

Molesworth Mrs.

The Adventures of Herr Baby



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Mrs. Molesworth

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CHAPTER I.

FOUR YEARS OLD

"I was four yesterday; when I'm quite old
I'll have a cricket-ball made of pure gold;
I'll never stand up to show that I'm grown;
I'll go at liberty upstairs or down."

He trotted upstairs. Perhaps trotting is not quite the right word, but I can't find a better. It wasn't at all like a horse or pony trotting, for he went one foot at a time, right foot first, and when right foot was safely landed on a step, up came left foot and the rest of Baby himself after right foot. It took a good while, but Baby didn't mind. He used to think a good deal while he was going up and down stairs, and it was not his way to be often in a hurry. There was one thing he could *not* bear, and that was any one trying to carry him upstairs. Oh, that did vex him! His face used to get quite red, right up to the roots of his curly hair, and down to the edge of the big collar of his sailor suit, for he had been put into sailor suits last Christmas, and, if the person who

was lifting him up didn't let go all at once, Baby would begin to wriggle. He was really clever at wriggling; even if you knew his way it was not easy to hold him, and with any one that didn't know his way he could get off in half a minute.

But this time there was no one about, and Baby stumped on – yes *that* is a better word – Baby stumped on, or up, "wifout nobody teasing." His face was grave, very grave, for inside the little house of which his two blue eyes were the windows, a great deal of work was going on. He was busy wondering about, and trying to understand, some of the strange news he had heard downstairs in the drawing-room.

"Over the sea," he said to himself. "Him would like to see the sea. Auntie said over the sea in a boat, a werry big boat. Him wonders how big."

And his mind went back to the biggest boat he had ever seen, which was in the toy-shop at Brookton, when he had gone with his mother to be fitted for new boots. But even that wouldn't be big enough. Mother, and auntie, and grandfather, and Celia, and Fritz, and Denny, and cook, and Lisa, and Thomas and Jones, and the other servants, and the horses, and – and – Baby stopped to take breath inside, for though he had not been speaking aloud he felt quite choked with all the names coming so fast. "And pussy, and the calanies, and the Bully, and Fritz's dormice, oh no, them *couldn't* all get in." Perhaps if Baby doubled up his legs underneath he might squeeze himself in, but that would be no good, he couldn't go sailing, sailing all over the sea by himself,

like the old woman in "Harry's Nursery Songs," who went sailing, sailing, up in a basket, "seventy times as high as the moon." Oh no, even that boat wouldn't be big enough. They must have one as big as – and Baby stopped to look round. But just then a shout from inside the nursery made him wake up, for he had got to the last little stair before the top landing, and again right foot and half Baby, followed by left foot and the other half Baby, stumped on their way.

They pulled up – right foot and left foot, with Baby's solemn face top of all – at the nursery door. It was shut. Now one of the things Baby liked to do for himself was to open doors, and now and then he could manage it very well. But, alas, the nursery lock was too high up for him to get a good hold of it. He pulled, and pushed, and got quite red, all for no use. Worse than that, the pushing and pulling were heard inside. Some one came forward and opened the door, nearly knocking poor Baby over.

"Ach, Herr Baby, mine child, why you not say when you come?" Lisa cried out. Lisa was Baby's nurse. Her face was rosy and round, and she looked very kind. She would have liked to pick him up to make sure he had got no knocks, but she knew too well that would not do. So all she could do was to say again —

"Mine child – ach, Herr Baby!"

Baby did not take any notice.

"Zeally," he said coolly, "ganfather must do somesing to zem locks. Zem is all most dedful 'tiff."

Lisa smiled to herself. She was used to Baby's ways.

"Herr Baby shall grow tall some day," she said. "Zen him can open doors."

Lisa's talking was nearly as funny as Baby's, and, indeed, I rather think that hers had made his all the funnier. But, any way, they understood each other. He was thinking over what she had said, when a scream from the nursery made them both turn round in a hurry.

"O Lisa, O Baby, come in quick, do. Peepy-Snoozle has got out of the cage, and he'll be out at the door in another moment. Quick, quick, come in and shut the door."

Lisa and Baby did not wait to be twice told. Inside the nursery there was a great flurry. Celia, Fritz, and Denny were all there crawling over the floor and screaming at each other.

"*I* have him! there – oh, now that's too bad. Fritz, you frightened him away again," called out Celia.

"*Me* frighten him away! Why he knows me ever so much better than you girls," said Fritz.

"He just doesn't then," said Denny with triumph, "for here he is safe in my apron."

But she had hardly said the words when she gave a little scream. "He's off again, oh quick, Baby, quick, catch him."

How Baby did it, I can't tell. His hands seemed too small to catch anything, even a dormouse. But catch the truant he did, and very proud Baby looked when he held up his two little fists, which he had made into a "mouse-trap" *really*, for the occasion, with Peepy-Snoozle's "coxy" little head and bright beady eyes

poking out at the top.

"Oh look, look, Baby's made Peepy-Snoozle into 'the parson in the pulpit that couldn't say his prayers,'" cried Denny, dancing about.

"All the same, he'd better go back into his cage," said Fritz, who had a right to be heard, as he was the master and owner of the dormice. "Come along, Baby, poke him in."

