

Fanny Aunt

Little Mittens for The Little Darlings



Aunt Fanny

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Aunt Fanny

Little Mittens for The Little Darlings /

Being the Second Book of the Series

THE LITTLE KITTENS

Only to think! A letter from Aunt Fanny to the little ones, which begins in this fanny way:

"You Darling Kittens – "

All the small children looked at Mary O'Reilly – who sat staring at the fire, with her whiskers sticking up in the air, and then felt their faces with their little fat hands. They did not find the least scrap of a whisker anywhere on their round cheeks; and Pet said – "But I a little girl; I not a kitty" – at which all the family laughed, and ran to kiss her – and she thought she had been very smart, I can tell you; and clapped her hands and said again – "No! I not a kitty!" and all the rest of the little ones said they were not kittens, and for two minutes there was such fun, everybody mewling like cats, and patting each other softly for play. The little mother said they must all have been to Catalonia; and that might be the reason why Aunt Fanny called them "kittens;" or perhaps it was because *she loved them*.

So she began again:

Darling Kittens —

You must have stories as well as the rest – of course you must. If I should forget to write some for such sweet little monkeys as you, that I know and love so dearly, and some other sweet little monkeys that I don't know, but love very much; why, Mr. Appleton, who has sweet little monkeys of his own, would say to me with a grave face – "Aunt Fanny! I'm surprised at you! What do you mean by such conduct? What has become of that big room in your heart, which you keep brimful of love for babies and little bits of children? Do you want them to sit humdrum on rainy days, when they are tired of playing with dolls, and tops, and kittens, and have no story book for their kind mammas to read to them? This will never do, Aunt Fanny. Please to begin right away!"

Oh! what a dreadful thing it would be, for any one to suppose that I did not love you any more. I could not bear it; so here I am beginning "right away," and the very first thing that comes into my mind is a story about kittens. What do you think of that! you lovely little red, white, and blue darlings! with your pretty red cheeks, pure white skins, and sweet blue eyes! The bright hazel, gray, and black eyes are like the stars; so no wonder we love the "star-spangled banner," when such precious little ones as you wear the very same colors as the dear old flag. Then —

"Hurrah for the children forever,
And three cheers for the red, white, and blue."

And now for the kitten story.

THE LITTLE KITTENS

One cold, bright day in the middle of last winter, a lady came to see me. She brought with her two little girls with the roundest and rosiest faces; even their dear little noses were red as roses for a minute or two, till they got warm, because Mr. Jack Frost had been pinching them all the way from their house to mine. But he couldn't get at their fingers, for they were covered with pretty white mittens, and they had on such warm coats and nice fur tippets, and so many cunning little flannel petticoats about a quarter of a yard long, that they looked as round as dumplings. Their fat legs were

all packed up in woollen leggings; and they had little brown button-over boots – with, would you believe it? heels! Just to think of it! heels! and they didn't tumble down either. Well, I gave them – guess how many kisses, apiece? and then their mamma and I sat down to talk. It was very *old* kind of talk: all about "contrabands" (that's a *very* hard word, isn't it?) and about the best way to make noodle soup, and so on. The children did not care a fig about that kind of talk; so they walked off to a corner, and began to play with some funny things they found. One was an old man all made of black wadding, and another was a very fat old woman made of white wadding. The old woman hadn't the least speck of a foot to stand on; her body was just a great round roll of wadding, without legs; I never saw a real, live old woman without legs, did you? But this one must have come from no one knows where. You see, she and the black wadding man were left by Santa Claus one Christmas night, who drove off in his sleigh in such a hurry that he forgot even to leave a card with their names; and that's just the long and the short of it, or the black and the white of it.

Pretty soon Sarah, my daughter, came into the room. "Oh you dear, dear, little things!" she cried, "I am so glad to see you!"

"Then tell me a story," said Mary, the elder.

"Would you like to hear about the three little kittens that lost their mittens?"

"O yes, yes!" they both exclaimed.

Then Sarah took dear little Charlotte upon her lap, and Mary stood close to her knee, pressing lovingly against her; her large dark eyes were fastened on Sarah's face, for she did not mean to lose a single word of the delightful story; and Sarah began:

"Three little kittens
Lost their mittens;
And they began to cry:
'Oh mother dear,
We very much fear,
That we have lost our mittens.'"

"Oh, what bad kittens! I shame for them!" said Charlotte.

"Their mamma was 'shame' too," continued Sarah, "for she gave them a dab with her paw on their ears, and said in a severe voice:

"'Lost your mittens?
Oh, you naughty kittens!
Now you shan't have any pie!'"

and then she gave them each such a good whipping that the tears ran down on the ground, and made it very damp.

