like to go," said Line.
"There was a girl in our class last summer who

said she always went at home and she wouldn't miss going for anything; she was so sorry she lived too far away from the church here to go."

"I'll bet you the meetings she was used to were different from ours," said Rufus positively.

"Or else the girl was different from us." It was Ben who said this, half in fun and half in earnest, but Daisy was wholly in earnest. It was clear that she thought Ben had given the true reason.

"I'll tell you who I like," said Rufus, after a moment's silence, "and that is the minister who preaches in the gray church. Do you know him, Ben? Miss Webster says he is nice, and I guess he is. He doesn't seem like a minister, somehow. I mean, a fellow doesn't feel afraid He came along one day when we boys were having a snowball frolic. He stood and watched us a minute, then he took hold and snowballed with us, and he made a true aim every time. I'd like to hear him preach. don't your folks go there, Ben? It would be ever so much nearer than where you go."

"Why don't your folks?" said Ben. Rufus laughed, and Fannie answered for him:

"Our folks don't go anywhere most of the

time. Mother is so tired, and there is always so much to do; besides, Sunday is the very worst day in a boarding house. The people think they must have a good dinner that day if they don't any other time, and the girls have to go out part of the day, or they think they are ill used. I don't get to Sunday school more than half the time."

"Keeping boarders must be hard work," said Line with sympathy.

"It must be fun, though," added Ben. "So many different people to get acquainted with and watch how they do things I should think a fellow might learn ever so much in that way. There are some nice people come now and then."

Rufus assented.

"There's a man at our house now I guess you'd like. He's a writer of some sort. Letters, I guess, though people don't hire their letters written for them, do they?"

"Some folks do, because men who have lots of letters to answer wouldn't have time to do it themselves."

"That's so; but then, they couldn't carry them round the country and answer them. Well, I don't know what he does, only he writes a great deal, and he has a machine to do it with."

"A machine to write with!" exclaimed both girls at once, while Ben looked his astonishment in silence.

"Yes, sir," said Rufus, enjoying the sensation he had made; "a machine to write with; I saw it and heard it. It prints just like books and papers."

"I never heard of such a thing," said Line.
"Rufus Kedwin, are you making fun of us?"

"No, I'm not; it is all true, just as I tell you. I saw it to day and asked him lots of questions about it; he makes it go like lightning. I looked for you, Fanny, to come in and see it, but you hadn't got home from the grocery. After that I forgotit. He says he does all his writing on it, and that it is enough sight faster than any pen that ever was made; easier to read, too. He takes it along with him wherever he goes. He has a case for it and he carries it in his hand. Folks think it is a valise, he says, until he unstraps it, sets it on his lap and begins to write; then you ought to see them stare, he says. It is the cunningest thing out."

"I suppose it costs a great deal of money," said Ben, his eyes large and wistful. A machine of any sort had a great attraction for him.

"I s'pose it does," said Rufus, in a very important tone. "I don't believe you could guess how much. I asked him, and I was so scared at what he said, that I whistled right out. You see it isn't so very large, for all it's so cute. It didn't seem to me it could take much time to make one, when folks once knew how, so thinks I to myself, like as not it costs as much as twenty dollars."

Ben shook his head and laughed.

"I should say more than that," he said, "without seeing it. It must be a new invention; and new things always cost a great deal even if they get cheap afterwards. I believe I should have guessed as much as fifty dollars the first time."

"Well, you might," said Rufus triumphantly, "and been a good deal out of the way, too, What do you say to a clean hundred dollars? Yes, sir," he added, while Ben was dumb with astonishment, and the girls exclaimed, "a hundred dollars in good hard money! that was what

he paid for the thing. Doesn't it seem tremendous?"

"It seems as though a fellow could never afford to have one," said Ben, with a half-laugh.

"What in the world would you want of one?" Fanny asked, looking at him curiously.

Ben laughed again.

"It wouldn't be very easy to tell," he said.

"I always feel a hankering after a new machine somehow, just as you do after a piano, you know. I never hear of one but I think I would like to own it."

"Well, but," said Fanny, "I could learn to play on a piano if I had one. There would be some sense in that."

"So could I learn to play on a machine if I had one," Ben said quickly.

Meantime Rufus was getting ready to answer Ben's remark about price.

"I don't know," he said, "if a fellow had the money he could afford to buy one, because they earn lots of money writing on them. This man says that lawyers and all sorts of business men are having their letters and law papers and things copied on this machine, and they pay a great price for it. If I only had a machine I'd

risk but that I could earn my living. I know it is an easy thing to learn. I'd risk but that I could learn it in less than no time. I wrote my name on it. He told me I might, and it was just as easy! the keys go down with a touch. He said I might write on it every day and learn how. But what's the use in a fellow's doing that when he never expects to have one?"

"Oh!" said Ben with a long-drawn sigh that was almost a groan. "What a dreadful dunce you are, Rufus Kedwin. How do you know what may happen to you?"

"I don't," said Rufus good naturedly. "I may tumble down on my way home and tear a hole in my best clothes. I've got on my best ones to-night because I did actually tumble down on my way home from school and got my others all muddy. There's no telling what may happen, but I'm sure of one thing as I want to be, and that is, that I haven't got a writing machine and never expect to have one, and don't mean to waste my time learning to do a thing that I'll never have a chance to do."

"I only wish I had your chance," said Ben.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

THE very next day after her talk with Fanny Kedwin, Line dressed Daisy in her one pretty apron of soft plaid gingham that looked like silk, and was made to tie at the shoulder in pretty loops that looked as much like ribbon as they could, being only gingham, and went to call on the invalid lady who was so kind as to need some plain sewing done for her.

There might have been two reasons for Line's choice of an apron. She liked to have Daisy look pretty in it, and besides she made every stitch of it herself. If the lady should just happen to want to see a specimen of her sewing it might be convenient.

Fanny Kedwin was not at home; this at first frightened Line who was timid with strangers. She turned irresolutely from the door, half-

resolved to go home and wait until Fanny could befriend her, but the desire to secure the sewing before any one else was found gave her courage and she turned back.

"Do you know whether the lady who wanted some sewing done has found anybody yet?" she asked of the girl in a very much soiled calico dress who had opened the door.

The girl knew nothing about it and looked as though she would like to say, neither did she care; but Mrs. Kedwin was waiting at the head of the stairs to see whether she was wanted, and now came down a step or two.

"Is that Caroline Bryant? Come in, Caroline. Was Fanny speaking to your mother about the sewing? I didn't tell her to, for I didn't suppose it would do any good. Your mother said there was so much work on those wrappers and sacks that she could not promise anything else."

"No, ma'am," said Line, "she can't; but I thought perhaps if it was only plain work I might get it to do; mother would see that I did it right, and I know how to sew pretty well."

"You!" said Mrs. Kedwin, coming three steps farther down the stairs; "I'm bound you

do; you wouldn't be your mother's daughter if you didn't; but then, you haven't any machine, have you, child?"

"Oh! no, ma'am; but Fanny thought perhaps the lady would not care if they were done by hand, if she wasn't in too great a hurry."

"Care! I don't suppose she would. Of course hand work is nicer than machine work; but who can afford the time to do it in these days?"

"I can," said Line, with a bright little smile, "for the reason that I haven't anything better to do; I mean, that will earn money. It is getting so late in the season mother thought there would be no use in buying more yarn. I can't help with her sewing, that is I have done all she likes to trust to me; the rest is very particular work; but Fanny said it was just plain underclothes which were already cut, and I thought perhaps"—

"So you are willing to undertake plain underclothes by hand, are you? Well, there's a difference in girls, certainly. Come upstairs and I'll see what Miss Webster says. She is particular about her sewing, I guess, but I shall tell her that your mother's daughter ought to be able to suit her."

It was such a pretty room into which they were shown. Line had not known that Mrs. Kedwin's house held so pleasant a spot. not that it was elegantly furnished; indeed the furniture was of the plainest; just a cottage bedstead, with a bureau and washstand; matting on the floor. But there were the brightest, softest rugs laid about on the matting; crimsons, and browns, and pale greens, and tints of delicate pink. Line touched them softly with her foot and felt their thickness and warmth. minsters, they were, though she did not know They had followed Miss Webster in a large packing trunk the week after she had decided to remain at Mrs. Kedwin's; not so much because she wanted to be near the little church, as because she wanted to help Mrs. Kedwin with the generous price she paid for her board.

Then there were delicate curtains, hanging not only at the windows, but in all sorts of unexpected places. Line called them curtains. They hid the toilet appointments from sight, they drooped in graceful folds over the rows of shelves in the corner, where all sorts of pretty

knickknacks were gathered besides the choice books. There was even a "curtain" on the plain little table over by the fireplace; at least if it was not neither Line nor Daisy knew what to call it. It was not the right shape for a table cover, according to their ideas; it was long and narrow, hanging low at either end, but not quite covering the sides. Line wondered why they did not put it the other way and cover the plain woodwork entirely, but admitted to herself that for some reason it looked prettier as it was.

There were also a few pictures on the walls which Daisy's beauty-loving eyes saw at once. Especially was there one which gave her intense satisfaction. A pretty little oval, representing a single plump chicken in the act of picking up Its name, "Chicken Little," a choice morsel. was traced in rustic letters just beneath. was a very pretty chicken, and looked extremely It almost seemed to Daisy as though she could smooth down one of the feathers which was ruffled a little. But her special satisfaction in it grew out of the fact that she had but the day before cut from a stray newspaper a beautiful picture of a fat white goose, who seemed to be waddling across the grounds for a set purpose, there was such a look of intelligence in its eyes. Daisy had carefully cut it out and then and been seized with an æsthetic doubt as to whether it was the proper thing to place a goose in the study; but now, she reasoned, if Miss Webster who had so many beautiful things, believed a chicken to be an appropriate picture for her room, surely Daisy might set up a goose in hers.

Miss Webster received her callers with the most gracious smile, insisted on their taking seats, said she was lonely and in special need of young company, and would talk to Line about sewing after they were rested a little and had become acquainted. Line smiled at the idea of being tired with the short walk from her home to Mrs. Kedwin's, but grew grave with sympathy as she remembered how impossible it would be for Miss Webster to take even so short a walk as that.

Mrs. Kedwin went away leaving them to get acquainted without her, having first made Line's cheeks flame by saying with energy:

"She's to be trusted, Miss Webster. If she says she can do your work, why, she can. Mrs. Bryant's children are to be depended upon,

every time. I often tell my Fanny that if she does half the honor to her bringing up that the Bryant children do, I shall be satisfied. There isn't a better woman in the country than Mrs. Bryant; and she has a hard time, like the rest of us."

Line was glad to see the door close after that. It was embarrassing to be talked about in this way, even to have their hard times paraded before a stranger.

Miss Webster was looking at her with an interested sympathetic smile on her face, and she said softly as the door closed, "It is an honor to have a mother whom people cannot help praising, isn't it?"

Someway that made everything seem nicer at once to Line. The flaming color began to die out from her cheeks, she looked up and smiled and felt more at ease.

It was a very pleasant call. Miss Webster told the story of "Chicken Little" and why that particular namesake had a place in her affection; then she had Line hand her a box from the bureau and displayed some brilliant plumage from South American and other tropical birds, and told little bits of interesting things about

the birds who had worn them, until Line as well as Daisy began to think her the wisest, sweetest woman she had ever seen.

"So you know how to use your needle?" she asked at last, when they were beginning to feel quite at home with her.

"Yes'm," said Line simply: "I know how to do plain sewing pretty well, I believe. Mother taught me when I wasn't any older than Daisy, and I have helped her ever since when I could. I never undertook to do anything quite alone for other people, at least not for people who did not belong to our family; but I think I could, and mother would show me anything I didn't know."

"And you work evenings, I suppose, after school duties are over?"

The flush began to creep into Linc's face again. "I don't go to school this winter," she said, speaking low. "It was not convenient for mother to spare me; she has to be away quite often about her work, and she is sometimes kept so busy that she cannot do the housework at all; so I have that to attend to; and besides there were other reasons why I could not go." She did not propose to tell this stranger that it

had reached the point with them where she had no dress suitable to wear to school. That the plain dark calico in which she looked so neat and trim this afternoon and was her very best, was growing old and must be saved for Sunday, because there was no present prospect of being able to buy even a six-cent calico. It was an undeniable fact that, despite the fifty dollars which had come to them so unexpectedly through Daisy's letter, the Bryants were very poor indeed.

"It is all owing to that horrid mortgage," Ben had explained to Line when they talked things over only a night or two before. "I never understood it until the other day. Mother said it didn't seem worth while to explain to us, as long as there was no way open for us to help more than we were doing now. But I wish she had; we might have done something more, maybe, though I'm sure I don't know what."

"What is a mortgage?" Line had asked almost fretfully. It seemed to her that they were having more than their share of the burdens of life.

"Why, it is when you owe somebody and

can't pay, and you give them a paper saying that if you can't pay at such a time they will have a right to sell your house, or your cow or whatever you pick out, you know; then you have to pay interest on it, every year, and that counts up like everything."

"Give who a paper?" asked Line, bewildered by Ben's grammar, and the wandering of her own thoughts.

"Why, the man you owe," said Ben. Line was generally so quick to understand.

"In our case it is Mr. Jenkins; it seems mother owes him a thousand dollars." Ben had made an impressive pause at this point to give Line a chance to take in the magnitude of the trouble. "Father did, you know, and mother couldn't pay it when it was due; but she pays the interest and he lets it run on, only he says every time that he can't wait any longer, he will have to foreclose; that is what they call it when they sell, you know, so mother is kept in trouble about it all the time."

Poor Line had felt that she did not "know" at all. These business phrases which rolled so glibly from Ben's tongue were almost as new to her as they were to Daisy.

"I don't understand," she had said anxiously,
"what we have got that Mr. Jenkins could sell.
We haven't got anything," and she looked
about the room with a bewildered, though
troubled air. Few as their things were, and
plain, of course they would bring something,
and it would certainly be very hard to get
along without them.

"It's the land," said Ben gloomily. "The meadow and the garden, and this little shed of a house; they are all mortgaged to Mr. Jenkins. He could sell them all to-morrow, if he took a notion, and turn us out into the street, and mother is afraid a good deal of the time that he will do it. I can see that."

Line's face had grown pale. Here was trouble indeed! "But how came father to owe Mr. Jenkins?" she had asked in great anxiety. Ben's face had flushed and he had turned away for a moment, as though he had no answer for her: At last he had said, still with his back to her.

"I don't know, but I guess at it; and I think that is the real true reason why mother hasn't told you and me before. You know, Line, that father used to go to Mr. Jenkins's place a good deal once."

"I didn't know it," said Line sharply. "How should I? No one ever told me. did he go there for?"

"Rufus told me once," Ben said, after another troubled pause. "He did not do it to be mean. I came upon several of the boys suddenly, when they were talking about something, and they all stopped. Then Rufus thought that would make me think they did not like me or something of that kind, and he explained that they were talking about a man who was beginning to drink a good deal, and they were afraid it would make me feel badly; so they stopped talking when they saw me. I didn't understand that at all, and I kept asking questions until Rufus had to tell me that father used to drink a good while ago, before Daisy was born, and that is the way he lost so much money and got into Mr. Jenkins's hands."

"I don't believe it," Line had said angrily; "I don't believe one word of it. I should not think you would let Rufus Kedwin say such things about your own father, Ben Bryant."

But Ben had only looked troubled and had sighed heavily for answer; and Line, ashamed of her words, had gone away quickly lest in https://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t51g19x5× GMT 21:04 2022-11-28 Generated

was unkind. She had cried for an hour, and made her eyes so red she was ashamed to go to the store for molasses, and Ben had been very patient and kind and had gone himself, though he had just reached home after a long tramp. And, after all, Line felt obliged to confess to herself that the story was probably true. It explained a great many things which had been perplexing to her. It made her all the more anxious to get sewing to do to help her mother. Poor mother! So there were special reasons why she was not going to explain to this stranger how she came to be too poor to go to school.

Miss Webster looked interested, but asked no more questions in that direction. Instead, she turned her attention to Daisy.

"Are you a little sewing woman, too?" she asked. Daisy explained that she knew how to make quite a good many things for her dollies, and then, gathering courage from a look at the sweet face, added: "I tried to make scallops around the bottom of Arabella Aurelia's dress; my other little girl had embroidery on hers and I thought Arabella Aurelia might like some scallops; but I could not cut them because

mother's shears were too large for my hands, and the little seissors are too dull."

"Is that Arabella Aurelia?" asked the amused lady, pointing to a very little neatly dressed doll in Daisy's arms.

"Oh! no, ma'am. This is just one of my little children. Arabella Aurelia never goes out with me. I love her very much, and I would be willing to take her, very willing indeed, but my sister Line does not think she looks suitable."

Miss Webster decided in her own mind that this little child-woman who had come to call on her was just the oddest morsel she had ever seen, but she kept her face properly grave and asked what was Line's objection to Arabella Aurelia. Daisy looked at Line for help, but receiving none, put aside the fiction so dear to her own heart that the creature in question was real flesh and blood and answered in her grave grown-up tone:

"She is not a 'truly' dollie, ma'am; she is just the arm of the chair. It broke off and couldn't be mended, so I had it for my dollie. It has no eyes nor mouth, nor any of those things, but I love her very much. I did, long before I had any other dollie, and I always shall.

I would make her a scalloped dress if I could." The sentence closed with that quaint little sigh which always went to Mrs. Bryant's heart.

It found Miss Webster's heart on the instant. She hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

"Climb up on that chair beside the table," she said after a moment, "and open that box with the silver clasp; I think there is a pair of scissors in it like the ones you need."

Daisy gravely obeyed, got on to her knees before the opened box, and looked at the gleaming things within, her face all in a wonderment of satisfaction. Silver scissors with gold handles, besides other shining things which looked like silver, but whose names and uses were unknown to her.

"Try the scissors," said Miss Webster, motioning Line to hand her a bit of cloth from the work basket; "just make a pattern of the sort of scallop you mean and let us see if those scissors would do the work."

Down sat the little woman, her face taking on the most business-like air, and with deft fingers she folded the bit of blue flannel several times, then cut dainty pointed scallops.

"They are lovely!" she said, her fair face

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flushing. "They cut down to the very tip edge of themselves."

Miss Webster laughed; it was impossible not to.

"Then I want you to take them to Arabella Aurelia with my compliments; tell her they are her very own, but that if she loves you half so well as you deserve she will lend them to you whenever you wish. Tell her also that I shall feel hurt if she does not call on me as soon as her new dress is done that I may see the scallops with my own eyes."

CHAPTER VIII.

BEN'S VISIT.

WHEN Line and Daisy came back from their call on Miss Webster, Line had a good-sized bundle in her arms, in which were several pieces of work carefully cut and basted, ready for her hand. She felt triumphant, for was not this her first effort all by herself to help support the family?

Ben was to go in the evening to get a certain kind of button for which Miss Webster had sent. "I think it will be sure to reach me in the afternoon mail," she had said. "You can tell your brother to come up to my room, then I can give him whatever other directions I have."

"I don't want to go up to her room," Ben said, standing irresolute, hat in hand. "Why can't I just ask Fanny Kedwin to clip upstairs and get the buttons for me?"

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"She can't have many new directions since three o'clock," Ben said discontentedly. "It is only five hours since you were there; besides, Fanny can tell me the directions. I shall get them from her much straighter than I would from Miss Webster, you may depend. Won't that do, mother? I just hate to go upstairs."

"Why do you, my boy?"

"O, because! a fellow never knows where to step in a woman's room, nor how to act. It is all full of gimeracks, too; I shall be sure to smash something, or knock down something, at least."

"It seems to me that a 'fellow' of your age ought to be able to enter a lady's room and stand by the door a few minutes without doing any very great harm," his mother said, smiling.

Ben laughed good-naturedly, though he looked a trifle shamefaced. He knew his mother did not like to hear him speak of himself as "a fellow," and she didn't like such words as "gimcracks," neither was she espe-

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cially pleased with the fits of exceeding shyness which occasionally possessed him.

As he still stood in apparent irresolution, the mother added, "It is barely possible that she may wish to send a message directly by you, since she took the trouble to speak of it; at all events it would certainly be courteous to do as she said."

"O, well!" said Ben, "I'll go up, of course, if you say so." He went away wondering why things which did not trouble girls at all were so hard for boys to do; wondering also if mother and Line had the least idea how he hated to go up to that lame lady's room and ask for those buttons.

He puzzled over it all the way to Mrs. Kedwin's: why such little things as these were hard, and why, since they were hard, it had to be a "fellow's" duty to do them?

"It isn't that I'm lazy," he told himself, "or selfish. I'd go up nine flights of stairs, in a minute, if it would do anybody any good." Five minutes more, and, with the puzzle still unsolved, he was knocking at Miss Webster's door, Rufus Kedwin standing at the foot of the stairs to make sure that he chose the right door.

"Come," said a clear, pleasant voice, and Ben, wondering why she did not say "Come in," turned the knob and obeyed.

"Good-evening," said Miss Webster. "This is little Daisy's brother, I suppose? Would you mind helping yourself to this chair here by the lamp? And tell me, please, which of these buttons you think are the prettier; my cousin has sent me two kinds, and I can't decide."

"I don't know much about buttons, ma'am," said Ben, with an embarrassed laugh, as he took the chair indicated, and felt that his cheeks were ablaze.

"Not? Don't you know now that there is a certain style of button which you prefer to all others for your collar?"

"Why, yes'm," he said, laughing and wondering. How in the world did she know anything about his collar buttons? "I do like them to be just about right."

"Ah! I was sure you did; that is just the way I feel about my buttons, only you see I am never sure which ones will be about right, so they give me some interested minutes. Did you ever imagine how many little things a per-

son who cannot take a step has to plan, to interest herself with?"

"Can't you step at all, ma'am?" Ben asked, intense sympathy overcoming his timidity.

"Not a step," she said, with great cheerfulness. "That is, not by myself. When my nurse puts both arms around me, and lets me rest my weight against her I can walk quite nicely; but that, you see, is pleasanter for me than for her, so I don't entertain myself in that way very often."

"I don't see how you can bear it," Ben said, conscious that there was a queer lump in his throat.

"What, the not being able to walk? Why, I know so many trials harder than that, that sometimes it seems not worth mentioning. What would you think if I should tell you it had been the cause of more happiness to me than any other thing in my life? You would find it very hard to believe, wouldn't you?" she added, smiling at the look in Ben's brown eyes.

"I'd believe it if you said so," he answered gallantly, "but I don't see how it could be. It seems to me I would be cross and miserable all the while."

"O, yes! I walked for several years; but the jump hurt the nerves of the back in some way. They kept growing weaker and weaker, and at last they wouldn't work any more; they felt that they had done enough. But my little brother Bennie is a tall, splendid boy now almost nineteen, and just as good and brave and grand as he can be. He is going to do his work in the world and mine, too — do it better, I dare say, than I could myself—so you see I have happiness out of it all the time. There are very few brothers in the world like mine. I couldn't begin to tell you of the number of things he does for my com-He seems to be always planning something new and nice for me."

"I should think so!" burst forth Ben, his embarrassment all gone, his eyes glowing with sympathetic feeling. "I should think would feel as though he couldn't do enough for you."

"Why?" asked Miss Webster, smiling.

"Why, because," said Ben, almost indignant that she should ask the question, "didn't you pretty nearly give up your life for him? I should think he would almost worship you."

Miss Webster's bright kind eyes were fixed upon him, her voice was eager and pleased. "I am so glad to hear you say this," she said; "it tells me plainly that you are a servant of Jesus Christ, and think no service too much to give to Him. I wondered if you were, when I heard your sister call you Ben this afternoon. You can imagine that I am especially interested in boys of that name, so I thought about it a good deal; I am glad to know. You do serve Him, don't you?"

Then you should have seen Ben's face! Astonishment, dismay, extreme embarrassment, these feelings followed one another in such quick succession as to almost take his breath away. What did Miss Webster mean? What had he said to lead her to make such a mistake as this! His eyes drooped before her earnest gaze, and he felt ashamed and pained to have to answer her question with a low-toned "No, ma'am."

"Oh!" she said, in a disappointed tone, "I am so sorry to hear that. Why, I don't understand it. How can you, who understood so quickly what my brother Bennie felt for me, feel other than boundless gratitude and love for

your Elder Brother who gave His life for you? I thought of course you returned His love. How is it, my boy? Why do you not belong to Him?"

Ben was silent for a few minutes, then murmured low something about being "too young," and felt ashamed of himself while he spoke, his reply sounded so foolish.

"Too young!" repeated Miss Webster in apparent astonishment, "that is strange. Bennie loved me with all his heart, years before he was as old as you; and I am sure you must know how to love. How is it with that little Daisy of yours who visited me to-day? You are not too young to love her?"

Ben felt more ashamed than before, still there seemed to him something to say for his side of the question, and he answered sturdily that he always supposed there was more to do than just to love somebody.

"Why, no," said Miss Webster quickly, "nothing more than grows out of honest loving service, you know. Your love for Daisy does not permit you to sit still and see her suffer, when you could do anything to help her. That is one form of service; then how is it with

your mother? Doesn't your love for her prompt you to obey her directions? What sort of love would it be which allowed you to deliberately do that which you knew would pain her or was in any way contrary to her wishes? Don't you see that honest loving means service to those who need, and loyal obedience to those who have a right to command? Aren't you old enough to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to follow his directions?"

"Yes'm," said Ben frankly, "I suppose I am. I never thought of it in that way; being a Christian always seemed to me something for old people, or for men and women, at least."

"I understand; you thought it something too great for young people. It is great, certainly; but it is like some other great things, human love, for instance. Take Daisy and yourself. I know you both love your mother, but you can show it by doing for her things which Daisy cannot do, because her arms are not strong enough; yet, to the measure of her strength, I presume she shows her love in service."

"Yes'm," said Ben, but even as he spoke he gave a little sigh—there came to him a thought

of how little he could do to help his mother. Miss Webster studied his face a moment while he stared steadily at the door and winked hard.

"There is very little you would not do for your mother if you could," she said gently, "I feel sure of that; what I want to have, is a reason why you do not feel so toward Jesus Christ?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Ben, after a moment's thought, turning honest eyes on her. "It doesn't seem so easy to me as the other, not by a good deal. I am with my mother every day, and I know her, and can talk with her, and hear her talk to me, and the other is — very different. I can't seem to feel, sometimes, as though there were any such person; I mean as though He could hear what I said, or cared for me, or anything. I never thought I was ungrateful, but I don't"— A pause, then after a moment of silence, "You can't make yourself love a person, you know, ma'am."

"No," said Miss Webster; "that sort of love would be worth very little; but I'll tell you what you can do, you can make yourself serve a person. Suppose you undertake that?"

"I don't understand what you mean," Ben

said, twisting uneasily in his chair, his face growing red.

"Why, I mean — See here! am I right in thinking that you admire your mother very much, and would like above all things to give her pleasure?"

"Yes, ma'am, you are. I think my mother is the best woman there is in this world, and she has lots of trouble, too; there is nothing in the world I wouldn't do to help her in a minute, if I could."

"Then tell me this. Do you believe your mother would be pleased if her son were a servant of Jesus Christ? If she knew you had joined his army and promised to obey his lead in all that you did and said, would she be glad or not?"

There was a sense in which it was very easy for Ben to answer this question. Many and many times had his mother said to him, speaking low, "I long to see my boy a Christian." And he had always answered either by silence, or by a constrained "I mean to be, mother, one of these days," whereupon she would sigh and turn away. She was not given to much speaking on this subject; she had not trained herself

to speak freely even with her children about it; but Ben knew — none knew better — how much such a step as this would please him mother; yet he had honestly thought he could not take Something, some mysterious process, must go on in his heart before he could be a Christian. He had heard repeatedly the phrase "a change of heart"; he knew that only God could change the heart, and without stopping to make this thought consistent with other things he knew, he had told himself that sometime, probably, that mysterious change would come to him, and then he would be a Christian; but in the meantime he did not like to think But Miss Webster was anything about it. waiting for her answer.

He looked down on the floor and spoke low.

- "I know she wants me to be a Christian."
- "Then suppose you engage to do this: not to love Christ, mind you—as you said, you cannot make yourself love Him — but to obey Him; to study His Book in order to find out what He wants done, and then to do it honestly as well as you can. Are you willing to please your mother by doing this?"
 - "But the Bible says we must love Him, that's

the very first thing," said Ben, almost with an air of triumph. He had learned the verse in his lesson only the week before, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." He thought Miss Webster was contradicting herself and getting her logic into a very narrow corner.

"I know it does," she answered quickly; "but you and I are entering into an agreement to do what we can, not what we cannot; we are both agreed that you cannot of your own power make yourself love God, but you can make yourself obey some of his directions. What I ask is, will you take them up as fast as you find them, and live by them?"

"Why, I do," said Ben sturdily, "if you mean the Commandments, and such things."

"Do you? Do you pray, my boy?"

"I say the Lord's Prayer generally, at night."

"And think of the words, and try to order your life by them?"

Ben thought a minute. "No, ma'am," he said at last, looking at her with honest gray eyes, "I don't believe I think about the words much at all; I am so used to them I can't;

they slip right off my tongue, when my mind is contriving some way to do something that I want to accomplish."

"Yes; I know all about that kind of praying; I mean a different kind. You are a very honest boy; I like that. We can understand each other a great deal better on that account. Let me ask you two or three questions. I know you will answer them honestly.

"Do you believe that you owe God your love and obedience?"

"Why, yes'm, certainly."

"Then of course, being an honest boy you want to give what you owe, so far as you can. Are you willing to follow my rule about it a little while? Suppose you promise that every morning before you leave your room you will kneel down and pray something like this: 'Heavenly Father, give me a heart that wants to love thee; help me to obey thee this day so far as I can, for Jesus' sake.'

"And at night, instead of saying 'Our Father,' will you say, 'Forgive the sins and mistakes of to-day, show me plainly what they are, and help me not to make them to-morrow'? Will you do this?"

"Why," said Ben, hesitating, while a deep crimson flush spread all over his face, "I suppose I could, but"—

There he stopped. He wished Miss Webster would finish the sentence for him; he had not the least idea how to finish it; but she looked directly at him and waited. "I don't want to," he said at last.

"That is honest. I am glad you own it; but for all that I ask you to do it. And if I am not mistaken in you, you will. Didn's you tell me you ought, my boy?"

Ben Bryant had never in his life before had so small an opinion of himself. He had always rather prided himself on his honesty. Something in Miss Webster's tone made him feel as though he was dishonest and mean.

He did not want to make the promise she called for, yet he did not understand his own heart enough to tell why. Neither did he see any honest reason for not doing so.

At last, drawing a long sigh, like one who was forced beyond his inclinations, he said, "I suppose I can do it, Miss Webster, if you think it will be of any use."

She smiled on him brightly. "I am sure it

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will be of use in your case, because I take you to be faithful about anything that you undertake."

Ben went home, thoughtful. Line questioned him curiously. What did he think of Miss Webster? What had kept him so long? Did she say anything to him, beyond the directions about the work? Didn't he think she was lovely?

