

Mathews Joanna Hooe

Bessie on Her Travels



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Joanna H. Mathews

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I

PACKING UP

What a twitter and flutter and chirping there was in the pretty nest which Maggie and Bessie Bradford called their own room; for there were four little girls, who were to start together the next day on their travels, and there was so much to be talked over. All the new places they were to visit, all the wonderful things they were to see and do; and, more than all, that sea voyage of three or four days. For none of them but Belle had ever been to sea, and it would be quite a new thing to all the rest.

Then there was the packing, about which both Maggie and Bessie, especially the former, had been greatly concerned for the last week; for it seemed impossible to them that nurse and Jane could make all the necessary preparations for this important journey on the day before that on which they were to start.

That morning Maggie's excitement and impatience had overflowed. Waking at a very early hour, and finding Bessie still sleeping, she lay a few moments thinking of all that was to be done that day, and wondering that the household should still be so quiet, with the prospect of such important business before them.

"I just expect the end of the matter will be that every one in the house, even poor mamma, who is not so very well yet, will have to turn to and help to make up for their pro-cras-to-na-tion!" said she to herself, indignantly; "and I've just a great mind to begin packing up myself, to set them a good example, and make them ashamed of a little girl like me taking time by the forelock so much better than they do."

No sooner said than done; and Maggie scrambled out of bed and into her dressing-gown and slippers quite forgetting to pause and think whether or no mamma would approve of her running about the house in such a guise, and if she would not be giving more trouble than help by meddling with what she did not understand.

Upstairs she trotted to the topmost story, where was a room which Fred called the "put-all-room," and which held, not only trunks and boxes of all shapes and sizes, but a couple of great, old-fashioned presses, and many another article not in common daily use, and stored there to be out of the way. The children thought it rather a treat to go in now and then with mamma or nurse, to rummage there and see what they could spy out: but none of them had ever gone there alone or without permission; and if Maggie had taken time to reflect, I think she would have known that her mamma would not wish her to do so, though she had never positively forbidden it.

But just now the busy little head was too full of plans for making herself useful, to take heed of any thing else; and finding what she had hoped for, that the door was unlocked, she opened it, and went in. The trunks were not piled together at one end as they usually were, but stood singly, here and there about the room, just as Patrick had left them the day before, when he had examined them to see if they were in good order; and this Maggie observed with great satisfaction.

"It just seems as if it was fixed to be convenient for me," she said to herself; "and now I can try which is the heaviest one I can pull. I know I could not take those largest downstairs, but I think I could one of the middlings."

But, after various trials, she found to her great disappointment, that she could by no means move even one of the "middlings;" and was at last forced to content herself with a small black leather trunk, in which she thought she would put some of her own and Bessie's clothes.

“For a pack in time saves nine,” said Maggie to herself; “and even if it does not hold much, this little trunk is a better beginning than nothing.”

Having fixed upon this prize, she contrived with some trouble to drag it from the room, and push and pull it to the head of the stairs. But here a new difficulty arose. She could by no means lift the trunk and carry it down: small as it was for the amount of packing she wished to do, it was quite too heavy for her little strength; and though for one moment she thought of pushing it over the edge of the top stair, and allowing it to slide down by its own weight, she soon reflected this would not do.

“For it will just go and smash itself all to pieces, I suppose, and then make a horrid noise to wake the people all up,” she said again, feeling rather vexed with the innocent trunk. “Oh! I know what I’ll do: I’ll go in front of it and pull it down very gently, one step at a time.”

But in spite of all the pains she took, the trunk seemed to Maggie to make the most outrageous noise, sliding over each stair with a grating sound, and coming down from the edge of one to another with a thump and a bang, which all her efforts could not silence. She was soon heartily sorry that she had ever touched it; but she must go on now, for she could not possibly pull it up again, and if she left her hold of it, it would go tumbling headlong to the bottom.

However, she took heart of grace again by the time she had reached the foot of the top flight, for no one seemed to have been disturbed; the servants having all gone down stairs, and the boys, who slept in the third story, being sound sleepers. So she concluded to go on and not have all her pains thrown away; but she had gone only two or three steps on the second flight, her troublesome prize bumping after her, when she heard her father’s voice from below.

“What are you busy with there, Patrick?” he said. “You are disturbing Mrs. Bradford, and will wake the children. Leave it till later in the day.”

“O papa!” said Maggie, feeling rather guilty, and very much mortified, “it’s not Patrick, but me;” and as she spoke, she appeared round the turn of the stairs, while her attention being for the moment diverted, the trunk slid after her with a bang which seemed to jar the house.

“You, my daughter!” said Mr. Bradford, coming up to where Maggie stood; “and what *are* you doing here at this time in the morning?” and he looked down in great surprise at the small figure whose cheeks matched her scarlet dressing-gown, and whose curls were tossed and tumbled in the wildest confusion.

“It’s this mean old trunk, papa,” said Maggie, pettishly; “the more I try to make it go softly, the more it won’t, but just squeaks and bumps all it can, the horrid thing!” and now she gave up the trunk very willingly into her father’s strong grasp.

“What were you doing with it?” asked Mr. Bradford.

“Taking it downstairs, so I could pack it with my things and Bessie’s, papa. I wanted to take mamma by surprise to see how useful I could be.”

“You have taken mamma rather too much by surprise,” said her father, unable to help smiling; “for you have wakened and startled her. It is well to try to be useful, but one should try to be thoughtful and considerate at the same time, or our pains will be quite thrown away, as yours are now. You must go back to your bed, my daughter, and let this trunk alone;” and lifting the trunk he carried it to the third-story hall, Maggie looking on with a very crestfallen feeling.

“It may stay there till we see if it is needed,” said Mr. Bradford, soothingly, as he saw her disturbed face; “and by and by, at the proper time, you may ask mamma if you can help her;” and taking the little hand which was trembling with cold and over-exertion, he led her back to her own room. Papa had been very kind, and could scarcely be said to have found fault with her; but Maggie, who began to feel that she had been somewhat to blame, would rather have been scolded than hear him laugh as he did when he told mamma how and where he had found her. She did not hear what he said, but she knew very well what he was talking about, and drew the bed-clothes over her head that she might shut out the sound of his laughter.

“It’s too bad,” she thought: “most always when I try to be very superior, I make a mistake and people laugh at me about it. I feel as if I’d like to be mad at some one, but I can’t be mad at papa, and I don’t want to be mad at myself, ’cause I didn’t mean to do wrong; and it’s no use to be mad at the trunk, but I b’lieve I do feel a little provoked at it, it has made my hands hurt, and my arms do ache so. I’m real tired too.” And coming to the surface for air, Maggie turned over on her side, and presently dropped off into a sound morning nap; so that when nurse came to tell her she might get up, she found her still sleeping instead of wide awake as usual, and was bidden by Mrs. Bradford to let her sleep as long as she would after her exertion.

Maggie was rather subdued and quiet all the first part of the morning, and more than ever grateful to papa, when she found that he had not told the boys, and so given them the opportunity to tease and laugh at her.

“I suppose you couldn’t let me help you after my *unconsiderate* unusefulness this morning: could you, mamma?” she said, when she saw her mother gathering together the articles Jane was to stow in the trunks.

“Well, yes: I think I can find something for you and Bessie to do,” said mamma: “you may take all these tapes, needles, spools, and so forth, into your own room, and see how neatly you can put them into this box; and all these ribbons may go into that one.”

“Oh! thank you, mamma: I will let Bessie do the ribbons, ’cause they are the prettiest;” and away ran generous Maggie with her sister to begin the pleasant task.

That done, mamma gave them leave to pack the clothes belonging to Miss Bessie Margaret Marian, and Miss Margaret Colonel Horace Rush Bradford, in another box; saying that since she did not feel as if she could do without her own little daughters, she would not ask them to leave the whole of their large family behind, and thought the dolls might prove a great diversion when they were tired, or perhaps shut up in some hotel on a rainy day.

They were busy deciding what dresses should be taken and what left, when Mrs. Norris came round to see Mrs. Bradford for a few moments, bringing Lily with her; and while the ladies talked in one room, the little girls chattered away in the other, Belle coming in about the same time.

“Oh!” said Lily, “is your mamma going to let you take your large dolls? my mamma will only let me take a tiny, weeny one that can go in a travelling-bag.”

“I wouldn’t take any then,” said Belle. “I’m going to take my largest, biggest one of all.”

“Not Belle Maggie Bessie?” questioned Maggie.

“Yes: Belle Maggie Bessie!” repeated Belle, in a tone of determined obstinacy and snappishness, which showed that the subject was a sore one with her.

