

Blanchard Amy Ella

# A Dear Little Girl



Amy Blanchard  
**A Dear Little Girl**

«Public Domain»

**Blanchard A.**

A Dear Little Girl / A. Blanchard — «Public Domain»,

## Содержание

Chapter I	5
Chapter II	9
Chapter III	13
Chapter IV	17
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

# Amy Ella Blanchard

## A Dear Little Girl

### Chapter I

### AN ACCIDENT

"It will be a fine opportunity for Edna," said Mrs. Conway.

Edna did not like that word opportunity; it always seemed to her that it meant something unpleasant. She had noticed that when pleasant things came along they were rarely spoken of as "opportunities," but were just *happenings*. So she sat with her little sturdy legs dangling down from the sofa, and a very sober look upon her round face, while her busy, dimpled hands were folded quietly.

Her mother leaned over, and took the plump little fingers in hers, giving them a squeeze. "It will be an opportunity," she repeated, as her eyes rested fondly on the child by her side; "but she is only eight, and it seems like pushing her out of the nest before her wings are ready, poor birdie!"

"O, no it doesn't," replied Mr. Conway. "It will only be changing nests. Aunt Elizabeth will be just like a mother to her; it is not like a boarding-school, my dear."

"I know," replied Mrs. Conway, resting her cheek against Edna's little dark head. "Should you like to go to Aunt Elizabeth's, dear?"

"Cousin Louis will be there, you know," put in Edna's father, "and you'll have fine times together. Suppose I read to you what Aunt Elizabeth says. 'You write, my dear nephew, that it seems prudent, on account of your wife's health, that you should go to Florida. I have received some such news from William who is about to take a trip to California in search of health. He has asked me to take charge of his son, Louis, during his absence. Should you not like to place Edna, also, with us during the time you are gone? She could then attend school and would find a pleasing companion in her cousin Louis, who, I fear, will be somewhat lonely with only myself and your Uncle Justus. The advantages of a city are great, and I need not say we will endeavor' – h'm – h'm – never mind the rest," said Mr. Conway, laying down the letter. "You know, daughter, Aunt Elizabeth lives in a big city, where there are fine shops and beautiful parks; moreover, you would meet a lot of nice little girls in the school. It would be much nicer than for you to stay here with sister and the boys while we are gone. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Edna, her little fat hand enfolded in her mother's, feeling very moist from the excitement of the prospect.

"Of course, I know it is best," said Mrs. Conway, "and I know Aunt Elizabeth means to be as kind as possible." Here a wistful look came into the mother's eyes, but Edna only saw visions of gay shops, while she pictured romps with her cousin Louis.

She remembered very little of this great aunt, except that she had once sent her a most beautiful doll, with a cunning trunk filled with such neat, old-fashioned frocks and aprons, together with a real little slate and books. Aunt Elizabeth had written a tiny letter which the doll had brought pinned to her muff. In the letter the doll's name was said to be Ada, and many instructions were given as to her behavior and studies. So Ada and Aunt Elizabeth were inseparably connected in Edna's mind.

"I must go get Ada ready," she said, jumping down from the sofa on which she had been sitting. "When shall I go to the city, papa?"

"Next week," he answered; and the little girl, on business intent, ran to the playroom.

There was a great deal to do before she should go away. She reflected. She must clean house, and see that all Ada's clothes were clean and whole, for it would never do to let Aunt Elizabeth find that they had not been kept carefully. "They are not all here," said the child, sitting down on the floor.

"Lilypaws tore up the muff, and Gyp ate up one of the books; then the wind blew away an apron and a skirt that day I washed them and put them out on the grass to dry. I'll have to tell Aunt Elizabeth about that. She'll know it was an accident. Maybe sister will make me some more. I'll go ask her now."

Leaving Ada with her wardrobe scattered over the nursery floor, Edna sought sister, who was studying her lessons, curled up on the window seat of her room. "I'm going to the city to live, next week," announced Edna, importantly, "and I'll have to get Ada's clothes in order. Sister, won't you help me?"

"Going to the city!" cried Celia, lowering her book in surprise. "What do you mean? O! you're only playing make-believe."

"No, I'm not. I am really and truly going. Papa and mamma said so. I'm going to live with Aunt Elizabeth while they are away in Florida, and, of course, Ada will have to go."

"And, of course, I'll help you," replied Celia, "you poor little midget."

