

Leslie Madeline

Little Frankie on a Journey



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CHAPTER I. FRANKIE'S BIRTHDAY

"Frankie," said mamma one evening, just as he was going to bed, "to-morrow you will be six years old; how should you like to have a party of your young friends?"

"I should like it very much indeed," replied the boy, his eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"You have been trying to improve lately, my dear, and have almost conquered your hasty temper. Your father and I have been so much pleased with your conduct that we wish to reward you; so if you would like to have a party, I shall invite as many of your young friends as you please."

"O, what a kind mamma!" exclaimed Frankie, clasping his arms around his mother's neck. "I mean to try to be just as good as I can."

The little boy then knelt by his low bed, and said his evening prayer. Perhaps you would like to hear it.

"O God! thou art very good. Thou hast given me a kind father and mother, and food to eat, clothes to wear, and many other favors. Wilt thou forgive all my sins, and make me a good boy, so that when I die, I can go to heaven to live with thee, for my dear Saviour's sake. Amen."

This little prayer Frankie had learned when he was four years old, and he had repeated it every night since that time. Beside this he said the pretty verse beginning and then added a short prayer of his own, asking God to bless papa and mamma, Willie, Nelly, and Margie; to keep the house from being burned while they were asleep; and to make the heathen good, for Jesus Christ's sake.

"Now I lay me down to sleep,"

When Frankie was nearly five years old, a large house in the neighborhood had been burned to the ground. He was aroused from his sleep by the loud ringing of the bells, and the cry of fire, and sat for a long time gazing from his mother's window at the bright, red flame. Ever since that time he had always prayed God to keep the house from being burned while they were asleep.

In the morning, Frankie said the Lord's prayer, and this pretty little hymn, which perhaps you will like to learn: —

"Fled away are the shadows of night;
The morning is smiling and clear;
The sun has arisen all bright,
And the birds fly aloft in the air.

"The sweet robins sing on the tree,
The little lambs skip on the hill,
And loud hum the bees as they work,
Their houses with honey to fill.

"'Tis time for the children to wake:
Come, little ones, open your eyes;
And your thanks and your praises return

To the Being who governs the skies.

"He has guarded you, all the long night,
From sickness, and danger, and pain,
And brought you, in safety and peace,
To a beautiful morning again.

"Whatever your parents command,
Be ready and willing to do;
For that, my dear child, is the way
To be happy, and prosperous too.

"But if (as is sometimes the case)
You should happen to do a thing wrong,
Just own it, and let not a lie,
In any case, come from your tongue.

"For the child who is gentle and kind,
And obliges as far as he can,
May be sure to be loved while a boy,
And respected when grown to a man."

The next morning, when Frankie went down to breakfast, Willie sprang out from behind the door, and gave him six loud kisses. Then he took from his pocket a beautiful new humming top, and said, "Here is your birthday present."

Frankie had hardly time to say, "O, how pretty! I thank you very much," when Nelly came in smiling, and looking very happy, with something hidden behind her.

"Let me give you some birthday kisses," she said, reaching forward and putting up her pretty red lips – one, two, three, four, five, six. "Now guess what I've got for you;" and she began to laugh merrily.

Frankie looked very grave, because he was trying to guess. He would have said a new hoop, only he thought if it was that, he should see it sticking out from behind her dress.

"You can't tell, I know," shouted Nelly. "Will you give up?"

"Yes," said Frankie.

"There!" exclaimed the little girl, with a quick motion bringing from behind her a large tin tip cart, with two red oxen waiting to draw it along. "Isn't it pretty? I bought it with my own spending money, and I've been saving it for your birthday ever so long."

"O, I do thank you!" exclaimed the delighted boy; and he kissed his cousin more than six times, and then began to roll the cart on the floor.

"Come to breakfast now," said mamma; "and then you shall play with your new toys."

After the children had been to prayers with their parents, they ran up to the play room. Sally was turning the mattress in her mistress's room; but as soon as she heard their voices, she presented little Frankie a small handkerchief with two pretty pictures printed upon it. One was of two little girls taking a walk, and meeting a poor, lame beggar man; the other of a good boy standing at the door; calling his sister to take a ride. Perhaps, some time, I will repeat to you the pretty hymns which were printed underneath; but now it is time for me to close this chapter.

CHAPTER II. FRANKIE'S PARTY

Perhaps you will wonder whether papa and mamma gave Frankie a present. Yes, they did; but he did not see it until the evening when his little friends came to his party. Jane, too, and even little Margie, remembered it was his birthday, and had a present ready for him.

Jane, with the consent of her mistress, had made a large frosted cake for his company; and Margie gave him a beautiful white kitten, with not one black hair on it.

As it was a holiday, there were no lessons to be learned. Mamma took a walk to the store; and she allowed Nelly and Frankie to go with her and carry the basket in which she intended to bring back the nuts for the party.

But first she showed them a small basket full of notes which she had written, inviting the little boys and girls to come and pass the evening with Frankie, and help him to keep his birthday. Willie and Margie were to carry them, as there was no school.

Ponto was very lively that morning. He seemed to understand that his young master was unusually happy; and he kept jumping up on him, wagging his tail, and trying to lick his hands and face. Willie had taught him to carry a basket in his teeth; and as soon as they started on their walk he began to whine, and put his nose into the basket until they gave it to him. Then he trotted along quite contentedly after them.

It was a very hot day, and after dinner mamma tried to persuade the little folks to lie down and get a nap, so as to be bright and fresh for the evening. Nelly at last lay down on the lounge in her aunt's bed room; and then Frankie brought his pillow, and lay on the floor by her. They were so happy, they wanted to talk about the party.

Mamma was lying on the lounge, too. She was very tired after her long walk in the morning, and wanted to go to sleep. But the children's tongues ran so fast, that she could not. She laughed, at last, at the very idea of sleeping there, and took her pillow into Nelly's room, where it was dark and cool; and presently had forgotten all her fatigue.

About seven o'clock the little folks began to arrive. In August, you know, the days are very long, so that it was still light, and as the sun was down, it was the pleasantest part of the day.

Mr. and Mrs. Gray sat on the large iron chairs belonging to the portico, and shook hands with the little girls and boys coming up the avenue; then joining the company on the lawn, where Willie and two of the larger girls were planning some games for them.

After they had enjoyed themselves in this way for an hour, Mrs. Gray called Margie from the lawn, and told her to invite the children to come in. Then she introduced them into the parlor, where on the table they saw a large pile of cards, nearly half a yard in length, with beautiful pictures on them, representing animals and birds; some of them as large as life.

These, which came in a long box, with a brass handle on the top, were Frankie's birthday present from papa and mamma.

At first the little fellow was so surprised, that he could not speak a word; but then he ran, first to his mother and then to his father, put his arms around their necks, and thanked them over and over again.

His father went to the table and distributed the cards round among the excited, happy group, and for half an hour there was one continued shout of delight in examining them.

"O, see this great elephant!" said one little boy; "he is winding his nose around that baby, and is going to kill him."

"No, indeed!" said mamma, "that baby is the child of his keeper, the man who takes care of him, and feeds him. See, the soldiers are coming up, and the good elephant is afraid they will hurt

his little charge; so he takes it very gently in his trunk, or proboscis and puts it over behind him into a safer place."

"I like that elephant," said Frankie; "but I shouldn't think the baby's mamma would leave him to take care of it. I should think she herself would keep it in her arms."

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