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LITTLE ONES

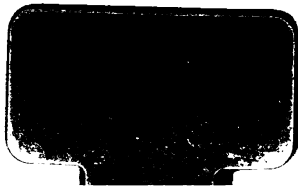
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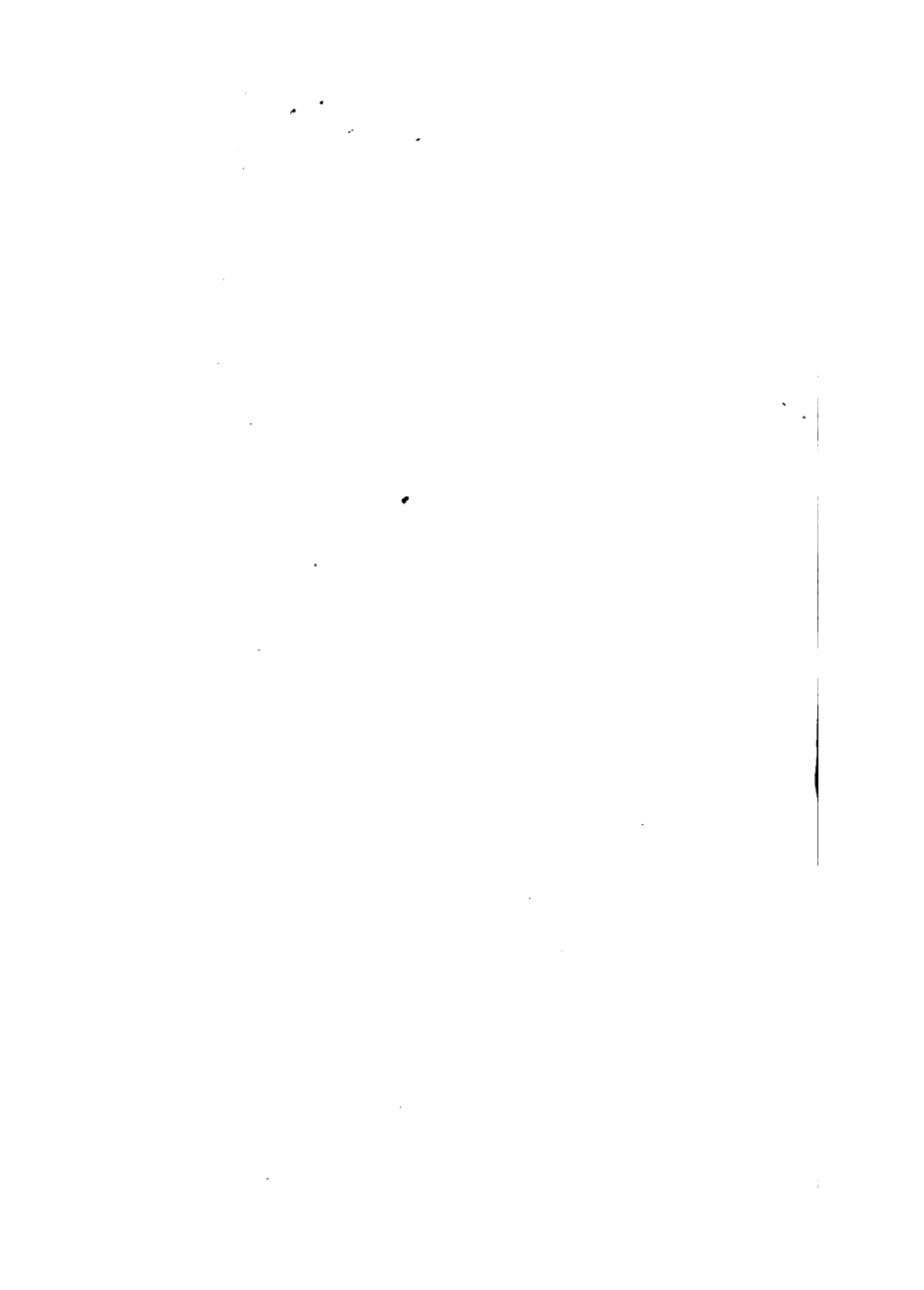
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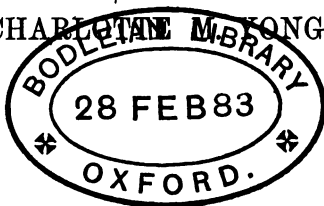


LANGLEY LITTLE ONES.

SIX STORIES.

BY

CHARLOTTE M. TONGE.



London :

WALTER SMITH (LATE MOZLEY),

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PREFACE.

It is sometimes said that stories of this description are of far more use to the teachers than to the taught.

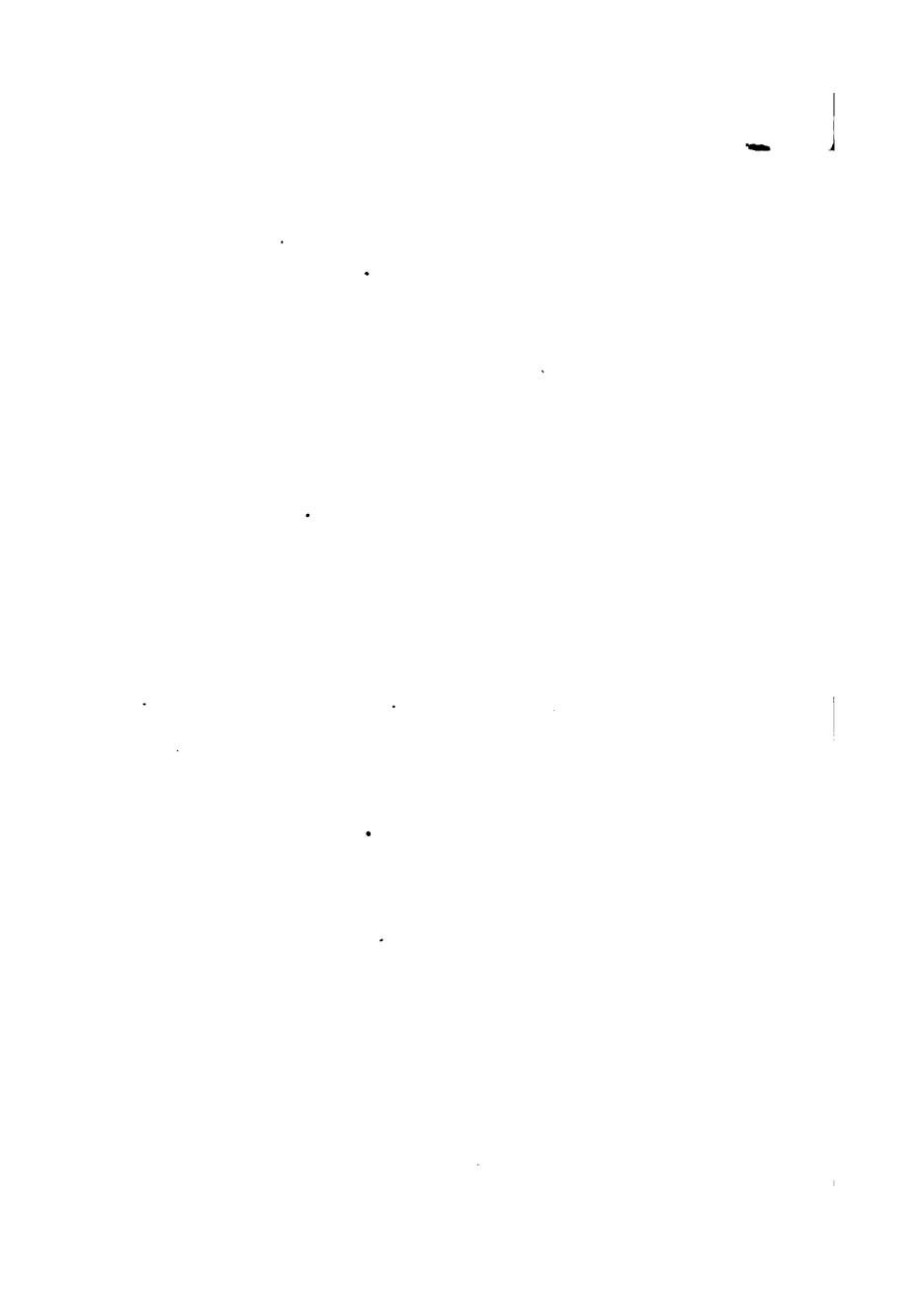
It may be so. Long ago the well-known "Langley School" taught hundreds of young ladies to care for village school-children, and what sort of training to give them. If this little attempt can show to any, at a time when change and difficulty make many feel great discouragement, how the same happy relations and the same mutual affection can exist amidst the much more elaborate conditions of a modern town-school, it will, through them, at any rate, benefit their scholars.

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QUACK, QUACK.

There was a round pond, and a pretty pond too,
And about it white daisies and violets grew,
And dark weeping willows that stoop to the ground,
Dipped in their long branches and shaded it round.
A party of ducks to this pond would repair,
To sport 'mid the green water-weeds that grew there.

Miss Jane Taylor.

OLD Mr. Randall lived at the end of a long lane, out of the postman's beat. But he liked to have his newspaper every morning on his breakfast table, and as James Woodfall's cottage stood just at the corner of the lane, he settled that the postman should leave his bag there on his way from Ellerby, and that little David

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Woodfall should have threepence a week for carrying it up to him.

There was plenty of time for this before Davy had to go to school, though he lived nearly a mile from it ; and he had a good sturdy pair of legs, so that there was no fear of his being too much tired, though he was only seven years old when he began to be Mr. Randall's little postman. Besides, he did not go home at dinner-time, but left his dinner-bag at Granny's cottage just by the churchyard, and went to eat his meal there with her if she was at home, and not out charring or nursing.

Granny was a bright little kind old woman, with a clean white skin with a pretty pink colour in it, and very clear blue eyes under her old-fashioned cap tied under her chin. She could trot about as nimbly as any girl in the parish, and every one liked to have her help when anything was to be done. So Davy

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was not at all sure of her being at home, and that made it the greater treat when she was there. It was not only because she used to give him a little butter or some brown sugar, or a little dripping, or treacle, or may be what she called "a few broth," or a cup of tea, to help out his hunch of bread. He liked to talk to her, for she was always kind and merry with him ; and he was fond of Tom, her big old cat, all white except his tail and one ear. Davy thought there was not such a fine cat in all Langley as Granny's Tom.

Granny Woodfall had a nice garden too, with double daisies and thrift and violets along the paths, and vegetables beyond, also three or four stocks of bees.

She would not keep fowls, because she said they would scratch her garden and ruin it, but she had ducks—which ate the slugs and did no harm. They swam in the pond by the churchyard, and it was grand to see them all coming back in

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a line, the old drake in front, with his green head and little black curl, wagging his short tail, and making odd little noises with his orange-coloured bill, and his brown ducks with their purple pockets waddling after him. Sometimes one of them had a train of soft woolly, downy, brown and yellow ducklings after her. Davy loved to feed the ducks, and to look for their nests when they made them in cunning places where Granny could not go after them.

It was a grand thing for Davy, as Granny said, to have a chance of earning threepence a week.

“But you won’t let the child spend it all in trash,” she said to Davy’s mother, who had come in on her way to evening service on Sunday.

“No,” said young Mrs. Woodfall; “he is going to take it to school on Monday for Miss Manners to put it into the Penny Bank.”

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“Better put it in a money-box,” said the old lady. “I’ve got one up there, like a little house, that I saved one pound two and fourpence in, all in halfpence. I’d give it to Davy, only that my son Jack, he broke the chimney off it. He always was an unlucky one, was Jack.”

“I think the Bank is the safer. It ain’t so easy got at,” said David’s mother; “and besides, they add to it.”

“I ha’n’t no opinion of banks,” said Mrs. Woodfall. “They breaks, and then there’s an end of all you’ve put by—like as it was with poor Mr. Light.”

“Mammy, how do a bank break,” exclaimed Davy, “and do the ducks tumble into the water?”

His mother laughed, and said she did not mean that sort of bank, like where the ducks ran about, but still David said very gravely,—

“I don’t want to hide my threepenny bit there; the dilly-ducks would gobble

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it up," and his grandmother shook with laughing and said,—

“Listen to the child now.”

But though her daughter-in-law told her the Post-Office Savings' Bank could not break she was not satisfied, and David could not understand the matter at all. His mother told him not to ask questions, for he could not understand, but that his money would be quite safe with Miss Manners. David was rather sorry to part with his pretty little silver coin with a great 3 on the back of it; but, on the other hand, he liked handing it up to Miss Manners, and her giving him in return a little book with “Langley, February 30th, David Woodfall—3*d*.” written in it.

Several other children also brought their pence for Miss Manners to put into the Bank for them; but most had not much choice about it. Their mothers sent the money to be laid up against the time when they would want to be fitted out for some

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situation. However, Charlie Anstey, who began at the same time as David, did earn his, for old Mrs. Cannon of Low Mead gave him a penny for every twenty eggs he brought in, because her hens always would steal their nests, and she and her maid could not be always going after them.

For two Mondays, all the money of these two boys went to Miss Dora. But on the third Monday morning there was to be seen in Mrs. Hollis's window a most beautiful new sweet—all creamy-looking, white with stripes of pink and blue upon it. Jim Nowel came out with a great lump, all sticky and delicious-looking, and gave a bite of it to Charlie, who cried out as well as he could, for his teeth were sticking together, and the loose one in front was nearly pulled out,—

“Oh, my! if that isn't—”

Words could say no more. Charlie dashed into the shop, and laid out all the twopence halfpenny he had just received

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from Mrs. Cannon upon a great lump of it. He gave a bit to Jim, and to his little sister, and to Davy, and still there was a good deal when they got to school, for it was not possible to swallow it down quickly, since it stuck the jaws together like wax, especially when eaten in a hurry ; and there was the bell ringing, and they had to tumble into school, while the lump went down into Charlie's trouser pocket. Neither of the three boys could sing in the hymn, but Jim and Davy were all right by the time they joined in the prayers.

However, the pupil-teacher might soon be heard saying,—

“ Anstey, what are you eating ? ”

He held his head down and made no answer, and he would have escaped if, when he was doing his sum, he had not been so foolish as to try to pinch off a corner of the sweet stuff that he longed after.

Teacher Edward saw it, and called the

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master. Poor Charlie! out came the whole brown paper full of sweet, sticky Gibraltar rock, and straight into the fire it went; while a cruel bright white flame licked it up, and poor Charlie cried, with his knuckles in his eyes, till he was put to stand on the form! And there he was when Miss Manners came in for the Penny Bank money.

Davy felt pleased with himself as he gave his threepence all in halfpence. Yet he was not so very wise and saving, after all, for he *did* long after a bit of that beautiful rock; and he almost wished he had kept back a halfpenny to spend on it, if only to comfort poor Charlie for the sight of his lump burning away. One or two other boys could have cried for it too if they had dared, and only one of the sums in the class came right, and that was done by Peter Slowman, whom nothing ever disturbed.

The boys had just found out that one

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can't save one's money and spend it both, and there was no doubt which was the nicest just then.

Davy told his Granny all about it ; and perhaps she was a foolish old granny, but she was a dear kind one, for she said he was her good boy, and she went to the big copper-coloured earthenware teapot with a lion on the lid, and she took out three halfpence, and told him to buy a good lump of rock, only not till he came out of afternoon school. Davy hugged her and asked if he should bring her some, which made her thank him and laugh till her old eyes ran over at the very notion of her wanting any.

So Davy bought a famous bit of Gibraltar rock after school.

He was an open-handed little man, and he gave a good piece to Charlie, and so many bites to others who stood round saying, "Give me a taste, Davy," that when he had saved enough for his two

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little sisters at home, there was a very tiny morsel for himself; but he had had a full three halfpence worth of pleasure out of it.

However, when he came home, and gave Polly and Annie their treat, and their mother heard all the story, she said,—

“Look here, Davy, you must not be begging coppers of Granny. She’s got a hard matter to live, as it is, and I can’t have you going to her if you are to be getting pence from her. I’d rather you kept back a halfpenny, if you had a craving, once in a way, than go getting the money out of her.”

It would be of no use to tell what happened every week. David seldom missed giving Miss Manners something for the Bank,—not often the whole threepence, and sometimes only a penny; for he did like to take the little ones home some peppermints or some gingerbread, and once he kept his pence to buy himself a

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knife, and once he broke a window and had to pay for it.

When there was a collection in Church it was his own penny, not his mother's, that he put into the bag; and when the birthdays came round, he had his presents for the little sisters. But he had really missed only one week in a whole year saving something, and that was when little Annie was ill, and he brought home six oranges for her.

He came to have a bigger book now belonging to the real Bank, and there was a very long sum of figures, though they were but small ones; and as he grew older he came to a little better understanding of the Savings' Bank at the Post-Office. As he told Granny, it was lending money to the Queen, and she paid you for the use of it, and that made it more, and of course it must be safe when it was lent to the Queen. And Granny laughed that they should tell the child such things, and

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still held that her teapot was the safer place.

How was Charlie Anstey getting on? Well, his book stood still as follows:—

CHARLES ANSTEY—

| | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Feb. 3 | . | . | . | 3 <i>d.</i> |
| „ 10 | . | . | . | 2½ <i>d.</i> |

It had never gone any further; and yet Charlie found eggs all the spring and summer. But his halfpence never could get past Mrs. Hollis's shop. The more sweet things and apples he ate the more he wanted to eat. He was never happy without something in his mouth, and there is no telling the number of troubles he got into for cracking nuts or sucking peppermint-drops at school, or even at Church; for the habit grew on him. Such tastes do grow if we let them. Then they become the sinful lusts of the flesh, and a boy, who never tries to stint himself in sweets when he is little, is very

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likely not to try to stint himself in drink when he is a man.

It was two years and a half since David had begun to put into the Bank. He was nearly ten years old, and would soon be in the fourth standard. He took Polly and Annie to school with him now, but mother would not let more than one at a time dine at Granny's, so they went turn about. Perhaps all three every day would have been too much for old Mrs. Woodfall, for they made a pretty good noise altogether, such as mother said would terrify the old lady, and she would never have been able to help giving them the best part of whatever she had for dinner. She was very kind to each, but on the whole she best liked the days when Davy came.

