

Fanny Aunt

# Baby Nightcaps



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*Baby Nightcaps:*

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# **Frances Elizabeth Barrow**

## **Baby Nightcaps**

**Dedication**

**THESE BABY NIGHTCAPS ARE FOR**

**YOU!**

**YOU DEAR LITTLE DARLING!**

# A NIGHTCAP LETTER FROM AUNT FANNY

*You dear little darling:*

A long time ago, that is, long for such a little speck of a child as you, just before last Christmas, I wrote a story book called "Nightcaps." I called it this funny name, because poor little lame Charley to whom all the stories were told, called them his "nightcaps," as he and his sisters and brothers had to go to bed, the moment a story was finished for the evening.

Did you read them? I am afraid they were *too old* for you, you dear little kitten!

But since last Christmas, I have heard some of the funniest little bits of stories! funny enough to make all the dimples in your round face come out, or rather come *in*, and cause you to look perfectly lovely: for the happy laughing face of a little child, is the loveliest sight in the world; and if *I* should see those dimples, do you know what I would do? why I would just catch you up in my arms, and give you a good kissing.

Then I have heard other little stories, that are sad; because you know in this world we cannot always have perfect happiness: things will sometimes happen to grieve even a tender little child; but although your sweet lip may tremble as mine does when I am writing, or listening to a sad story, you will not love me less, I

hope, because I have told the truth; for remember, every thing is true in this little book, and all the dear little boys and girls are living at this very moment. What would you say if you knew some of them? Wouldn't it be funny if you should exclaim, while your mamma was reading:

"Why, mamma, *I* know Lily; why that's the very Lily that lives next door: " or, "Oh, mamma! stop! look here! that very Willy goes to my school, he's got a kite as big as any thing! and he said he would let me fly it, as soon as kite time came. *Won't* he stare, when I tell him he's in a book? I wish Aunt Fanny knew *me*."

You precious pet! Just ask Mr. Appleton to tell you where I live, then come with a hop, skip, and jump to my house, and you and I will have a nice little talk, and after that, take care! you will find yourself in my next "Nightcap book." Won't that be funny?

I have a little daughter, named Alice; once upon a time she gave away all the clothes she had on to a poor little shivering child, without any clothes, only old rags. You see, Alice felt so sorry for her; she had plenty of clothes in her drawer, but she did not think of those, she just took off all she had on. She is a dear "little Alice," and I call her by a great many pet names; sometimes she is "my rosebud," sometimes I say, "Come here, Mrs. Frizzlefits." When she is sick, it is always "darling," and when she is well and hopping about, it is "you precious little old toad." But they all mean the same thing. She likes to be my "old toad" just as much as my "rosebud," for she knows perfectly well, that they all mean love.

One day, when I felt as if I could not find a word to express how much I loved her, I came out with, "Come and kiss me, you dear little *donkey*!" How she laughed! and how I laughed! You may be sure she told her papa the moment he came home, that now she was a dear little donkey, as well as a precious old toad. Does your mamma ever call you funny names? I hope so.

I will tell you how I came to hear these stories. Lame Charley has a sister, that last year was about as large as a pretty large doll. I suppose you know how large I mean. She pattered about on her cunning little feet all day long; she only sat down long enough to eat her bread and milk; and so when the sun went to bed, and the chickens went to bed, and the little birds said chip! chip! to each other, meaning "good night," Minnie (that was her name) would begin to poke her fingers in her blue eyes, and say, "Pease mamma *cake* Minnie: Minnie *so* tired." Then her mamma would lift her tenderly into her lap and say, "Poor little kitten! *so* tired:" and she would unfasten her clothes quickly, and slip on her little night-dress, and then she would kiss her four or five times to waken her, and say, "Come, darling, kneel in mamma's lap and say your little prayer." Then Minnie would smile and tumble about in a funny way, till she got on her knees, and then she would fold her hands and say, "God bess my dear mamma and papa, my bedders and sisters, and poor lame Charley, my dear bedder; God bess me, and make me a good little chile, for Jesus' sake, Amen."

What a sweet little prayer that was! After the prayer her

mamma would kiss her again, and lay her gently in her pretty crib; and before you could count one! two! three! Minnie was fast asleep.

But one evening lame Charley had crept sooner than usual into his mamma's lap, and was resting his head against her kind breast, and all his brothers and sisters had come out of the corners and closets, and from under the tables and chairs, and were chuckling and laughing, and saying, "Hush! take seats everybody! mamma is going to tell us something real nice to-night," when little Minnie, (who I forgot to tell you, always went to bed before the story began; because she was such a little bit of a thing, and did not know how to sit still and listen,) little Minnie, all of a sudden trotted up to her mamma, and taking hold of Charley's leg, began pulling it and crying, "Get down bedder, get down 'ight away; let me tome, I want a night*cat* too, 'cause I's old now."

"Why, Minnie!" said her mamma, "don't pull poor Charley; if you are so old you can sit in Charley's arm-chair, and let him stay here; can't you?"

