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BY

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BY

RALPH HAROLD BRETHERTON

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THE CHILD MIND

CHILDHOOD'S BED

It was an off-hand, parenthetical good-night which ushered in the long exile of bed. For more than an hour she had dreaded its coming, and at length it fell when she least expected it. She had just completed the circuit of admiring relatives, who were seated on the shady side of the lawn, enjoying the evening air, and was convinced, from sundry remarks which had fallen, that no one knew quite how late it was; when she arrived at her mother's knee. Her mother, deep in conversation with her neighbour, a distant cousin, who was a clergyman, and who was to preach at the local church next Sunday, absent-mindedly ran her fingers through the child's hair, and the child felt safe. She felt in need of a little mother-love like this, and

she was having it, she thought, without attracting her mother's attention to the fact that she was up, while the sun was down. Full of contentment, the child allowed the gentle hand to wander over her small head. With her finger she traced a story, which she muttered happily to herself, upon the skirt about her mother's knees. She knew that it was very naughty to be up so late; she felt that she ought to point out how they had forgotten to send her to bed; but it was so very pleasant, and they were to blame, not she. As time passed she grew bold in her security, and emphasised points in the muttered story by playful digs with a healthy knuckle at the thigh of her preoccupied parent. The third of these digs, coming at a most thrilling part of the story and consequently of some strength, brought about the end of her happiness. Her mother suddenly remembered her, and sandwiched between a couple of remarks to the clerical cousin a kiss for her little girl. This kiss loosened an avalanche of other kisses from other persons upon the child, who, utterly bewildered by the suddenness of it all, did not at once realise the disaster that had befallen her. It was not until her nurse's arms closed

upon her that she understood that she had been wished "Good-night." As she was hurried into the house she looked back at the group on the lawn, and saw that the world got on very well without her. Every one seemed quite indifferent to her absence; her going away was not more than the taking of a bucketful of water from the ocean; no void was left. Her mother laughed. The child liked to hear her mother laugh, because, when she laughed, the child knew that the person she loved best in the world was happy; but the laughter, coming at this moment, when she was being banished to the awful infinity of night, raised melancholy within her heart. She did not feel like laughing, with all the terrors of bedtime before her, and it seemed to her so cruel that the hour should take her from a happy mother to a desolate cot. The laugh seemed to tell her that her mother did not understand how terrible the night was to a child. She had often told how hour after hour she would lie awake, unable to answer the childish fears which crowded upon her; but all her mother had said was, jokingly, that she was a foolish little girl, and, more seriously, that for her mother's sake she was

not to lie awake, troubling her poor little head with things she did not understand. This scarcely proved as consoling as it was meant to be, for out of it there grew in the child's mind the idea that it was unkind to her mother to lie awake unhappy, and yet another trouble was added to her sleepless nights.

It was very lonely between the sheets of her little bed. The day still glowed behind the canvas blind, and a restless fly hummed now here, now there, and at times brushed across her face. The bottom of the window was slightly opened, and the blind bellied out and then fell back, the wooden bulb of the tassel striking the wall with a little thud. From outside came the melancholy chirp of a bird. She determined to think of nothing, and so fall to sleep. But she began badly by thinking of thinking of nothing. Was it possible to think of nothing? This was a question which, in the daytime, would not have troubled her; but now it filled her with a horrible sense of the vastness of thought. Her mind stretched far beyond her comprehension; she lost it in the dim corners of the room. In a rash moment she turned on her back, and looked up at the shadowy ceiling,

which rolled in great purple clouds, now within an inch of her face, now miles away. Horror-struck, she swung over on to her side. Mental discomfort was replaced by physical pain. Between her temple and her ear the pillow drove sharp arrows of fire, and the whole weight of her body rested on her arm. She had, young as she was, picked up a little medical knowledge, and she feared that, if she remained long in this position, she would find that her arm was purple and lifeless. It even occurred to her that she might lose her arm; that, bloodless, it might drop off, and she would wake up in the morning to find that it was gone. So, though it seemed that sleep was coming, she changed her position, and lay again on her back, this time with her eyes carefully closed. But even now she was not comfortable. The sheets pressed out her toes, twisting her ankles and knees. This was terrible, for she still had before her the trials of growing up; until she had reached physical maturity there would always be a load on her mind. Sleep made little girls grow, and she did not sleep well, and the fear was ever with her that she might not grow up tall and strong, but a dwarf. How

she looked forward to that day when there would be no more growing up, and she might lie awake with a peaceful mind! But what disturbed her now was the thought that, if she let the sheet press her toes out, she would grow up with toes turned out.

With a little groan of despair she wriggled about until she lay half on her back and half on her side. Her toes were thrust deep down in the cool recesses at the bottom of her little bed, and for a moment she felt peaceful, blissfully peaceful, and she thought that sleep was sure to come. But few seconds had passed before her feet became rebellious, and she was bound to draw them up towards her body. Soon, however, she shot them down again. Now every part of the bed was warm, and she tried position after position, and her mind was restless as her body. She could not sleep, she supposed, because she was wicked. She did not know in what she was particularly wicked, so she made offences out of a hundred and one innocent acts. Disobedience was, of course, about the only sin of which she had ever been told, but it was a great sin, into which it was difficult not to fall. She could remember a thousand

times when she had been disobedient. But, if God would only let her sleep, she would promise never to be disobedient again. She remembered with dismay that she had made this promise last night, and the night before, and the night before that, and sleep had not been the answer. But she had not meant it on those occasions. She meant it to-night, however; she assured God a thousand times that she meant it, and waited patiently for sleep. But before sleep had time to come she remembered that she had made a promise which it would be well-nigh impossible to keep. As she did not wish there to be any misunderstanding between herself and God, she at once modified the promise. She would try; she would really try always to be obedient. This, however, did not satisfy God, for sleep did not come.

Not far from the house the road lay, straight and hard. As the child tossed in bed, wondering if it would be right to ask God to punish her wickedness in any other way than by withholding sleep, her ears caught every sound. Once coarse laughter came from some one who was wending his way with companions either to or from the village, and the laughter entered through

the open window, and seemed to stand, mocking, for a moment over the child's bed. She alone was unhappy; even the rough village youth, who, her mother had said, were low and wicked, could laugh; she must be a very naughty child. A horse went clattering down the road in a great arc of sound. It seemed to her that she could hear the hoofs beating their rhythm to the end of eternity. This gave a ghostly terror to the sound, and she shuddered. It was not a real horse, but a warning. It meant something; she did not know what, but it probably foretold that she would die because of her wickedness. The thought of death made her feel miles away from every one, and her heart turned sick with loneliness. She wanted her mother, and crept to the window, raising the corner of the blind. She would not call her mother up; that would be cruel, for her mother was happy, and the child, sinful and doomed, could only make her miserable; but she would like, if there were still light, to look down upon her.

The window overlooked the lawn. In the dim light the child could see the figures on the shady side. She could not distinguish her mother, but she knew that her mother must be there, and

was comforted. The glowing ends of two cigars were, too, a cheering sight. The fear that she would die before the night was out left the child, and she became less sure that she was the most sinful of little girls. The child of the lovely mother down there in the twilight could not be so very wicked, she told herself with beautiful faith. She stood, looking out, for a long time. This was a new world upon which she gazed; familiar objects were made quite strange to her by the summer dusk. Overhead, a clear sky of the palest green was pricked by stars of electric blue. Lower, the green gave way to a faint yellow tinged with red, and against this the trees, the church tower, the chimneys and roofs of one or two houses, and the distant hill stood out sharp and black. Not a leaf stirred, for the warm breeze of the afternoon had died down. The strangeness of the scene, the prominence of objects she had never noticed before, and the absence of others, led her to wonder if she were at home, and then even to doubt if she were herself. Had she unconsciously become some other little girl? Suppose she were to find in the morning that she was in a strange room, that she had a different mother from her

own dear mother, a different father, a different home—and perhaps what she had not now, a little brother or sister! She was a shy child, and the thought that she would have to become accustomed to these new things appalled her. She let the blind fall back, and turned to reassure herself that this was her own little room. It was some time before she could make out much in the darkness, but she soon was satisfied that the window and bed were in their proper places, though the door seemed to have taken up a new position in quite a new wall. She crept softly to the bed, her small bare feet falling heavily upon the floor. The jug on the washstand rattled in its basin, and reminded her that it was wrong of her to be out of bed. It seemed to her that her tread shook the whole house, and she feared that some one would come to scold her. She lay still between the sheets, listening to find if she had aroused any one. Somewhere in the house a door opened and closed. Her heart beat fast. If some one came she would know that she was a wicked child; if no one came she could still hope that she was a worthy child of her mother. Heavy steps sounded on the stairs, a light wheeled under

the door, and the cook passed, breathing heavily, to her room. The child heard the cook mounting further stairs, and her sins troubled her less.

Through the open window came the drone of voices. They were still chatting on the lawn, and their conversation rose and fell like a fountain in the wind. There was something accusing in the undertones that reached her. She could not hear the words or even distinguish the voices, but it seemed to her that she was the person under discussion. When they laughed, she thought that they were making merry at her expense; when their voices sank into a solemn or serious key, she knew that they spoke of her naughtiness, and were grieved. She could not listen without being convinced that she was the worst little girl that ever lived, and she drew the bedclothes up until they covered her ears. But it was too warm for her to rest long in such a position, and soon she threw back the clothes and turned her pillow to gain the benefit of the cool side. The voices had ceased; she concluded that every one had gone indoors, and she felt lonely again. Outside the window the world was perfectly still and quiet; there was not a sound, not a movement. The house, too,

was quiet, for her room was some distance from the living rooms, and she began to wonder if she were the only person left in the world. Had they all gone away, and left her behind? What should she do if she found herself to be all alone in the world? What could she do? She could do nothing without her mother. When she thought of herself without her mother, she found that she was very small and weak, and unimportant and unlovely. Although she experienced so sharply the pains of loneliness, she had not yet quite realised the complete separateness of existence, and the fear that she might wake up to find that she was all alone, with no dear ones about her, soon left her. Still, she wished that the house were not so dumb, that it would use one at least of its many familiar voices. Almost as she wished this her wish was granted. The solemn old clock on the stairs grumbled, and growled, and cleared its throat before striking slowly—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Was it no more than nine? It seemed as if she had been in bed for hours, and yet it had not been half-an-hour. The clock in the church tower followed the clock on the stairs, and she counted carefully, think-

ing that she must have made a mistake. But she had not. Nine times the air tingled with a deep note. It was only nine, but it did not distress her to find that it was so early. The night had lost many of its terrors, and did not seem half so long now as it had but a few minutes ago. Her limbs were still and restful; there was no need to seek for a cool portion of the bed, for a delicious glow had brought her body and the sheets into a more friendly relationship. After all, she was not so very wicked, for in response to her promise God was sending her sleep. Sleep, indeed, was coming so easily that she almost wished she had not made the promise, which might deprive her of many little enjoyments. Still, she was too drowsy to think about it; she only wondered that she had ever thought the bed cruel which she now found so comforting. She would sleep well to-night, and grow up a big, strong girl.

Her mother, looking in upon her at half-past nine, found her sound asleep. She kissed her, and smiled, but did not contradict her when the next morning the child assured her that she had not slept all night, not closing her eyes until dawn had broken.