Baby was busy kissing and petting Peepy-Snoozle by this time, for, though he did not approve of much of that sort of thing for himself, he was very fond of petting little animals, who were not little boys. And to tell the truth, it was not often he got a chance of petting his big brother's dormice. It was quite pretty to see the way he kissed Peepy-Snoozle's soft brown head, especially his nose, stroking it gently against his own smooth cheeks and chattering to the little creature.

"Dear little darling. Sweet little denkle darling," he said. "Him would like to have a house all full of Peepy-'noozles, zem is so sweet and soft."

"Wouldn't you like a coat made of their skins?" said Denny. "Think how soft that would be."

"No, sairtin him wouldn't," said Baby. "Him wouldn't pull off all their sweet little skins and hairs to make him a coat. Denny's a c'uel girl."

"There won't be much more skin or hairs left if you go on scrubbing him up and down with your sharp little nose like that," said Fritz.

Baby drew back his face in a fright.

"Put him in the cage then," he said, and with Fritz's help this was safely done. Then Baby stood silent, slowly rubbing his own nose up and down, and looking very grave.

"Him's nose *isn't* sharp," he said at last, turning upon Denny. "Sharp means knives and scidders."

All the children burst out laughing. Of course they understood things better than Baby, for even Denny, the youngest next to him, was nine, that is twice his age, which by the by was a puzzle to Denny herself, for Celia had teased her one day by saying that according to that when Baby was eighty Denny would be a hundred and sixty, and nobody ever lived to be so old, so how could it be.

But Denny, though she didn't *always* understand everything herself, was very quick at taking up other people if they didn't.

"Oh, you stupid little goose," she said. "Of course, Fritz didn't mean as sharp as a knife. There's different kinds of sharps – there's different kinds of everything."

Baby looked at her gravely. He had his own way of defending himself.

"Werry well. If him's a goose him won't talk to you, and him won't tell you somesing *werry* funny and dedful bootiful that him heard in the 'groind room."

All eyes were turned on Baby.

"Oh, do tell us, Baby darling, *do* tell us," said Celia and Denny. Fritz gave Baby a friendly pat on the back.

"You'll tell *me*, old fellow, won't you?" he said. Baby looked at him.

"Yes," he said at last; "him will tell you, 'cos you let him have Peepy-'noozle, and 'cos you doesn't call him a goose – like *girls* does. I'll whister in your ear, Fritz, if you'll bend down."

But Celia thought this was too bad.

"I didn't call you a goose, Baby," she said. "I think you might tell me too."

"And I'll promise never to call you a goose again if you'll tell *me*," said Denny.

Baby had a great soul. It was beneath him to take a mean revenge, he felt, especially on a *girl*! So he shut his little mouth tightly, knit his little brows, and thought it over for a moment or two. Then his face cleared.

"Him *will* tell you all – all you children," he said at last, "but it's werry long and dedful wonderful, and you mustn't inrumpt him. P'omise?"

"Promise," shouted the three.

"Well then, litsen. We's all goin' away – zeally away – over the sea – dedful far. As far as the sky, p'raps."

"In a balloon?" said Denny, whose tongue wouldn't keep still even though she was very much interested in the news.

"No, in a boat," replied Baby, forgetting to notice that this was an "inrumption," "in a werry 'normous boat. All's going. Him was looking for 'tamps in mother's basket of teared letters under the little table, and mother and ganfather and auntie didn't know him

were there, and ganfather said to mother somesing him couldn't understand – somesing about *thit* house, and mother said, yes, 'twould be a werry good thing to go away 'fore the cold weather comed, and the children would be p'eased. And auntie said she would like to tell the children, but – "

Another "inrumption." This time from Fritz.

"Baby, stop a minute," he exclaimed. "Celia, Denny – Baby's too little to understand, but," and here Fritz's round chubby face got very red, "don't you think we've no right to let him tell, if it's something mother means to tell us herself? She didn't know Baby was there – he said so."

But before Celia or Denny could answer, Baby turned upon Fritz.

"Him *tolded* you not to inrumpt," he said, with supreme contempt. "If you would litsen you would see. Mother *did* know him was there at the ending, for auntie said she'd like to tell the children – that's you, and Denny and Celia – but him comed out from the little table and said *him* would like to tell the children hissself. And mother were dedful surprised, and so was ganfather and auntie. And then they all bursted out laughing and told him lots of things – about going in the railway, and in a 'normous boat to that other country, where there's cows to pull the carts, and all the people talk lubbish-talk, like Lisa when she's cross. And zen, and zen, him comed upstairs to tell you."

Baby looked round triumphantly. Celia and Fritz and Denny looked first at him and then at each other. This was wonderful

news – almost too wonderful to be true.

"We must be going to Italy or somewhere like that," said Celia. "How lovely! I wonder why they didn't tell us before?"

"Italy," repeated Denny, "that's the country like a boot, isn't it? I do hope there won't be any snakes. I'd rather far stay at home than go where there's snakes."

"I wouldn't," said Fritz, grandly. "I'd like to go to India or Africa, or any of those places where there's lots of lions and tigers and snakes, and anything you like. Give me a good revolver and *you'd see.*"

"Don't talk nonsense, Fritz," said Celia. "You're far too little a boy for shooting and guns and all that. It's setting a bad example to Baby to talk that boasting way, and it's very silly too."