There was a beautiful brood of ducks that summer—twelve of them, of a top-knotted kind, which the children thought most beautiful. How they did like to watch them rowing with their yellow web

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feet in the pond, or turning right upside down in the water, with only a little tail sticking straight upright—"standing tail upwards," as the verses in the school-book called it. Annie was so fond of these young ducks that Granny could not bear to vex her little tender heart by telling her when a bargain was made, that when there was a great public dinner next week at Ellerby the young ducks would all be eaten up. The market-cart had to call for them the day before, and would bring the money on returning. David was warned not to tell his sisters. Some boys would have done so all the more, out of a strange delight in teasing and vexing little girls; but Davy really loved his little sister, and saw no fun in making her unhappy beforehand by telling her she would be feeding her dilly-duckies for the last time when she trotted off to Granny's cottage at dinner-time. So he was not very much

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surprised when Annie came tearing back to the play-ground, crying bitterly, and sobbing out,—

“The poor, poor dillies! All gone.”

“What? are they gone already?” he said. “I thought she was to have kept them till to-morrow.”

“It’s the fox—the nasty, horrid fox,” said Annie; “he has killed them all, and not left one!”

David still suspected for a moment that perhaps Granny had let Annie think it was the fox who had taken them; but when the little girl said every duck, old and young, was gone, and poor Granny was crying, he began to believe it, and set off at full speed to see what was the true story.

Yes, Granny was crying. She had been out all night sitting up with a sick neighbour, and had not been able to get home till late in the morning; so that when the poor ducks did not come at her call she had not been alarmed, but thought they

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had gone into the long meadow to look out for food for themselves.

Little Annie had, however, run out and called them in vain ; no ducks came, and at last she came on one dead body, a little lonely, late-hatched thing, that was all down except some beginnings of wing feathers. There it lay, with its neck and web feet out, quite dead. Annie carried it home, pitying it. Then Granny came out to search. Some of the children and their mothers came out to help, and by-and-by, at the back of the hedge on the bank of the pond, there was found a quantity of feathers, which every one knew belonged to the poor old drake. It looked as if he had fought hard for his life, poor old fellow ; and when David came to the house the policeman had just come in, and had given it as his opinion that it was a two-legged fox that had done it, and was picking out some of the feathers to try to trace the poor old drake by. He

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would compare them with all the ducks he could find in the shops, though there was little hope that he would find them.

Poor Granny said she had much rather it had been a fox, for then the gentlemen of the hunt would have made it up to her, as they always paid for mischief foxes could be proved to have done.

But she had made quite sure of thirty shillings for these ducks to pay her quarter's rent. It had been promised to her by the poulterer at Ellerby; and what should she do? The squire would have been patient with her, only her house did not belong to the squire, but to a tradesman at Ellerby who had the name of being very hard with his tenants.

“He'll seize my clock! I know he will,” said the poor old woman, sobbing,—“my clock that I had when I was married and my poor husband wound up every Saturday night reglar—so that I always thinks

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I hears his voice, when it buzzes afore striking eight.”

“Come, come, Mrs. Woodfall, don’t ye take on so ; maybe your son will help you.”

“My son ! He be a good lad, he be, but he has got a family of his own, and has got enough to do to look after them. I’ll not be a burthen on him while I can help it, and it pleases God to give me my health and strength. He—he haven’t got it to spare, not he.”

David heard all this, but nobody saw him, for four women and one old man were standing round the old woman. He heard, and a sudden thought struck him. He set off running—he had never run away from school before, but then such a thing had never happened before. He ran till he could run no longer, then he walked, then he ran again; but not so far or so fast.

However, between walking and running at last he bounced into the house, with his

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face as red as fire and quite out of breath, and, as his mother said, he "gave her such a turn as never was."

"Davy!" she cried, "what is it?" For she thought one of his little sisters must have been run over.

"Granny!" was all he could say, he panted so for breath.

"Granny! Good gracious! Is it a fit?"

"Ducks!—All stole!" he managed to say next.

And then his mother was, to tell the truth, a little bit angry at the fright he had given her, and would hardly believe him at first. But she was grieved enough when she properly understood that all the fine, well-fatted ducks were gone—the ducks that would have paid the rent.

"And what will poor Granny do?" she said. "What are you after now, Davy?"

Davy was routing in a drawer under his Sunday clothes, where, kept flat by his

prize books, lay a big envelope with a book in it. There under the name of David Woodfall stood some figures, and the last adding up made them come to £1 15s. 7½*d.*

“Mother! I can do it?” said David.

“Bless the boy, he’ll be for giving his head away next,” said young Mrs. Woodfall. “Why, Davy, you’ve been saving this ever so long, and I meant it to get some nice clothes for you when you have a place in two or three years’ time.”

“But, mother, I shall be able to make it up again before that.”

“You don’t know that. You might be ill, or Mr. Randall might employ some one else. You’ve been a good boy to save it all this time, and it’s a real nice little sum, and I don’t like it to go in this way.”

“Oh, mother, if you saw poor old Granny crying, and talking about the man seizing her clock that buzzes just like grandfather.”

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“Seizing her clock ! It ain’t coming to that ?”

“She’ll have to sell it, she says ; and she would do that rather than ask father to help, because he has a family of his own.”

“She’ve always been a good mother to me, and a good grandmother to all of you,” said Mrs. Woodfall.

“Then you’ll let me take out the money for her, there’s a dear mother,” said Davy earnestly.

“Well, well ; we’ll see what father says.”

“I’ll run to him this moment ; he’s hedging in Great Courtiers,” said Davy.

“Why, child, they ain’t coming after the clock this instant—there’s plenty of time.”

“But Granny’s crying,” repeated Davy, who could not for a moment forget the strange sight of his dear old cheerful grandmother in tears ; and holding tight his envelope, he set off again at a full

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gallop after his father; and Mrs. Woodfall gave a little sigh, for she knew pretty well how it would be, and she had liked to think of her boy's savings at his age.

"But there!" she said to herself, "a good heart is worth a pot of money. It's not as if he wanted to spend it for himself."

James Woodfall was almost as much startled as his wife when his boy's hot face showed itself at such a strange time of the day, and he was, like her, quite glad to find it was nothing worse than ducks that were dead.

But he made much less difficulty than his wife had done about David's money.

"Give it to Granny?—yes, and welcome, my lad. You're a good boy to have thought of it. I only wish I had it to give, for she's been the best of mothers to me. It's right down lucky you had laid it up," he added, "or I don't know what-
ever we should have done for mother."

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David sped away again as hard as his legs would let him, for he could not allow them to be tired yet. All his fear now was that Miss Manners might not be at home, and his heart was beating like a hammer when he reached her back-door and asked for her.

Robert, the page-boy, was in his best suit of buttons, and said she was at home, but that she had some ladies to tea with her.

“Oh, but please; it is very particular,” said David.

And Robert took in the message that “Little Woodfall wanted to see Miss Manners very particular.”

So she came to him in the kitchen, and he began,

“Oh, please, ma’am, might I have my money,” and he held up the book.

“All your money, David?”

“Thirty shillings, please, ma’am.”

“That’s nearly all, isn’t it? Are you in such haste? for I could not get it

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to-day, and I don't think I can go to-morrow."

Poor David looked very blank.

"Is there so much haste?" she said kindly. "What is it for? Did your mother send you for it?"

"She said I might, and father did too. It is for Granny. She've had all her ducks stolen last night, and she was crying because they were to pay the rent; and mother said I might take her the money."

"My dear little boy!"—Miss Manners quite startled him by the words and voice—"I'll let you have the money directly if you will wait a moment: you and granny shall have it. I'll get it out of the bank in a day or two; but I'll advance it to you at once."

She went away, and presently came back with a bright gold sovereign and a half, and put them into David's hot red hand, saying,

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“I think you are a very happy little boy, David.”

Away he went again. He had not far to go this time. The cottage door was open; nobody was there, and he heard Granny clattering about in the kitchen. He began to feel shy; so he put down the sovereign and half-sovereign on the little round table, and crept under the big table by the window to watch.

Presently Granny came in, talking to herself. How his heart beat!

“Well, a poor old body must have her tea, any way. I thank the Lord I’ve got that. And I won’t vex. Sure the Lord will provide. Bless me! how ever did I come to leave them two farthings out on the table. I thought I’d put ’em in my pocket to please the little maids, they was so bright and new; but my troubles put it all out of my head. I’ll give them if they look in after school. Maybe ’twill

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comfort little Annie a little for her poor old Dilly Top-knot."

David could not bear it any longer. He burst out with—

"Oh, Granny, you mustn't! It's golden money!"

Poor Granny, after the shock she had had that morning, was almost frightened into a fit by the roar and scramble under the table, and fell back into her chair looking so that Davy didn't know what he had done to her, and came to her side in a terrible fright, saying, — "Don't, Granny; it's only me."

"Oh, Davy, how could you frighten your poor granny so, you naughty boy?"

And she gasped and panted before she could understand anything, while David did for the moment feel it very hard to be called a naughty boy, forgetting that it was all his own roughness that had brought it on him. But the mist cleared away from Granny's eyes and ears in a

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moment or two, and the cheery old body was herself again.

“What did you say, Davy, with your tricks? What’s this? Why, ’pon my word and honour, ’tis a gould sovereign, after all!”

Then David began to smile.

“Where did it come from?” she asked.
“You never brought it.”

He somehow could not speak, but he nodded his head hard.

“You did? Well, you are a good, kind little lad to think of your poor granny. But, my dear, you never went begging to the quality for it? I never begged in my life, nor none of mine ever did.”

“No, no, Granny. It’s my own, my very own! Out of my Savings Bank, you know.”

And he hugged her round the neck so that the old lady’s next danger was of being choked. She hugged him in return, and what was more, she took to crying, which made him quite angry.

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“Now, granny, I did it that you mightn’t go crying,” he exclaimed, which set her off into laughing.

Indeed she was altogether so much upset that it was lucky that mother walked in just at that moment, having come as soon as she could, to see about this whole story.

After all, the old lady was quite hard to persuade to take the little boy’s money. Mother said all she could, but the more pleased the grandmother was with her grandson’s thought the less she could bear the notion of what she called “robbing the child of his little earnings.”

She did not quite give way till father came in too, as he did as soon as his day’s work was over, and said he,—

“Why, mother, one would think you’d never taught us the end of the fifth commandment as well as the beginning. You wouldn’t wish to hinder the child

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from getting a blessing that'll be more to him than the gold?"

"Ah!" she said then, "God bless him, and you too, Jim, and Mary too. I don't think there's a happier old woman in all the world than I am to-day. And to think that I owe it all to that there thief!"

There certainly was not a happier boy in the parish than David Woodfall, and he might have said he owed it all to the good mother who taught him to deny his taste a little, and not eat up all he earned as fast as he had it.

As for the poor young ducks, nobody went on grieving much for them but Polly and Annie, as every one else knew that they really had only had one day longer to live. Poor old Dilly Top-knot and his two old ducks, they had certainly had their lives cut too short, and the pond looked very forlorn without them; but two days later there came down all the

QUACK, QUACK.

nursery children from the hall with their donkey. Miss Hilda, Miss Mary, and Master Freddy each carried a covered basket. And when the lid was raised, Master Freddy's held a big snowy-white drake, with two fine curls and beautiful orange bill and feet, and each of the little girls had in her basket a lovely gentle-looking white duck.

"They are the real Aylesbury sort," said Miss Hilda, "and we chose them ourselves, and we do hope you'll accept them, Mrs. Woodfall, for it is our own present to you!"

"And," said Master Freddy gravely, "they are so big and so white that the next thief will think they are swans, and not good to eat, and won't steal them." And the great white drake said "Quack! Quack!"

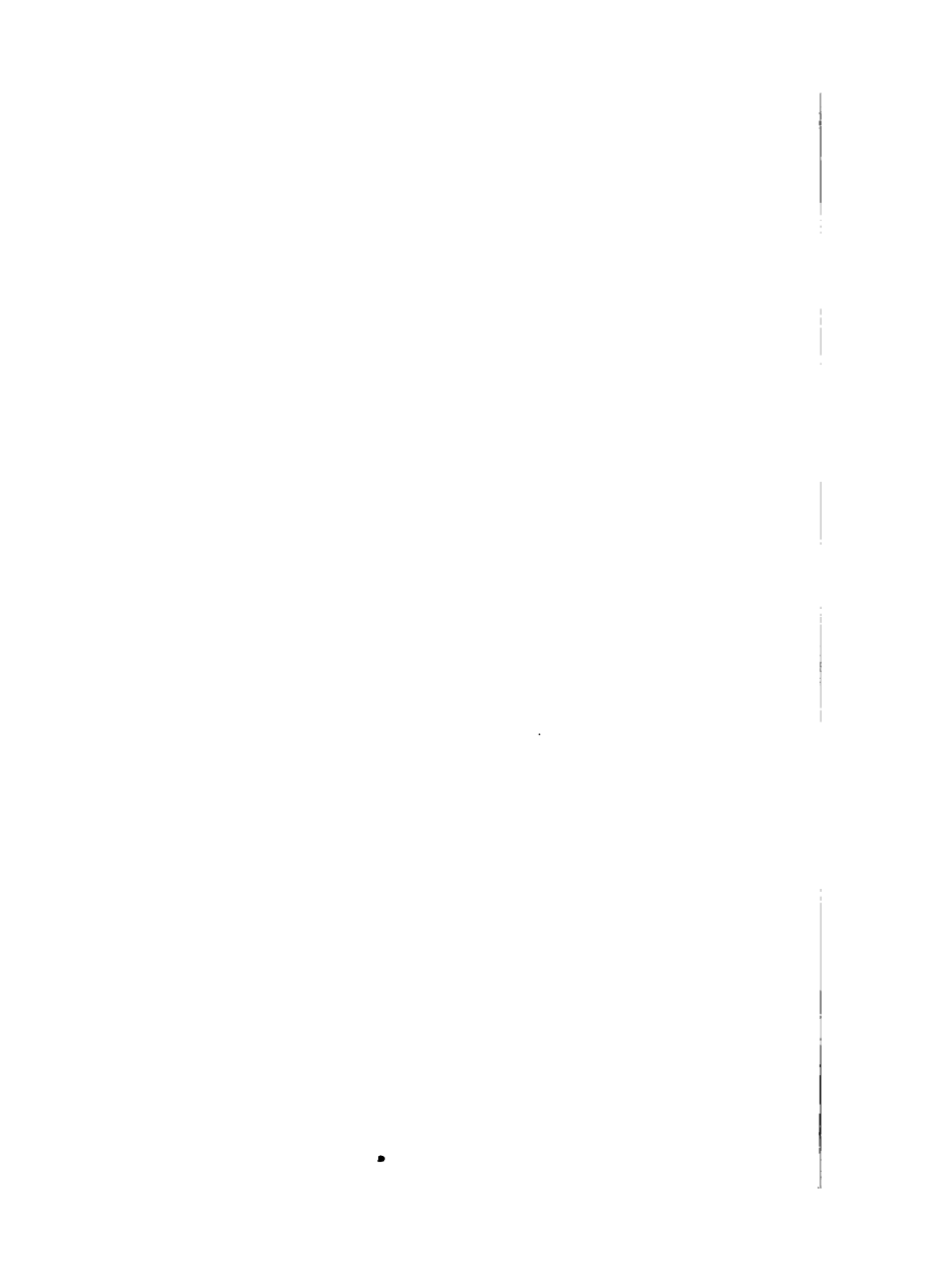
OLLY BRINDLE.

moon is up, the sky is blue,
owllet in the moonlight air
ats from nobody knows where.
engthens out his lonely shout—
ool halloo! a long halloo!
the moonlight lanes they go,
e moonlight dale,
or from the town.

Wordsworth.

farmer Drew buy that
and let her graze in the
e was striped black and
; or any other savage beast
ple and eats them up; she
the points of her great,
ling horns; and when she
head and stared, little hearts
ort legs ran.

three children from the hall
nursery-maid, Annie, came



BULLY BRINDLE.

The moon is up, the sky is blue,
The owlet in the moonlight air
Shouts from nobody knows where.
He lengthens out his lonely shout—
Halloo ! halloo ! a long halloo !
So through the moonlight lanes they go,
And far into the moonlight dale,
To bring a doctor from the town.

Wordsworth.

WHY did Farmer Drew buy that brindled cow, and let her graze in the path-field ? She was striped black and red like a tiger, or any other savage beast that kills people and eats them up ; she wore tips on the points of her great, white, spreading horns ; and when she lifted up her head and stared, little hearts beat and short legs ran.

Once the three children from the hall
and their nursery-maid, Annie, came

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rushing and tumbling in at Mrs. Snow's garden-gate, because "that dreadful cow had put down her head and came running at their aunt's little dog Pickle," and Master Freddy was "quite sure that it wasn't a cow at all, but that Mr. Drew had bought a mad bull by mistake."

Ernest and Celia Snow heard of it. They were only eight and seven years old, and shy, timid-looking things, with light hair and blue eyes, whom every one took for twins. The story did not make them laugh as it did older people; and only two days later, when they were walking part of the way home with their Aunt Jane and her mistress's white dog, with a sharp nose and a very tightly-curved tail, all the cows came down the lane on the way back from being milked, and what must Fritz, the dog, do but run up and bark at their noses. Then Brindle showed how like a mad bull she was, for she put down her head and ran at him. He went off at once to hide behind Aunt

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Jane ; and what would have happened then, no one can tell, if there had not been a gate into the field just behind. Fritz squeezed through, Aunt Jane and the children tumbled themselves over and stood trembling, and the boy who was driving the cows burst into a great rude laugh.

When they were safely past, Aunt Jane kissed the children and went on her way. They were far too much frightened to go any further with her ; but ran back hand-in-hand, as if they thought a whole herd of mad bulls were after them.

Poor children ! it was hard for them to have to come and live in such a lonely place, with nobody to walk with them to school. They used to live in the middle of the village, close to the school ; but their father had the charge of Mr. Drew's steam-engine, which did much of the work in the farm, and which was kept in one of the outhouses belonging to an old straw-yard ; so that Mr. Drew wished him to live in the cottage close by it.

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It was a nice large cottage, with a famous garden full of old fruit-trees ; but Mrs. Snow, who had been brought up in a town, and was a gentle, timid woman, would have given up all these advantages if only she could have had a few neighbours nearer to her, and not had to send her two eldest children such a long way to school by themselves.