Some of these questions he found hard to answer; he was in no mood to tell what Miss Webster had said to him. He put Line off almost gruffly, and gave his attention to Daisy. Her face was a study. She had retired to the farthest corner of the trim little study, and was bent over with her elbow on her knee and her cheek resting on one hand, while in the other she held a small box of pennies, and one half dime, being, as Ben very well knew, all the money she had in the world. "It isn't enough to do anything with," she said at last, her voice so sad that it went to Ben's heart.

"What did you want to do, Daisylinda? You are not in need of another picture-frame so soon, surely." He gave a glance around the decorated walls as he spoke. A new picture, a

lovely little Christmas scene, had been mounted but the day before, and hung in a conspicuous corner.

"O, no!" said Daisy, "I was not planning anything for myself. I wanted to think of some way to help mother; I heard her tell you and Line about the money, and that she didn't know how to pay it, but I have only seventeen cents, and that won't do hardly any good at all. If I only knew some way to make it grow bigger."

CHAPTER IX.

"DO IT, ANYHOW."

BEN was moving very slowly down the street. The night was cold, and he had his hands in his pockets. He was whistling to keep his courage up. The truth was, Ben was a good deal discouraged, and was also in some perplexity. Something troubled him very much; something that he had not told his mother, nor indeed anybody else; one of the perplexities was, whether he ought to do so. He hated to get home while his mind was in such a whirl of doubt; therefore he walked slowly, though it was so chilly.

In one of the pauses between the rather doleful whistling he was doing, came the distinct sound of a "tap, tap, tap," on a window pane. Ben stopped and listened. It came again, "tap tap, tap."

"That is Miss Webster's window," said Ben,

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looking up. "I wonder if she can be tapping for somebody? She can't walk, and maybe she wants something. But maybe it is only the elm branches tapping against the window. Dear me! I wish I knew. I'd go up in a minute if she wanted anything; but it would be awkward to go and find it was only the elmtree knocking."

While he waited, the street door opened and Fanny Kedwin looked out. "Ben," she said; "if that is you, Miss Webster says she wishes you would come up to her room; she wants to see you."

"It is me," said Ben, without regard to grammar, "but I don't know what she wants of me; do you?"

He followed Fanny as he spoke, somewhat reluctantly. He admired Miss Webster very much, but felt exceedingly shy about meeting with her.

"No, I don't," said Fanny shortly. "She wants to preach to you, I suppose; she preaches to us, or about us, most of the time. She is always talking about how young folks ought to do, or might do, or something. I'm tired of her; she is just an old maid; what do old maids

know about young folks I should like to know? If it had not been for her mother would have let Rufus and me go to that masquerade party to-night. I had just the prettiest notion about a dress, and it wouldn't have cost much of anything. Mother was almost willing until she went and talked with Miss Webster, and then she said No, outright. I'm tired of her; I wish she would go home; I don't care if she does pay more for her board than mother asks."

By this time they were at the head of the stairs, and Ben had only a chance to say, "Seems to me you are in ill humor to-night," when Fanny knocked sharply for him at Miss Webster's door, said in answer to the invitation to enter, "Here's Ben Bryant, ma'am," and vanished. Ben thought it a very awkward way to introduce him, and wished he had coaxed Fanny to stay.

"Come in," said Miss Webster briskly. "Did you hear my 'tap, tap,' on the window? You didn't think I was a raven, did you? Take a seat. You are not in a hurry, I hope? I have been watching for you all the afternoon; I wanted to send Daisy a picture."

"A raven?" repeated Ben curiously. Miss

"Why, yes; you know the raven came tapping, only that was at the chamber door. Did you never hear the story of the raven? How when the gentleman was nearly napping,

> "'Suddenly there came a tapping, As of some one gently rapping, Rapping at the chamber door?'"

Miss Webster's voice was very musical, and Ben was extremely fond of rhyme. He smiled as he said, "That was what came to me out there on the street, only I knew it was on a window. But I didn't know what it was; I thought maybe it might be the branch of the old elm tapping against the window, but it sounded to me like a person."

Miss Webster nodded her head.

"Just so," she said quaintly; "history repeats itself. Only you were not 'napping.' If you had been you might have said:

"'Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is, I was napping,
And so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping,
That I scarce was sure I heard you.'"

"Oh! I heard it very plainly," Ben said, laughing at he hardly knew what. "But I don't see what it has to do with a raven!"

"Why, it was the raven who knocked; at least that is the way the poem runs.

"'Open here I flung the shutter,
When with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven
Of the saintly days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he;
Not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But with mien of lord or lady,
Perched above my chamber door—
Perched above a bust of Pallas,
Just above my chamber door.
Perched, and sat, and nothing more."

Ben's amazed look set Miss Webster off into a merry laugh.

"You should hear the whole story," she said.

"Some of it is very quaint, and some of it is very sad; one cannot help feeling sorry for the poor fanciful brain that could get up such a strange conceit, and put so much sorrow and despair into it." She had for the moment forgotten who her listener was, and lost herself in a sorrowful thought of some sort. Then she came back to Ben with a smile. "I did not

mean to compare myself to a raven, nor to give you snatches from Poe."

"Poe! What a queer word. Is that the short for poetry?"

"O, no!" and Miss Webster laughed again, but not unpleasantly. "That is the name of a famous poet who wrote the poem from which I quoted—Edgar Allan Poe; and his poem called 'The Raven' was one of those which made him famous."

Ben's face erimsoned. He began to understand that he had been exhibiting a good deal of ignorance.

"I don't know much about poetry," he said humbly, "nor books of any kind," and he sighed.

"You are young yet, you see, and opportunity is all before you."

"I haven't a great deal of opportunity," said poor Ben, thinking of the school to which he could not go.

"More than you realize, I dare say," Miss Webster replied with a wise nod of her head. "The way to do it is to pick up little bits of knowledge wherever you find them. They lie around loosely all about us, only the trouble is, we so often go blindfold. I don't suppose a day passes but that you and I add to our stock of useful information without realizing it, and fail of adding a good many little items that we might, just because we do not realize, or recognize them."

Ben looked interested and puzzled. "I'm sure I don't know where mine are; I must be blind most of the time. I don't see any of them."

"Really? have not you learned a single new thing to-day? Think!"

"Not a thing," Ben said promptly, then hesitated and laughed a little. "Or, I don't know; I did learn that dried peaches had gone up two cents on a pound since yesterday; but I don't know what particular good it will do me."

"Is that so?" said Miss Webster interestedly. "What is the reason, I wonder? They must be getting scarce in the market; it is getting toward spring, you know. If that is so they will go higher still. I'll tell Mrs. Kedwin; she may want to lay in a supply before they take another jump."

"They will go higher," Ben said promptly; "that is, Mr. Perkins thinks so. I heard him talking about it to Mr. Wood. Just happened to hear it, you know. I wasn't interested; I didn't suppose I cared."

"But you see you do; your item may save Mrs. Kedwin several pennies. Oh! things fit in where one least expects them to. I've always found it so. Here is this poet whose acquaintance you are making to-night, he will do for item number two; and there is no telling when he may be useful to you."

Ben laughed. This was getting to be a very queer talk, but he enjoyed it.

"I don't know much about him," he said. "If he is going to be useful to me, I ought to know more than his name."

"As to that," said Miss Webster with a sigh, "there is not much to know about him that could be helpful, except in the way of warning. He was a genius who wasted his life."

"When did he live — ever so long ago?" asked Ben.

"O, no! he belongs to this century; has been dead only a few years. Died young, too; only thirty-eight; and died in poverty and sorrow."

"A scholar and a poet!" exclaimed Ben in dismay.

"Yes, indeed; many a brilliant young man has been ruined by rum. I hope you fight alcohol in whatever form you find it, my friend. A boy named Benjamin should always be a foe to anything that can intoxicate."

"I am," said Ben, but his face looked troubled. "Was this Mr. Poe a drunkard?"

"Poor fellow, he was almost everything bad. I do not know a sadder life belonging to a genius, than the one he lived. He must have been started wrong. His father and mother were strolling play-actors, and both died when he was a little fellow. Then a rich man named Allan adopted him; that is where his middle name came from. He was Edgar Allan Poe, you remember.

"He was sent to school, and had every opportunity, and wasted them all. He was expelled from the university for all sorts of disorderly conduct; then he quarreled with his adopted father and went off in anger to a foreign country. He was going to be a soldier and do great deeds, but he brought up in a police cell in St. Petersburg.

"His long-suffering adopted father received him back, and tried again and again to make a man of him, and always failed. At last his patience was exhausted, and the poor idiot had to take care of himself for the remainder of his life. It ended, as I told you, in a sorrowful death."

- "And he wrote beautiful poetry?"
- "Some of it is beautiful. He was a genius, and yet he was an idiot, as I said."
- "How very strange," Ben said, drawing a long sigh. "I did not know that people who had chances, and—and brains, ever finished up in that way."

"Oh! they do, often. The truth is, life is full of such slippery places that the only chance worth thinking about, is the one held out by the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who lean on Him are safe from falling, and no others are. Well, now you see you are slightly acquainted with Edgar Allan Poe, and with one of his poems, all growing out of my tapping on the window pane to-night. And you don't know yet why I did it. I have a picture for Daisy. Has she framed her goose yet?"

"Yes'm," said Ben, answering the smile in

Miss Webster's eyes with a laugh. "My sister Line framed it for her with some red paper that came around some of the things at the store. Did she tell you how troubled she was at first about hanging a goose in the study?"

"Line told me," said Miss Webster, breaking into a merry laugh. "She is a dear little sister, is that Daisy. I have a picture for her which I think she will like. The child's face is not sweet, like hers, but it is pure and good, and the lamb is very natural. I took the liberty of framing it; I hope Daisy will not object."

As she spoke she drew a portfolio from the table, and produced an engraving of a gentle-faced little girl, with a kitten in her arms and a lamb at her side. The picture was "framed" with a broad band of embossed gilt paper; something altogether more elegant than anything Daisy's collection could boast, and yet entirely in keeping with her idea. Even Ben exclaimed over the beauty of it.

"She will like it so much!" he said eagerly;
"I can't tell you how much. She is a very
queer little girl. I don't know how she happens
to have such odd notions; she does not seem a
bit like other little girls."

"She is a flower," said Miss Webster tenderly; "a lovely little wild wood flower, that must not be spoiled by cultivation, and yet must be trained so that it will bloom beautifully for the Lord of the garden."

Ben looked at her in respectful silence; he did not quite understand this, but he gathered that Miss Webster certainly thought their little Daisy very sweet.

"And now," said that lady, when she had carefully wrapped the picture in white p tied it with a blue cord and addressed Daisy Isabelle Bryant, with the love of the sender, "how does Daisy Isabelle Bryant's brother get on? You have kept the promise you made me, of course?"

"I've tried to," Ben said, growing gloomy at once; "but I don't get on very well. are in a good deal of a muddle, and that very thing muddles me more, I believe."

"Then it is clearly your duty to tell me all about it; because if I have helped make a muddle for you, it stands to reason that I should try to help you out of it."

"Oh! it isn't your fault," said Ben, twisting in his chair and trying to smile, "Only, you see, things in a fellow's life don't fit that sort of praying; and he's got to live his life, of course, and it just makes things mixed up and miserable for nothing."

"That is a grave statement and needs careful looking into. I'm not sure we would agree as to the logic. Let us take it up in sections. 'Things in a fellow's life don't fit that sort of praying.' That is a statement of fact, is it? Then of course I must accept it. But the next, 'he's got to live his life, of course,' that I quarrel with. From my standpoint I should say he hasn't got to do any such thing. If the steps we took during that last talk were true - and you and I agreed they were, and that we would abide by them — why, then it is plain that this 'fellow's' life must be changed to fit the praying."

"That's easy to say," declared Ben sturdily, resolved on being honest at whatever cost to his politeness; "but it isn't such a very easy thing to do, I can tell you."

"Nobody promised that it should be easy, my boy; in fact we said nothing about that; it was a secondary consideration, of course, after it had been once settled that a thing had got to

Do it, easily if you can, but do it, anyhow, is the motto of such a life."

"When you have first settled that you ought, there is no place for any such 'suppose.' There is never an 'ought' when there is an honest 'cannot."

The two looked at each other steadily in silence for a few moments. Apparently Miss Webster had not the least idea of retreating from her position.

"Well," said Ben, at last, "I don't see my way clear, I know that."

"Is it something which you can tell me? Perhaps I can help you think it out."

"Why, yes'm," he said, after a moment's slightly embarrassed pause, while the red on his cheeks grew deeper, "I could explain, but there are other things which would have to be explained before you would understand. You see the way of it is, my father is dead, and my mother has it all to do, except what little we can do to help; and there are some debts that were made when — when "— He hesitated, and Miss Webster came to the rescue.

"I understand perfectly. There are debts which your mother is trying to pay, and which make it hard for her; that is so often the case with a widow that it might almost be said to belong to most stories of life; and you older ones want to help in every possible way. So much is clear. What then?"

Ben drew a long breath; how well she had made it all sound! And not a word had been said that reflected on his father's memory.

"Well, the next thing is, it is one of the meanest towns in the world for a boy to get work in. I tramped through every street in it before I got this place in the grocery; and I shouldn't have got it then, if the boy who was there before hadn't broken his leg. There are more boys than there are places, you see, or else there is very little doing. I don't know what makes it, but I know it is as much as a fellow's head is worth to get a place to earn anything. In summer when the canning factory is open I can get work enough, but that only lasts for a little while, and it is a good while yet to summer."

"But as I understand it you have a place in the grocery. Are you thinking about how hard it was to get it, or borrowing trouble, or what?"

"Why, you see," said Ben, then he stopped

to laugh. "Maybe I am borrowing trouble; at least I can see that something is coming. I've either got to stop one thing or the other. They sell hard cider at the grocery where I am."

"Well?" said Miss Webster, looking steadily at him as he spoke these words in a significent tone; and she waited for him to say more.

"And the boys drink it; some boys whose folks don't know it, I guess, and who can't afford the money for it, if that were the only thing."

"Well?" said Miss Webster again.

Some way he had not imagined that it would be so hard for her to understand.

"Why, the fact is," he said, dashing into the subject now with all haste, determined to make it very plain, "I'm an out and out temperance tooy — beer, and cider, and all of them. I don't believe in sweet cider, let alone hard."

"But you don't have to sell cider, do you?"

"No'm," said Ben, speaking more slowly, the troubled look coming back into his face; "that was what I thought all the time, until I began to do this other thing that you wanted me to, and for the life of me now, I can't seem to make them match—the praying and the living What if I don't sell it, I'm there, and the boys,

some of them, come in to see me, and after saying a few words to me, they order a glass of cider, and I look on and can't say a word, because I don't suppose I've any business to preach against it when I'm in the employ of the man who sells it; and I suppose some of the money he pays me comes from the cider barrel. I was all right enough, because I didn't drink it myself, nor sell it to others, until I began to pray that prayer, you know, and it doesn't seem to me the two can be made to match."

If Ben had been looking at Miss Webster just then, he would have seen a quick flash of pleasure come into her handsome eyes. But he was looking at the floor.

"I comprehend the situation, I think," she said at last, after waiting for a minute to see if he had more to say; "but I don't think I understand where the perplexity comes in. Didn't I understand you to say you were in a muddle?"

"Yes'm," said Ben. "Do things seem to you to fit?" and he gave her a furtive glance.

"O, no! but, Ben, my boy, are you really in a muddle as to which ought to be given up the praying or the business?"

CHAPTER X.

"GETTING INTO CLOSE QUARTERS."

THIS was bringing things down to a fine point; or, as I am afraid Ben would have expressed it, "getting a fellow into close quarters." He had no answer ready for her. Truth to tell, he was a good deal surprised. She had seemed so far from understanding him that he had, some moments before, reached the conclusion that she was not a very strong temperance woman, and would perhaps think him a trifle silly for attaching so much importance to a few drinks of cider. It was this thought which had increased his determination to stand by his colors.

But the tone of her question put to flight all such fancies as these. It was only too evident what answer she expected him to make.

"But what is a fellow to do?" he asked, almost impatiently. "There are reasons why

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my mother ought to have the little bit I am earning."

"Not if you are earning it in a way that she would not like. On which side of this question is mother, my boy?"

Then did Ben's eyes droop. "I haven't said a word to her," he murmured at last; "she doesn't know anything about there being cider sold at the grocery. She doesn't go to a grocery from one year's end to another; she hardly ever even goes down that street."

"On which side will she be, Ben, when you tell her about it?"

That was a very ingeniously put question. How did Miss Webster find out that he was going to tell her about it?

But he answered her presently, his tone still low, "She hates cider worse, if anything, than I do."

"And she hates sin, and wrong, and compromise with conscience of any sort, doesn't she?"

No reply.

Then presently, in a cheery tone: "It seems to me, Benjamin Bryant, that you are trying to answer too many questions at once. Or, to put the thought in another form, trying to take

certain steps before you reach them. The first thing to do is to get away from this cider barrel; that is, if you are settled that the two do not match; and I certainly understood that such was your deliberate opinion. As to what you will do next, of course you cannot answer that until the next thing comes."

"There isn't any 'next thing'; there isn't another place in this town where a fellow can get any work. I've been thinking about it all the week, and I know there isn't. More than that, if I should leave Mr. Sewell now, when I've just got used to the work, it would vex him, of course, and he wouldn't recommend me."

"All of them steps with which you have clearly nothing to do, my friend."

Miss Webster spoke with a quiet smile which was intended to be encouraging; but some way it irritated Ben.

"That's easy enough to say," he said, pushing back his chair with a vim, "but you don't know anything about how hard things are. Why, even little Daisy realized the need for helping so much that she counted out her fifteen cents and cried because it wasn't more,

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and because she didn't know how to help," he added.

"Let us talk about Daisy for a few minutes," said Miss Webster suddenly. "You have reminded me of something which I wanted to ask you. Daisy told me about her dollies. What is she going to do with so many?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Ben said, a little astonished at the sudden change of subject. He did not feel in the mood to talk about dolls, but since Miss Webster did, there was no help for him. "She fixes them in rows about the 'study,' as she calls it, and tries to teach them a great many things; but they are about as worthless a lot of creatures as ever sat around and did nothing. We hardly know what to do with them in our little house. It seems queer that so many dolls should have been sent to her, when"—

But there Ben stopped. He had almost said, "when we needed so many other things, and didn't need dolls—only one." But if there was anything he hated, it was parading their needs in any way.

Miss Webster laughed.

"She tries to teach them, does she? That

reminds me of my little sister Faith. She had a great many dolls; they accumulated, you know. The circle of relatives was large, and Faith was a great pet with them all. She clung to her dollies as treasures; none of them seemed to wear out. She was a most imaginative little creature, always trying to teach her dollies what she had just learned herself. Your little Daisy reminds me of her in many ways; she doesn't look like her, as you do like my brother, but she has her sweet fanciful ways.

"I must show you a picture of Faith; I have a great many. One of father's pastimes was the taking of Faith's picture in every imaginable attitude; he had an amateur photographer's outfit. There! I see by your face that you are not quite sure what that means, and want to know. Good for you! That illustrates what I meant by 'picking up knowledge.' Why, the word amateur doesn't strictly belong to us; it is stolen from the French partly, and partly from the Latin, as so many of our words are. There is a Latin verb amare, meaning 'to love,' and amateur is made up out of it and used to describe a person who loves a certain art, or profession, or study, and pursues it when he

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can get a chance, but does not earn his living by it, or make it his life work."

"Then I'm an amateur machinist, I guess," Ben said, with a little laugh.

"Are you? Are you fond of machinery? We must have a talk about that. Well, father took Faye's picture one day when she was posing in the middle of her bed before she was dressed in the morning, trying to teach half a dozen dolls a new figure in calisthenics."

Ben looked puzzled, and Miss Webster stopped to laugh. "You are fond of language, at least," she said, not at all as though his curiosity troubled her.

"That is a borrowed word again, from two Greek words, one of them meaning beauty, the other strength; and the word itself is applied to an exercise of the body and limbs, its object being to strengthen the muscles, and teach grace of movement. It is reduced to a science, and is taught in most city schools nowadays. Faith had just learned some new movements, and was teaching the dolls, when my father opened the door. He thought her position a graceful one, and took a picture of her. Here it is. Isn't her face sweet?"

"Where is your sister Faith?" Ben asked, studying the pretty creature with one plump foot on tiptoe, crossed over the other.

"In Heaven," said Miss Webster gently. "Faith is sure to be swift and graceful in her movements there. I often think of her as intent on some sweet service for the King."

Miss Webster had the strangest way of talking about Heaven, Ben thought.

The next moment she laughed merrily over the "dough" faces of two of the dollies.

"They were pretty dolls," she said, "but you see they did not take well in the picture. They were 'shadow struck,' or 'light struck,' I These are some of the terms which suppose. seem to belong to the profession. I remember we asked father if the dolls would not sit still.

"You wonder where my bright idea is, don't you? It has to do with still another pict-Father made a photograph of dollies one day, all the dollies we could gather in the neighborhood. I grouped them for a tableau, and their pictures were sold at a child's fair which was held for the benefit of the orphan asylum. They brought a good deal of money.

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I thought of it when you called your sister's dollies worthless. It is never safe to pronounce anything utterly worthless in this world, my friend. Here's the picture. Did you ever see so many cunning dollies grouped together?"

Ben looked, and laughed, and admired.

"It is the cutest picture I ever saw," he said; "I should think it would have sold well. What are they all about? Why, there's one sewing."

"They are doing all sorts of things," said Miss Webster. "They represent the woman who lived in her shoe — you know she 'had so many children she didn't know what to do.' That largest one isn't really a dollie at all, but a little girl made to look like one. She really sat in a large pasteboard shoe in the tableau, but that doesn't show in the picture. They are at work getting their mother ready to go to the fair. It was a very good likeness of Nettie Chalmers; I presume that helped to sell the picture. When I came across it the other day it made me think of your Daisy's dollies. Why doesn't she go into business, Ben?"

"Go into business!" said Ben, bewildered.

"Why, how, ma'am? What do you mean?"

"Wouldn't a cunning little dollie store do

well here, don't you suppose? Besides the dolls, a great many things could be made for them to wear—dresses, you know, and bonnets, and sacks and shawls, ever so many cunning little creations. Your sister Caroline could do such work beautifully, I am sure, and I have rolls of scraps just longing to be made up into dollies' wardrobes. Why couldn't you set Daisy up as a saleswoman? You say she wants to help mother—I don't believe but this is a chance for her."

Ben looked more astonished still, but interested. He laughed a little, but it was over a fancy that he had as to what Daisy might say. The more he considered the plan the more it seemed to him a good one. Line could certainly do her part, for he had often heard his mother say that she was very skillful with her needle, and could do fancy work beautifully if there was any way to get her started.

"But would people want to buy such things?" he said at last aloud, speaking doubtfully. He was so used to planning carefully about every purchase, and cutting off what did not come under the head of necessities, that it seemed strange to think of people spending money for dollies and dollies' clothes.

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"O, yes!" said Miss Webster briskly, "wme people would; it is the only way they have of getting them. There are girls who have plenty of money, and plenty of leisure, who could no more make a dress for their little sister's doll than they could build a house; they haven't the talent, and don't want to spend patient labor in acquiring skill. Oh! I should think in a town of this size a very good custom could be worked up."

At that moment came a sound which turned their thoughts in a new direction. A little clicking sound, new to Ben, and curious. He stopped in the midst of the question he was forming, to listen to it.

"Do you think that is some one else 'tapping at the window?'" she asked, smiling. "That is a writing machine. Hasn't Rufus told you about it? He was very much interested in it for a few minutes. I thought he might perhaps learn to work it, but he didn't seem to care to."

"He said he saw one," Ben answered eagerly, "and he tried to tell me how it went, but I couldn't understand very well. Have you seen it, Miss Webster? Does it really look like print? And can he make it go as fast as Rufus thought?"

"I don't know how fast Rufus can think," said Miss Webster, smiling over Ben's eagerness and his confusion of sentences, "but I know a way in which we might test it. Suppose you knock at that door for me, and see if we cannot stop this racket and get a glimpse of the chief performer."

In much delight and some trepidation, Ben tiptoed across the room and did as he was told. The "tap, tap," in the other room ceased. A moment and the door between the rooms was opened, revealing a young man with his hair somewhat rumpled and a pencil behind his ear.

"Good-evening, Mr. Reynolds," said Miss Webster cordially; "we hope you will excuse us for interrupting, but I have a young friend here who is very eager to see that little wizard on which you play in such a manner that it can give you back your thoughts. Would it be too much trouble to bring it in here for our especial benefit?"

"Not at all," the young man said, with great promptness; it would give him pleasure to do / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t51g19x5x .trust.org/access use#pd Generated on 2022-11-28 21:04 GMT Public Domain / http://www.hathi

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"She's a beauty," Mr. Reynolds said, seating himself before her, "a regular beauty. I've never worked one who behaved quite so well; some of them get rather confused in their minds after being knocked about on the railroad for a few weeks, especially if they are not carefully packed; but this one is as clear-headed as she was the day we left home. Did you ever see one work, young man? Then we'll start her off."

Mr. Reynolds spoke of the little creature as though she were alive, and really it almost seemed to Ben that she was. He bent over her with parted lips and quick breathing, amazed beyond measure, when after the lapse of a few seconds the performer lifted the roller, and revealed in neat print the words:

"John quickly extemporized five tow bags."

"You see," said Mr. Reynolds apologetically, when Ben read the line and Miss Webster laughed over it, "I'm in the habit of writing

those words because they contain every letter in the alphabet, and therefore it is a good sentence to learn on. It is some time since I learned, but the habit is upon me when I'm showing her off, to give that sentence for the first one."

"It is a suggestive sentence, I'm sure," laughed Miss Webster. "John was a remarkable boy if he could extemporize bags, five of them, at that."

Ben did not hear her; he was intent on the machine.

"I don't understand," he said. "Where is the ink?"

"Not a bit of ink about it," Mr. Reynolds declared, enjoying the puzzled face.

"Then it isn't a self-inker? But it prints with ink! Is that a ribbon running through there? Why, it rolls itself up on those wheels, and the ribbon is inked, or colored, or something; I begin to understand. But where are the type?"

Mr. Reynolds silently lifted the roller, then the ribbon, and pointed to the type with his finger, at the same time going through a pantomime which told Miss Webster that he con-

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sidered the boy's intelligence and curiosity worthy of response.

"Sit down to it," he said heartily. "Write your name and Miss Webster's name, or write 'tow bags' if you want to."

"Can't I get it out of order?" Ben asked, his face flushing with pleasure as he took the offered seat.

"O, yes! you can, but you won't. I've had boys look at it that I'd no more let try it than I would a polar bear, at least unless I was on hand to guard it all the time; but I have a notion that you are of a different stamp."

Ben hardly heard the implied compliment; he was at work trying to print his mother's name. This, after patient effort, he accomplished. To be sure it was spelled with a little b, and he struck u for y at first, making it bruant, but he discovered his mistake in time to correct it, and "guessed" out the way to move back the roller so as to do it.

"What do you think of it?" Mr. Reynolds asked, watching his face as he looked up from this effort.

"I can see that there is a chance to do fast work, after a fellow once learned where the letters were. I don't quite understand why they have put the a so far away, though," replied Ben.

"No more do I," said Mr. Reynolds significantly. "Sometime, when you get to be an expert, you must go down to the manufactory and see if you can find out. Miss Webster, there's a difference in boys, as sure as the world. I gave a young fellow of your acquaintance a chance to write his name, one day, and after struggling over it awhile he said, 'I don't see the use in learning this thing. I can write my name enough sight faster with a pen."

Both Miss Webster and Ben laughed, Ben feeling sure in his heart that the boy was Rufus, it sounded so like him.

Several more names were tried, and then with a masterly effort Ben struck off on his own account and wrote:

> "Suddenly there came a rapping As of some one gently tapping, Tapping at my chamber door, Only that, and nothing more."

This he showed to Miss Webster, much elated because there were only two mistakes in the print.

"That is well done," Mr. Reynolds said emphatically.

"Yes," said Miss Webster, "so it is."

The gentleman had reference to the machine work; but Miss Webster thought it was worth something to have remembered Poe's lines so correctly, having heard them but once.

"You have a good memory," she said to Ben significantly.

"Yes," said Mr. Reynolds, "he has; he recalls the position of the letters, having once used them; that shows he would make a rapid operator."

Then Ben and Miss Webster exchanged looks and smiles; they understood each other.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, young man"—
it was Mr. Reynolds who was speaking—
"we'll strike up a bargain, if you say so, to
help each other. I'm in need of a boy to do
some roller work for me, and in return for your
services I'll teach you to write on that machine,
or let you teach yourself, which is better; that
is, if you have any leisure evenings."

"I study evenings," Ben said. "I'm at work during the day, and have to make what I can of my evenings; but that would be study. I

I should." Ben's eyes were so full of eager delight that he did not need to add those last words.

Mr. Reynolds, looking at the eyes, laughed in a pleased way.

"Then we'll call it a bargain," he said, "if mother is willing. I shall only need you two evenings in a week. I don't get ready for printing oftener than that, but you may come up to my room and practice on the machine a little while each evening, if you can manage the time, and I really think it will pay you to do so."

Then there was a tapping at Miss Webster's door, and another caller was announced.

CHAPEER XI.

"WHAT'S THE USE?"

COOD-EVENING," said Miss Webster heartily, as the door opened in answer to her invitation and revealed a tall gentleman. "How fortunate! you are the very person I want most to see, at this moment."

"How fortunate for me," said the new comer in a cheery voice, as he crossed the room with brisk step, and shook hands with Miss Webster. "It cannot be because you are lonely, either," and he glanced interestedly first at the two strangers, then at the machine on the table.

"O, no! it was because I wanted you to meet my friends. Let me introduce to you Mr. Reynolds of New York; the Rev. Mr. Holden, Mr. Reynolds; and this is my young friend, Benjamin Bryant."

"Ben, how do you do?" said the cheery voice, and the boy who had imagined himself

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shy of all ministers, felt his hand grasped in a hearty way, as though he had been an old friend.

There followed as interesting a half-hour as Ben had ever spent in his life. Not only was Mr. Holden interested in the machine to such a degree that he asked numerous questions which Ben was longing to ask, but had not dared, but his own intelligent suggestions in regard to it drew out from Mr. Reynolds several important points; besides, he was apparently, to that young man's great astonishment, interested in Ben himself. At least he asked numerous questions for which there could have been no other explanation.

On the whole, it was in undisguised amazement, and some dismay, that he started up suddenly at the sound of the great clock on the corner striking nine.

"Are you late?" Miss Webster asked, in answer to the dismayed face. "Will your mother worry? I'm afraid we have been careless. Tell her it was all owing to the tapping of an old raven on the window-pane, instead of the chamber door."

"She will not be worried," said Ben, smiling

over the raven, "because I am sometimes kept at the store, and she knows I don't stay anywhere but where she would be willing to have me; but I was going to do some things this evening, and now it is gone."

"All the raven's fault," said Miss Webster cheerily, "but perhaps it has not been a wasted evening. You have learned some things about the machine."