“But your papa said last night that you could not take her, ’cause such a large doll would be too much trouble,” said Bessie.

“Well, anyhow, I’m going to: he said I could this morning,” answered Belle.

“Then you cried and cried and bothered him, till he said yes: I know you,” said Maggie, reproachfully.

“I don’t care,” said Belle; but she did care, and now was ashamed that her little playmates should guess how she had worried her too indulgent papa.

“You might repent yet and tell him you won’t take her,” said Bessie.

“Yes, do, and make a Rip Van Winkle of her,” said Maggie.

“I shan’t make her that ugly thing, and I shall take her,” said Belle, indignantly.

“You needn’t be so cross,” said Maggie: “Bessie and I made all our other dolls Rip Van Winkles and William Tells, and it was good fun. Don’t you want to see them, Lily?”

Lily assented; and, opening a deep drawer in the bureau, Maggie showed her all the various dolls belonging to herself and Bessie, lying with bandages on their eyes.

“I don’t see what you call them William Tells and that other name for,” said Lily. “William Tell was the man Miss Ashton told us about, who shot an apple off his son’s head.”

“Yes,” answered Maggie; “and we told Harry and Fred about it, but they knew before, and told us that the Swiss people believe that he and his companions went fast asleep in a cave for a great many hundred years, and some day they would wake up and rule over them.”

“And who was the Winkle man?” asked Belle.

“He was another old fellow who went up into the mountains and went to sleep for ever so many years; and when he woke up nobody knew him, and he did not know anybody. Harry told us about him. I don’t see how people can be so foolish as to sleep for so long; but it came into my head to make our dolls Rip Van Winkles and William Tells till we came back, and then we wouldn’t feel as if they were so lonely when they were asleep all the time.”

“It’s only pretend, you know, and one can make b’lieve about dolls even better than about people,” said Bessie. “And it’s a great relief to suffering to go to sleep and forget it,” she added, as gravely as though there were no “pretend” about it, and the dolls were real children, feeling deeply the separation from their little mammas.

“That’s a very nice thing to do. You do make such nice plays, Maggie,” said Lily, admiringly. “I shall do it with my dolls: you’d better too, Belle.”

“Well, I don’t know; but I’m going to think about it,” said Belle, in whose little heart Maggie’s reproach had awakened a feeling of remorse for the selfishness and obstinacy she had shown about her doll. “I b’lieve Belle Maggie Bessie *is* most too large. I can’t carry her much myself, and papa did say she’d be in everybody’s way. I guess I’ll make a William Tell of her, if Maggie and Bessie will let me put her with theirs.”

“Yes, we will; and you can take a doll of moderation,” said Maggie, meaning that Belle could take a doll of moderate size.

“Do you think you’ll be seasick on the steamer?” asked Lily.

“Pooh! no, I shan’t. I won’t be,” said Maggie.

“Perhaps you can’t help it,” said Belle. “I’m sure I didn’t mean to be seasick when I came here in the steamer, but I couldn’t help it; and oh dear! – it’s – it is horrid.”

“Is being seasick any thing like being homesick?” asked Bessie.

“Not exactly; but the two things very often go together, darling,” said Aunt Bessie, laughing, and speaking from the next room.

“Then I’m more determined than ever not to be it,” said Maggie, meaning seasick by “it.” “But then I couldn’t be homesick either, when I have so many of my own home people with me.”

But, in spite of her determination, Maggie had privately a great dread of this same seasickness. She could not bear to be sick; not that she was impatient or cross when this was the case with her, but that she thought sickness, like sleep, was “a great waste of being alive.” She wanted to be able to run about and amuse herself all the time; and it was “such fun” to go to sea, that she was very much afraid lest any thing should interfere with her enjoyment of it.

“They give people sour things when they are seasick,” said Belle, who, having once suffered in this way, thought herself entitled to give all necessary information on the subject. “That’s the only nice thing about it. They gave me lots of sour oranges and lemons.”

“But Bessie and I don’t like sour things, so that won’t make it any better for us,” said Maggie, soberly. Nevertheless, she treasured Belle’s remark; and not seeing her way clearly to a private stock of oranges and lemons, she watched her opportunity when her little playmates were gone, and taking Patrick into her confidence, begged him to give her “two pickles and a whole lot of vinegar,” not to eat herself, because mamma would not allow that, but to be prepared, when all the rest of the family were seasick and she had to take care of them.

The good-natured Irishman, expressing great admiration at the “forethought of her,” furnished her with what she wanted; and Maggie went off, rejoicing in her spoils.

The pickles were stowed away in the soup-tureen belonging to her doll’s dinner-set; and she contrived, when nurse and Jane were not looking, to slip them into a corner of one of the trunks. The

vinegar she poured into a vial she had also obtained from Patrick; and as the cork did not fit very tightly, and she feared the liquid might run out if she put it into the trunk, she hid it in her bosom, heroically enduring the smell of the vinegar, which was exceedingly disagreeable to her, “for the sake of my family,” as she told Bessie.

For Bessie’s quick little nose soon smelt out the vinegar, which she also disliked very much; and after several sniffs and exclamations of disgust from her, and much wondering as to where that “horrid, vinegarish smell did come from,” Maggie felt forced to tell her the secret which she had meant to keep until they were safely on board the steamer.

But Bessie was by no means so struck with admiration as Patrick had been, and for once did not think Maggie’s plan a good one; at least not unless she could be persuaded to tell her mamma of it.

“For you know, dear Maggie,” she said with a doubtful shake of her head, “mamma does not like us to keep secrets from her; and don’t you think she will know what is best to take?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Maggie, unwilling to give up her cherished plan; “maybe she won’t think about sour things, and I’m sure she’d be very thankful when she’s seasick, and finds an unexpected pickle just on hand.”

“I think she’ll like it just as well if she knows about it before,” said Bessie. “And I don’t believe it is quite right; and, besides, it is such a very bad-smelling secret to have. Tell her, and see what she will say.”

But even as they were talking, they found that the “bad-smelling secret” had betrayed itself; for nurse, going to finish the packing of the trunk where the pickles were concealed, also perceived the scent of vinegar.

“What have you been putting in here that smells so of vinegar?” she said to Jane.

“Nothing,” was the answer. “I’ve had no vinegar.”

“But it’s here, surely,” said nurse, sniffing around in her turn: “it’s about this trunk, spilled on something I suppose: that’s some of your carelessness, Jane.” And Mammy, who was rather apt to snub her younger helpmate, lifted several articles in turn to her nose.

“Oh dear! I’ll have to tell: she’s scolding poor Janey for it,” whispered Maggie, in great dismay.

“What’s this?” exclaimed nurse, when, having pulled out half a dozen things, she came upon the tiny tureen. “Pickles! and the vinegar dribbled out of them on the master’s clean shirts. Well! that naughty Frankie! he’s gone beyond himself in such a trick as that. He’s been busy with your doll’s china, Maggie, my honey; but where in the world did he lay his mischievous hands on pickles? I’ll just speak my mind to Patrick for leaving them in the child’s reach. Pickles indeed! but he’s a pickle!”

This was too much for Maggie. She could not hear her little brother and Patrick blamed, and she spoke out at once.

“It was not Frankie who put them there,” she said: “it was I, and I want them to stay there.”

“Indeed, they’ll not then,” said nurse. “Ye know your mother never lets ye touch them; and what a way would that be to take them anyhow? What ails ye the day, Maggie? I think the spirit of mischief has hold of ye.”

Maggie was displeased in her turn, and, as usual, was dignified and made use of all the long words she could think of, which were suitable to the case.

“If you interfere with my pickle arrangements, I shall not be responsible for the seasickness,” she said solemnly.

“Responsible for the seasickness! I should think not,” said nurse, forgetting her vexation in her amusement, and bursting into a hearty laugh, in which she was joined by Jane; while Maggie stood swelling and indignant; “responsible for the seasickness! and what put that into your head, my lamb, and what do you think pickles stuffed into trunks have to do with it?”

But Maggie was too much hurt and disappointed to answer, and could only reply with a nod to Bessie’s plea that she would let her explain.

This was soon done; and nurse, sorry to see Maggie so grieved, said, —

“The pickles would have done ye little good packed away in the trunk which ye will not see till we come to land again, honey; and don’t ye fret your little soul about it, for your mamma has provided all things needful; and I promise you if all the rest are taken down but yourself, ye shall play nurse to your heart’s content, and wait on everybody. Ye did mean to be considerate and thoughtful, I’m sure; but it’s always best for such young heads to take counsel of those that are wiser and older in such things.”

