

Leslie Madeline

**Bertie and the Gardeners: or,
The Way to be Happy**



Madeline Leslie

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Bertie and the Gardeners;
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TO

HARRY, NELLIE, AND WILLIE SAMPSON;

ALSO,

To the Memory of their Deceased Brothers and Sister,

BERTIE, FRANKEY AND EMMA,

THESE LITTLE BOOKS ARE AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED

**If the perusal prompt them and other readers to imitate the virtues of our hero
in his efforts to *be* good, and to *do* good, the wishes of the author will be realized**

CHAPTER I. THE NEW FARMER

The new house at Woodlawn was nearly completed; and Mr. Curtis now set to work in earnest, clearing the grounds of the rubbish, in order to make the terraces and lay out his avenue in front.

Those who have read the other books about Bertie, will know that two wide avenues, enclosed by handsome iron gates, had been already made; one winding along on the shores of Lake Shawsheen, the other entering from a higher point which led through a grove toward the house where the enchanting view of lawn and water burst at once on the vision.

But in the vicinity of the house, no grading had been done, on account of the vast amount of bricks, lime, mortar-bins, wood and chips lying scattered in every direction.

The house, elegant in proportion and finish, stood about a hundred rods in front of a high, grassy mound, upon the top of which a cluster of chestnut-trees cast a pleasant shade.

The rich, green turf on the lawn which sloped to the lake, was dotted with magnificent old trees undisturbed for a century. Back of the house, or rather beyond the barn, was another swell or mound, which like the first, was so regular in its form as almost to excite the belief that it was artificial. Indeed, from the fact that two tomahawks were found buried in the spot where the barn stood, Mr. Curtis inferred that it might have been used for the grand council of the Indian tribe, and that here they buried all hostilities.

"Certainly," Mrs. Curtis remarked, "this was a pleasant view to take of it," and as there was no one to dispute the fact, the larger mound was called "Peace Mountain."

Mr. Curtis, or the Squire, as the Oxford villagers called him, was now in his element. Every pleasant morning he might be seen, his wife leaning on his arm, walking over the premises, planning the improvements to be made, and often Bertie and Winifred accompanied them.

When the weather was not so clear, the gentleman and his son hurried from one part of the grounds to the other, directing Tom Grant, or measuring with a ten-foot pole.

There was a nice sunny plat containing sixteen acres back of Peace Mountain, which had been ploughed earlier in the season, to be in readiness next year for a garden and orchard. Besides this there were to be heart-shaped and diamond-shaped figures and circlets cut in the lawn, near the house, for flowers of every hue.

It was now October, and the most must be made of the fine weather. Ploughing and preparing the ground for agricultural purposes, was what the farmers in the neighborhood were accustomed to, and therefore help was easily to be obtained.

Through the summer, Mr. Curtis had borne in mind that he should need a skilful farmer to till his land, one who understood the science as well as the art of farming to the best advantage. He greatly approved Thomas Grant's industry, and the zeal he manifested in all that concerned his master's interests; but he feared the man was so attached to the old ways of managing land, that he would be unwilling to avail himself of the improved implements of agriculture, or the new-fangled notions, as he called mowing-machines, horse-rakes, sowing-machines, etc., etc.

But one noon, while his oxen were eating their dinner, Mr. Curtis found him sitting under the shade of a tree, examining with great interest the latest report of the State Agricultural Society.

Turning to a picture of a Devon cow, he exclaimed:

"Well, Squire, if Adam carried such cows as that with him when he went outside of Eden, I think he might have set up another paradise. To my thinking, Squire, nothing can beat that cow."

Mr. Curtis threw himself on the grass, wishing to test Tom's ideas of farming; and after conversing half an hour, resolved to hire him for his farmer.

But still it was necessary for the gentleman to employ a gardener, one who loved flowers and had a taste for landscape gardening.

"I must advertise, Cecilia," he said one day to his wife; "I want exactly the right kind of a man for there is a great opportunity to improve and beautify the place."

While his papa and mamma were talking, Bertie sat on a cricket before a wooden chair which he had borrowed of Mrs. Taylor from the kitchen. Winnie was by his side, and he was teaching her to make a penny spin around so that it looked like a ball.

CHAPTER II. THE SICK WORKMAN

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Curtis noticed that their son listened to the conversation; but he did, and remembered it.

The next day he harnessed Whitefoot into his donkey carriage as soon as he had read his chapter, with his mamma, and drove away with all speed to Woodlawn.