"But the three little kittens,
Found their mittens,
And they began to cry,
'Oh, mother dear,
Only see here,
See! just look! we have found our mittens.'"

"Oh! I so *grad*," said little Charlotte, and she clapped her hands; and then gazing at her own pretty white mittens, held them up, and cried: "Look! *I've* got mittens! look! look!"

"So you have," said Sarah, kissing her – "and they keep your hands nice and warm, don't they?"

"Did they keep the kittens' hands warm too?" asked little Mary.

"Yes, as warm as toast; and their mother was so glad they were found, that she hugged her three children to her breast, and cried:

"Found your mittens?
Oh, you dear, good little kittens!
Now you shall have some pie.'

"Then she got a large apple pie out of the closet, and cut them a tremendous slice apiece; and the little kittens were so glad that they kept saying, 'purr purr purr,' which meant, 'Thank you, ma'am! Oh, thank you, ma'am! Thank you very much.'

"But, dear me, what a pity! they forgot to take their mittens off; and such a sticky, lot, when they were done eating, you never saw! They were full of bits of apple, and sugar, and crumbs of buttery pie crust. The kittens stared with dismal faces at their mother, and it was plain to see that

"The three little kittens
Had *soiled* their mittens;
And they began to cry:
'Oh, mother dear,
We very much fear,
That we have soiled our mittens.'

"This was really dreadful! The old cat started up, her whiskers curling with rage; she very nearly danced on her hind legs, she was so angry. It wasn't right to get into such a passion; but then you know she was only an old cat, and had not read that pretty verse which begins, 'Let dogs delight to bark and bite;' so she mewed, and snarled, and made her tail up into an arch, and said very crossly:

"You've soiled your mittens?
Oh! you naughty, bad kittens!"

And she whipped them so dreadfully this time, that they cried till the tears made a little puddle on the ground."

"Oh my!" said Charlotte, and her bright black eyes looked very sorry.

"Oh my!" said Mary, exactly like her little sister.

Sarah laughed a little bit, and said, "Oh my!" too. "*Your* dear mamma wouldn't do so, would she?" she asked.

"Oh no!" cried both the children; and then they had to get down, and run to kiss their mother; whose large dark eyes were full of love for her darlings.

"After the poor kittens had wiped their eyes, and blowed their noses, and sighed two or three times, one of them said to the others, "Don't cry any more. Let's get our little pails and fill them with water and borrow a piece of soap from the cook, and wash our mittens."

"Oh yes! you darling sister, to think of such a nice plan!" cried the other two; and they rolled over on their backs, and flourished all their soft paws in the air together, they were so glad.

"So the three little kittens
Washed their mittens,
And hung them up to dry.

"Then they ran to their mother, who was fast asleep on the rug, with her tail curled round her; but they did not mind that – which I think was not quite polite – for when people and cats are taking a nap, everybody must keep *very* quiet, and not go near them or make a noise; but our friends, the kittens, did not think, you see: they just went pounce right on top of their mother, and sang out:

"Oh, mother, dear,
Only see here,
See! open your eye, see! we have *washed* our mittens.'

"The old cat, for a wonder, did not get angry; instead of that, she smiled a sweet smile, rubbed her chin with her paw, and in a musical, mewling tone of delighted surprise, exclaimed:

"Washed your mittens!
Oh you little ducks of kittens!
But s-hh! Listen! I think I hear a rat close by.'

"Purr purr.'

"*Mew!*" said one of the little kittens, who was afraid of the rat.

"Hush up, you naughty little kitten! I hear a rat close by.'

"That's all."

"Oh!" cried Mary, "tell me about the rat, won't you?"

"Well, I believe the old cat ran like lightning after the rat, caught him, and gave her little kittens a paw apiece, and eat all the rest up herself."

"Every bit?" asked Charlotte.

"I don't think she left the least scrap," said Sarah.

"Tell another story," said Mary. "Ah, *do!*"

How we laughed – their mother and I – softly to ourselves, when Mary asked Sarah for more stories; Sarah laughed too, and was just going to begin another, when the mother said it was time to go. So I bid her good-by, and sent my kind regards to Mr. Ewer, the dear little childrens' father – who is a minister, and one of the best men in the whole world; because he is never tired of working for God. Great crowds of people go to hear him preach, and his constant prayer is: that he may bring them all, old and young, to the feet of the Blessed Jesus.

I was very sorry to have those sweet little pets go so soon, because I wanted to talk to them myself; but, *of course*, they must mind their mother; and I never *tease* any one to stay. It is not polite; so I kissed them heartily, and went with them to the front door.

The wind blew sharply in my face, and I said, "You dear little kits! I'm glad you are not made of sugar candy; you would snap all to pieces such a cold day! but here, what is this? where in the world is your mitten?"