Having allowed so much to be confessed, Maggie thought she might as well make a clean breast of the whole affair; and produced the bottle of vinegar, with many entreaties to be allowed to keep it. Nurse shook her head; but Mrs. Bradford came into the room just then, and she turned the matter over to her.

Mamma laughed too when she heard the story, and told Maggie to give up her pickles and vinegar, and she would provide her with something better; so taking both the little girls into her own room, she delighted them by presenting each with a beautiful morocco satchel, just of a right size for small travellers, and with lock and key all complete, to say nothing of a light chain by which they could be hung over the shoulder.

Maggie was farther consoled by a bottle of smelling salts, one of hartshorn, and three lemons; and this she appeared to think a sufficient safeguard against seasickness for all the passengers and crew of the steamer. For the rest of the day her restless energies found satisfaction in locking and unlocking, arranging and rearranging this satchel and its contents, and the busy head and fingers were kept from farther mischief or hindering “help.”

II AT SEA

“Are we at sea now, papa?” said Maggie, holding by her father’s hand as she jumped up and down on the deck of the steamer; “are we really at sea?”

“Hardly at sea yet, little daughter: we are still going down the bay. When we are fairly at sea we shall lose sight of our own great city, where we have left grandmamma and the boys, and all the other dear ones.”

“Yes,” said Bessie, who was by no means in such overflowing spirits as Maggie; “it’s rather sorrowful to leave so many of our own people behind us. I wish everybody could have come with us.”

“Then we’d have no one to write to,” said Maggie, who found consolation in all partings in the thought of letter-writing, in which she delighted.

“But, papa, will you tell us when we are really and truly at sea?”

“You’ll be apt to know that without telling, little maiden,” said a gentleman who was passing: “we have had high winds the last three days, and shall find it rough enough outside, I take it;” and he passed on.

“Who’s that, papa?” asked Bessie.

“That is the captain,” said Mr. Bradford.

“What a nice face he has,” said the little girl.

“What did he mean by ‘outside’?” asked Maggie.

“He meant outside of the bay or harbor. We are going now through what is called the Narrows, then we shall pass Sandy Hook, where the light-house is, and be fairly out at sea.”

“And what did he mean by ‘rough’?” asked Maggie.

“Well, he meant the waves might be rather high, and toss and roll the ship about more than you would find quite comfortable.”

“Oh! I shan’t mind it,” said Maggie. “It will be fun.”

“He meant you’d be seasick,” said Belle, with a wise shake of her head.

“I don’t believe he ever meant that,” answered Maggie, in a tone which said she considered the idea almost an insult. “He must see how well and strong I look.”

“I hope you may be able to keep to your determination, my little girl,” said her father, smiling.

“Why, is this what people make such a fuss about?” said Maggie, when some time after the threatened rolling and pitching began: “I think it is lovely. But, then, papa,” she added presently, “perhaps it would be nicer if you would ask that good-natured-looking captain not to let the ship do it quite so much. It seems to make my head so very *bobbly*.”

“The captain cannot help it, dear,” said her father, looking half in pity, half in amusement, at the face which Maggie was making such desperate efforts to keep smiling and unconcerned. “The waves roll the vessel about in this way, and you know the captain does not rule them. We must bear it as we can; but I hope by and by you will become used to it, and not mind it so much.”

“Oh! I don’t *mind* it, papa,” said Maggie, still determined that these rolling waves should not conquer her; “at least not so very much, and I’m not a bit seasick; only – only – I don’t think the sea is quite so very comfortable to be on as the land: do you?”

Hapless little Maggie! Half an hour more, and the “bobbly” head lay in mamma’s lap, hands and feet hung helplessly, chattering tongue was still, save for an occasional piteous, “O mamma!” and the merry dancing eyes, usually so wide-open and quick to notice all around them, were closed as though they never cared to lift their lids again. Even the new satchel had lost its charm, and hung unheeded at her side. Its cherished contents, which she had intended to be of so much use to others, proved of none to herself. Lemons, smelling salts, hartshorn, and many other remedies, were tried without

success; and it would have been hard to find a more wretched little girl than was poor Maggie, for the next twenty-four hours. Belle and Lily were too ill themselves to feel at all inclined to triumph over the failure of Maggie's "determination;" though I do not think they would have been unkind enough to do so, had they been ever so well.

As for Bessie, she made what the captain called "a capital little sailor," and to her fell the part of nurse, which Maggie had intended to fill. And never was a more gentle, tender, thoughtful young nurse than our little "princess," handy and knowing enough for seven-and-twenty instead of seven years old. Now she was rubbing Maggie's cold hands, now bathing Belle's dizzy, aching head with such soothing fingers; now coaxing Lily to take one of those oranges which were to work such wonders; now amusing baby, for Mammy was in a bad way too, and mamma's attention was pretty well taken up with her poor Maggie; now showing a picture-book to some fretful child whose mother was too ill to attend to it. Always ready not only to do, but to see where and how she could do, some small service for a sufferer, she went about from one to another like some dainty little fairy, with a mission of healing and kindness. So long as she could keep her feet, which was not always possible, the rolling of the ship only troubled her by the distress it brought to others, especially Maggie; but all her pleasure in her beloved sea was lost in her sympathy for her sister. It was so strange and unusual to see Maggie lying helpless and subdued, with no thought or care for any thing about her, that it made Bessie herself very miserable; and she could scarcely believe her father's assurances that Maggie was not going to die, and would probably soon feel better.

But she thought despair and misery could go no farther upon the following morning, when, having dressed Margaret Bessie Marion and Margaret Colonel Horace Rush in the new travelling suits Aunt Annie had made for them, and combed their "real live hair," she brought them and placed one on each side of Maggie, as she lay among the pile of pillows and shawls papa had arranged for her upon the deck.

"Maggie dear," she said coaxingly, "would it not comfort you a little to hold Bessie Margaret Marion? She looks so sweet."

"No," moaned Maggie, without opening her eyes: "I never want her again, Bessie, never. You can have her."

"Oh, no!" said Bessie, cheerily: "you'll want her when you feel better, and I hope that will be pretty soon."

"No," said Maggie again: "I'll never be better. And, Bessie, I think I'd better tell you my will. I'm too sick to write it myself, but you can remember."

"But you're not going to die," answered Bessie, dropping the doll upon her lap and looking at Maggie in fresh dismay.

"Yes, I feel it," said Maggie, with a tragic whisper and shake of her head.

"Oh, no, dear! Papa said not, and the doctor said so too. They said people hardly ever died of seasickness."

"Then I'm one of the 'hardly evers,' Bessie," persisted Maggie, seeming, poor child, to find some relief in the idea; "and I'd better make my will, and tell you who I want my playthings and other *possessions* to go to."

Bessie did not know whether to be most alarmed at Maggie's words, or consoled by her belief that her father and the doctor must know best; and she listened in silence while Maggie went on, speaking slowly and with many pauses.

"You can have all my dolls, Bessie, 'cept Josephine Matilda, and she'll be good for Baby, 'cause she's Indian rubber and can't be broken; and mamma my prize writing-desk, and papa my new satchel; and my doll's tea set, the white and gilt one for you, and the blue one for Lily; same with the dinner-sets – only, red for Belle – and my tin kitchen too – oh! I can't tell any more – oh! mamma – mamma!" and here poor Maggie's will came abruptly to an end.

But things brightened towards the latter part of that day, for they came into smoother waters; and Maggie, as well as all the other seasick passengers, began to feel easier.

“Hallo!” said the captain, pausing as he came by to look at the little, pale, tired face upon the pillows: “is this the jolly little woman who came on board yesterday afternoon? Why, this will not do. I shall have to take her in hand myself, Mrs. Bradford: will you let me turn doctor?”

“Most certainly, Captain, if you can do any thing to relieve her. Every thing seems to fail except time and patience, and of the last my poor child has shown a fair sample,” answered the anxious mother.

With a nod to Maggie, who, at the sound of his hearty, cheery voice had half opened her eyes to look at him, and another to Bessie, who sat upon the edge of her sister’s couch, he walked away; coming back after a little while, followed by the steward carrying a small tray. On the tray were two plates, the one holding a crisp slice of brown toast; the other, something which Bessie thought very uninviting, a dry, rather black-looking herring.

“I wonder if he is going to ask Maggie to eat that thing,” she said to herself. “Idea of it! I know she never can do it. I’m afraid he’s not so very nice as he looks, and that he has very poor sense.”

But the captain asked Maggie nothing about the herring; but, sitting down beside her, he took the tray from the steward, and cutting a small bit from the fish, he held it to Maggie’s lips. Maggie turned away her head in disgust, in which Bessie sympathized.