THE NURSERY

IT was a weird toy. The parents wound it up, and it ran across the floor towards the child. There was something threatening in its gait, and something almost diabolical in its noisy gesticulations, so that the child shrank from it as it hastened drunkenly in her direction. It came close to one of her feet, and she could almost have shrieked with terror, but ere it reached her it fell over on its side in attempting the figure eight, and groaned out the last few moments of its brief life. The mother pounced upon it, and having resuscitated it with a key, set it off to the father on the other side of the room. It suffered, however, from locomotor ataxy and failed to reach the father by many feet. It went wide to the right and staggered against the skirting. For a moment it hammered and kicked angrily at the board, and then fell down, buzzing like an entrapped bee. The

parents laughed hysterically, but the child sat solemnly in the centre of her nursery floor, and did not even smile. Though she was glad that her parents were so happy, the ingenuity of the toy frightened her. She was too young as yet to understand how and why the thing moved and ran and shook its arms. For her there was an appalling reality in all its movements, and when the angry buzzing against the skirting board at length ceased she heaved a big sigh of relief.

Then her parents took another clockwork figure, wound it up, and set it before her. It was a "gentleman in khaki," who, while standing firmly, wriggled his shoulders about in a most irritable manner, as though he were scratching his back against an invisible post. When she saw the grin on her father's face and heard her mother's merry laughter she bravely suppressed the terror the antics of this figure inspired in her. But she wished that it would stop wriggling with such pitiful persistence. For all the merriment of her parents, she knew it was in pain. The set face told her that, and she was sorry for it, and wanted it to be taken away where she could not see it in pain. It stood there for hours, it seemed to her, swinging

its tin shoulders towards her in dumb supplication. She stared at it with fearful fascination. Its dull eyes asked questions of her that she could neither understand nor answer. In time its wrigglings grew less furious; at length they stopped altogether. The child turned her eyes away. She was afraid this poor suffering thing was going to fall over with a groan as the first one had fallen, and she could not bear to see it.

"Isn't it a dear? Isn't it lovely?" cried the mother excitedly, gathering it up in her hand. The child turned her head again, glad that the toy had not been allowed to tumble over. Her heart was much lighter now she found that the distressed figure was still and safe in the loving hand of the mother. She knew it would be happy and comfortable there. She felt in sympathy the soothing touch it must find in those soft, good, kind fingers.

The mother put the little figure on the mantelshelf.

"Now for the dolls," cried the father. Mother and father between them swung the child merrily across the nursery to the corner where the doll's house stood, prim, respectable, and early Victorian, the very model of an ideal residence for

a doctor or a solicitor with a large practice in a small country town. The father turned back a little catch, and the door was bisected with Euclidean exactitude, and the mathematical front of the house fell back in two equal leaves, revealing six little square rooms, each of which presented a scene which reminded one of the stage photographs to be seen in the illustrated papers. Highly dressed dolls stood, sat, or leaned in wooden attitudes amidst stiff furniture. The top room hinted of a tragedy. A stout lady doll lay, a limp huddle of muslin and ribbon, on the floor, and a ruddy-cheeked gentleman doll was propping himself up against the bed in poker-backed grief.

The child watched with something akin to dismay in her heart the father clear up and set right this tragedy with irreverent haste. He did not understand the solemn reality of these things; he even went so far as to treat them playfully, but she knew that his excuse was that he was not a child, and, being a good daughter and having a loving tolerance for her parents, she said nothing, though his every action set her child-nerves jangling exquisitely and outraged her infant sense of art and romance. In a second

he had revived the fallen lady and set her in a healthy attitude in a chair. With one touch he made the grief-stricken gentleman writhe with laughter. The child was aghast at the waste of loving concern which this worldly swiftness of action caused. Left to herself, she would first have raised the prostrate lady into a sitting posture, and have bathed her forehead with real water from the little basin on the washstand. Then she would have tenderly put her to bed, and called in a doctor from one of the rooms downstairs. Finally, she would have soothed the weeping gentleman. Possibly she would have made him kneel by the bedside to pray for the lady's recovery. But her father, great, foolish, light-hearted man that he was, had changed the whole aspect of the room in a couple of touches. What was the use of dolls to grown-ups, she wondered? Whatever pleasure could her father derive from them if he treated them so lightly? It was their seriousness that made them so lovable to her.

Sitting on the floor, a little behind her parents, she watched them at their play. Occasionally she received their busy elbows in her face. That she did not mind, but she did resent the many

ways in which they upset the arrangement of her dolls. They intruded quite indecently upon the privacy of the inhabitants of the house. They shook respectable matrons, bandied sober husbands from pillar to post, and picked up and carted about sedate children in bundles of three or four at a time. The child's heart sickened with shame when the mother, with a laugh, made Noah—ugly, unjointed Noah from the Ark—page-boy to the haughty and titled family in the right-hand bottom room. She almost cried out at this insult to the doll-family whom she liked best of all her doll-families, but with whom she had to be very diplomatic, so ready were they to take offence; she feared the long explanations she would have to make in excuse of her parents, but her distress was so great that her tongue lay silent in her dry mouth. She knew her mother meant no harm; still, it was a hard thing to forgive her.

At length the father looked at his watch. "By Jove!" he cried, "it's all but dinner-time." He shut the front of the doll's house with a violence that made the child shudder. Then he and the mother got hurriedly up from the floor, and dusted themselves down. Both father and

mother kissed the child rapturously, for they were very fond of her, and without her they would have had no toys to play with.

"Haven't we had a lovely afternoon, Kitty?" said the mother.

"Yes," answered the child solemnly.

"We have enjoyed ourselves, haven't we?" cried the father, with outstretched arms.

"Yes," the child answered, still more solemnly. Then, when left alone in the nursery, she apologised humbly to her dolls for all that had been done to them that afternoon. She had the greatest difficulty in getting the titled family to accept these apologies, and for many days had to be on her very best behaviour with them.

THE VISITOR

THE breaking of an ornament or the spoiling of a frock was always forgiven after a certain amount of scolding; but to disturb or plague the visitor was unpardonable. So the child came to regard the visitor as almost a sacred person. She noticed how her father never stopped him in the middle of a story—as he would have stopped her mother—with the remark, "Oh! not that old story, please;" and how her mother did not tell him, when, at lunch, he drew his soup into his mouth with a gurgling sound, that he was vulgar and did not know how to behave at table—as she would have told the father, had he taken his soup in that way. Nothing that the visitor did was questioned; as a matter of fact, many things that he did brought about new regulations and observances in the house. Family prayers were instituted on the first night of his arrival, and

now her father, in a voice that trembled on the verge of nervous laughter, read ill-selected passages from the Bible to an astonished household. The bathroom was given up to the visitor, and there he splashed and thumped with exasperating persistence for half-an-hour every morning. Brown bread and stout were introduced into the family fare. The child had never seen either the bread or the stout before, and that he could partake of such unpalatable food and drink, and even declare that he enjoyed it, did more perhaps than anything else did to raise him in her mind far above ordinary mortals.

She wondered if she could raise herself to the high standard of this gaunt divinity, before whom every one prostrated himself or herself; for she thought it was only right that, as daughter of the house, she should help her mother and father in entertaining him. But for several days shyness held her back. She felt so immeasurably his inferior. Small, and of very tender years, she had not attained to that selfish dignity which characterised him. Troubled in conscience and ever fancying herself unworthy of the good things of this life, she did not possess the splendid shamelessness which

enabled him to accept favours and attentions with no more than a grunt of thanks. One must be very good and clear of conscience, she thought, to take, not with modest diffidence but with the ready avidity of expectation, all the services of a genuflecting world. Such services would place her own faulty little self under obligations of practical gratitude, the very thought of which appalled her. She breathed more freely when she remembered that the world did not, nor was ever likely to, bend its many knees to her. From this person, however, who, with never an apology, upset the whole household, no return was expected; so she believed him to be on a far higher level than that which she occupied.

Certainly he was above those limitations which governed her own actions. It was not wrong in him to contradict or ask for what he knew it would be most difficult to get, while it was in her. Apparently he lived in altogether a different sphere of virtue. She did not know that his acts were very different from hers, but none of them was wrong. When she saw how in him all things were blameless, she wondered what wonderful sort of man he was,

and was worshipfully fearful of him, for he dominated her in common with the rest of the house by his uncivil strength of will.

Throughout a whole week she watched him with large eyes. She supposed she could copy him, if she wished to be good. But she scarcely thought she understood the lesson she drank in through her eyes. It occurred to her at times that he was rude, but her mother, who checked all rudeness in her, seemed to see no rudeness in him. It also occurred to the child that, if she grew up as full of faults as she was at present, she had better become a visitor. A visitor had no faults, she saw; as a visitor she would become that blameless person it was her ambition to be.

So she watched his every movement, thinking how nice it was to be good and a visitor. If he wanted anything, it was given to him; the best was invariably reserved for him. His wish was but expressed, and willing slaves executed it. Certainly it would be worth her while to grow up to be such as he.

But she was perhaps a little jealous of him. He took much of the attention which her parents had hitherto shown her. She hardly opened

her mouth now before her mother checked her with, "Oh, I really haven't got time, dear!" Her father, too, was extraordinarily busy whenever she wanted to love him, and she was not allowed so much in the drawing-room as formerly. She felt that her parents were trying to hide certain precocious habits of hers from the visitor, and certainly it was the height of impudence in her that she should find herself better behaved in many respects than he was. Still, it sorely vexed her to think that her father and mother should be ashamed of her. This ashamedness was quite new. Until the visitor came she had not known of it. But now she saw it in every look that was given her, and it kept her very subdued and quiet.

She was, however, too honest to blame the visitor wholly for the cloud that had come into her life. It was the great difference between herself and him that made her parents ashamed of her, and the fault of that difference lay largely with her. He was superior, and she inferior; the inferiority alone was blameworthy. The only grudge she had against him was that he had brought his infallibility to compare so disastrously for her with her own unworthiness.

Until he came her parents did not seem to know what an undesirable and unpresentable child she was; now they spent all day, apparently, in apologising for her, not in so many words, but in their actions, which contrasted so favourably with hers.

If the visitor's coming had brought a little soreness into her heart, the soreness was more against herself than him. She was angry with herself for not being able to make herself so dear to her parents as he seemed to be. That he could oust her from the position she had held so long made him very wonderful in her eyes, and in this wonder was a certain amount of admiration. It was miraculous, the way in which he did all that he wanted to do, and got what he wanted to get, without being told that he was wicked. His unpunishableness was scarcely human, and as he was unpunishable, she regarded him as a god who could do no wrong. Not that she could say that she liked him, for his alteration of the conditions of the household proved nothing but discomfort to her. Still, she was generous enough to know that he was great, and to have respect for his greatness.

So she followed her parents' example, and

set her life by his. She made herself thirsty for the rest of the day by taking brown bread at breakfast, for she had heard him tell her mother that it was the healthiest food one could take, and her mother had agreed. The child passed her plate back, as he did his, saying that really she had been given twice as much as she could eat, and then came for a second helping. If the window were open, she asked that it might be closed; if it were closed, she asked that it might be opened. She asked that she might be allowed to thump and splash in the bathroom for half-an-hour every morning, but the bathroom was now sacred to the visitor, and her request was not granted. She assumed a testy air of indifference to the comfort of others, and took to herself everything that anybody else was likely to be wanting. These things which she tried to imitate were the signs of his greatness, and, if they won for him her parents' service and attention, they should win back for her the parental caresses she was beginning sadly to miss. But, strange to say, her imitation of the great man brought her frowns, instead of the smiles she had expected. She supposed that the imitation was poor.

One day there was a tramping of heavy feet on the stairs, a banging of the walls, a jarring of the balusters, and the scrape of trunks and boxes in the hall. The child, standing back, saw her parents laughing and chatting with the visitor near the door, which the servant held open. With handshaking and a promise to remember the respects he had been commissioned to carry to various quarters, the visitor passed out in the wake of the boxes and bags. The door shut heavily behind him, and her mother and father collapsed into a couple of chairs.

"Phew!" said her father, waving his pocket handkerchief with a limp wrist.

"Thank goodness! he has gone," said her mother.

The child looked at them with astonishment.