"Indeed, miss. Much obliged to you, miss," said Fritz. "I'd only just like to know, miss, who it was came to my room the other night and was sure she heard robbers, and begged Fritz to peep behind the swing-door in the long passage. And 'oh,' said this person, 'I do so wish you had a gun that you could point at them to frighten them away.' Fritz wasn't such a very little boy just then."

Celia's face got rather red, and she looked as if she was going to get angry, but at that moment, happily, Lisa appeared with the tray for the nursery tea. She had left the room when the dormouse was caught, so she had not heard the wonderful news, and it had all to be told over again. She smiled and seemed pleased, but not as surprised as the children expected.

"Why, aren't you surprised, Lisa?" said the children. "Did you know before? Why didn't you tell us?"

Lisa shook her head and looked very wise.

"What country are we going to? Can you tell us that?" said Celia.

"Is it to your country? Is it to what you call Dutchland?" said Fritz. "I think it's an awfully queer thing that countries can't be called by the same names everywhere. It makes geography ever so much harder. We've got to call the people that live in Holland Dutch, and they call themselves – oh, I don't know what they call themselves – "

"Hollanders," said Lisa.

"Hollanders!" repeated Fritz. "Well, that's a sensible sort of name for people that live in Holland. But *we've* got to call them Dutch; and then, to make it more muddled still, Lisa calls her country Dutchland, and the people Dutch, and *we* call them German I think it's very stupid. If I was to make geography I wouldn't do it that way."

"What's jography?" said Baby.

"Knowing all about all the countries and all the places in the world," said Denny.

"Him wants to learn that," said Baby.

"Oh, you're *far* too little!" said Denny. "*I* only began it last year. Oh, you're ever so much too little!"

"Him's not too little to go in the 'normous boat to *see* all zem countlies," said Baby, valiantly. "Him *will* learn jography."

"That's right, Baby," said Fritz. "Stick up for yourself. You'll be a great deal bigger than Denny some day."

Denny was getting ready an answer when Lisa, who knew pretty well the signs of war between Fritz and Denny, called to all the children to come to tea; and as both Fritz and Denny were great hands at bread and butter, they forgot to quarrel, and began pulling their chairs in to the table, and in a few minutes all four were busy at work.

What a pretty sight, and what a pleasant thing a nursery tea is! when the children, that is to say, are sweet-faced and smiling, with clean pinafores, and clean hands, and gentle voices; not leaning over the table, knocking over cups, and snatching rudely at the "butteriest" pieces of bread and butter, and making digs at the sugar when nurse is not looking. *That* kind of nursery tea is not to my mind, and not at all the kind to which I am always delighted to receive an invitation, written in very round, very black letters, on very small sheets of paper. The nursery teas in Baby's nursery were not always *quite* what I like to see them, for Celia, Fritz, and Denny, and Baby too, had their tiresome days as well as their pleasant ones, and though they meant to be good to each other, they did not *always* do just what they meant, or really wished, at the bottom of their hearts. But to-day all the little storms were forgotten in the great news, and all the faces looked bright and eager, though just at first not much was said, for when children are hungry of course they can't chatter quite so fast, and all the four tongues were silent till at least one cup of

tea, and perhaps three or four slices of bread and butter each – just as a beginning, you know – had disappeared.

Then said Celia, —

"Lisa, do tell us if you know what sort of a place we're going to."

"Cows pulls carts there," observed Baby; "and – and – what was the 'nother thing? We'll have frogses for dinner."

"Baby!" said the others, "*what nonsense!*"

"Tisn't nonsense. Ganfather said Thomas and Dones wouldn't go 'cos they was fightened of frogses for dinner. *Him* doesn't care – frogses tastes werry good."

"How do you know? You've never tasted them," said Fritz.

"Ganfather said zem was werry good."

"Grandfather was joking," said Celia. "I've often heard him laugh at people that way. It's just nonsense – Thomas and Jones don't know any better. Do they eat frogs in your country, Lisa?"

"In mine country, Fräulein Célie?" said Lisa, looking rather vexed. "No indeed. Man eats goot, most goot tings, in mine country. Say, Herr Baby – Herr Baby knows what goot tings Lisa would give him in her country."

"Yes," said Baby, "such good tings. Tocolate and cakes – lots – and bootiful soup, all sweet, not like salty soup. Him would like werry much to go to Lisa's countly."

"Do cows pull carts in your country, Lisa?" asked Denny.

"Some parts. Not where mine family lives," said Lisa. "No, Fräulein Denny, it's not to mine country we're going. Mine

country is it colt, so colt; and your lady mamma and your lady auntie they want to go where it is warm, so warm, and sun all winter."

"I should like that too," said Celia, "I hate winter."

"That's 'cos you're a girl," said Fritz; "you crumple yourself up by the fire and sit shivering – no wonder you're cold. You should come out skating like Denny, and then you'd get warm."

"Denny's a girl too. You said it was because I was a girl," said Celia.

"Well, she's not as silly as some girls, any way," said Fritz, rather "put down."

Baby was sitting silent. He had made an end of two cups of tea and five pieces of bread and butter.