“Come, come,” said the captain, “every one has to do as I say on this ship, especially when I turn doctor.”

He did not smile, though he looked as good-natured and pleasant as ever; and, doubtful if he were in joke or in earnest, Maggie reluctantly took the bit of fish from the fork, and then a mouthful of the toast, which she swallowed with the same martyr-like air. Another and another followed, taken with less and less reluctance; till at last Bessie was surprised to see Maggie’s eyes remain open, and fix themselves rather longingly upon the plate, as if she wished the captain would make the intervals shorter. He took no notice, however, but fed her slowly, till fish and toast had both entirely disappeared, when he said, —

“I think we shall do now. I’ll be back in half an hour, Mrs. Bradford, to see how my patient here is getting on,” and walked away.

“Maggie,” said Bessie, as soon as he had gone, “wasn’t that meal very nas – , I mean rather disagreeable?”

“Why, no,” said Maggie, “it was delicious; and I think that captain is lovely, Bessie. He’s the best doctor ever I saw. The next time I come to sea – which I hope I never will again – I’ll put herring in my satchel ’stead of lemons. They never did me a bit of good.”

Bessie privately thought this worse than the “pickle arrangement;” but since the captain’s prescription had done Maggie so much good, she had nothing more to say against it or him; and when he came back at the promised time it was to find his little patient beginning to look like herself, and talking and smiling with something of her accustomed brightness.

This was the last of Maggie’s seasickness, and by the next morning she was nearly as lively and well as usual; though she now and then fell into a fit of thought, as if she were considering some knotty question; and she was observed to regard Margaret Bessie Marion with more than usual interest, and to give her a great amount of petting and tending. At length the question which was weighing on her mind found words.

“Papa,” she said, “don’t lawyers know about wills?”

“They ought to, Maggie,” answered Mr. Bradford. “Why, you don’t want to make yours, do you?”

“I have made it, papa,” said Maggie, with all the gravity of a judge. “I told Bessie about it, but I want to know if it’s against the law to undo the things you’ve willed, if you don’t die when you thought you were going to.”

“Not at all,” said papa, laughing: “you may make your will, and ‘undo it’ as often as you please, while you are living.”

“For the people won’t be disappointed as long as they don’t know you’ve willed them the things,” said Maggie, meditatively. “Anyhow, I s’pose my people would be more disappointed to have me die, than not to have my things.”

“They would indeed, little daughter,” said her father, drawing her tenderly to him: “to lose our Maggie would be to take a great deal of sunshine out of the lives of ‘your people.’”

“And I know Bessie don’t care for my dollies so long as we can play with them together: do you, Bessie?”

“Oh, no! Maggie; and if I hadn’t you, I should never play again, but be sorrowful all my life;” and Bessie put on an air of extreme melancholy at the bare idea of such a possibility.

So this matter being settled to the satisfaction of all, and Maggie feeling like her own self once more, she and Bessie were free to enjoy all the new pleasures about them.

They were a merry, happy party, those four little girls, Maggie, Bessie, Belle, and Lily; always pleasant and good-natured with one another; never fretting or quarrelling in their play. As for Maggie, her new friend the captain used to call her “Little Make-the-best-of-it;” for her sunny temper found so much good in all things, and so many reasons why all that was, was best.

He escorted the young quartette all over the steamer, taking them down into the machine rooms, where they saw the great furnaces glowing with hot coals, and tended by strong men in scarlet shirts, with their sleeves rolled up to the shoulders; where the iron beam and pistons went up and down, up and down, without a moment’s pause or irregularity; where each little wheel and joint went steadily on doing its appointed work, without which the huge machinery must have stood motionless and useless.

The sympathies of the children, especially those of Maggie, were greatly excited in behalf of a man whom they saw watching the steam dial plates at the upper end of the engine room. There were three of these plates, the centre one very large, the other two smaller; and the man paced up and down the narrow platform in front, almost without a moment’s pause, turning his eyes every now and then to the dials.

“What funny clocks,” said Bessie, “and how that man watches them! Why is he so anxious about the time?”

“Only one of them is a clock,” said the captain; “the others are to show how much steam we have on, and how it is working, and if all is right.”

Bessie did not understand, and said so; and the captain, taking her up in his arms, tried to explain the use and working of the dials to the little girls; but it was rather a difficult matter for them to take in, and I do not know that he made it very clear to them.

“But I want to know about that man,” said Maggie: “does he have to walk here and look at these things all the time?”

“All the time,” said Captain Brooks.

“Doesn’t he eat and sleep?” asked Belle.

“Oh! to be sure,” said the captain. “I said he was here all the time; but I should have said a man was here all the time; for there is another who takes his turn while this one rests.”

“But are you not tired sometimes?” Bessie asked of the man, who just then came to the end of the platform where she was.

He nodded assent as he turned, but made no answer in words, did not even smile, being a grum-looking man, and seeming altogether intent on his dials.

“He’s not very polite just to nod at you and not speak,” said Lily.

“It is against the rule of the ship for him to talk while he is on duty, and he always keeps the rule,” said the captain.

“Oh!” said Maggie, her pity more than ever roused for the object of her interest: “does he have to walk on this little bit of a place with nothing to amuse him, and can’t even talk? I think that is pretty hard: *I* never could do it.”

“But if he were talking and chatting with every one who came along, and thinking only of his own amusement, he would forget his work and have his attention taken off from those plates which it is his business to watch constantly,” said the captain.

“And then we’d be blown up or burnt up or drowned or something,” said Maggie.

“Not as bad as that, I hope,” said Captain Brooks, smiling; “but something might readily go wrong before he perceived it.”

“It seems like watching conscience all the time for fear we do something naughty,” said Bessie, who had been thoughtfully regarding the man since she last spoke. “If we forget conscience, or don’t pay attention where it points, we can be naughty before we know it.”

“Just so,” said the captain, looking at her half in amusement, half in surprise; “but tell me, little one, do you find some moral lesson in every thing?”

“I don’t know what ‘moral’ is, sir,” said Bessie, demurely; “but I think that man is a pretty good lesson to us.”

Here roguish Lily, for whom the prospect of being “blown up or burnt up or drowned or something,” did not seem to have any terrors, and who had been all this time trying to distract the watchman’s attention by shaking her head and finger at him, flirting her pocket-handkerchief, and giving little squeaks and “hems,” all without any avail, suddenly astonished him and accomplished her object, by firing a paper pellet which hit him directly between the eyes. The gruff old fellow only gave her a growl in return, however, and recommenced his pacing up and down; but Lily went capering about in an ecstasy of delight at her unlooked-for success, till the captain, who could not help laughing, called her to order with, —

“Here, here, you elf! have done with your monkey tricks, or I shall shut you up in a cage till we get to shore.”

“You’ve none large enough,” said laughing Lily.

“There are plenty of hencoops on board,” said the captain, pretending to look fierce, “and carpenters too, to make any sized cage I may order. You had better look out.”

“I don’t think it’s fair to tease the poor man,” said Bessie, “he has to be so stupid all the time, and he is so dutiful too. Let’s go away, Captain Brooks, and not let him be teased any more.”

So the captain took them away in search of other novelties; but Maggie and Bessie did not forget “the poor, stupid man,” as the latter called him, meaning only that she thought he passed his time in such a dull, uninteresting manner; and they set their young wits to work to see if they could not do him some kindness.

“I don’t see the good of it,” said Lily. “The captain said he was a surly old fellow, any way, and didn’t care to talk much when he could. I guess we’d better just let him alone.”

“We oughtn’t to judge by appearances,” said Maggie, gravely. “Bessie and I have learned that.”

“But not till we’d performed some pretty bad mistakes,” said Bessie: “so take a lesson of us.”

“Tell us about them,” said Belle; and accordingly Belle and Lily were much interested in hearing of Lem and the silver cup, and of Aunt Patty; Maggie also confessing how she had for a long time misjudged Mrs. Jones, of Quam Beach, because she had a disagreeable manner.

III LUCY

Old ocean seemed to wish to make amends, during the last two days of the short voyage, for the tossing and rolling he had given our friends during the first. It was as smooth as a river almost, and broke itself up into little wavelets which seemed formed only to sparkle and catch the sunshine. The weather was warm and summer-like, growing more and more so the farther south they went; and the children spent the whole of their time on deck, even taking their meals there: for though Maggie declared herself “all right now,” she could not eat when taken below, and it was “such fun” to have breakfast, dinner, and tea, sent up to them and eaten on deck in such *impromptu* fashion, that the others were only too glad of the excuse of bearing her company. Mamma and Mrs. Norris preferred it too; so they had quite a sociable, cosy time of it.