Braver children would have thought it a very pretty way. First there was the straw-yard, with their own pigs running about in it, and sometimes father, oiling up his engine. Then there was crossing a lane ; and then came a path along the top of the meadow, with a copse on the other side. After the field came a lane again, and then after a longish way across a corner of the down, down a path through some fir-woods, out over another big field, where the corn closed over their little heads, then along a path through the churchyard, and there they were close to the school. It was

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not far enough to tire the little people, and many of their school-fellows would have liked such a walk; but it was the being all alone that was distressing. And in that path-field might be Bully Brindle! Or she might be coming from the farm-yard when they came back from school! When they saw her in the field, they always went round the outside of it, though thus they had to go round three sides of a square instead of one, and through two bad gaps and a sticky turnip-field, so that they had to run great part of the way to make up for lost time. In the bit of plantation they crossed, too, they always thought about wolves, and the picture of Red Ridinghood with the wolf's nose poking out behind the tree, and they held each other very tight, and started at the least rustle of a rabbit in the wood, or screamed at a wood-pigeon's heavy flight.

Perhaps they would not have been so silly, if it had not been for the two farm-

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boys, whom Mr. Drew had lodged with their mother — Fred Bates and Harry Mole. They were about fourteen, big fellows, and rather clever; but they were the sort of lads who think it very good sport to tease and frighten little children.

They never did so before Mr. or Mrs. Snow, for they had seen at the first that this would bring a good stripe on them, if nothing worse; but they could seldom be alone with Ernest and Celia, or even with little three-year-old Edgar, without doing something to torment them, letting the poor little things know all the time that to speak a word of complaint would only make it the worse for them. And they could sometimes be good-natured. They taught Ernest some new games with marbles; they used to bring home pockets full of sweets from the shop, and share them freely among the children; and Ernest watched and admired them in spite of his fears.

Sometimes they twisted the children's

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arms to see if they could bear pain. Sometimes they shut Celia up in the dark coal-store in the straw-yard, and often they pretended to be going to put her under the engine to be chopped into little bits.

Two or three times they had made the poor children late for Sunday School by dancing across the lane with their arms spread out, so that there was no passing them, or they would roar behind the hedge, jump out, and try to catch the children as they went by. Once Fred made as if they were going to put Celia into the bucket and let her down into the well, while Harry talked of frogs and toads; and if they did nothing else, they would tell the most dreadful stories they could think of to alarm the children. To say the truth, it was Harry who told most of the dreadful stories, and Fred who *did* the worst and most terrifying things; but then they always backed up one another. Fred made Harry's stories more shocking

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still, and Harry helped Fred in his tricks. Harry said old Nero, at the farm, had bitten a piece out of the postman's leg, and Fred added that they thought he was going mad.

Harry said there was a wolf in the plantation, and Fred that it had eaten up a tramp's baby.

They looked quite shocked when Celia on an autumn day put on her little scarlet hood. The turkey-cock would be sure to knock her down and stand upon her, and Fred added that perhaps he would peck off her nose. And as for Bully Brindle—Oh, dear! they were sorry for Celia.

“She can't get at me through the hedge,” said Celia in a trembling voice.

Harry shook his head and looked pitiful, and Fred said,—

“You'll see! Hedges won't hold her.”

Celia cried, and begged to wear her hat instead of her hood; but she would not tell the reason why, and her mother

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thought it was only that she fancied the hood would make her look like a baby, and said she would have no such nonsense.

Celia went away crying with fright and at being scolded. She took off her pinafore and tied it over her head ; and then she and Ernest took each other's hands and raced along the lane as hard as they could go. Fred, who unluckily was in the next field, gave a horrible moo behind them, and then burst out laughing to think how he had scared the foolish little things.

They used to run along in fear and terror till they had got beyond the plantation and could see the church. Then their frights were over for the time. They could walk quietly without listening and starting at every sound, their poor little hearts did not go so fast, and they could talk a little in peace.

"I've learnt such a nice text, Ernie," said Celia one day. "'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming

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in, from this time forth for evermore.' Teacher said that God would take care of us when we went out and when we came home, every day and always, if we asked Him."

"We do ask Him when we say our prayers," said Ernest.

"Yes," said Celia, "and you know nothing has ever hurt us yet."

She said it in a trembling little voice, though she was rather the bravest of the two, and Ernest started as if the little boast might bring danger on them.

"Shall I teach it you, Ernie?" said Celia. "If we say it all together through the wood and the lane, maybe we shan't get into such a fright."

They repeated the verse in their little shaky, chirping voices over and over again, though they often stopped and started and listened; but this time the noise they heard was the panting and snorting of father's engine coming up the lane, and they ran towards him. They were lifted

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up to him to ride home, and they felt as happy and as safe and at rest as the little birds in their nests.

Harry did sometimes entertain himself by telling them that engines blew up, and that people fell into them and got their legs and arms chopped off. Indeed, he was really rather afraid of going near the engine himself. They never thought father or his engine could come to any grief or harm; and the notion troubled them as little as other stories that Harry sometimes told about white things and light things, and groaning and moaning things in the churchyard. They had once lived near the churchyard, and they only wished they were near it still, for it seemed like home, and they never were afraid there close to church and school and all their playfellows, and out of reach of the turkey-cock, and Nero, and Bully Brindle, and those two cruel boys.

Mrs. Snow did not much like the boys, though she never guessed how miserable

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they made her children. She hoped they would have gone to the night school and have been out of the way two evenings in the week, but they would not go. They said they knew enough without, and it was true that they could read, write, and cipher beautifully. But there were other things they had not learnt at the school they had been at: they did not know anything about the Commandments, or the Lord's Prayer, or the Bible; and Harry laughed and said they did not care about those things in their parts, and they weren't going to be bothered.

They did not go out in the evenings; Mrs. Snow rather wished they would, instead of hanging about the house. Fred seemed to be generally trying to frighten something, and Celia's poor pussy had taken to living in the loft over the engine-house, and never coming home except when the lads were out of the way. Harry sometimes had newspapers

¹ books with very gay pictures on the

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outside, sometimes quite as horrid as his stories. Father once read one of them, and did not like it. He advised Harry to get books out of the lending library instead, but Harry said, "Catch me. I know what they are like."

So father only told Ernest and Celia not to read the books, and they did not want to do any such thing. They had quite as much reading as, or more than, they wanted at school and with their lessons, and these books seemed to be full of hard words. Besides this, Harry had a pack of cards, and the two used to have games with them, and sometimes to quarrel over them. Though if Harry was in a good-natured mood, he would build houses with them for little Edgar; but his good nature was never much to be trusted. If mother was not there, it would often end in his making the horrid face that always terrified the little boy so much that he would stand staring and shaking, and not daring to cry out. If

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Fred came in, something of the kind was sure to happen ; for if either of the lads was tolerably kind by himself, the moment the other came up, he would seem ashamed of his kindness, and begin to tease.

On the whole, the children liked Fred the best, though he was the roughest. They pretty well knew the worst that he was likely to do, and that when he had shouted out a great rude laugh, it was all over. Besides, he cut and peeled lovely sticks with a ribbon of bark running round them, and he had made a may-horn for Ernest, and taught him to make as hideous a noise with it as could delight a boy.

But as to Harry, nobody could guess what he would do next. There was no feeling safe from him anywhere, and though he did not laugh quite so loud as Fred, he never left off so soon, but seemed more to enjoy the distress he gave.

Fred was large, big, and stout, but Harry was thin and pale and sharp-faced,

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and was not much liked by any one except Fred, for the other boys thought him spiteful. And he was never ready to do anything venturous. He was giddy on a ladder, would never go near the real bull, and ran into the coal-hole when there was a thunderstorm.

After harvest Mr. Drew hired out his machine to some other farmers, and Mr. Snow had to go with it, and sleep on the farm, for it was too far to come back at night.

“Those lads will be worse than ever!” said Mrs. Snow with a sigh, for if father was well out of reach, and could not be told directly, they did not heed what she said to them; and when they were in a real unruly mood, they did not stick at frightening her as well as the children.

The second night of father's being away they were in a very noisy, troublesome state. Mrs. Snow was a meek woman, and could not stop them; but she took Edgar and the baby up-stairs to

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put them to bed, wishing she could have gone thither herself, but afraid to do so, lest they should set the place on fire by some of their pranks.

Ernest and Celia thought the safest place was the top step of the stairs, and sat there huddled up together.

“Come down, you little sillies,” shouted Fred; “come down, or we’ll make you.”

“I know where you are; you needn’t pretend to hide,” added Harry. “I’m sharpening my scythe like old Time in the picture, to mow you down.”

“Have they got at the scythe,” whispered Ernest much shocked, for he and his sister were never allowed to touch it.

“I hear you! Boo!” bawled Fred. “I’m coming.”

“Never mind, Fred,” said Harry. “They’ll die, you know.”

At which Celia began to cry, though it was an old way of tormenting her, and merely meant that she would die some time or other.

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Just then there was a thump, a scuffling, and a most frightful scream and moan, which brought Mrs. Snow rushing out with the candle. She just missed falling over Ernest and Celia, who had sprung up, and she ran down, while Harry was heard saying,

“There! there! you ain’t hurt, old chap, are you?”

“Oh! oh! ain’t I though? Oh, the blood! My leg’s cut in two! It is— Oh—”

It was not quite cut in two, but in the dark passage, the scythe had fallen, by its own weight, out of the hands that were not used to it, and it had made a most frightful gash in the calf of Fred’s leg, from which the blood was pouring out in a perfect torrent; so that as the light came, Harry staggered back into the kitchen white and sick. Poor Mrs. Snow would often turn faint at a cut finger, but she knew that if she did any such thing now it would be as good as death to the boy.

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“ We must stop it,” she cried. “ Get a cloth this instant—never mind what.”

Ernest had the sense to bring her two or three dusters, and she tried to bind them round, but they were like nothing against the stream of that dark-looking blood ; and Fred sobbed and gasped that he was killed, he should die.

“ Get the round-towel down, Harry, there, can't you ? ” she called. “ Oh, dear, was there ever such a boy ? Celia, there's one in the dresser drawer. Now, let me get it under. My dear lad—there ! ”

With the long towel rolled round the leg, and pulled tight with all her strength,—not Harry's, for he was too much frightened to come near,—the flow of blood was a little checked, and she was able to think, for a moment, what was to be done. Harry sobbed out something about a doctor.

“ Yes, 'tis a job for a doctor,” said Mrs. Snow ; “ but there ain't none nearer than Ellerby. Look here, one of you—

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Ernest, yes—must run over to the farm and say Fred has had an accident with the scythe, and if Mr. Drew would send over some one on horseback for the doctor—though I don't know who he'd send unless the young master is there to go. And if Mrs. Drew would let you bring back a drop of something, it might help to keep the life in him. Now, Harry," she added, as she saw the blood still oozing out, though not so quickly, "you must go down as quick as ever you can into Langley village and fetch old Mrs. Woodfall. She'll know what to do before the doctor comes ; and there's need," she added, for she really thought the lad would bleed to death.

"I don't know where Mrs. Woodfall lives," muttered Harry.

"My patience ! Any one will tell you when you get into the street. Be off with you ! Here, Cely, give me the cushion out of father's chair to put under his head ; poor lad, I don't dare to move

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him. Dear, dear, here's the blood again !
Be quick, I say."

Celia gave the cushion, and then Ernest clasped hold of her hand and said,—

"Come, Cely."

She caught up her little cloak and hood, and came out with him into the moonlight night.

It was about seven o'clock, the moon, just past the full, was rising, and the trees made long shadows. It had never come into Celia's head that mother might want her. She was so much used to go with Ernest that she only thought of helping him to face the farmyard ; and they held each other's hands tight and said,—

"Let's run ! We'll say our text—
'The Lord preserve thy going out—'"

"Hark !"

It was a great sobbing noise. Harry was at the gate in the moonlight, crying and shaking all over. Little Celia's first notion was to comfort him.

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“Don’t cry so, Harry,” she said. “Granny Woodfall always knows what to do. She quite cured Eddy when he had his foot scalded.”

“I can’t go,” sobbed the boy.

“There’s nothing to hurt you,” said Ernest, as much amazed as if he did not daily rush along the path in terror.

“The dark! the churchyard! Oh, I’m afeard,” cried Harry, beating the children off, as if they were strong creatures about to drag him forward.

“The churchyard won’t hurt,” said Celia. “Oh, Harry, make haste—do. If the blood broke out—”

“You go, I say,” and Harry ran back into the shadow of the house.

He was almost beside himself with fright at the sight of Fred indoors, and out of doors at the bare notion of going alone in the dark, or what was worse, among the strange lights and shades cast by the moon across the wood and churchyard, of which he had told so many tales

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that he really had a dread of them ; and, upset as he was by the shock, the selfish lad felt nothing but his own fears.

“ Won’t he go ? ” said Ernest. “ We must tell mother, and she’ll make him.”

“ She can’t,” said Celia ; “ she can’t come away from poor Fred ; she can’t let go one moment. Don’t call her, Ernie. You run on for Mr. Drew ; I’ll go for Granny Woodfall.”

“ I wish he would,” said Ernest, looking back. “ Then you could come along with me.”

“ Never mind, Ernie,” she answered. “ Nero isn’t loose at night, and Vixen can’t hurt much. You’ll soon be there. We’ll say our verse all the way, and then God will take care of us.”

And as the little ones crossed the straw-yard, their voices said together—
“ The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.” They came to the stile

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where their roads parted. Ernest had to go to the farm-house, which lay nearer than the village. He ran all the way, and came safe. Nero only barked at his kennel door, and the back door was open. Little Vixen rushed out, but the maid called her back ; and when she heard the boy's story, she ran in to tell her master and mistress in the parlour.

They both came out and questioned Ernest, so that he got frightened, and hardly knew what he was saying, and he could see that they did not half believe Fred was so bad as he said.

“Just a bad cut! Serves the lads right for larking about and meddling,” said Mrs. Drew. “I'm sure *you* can't go, dear, on a frosty night like this. Such a cold as you have too!”

Young Mr. Drew was not at home, Mr. Drew had a cold, and Mrs. Drew was always afraid of his going out late. So when they heard Mrs. Woodfall had been sent for, they said that she was as good

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as any doctor for a cut, and they would wait till morning.

Mr. Drew gave the boy the little bottle for his mother, and told him to go back, and if Fred was not better, to fetch the doctor in the morning. Ernest went out crying, and a big carter lad, Frank Freeman, said, —

“ Well, what is it? Ain’t Harry gone for the doctor for his mate.”

“ He’s afeard,” said Ernest.

“ Afeard!” and Frank burst out laughing. “ That’s a good one!”

But Ernest cried so much, and gave such an account of poor mother, and the terrible sight at home, that Frank at last said, —

“ Come on, little chap. You run home with the bottle as fast as you can, and I’ll make the best of my way to Ellerby before the doctor goes to bed. Won’t I give it well to that cowardly fellow Harry to-morrow?”

In the mean time, Celia had had to

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cross the path-field, for she knew that she must not lose time by going round. The two children could hear one another's voices for a little time as each went on with their Psalm.

Then Celia, still murmuring it, tried not to see whether the cows were in the field. Perhaps they would not see her. Oh dear! here was one lying full in the path, close to the stile. Perhaps it was one of the tame ones! Oh dear, the light shone on those wide white horns, and glanced on the metal tips. Bully Brindle herself! But she was quietly chewing her cud like the rest. Celia could hear in the still, silent field the munch, crunch, lick, and turn over, in the creatures' mouths. Well, Bully Brindle might perhaps not notice her, if she respectfully went out of the path, and walked all round the creature on the grass that looked all silver with the dew in the moonlight.

Brindle did, however, either see or

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hear the little figure, and began getting up in a cow's own awkward way—hind quarters first, so slowly, luckily, that Celia, who was by this time close to the stile, had time to roll herself over it, she hardly knew how, before Bully Brindle was quite on her four legs, and was puffing the steam out of her nostrils in the frosty moonlight, as she tried to make out what strange little thing had trotted round her.

The lane was all in shadow from the hedge, but Celia did not mind that greatly, and there was a nice little tinkle from a sheep-bell, which grew louder as she came out on the silvery down. It seemed to her quite the middle of the night, by the time she reached the fir-wood. That she did not like at all. It was terribly black and dark in the path, and the wolf and the tramp's baby came into her head; but there was no going back now. She said her text again, and bravely went through the turn-stile. But

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there was a rustle, and then a long, loud shout, "Hoo, hoo, hoo—ow—ow!" followed by the oddest little "skwiow, skwiow." Was it the wolf? She set off running as fast as she could, and soon had another fright, for she hit her foot against the root of a tree, and tumbled down right on her face.

However, nothing came to eat her up, and she gathered herself up, rather shaken, but hearing the "Hoo, hoo!" much further off; and though "skwiow, skwiow," was nearer, she did not think wolves said anything like that.

Here was the stubble-field at last, all white and broad and shiny, with the dew on all the white-headed wigs of thistle-down, and the gossamer webs between them; and the church tower stood up before her, and the church windows were lighted up, the bright colours of the painted glass looking prettier than ever.

It was quite a surprise to Celia, who felt as if it were midnight, that service should be going on, and the sound of the

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hymn came out to her. She wondered whether Mrs. Woodfall were in church. It would save much time if she were ; and the little maid crept into the porch, and pushed open the heavy door, feeling very glad that the last Amen was sounding.

There were not many people, and when they got up from kneeling, they were very much surprised to see the little red hood standing there.

Mrs. Woodfall *was* moving out, and she bent to hear the whisper, as Celia clasped her hand.

“Oh, do please come. Fred has cut himself dreadful with the scythe, and mother says will you please come and help her till the doctor comes, for she can't stop the bleeding.”

“Dear, dear ! your little brother, do'ee say ? How came he to get at the scythe ? Poor little fellow !”

By this time Celia had explained that it was “our lodger,” and that they had sent to ask Mr. Drew to have the doctor

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fetched. Mr. Somers came out of the vestry, and when he heard the little girl's story, and that father was not at home, he said he would come too. And so Celia had no frights at all in going back. The strange noises did come again, but Mrs. Woodfall said,

“Dear, how them owls be hollaing, to be sure!”