"I'm not poor at all," replied Edna, "for Cousin Louis is going to be there, and I'm going to play with him in the park, and I'm going to buy things in the beautiful shops. What shall I buy for you, sister?"

"O, I don't know. Don't buy me anything – or if you should see a belt buckle exactly like Grace Neal's, I should like to have one, but only if it is *exactly*."

"All right; I'll buy that and send it to you," decided Edna, very positively, while she made up her mind to notice Grace Neal's buckle very particularly the next time she saw her.

There was much hurry and excitement for the next week. Edna did not go to school at all during that time, for the dressmaker was likely at any time to want her to stand up to be fitted, something Edna did not like at all. "I believe I'd just as soon go to school," she fretted while Miss Marsh, with her mouth full of pins, pinched up here, and trimmed off there, bidding the little girl to "stand still."

"I am standing as still as a mouse," she protested.

"About as still as that canary bird," returned Miss Marsh. "Don't shrug your shoulders while I cut out this armhole. I might snip you with the scissors."

That was something really to be dreaded, so Edna did stand very still while the cold steel points circled her plump shoulder. "O, dear!" she sighed, when the operation was finished, "I hope I sha'n't need any more clothes for a year."

But even the discomfort of dress-fitting did not do away with the pleasure the little girl felt in her pretty new frocks, and it seemed no time before her trunk stood ready packed and she had said good-bye to Gyp and Lilypaws, to Bobby in his cage, and to the chickens, each and every one; her own special pet hen, Snowflake, being entreated not to hatch out any new chickens till Edna should return.

It was rather a solemn moment, after all, when mamma hugged her and kissed her, with the tears running down her cheeks; when the cook, Jane, hoped they'd see her again; and when the boys thrust parting gifts into her hands – Frank a small mouth organ, and Charlie a wad of something which was afterward discovered to be taffy, wrapped in brown paper; when Celia winked away the tear-drops from her lashes and called her "precious little sister." It was therefore with the very opposite of a smile upon her face that she climbed up the steps into the car. But the dimples soon came back again as the car moved off, and the boys, standing on a woodpile, cheered and waved their hats as the little head at the window nodded good-bye.

It was quite a long journey to the city to which Edna was going, a whole day and night to be on the cars, and after the first few hours the little girl began to get very restless. Even the picture papers her father bought her, and the little excitement of stopping once in a while at a station, where could be seen queer-looking people, did not serve to keep Edna from getting very tired; but it grew dark early, and when the porter came in to make up the berths she felt that she would be quite ready to clamber up into that funny little bed above her papa's.

"It's just like being put away on a shelf," she laughed. "Suppose I should tumble out, papa?"

"Then I think it would be better for you to take the lower berth," he replied.

"O, no. I like it best up here. I can peep out better. Are you going to bed, too, papa?"

"Not just yet. I am going to the smoking-car for a while. You go to sleep, daughter, and I'll be back pretty soon."

It was some time before the child could compose herself. The voices of the people in the car, the clatter of a passing train, the letting down of the berths, or the opening of a door, all tended to keep her awake, but after a little time she began to say over a rhyme she had learned at school, keeping time to the motion of the car as she repeated:

"To cuddle up the baby ferns, and smooth the lily's sheet,  
And tuck a warm, white blanket down around the roses' feet;"

and before she knew it she was fast asleep.

How long she had slept she had not the slightest idea, when she was awakened, very suddenly, by a jerk of the car which nearly threw her from the berth. She sat up rubbing her eyes, wondering where she was, and for a moment it seemed as if she must be dreaming that she was packed away on a high shelf in such a queer place; but presently she was quite wide-awake, and found that there was a great commotion going on; men with lanterns hurried through the car; women began to scream, babies to cry.

"It's all right!" some one shouted. "Don't be alarmed!"

This was enough to frighten Edna, and she began to scramble on her clothes as quickly as possible, first peering down into the berth below, but seeing no papa there. "O, where is my papa? Where is my papa?" she whispered under her breath, as the little trembling fingers tried to fasten the buttons hurriedly.

Presently some one parted the curtains and looked in; it was the negro porter.

"Scuse me, Miss," he said, "but de folks is all leavin' de cyar. You better let me 'sist you off."

"I want my papa!" cried Edna, looking around distressedly. "O, please tell me what is the matter."

"De engine an' de baggage cyar was derailed," explained the man, "an' de smokin' cyar cotched fire."

"O! O! my papa is burned up!" cried Edna, helplessly.