As for Bessie, she wanted “no better contentment” than to sit watching the sea. The sky; the waves; the white sea-gulls, which now and then came sailing round on their snowy wings; the other vessels they saw in the far distance, or sometimes near at hand; the huge porpoises which threw themselves with a sudden leap and plunge out from the water and back again, – each and all had their charm for her; and, if undisturbed, she would sit for hours, her doll clasped in her arms, gazing her fill, and thinking her own thoughts. Happy, peaceful thoughts they were too, if one might judge by the expression of her sweet little face.

“How my Bessie loves the sea, does she not?” said her father, sitting down beside her one time when he found her thus absorbed.

“Yes, papa, dearly; but then I love the real sea better.”

“But this is the real sea, darling.”

“But I mean the *real, real* sea, papa; the true, *very* sea,” said the little girl.

“I do not know how you could have more real sea than this, dear,” said her father, rather at a loss to know what she could mean. “We are many, many miles from land. You can see none on any side. It is water, water, the real true ocean, all around us, as far and farther than our eyes can reach. You do not mean that you would have it rough and stormy?”

“Oh, no, papa!” Bessie answered, rather puzzled herself how to make her meaning plain to her father; “but I mean that kind of sea where the waves come slowly, slowly on the beach, all white and curly, and make that nice sound I like so much. It does not come in this kind of a sea.”

“Oh, ho!” said her father, “I understand. It is the *seashore* you are longing for, even more than the open sea itself. Well, perhaps one of these days, you may be there again.”

“Oh! do you think I might be, papa? Oh, that would be so delightful!” and she turned her little, eager, wistful face to her father with such a sparkle in her eye.

“I think it more than likely that such a thing will come to pass, Bessie,” said Mr. Bradford; but he did not tell her what a pleasant surprise awaited her in the course of her summer travels.

“Papa,” she said again presently, “do not these dear little waves we have to-day make you think of our Maggie? They seem just like her, as if they were dancing and laughing, and so glad and gay.”

“Yes,” said her father, pleased at the pretty conceit of the affectionate little sister, “and God’s sunshine, pouring down upon these merry waves and touching them with light and sparkle, is like the love and tenderness which make our Maggie’s heart so gay and happy.”

“And I am a little bit of Maggie’s sunshine: am I not, papa?” asked the sweet Bessie.

The reply came in a squeeze, half a dozen smothering kisses, and a squeal meant to express affection and delight, from Maggie herself, who, coming up behind them and hearing Bessie’s question, answered after her own peculiar fashion.

Yes: they were both true sunbeams, these two dear little girls: sunbeams as all children may be, because they were happy; happy because they were good and generous and loving; sunbeams to one another and to all around them, shedding light and brightness wherever they passed.

“Bessie,” said Maggie, when she had done hugging and kissing her sister, “I’ve made a very surprising discovery. Do you see that little girl sitting over there? I’ve seen her before.”

“Yes,” answered Bessie. “She’s a kind of errand girl and helps the stewardess. Yesterday morning when you were so sick she brought some ice for you; but I didn’t speak to her, ’cause I felt so bad about you.”

“But, do you know who her father is, Bessie?”

“No,” said Bessie. “Who?”

“That man downstairs, the steam-clock man. Isn’t that very curious?”

“Why, yes. How did you find out, Maggie?”

“Well, Belle and Lily and I were there, while you looked at the water, and that child came and stood by us; and she looked so very wishful at our dolls, that I told her she might hold Bessie Margaret Marion a little while if she would be careful of her; and you don’t know how pleased she seemed then; and, Bessie, what do you think, the poor child never had a doll in her life, ’cept only a rag one, and she has no mother or sisters or any one but her father; and the captain lets her live with her father on board the steamer; and she tries to help the stewardess and run about; and she don’t like the sea a bit, she is so tired of being on it most all the time; and she’s just my age, only a year older; and Lily asked her if her father was a cross patch to her, and she was rather mad at that, and said no: he was good and kind as could be, and she loved him dearly. And so I told her Lily did not mean to make her mad, – only we thought perhaps she did not find him very interesting ’cause he would not talk much. But she did not seem to like that very much either: so I said, very quickly, that maybe the reason her father did not talk much was because he had so much thinking to do; and then she looked pleased again, and said yes, that was it, but he always talked enough to her. And then I told her I felt so very sorry for him, ’cause he had to walk up and down that little place, with nothing to do but to look at those old clock things; and I knew I never could be so strict with my duty, for I would be sure to laugh or talk or something.”

“And didn’t she look pleased when you said that about her father?” asked Bessie, when Maggie had come to the end of this long story.

“Oh, yes! And she said he did not like to do it, but he had to make a living,” answered Maggie.

“I’m real sorry for both of them,” said Bessie. “You know, Maggie, we said we would like to be kind to him if we could, ’cause he had such a stupid time; and I s’pose he would be just as pleased if we did a kind thing to his girl.”

“Yes,” said Maggie: “if he’s a dutiful father, he would. I was thinking we might give her a doll to amuse herself with.”

“Not one of ours?” said Bessie, holding Margaret Colonel Horace fast, as if she thought she was to be taken from her at once.

“Oh, no! We never could give up these dolls,” said Maggie. “We love them too much; and besides the Colonel gave them to us, so it would never do. But then, you know, we have some of our own money with us; and I thought when the steamer stopped going and we come to that part of the world that is land again, maybe we might find a toy-store and buy her a doll of her own.”

“Yes,” said Bessie. “Papa, do they have stores in Savannah?”

“Plenty,” answered papa, “and doubtless we shall find a toy-store without trouble.”

“And we may buy Lucy a doll, may we not, papa?” said Maggie. “You see, it’s pretty hard for a child to have no relations, or dolls, or other advantages, except only a father.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Bradford, laughing, “if you choose to spend your money to give pleasure to this little girl, who is so poorly off, you may certainly do so.”

The children were delighted with their papa's consent; and when Belle and Lily heard of the plan, they begged Maggie and Bessie to let them join in giving this pleasure to the poor child who had so few enjoyments. Maggie and Bessie readily agreed: and it was settled that when they reached Savannah, one of the first things to be done should be the purchase of a doll for Lucy Waters; for such was the name of the little girl.

Our four young friends were not the only children on the steamer with whom Lucy had something to do, as you shall hear.

"Father," she said, as she sat upon his knee that evening, while he was off duty, "there are some nice little girls on board, this trip."

"Humph!" was all the answer she received; for, in spite of Lucy's assertion that her father talked enough to her, he did not throw away too many words, even upon her: but Lucy was used to his way, and did not mind it, for she knew he loved her dearly.

"There are," she insisted. "One of them let me take her doll, and it can turn its head; and she let me do it, and move its arms too. And another one was kind to me when some other children said bad things to me. There they are, father: don't you see them?" and she pointed to where Maggie and Bessie were sitting, with their father and mother.

"Thought so," said Waters, who was not really surly, but only silent and unsociable.

"Why how, father! Did you know about it?"

"No," replied her father, "but thought like enough it was them when you said some spoke nice to you. Seem like kindly, loving, little souls."

"There are two more nice ones, that play with 'em," said Lucy.

"Humph!" said Waters again, "one of 'em is a saucy mischief, I guess."

"Oh!" said Lucy, "I know which one you mean. They call her Lily. I didn't like her so much at first; but I do now, 'cause she slapped a boy's face who said hateful things to me."

If Lucy imagined her father would ask what the boy had said, she was mistaken; for he smoked away without a word more. But the memory of her wrongs was too great to be borne in silence, and presently she said, —

"Are not my clothes very nice, father?"

"Nice as I can afford, anyhow," he answered without taking his pipe from his lips.

"I told that boy and his sisters they were as nice as anybody's," said Lucy; "but maybe they're not." And taking off her bonnet, she turned it round and round, eying it rather mournfully. "I don't think this kind of a hat is so nice as those little girls', father; nor this long apron so nice as their short frocks. I wonder if I couldn't make 'em look better, so folks wouldn't laugh at me."

Now, I think Waters was somewhat mistaken when he said Lucy's clothes were as nice as he could afford. He had good wages, and his little girl did not want for what was necessary to make her neat and comfortable: but he did not know how to dress her; and the enormous shaker bonnet, which would have fitted a grown woman; and long, scant apron which came to her feet, — cost no less, perhaps more, than the short frock and round straw hat, which would have been more convenient and suitable for a girl of her age.