He was not, therefore, *quite* so hungry as he had been at the beginning, but still he was a long way off having made what was called in the nursery a "good tea." Something was on his mind. He sat with one arm propped on the table, and his round head leaning on his hand, while the other held the piece of bread and butter – butter downwards, of course – which had been on its way to his mouth when his brown study had come over him.

"Herr Baby," said Lisa, "eat, mine child."

Baby took no notice.

"What has he then?" said Lisa, who was very easily frightened about her dear Herr Baby. "Can he be ill? He eats not."

"Ill," said Celia. "No fear, Lisa. He's had ever so much bread and butter. Don't you want any more, Baby? What are you

thinking about? We're going to have honey on our last pieces to-night, aren't we, Lisa? For a treat, you know, because of the news of going away."

Celia wanted the honey because she was very fond of it; but besides that, she thought it would wake Baby out of his brown study to hear about it, for he was very fond of it too.

He did catch the word, for he turned his blue eyes gravely on Celia.

"Honey's werry good," he said, "but him's not at his last piece yet. Him doesn't sink he'll *ever* be at his last piece to-night; him's had to stop eating for he's so dedful busy in him's head."

"Poor little man, have you got a pain in your head?" said his sister, kindly. "Is that what you mean?"

"No, no," said Baby, softly shaking his head, "no pain. It's only busy sinking."

"What about?" said all the children.

Baby sat straight up.

"Children," he said, "him zeally can't eat, sinking of what a dedful packing there'll be. All of everysing. Him zeally sinks it would be best to begin to-night."

At this moment the door opened. It was mother. She often came up to the nursery at tea-time, and

"When the children had been good;
That is, be it understood,
Good at meal times, good at play,"

I need hardly say, they were very, very pleased to see her. Indeed there were times even when they were glad to see her face at the door when they *hadn't* been very good, for somehow she had a way of putting things right again, and making them feel both how wrong and how *silly* it is to be cross and quarrelsome, that nobody else had. And she would just help the kind words out without seeming to do so, and take away that sore, horrid feeling that one *can't* be good, even though one is longing so to be happy and friendly again.

But this evening there had been nothing worse than a little squabbling; the children all greeted mother merrily, only Baby still looked rather solemn.

CHAPTER II.

INSIDE A TRUNK

"For girls are as silly as spoons, dears,
And boys are as jolly as bricks.

* * * * *

Oh Mammy, *you* tell us a story! —
They won't hear a word that *I* say."

"Mother, mother!" they all cried with one voice, and the three big ones jumped up and ran to her, all pulling her at once.

"Mother, mother, do sit down in the rocking-chair and look comfortable," said Fritz.

"There's still some tea. You'll have a cup of *our* tea, won't you, mother?" said Celia.

"And some bread and honey," said Denny.

"It won't spoil your afternoon tea; don't say it will," said all together, for nothing would ever make them believe that when mother came up to the nursery at tea-time it could be allowed that she should not have a share of whatever there was.

"Such a good thing we had honey to-night," said Celia, who was busy cutting a very dainty piece of bread and butter. "We

persuaded Lisa to give it us *extra*, you know, mother, because of the news. And, oh, mother, what do you think Baby says? he — "

"Baby! what is the matter with him?" interrupted mother.

They all turned to look at him. Poor Baby, he had set to work to get down from his chair to run to mother with the others, but the chair was high and Baby was short, and Lisa, who had gone to the cupboard for a fresh cup and saucer for "madame," as she called the children's mother, had not noticed the trouble Herr Baby had got himself into. One little leg and a part of his body were stuck fast in the open space between the bars at the back, his head had somehow got under the arm of the chair, and could not be got out again without help. And Baby was far too proud to call out for help as long as there was a chance of his doing without it. But he really was in a very uncomfortable state, and it was a wonder that the chair, which was a light wicker one, had not toppled over with the queer way in which he was hanging. They got him out at last; his face was very red, and I *think* the tears had been very near coming, but he choked them down, and looking up gravely he said to his mother, —

"Him's chair is getting too small. Him hasn't room to turn."

"Is it really?" said his mother, quite gravely too. She saw that Celia and Fritz were ready to burst out laughing at poor Baby, and she didn't want them to do so, for Baby had really been very brave, and now when he was trying hard not to cry it would have been too bad to laugh at him. "Is it really?" she said. "I must see about it, and if it is too small we must get you another."

"Him doesn't want you to pack up *that* chair," said Baby again, giving himself a sort of shake, as if to make sure that his head, and his legs, and all the rest of him, were in their proper places after being so turned about and twisted by his struggles in the chair.

"He's quite in a fuss about packing," said Celia; "that's what I was going to tell you, mother. He stopped in the middle of his tea to think about it, and he said he thought we'd better begin to-night."

"Yes," said Baby. "There's such *lots* to pack. All our toys, and the labbits, and the mouses, and the horses, and the fireplaces, and the tables, and the cups, and the saucers," his eyes wandering round the room as he went on with his list. "Him thinks we'll need *lots* of boats to go in."

"And two or three railway trains all to ourselves," said mother.

Baby looked up at her gravely. He could not make out if mother was in fun or earnest. His little puzzled face made mother draw him to her and give him a kiss.