"No, miss, I reckon he ain't, but yuh see dey is sorter 'stracted out dere; de women a-faintin' an' de men a-hollerin', but nobody ain't hurt so tur'ble. Yuh better come get off." And picking her up in his arms the porter bore her from the car.

"Now I'll set you down on dis ole stump, an' yuh'll be safe," said he. And Edna found herself, at midnight, by the side of the railroad in what seemed to be a bit of woodland. She could hear the rushing of water and see the blazing car ahead. The rest of the train had been backed along the track, and some of the women and men, seeing the rear cars were not hurt, were climbing back into them. There was a crowd of people moving about farther up the railroad, and Edna made up her mind that she would try to find out what had become of her father. So she took her way toward the throng of people who were gathered about the baggage car, which lay over on its side by an embankment.

"You'd better go back to the rear cars, little girl," said some one, as she came up. "Where is your mother?"

"She is at home," replied Edna. "I want my papa. Is he burned up?"

"No, indeed; no one is burned up," was the reply. "You go back and we'll find your father. What is his name?"

"His name," returned Edna, "is Henry Parker Conway."

"Anybody about here by the name of Conway?" shouted the man.

But there was no one answering to that name in the crowd, and Edna picked her way back to the stump where the porter had placed her, feeling very lonely and miserable. "O dear!" she said to herself. "What shall I do? Suppose papa doesn't come for me? That man said they had sent ahead

for another engine, and that we should go on pretty soon; but I can't go without my papa," and the tears began to run down Edna's cheeks. She was beginning to feel cold, and it was very forlorn to sit there alone on a stump all night. "I believe I'll go back to the car," she said, "but I don't know where I belong." By great effort she managed to climb up on the high step of the first car, then made her way inside and stood there looking wistfully around.

"Why, you poor little child," said a lady, coming forward. "Where did you come from?"

"I came from the stump," replied Edna, "and I want my papa," she continued, her lip quivering and her eyes filling.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know," returned Edna, and putting her head against the arm which was placed sympathetically around her, she sobbed outright.

"There! There! Tell me all about it," said her friend. "We'll make it all right as soon as my husband comes in. Come, sit down here by me. Your father can't be very far away, and you know no one has been very badly hurt."

Edna gave the best account of herself that she could, and the lady comforted her and promised that she should be safely cared for.

After what seemed a long time, just as the morning was breaking, the train was again on its way. But no papa had appeared, although the husband of Edna's new friend had gone through the cars to look for him.



## Chapter II

### GETTING SETTLED

Poor little Edna! she was so unhappy, so anxious, as the train moved along faster and faster. Even kind Mrs. Porter by her side felt that she did not know just how to comfort the child, although she did try very hard, and at least made the little girl feel that she should be safely guarded on her way to her aunt's house; for Mrs. Porter lived in the same city, and had promised to take Edna in charge and deliver her safely at her aunt's very door.

The rising sun was lighting up the mountain tops and finding its way into the deep gorges, when suddenly Edna started to her feet with a cry, as the door opened and a man came in, very pale, with his head bandaged and his hand in a sling.

"Papa! Papa!" a little voice rang out, in tones of such gladness as caused everyone in the car to turn. It was Edna's father, truly, who made his way over to the seat where his little girl was sitting.

With his uninjured hand fondly clasped in that of his daughter he told how he had happened to be absent from her so long. "I was in the smoking car when the accident occurred," he said, "and I was thrown forward so violently that I was stunned, and was carried out of the car to a place of safety. Later I was placed in a berth in the car ahead of this, and lay in a stupor till a short time ago, when some one discovered me and asked if my name were Conway, saying that inquiries had been made for me. In the confusion and trouble I had been forgotten, but a doctor has been looking me over and tells me I am only a little shaken up, so all I needed was a bit of patching, as you see by this cut head and sprained wrist. I shall be as good as new in a few days. Poor, little daughter! I suspect that you fancied all sorts of things about me."

"Indeed she did," said Mrs. Porter, smiling, "we were really alarmed ourselves for your safety."

"I don't know what I should have done without Mrs. Porter. You don't know how good she has been to me," said Edna, looking up gratefully.

So the rest of the journey they were all on very good terms, and when Edna parted from her kind friends at the depot it was with a promise to go and see them as soon as she could.

"We have two boys, but no little girl," Mrs. Porter told her; "but we'll have a good time, even if we have no dolls in our house."

