

Fanny Aunt

The Little Nightcap Letters



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NIGHTCAP LETTER No. 2 FROM AUNT FANNY

You little darling:

What *do* you think happened the other day? why, a lady came to see me, bringing with her just about the dearest little Kitty that ever lived. Not a Kitty with whiskers, and four paws, and a fur coat, but a sweet little girl *named* Kitty, with lovely blue eyes, a great many soft brown curls, and the same number of sweet rosy lips that you have. How many is *that*, I should like to know? I had never seen the lady, or the little girl before, and of course I did not know their names until afterwards. So I bowed, and smiled, and looked as pleasant as ever I could.

Then Kitty said in a sweet trembling voice – "*Is* you Aunt Fanny?"

I laughed a little bit, and answered, "Yes, dear."

What happened then? Why in a moment she ran up to me, climbed upon a chair close by, – threw her arms around my neck, and gave me such a precious little smothering hug, and so many sweet kisses, with her soft face pressed with all her might

upon my cheek, that I almost lost my breath, and was perfectly astonished, as well as delighted.

Then the little girl said: "Oh thank you, dear Aunt Fanny, *twenty-ten* times, for my Baby Nightcaps! I love them! I love you! I love you *dreadfully*!" Oh! how glad I was to hear that! I was glad "*twenty-ten*" times. It was sweeter to me, than a whole basket full of sugar candies would be to you – and I kissed her on both her round dimpled cheeks, and sat down, and took her on my lap, and hugged her to my heart, and said – "what a darling! what a dear little thing!"

Then I looked at the lady. She was laughing and blushing, and I was laughing and blushing, and the little girl was laughing and blushing. Don't you think we three were having a very funny kind of time? *I* did.

At last the lady said: "I hope you will excuse me for bringing Kitty to see you; but she begged so hard for 'just one little look at Aunt Fanny,' I could not bear to refuse her. I am afraid she has taken a great deal more than 'one little look.' I hope she has not kissed a piece out of your cheek?"

At this, Kitty looked up in great alarm at my cheek – but seeing that it was not bleeding, and had no hole in it, she patted it softly with her little tender dimpled hand, and said: "Aunt Fanny, Aunt Fanny," in a little speck of a whisper to herself a great many times.

Then I said: "I am *so* glad to know that you were pleased with Baby Nightcaps. Would you like me to ask poor lame Charley's

mother for more?"

With a joyful little scream, she hugged me again, and kissed my cheek — *very softly* this time, for fear of hurting me, and said: "Oh! Aunt Fanny! if you only will, I will give you a whole paper full of *perlasses* candy, and one of my new *handkerchickers*; and when you are old and blind, I will take you in my arms, and carry you up stairs, and put you in my lap *and teach you your letters*, and ask mamma to read the Bible to you – all about Joseph, you know, and his wicked *bredders*; it will make you *ki*."

Wasn't she a cunning little thing? I could not help laughing, to think of such a little mite of a child, talking of taking me in her arms; and then I could not help the tears coming, at her offer to have her own mamma read the Bible to me – was it not sweet? *You* would have done so too, wouldn't you? You see, it must have been Kitty's greatest pleasure, to have God's Holy Bible read to her; so she promised me, what she thought was the very best thing in the whole world. And so it is.

You may be sure, that I told her, I would try to get the stories very soon.

Pretty soon Kitty and her mamma went away; but not before we had given each other one more real good kiss, and I had prayed in my heart that God would bless the precious little child, and guide me with my new book, so that it would help Kitty and you to be good, obedient children, His precious little lambs here upon earth, and His bright, beautiful angels in Heaven.

In the evening I put on my bonnet and shawl, and went to see

lame Charley's mother. As I rang the bell, I heard such a quantity of laughing voices, and so many little feet pattering, I was almost certain, that at least twenty cousins must have come to town to help them have a good time: but when the door was opened, I saw they were all Nightcap Children, rushing down stairs together. They had gone up to wash their faces and hands and brush their hair, and were coming down all laughing and talking at once, so you may be sure it made a great noise.