And Celia saw a great white thing sail silently along, and as the other thing said “Skwiow, skwiow!” Mr. Somers said,

“Ha, there's the little sparrow-owl. I've always wanted to see him.” Then he added, “What, are you come here all alone, Celia? You are a brave little body.”

But they did not talk much, for they wanted to get on as fast as they could.

Here they were at last—not a bit too soon. When they opened the door Fred was still lying at the bottom of the stairs, ever so much more deadly-looking and gasping than before. Mrs. Snow was

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still kneeling over him, pulling the roller-towel as hard as her strength would let her; but she looked almost as pale and spent as the boy. Ernest sat on the stairs trying to hush the baby; Edgar was asleep against his knee.

Mrs. Woodfall and Mr. Somers knew what to do, and when the doctor came at last he said that they had saved Fred's life; for if they had been longer in coming, the boy would have died before he could arrive.

And why had not Harry gone either for the doctor or Mrs. Woodfall?

Poor boy, he did look and feel very foolish the next day, for Frank Freeman and the other lads did not spare him, but laughed at him well for having been afraid to take a walk in the dark, when two scraps of children had done it instead of him—children too whom he and his companion had bullied.

For though Ernest and Celia did not know it, more than once, Frank Freeman

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and Tom Walton, big fellows of eighteen or so, had cried shame on Harry and Fred if they heard or saw them at their tricks, and had saved the children from many a fright by declaring that if they saw the poor little things terrified they should give the boys a thrashing. And now Harry could not show his nose at the farm without some one calling out, "Who's the bully? What about going out in the dark?"

He had a great mind to run away, but he was hired for a year, and the policeman would be after him if he went off. And thus his best time was in the cottage in the evening, as Fred began to get better. Mr. Somers, who had hardly known such lads were in the place, had come to see Fred, lent him amusing books, and talked to him pleasantly, and Mrs. Snow was quite a mother to him. The poor boy had been a good deal knocked about by a rough step-mother, and had never known such kindness as hers. And when Celia

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and Ernest were at home they were always ready to do anything for him.

So that by the time his leg was well enough to be used again, the good that was in the two boys had begun to wake up, and come out. And they had begun to take in something more precious than reading or writing or ciphering.

It was that *something* which had made those tiny timid children strong where the big boy was weak in overcoming fear—that something which had made them do their best for one who had been very unkind to them in his thoughtlessness.

The children grew wiser too when there was no one to work up their fears, and before the winter was over, they might be seen feeding Bully Brindle with turnips in the straw-yard, and stroking her soft, satin, striped face, having found out that she was the tamest and gentlest of all the cows.

SNOWDROP'S EGGS.

But cried cok-cok, and up he start,
As man who was affrayed in his heart.

Chaucer.

SNOWDROP was a very pretty white hen, without a coloured feather about her. She had a lovely nodding tuft on her head, with a fine crimson bit of comb between it and her clean white bill, and a little blue and white in her cheeks, over which looked out her quick bright eyes.

Snowdrop was a clever hen, perhaps a little too clever, for she chose to think for herself.

Miss Meakins and her maid Martha

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had made three beautiful nests in the hen-house, all done up with hay. One had a china egg in it and two had chalk ones; but Snowdrop did not trust those eggs, they felt hard and chilly, and besides, though she was so white herself, her own proper eggs were of a delicate pale brown or light coffee-colour, just what is the fashion now. Moreover, she knew that, lay as many eggs as she would, day after day, there never were more than two in the nest, counting the sham one; and however was she to hatch a brood of chickens at that rate?

So she flew over the paling into the Long Meadow, and there, searching about, she found in the corner of the ditch a beautiful place under the stump of an old tree, all soft with withered oak-leaves and grass below, and sheltered above by some ferns which were just spreading out their leaves, and there was a fine large primrose root besides, making it all

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beautiful, though Snowdrop only cared for that because that it helped to hide the nest. Here she laid her egg, one day, two days, three, four, five days, and they lay quite safe there. She was so safe and so proud that she could not help flying up to the top of the wood-pile, and cackling out at the top of her voice—"Buy tobacco! buy tobacco! buy tobacco! I'll pay a'll." As if Miss Meakins ever wanted to buy tobacco!

And somebody heard her, namely, Charlie Anstey, who had been hunting about in Mrs. Cannon's garden and the back-yard at the other end of the meadow for eggs. Mrs. Cannon always gave him a penny when he had made up twenty, and he knew there were sixteen in already; but he had only been able to find *one* that morning, and there was some ginger-bread all done over with pink and white at Mrs. Hollis's that he had set his heart upon. It was going very fast, and he

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must have some of it. His craving made it seem dreadful to him to think of going without.

He knew the white hen did not belong to Mrs. Cannon, whose black hen was sitting, while her Brown Betty had nine chicks, and of her three pullets two were speckled black and white and the other was yellow, and, stupid things, only one had laid an egg that morning, and the other was wandering clucking about, wanting to cheat him by going and sitting. He would like to duck her well in cold water and send her back to her proper trade of laying eggs for him to get sweeties with.

He wondered where that white hen's nest was. He thought she looked as if she had flown up from the outside of his mistress's grounds, and she certainly sprang down inside, where her cock was shouting out his congratulations to her, and the other hens beginning the song. Charlie

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thought he would go and look, and after hunting about a little he found the five pretty brown eggs under the primrose root. His conscience told him he ought to go and tell Miss Meakins or her Martha of them, and perhaps they would give him something for them. But Miss Meakins was said to be close, and Martha always looked sour and cross at boys. Besides, he didn't think much of 'that there Meakins,' as the rude boys called her.

She was a little pale woman with a very low voice, and people said she had been a nursery governess, till her old uncle or cousin, or whatever he was to her, had died and left her Woodbine Cottage for her own, and then she had come to live there with her maid Martha. The boys did not know what a nursery-governess was, but the foolish heads did not think it was so grand as the girls' governess, Miss Bolton, who had made

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them all mind her when they were infants, and could do so now when they came in her way; and certainly not so grand as the young ladies' governess at the Hall. And so they would not touch their hats to her; for the foolish lads always thought touching their hats showed that they were inferior to the person they greeted. They did not understand that the putting up the hand merely means, "I know you; good morning," though they never saw the Squire, or even any greater gentleman than the Squire, pass any woman he knew, from her ladyship at the Castle down to old Mrs. Long, without touching his hat; so that when they swung by, quite pleased to be disrespectful, they only showed how far they were from being gentlemen.

Miss Meakins had offered to take a class in the Sunday School, as she was used to teaching. Mrs. Somers gave her some little boys, of whom Charlie

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Anstey was one. But she had been used to quiet, well-behaved children, and these idle fellows soon found out that she did not know how to keep them in order, and they grew naughtier and naughtier every Sunday. They talked while she was teaching them; some punched and cuffed one another, and others made faces—they would not learn their lessons nor answer questions. Joe Marden and Tom Long played at dibs together, Jim Hunt and Harry Bell exchanged marbles and quarrelled over them; even David Woodfall and George Walton, who were reckoned the good boys of the lot, had a kicking match; Charlie himself had eaten peppermints under her very nose; Albert Millar had brought a live dormouse, a sleep-mouse he called it, and it lived in a tea-pot. He was handing it round, when the Vicar came upon him, was very angry, took away the mouse and let it run away to the wood again.

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Poor Miss Meakins was very much distressed, and when the naughty boys saw the tears in her eyes they were not a bit sorry for her, but only grew worse. They brought nuts and cracked them. Albert Millar made a grasshopper leap on her book, and they all laughed at the start she gave, and said she jumped as high as the grasshopper. Tom Hunt was even so bad as to put nonsense words into his hymn, George Walton made silly answers on purpose to set the others laughing, and when she spoke to them in a sad and trembling voice, Harry Bell mimicked her, and they all laughed.

That brought Mr. Somers down on them again, very angry indeed. He said he was ashamed of them for insulting a lady, and sent them all home that day in disgrace, taking away their tickets, and when he found out how they had gone on, threatening that they should not

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come to the school-feast. However, they were forgiven and allowed to come. Mr. Somers and Mr. Lamb told them it was because Miss Meakins had pleaded for them and begged that they might be forgiven, and Mr. Somers said he hoped they would ask her pardon, for they had behaved so ill that he would not let her be so treated again, and she would not teach them any more.

David really was sorry, and brought her a nosegay by way of making up for his conduct, though he was too shy to say anything; and Mrs. Walton told Miss Meakins at the feast that she was sorry her boy had been so led away. Harry Bell was beaten by his mother for losing his tickets; but on the whole, the boys were proud that she had not been able to tackle them, instead of feeling what a sad thing it was to be so hard and rude as to have no feeling for gentleness. If they had been really strong

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and manly, not weak and babyish, they would have known how to behave to her.

She taught the infants now, and they were very fond of her, while her class had been put again under Teacher Edward, who was very sharp with them—never gave tickets for ill-said lessons, not only took away everything to eat or play with, but destroyed it for ever, and if they had only remembered the fable, was very like King Stork after King Log.

But these recollections remained with Charlie Anstey, and just because he had behaved so ill to Miss Meakins, he did not want to go near her or have anything to do with her. Nay, he even felt pleased to do something to spite her.

Three eggs—that would just make up the number, and then he should get his gingerbread. If the eggs were out in the

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open, where Miss Meakins' hens ought not to be, where was the harm of taking them? Yet he knew very well that he would not have liked his elder brother Billy, or his father or mother, to have known what he was doing, as he stooped down and took up the three clearest and freshest-looking of the five warm eggs. He put them in his basket and carried them in to Mrs. Cannon.

"Deary me," said the old lady, "four eggs! Well, you are a good boy. Where did you find them?"

"Out in the field," said Charlie.

"Ah! Speckle has stolen her nest again, the naughty bird," said Mrs. Cannon. "And what brown eggs, to be sure! What, is it twenty? Well, there's your penny for you."

And Charlie went off with it, and in the dinner hour he bought his gingerbread, and went off behind the holly bush to eat it all by himself, without having

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to give a bit of it even to his little sister Alice.

He went again and again to the nest under the primrose root, and often brought away a brown egg, and Mrs. Cannon began to be very proud of her three wonderful pullets, that laid twenty-one eggs in a week.

However, Snowdrop had found out that her primrose nest was meddled with as much as ever, and that she never was allowed more than two eggs at a time; and she had been terrified besides by Charlie's breaking in on her one day when she was rather later than usual.

At any rate she should be safe from boys at home, and she found a very nice corner in under some sticks in the wood-house; but she did not creep out so well but that Martha saw her, and found it too, but as she thought it would be as well for Snowdrop to sit, she let the eggs alone to encourage her.

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Charlie was greatly vexed when he found that the hen had deserted her nest. He had reckoned so much on her eggs that he felt as if she was using him ill, and he must be even with her and find where she went. He went at dinner-time and looked about till he saw a hole in the hedge, hidden by the wood shed, and there he squeezed through on hands and knees just to see what that bad hen could have done.

He knew Miss Meakins would be at dinner, so that he would not be caught, and into the garden he crept, peeping about; yes, into the wood-house, and there he found four eggs. It was plain that no one else knew of the nest, he thought, and the hen should not cheat him in that way. He felt as if he had the best right to those eggs, since he had found the nest; and no one knew of it or wanted them.

One, two days went by, and Charlie

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had carried off an egg on two of them. On the third day, as Miss Meakins looked into the nest as she made her rounds with her india-rubber goloshes, and her silk handkerchief tied over her cap, she exclaimed,—

“Dear, dear! has Snowdrop only two eggs? I thought you told me you were leaving them for her to sit, Martha?”

“Well, so I be, miss,” said Martha, coming up. “There ought to be five or six at the least. Only two! Well, I never! a rat must have been and got at them!”

“Oh, I hope not, Martha,” said Miss Meakins, stepping back and trembling. “If there is a thing I hate it is rats. Perhaps Mr. Grey or Mr. Nowell would come and kill the nasty thing.”

“Ay, and tear all the place to pieces with their dogs,” said Martha; “besides driving the poor cat right out of her mind. No, no, miss; I’ll do better than

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that — I'll run over to Mrs. Nowell and borrow their rat-trap. I won't have rats here, any way. Why, they'll be eating the poor fowl as she sits on her nest."

"They say rats always come where fowls are kept," said Miss Meakins in rather a melancholy voice; for she was rather strange to the country, and depended very much on Martha to manage the poultry, which gave the greater pleasure to her because it was all so new. "But what will you do, Martha? You'll be catching the poor bird herself."

"No, no, miss, I know better than that," said Martha. "I'll not lay it down till after she has come out. I shall hear her holloaing, you may be sure; and then I'll take it up before I lets her out in the morning from the fowl-house, so that she can't come to no harm."

So Martha went to Mrs. Nowell's, and on the way back fell in with a cart full

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of sprats, and enough of the little shining fish were bought to serve for dinner for both mistress and maid.

Just as Miss Meakins sat at her table, and having finished her first sprat, was picking out the backbone of the next, there sounded all through garden and house a most dreadful scream and cry. She jumped up quite pale, and Martha exclaimed,—

“ Bless me ! if it ain't a child, after all ! ”

Out they both rushed, and found Charlie dancing about, quite wild with the dreadful pain given by a rat-trap, whose teeth had closed on his fingers.

“ You little thief, you ! Well, it has served you right,” was Martha's first cry ; but her mistress's was—

“ The poor child ! the poor child ! He'll lose his hand. Get it off, get it off, Martha ! ”

“ Here, stand still, can't you,” said

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Martha, coming to him and catching hold of him ; but he could not keep still, and she was too nervous to find the spring or press it ; while Miss Meakins, quite white and sick with horror, flew out at her front door, calling out,—

“Help! help! Here’s a rat in a boy-trap—I mean a boy in a rat-trap.”

It was Baker Lee whom she nearly knocked down in her fright as he was coming in with her bread. As soon as he understood what was the matter, he got hold of the boy, made Martha hold him tight, and opened the trap ; but as soon as that was done the poor boy turned perfectly white, and would have fallen flat on the floor, if Martha had not held him in her arms.

“’Tis a bad job,” said Mr. Lee. “I doubt if his fingers ain’t broke, besides the tearing of them. I’ll tell you what, miss, we’d best put something round his hand, and then put him down in my cart,

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and I'll drive him straight off to Ellerby to the infirmary."

"But his mother, poor soul?" said Miss Meakins. "Best let her go with him."

"Who are you?" said Martha. "Where is mother, my dear?" she added, as Charlie moaned a little and gulped down some of the cordial water Miss Meakins was giving him.

He only moaned out something about "mother" and "home."

"He is Anstey's boy," said Mr. Lee, looking him well over. "They live up all across the Park, and 'tis mere folly to take him all the way there; nothing but waste of time. Here, Tom," to his boy, "you can take the rest of the bread round. Now then, if you'd a cloak or rug, miss, and a pillow, I'd lay him in the bottom. There, that's the thing."

"Hadn't Martha better get in and hold him, poor child?" asked Miss Meakins.

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“Well, I don't know; but he'll be better lying down,” said Mr. Lee. “Only—ah, that's right,” as Martha contrived to tie a handkerchief to support the arm. “There! there! 'tis very bad now, I know, my man, but the doctors will soon have you better.”

The mention of the doctors set Charlie off crying and howling so strongly and loudly that Mr. Lee said,

“You needn't be afraid for him, Miss Meakins. Hold your noise, my boy; it won't do no good. Here, I'm going to give you a ride.”

And so somehow he was got into the bread-cart, and laid down there on a rug; while poor Miss Meakins, not able to eat another morsel of dinner, put on her broad brown hat, and set out to find her way to Mrs. Anstey, and tell her how shocked she was, and how she had never thought of the chance that a child instead of a rat would be caught in

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the trap, and how Mr. Lee thought it for the best to take him to the doctor at once.

While she was often wiping the tears from her eyes, and picking her way up that long, dirty road, she met Mrs. Anstey, for Susan Bray and Lily Bell had rushed headlong into the cottage long before, calling out—

“Mrs. Anstey, Mrs. Anstey, your Charlie have been stealing Miss Meakins' eggs, and her Martha have caught him in a rat-trap, and the trap have snapped his hand right off, and Baker Lee have taken him off in his cart to the infirmary!”

Poor Mrs. Anstey had taken her bonnet and cloak, and hurried off like one distracted to find out what had happened to her boy. Mrs. Anstey knew Miss Meakins, though that lady did not know Mrs. Anstey, and called out,

“Now, Miss Meakins, I'm come to know whatever you've been doing to my

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poor boy. 'Tis a shame, it be, to set gins for vermin to maim a poor child for life; and however is he to get his bread?"

"Indeed," said poor Miss Meakins, trembling, "I hope it is not so bad as that. Mr. Lee seemed to think the medical men there would be able to set it right."

"Don't tell I! How is they to set it right when a poor child's hand is snapped off?" cried Mrs. Anstey. "His father will have the law of you, Miss Meakins."

But in the midst of her crying, Miss Meakins at last managed to make her hear that the hand was in its place, and that all they feared was that two fingers might have been crushed. This began to comfort the poor woman a little; and she perceived, as they went along together, that Miss Meakins was as grieved and shocked as any one could be, and never would have let the gin be put down, if

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she had for a moment guessed that it would catch anything but a rat or a stoat. She declared she would do anything, or be at any expense, and she could not bear the poor boy's being sent away without his mother, only he was in such pain, that Mr. Lee and Martha both said it would be better for him to lose no time.

So Mrs. Anstey was a good deal softened, and owned that it was hardly Miss Meakins' fault, before she went off on the Ellerby road, poor woman, in much trouble and anxiety.

The people at the infirmary had put the boy in the doctor's hands, and would not let her in to him, saying that till that was over it might do great harm to disturb him or make him start. After some waiting she was allowed to come in. Charlie was lying back on a couch with his hand bound up and in a sling, but his clothes were on; and when the nurse told

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him he was much better, and it did not hurt so much now, he did not say otherwise. The doctor told her that two fingers were broken and the skin and flesh torn; but it was not near so bad as it might have been, and that he would almost certainly get quite well if he was carefully treated and had good food. There was no bed to be conveniently had in the infirmary. Besides, it was not a very serious case, and he was more likely to recover well in the open country air than shut up there; but he must come in twice a week to have the hand looked to, and the doctor gave her directions and ointment for the wounded fingers. Mrs. Anstey was not a handy woman, and looked rather bewildered; so they asked if there was no one who could manage it for her, only warning her against letting any one disturb the splints in which the fingers were fixed.