Mr. Fuller and most of the workmen had left; but Joe Allen and his father were busy in the conservatory which they were just finishing. It was a beautiful building, the centre much higher than the rest, to be filled with climbing roses, vines, etc.; the sides sloped off until they were only high enough to allow free entrance at the doors. It was finished in a highly ornamental manner, and in the distance resembled a heathen pagoda.

This was Joe's first effort at architecture; and he was proud of it. When he left Oxford he was going directly to Mr. Bryant's with whom his kind friend Mr. Curtis had made arrangements for him to study and perfect himself in his chosen pursuit.

Joe was not at work when Bertie found him; he was giving directions to the man who had brought a load of marble blocks for the walks.

The little fellow found he would be busy for some time; so he sauntered on to the back of the building till he came to the painter Mr. Dodge, who was engaged in setting some panes of glass which had been broken. He smiled directly when he saw Bertie, but he did not speak, and presently the child noticed he was very pale. Occasionally he put his handkerchief to his mouth; and the little fellow was frightened when he saw that it was spotted with blood.

"Oh, dear!" he exclaimed, "you are sick. You must go home, and send for the Doctor."

"I confess I don't feel like moving a mountain this morning," answered Dodge, with a sickly laugh; "I'm on my last job at painting. Did you know it?"

"What do you mean?"

"I wasn't brought up to be a painter; and it doesn't agree with me."

"What did you do before?"

"Oh, I turned my hand to anything! I took up painting because it paid best at the time, and I had my mother and sister to support."

"What shall you do then?"

"I don't know." He laid down his putty knife and leaned back, wiping his mouth again.

"I know you're sick," Bertie urged anxiously, "and I'm going to call my papa."

"No, don't! I've had such turns before; but they do make me weak as a baby."

But the child was alarmed, and had already gone. When he returned the painter had risen and was slowly walking toward the house on his way to his boarding place.

"My son," said Mr. Curtis, "call Whitefoot and harness him into the carriage as quick as you can."

"Sit down on the boards, Dodge, until he brings the donkey round. Bertie tells me you think painting disagrees with you."

"Yes, sir, I am sure it does. I half promised my mother never to do another day's work at it; but when Torrey was hurt I couldn't refuse Mr. Fuller; he's been a good friend to me in times past."

"What would you choose for an employment?"

"Out – door work, sir, was what I was brought up to. I shall try to get something at that. There's nothing more healthy for the lungs than being over horses and cattle."

The gentleman noticed that the effort of talking seemed to give the man pain, and instantly checked him from saying more.

"You must stop at once," he urged in a firm voice. "Such warnings as that," pointing to the blood-stained handkerchief, "are not to be trifled with. I shall send a physician to see you; and I will talk with you again."

At noon Mr. Curtis found that the woman who boarded Mr. Dodge couldn't keep him while he was sick; and arrangements were made at once to remove him to the chamber in Mrs. Taylor's farm-house which Patrick Riley had left.

The next day he was so much worse that his mother was sent for; and thus an acquaintance commenced which continued for life.

CHAPTER III. THE MERRY GARDENER

Mrs. Dodge was the widow of a clergyman. At her husband's death she was left destitute; and until Albert was able to labor for her support, she kept school, filling up every moment out of school hours, in sewing for the slop-shops.

In this way she injured her health, and her son insisted she should hire a couple of rooms, take his sister from an uncle's where she was not happy, and keep house for him.

Her health was now entirely restored, and she had resolved to advertise for a situation as housekeeper, and thus relieve her son of the burden of her own and her daughter's support.

The longer Mrs. Curtis knew Mrs. Dodge, the better she was convinced that she was exactly the person to relieve her of her household care.

They sent to the city for Nelly the daughter, and found she was old enough to be of service as a chamber girl. Nancy was to retain her old place as nurse, so that only a cook was needed to make the corps complete.

It was not long before Albert was able to return to the city. He was delighted that his mother and sister were provided for, and kept Mr. and Mrs. Taylor laughing from morning till night; and yet Mr. Curtis suspected there was something on his mind that troubled him.

The night before he was to leave he requested an interview with the Squire, when with some embarrassment he said:

"Bertie told me to-day that you were looking for a gardener. If I can fit myself for the business by next spring, will you let me try it?"

"Do you know any thing about flowers?"

"I worked one winter for a gentleman who cultivated flowers and fruit for sale. He had violets and carnation-pinks and roses, and in other houses he had strawberries and mushrooms, and lettuce. I think as far as I went I learned the business thoroughly."

"Capital! and do you understand about laying out grounds? I mean small plats for flowers."