"It's a shame to talk nonsense to such a serious little man," she said. "Don't trouble yourself about the packing, Baby dear. Don't you know grandfather, and auntie, and I have had lots of packings to do in our lives? Why, we had to pack up *two* houses when we came away from India, and that was much much farther away than where we're going now! And you were *such* a tiny baby then – it was very much harder, for mother was very very sad, and she never thought you would grow to be a big strong boy like

what you are now."

"Was that when – " began thoughtless Denny, but Fritz gave her a tug.

"You *know* it makes mother unhappy to talk about that time," he whispered; but mother heard him.

"No, Fritz," she said; "I don't mind Denny thinking about it. I am so glad to have all of you, dears, happy and good, that my sorrow is not so bad as it was. And I am so glad you and Celia can remember your father. Poor Baby —*he* can't remember him," she said, softly stroking Baby's face.

"'Cos he went to Heaven when him was so little," said Baby. Then he put his arms round mother's neck. "Him and Fritz will soon grow big, and be werry good to mother," he said. "And ganfather and auntie are werry good to mother, isn't they?" he added.

"Yes indeed," said mother; "and to all of you too. What would we do without grandfather and auntie?"

"Some poor little boys and girls has no mothers and ganfathers, and no stockings and shoes, and no *nothings*," said Baby solemnly.

"There's *some* things I shouldn't mind not having," said Fritz; "I shouldn't mind having no lessons."

"O Fritz," said his sisters; "what a lazy boy you are!"

"No, I'm just *not* lazy. I'm awfully fond of doing *everything*— I don't even mind if it's a hard thing, so long as it isn't anything in books," said Fritz, sturdily. "Some people's made one way, and

some's made another, and I'm made the way of not liking books."

"I wonder what Baby will say to books," said mother, smiling.

"Is jography in books," said Baby. "Him wants to learn jography."

"I think it's awfully stupid," said Denny. "I'm sure you won't like it once you begin. Did *you* like lessons when you were little, mother?"

"Yes, I'm sure mother did," said Fritz. "People's fathers and mothers were always far gooder than their children are. I've noticed that. If ever big people tell you about when they were little, it's always about how good they were. And they say always, 'Dear me, how happy children should be nowadays; *we* were never allowed to do so and so when *we* were little.' That's the way old Mrs. Nesbitt always talks, isn't it mother? I wonder if it's true. If people keep getting naughtier than their fathers and mothers were, the world will get *very* naughty some day. *Is* it true?"

"I think it's true that children get to be more spoilt," said Denny in a low voice. "Just look how Baby's clambering all over mother! O Baby, you nearly knocked over mother's cup! *I* never was allowed to do like that when *I* was a little girl."

Everybody burst out laughing – even mother – but Denny had the good quality of not minding being laughed at.

"Was the tea nice, and the bread and butter and honey?" she said eagerly, as mother rose to put the empty cup in a place of safety.

"Very nice, thank you," said mother. "But I must go, dears.

I have a good many things to talk about with grandfather and auntie."

"Packing?" said Baby.

"How you do go on about packing!" said Denny. "Of course mother's not going to pack to-night."

Baby's face fell.

"Him does so want to begin packing," he said dolefully. "Apose we forgottened somesing, and we was over the sea!"

"Well, I must talk about it all, and write down all we have to take," said mother. "So I must go to auntie now."

"Oh, not yet, not yet. Just five minutes more!" cried the children. "And, mother," said Celia, "you've not answered my question. *Is* it true that children used to be so much better long ago? Were you never naughty?"

"Sometimes," said mother, smiling.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Celia. "Often, mother? I do hope you were often naughty. Do tell us a story about something naughty you did when you were little. You know it would be a good lesson for us. It would show us how awfully good one may learn to be, for, you know, you're awfully good now."

"Yes, of course you are," said Fritz and Denny.

"Mother's *dedfully* good," said Baby, poking up his face from her knee where he had again perched himself, to kiss her. "Do tell him one story of when you was a little girl, mother."

Mother's face seemed for a minute rather puzzled. Then it suddenly cleared up.

"I will tell you a very little story," she said; "it really is a very little story, but it is as long as I have time for just now, and it may amuse you. Baby's packing put it in my head."

"Is it about when you were a little girl, mother?" interrupted Denny.

"Yes. Well, when I was a little girl, I had no mother."

The elder children nodded their heads. But Baby, to whom it was a new idea, shook his sadly.

"Zat was a gate pity," he said. "Poor mother to have no mother. Had you no shoes and stockings, and nothing nice to eat?"

"You sill – " began Denny, but mother stopped her.

"Oh yes," she said, "I had shoes and stockings, and everything I wanted, for I had a very kind father. You know how kind grandfather is? And I had a kind sister whom you know too. But when I was a little girl, my sister was not herself *very* big, and she had a great deal to do *for* a not very big girl, you know. There were our brothers, for we had several, and though they were generally away at school there seemed always something to do for them – letters to write to them, if there was nothing else – and then, in the holidays, there were all their new shirts, and stockings, and things to get to take back to school. Helen seemed always busy. She had been at school too, before your grandfather came back from India, for five years, bringing me with him, quite a wee little girl of four. And Helen was so happy to be with us again, that she begged not to go back to school, and, as she was really very well on for her age, grandfather let her stay at home."