"O, no indeed!" Ben said eagerly; "I have learned a great many things, and had a beautiful time."

"And I have learned that dried peaches have gone up in price and are going higher," said the lady merrily. "Did you know that, Mr. Holden? I'm going to make a note of it to tell Mrs. Kedwin."

"I didn't know it," Mr. Holden said, in the same tone. "Don't tell my landlady, please. Ben, my boy, come and see me some evening, will you? I live just around the corner in the stone house; I shall be very glad to have a chat with you about machines, and any other interesting matter."

Ben went away, smiling. Their tones were very merry, but there was nothing about either of them that suggested to him he was being made sport of; on the contrary it seemed as though they were his intimate friends whom he had known a long time. He went home slowly, thinking about it all; happy also over the fact that Mr. Reynolds had said to him, the last thing before he took his machine away, "Come in to-morrow evening, and we'll talk business."

That sounded delightful. Would his mother think he could spare the time to learn to work that splendid machine, he wondered? Of course it was not very probable that he could make the knowledge of use to him—not for years, at least—but then, who knew? He had a chance to do some of his thinking aloud. Just as he turned the corner which brought him in sight of home, Rufus Kedwin joined him.

"Where have you been all the evening?" he asked. "I stopped for you to go to Jimmy Brower's with me, and they said you hadn't got home yet. Your mother said she supposed you were at the store; but when I passed the store it was closed."

"Did you tell my mother so?" Ben asked, a note of anxiety in his voice.

"Why, no; I hadn't passed the store then, you know, but I did five minutes afterwards. Is that the game, Ben? you been spending the evening somewhere where you would rather she wouldn't know?"

Ben drew himself up proudly. "Not unless your mother's house is such a place," he said stiffly.

"My mother's house! Have you been to see me? That's great, and I was in search of you and would enough sight rather have had your company than Jimmy Brower's; but how came you to stay? I wasn't there."

"No," said Ben, laughing, in spite of his dignity, over such a manifest truth, "you were not there, I should say that was plain; but neither was I—not in your part of the house; I was up in Miss Webster's room."

Rufus gave a low whistle. "All the evening? poor fellow! What have you been about to get caught in such a scrape as that? You had at least sixteen solemn lectures on the duties and responsibilities of life, I'll venture."

"I had a very pleasant evening," said Ben, with emphasis. He felt himself growing dignified again; he had never liked Rufus Kedwin

so little in his life as at that moment. "I think Miss Webster is one of the nicest and pleasantest women I ever saw," he said, after a moment's consideration as to how to put his thought.

"Oh! of course she is; pleasant as June weather—a great deal of it—and 'nice' is no name for it; mother thinks so too; but honest, Ben, don't you think she is rather, rather—well, poky, you know, or something of that kind? Preachy, maybe that's the word for it. A fellow can't go by her door, seems to me, without getting a touch of the 'importance of his opportunities,' or something of that kind."

"Well," said Ben, "if she tries to help a fellow to do a little thinking, I shouldn't think it need to hurt him. She hasn't said any more to me than mother does, nor half so much. But I saw some other people to-night. I saw that writing machine you told about, and Mr. Reynolds, and Mr. Holden."

Ben spoke as though the writing machine were one of the "people," and the first in importance; it almost seemed so to him.

"Mr. Holden?" said Rufus, with a little start, "he's the last man I should want to see; I

don't like him, anyhow. What did you think of the machine?"

"It is the most wonderful thing I ever saw,"
Ben said heartily. "Why don't you like Mr.
Holden? I thought he was splendid."

"Oh! because he meddles too much with other people's business. Never mind him; he's nice enough for those who like him. Did you write any on the machine?"

"I wrote mother's name. I'm going to learn to write on it; that is, if I can spare the time; he offered me the chance. He wants some work done, and he says if I will give him two evenings, part of the time, I can write on the machine the other part and learn how. Isn't that a good chance?"

"Humph!" said Rufus, "a dirt cheap way of getting a fellow to work for you, I should say. Of what earthly use does he suppose it will be for you to learn to write on that machine? In two months at the latest he will take it away, and you'll never see another, and what good will your knowledge do you?"

"How do you know I'll never see another? Perhaps I'll have one of my own, some day."

"O, well! perhaps I'll have a balloon and

take a ride in it to the moon, some day, but I don't believe I will."

"I don't either," said Ben, with a goodnatured laugh, "because you wouldn't know how to manage one; if you ever had a chance to learn, you would say 'What's the use?' and let it slip."

"I know the difference between chances and shams, I hope," Rufus said sharply. "I call this a sham — to get a fellow to work for nothing. He offered it to me, and I let him know what I thought about it—at least I hope he understood."

"I think he did," Ben said significantly. "Good-night, old fellow! I'm at home, and, as the man in the paper said, 'I wish you were.' Just because you hate to walk alone so badly, you know, and have been walking out of your way to keep me company." And Ben went in at the kitchen door, confirmed in his resolve to learn to run the writing machine if possible.

Everything was quiet in the neat little study. Daisy was asleep in her bed, but Mrs. Bryant and Line were sewing steadily. Line had a history open on the table beside her, and occasionally glanced at the page as she sewed.

"How late you are!" were Mrs. Bryant's first words. "Do they mean to keep you often as late as this at the store?"

"I left the store at seven o'clock, or a little after," Ben said promptly, "and I haven't seen it since."

"Why, what does this mean? Where have you been, then?"

There was a note of anxiety in the mother's voice, despite her desire to trust her boy. It was a wicked world, and the town in which they lived held many boys who delighted to prowl around the streets of evenings; she had always felt that this was one of the roads to ruin. Was it possible that her Ben might be dropping into it without even realizing it himself?

"It was all on account of a raven tapping on the window," said Ben, bursting into a merry laugh.

"At least that was what Miss Webster said, mother; I wonder if you will understand her better than I did?"

Even before the mention of Miss Webster's name, Mrs. Bryant's face had cleared. No boy could come into his mother's presence with

such a cheery, innocent laugh, who had been doing anything not just right; at least that was what she thought. Perhaps she had too high an opinion of boys.

"I don't know much about ravens," she said, smiling, "and you are talking in riddles. Have you been to call on Miss Webster?"

"Been there this whole evening! She tapped for me, you see, on her window. I couldn't think, at first, what the sound was; that set us to talking about the raven tapping. It is a poem. Did you ever hear of a poet named Poe, mother?"

"Edgar Allan Poe?" said Ars. Bryant, taking neat stitches in the shirt front. "O, yes! I've heard of him and his raven, 'Nevermore.' There is nothing about the doleful creature to remind me of Miss Webster, though."

"I never heard of him," said Ben, with that added note of respect in his voice which a boy cannot help feeling when he makes new discoveries in regard to his mother's fund of information.

"She isn't like a raven, I don't suppose. She isn't like anybody that I ever saw before; I've had the nicest time!" And, late though it

was, he launched forth into a description of his evening—a description in which the wonderful machine figured largely, of course. In the course of it he could not help contrasting his mother's views with those of Rufus Kedwin.

"What do you think about it?" he asked, a trifle anxiously, having told her of the offer for some of his evenings.

"Why, I think it is a grand opportunity;" she said, with enthusiasm. "It will be a change of work, and you will be learning to make yourself useful in a new way, at the same time that you are acquiring a wonderful art; for it really must be wonderful to write as fast as you describe."

"But there isn't any likelihood that I can make it useful to me, you know," Ben said, still somewhat anxiously; it was right that his mother should consider all the objections in the way." I should have to own a machine if I ever earned any money in that way, and they are terribly expensive; just think, a hundred dollars! Of course I shall never have one of my own."

"How do you know that?" His mother

asked the question so coolly that it almost took his breath away.

"Why, mother!" he said, and stopped.

She glanced up at him and quietly smiled. "It is impossible to tell what may happen in this world," she said cheerily. "A great many wonderful things have happened, even to me. Once when I was a little girl, and had an opportunity to learn how to harness a horse, I said, 'What's the use in learning, I shall never have a horse to harness?' but I learned, and because I did, I had a chance to save a child's Oh! it is a long story, too long for tonight; I'll tell you about it sometime, but it is one of the things which taught me to learn all I could in any proper direction, and be ready, when the opportunity offered, to put it in You may never have a writing mapractice. chine, it is true, but then again, you may; stranger things than that have come to pass, my son. Since you don't know any certain future, get ready for a possible one; that is my rule."

"I'm glad of it," said Ben, with great heartiness. "It is just exactly what I wanted to do, but I didn't know but you would think it foolish. You ought to hear Rufus Kedwin go on about it; he hasn't your ideas, I can tell you. Mother, I wish he could hear you talk, sometimes. That boy needs something. I wonder if his mother — I suppose there are as great differences in mothers as in anything else."

These pieces of sentences, thrown out in jerks, set Line into a bubble of laughter.

"Why, Ben," she said, "what's the matter? I should think it was a sphinx instead of a raven you had visited with to-night, by the bits of wise sentences you toss out. I should think there was a difference in mothers! If you mean Mrs. Kedwin and mother"—

"Softly, softly!" warned Mrs. Bryant.

"Well, but, mother," interrupted Ben, just as Line was about to speak, "Rufus does have such queer ideas, and it seems as if"— But he broke off again. A dim idea that his mother would not approve of his saying that it seemed as though Rufus would have been better, had he been better managed by his mother, held back his sentence. To Line he said, when they were down cellar together getting some forgotten potatoes for morning, "Did it ever strike you that Rufus had pretty

low-down notions about what folks do, or what they might do?"

"It has struck me that he has rather low-down notions about a number of things, Ben. What do you mean in particular?"

But just then a gust of wind blew the light out, and Ben did not explain.

It occurred to him afterwards as a strange thing, that in the excitement of telling about the machine, and the offer, and the minister, he should have forgotten all about the subject which was troubling him so much when Miss Webster tapped on her window. It did not enter his mind again until the next morning, when he was skimming along the street on an errand for the store. Just as he turned into Dane Street a little fellow with his satchel of books on his shoulders making a cross cut across the pond for school, fell at full length. not seem to be hurt, and it was a common enough occurrence. Ben, halting a moment to see that the boy was being helped up, would have dashed on and thought no more about it, but for a sentence which caught his ear from a rough-looking boy standing by.

"Ha, ha! I guess he's been to Sewell's and

A coarse laugh followed these coarse words, and Ben, as he hurried on, felt the hot blood mounting to his very forehead; "Sewell's" was the store where he spent his days in hard work.

"I don't believe I'll stay there another day," he muttered. "I'll talk to mother, anyhow."

CHAPTER XII.

"I THINK AS MUCH."

A NOTHER thing that Ben had forgotten, was Miss Webster's scheme for setting Daisy up in business. He thought of it at dinner-time when he saw the dolls set in solemn rows about the study, and heard Daisy's grave remark that she was afraid they "felt crowded," but it was the best she could do.

But it was two days before he had a chance to talk the matter over with his mother. Daisy was close at her side all day, and in the evening Mrs. Bryant went out to care for the sleeping baby while its parents were away.

Meantime, he did not wait for Daisy's absence to settle that other question.

They were at the tea-table when he made a bold dash into what, for several reasons, was hard for him to say. "Mother, does what I earn at the store help you a good deal?"

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"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Bryant, with great heartiness, "you will never realize how much it helps, Ben, until you come to be the provider of a family; perhaps you won't even then," with a bright little laugh which really covered a sigh, "because it is just possible that your pocket-book will be so well filled that you may not realize little helps, but I can assure you I do."

This was a bad beginning. Ben was so silent and grave over it, that his mother, watching him a moment, hastened to add: "Not but that I believe we could get along with less, if you see your way to better things in the future by taking a little less wages now." And Line said, "O, mother! I don't see how we could."

"The worst of it is," Ben said, at last, finding that his mother was waiting for him in some anxiety, "that I don't see any way to earn a cent anywhere else, and yet" — Then he came to a period. It was very trying, when they were all so anxious. Line felt as though she would like to shake him, and even gentle Daisy asked, "Why don't you tell about it quick, Ben?"

"I think as much," said Line. "Have you lost your place, Ben? I'm sure I don't know

what we will do if you have. We just manage to live now, and that is all."

Said Mrs. Bryant, "Be quiet, Caroline. Ben, my boy, tell mother what it is that troubles you. Have you had any accident at the store?"

"No, ma'am," said Ben, low-voiced, and wishing with all his heart that Line and Daisy were both asleep, "there hasn't been any accident, only I've been thinking a good deal about things lately, and I'm afraid some of them you wouldn't like—I know I don't. The long and the short of it is, mother," he said, gathering courage as he thought of the sprawling boy on the ice, and of the laughing comments, "they sell cider at our store—lots of it. 'Sweet cider,' they call it, but I don't think it is very sweet, and "— Another period.

"Have you been called upon to sell cider?"

Mrs. Bryant's face was growing pale, and there
was a dangerous flash in her eyes such as her
children seldom saw there.

"O, no, ma'am! of course not. There wouldn't be any chance to think twice if I had. But you see, mother, the boys like me pretty well here in town, and they drop in there to

see me, and get in the habit of taking a glass of cider, when maybe they wouldn't if they didn't come for my sake in the first place. And then, anyhow, a fellow doesn't feel exactly consistent, somehow, to be in the store where the thing is going on, when he has such ideas about it as I have."

Mrs. Bryant was not through with her sup-The bread had given out, and they were having a treat out of a cup of sour milk and a stale loaf from the baker's. The two, with the help of a little soda and salt, had changed into some delicious flannel-cakes, which had made Daisy wish that the bread would always give out just at supper time, so the evening meal had been prolonged beyond its usual length; but Mrs. Bryant laid down her knife and fork and came with quick step to her son's side, put one hand on his head, and with the other lifted up his face and deliberately kissed it. "And you do not want nor mean to stay there," she "God bless you, my boy. If you had given me a hundred dollar bill of your own honest earning, it could not have begun to give me the pleasure which those words do. Of course you need not stay - not another hour.

We can manage, even if you find nothing else to do."

Said Line, in her most emphatic tone, "I think as much!"

As for Ben, he had a chance once more to contrast in his own mind the difference between mothers. On his way home he had had occasion to stop at Mrs. Kedwin's to deliver a large order for dried peaches, and had stood talking with Rufus a moment, during which they had discussed an item of news.

"Joe Bailey has gone to Peterson's saloon as a clerk," announced Rufus. "He gets real good wages, too. Did you know that, mother?"

"No," said Mrs. Kedwin—"Take the apple-sauce in, Dinah; Jane, look out for that stew, it is burning. I wish folks didn't have to have stews and all sorts of things for their supper, after having a good dinner; it doesn't seem necessary.—I'm glad of it, Rufus: his mother needs good wages if anybody does, and Joe will save some of them for her, I suppose, though he isn't the best boy in the world, I'm afraid."

Mrs. Kedwin always had to mix her conversation with directions to the girls about tea, or baking, or some household care. She rescued two dishes from a tumble, and gave three more orders, before she replied to Ben's dismayed exclamation, "Why, Peterson keeps a liquor saloon!"

"Well, he keeps oysters and other things, too; still, I suppose Joe will have to help at all of it. It seems too bad, but I don't believe he'll take to liquor, he has had such a sorry example set him in his own home. He was quite a big boy when his father froze to death, after a drunken spree. I should kind of hate to have him there, if I were Mrs. Bailey; but what can poor folks do? They have to take what work they can get, and work is very scarce in this town. I'm glad you've got a good place, Ben. I hope you'll hold on to it, and I know you will, for everybody knows you are a good steady boy, and your mother needs your help."

And then Ben had gone home to the suppertable and the flannel-cakes, and told his short troubled story, because he felt that he mustn't dally with his conscience another minute, that something happened all the time to make it seem harder to take a stand. Was it much wonder that the contrast between mothers struck him forcibly?

"So now," he said to himself, "it is plain sailing as far as mother is concerned. What a tiptop mother she is! The next thing is, what will Mr. Sewell say?"

What he said was to argue with his young clerk, to assure him that he had given satisfaction, and would be sure to rise in time; and then to do what was a very unusual thing for Mr. Sewell, actually offer him a little more And then, as it finally became necessary for Ben to own that he had no other place in view, that he was very anxious to work, that his mother needed the money, and that the cider barrel was the sole thing in the way of his staying where he was, Mr. Sewell, after taking it pleasantly, as a sort of joke, at first, and trying to argue him out of his position, grew positively angry, called him a fool, declared that he would give him no recommendation whatever, and that he hoped it would be a long day before he found work that he did not deserve; that all this palaver about principle was just an excuse for getting a chance to loaf around in idleness, and that he would ruin

his mother with his pig-headedness, as his father had before him with bad habits.

"Serves me right," said Ben, drawing himself up to his full height, and looking as manly as possible. "All this abuse serves me right, Mr. Sewell, for having been mean enough to go to work, in the first place, in a store where they sold hard cider for sweet. If my mother had known it, I wouldn't have stayed here an hour; but I never thought of it at first. I wonder how I could have been such an idiot, and I promise you I never will be again."

Whereupon he walked out of Mr. Sewell's store, resolved never to enter it again. Trembling, he was, so that he could hardly walk. The idea of that man insulting the memory of his father! Oh! to have been able to say "It is false, and you know it. My father had no bad habits; my father was always a grand, true man!"

"The mean, mean fellow," he said aloud, burning with indignation, "when he knew my father reformed, and for years and years before he died, never drank a drop. How could he bear to say such a thing as that to his son!"

If he had not been on the public street, a

long way from home, I think Ben would have broken down and cried outright, so keenly did he feel the sting of the insult which had been given to his father's name. Like all insults, the bitterness of it lay in the fact that it had about it a shade of truth. But it was something which must be borne in secret; not for the world would he have let his mother know what that man had said. He brushed away a new of the bitterest tears that had ever gathered in his eyes, and gave himself at once to the wearisome business of looking for a chance to earn something. A vain look, so far as this long day was concerned. There was not even a horse to be tied to a post, or untied for some lady driver; there was absolutely nothing all day by which he could earn a cent to carry home at night; and, though it was the middle of the week, Mr. Sewell had refused to pay him anything for this week's work, assuring him he had forfeited it, at the same time refusing his offer to stay the week out, as Ben had supposed he must in honor do.

"I'm glad he did not require it of you," Mrs. Bryant said, when told that part of the story, "very glad indeed. I would not have had you for

two days more in company with a cider barrel for all the money a month's wages would give me."

It was certainly very nice to have such a mother. Nevertheless, Ben's heart was heavy during the two days that followed. Not a thing to be found to do. He had not even the pleasure of trying the new machine and making himself useful if possible to Mr. Reynolds, for that gentleman sent word that he had unexpectedly been called out of town, and would not be able to see him until the following Monday.

"A fellow might study lots, if he only could," Ben said gloomily to Line, as he stood beside her while she washed the dinner dishes on the afternoon of the second day; "but you see my mind is so upset by having nothing to do that will bring in anything, that I can't make it take to figures, or dates, or anything. I believe I will learn to sew; you and mother seem to have work enough. Here, give me that cloth; I can dry these dishes, anyhow."

Occasionally he found himself wondering whether it might not be possible that the pleasant-voiced young minister might know of something he could get to do. Twice during the afternoon he was tempted to go and see, yet

something held him back. I am glad, on the whole, that he did not go, because of a little conversation which Miss Webster had with the minister that evening after Ben had gone.

"That is an unusual boy, Richard," Miss Webster said.

"He has a good face," said the minister.

"He is a good boy. I am deeply interested in him, especially just now." Then she told about the mother's circumstances, and Ben's desire to help; and the cider barrel and the disturbed conscience.

"I shouldn't be surprised if I could find employment for him," said the minister.

"Can you? I hoped you could. But, Richard, I wish you would wait for a few days until he works out this problem by himself. I hope he will leave there, even before he finds other work; and I think I even hope he will have to wait a little while, after he has left, before work comes to him; it will make him stronger for the future, I believe."

"I see your point," said the minister, smiling.
"Well, we will wait and see; let the will assert itself so far as it is able." So, on the whole, I am glad Ben did not go to the minister just yet.

That evening he found opportunity to lay Miss Webster's scheme about Daisy before his mother.

"I don't know," she said, smiling and sighing, after it had been fully talked over. "It is very kind in Miss Webster to think of it, and I do not know but it might be the beginning of help in a very small way; but Daisy is the queerest child who was ever born, I think sometimes; there is no telling what she will think of it. I almost fancy she will oppose it, and I shouldn't like to force the child into anything of that kind."

Mrs. Bryant was found to understand her small daughter better than Line and Ben did; they declared that they thought she would like the scheme very much, but she, on being told of it, looked not only grave, but deeply grieved.

"Mamma! O, mamma!" she said, in the most distressed tone imaginable—a tone which had also a touch of reproach in it—"sell my children! What if I have a great many? Suppose you had thirty-five children"—

"O, dear!" said mamma.

"Well, but, mamma, I know you haven't, but just suppose you had; would you like to open a store and sell them? Would you now, really? Even if you could make as much as a whole dollar every little while?"

"Daisy!" exclaimed Line, while Ben leaned back in his chair and gave the first hearty laugh he had indulged in for two days, "you are the most ridiculous child who ever lived, I am sure."

But Daisy was grave and firm. "Mamma, would you think of such a thing for a moment?"

"Little daughter," said Mrs. Bryant, controlling her inclination to join Ben's laugh as she saw the distress in her child's face, "there is not the least doubt in my mind that I would not think of such a thing, for a moment, not if I had twice thirty-five children. But, dear child, do you remember one thing? My children would have souls which would live forever. Have yours?"

Poor Daisy. She looked down at the bit of work she was doing for one of the thirty-five, choked and swallowed, and had much ado to keep back the scalding tears, while she faltered out, "I play they have, mamma."

"Yes, my dear, I know you do, and that, I think, would make the tremendous difference

between your case and mine. That is my little daughter's gravest fault, perhaps, that she plays too seriously. I like to have you use your imagination to a certain extent, dear; it is worth a great deal, at your age, to be able to do so, but there is such a thing as carrying it to an extreme, and I have sometimes been afraid that you did so. Not merely in this case; but do you remember how hard you cried when Arabella Aurelia fell into the tub of soap suds, though it did not hurt her dress, even, and you knew it wouldn't?

"However," for Daisy's head was still drooping, and it was evident that she had nothing to say, "we will not talk more about this now. You will never be obliged, daughter, to carry out any plan of this sort unless you wish. It would probably not amount to very much in any case, and if you do not like to think of it as one way of helping you to learn how to be a little business woman, you need not. You are still too young to have heavy griefs, if mother and brother and sister can shield you from them; and if you really love the thirty-five with all your heart, we shall never consent to the sale of one of them. We shall find a way

out of our perplexities without that sacrifice, I fee oure."

"Of course we shall," said Ben heartily. "I shall find work very soon, mother—I feel it in my bones to-night—and Daisy need not part with one of her children. I sympathize with her."

"So do I," said Line. "Poor little mouse, I remember just how I felt when my rag dollie dropped into the soap barrel and had to be burned."

In many ways they tried to cheer their darling, and make her feel that the thirty-five children were safe and most welcome. But for all that, she made up her mind, only a few weeks thereafter, to part with them. The processes by which she arrived at that conclusion were very queer.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THERE IS A DIFFERENCE."

POR weeks after that talk with her mother, Daisy wandered about the house in a disconsolate and preoccupied way. It seemed not possible for her to settle her mind to anything. Even a new book, which came to her through the post-office, from Dee Dunmore herself—a lovely history of real happenings put into such delightful story form that Line said it was "just as fascinating as though it hadn't happened!"—had hard work to hold Daisy's attention long at a time. She had such a difficult question to settle.

Should she go into business with her dollies? Set a price on them and actually sell them, and have them carried away from her! It seemed beyond belief.

It was in vain for her to assure herself that her mother was right, and they were not

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"truly" children, and it was extremely foolish in her to act as though they were.

"But then," would poor Daisy's heart say to her common sense, in a sorrowful undertone, "neither am I a 'truly' woman. I'm just a little girl, and things have to be real when I play, or there would be no pleasure in playing."

Nevertheless, the Bryants were very poor. To add to their anxieties the mother herself was sick for one whole week. Not dangerously so—at least she said it was "only a cold," and the pain in her head was "only neuralgia"—but it kept her from her work for more than a week, and that meant serious additions to their anxieties. Daisy felt sure of it, though very little was said before her.

The mother did not help her with her problem, though more than once petitioned by both Line and Ben to do so. "Mother, why don't you tell the mouse to keep her dear thirty-five and be joyful in them?" Ben would ask, and add heartily, "I'm at work again, and I see a way to earn quite a little before summer; and we can manage, I feel sure."

Then Line would come:

"Motherie, don't you think Daisy looks pale?

The poor little mouse is worrying, I'm afraid, about her dollies. Couldn't you tell her there is no need for her selling them? I really think it is almost as hard for her as it would be for what she calls a 'truly' mother to do such a thing."

Then would Mrs. Bryant smile and shake her head, though she looked a little bit anxious at the same time.

"I don't think it wise to interfere, children. Daisy is young to deal with such questions; but at the same time, in some things she is older than her years. It is the ever-repeated question which has to be fought out in all lives sooner or later — shall I do for myself, or for others? That is, shall I make self the object, or only the means to an end? I may be talking above even you two," she would add, with a wan smile; "you are so patient under the cares and responsibilities which generally belong to men and women instead of to such young shoulders as yours, and you are so intelligent and appreciative that I am sometimes in danger of forgetting that your minds are young."

Then would Ben and Line exchange quiet

glances which said as plainly as words could have done, "Poor mother, dear mother! we will never let her guess that we are young; we are old and strong, and she shall lean on us." And they would sigh almost impatiently sometimes, for the days when they could lift from her every burden. They felt sure the days would come.

After a moment of silence Mrs. Bryant would try to explain further. "Besides, I am more than doubtful about the wisdom of encouraging Daisy to make play-life so real. Her imagination needs guiding or checking. I hardly know what it needs, and I hardly feel competent to deal with it; but I am quite sure that she must come to a decision about this matter all by herself. I feel sure that she will, if we are quiet and patient, and that it will be a decision which will help her in the future."

But Mrs. Bryant was mistaken; Daisy did not reach the decision without help. Instead, one of the forlornest little girls who lived on Smith Alley, more than a mile away from the little brown house of the Bryants, helped her.

The early spring days were upon them while this grave question was pending. Some of

those deceitful days often belonging to early spring, when the sun shines warm and bright, and the early birds appear, and the summer makes believe she has changed the plans of years and is just at the door, coaxing the buds to swell before their time, wooing young ducklings who have come into the world early along with all other too early things, to take some delightful swims in the pond, wooing the foolish children to coax to wear their thin dresses, and leave off shoes and stockings for just a little while, wooing some foolish mothers to give consent. By and by there comes a day when the ducklings are sorry they were born; when the birds sit in ruffled-up balls with one foot under them, and wish they had listened to reason and stayed in the South; when the buds on the trees wish they had not swelled; when the hoarse, sneezing, croupy children wish the spring had not "made believe" arrive, and then let winter, and frost, and coughs, and sore throats in at the door she left ajar when she retreated.

All these things were happening this spring in the town where the Bryants lived. And though Daisy—her mother being sensible—

still wore her thick plaid dress and her winter shoes and stockings, there were children, especially some living on Smith Alley, who kicked off their worn shoes and ragged stockings—which, truth to tell, they sometimes did even earlier than this, because they were too worn to be kept on—and rejoiced in the pretense of summer.

It was on one of these lovely afternoon deceptions that Daisy, coming with Line from Mrs. Martin's with a basket of spring sewing for Line to do, saw a sight which filled her with pity and dismay. Two children from Smith Alley, bare as to feet and ankles, ragged as to dress, uncouth as to hair and hands, one of them perhaps ten years old and the other a wee baby of a creature, played just above the stream where some silly ducklings swam. What the argument had been, or how she was persuaded into thinking it the thing to do Daisy did not know, but just as she crossed the bridge above where they were, down went the younger one's soiled and ragged and battered dolly into the water. The ducks were astonished and hurried away from it. They need not have done so; the current was swift,

and the dolly herself made all speed down the stream out of reach, presently out of sight.

The loud wail which arose from the younger Smith Alley child as she saw her treasure disappear, went to Daisy's very heart.

"She threw it in herself!" she said to Line, horror in her voice. "She drowned it. How could she?"

"Hush, Daisy," said Line; "she wanted it to swim, I suppose, like the ducks; she thought it could. Daisy, dear, how foolish!" for Daisy was crying bitterly. "It was only a worn-out broken doll. O, dear!" said Line to herself, "mother is right; these things are all too real to Daisy. What shall I do with her? We can't go through town with her in such distress."

But Daisy had already checked her sobs, and was waiting for the Smith Alley children to come toward them, the younger one being borne in her sister's arms, and still crying passionately.

"Yes, ma'am," explained the girl, in answer to Line's question, "she thought it could swim, you see, like the ducks. She is so little, you know; poor little young one, she loved her dolly so much. No, ma'am, she hasn't any

other, this was all the one she ever had. It was broke, but she loved it. Never mind, Sallie, don't cry any more; father will hear you, maybe."

The suggestion seemed to hush the wild crying a little. Daisy could not imagine why, but Line could, and her face darkened over the thought.

"Are you Mrs. Zimmerman's children?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl; "we live down there at the end of the saw-mill, or behind it, in that red house."

Line nodded, and drew Daisy's hand in her own to lead her away. She did not know what more to say, but she felt that she understood perfectly why the mention of "father" had quieted the almost baby. "Old Joe," the worst drunkard in town, was Mrs. Zimmerman's husband.

She explained a little to Daisy as they walked away; she thought it might be well to withdraw her thoughts from the drowned dollie. "He is a drunkard, Daisy, the father is, and very cross to the children when he has been drinking, which is most all the time. I have

heard that he whipped that little girl once, until her flesh was so sore her mother had to wet cloths all night in something cooling and lay on it."

"Why don't they put him in prison?" asked Daisy, in wide-eyed horror.

"I don't know; they can't, I suppose. Besides, sometimes he is good and kind, and works hard to take care of them all, and kisses that very little girl. It is only when he has been drinking whiskey that he is bad."

"Then why does he drink it?"

"He can't help it, he says. He is a poor, weak man, you know, who has done wrong so many times, and learned to want the whiskey so much, that when he goes by where it is and smells it he can't let it alone. He wants to—I heard him say so; and he will go without for weeks, and then a time will come when he can't seem to let it alone."

"But, Line, why don't they — why don't men —good men, help him, and put all the whiskey where he can't ever get a smell of it, or buy it if he wanted to?"

"Ah!" said Line, setting her lips firmly in a way she had when she felt that she could say

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However, Daisy didn't; she went home to her study and her own little chair, and took Arabella Aurelia in her arms and sat silent and thoughtful for a long time, with the traces of tears still on her face.

At last she came to her mother, Arabella Aurelia still in her arms.

"Mamma, you know that story we read last Sunday about the boy who had his tenths?"

"I remember."

"Well, couldn't he, I mean couldn't anybody give tenths of things as well as money?"