"But I thought you liked him," she said.

"Gracious, no!" cried her mother. "He's a perfect boor."

"But you were very 'tentive to him."

"Well, we had to be polite. But did *you* like him, child?"

Five minutes ago such a question would have seemed sacrilegious. Coming now, it suddenly showed her her true feelings. She had

not liked him, though, following her parents' lead, she had endeavoured to think as well of him as their actions led her to suppose her parents thought of him. But she was quite disillusionised now. She no longer saw her parents' subservience to his greatness, but his tyranny over their good nature and courtesy. At no time had it been a pleasure to believe that she liked him, and it was with a great sense of relief that she found she disliked him.

"No, I hate him," she cried.

"I expect you do," answered her mother. "He put your poor little nose out of joint just a little, didn't he, dear? But never mind, you shall have us all to yourself for to-day."

A little ashamed that in her ignorance she should have tried to imitate this man whom her parents called a boor, the child resigned herself to the caresses that had been all too rare in the past few weeks.

THE ILLNESS

SHE awoke to a feeling of unusual wickedness. She always felt a little wicked, but not often so wicked as she felt this morning, and she wondered what the cause of it was. Her little hands were hot under the sheets, and she impatiently drew up her hands and threw them out on to the counterpane. The sleeves of her nightdress slipped up and back so that her forearms were bare, and soon her flesh was creeping, and she gladly thrust back her arms into the glow beneath the sheets. It surprised her that she should find the air so cold on a summer morning, and she stopped, as it were, in her thoughts to examine herself. Not only were her limbs unpleasantly hot, but there was a tightness across her forehead, and her mouth had a nasty taste, and she was very thirsty. Her eyes were heavy, and her neck shot with pains whenever she turned her head. It gradually

dawned upon the child that she was ill, and her feeling of wickedness increased. To be ill was a grave fault in her eyes. She judged between the rightness and wrongness of things by their effect upon her mother. Those things were right and good which pleased her mother; those things were wrong and wicked which vexed her mother and made her unhappy. And the child knew that the least ache in her little body made her mother most unhappy. So her sense of guilt and shame grew and grew as she became more and more aware of her physical distress. When she found that her knees and elbows ached, and that, try what she would, she could not stop shivering, she felt as if she were cutting her mother's heart in two, and a tortured conscience was added to her bodily pain.

She had no desire to get up. When she came downstairs questions would be asked: Why was she so silent? Why was she so pale? and she did not know where she would find the strength with which to answer their questions untruthfully. She would be unable to hide the truth from the loving eyes of her mother, but to stay in bed would rouse suspicions and bring her mother, hurrying, frightened, to her. So,

though she gasped at the thought of the long weary hours of the infinite day before her, she submitted without a murmur to being lifted out of bed by her nurse. Outside the morning was bright with summer sights and sounds, but she knew that the sun had not risen for her, and that the birds, fluttering so noisily and busily in the ivy by her window, were not singing for her. The breeze came from a world which would not be hers all day, but would belong to other people, whom she would envy bitterly and miserably. She felt that she would spend the sunny hours in wearily watching others enjoy themselves, while she herself was sad and listless. When her nurse took her out of bed to dress her, she found that her head throbbed and her limbs were so shrammed that she hardly dared to stretch them out. And it seemed such cruel waste of the water, which passed over her shuddering skin. She did not want to be washed, but badly wanted a drink, though afraid to ask for one. Once she caught a ragged end of the sponge in her teeth as it passed over her face, and took a furtive suck, but she was only able to moisten her tongue, and her throat remained clogged and burning.

But never had water seemed so cool as that which she drew through the sponge.

At breakfast her guilty feeling grew into a positive terror of other people. She was an outcast from the world in which her energetic parents lived. They talked of doing things, the power of which seemed to have been taken from her for ever. They ate as she did not think she ever could have eaten, and laughed as she could never hope to laugh again. Altogether they were creatures immensely superior to her, useful, active, light-hearted beings, while she was dull and sad, and of no use whatever to any one. To her, in her weakness, her parents were scarcely ordinary flesh and blood; they were nightmare giants by whom she was appalled; they were gods of whom she was fearful. They were anything but wretchedly human as she was.

How she struggled through breakfast she did not know. Whenever she bent her head over her plate in feigned industry, she felt all the million eyes of the world burning their way down through hair, and skull, and brain to her deception, which they quickly discovered. If any one spoke to her she started guiltily, fearing

a reprimand for eating so little. And it was very little indeed that she ate. Hercules cleaning the Augean stables could not have needed more will than she did to clear her plate of porridge. It seemed to her that it would be scarcely more difficult to bale the sea dry with an ordinary bucket than empty her plate with her spoon.

But at last she made the plate look fairly empty, though her jaws pained her exquisitely in the effort, and her spoon was very heavy in her aching fingers. Breakfast over, she wanted to hide herself. She just wanted to huddle herself up in a corner and lie there, unheeded and unheeding. She did not care to face—more nearly than she had across the breakfast table—her mother, in whose eyes she knew she would waken a sad, reproachful, accusing look. That she was so heavy of limb and dizzy of head she felt was unloyal to all the ideals and ambitions of her mother with regard to her. So the child crept away as though she were a hunted criminal. She went out of doors, where the sun burned her and the wind laid icy fingers on her skin. She went wearily down a long perspective of currant bushes to where was a soft bank of luxuriant grass. There

she lay down, her face turned up to the sky, and her eyes closed. For all the warmth of the day she shivered. The trees pursued her mercilessly with a cold shadow.

As she lay on the ground, only half knowing where she was, or what was happening in her little life, the summer day hummed and buzzed about her. She could hear other children shouting as they played, and she felt guiltier than ever. She had been told that only the wicked were ever unhappy, and these other children were happy and good while she was wicked and unhappy. Whenever the sound came near her she shrank back deeper into the long grass. It seemed to her that the most horrible thing that could happen to her would be to be disturbed, and her heart beat fast, chokingly, painfully fast, if she heard footsteps coming in her direction, and she gasped relief when they died away in the distance.

Presently there was a crackling of wood in the little copse behind her, and she heard the tinkling fall of stones from the loosely built wall at the top of the bank, and felt a thud on the ground beside her. With difficulty she raised her aching head and looked up at a

swimming world, which she only saw dimly, as though through a blue and blurred piece of glass. Her father was standing over her.

"Get up, Kitty, you lazy child," he said with a laugh.

"I must have been 'sleep," she said weakly.

She staggered to her feet. She clutched his coat-sleeve or she would have fallen.

"I'm not quite 'wake yet," she said in excuse.

"No, lazy-bones," he answered; "but come and help me to pot some plants. There's lots for you to do."

She felt like one upon whom a long sentence of hard labour had been passed. Her first impulse was to beg for mercy, but she was very much ashamed of her illness, and, checking the impulse, meekly followed. Fortunately her father whistled instead of talking. Had he talked, she could not have answered him, for there was a numbness at the back of her head, which laid lead upon her tongue. For two hours, each of which seemed like a dozen cycles of eternity, she watched him busy himself with trowel, and pots, and watering-can. The greater part of the time she stood wearily like a statue,

but at times she had to move a few feet or yards to fetch or hand him what he wanted, a pot, or a plant, or the watering-can. She tried to show an interest in all that he did. She asked him now and again why he did this or that, and he told her; and occasionally, when she felt more than ever ill and guilty, she allowed her small hands to stray after his in their many movements. This she conceived to be helping her father, and she knew that he liked her help, so racked the whole of her aching body to stoop busily with him over the pots and plants.

"Enjoying yourself, Kitty?" he asked.

"Oh yes," she answered, but never had she known anybody do anything with such exasperating deliberateness as her father employed in potting the plants. He was always fetching things from the distant end of the garden, and seemed dissatisfied with the set or rake of each plant when he had it fixed in the pot.

"No," he said with his head thoughtfully inclined to one side, "I don't like the look of that. It's crooked. We must have it out, Kitty."

How she envied her father the health and strength which enabled him to double his labour

in this conscientious way. Her one desire was to get the plants into the pots as quickly as was possible. She did not care whether the plants stood upright or crooked. To have done with them, to have them all somehow or other in their pots, was all she cared about. But her father dragged out the potting until her brain seemed to dance impatiently beneath her skull. A sick, irritable feeling crept over her head and neck and shoulders as she watched his careful gardening. She could have shrieked to see how lovingly he lingered over his task; it was so difficult to realise that he could find pleasure in what was to her an endless torture. An overturned box caught her eyes, and unconsciously she edged towards this box. She wondered if she might sit down, and then thought she dared not. To sit would probably disclose her weakness to her father, and she still wished to hide her illness from every one. But she eyed the box longingly, and crept nearer and nearer to it. Presently she was thoughtfully scraping one of its sides with the toe of her shoe. She did not remember sitting down, but she slowly awoke, without knowing that she had slept, to find herself crouched upon the box, her head in her

hands, and her elbows on her knees, and that her father had gone.

It seemed to her that there would be nothing better than to remain here for ever as she was. But some one called her, and she had perforce to go into the house, or else confess to her shame.

In the afternoon her parents suggested that the thing she would like best in all the world would be a walk with them. She remembered their long stride with dismay, but said a walk was just the thing that would make her happy. It was a loving lie, and it led her into an afternoon, which was a punishment for the lie, and not a reward for the love. Her thighs shuddered, her feet ached and burned, her head throbbed, and her eyes sought the ground, but she struggled bravely along over dusty roads, and fields where the grass was slippery from drought. Now and again she stumbled against obstacles, over which it seemed well-nigh impossible to lift her tired feet; and again, her father and mother would clutch her arm to call her attention to something or other, and it was all that she could do to keep from crying out in pain at the soreness and tingling the touch caused. Yet all the time she made an heroic

but absurd pretence of activity. It was she who, when the time for turning back came, suggested that they should go a little farther. To her horror she found her foolish request granted, and she had a hard time to keep back her tears.

At length they turned to go back. They walked more slowly now, much to the child's relief. She bore on her shoulder the weight of her mother's hand. As a rule that hand caressed lightly when it rested thus, but to-day it almost crushed her to the ground.

"I wonder what we should do without Kitty," said her mother.

"God knows," answered her father.

The child's heart stood still. Suppose she should die of this illness! Then indeed would she be wicked. She would break her parents' hearts. She raced away from her mother's side in pursuit of a butterfly, thereby trying to prove to herself that she was not very ill. But just under the hips her legs ached as though they would break, and the jar of her steps shot right up through her, and she could not persuade her painful little self that she was not ill, and she soon came back to her mother's side, and dragged along there as best she could.

A century later she found herself at home again, but she had not returned to peace and rest. The meals followed cruelly close upon each other's heels, though yesterday she had thought the waits between them intolerably long. Utterly wretched and tired, she sat down to tea with noble resolution. It was not long now to bedtime. She would hold out till then, and the morning would find her well again. She hoped now to reach the end of the day without disclosing her shameful illness. Though her nerves and tendons grated one against the other when she lifted her mug of milk and water to her mouth, she found a consolation in the steaminess in the mug's interior. The mug between her face and the world, she felt hidden as the ostrich does, which buries its face in the sand. But she could not hold up the mug for ever. Her fingers ached so that she had soon to put it down. Then she saw the cake and bread and butter on the table, and her resolution crumpled up like so much paper. She had to eat these things, or stand confessed of her illness. She could not do it; she could not do it! The very thought produced a wild terror in her. The table swam before her eyes, and came up to

meet them; she uttered a little gasping cry, laid her head on the cool white cloth, and sobbed piteously. She did not care how wicked it was; she could hold up no longer.

"Lor! Miss Kitty," exclaimed her nurse, "what's the matter?"

"I don't know, I don't know."

"You're ill?"

The child looked up, frightened.