The accident had kept them from reaching Aunt Elizabeth's at the time they expected, and it was quite dark by the time they arrived at the house. Edna, therefore, could not see much of the street, but she could see the open square near by. The door was opened by Uncle Justus himself. "Heigho, little girl!" he exclaimed. "What's all this?"

"We were beginning to think you were not coming," was Aunt Elizabeth's greeting, as she, too, came forward. "What detained you, Henry? Why, what has happened to you?"

"We had an accident," explained Mr. Conway; and he proceeded to give an account of it, while Edna sat looking about her and wondering where her Cousin Louis was.

She was not long wondering, for in a few moments the door of the sitting-room opened and a little boy about ten years of age came quietly in; he was fair-haired and pale, and did not burst into the room as Frank or Charlie would have done.

"Louis, here is Cousin Edna," said Aunt Elizabeth. "Come and shake hands with her, then go with her to find Ellen, who will show her to her room. She will want to prepare for supper."

Edna cast an appealing glance at her father as she went out; but he was absorbed in talking to Uncle Justus, and, after shaking hands absently with Louis, returned to his conversation, and Edna followed Louis, feeling a little aggrieved at being sent off in this way. "My mamma would have gone with a little girl herself," she thought, as she waited for Louis to return with a candle, for which he went to the kitchen. "Say," he said, on his return, "Ellen is setting the table. I'll take you to your

room; it's 'way up stairs;" and he swung around the post of the baluster to run up ahead of her. On the first landing he paused. "This is the parlor," he said, and Edna peeped in. The appearance of the room gave her a subdued feeling, as if she must not speak above a whisper. The windows were heavily curtained, and the children's voices had a muffled sound as they slipped cautiously inside. The furniture was big and ponderous; on a little stand was placed a heavy family Bible, a hymn book, bound in purple velvet, with gilt clasp, lying on top. Edna thought this last very beautiful, and looked back at it as they stole quietly out of the room.

On the next floor were the schoolrooms; these too, were shown Edna by Louis.

"These two rooms are the girls' schoolrooms, and back there is the boys' room," he explained.

"It must be a big school. Does Uncle Justus teach all the scholars?" asked Edna, with a little hope that the shaggy eyebrows would not be within her line of vision during all the school hours.

"No," replied Louis. "Aunt Elizabeth teaches the boys and Miss Ashurst the little girls."

Edna was relieved, and followed Louis up the last flight to the top floor. "My!" she said, "it is 'way up at the top of the house, isn't it? This is a queer house. I never saw one like it, with the parlor on the second floor. Where is your room, Louis?"

"I sleep in a little room next to aunt and uncle. Here's yours. Ellen has that one next to you," and he flung open a door; but by the dim light of the candle Edna could not see all the details.

"There isn't any gas up here," explained Louis, "but you won't mind that. It is pretty high up, too, but you can see ever so far from this window – the harbor where the ships sail and where the bridge crosses this side, and you can see the cars and lots of things. I'd a heap rather be up here, but Aunt Elizabeth said 'No,' and that settled it. There now, can I do anything for you?" he asked, setting down Edna's little hand satchel.

"No-o, thank you," replied the little girl, helplessly. She was so used to having sister or mamma at hand that it seemed very queer to be left alone, and after Louis had shut the door she stood looking around, not knowing just what to do; but she concluded she must take off her coat and hat, anyhow. This she did, and then washed off some of the dust as best she could, smoothing down her hair with her little wet hands.

"I wonder if I am to blow out the candle or take it back," she said to herself, but a recollection of the dark passageway decided her to take the candle down stairs, and she proceeded to descend, feeling rather scared as she passed the dusky corners of a strange house.

Supper was ready shortly after she entered the sitting-room; it consisted of warmed-over rolls, dried apples stewed, grated cheese, weak tea, and a dry kind of cake which tasted of the wooden box in which it had been kept. Edna never forgot the taste of that cake with which she became very familiar as time went on.

Uncle Justus was a very quiet, dignified man, with a Roman nose and gray side whiskers. He wore spectacles, which added to the effect of the shaggy eyebrows. Edna was very much afraid of him at first. Aunt Elizabeth was portly and bland, but her sharp eyes had a way of looking you through and through. Edna soon discovered that she was a person much more to be feared than Uncle Justus. She allowed no nonsense, no indecision. When she looked at you during mealtime and said, in a severe tone, "Butter or molasses?" if you wavered an instant you were told you could have neither, since you did not know what you wanted. To be allowed both was out of the question, and so it was a serious matter, with a slice of bread on your plate, to make a wise choice instantly.