"Why, certainly, if their things were such as could be divided. I knew a man who did that with his garden, and his wood-lot, and indeed all that he had. When there were ten baskets of potatoes dug he had the tenth one laid in a heap by itself to give to the poor. When the cabbages were brought in each tenth one was laid aside; when his wood was drawn to town to be sold, he said the tenth load was the Lord's. This is sometimes a very

nice way to do. Has my Daisy anything she would like to divide into tenths?"

"I was thinking, mamma, if I went into business, you know"—the voice was low, but controlled, and there was an air of grave resolve about her face such as had not been seen for days—"I could, that is, couldn't I—wouldn't I have a right to give one tenth of all my dollies to—to other little girls who were poor and couldn't buy any? Would that be giving to the Lord, mother?"

"I certainly think it would, Daisy. If you use your property to make others happy, because you want to follow His rule of living, He has promised to accept the gift as made to Him."

Yet while she made this grave explanation, Mrs. Bryant was divided, as she often was when she talked with this queer little daughter, between the desire to laugh or to cry, she could hardly tell which.

"Well," said Daisy, after another reflective pause, still speaking in that grave, womanly tone, "I have almost decided — yes, I may say I have quite decided to do it." A long-drawn sigh finished that tremendous sentence of self-

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surrender. "I will go and see Miss Webster about the plans this afternoon, if you will let me. But, mother, there's one thing it seems to me I must have settled so that we will all understand about it, always."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bryant, in her most sympathetic and encouraging tone, setting down her bowl of flour and drawing a chair to wait for Daisy's further revelations; this business was so important that nothing must be done in undue haste. "What is it, little daughter?"

"Mother, I do not feel that I could ever, ever in the world sell Arabella Aurelia."

"Oh! surely not," said Mrs. Bryant, with decision enough to satisfy even Daisy. "No one would think of such a thing, I am sure."

"Nor even give her away," continued Daisy, her voice faltering a little over the words. "I do not feel that I could make her a tenth, unless—unless, you know, some reason came up which made me think I ought to do it."

"It does not seem at all probable to me that any reason will ever come up," said this wise and sympathetic mother. "I think you are quite right, daughter, and may rest easy concerning it." In her heart she wondered whether, after all, she need be so much troubled about this little girl of hers. Was she not, on the whole, if more clinging, less selfish than most of her elders?

"And then, mother," said Daisy, "it seems to me that I ought not to part with Dee Dunmore Bryant; because she came to me in such a way that it does not seem quite like a dollie, but more like a—like a personal friendship," said Daisy, choosing her words with great care; "and then she has that name, you know."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Bryant, actually resorting to a little cough now, to cover a smile. "Dee Dunmore Bryant should never be sold or given away; or at least not until you are a woman grown. After that, of course you have a right to change your mind, but I do not think I would consent to it myself before then."

It was in this way and with this help that the momentous question was settled, and Daisy went that very afternoon to Miss Webster to get suggestions as to how to set herself up as a woman of business.

It was that lady's own sweet tact which

caused her to select from her portfolio of engravings one which she gave to Daisy for the "study," a special decoration to signalize as a sort of memorial of this important time in her life. The picture was accompanied by some very choice gilt paper so heavily embossed that it looked almost a "truly" frame when it had been prepared by Ben's careful hand. It was a quaint home scene across the sea. A mother and father and some admiring friends all absorbed in watching the pretty motions of a year-old baby, whose small plump hands could almost be seen to flutter and then draw back as he argued the question in his little brain whether he should give a spring after his father's whiskers, or stay where he was.

Daisy studied it with the gravest face after it was settled in its proper place in the study, then turned at last from it with that curious little half-suppressed sigh, as she said gravely to her mother,—

"There is a difference. Even in a picture there is a great difference; I never had a dollie who had a look on its face like that baby."

"Dear child," said Mrs. Bryant, "that is a picture of a soul."

CHAPTER XIV.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.

TEANTIME, Ben's affairs had by no means stood still. In fact a series of things, some of which were wonderful, had happened to him. In the first place, Mr. Reynolds returned, and Ben went to his room and was as completely bewitched and absorbed for the next two hours as though the type-writer had been a magician. At first he made terrible work. The paper would run in crooked; then when that was conquered, Ben discovering that like all crooked things it started in a very trifling bit of carelessness on his part, the roller refused to run back without making a harsh, grating sound, which made Ben feel as though all the machinery had been reduced to helpless ruin by his own hand, and which Mr. Reynolds said reminded him too forcibly of the dentist to be agreeable.

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"It's a sort of sleight of hand," he said, coming to the rescue. "You take hold of it in this way; not as though you were afraid of it, but as though you didn't care in the least how much noise it made, and give it a quick jerk, and the thing is done. Fact is, when it discovers you are indifferent to its movements, and are simply in a hurry to get on, it gives over being hateful and slips into place."

Then Ben tried it again, but it grated horribly, and he felt sure it was "sleight of hand."

"You are still afraid of it," Mr. Reynolds said. "Keep at it; you won't hurt the creature, and you'll conquer her after awhile."

And he did. Only a few minutes' persevering effort, and not Mr. Reynolds himself could make the roller roll into place more smoothly than it did it for him. Next came a quarrel with the capitals. Small i's and small a's where there should be capitals insisted on putting in their appearance. That "upper case" key Ben inwardly pronounced a "nuisance" before he became accustomed to it; he even went so far as to say to Mr. Reynolds, "I should think there might be a thing contrived by which you could touch that with your foot,

or with something else than your fingers, when both hands want to be busy at something else."

"Ah!" said Mr. Reynolds, pausing in the busy race of his pen over the paper, and looking up reflectively at Ben. "As the man did with his music, eh? Perhaps there's an idea in that. Somebody ought to think it out."

Ben did not know what the man did with his music; he was tempted to inquire, but Mr. Reynolds was writing again as hard as ever, and besides, he himself was having a struggle with the exclamation point. It seemed determined to take the place of every period he wanted. Very slow work Ben found it that first evening. Not a line had he succeeded in writing with absolute correctness, though he used up paper enough to alarm him, had not Mr. Reynolds kindly called it "waste paper," and told him to use as much as he liked without any qualms of conscience.

Finding the position of the letters was such laborious business that Ben was reminded more than once of the boy Mr. Reynolds told about, and who, you will remember, he shrewdly suspected was Rufus Kedwin, who said he "didn't see what folks wanted to write on machines

for, that he could write enough sight faster with a pen."

However, Ben being of another metal, the only effect his difficulties had upon him was to make him resolve that he would conquer the thing, capitals, periods and all, and that before very long, too, or his name wasn't Benjamin Foster Bryant. To this end he paused in his work long enough to make a careful diagram of the key-board on a sheet of paper, and place it carefully in his pocket. Mr. Reynolds, noticing the silence of the machine, wondered if he had grown weary of it, and glanced up to wonder why he was scribbling on paper; but as the machine presently went to click, clicking again, and kept it up with laborious steadiness for the next half-hour, he asked no questions.

Presently Ben was called to a new conjuring instrument. "Come and look on," said Mr. Reynolds. "You might as well be learning how to manage the thing; you will be wanting to print some notices on it, or something of the sort, one of these days. This thing that I write with is not a pencil, you see, nor yet a pen; it is called a stylus. I don't use ink, you will observe, nor has it any lead in it; it is

simply a sharp steel point made to write on this stone. I've nearly finished the page, but you can see how the last lines are written."

"Why, it is just common writing," Ben said, wondering why he should be called to look on at such work.

"That's all," said Mr. Reynolds, "just common writing, but it will multiply itself in a most uncommon fashion, you will see presently."

Ben watched. The writing finished the sheet of paper was laid carefully over another, the whole fastened into a frame—which looked for all the world like a slate frame—and then, to Ben's horror, Mr. Reynolds deliberately took an ink-roller which lay on an ink-slate at his right, and deliberately smeared the whole fair surface.

"You've ruined it!" declared the boy, speaking his thoughts aloud in his excitement.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Mr. Reynolds cheerfully, "but the fact is, I'm just getting the thing ready to be useful. I wonder how many such processes are going on with people? Our Miss Webster would make a wonderful lesson out of that, but I haven't the knack." While he talked, he worked. A sheet of blank paper was laid on a blotting pad, down came the frame with its blackened sheet, over it went the remorseless roller, like a grim little horror bent on destruction, then the frame was lifted, and behold, a fair and perfect copy of what Mr. Reynolds had written lay there.

"There we are!" said Mr. Reynolds, in intense satisfaction, "works like a daisy, just as she always does. Now, my boy, if you will proceed to making the copies, I will inclose them in these envelopes, which I have already addressed, and we shall be ready for the morning mail before we know it. After you get a little used to the thing, I have a notion that you can manage the whole affair, addressing and all, and save my time for the other work which is crowding me."

Ben thought to himself with much satisfaction that he could certainly manage the "addressing." He had not taken exceeding pains to learn how to hold his pen, and acquire a fair round business hand, for nothing. He had been called the best writer in school many a time. Truth to tell, it was the thing he had aimed for.

But he was just now too much absorbed in this new wonder to be able to give much thought to the commonplace matter of writing with a pen. Each fair sheet that he carefully laid on the frame, and apparently ruined with the grim roller, as it presented itself before him a perfect transcript of the copy, filled him with astonishment and delight. Having made, in the space of a very few minutes, as many as twenty-five copies, and finding that the power was by no means exhausted, he ventured a few questions. Mr. Reynolds was engaged in nothing more formidable than folding sheets of paper and slipping them into envelopes, he ought certainly to be able to talk.

"What is the name of this thing, Mr. Reynolds?"

"That thing, young man, is a Mimeograph. Isn't that a high-sounding name for you? A wonderful invention it is, of a wonderful man by the name of Edison. You may have happened to hear of him."

"Yes, sir, I have," said Ben, speaking respectfully, and in a subdued tone. It almost took his breath away to think that he was really so near to the great man of whom he had read as to be using one of his inventions. "I have read about his machines, and thought about them a good deal, but I never supposed I should see one."

"That is one of his latest; hasn't been patented very long. I've only had it a few months, but it works as well as this, every time; did the first time I tried it, in fact. is about as labor-saving a thing for a man who needs a good many copies as I can imagine. used to use their jelly pads, and affairs of that kind, until I got tired to death of them; sometimes they'd work, and sometimes they wouldn't - oftener wouldn't than would, for me - and they were sticky, messy things, anyway. I was glad to see the last of them. How many copies are you getting, my boy? I don't think I want more than a hundred of that sort. I have to keep watch of that creature; she throws out a hundred copies before I realize what I'm about, and goes right on adding to them, almost in spite of me. There's a kind of fascination

in printing just one more, to see if it will be as bright and clear as the others have been."

"How many copies can you make of one writing?" asked Ben, his eyes twinkling over Mr. Reynolds' queer way of speaking of all machines as though they were human beings.

"That's a question I can't answer," said Mr. Reynolds, as he laid a pile of sealed letters in the mail-box at his side. "Ten, fifteen, twentytwo — I've got fifty-five of these ready; just see how many you have there. I've printed two hundred and fifty copies, and she has felt as fresh and lively on the two hundred and fiftieth as she did on the first. How long she would go on in that fashion I can't tell - not from experience -- I haven't happened to want more copies than that. But next week, if I have good luck, you and I will try her metal a little; I shall have a paper then of which I shall want to make several thousand copies. I'll want her to copy the type-writer, too, which is a little more ticklish work; at least it always seems to me so, perhaps because I haven't practised on it very long; but she does it like a daisy."

A daisy must certainly have been Mr. Rey-

nold's favorite flower; he always referred to it when he wanted to express special excellence.

"The type-writer!" echoed Ben. "Can she copy that?" And then he asked no more questions. He was dumb with admiration.

There was time for no more practice on the type-writer that evening, but Ben carried home the diagram he had made and displayed it to Line while she was washing the breakfast dishes. "I'm bound to learn the thing this very day," he said, with a vigorous shake of his head. "The letters, you know, they had the dizziest way of flying about on that keyboard! You never saw the like. Why, some of the time I could have declared that there wasn't an 'h' on the thing, yet there it would be, right before my eyes. I'm going to place every letter in my mind, this day, in such a way that it will have hard work to get out There are only twenty-six of them, you know. Pity if a fellow can't place twentysix letters in one day. I can do that as well without the machine, you see, as with it."

"Why, so you can," said Line, in admiration.

"What a boy you are to think of things, Ben.

Look here, why wouldn't it be a good idea for

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me to learn them too? I might practice on a "make-believe" machine. Daisy can make believe anything under the sun, and I might follow her example in this, and learn to write by imagination. Then, when you get your machine, you see, I could do copying for you."

The sentence closed with a merry laugh, but Ben, who smiled to keep her company, did it in an absent-minded sort of way, then suddenly burst forth with, "It is a capital idea. Look here, Line, I'll make you a board, a regular keyboard, in wood, with the shape of the keys marked on it, all in their places, and you practise moving your fingers over it, writing words, you know, until you can do it like lightning."

"All right," said Line, still laughing, but impressed with the idea, nevertheless. "I'm sure I don't see why I can't learn a good deal in that way."

What Ben learned that day may be gathered in part from Mr. Reynolds, who watched him the next evening in silent astonishment as he ran in his paper, and after a few seconds' careful survey of the key-board, wrote without hesitation and without mistake a long paragraph from a book which lay at his side.

Presently the teacher spoke: "See here, my boy, did you dream that out last night, or make a machine and set it up to practice on, or what? You didn't learn the position of the letters like that last evening!"

"I made a machine," said Ben, laughing, "a piece of one. I made a diagram of the keyboard and learned it by heart to-day."

"You'll do," said Mr. Reynolds; but for what he would "do" he did not say. He watched for a few moments longer, then went back to his writing with a queer smile on his face.

CHAPTER XV.

DAISY AS A BUSINESS WOMAN.

MEANTIME, plans for setting Daisy up in business went forward rapidly. There was much talk as to how the store should be advertised. So interested were all parties concerned that Mr. Reynolds heard some of the talk, and questioned as to its meaning, then proposed that some "posters" or "dodgers" be gotten out, made on the wonderful Mimeograph. This was delightful, but the perplexing question was, what should be put on them?

"Miss Daisy Bryant will open a doll store at her mother's house on Saturday at ten o'clock." This was the beginning of one of the "dodgers." Ben wrote it on a bit of typewriter "scrap" paper, spread it out on his knee, studied it thoughtfully, and shook his head. "I don't like it, mother. I can't exactly tell why—that is, I can't put it into words, but I don't like Daisy's name on pieces of paper blowing around town."

His mother smiled a little sadly, as she said, "Isn't that foolish, Ben, my boy? There is nothing wrong about Daisy's going into business - no disgrace, certainly - why should it not be announced on dodgers?"

Ben looked perplexed, but not convinced.

"I don't know," he said again, in anxious tone; "but, mother, Daisy is such a little bit of a girl to have her name spread around and talked about, and people asking questions and laughing. Don't you know what I mean? I don't like it a bit. If it was my name, why, of course"— And Ben drew himself up proudly, and looked as much like a man as a boy of his size could.

"I understand." Mrs. Bryant spoke gently and sympathetically. "You want to shield your little sister from all that you can. I like the feeling, my son, and hope and believe it will grow with your growth, and develop with your manhood. There is nothing wrong in spreading her name about, but you would like it better to keep the name close at home.

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Well, how can we advertise her business? It will not do to say that Benjamin Bryant has opened a doll store!"

Ben laughed. "I should think not," he said, then relapsed into perplexed thought.

"How would it do," said Line, pausing in the hem she was making on Miss Webster's white skirt, "to announce the business in the name of Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant? People who know us would inquire what it meant, and be very much amused; I shouldn't be surprised if it would help along."

Ben looked greatly relieved. "It takes a girl to think of things," he said, with a nod of admiration for the bright-eyed girl beside him. "I think that is a very bright idea; one doesn't care anything about a doll's name being tossed about town, and it would be a very unique way of managing."

"Where did you get that word?" Line asked, a little in doubt whether to be amused at Ben's largeness in producing new words every little while, or pleased with the evident strides his education was taking.

"What word—unique? Oh! I picked it up. It is one of Mr. Reynolds' favorites; he says were odd, only odd hasn't quite the meaning of the other, after all. Mother, I wish I knew French. I'd like to know some language beside my own, it would be such fun; and a great many French words seem to me to be very expressive."

"There is a great difference between 'unique' and 'odd,' in my opinion," his mother said. "Oddity has an element of queerness in it, while a thing may be 'unique' because it stands alone in its excellence or beauty."

"That's so," said Ben emphatically, and once more he felt that little thrill of respect for his mother. How much she knew that a great many nice good mothers knew nothing about! And yet she had to take in clear starching in order to live. "She sha'n't always," said Ben, drawing in his breath with a little sudden cach, which meant with him suppressed energy biding its time. But this he said to himself.

"Miss Webster reads French," said Line; "I saw a whole shelf full of French books when I was there the other day, and she asked me to give her one which had her mark in, to read after I was gone. It was poetry," added Line,

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with a grave little sigh. Nobody but Caroline Bryant knew how much she wanted to have a first-class education.

"Mother"—it was Daisy's soft voice which next took up the theme before them—"do you think if it isn't a nice thing for me to have my name put on, on those dodger things Ben told about, that I ought to have Dee's name there? Ought I to have her put where it would not be nice for me to be?"

How was anybody to help laughing over such a question? Ben shouted. Even after he caught a glimpse of Daisy's grieved look, and tried to control himself, he burst forth several times, and Line's chair shook with her suppressed mirth. As for Mrs. Bryant, even she could not quite hide a smile, but she answered carefully,—

"Daisy, dear, don't you think you ought to always remember the difference between dolls and people? That question of souls, you know, reaches in every direction. Think a minute. Would it not grieve you to have your name in a place where brother Ben did not like to see it? I knew it would. Now do you really suppose Dee cares?"

Daisy thought a moment, then, with a sigh much deeper than Line's had been, gave her decision.

"Why, of course she doesn't; but it is because she can't, poor thing, and it seems sometimes kind of like taking advantage of her not having a soul to treat her always without one."

It was of no use; Ben fairly doubled himself up to laugh, and Mrs. Bryant had to join in the mirth this time, though Daisy looked grave and wondering.

"I don't intend to spoil the plan," she said gently, after a minute, "and I know Line meant it for very nice, and of course Dee won't care, but it is hard for me all the time to remember that she isn't 'truly,' you know, because I have made believe so long that she was."

"There is a more serious objection than Miss Dee's feeling, I am afraid," Mrs. Bryant said. "One in which the Golden Rule Daisy is trying to apply will fit, I think; if we do not like to have our little girl's name sent around town, we must remember that Dee is named for a 'truly' little girl, and that her 'brother' or other friends might not like it."

"But they won't know anything about it," Ben said, opening his eyes wide over this new application of the Golden Rule.

"My son, would that really make any difference with the principle? If I have reason to think a person might not like me to do thus and so if he knew it, am I necessarily freed from blame because he may not happen to know of it?"

Ben whistled an entire bar of "Hail, Columbia," and broke off suddenly to say, "I beg your pardon, mother, but that is what I think I'll call a unique notion."

"We'll sleep over all the notions," said Mrs. Bryant; "we may have clearer ideas in the morning. Bring the Bible, Dais, dear; it is time you, at least, were asleep."

The next day Daisy settled the question. But the way she came to do it is a long story.

It began by the Sutherlands going to Europe unexpectedly. The son of the house reached a foreign port to remain for several months, and sent them a cablegram to join him. Instead of closing their handsome house they rented it to acquaintances of their uncle's in New York

— people who wanted to leave their town house at this season in order that extensive repairs might be begun on it, and who were not ready to go to their house in the country because the season of mud and rain would soon be upon them. They called this good-sized town a sort of half-way stopping place, and were glad to get into the Sutherland home, and were glad to hear of an excellent clear starcher and ironer almost as soon as they reached the town.

"Perhaps she can do the children's clothes decently," said Mrs. Irving, the married daughter. "They haven't looked fit to be seen since I left home."

"What is the name of the woman?" her mother asked.

"I don't remember. Brown, I think, or some such name. Dennis said he knew her and would leave word for her to call and see about it."

Dennis was Dr. Sutherland's coachman, who was going to serve these new people while his master was gone to Europe.

So, because of all these things, Mrs. Bryant sat the next evening in the little room off the

"Would you like to go into the hall, little girl, and see my children? They are all there with the kitten. They have a new white kitten for a pet, and are nearly wild over it," she explained to Mrs. Bryant. "My little sister is with them, and she is about your child's age, I think. Would she like to go in and see their new kitten? Now that I think of it, my Lora has on a dress I would like to ask you about, so we will all go."

And the door was opened into that beautiful wide hall, which was large enough for a reception-room, and where the children were at this moment engaged in trying to make a frisky white kitten with a blue ribbon about its neck,

keep her paws out of the bright tin of milk, and lap it properly with her pink tongue.

"Why, children! this is hardly the place to serve kitty's meals," Mrs. Irving was saying, and she had meant to add, "I have brought a little girl in to see you and the kitten," but she had no opportunity.

Daisy, the moment her eyes rested on the taller of the group who stood aside, looking on, stopped short for one amazed second, then with a low murmur of delight moved forward eagerly, just in time to receive the other's impetuous embrace as she shouted, "It is Daisy Isabelle Bryant!"

"And you are Dee Dunmore," murmured Daisy, in sweet and shy delight. "I knew you in an instant."

"Knew me! Of course you did. Didn't I know you the very second I turned away from that kitten to see who was coming? I'd know your eyes anywhere. O, Daisy Isabelle! how is Dee Dunmore Bryant? Is she well? Do you live here? Can I come and see you and all the other dollies? How lovely!"

Of course there were explanations to make to the bewildered Mrs. Irving, which resulted He carried her off, presently, to the library, under pretense of showing her a good picture of Dee and her dollie which hung there, but really because he wanted to talk with the sweet, shy little mouse a few minutes, away from the distractions of the other children. Dee went along, of course, but the little Irvings were left with their kitten, and Mrs. Dunmore took Mrs. Bryant to the sitting-room to wait for Daisy.

But Daisy, grave little woman as she was, in the midst of all these distractions did not forget that she carried grave business interests on her shoulders, and decided that this would be as good a time as any for learning from head-quarters whether there was an insuperable objection to Line's scheme for advertising. She was a little afraid of the Judge, it is true. "But then," said Daisy to herself, "he will have to know about it, and it would not be polite for me not to tell him myself, and I may never have another chance." So she bravely shouldered her cross and began. "Dear Miss

Dee Dunmore," but here she was stopped by Dee, laughing and kissing her.

"Why, you dear little Daisy, don't call me 'Miss Dee.' I'm just a little girl, you know, like you; and you needn't take the trouble to say the last name every time; I'm just Dee, and you are Daisy, though I've always called you Daisy Isabelle, and that sounds the most natural."

"You interrupted Daisy, my dear," said Judge Dunmore.

"I was going to ask you," began Daisy, "and I mean I want to ask your father, too, if you would mind—that is, if you had objections to my using the name of my dollie in the firm—for advertising, you know? Mother thought it would not be right, because you might not like it, and we didn't ever expect to have a chance to ask you, so we thought it would have to be given up. But that was only yesterday; and now, since you are here, I thought I might ask about it."

"Exactly so," said Judge Dunmore, trying his best not to let his eyes twinkle with fun. Nothing more delicious than this little bit of gravity had ever before come into his library. "You are right, I am sure, but we don't quite understand, Dee and I. What 'firm' is it, and what is to be advertised, and how can the dollie help?"

"Why, you see, sir, I'm going into business; we need to, to help along, and there are so many dollies that we planned to have a fancy store and sell them. I didn't quite like it — I mean I didn't like it at all—at first," spoken with drooping eyes in which there were tears very near to falling, "because it seemed like selling one's children; but Miss Webster thought it would be right, and mother talked with me; and dollies haven't souls, you know, they are really very different from 'truly' children, and mother said that I could have a 'tenth' from them to give to some little girls who were poorer than I, and that of course I need never, never sell Miss Dee Dunmore, nor my dear Arabella Aurelia, and so," drawing a long sigh, heavily burdened with responsibility and care, "we planned it, because it seemed to be right and best."

There was no twinkle in Judge Dunmore's eyes this time, unless the shining of something very like a tear could make it. He had to wait

a moment before speaking and clear his voice, which even then was slightly husky.

"That sounds like a very sensible and altogether practicable plan, in every way worthy of you," he said gravely. "Of course dollies have not souls, and of course they should be made to help in every proper way; I'm heartily with you, but do not yet understand how Dee's little dollie namesake can help. She is not to be sold, you say?"

"O, no, sir, never!" said Daisy ickly. "I couldn't ever do that, and myer thinks so, too."

"Certainly," said the Judge, "we must have all proper respect for even dollies' feelings; but how then? Do you understand it, Dee?" turning to his little daughter.

"Why, you see, sir," began Daisy again, "it is like this. The business must be advertised, or how would people know there was a store? And Ben, that's my brother, made a copy of a —a dodger, I think they call them, which had my name in, and told about the business, but he did not like it—did not like my name on it, I mean —he said I was very little to have it tossed about the streets, though I don't see

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what hurt it could do, just a name made of ink," and Daisy stopped to consider this perplexity for a moment. "But that was the way Ben felt," she continued, "and mother seemed to understand it.

"Then Line thought of a plan; it was this: to put 'Miss Dee Dunmore' on the dodger her name, I mean, not her picture — and have the business conducted in her name, because she is really a sort of queen among the dollies, Ben said, and he thought it would be appropriate; but mother thought of a trouble right She said we must remember that my dollie's name belonged to a 'truly' little girl, and if Ben did not like his sister's name to be put on 'dodgers' and things, he must remember that perhaps the little girl's folks would feel just so, and that we hadn't a right to use the name, on account of the Golden Rule. did not quite understand it, because he said we only wanted to use the dollie's name, but mother said that was the way we ought to feel, and so"-

Here Daisy came to a full pause. She was not accustomed to talking to strangers; she was very shy of strangers, but this explanation she felt had to be made. Now that it was made as well as she knew how, she was very uncertain what to say next, and was growing exceedingly uncomfortable, the more so as Judge Dunmore was looking at her in a queer way and saying nothing. As for Dee, she looked from the one to the other and did not seem to know what to say. At last the Judge roused himself.

"So that is the way your mother argues, is it? She must be an unusual woman; no wonder the daughter is"— But he seemed to decide not to finish that part of the sentence, and commenced again. "I begin to understand it. So you want Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant to go into business? An excellent plan. Give my compliments to 'Line,' and tell him I think so. But you did not explain who Line was. Is that another brother?"

"No, sir! that is my sister Caroline; we call her 'Line' for a love name. She planned it."

"I beg her pardon. She planned well; I have no sort of objection, on the contrary I so entirely approve that I shall take it upon mycelf to have a small window sign painted with

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my lady's name, and the nature of the business in which she is about to engage. You see, my child, what you said about dollies is very true. However much their owners may love and care for them, they have not, after all, souls, and this may be remembered in our treatment of them. Now although your Dee Dunmore bears a part of my daughter's name, she is not after all my Dee Dunmore, but yours, and there is that infinite difference between the two of which we have been speaking. In the second place, although she has the name of my daughter, she has also your surname, which is much more important. Don't you see how it is? Suppose a family named Smith lived near to your mother's house."

"They do," said Daisy gravely, "just around the corner from us."

"Do they indeed? Then that is so much the better for my illustration. Let us suppose, then, that they have a little girl and choose to name her 'Daisy Bryant Smith.' That is perfectly reasonable, and you could not blame them for wanting to borrow your name to place before their little daughter's surname, neither would there be any danger of confusing

the two, for sensible people would have no trouble in understanding that Daisy Bryant and Daisy Bryant Smith were two different persons; but suppose, for any reason, the family had grown tired of the name of Smith and decided to borrow your surname and call themselves Bryant; that would be a very different matter, and might cause you a good deal of trouble, and in order to bear it patiently you would want to be assured that they had somehow secured the right to do such a thing. Do you understand?"

"O, yes, sir!" Daisy said with infinite gravity, "I understand, and I thank you very much; but all the same, if you did not quite like me to use the name in this way I would rather not do it, because I know I am a little bit glad that the Smith baby is named Charlotte Ann Smith, instead of Daisy Bryant Smith."

Whereupon the Judge threw himself back in his chair and laughed loud and long, to the great discomfiture of Daisy, who had no idea what he could be laughing at.

Nevertheless, the matter was finished to the satisfaction of all. Two days thereafter,

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there hung in Mrs. Bryant's front window a handsomely decorated sheet of cardboard, making in gilt letters the following announcement:

DOLL EMPORIUM.

Season opens on Saturday at 10 o'clock.

MISS DEE DUNMORE BRYANT,

Proprietor.

CHAPTER XVI.

EBON "LENDS A HAND."

WHILE Daisy's business was getting into such a satisfactory shape, matters were by no means standing still with her brother Ben. With Mr. Reynolds business was very brisk; Ben spent not only his evenings, but a large part of his afternoons and occasionally a morning in helping. He made great strides during this time in the management of the type-writer and mimeograph. Moreover, he was learning incidentally a good deal about business methods which would be sure to prove valuable in days to come.

It was a very pleasant life to live, and Ben enjoyed every minute of it, but between times had his hours of anxiety. Mr. Reynolds was soon to depart, and with him would go his wonder-working machines, and the occupation

which now brought Ben in quite a little sum of money. After that, what was to be done?

"I've learned a good deal," he told himself mournfully, "but after all it is not anything which will help us live after he is gone. I'll have a machine, sometime, but of course it will be years yet; and I'm sure I don't see what we are going to live on while I'm earning one, nor how I'm to earn one anyhow, unless I get steady work somewhere. It's a good deal as Rufus says, to look at it from the outside. 'Wasting time,' he says I am; perhaps if I had anything in life to do that would bring in the money for mother I might think so, but as it is, my conscience is free."

This is about as far as his anxious thinking and reasoning reached. He always brought up against what he called a "stone wall" which he could not see over, and always decided that there was nothing to do but get what he could from Mr. Reynolds, and be as helpful as he could in return, and wait for the way out of his perplexities.

Meantime, the "way out" was preparing all about him, though he had not an idea of it.

Three people were already very much inter-

ested in him: Miss Webster, Mr. Reynolds and the minister. From time to time they talked together about his affairs and made plans for him; at least Miss Webster and the minister did, and certain matters were in train at the time when a fourth friend appeared on the scene.

It happened that Dee Dunmore herself had to do with this last experience. She was on her way to the "Doll Emporium." It was nearly two weeks after the establishment of that important business, and Dee, it must be confessed, was a good customer and spent much time there.

As she turned the corner and came to Main Street trouble began. It happened that Ebon was out for a walk that morning, all by himself. Now Ebon, you will remember, was a very wise dog, and ought to have known better than to have lent himself to any such scheme as he did, but even dogs will sometimes make mistakes, and there is this to say for Ebon, it was a mistake, not "malice aforethought."

The same cannot be said for the Smith boys; they turned the corner from the opposite street just as Dee did, and met Ebon and her at the same moment. They saw the little girl stop short, bestow a doubtful, troubled look on Ebon, then go to the very outermost edge of the walk, leaving him the whole broad sidewalk, and prepare to pass him with great caution.