"You won't tell mother?" she cried.

"No, but I'll put you to bed."

Then, for the first time that day, the child knew what comfort was. Strong arms wound about her, and laid her in her bed, where a delicious restfulness came to her tired frame. Soon she fell asleep, and, when she woke some hours later to find her mother bending over her to kiss her good-night, she no longer felt guilty or undutiful, for the fever was gone, and her little body glowed with convalescence, which it were well worth while being ill to obtain.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

SHE knew well that she did not deserve to be loved as much as she was by her mother; indeed, Kitty was sensible, whenever the world looked at her, of having intruded; she was tolerated because she had come, but really she ought never to have come. Not that her parents ever said so; but then her parents, she knew, were thought exceedingly foolish in their doting parenthood; but uncles and aunts, and other kind, envious persons, had so impressed upon the child her good fortune in having come to two such fond, foolish persons as her father and mother, and seemed so surprised that the fortune of such an undeserving child should be so good, that Kitty had long ago become convinced that she had had no right to be born. Still, she had been born, and she had no grudge against life, and the best had to be made of love, even if it were undeserved. None the less, Kitty felt insecure.

Some day she would be loved as she deserved, and it was her private opinion, whenever the grave-eyed world looked at her, that she deserved no love at all. Her conscience was young and vigorous then, and nothing sad or troublesome happened about her but what she saw the cause in herself. Life was to her a roomful of mirrors. On every side, in every face, laughing or sad; in every back, bowed or straight; in the garden at winter, in the garden at summer, in her nursery, in her toys, in the village-folk, in the hills and the fields, she met with reflections of herself, generally fearfully unfamiliar or terribly true. Kitty was not vain, be it said, that she saw so much of herself in the world, but she had a conscience which a saint might have envied. At seven, too, one has yet to learn that wickedness is not confined to children. She was slow to lose her childish beliefs, and one of these beliefs was that one grew out of wickedness, so that at last one, when he broke anything, need not cry, but only say, "Good gracious! how ever did that happen? There must have been a flaw somewhere," and smile contentedly and proudly at the owner of the article which had been broken. When a per-

son was able to do that, Kitty, all conscience, considered him beyond sin, and, as most of the grown-ups of her acquaintance had gone through the test of doing damage without tears of remorse, Kitty, the only child in her home, thought herself the only sinner, and in every trouble that came to her immediate world saw herself reflected, the imp of mischief. So Kitty shuddered to think of the day when she should be loved only as she deserved, and tortured herself with whispering constantly in her mind that the day was near. It was impossible that her mother could go on loving her so fiercely when all the world was saying, "Molly, that child isn't worth it;" and Kitty was so proud of her mother as the loveliest woman in the world that the child was certain that her mother must soon see the one folly of her life, and not love her little daughter so unquestioningly. Kitty was well aware that the world of relatives, that hardest world of all, laughed at her mother for being so ridiculously fond; and Kitty had once tried to make her mother spoil her less, but had ended the trial weakly in embraces and love and tears, lest persistence should break two hearts; and the child always feared that presently her mother

would listen to this laughter. Kitty, of course, would love no less, even if the time came when she was loved only as she deserved; and, dreading that time, she yet found courage in the thought that she would always love her mother passionately. It must not be supposed that, because she thought so much of her mother's love, Kitty did not love her father. She loved him dearly, but differently from her mother. The child accepted his love less guiltily, with a greater sense that she deserved it, because she could never find him quite serious, and because, rather than being laughed at by the world, he seemed to laugh at himself. He always gave her the impression that he loved her, while knowing that she did not deserve to be loved. But with her mother it was very different. Her mother loved blindly, and Kitty, conscience-stricken, was afraid of such love—afraid that, not deserving it, it was only right that she should lose it.

Kitty learned with throbbing heart that her mother was going away.

"Only a short visit," said her mother, "and really I don't want to go. The tea will be vile, and the children worse. It always is so away

from home. But I've got to go. It's a sort of duty visit. Can you spare me, Kitty, just for a week?"

Kitty said "yes," and tried to say it cheerfully, though she was very sad. This was the first time, to her recollection, that her mother had ever left her; it was one of the world's sneers—or, at any rate, one of the sneers of uncles and aunts, who, after all, are the world, as distinct from home, to a child—that Molly never left her little girl. "Wastes her life on that brat," said the aunts, whose children were spread about the country in boarding-schools. "Doesn't deserve a child," said uncles who sent sons to unhealthy colonies rather than give those sons a share in the business at home. So it was new and very horrible to Kitty to find that her mother was going away from her. It was only for a week, it was true, but seven days of such desolation were a prospect as long as her retrospect of seven years so full of love, for her nature, and not the sun, was the standard of measurement. And Kitty argued—the more conclusively because she knew no logic—that her mother, away from her, would see her from a new point of view. The old point of view was love; Kitty did not tell herself what

the new view would be, but shivered, and was sure that her mother would come back cured of her infatuation for an unworthy child. Kitty forgot the centripetal force of instinct, which kept her mother's point of view of her, wherever it swung, always at the same radius from the centre, Kitty's own dear self. But Kitty, of course, was too young even to suspect the existence of mechanical laws, and of instinct she had never thought; affection was the only emotion she experienced, and she treated that as a matter of conscience rather than of instinct. She thought she loved because she deemed it right to love. She did not know that she loved simply because she could not help it, or that her father and mother loved simply because they could not help it. She believed that her parents loved her for no other reason than that, finding themselves in some way connected with her, they thought in pity and kindness that they ought to make her happy. But her mother was going away to learn wisdom of the world, and Kitty was afraid that her mother would come back too wise to love her any more. Kitty imagined the world drawing her mother aside to whisper in her ear: "Look here, Molly, we like you; you're very nice, and we wish to

goodness you wouldn't give all your niceness to a child who isn't worth it," and her mother replying, "Dear me! how stupid I've been; I'll forget all about Kitty—except, of course, that I must look after her until she is old enough to look after herself." Kitty was so fond of her mother that she always thought the world grudged her her mother; indeed, Kitty did not see how the world could do otherwise, when her mother was so lovely; and the child, in fearful possession of so lovely a thing as her mother was, was by no means eager to spare her mother to the world—even for a week. In love, and not at all in vanity, Kitty feared the envy of the world. She felt that the world wanted back her mother, whom Providence absent-mindedly, and without consulting certain uncles and aunts, had given to the child. Kitty, therefore, was in dreadful tears when she parted from her mother.

"Oh heavens!" said Molly, "I'm not going."

"No, *you're* not," said Kitty's father, with emphasis. "If we don't start in a minute we shall miss the train."

"But look at Kitty. I can't leave her like that."

"Oh, kiss her, and come; it's getting awfully late."

Kitty was hugged almost to death.

"Now, it's very silly of you to cry," said her mother. "I'm not crying," which was true, though she sniffed every third breath, "and you must be brave. Good-bye, darling."

Her mother settled down in the cab, and Kitty stood, feeling very small, in the porch.

"I believe I shall be back to-morrow," said her mother.

"Back in an hour," said her father; "for, if this horse catches the train, it'll deserve to graze for the rest of its life."

The cab started. Kitty waved her hand bravely.

"Be good," said her father.

"Of course she'll be good," said her mother. "Good-bye, Kitty."

"Good-bye," said Kitty faintly.

Her father threw her a kiss, and then seemed to laugh at himself for having been so foolish. Her mother craned out of the cab until the gate-post came, when the father suddenly drew her back. Kitty did not know how nearly she had lost her mother for ever. The fact that the world was taking her mother for a week was so terrible as to shut out any thought

that fractions of a second and of an inch alone prevented the gate-post from taking her mother for eternity.

The house was very empty for the child. Her toys had no life in them. There was little pleasure in play when she knew that, if she looked round, she would not find her mother standing behind her, gazing proudly down on her. When she turned her head now, and found no one behind her, her shoulders contracted, and she shuddered a little. She felt lonely, for the whole world seemed to lack sympathy with her. Her nurse did not understand the true inwardness of dolls; the nursery had lost its tender tolerance of dreams. Kitty squatted, silent and idle, on the floor, her hands listless among her toys. The spirit of play was gone from her. In the emptiness of the house she was shy of the thoughts which would have seemed only natural if she could have felt that, if she turned, she might have found her mother. Kitty realised that a mother softened the world considerably for a child, and wanted her mother back. But the child thought it was wrong to grudge the world even this little bit, this one week of her mother, and tried to

believe that this was a little holiday from the cares of being a good child to a lovely mother. After all, a mother so lovely as Kitty's was an almost overwhelming burden in Kitty's heart. The child no doubt would have been far happier if she had loved less passionately. Love was with her a fever of anxiety. Every moment that her mother was away from her Kitty was racked with fear. But for this week Kitty determined to forget these fears in the relief of feeling that she need not dread every minute that she was vexing her mother. If Kitty were naughty now, her mother would not know, and so would not be vexed. To think this was half joy, half pain to the child; to save her mother vexation was joy, but to feel that she sinned in secret was no pleasure. Still, Kitty, making the best of things, decided that she was having a holiday from the love which exacted so much from her, and after tea began to hum little songs to herself, to prove that she was quite happy. But, going, unhugged, unkissed, to bed, she found tears in her eyes, and sobbed into her pillow. She felt very loving as she lay, crying, in her cot; but at this moment the world was probably talking to her mother, and Kitty feared what

the world might be saying. "My dear Molly," Kitty fancied, in some subtler psychic way than actual thought, she heard said to her mother, "now you've managed to break with the child for a few days, for heaven's sake be more sensible in future, and don't wrap yourself up in her any more." Yes, Kitty felt that she would have lost, before her mother returned, a great deal of her mother to the world, and that scarcely soothed the child's loving nature, or gave her much assurance that she was enjoying her holiday.

Next morning Mrs. Vicar brought her small daughter to call on Kitty. Mrs. Vicar said that Kitty's mother had asked her to call. That may or may not have been true, for Mrs. Vicar would have called, whether she had been asked or not. It was her habit, her recreation perhaps, to offer her services to the remains of any household temporarily lessened in numbers. This morning she asked if she might do anything for Kitty. "For you've never been alone before, have you, child?"

"No," said Kitty.

"I expected to find you in tears."

"Why?"

"Don't imagine, Kitty, that the whole world doesn't know how fond you and your mother are of each other."

Kitty, always her mother's champion, read a sneer in this. Mrs. Vicar laughed, and the child believed that the laugh was at her mother. Kitty clenched her fists.

"Well, I'm not cwying at all," she said, lisping, as she always did when dignified.

"I thought you'd be sobbing."

"Why? Muvvie hasn't gone away for ever —only a week. It's quite a short time."

"So you can spare her for a week? Your mother never thought you could. She expected you'd break your heart. That's why I came round."

Mrs. Vicar seemed almost sorry that she had not found Kitty breaking her heart; there was really nothing for Mrs. Vicar to do—not even tears to dry.

"Well," she said aggrievedly, "I'm glad you and your mother are more sensible."

"Muvvie always was," Kitty declared. "It was me who wasn't sens'bul, but I'm going to be now."

"So much the better. You're a spoilt child, you know."

"It wasn't Muvvie's fault."

"I'm going to write to your mother. Shall I tell her you're quite happy?"

Kitty seemed to be all in her throat, and she swallowed herself. Some faint ghost of her answered Mrs. Vicar.

"Yes," answered the ghost.

