

Leslie Madeline

The Pearl of Love: or, Josey's Gift



Madeline Leslie

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CHAPTER I. JOSEY'S RIDE

"Please mamma, may I go to ride with you?" asked little red-cheeked Josey Codman.

Mamma was tying on baby's silk hood, and did not answer for a minute.

"I would let him go," urged Aunt Fanny. "He can sit between us; and he wont be a bit of trouble."

Josey clapped his hands.

"I'm going, mamma, isn't I?"

"Can Nurse get him ready quick enough?"

"Yes, indeed! Run, Josey, for your new hat. Nurse bring his sack from the hall. It's fortunate I curled his hair before dinner. It's all dry now; come, pet, stand still while I baste in a clean ruffle."

Baby Emma didn't like so many wrappings around her neck, and began to throw back her head in an alarming manner. Mamma gave her to Nurse to carry about, while she put on her bonnet. Then the carriage drove to the door. Papa had to be called from his study. Nurse scrabbled on her hat and shawl, and at last they were all seated in the back, and the driver cracked his whip, calling out to his horses, —

"Go on!"

"Why!" said papa, "I didn't know Josey was going."

"But I am. Isn't I, mamma?" cried the boy, his eyes dancing.

"I should think so," answered mamma, laughing. "I don't know as it was best, we shall be out late."

"Oh, we'll manage somehow," said Aunt Fanny, "Josey is such a good boy!"

"Nurse," began mamma, "you must be careful what Josey eats for supper; only bread and butter, with a cup of milk."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And if he grows sleepy before service is through, take off his jacket and let him go to sleep. You will be in Mrs. Reed's nursery."

"Yes, ma'am, where we were before."

"Baby's asleep, so soon," said Aunt Fanny, watching the infant's head nodding over Nurse's shoulder. "Lay her down. She'll sleep all the way, and be as good as a kitten."

"Don't let her soil her new cloak, Nurse," said mamma. "Fanny, the cloak looks beautifully handsomer than I thought it would."

"I always liked that color," answered Aunt Fanny, "it's real bird of paradise. Untie baby's hood; now Nurse, she'll sleep easy."

Mamma and aunty were on the back seat, with Josey tucked in between them; papa and Nurse, opposite. Papa turned from one to another as they spoke; but he did not listen to a word that was said. There was to be a great meeting in the Tabernacle Church that evening, and he was to preach. As they rode along, his mind was fixed on what he was going to say.

Mr. and Mrs. Codman did not always live near the great city where they were now going. Their home was more than a thousand miles away; but they had come here to reside for a year or two, and had rented a pretty cottage nearly ten miles from town.

On three sides of the cottage, there was a piazza, with pillars all covered with woodbine and honeysuckle. In the barn at the end of the garden, was a horse which the clergymen used for his daily ride to the Post Office. When they went to town, they always hired a hack from the stable.

Mr. Codman was a very learned man, as well as a faithful, devout minister. Everybody loved him, for he loved everybody, but especially little children. If he were riding through the village, he always liked to watch the boys at their play, or the little girls trundling their hoops. Whenever there was a cry of distress he was off from his horse in a minute, ready to assist the child who had fallen, or to relieve any one of their troubles.

The children of course loved him. Many a time in the early spring, as he came out of his gate in the morning, he would find a group of them standing there to say "good morning!" or to offer him a bunch of violets.

Sometimes papa took Josey on the saddle before him; and then how the children would shout with glee, and press up to speak a word to the pretty boy.

Mr. Codman was not the minister of the village, though he sometimes preached for the clergyman; but he always improved every opportunity to tell those around him of the love of God, who sent his only Son into the world to save sinners.

CHAPTER II. THE TWO NURSES

At seven o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Codman and Fanny started for church. Dr. and Mrs. Reed went, too; and another clergyman with his wife, by the name of Matthews. Mrs. Matthews had been invited to tea, and had brought her baby, a little girl, nearly the same age as Mrs. Codman's.

Soon after they were gone, Ann perceived that Josey was sleepy, and easily persuaded him to lie down on the bed. Then the two nurses, having had their supper, began to chat, while they tended the babies.

"Look now!" said Ann, dancing Miss Emma on her lap, "the two of them look as much alike as a pair of kittens."

"Except," answered Martin, "that your Miss has black eyes; and mine, blue."