Now the Smith boys had made friends with Ebon, and knew most of his wise ways.

"Here's fun!" said Joe, chuckling low; "little Miss Perkey is afraid of Ebon; let's get him to show off, and see if we can take some of the starch out of her."

"Little Miss Perkey" meant Dee, of course. It was a name the Smith boys had given her the first time they came in close contact with her, at which time they had declared that she was "stuck up." Why, I do not know, unless it was because her dress was very neat and her manners lady-like; however, it might have been revenge for having overheard her say, speaking of them, that she didn't like to have much to do with boys who had such very dirty hands.

Still I do not know, I am sure, whether malice or only thoughtless mischief moved the Smith boys on this morning; the actions which spring from these two sources are often so very much alike as to make it difficult for a lookeron to judge.

This I know, that the boys, having whispered together a few minutes, following Dee at a little distance, as did also the stately Ebon, called the latter and gave orders to him in low tones to "shake hands with the little girl."

Immediately Ebon tried to obey. He trotted on fast, and Dee, as she heard his swift steps behind her, tried to walk faster, her heart beating hard the while. But Ebon could trot faster than she could walk; a moment more and his great paw was resting on her arm, she, meanwhile, giving forth a terrific shriek, and the Smith boys bending double with laughter.

"Kiss her," shouted Joe, between the bursts of merriment, "kiss her, Ebon, that's a good fellow."

And to Dee's unutterable horror, Ebon's great red tongue came up and tried to lick her cheek.

Just what would have happened next, whether Dee in her awful terror would have fainted or gone into a fit, I cannot tell, for at that particular instant, while she seemed fairly

paralyzed with fear, came a clear, ringing voice from across the street, whose owner took long strides toward them as he spoke. "Off, Ebon! off, I say. Come here, sir! Don't be frightened, little girl, he would not hurt you for the world. As for you, Joe and Ted Smith, see if I don't report you to Professor Kelley before you are two hours older."

It was Ben Bryant who made these several speeches, and the little girl, who was now leaning against him too weak to walk, and sobbing violently, was Dee Dunmore he was sure, although he had not been at home when she made her calls on Daisy, and had never seen her before.

"Don't cry," he said gently, stroking back the wind-blown hair as he would have done Daisy's own; "it was too bad to frighten you so. Ebon is a grand good dog. He would have behaved like a gentleman if those scamps hadn't told him to pretend he was well acquainted with you. Here, sir, don't you try to make friends yet; you've been too bold, altogether, trying to kiss a stranger, on the street, too; I'm ashamed of you. Go home, sir, and tell your mistress what you have done."

Frightened as Dee was, and still trembling so that she could not walk, she could hardly help a faint smile over the ashamed and utterly discouraged way in which Ebon, with slow steps and drooping tail turned, on receiving these orders, and walked away in the opposite direction from which he had been going.

"He minds," she said faintly.

"O, yes! Ebon always minds. He is a good friend of mine; I don't often have to scold him. It is really the Smith boys who need the scolding this time, the young scamps!"

"What is all this?" asked a quick voice behind them. "My daughter, what is the matter?"

"O, papa!" said Dee, making one spring from Ben's protecting arm into her father's. "Hold me close, papa. I can't stop trembling yet, though I know there is no danger now; this good boy would not let them hurt me. O, papa!"

And then Dee began to cry.

It was Ben who had to explain, which he did very briefly, sparing Ebon's feelings and he could, but not sparing the Smith boys. He said little about himself, but Dee between her

sobs helped out the story in that respect. "And, papa, he came across the street fast, and called the dog, and made him take his dreadful tongue away." Here Dee shuddered. "And O, papa! I should have died, I'm almost sure, if he hadn't come that very second."

It was really quite embarrassing. Dee was so grateful, and her father, who used less words, seemed also so very glad that his little daughter had found a friend, that Ben, who felt that he was being thanked for almost nothing, was in blushing haste to get away.

"I must go on," he said quickly. "Could the little girl walk with me to where she is going, sir? I will take care of her."

"I came out to join her in her walk, but I am obliged to you for your thoughtful offer. Do you know who I am, my friend?"

"Yes, sir; I think you are Judge Dunmore. I have seen you on the street."

"Then you are better off than I, for I do not know your name. Will you tell my daughter and me who we have to thank for thoughtful kindness and care this morning?"

"My name," said Ben, straightening himself

as he unconsciously did whenever he spoke the name, for which he had a good deal of respect, "is Benjamin Foster Bryant; but I don't want any thanks; I haven't done anything."

Almost before he had finished his sentence, Dee had broken away from her father, excitement and pleasure rapidly taking the place of fright, and dashed over to Ben's side again.

"Why, papa! why, papa!" she said, "it is Daisy's good brother Ben! Daisy says he is the best and dearest brother in all the world, and I'm sure he is; I'm sure of it."

"I don't doubt it in the least," said Judge Dunmore, laughing heartily. "We are very glad to make your acquaintance, Benjamin, and glad to learn that you belong to little Daisy, whom we love. Now I shall know where to look for you, and will not detain you longer."

Ben went away, wondering why he would care to look for him, and wondering just what he ought to tell Professor Kelley about those scamps of boys, and wondering what Miss Webster would say when she heard of Ebon's adventure.

It was this little incident which made Judge

Dunmore seek not Ben, but Ben's acquaintances, and ask some questions. Among others he chanced upon Ben's former employer.

"Doesn't amount to much," said that gentleman, with a significant toss of his head.

"What is his distinctive quality?" Judge Dunmore asked.

"Shirking."

Whereupon the Judge raised his eyebrows in surprise. "I should not have supposed that," he said thoughtfully. "He seemed to me a boy who had a good deal of energy."

"Energy enough, only he doesn't like to apply it to steady work. He had a good place with me, and I would have done well by him; I meant to, and what did he do but up and leave me on short notice; no other place in view, either; hasn't had a place since, and won't be likely to get one very soon. Good places are not common for youngsters with no more training for work than he has had, especially if they cannot stick when they get them."

"But what reason did he give for such an extraordinary proceeding? He must have had some explanation to offer."

Mr. Sewell shrugged his shoulders and

laughed. "The queerest excuse you ever heard of," he said, "and the flimsiest; of course I took it for what it was worth, and knew that it ought to be spelled for 'l-a-z-i-n-e-s-s,' for that was what it meant. Why, he took a notion to make believe scared at an innocent-looking cider barrel which stands in the corner of my back room. He had nothing to do with it—never had to wait on customers, even, unless it was now and then a boy; but all of a sudden he got up an idea that selling cider wasn't the correct thing, and off he went."

"Did he indeed?" said Judge Dunmore, with a smile on his face and a good deal of pleasure in his voice; "that was certainly a very unusual step for a boy of his age. Where did you say you thought I might find him?"

"So I told him — putting on airs and making himself out wiser and better than his elders. Why, I think you will find him hanging around that Mr. Reynolds who is here canvassing. He has a room at the Widow Kedwin's, on Second Street, and Ben has got bewitched over some fool machine or other which he carries about with him; wastes half of his time there, I guess. It is a great shame, and

his mother a widow and struggling to make a living. I was willing to do well by the boy, as I said, if he hadn't been such a born idiot."

"Good-morning," said Judge Dunmore, lifting his hat in a courteous way, and moving down the street with rapid step. It happened that he was particularly interested in just such "idiots" as Ben Bryant had been.

His next call was on Mr. Reynolds, though Ben was not there. He had been sent to the express office with an important package. Mr. Reynolds was, however, in his bicycle dress, making ready for a long trip. The typewriter was packed, and in fact it was that which Ben, with sorrowful heart, was carrying to the express office. Little Lora Kedwin and Ebon came together to announce Judge Dunmore.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Reynolds, glancing around. "Lora, I don't believe I can receive you and Ebon this morning; I'm very busy. It's too bad; I'd like nothing better than a frolic with both of you, but I must get these papers done in time for the noon train."

"We didn't come for ourselves," Lora explained, "we came to show a gentleman the way; he wants you," "Ah! I beg your pardon," said Mr. Reynolds, rising in haste to meet Judge Dunmore, whose handsome face now came into view.

"He is a splendid young fellow," said Mr. Reynolds heartily, as soon as he heard the object of Judge Dunmore's call. "I never met a boy in whom I was more interested. He is smart, too, as well as faithful and in earnest. I've been uncommonly busy since I came to this town, and that boy has helped me more than the young man of about my own age who used to travel with me ever did in the same length of time, and he understood the business, too; of course it was all new to Ben. Poor fellow, his heart is heavy this morning; he has just taken his treasure on a wheelbarrow and trudged away to the depot."

"Does he know how to manage a typewriter?" Judge Dunmore asked, after he had asked several other questions.

"He certainly does; better than some who have had a half-year's drill; he is uncommonly quick at taking up new things, as well as uncommonly persevering. Why, he made a board imitation of the lettering, and practiced on it evenings at home; the consequence was,

the next time he came he astonished me by making the machine go like lightning. I call that an original idea."

"It seems to me he ought to be in school,"
Judge Dunmore said, in a reflective tone.

"That's exactly where he ought to be, and there is a good school here where he could do well if he had a chance. The girl ought to be there, too, but I suspect it can hardly be managed at present."

"The girl," interrupted his caller, "what girl—little Daisy? There is time enough for her; she may better play with her dollies a year or two yet, than be confined to the school-room."

"No, no! I don't mean her. I mean the older sister—thirteen or so, perhaps—a smart girl, and a constant companion and friend of Ben's; he doesn't like to do anything in which 'Line,' as he calls her, doesn't have a share. Why, she worked at this finger-board with him until actually the first time she saw the type-writer she sat down to it like an old hand, and wrote with remarkable correctness and a good degree of speed."

"So there are two of them, eh? There must be a somewhat unusual mother."

"O, there is! My landlady says she is 'one of 'em,' which seems to be a mysterious way of conveying high praise." He laughed with his mouth and his eyes, and Judge Dunmore joined him merrily.

Then Mr. Reynolds began to talk again. "Yes, there are certainly two of them, and they ought to be in school; but the mother is poor — has a little place burdened with debt, I am told — and these two have to stay at home and help all they can; besides, Miss Webster tells me it is a question of clothes, though I think she has some scheme in mind to manage that part. I have a little plan, but I don't know that I can carry it out for years yet, and by that time it will not be needed, for I hope to see Ben in Congress or somewhere, by the time I'm able to help him. I'm young, you see, and have had quite a tussle for ways and means myself." Here his frank eyes met Judge Dunmore's keen gray ones, and that gentleman nodded sympathetically. "So you see my little plan, though a good one, I do believe, will have to wait."

"Perhaps not. Suppose you tell me about it. I'm interested in the young people; my / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t51g19x5x Generated on 2022-11-28 21:04 GMT Public Domain / http://www.hathi

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Whereupon he told the story of the Smith boys and Ebon. Then Mr. Reynolds talked eagerly, describing his "little plan." "I'm pretty sure it would work," he said, after giving much information, and answering all questions. "I meant to try to work it up in some way if I stayed here, but this order from head-quarters to return to New York at once, has upset a good many of my schemes, as well as Ben's. You would have felt sorry for the boy if you could have seen his face when he was getting the type-writer ready to travel. He feels that he is bidding good-by to a friend."

As Mr. Reynolds returned from showing his caller to the door, a short time afterwards, he stopped to pat Ebon on the head and say confidentially, "You mustn't kiss the girls, old fellow, unless they themselves ask it. Don't you know that? However, we won't scold you this time, for I shouldn't wonder if you had made a pretty good morning's work out of it." And he laughed his bright, glad laugh.

CHAPTER XVII.

A "BUSINESS TRANSACTION."

BUSINESS prospered with Daisy. It really astonished Mrs. Bryant to find that from the first there was a brisk market for dolls. "One would think that all the little children in town had been forgotten or neglected until now," she said, looking on one morning with a puzzled air, while a woman from Factory Lane, whom she knew only by sight, carefully selected two neatly dressed, red-cheeked misses as birthday offerings for "the twins," and counted out with great satisfaction her silver pieces in payment. The woman overheard her, and looked up with a smile.

"I didn't forget mine, ma'am, nor neglect them exactly, though they never had a boughten dollie in their lives, and they will be six tomorrow; but you see the way of it is that I never had a cent of money to spend on such

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things, not once since they were born, though many's the time I've walked up and down the street before the store windows and picked out what I would like to buy them, and wished and counted, and shook my head, and been that silly that I cried a tear or two because I knew I mustn't do it. You can't call that 'neglecting,' you know, though they are to have their first boughten dollies to-morrow. I think the one in the pink sash is a trifle the prettier, ma'am, don't you?"

This last to Daisy, who gravely considered it while her mother continued the conversation.

"And are times easier with you now, Mrs. Dobbs?"

The questioner's voice was sympathy itself. Her own sharp experience had led her to have always a warm heart for the poor. Mrs. Dobbs' face flushed slightly, and she hesitated a moment. "There's not much 'easy' to speak of," she said at last. "We have none of us starved, so far, and maybe we won't, though the prospect ahead ain't none of the brightest. Being a widow yourself, ma'am, you don't know how hard it is. It's the drink that makes the trouble; when he keeps sober there isn't a

better provider in the town; and he is that fond of the twins that he will get up in the night to see if they are safe covered, if he hasn't been drinking; but it seems that he can't pass Hogan's saloon without going in; and pay-day, when he comes from the office, he has to pass right by the door, and Hogan, he keeps on the lookout for pay-day—he's sharp, Hogan is—and so it goes. There ought to be some kind of a law against them places, don't you think, ma'am?"

Mrs. Bryant's cheeks were red now; they had been pale for a moment, then had flushed crimson. So this poor woman really thought that she, "being a widow," was too well off to sympathize! What terrible burdens were these which made even death seem a relief! She could not trust herself to speak her opinion of "them places," but Line did.

"Yes, there ought, Mrs. Dobbs, and mother thinks so, too; and there will be one of these days, you see if there isn't."

Mrs. Dobbs drew a long patient sigh as she said, "Well, indeed and I hope it won't be too late to help him. It isn't as if he was ugly, you see; he is that kind when he isn't in liquor

And he means not to drink; he promises and promises, and I try to believe him every time, because I know he means it, but the habit has got hold of him, you know, and habit is an awful tyrant, ma'am!"

Mrs. Bryant had found her voice again, and now spoke the thought which was troubling her. "Perhaps my little girl ought not to take this money for dollies, Mrs. Dobbs? You need it for so many things, and children are quite happy without such things. A little pillow with an apron tied around it does nicely, or even a smooth stick. My Daisy has such a doll, of which she is very fond; you mustn't suppose you are neglecting your children because you do not think it right to spend money for such things; I quite agree with you."

But the curious smile of satisfaction had returned to the face of Mrs. Dobbs, and she was eager with her answer.

"O, ma'am! it has all been taken out of my hands, and I'm that glad that I don't hardly know what to do. I'd never have thought of buying them, not this season, anyhow, but for what happened yesterday. You see the twins

was playing out in the road, and they had a stick like what you tell about for a dollie; nothing in the world but a little old stick, ma'am, only it had a knot on it that they thought looked like a head, and one day when he was sober he put some eyes and a mouth to it, and a nose, and it did look cute; and I dressed it up in a bit of turkey-red calico that I had left over from the comforters I made last winter for the factory men, and they set great store by it; and they was playing out in the road, and laid it down flat in the road, ma'am —they ain't generally that careless, but they forgot — and a carriage came by fast, and what did them horses do but step on that baby and break it right in two!"

An exclamation of horror from Daisy at this moment, warned her mother that the story was growing too tragic.

"What a blessing that it was only a stick," she hastened to say.

"O, yes, ma'am! it was; but then there was the twins, and if it had been real flesh and blood they couldn't have took on worse; they sobbed and they cried, and I didn't know what in the world to do with them. I was sorry for 'em, and fretted with them, both at once; I didn't know but I'd have to spank them out there in the street; and yet I kissed them and tried to comfort them."

"Poor children," said Mrs. Bryant, trying not to smile, for Line was laughing at the queer way in which the story was told, though Daisy was grave enough.

"Yes, sure enough; I was awful sorry for them, but what was I to do? The stick was broke right square in two, and all mud and dirt at that, and there was them two a-screaming fit to rouse the neighborhood. And the folks in the carriage heard them, don't you think, though the horses were dashing along dreadful fast when they stepped on the dollie; and what did that driver do but turn around, at last, and come back to where we was standing a-fussing over that broke stick! There was ladies in the carriage, and children, and a handsome gentleman who did the talking.

"'What's the matter?' says he. 'The little ones were not hurt, I hope?'

"Well, the twins was kind of took up with the horses and fine carriage, and they didn't howl so loud, so I had a chance to speak. But

then, ma'am, what had I to say? I give you my word that I never felt more like a halfwitted creature in my life than I did when I held up them two pieces of an old stick with some red cloth tied around them, and tried to explain that they was a dollie, and that the twins' heart was broke because that was broke I don't know how I did it, but they seemed to understand. The ladies laughed a little, which I don't wonder at, I'm sure—it was a ridiculous kind of a time — and one of them said, 'Your life seems to be strangely interwoven with dolls, nowadays, father.' Them was the very words, ma'am; I remembered them because they sounded smooth and nice like music, somehow — though I didn't understand what she meant; of course a grand gentleman like that hasn't much to do with dolls; but he smiled, and then he spoke to the twins just as kind, and told them he was very sorry indeed for the accident, that he wouldn't have had his horses do such a thing for a great deal, but that they must forgive them, because they were only horses and didn't know any better, and a lot more nice pleasant things he said. Then he give them each an orange, and the

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ladies give them some candy, and one little girl, a lovely child with curly hair, and such pretty eyes, twitched at his sleeve and whispered something, and he said, 'Sure enough, that's a good idea.' Then what did he do but call me to his side of the carriage, and while the twins was so took up with the oranges and candy and everything that they forgot to cry, he give me this very money that I'm laying down here this minute, and says he, 'Now, my good woman, remember that is only for dolls two of the best that you can buy for the money - one for each of them; it is no more than justice after what my horses have done.' Then he told me where to go, and I'm sure it is a nice place. I didn't know there was such a place in town, and I'll tell my neighbors, ma'am, that if they have any dolls to buy this is the place to come. And he said again to me just as the carriage was going on, 'Remember, Mrs. Dobbs,' says he, 'that money is for nothing else in the world but dolls.' you see, ma'am, I wouldn't have any right to spend it in any other way, though I can think of a hundred things this minute that we ought to have; but it wouldn't be honest, you know."

"That woman is the best stocked with 'ands' of any person I ever heard talk," Line said, the moment the door closed after her. "Mother, did you notice how they rolled out and tucked themselves in wherever there was a little bit of a cranny for them? Isn't she queer?"

"She is another victim," said Mrs. Bryant, with a sigh; and, as she thought of Hogan's saloon, and of all the other saloons on dangerous corners, and much-frequented streets, her heart gave a little throb of gratitude over the fact that the feet of her once tempted one now trod the safe and sheltered pathways prepared for those whom God has called away from all temptation, and that they "go no more out forever."

For the first time since Mrs. Dobbs had appeared, Daisy now spoke. "Mother, that little girl in the carriage who whispered to her father was Dee, I think."

"I do not doubt it, little daughter; and the father who gave his money so freely was Judge Dunmore. You are indebted to him for a great many kindnesses, Daisy."

"But, mother, this was not giving, was it?" with a little hesitancy and emphasis over the "Certainly," said Mrs. Bryant, with a little gleam of amusement in her eyes. The sturdy independence of this small daughter, while it pleased her, was at times very amusing. "So far as you are concerned it may be called a perfectly plain business transaction, yet people can be kind in that line as well as in others; it was very kind in Judge Dunmore to remember you, and send customers over here instead of somewhere else."

"Yes'm," said Daisy thoughtfully; "I think it was, but then, mother —"

"Well, my daughter?"

"If he had not sent her here, and she had gone somewhere else and bought dollies, the man, or whoever has them to sell, would have been glad, and now he can be sorry if he knows it, because he has lost this chance. What about that?"

Mrs. Bryant laughed outright. "You are going too deeply into the question for me now, I'm afraid," she said. "You will have to take that thought to Miss Webster to talk over, or

perhaps to the Judge himself—he is a lawyer, you know—it is only a share in custom which you want, though; that is perfectly fair, is it not?"

"I suppose so," with a curious little sigh; but then, it seems strange someway, that I have to be glad over what makes somebody else sorry. Things seem a little like that everywhere; I think I would like a world where everybody could be glad at once."

"There is such a world," said Mrs. Bryant softly, a tender look in her eyes, and a wistful going forward to the glad day when they would all be there. As for Line, she looked simply amused; these flight of Daisy's were delicious to her.

But Daisy's face was still thoughtful, though her mind had turned to another phase of the subject, which came to the surface presently.

"Mother, I am very sorry for the twins."

"Sorry for them!" exclaimed Line. "Think of those lovely dollies that will be in their arms in a few minutes. The prettiest dressed ones in the crowd, I believe. I took special pains with that tucked skirt, only yesterday."

"I know," said Daisy, "they are very nice,

and I am very glad the tucked skirt was on one of them, Line; but for all that it must have been terrible to stand there and see their wooden dollie crushed. I cannot help thinking what if it had been Arabella Aurelia!"

Line's laugh rang out merrily then, but her face also shadowed over, after a moment, and as she watched Daisy out of the room she said, "Mother, whatever would become of such an unpractical little mouse as Daisy if she had not you and Ben and me to take care of her?"

"The Lord can take care of his own," said the mother, and Line was silenced.

From this date there sprang up a brisk business connected with Factory Lane. Whether money grew more plentiful there, or whether each child in the region became so envious of the twins as to make it necessary to take some steps for their relief, Daisy Bryant did not know; but certain it was that during the next two weeks many new dollies went down that way to live, and Line was kept very busy evenings, fitting out others to take the places of those who had moved.

Queer little customers they had, sometimes, affording unbounded amusement to the older

ones, and opportunity for much philosophical musing on the part of Daisy. Two neat and trim little Dutch women came one day in their odd little caps and roly-poly bodies, the older one with the quaintest neckerchief pinned around her throat and tucked into the waist in front, after the fashion of her mother and grandmother. Line studied the costume carefully, and declared that some dollies dressed in that way would "take" extremely well, she believed, and consulted Dee, who happened to be present, as to what she thought about it. Meantime, but a few rods from the house, a discussion was in progress among the Dutch Only one had bought a new dollie, maidens. and she the younger of the two. The other had brought her treasure, somewhat the worse for wear, close clasped in loving arms; but alas for her mother heart! its charms began rapidly to fade before those of the new and elegantly dressed dollie, all in spotless white, with tucked skirts and embroidered over skirts, and a lovely white cape bonnet covering its head. Hilda seized upon it, gave one delighted look at it, then suddenly hiding its charms behind her, held forward her own battered and bruised dollie, with ink on its dress not only, but also on its long-suffering face. "You may have my doll," she said to Gretchen, "my dear Margaretta that you love so much, all for your truly own, and I will have this new dollie without any name for me."

Gretchen, sweet-faced and unselfish, unworldly too, put her small fat hands on her small sides and considered the question, evidently not struck with the supreme selfishness of this offer. She did love Margaretta; she had often hugged and kissed her sweet black face, she had often rocked her to sleep; why should she not let Hilda have the new dollie, who, it was true, had no name, and take the one whose very name she loved?

It was Line who interfered; she and Daisy were just starting on an errand when the customers came, and had followed them in time to hear the discussion.

"O, no!" said Line hastily, "Gretchen's mother would not like that. Gretchen must take the new dollie home to show her mother; she is the one who bought it; you would not be honest, Hilda, to take it from her. The dollie has a name; its name is Freda."

Instantly were Gretchen's arms outstretched to receive back her treasure, but Hilda would not yield; she thrust the doll farther and farther behind her, and stood back on her sturdy little heels and declared she would not give it up, and resisted Line, who tried to coax her, until finally it was settled by the coming of a stout German woman, who was watching in the doorway near at hand. She took hold of fair Gretchen with the air of one who had a right to manage her, called her a little simpleton for letting go of her dollie, wrenched it with no gentle hand from Hilda's grasp, giving her a smart slap on her fat arm at the same moment, and bidding her go about her business.

Line and Daisy went about theirs, the former laughing, the latter very sober.

"Line, what made you say that dollie's name was Freda?" This was her first gravely put question.

"Oh! to help the little thing get back her own; she has a big sister Freda whom she loves very much, and I knew as soon as she heard the name she would assert her rights."

"But, Line, was it quite true?"

"O, yes! I named her, you see, that very

moment; she was without a name and had to have one, so I named her. They can change the name if they do not like it, you know, but I feel certain that that dollie will be named Freda from this time forth."

Silence for several minutes, then Daisy:

"Mrs. Hutchins was nearly three weeks naming her baby before she could find one nice enough, and you named this dollie in just a minute! And that Hilda was willing to give up hers just because the other was newer and prettier."

Another minute of silence, then a sigh which came from the depths of Daisy's troubled heart as she said, "Dolls are very unsatisfying, Line; it isn't any of it truly, is it?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"YOU WAIT AND SEE."

INE was washing the tea dishes, Daisy was trying patiently to sell a pink cashmere cloak to a small miss for her small dollie, and was finding the customer very hard to suit. Ben was waiting for Line, and drying the spoons and plates while he waited, and the express wagon passed the end window.

"There goes the express," said Line. "How I wish it would stop here; it hasn't stopped since Daisy's children came. I never had an express package in my life."

"I'll send you one as soon as I can bring it to pass," said Ben, carefully drying a plate as he spoke. "Are you particular at all as to what shall be in it?"

Line laughed. "I don't know that I am," she said, "almost anything that could possibly come in a package would be acceptable. But

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I do think, Ben, it would be real fun to live as Miss Webster does. Why, she has an express almost every day—the loveliest three-cornered bundles, and all sorts of bundles."

"Be willing to change places with her, and sit there and wait for bundles?" Ben asked significantly.

Line shivered. "Of course not," she said promptly. "Doesn't it seem too hard that she cannot walk at all? And yet she is the very happiest person I ever knew, I really think," and Line's face took on a shade of gravity over some thought which she seemed not to care to express. Ben asked no questions; he almost knew what she was thinking of, and although he talked freely with Line on every other subject, for some reason he too chose to be silent here. In fact, he changed the whole tone of the conversation quickly, with a vague fear that Line would probe what he was not yet ready to talk about.

"Let's plan for school next fall, Line, without any fail."

Line in her astonishment dropped the bowl she was washing so suddenly, that a drop of the dish-water plashed into Ben's face. "Plan for school! Why, how can we go to school next fall any better than we did this winter?"

"I don't know the 'how' yet," said Ben sturdily. "What I say is, let's plan for it; it is time we went; I really don't see how we are going to get along any longer without going, and if we can't, why, we might as well be making our plans that way."

Line laughed, a little bitterly, perhaps, at this. Her cheeks were redder than before, but she went on with her bowl-washing, even waiting to say, "I don't see why scalded milk wants to stick so!" before she made any more direct response. Then she said, "You are as queer a boy, Ben Bryant, as I ever knew! Here you talk about planning, and about what we cannot get along without, as though all we had to do was to decide that a thing must be done, and get ready for it."

"Well, isn't that so?" Ben asked. "Don't we believe, on the whole, that if a thing ought to be done it will be? And if it is to be, of course we ought to get ready for it."

"Mother believes so," said Line, low-toned and thoughtful again, and Ben felt that he was edging very near to the subject about which he

M. 4.

was not ready to talk, and was much relieved that there came just then a queer shuffling noise at the street door, which made Line ask a startled question — "What was that?"

"I don't know, I am sure; sounds as though some one was trying to make a call, and had forgotten how to knock."

But even as he spoke there was a distinct "tap, tap, tap," not on the door, but apparently on the step, yet it sounded like an imitation knock.

"It is a tramp," said Line, still startled; "there have been two along to-day. What shall we do, Ben? The door isn't locked, and mother is out, you know."

"Why, we'll open the door and see what is wanted," Ben said boldly. "It is not likely that any one wants to hurt us. I'll take care of you, Line."

So without more ado he stepped toward the door, a trifle glad, if the truth must be told, that he was the sole protector of the family at a moment when there might be some sort of an intruder.

Sure enough there was! Line gave a scream the moment she saw him, but not of fright.

"It is Ebon!" she declared. "O, Ben! he knocked with his tail. And he has something in his mouth — a package of some sort. he is an expressman, and has stopped at our door."

"It looks like it," said Ben. "Come in, sir; happy to see you. How do you do? Shake hands, old fellow. What have you here, something for us?" He bent down to the delighted dog, who promptly yielded up the string w h which the package was securely tied.

"It must be for me," said Ben, "or Ebon would not give it up. He has been told to bring it to me. I wonder what it can be. Perhaps Miss Webster has sent you some work, and sent Ebon to me, because she thought you might be afraid of him."

"She knows I'm not afraid of Ebon," said Line, stooping to pat him. "Nice old fellow. Shake hands. Now give me a kiss. You need not be afraid of getting into trouble by kissing Ebon and I are very intimate friends, Why don't you open your package and see what is wanted?"

But Ben seemed to be having all he was capable of managing in studying the outside of the package. "There is something written," he had said, as he stepped toward the lamp. There he stood staring at it, his cheeks ablaze, and his eyes shining. "Listen to this," he said at last.

"'Ebon Webster pays his respects to Benjamin Foster Bryant, and would like to have him accept the inclosed as a slight token of his gratitude in standing up for Ebon when he tried to offer courtesies to a little friend, and was so cruelly misunderstood.'

"That is every word there is, Line; no name signed, and I don't know the writing; it isn't Miss Webster's. What do you suppose can be in the package, and who sent it?"

"I should guess that Judge Dunmore sent it," Line said, laughing at her brother's excited tones and blazing face, "and I should think the quickest way to find what was in the package would be to open it and see. It is certainly for you; Ebon gave it to you, and your full name is on it. Miss Webster must know about it, for she asked me only yesterday what your middle name was. Open it, Ben, quick, before Daisy comes in; perhaps there will be something in it for a surprise for her."

By this time Ben's trembling fingers were tugging at the strong cord. It yielded at last to skillful management, then layer after layer of paper was unwrapped. "It must be something very precious," Line said, under her breath, and almost wishing she had called Daisy to enjoy the delight of seeing a bundle opened—there were so few bundles to open in that house, save those which wrapped plain sewing, or articles to be laundered. Still, if it should be a surprise for Daisy—because in another week would come her birthday.

At last a fine hard-wood box, highly polished and fitted with a nickel plate spring lock, came into view, and their excitement and curiosity were greater than before.

"What a pretty thing," said Line. "Do you know how to open it, Ben? There must be something very cunning inside."

"Yes," said Ben, "Mr. Reynolds had a box something like it, which opened with a secret spring, and he showed me how."

Whereupon he touched the spring. The lid flew open, disclosing the queerest little paper packages, which being unwrapped gave Line no more light than she had before.