After supper Edna and Louis played quietly with a queer old-fashioned game, called "The War of the Revolution;" it was played by using a teetotum and counters. Tiring of this the children next looked at a huge picture book containing Bible stories, with very highly colored illustrations. Edna was charmed with it, but was told that hereafter it was to be viewed only on Sundays, although as a special privilege it could be examined this first evening. The little girl was far too tired to care to sit up late, after the exciting scenes she had gone through, and of which she told Louis in reply to his eager questionings.

"My!" he had said, "I'd like to have been there. Won't they all stare at you in school to-morrow when I tell them?" To her little high-up room Edna was taken by the maid, Ellen, who was an uncouth, kindly creature, and from the first befriended the little girl.

"I'll sit up here, dear," she said, "an' kape open me dhure so yez will know I'm there;" and Edna fell asleep quite comforted by the near presence of the girl.

She was aroused the next morning by a voice, saying, "Come, come, child, it's high time to be up. I've let you sleep overtime after your journey, but you must be ready for school;" and opening her eyes the child saw Aunt Elizabeth standing over her.

"Am I to go to school to-day?" she asked, sitting up straight.

"Why not?"

Edna had no reply ready; she didn't know why not, except that her father was going home that afternoon, and she had hoped to have the morning with him.

Aunt Elizabeth, however, would not listen to protests, but bade her niece hurry down.

"Who will fasten my buttons?" asked Edna.

Aunt Elizabeth looked at her severely. "A big girl, eight years old, that has to be dressed like a baby!" she exclaimed. "Hereafter you must fasten your own buttons;" and she left Edna sitting on the floor feeling rather disconsolate at this prospect.

However, by fastening the buttons in front and then twisting the garments around, slipping her arms into the shoulder straps last, she managed all the buttons but those of her frock, and for this she concluded she must ask Ellen's help. So she stole softly down stairs and out into the kitchen, where the willing maid helped her through the difficulty.

And so the new life began. School was rather pleasant, after all. Miss Ashurst made the lessons interesting, and while Uncle Justus had an eye to the schoolroom where the little girls were he seldom came in, although to him were offenders sent. Edna thought she could not possibly endure the disgrace of being ordered into the next room, so terrible did it seem to her. Consequently she took care to give no cause. She soon became acquainted with the little girls, and chose her special companions from them. They were, however, never allowed to visit her, as she soon found out to her confusion, for in the innocence of her heart she asked her deskmate to come and bring her dolls one Friday afternoon, but the little visitor was not allowed to enter the house, and was given the message that Edna was not permitted to receive company unless invited by her aunt. Poor little Edna was overcome with shame, and for the first time realized what real homesickness meant.

"My mamma let me have little girls to come and play with me," she sobbed; "and I used to go to play with them."

Aunt Elizabeth was a trifle less stern than usual; perhaps she did have some tender feeling for the child. "Stop crying, my dear," she said. "You and Louis may go and take a walk in the square. To-morrow I will take you to see some children who will, I hope, make you understand how highly favored you are. Run along, now, and get your hat. You may stay out an hour."

In the hall Uncle Justus met her, and seeing her wet eyes asked, "What is the matter, little girl?"

A grieving sigh was his only answer, so he patted her head and gave her a nickel. "There is a nice little shop around the corner," he said. "Louis can take you there to buy some candy." This showed such real sympathy that Edna looked up gratefully and ran to find her cousin.

"Good!" cried Louis whom she found in the schoolroom studying his lessons for Monday. "I'm tired of staying here, and they won't let me play with the boys in the street. There is one boy, though, that I do know. I see him in the square sometimes; he is a jolly fellow. They don't know I see him."

"O, is that right?" asked Edna.

"Ho! why not?"

"Why, I don't know, it's – it's kind of deceiving."

"I'd tell 'em if they'd ask me," replied Louis, conclusively. "Come, I'll race you around the square;" and they started out.

The square was a pretty place even in winter weather. In the center was a circular coping from which a flight of steps led down to a spring, the water of which ran constantly from two lions' mouths. Edna had never seen anything like this before, and was filled with admiration. It ever after remained a delight to her, and to the square she would rather go than anywhere else. The candy shop around the corner was another place to be favored. It was a queer little old-fashioned affair, quite unlike the big shops on the other streets, but there was something the children liked about the way the wares were shown, and the good-natured German woman who kept the shop was always ready to attend to the little ones, helping them out when it came to be a serious question whether peanut taffy or sour balls should be chosen.