Poor Lucy knew she looked very different from most children of her own size; but, although she kept herself very tidy, she did not see how she was to remedy this difficulty. She was a funny little figure, certainly: more so than she was aware of; but it had never troubled her much until this afternoon, when some rude but well-dressed boys and girls, who would have been very indignant if they had been told they were not half so well-bred and polite as the engineer's little daughter, had annoyed her very much.

Maggie and Bessie had noticed these children, but, seeing how rough and boisterous they were, had rather avoided them. But that afternoon, while they, with Belle and Lily, were talking to Lucy, and asking her some questions about her homeless, seafaring life, these boys and girls came up to them.

Not having at that moment any dispute to settle among themselves, they were ready to band together against any one else; and Lucy presented a tempting mark for attack.

“Ho! you seem to have picked up a fine acquaintance there!” said Arthur Lathrop, the eldest of the brothers.

“She is dressed in the last fashion,” said Charlotte, his sister, with a scornful look at Lucy.

“Quite the style,” joined in the other boy. “You brought your bonnet from the Paris Exposition: did you not, ma’am?”

Poor Lucy had not the least idea what the Paris Exposition was; but she knew very well that these unkind children were making fun of her, and she drew back with a hurt and angry look.

“Couldn’t you give my sisters the pattern of that lovely bonnet?” said Arthur.

“And of that outside toggery too,” said William, “whatever its name is. Not being used to such an elegant style of dress, I don’t know what to call it.”

“You ought to be ashamed to talk so,” said Bessie, indignantly. “She’s a nice, good, little girl, who tries to be a help to every one; and if her clothes are not so very pretty, she can’t help it. It is better to have good clothes and be bad, than to have bad clothes and be good,” added the little girl, saying just the opposite of what she intended.

But no one noticed her mistake. The Lathrops were all too intent on their victim, the other little ones too full of sympathy and indignation, to pay much heed to a choice of words.

“Well,” returned William, provokingly, “don’t we say she is the most stylish, fashionable young lady we have seen this long time. For me, I am struck dumb with admiration.”

“To be sure,” said Charlotte, “didn’t you say that bonnet was the latest fashion from the Exposition?”

“Or from Noah’s ark: which is it? Pray tell us, miss,” put in Arthur with a loud laugh.

“Let her be, you bad boys,” said Belle.

“She looks a great deal nicer than any of you,” said Lily, too anxious to take up Lucy’s defence to think of the exact truth of her statement.

“Oh! of course, of course,” retorted Arthur. “She is quite a model. I propose we all ask our mothers to buy us just such clothes. Don’t leave us, Miss Elegance;” and he caught hold of poor Lucy, who had turned to run away.

“Let her be,” said Lily.

“You’re very ungrateful,” said Maggie. “This morning when you called the stewardess, I saw Lucy run very quick to call her. You ought to be ashamed all of you. You’re as bad as the Elisha children in the Bible, that were eaten up.”

“Are you going to let her go?” asked Lily, with a threatening shake of her head at the young tyrant, who still held Lucy fast.

“As soon as she tells us how many hundred dollars she paid for this love of a bonnet,” said Arthur, tossing off the unlucky shaker with a jerk of his thumb and finger.

Without another word, Lily reached up her small hand, and gave the big boy a sounding slap upon his cheek. In his surprise, he loosed his hold of Lucy, who quickly snatched up her bonnet, and made good her escape.

Arthur turned fiercely upon Lily; but she stood her ground, and not exactly caring, bully though he was, to strike back at a girl so much smaller than himself, he contented himself with catching her still uplifted hand in his, and saying, —

“How dare you do that?”

“Cause you deserved it,” said Lily, sternly.

“And I’ve a good mind to give you another,” said Belle.

“Children! Children!” said Mr. Powers, who had seen from a distance that trouble was threatening, and had come to prevent it. “What is the matter here? Quarrelling and striking?”

“I’m striking,” said Lily, rather proud of having given a blow in what she considered a just cause; “but I’m not quarrelling, sir.”

“No, papa,” said Belle. “We’re not quarrelling: it’s only those bad, mean ones;” and she pointed at the Lathrops with as much scorn in her tone and manner as they had used towards Lucy.

But these children, knowing right well that their share in the dispute was by far the worst, did not choose to face Mr. Powers’s inquiries, and now scattered in all directions.

“Striking and calling names look a good deal like quarrelling,” said Mr. Powers, smiling.

“But we had to take Lucy’s side, papa,” said Belle; and neither she nor Lily was to be persuaded that it was not right for the latter to strike a blow in Lucy’s defence. Indeed, Maggie and Bessie were rather inclined to hold the same opinion, and all four were quite excited over Lucy’s wrongs.

While Lucy was telling her father the story, they were talking it over among themselves; and knowing, in spite of their sympathy, that she presented rather a comical figure, were trying to think of some means by which they might help her to dress herself more like other children. But they did not see exactly how it was to be done, nor did Mrs. Bradford when they consulted her.

“I fear it would not do to offer Lucy clothes, my darlings,” she said: “those she wears, though odd-looking, are good and comfortable; and her father might be offended if we offered her any thing which seemed like charity, or let him know that we do not think her properly dressed.”

“Mamma,” said Bessie, gravely, “do you think a thing is comfortable when it makes a child laughed at?”

“Well, no, dear, perhaps not,” answered Mrs. Bradford, smiling, “and I am very sorry for Lucy. Mrs. Norris and I were saying this morning that we wished we might tell the poor child how to make herself look less like a little old woman, but we thought it would not do to interfere.”

“I’d wish somebody would interfere if it was me,” said Maggie. “It must be most *too* much to have a father who won’t talk, and who has such very bad taste.”

This was said with so much emphasis, and with such a long-drawn sigh at the end, as if the mere thought of such misfortune were almost too much for Maggie, that every one laughed.

Bessie had less to say about Lucy’s troubles than any of the others; but she thought more of them: for we know how sensitive she herself was to ridicule, and she could not bear to think that Lucy might have to undergo the same trial again.

“Mamma,” she said, coming to her mother’s side that evening, “there are Lucy and her father sitting at the head of those steps, and she is showing him those queer dressing-gown frocks of hers. Could I go and speak to them?”

Mrs. Bradford turned to see if it was a proper place for Bessie to go to, and then gave her permission, thinking that her little girl might possibly see some way to help Lucy, and trusting to her good sense and kind heart not to say any thing that might give offence.

“Maybe they’re not just the right shape,” said the engineer, as Bessie came near; “but I don’t know how you are to better them;” and he turned over and over the two frocks, just like the one Lucy had on, which lay across his knee. “Maybe Dorothy would show you.”

“I don’t like to ask her,” said Lucy; or Dorothy the stewardess, was rather sharp and short with her.

Bessie came close.

“Would you be offended if some one tried to be kind to Lucy?” she asked, seizing her opportunity.

She was quite surprised to see how pleasantly Waters smiled as he answered, —

“Not I. Those that are friends to my Lucy are friends to me.”

“Some children laughed at her,” said Bessie, wishing to put the case as gently as she could.

The engineer frowned and nodded.

“I told him,” said Lucy.

“There’s no excuse for them,” continued Bessie, looking out over the waters as if she were talking more to herself than to the man, “but perhaps they would not have done it, if – if – if Lucy’s clothes were – were a little prettier.”

“And I’ll warrant if your power was as good as your will, you’d make them prettier for her,” answered the engineer. “You’re a kind little lady. Lucy was just asking me if I could tell her how to fix up her things a bit; but I don’t know. Old Mrs. Sims, who does her washing and sewing, she bought them, and I didn’t see but they were all right; but now Lucy says they’re not, and she can’t do ’em over.”

Lucy stood listening in amazement to this unusually long speech from her father, who was very rarely so sociable with any one as he now was with Bessie.

“But you wouldn’t mind if mamma was to try and help her, would you?” Bessie asked in a coaxing voice.

“Mind!” said the engineer, “I’d be only too thankful, and so would my Lucy; but such a lady as your mamma doesn’t want to bother with a little stranger girl.”

“Oh, yes, she does!” said Bessie, eagerly, “and mamma don’t think it a bit of bother if she can do a kind thing for some one; and she said she would like to fix Lucy up, ’cause she was such a nice, tidy child. Come and show her these, Lucy;” and without waiting for more words, she snatched up one gown, and taking Lucy by the hand drew her after her, telling her to bring the other two with her.

Lucy obeyed rather timidly; but the kind manner and words of the two ladies, Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Norris, soon put her at her ease, and she became deeply interested in the plans for putting what Bessie called “the dressing-gown” frocks into proper shape.