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"What in the world can it be?" she said. "Have you the least notion, Ben? It makes me think of the telegraph office; I don't know why, I'm sure. Can it be something to use, to work with, you know? Ben, it isn't any kind of a writing-machine, is it?" The sympathetic voice had sunken to a whisper, and then hushed into respectful silence; for Ben, his fingers trembling so that he could scarcely work, was yet working with lightning speed, and the blood was racing back into his face, reaching to his very hair. It was evident that he knew or guessed what the "thing" was, and knew what to do with it. Not a word did he speak, but in less time than it takes me to write the words, he had unlocked the neat little creature from its box, set it on the table, adjusted a curious contrivance that Line begged him not to touch, lest he might put it out of order or get hurt, dived into his pocket for a piece of paper, drawn it forth, slipped it under a tiny roller, taken an innocent-looking knob in charge, and drawn forth from the small object a series of little ticking sounds which were to him sweeter than any music he ever heard. Then, drawing out the paper as suddenly as he

had slipped it in, he held it before Line's astonished eyes, and said, in a voice in which emotion and exultation blended very queerly, "That is what it is, Line." And there, printed, before her very eyes, in neat, clear characters, were the words, "Caroline Foster Bryant." She withdrew her fascinated eyes as soon as she could, and fixed them on her brother's face. "It's a type-writer," he said, speaking huskily now. "A little brand-new type-writer, and it's for me! It said so on the wrapper, didn't it? O, Line!"

There was great excitement in the Bryant home for the remainder of the evening. Daisy deserted her store altogether, only leaving the curtain drawn, to be sure of seeing any possible customer, and was allowed to print the names of seven of the dollies on the wonderful machine. She picked out the letters with laborious care; but Ben, who discovered in less than five minutes that the ones most used were gathered into a center of about an inch square, exclaimed in glee that he almost knew its lettering already.

"Only look, Line, how it is arranged. Here are 'and of' and 'there' and 'this,' and I don't

know how many other words which one uses all the time, grouped in this tiny white center. Here is 'do' and 'it' and 'is' and 'her.' See?"

"Yes," said Line, "I see; the vowels are all there, so of course they are the ones which are repeated constantly; and the capital of each letter is just above it, all the way along. Do you notice that?"

"Sure enough," Ben said, taking his eyes from the machine long enough to bestow a glance of admiration on his sister. "What a girl you are to see into things, Line! I never show you anything new but you make me wish you could go right straight into school and stay there until you graduated."

"Or go in a balloon to the moon to study astronomy," Line said, laughing gaily to smother a sigh which she was determined should not be heard. "You are certainly the wildest boy to wish that I know. It is fortunate that when you go to doing, you come down from the clouds and show good hard sense."

"You wait until some of the wishes come to pass," Ben said, with a wise nod of his head. Meantime, Daisy had come closer, and was making grave investigation.

"Where are the fowls?" she asked, at last.

"Where are what?"

"The fowls. I thought Line said the 'fowls' were all here in this little white place."

Ben went off into a tempest of laughter, while Line hastened to explain. "Vowels, darling, not fowls. Don't you know what vowels are?"

"No," said Daisy gravely, "I never heard of them. Where are they, and what do you do with them?"

"How did you think any fowls got into so little a space as this, Daisilinda?" Ben asked, his eyes twinkling with fun. This little sister was so quaint and delicious, that Ben could never resist the temptation to cross-question, even though she looked unusually grave, as she did just now, over the laugh raised at her expense.

"I did not know," she said, raising reproachful eyes to his face, "but I could think of some way. There were some people once, you know—very smart people too—who used to make pictures to stand for words, and I thought perhaps there were some little bits of pictures on

this writing-machine that meant long words, and took up less room than they would."

"That's an idea," said Ben. "Where's M, I wonder? Line, do you see M? Oh! here it is, not an inch away from my finger," and he ticked down an M in the sentence he was writing. "What people were so cute as that, Daisilinda, and what pictures did they use?"

"Ever so many pictures, and the real things; sent them, you know, to talk for them. Oh! it was a long time ago — three or four hundred years before Jesus came down here to live. There was a king named Alex, who was taxed to pay a thousand gold eggs to another king. Do you know the story, Ben?"

"Not a bit," said Ben gravely, printing away on his type-writer the while. "Tell it, Daisilinda."

"Why, Alex said he wouldn't, and the other king—his name was Darius—sent a bat and a ball, and a bag of little seeds to Alex. Now what do you suppose they meant?"

"Haven't the least idea," Ben said, glancing up with a perplexed face, "Do you know, Line?"

"No," said Line. "Is this a made-up story, Daisy, or a 'truly' one?"

"Oh! it is true enough," Ben said quickly, a little shade passing over his face; "she is talking about Darius of the Persian army—I know so much. What about the bat and ball and bag of seeds, Daisy?"

"He had to study out what they meant," said Daisy, "and he did. The bat and ball were to make fun of Alex for being so young, and the bag of little bits of seeds was to make him think what a very great army Darius had, and how foolish it was in him to try to resist it. Alex was smart, too; he understood it, and sent back an answer in the same way."

"How?" asked both listeners at once, and Daisy, much gratified, proceeded to tell.

"He struck the ball hard with his bat, to show that that was the way he meant to strike the part of the ball on which Darius lived, and he gave the seeds to a fowl, who ate them up; this showed how he meant to destroy Darius's army. Then he sent him back a wild melon which is very bitter, and by this Darius was to understand what bitter trouble was coming to him. Miss Webster told me the story, and

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there are ever so many more. I suppose it was remembering about the fowl which made me think that Line said fowl instead of vowel. Now show me the vowels, please, and tell me what they are for."

"The vowels," Ben said, speaking almost respectfully, "are those five letters so close together -a, e, i, o, u. See how easy it is to make them without moving my hand but a little bit. Those are the important letters, because one of them, at least, is in every word we speak."

"Why-e-e!" said Daisy, in great surprise.
"I didn't think that; are you sure, Ben?"

"Pretty sure; try it. Think of a word which hasn't one of them in it."

"Dolly," said Daisy promptly. "O, no! that has o in it. Well, there's heaven; why, that has two of them! I'll take a little bit of a word—'Cat.' No, that won't do, nor 'it,' nor—why, Ben, I can't think of one. How funny! Why do you call them vowels?"

"I don't know," said Ben humbly; "they belong to the long list of 'I don't knows.' It is longer than any other list in the world, Daisilinda, and I want to try to make it shorter.

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I'm at it every day, and queerly enough every day it seems to grow longer."

"O, no!" said Daisy earnestly, "it can't grow longer, because all the things there are to know God thought of ever so long ago, and there aren't any new ones, only he lets us keep finding them out. I think it is nice, and the list really does grow shorter every time we learn something. I thought about that, and Miss Webster said it was so. I mean to ask her how those five little letters came to be in all words, and why they are named vowels. Don't you like to know reasons for things, Ben?"

Ben was writing hard and fast by this time, and only nodded his reply; from this time on the interest centered entirely on the wonderful new machine and the marvels it could do. Line, in her excitement, lighted another lamp, thereby startling her mother very much when she came from the house around the corner—where she had been sitting with the baby—by the flood of light in the little home. Something must have happened. Sure enough, she found that something had, and was quite as eager and pleased as even Ben could desire.

But when Daisy was gone to bed, and the mother had gone to see that she was tucked away comfortably, Ben said to Line, still writing while he talked,—

"Line, there are three of us as sure as the world. To think of that mouse getting interested in ancient history, and knowing about Darius and the Persians; knowing more about them actually than you and I! It will never do in the world; we must go to studying, and we must educate her. She 'thought out' that about there being nothing new because God had thought of it before; did you notice that? Daisy is made of uncommon stuff, I tell you, and she's got to have an education, and this blessed little machine has got to help me earn one for her."

"I don't see how," Line said, stopping in her sewing, which she had finally made herself sit down to, to look over the worker's shoulder. "You can't get any work to do on it, can you — work that will pay in money, I mean — even after you learn?"

"I don't know. I'm going to learn, I know that, and then try for it. Mr. Reynolds thought I could if I had a big machine, and I don't know why I couldn't do it on here as well."

"Well, I don't actually write with but one hand at a time on the other. I don't know what I can do till I try; all I know is that I mean to try. Judge Dunmore must have thought it was a fine thing, or he wouldn't have bought it, and he is the one who must have done it. Besides, I know it is a fine thing; I feel it all through me. Line, I know where every letter is already, and see how quick I can write t-h-e-r-e. If a fellow can learn to write one word quickly, it stands to reason that he can all the others, if he practices long enough."

"I wonder why they called it 'The Century'?" Line said thoughtfully.

"Did they? How do you know? Is that the name on that card? Good! I like that; it is the discovery of the century, maybe. It is the finest one which has come to me, anyhow. Line, I feel in my bones that I'm going to accomplish something with this. You wait and see."

CHAPTER XIX.

"TENTHS."

ONE morning there came to Daisy Bryant a troubled thought. Truth to tell, it had come to her mother and sister before this, but they had said nothing to Daisy.

This was the way it came to her. You will remember that her store occupied the large window which fronted the street. Ben had put up a shelf there, and the rows of dollies were most tastefully arranged, with a view to showing off their wardrobes to the best advantage.

Each morning they had to be rearranged, dusted, and the netting veil which protected them from soil carefully draped over them. On the morning in question Daisy was engaged in this lovely work when she became aware that a pair of very earnest eyes were watching most closely. These belonged to as queer a little

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creature as she had ever seen. A wee "chunk" of a girl, bareheaded, with a white handkerchief knotted about her neck in some odd fashion. On her arm she held a bundle tied up in white, and with the other hand she grasped an enormous umbrella. On her head was a something which Daisy could not fit to a name; it certainly was not a bonnet, nor yet a cap, but it seemed to take the place of these things in the mind of the little woman who Apparently she had been left on guard, for a very large basket of the sort used for packing peaches stood near her, while boxes and bundles of various shapes and sizes were stacked around it.

As for the small woman herself, she seemed to have lost all knowledge, or at least thought of these, and was absorbed in staring at Daisy, or rather at the dollies, with the most wistful and at the same time sorrowful look on her face that Daisy had ever seen.

She paused in her work, irresolute as to what she ought to do, and finally smiled on the gazer. Her mother did not like to have her speak to the strange children who so often stopped at the window, but it could certainly

do no harm to smile at them, especially at this one, who was evidently very strange indeed to the town and the town's ways. She was rewarded for her smile. It was instantly returned—so broad a smile that it widened out the odd little face in a way that almost startled Daisy. The next thing she did was to bow, a very timid little bow, which was answered by a series of delighted nods. Then Daisy went for her mother.

Mrs. Bryant opened the door and stepped out. "Good-morning, little girl," she said pleasantly; "are you waiting for somebody?"

The smile faded, and a startled, frightened look took its place; but seeming to be reassured by the kind face of the lady she poured out a torrent of bewildering words.

"What does she say?" asked Daisy, in astonishment.

"I do not know, my dear; she is a little German girl. I think she must just have come into town—on the early train, perhaps. She has evidently been left to take care of the things while somebody went back. I cannot understand a word she says, Daisy."

"Mother," said Daisy earnestly, "what a

pity! Nothing kind can be said to her, and she looks lonesome and half afraid. She can smile, though; I smiled at her, and she answered that right away."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bryant, smiling in her turn, "I have often thought what a blessed thing it was that people could smile in English. Well, dear, come in, we cannot help her any, and perhaps she does not like to be gazed at."

"Mother," said Daisy, following her mother's steps somewhat reluctantly, "it doesn't seem quite nice to come in and leave her standing outside there. It isn't quite — quite hospitable, is it?"

"Why," said Mrs. Bryant, laughing outright, "I do not know that we are called upon to be hospitable to strangers passing by."

"O, yes! we are, mother; don't you remember 'the stranger within thy gates'? It speaks of them particularly. Mother, I am almost sure she wants a dollie; her eyes said it almost plainer than her mouth could. I don't think she has any dollie at all, because if they are traveling, and she has just come from the train, she would have it along, you know, if she had one. O, mother! you said she was a German;

could not I give her my 'Greta from over the seas'? Would not she be a lovely 'tenth' for this 'stranger within thy gates'?"

As usual, Mrs. Bryant was greatly in doubt whether to laugh or cry over the sweet, quaint ideas of this quaint little daughter.

"Would you be willing to give Greta away?" she asked, at last, "and to a stranger?"

"Why, mother, she would be a 'tenth,' you know, and this stranger would love her, I am sure. Greta would have to go where they would love her. That is the reason I have not been willing to sell her; because she is not pretty, you know, like the others, and some children would poke fun at her. I shouldn't like that. May I give her to the little German, mother? See, she is standing there yet, and her eyes—why, they talk just as plainly. Don't you see them?"

Mrs. Bryant certainly saw them. Most hungry-looking eyes they were; they seemed fairly to devour the dollies in the window. Was it fancy or actual fact that they lingered most lovingly on that square-shouldered, stolid-looking "Greta from over the seas"? the Dutch dollie to whom Daisy had clung almost obsti-

nately, although the Harding children had wanted to get her for a maid for their Florinda and Gabrielle, and even Dee had hinted once that perhaps she might like to buy her. Why did Daisy want to give her to this round-faced, wondering-eyed, strange-looking little foreigner?

"Why do you wish to give Greta to her, dear?" she asked gently. "Why not one of the others?"

"Mother," said Daisy, with a penetrating look, "she would love Greta the most of any of them, I feel in my heart that she would; and I have not found anybody before, not even Dee, whom I thought would love Greta enough."

Mrs. Bryant resisted the inclination to laugh again, and gave instant consent. If the doll was a "tenth" why should not the one who offered bestow it where she would? "Perhaps," said this mother to her heart, as she watched the tender way in which Greta was removed from her corner of the shelf, "perhaps the child is taught of One who is wiser than we, and who does actually accept the gift as coming in His name."

Greta was caressed and kissed very tenderly; some whispered words followed for only her large cloth ear, and then, wrapped in the newest cloak among the pile of fresh ones which had come from Line's skillful touches only yesterday, Daisy hastened out. Mrs. Bryant watched from the window. What a delicious pantomime it was! Daisy's sweet, shy ways, her gentle, explanatory words, accompanied by the better-understood gestures, the child's bewildered gaze, her blue eyes seeming to speak for her, to ask, "What in the world do you mean? Do you mean to let me hold the dollie a minute?"

So much she comprehended. The umbrella was dropped without ceremony; it lay prone on the ground, while Greta was clasped in eager arms, and received the most rapturous hugs and the most passionate kisses that Mrs. Bryant had ever beheld. "Poor little hungry heart!" she said, and brushed the mist from before her eyes. There seemed to be no fear as to Greta's being loved enough. There came, presently, with rapid strides, and arms laden down with bundles, two Germans, a stalwart man and These halted before the two children woman. and surveyed them both with astonishment. The rapture faded from the little German's eyes, and with slow, reluctant hands she made ready to give Greta back to her owner, the woman talking volubly to her the while, in words which Daisy could not understand.

"O, no!" said Daisy earnestly, "do not give her back; she is for you. She is come to be your little girl; you must take her home and love her."

The woman turned to her with a torrent of words, causing Daisy to stare and look half frightened. Then Mrs. Bryant opened the door. With words which she seemed to think could be understood, they were spoken so slowly and chosen so carefully, she repeated Daisy's wish.

Only bewilderment on the part of the mother. At last the father stepped forward.

"Was gibt?" he said, "keep? Wird's ihre gewiss gegeben?"

It was all very comical. The bowing and gesticulating, the rapid sentences hurled at her in German, the few broken English words which the man occasionally ventured. But at last they understood, and bowed and smiled, and made hands and tongues go. The man took off his hat, and the woman waved two

umbrellas, and all of them laughed, and the child hugged and kissed Greta with resounding eloquence, and at last they all tramped away.

Line, who had come to the window to enjoy the scene, was almost overpowered with laughter, but Daisy was sweetly grave. She had given her tenth, and it had been joyfully received and she was glad, but at the same time Greta was gone, and she had been so much afraid that nobody would love the little Dutch dollie that it had ended by her bestowing much love and tenderness upon her, and it was not in Daisy's heart not to miss her

Beside—and that "beside" covered the most of Daisy's gravity—another thought had come to her of such moment that it was no wonder she looked, after a little, not only grave, but perplexed.

"What is it, dear?" her mother asked gently. She understood her young daughter's changing face, and had come to respect a great many of her thoughts.

"Mother, I have given away my last 'tenth.'
What am I to do now?"

Mother and elder daughter exchanged glances. It was the "tenth" of which Daisy thought, but they had thought and said to each other several times during the last few days that the stock of dollies was lessening very rapidly, and when they were gone, what was this little woman of business to do? She was evidently becoming deeply interested in her work, and it was really surprising how full her little bank was getting of silver pieces. The doll business was certainly one not to be despised; at least where all the dolls were gifts, costing nothing, but how was the stock to be replenished? Various plans between the mother and Line had been discussed and abandoned. Even Ben had taken part in the discussion with interest. But the farthest that any of them had reached was to wonder what Daisy would say or do when she realized the situation, and whether they would better talk with her about it, or leave the knowledge to dawn upon her through the force of circumstances. Not one of them had thought of the "tenths," but this was Daisy's first anxiety. She moved toward the window and surveyed her family with that thoughtful, perplexed air. "No," she said gravely, "Greta was my last tenth. Or that is, I had not thought of making her a tenth; I thought it would be Florimel, but I could feel that this little girl would not approve of her, and would like Greta very much indeed, so she had to go."

Now Florimel was the most elegant, both in dress and general appearance, of all the dollies left, and would without doubt have brought the largest price. Certainly Daisy was not offering the "lame or the sick" for sacrifice.

"What am I to do?" she repeated. "I cannot go on with this business without some help."

"We must think over it," said Mrs. Bryant gently, "and talk it over with our friends. Perhaps"— and there she paused.

"Perhaps what, mother?"

"Never mind, dear; we will think over it as I said, and see what can be done to add to the stock, if that is considered best."

In the light of Daisy's grave anxiety, not as to the general stock in trade so much as the sacred "tenths," much of the talk which she and Line had held about it seemed almost sordid to the mother's eyes. "Perhaps," she thought again for the dozenth time, "this little flower of mine is really taught of God, and he

will help her to think what to do." At any rate, she did not feel ready to touch the subject.

Daisy, however, could not get away from it. Her anxiety once roused would not slumber again until she had resolved what to do. She said no more, but the thoughtful look on her small face deepened rather than lessened as the hours passed; and when early in the afternoon she asked and received permission to call on Miss Webster—Line engaging to look carefully after the "business" while she was gone—her mother looked after her with a relieved smile and said to Line:

"She has reached a second stage in her problem, and is willing to consult with Miss Webster. I am glad she has found so wise a friend to unburden her heart to."

"Mother," said Line, "did you ever see so queer a child as Daisy? She is so grown up sometimes, and so entirely a baby at other times. A little while ago when she was wiping the spoons and forks she drew two or three heavy sighs which went to my heart, and I asked her what was troubling her, and why she did not talk with you about it. Mother was very busy this morning, I said, and could

not talk; but now she will be sitting down sewing, and you can plan out some way of adding to the dollies."

"'I do not want to talk with mother yet,' she said, and I cannot tell you how sweet and yet grave her voice was. 'She has such burdens now, Line, that I do not want to make my dollies into another; if they cannot be a help they ought to be all given away. When I get something thought out, mother will help me do it, but I do not want to take the trouble part to her.' Now that is not in the least like a child, is it? Sometimes it troubles me."

"I do not know," said Mrs. Bryant, smiling, though there were tears in her eyes. "Daisy's sweet, unselfish thoughtfulness for mother and for everybody, even the little Dutch 'stranger within the gates,' may be like a child who lives very close to Jesus, may it not? I think that is what our Daisy does."

And Line was silent.

At Miss Webster's Daisy found Dee. She had herself introduced the two, and was not in the least jealous, but very happy over the fact that they were evidently destined to be very intimate friends.

"A little while," said Daisy, "if Miss Webster is ready for me. I came to consult her, too."

These two little girls, though wonderfully unlike in many respects, were kindred spirits in this, that both were extremely fond of choice words, especially if they were rather longer than was common to children of their age. With Dee this was a sense of largeness, a vague impression that such language added to her years and dignity. With Daisy it was an outgrowth of her intense longing for an education. She carefully treasured every new, and as she said, "interesting" word she heard, printed it in her note-book, consulted the small, worn dictionary as to its meaning, and felt after each acquisition that she had added to her treasures.

So now, though Miss Webster smiled over the language, neither of the children realized that it was unusual, and the important subject which was lying heavy on Daisy's heart was forthwith introduced, Dee assuring her that she might speak first, because hers was longer, and to tell the truth was, a piece of it, a secret even from Daisy.

"Mine is not a secret," said Daisy gravely, "because everybody who can count will soon know about it. I think I will have to close up business, Miss Webster, and it is that I came to talk about."

"Is it possible!" said that lady, in great surprise. "O, I hope not! I was looking forward to the days when the mud would be all gone, and I could ride out in my wheeled chair and select a dollie for my niece from your store."

"I am afraid you cannot," said Daisy, with a mournful shake of her head, "I am afraid they will all be gone before the mud is. I did not once imagine that so many dollies could go away so soon. But I have not a single tenth left, and that will tell you how few there are. Beside, I cannot do business without any tenths."

"Certainly not," said Miss Webster, with instant sympathy, and Daisy breathed a sigh of relief; it was so pleasant to be understood.

CHAPTER XX.

GETTING READY FOR THE FAIR.

HY don't you take the money you have made from the sale of dollies and buy more?" broke in Dee, after the matter had been I iid before them and discussed for a few minutes. "That is the way they do, isn't it, Miss Webster? People who go into business always use the money they make to buy more things, don't they? I know they do; that is business. Papa explained it to me."

Slowly and gravely Daisy shook her head. "I cannot do that," she said; "it is appropriated."

Even Dee opened her eyes wide over this long word and looked perplexed, while Miss Webster made a little cough to hide a smile, and questioned:

"Can you explain to us, Daisy dear, just what your plan has been? Dee is quite right

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Miss Webster had purposely used a number of very business-like words, in expectation of questions concerning them; but Daisy's trouble seemed not to lie in that direction; she evidently understood exactly what Miss Webster meant, yet looked distressed.

"But, dear Miss Webster," she said, "I cannot do that. I went into business for a certain purpose. I could never have consented to sell my dollies at all except for a very important reason; I needed the money—in fact it had to be earned—and this was the only way I could think of to help; but if I have to spend almost all of it in buying more dollies, that will not be helping?"

"Why, yes, it will," said Dee promptly.

"That is the way they have to do, isn't it,
Miss Webster? She doesn't understand business, does she? My father is a lawyer, you

know, and I suppose that makes the difference. Daisy, let me tell you about it just as papa told Suppose you had a dollar and bought ten dollies with it — that was the way papa said they would have to be very cheap, common little dollies, you know, but they do have tencent dollies; well, and you dressed them up and made them look pretty, so that they were worth twenty cents apiece, and you sold them all. Then you would have two dollars. suppose you put twenty cents of that money away for 'tenths' - I always give 'tenths' myself, only I give it in money; that is easier than to do it with dollies, I think, don't you? and then suppose you laid away twenty cents more for a fund to use whenever you had to buy things for yourself, you know, and with all that was left you bought more dollies. You would have, let me see — papa said sixteen dollies, I think — yes, I am sure he did — and you would sell them, and make more money and divide it, and buy some more, and keep on doing that, and by and by you would have a Don't you see? The name of large fund. that is 'capital.' I don't know why, I am sure, but that is what they call it, and it grows."

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"Then you will have to fail," said Dee solemnly, but not without an undertone of satisfaction. There was something very business-like and interesting in the idea of a failure in business. "I know how they do that, too, Daisy. When they can't go on with their business and pay their bills, you know, why, they just have to fail."

"Not always," said Miss Webster, who felt it was quite time to come to the relief of her sorrowful-eyed Daisy, whose lip was beginning to quiver; "sometimes there are friends who assume the liabilities, Dee. Did you ever hear that word used? Daisy, my dear, can you tell us how much money is needed to be secured before you can make any further investment?"

Daisy turned grave eyes upon her and spoke slowly. "I think I have been very silly, Miss Webster. I did not think it all out beforehand. I do not understand business very well, any way—not nearly so well as Dee does—and I wanted to help about the mortgage; that was

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why I went into business. I thought I could make a good deal towards it—enough so that perhaps mother could pay what they call the interest right away, so it wouldn't worry her any more, but it seems it takes a very great deal of money. And then it begins growing again, the interest does, or coming again; I don't understand it, but that was what Ben said, and there doesn't seem to be any way out of it."

Poor little woman of business! There were tears glistening in her eyes by this time, and her voice broke almost before she reached that last word.

"Mortgage!" echoed Dee respectfully. She had heard of those creatures only in the dim distance; she had immense respect for them, as creatures of great power, capable of causing an immense amount of trouble. She knew that men who were closeted with her father in his private office by the hour, sometimes used the word in the gloomiest of tones; if Daisy had to do with mortgages, she was getting beyond her depth. Privately, she resolved to consult her father at the first opportunity.

"I understand," said Miss Webster cheerily,

"and you want to save the thirty dollars you have made towards paying the interest; that is a very thoughtful little woman of business, certainly. But then, there is really no opportunity for failing, because, you see, you are not in debt."

"O, yes, ma'am!" said Daisy earnestly, "mother is; that is the word that makes the mortgage."

"Yes, I know; but I mean you as a business woman are not in debt. That is, it is not the doll business which has made the trouble. What we need is a little more capital, without investing that already made. How would it do to have a fair?"

"A fair!" echoed both girls at once.

"Yes; a dolls' fair. A few years ago there was one in Boston. It was held in a large room, and hundreds upon hundreds of dollies came to be exhibited; there were six prizes given for the most tastefully dressed dollies, and the neatest sewing. I have a photograph of the room taken after all the dollies were arranged. Hand me that large book, Dee, at your right, and I will show you the photograph."

For the next fifteen minutes both girls were

absorbed in a study of the picture, with its endless display of dollies of every size and style. Then they began to ask questions.

- "What did they have a dolls' fair for?"
- "Who sent all the dollies?"
- "What did they do with them afterwards?"
- "Who gave prizes?" and, "What were the prizes?"
 - "How did they make any money by it?"
 - "How could we get up a dollies' fair?"

The This last required a long answer. entire question was thoroughly discussed. fact, the short spring afternoon was drawing toward dusk before everything was settled; but it was settled at last, subject of course to the approval of Daisy's mother. There was to be a dollies' fair in that very town. to be held in Miss Webster's own rooms. Every little girl in town was to be invited to put her pet dollie on exhibition. Ten cents was to be charged for the privilege of seeing the dollies, and Daisy and Dee and Daisy's sister Caroline, and Miss Webster herself, were to spend all their leisure time during the three weeks that must elapse before they were ready for the fair, in making up articles for sale -

dolls' hats, and slippers, and fans, and parasols, and sacks, and capes, and dresses, and night-gowns. It was certainly a wonderful scheme, and Daisy became so interested in it, and so eager over it, that she almost forgot the mortgage. Not so Dee; she had not gotten both arms out of her street sack before she began at her father. "Papa, what is a mortgage?"

"A mortgage?" repeated Judge Dunmore. "Generally speaking, it is a very disagreeable and troublesome document to the parties chiefly concerned."

"I know so much, papa; but what is it, and what is it for?"

"Why," said the Judge, "we will suppose that you owe me ten dollars."

"O, dear!" said Dee, "I'm so glad that I don't."

"And you cannot pay me at present, but you promise to do so at some future time — say in a year — giving me interest meantime for the use of my money. You understand about interest?"

"Yes, sir," said Dee; "I would have to give you six cents for every dollar; that would be sixty cents, wouldn't it?"

"That would depend on the State you lived

Each State settles what shall be its legal or lawful interest. In this State six per cent. is allowed. I might be what is called a sharp man and take advantage of your wanting the money very badly, and say to you that I wouldn't lend it for less than eight or even ten per cent. interest; but I do not believe I will, for that is not an honorable thing to do, so we will say six per cent.: that is, six cents for every hundred, so at the end of a year you will owe me ten dollars and sixty cents. am I to be sure that you will have any money to pay me with in a year? I must have what is called security — something to secure me from loss, even though you could not pay the money - so you give me a paper saying that your flower garden, for instance, shall be held as security for me; that is, I have a mortgage on the garden to the amount of ten dollars and sixty cents. If at the end of a year — provided that is the length of time for which you have borrowed the money — you cannot pay me, I have a right to sell your garden for whatever I can get. If it is worth fifty dollars and I can get only ten dollars and sixty cents for it, that is your misfortune; the money is

mine, and your garden is gone. Do you understand?"

"But, papa," said Dee, with wide-open eyes, "I shouldn't think that would be honest, to take a thing which was worth fifty dollars to pay you ten dollars."

"That depends," said the Judge. "It might be worth fifty, and yet there be no person able or willing to give that sum, and I might need the money so much as to be obliged to make what people call a forced sale, instead of waiting for a better time, when some one would want to buy the garden at a reasonable price; but I confess that I should not like to own your garden at such a price, when I felt that it ought to be worth to you fifty dollars. the same time I should have what is called a legal right to do so if I could get no more for it; and very heavy losses are often brought about in this way. Dishonorable people sometimes force sales and foreclose mortgages simply for the sake of getting valuable property without paying its full value. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Dee, with a sigh. "Papa, do you know what Daisy has that is mort-

gaged? And will there perhaps be a forced sale on that?"

"Daisy! Has the mouse a mortgage to trouble her? It must be one of the dollies."

Then Dee explained the situation.

"Poor child!" said Judge Dunmore, clearing his voice, which had a husky sound, "it must be her mother's burdens which she is trying to help carry. She is young to have so heavy an end to lift. I think we must see if we cannot help lift a little, must we not, daughter?"

"O, yes, sir! we are going to. We have been at work all the afternoon planning a dolls' fair. It is to be in Miss Webster's rooms, and will be just lovely; and we are to make things for sale — Miss Webster and Daisy and Line and I — mamma will help too, I most know she will — and the things will sell, you know, and there's the price of admission. Miss Webster said Daisy and I would have all the work, so we should share the profits; but I mean to give every cent of mine toward the mortgage; wouldn't you, papa?"

"I certainly should," said Judge Dunmore, smiling, and at the same time fumbling in several pockets in search of a handkerchief.

That evening he went out alone, and made his way with a quick step to the street where Mrs. Bryant lived. It happened that she was quite alone. Daisy was asleep for the night, and Line and Ben had gone, at Miss Webster's invitation, to hear about and help plan for the wonderful fair, which was to be an assured fact at as early a date as possible. The Judge was in no wise disappointed at finding the mother alone. He had a very delicate piece of business to carry out, and the fewer listeners there were, the better he felt it would be for the success of his scheme. It was not an easy matter to get at the situation of affairs. Bryant was not one who paraded her troubles where there was no occasion, but Judge Dunmore was accustomed to cross-questioning and to careful management. By dint of much tact and patience he made all the discoveries he needed, in addition to those which Dee had given him, and before the steps of Ben and Line were heard at the door, their mother held in her hand a check sufficient to cover principal and interest of that terrible debt, and Judge Dunmore was the owner of the original mortgage, instead of the man who was bent on

securing the valuable lot for less than half its value.