The honor of sitting in Charley's arm-chair was something to be proud of; so Minnie climbed into it, and turned round, with a little sideways tumble into the seat, her eyes sparkling with delight; then, when she had twitched herself straight, and had settled her feet and elbows quite to her mind, her mamma made this little speech:

"Dear Charley, and all my children, I meant to have told you a

story to-night, about a lady who went to teach in a ragged school. This is a school where poor little children are washed and fed and taught; who have scarcely any clothes to wear; sometimes no shoes or stockings; and are so very, very poor and dirty, that they cannot go to any other school. Minnie is so young, she will not understand it all. Now, shall I tell a *baby story* instead?"

"Oh, yes! yes! yes!" shouted all the good brothers and sisters, "let Minnie have a nightcap, or a 'nightcat' as she calls it; dear little darling! isn't she a darling, mamma?"

"And what do you say, my Charley?"

He lifted his curling head, and put up his sweet pale lips for a kiss, and said: "Dear mamma, I love Minnie dearly; I love all my brothers and sisters more than I can tell; I think a little baby story will be *lovely*."

Then what happened? I only wish you had been there to see all the children rush up to Charley, when he stopped speaking. Such a kissing, and laughing, and tumbling over each other! I should think Minnie was called a "darling," about fifty times; and Charley a "darling," about a hundred; because he was sick and lame, you know, and *of course* ought to be loved about twice as much as anybody else, to make up for it; and their mamma was hugged till her daycap was all pulled over one eye, with the lace border resting on the end of her nose, which made her look so funny, that the children laughed till some of them tumbled down again; so what with the daycaps, nightcaps and madcaps of children, it was quite a capital party. It took a long time for them

to settle down again; a great many little short laughs had to be got rid of, and the dimples would hardly go away.

But at last they all sat quiet, and the baby story began. It was so interesting, that you might almost have thought the children had forgotten to breathe, or wink their eyes, they were so still.

When it was ended, Minnie kissed her mamma, and said: "I very much 'bliged; I love you five dollars, and Charley five dollars," and then she bade them all good night, and went skipping and singing to bed, her dear little face all smiles and dimples.

After this, one of these little stories was told every evening; then, if there was time, after Minnie pattered off to bed, her mother would tell another to the older children; but all the little nightcaps I have put in this book, by themselves, on purpose for you, you sweet little thing! If you cannot read, and I am almost sure you are too young, you must ask your mamma, or some one that loves you, *very politely*, (*don't forget that,*) to read them to you; because these nightcaps are for the inside of your cunning little head.

And now, just here, on the paper is a kiss from your loving

*Aunt Fanny.*

# THE STORY TOLD TO MINNIE

I know a little boy, named Johnny. He is a fat, rosy little fellow, as round as a dumpling. He has two large black eyes, two small pink ears, two sweet red lips, and only one little white nose.

"Oh, what a pity!" said Minnie.

How the children did laugh, when they heard little Minnie sigh, and say this; but their mamma kindly continued. Put your hand up to your face, Minnie, or look in the glass, and you will find that Johnny had just as many noses as you.

"I'm so glad," said Minnie, with a merry little laugh: "tell more mamma."

I suppose you use your two bright eyes, to look at every thing with. So did Johnny.

When he was quite a little baby, his eyes sometimes got him into trouble; if he saw a pin, or a button, or little bit of thread on the carpet, he would creep up to it as well as he could, pick it up with a good deal of trouble, because his fingers were so fat, and he did not know very well how to use them; and pop! it would go right into his mouth.

You see, he had been here in this world such a very little while, that he thought every thing in the world was made to eat. Sometimes he would try to eat his own toes; and once he got the end of his nurse's nose in his mouth, and gave it a good nip with his two little white teeth; and was very angry, and cried very

loud, because she pulled it away. He was only a baby you know. Such a dear little fellow.

Johnny liked, of all things, to be put in his little bath-tub, half full of water. The moment he saw the bath-tub, he would begin to jump and crow and laugh, and when he was undressed, and lifted up to be put in, his little feet would kick in the air, as if he meant to jump over the moon! When he was in the water, Oh! then was the time for fun! such a splashing and dashing and thrashing as the water got! Such a noise! you could hear him squealing with delight all over the house, and very often every body in the house would come up to look at him; even the cross old cook. She was never cross to Johnny; she would come in the room, and opening her eyes would exclaim: "My Sirs! if Johnny don't look just like the gold Koopid, straddling over the top of the looking glass in the parlor." He did look like a little fat Cupid. Any picture of a little fat Cupid will show you how Johnny looked when he was a baby.

When Johnny was almost a year old, his mamma and papa took him to church to be christened. Do you know what that means? It means that they would promise before all the people in church, and what is a great deal more solemn, before God, our Father in Heaven, to do their best to make little Johnny a good child, to teach him to love, fear, and serve Him all the days of his life. They would give their dear child to God.

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