Kitty felt as if she had forsworn her love, but thought she had done right. She was removing the cause of the world's contempt for her mother. But Kitty had not spoken the truth, for she was broken-hearted directly Mrs. Vicar had taken herself and her little daughter away. If she were to have one happy moment while her mother was away from home, Kitty would never forgive herself; and yet she had, for her mother's sake, to tell the world that she was not in the least upset by her mother's absence. It was a bitter grief to Kitty to feel, and not to know why it was, that her very love for her mother hurt her mother. The fact was to be read in Mrs. Vicar's face, but Kitty did not understand why these things should be so. So Kitty cried a great deal, though secretly, while her mother was away The child foresaw her mother coming back,

wiser than she had gone; saw her mother looking at her, and saying in her heart, "So that's the child I've sacrificed the world's respect for? So I've made a goddess of that little imp, have I? Oh well, I've learnt better during the past week," and then aloud, as though she were any other child's mother, "Oh, Kitty, do go away; I'm busy." Kitty expected quite a new and strange mother to return — a mother to whom uncles and aunts would not have so much advice to give—and prepared herself to meet that mother. Kitty herself became a new and strange child. She was not so new and strange, however, that she did not hear the cab that brought her mother back, when it was some distance down the lane, and she stood in the porch as though she had not left it since her mother went away. The gate screeched and rattled as it swung back, and the village cab ground its way up the drive, and stopped with a sharp little grunt of the brake at the porch. Her mother came precipitately from the cab, and embraced her tightly.

"Oh! you little statue," cried her mother, "I believe you've been standing here all the time."

Kitty was kissed until she was breathless.

Then suddenly her mother seemed to recollect something—something the world had said to her perhaps. She stood back, and looked with vexed eyes at Kitty.

"Yes," she said, "you *are* a statue—as cold as marble, Kitty."

It was not often that her mother spoke to her reproachfully, and Kitty read the worst in her mother's manner. In her mother's sudden change from warm embraces to reproachful eyes and voice, Kitty saw that at last her mother had learnt wisdom. She knew at last that her child did not deserve such love as she received. The old, foolish impulse to hug Kitty soon died out, and there came in its place this vexed look. The world had cured Kitty's mother of her foolishness. Two or three months ago Kitty had tried to effect this same cure in her mother, and had been rather relieved when she failed. Of course she liked her mother to love her, but she did not like her mother to be laughed at by every one. Kitty knew that she ought to be glad that at last her mother was a sensible mother, but found that her heart was very sick, and that she dared not speak lest she should cry. The best thing that could have happened

had happened; the whole world might see Kitty and her mother meet, and not be shocked; but Kitty felt no happier than if the whole world had seen her taking medicine and had approved. No amount of approbation could take away the bitter taste.

Kitty kissed her father.

"Been lonely?" he asked.

"No, not very," she answered.

"Oh-h!" He seemed surprised, but said no more. The luggage was being brought in, and Kitty stood back from the consequent bustle. Kitty watched her mother, and saw that her mother watched her. There was still that reproachful look in her mother's eyes, which said, or so Kitty thought, "Oh, Kitty, Kitty, all the world had been laughing at me because I've loved a silly little thing like you. But I know better now." Kitty was for creeping off to her nursery and there hiding her sad little self, but her mother kept her back.

"Oh, don't run away, child, directly I return."

She supposed that her mother wanted to explain to her at tea that there must be no more of that foolish fondness which had existed between them. Her mother took off her hat

and jacket, and said that she must have her tea or die.

"And come here at once, Kitty." Kitty came, and was subjected to a scrutiny. "Oh, you seem all right," said her mother. "No rash, no bruises, but what's become of your spirits?"

Kitty could not say. It would spoil everything to say. If Kitty confessed to the least pain, her mother would probably become again the laughing-stock of the world. So Kitty kept silent.

"I thought I should enjoy coming home much better than I do," said her mother. "Something's gone wrong somewhere."

Her mother, then, did not fully understand the cure that had been effected in her. Like most convalescents, she was fretful.

"I ought never to have gone away," she said. "The whole house is upset. Wherever is tea?"

"It's only half-past three," said Kitty's father.

"Well, didn't I write that tea was to be ready directly we got back?"

Tea came at last, and Kitty's mother grew more restful.

"You can only get tea at home," she said.

"Kitty, you've caught something. Why don't you eat more?"

Kitty's father laughed.

"You can't expect a nursery appetite in the drawing-room," he said. "It would be impolite."

"Rubbish!" cried her mother. "Kitty needn't be afraid of us."

Kitty did her best to eat, but, as she had been eating her heart all day, she had little appetite for cake.

Darkness fell early that afternoon, and soon the room was ruddy with the firelight. Kitty knelt on the rug before the fire, and looked into the flames. She was not happy. She felt inexpressibly wicked. She could not specify her wickedness, but her mother had come back, happy, from the world to be vexed by her child. "I thought I should enjoy coming back better than I do," her mother had said. Her mother, with her eyes opened by her visit from home, had returned to see Kitty for what she was worth. So Kitty, finding her mother unhappy, felt wicked, very wicked; only wickedness could vex her mother. The cosiness of the fire struck a chill through the child. Her physical comfort started suddenly back from her spiritual distress.

It was as if one, going on his way, whistling, came unexpectedly upon a sad sight. Kitty gave a little shudder in the warmth of the fire. Penitence of a robust order, penitence demanding a hair-shirt and a knotted scourge, is perhaps an instinct, the quarrelsome instinct, and Kitty, at seven, had all her instincts unbroken, so that her flesh, in sympathy with her heart, warring against what she thought was her unworthiness, struck out at random, and hit the comfort of the fire. She sat back on her heels as though to escape some of the cosiness that purred out of the flames.

"You're very dainty," said her mother.

Kitty looked fearfully at her mother, and wanted to sob out her repentance to her. But exactly what to say, what to sob about, she did not know. She only knew that her mother ought never to have had her, and that sobbing over that mistake could not rectify it. She found the cat by her on the rug, and dragged the animal up with her little hands to nurse it to her breast. The cat, awakened from sleep, mechanically began to stretch itself in her arms. Its sharp claws found purchase in her shoulders, and the child cried out in pain. The cat jumped

away, frightened, and she saw a parable. The cat loved her, but, not meaning, hurt her. So she, loving her mother, not meaning, hurt her mother. In each case the hurt was real, very real, though unmeant; and Kitty, rubbing her smarting shoulder, likened herself to the cat, when she looked up and saw the pain in her mother's face. It was possession that hurt—the possession of a cat in the one case, the possession of a child in the other. Kitty saw that it was her duty to be possessed as little as possible. But the greatest trouble of all to Kitty was that her mother now seemed to know what Kitty's duty was. Her mother's blindness had been a long, guilty pleasure to the child.

"Kitty," said her mother, "aren't you going to ask us how we enjoyed ourselves?"

"Did you enjoy yourselves?" Kitty asked dutifully.

"Not a bit. The tea was filthy, and I hadn't got you."

"But you didn't mind that?"

Kitty hung her head very low. She had asked a question to which she did not want to know the answer.

"Kitty!" was all her mother said, but the

tone sent Kitty's hand straying pitiably in the rug. Her little fingers plucked and plucked, and she dared not look at her mother.

"Well, you minded our going away?" her mother asked after a pause.

Kitty would not hear.

"But, Kitty, you did, you know you did."

"A little," said Kitty.

"Only a little?"

"Well, I'se growing old."

Her mother spoke across to her father.

"It's quite true what Mrs. Vicar wrote," her mother said. "She didn't mind a bit—never even cried. Oh! I wish I had never gone away."

The room listened to itself through a long, heavy minute. The cat came back and nosed Kitty. Kitty leaned over the cat, and rubbed her chin along its back.

"She loves her cat more than she loves me," said her mother sadly.

Kitty gulped.

"I wanted some sort of welcome after my long martyrdom of vile tea and stupid people who frighten their children out of the room," her mother continued, "and this is it; Kitty's sorry we've come back."

Kitty sprawled over the cat, and grovelled on the rug. The cat squirmed away, and cleaned itself in offended dignity.

"Heavens ! father," cried her mother, "something's happened to the child. I said something would. I'll never go away again. Come here, Kitty, at once."

Kitty got up, and went to her mother.

"If it's anything wicked," said her mother, "I'll forgive you if you'll only say you love me."

"Muvvie," said Kitty brokenly.

"So you'll still call me 'muvvie.' Well, that's a comfort."

Her mother put her arm round Kitty, and drew the child to her.

"You know, we had to come back, Kitty," she said. "This is our home as well as yours. It's a pity you want it all to yourself, because you'll have to put up with us." The arm that was about Kitty tightened. "Kitty, why don't you love us ? Are you angry because we went away ?"

Her mother scarcely seemed to have learnt wisdom during her visit to the world, and Kitty felt very foolish. Why should she want to be loved less, why should she want to be loved

only as she deserved to be loved, when it only vexed her mother? After all, her mother's happiness was more important than the world's opinion of her mother, and her mother's happiness seemed to lie in loving her. So Kitty gave way to the crushing of her mother's arm, and was hugged.

"Muvvie," she said again, and in that one word she managed to say all that she felt, and all that her mother wanted to know. The child nestled close to her mother.

"Kitty," said her mother, "you gave me such a fright. I thought you had forgotten to love us, but you haven't, have you?"

"No," said Kitty.

"Mrs. Vicar had no right to say that you didn't mind a bit. You did mind, but you were too sad to cry. Wasn't that so?"

Kitty nodded, and felt at peace.

"Here, give me that child, Molly," said her father after a while. "I've been away from her for a week, too, and it's my turn now."

SUNDAY

THE minutes immediately succeeding waking were deliciously drowsy. The child had no remembrance of yesterday, nor thought of to-day, as she lay with her senses as yet unresponsive to the morning. But, as she grew more awake, a strange, unusual stillness of the things without her window filled her with uneasiness. The sun was yellow behind the blind, but scarcely a bird chirped; the cattle and sheep were silent in the fields, and never a cart rumbled or rattled down the road; all the world was silent. She puzzled over this for some moments; felt (she hardly knew why) her hair, and found it crisp and rebellious where her head had touched the pillow; then remembered that she had gone to bed last night with the steaming glow of a hot bath in her hair; and knew in a flash what this stillness meant. To-day was Sunday.

A cloud came over her soul; this silent morning lacked the enthusiasm of other mornings. There was no homely, work-a-day clatter of morning tasks to greet her; the house prepared itself silently for the day. Household duties crept about on tip-toe as though ashamed of themselves; she heard a door open furtively and the timid scrape of a bucket on the stones of the stable-yard; then the world, affrighted, held its breath. Everything seemed most consciously unworthy of the day, and she, having often been told that she was the worst little girl in all the world, was quick to torture herself with a horrid bogey made up of her own unworthiness. Sunday, which was, she had come to believe, a virtue ennobling the elect, such as her mother and father, who would be placid and contented saints throughout the day, was not for her, or the door, or the bucket in the stable-yard. It served only to emphasise the wickedness of her impulses. Other days were more or less tolerant of her sinful nature, but Sunday brought her to task for every little fault. It was only on Sunday that she learned how wrong it was to sit on the stairs, singing to her dolls, or to run, laughing, across the lawn

and down the paths between the currant bushes in trial of speed with, or in pursuit of, some imaginary playmate. So, when the day came, still and silent, as this morning had come, she looked forward to long, dreary hours of guilt and remorse.

Her nurse did not help her to be worthy of the day. At the very outset, that woman, talking the while in sabbatical undertones on subjects which could only claim to be unsecular in that they were not interesting, dressed her in a white frock, the spotlessness of which made the sin of getting dirty dangerously possible. The crumpling of the stiffly setting little skirt was a pitfall the child could not hope to avoid, seeing that it lay right in the path of time which, willy-nilly, she must cross from bed to bed. By evening the perpendicular lines would have become stars and webs of creases. Saturday only of all the days—Saturday the genial, when even grown men and women allowed themselves to play and get dirty—would condone these creases; Sunday would be so horrified by them that it would prompt her mother to scold her for them. Sunday, she was too well aware, had the habit of suggesting to her parents fault-finding

in which they were too loving to take the initiative.