“And,” said the doctor, “I hope he

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has had a lesson for life against robbing hens' nests."

Mr. Lee came back from his business in the town to ask how the boy was, and, if needful, to take him home ; so he went back in the cart sitting on his mother's knee.

He had begun to feel very much ashamed by the time he got back, and thought of meeting his father and his brother Billy, who was not likely to be as tender over him as his mother had been ; and he was quite ready to be taken up to bed at once before they came home from work.

He heard through the chinks of the floor how his mother told all the story, and his father, who was a man of few words, made gruff noises in reply ; but neither his father nor his elder brother came up to see him. They had their tea, and then went out to work in the allotment. Charlie went to sleep, but

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woke up again when they were clumping up-stairs to bed. His father came and stood by him and said,

“What, Charlie, however came you to do such a thing as that? If you hadn't been so much hurt you should have had a good warming, that you should.”

Charlie hid away under the clothes, and began crying with the pain of his hand, which put an end to the scolding.

They were very dismal days that came after. The poor little boy was up and about, but his hand was very painful, and often made him feel quite sick, and he could not bear any of the other children to come near him for fear they should hurt it. He had nothing to do; and when his mother was cleaning, there was no place to sit down in, and she got out of patience with him, and scolded him for fretting. Then Mrs. Cannon came herself the next day to say he was not to come about her house any more. She would

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not employ a boy that was not honest. How did she know how many eggs of other people's he had brought her? And all Mrs. Anstey said of its not being her wish, and his father being very angry, and their all having an honest name, made no difference, Mrs. Cannon would not forgive him, nor let any of his brothers come instead. So there were all those pence gone. Not that they had, as his mother said, ever done the family any good, since Charlie had put them all down his own throat, like a greedy boy as he was. It was that nasty, foolish hankering after sweeties for ever that had made him do what she never thought a child of hers would have done.

She scolded him again for being greedy and fanciful, when he felt so sick and uncomfortable that he turned against the bit of fat mutton she had bought on purpose for him, because the doctor said he must live well. He felt as if he could

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not eat it anyhow. Fat and grease always went against him, and he was crying most bitterly, and his mother was very much vexed with him, when who, of all people in the world, should come in but Miss Meakins herself with a basket, and in it the prettiest little pudding in the world, made in a tea-cup, and so smooth and sweet and nice.

She said she did not expect the child would be able to eat meat to-day, so she had brought him a pudding which would have nourishment in it. And then she asked about his hand. His mother said he was a naughty boy, and would not let her touch it, and she was going to take him down to get Granny Woodfall to see to it.

Miss Meakins then said it would be a great comfort to her if she might try what she could do for it. And when she took off her gloves, and Charlie saw her nice, soft, white, delicate fingers, he did

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not shrink from them like his mother's hard-working, rough ones. And she spoke to him softly and did not scold him, though she tried to make him bear the dressing patiently.

She made his poor fingers quite cool, and seemed to have taken out the ache and burning. Then she begged, just as if it was a kindness to herself, that he might come to her to have his hand dressed every day, and she would give him his dinner, and let him rest if he was tired with the walk. Mrs. Anstey was quite surprised, and so was Charlie, when he had behaved so ill to Miss Meakins.

Partly, no doubt, the good lady blamed herself for having let the gin be set where it could hurt the child; but whenever the Ansteys heard of returning good for evil, they always thought of that gentle, pale face, and those kind hands.

And all the time that his hand was really bad, Charlie never had such comfort as

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when he was in Miss Meakins' house. At home the younger ones were so rough that he was always afraid of their hurting him; and out of doors, the ruder Langley boys, who hated pilfering, and felt as if he were a disgrace to them all, used to call after him, "Who took Meakins' eggs?" and "Rats, rats!"

It was naughty and unkind of them, and once when they hunted him up to the very door, it made Miss Meakins so angry that she fairly flew out at them without her brown hat or white bonnet. so that they hardly knew her as she cried out—

"Boys, boys, how can you? If I have forgiven him, you might."

They never did it again after that; but Charlie never went to the infirmary without thinking that the other patients pointed at him and said—"There's the boy that was caught in a rat-trap stealing eggs."

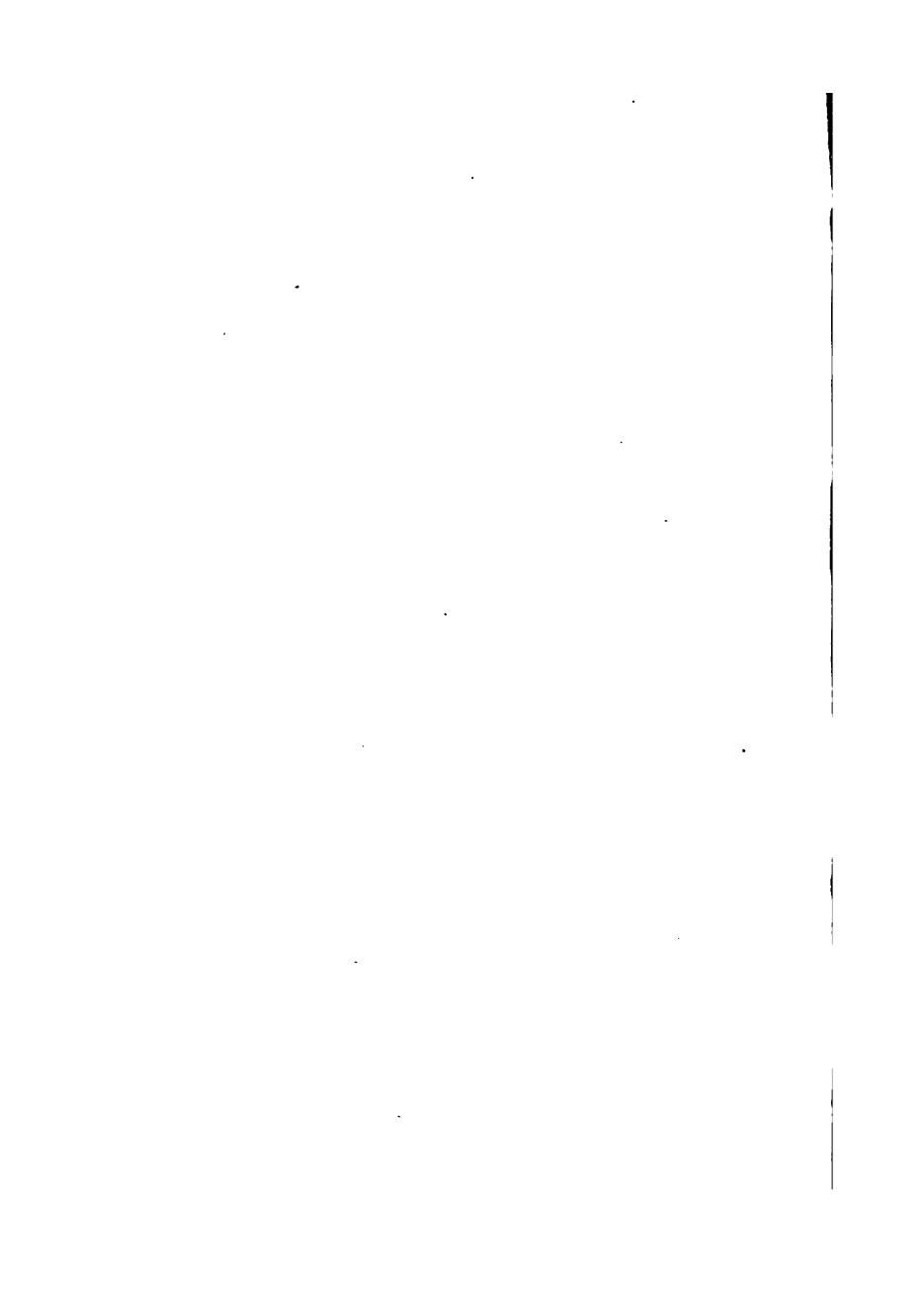
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But Miss Meakins was the only person who was always kind to him. She made his hand comfortable ; she gave him his dinner every day ; and then she let him lie down on a little couch, where he went to sleep at first, but as he grew better she showed him pictures in a great scrap-book, and told him stories about them, and read easy tales to him. He came quite to like them ; and when he was well enough to go to school, as long as he could not use his hand, he still came to dinner, and she helped him learn his Sunday lessons, so that he got on famously. He grew very fond of her, and thought there never was any one like her ; and she so waked up what was good in him that he quite left off caring for nothing but eating. Indeed, he hated the sight of bulls-eyes and gingerbread when he thought of all they had brought on him. By the time his fingers were quite well, he was a very different boy from what he used to be.

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He said his prayers now, and minded them, and tried his best to be good.

His father said that rat-trap had been the making of him. And Charlie looked up to Miss Meakins more than anybody he knew, and never was so happy or so pleased as when he could do anything for her.



FANNY'S DOLL.

“It blesses him that gives and him that takes.”

Shakespeare.

LITTLE Fanny Hill was not quite seven years old when she came to live at Langley. Her father was a shoemaker, who came when old Cobbler Parkins grew blind, and wanted some one to take his business.

Some of the servants at the Hall had had their boots mended, and then came a pretty little pair of boots that wanted fresh toes, and the nursery girl who brought them was measured for a pair of stout boots for out-of-doors.

Mrs. Hill measured her. She could do so as well as her husband, and on the Saturday when the boots were finished

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she took them home, and for a great treat Fanny was allowed to come with her.

The little girl trotted by her side looking about and asking questions, as she saw the deer with their large horns, and was rather frightened, though her mother told her they would not hurt her.

There was a peacock sitting on a wall turning his beautiful crowned head and dark blue neck, and hanging down his long tail glittering green with purple eyes. Fanny said "Oh!" under her breath, and stood still to look. She had never seen anything so beautiful; but the peacock suddenly cried out: 'Miaou, Miaou' in a very loud voice, and she gave a great jump, and was glad to get out of the way of the strange creature.

They crossed a paved yard and rung at a back door. A little tidy maid in a neat brown apron and bib came to open it, and when she heard that it was Annie Osborne's boots, she asked Mrs. Hill to

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come into the hall and wait while she went to tell Annie.

She gave them chairs in a big room, where there was a very large table, and wooden chairs all round. Mrs. Hill said that the servants dined there, and she hoped Fanny would some day be in as nice a place; but the little girl wondered how she should ever eat in such a big silent room.

Presently the little maid came back, and Annie Osborne with her. Annie brought a message from Mrs. Grey, the head nurse, to ask Mrs. Hill to come up to the nursery to measure Master Fred.

Fanny was perched up on a high chair with her poor little feet dangling. She was looking with all her might at a picture of Queen Victoria being crowned, but she was not at all at her ease, and felt very shy. And when she heard that mother was to be called away, her mouth began to work, her eyes grew round and

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then winked hard, and she was very near beginning to cry. She was a good child, and tried to stop herself, and it was well that she did so; for otherwise the housekeeper would not have said—

“Do you want to go with your mother, my dear?”

“If it is not too great a liberty, ma'am,” said Mrs. Hill very politely.

“Oh, Mrs. Grey won't mind at all, and the young ladies will be pleased to see her,” said the housekeeper.

So Annie the nursery-girl went on before, Mrs. Hill followed, and Fanny, holding tight a pinch of her mother's gown, trotted after, all along the passage, and up, up, up, step after step of the long stairs, feeling quite afraid when the steps turned round a corner, and were three-cornered instead of straight. She felt quite as if she had been going up a mountain when they took her through the little gate into the open space at the

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top, and then into the great light open room. It was as big as the infant school, and had as many pictures on the walls; but there was no carpet, only nice fresh boards. There was a large table with a white cloth just laid on it for tea, and a kettle was on the fire; but what Fanny looked at most was a cupboard that stood half open, and which seemed to her the most wonderful place she had ever seen except the toy-shop at Ellerby. The shelves were full of charming things. There was a great white woolly dog looking out with black beads of eyes, and all on one side, because one of his wheels was off; there was a doll leaning out of a perambulator with her mantle turned hind side before; there was a bear lying on his back with a trumpet right across him, and half a dozen tin soldiers and tiny teacups and saucers scattered about, and on the floor there was a tower built up with wooden bricks, and a flock-

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paper monkey driving a large wooden pig with a very small china pug which had lost his tail. This was all that Fanny had time to see before the children came trooping in, having just taken off their walking things and put on their pinafores for tea. Master Freddy was pounced upon at once, and perched up on a chair, where Mrs. Hill went to work to take the length of his foot, measuring it with the rule with the sliding-brass. The other children stood gazing at Fanny, who shyly hung her head down.

“Take her to the cupboard and show her your toys, my dears,” said Mrs. Grey. “She would like to see the doll’s house.”

“Did you ever see a doll’s house?” said Miss Hilda, the eldest of them.

Fanny might be heard to whisper “no,” and then with a great effort she added “Miss.”

The other half of the cupboard was opened, and a greater wonder than ever

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stood there. A little house front like red brick with a door and windows—real glass windows. Miss Mary tapped at the door, and Fanny would scarcely have been surprised if a tiny parlour-maid had come to open it; but instead of that Miss Hilda took down the whole front, while Miss Mary asked whether Lady Florentina was at home. It was hardly necessary to ask, for that lady was lying on her face in a pink satin dress in the kitchen, with the table with all its legs in the air on the top of her.

“Oh dear,” exclaimed Miss Hilda, “the little ones have been at it.”

“Never mind; we’ll say there have been robbers, and she’s had a fit,” said Miss Mary.

“No, no,” said the elder one, with a glance at Fanny. “*She* wouldn’t understand.”

So Lady Florentina was picked up, and popped all sloping into a chair; and

FANNY'S DOLL.

Fanny looked with delight at what seemed to her so wonderful—the tiny kitchen-range, the table, dresser, plates, and dishes; and above, the charming little drawing-room, with a carpet, and a harp, and real pictures edged with gilt paper on the walls; and above, the bed-room, with the pretty white-curtained bed, and the toilet-table and looking-glass. To be sure the brushes and combs, and the bath with the china doll in it, were much too big for any one that was able to lie in that bed, but they did not trouble themselves about that.

The brush was taken out, and Miss Hilda fetched her biggest doll, a beautiful creature almost as large as a baby, with waxen arms and legs, and let Fanny brush the beautiful curly hair.

She was quite frightened to do so, and she ventured on softly touching the soft waxen hands.

“Have you a doll?” asked Miss Mary.

FANNY'S DOLL.

“No—o,” said Fanny; “only a rag one.”

“Oh, then—” began one of the little girls; but at that very moment Mrs. Hill called out—

“Come, Fanny, I am sure you are very much obliged to the young ladies. Make your curtsy, my dear, and come home.”

Fanny could have cried. She really thought Miss Mary was going to have given her one of the dolls, so many of them as there seemed to be! The young ladies, however, only wished her good-bye, and told her they would show her some more things when she brought back the boots, and she had to climb down the stairs as fast as she could after her mother. Then she stood still with her finger in her mouth, while Mrs. Hill took leave of the servants down-stairs, and then trotted away so silently that presently her mother said,

FANNY'S DOLL.

“ Well, Fanny, I'm sure you saw a sight of pretty things.”

“ Oh, mother,” said Fanny, “ the young lady was just going to give me a dolly ! ”

“ Now, Fanny, you've been asking for it again, just as you did for Mrs. Hollis's gooseberries ! I can't take you anywhere if you are always to be hankering after everything you see, and going asking for it. It's being no better than a beggar.”

“ I didn't ask for nothing,” said Fanny, beginning to cry. “ The little miss asked me if I'd got a doll, and I said no, and then I said a rag one—I *did*, mother.”

“ Well, child, I'm glad you didn't ask. I'd never have a child of mine craving for all she sees. You should know your tenth commandment better. Say it, Fanny.”

Fanny was not seven years old, and she did not remember which was the tenth at first ; so she began—

FANNY'S DOLL.

“ ‘Thou shalt not bear—’ ”

“ That’s not it, child. Don’t you know any better ? ‘Thou shalt not covet—’ ”

Then Fanny did get through the commandment, and for the first time began to see what coveting meant.

“ But, mother,” she said, after a long time, “ I don’t want his ox nor his ass.”

“ What does it say,” returned Mrs. Hill. “ ‘ Anything that is his ’—don’t it ? Come now, Fanny ; if you can’t see a pretty thing without wanting it, you’ll always be a poor unhappy girl ; so put all that out of your head at once, or I’ll never take you to the Hall again.”

Fanny was frightened at this, for her mother always kept her word ; so she held her tongue, and Fanny’s tongue was very near her thoughts, so they soon went away from the doll, and she had plenty to say about the baby-house, and all the wonders there. She told her father so

FANNY'S DOLL.

much about it that at last he laughed and said—

“One would think the little maid had been in among the fairies to hear her talk.”

But Fanny had not forgotten. That evening she turned over her poor doll. It really was only a bundle rolled up tight, and when it had a shawl nicely put on she could cuddle it up, and carry it, and make believe it was a baby; but there was nothing else that could be done with it.

Poor little Fanny had not thought much about dolls when she had one brother older and two younger than herself to play with her; but last year at Ellerby there had been a sad time, about which Fanny recollected very little, except that she was burning hot and aching all over, and that nobody seemed to come to her. And when she was better, there were no brothers; and when she asked for Jimmy and Alf and Tiny,

FANNY'S DOLL.

mother cried and said they were gone away to a better place, and were with their Lord in Heaven.

Since that time Fanny had been a lonely little girl. She had been watched very carefully as she got better; but she had not wanted to play then—she was too weak, and it was hard to get good food for her, for father had been ill too, and all was sad and hard till father got the letter to propose his coming to work for his old uncle, and they came out to Langley. There Fanny had got quite well and strong, and she was merry enough in the playground with the other infants; but she did want something to play with at home.

“Mother,” she said, a few days later, “may I not have a dolly?”

“Oh, Fanny.”

“No, mammie, I ain't coveting,” cried poor Fanny. “I don't want one of them

FANNY'S DOLL.

dolls in the baby-house now. Only a doll! Kate Bell has got one as long as that, all jointed, and it only cost three-pence! Mayn't I have threepence to buy one?"