There were four of them, all alike, of a good but dull gingham, without the least shape or fit, save what was given by a string about the waist; very long and scant, – so scant, that the ladies decided it would take two to make one suitable frock. Lucy asked and readily obtained leave from her father for this; and Mrs. Bradford allowed the four little girls to begin the work that very night by ripping apart the seams.

She and Mrs. Norris went to work also that evening; and when the steamer came into port the following night, Lucy was made happy by having one dress made in a manner proper for a girl of her age; and knowing that the second was surely promised to her by Mrs. Bradford. Belle presented her with “the doll of moderation,” which she had brought with her, she and her young friends having concluded to keep their money for another purpose instead of buying a new one.

The day on which the vessel started on her return voyage, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Powers drove down with their little daughters and Lily Norris; and the children brought Lucy not only her own gingham frock, but also two others, of bright, simple calico, all nicely made up; and a straw hat with a blue ribbon upon it. These were all their own presents, bought with their own money, only the making having been paid for by their mammas; so that the engineer could find no fault with the kindness done to his little girl by these thoughtful young strangers.

Lucy was contented beyond measure with her new clothes; but no words could do justice to her satisfaction and pleasure in her doll. What a treasure it was! What a delight in her rather lonely little life! She talked to it, and caressed it, slept with it in her arms at night, kissed it the first thing in the morning, dressed and undressed it, and learned to use her needle in fashioning clothes for it. Her father might be too busy to attend to her; Dorothy might snub her; fretful, impatient passengers send her hither and thither till she was ready to drop from fatigue, – she had one solace and delight that repaid her for all: the recollection of that little china head, and the staring, blue eyes which lay upon the pillow in her berth, the kisses which she would run and snatch now and then, till her time was her own once more, and she could pet and nurse her little treasure to her heart’s content.

And so our four little travellers have begun their journey with a kind deed which brought pleasure and comfort, such as they did not dream of, into this poor, craving, young heart, which had had so little to feed upon; and went upon their way followed by blessings and grateful, happy memories.

IV

AN OLD ENEMY BUT NEW FRIEND

It was late at night when our travellers reached Savannah, so late and so dark that even quick-sighted, wide-awake Maggie could see nothing about her as they rode to the hotel, save the twinkling street-lamps; and she was as ready as the other children to be put to bed at once and postpone all questions and sight-seeing until the morning.

But you need not fear I am going to trouble you with a long description of the beautiful, quaint, old city, with its numberless green squares which make it so bright and airy; its broad avenues planted with three rows of trees, so tall and wide-spread that their branches have laced overhead, making lovely, leafy arches for one to pass beneath; its roses – such roses! the like of which we do not see in our colder northern climate; roses, which with us are only bushes, growing there into trees, or running into luxuriant vines which clothe the fronts and sides of the old-fashioned houses, covered with a profusion of blossoms, and filling the air with their delicious fragrance. They were just in the perfection of their glory when our friends arrived, and it would be impossible to tell the delight Bessie took in them. Her love of flowers here had full enjoyment in these her favorites. Morning, noon, and night, she was seen with her little hands filled with roses, – for the family were kept well supplied, thanks to the graceful southern fashion of sending flowers to all newcomers and strangers; they were twisted among her curls and worn in her bosom, laid beside her plate at meals, and she would even have slept with them on her pillow, if mamma would have allowed it.

She made a pretty picture as she sat upon the staircase of the – House, the day after their arrival, her lap full of red, white, and yellow roses, which she was arranging with no small taste and daintiness into bouquets for her people.

Three pair of eyes were watching her, – those of a grave-looking gentleman, who stood at the foot of the stairs; and those of Arthur and Charlotte Lathrop, who were peering at her over the banisters from above. But Bessie noticed neither until Arthur called her attention by making a sound like a snarling dog. Bessie started and looked up, then went on with her work in silence.

“I say,” said Arthur, “are you making a wreath of roses for that old Mother Hubbard you took such a fancy to on board the steamer?”

Bessie made no answer.

“Why don’t you speak when you’re spoken to?” said Arthur. “Did you give your tongue to Mother Hubbard?”

“When I’m talked to politely, I always do speak,” said the little girl.

“Oh! and we’re not polite enough to suit you, I suppose,” said Arthur, sneeringly.

“’Tis only engineers’ daughters and the like who are fit company for her,” joined in Charlotte.

“We might go and take lessons from Mother Hubbard, and then perhaps she’d like us better,” said Arthur. “I say, Miss Bradford, what school did you learn your manners in, that you don’t speak when you’re spoken to?”

Bessie remained silent again.

“Do you hear?” shouted Arthur.

“Once I heard of a school where they only paid two cents for learning manners,” said Bessie, demurely.

“What then?” asked Arthur.

“I should think that was the kind of a school you had been to,” answered Bessie.

“And why, I’d like to know?”

“Cause I shouldn’t think they could teach much manners for two cents.”

Arthur was a clever boy with a quick sense of humor; and he was so struck with what he considered the wit and smartness of the retort, that he forgot to be angry, and, instead of making a sharp answer, broke out into a hearty laugh.

“Pretty good that!” he said. “You’ll do yet.”

“Pretty good, and pretty well deserved too, my lad,” said the gentleman, who had been standing below, coming up the stairs. “See here, Clara, here is the Queen of the Fairies, I believe,” and he turned around to a lady who ran lightly up behind him.

“Queen of the Fairies, indeed,” said the lady, with a laughing look at the little figure before her, in its white dress and shining hair, and lap covered with brilliant flowers: “or Queen of the” – What she would have said was lost, for after a pause of astonishment she exclaimed, “Why! it is – yes, it is Bessie Bradford – dear little Bessie!”

And regardless of her muslin dress with its fluted flounces and ruffles, down went the lady on the stairs before Bessie; and, greatly to her surprise, the little girl found herself held fast in the embrace of a supposed stranger.

But it was no stranger, as she found when she could free herself a little from that tight clasp, and look in the lady’s face.

“Don’t you know me, Bessie?” asked the lady.

“Why! it’s Miss Adams!” cried Bessie, in as great amazement as the new-comer herself.

“And you are a little glad to see me, are you not?” asked the lady, seeing with pleasure the smile and glow on Bessie’s face.

“Not a *little*, but very, Miss Adams,” she replied. “I was very interested about you, and always thought I’d like to see you again after I heard you’d” – here she hesitated for a word.

“Well,” said the lady.

“I can’t think of the word,” said Bessie. “Oh, yes! reformed, that’s it, – after you’d reformed. You know you wrote and told us about it yourself.”

At this “Miss Adams” went off into a fit of laughter, which sounded very natural to Bessie’s ears; and yet there was a difference in that and in her manner from those of the old days at Quam Beach; something softer and more gentle; “more as if she remembered to be a lady, mamma,” Bessie said afterwards.

The gentleman smiled too.

“Her words are to the point when she does find them,” he said.

“They always were,” said the lady, giving Bessie another kiss. “Bessie, this is the gentleman I found to make me ‘behave myself.’ I hope you’ll find the ‘kitchen lady’ improved under his teaching.”

Bessie colored all over face and neck.

“Oh! please don’t,” she said. “I’m so sorry I said that; but I was such a little child then, I didn’t know any better. I wouldn’t say such a saucy thing now for a great deal.”

“You need not be sorry about it, Bessie: I am not.”

“Please don’t speak about it any more, ma’am,” pleaded the child. “Couldn’t you let bygones be bygones?”

“What do you mean by ‘bygones?’” asked the gentleman.

“I thought it meant, sir,” said Bessie, modestly, “when a person had done something they were sorry for, not to say any thing more about it.”

“Very well,” said the lady, still smiling. “It shall be so, if you wish it, Bessie. And now tell me how your mamma and Maggie and all the rest are.”

“Oh! they are all very well, except mamma, and she is better, and we are travelling to do her good; and a great many things happened to us, Miss Adams, since you knew us before.”

“I don’t think it has ‘happened’ to you to grow much,” said the lady.

“Oh, yes’m!” answered Bessie. “I used to be five, and now I’m seven; and I’ve been to school too. We’ve all grown pretty old. Baby can walk and talk now.”

“And how do you like my doctor?” asked “Miss Adams,” as Bessie still called her, glancing round at the gentleman who stood beside her.

Bessie looked up at him, and he looked down at her, and when their eyes met, both smiled.

“I like him: he looks good and nice;” and the little girl, who had already twisted a rose or two into the bosom of the lady’s dress, now handed two or three to the doctor in her own graceful, gracious little way.

