

MARY F.

WATERBURY

LIGHT FOR LITTLE ONES

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	6
CHAPTER III	9
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	10

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CHAPTER I

FRANKIE AND HIS HOME

Frankie's home was on the bank of a large creek, the Kayaderossevas. Its water turned the great wheels of many a mill and factory. These mills were long, high buildings, filled with windows, and having steep, dusty, narrow stairways. The water was clear and blue when it flowed by Frankie's home, but after that it went foaming and dashing over the dam, and seemed intent upon doing as much work, and making as much noise as it could. It made the wheels whirl around, and they started the machinery in the mills, and then for a buzz and whirr and roar all day long!

The house in which Frankie lived was white, with a piazza across the front covered with trumpet honey-suckles—those bright red flowers, shaped like trumpets, just the thing for fairies to blow, they are so delicate and pretty. Around the house was a large yard full of trees and shrubs. Outside of the fence stood a row of poplars, as tall and straight as soldiers on guard. There were maples too, and, every autumn, Jack Frost painted their leaves crimson and yellow.

Do you know Jack Frost? He is the merry fellow who pinches your fingers and toes, and the end of your nose and the tips of your ears; and who, to atone for all that, on winter nights draws those beautiful pictures on the window panes for you to look at in the morning. He thinks, perhaps, that you will look at them instead of teasing "mamma" for breakfast. Some of the trees Jack did not paint, but left them green all winter. These were the pines, with their brown cones, and the firs.

How do you like the outside of Frankie's home? The inside was just as pleasant, that is, if any house can be as pleasant as the sky, and clouds, and trees filled with singing birds. The sun came in at the window, where there bloomed scarlet geraniums and heliotropes, and near which a golden canary sang his cheerful songs; and Mrs. Western, Frankie's mother, was so cheerful and good that any place would be pleasant where she was. Frankie's father was in California. It was a sad day when he bade his wife "good-bye," and lifted Frankie in his arms for the last kiss; but he must leave them, to earn money, so that they could keep their pleasant home, for when his factory burned down one windy night, he lost, with it, all his property.

After a few months had passed, Frankie did not miss his father, but played as merrily as ever. What a comfort he was to his mother! So strong, healthful, and happy all the day long! In only one way did he give his mother trouble. He had a very strong will and quick temper, and when he could not have his own way, would sometimes speak hasty, angry words. But his patient mother taught him the wickedness of yielding to his temper, and by gentle words led him to see how dark is the life of sin, and how light and pleasant the "way of holiness."

How Frankie learned to "walk in the light," we shall see from the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENTURE IN THE CREEK

“Hurra! hurra!” shouted Ben Field, Joe West, and Willie Prime, throwing up their caps, and giving an extra cheer as they stopped in front of Mrs. Western’s gate.

“What are you hurraing for?” asked Frankie, who stood inside the gate, whistling, with both hands in his pockets.

“Coz you’ve got pants on,” said Ben. “You won’t have to stay in the yard now all the time, just as if you’re a girl.”

“Don’t know,” Frankie said, doubtfully, putting his hand on the latch.

“That’s right, Frank,” said Joe, “come on; we’ll have a game of marbles. I ain’t too big to play with a little fellow, are you, Will?”

Joe was eight and Willie seven years old, and though Frankie was but six, he *felt* quite as large in his new pants and jacket, as either of them; so he said, with an odd little air of dignity, “I *ain’t* a little fellow, and I don’t want to play marbles.”

“Of course not,” said Willie, “or you’d wear dresses. I did. I can just remember.”

“He had a dress on yesterday, and a sun-bonnet,” Ben said, with a provoking laugh. “He’s growed a lot since then.”

“Stop laughing at me, Ben Field. Do you see my copper toes,” and one of the new boots was thrust threateningly through the fence.

“Never mind him, Frank,” said good-natured Joe. “Come on, boys, let’s go to the creek and wade.”

“Don’t you want to go too?” asked Willie, seeing Frankie’s wistful look at the mention of the creek.

“Oh yes!” he exclaimed, delightedly. “Just wait a minute till I ask mamma;” and off he ran, tumbling down two or three times, and rushing into the house like a small hurricane. Not in the kitchen, nor the sitting-room; “Where is mamma?” he said to himself impatiently. At last he opened the parlor door and found her there, fast asleep on the sofa. “Oh dear!” he thought, discontentedly. “Mamma never’ll let me wake her up, an’ the boys won’t wait, an’ I can’t go.” With a sad face he went back to the gate. “I can’t go. Mamma’s asleep.” He put his hands in his pockets, winked his eyes very fast, and began to whistle. All this to keep from crying, and disgracing his new pants by acting like a girl.

“I don’t believe your mother’ll care one bit. Just to walk to the creek,” said Joe.

“No, of course she won’t,” added Will. “Take off your boots and go barefoot like us boys.”

The temptation to go barefooted was too strong for Frankie, so down he plumped on the grass, and off came the copper-toed boots and clean white stockings. In a few minutes all four boys were running along the dusty road in their bare feet. It seemed very new and funny for a while, but after they had gone half a mile, Frankie began to wish for the cool shade and moist greensward of home. The sun burned his head, and the sand of the road his feet.