"There, you see," whispered Celia, nudging Fritz. "It's beginning – it always does – you hear how awfully good auntie was."

Mother went on quietly. If she heard what Celia said she took no notice. "Grandfather let her stay at home and have lessons there. She had a great many lessons to learn for her age besides those that one learns out of books. She had to learn to be very active, and very thoughtful, and, above all, very patient. For the little sister she had to take care of was, I am afraid, a very spoilt little girl when she first came home. Grandfather had spoiled her without meaning it; he was so sorry for her because she had no mother, and Helen was so sorry for her too, that it was rather difficult for her not to spoil her as well."

Here Baby himself "inrumped."

"Him doesn't understand," he said. "Who *were* that little girl? Him wants a story about mother when *her* was a little girl;" and the corners of his mouth went down, and his eyes grew dewy-looking, in a very sad way.

"Poor Baby," said mother. "I'll try and tell it more plainly. *I* was that little girl, and auntie was my sister Helen. I must get on with my little story. I was forgetting that Baby would not quite understand. Well, one day to my great delight, Helen told me that grandfather was going to take her and me and the two brothers, who were then at home, to spend Christmas with one of our aunts in London. This aunt had children too, and though I had never seen them Helen told me they were very nice, for she

knew them well, as she used to go there for her holidays before we came home. She told me most about a little girl called Lilly, who was just about my age. I had never had a little friend of my own age, and I was always talking and thinking about how nice it would be, and I was quite vexed with Helen because she would not begin to pack up at once. I was always teasing her to know what trunks we should take, and if all my dolls might go, and I am sure poor Helen often wished she had not told me anything about it till the very day before. I got in the way of going up to the big attic where the trunks were kept, and of looking at them and wondering which would go, and wishing Helen would let me have one all for myself and my dolls and their things. There was one trunk which took my fancy more than all the others. It was an old-fashioned trunk, but it must have been a very good one, for it shut with a sort of spring, and inside it had several divisions, some with little lids of their own, and I used to think how nice it would be for me, I could put all my dolls in so beautifully, and each would have a kind of house for itself. I don't remember how I managed to get it open, perhaps it had been a little open when I first began my visits to the attic, for the lid was very heavy, and I was neither big nor strong for my age. But it *was* open, and it stayed so, for no one else ever went up to the attic but I. The other people in the house were too busy, and no one would have thought there was anything amusing in looking at empty trunks in a row. But I went up to the attic day after day. I climbed up the narrow staircase as soon as I had had my breakfast, and stayed

there till I heard my nurse calling me to get ready to go out, or to come to my lessons, for I was beginning to learn to read, and I used to have a little lesson every day. And at last one day I said to my sister,

"Helen, may I have the big trunk with the little cupboards in it for *my* trunk?"

"Helen was busy at the time, and I don't think she heard exactly what I said. She answered me hurriedly that she would see about it afterwards. But I went on teasing.

"May I begin putting Marietta and Lady Regina into the little cupboards inside?" I said.

"Oh yes, I daresay you can if you like," said Helen. She told me afterwards that when I spoke of cupboards she never thought I meant a trunk, she thought I was speaking of some of the nursery cupboards.

"It was just bed-time then, too late for me to go to the attic, for I knew there was no chance of my getting leave to go up there with a candle. But I fell asleep with my head full of how nicely I could put the dolls into the trunk, each with her clothes beside her, and the very first thing the next morning I got them all together and I mounted up to the attic. I had never told nurse about my going up there. Once or twice, perhaps, she had seen me coming down the stair, but very likely she had thought I had only been a little way up to look out of a window there was there. I don't know why I didn't tell her, perhaps I was afraid of her stopping my going. I waited till she was busy about her work,

fetching coals and so on, and then I trotted off with Lady Regina under one arm and Marietta under the other, and a bundle of their clothes tied up in my pinafore before, to make my way upstairs to the delightful trunk. It was open as usual, and after putting my dolls and bundles down on the floor, I managed to lift out the two top trays. One of them was much larger than the other, and it was in what I called the cupboards below the smaller one that I settled to put Regina and Marietta. There were two of these little cupboards, and each had a lid. They would just do beautifully. Under the larger tray there was just one big space without a lid, 'just a hole,' I called it. I went on for a little time, laying in some of the clothes first to make a nice soft place for the dolls to lie on, but I soon got tired. It was so very far to reach over, for the outside edges of the box were high, higher of course than the *inside* divisions, for the trays I had taken out, which lay on the top of the lower spaces, were a good depth, and there had been no division between them. It came into my head that it would be much easier if I were to get into the box myself – I could stand in the big hole, as I called it, and reach over to the little divisions where I wanted to put the dolls, and it would be far less tiring than trying to reach over from the outside. So I clambered in – it was not very difficult – and when I found myself really inside the trunk I was so pleased that I sat down cross-legged, like a little Turk, to take a rest before going on with what I called my packing. But sitting still for long was not in my way – I soon jumped up again, meaning to reach over for Lady Regina, who