On this Friday afternoon the gift from Uncle Justus was spent in little scalloped cakes of maple sugar, at which the children nibbled as they ran back to the square.

"There's Phil Blaney now," said Louis. "Come along, Edna;" and the little girl followed her cousin to a bench where a boy, somewhat older than Louis, was sitting. He looked Edna over rather contemptuously, and she, on her part, took a dislike to him which she never overcame, although the boy tried to be friendly, especially after Louis told him of Edna's exciting journey. But the hour was soon up, and Ellen at the door beckoned them in. Edna wanted to tell about Phil Blaney, but didn't know just what to do about it, especially when Louis called her a telltale for thinking of such a thing. Before she decided the question something happened which put it quite out of her mind.

## Chapter III

### WHAT HAPPENED

The happening came about in this way: Aunt Elizabeth had promised to take Edna to see some poor little children who, she said, might make Edna feel how highly favored she was. Aunt Elizabeth Horner was a good woman, although she was rather hard on little people, having been brought up in a very strict way herself; but she was interested in many charities and missions, was always making warm clothing for the poor, and many a time sat up late at night, after a busy day, in order to fashion pretty cornucopias, boxes, and other fancy articles for some fair in which she was interested. She was one of the managers of an institution called "The Home of the Friendless," and favored it more than any of her other charities. The name appealed strongly to Edna, and she was very anxious to see the little children.

"We want to build a nice big new home for these poor wanderers who have no other home and no friends, so we are going to hold a fair," said Aunt Elizabeth, as they stopped at the door of a quiet-looking house on a little side street. "This is too small a place for the many little children who should be provided for."

Edna was very much interested in seeing the little waifs, in hearing them sing, and in seeing where they ate and slept. She was very thoughtful as she sat perched up on the seat of the car by her aunt's side during their homeward journey.

"I wish I could do something for them," she said, after a while.

"So you can, my dear," replied Aunt Elizabeth. "You can help me to make something for the fair."

"Do you think I really could?" cried Edna, delightedly.

"I am quite sure of it; if you are willing to give up some of your playtime, you can help me a great deal by cutting out the paper for my cornucopias, and perhaps you could do some of the pasting yourself."

This was surely a pleasant prospect, and the little girl was much pleased at it. She was a warm-hearted child, and a generous one, too. So she not only helped to make the pretty things, but brought all her pennies to her aunt to spend in materials.

"I will tell you what we can do with the pennies," said Aunt Elizabeth. "We will buy a lot of little dolls, and you can help dress them. I will have a great big shoe at my table, in which we can have the old woman who had 'so many children she didn't know what to do.'"

"Where will you get the old woman?" asked Edna, her face beaming.

Louis was standing by. "O, Aunt Elizabeth!" he said, becoming interested in the plan, "let me give the money for the old woman." So it was settled, and Edna gave up every spare moment to helping. All her thoughts were upon the fair, and she thought nothing more beautiful than the pretty things which Aunt Elizabeth's deft fingers turned out. There were little mugs and boats and pitchers, all made of pasteboard and fancy papers; these were to be filled with candy, and made a fine show as they stood on a table ready to be sent away.

One afternoon Aunt Elizabeth wanted some ribbon in a hurry. "I am going to send you downtown, Edna," she said. "You are big enough to find your way alone. Hurry back, for I want the ribbon as soon as I can get it."

"Can't Louis go with me?"

"No; he has to study one of his lessons, which he missed this morning. It is high time you were learning to be more self-reliant. I will tell you just how and where to go."

Edna's heart fluttered at this undertaking. She had never been downtown alone, and she was much afraid that she could not find the way, but she decided to do the best she could, especially as she knew her aunt would consider any objection in the light of disobedience.

It was all very easy to get in the car, pay her fare, and ask the conductor to let her out at such a street; so she managed very easily to reach the shop and get the ribbon; but to take the car home she was obliged to cross the street, and here came trouble, for there were horses dashing up and down, trolley cars coming this way and that, and, altogether, it was a very confusing point. Therefore Edna stood a long time on the curb before she dared to venture across, but finally she summoned up courage when the way seemed tolerably clear, and she managed to reach the opposite side; but looking back at a trolley car which seemed close at hand she hurried faster than her stout little legs could be relied upon to take her, and down she went in the mud of the gutter. She picked herself up in an agony of shame, lest she should be laughed at, and ran on as fast as she could up the street, but, unfortunately, in the wrong direction; for when she stood still and looked about her there were no blue cars to be seen, and it all looked strange.