"That's true for ye, but then their mouths are the same, and sure enough I thought before, that no baby could equal ours for a small mouth."

In the mean time Emma and Rose cooed and coquetted with each other in the very best of spirits, until a late hour, when they both went quietly to sleep.

"Feth and a pretty sight they're making," suggested Ann, pointing with some pride to the bed; the two little ones lying side by side, and Master Josey across the foot, with his rosy cheek resting on his hand.

"It looks for all the world like a baby asylum," was Martin's laughing reply.

"I wonder what Mr. Codman is preaching about," she added; "I would like to be within sound of his voice, it's a treat to hear him."

"I heard Miss Fanny saying to her sister that the text was to be from Ephesians 4:32. 'Be ye kind one to another.' You know it's before the 'Young Men's Society,' he's preaching to-night."

"And fine words they are to put before any society. I'll ask Mistress to tell me about it to-morrow. Sure, I've read in some good book, that kindness to every one would just turn this wicked world into a heaven, like where the angels live."

"I believe it would," replied Ann, "for if everybody loved, sure there'd be no stealing, nor lying, nor any such wickedness. And then, why, there would be no prisons, nor jails. Indeed, Martin, I think it must be the finest text in the whole Bible."

"Because," added Martin, in an approving tone, "the greatest kindness of all was, when the Lord of glory himself loved us poor sinners so well that he couldn't bear to see us ruined forever, and so he gave himself to die on the cross in our stead."

"Would we have had to die there, if he hadn't?" asked Ann, with a look of awe.

"Not just there, maybe; but we would have had no hope of being happy, because there was God with a sword over our heads; and he couldn't take it away, till somebody, equal to the whole world of people, suffered the penalty in our stead."

"I see it now, I've heard Master explain, that Jesus being the Son of God, his blood was more precious than the blood of all the human race; and if all the sins of all the people were washed in it, there still would be enough to save millions on millions more."

"Well," murmured Martin, after a pause, "we can't be kind enough to people after such an example as the Lord has set us."

The great clock on a neighboring church struck nine.

"They'll soon be home now," she added, springing to her feet, "I'll just bring my baby's cloak and hood from the closet, and have them ready."

"It's a fine night for a ride," said Ann, bringing Josey's coat and cap, and laying them on a chair. "Baby slept all the way into town, and I expect she'll sleep going home."

"You have to go nearly twice as far as we do. It's scarce six miles to Easton Parsonage; but then Mr. Matthews is a very careful driver; Mistress would like to ride faster than he drives; I wish we were going the same way!"

Every moment footsteps were listened for; but not till half-past nine did a carriage drive to the door. Then Aunt Fanny and Mrs. Reed ran up in a great hurry.

"Come, Ann," said Miss Fanny, hurriedly, "we're late and must be off in a minute. You put on your sack, and I'll dress Josey. Mrs. Reed has offered to put on baby's cloak and hood; and, Martin, you had better get on your bonnet, for the other carriage, with Mrs. Matthews and Mrs. Codman in it, will be here directly."

The two nurses ran to the back room, where they had taken off their outer garments, and in less than five minutes, Miss Fanny appeared with Josey asleep on her shoulder, and Nurse behind her with baby Emma, closely wrapped in her cloak and hood.

Mr. Codman cut short his wife's "good byes," by saying, —

"It will be midnight, wife, before we reach home;" so, with hasty adieux, they jumped into the carriage and drove off.

Mr. and Mrs. Matthews followed directly, turning down the opposite street, Martin screening her baby's face from the night air by a thin veil.

It was a bright, beautiful evening, but rather cool. Mr. Codman held Josey close to his breast; and his wife, with a warning to Ann to keep Emma well covered, began to talk earnestly about the sermon.

CHAPTER III.

THE WRONG BABY

In this way they rode on for four miles. "Almost half way," Fanny observed, as they passed the five corners; "I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Matthews are home by this time."

Just then, Josey awoke with a start and cry of alarm, which roused his sister, and made her open her eyes. Fanny, who sat opposite, pulled back her hood to quiet her, when, with a shriek, mamma cried out, —

"We've got the wrong baby! Oh, Nurse, you made a mistake! This is Mrs. Matthews' Rose. Husband, stop the driver, quick!"

"Are you sure?" asked papa, who had been taking a short nap.

"Sure? Can't I tell my own baby? Emma has black eyes; and, look for yourself, is this my baby's dress?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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