“Oh dear!” he said, “ain’t we most there?”

“Tired a’ready!” laughed Ben. “You’re a great boy. Better go home and sit in mammy’s lap.”

In his sorrowful little heart, poor, tired Frankie wished most heartily that he was on his mother’s lap that very minute, but he thought it wouldn’t be manly to say so. He was too tired even to resent what Ben had said, so he kept still and trudged on.

“I know what we’ll do,” said Joe. “Will and I’ll make a chair and carry you. And you, Ben Field, had better keep mighty still, or I’ll settle your case in a hurry.” For some reason, just then Ben thought best to start off in pursuit of a butterfly.

Joe and Willie made a chair of their crossed hands, on which Frankie seated himself, and put an arm around each of the boys' necks. This mode of traveling pleased him very much, and it seemed but a little while before they reached the creek.

"Ain't it jolly?" said Joe, as he led Frankie into the clear, cool water.

"Oh! oh! see the fishes! the dear little fishes!" said Frankie, stooping to pick them up. But the gay little shiners knew better than to allow themselves to be picked up, even by such a nice little boy. Losing his balance in his attempts to seize one of them, Frankie had a sudden bath in the creek.

"Oh dear! my new pants and jacket!" was the first thing the wet little fellow found breath to say after Joe and Willie had fished him out of the water and set him on the bank to dry.

"That comes of bringin' babies along," said Ben, running down the bank.

That was the drop too much, and Frankie commenced crying, saying, between his sobs, "I want to go home. Oh! please let's go home."

So Joe and Will made a chair again for Frankie and started for home, leaving Ben to enjoy his wading alone.

They set Frankie down by the gate, and, picking up his boots and stockings, he went into the house.

"Why, Frankie Western!" exclaimed his mother, as the wet, muddy, rueful little figure stood in the sitting-room door. "Where have you been? Your new clothes are ruined." And, carrying the speechless little fellow into the kitchen, she soon had him thoroughly washed, and put on one of his old dresses in place of the new pants and jacket which were hung up for future attention.

It was a good deal of water for one day, and the crash towel was rough, and to go back into a dress and apron after wearing pants, was something of a trial, but the poor child was too tired, and too glad to be at home to care much about it. After he was dressed he sat contentedly in his chair till supper-time, then ate his bread and milk and went to bed. It was not long before he was dreaming of fishes and creeks, and muddy pants, nor *very* long before the morning sun drove away the dreams and opened his eyes. Jumping up, he put on his stockings and boots, but pants and jacket were nowhere to be seen, nothing but the brown gingham dress and apron.

"Mamma, mamma, I want my pants. Please, mamma," he said, running into the kitchen where his mother was getting breakfast.

"They must be cleaned first. Put on your dress and come to breakfast." Her voice was so pleasant that Frankie forgot his impatience, and dressed himself quickly and quietly.

After breakfast he was about to run out as usual, when his mother said,

"No, Frankie. Mother wants you to stay in the house this morning. She has something to say to you."

"But I don't want to stay, mamma," and he walked slowly toward the door.

"Frankie *must* stay." This was decisive, and he sat down in his chair.

After his mother had finished her work, she took him into the sitting-room, and gave him a seat on a stool by her side.

"Now, Frankie," she said, "I want you to tell me just what you did and where you went yesterday afternoon."

Frankie gave a truthful account of his adventures at the creek. Then his mother said, "Did you know you were disobeying your mother, and, more than that, disobeying God?"

"O mamma, I didn't think, I wanted to go so much," and Frankie looked as though he wanted to cry.

"I know you *wanted* to go, but you must do what is *right*, not what you *want* to do. I will teach you a verse from the Bible that you must remember whenever you are tempted to disobey your mother. It is this: 'Children *obey* your parents in the Lord, for this is right.' Can you repeat it now?"

After a few trials, Frankie could say it without a mistake, and he seemed to understand it, for, when his mother told him that he could run out and play, he put his arms around her neck and kissed her, saying softly, “I’ll remember, mamma, that God tells me to mind you.”

CHAPTER III

ALECK—THE NEW FRIEND

Frankie had never been to school, but his mother had taught him to read, and had given him some nice books. These he used to read over and over again until he almost had them by heart. Then, every Sunday his teacher selected a good Sunday School book for him to read during the week. The book she gave him on the Sabbath after his adventure in the creek, was the story of a naughty boy who disobeyed his parents. Frankie read the story with great interest, and did not leave it until it was finished; then, going to his mother, he said, earnestly,

“Mamma, did Miss Campbell know I didn’t mind you and went to the creek?”

“I don’t know, Frankie,” replied his mother. “Why do you ask?”

“Because she gave me a book that tells about a little boy that didn’t mind, and ran away to a pond, and got drowned; and I thought she must have known it.”

“It may be that she did, but that is of less consequence than the fact that God knows it. Think of it, Frankie, the great and holy God! He sees everything you do, and hears everything you say, and knows all your thoughts.”

“Oh, dear!” sighed Frankie. “I wish he didn’t. I never can have any more fun when I think of that. Is he looking at us all the time, every one of us?”

“Every one of us, and all the time,” answered his mother. “His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.’ But that need not trouble you, if you do right.”

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