"My dear love, I am sorry to deny you," said her mother; "but, dear, in those bad times last year poor father and I were forced to run in debt. They would never have let us come here, if they hadn't known that we would pay them honest every penny we could put together, as we promised faithfully we would do. And we passed our word not to spend one penny more than we could help till they be all paid. When they be, Fan, you shall have your dolly, my child, and welcome."

Fanny understood most of this; indeed she had heard a great deal about the debt and the saving, and she knew how mother kept the shillings and coppers in a box, and when she could change

FANNY'S DOLL.

them into a pound, carried it to Ellerby. But she thought that threepence would not make much difference, and it seemed to her that, before that weary debt was paid, she should be an old, old girl up in the sixth standard and too big to care for dolls. Perhaps she would have cried for herself at the sad thought, if luckily old Uncle Parkins had not called to ask if his little maid would come and lead him down to Mrs. Nowell's. There she had a very happy game at play with Emma Nowell and her brothers, and was not led to think of dolls.

But three days later, as she was going home from school, and had just parted with the other children at the corner of the green lane, what did Fanny see? There stood in the middle of the foot-path a tiny basket perambulator, and in it sat a beautiful little lady all fresh and rosy in a white worked frock, a mauve satin cloak, a large straw hat trimmed

FANNY'S DOLL.

with daisies, and a pink parasol fringed with white, which was tied on to her back. Fanny stood staring as if a fairy had come out on the dusty road. Nobody was to be seen all round. Nobody was even to be heard. Fanny went near and gazed at the beautiful creature in a sort of awe. She clasped her hands tight at first in wonder; then she longed just to feel the soft satin and stroke the nice round golden curls of hair; but "not mine" came into her head, and one hand held the other tighter.

She knew what mother would say if she meddled. And like a good little girl she did the wisest thing. She ran as fast as she could away from the sight, a little hope of, she didn't know what, rising in her heart, and she burst into the cottage crying out, "Mammy! mammy! come and look! There's the loveliest dolly in the world sitting up in a *pre-ram-bulator* in the lane." (Fanny never said perambulator right.)

FANNY'S DOLL.

“How the child’s head do run on dolls, to be sure!” said mother.

But she *did* come out to see what it meant, telling Fanny she had been good to call her, and not to touch it.

Somehow Fanny’s heart beat fast with hope as she said,

“Do you think somebody lost her, mother?”

“Then,” said Mrs. Hill gravely, “we must find them that have.”

And Fanny hung down her head and fidgetted her fingers, a little disappointed and a little ashamed.

When they came round the corner Fanny gave a little scream. The doll was no more to be seen on the foot-path. No!

But looking a little further, there had five or six little misses and masters and two ladies come over the stile from the coppice with their hands full of primroses, and a carriage was waiting to take

FANNY'S DOLL.

them up. They were being packed into it tightly, tightly—it was a wonder how they all managed to crowd in; and presently Fanny spied the doll and her carriage being handed up to one of them. It was one of the Ellerby flies, and all was plain to Mrs. Hill now.

“See,” she said, “they have all driven out from Ellerby to pick flowers, and I suppose Miss Dolly must needs come too. And so the little lady forgot her, and left her in the road for a bit. And oh, Fanny, you may be right glad you were a good child and kept your hands off her, or you would have been ashamed now.”

Fanny was glad, and yet she could not help thinking that if she had been that dolly's little mother she should have loved her a great deal too well to leave her out in the perambulator in the middle of the path, where a cruel boy might have thrown a stone at her, or a very naughty little girl might have run away with her.

FANNY'S DOLL.

Fanny hoped Master Fred's boots would be done on Saturday that she might help to take them home, but they were not ready, and mother would make no promises about waiting for her to go after school.

Perhaps Mrs. Hill thought it would be pushing to take her so often, or perhaps the good mother thought that seeing those wonderful toys put fancies in her little maid's head and made her discontented.

One Wednesday evening when Fanny came home Mrs. Hill's basket was standing on the table. • •

"Oh, mother," cried Fanny, "are the boots done? Are you going to the Hall? May I come? Shall I put on my best hat?"

"Look in, Fanny," said mother.

Fanny lifted up one lid, and gave a little scream. She saw a pair of tiny blue silk feet sticking up, and she let down the lid, turning quite red.

FANNY'S DOLL.

"Well, Fanny," said father, laughing.

Then Fanny lifted up the other lid, and there she saw a rosy face, quite as fresh as the lady's in the perambulator, smiling at her.

"Oh!" she said.

"There, Fan, what do you think of that?" said father.

"Is she——?" began the child.

"Yes," said mother, "the young ladies have dressed her for you themselves."

"My very own! Oh!" said Fanny.

And then she ventured to lift her out by her waist and admire her.

It was a nice, crisp, clean frock, all over little forget-me-not flowers, like the ones the young ladies had on, and a clean white pinafore with a band and bib, and a pretty blue silk hat with a white rosette and a blue sash!

Oh, yes! and there was a grey frock besides edged with pink! And they could be taken on and off!

FANNY'S DOLL.

And below ? Oh ! there were petticoats upper and under, the under one so nicely herring-boned, and a pair of nice white drawers, all like a real little girl.

Fanny was too happy to speak for a long time. She stood holding the doll as if nothing could be such pleasure. I think she almost cried.

We need not tell how on Sunday, after church, mother took her to meet the two little misses, and make her curtsy, and say, "Thank you, miss, for my pretty doll."

And we need not tell how Fanny carried about her dolly, and loved her, and let her sleep by her, and took her to visit Emma Nowell's and Kate Bell's dolls, and by-and-by made fresh clothes for her, and treated her like her own dear darling child, as she called her. She called her Alice, for she thought Florentina was too fine a name ; and besides, she had so much wished for a sister Alice.

FANNY'S DOLL.

Mrs. Hill was happy too, for Master Freddy's boots were so well made that father got plenty more work from the Hall, so much that before the autumn was over the money that was owing at Ellerby was all paid off.

Before primrose time was over next year there was a wonderful sight for Fanny when she came home from school one day.

Old Mrs. Woodfall was there, and told her there were more dollies for her. And there were two little brown heads side by side—two little brothers in the cradle!

Fanny could not play with her first dolly nearly so much now there was a live one to be put into her arms whenever she came home; but she did still love her dear old Alice, and kept her carefully.

When Johnnie and Georgie began to run about, and lay hold of everything, Fanny kept her out of their reach. She knew Alice could not feel; but it did

FANNY'S DOLL.

seem to her cruel to let them hammer with her, pull off her head and arms, and spoil her dress, and have only five minutes' pleasure over her, after all, before she was made away with !

So she kept her in her own drawer, for fear they should see her and cry for her, and only took her out sometimes to drink tea with Emma Nowell, and then dolly behaved herself as well as ever.

One summer Sunday, Mr. Hill said, after church he must go and see Mrs. White, his old neighbour at Ellerby, and a sort of cousin. He had heard that she had lost her husband, and was badly off, and he would take Fanny, who used to play with her little girls. Only she must ask leave from afternoon school.

Fanny was very glad to go. She remembered how much she used to like to go and play with Janie White, whose parents were better off than her own, so that Janie had prettier frocks and hats

FANNY'S DOLL.

than herself, and at tea there were more cakes and more butter than what was to be had at home. And what Fanny cared for more, Janie had more toys than any little girl she had known till she saw the young ladies at the Hall. She still remembered the three dolls, the Noah's ark full of creatures, and the boxes of toys, especially the curly snake in a round box that always frightened her, though she should be braver now.

She thought it would be delightful to take her own dolly for a walk out of the babies' way, and to introduce her to Janie's dolls. She was quite as pretty and well-dressed as any of them, and what a game they would have. They could keep school for the dollies when there were four of them, as Emma Nowell was so fond of doing.

But mother shook her head

"No, Fanny, I can't have you carrying no dolls about on a Sunday. It ain't

FANNY'S DOLL.

fitting, and father would be ashamed to have you walking with him with that thing in your arms."

Fanny was a good deal vexed and a little ashamed, but it was a treat to walk over the downs with father. And when they came to the long lane, he reached down some honey-suckle and some dog-roses whenever she wanted them.

It was odd to get into the street that used to be home, and to see the old door she had looked out at so often with a strange little girl nursing a baby at it, and staring hard at Fanny's flowers. Father knocked at Mrs. White's door, but a stranger opened it, and told him that Mrs. White had moved into lodgings.

They were not very far off, but the house looked very shabby and dreary. The stairs were narrow and shaky, and when they got up and the door was opened, there was Mrs. White all in black, in a clean, neat room; but it was

FANNY'S DOLL.

plain that it was bed-room, parlour, and kitchen all in one.

Janie was lying partly dressed on the bed. She cried out, "Fanny Hill!" but did not jump up, only held out her arms, and Fanny ran to her, and they hugged and kissed. Presently Fanny timidly asked,

"Are you ill, Janie?"

"Oh, don't you know I tumbled down-stairs, stepping on a bit of orange-peel? My back doesn't hurt so much now, but the doctor says I shan't never be able to run about."

"Oh!" said Fanny, quite frightened, "Don't you want to?"

"It would be a deal of trouble," said the poor little girl. "But I wish I could get about and go to school! 'Tis so long when I'm shut up here, while mother goes out to work all day."

"Does she leave you all by yourself?"

"She has to, you know, always, except

FANNY'S DOLL.

Sundays. Bessie's got a little place as child's maid in Potter Street, and I lie here all alone when mother's out."

"But where are your dolls? I've got a lovely one named Alice, and I'd have brought her to see yours, only mother said it was Sunday, and I musn't."

The tears came into Janie's eyes, as from under the bed-clothes she pulled an old headless, half-dressed stump, with a handkerchief round it.

"Do you know her, Fanny?"

"Is it—is it Maria?" asked Fanny, in a low, awe-struck voice.

"Yes, it's poor Maria! It is all that is left of them, Fanny."

"And she used to look so sweet in her white frock," said Fanny.

"Yes. Mother thinks they smashed her poor head when the things were moved here, and I was so bad I couldn't take care of nothing."

FANNY'S DOLL.

"You must have been bad indeed," said Fanny.

"Oh, I was. But I cried so when I knew it that mother was fit to beat me."

"And Miranda, and Lucy?" asked Fanny.

"Miranda broke all to pieces the day I fell down; and Lucy, she was stolen. A rude boy snatched her one day when I was out, and ran away with her."

"What a shame! I'm glad I don't live in the town."

"I didn't mind so much while I had Maria to comfort me. But it makes me sorry to have her without a head. I can't feel her quite alive, and I'm so sorry for her. She'd be more company if she had only her poor old face; now I can't do anything but cuddle her."

"And are all your old playthings gone?"

"Yes, all. You see, when poor father died, and we had to move up here, I was

FANNY'S DOLL.

terribly bad, and mother and Bessie were in such trouble they never gave it a thought, though I think they might have saved my china pussy."

There was a great thought swelling in Fanny's heart.

"Janie," she said, "would you love my Alice if I brought her?"

"Oh, Fanny! you won't?"

"Yes, Janie," said Fanny, in a sad but determined, old-fashioned voice; "I think it will be all for the best. We've got two twin baby boys at home that would worrit the very life out of her if I let them get at her, so she can't have no play nor much notice, and that ain't good for children."

"I'd look after her all day long," said poor little Janie.

"And you won't let no bad boys get at her?"

"There's no fear of that. Why, I never go out of this room."

FANNY'S DOLL.

"And you will love her, and keep her nice and neat and clean?"

"Indeed I will. I'll love her next thing to old Maria."

"I should think you'd love her better than an old thing like that," said Fanny, rather hurt.

"Oh, I can't."

However, before the little girls could go any further, Mrs. White came to give them some tea.

Fanny went home much more silent than she came. One of Mr. Hill's old friends walked with him, and she had time to think how sorry she should be never to see Alice on the shelf, nor to take her down when the twins were safe in their cradle for the night. And after all, Janie would not love her like the stump of old Maria without a head. Fanny almost hoped her mother would say that Alice was a keepsake from the young ladies, and must not be given

FANNY'S DOLL.

away. But no such thing. Mrs. Hill said,

“Yes, to be sure, child. It would be a shame to keep it up there on the shelf when that poor maid is pining for something to play with. A promise is a promise, and if you’ve passed your word you must keep it, even if you were hasty about it, and not disappoint poor Janie White. I’m sorry it is so long since I’ve seen Mrs. White ; she’s had sore trouble.”

The first day that mother could spare they got out the double perambulator and put the twins into it. Fanny carried the doll. They very much wanted it, but they had to go without ; and Fanny felt very sad as she fondled the dear old thing for the last time, and sometimes hung back, whispering to her that she must be very good, and a great comfort to poor sick Janie, who would take great care of her, and that she must not be

FANNY'S DOLL,

jealous of poor old Maria, for Janie had her first.

Up, up the stairs went Fanny. There lay the poor, white-faced little girl all alone, with one old, worn-out story-book by her side, and the last of Fanny's wall-flowers, very fady-looking, in a cup in the window. Fanny gently said—

“Janie !”

The poor little face lighted up, and when she saw Alice there were two of the very happiest little girls in the world in that dull little room.

Alice never was jealous of Maria, but Janie kept her as choice and nice as her first mistress; and when Fanny heard how much pleasure she gave the poor little girl, it made her know a little how “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” especially when giving costs us something.

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,
A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”—*Isaac Watts.*

I CAN'T tell what a mollar may mean, but I know this rhyme was very apt to be muttered in school when Albert Millar came into it, as he generally did when he came at all, just as the names had been called over.

He had missed hearing all the history about Joseph in the pit, and Moses in the bulrush cradle; and when once he did come in time, and his class were learning about the water out of the rock, he had no notion who Moses was, nor the Israelites, nor any one else; and he had missed learning

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,

anything about the Belief, and about what could make him good and happy.

When the Inspector came to examine the boys, Albert Millar could not find the place in his book ; and when he read he called c, o, w, sow, and read that she gave us good milk and coam. When he had his slate, and was to write his name, this is what it came out—

“ burd mlur.”

And he set down one hundred and five—5001. So you may guess whether he had passed the first standard, though he was going on for nine years old

And people who don't pass, but have a round O put against their names in each line of the schedule, are not apt to be fond of school.

Berty, as he was generally called, lived some way off from school, and whenever it was a wet day his mother let him stay at home. Or if she was washing, and

A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

that was once a-week, she let him stay to mind baby Fred ; though, as Fred was generally heard roaring in the lane, toddling along, left far behind him, it is likely that the little fellow would have done as well or better with the door shut, trotting about the kitchen.

However, between wet days and days supposed to be wet, and washing days, and days of going out to wood, and days when something was wanted at the shop, there were so many *a's* against "Millar, Albert," in Mr. Lamb's list, that the school-officer called on Mrs. Millar and told her to take care or she would be fined.

She lamented much that people should be so hard on a poor woman like her, with nobody to help her. But Mr. Makepeace said he could not help that, he did not make the laws, and that he came to warn her. Why, her boy had only been at school twice in the last fortnight.

Then she cried and said it wasn't true,

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,

for she had sent him yesterday, and Friday, and Tuesday, and— There she got puzzled, and Mr. Makepeace said,

“Well, if you’ve sent him he’s been mouching; so I advise you to take care he does go.”

As soon as Mr. Makepeace was gone Mrs. Millar called Berty, but he would not hear. He knew well enough what Mr. Makepeace came for, and he knew too that he *had* been sent to school more times than he had been there. So he kept out of the way, and did not come in till his father had come home; for he thought that thus he should hear nothing about it.

No; Mrs. Millar was still very angry, and what was worse, Mr. Makepeace had met his father and spoken to him.

His father was asking what it meant, and why the boy was kept at home. He made very light of all that his wife said about having no one to help her.

A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

“ A child at home ! Why, Mrs. Bell has two, and she never keeps the elder ones at home to do nothing. Don't tell me that ! ”

And when Mrs. Millar cried and said she had sent Berty ever so many times, but he was a bad boy, and had not gone, his father took the stick and beat him, and sent him up to bed without any supper, telling him he should have “ a good warming ” if ever he missed school again.

Berty went up to bed crying, and went on crying and howling so loud that his father called up-stairs to bid him “ stop that there holloaing, or he would give him something more to holloa for.” But he went on, only not quite so loud, till his mother came quietly up-stairs with a big bit of bread-and-treacle, and coaxed him to leave off crying, and be a good boy, and go to school to-morrow.

And Berty did go to school, and so did Joe Marden from Blackthorn Lane. His

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,

father asked him if he had been there, and he was able to say "Yes." Every evening for a week or ten days his father asked, and Berty answered, "Yes." Only once he had been a ten-o'clock scholar; and one morning his mother sent him for some candles to the shop, but she made him go in the afternoon, though he thought it very hard, when he had so good an excuse for staying away the *whole day*; and his father stayed out late, and never asked if he had been to school, so where was the use? thought the foolish boy.

He had tried to play with a nice long piece of string, but the master took that away. Then he got a button and began to spin it, but the pupil-teacher got hold of it directly. And when he *really* had added up three and five are—are seven, and four are ten, and had set down a one with a nought before it, that wicked teacher had gone and rubbed it all out,

A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

and said he must do it again. Yes ; and the master kept him in, and would keep on putting it to him—if he had three marbles and five marbles, how many would that be ? He wished he had them, and then he could count ; but he wasn't going to think about such stuff. He hated going to school to be bothered in that way.

He hated it more every step he took that fine summer morning, and when he met Joe Marsden he was hating it too ; for he had been trying to play at dibs over his copy, and the dibs also had been taken away from him. Why should there be schoolmasters and pupil-teachers, but just to spoil boys' lives and knock them about ?

The boys did get a little fun on their way. They broke down two long sticks, they knocked down all the tallest flowers in the hedge, and they caught a daddy-long-legs, and put him into Joe's pocket

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,

to serve for sport in school. They got there just as the names were being called, and Mr. Lamb said he had hoped they were turning over a new leaf. They had missed what might have made them better boys.

They were called to the class to read. And while the upper ones were beginning about 'the camel,' Joe put the poor maimed daddy-long-legs to walk on his book, while Bertie pinched its leg to see what it would do.