was lying on the floor beside the trunk, but, how it happened I cannot tell, I suppose I somehow caught the tapes which fastened the lid; any way down it came! It did not hurt me much, for I had not had time to stretch out my head, and the weight fell mostly on my shoulders, sideways as it were, and before I knew what had happened I found myself doubled up somehow in my hole, with the heavy lid on the top of me, all in the dark, except a little line of light round the edge, for the lid had not shut quite down; the hasp of the lock – as the little sticking-out piece is called – had caught in the fall, and was wedged into a wrong place. So, luckily for me, there was still a space for some air to come in, and a little light, though very little. I was dreadfully frightened at first; then I began to get over my fright a little, and to struggle to get out. Of course my first idea was to try to push up the lid with my head and shoulders; I remember the feeling of it pushing back upon me – the dreadful feeling that I couldn't move it, that I was shut up there and couldn't get out! I was too little to understand all at once that there could be any danger, that I might perhaps be suffocated – that means choked, Baby – for want of air; or that I might really be hurt by being so cramped and doubled up. And really there was not much danger; if I had been older I should have been more frightened than there was really any reason to be. But I was big enough to begin very quickly to get very angry and impatient. I had never in all my life been forced to do anything I disliked; often and often my nurse, and sometimes Helen, had begged me to try to sit still for a minute or two, but I never would. And now

the lesson of having to give in to something much worse than sitting still in my nice little chair by the nursery fire, or standing still for two minutes while a new frock was tried on, had to be learnt! There was no getting rid of it; I kicked and I pushed, it was no use; the strong heavy lid which had been to India and back two or three times would not move the least bit. I tried to poke out my fingers through the little space that was left, but I could not find the lock, and it was a good thing I did not, for if I had touched the hasp, most likely the lid would have fallen quite into its place, crushing my poor little fingers, and shutting me in without any air at all. At last I thought of another plan. I set to work screaming.

"Nurse, nurse, Nelly, oh Nelly,' I cried, and at last I shouted, 'Papa, *Papa*, Papa,' at the top of my voice. But it was no use! Most children would have begun screaming at the very first. But I was not a *frightened* child, and I was very proud. I did not want any one to find me shut up in a box like that, besides, they would be sure to stop my ever coming up to the attic again. So it was not till I had tired myself out with trying to push up the lid that I set to work to screaming, and that made it all the more provoking that my calls brought no one. At last I got so out of patience that I set to work again kicking for no use at all, but just because I was so angry. I kicked and screamed, and at last I burst into tears and *roared*. Then I caught sight, through the chink, of Lady Regina's blue dress, where the doll was lying on the floor near the trunk.

"Nasty Regina,' I shouted, 'nasty, ugly Regina. You are lying

there as if there was nothing the matter, and it was all for you I came up here. I hate dolls – they never do nothing. If you were a little dog you'd go and bark, and then somebody would come and let me out.'

"Then I went on crying and sobbing till I was perfectly tired, and then what do you think I did? Though I was so uncomfortable, all crushed up into a little ball, I went to sleep! I went to sleep as soundly as if I had been in my own little bed, and afterwards I found, from what they told me, that I must have slept quite two hours. When I woke up I could not think where I was. I felt so stiff and sore, and when I tried to stretch myself out I could not, and then I remembered where I was! It seemed quite dark; I wondered if it was night, till I noticed the little chink of light at the edge of the lid, and then I began to cry again, but not so wildly as before. All of a sudden I thought I heard a sound – some one was coming upstairs! and then I heard voices.

"'Fallen out of the window,' one said. 'Oh no, nurse, she *couldn't*! She could never get through.'

"But yet the person seemed to be looking out of the window all the same, for I heard them opening and shutting it. And then I called out again.

"'Oh Nelly, Nelly. I'se here; I'se shut up in the big box with the cupboards.'

"They didn't hear me at first. My little voice must have sounded very faint and squeaky from out of the trunk, besides they were not half-way up the attic-stairs. So I went on crying —

"Oh Nelly, Nelly! I'se up here. Oh Nelly, Nelly!"

"She heard me this time. Dear Nelly! I never have called to her in vain, children, in all my life. And in half a minute she had dashed up the stairs, and, guided by my voice, was kneeling down beside the trunk.

"'Little May, my poor little May,' Nelly called out; and do you know I really think she was crying too! I was – by the time Nelly and the servants who were with her had got the lid unhooked and raised, and had lifted me out – I was in floods of tears. I clung to Nelly, and told her how 'dedful' it had been, and she petted me so that I am afraid I quite forgot it was all my own fault.

"'You might have been there for hours and hours, May,' Nelly said to me, 'if it hadn't been for nurse thinking of the window on the stair. You must never go off by yourself to do things like that,' and when I told her that I had asked her and she had given me leave, she said she had not at all known what I meant, and that I must try to remember not to tease about things once I had been told to wait. Any way I think I had got a good lesson of patience that day, and one that I never forgot, for it really is not at all a pleasant thing to be shut up in a big trunk."

Mother stopped.

Baby, who had been listening with solemn eyes, said slowly,

"Him will not pack by hisself. Him will wait till somebody can help him. It would be so dedful sad if him was to get shuttened up like poor little mother, and perhaps you'd all go away ac'oss the sea and nebber find him."

The corners of his mouth went down at this sorrowful picture, and his eyes looked as if they were beginning to think about crying. But mother and Celia set to work petting and kissing him before the tears had time to come.