Bless their little chattering tongues, and pattering feet! You can't expect children to be as grave and solemn as judges – of course not. I, for one, would not give a pin for a child that did not make a noise – that is – a pleasant noise.

So they were jumping and tumbling down, when I entered, and in a moment they were all about me crying. "How-de-do, Aunt Fanny? Come in, come in, mamma is in the parlor, and Charley is sitting in her lap – and the tremendous DOG is asleep on the rug – and we are not to have a Nightcap story to-night – but something grand! splendid!"

"Somesing 'tonishing," chimed in little Minnie – "*tome!kick!*" – by which she meant me to "come quick" – and not to tell me to kick anybody – oh dear, no!

So we all hurried along – and how I got into the room, without stepping upon some of their dear little toes, I am sure I don't know, but nobody seemed to be hurt – and heads and toes came in all safe – and Charley lifted up his sweet pale face for a kiss, and his mother shook hands with me, and then we all sat down,

and the boys said "hush," and the girls said "hush," till it sounded so much like a room brimful of cats sneezing, that I laughed; and that made the children laugh, and then of course they had to jump up and down in their seats, and the girls had to twirl round and make cheeses, and this made the tremendous DOG laugh, which he did by wagging his tail, like a flag in a high wind, and giving two or three short barks, and it was just as good as going to Barnum's Museum, to see such a "happy family." If you had asked *Barnum* about it, he would have said it was ever so much better.

At last I said: "Dear little Charley, I have put the stories told to you, and Minnie, and the rest, into three Nightcap books. They have pleased the children very much. I know this, because I have received a great many letters; such nice letters! telling me how the children laughed and cried, and not one single word in any of them to say that anybody put his mouth out of joint, yawning over the stories. Instead of that, they all want more; and this very day a sweet little girl came to see me to ask for more. She was not like poor Oliver Twist, asking for food for her body. Oh no! she was a plump, merry, rosy-cheeked darling, just like Minnie, and eat just as much good bread and milk as she wanted, and molasses candy, too – for she promised to give me ever so much, if I would only give her another Nightcap book – and what is more and better, she has promised to read the Bible to me, when I am old and blind."

"Did you ever!" shouted the children; "Aunt Fanny, old and

blind! We'll read to you, too, the whole Bible, and all the books in the bookcase beside! When are you going to be? Will you walk with a long black cane like old Granny Van Winkle? Do begin pretty soon, because we want to be kind to you, and read to you, too!"

"Ah – no!" said the sweet voice of lame Charley. "Dear Aunt Fanny, we *don't* want you to be old and blind; you shall have all mamma's pretty stories without it. I am glad the children like them. *I* think them lovely; my back does not hurt me near so much while she is telling them, and when I die, which I think will be very soon now, I hope the children will think of me sometimes, and love my darling mamma, who has given them and me so many pleasant hours. This is my birthday, Aunt Fanny. I am ten years old to-day. Perhaps it is my last birthday. See what my brothers and sisters have given to me."

In the midst of a sad silence, (for the children were now quite still, and were looking at Charley, with their eyes full of love and tears,) I went up to a table, at which he had pointed, and saw what looked like a large tin box. It proved to be a splendid magic lantern! The children had saved all their money for many months to be able to buy it, and the little mother told me, that when they came in a body that morning and gave it to Charley, with their dear love and many kisses, their faces glowing with pleasure, it was the sweetest sight in the world to see, and Charley thought he could never thank or love them enough, and that very morning he made this little prayer, and added it to his others:

"Oh God, I am a poor little suffering child. Very often, I cannot help crying with pain. But many children suffer as much as I do, and have not one of my blessings; and Jesus, my Saviour, suffered far more. He was innocent and good, while we, for whom He suffered, are sometimes very naughty. Please, God, to forgive me for being naughty, and bless and love my dear brothers and sisters who are so kind to me, and please bless my darling mother, and if I die before another year, may we all meet again in heaven, I pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

The tears came into my eyes as I listened to this little prayer – and I bent my face down and kissed Charley's white forehead to hide them – and whispered to him that I would tell it to the children outside in the world, and perhaps this little prayer might be learned by some other sick child – and it would comfort them, and I would also give them the new stories – at which he smiled and said: "Oh, yes, do!" and all the rest said: "Do, Aunt Fanny; and stay to-night – and see the magic lantern – then you can tell them about that, too, you know; they'll be so glad, they won't know what to do."