She felt in her pocket for her parcel; it was safe, but her car fare was gone, and she stood a pitiful, mud-besmeared little object. Then the big tears began to come as she walked along very fast. "O dear, I'm lost!" she said to herself, "and I'll have to walk home, and Aunt Elizabeth is in a hurry, and she'll scold me! O dear! O dear! I want my own home, I do, I do." She began then to run along very fast again, to hide her tears from passers-by, and presently she came bump up against another little girl who had also been running.

The two children coming to such an abrupt standstill stared at each other. Edna saw a poor, ragged, dirty, pale-faced child with wild locks; and the little girl saw Edna with the tears still coursing down her cheeks, her pretty coat and frock stained with mud, and her hat knocked very much to one side.

It was the ragged girl who smiled first.

"I 'most knocked ye down, didn't I?" she said. "Where was ye going so fast?"

"I am going home," replied Edna, "only I don't know how to get there."

"Yer lucky."

Edna stared. "I think I'm very unlucky. What makes you say that?"

"Yer lucky ter have any home ter go ter. I ain't. Yer live somewhere, if ye don't know where it is, an' I don't live nowhere, if I know where that is."

Edna smiled at this. "Why," she said, "where are your father and mother?"

"I ain't got none. Mis' Ryan she bound me out to Mis' Hawkins, an' I ain't goin' to stay there, I ain't. She starves me an' beats me;" and the child's voice shrilled out again, "I ain't goin' ter stay, I ain't."

"And haven't you any grandparents, or aunts or uncles?"

The child shook her head.

"Nor great-aunts? I think maybe you have a great-aunt like my Aunt Elizabeth," continued Edna.

But another shake of the head was the reply.

"And you haven't any friends. O, do say you haven't any friends," urged Edna, a pleased look coming into her face. "If you just say you haven't any friends I'll know just what to do."

"There's Moggins," said the child.

"Who is Moggins?" Edna asked, her face falling.

"My cat. Mis' Hawkins won't let me let him indoors; but he knows me an' comes when I call him."

"O, well," replied Edna, "of course a cat is a friend, but I don't believe he'll count. Anyhow, we'll take him, too."

"Where?" asked the girl, in astonishment.

"Why, to the Home of the Friendless, of course; aren't you friendless, and you haven't any home. It's just the place made for you;" and Edna smiled, well pleased. "Can you get Moggins? Is he far away?"

"Down there," and the child jerked her head in the direction of a narrow court near by.

"I'll wait here for you," said Edna, decidedly. "Tell me your name and I'll tell you mine. I'm Edna Conway."

"I'm Maggie Horn. You wait for me;" and Maggie darted away, leaving Edna on the corner.

All thoughts of the ribbon, car fare, and all else faded away before this great new interest. The saving from homelessness and friendlessness this little street child whom Edna had met in such an unexpected way seemed to her more important than anything else in the world, and she eagerly waited Maggie's return.

She did not have to wait long, for very soon Maggie came running back with a forlorn, miserable, half-starved kitten cuddled up in her arms.

"Here he is!" she cried, exultantly. "I ketched him; he was a-settin' in the sun. Let's hurry, so Mis' Hawkins won't git me." Edna patted Mogg's head, the little cat looking at her with scared eyes until he was reassured by Maggie's coaxing voice.

"Ye see," said Maggie, "he's kinder skeert o' most folks, 'cause they've tret him so bad. The way I come to git him was when Annie Flynn an' Han Murphy had him a-swingin' him round by one paw and then flingin' him off ter see if he'd light on his feet; one of his legs has been queer ever since. I give 'em my supper fur lettin' me have him, but I have a time ter keep the boys from gittin' him. Come, let's go to the place. Where is it?"

Edna came to a halt, looking doubtfully up and down the street. "I don't just know," she said, "but I'll know it when I see it, for there's a sign over the door with 'Home for Friendless Children' on it."

"Ho!" exclaimed Maggie, "we might walk all day in this big place, and then not get there."

"If I hadn't lost the ten cents I had for car fare we might ride and tell the conductor to let us off when we got there," said Edna, naïvely.

Maggie laughed. She was sharper than Edna. "How'd ye know which car to take?"

"That's so," was the reply; "we'll have to ask a policeman."