"As if we would ever go across the sea without *him*," said mother.

"Why, we should never know how to do *anything* without Herr Baby," said Celia.

"Fritz and Baby will do all the fussy things in travelling – taking the tickets, and counting the luggage, and all that – they're such big men, aren't they?" said Denny, with mischief in her twinkling green eyes.

"Now you, just mind what you're about," said Fritz, gallantly. "You'll make him cry just when mother's been comforting him up. Such stupid girls are!" he added in a lower voice.

"I really must go now," said mother, getting up from her chair. "Auntie will not know what has become of me. I have been up here, why a whole half hour, instead of five minutes!"

"Auntie will think mother's got shut up in a trunk again," said Denny, whose tongue *never* could be still for long, and at this piece of wit they all burst out laughing.

All but Herr Baby. He couldn't see that it was any laughing matter. Mother's story had sunk deep into his mind. Trunks were things to be careful of. Baby saw this clearly.

CHAPTER III.

UP IN THE MORNING EARLY

"Sweet, eager promises bind him to this,
Never to do so again."

He woke early next morning. He had so much to think of, you see. So much that even his dreams were full of all he had heard yesterday.

"Him's been d'eaming him was in the big, big, 'normous boat, and zen him d'eamed of being shuttened up in a t'unck like *poor* little mother," he confided to Denny.

He was forced to tell Denny a good many things, because they slept in the same room, and, of course, everybody knows that *whatever* mammas and nurses say, going-to-sleep-in-bed time is *the* time for talking. Waking-up-in-the-morning time is rather tempting, too, particularly in summer, when the sun comes in at the windows *so* brightly and the birds are *so* lively, chattering away to each other, and all the world is up and about, except "*us*," who *have* to stay in bed till seven o'clock! Ah, it *is* a trial! On the whole, I don't think chattering in the mornings is so much to be found fault with as chattering at night. It is only children who are so silly as to keep themselves awake when the time for going to sleep has come. The birds and the bees, and the little

lambs even, all know when that time has come, and go to sleep without any worry to themselves or other people. But children are not always so sensible. I *could* tell you a story – only I am afraid if she were to read it in this little book it would make her feel so ashamed that I should really be sorry for her, so I will not tell you her name nor where she lives – of a little girl who was promised two pounds, two whole gold pounds – fancy! if for one month she would go quietly to sleep at night when she was put to bed, and let her sister do the same; and she was to lose two shillings every night she forgot or disobeyed. Well, what do you think? at the end of two weeks the two pounds had come down already to nineteen shillings! She had forgotten already ten times, or ten and a half times – I don't quite understand how it had come to nineteen, but so it had; and at the end of the month – no I don't think I will tell you what it had come down to. Only this will show you how much more difficult it is to get out of a bad habit than to get into a good one, for this little girl is very sweet and good in many ways, and I love her dearly —*only* she had got into this bad habit, and it was stronger, as bad habits so often are, than her real true wish to do what her mother told her.

But I have wandered away from Herr Baby, and I am afraid you won't be pleased. He was forced, I was saying, to tell Denny a good many things, because he was most with her. I don't think he would have told her as much but for that, for Denny's head was a very flighty one, and she never cared to think or talk about the same thing for long together, which was not *at all* Herr Baby's

way. *He* liked to think a good deal about everything, and one thing lasted him a good while.

"Him's been d'eaming such a lot," he said to Denny this morning.

"I think dreams are very stupid," said Denny. "What's the good of them? If they made things come *real* they would be some good. Like, you know, if I was to dream somebody gave me something awfully nice, and then when I woke up I was to see the thing on my bed, *then* dreams would be some good."

"But if zou d'eamed somesing dedful, like being shuttened up in a t'unck like *poor* little mother, *zen* it wouldn't be nice for it to come zeal," said Baby, who never forgot to look at things from both sides.

"No, of course it wouldn't. How stupid you are!" said Denny. "And how your head does run on one thing. I'm quite tired of you talking about mother being shut up in the trunk. Do talk of something else."

"Him can't talk of somesing else when him's sinking of one sing," said Baby gravely.

"Well, then don't talk at all," said Denny sharply, "and indeed I think we'd better be quiet, or Lisa will be coming in, and scolding us. It's only half-past six."

Baby did not speak for a minute or two. Then he said solemnly, "When us goes away ac'oss the sea in the 'normous boat, him *hopes* him won't sleep in the same zoom as you any more."

"I'm sure I hope not," said Denny snappishly. There was some

excuse for her this morning, she was really rather sleepy, and it is very tiresome to be wakened up at half-past six, when one is quite inclined to sleep till half-past seven.

But Baby could not go to sleep again. His mind was still running on packing. If he could but have a *little* box of his own to pack his own treasures in, then he would be sure none would be forgotten. He did not want a *big* trunk – not one in which he could be shuttened up like mother, but just a nice little one. If mother would give him one! Stay – where had he seen one, just what he wanted, was it in the nursery or in the cupboard where Fritz kept his garden-tools and his skates, and all the big boy things which Baby too hoped to have of his own some day? No, it was not there. It must have been – yes, it was in the pantry when he went to ask James for a glass of water. Up on a shelf, high up it stood, "a tiny *sweet*

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