So I staid; and pretty soon there was a great scampering, and bustling, and climbing up on chairs, to fasten a large sheet over the opening of one of the doors, and then the grandest of the company – which consisted of Charley, the tremendous DOG, and myself – were put, with a great many polite speeches, into the best places in front; and the rest shook, and jumped, and tumbled themselves into seats behind us – and all the lights were put out,

and everybody was in a perfect state of delightful expectation, as they shouted: "Here we are, mamma, with all our eyes staring at the sheet ready for the show."

Then the little mother went into the next room with the magic lantern, and lighted a lamp inside, and placed it close to the sheet. In a moment, a large, bright circle of light appeared on the sheet – and in a moment more, we saw a splendid picture of Daniel in the Lions' Den; the lions with their fierce-looking mouths wide open, and their sharp claws spread out as if they would snap up Daniel the very next instant – upon which the children raised such a shout that I thought my head was coming off – and it was quite fortunate that the picture was changed to one of Moses in the Bulrushes, which delighted the children beyond every thing; but when there came a picture of little Samuel praying – a low murmur of – "Oh! how lovely! what a good little Samuel! how I love him!" sounded softly through the room.

There was one picture of a cross old school ma'am, with a great hook nose, and a long whip, looking so savage at three poor little children that did not seem to know their lessons – that Minnie cried out:

"Oh! see the poor chillens! they don't know their A, B, C. Ah! I so sorry for them!" and then all the children said: "Poor things! why don't they run away – I would! Because she looks so cross! let's scratch a smile on her face with a pin, and *make* her look pleasant."

But the best picture of all was Noah's Ark. First the ark came

on alone – then a plank seemed to be put down – then came the great elephants, lions, tigers, and bears, marching up the plank two and two into the ark – and after them all the rest of the animals in the world, getting smaller and smaller, until little wee monkeys, and kittens, and mice, and robins, and grasshoppers, and blind beetles, and big spiders, and tumble-bugs, ran and hopped, and skipped, and crawled up the plank in such quantities, that it was quite a wonder they were not all suffocated in such a crowd. But didn't the children clap their hands and cry: "Look! look!" when Noah and his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their families, marched gravely past, looking straight before them, and went into the ark, and the ark sailed slowly off! It was perfect! they wished they could have gone into the ark, too, to put apples into the elephant's trunk, and play with the monkeys, and count all the animals – George guessed there must have been at least a thousand – while Annie thought a million went in. How many do you think, you dear little darling?

The magic lantern was a great success, and Minnie said: "the magic *nightcat* was the bestest of all."

After the show was over, I kissed everybody, and went home quite happy in the promise of my new stories – and you may be sure, you dear little poppet, that Kitty, and you, and all the darling children shall have them as fast as the printer can print them. If you like them, just go to Mr. Appleton's, and coax him to tell you where I live; and then run up to my house on your dear little feet, and give one real good kiss to your loving Aunt Fanny.

INTRODUCTION

One evening the little nightcap mother said: "Children, I have had a most charming present. It is a copy of some letters and stories that were written and told to your little friend, Bella Curtis. They are a kind of baby stories, for children like Minnie. Do you think you shall like them? Do *you* Charley?"

Then the children all shouted out "Certainly! Of course! the baby stories are the best! no, not the best, but just as good as the *old* stories – yes, mamma, do read them. Letters! why that is something new – how very nice."

"But I don't want to hear A – B – C," cried little Minnie, who was just learning her letters, and thought it very hard work – "I don't like letters a bit."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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