“What are you going to do with all those bouquets you have tied up so tastily?” asked Dr. Gordon.

Bessie told him whom they were for.

“And who is this for?” asked Mrs. Gordon, – for so she told Bessie to call her, – pointing to that which the small fingers were now arranging.

“It’s for a little girl down at the steamer, who is rather hard off, and does not have a nice time, and has extremely ugly clothes,” answered Bessie. “But then if they are the best she has, and she has no mother, no one ought to laugh at her: ought they?”

“Certainly not: who was so unkind?” asked Mrs. Gordon.

“Some children who didn’t behave half so nice as she did, ma’am.”

“Ah!” said the doctor; “and was that boy you were talking to just now one of them?”

“Why, yes, sir,” said Bessie, with some hesitation. “But how did you know it?”

“Oh! I am a good guesser,” answered Dr. Gordon.

“I don’t know if I ought to have said that to him,” said Bessie, thoughtfully. “I b’lieve I was pretty severe.”

At this Mrs. Gordon went off into another fit of laughter; and the doctor smiled as he answered,

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“It was pretty severe, it is true, Bessie; but not more so than he deserved, especially if he had been teasing some poor child who could not defend herself.”

Bessie colored, and answered, “But I’m afraid I did it more ’cause I was angry for his being impolite to me than for his teasing Lucy.”

“But tell us all about it; and did you say the child had no mother?” said Mrs. Gordon.

In reply, Bessie told all she knew about Lucy, omitting, however, to give any account of the unkindness of Arthur Lathrop and his brother and sisters to the poor child. This was noticed by both Dr. and Mrs. Gordon, but they pressed her no farther, seeing she did not wish to speak of it.

“There’s another will be glad to come,” said Mrs. Gordon, eagerly, to her husband. “That will make five. You’ll see this engineer and speak to him about it: won’t you, Aleck?”

“All in good time, dear,” he answered quietly.

Five what? Bessie wondered; and where would Lucy be glad to come? But as she supposed they would tell her if they wished her to know, she asked no questions.

But her curiosity was not gratified just then, for the doctor now said to his wife, —

“Come, Clara, we are keeping our friends waiting. You must tell little Bessie about your plans some other time.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Gordon. “We have to go to a sick friend here in the house, Bessie; but I shall come to call on your mamma to-morrow, and then I shall see you again and ask her to let you come to me; for I have something to tell you, in which I think you will be interested.”

“Don’t you live here, ma’am?” asked Bessie.

“Here? yes, here in Savannah, but not in the hotel; and I want you to come to my house. By the way, where is Maggie? I thought you were always together.”

“Most always,” said Bessie; “but Maggie and the other children went with Mr. Powers and papa to see a cotton-press; and mamma thought I was too tired, so I told Maggie she need not mind leaving me. And now I am glad I did not go.”

“And I am sure I am glad,” said Mrs. Gordon, as she kissed Bessie for good-by, and once more told her she should be sure to see her the next day, and would arrange with her mamma the time when she and Maggie might come and spend the day with her.

Bessie was very anxious to know what Mrs. Gordon could have to tell her which was to interest her so much, and which seemed in some way to concern Lucy Waters; but she was a little doubtful regarding the prospect of spending the whole day with her old enemy “Miss Adams,” not feeling at all sure that she would like it, or that she might not fall into some trouble, in spite of the very evident and pleasing change in that lady.

Maggie was not at all doubtful, and positively declared that she would not go on any account; and she tried to persuade Bessie to join her in begging their mother to refuse Mrs. Gordon’s invitation to them.

“For Bessie,” she said, “you know a ‘bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;’ and so, even if Miss Adams is so much better than she used to be, it is wiser to stay away from her, and not give her the chance of being disagreeable if she wanted to be.”

Maggie had been much given to the use of proverbs lately, as you will have perceived; and if one could possibly be fitted to her purpose, it was made to serve, as on this occasion.

But Bessie did not feel as if they had any excuse for refusing the invitation so kindly given, nor did mamma when she was appealed to.

“You certainly need not go if you do not wish it, my darlings,” she said; “but do you think it likely, Maggie, that Mrs. Gordon would invite you to her house, and then treat you unkindly? She must be a good deal changed, it seems to me; and would it not look as if you were unforgiving, if you refuse her kindness?”

“Oh! I forgive her, mamma,” said Maggie, “though it *was* my own Bessie she plagued so, but then I thought her old habits might be too strong for her, and break out again.”

“You forgive, but don’t forget, eh, Maggie? Suppose you were Mrs. Gordon, how would you like Miss Adams’ faults to be treasured up against you, and allowed to stand in the way when you wished to show good-will and kindness?”

“I wouldn’t like it at all, mamma; and I suppose it’s not very Golden Rule for me to say I won’t go; so, if she asks us, I’ll make up my mind to it.”

Mrs. Gordon came the next day, according to promise, to call on Mrs. Bradford; and invited not only Maggie and Bessie, but also Belle and Lily, to spend the whole of Friday with her, promising to call for them in the morning and bring them back at night.

But perhaps you will find it more interesting to read Maggie’s own account of this visit, which she wrote to Colonel Rush.

“Dear Uncle Horace, – Things are so very surprising in this world that you never quite know how they are going to turn out, of which the case is at present, Miss Adams or who was Miss Adams but now Mrs. Gordon and you will remember her at Quam Beach but under unpleasant circumstances to which we will not refer but forget as well as forgive as mamma reminded me. But you would be surprised to see how much she is improved and so different to what she used to be which was greatly to be desired of all her friends and a pleasure to all who wish her well. So seeing she wished to make up for past offenses we went to spend the day with her and she was very hospitable. She came in her carriage to take us to her house which is most handsome with roses and flowers of many kinds of which she brought mamma a whole lot at the same time and invited all the big people to dinner the next day. I think all this shows she repents sincerely and is not the same woman but much changed and ought to be encouraged to keep on doing well. She has a nice husband named Dr. Gordon, but sober which is not his own fault if he was born so and I pity him. And a sweet baby boy named Aleck and crows and laughs with pleasure at us.

But I hope by no means you think we think him so sweet as May Bessie which he is not and May Bessie is so near to us, which also he is not and we love her far the best. Miss Adams was very kind to us all day, indeed quite fond but most of all to Bessie, and she played with us and amused us and I was glad I did not let the devil which is a word that is not best to write unless it is necessary get the upper hand and make me stay away out of revenge or being shy.

“But the most surprising and best thing of all, Uncle Horace is what she is going to do with some of her money. You know in those days of which we will not speak she had a great deal more than she knew what to do with. Well, now she has found a good use for some of it in a way well pleasing to God and men. But I am too tired to write more to-day and will finish it to-morrow – Well, to return on this day to Miss Adams and her good works which shows she has read her Bible which urges to repentance of sins and prophets by it which is a sight to make the coldest heart to rejoice. She has a house not very far from her own where she lives and she is going to have six little girls there in the care of a nice, kind lady. And these little girls are not to be happy children with mothers to take care of them, but orfuns or without mothers or teaching or training in the way they should go. For Miss Adams says she knows what it is to be without a mother or some wise person to guide her, and now that God has been so good to her she wants to give a helping hand to some little girls who would be left too much to themselves and not properly taught. She does not mean to have very poor children, and if their friends wish it they may pay a little money for them but the contrary if they do not, and prefer charity though she does not think it such and would like them to come without any pay. And here they will have a happy home and be taught to be desirable women fit for teachers or other good things and so it will be their own fault if they don't do it. And she has chosen four girls who are to come in the fall when Miss Adams comes back from the north because things cannot be quite ready till then, as the lady has a sailor son who is to go to sea which I think a hard case for his friends to have him leave his native land. And then the house will be ready and the lady will go and the children will come and Miss Adams is going to see if Lucy Waters' father who you know I told you about in my last will let her come too. I think if he does not he will be much wanting in sence and proper behaviour, but I think he will dont you? Miss Adams, Mrs. Gordon I mean but I always forget to put her wedding name says she feels so sorry for all little motherless girls, and I am glad of it are not you? And so is Bessie and we think the reason Miss Adams takes so much trouble for these little girls is because she is afraid that if they do not have good care they may grow up to be such women as she used to be when we knew her before but which is not to be mentioned in these pages and now she is quite ashamed of it. We cannot tell just yet if Lucy's father will let her come, but papa and the doctor are going to the steamer this evening to ask him and when we know Bessie will write and tell you all about it. And Bessie and I have quite made up our minds to take Miss Adams for one of our friends because we find her most sencible and kind and so changed from her old ways which we will not remember if we can help it.

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