Only a transfer from one man to another. Mrs. Bryant, at the close of that eventful evening, owed exactly as much money as she had when it began, yet her heart was lighter than it had been since the day when she was left a widow to struggle with her burdens.

Dee did not understand it at all; she questioned and cross-questioned her father. "And you did not give her any money at all?"

"No, indeed, daughter; it would have been rude to have offered her money. That would have been treating her like a beggar, and she is no beggar."

"I don't see why, papa; if I owed a lot of money and you should give me some to pay it with I should be glad, and kiss you and love you harder than ever. I don't see why it wouldn't have been nice in you to give Mrs. Bryant some."

Judge Dunmore laughed. "The child may take from her father," he said, "what she may not want to from a stranger. Never mind, daughter, you will understand it some day; I could not offer Mrs. Bryant money, because

she is a lady, and to have done so under the circumstances would have been rude."

"Then you didn't help her a bit, did you, papa?"

"She thinks I did."

"I don't see how; didn't you say you took that old mortgage yourself, and doesn't that mean that she owes you?"

"That is what it means, my child."

"Then, papa, won't you put it in the fire, and not let her give you a cent of money?"

"O, no!" said Judge Dunmore, laughing heartily, "that would be a very unbusiness-like way of doing. It is purely a business transaction; she owes me the interest and principal, and is to pay me, instead of the other man, that is all there is to it."

"Then I don't see how it is a bit better!" declared disappointed Dee, who had felt sure that her father would make everything comfortable for her dear Daisy.

Father and mother exchanged smiles, then her mother said, "If my little girl should ever be so unfortunate as to owe anybody, she will find that to owe a good and honorable man who will not take advantage of her trouble in "I shall never owe anybody a cert," said the little girl, with emphasis. "I don't like it. I would never want to pay a man some money every year because I owed him, and yet not have the money I gave him pay a cent of the debt; it doesn't sound right. Just think how Daisy's mother has been paying and paying, every year for ever so long, and hasn't got a bit of it paid. I never want to do that," declared Dee.

This view of business set her father in laughter again, but he sobered his face to tell her that he hoped she need never owe anybody anything but the debt which the Bible told about, and to assure her that Mrs. Bryant should never be pressed for the payment of the money which she now owed him.

"Her fine young son will pay the debt some day," he said. "I haven't a doubt of it, if he lives; and it is to protect his boyhood, and to help him to be a manly man, that I have taken the mortgage."

One thing had happened during that visit of her father's to the Bryant cottage which Dee did not yet know about, but which had been the source of almost as much joy as the transfer of the mortgage. It was after Line and Ben had returned, and the conversation had become general, that the Judge turned to Ben with his question.

"Well, sir, how does the little machine behave? Are you able to make anything of it?"

"O, yes, sir!" said Ben, with shining eyes; "it behaves beautifully; does everything I tell it to, as fast as it can." And he sprang up and brought his treasure from its corner on one of the "study" shelves, carefully removed the bright-colored bag in which it was hidden from the dust, and setting it on the table began to write.

"Really," said Judge Dunmore, regarding it with keen interest, "you certainly do make it talk fast. I do not see how you can have acquired such skill in so short a time. Then it is really of practical value? I was skeptical as to its being worth much for anybody but our little friend Daisy. I could see how a little one like her might learn to write, and to spell, and to express ideas correctly and fluently by

it, but I confess I thought that a boy of your age and acquirements would soon discover that he could do more rapid work with a pen."

"No, sir," said Ben decidedly; "I can work pretty fast with a pen, I believe—Mr. Reynolds thinks so—but I can work a good deal faster with this already, and I haven't used it so long as I have a pen."

Judge Dunmore drew from his pocket a blank sheet of paper folded and placed in a blank envelope.

"I have made so much preparation toward writing an important business letter," he said. "I thought I should drop into the post-office on my way back and write it ready for the early mail. What is to hinder this little instrument from doing it for me? If I dictate will you write?"

There was a flush on Ben's face which mounted to his forehead, but his answer was prompt and courteous, and without more delay Judge Dunmore dictated a brief note, giving directions to one of his clerks concerning certain packages which were to be looked after.

No word was spoken by the little group who watched Ben's flying fingers and flushed face.

He could spell—that was a comfort, certainly; but perhaps he did not know whether "Dear Sir" should be in the middle of the line, or at the end, or where. He had seen so few business letters, or letters of any sort, poor boy!

CHAPTER XXI.

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A "CHANCE."

JUDGE DUNMORE surveyed the neatly-written sheet that was presently handed to him with a very critical eye.

"That is correct in every particular," he said at last, with a satisfied air, "unless there should be a comma after that word 'shelf.' What do you think?"

"I think not, sir," said Ben respectfully, but with decision in his tone, "because the sense is complete without it, and you know they do not use commas so freely now as they once did."

"Is it so?" said Judge Dunmore, smiling.
"Perhaps you are right; in any case, it is a relief to see a boy of your age who has given thought to the subject and has ideas of his own in regard to it. Most young people, and older ones too, for that matter, seem to me to tumble in the commas and semicolons wherever

it happens, without regard to sense. Well, what about the envelope? Will that magician address it?"

"He can," said Ben, his eyes gleaming with pleasure and a touch of pride. The envelope was slipped into place, and the gentle "tack, tack, tack" of the letters began. A moment, and it was slipped out in triumph and held before the pleased eyes of the Judge.

"Upon my word!" he said heartily, "as plain as print—in fact it is print. What a relief that will be to the postmaster, who is probably never sure whether I mean a Y or an S or a T. I regret to say I have fallen into a most slovenly habit of writing, until I can hardly, at times, decipher my own notes. I am not sure that I should use the term 'fallen into.' I don't think I ever learned how to write properly; it has been a great regret to me. Ben, my boy, what are you doing nowadays?"

The flush, which had died out a little on Ben's face, deepened again. "I am addressing envelopes and putting up church circulars for Mr. Holden, just now," he said. "I work at it a little while every afternoon. Mr. Holden thought it would be better to keep it for after-

noon work, and leave my mornings free for other chances, but I haven't found any chances yet," and Ben tried to keep back a sigh over the last words.

"What kind of work have you been looking for, my boy?"

"Anything in the world," said Ben earnestly, "which was respectable and would help along."

"Rather indefinite," Judge Dunmore said, with a quiet smile; "I have no doubt you intended to be very clear in your answer, but the fact is, the word 'respectable' is a hard one to understand. What does Webster say about it, I wonder?"

"I wish I knew," said Ben, with a half-laugh.
"I will put it on my list and let you know to-morrow, if that will do?"

"Your list? I am curious. Has your Webster a special fit of dignity in obliging you to make out a list each time you want to consult him? Pray how many words does he demand at a sitting?"

Line's face was red, but this was not the sort of poverty which made her brother blush. He answered frankly, laughing as he spoke, "No, sir, it is not an arrangement of Webster's. At least I think he would be more accommodating if he had a chance. We have none of our own, so my sister and I make out a list of any words that we want to know about, and the next chance we have, either at Mr. Holden's or Miss Webster's, we look them up."

"Ah! I understand; that is a very sensible idea. Webster is a cumbrous luxury in these days, especially the pictorial unabridged. As to the word 'respectable,' I think we can get at the meaning sufficiently perhaps for our purpose, though accuracy in definition is a very important thing; what should you say, at a venture, the word meant?"

"Why, I shouldn't think there could be any other meaning to it than just that which is wound up in the very sound of the word," said Ben; "a thing is respectable if it is proper,—and, well, the thing that ought to be done."

Judge Dunmore looked at Line. "Do you

Judge Dunmore looked at Line. "Do you agree?" he asked.

"I should think one would have to know exactly what 'respect' meant before the word 'respectable' could be understood," she said; and on the Judge's face there was a quick flash of appreciation as he answered:

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"True; Benjamin, my boy, you and I stand corrected. 'Respect'—let us see. Do either

or both of you study Latin?"

"No, sir," said both, in the same breath, lowtoned and regretful.

"When you do, you will both enjoy the study."

There was something very invigorating in the way he spoke those words. It was as if he considered the matter in the light of one not to be questioned, whereas these two had said each to himself and herself but a few days be e, " If I can get a respectable common-school it is all I must hope for." Now instinctively each said inwardly, "I mean to study Latin."

"Respect," said Judge Dunmore, "is made up, like so many words which we claim, from two Latin words, and literally means to 'look back,' or 'look again'; does that give you a hint as to the original meaning? Something to command attention, to attract notice. that the idea to be conveyed in your use of the word respectable, Ben?"

"No, sir, not at all," said Ben, laughing. "If I had something to do which would be right, and which would help support my family, I shouldn't care whether people ever looked at it or not, or at me."

"Then you see how difficult it is to understand words. I know a boy who refused to saw wood for a man to pay a debt he had carelessly made, because his father was a lawyer, and it wasn't respectable work for a lawyer's son."

Both Ben and Line laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the Judge, looking from one to the other curiously. "Am I to understand that you believe he ought to have sawed the wood?"

"I should think that would depend on whether he had something else to do that was more important, and that it was his duty to do instead," said Ben promptly.

"And something by which he could earn money to pay his debt," chimed in Line.

"Of course," said Ben.

The Judge smiled on them both, and drew out his watch.

"It is later than I thought," he said, rising.
"We have spent so much time on the meaning of that word 'respectable' that we haven't reached the point at which I aimed when I started. Are you an early riser, Benjamin?"

"It will answer my purpose, at least," said Judge Dunmore. "It happens that Mrs. Dunmore and I are the only early risers in our house, at present. Our married daughter likes to breakfast later, and as she is visiting us the young people think it is very pleasant to wait and reakfast with her, so Mrs. Dunmore and I, who do not like to wait, sit down alone often, at half-past seven; and the question is, whether you could come to-morrow morning and take breakfast with us at that hour, and give us a chance to talk over some work that we should both consider respectable?"

You should have seen Ben's face then! If it had been red before, crimson is the word which ought to describe it next. He looked at his mother, and at Line, and at the floor, and tried to stammer out something which he knew was unintelligible, and stopped in the middle of it in utter confusion.

Judge Dunmore laughed pleasantly. "You do not want to come in the least, do you?

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You think it would be dreadfully embarrassing to go out to breakfast with two elderly people who are almost strangers to you, and you do not believe you can eat five mouthfuls; in fact you would rather go without your breakfast altogether than to have it under such circumstances, at the same time you are afraid that it will be rude to decline, and you do not want to Haven't I stated the case fairly and honestly?"

"That is about it, sir," said Ben, looking up at last, his face fairly blazing; at the same time he could not help laughing a little. It seemed so absurd to be admitting to Judge Dunmore that he thought it a dreadful thing to go to his house to breakfast.

"Good!" said the Judge heartily; "I like frankness, and I do not think it at all surprising that a boy of your age would rather take breakfast with his own family than with some other person's family; nevertheless, I am going to press my invitation, because I see in it an opportunity to learn some things which I wish to know. Will you come to breakfast, Benjamin?"

"Yes, sir," said Ben, "if mother says so."

There was plenty to talk about now, as soon as the door closed after the Judge. Line began it.

"Well, Ben Bryant," in a half-admiring, half-quizzing tone, "I should think you were getting on fast. Invited out to take breakfast with Judge Dunmore! They say the dining-room is just lovely. The chambermaid at Mrs. Kedwin's has a sister working there, and she tells wonderful things about the dishes. It seems they have unpacked some of their own which they brought with them from their winter house, and she says they are ever so much more elegant than the Sutherlands' dishes."

"I guess the Sutherlands' dishes would be quite elegant enough for me," Ben said gloomily. And then, "Mother, whatever do you suppose is the reason he wants me to come?"

"To learn some things which he wished to know, he said," Mrs. Bryant replied placidly, sewing away steadily as she spoke.

"I'd like to know what they are," said Ben, and his face was very gloomy indeed.

"You'll learn some things, too," said Line.
"I wish I had your chance."

"I wish you had!" with a good deal of

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energy in the words. "What chance is there about it, I'd like to know, for a boy?"

"Plenty of chance. You will see things the way people have them who belong in - well, in society, you know, people who are somebodies; the way they live, and the way they eat, and all about it."

"And what good will that do me?"

"How do I know? What a queer evening this is! Here I thought I was talking to my brother Benjamin, and behold, he has changed into Rufus Kedwin in the last five minutes, with his everlasting 'What good will that do?' over all the 'chances' that come to him. thought you preached to him that every single thing we can learn may be of use somehow, and that we ought to learn everything we could."

Ben let his face break into a grim smile. "This is different," he said.

"I know it, very different and unexpected, and who knows what the next thing may be? A different one still, perhaps, into which a piece of this will fit. How do you know how soon you may have a chance to belong to such people yourself?"

"What people?"

"Why, the kind we are talking about. ple who live in handsome houses and have nice things every day in the week, and keep on their company manners all the time."

"Ho!" said Ben, "I call that a jump. How would I go to work to belong to such people? Mother, did you ever suppose our Line was proud?"

"I mean it," said Line coolly, while his mother only smiled. "I say you don' know how soon you will be placed where you would give a good deal to know just how to act, and here is a chance to learn some of the things. I suppose they have great fine napkins at each plate, and they spread them over their laps to keep their clothes nice. They do that at Mrs. Kedwin's, you know, and I suppose they have larger and nicer ones at grand houses; don't they, mother?"

"I should think well-brought-up people could keep their clothes clean at the table without having bibs on," Ben said, in some disdain.

"Well, they can't always; things drop, you A drop of milk, or even of water, would spoil some dresses, and sometimes the person who sits next to a lady is awkward and spills the gravy, then what would become of her dress without a napkin?"

Ben laughed, and his cheeks reddened. "Yours wasn't spoiled," he said.

"No, it wasn't, because it is calico and will wash; but I should like a napkin for every meal."

"I wouldn't; I need something more substantial. Mother, would it be expensive to feed Line on napkins three times a day?"

It was Line's turn to laugh and blush.

"At every meal, then," she said, "if you like that better. And they have little butter plates for each person, and the butter is in little round balls, all carved. I don't know how they manage it, but I saw them once. I waited for Miss Sutherland in the dining-room while they were setting the table, and I saw ever so many pretty things that I have wanted to know the name of and the use for ever since. You must keep your eyes and ears open, and have a good deal to teach me after to-morrow."

"It ought to be your chance instead of mine," Ben said, waxing into gloom again; "you have your ears and eyes open already to all such chances, and mine are stupid in that direction; I shall make some horrible blunder and disgrace you all. I don't know how to wear a bib, or to get anything off from a round roll of butter; I won't eat any butter, see if I do. O, mother, mother! I wish I didn't have to go," and the brown head went down suddenly plump into his mother's lap.

"Well, you do," said Mrs. Bryant coolly, "and I have no doubt you will have worse things in life to do many a time; you may as well get used to them as they come. If I were you I would learn to be brave and manly over little things, as well as great big ones."

These were the words, hard-sounding, perhaps, to a badly-frightened boy going out to his first state breakfast alone, but while she spoke the mother's hand was making soft passes through the tumbled brown hair, and the pats she bestowed from time to time were tender and sympathetic. On the whole, Ben was comforted, but he could not have told why. Nevertheless, he went the next morning with more fear and trembling than had ever fallen upon him before, to meet his appointment.

"Poor Ben," Line said, looking after him,

half-laughing, half-sympathetic, "he looks as though he were going out to be hanged, instead of going to take breakfast with Judge Dun-Mother, aren't boys queer? I should like to go. I can't tell you how much I should like it. If I had a dress that just suited me to wear, and was sure I looked just right, I should like nothing better than to be going out to a grand house, where everything was beautiful. I should like to have an elegant carriage come for me, and a footman to wait on me. I believe I could step into a handsome carriage real gracefully. I've watched Miss Sutherland step into theirs so often that I know just how to do it. Do you suppose I will ever have a chance to prove it, mother?"

Mrs. Bryant looked at her handsome daughter, whose eyes were bright with excitement, and whose cheeks were flushed a lovely red, and said to herself with a sigh, "She could grace a pretty home and a becoming dress." Then, in the next breath, "But what a temptation they might be to her. It is best as it is." Aloud she said, "I don't know, I am sure, dear; I know I think that at present it is better that it is Ben who is to go instead of you."

"Of course it is," said Line coolly, "because, you see, I couldn't have gone. It is all very well for Ben to go in a threadbare jacket—boys can do such things and it doesn't hurt them—but for me to go to Judge Dunmore's to breakfast in a faded calico, too short for me at that, is not to be thought of, and it is to be hoped he has sense enough to know it." And then Mrs. Bryant was sure that it was better for it to be Ben, because it was quite plain that her daughter Caroline had not grace enough to meet such a duty as yet.

As for Ben, if he should live to be a hundred years old I am sure he will never forget the queer feeling he had, nor the loud thumps which his heart gave as he waited in the great hall, the next morning, for his host to appear.

The smiling black man who seated him did it with such a friendly air that Ben could not help wishing it had been he with whom he was to take breakfast.

"The Judge says will you be seated, sah, for a very few minutes, and he will be at your service. Breakfast will be served as soon as the Judge and his lady are ready," all the while showing beautiful white teeth, which to Ben's https://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t51q19x5x GMT 21:04 2022-11-28 Generated

confused vision seemed somehow a continuation of the mass of white shirt front which gleamed below them, all the while bowing profusely and waving his hand toward one of the large, highbacked easy chairs with which the wide, oldfashioned, elegant hall was lined. The wide doors leading into the dining-room were thrown open, and Ben could have a broad view of the breakfast table, and of the sideboard agleam with silver and cut glass. How beautiful, how perfectly beautiful it all was! How Line would glory in it all, and how he hated it. Not that he hated pretty things; on the contrary, he felt an exultant thrill whenever he thought of the beautiful things there were in this world that money could buy. In his heart he meant to have some of them — a great many of them, in fact — and to know their uses and to be entirely at home with them, but never for his own sake; always there was a lovely background of "mother" and "Line" and "Daisy" to fill up his picture; for them he meant to work and win all beautiful and costly things. Until then he would have been quite content to wait for a state breakfast. He grew red in the face as he thought of all the embarrassWhile he was puzzling out an answer to this question a door behind him somewhere swung noiselessly open, and Judge Dunmore entered.

CHAPTER XXII.

"JUST COMMON SENSE."

THEN Benjamin Foster Bryant walked away from Judge Dunmore's door that morning, he almost wondered whether he had not grown a little since he left home. much had been compressed into the last two hours it was hard for him to realize that only two hours had passed since he saw his mother. He remembered that he had agreed with Line to come back and get a piece of her johnny-He laughed over the thought. Johnnycake was the last thing he wanted just now. Hungry he certainly was not; although he had not expected to eat a dozen mouthfuls at the Judge's table, and was not at this moment aware whether he had eaten much or little, his appetite was undoubtedly satisfied. The steak had been so juicy that it was impossible, after the first taste, to help taking another and

another, and by the time the third mouthful was reached, he had become so interested in what Judge Dunmore was telling, that he ate right along without thinking much more about it.

Turning the corner he came almost upon Rufus Kedwin before he saw him.

"Halloo!" said that young person, "have you gone blind, or are you studying how to make another machine like the one which has bewitched you? I'll be thumped if you haven't it along! Do you take it with you when you go on errands?"

Ben laughed pleasantly. "Did I run into you?" he asked. "I was so busy thinking that I never even heard your step. O, no! I don't take my machine along generally; this morning was an exception, though I fancy it will often walk out with me after this."

"What 'this' are you talking about? Where have you been?"

"You would never guess," said Ben, his round face breaking into a broad smile. "I've been out to breakfast, old fellow, and a good breakfast we had, too. Did you ever eat California peaches? I can tell you they are prime."

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"At Judge Dunmore's."

"Bah!" said Rufus, with a look of intense disgust on his face, "what's the use in chaffing a fellow so early in the season? It isn't April Fool yet, and if it were, I'm too old a bird to be caught with such a silly 'fool' as that. Why don't you tell me in plain English what you mean?"

"I used as plain English as I could, and I told you the exact truth. I have been taking breakfast with Judge Dunmore and his wife; I went because I was invited, and we had a splendid breakfast — California peaches and all."

"How came you to?" asked Rufus, whose mouth was wide open now, as well as his ears. "I mean, how came he to invite you? What does it all mean?"

"Well, I'll be switched if you aren't a lucky fellow!" This was Rufus' final exclamation, as, by means of much cross-questioning, he at last understood the whole matter.

"I don't think there is any luck about it," said Ben, growing dignified. "I learned to write on a machine when I had a chance, and you didn't learn, though you had the same

chance; and because I knew how to write on that one I had a small one given to me, which you said you wouldn't have for a present; if you couldn't have a large one you didn't care for any; and I learned to write on that, and got a chance, by the means, to do some work on it for Judge Dunmore. Where's your luck about that?"

"I call it luck. Who would have supposed that a man, and a big lawyer at that, would ever want work done on such a baby machine? I thought it was only a plaything for Daisy."

Ben laughed good-humoredly; he could afford to laugh, even though his treasure was called a "baby machine." Hadn't it earned twenty-five cents this very morning, with a chance to repeat the experiment to-morrow morning? "Who did you suppose would care how small a machine was, if it could do the work?" he asked. "I should consider that an advantage, just as you would, let me tell you, if you had to lug around one of the large machines; they are a trifle heavier than this."

"Well," said Rufus mournfully, "if I'd had the least idea it would ever amount to anything I should have learned to clatter the old thing on hich; if care and ork

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when Mr. Reynolds told me I might. I wouldn't mind earning a quarter, I know, in that way, or most any other; I haven't had a cent of spending money since Christmas, and only fifty cents then."

Ben tried to think when he had had fifty cents for "spending money," and could not, but this he said nothing about. "I'll tell you what it is," he said, speaking earnestly, "I've told you you made a mistake — don't you know I have?—in not learning things when you had a chance; they fit in, somehow, when you don't expect them to. I wasn't sure, of course, that learning to run that machine would ever do me any good, but I meant to try for it, so long as I had the chance, and you see how it has turned out; it isn't luck, it is just common Now look here, I'll make you an offer; you learn to run this little fellow. I'll give you a chance. If you will come over to our house evenings regularly, we'll divide up the evenings. Line will work on it half an hour, and I'll take it half an hour, and you may have half an hour, and the rest of the time we'll each work on our lessons, and recite together. Wouldn't that be a good plan?"

"Catch me Rufus shrugged his shoulders. studying an hour every evening," he said. go to school all day, I suppose you know, and get studying enough, I can tell you."

"I forgot you were in school," Ben said, his face grave, his tone almost respectful—it was necessary to have a little respect for a boy who could go to school all day - "but then, of course you have to study some evenings? Line and I used to."

"Of course I don't. Catch me studying evenings after tugging at books all day; a fellow has to have some time to himself."

"Well, then, you can have the first half-hour and leave, if you want to, or the second halfhour, or the third, whichever you like. we'll run races on the thing and see who can get up the highest rate of speed, or which one can write the most pages without a mistake in them; that is, after you learn, of course. doesn't take long to learn."

There was no lighting up of Rufus' face.

"It wouldn't be of any use," he said gloomily; "two machines are not given away in the same town, and if they were, there's no work here for machines. Judge Dunmore won't be

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here but a few weeks, and when he goes your machine will be on your hands, and you will have had all your trouble for nothing."

Ben could not help laughing. What a hopeless croaker Rufus was, always sighing about "chances" and "luck," and saying "If I only had!" Still, he would make one more attempt.

"You never can tell," he said sagely, "whether a thing will work or not, unless you try it. I don't ask you to give up a better chance to try this one; I just propose that you take some of the time which belongs to you, and learn a new thing that may help in the future, or it may not; now do you want to do it?"

"I don't believe I do, though you are a good-natured fellow to plan it; some boys would not let anybody else touch their things. If there was the ghost of a chance for making any money I'd go into it quicker than lightning, but you see I know there isn't. I believe in a fellow's using his common sense about such things. Besides, I could not learn to do any work that would amount to shucks on such a baby affair."

"Don't I tell you I have earned a quarter on

it this morning, and have a chance to earn one each morning for a week at least?" asked Ben, growing indignant at last.

"O, well! that's because you had a chance at the big machine and got your hand in."

"Line didn't have a chance at the big one, and she is learning to write fast."

"O, Line! she's only a girl; she can write fast enough for girls, of course; what will they ever want to write that needs speed?"

"You talk like an idiot!" declared Ben, losing his patience utterly. But Rufus did not want to vex him just yet, and answered quickly, "Why, I don't mean anything disagreeable about Line; I mean that girls do not need to work as fast as boys; girls have to be taken care of and worked for, you know."

"Don't your mother and mine have to work, Rufus Kedwin? and they were both girls once. Suppose they hadn't learned when they had a chance? Though I don't mean that my mother shall have to work when I am a man."

"That's just it. I'm going to support my mother, too, and do it in style. None of your little seven by nine houses for me; I mean to have one as big as the Sutherlands'."

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What was the use in being vexed with a boy who used so little of his boasted common sense, and withal was so good-hearted? Ben laughed again, and concluded to let it all go. But Rufus had a plan which needed his help.

"I'll tell you what," he began earnestly, "you are such a good fellow that I'm going to ask a favor of you. I want you to lend me a quarter. There's a special reason why I want one worse than I ever did in my life, I do believe. If I knew a single chance for earning a cent I wouldn't bother you, but I don't; and now that you are in the way of earning so much, I thought perhaps"—

Ben interrupted him. "I can't lend money, Rufus; it is part of my bargain with mother that I would neither lend nor borrow, that is unless I told her all about it and she agreed. If it is something you want to explain to mother, and she can spare the quarter, why, we'll talk about it."

"I don't want to borrow of her," said Rufus stiffly. "I thought you said the money was your own."

"Why, of course it is my own; didn't I earn it? But, man alive, what do you suppose I

"O, for pity's sake, Ben, don't preach a sermon with every breath! I know you are a perfect pattern of a boy, and all that—never spend a cent for a stick of candy unless you ask your mother, but I thought you could accommodate a friend without running home to ask your ma if you might."

If Rufus had not been troubled and vexed, he would have known better than to expect to accomplish anything by using that sort of argu-His face flushed a little, but ment with Ben. he was cool and good-humored. "All right," he said; "then you are mistaken in me, and may as well own it; your common sense didn't work this time. I'm just that sort of a chap; I shall run home and ask my 'ma' before I lend you one cent, to say nothing of twenty-five of them, you may depend upon that; and moreover, likewise, I shall explain to her why I want to lend it, and why you want to borrow it, before she will agree to the bargain; that's another thing you can depend upon; and if

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you thought I would be ashamed of such an arrangement, why, that is mistake number two."

"Suppose it is a secret?" said Rufus, in an eager and conciliatory tone; he was already sorry he had put his hoped-for quarter in jeopardy by losing his temper.

"Um," said Ben musingly, "we don't think much of secrets, any of us, unless it is about Christmas or birthday times. If it is anything of that kind, Rufus, I know just how you feel, but I wouldn't now, honest. I've been there myself, and I know mothers pretty well, and I know they would rather go without a present five times over than to have it bought with borrowed money, and it isn't because I don't want to lend it, either."

"O, botheration! you are too stupid and old fogy and green for anything. It isn't about a present; my mother doesn't have any birthdays—not that I ever heard of—and she wouldn't thank me to borrow money to make her a present; you are right enough there. Say, Ben, I'll pay you interest on the quarter—ten per cent; come now, you are all for making money, and you are willing to make it a quarter of a cent at a time, here's a chance for you."

"I don't think you ought to pay interest on money," Ben said gravely, "when you haven't an idea where the principal is to come from. Beside, what is the use in talking? Didn't I tell you that mother and I had a bargain about such things? Is it something you are willing to explain to her?"

"Why, yes, it is, if it comes to that. You may explain to all creation, if you want to, and keep your old quarter besides. I want to go to the circus — Barnum's circus, that is coming next week — and I mean to do it, too, whether you are too mean to let me have the money or not. So now run home and tell your ma I kept you on the corner talking, and that is why you are so late. I suppose you have to tell her every time you turn around, don't you?"

"Every single solitary time," said Ben, in utmost good humor. "But, Rufus, you are a sillier boy than I thought if you mean to spend twenty-five cents to go to a show, when you told me yourself you couldn't join the history class because your mother couldn't afford a book for you this year. A quarter would go a good way towards buying a second-hand

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history, and you are greener than I take you to be if you think my mother will agree to any such borrowing as that."

"Well," said Rufus sullenly, "you are meaner than I took you to be; I thought you would be glad of the chance to help a fellow along who never has any fun, when you could as well as not. But a boy who takes breakfast with a judge can't be supposed to care to help an old acquaintance, I suppose. I'll remember in the future how accommodating you are. I shall go to that circus, you see if I don't, and I'll get a chance for you to go too, if I can. Anyhow, I'll return good for evil."

"That's right," said Ben good-naturedly; "I wish you success in earning the money, and common sense to spend it after it is earned. I wouldn't waste any of it on the circus if I were you, I know that." And having reached the corner where their ways separated he ran off without further ceremony.

While he is on his way home I may as well tell you how the plans for the fair were progressing.

It is true that very little time had passed since the plan was first thought of, yet much

work was being done toward getting ready for What is very strange, when one stops to think of it carefully, much work was being done for it by those who knew nothing about For instance, there was a plain little room in a back street of a large city, where sat a middle-aged woman with a plain pleasant face, sewing industriously. She was not by any All around her, lying in heaps, means alone. sitting in rows, standing in corners, sleeping in boxes, were dolls of every size and shape and complexion. Dolls with arms and dolls without arms; dolls with hair and baldheaded dolls; in fact, there were dolls with no heads at all! Miss Perkins arrested her busy needle and looked about her once or twice thoughtfully, pushing out of hearing as far as possible a little sigh which wanted to come out into the room. The smile which was so generally on her face faded a little, and she really tried to look sober and think. In fact, she did more than think; she held at arms-length the doll whose head she was sewing fast to its shoulders, and thoughtfully studied its face as she said:

"What in the world am I to do with you when I get you done? That is the question,

and I'm sure I don't know how to answer it. Not only you, but dozens of others like you. It is a mercy you do not have to eat for a living; that is at present my one comfort in life; but then if you don't I do, and I cannot eat you. I'm sure I don't understand how there could ever be cannibals; I couldn't eat even my kid and cloth children, I believe, not if it should save my life. But it is getting to be pretty serious business for you and me, I must say. If I don't sell one of you before the week is out, it is difficult to tell what will become of any of us."

After which the sigh did really get out, and floated through the room among those staring children, who did not care at all. Miss Perkins felt the lack of sympathy. If there had only been somebody to say "Poor Miss Perkins!" I am certain she would have felt better, and would not have let that one tear roll down over her nose and plash on the needle she was pushing through a kid arm at the moment. I mean if she could have realized that there was One who cared. Generally Miss Perkins did realize this, and it is what made her smiles bright and steady, even through trying days and weeks.