Breakfast was a subdued, apprehensive meal. The click of the teapot, when it was set down on the little stone stand after being lifted to pour out a cup, was apologetic. The room seemed larger and broader and higher than usual, and to hold an infinity of silence. The corners were shy of the sunshine which poured in through the broad windows, and wrapped themselves up offendedly in their shadows. The sideboard dared not to creak. The cat watched the kettle without purring, and the kettle itself only boiled half-heartedly. The usual conversation, too, was missing; her own chatter was stifled within her; there were no letters by post from which her mother could read extracts; and her father was engrossed in staunching the flow of blood from a razor-cut in his chin. If she had hitherto failed to remember what day it was, that cut would have told her; it was there, on her father's chin, every Sunday morning; its absence would have been far more notable than its presence.

She ate but little, for her appetite was subdued in accordance with the general spirit of things.

It did not seem right to be hungry when, so far as she could see and hear, even the birds, who were supposed to have no religion, took little account of breakfast. This was a day of humiliation, for before the day was out a thousand black sins would stand against her name, and, from old experience, she took it as such from the very beginning, and toyed with her food in a properly chastened spirit. That her mother and father should eat the usual quantity of food she took to mean that they were infallible and therefore worthy of Sunday.

Breakfast was scarcely over when the day gained her mother's ear.

"Oh!" cried her mother, "you naughty child; just look at your stockings; they're all twisted."

She looked at her stockings. The seam of each ran spirally up her leg. That spiral seam was as inevitable on Sunday as was the cut on her father's chin; she never noticed it on any other day. It was a crime of which she never hoped to be free; it had pursued her for years. With sundry tugs, mingled with pinchings of the infant calves, the mother put the stockings

straight. When she stood up again from the kneeling posture she surveyed the child.

"You're untidy and dirty already," she said severely. "You'll have to wash your face before you come to church."

The child bowed her head meekly to this scolding. There was nothing she could say; she could only feel unhappy and hurt; she might be jealous of the influence Sunday had with her mother, but she could not fight against it. Still, it was hard that a day should change her mother from an indulgent parent to a fault-finding monitor, and she only just kept back her tears. She did think that she, and not the proprieties of a certain day, should have first place in her mother's heart.

Ten minutes later she stood, her face washed and her hat on her head, a large prayer-book in one hand, and a tiny sunshade in the other, in the sunshine of the porch. The day was bright and warm, but not companionable. There was never a suggestion of playfulness in all its beauty. It did not greet her enthusiastically, as a child-cousin would, but kissed her off-handedly, as sometimes a grown-up aunt or uncle did.

Poking at the tiles with the point of her sunshade, she looked back into the shade of the hall. Her father's white waistcoat gleamed now and again in the gloom, and she heard the scrape of a brush around his hat, and then the sound of the brush being put down on the table. She heard also the rustle of her mother's skirt up and down the stairs. These extensive preparations belonged peculiarly to Sunday mornings; they did not seem to be necessary on other days. Pondering why they should be more necessary on one day than on another, she dug somewhat heavily into the tiles, so that one tile stood suddenly up on end and fell tinkling upon its neighbour. Her heart thumped heavily as she gazed upon this disaster. On any other day this would not have happened, but Sunday employed everything possibly breakable or upsettable to help to ruin her reputation. Hastily she replaced the tile. It slipped back neatly into its place, but she felt none the less guilty because her sin was not likely to be discovered.

Her mother came to the door. She put her hand to the back of her skirt.

"Oh!" she said, and ran, rustling, up the stairs again.

Her father's waistcoat grew from dull white to dazzling brilliance as he came from the gloom into the sunshine. Putting his fingers in his pocket, he found that he, too, had forgotten something.

"Oh!" he said, and disappeared into the gloom.

But at last everything was remembered, and they started.

"What a lovely day!" said her father, as they walked down the drive.

"Yes, isn't it?" answered her mother.

The child could not help thinking that it was a great pity so lovely a day was Sunday. All this sunshine was wasted. One had to be thankful for it without being able to enjoy it. She had once been told that she should always praise God when the sun shone, and she was always grateful to Him for the sunshine; but it was a little hard to praise Him for it on this, His very day, when it was wicked to play in it.

Church was perhaps the most enjoyable part of her Sunday. Without being very religious,

she was devoutly inclined. There was a not unpleasing awe in the old grey building with its subdued light and drone of prayer. To kneel down, deep in the pew, with her eyes buried in her arm, was to find peace and security which the rest of the world could not give. Such an attitude saved her from all scolding and criticism, though she was in the midst of countless adults. Kneeling thus, secure from the assaults of the world, she did not find the long, long Litany tedious. The wonderful rhythm of the words was most soothing, though she knew nothing of the equally wonderful comprehensiveness of the supplications. "Battle, murder, and sudden death," "Pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy," lingered musically in her ear, and often mingled jig-like with her thoughts as she played with her toys on other days than Sundays. But sitting up, seeing and seen by the congregation, during the sermon, she felt how convenient was the provision that an ox falling into a pit on Sunday should be rescued forthwith. She looked furtively out through the open door into the sunshine, hoping perhaps to see some unfortunate ox which required to be helped from a dangerous position. But

Sunday oxen seemed most careful where and how they stepped, and never met with accidents.

Sunday was the one day on which she dined with her parents. Ordinarily they dined after she had gone to bed, but Sundays they dined in the middle of the day, under the mistaken notion that it helped the servants. To her mind the dinner was yet another of the pitfalls laid by Sunday for her undoing. It found out her manners most unmercifully. Whatever way she ate, whatever way she sat, reproval came from one or other, or perhaps both, of her parents. Those little table acts or tricks which on other days were unnoticed second nature, to-day were magnified into gross offences. Dinner was not over before her parents were convinced that she was incorrigible of the most disgusting ways of taking her food and drink. In the end she was so horror-struck at the picture they drew of her as a diner that, though her mouth watered for the fruit, she refused to take any dessert, not knowing how she could take it without making a beast of herself.

Determined to be a better child in future, she spent the afternoon most properly. Imitating

her parents, she took a chair to the farther and shady side of the lawn, and sat there reading. She read the one book she was supposed to read on Sundays. She did not actually read it by spelling out the type, but it had been read aloud to her so often that, with the aid of the illustrations, she was able to believe that she read it word by word, though such a task was really far beyond her. It was not a book that pleased her, but it was a Sunday book, and its presence on her lap, like the prayerful attitude during the Litany, lent her an appearance of virtue which disarmed the criticism of a hostile world. The story was sickly sentimental, and the illustrations were mawkish woodcuts borrowed indiscriminately from earlier publications. The whole volume was depressing. It represented virtue as lying suffering on a couch all day, and vice as vigorously climbing trees in search of birds' eggs. The good little girl walked with a crutch, while the bad little boy was sturdily built and was stronger than the majority of his playmates. The moral the child drew from this was that to be healthy was to be wicked. Thinking, as she glanced through the book, of her firm little frame and robust health, she felt a very miserable

sinner. If she had a withered leg, or a hump on her back, or a dry, ominous cough; if she could fade away before her parents' eyes, she would be, though frail and misshapen, the embodiment of all the virtues. But, as it was, she had never even taken measles, and she remembered having once climbed a tree. She almost prayed that she might exchange the pleasures of health for the pleasures of virtue. It was her ambition to be good, and she would have welcomed a little chastening sickness.

The hot, heavy minutes went slowly by. As she turned the pages of the book the pictures lowered at her so that they frightened her. Ruffian bargees, in strange fur caps, and with heavy cudgels in their hands, peeped murderously around initial I's, and lean curates sheltered pathetically under initial T's. There was one picture she dared not look at. It showed the sickly and saintly child dying in the presence of her parents, who knelt, sobbing, on either side of the bed. She had looked at it once, and ever since it had haunted her dreams, so that she was now careful to pass it by. The fate accorded to virtue was too painful to behold more than once;

it made her longings to be good seem so vain and foolish.

She sat with her book until teatime. Then she rose, feeling that she had spent a most proper afternoon. As she rose her chair came with her. She heard a little ripping sound, and the chair fell away from her. For the moment she did not realise what had happened, then she put her hand suddenly, nervously, behind her and brought round the back of her skirt so that she might look at it. She had not to bring it round very far, nor to twist her neck much to see that another disaster had befallen her. Her skirt was torn right across.

She looked dully at the rent. The full horror of what had happened could not be grasped all at once. Slowly it dawned upon her that she had committed the greatest of all sins; she had spoiled a new frock. A numb misery crept through her, altering the colour of the whole world. The sunshine paled, and objects shrunk back from her as though seen through a reversed telescope. She stood, lonely and frightened, in the middle of a jaundiced, diminishing world.

"Oh, you naughty child!" cried her mother,

holding the teapot in mid-air, and looking from the tea-table to the rent skirt. "You've torn your frock! You'll break my heart if you're not more careful with your clothes!"

"I didn't mean to," answered the child weakly.

"Of course not, but you're careless. You don't deserve to have any tea; you're about the naughtiest child a mother ever had. I don't know what I shall do with you!"

And this from a mother who was ordinarily kindness itself; this after an afternoon most correctly spent with a good book. The child's spirit rebelled against the injustice of it. From early morning she had endeavoured to be good, but the day had been against her; she had been the sport of some fiendish fate which would not allow her to do what was right, yet she was scolded, and Sunday went, unblamed, on its quiet way. She felt angry, very angry, with everything and everybody; she could have pummelled the whole world with her little fists, and kicked its shins with her little feet.

"And look at your book; you've spoilt that too!"

She looked at her book. It lay on the ground

as it had fallen, when she loosed her hold of it in horror at her torn skirt. Opening fanwise, it had fallen on its pages, crumpling and tearing them. As she gazed at the wreck her anger gave way to despair. She was no longer angry with the world; she only hoped the world was not too angry with her, a poor sinner. Truly, she was the naughtiest child a mother ever had. She felt very helpless, very hopeless, and the tears began to roll slowly down her cheeks. In a vague way she knew that her mug of milk was being handed to her.

"I don't want it," she cried; "I won't have it; I only want to die!"

She flung herself, sobbing passionately, on the grass. Buried in her grief, she abandoned all effort of living up to the day and its proprieties. She was done with it and its hard ways. It might whisper what it liked of her in her mother's ear; she did not care; she would die and get away from it all—Sunday, mother, father, everything. But soothing arms were round about her, and they lifted her up. A loving voice sounded in her ear, and she checked her sobs.

"What is it, darling? Tell me all about it. Let mother comfie you."

But she never told how Sunday troubled her, for at this moment, with the loving arms about her, she had no grudge against the day, which suddenly became the happiest of the happiest.

THE TRAIN

SHE stood, with father, mother, little cousins, nurse, and goodness knows how many packages and trunks, watching the train, which had deposited her and all these belongings at a seaside station, glide away with the acrobatic guard performing wonderful feats on the foot-board, as he flourished one foot in the air and at the same time put his watch back in his pocket, rolled up his flag, and opened the door of his van.

"Where does the train go?" she asked, with infant curiosity.

"Into the sea," they answered her.

She looked into their faces to see if they were joking, but she found there never a smile. She waited for them to burst suddenly out into laughter and tell her, as they shook their heads merrily in her solemn little face, that she must not believe what they said; they were not serious, but only giving her such a silly answer

as an inquisitive little girl ought to expect. But they did not burst out into laughter; they busied themselves with the trunks, and gave no explanation of what they had said about the train. So she supposed that she had received a sober answer to a question she had put in all seriousness.