What happened was this—each boy got a sharp cut across his fingers from Mr. Lamb's cane. Mr. Lamb never struck his boys except for something really bad, and thus a blow was always thought much of.

"For shame!" he said; "I won't have cruelty here. Give the poor insect to me."

It was so much hurt that the only mercy was to kill it. Mr. Lamb was really angry; he kept both boys in at

A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

dinner-time, and made them learn the three lines of the multiplication table ; besides talking to them about the sin of cruelty ; but they didn't listen to a word of that, and only hated school the more. Cruel ! wasn't masters cruel to boys ? What signified nasty little flies ? Albert told his mother about it when he went home. Indeed, he managed to come in crying, and said there was a weal all across his hand.

And his mother saw it, and said it was a shame, though any one but his mother would have seen nothing the matter with his hand but dirt. However, when father came home she showed it to him, and said she would not have her poor boy go to school to be knocked about shameful, just for nothing at all.

But Millar himself could not manage by looking ever so hard to see any mark, and he wanted to know what the cut was for.

Berty mumbled out—

A MILLER, A MOLLAR,

“ We’d only got at play with a Bartlemy calf.”

“ I thought you were after something you ought not,” said his father. “ I’d be more of a man than to make a work about a cut like that. You should see what old Mr. Round up at Bronswick, where I came from, used to do to us. He did give us something to sing out for, to be sure !”

So Berty did not get much comfort from his father ; and when he lingered the next day, his mother drove him off, and said he was not to be a bad boy, and have Mr. Makepeace coming after them again.

So Berty went off a good deal as if the tips and nails of his boots were of lead, and when he got to the Long Field he looked up and down to see if Joe Marden was coming, and stood to wait for him. Presently he saw Joe standing up on a gap in the hedge, and waving to him.

A TEN-O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

His feet got light enough then, and he ran.

“Come on!” called Joe, “here’s such a sight of things going along the road.”

It was market day at Ellerby, and there were more carts and traps and carriages of all sorts than usual. The two boys got down into the road, and looked at cart, carriage, tax-cart, dog-cart, trap, and when any one was going fast they began to holloa, “Whip behind,” like rude fellows as they were. Presently there came a light low basket carriage driven by a young gentleman, with a lady and another boy in it. Joe and Bertie made a rush at that and clung on, running behind as it went uphill, when all on a sudden Bertie felt something clutch the top of his cap. He let go with one hand. His head was bare. The cap was dangling overhead on the hook of an umbrella, and there was a shout of laughter from the boys in the carriage. And then they came to

the top of the hill, and the pony began to trot, and the driver whipped him up and made him trot so fast that Joe let go ; but Bertie held on, for he could not give up his cap. It was an old cricketing cap, in scarlet and yellow quarters ; he was very fond of it, and knew that mother would be sure to give him the stick if he lost it. But the carriage was going much too fast for his short legs. He panted, his breath seemed stopping, things were all in one daze. He gave a great scream and loosed his hold.

And that moment a voice from the carriage called out—" You've got your lesson, you little rascal," and he saw his cap flying in the air, till it pitched on the top of the quick-set hedge, where it hung, looking like a fine red and yellow sort of vegetable marrow. Bertie stood staring up at it, still out of breath and stupid with over-running himself, and soon he began to cry.

Joe came up with,

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"Come on, Berty; what's the matter?"

After gazing at the cap for a little while, he said,—

"Let's shake it down."

But that was not so easily done. The hawthorns stood very thick, and there was no getting one's hands through, and even if that could have been done the sturdy stem would not shake. There was nothing to get hold of, and Berty cried again.

"Hollo, little chap; what's the matter now?" said a good-natured voice. "Why, if it bain't young Joe Marden and Bert Miller! What be holloaing about?"

And Tom Walton, Mr. Drew's carter-boy, stopped his team for a moment.

"He've throwed my cap up there," said Berty between his sobs.

"Who did?"

"Him in the carriage, as he was running after," said Joe.

Tom whistled.

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“Oh, ho! and what be you about out here, you little scamps?”

And he gave a great smack to his whip, so that they thought he was going on, and Berty quite howled out,

“My cap! my cap! Huck it down, I say.”

Tom was good-natured enough to use his long stiff black whip to poke at the cap till it fell down, and Berty could pick it up again. As he did so Tom said,—

“Ah! now I suppose you’re mouching. What a couple of foolish chaps you be, to be sure. You’ll catch it, won’t you. If you were my brothers now.”

This made the idle little pair take to their heels, for Tom Walton was well known to be as good as a father to his younger brothers, indeed, to keep them with a more tighter hand than was on either Joe or Bert. So they made off without giving him any thanks at all.

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It was clearly too late to go to school that morning ; so, for fear any one should see them and scold them, they got through the next gap, and sat down under the hedge to rest after their run. They found that they were very hungry, so they opened their dinner-bags, where each had a hunch of bread. It made them thirsty, though they ate all the bits of sorrel they could find. So they turned down towards the meadows to get some water, and when there they came upon a still, deep pool filled with tadpoles, polly-wags, as they called them—funny black round heads with thin wagging tails. The two boys both lay down on the grass and tried hard to catch them.

Happily they did not—happily, I say, for truant boys like these two seldom meddle with any poor dumb creature except to be cruel to it, and they only wanted the poor helpless, innocent tadpoles

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for the mere pleasure of killing them. They went on—how long there is no knowing—with their hands and their caps in the water trying to fish some out, almost getting them, but missing again and again, till at last that unlucky cap of Berty's fell quite into the pool.

He said it was Joe's fault, and Joe said it was his, and then they began to cuff and kick one another, till they thought they heard some one coming. Then Joe went off, half crying, half sulking, one way, and Albert the other.

It turned out to be nobody, and Bert found a stick with which he fished out his cap again, and then wandered about at the wood-side till he heard the voices of the children going home from school, and thought it safe to show himself.

Then he slunk into the cottage and got his tea. His mother asked no questions; but when his father came home, he said,—

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"Well, Bert, my lad, have ye been at school?"

"Ay," said Berty, telling, and he knew it, a flat falsehood to his father, who asked no more.

Berty was, as may have been seen, not a boy who thought about rights and wrongs, and he never said his prayers, or he would not have been so naughty a boy.

But the having told that story made him more unwilling than ever to go to school, for he knew he might hear something dreadful about liars.

This was one of the days that Berty and Joe played truant. There were many more, when they dawdled out to the road on market day, when they could bawl at the things going by.

If they saw any one with a donkey they always shouted at him. The foolish fellows thought donkeys were made to be laughed at; and if the rider was so small

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that they were not afraid of him, they would race the donkey and strike at it. What cowards they were!

When a bicycle came skimming by they holloaed out, and threw their caps in front, hoping to upset it.

However, they got the worst of that, for there was another young man coming on another bicycle. He jumped off, caught hold of Bert, and boxed his ears soundly, saying,—

“ You little rascal, do that again, and I'll give you to the police. Why, do you know, if you threw over a bicycle it would be as good as killing a fellow ? ”

And that was quite true. A bicycle was upset by a stone on that very hill the next day, and the rider was so stunned and cut about the face that he looked like death.

Bert and Joe felt very glad when they heard of it that they had been well out of the way, and no one could say it was they.

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Or sometimes they wandered down to the river and tried to catch minnows ; or they would gather blackberries in the hedges.

It was not that they always meant to miss school, and Joe went oftener than Berty ; but when people dislike something very much, and only do it when they are forced, there are a great many ways of getting off. And when the first alarm of Mr. Makepeace's visit had passed off, Mrs. Hill began to keep Berty at home whenever it saved her trouble to do so, or when he made himself so tiresome by persuading her to let him stay at home that she could bear it no longer.

She of course thought he was at school all the times she saw him go off, and thus that one day's absence now and then could do no harm.

And matters were not mended when Peter Potter began to keep Mr. Lee's cows on the common. He was a great lazy fellow of thirteen, who had longed to

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be too big for school and to go to work, and when he was at work found the cows such dull company that he was always looking out for some one to be with him. He rather liked making Joe and Bert mouch; he partly felt good-natured when he did so, and partly he thought it fun to vex "old Lamb," as he called the master.

So if he were in their way they were pretty sure to stay with him—sometimes pelting an unlucky wasps' nest with stones, and then running away when the wasps came out, or digging for poor little field-mice, or playing marbles.

One Monday he took out a handful of halfpence, and grinned, saying, "The old woman" (he meant his poor widow mother) "han't got 'em all this time! I'm very thirsty. I'll give you a half-penny a-piece, young ones, to bide here and mind the cows while I goes and gets a pint at the Corner hut tap."

He sauntered off, leaving the three cows

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and two yearlings quietly grazing or chewing their cuds, while Bert and Joe got out their marbles and began to play under the hedge.

How long the time was they did not know, but by and by they heard a great shouting and bawling.

And as they started up an angry voice exclaimed,

“There you are, you young rascals! Is this minding? Whose cows are those?” and farmer Torwood, in a great rage, pointed with his stick to all the five cows in the middle of his turnip-field.

“Baker Lee’s, sir.”

“I’ll teach Baker Lee to be setting little scamps like you to keep his cows, as he calls it. Fine sort of keeping.”

. So the farmer ran on, all the time pulling the gate open, while his two young sons were trying to hunt out the cows, for Mr. Torwood was stout and heavy, and too gouty to go after them himself; and

his sons were quick and lively, and in too great a hurry.

So old White-face, the leading cow of the lot, stuck up her tail straight out, with the end in the air, and began to gallop and plunge about in the turnips, with all the other four after her, too much frightened to find the gap they had gone in by or to see the open gate, and rushing round and round.

Bert and Joe would have joined in the chase, but the farmer roared at them to stop, while, being a hot-tempered man, he abused Mr. Lee for giving such work to good-for-nothing little brats, who ought to be at school, and rated them for their carelessness, till Bert, expecting to have the stick about his shoulders, sobbed out that it wasn't they as was minding the cows, it was Peter Potter. And where was he ?

“Down at the Corner hut tap, a getting a pint of beer !”

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They had no such feeling about Peter as to make them unwilling to get him into the scrape instead of themselves; and when the farmer growled to them to go and fetch him directly, muttering, "Pint of beer! I'll beer him," off they ran, very glad to escape; and when they presently saw Peter leaning against the door of the squalid public-house, they shouted to him,

"Come on, Peter; your cows have got into the turmots, and farmer Torwood's fit to kill any one!"

Then they went off again, out of reach both of the farmer and of angry Peter.

"We shan't hear no more of it," they said to one another.

They did not think it concerned them that Mr. Torwood called on Mr. Lee to pay for the harm his cows had done. And Mr. Lee could have forced Peter to pay, as it was all his fault; but what would the poor mother have done then?

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And it was for her sake that Mr. Lee had consented to employ so lazy and rude a lad. And he would have turned him off at once if Peter and his mother had not begged and promised hard.

Peter looked so black at the two run-aways and tell-tales who had brought him into the scrape that they knew their pleasant times with him were over.

But they did not yet know that they would have their share of the punishment. The farmer was one of the Poor Law Guardians, and the next day, at the Board, he declared to Mr. Makepeace that the idlest and most mischievous boys were running about all over the place, so that it was a perfect shame and disgrace, and that their parents must be made to keep them at school, if they wouldn't do it any other way.

Thereupon Mr. Makepeace looked at the register, and saw there were many, many more *a*'s against the name of Millar than

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there were of straight strokes. And the end of it was, that George Millar was served with a summons to attend before the magistrates on the next Saturday.

He was as angry as a man could well be, first with his wife for keeping Berty at home; and then both of them fell upon Berty, so that if you had seen the poor boy that night, you would have thought all his play and fun by the river, and on the common, ill bought by his pain and fright. And it was worse still on Saturday night when his father came home, having had to give up a day's work, and besides having been fined five shillings, which he could ill spare. Again he beat Berty, and even poor mother came in for many of the angry words, and cried sadly.

Poor mother, she was frightened for Berty, and let father think she had kept him at home many a time when he had played truant by his own fault. And the trouble and punishment did not stop here.

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The rent and father's boots must be paid for anyhow ; so, however cold and wet it might be, Berty could have no new coat. Such things were not for idle boys who told lies to their fathers and got them fined.

And what was to be done ? Millar said he could not trust his wife or his son not to play him the same trick again. So this was what he did. He got up early to go to his work, and he made Berty get up too, in the dark, cold winter mornings, that made one's fingers tingle with frost.

If Berty had been a good boy who could be trusted, he might have lain in bed comfortably two hours later, and had a nice warm cup of tea before going out. But his father had to go to his horses before seven o'clock, and only took a hunch of dry bread, and another for Berty.

The stable was not cold, and Berty would not have minded being there, but when the horses went out to plough, in

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the cold wet fields, or when there was chalk to be spread, it was dreadfully cold.

His boots were terribly thin, and too small besides, so that his chilblains grew very bad ; his jacket had great holes in it, his comforter was a mere wisp, and his poor fingers looked like radishes, all stiff and purple and crimson.

He got no pity. If he cried with cold and misery he was told to hold his noise, for it all came of being a bad boy ; nor could he go anywhere to warm himself, for his father would not let him out of sight till he could be put into the charge of George Freeman, a much bigger boy, to take care and see that he really did get to school.

When he came in, he was often half perished, and Mr. Lamb would pity him, and call him to the fire ; but then came what was still worse, for his fingers ached so dreadfully that he was almost wild with the pain, and cried and danced about.

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Even then few were sorry for him, for everybody knew it came of his playing truant, and Joe Marden laughed at him more unkindly than any one.

At last one morning Miss Manners came in, and was so much shocked by his miserable looks that the very same afternoon she brought him a stout, thick ulster ; but he had caught a bad cold already, and seemed so ill the next day that Mr. Lamb went home with him at dinner-time, and told his mother that to go on in this way would be the death of the boy.

She cried and said, " What was she to do ? it was his father who was so angry, he could not trust him," and Mr. Lamb said he would come and speak to Millar that evening.

So he did. He found Bert was in bed, where he had been put as the place safest from his father, and there he was coughing dreadfully.

Millar asked again, what could he do ?

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and said he was determined not to be let in again for a fine by an idle, good-for-nothing boy, whose word he could not trust.

Then Mr. Lamb offered to send home a bit of paper every day to show whether his scholar had been in his place, and he said if his father would sometimes hear the boy read or look at his writing it would give him an interest in his learning.

Millar growled a little, and said he was no scholar; but at last he promised to think about it.

Albert was a strong boy, and soon got well, and Miss Manners let his mother have a pair of new boots for him, to be paid for by little and little.

When he went to school again he made many promises to go steadily. And he did keep them. And he found that going every day made school much less tiresome than only going now and then.

Of course he got on better instead of forgetting everything he had learnt, and having to begin over again every time. He really got interested, and felt some liking for what he learnt, and he was pleased to show that he could read and write a little better each week.

He began to care about the Bible-stories he was told, and he took in some of the good lessons that were given to him. Chief of all, he learnt to remember that God sees us always, and that we cannot run away and hide from Him.

By the next summer Albert Millar had begun to feel that there is much more real pleasure to be had by trying to do one's best than by only trying to do nothing.

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THE
THIRD STANDARD.

“In work or play
Keep thou the one true way.”—*Kelle*.

THERE were six little girls in the third standard at Langley school. They had all come to school about the same time, had all come up from the infants, and had passed the first and second standards together, and they all held close together, and knew each other's ways and looks exactly. Their names were Susan Bray, Mary Smithers, Alice Long, Lily Bell, Myra Allen, and Lucy Hunt. Being such friends, they went on very comfortably together with their lessons, for Susan Bray, who was the sharpest of them, always answered all the difficult questions,

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and then the others could repeat after her, or if that was not allowed, they knew how to go on from the beginning she had made. If they were in a puzzle over their sums, the one who saw the right way to manage (it was generally Myra) would show the others her slate, or make them a sign, and Alice Long's spelling helped all the others.

Sometimes the pupil-teacher, Margaret Roller, called them to sit farther apart, or told them not to whisper nor to look at one another's slates; but they did not greatly attend to her, and it made very little difference, for they knew one another's faces so well that they could see in a moment what was intended, and they could read slates upside down.

They were in the same class with the second standard, of whom there were many more, and who of course needed more help, so that Teacher Margaret did not always find out what they were about. But one week, when Myra Allen stayed

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at home because of a broken chilblain, all the sums were wrong, and perhaps that made the mistress suspect something, for she took the class one day, found Mary Smithers out in copying, and sent her to the bottom of the class. The girls all knew that to copy was against rule, but they never thought for a moment why. They liked to help one another, and to be saved trouble in getting through a lesson. And so they went on with their give-and-take, always with the chance of being punished when they were found out. It did not seem wrong to them like stealing, or telling falsehoods, or hurting any one.

One Sunday, however, they were learning about the duty to our neighbour. Miss Hollis made them say the eighth commandment, and of course every one answered,

“Thou shalt not steal.”

“And how does the duty to our neighbour explain it?”

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Susan Bray began :

“To keep my hands—”

And then all the others chimed in with her :

“From picking and stealing.”

“That’s right ; but there is a bit more about it.”

“And my—” said Susan.

“Tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering,” joined in all the little poll-parrots.

“Now, is that one bit about the eighth commandment ?”

Susan looked foolish, and the others looked at her.

“Now, think,” said their teacher.

Nobody did think but Susan, the others waited and looked at her in case she chose to do it for them ; and at last, when she had had time to say most of the Duty over to herself, she managed to recollect—

“To be true and just in all my dealing—”

They took it up at once, and had

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galloped on to "bear no malice," when Miss Jessie cut them short, and made each repeat what the meaning of the commandment was.

"To be true and just in all my dealing, to keep my hands from picking and stealing."

"Now I don't want to say much about stealing; you all know what that is; and I don't think any of you would do it."

"Oh, no."

"I hope you never pick; you know what that is?"

"Taking little things," said Lucy.

"Tell me of some."

"Getting plums out of a cake," said Susan.

"Taking bits of slate pencils," said Alice.

"Yes; or anything you are not sure you have a right to. I mean you must not take sticks out of a hedge, nor fallen apples under a tree, without leave; you know that. But I want to tell you of a way to be true and just that, perhaps,

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you have not thought of. Now if you, Lucy, had a copy to write, and you showed up one that Alice had done, would that be true or just?"