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You have guessed before this that Miss Perkins made her living by making dollies. is, she sewed for a large firm, who employed her whenever they wanted extra help. could not take her regularly into their factory, because she would not be taken; she kept this one room and kept it homelike, and kept a few of the old home things about it for the sake of a troublesome little nephew, whose only friend she was, and who repaid all her sacrifice by being almost as bad a boy as he could, and wasting his little earnings in chewing-gum and cigarettes. "If I were you I would send him to some Home, Miss Perkins," so her friends often said to her. And Miss Perkins would shake her head and say, "I have; I've sent him to my home. Poor little fellow! if there isn't room in my heart for him there isn't anywhere. I promised my sister with her last breath that I'd look after him as long as there was life in me, and I mean to do it."

So Miss Perkins would not break up her little home and go to the factory; and it happened sometimes that very little extra work was needed; and on this particular winter Dorry, the naughty nephew, had tumbled from

been, and broken his leg and required much care and some luxuries, and times were harder than usual. Miss Perkins, during the five years in which she had been an extra hand for the firm, had gathered about her many scraps of kid and cloth, and many heads of dollies slightly marred in some way, and so thrown out as imperfect, and had set up a wee manufactory of her own, making dollies to order; the only trouble was, the orders were few and far between. Only a few of her friends knew about this, and they belonged to the class who do not spend much money for dolls.

It came to pass, in the course of time, that Miss Perkins had boxes and boxes of unfinished dolls, some needing an arm, when the kid gave out at just the wrong minute, some with their heads only basted on, because an order had come before they were finished.

This particular spring, times were duller than usual, and Miss Perkins, who had been without work for three weeks, other than these dollies afforded, had finally gathered them all about her to discover in a systematic way, if she could, what was needed.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

"who knows?"

I MAY as well finish them up," she had said cheerfully, "and be done with it. Who knows what may happen, or how soon some of them may be needed?"

This she had said three days before, but on the morning of which I write, when that tear I told you of had rolled off her nose, times looked dark. It was raining outside; perhaps that may have been one reason; and Dorry the scapegrace had not brought home one cent the night before, though he admitted that he had sold two newspapers, but he had lent the money to another "fellow," who had bought two glasses of soda and two buns with it, and "treated."

Miss Perkins tried to be glad that the "treat" was soda water instead of anything more dangerous; and I am almost glad that she did not

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know how dangerous a drink soda water, even, can be made, because I really think she had trouble enough.

Well, she sewed on her dollie's head, and looked soberly at it, and presently plashed a tear right into the middle of its unwinking eye, and wondered whether it was worth while to try to finish up these dolls. Who would ever buy them? She was sure she didn't know; and she actually forgot that there was One who did. At precisely that moment of time Miss Webster, in her room two hundred miles away, having been waited upon by her nurse to writing pad and writing rest and stylographic pen, was writing a letter which read like this:

MY DEAR MISS PERKINS:

I hope you have what I need, or can get them ready in the course of the next few weeks. I want about thirty dollies; not fine ones—just neat, plain little creatures, well made, as I know all your work is. There is to be a dollies' fair in this town in the course of the next two weeks, and if I can get the dolls within a week I think I have a plan by which they can all be dressed in time for the fair. I inclose my check for thirty-five dollars, for which please send me if you possibly can thirty of the best-looking Misses; they need not all be worth a dollar apiece; indeed I do not care if some are very small and cheap, but some of them will probably be worth much more than that; at least I want only thirty, and I am willing to pay that price for them. The extra five dollars will cover the packing and expressage, I think. Please let me

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Original from UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA know by return mail whether you can accommodate me. I hope you are having a pleasant spring, and that Dorry has not forgotten that he is going to try to grow up a man.

What do you think Miss Perkins will say when she receives that letter? Will she remember those tears, do you suppose, that she shed while it was being written, and the gloomy, almost despairing thoughts she had? Sew fast, Miss Perkins, you have no time to waste in Miss Webster is already sealing and tears. addressing her letter. The postman's whistle is sounding on the street below; he will hurry it into his mail bag, the clerk at the post-office will presently push it with all speed into the right bag, and the train will rattle it over the rails miles and miles, and other clerks will glance at it, and push it on, and a postman will presently ring at your own door, and you will be sure that he can have nothing for you, as there is nobody to write to you now, and you will be sure while you are breaking the seal that there is some mistake; but there is no mistake; the loving Father who lets not a sparrow fall to the ground without his care, and who numbers the very hairs of your head, has planned it all; brush away the tears, smile

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and trust, and sew fast, Miss Perkins, for the dollies are needed.

By this time you feel sure that Benjamin Bryant must have reached home. If you could have heard his sister Line ask questions in an eager effort to get him to describe the scenes through which he had just passed, you would have been sure of it.

"Did Mrs. Dunmore sit down to the table with you? Just you three? how queer! how did she look - I mean how was she dressed?"

"How do I know? She had on some clothes, of course, and a little three-cornered patch on top of her head. I thought she would have looked better without that; I felt afraid it would slip off all the time. It looked loose, and flapped a little in the wind."

"A three-cornered patch! Mother, I suppose it was one of those lovely lace breakfast caps. What color was her dress, Ben?"

"Blue, I guess; or I don't know — a kind of a gray; greenish gray — with blue ribbons to tie it up with; they fluttered around in the way. She didn't look as nice as mother does."

"Of course not, you silly boy. Nobody ever

looks as nice as mothers do; but I don't believe her dress was greenish, with blue ribbons; that would be in horrid taste."

"It was some of those colors," said Ben confidently; then, "Mother, did you know Barnum's circus was coming next week? The hand bills are all over town — great big pictures of all sorts of terrible-looking animals. I should like to see the animals."

"Oh! never mind that old circus; tell us all about the breakfast; we have never been to a 'style' breakfast, you know." This from Line, of course.

"Why, I have told you. We had things to eat, and we ate them - beefsteak and things; and they were good

"Mother, did you ever see anything like a boy for describing things? If it had been Daisy or me, we should have had a whole book full to tell, and here is this provoking boy can only say he had 'things' to eat!"

"Well," said Ben, laughing, "what would you have? We had butter, and muffins, and coffee — or they had — and milk — iced milk and sauce."

"Sauce for breakfast!"

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ould and "Yes'm; sauce for breakfast—a large dish of it—and it was good; and mush of some kind they had, the first thing, with cream on it—not milk, but thick cream—you could almost cut it, it was so thick."

"That was oatmeal," said Line, with a superior air. "People eat oatmeal and cream first, nowadays—real stylish people do. It would seem queer to me—like having bread and milk for breakfast. Go on, Ben."

"There's nothing to go on about; I've told you everything now, anyhow."

"O, no, you haven't! How was the table arranged? What kind of dishes, and where were they put?"

"Put?" repeated Ben helplessly, "why, on the table, of course, and they were dishes like anybody's, only some of them were silver, and some were blue and all colors."

"O, dear me!" said Line, "was there ever anybody like a boy?" whereupon both Mrs. Bryant and Daisy laughed.

"You haven't studied the art of description, have you, Ben?" his mother said pleasantly. "Never mind, Caroline; boys never do observe in those directions as carefully as girls, or at

least they rarely do. Did you have a comfortable time, my son, all things considered?"

"Part of the time I did, and part of the time I didn't; I spilled my glass of milk."

An exclamation of dismay from Line, a look of sympathetic pity from Daisy, and the mother asked, "On the table? How did that happen?"

"Yes'm, on the table-cloth; and it was as heavy as—as a comfortable; I don't know how they contrive to have their table-cloths so heavy; you couldn't feel the table under it any more than if it had been a cushion. I don't know how it happened, I am sure. I was being just as careful as a fellow ever was, and the first thing over it went!"

"What did you do?" asked Line. "I should have wanted to sink right through the floor, I know I should."

"It wouldn't have done you any good if you had wanted to," Ben said coolly. "The floor is all hard wood, without any holes in it, and polished until it shines like glass, and feels almost as slippery; and they have great squares of carpet lying around on it, so thick that you don't hear your own feet at all when you step on them; but they don't sink in enough to put

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a fellow out of sight. I didn't do anything, only blush and stammer. But it was all cleared up in about a minute. The black man whisked out a cloth from somewhere and mopped it up, and spread a great, beautiful white sheet over the wet place, and Mrs. Dunmore acted as though she had not seen it at all. She leaned over and handed me a rose, and asked me if I knew what the name of that variety was. happened that I did, too, and could tell her all about it; Miss Webster showed me some like them last week. And Judge Dunmore said, 'That reminds me of when I was a boy about your age,' and then he told the funniest story about an accident that happened to him. too long to tell now; I've got to go; Mr. Holden will be waiting for me. That reminds me of the circus again. Mother, if people had money to spare, so that it would not be taking it from things that they needed, would there be anything very dreadful in going to a circus, just to see the animals?"

"What a boy!" said Line; "he keeps flying off to a circus every few minutes, when he has just been to breakfast with a judge."

Mrs. Bryant smiled. "I think that will be

a longer story than the one you had not time "Suppose we leave it until for," she said. evening?"

"Especially," added Line, "since you are not the boy with money to spare, and are not likely to be."

"There are such boys," added Ben gravely. "Rufus wants to go dreadfully, and I shouldn't be surprised if he should manage it somehow."

I shouldn't think he could spare the money much better than we. Mrs. Kedwin told me yesterday that she did not know what they were going to do; that she would close the season in debt in spite of all her efforts. says if Miss Webster did not pay as much again for her board as it was worth, she should be just swamped in debt. That is the very If I were Rufus I should be word she used. ashamed to talk about spending money at a circus when my mother was almost beside herself trying to pay her bills! I'm ashamed of Rufus almost every time I see him or hear anything from him. I think he grows worse instead of better."

"I'm afraid he does," said Ben, looking grave, and wondering what Line would think not cely

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if she knew he had tried to borrow money for the circus; "he has got intimate with a set of boys who make him worse than he would be. He goes with that Jonas Smith a great deal, and they read books together that are not what you and mother would think very good, I guess. Rufus used to like Mr. Holden—don't you remember when he said he was a splendid man?—now he doesn't like to hear his name; he is always saying that he meddles with other people's business."

The mention of that name again seemed to remind Ben that he was in haste, and he started up suddenly, turning back as he reached the door to say, with a flush on his face as though it was a bit of news of which he was half-ashamed, "Something else happened this morning that I didn't tell you about. Judge Dunmore took me into his library and gave me letters to write—business letters, you know. He had written on slips of paper about what he wanted said, and I had to put them into shape. I wrote four, and he paid me twenty-five cents; and I am to come every morning this week, and perhaps longer."

"Why, Ben!" said his mother, in a gratified

voice, and Line set down the cup she was rinsing very suddenly, and rushed over to him, dish towel in hand, to give him a hearty hug "What a boy!" she exclaimed for the third time that morning. "Tell all about carpets, flowers, circuses, and I don't know what else, and leave such a splendid piece of news to the last second. Ben, it is the beginning of the fortune you are going to make out of the machine! Why didn't you tell before?"

"Hadn't a chance," said Ben, relishing his importance highly, but trying to look dignified and manly; "you wanted to know all about dishes, and clothes, and things, and didn't ask a word about the machine, so I tried to please you; besides, it isn't much, I suppose. says it isn't; he says Judge Dunmore will be going away in a few weeks - which is true enough — and that then there will be no more work for the machine; he says I ought to be paid more than twenty-five cents for writing four letters; that it is ridiculous in Judge Dunmore to get his work done for next to nothing."

"Rufus is an ignorant boy whose opinions are not to be noticed," said Mrs. Bryant, with more haste than she usually spoke.

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thought that such talk as that had the least influence over you, I should not want you to go with Rufus Kedwin, my son."

Ben laughed good-humoredly. "I'm not going to quarrel with my quarters, mother, because they are not half-dollars, if that is what you mean. Rufus always lost any chances there were for him, by being disgusted because they were not bigger. Where is Daisy?"

"Gone over to Miss Webster's to plan about the fair; her mind is so full of it that she cannot sleep nights. I shall be almost glad when it is over. She says Mr. Holden has sent for a dollie who is to come by express, and have the place of honor, he hopes, at the fair. He must be an unusual minister, to interest himself in a child's fair, when she is almost a stranger to him, and not of his congregation."

"He is an unusual minister," said Ben, "and he is being kept waiting unusually long. Goodby, mother," and he vanished.

Half an hour afterwards he was writing names on envelopes with neatness and speed. Certain circulars which the minister desired to have go out in the next mail were being prepared, so Ben had agreed to come in the morning instead of the afternoon. He worked on silently for some time, steadily lowering the pile of envelopes, until now only a half-dozen were left of those which must soon go, and the minister who had laid down his pen, which had been racing over the paper, ran his fingers through his hair in a way he had when he wanted to rest his brain, looked over at Ben, and smiled. "Well, sir," he said cheerily, "my morning's stint is accomplished; how is it with yours?"

"Almost done, sir. Could you be asked a question now?"

"Half a dozen of them if you will."

"What's the harm in circuses?"

The minister looked neither shocked nor surprised, only reflective. After a moment's silence: "Is there harm in them, my boy?"

Ben looked up astonished. "Why, I thought so," he said slowly. "At least, I thought you thought so."

- "Why should I?"
- "Why, because you are a minister."
- "Do all ministers think so?"
- "I suppose so."
- "Why do they?"
- "That is what I am asking you," Ben said,

with a gleam of fun in his handsome eyes. The minister answered the look with a genial laugh. "And you think I am begging the question," he said. "I do not mean to; I only wanted to get a glimpse of the reasoning processes through which you have been. You seem to have come to conclusions in regard to a certain class of workers called ministers. Are they the only ones included in this position which you say they take?"

"And mothers," Ben said slowly.

"Ah, mothers! They are of us, are they? A very respectable portion of the world, don't you think, whose opinions ought to carry weight?"

"Yes, sir; and for that reason I'm trying to find out why they hold them."

"What does your mother say?"

"She has never said much, only she didn't take us when we were younger, and she could; and I know she wouldn't want us to go if we could; she is going to talk it over to-night."

"I think I'll wait until after to-night before I make a full answer," the minister said, smiling; "I am a believer in mothers. In the meantime, I will ask you two or three questions, "I should think it would have a very bad effect indeed."

"Suppose, added to the surroundings I have mentioned, there should be men much older than he, who had been demoralized by such living, and had learned to swear, and to drink, and to gamble, and spent much of their leisure in this manner? Suppose that the boy of about your age had chiefly to do with such men; did not stay long enough in any one place to form other acquaintances, or to be influenced by other lives than these. Suppose that the few women whom he knew were of the sort who tolerated, at least, perhaps enjoyed, the society of men such as I have described, and were more or less like them?"

"I should think it would be horrid, sir."

"Then I will ask you only one question more: What's the harm in circuses?"

Ben's cheeks glowed, and he glanced up with a half-laugh. Then, after a moment of silence, during which he addressed the last envelope in the pile, he said, "But going to see the monkeys and the bears for one evening wouldn't hurt the boy who was traveling with them?"

"But he wouldn't travel with them if I and my brother and sister didn't pay him money for showing them."

"Other people will," said Ben, in a low tone, as though half-ashamed of the words.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" said the minister.

Ben sealed the last letter, stamped it, placed it in a neat package ready for the office, then arose, package in hand, and a thoughtful look on his face. "Thank you," he said.

"For what?" asked Mr. Holden, rising.
"Ben, my dear fellow, one question more. I have said nothing about it for quite awhile, but it hasn't been because I am not deeply interested in the answer. Have you settled that other matter fully?"

Ben's eyes were fixed on the questioner's

The minister held out his hand. "Then, my dear boy, I may claim you as a young brother in Jesus Christ—a soldier who has enlisted for life under my Captain?"

"Yes, sir; if I understand myself, and I think I do, I belong to Him for life."

"God bless you, my dear young brother! Does 'mother' know?"

"I haven't told her yet," said Ben, his cheeks flushing, "but I mean to. I have told nobody but little Daisy."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A HAPPY MOTHER.

TOTHING ever worked up better than that fair. Miss Perkins was ready with her thirty dollies; and you and I can imagine just how she felt when the order came which swept nearly all her stock on hand away, but left, instead, money enough to support Dorry and herself for the next three months.

But she was by no means the only one who planned dolls for that fair. On the very evening in which the order from Miss Webster arrived, came one of the college girls to call on Miss Perkins. "Just a little bit of red kid no larger than her two fingers" was what she thought she came after, but in reality she came to hear Miss Perkins pour out her joy over the large order, to hear the letter read which explained why they were wanted, and to clap her hands gleefully and say, "That's the very thing

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The children in our circle have been dressing dolls to give away; we planned it for them to teach them how to sew. We'll send them to this fair — the dolls, you know, not the children—and let them be sold for the benefit of whatever the managers are working It is sure to be a good object if Miss Webster is interested in it. I mean to write to her this very evening. Won't that be nice, Miss Perkins? Some of the dolls are the oddest-looking creatures you ever saw. We girls in the graduating class have each planned a dollie like the one we used to love the best when we were little dots, and some of them are unique."

In this way, and in many other ways of which I have not time to tell you, the interest grew. By the time Miss Perkins's box arrived, the young ladies of Mr. Holden's church had formed a circle to meet on two consecutive afternoons and dress dolls for "Miss Webster's fair."

Every one of them knew Miss Webster, and were ready to serve her. A few of them were acquainted with little Daisy, and understood something about the occasion for this

From Judge Dunmore's home went great packages, made up of bits of lace, and silk and velvet such as would have delighted any dollie's heart. Mrs. Irving, the married daughter, said she wondered, when she packed her trunks, why all those cast-off bits of finery persisted in coming along, and now she knew. Cards of invitation were already out, in the name of "Miss Dee Dunmore Bryant," inviting every dollie in town to exhibit herself at the fair; and Judge Dunmore offered a prize of a five-dollar gold piece to be given to the most neatly and tastefully dressed dollie, three ladies, none of whom had ever seen any of the dollies until the afternoon of the fair, to be chosen as committee of award. Miss Webster was hard at work making and dressing an exact representation of "Sally," the famous doll who lived in the White House in the years when John Adams was president of the United States, and "Mary Louisa" was his little daughter.

The day before the fair was one long excitement to Daisy Bryant. Surprises began as early as seven o'clock in the morning, when that express package arrived from the college girls—a gcod-sized box filled with dolls, which

Among other wonders in this box was a remarkable shoe, made of pasteboard covered with velvet, and filled even to overflowing with dolls. I may as well tell you, in passing, that this shoe full of dolls was the cause of great discomfort to Daisy. One little visitor from whom she had hoped much, sat down disconsolate before this shoe, refusing to be interested in anything, making herself and all about her miserable because her mother refused to buy the entire family—"old woman," "shoe" and all.

In vain Daisy gently explained: "I couldn't spare them all to one customer, Alice dear — I couldn't, really; there are a great many people here, you know, and so many of them want dollies that I think I shall have to take orders from some and supply them afterwards, so you see it would not do for one little girl to buy so many."

The only answer the broken-hearted Alice had to all this was a twitch of the shoulders and a snarly little "Go away, do! What difference would it make to you whether other people got dollies or not, if you sold them all?

So Daisy turned away with a sigh to attend to some less exacting customer. She found it hard to understand such a form of selfishness as this. Little girls were certainly not all alike, but Daisy had had her trials.

On the afternoon before the fair, when Miss Webster was wheeled into the front room upstairs where the dolls were to be exhibited, she found Daisy alone on her knees in front of a beautiful wax Miss who had arrived from Boston but the night before, and was by far the most beautiful doll on which Daisy's eyes had ever rested. It was from Miss Webster's brother Ben, who sent his love to Daisy, and his hearty regards to his namesake, Benjamin Bryant.

Even Miss Webster had been surprised at this, and had laughed until the tears were in her eyes, and she had bent over and kissed the doll to hide them, as she said, "Dear boy, who would have supposed that he would think to do such a thing? Yet, after all, I do not know why I should be surprised; it is just like him."

In front of this dollie, as I said, knelt Daisy, alone but for the presence of Bobby, a boarder's

baby, who had been left in her care for ten minutes while his mother ran downstairs on an Bobby was comfortable in his basket, but was at that moment very much astonished because Daisy did not look around and attend to him, as he had just thrown his rubber ball at her head to attract her notice. To be sure it had missed aim and only bounded lightly against her dress, but Bobby thought she might have noticed it. The truth was, she was too She did not even hear the much absorbed. soft roll of Miss Webster's chair, and did not look around until that lady said gently, "Is she talking to you, Daisy, or are you just loving her?" Then Daisy gave one of those slow, long-drawn-out sighs which seemed to come somewhere from the depths of her heart, and said gravely, very gravely indeed, "Miss Webster, I shall make her a tenth."

"Shall you, indeed?" said Miss Webster, with a slight start; "I confess I am surprised at that. She would bring you in quite a sum of money, Daisy dear."

"I know it, ma'am," said Daisy firmly; "but I have quite made up my mind that she shall be a tenth. Because, Miss Webster"—and here a lovely flush spread over Daisy's face—
"at first I didn't want to do it—I don't understand why, but I didn't, really. I think I
wanted to keep her for myself. It seemed to
me that I couldn't bear to sell her, or even give
her away. It is very strange that I should have
such a naughty feeling." And then, to Miss
Webster's dismay, the slow tears came dropping softly from Daisy's eyes.

"My darling," she said soothingly, "I do not think it at all strange that you should want to keep such a lovely little dollie for yourself, especially when it was sent on purpose for you by my brother. Why should you not keep it? There will be a great many others on exhibition, and she might have the same position; then, after the fair, you could keep her for your own. I am sure my brother Ben would like that."

Daisy turned toward her now, the tears brushed away, her eyes large and sorrowful, fixed on Miss Webster in a sort of sad surprise. "It wouldn't be right," she said gravely; "I do not need her. It isn't as it was when my dear Dee Dunmore came. She was only for me and for nothing else, and I was never to part with her; but this one your brother said

was for me to do what I thought best with, and of course I ought to think best to give it to Jesus, for it is the very loveliest one I ever had, and I always wanted to give the best before. I do not understand why I feel so."

Tears were very near the surface again. Miss Webster made haste to argue the point. "Daisy, my darling, do you think she would be an entirely suitable 'tenth'? Of course the home where you would send a dollie in that way would be a poor little house, and would not such an elegant dollie be out of place, and not feel as much at home as a plainer and more simply dressed one would?"

Daisy slowly shook her head. "She cannot feel, you know, Miss Webster; I have to keep remembering that all the time, or else I could not sell them, nor give them away, nor any thing; so, even if things are not comfortable, she will not mind; and the little girl is sure to love beautiful things almost more, I think sometimes, because she is poor, and hasn't any thing very pretty of her own. And beside, Miss Webster, Jesus left heaven, you know, and came down here and was poor, and hadn't even where to lay his head."

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Miss Webster was utterly silent, and there was such a mist in her eyes she could hardly see the little face which had turned again to the beautiful dollie, and with folded hands and fixed gaze was studying it. Before this Miss Webster had bowed to and motioned in Mr. Holden, who had appeared at the open door. His eyes danced with mirth at first, then softened into something very like reverence, as he listened to this unusual reasoning from a child. He came over presently to where Daisy knelt, and dropped on one knee beside her.

"Do not be troubled, Daisy dear," he said; "we often find it hard to give our best while we are here, and cannot see Him plainly; but He is so good that He accepts the gift and loves the giver, even though she has little quivers of wanting to keep her treasures for herself. One of these days you and I will have learned to love Him so much that we shall be only glad to give everything to Him."

Daisy turned toward him, smiling gently. "I thank you," she said, with sweet gravity, whereupon she gave instant attention to Bobby, who thought he had been silent and unnoticed long enough,

"That is very strong meat, Richard," Miss Webster said, smiling, as she too brushed away a tear.

"I know it; but the child is an unusual one."
And I'm sure I hope you know what those
two grown-up people meant; there was certainly no meat in the room!

So Daisy, you see, knew something about selfish qualms, though the little Alice's form of it did not touch her. She had another talk with Miss Webster about the beautiful dollie. "I have quite decided," she said, taking neat last stitches in the long white dress she was making. "I wonder that I could have wanted to keep it. There was one thing I did not think of at first; as soon as I did all the 'want to' went away. I should not have minded for Dee's sake, because she is pretty enough, but there is my poor Arabella Aurelia might have been hurt. I would not have her feelings hurt for any thing in the world; and if I had thought of that in the first place there would not have been any hard to it."

Miss Webster waited a moment to steady her voice so there should be no hint of a laugh in it before she said, "I understand; but I wonder "That was different," said Daisy, with decision; "Dee was my very own from the first minute; there was never any thing to decide, but here there was." Then, after a moment's pause, "Do you think, Miss Webster, that Arabella Aurelia would like better to wear a sash, or just to be in plain white from head to foot?"

"I really do not feel equal to deciding that question," said Miss Webster gravely; "your plans for Arabella Aurelia have been so entirely unlike what I supposed they would be, that I believe you are the best judge."

Daisy turned on her somewhat anxious eyes. "Do you mean that you are not sure about her liking it?" she asked, with gentle gravity. "You see she is so different from any of the others—without any arms, or feet, or even nose—that I thought if I dressed her in just white, with everything as clean and neat as I could make it, and took every stitch myself, she would like it. I have let Line and the young ladies help with all the others; even my dear Dee Line made a hat for, and looped her

dress, but nobody has touched my poor Arabella Aurelia's things but myself."

Was there ever a smaller and sweeter picture of the sublimity of mother-love? Poor little deformed, wooden Arabella Aurelia, without even a nose, to receive patient and unremitting care, while the beautiful Dee had her adornments furnished by other hands.

"I never know whether to laugh or cry," said Miss Webster, "when you get to asking me questions," and she contented herself with kissing the little mother rapturously.

And so the fair took place, and was in all respects a most remarkable success. If you could have seen the dollies of every grade which swarmed in the rooms you would have been sure of it. It was also very largely attended. All the afternoon and evening the rooms were thronged, and to Daisy's great astonishment Mrs. Dunmore sent cake and cream to be served to each caller.

"Do they do that at fairs?" she had asked Ben, with wide-open, pleased eyes. It was certainly a very pleasant thing to do; but she went to a fair once, and felt sure it was omitted then. "Not commonly," said Ben, trying not to laugh; "this is in some respects an uncommon occasion."

Before the day was over Daisy felt sure he was right. Another surprise awaited her. The committee of award, after sitting apart in solemn session for nearly an hour, note-books in hand, earnestly discussing the merits of the different wax and wooden ladies under their charge, brought in a unanimous report which nearly took Daisy's breath away. Behold, of all the elegant Boston, New York, and even Parisian beauties who had adorned the grand stand, Arabella Aurelia had been singled out as the one to take the prize. "It is not that there are not more elegantly-dressed dolls," explained the sweet-voiced lady who acted as chairman of the committee, "or more beautiful ones as regards form and features; but your committee understood that nothing of this kind was to be taken into consideration. The giver of the prize expressly stipulated that it should be presented to the dollie who was most appropriately and most carefully dressed, as regarded small Keeping these instructions in mind, we have no hesitancy in saying that Miss Arabella Aurelia beyond all question has won the prize. Her dress is not only exquisitely appropriate to early childhood, but every article upon her is made with the most painstaking neat-Every stitch has apparently been set with a view to being as nearly right as possible. Other dollies, upon whom much care has been bestowed, have failed when it came to an examination of the button-holes; those on Arabella Aurelia's wardrobe would do credit to a tailor. Still other children, looking very well on the surface, have been basted together, or pins have been made to serve where needle and thread are generally used; nothing of this kind appears about Arabella Aurelia. In short, she is in most perfect and careful order from head to foot, and in the estimation of your committee the mere accident of her not possessing arms or hands, or even a nose, had nothing to do with the qualifications to be considered in awarding the prize; we therefore do unanimously vote that the five-dollar gold piece be hung about the neck of Arabella Aurelia Bryant."

Great was the delight of the company over this happy result. They could not be restrained It seemed for a time as though the Bryant family would not get to rest that night. Even after they had torn themselves away from Miss Webster's rooms and were at home, they were too much excited, and too eager all to talk at once, to think of going to bed.

What a wonderful time it had been! How many people had come whom they had had no idea of seeing! What a triumph for Arabella Aurelia! How funny it was for Mr. Holden to buy "Sally." And to think that he should pay four dollars for her! What an almost alarming amount of money had been made — actually fifty-seven dollars and forty-three cents in Daisy's strong little "safe," to say nothing of the five-dollar gold piece at this moment suspended by a white ribbon from Arabella Aure-

lia's neck. "It is well you have a neck, my lady," Ben had said, "if you haven't any nose." And Fanny Kedwin, standing beside him watching while he fastened the ribbon, said, "I told Daisy I thought it was silly in her to take so much pains with those button-holes, but it seems it paid."

"It nearly always pays to take pains with things," said that young man sagely, and he thought within himself how much alike Fanny and Rufus Kedwin were.

Beside the fifty-seven dollars there were twenty-four new dollies left in stock. Where had all the money come from? Nobody seemed to know. Is it any wonder that they were excited? Mrs. Bryant did get Daisy tucked away at last, with Arabella Aurelia beside her, and Line went to see that all was as it should be in the store, leaving Ben and his mother alone for a moment in the little kitchen.

"It has been a great success, hasn't it, my boy?" the mother said.

"Splendid!" said Ben. "I have been so busy helping to get ready, and then seeing it through, that I haven't had a chance to tell you something. I've got regular work. Judge

Dunmore recommended me to that Mr. Welford, who has an office on Main Street; he is a lawyer, you know, and it seems he wants copying done, and letters written, and things of that kind regulary; and I'm to go there afternoons after this, as long as I suit, he said. And mornings I can have, through the summer, for extra pieces of work which he says he can find me; and by fall he thinks I can keep my place in the office and go to school to recite. Judge Dunmore says Mr. Welford will pay me a good fair price for my work—as much as I could earn anywhere. What do you think of that?"

"I think it is just splendid!" said Mrs. Bryant heartily. "I always knew my children would make a way out of my perplexities for me, but I did not think they could do it so effectually so soon. What with your and Line's and Daisy's faithful help, we really begin to see daylight; and I believe with all my heart, Ben, that the education for all of you will come. I like the school part almost better than any of it, I believe."

"So do I," said Ben heartily; "that means Line, too, you know; we'll start in together when we start. And, mother, there's one thing more; I promised myself I would tell you before I slept again, though I don't exactly know how."

The mother turned on him a tender yet anxious look, and spoke quickly. "What is it, my boy? Have you gotten into any trouble, or done something you don't quite like? Don't be afraid to tell mother."

Ben laughed a little at that, though his face sobered instantly. "No, mother, it is no trouble, it is good, only I don't quite know how to tell such things. I've become a soldier—enlisted for life, Mr. Holden calls it—and the Lord Jesus Christ is my Captain. I thought you would like to know."

Then that mother folded both arms about her boy, and kissed his cheeks, his forehead, his lips, and there was such a light in her eyes as he will never forget.

"My dear, dear boy!" she said, "no other news that you can ever give me will be half so grand as this. Now, indeed, mother's heart is at rest."