But she did not understand it. It seemed so unreasonable that the train should go into the sea. Puzzle her brain she might, but still she could not see that any purpose was served by sending the train into the water. It did not go under and come up the other side, she knew, for people crossed the sea by ships and were very ill in consequence, and surely, if there were this less upsetting way of going by train, they would not still brave the miseries of going by ship. Yet she had noticed that many people went on by the train. Why did they go if they knew it was only going into the sea? How would they escape getting wet and possibly being drowned? She knew, from her own case, that she would not care to be in a train that suddenly plunged under the waves. It would frighten her; it would spoil her pretty frock. But those who had gone on did not seem frightened, nor at all anxious about their

frocks. Indeed, one and all, they were laughing and chatting; one and all, as merry as if they were going to get out a little farther on, as she had got out at this station, with her father, mother, and cousins, and nurse, for a holiday by the sea. She did not understand it. She was bewildered, a little frightened. All she knew was that, when she asked where the train was going, they had answered her, without joking, "Into the sea"; and, because they had not said it jokingly, she was bound to believe them, for they would not deliberately tell her a lie. Her baby faith in her elders accepted the story, while all the logic in her mind endeavoured to reject it.

Very thoughtful, she stood apart from the bustle of collecting the luggage. As she watched the train grow smaller and smaller in the perspective that led to destruction, a great sadness clouded her heart. Like all good children, she had a very tender regard for all things appertaining to railways, and she loved this train, hurrying away to prearranged disaster, almost as much as she loved her prettiest doll. It seemed so senseless and cruel that the poor engine and carriages; and the engine-driver (who held a post which, were she a boy, it would be her ambition

to obtain); and the stoker, who was, it seemed to her, the one person in the world who was privileged to have dirty hands and a smutty face—perhaps she envied him his privilege; and the guard, of whom she was always a little frightened; and the nice passengers, who had said she was a pretty child, and thought she was older than she really was—a compliment she much appreciated—and had given her sweets; should be obliged to go on like this into the water, where they all, so far as she could see, must perish. What worried her most was that all this should be planned beforehand; that people should know of it, and not try to prevent it; should see the train puff away to its doom, and not be in the least sorry or put out about it. It was a great shock to her to see how her mother, the good, loving mother she believed to be perfect, took it quite light-heartedly, chatting and laughing among the trunks, as though it were nothing amiss that a whole train should hurl itself into the sea. That her father, a great, strong man, who, as a man, was not supposed to care very much about anything, should smoke his cigarette so gaily she could understand, but that her mother should be so callous was a revelation

against which all her filial pride revolted. And yet in the revelation there was a consolation. It brought her mother rather nearer to the child's unworthy little self; it made her loving ideal some day to be as good and lovely a woman as her mother more possible of realisation. Still, she was all alone in the distress she felt on the train's behalf, and that made it all the sharper.

A chill greyness came over what had been, a few minutes ago, the bright horizon of her holiday. All joy had gone out of her. She felt hopelessly miserable without exactly knowing why. She supposed it was because of the train, and yet a certain dignity of incredulity rose up somewhere within her and forbade her to believe it. It was as if the shadow of her coming, elder self called her a fool. But to be called by herself a fool only added to the anxiety she felt for the unfortunate train.

She was all alone. The others bustled about with never a thought to give to the coming disaster. This led her to feel personally responsible for the train. Yet what could she do to help it? She did not know how it went into the sea. She was not even certain that she quite believed that it did really go into the sea. All

she knew was that she had been told that it did. But it seemed to her that it was wrong to stand there in doubt. She ought to find out what was the truth. Even then, when she had learnt the truth, and found that the train did really go right into the water, what could she do to save it, for it was now a mere speck in the distance? That she should have let a thing so lovable to her as a train pass out of her help, filled her with a bitter sense of guilt. The tears came to her eyes. She was a wicked little girl, and didn't deserve to come here to enjoy herself by the sea.

"Kitty!"

She did not hear the call, but harrowed her overwrought feelings by picturing the awful plunge of the poor train into the angry sea. The picture frightened her thoroughly; she tortured herself with it to the verge of sobs.

"Kitty, Kitty, child, come along; we're going."

She turned round with a half-checked sob.

"Good gracious, child!" said her mother; "you're crying."

"It's the train," she explained tearfully.

"The train?"

"I can't bear to think it's going into the sea."

"Into the sea?"

"Yes; didn't you say it went into the sea?"

"Surely not; I don't remember it."

Her cheeks burned red, and it seemed to her that a flaming mask buzzed all round her face about an inch from the skin. The guilty feeling was followed by quite another sense of shame. She was the foolishest, stupidest little girl that ever lived. She had believed against her better judgment what even her baby cousin would never have believed. As if the train could go into the sea! But for all this shame she was happy, exquisitely happy. A great load was taken from off her. The train was safe. She would see the dear, nice thing to-morrow, if she got some one to bring her up to the station.

THE SEA

HER parents insisted that, in common with other children, she found much delight in the sea. So her parents took her to the sea, although they declared that they themselves simply detested the average watering-place, and that they would be much happier at home. The child was by no means so certain as her parents were that she did love the sea, but she bowed to their maturer judgment. She was too devotedly filial and loving ever to suppose that her parents might be mistaken in their estimate of her likes and dislikes. She first thought that, if she did not like the sea, she ought to, and then, to satisfy her conscience, decided that she did like it. Reasoning with herself, she found that it was impossible that she did not like it. She was a child, and tradition had made the sea a great source of delight to every child who was worthy of the love of good,

kind, self-sacrificing parents. Tales had been read to her, in which it was recorded how poverty-stricken parents had sold their dearest treasures, or neglected to pay their much overdue rent, that their pale-faced child might be taken for a week to the seaside. The child knew that she was not pale-faced, and that the rent was neither overdue nor difficult to pay, but she felt that it would be ungrateful not to provide, by exclamations of delight at every mention of the sea, the excuse which allowed her parents, in spite of their firm conviction that there was no place like home, to take her every year to the sea.

For persons who were foregoing, on her behalf, the comforts of home and enduring the inconveniences of lodgings, her parents were surprisingly cheerful and happy. They certainly did nothing to show that they were suffering because of their fulfilment of what they conceived to be their duty to their child, and the child was careful to hide from them the suspicion that would ever recur to her that the sea was to her not quite all that great joy it should have been, for it would have been unkind to hint to them in any way that their generous

self-sacrifice failed of its loving purpose. They were good parents, and she had her duty to them, which was to keep them ever happy in their possession of her, as she was happy in her possession of them.

But, try as she would, she could not deceive herself into a conviction that she enjoyed the sea as tradition bade her enjoy it. The beach was bright with sunshine and people, but behind everything was a melancholy which found its way to her heart. Homeliness was lacking in all this brightness. The sea was only sullenly tolerant of the merry, laughing crowd on the beach, and all day long mumbled warningly of its anger and power. And the sea seemed to be especially angry with her. When she ventured down to its very edge it hissed at her, even in its present summer calm. Then it would draw away from her as though it were afraid of her, and lure her farther down the sand than it was wise for her to go. She would think it was carrying its anger away to the horizon, there to nurse its wrath into some winter storm; but she would be mistaken, for suddenly a great wave (or at least she thought it a great wave) would dart at her with a vicious

snarl, and, before she could back away, she would be up to her ankles or over her knees in seething, hissing, white and green water, whereof the tiny bubbles broke with the sound of countless tinkling chimes. This happened often whenever she walked along the lower and harder sands. Her mother and father only laughed, and she, being dutiful, laughed too, but not so merrily, for her little cry, when the water rose round her legs with such astonishing rapidity, was more fearful than any one suspected; she believed that the sea had struck at her in its anger, and it was more in terror than in play that she hastened back noisily to a drier footing. "Isn't it fun?" her parents asked of her, and she assented that it was, not knowing how it could be anything else since her parents, who were so much older than she and so much likelier not to see the bright side of things, said that it was fun; and there was at least one consoling thing in this spitefulness of the sea. She was here allowed wet feet, which at home brought her scoldings and solemn warnings of severe illness and possible and even probable death, if she persisted in her wickedness of courting cold.

The beach was made for the child's pleasure, the parents thought, and the sea itself for her health. Both her father and mother were hardy persons, and, being such, they had set up salt water as a fetish, in which nothing could shake their faith, and from their allegiance to which no one could draw them. So they decided that the child must bathe every day, as they did. The child had little confidence in the restless green water which served her such tricks when she walked peacefully on the sands, but she was told that to grow up big and strong she must submit to bathing daily. That to bathe was healthy she could not doubt, for it was as unpleasant as those many other things which, she was told on the best authority, were conducive to health; indeed, she suspected almost everything that left an unpleasant feeling or taste, of being corrective of ills or sins; and, as she conscientiously strove to make herself as perfect as was possible, she bathed, or rather allowed herself to be bathed, every morning.

But it was an ordeal which, until it was over each day, kept her awed and silent. There were mornings when the hours went by, and she hoped that her parents had forgotten all about

the bathe, but they were only waiting for the tide to do one or other of those things which the almanac forecast, but which she could not understand; and soon, just at a moment when the sun went behind a cloud and the wind came very strong from the sea, her father or her mother would seize her hand and say, "Come along, Kitty; we'll teach you to swim," and she would be haled away to the bathing-machines, with many of the feelings of a martyr who was being led to the stake.

The bathing-machine seemed especially designed to discourage those who had decided to bathe. Perhaps the builder had so constructed it that it might convey a wholesome warning to those proud people who do disagreeable things in order that they may boast afterwards that they have done them, and immensely enjoyed doing them. The interior of the machine was gloomy enough to chill the bravest soul, and so cramped as to ensure the barking of any knuckles that attempted hurriedly to pull off any article of clothing. As the child was being undressed the knuckles of her nurse or her mother rapped continually against the sides of the machine, and there were sundry exclama-

tions of irritation and much sucking of bruised fingers. All the while the sea outside growled menacingly as it surged through and through the wheels of the machine. It was a desolate sound, this growl of the sea, and well-nigh intolerable when heard in the gloom of the machine. As her clothes came off one by one, it seemed to increase in volume until at last, when she stood shivering in her damp little bathing-dress, she heard it as a terrifying roar. Then, as she listened, it appeared to die down and become more distant, and she felt less afraid, but, upon the lessening of her fears, the sound returned with greater vehemence, as though to warn her that she must not be too confident that she was safe.

At last she stood on the steps of the machine, forced thereto by a strong hand. She felt very weak in the middle when the wind struck upon her bare limbs, and she crouched some three or four inches off her little height.

"Get along, Kitty."

She splashed into half a foot of water. The splashing went up all over her, and big drops chose to lodge on those parts of the body which were most susceptible to cold. "Ugh-h-h," she

gasped, and, shuddering, looked back yearningly at the machine. Then a strong inexorable hand grasped each of hers, and she was dragged forward. The first wave reached to her knees, the next took her coldly half-way up the thighs, the third struck her in the waist, the fourth came with a thud against her chest, driving her breath from her, and the fifth snapped up over her shoulders and hurled sickly spray into her mouth. She coughed and jumped, but the sixth wave was but a little one, and, unsupported by it, she sprawled on her knees. Her parents held her down.

"Now, Kitty, duck your head."

She struggled and cried out in fear as the sea rose before her in a mighty heap. The sky disappeared, for the water stood up on end until it hung over her head. Then something dragged at her shins, which rested on the sand, and lifted her so that her little body stretched out horizontally under the heavy hands that pressed her down. There was a sharp blow in her face, and a dark greenness thundered over her head. She beat out wildly with hands and feet and fought blindly with the swirling element. For ages, it seemed to her, miles of rushing water

passed above her; cold fingers clutched at her feet and carried them upwards. She thought now and again that her feet beat in air, and her hands groped in the sands. Suddenly she righted; the pressure was taken from her head; the wind crept softly down her body; and she heard her mother and father laughing. She opened her eyes and blew the salt from her lips; to her surprise she found that the water was only up to her hips. She looked down through its sand-streaked depth and saw on the floor of the sea black patches that bobbed and swam from mere specks to great areas, and back again to specks. Her feet felt very small and unprotected in the middle of these objects, and she lifted her toes nervously up and down, for she feared the lurking of crabs and other monsters in every dark spot that she saw.