"No, teacher."

"Why not?"

"I should not have done it."

"Well, and if you have a sum given you, who is to do it?"

"Me."

"How should you do it so as to be true?"

"Do it right," said Susan.

"Well, of course, you should try as hard as you can to do it right. But if a person do not do the sum herself, but only looks to see some one else's slate and take down their figures—is that being true?"

Nobody said anything except Lucy Hunt, and she whispered "No."

"It is not *telling* a story," said Miss Hollis, "but it is *acting* one. You would none of you tell Miss Bolton or Margaret that you had done a sum if you had not.

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But if you write down the figures without really working them, and then show them up, does it not come to something very like telling a story ? ”

“ Yes,” said Lucy.

“ And if she writes an R on your sum or your dictation, when you have not really known, only been helped by some one, you get what you don’t deserve.”

“ Yes.”

“ What do you get ? ”

“ There ain’t any prizes,” said Susan.

“ No ; but Miss Bolton thinks you are good, clever girls, and that you know more than you *do* know, don’t you see ? So you get more praise or credit than belongs to you, and that is not fair. You don’t like children who don’t play fair, do you ? ”

“ Oh, no. Nobody will play with the Snookses because they cheat so.”

“ Well, if it is wrong to cheat one another in play, is not it wrong to cheat Miss Bolton and Margaret into thinking you know better than you *do* know,

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or have been more industrious than you *have* been? It is not being *true*, is it? And who wants to have us true?"

"God," said Lucy.

"In all our dealing. What does dealing mean?"

"Selling in shops," said Susan, who felt a little angry and a little pert, and thought she would give it home to Miss Jessie, who belonged to a shop herself.

But Miss Jessie did not seem put out.

"That is one meaning," she said. "It is our business to give you just as much and as good articles as you pay for. That's one sort of dealing. But dealing means what we have to do with any one; and you have to be faithful and true with Miss Bolton and Margaret in your work at school. Be faithful, upright little girls, never unfaithful in work or play."

That was Miss Hollis's lesson.

Susan felt rather hot and angry, for she

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understood it all, and as soon as she was out of school, she muttered,—

“Well, that be a shame of Teacher Margaret to set her on to be at us!”

“I’m sure *I* never look at anybody’s sums,” said Myra; “I don’t need to.”

“And I don’t see what call she has to be at us about weekday school,” added Susan. “Sundays is Sundays, and week-days is weekdays.”

So that pair settled the matter as they walked to church.

The next pair, Lily Bell and Alice Long, never thought about one word of it, and could not have told what their teacher had been talking about. They were much too busy looking at Alice’s new pair of brown gloves; Lily had been trying them on at school, and now she had to hear the price of them, and how mother would make her have brown instead of green or purple.

“I never knew before it was really naughty,” said Lucy Hunt.

“Teacher is always cross when she

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catches us," said Mary; "but teachers always are tiresome."

"I didn't know it was a sort of telling stories," added Lucy again.

"Well, we won't do it no more," said Mary.

And then they went into church. And there one verse of the Psalm got a hold upon Lucy's mind.

"I hate the sins of unfaithfulness: there shall no such cleave unto me."

She asked Polly Smithers when they went out if she thought copying was a sin of unfaithfulness; but Polly said,

"Oh, goodness, don't keep on so about that. We won't do it no more, and that's enough."

But Lucy, as the others said, was such a girl to keep on, that the verse rung in her head, and came back when she was saying her prayers, so that when she said "deliver us from evil," she thought of unfaithfulness, and cheating her governess and teacher into thinking she knew more than she did.

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She thought of it again on Monday morning, and most of all when all the children said their prayers together with their eyes shut. Reading and writing in copybooks went on as usual, and then came the sums.

The sixty-fives in five hundred and forty—how many ?

Mary thought it went nine times ; Lucy tried to stop her ears and eyes against the kind of murmur that came forth from Myra, and that effort took up all her attention, so that she put sixty-five down under fifty-four, and tried to subtract upside down. When that got into such a mess that she could not get on, and she looked up to wink the tears away and keep them from dropping on her slate, she saw Lily twisting hers so that the corner of it might be seen. She shook her head and would not look, and then a glance went round the class, while she rubbed her attempt out and tried nine times, but did not find out till she had subtracted, or

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tried to subtract, that it was too much. Then she said eight times six were thirty-two, and so got her next trial all wrong, just as the other girls—all but Mary—were holding up their hands to show that the sum was done.

“Lucy Hunt, what are you about? Look alive!” called out the teacher.

Lucy was worried and upset, and could not anyhow recollect what to do when she got to the second step in her long division sum, and had to subtract one hundred and ninety-five from two hundred and seven. She *really* knew, but she felt stupid and confused, and could not recollect, and Mary even had got on before her. So when the time for sums was up, Teacher Margaret exclaimed,—

“Well, Lucy Hunt, that is a shame! Whatever have you been about? You must be kept in.”

“That comes of being proud,” whispered Susan Bray. And poor Lucy began to cry.

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“Lucy Hunt, don’t be such a baby. It’s all temper,” said Margaret Roller, turning to the mistress; “the sum was as easy as possible, and all the others did it in no time; but I saw how it was—she didn’t try.”

Miss Bolton had a little more experience than Margaret, and thought perhaps the child was not well, so she made Lucy come and stand by her, and looked over her as she began again on the muddy, smeary slate; getting her through that one sum, and then letting her go home to dinner.

“That child knows nothing about her work,” said Miss Bolton to her pupil-teacher; “you have been getting her on too fast. You must give her easier sums.”

“I’m sure she has always done them right before. It is all contrariness,” said Margaret.

“So I thought,” said Miss Bolton; “but I see she really does not understand.”

Lucy had gone home very unhappy

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and downhearted. She had very seldom been kept in before, and her mother was vexed, and wondered at her; but she only said she had not been able to do her sum. Her heart felt very heavy, as if this "hating the sins of unfaithfulness" would only bring her into disgrace for ever, and what was worse, set all her companions against her.

"Here comes the proud girl," said Lily Bell, as they gathered round the school door.

"Well, if I would be such a silly!" added Alice.

"Don't, Ally; you know what Miss Jessie said, that *doing* a lie was like telling a lie."

"Well, and what has that there Jess to do with our lessons in the week?" said Alice; for the whole set of them seemed to be always repeating Susan Bray, and to be able to think of nothing for themselves.

"I like Miss Jessie," said Polly Smithers.

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"She's got no business with us," said Alice.

"And she bain't a lady," added Myra, catching hold of any foolish reason for not minding her.

"But if it is wrong," said poor little Lucy.

"Wrong! why, what harm does it do? It don't hurt no one, do it?" said Alice.

"Never mind, Ally," said Susan, coming up. "It's no use talking to Lucy Hunt. She be too proud for us."

"What's all this?" said Edith Walton, one of the sixth standard girls, coming up. "What, you having words! I thought you never had!"

Polly Smithers, who was fond of Lucy, spoke up.

"They are all *at* Lucy because she wouldn't copy her sum off theirs. Miss Jessie said 'twas naughty."

"Well, so it is, a nasty, mean trick. We never do in our standard, nor never did," said Edith Walton. "Our Tom

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would be in a pretty way if he thought I would do such a thing! Never mind them, Lucy; you'll learn twice as much as they do if you learn honest and true."

This was a help and comfort to Lucy, though Susan and Myra said Edith was a stuck-up thing, who needn't give herself airs. It gave more force to the little girl's resolution when the dictation lesson was going on, and she knew she had only to lift up her eyes to see in Alice's face how to spell *niece*, and half a dozen more words that she could only make a dash at. Even Mary Smithers had given up trying to find out for herself, and Lucy was the only girl who had written "*neace*." She had that and three more words to write twelve times over on her slate after she had done, and Margaret Roller scolded her again, and gave her a bad mark.

"Was it so very wrong to do as others did?" she said to herself. Why should

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she stand out and set them all against her, when they used to be such friends?

She went slowly and sadly to school the next morning. She had said her prayer, but her resolution was getting very weak. She did not want to meet any of the others for fear they should be cross to her, and she only came in at the last moment before prayers. Then came the Scripture reading. Mr. Somers took that on Tuesday mornings, and it was at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the broad and narrow way. And what the Vicar tried hard to make the little girls remember was — that everybody doing a thing did not make it a right or a safe thing to do. It was much better to be *one* doing right than among many doing wrong. That was another strengthening help to Lucy; though she did dread the sums very much, and wonder whether she should hold out. But to her surprise Margaret said in a cross voice,—

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“Here, Lucy Hunt, you have been too idle and careless to get on with the rest; you are to go back to the beginning. Here—seven millions, eight hundred and fifty-six thousand, five hundred and ninety-nine to divide by thirteen. I’d be ashamed to have such a sum as that after having long division for a month.”

Susan laughed, and all the others except Mary did the same; but Lucy, though hot and ashamed, was glad, for they could not prompt her now.

And the sum came out right.

Time went on, and the girls, who were really good-natured and fond of Lucy, left off teasing her to do like them, but treated hers as a fancy, like Polly’s love of chocolate, or Lily’s dislike of broth, or Alice’s turn for the infants. “Lucy never will,” they said, and they did not trouble themselves any more about her tastes, or think whether they were right or wrong. No one did, at least, except Polly Smithers, who now and then felt that Lucy was

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the good child among them, and wished to be like her, but was sure to get into trouble by it. Margaret Roller was proud of her class, and said they hardly ever had a wrong sum in their long division and their two first rules with money. She even got them on to multiplication of money — all but that little stupid, blundering Lucy, who was behind all the others.

And so came the day of the inspection, and the school was quite full of girls all on their forms in their standards, with their hair in the neatest order, and their clean aprons over their second best frocks, and large sheets of paper before the three highest standards, and new pens in their holders, and their hearts throbbing, for it was the best time of all the year for testing what they had done, and they knew that the managers of the school, the Vicar, the Squire, and Miss Manners, would give prizes to all who passed in all three subjects.

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Miss Manners was there already, helping to arrange the needlework on the big table—the work down from Edith Walton's beautiful Swiss darning to little Annie Woodfall's bit of hemming in pink cotton.

And just as the clock struck ten, in came Mr. Somers and a tall thin gentleman with a long nose and a big black beard—a new gentleman, whom even Miss Bolton had never seen before. He shook hands with her, and asked his questions of her, and desired her to make the children sing. They sang, "Shall Trelawney die?" not quite so loud or so heartily as generally, when they were twenty thousand Cornishmen, for they found themselves only forty-five little Langley girls with very quavering hearts. After two more songs, the Inspector began calling out their names, and making them change places, so that Susan Bray found herself in between Edith Walton and a fourth standard girl, Myra was ever so

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far off, next to a fifth and the only seventh standard girl, and Lucy Hunt had two older ones of whom she knew very little on either side of her, so that each girl felt, in a manner, lonely and apart from her own proper companions. Then came the orders to write their names, their standards, their numbers, and their school on their papers. This was new to the third standard, who last year had only worked on slates, and very carefully they wrote them; next the cards were dealt out—green cards with the sums that they were to do, four in number, of which three must be done.

How anxiously Lucy looked at them, making quite sure they would be like what Teacher Margaret gave the clever ones. No—all that were marked for girls were not a bit harder than she was well used to. She had gone through the first on the sheet, which was intended for rough copies, when the standard was called on to listen to the dictation. It was read

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twice over, and the more difficult words explained, and Miss Bolton, who went through it, took care not to go too fast, at least Lucy thought so, for she took in all the sense, though she was not sure of one or two words which she had never written before, especially something about delicious juices.

Then she returned to the sums, and was not disturbed in them; indeed, she had time to look them all over, and the dictation too, and to alter the word *here*, when it was used as a verb, into *hear*—having gone wrong while trying to keep up with the reading; but she was much afraid that some of her other words were wrongly spelt.

However, the six girls were called out together to read, and then it struck Lucy that Polly's eyes looked rather like crying. Susan would have answered all the questions for everybody, if the inspector would have let her, but he hushed her up, and let Myra and Alice and Lily have no

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peace till they had got answers out of one kind or another.

It was over at last, the geography, and history, and needle-work, and all. The inspector had taken all the written papers and rolled them up in his bag, and the third standard were told they might go home.

They felt very hot and weary, their little brains aching with the strain, and they were very glad to run out into the air and let out their voices.

“Did you do your sums right?” asked Myra of Susan.

“Oh, yes, to be sure I did,” was the answer, with a long stretch.

“And oh! how did you spell ‘delicious juices’?” asked Lily.

“Why, of course,” said Myra; “d—i double l—i—shus.”

“No, that’s not it. You’ll be out,” said Susan. “Now I spelt it del—e—t—i—u—s. It is always a ti, you know.”

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“And juices?” said Mary, anxiously.

“D—i—o—u—sh—es,” said Susan triumphantly.

“Oh, Susie, I know it is not that,” said Myra: “it is Ch—u—s—es.”

Alice Long burst out laughing. “If you’ve done like that!” she said.

“Well,” said Lily, “I tried to get Edith Walton to give me ever so little a notion what letter to begin with, but she was as cross as cross, and never looked round at me, though she had done in lots of time.

“But how did you spell it?” asked Mary anxiously.

And as Alice, the good speller of the lot, went through the word, Lucy’s hopes rose. She had spelt like that.

“How soon shall we know who passes?” was anxiously asked, and the elder girls were consulted on how soon the paper that they called the schedule would come back. In two or three days’ time they thought, and eager eyes looked at Miss

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Bolton every morning when they came into school.

At last the schedule had come. Mr. Somers and Miss Manners had both come in to hear it. There were all the names—beginning with the tinies of the first standard — going up — up — up to the elders in the sixth and seventh, and with the columns beyond, where blanks meant all right, crosses meant just scraping through, and O meant failure.

How the children listened as she began with the monitor in her extra sixth, who had succeeded in every subject except domestic economy ; then Edith Walton, sixth standard, had succeeded in everything ! Everybody was glad, for everybody liked Edith ; but they were too anxious to hear their own names for much heed to other people's. At last it came down to the third standard.

Susan Bray passed in reading, failed in writing and arithmetic.

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Lilian Bell passed in reading, failed in writing and arithmetic.

Myra Allen passed in reading and arithmetic, failed in writing.

Alice Long passed in reading and writing, failed in arithmetic.

Mary Smithers failed in every subject.

Lucy Hunt passed in every subject.

The third standard hardly heard a word more, even when their own little sisters' names were read out. Mary Smithers and Lily Bell were crying.

Susan had her don't-care face, and Lucy was not at all sure that she had heard the words right. The whole six felt that they had failed as a standard, and that something was coming that they would not like. They could see that Margaret was red, and looked angrily at them too, as if they had disgraced her. Indeed, they really were the blot on the whole school. There was only one other total failure, and that was of a poor

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child who was half silly, and could not learn; and the only girl besides who had not passed was one who had come into the parish very backward, and had been kept to the last moment among the infants.

When the mistress had finished reading out the list, Mr. Somers said,

“A very creditable schedule on the whole, Miss Bolton—all but the third standard. Why, there is only one perfect pass, Lucy Hunt; one pass, Myra Allen; three failures in two subjects, Susan Bray, Lillian Bell, and Alice Long, and one total failure—Mary Smithers. How is this, little girls? I am afraid you can't have been working with all your might.”

“I can tell you how it is, sir,” said Miss Bolton. “Those children are always copying from one another. I have reproved them for it over and over again, and one or other of them has been punished whenever we have found her out; but nothing will break them of

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it, and so when they were all out of reach of one another they were quite at a loss."

"Did they copy from Lucy Hunt?"

"No, sir. She was the only one who never gave in to it," said Margaret Roller, speaking up. "She left it off after Jessie Hollis spoke to them about it, and she had to do her sums separate, because she could not keep up with the rest."

Miss Manners said something in a low voice, but some of the sharp-eared ones caught it.

"Had they not all better have been kept apart, or not had the same sums to do?"

And Miss Bolton replied in the same undertone.

"Why, yes, ma'am, and so I told Margaret, and she did it now and then; but it seems she could not manage, or at least she *never did*."

Margaret, hot and indignant, with tears

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in her eyes, now broke forth so loud that every one could hear her.

“I am sure, sir, it is not my fault. If I have told them once, I have told them fifty times how naughty it was to look over one another, and I have always punished them when I caught them out; but they never would mind, and so now they are rightly served.”

“That is quite true,” said Mr. Somers gravely, but with a tone that hushed Margaret’s vehemence. “This is just punishment to all who have not been faithful in a little.”

The pupil-teacher’s tears came faster; for she knew that Mr. Somers meant that if she had been more faithful to her own work, and had tried more to carry out Miss Bolton’s advice, she might have done much to prevent this.

However, that did not excuse the little girls themselves. Miss Manners gave to all those who had passed well the prizes which she had promised—a pretty card

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with the date, and a shilling. But there was only Lucy Hunt to have this in her standard, and when she was called up Mr. Somers said he was glad to see her, for she had been a true and faithful little girl, who had stood bravely up against temptation.

And then he called the other five apart from the rest, and asked them whether they understood why they were in disgrace.

Lily, who knew her mother would beat her for failing, cried too much to answer, but Susan said,

“For not passing, sir.”

“No. We are not in the least angry with poor Janie Tubbs. Passing standards is not the great thing above all others. Do you know what is, Susan?”

“Doing one’s duty, sir,” she said.

“Yes; and you are not doing your duty in your state of life unless you do your best to learn now as children. The inspection shows whether you have tried

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thus to do your best. Now, I don't think you little girls have done so. You have only tried to get through your lessons each day as you could, not learning really, but being helped by others. Is it not so?"

"We didn't mean no harm," said Susan.

"But did you not know you ought not?"

She pinched the corner of her pinafore.

"Now, children, remember, you three have put yourselves back a whole year in school work, and disappointed all who care about you; because you were disobedient in the first place where your foolish young eyes saw no harm. And that made you act deceitfully, showing up work you had not honestly done. When each had to work for herself, without leaning on the others, she found she really could not do it, and came to this failure. It is a sad thing now, but it will be a very good thing for you all

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your lives, if it makes you remember that only what is true and real and thorough will ever stand in the end."

Then he spoke up to all the school and said,

"Remember, my little ones, we cannot all be clever or strong; but the one thing that we can be, and that God calls on us to be, is - faithful."