"I can't say, sir, how I should please you or the lady; but I could draw you a plan of what I've been wanting to see in front of the house. Perhaps you could judge something by that."

Mr. Curtis sat thinking for a time, and then Albert said with his old, merry twinkle:

"I'd like first rate to work for you, Squire; and I suppose mother would like to have me where she can look after me a little. I needn't promise, I'd try to do my best, for you know that already. I'd work for considerable less wages for the sake of being near Bertie."

"But your Mission School! what will become of that?"

Albert's face grew serious. "That's the only thing I regret, in leaving the city," he said. "There's so much to be done for the poor children wandering about the streets, I am sorry to leave my school; but the doctor says my life depends on quitting my present business."

As Mr. Curtis still seemed absorbed in thought, the young man added presently: "If you give me any encouragement I shall go back to Hantz where I once worked. Before you would need me in the spring I could learn something if I tried."

"Does Bertie know of your wish?"

"No, sir, I was afraid you'd consent to try me just to please him; and I want you to feel yourself that I'm worth trying."

This was said with a laugh.

"Well," answered the gentleman, "I'll think of it, and possibly I may give you an answer in the morning. But, as you are going to leave the city, you mustn't give up trying to do good. Workmen are needed in the country as well as the city."

It was Mr. Curtis' intention to move into his new house the first week in November. Upholsterers were already engaged inside in fitting carpets, and making ready for the furniture to be removed from their city home.

Mrs. Dodge, therefore, was going to give up her rooms, sell her plain furniture, and be ready to return as soon as possible. She knew nothing of her son's application to Mr. Curtis and felt considerable anxiety on his account. Her delight, therefore, may be imagined when after they were seated in the cars on their return to the city he informed her that the Squire had engaged him for a gardener, and thus they would all be together once more.

CHAPTER IV. VISITORS TO WOODLAWN

I suppose some of my young readers will be glad to know that Torrey recovered entirely from his accident, and had returned to his painting in the city. Perhaps there was no one of the workmen, aside from the Allens, who parted with Bertie with so much regret as he did, for there was no one who owed him so much for his kindness.

When the little fellow called to bid him good-by and to send a book by Mrs. Torrey to Edgar, the man caught his hand, exclaiming:

"I'm getting to like all children for your sake. At any rate nobody will ever hear me say again that children are a bother."

"Tell Edgar, please," urged the boy, "that I'm so glad to hear he is patient; and that the doctors think there is hope he will be well. Papa says he can stay there as long as he wishes, without any pay. I mean to ask Miss Lerow to go with me and see him when I'm in the city next time."

Mrs. Torrey promised to go to the girls' ward the first time she visited Edgar and ask for Susy Hunt and the tame linnet. The bird had arrived safely at the Hospital and proved a great amusement to the patients. Miss Lerow wrote a short note in answer, which I shall copy.

"Dear Bertie: – This morning when I carried the cage into Mrs. Ayer's ward there was great rejoicing. Susy and Marianne, that bright eyed girl you spoke to near the door, laughed aloud and clapped their hands, and exclaimed:

"Bertie didn't forget. He did send his bird. Oh, Miss Lerow will you please thank him, and say we like it ever so much!"

"Mrs. Ayers says, 'Tell that blessed little boy I'll take the best care of his linnet. Tell him the cage is hung on the hook where all the children can see it; and the pretty creature is chirping as merrily as if it had always been here.'

"So, my dear little friend, you will be pleased that your self-denying act has given pleasure to so many suffering children, and that they think of you with gratitude. Your friend,

"Carrie Lerow."

One pleasant afternoon Bertie and his sister were riding through the street, when a handsome carriage came slowly toward them.

"There's Whitefoot, and that dear little boy Mr. Carpenter told us about," exclaimed a young girl, who was no other than Emma Blagden.

The donkey trotted on until the two carriages met, when a pleasant voice called out:

"Stop a minute, please. Is your name Herbert Curtis?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How do you do, Whitefoot?" exclaimed the young girl, springing to the ground and throwing her arms around the donkey's neck.

"Oh, you stupid creature not to know your old mistress!" she went on, as the animal took no notice of her caresses.

"I'm very glad to see you," Bertie began, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "Will you please go and see mamma?"

"Have you moved into the new house yet," inquired the lady who had asked them to stop.

"No, ma'am. Mamma is over there though; and she would be very glad to see you, and thank you for sending me the bird."

"Oh, yes!" cried Emma. "Where is the linnet? I dare say she'd know me."

"I'm sorry; but I lent my bird to a little girl in the hospital. It does amuse the children there so much to watch it."

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