There was the darling little Charlotte, standing in the cold, with only one white mitten on.

"Why dear me!" exclaimed her mother, "what *have* you done with it?"

Then the cunning precious pet laughed out merrily, and turning her sweet face up to us, with the funniest little twist of her eye, lisped out:

"I a ittie kitten,
I *loss* my mitten."

We both burst out laughing – we could not help it; but her mother, smoothing the smiles almost away, made believe to be the kittens' mother, and cried out:

"Lost your mitten?
Oh you naughty little kitten!
Now you can't have any pie."

So back we all went to the parlor, both the children laughing, as if it was the funniest joke in the whole world; and we looked under the tables, and chairs, and sofas, and piano, and into all the corners. The little darlings, dancing up and down, and singing that they were little kittens, and had lost their mittens, and running all round the room in the greatest glee. But *we* could not find the mitten; and after we had stopped looking, and were feeling very sorry that Mr. Jack Frost would have such a fine chance pinching Charlotte's fingers, what do you think the queer little puss did? Why, she just crept behind the door, which was opened way back nearly to the wall, and in a minute, out she came again, with the lost mitten. The funny little thing had hidden it there on purpose, so as to be like the kittens in the story.

How we did laugh – for you know she was in play, and did not mean to do anything naughty. She skipped up to her mamma, and chirped out:

"See, mamma, dear!
Only look here,
I found my mitten! didn't I?"

And her mother just caught her up in her arms and kissed her, and said:

"Found your mitten?
Oh, you good little kitten!
Now you shall have some pie!"

And off they went, the children perfectly delighted with the comical play of the kittens. I dare say they hid their mittens again as soon as they got home. I know I should, if I had been a funny little girl; wouldn't you? But don't hide the soldiers' mittens – for all the world! They wouldn't like that at all, you know; and if any of them was as cross as the old cat, they might ask General McClellan to give them leave of absence, so that they could come and give you what Paddy gave the drum.

"What was that?"

"Rat-a-tat-tat!
Rat-a-tat-tat!
Rat-a-tat-tat-*too*!"

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

One evening the little mother said: "Here is a sweet little story for the 'darling kittens'; but first Aunt Fanny requested me to ask Clara to repeat the fourth commandment to the little ones, slowly and distinctly."

"Yes, mamma," said Clara, "I will; I know it perfectly. Gentleman and ladies, come stand in a row before me."

So the little tots trotted and skipped up to their sister, – who was quite a great girl in their eyes – and after hopping up and down, first on one foot, then on the other, and puckering up their mouths like little bags, to keep all the laugh in tight, they stood almost still.

Then Clara all at once grew grave; for she was about to repeat something out of the Holy Bible, and although this was a great pleasure to her, she did not dream of even smiling.

She began thus, in a clear, distinct voice:

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The little ones had listened with great attention, and their mother now said:

"My darlings, you know it is wrong to work on Sunday. You see me put all my sewing out of the way on Saturday evenings, and on Sunday I go to church; and when I am home, I either read the Holy Bible or a good book, or talk to you. You are very little children, but if you saw any one sewing or working on Sunday, what would you say to them?"

"Member the Sabbath day," chimed the little ones.

"That's right! and you too must never forget to 'keep it holy.' This little story is about keeping the *fourth commandment*; and now I will read it:

"Once upon a time, a pretty little girl was riding in a stage coach, along a country road, with her aunt. She had been making this aunt a visit, and was now coming home to her kind mother. It was a pretty long ride, over hill and dale; but Tillie, for that was the little girl's name, was delighted at first, and laughed every time the stones in the road made the stage give a jump, and a bump, and a rumble, and a tumble.

"But pretty soon she began to get tired, and wanted to jump and tumble herself. She could not run about in a stage coach – of course not – there was no room; and Tillie's little feet began to kick, because they could not get any play.

"At last her aunt said, 'Sit still, dear: look at the ducks, and pigs, and geese all along the road; and see those patient oxen in the field, how they turn one way when the farmer says "Gee," and the other when he says "Haw."'

"Tillie looked for a moment, and then said, 'Oh, I *so* tired.' Just then she spied a large black and white blanket shawl lying on her aunt's lap. She took it, and with great efforts managed to roll it up, and fasten the roll with two large pins she found in it, which had shiny black heads. Then she made believe that the shawl was a baby; and very soon every one in the stage was laughing at her funny talk.

"'Oh, my dear baby,' she said, 'I 'fraid the light hurts your little eyes; please, auntie, lend me your veil.'

"Her aunt smiled, and gave Tillie her brown barege veil; and the little girl spread it tenderly over the top of the shawl, saying, 'There, my baby, don't cry any more.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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