"No! no!" cried Maggie. "I'm skeered o' the perlice."

"Then we'll go to that drug store and ask," concluded Edna, wisely; and with childlike confidence she turned to the shop in question.

"The 'Home of the Friendless,'" said the clerk, with a smile, as he looked at the queer little pair. "Let me see, I can soon tell you;" and he turned over the pages of a big book on the counter. "It is on Pearl Street, No. 342."

"Is it a long way?" asked Edna.

"It's pretty long to walk. You'd better ride."

"O no, we can't; we'll walk. I can, can't you, Maggie?"

"Sure," replied Maggie, forcibly, if not elegantly.

Thanking the clerk who gave them some further instructions the little girls started out on their journey.

"We must go up this street to Market, and out Market to Pearl," said Edna; and they trotted along chatting as if the proceeding were not an unusual one.

It was a long, tiresome walk, but the place was reached at last; and Edna, standing on tiptoe, rang the bell, which was answered by one of the little inmates of the house.

Edna smiled as she recognized one of the children she had seen when she visited the place with her aunt. "O, how do you do?" she said; "I have brought Maggie to live here with you." And she stepped into the hall, followed by Maggie, who still held the scraggy little kitten hugged close.

The child who opened the door stared. "I'll go call Miss Barnes," she said. The sweet-faced teacher looked a little curiously at the visitors, but Edna was confident of a welcome. "I've brought Maggie," she informed the lady, with a bright smile. "She hasn't any home, nor any friend but Moggins, and Moggins hasn't any friends but her. So, you know, that's why they both had to come."

"But, my dear," interrupted Miss Barnes, "we cannot take in little people without knowing something more about them. The case will have to go before the Board of Managers, and then if it is all right we'll be very glad to have this little girl. The Board meets the first Friday in each month."

Edna looked distressedly at Maggie. "O dear," she sighed, "and we've come such a long way, and we're so hungry, at least I am. I expected to be back by dinner time."

Miss Barnes was looking at her more closely.

"Why," she exclaimed, "aren't you the little girl who came with one of our managers not long ago? Aren't you Mrs. Horner's niece?"

"Why, yes," replied Edna. "Didn't you know me? I knew you right away. I'm awfully muddy, 'cause I tumbled down. I lost my car fare, and we've walked and walked."

"You poor little child," said Miss Barnes, "let me go and call the matron, and we'll talk this over."

"Maggie can't go back," decided Edna. "She would be beat to death, and so would Moggins."

After a long consultation with the matron, and innumerable questions, it was arranged that Maggie should remain till Miss Barnes had seen Mrs. Horner. "And Moggins, too," stipulated Edna.

But the matron shook her head. "Then I'll have to take him home with me," said Edna, though in her heart she had many misgivings as to what Aunt Elizabeth would say.

Poor little Maggie stood with quivering lips as she saw her only friends depart; but the good matron set before her a generous bowl of mush and milk and the half-starved child, after receiving the assurance that all possible should be done for her, accepted matters quietly.

It was a very weary little girl whom Miss Barnes held by the hand as the two stopped at the door of the four-story house opposite the square.

"Shure! it's yersel'," cried Ellen, as she answered the bell. "Mrs. Horner's called out a-suddint, me dear, an' phwat'll she say to yer shtayin' so long? Phwat's that ye have?"

"O, it's Moggins; won't you take him and give him some milk? And, O Ellen, I'm so hungry!"

"The pore dear," returned Ellen, taking the kitten tenderly.

"I'll find Uncle Justus," said Edna, as she ushered Miss Barnes into the sitting-room, and, having brought her uncle, she ran to get something to eat from Ellen, for the kind-hearted maid had saved the child's dinner for her.

Having satisfied her appetite, and having heard the front door open and shut, Edna began to be seized with fear; and she stood tremblingly by the door as she heard Uncle Justus approach. But he only asked, "Have you had some dinner, little girl?" Then he laid his hand gently on her head and walked on. Next the front door again opened, and Edna heard Aunt Elizabeth's voice. Should she stay or go? Fear overcame her, and she took to her heels, never resting till she was up in her little room, where with beating heart she sat at the window overlooking the harbor.



## **Chapter IV**

### **MAGGIE'S CASE**

For a long time Edna sat at the window expecting every moment to hear her aunt's heavy tread upon the stair. Finally, from sheer exhaustion, the little dusky head drooped on the sill, and when the last fading sunbeam stole into the room it found the little girl fast asleep.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.