"Here's a beauty."

She looked up. High above her towered a hissing line of white which drew the sea up from her feet to itself. She was standing a little back from her parents, and no one held her hand. First her father disappeared, and then her mother, and the child was all alone. She did not know what became of her parents. There

were two angry flashes of white down the grey-green wall of the wave, and her mother and father were gone. With a cry the child turned for the shore, to escape the huge wave which had swallowed up her parents. The wave hurried her along reassuringly at first, then struck her heavily in the neck, and a great smother of water gurgled about her ears and rose high above her head. While the upper part of her body was pressed forward, her legs were drawn back, and she lost her footing. For the second time she battled through ages in a seething darkness. At last she found a footing, and her head came out into the air. Through blinking eyes she gazed in front of her, but the beach, for which she looked, was gone. She saw only what she had seen when her face was turned the other way, the long white line which drew the water, now grained with sand, far up to itself. Then she felt a gentle but growing push from behind, and she went forward, willy-nilly. The white line tumbled into a great white bed of tossing foam, and out of this foam the sea front with its red houses and grey sea-wall, and the yellow beach with its motley crowd and rows of tombstone-like

machines, swung up, all brilliant with sunshine, into the sky. It was a cheering, momentary glimpse of the firm dry land which she ought never to have left. But the push she was receiving from behind was now more forceful than helpful, and her eyes had only rested for a moment on the blessed homely sight of land, when she was again enveloped in thundering green, which first tossed her up from her feet, and then threw her down on her knees. Gasping, she rose and struggled forward through a great back-wash which dragged the sand tingling over her feet and about her ankles. Again there was a friendly push, and this time the wave did not cover her. Just as she was expecting a cold knock at the back of her head, she felt the water shoot around her shoulders and saw it spread white and broken about her, and soon she was drawing her legs noisily through shallow sun-warmed water. Here she waited, shivering, for her parents to return, if they had not been drowned in the great wave which had taken them from her. Presently they returned, splashing mightily, to tell her how they had enjoyed themselves beyond the breakers, and how she must learn to swim or

she would never know the full delights of bathing. She could believe that something was necessary to extract for her from the sea that pleasure which her parents seemed to find in it, and she promised that she would be brave to-morrow and would allow herself to be taught to swim.

Twenty minutes or half-an-hour later, when she walked along the beach with a pleased sense of duty nobly fulfilled, she felt that, in spite of a tight-drawn skin and blue fingers, a slight headache and a sickly salt taste in her mouth, she was much healthier and much stronger than she had been before the bathe. She was certain that such unpleasantnesses, if self-inflicted, brought with them the reward of health. If they did not, would her parents, who knew so much and loved her so, cause themselves and her all this discomfort each day?

It was in the evening that the melancholy of the sea most affected the child. Then her parents took her to listen to the band which played at the farther end of the esplanade. The yellow watery twilight faded into the crystal blackness of an August night. The ground was scrunched by ten thousand feet, each pair of which seemed to have a more joyous and

less responsible tread than her little feet had. Away somewhere in the gloom the sea roared monotonously, and over the noise of the feet and the sea, and the chatter of countless tongues, came the wailing of the band. Now it was the shriek of strings, now the bray of brass, and now the crash of cymbals; then it was only a film of sound which reminded her of the depthless sheet of water, which she had seen left on the beach by some of the waves that broke there.

Though she clung to her mother's hand, the child felt very lonely in this crowd. She saw hundreds of faces, and heard hundreds of voices, but the only thoughts of which she knew, the only feelings to which she could swear, were her own. It did not occur to her that all these voices had working minds and often troublesome emotions behind them. She heard so much laughter that she did not realise that other heads than her own were perhaps perplexed, and other hearts melancholy; she imagined that she was alone with the questions and answers of thought. She thought not only for herself, but for the whole crowd. To each person that passed she gave a history; of each face she told herself a story. In these histories she did her best

to be kind, and she was troubled and saddened when a face belied the character she wished to give its owner. As she looked upon all these people, whose souls she supplied from her own imagination, she became intensely maternal, wondering lovingly if she treated them all as well as they deserved. Wondering this, she remembered in how many things she was at fault, and felt that, though seemingly so much alone in this crowd, she was harming these people by her judgment of their several appearances. For all the laughter in the summer dusk, for all the merry chatter, there was a great sadness in things, and, troubled with a conscience, which was perhaps the worst ailment of her childhood, and which she would probably some day find less exacting, she half believed that she—the one person of them all with a busy and, therefore, wicked brain—was the cause of this sadness. If at times she should happen to cry, she was told perhaps that she was a darling, and the best little girl in the world, but she feared that there was a loving lack of truth in such consolation; and here, with the band wailing above the undertone of the sea, and the gaslight in the band-stand flaring low and blue

in the wind that puffed chillily from the darkness, her ever-present sense of guiltiness increased to alarming proportions. On the beach the sea was spiteful only to her, in the water the waves which knocked her about spared her parents; and she supposed that here it was only for her that the music was so sad, and only to her that the blue burning of the lights brought loneliness and desolation. All other people seemed gay and careless; she, prepared by a long career of naughtiness, was the one of them all to read, in the sea, the wind, and the night, of sadness; she only was, and deserved to be, sad.

Sometimes her father and mother took her far beyond the band, and along a cliff path to a point where they stood and looked out into the night. In the darkness the wind came very strongly, thrumming in their ears and mouths and whistling thinly in the dry cliff grass. Over the sea all was blackness, except, perhaps, for one or two yellow streaks still glowing faintly in the clouds which merged indistinguishably on the horizon with the sea. Some miles down the coast a small speck of light pricked the darkness at intervals, and out at sea there might be the slow-moving lights of a few

vessels. To look out at these lights, so widely separated from one another, and so small in the vastness of the night, was to chill the child to a feeling of utter loneliness. She seemed as small and as separate as any of those lights, and to be standing at the very end of the world, and to be in danger of being swept off into space. At such moments it was necessary to hold the hand of her father as well as the hand of her mother, and she was very glad when, in his biting of his pipe, her father pressed down the bowl so that she saw the glow of the tobacco. To hold these two hands brought the wind down from a gale to a breeze, and made her feel that, however wicked she might be, there was a blessed love that saved her from the loneliness which she deserved, and of which the sea reminded her, lest, in the security of this love, she should forget her unworthiness of it.

In spite of brave resolutions to justify the self-sacrifice of her parents, the child never could be quite so happy by the sea as she was in her own home. But this seaside life held one great joy, the joy of returning, and there was always the consolation that her parents made their great sacrifice very cheerfully.

THE OTHER CHILD

THE child had never seen the other child, but thought of her always with awe and admiration. Indeed, Kitty's eyes opened very wide whenever she was told of the other child. Kitty did her best to be good, but she never seemed able to approach even distantly the virtues of this other child; and Kitty, when she had spent herself in the throes of virtues, only to be told that the other child would have been twice as virtuous without any throes at all, wondered very much about the other child. But it was not a doubting wonder, mind you. Kitty believed implicitly in all that she was told of the other little girl, who did all the good deeds which Kitty left undone, and who never so far forgot herself as to do the bad things which Kitty, in spite of a tender conscience, was continually doing. In that same conscience Kitty often felt, in moments of repentance, that she would like

to be this other child to whom goodness seemed so easy. This model child, Kitty learned, would never dream of doing some of the things which Kitty did. Kitty thought that she would not do these things if she did not happen to think of them, and she envied the other child her mind which was so made that these things did not occur to it. Kitty supposed that it was a virtue to have a mind of this sort, but in angry moments told herself that the other child was more fortunate than actually good.

Kitty was puzzled to know who the other child actually was, and to whom she belonged. Kitty had many cousins and little friends, but she had not as yet met the other child. This might have been because it was generally in games and at parties that Kitty met her friends, and it was not likely that so good a child as the other child would join in games or attend parties. It was, of course, part of the other child's goodness that she should stay at home—why Kitty did not know. Kitty was terribly shy and did not care for parties, and she would have liked to stay at home with her mother instead of going in trembling daintiness into the midst of a whirl of pink and blue, and of a babel

of voices and music (for such was her confused idea of a party); but, when she proposed staying away, she vexed her mother, who was so proud of her in her party finery. But Kitty was sure that the other child's mother always had a headache on the nights when there were parties, and so made it good and proper for the other child to stay at home and do all she could to ease her mother's pain. Kitty did not want her darling mother to have headaches, but she did wish that on nights when she was bidden to attend a chaos of light and noise, which she was supposed to enjoy, but which really terrified her, something pleasant might happen to her mother, which a loving child was in duty bound to stay at home to share. She viewed as very fortunate the other child, who never attended parties, but always, or so it seemed, had a good excuse for staying away. At any rate Kitty never met the other child, and could only suppose that it was some goodness of the other child that kept her away from these gatherings where one might expect to find her. Kitty sometimes asked for the other child, and was always told that she was most goodly absent. The other child would dearly have loved to come, but an opportunity

of being good kept her at home. It appeared that it was martyrdom to the other child to stay at home, while it was martyrdom to Kitty to have to leave her mother and go out to a party. Kitty was a little vexed that her martyrdom should not be respected, whereas the other child's was set down on the credit side of that book which all grown-ups keep of the children of their acquaintance. The other child was praised for the very thing for which Kitty was called a little silly, even by her mother.

Kitty, puzzled as she was concerning the identity of this other child, never sought enlightenment from her mother. Kitty remembered that it was not her mother who told her of the other child, and did not care to introduce to her mother's notice that extraordinary little girl. So long as her mother remained in ignorance of the other little girl and her unusual goodness, Kitty felt fairly sure of her mother's love. Kitty had no wish—though perhaps she thought she ought to—to show to her mother the standard by which the world judged a child. Still, the mystery of the other child troubled Kitty, and she would have liked to solve it; but those who were able to inform her only snubbed her.

The other little girl never asked questions. It seemed to Kitty that it was by never doing anything that the other little girl was so good. Kitty once or twice tried the experiment of doing nothing, to see if that made her good. But it was not in such a loving nature as hers to do nothing all day. To love was to be doing with her; and, unfortunately, to be doing was to blunder. Kitty never meant badly, but what she did rarely corresponded with what she had intended to do. She had not that sureness of touch which the other child seemed to have. Kitty sighed, and would have liked very much to be the other child, save for one reason. The other child belonged to other people, and Kitty would not have liked to belong to any one but her mother. Yet, Kitty thought, if she were the other child, and at the same time her mother's child, how happy she could make her mother. Kitty knew that sometimes she was vexing, but it did not seem likely that the other child ever was. So Kitty, if she could have remained in some ways herself, would not have minded being the other child.

Of course they were many and emphatic who told her that it was a pity that she was not the

other child. On the other child the world centred the hopes of its future. No good was expected of Kitty, but the other child was assured of a prosperous career. The other child, if those who knew spoke the truth and did not make rash promises, would certainly have no cause to grumble at virtue being its own reward. But Kitty was promised only a harvest of regrets. Kitty thought it rather hard that the world before her should be so threatening just because she was unlike the other child. Kitty was sure that she did her best, but it was apparently a very poor best when it was compared with the other child's. Kitty once spelled three whole words proudly to an uncle: c-a-t cat, d-o-g dog, p-i-g pig. She expected commendation, but the uncle at once remembered that the other child, who had been three whole weeks behind Kitty in reaching her seventh birthday, had on that birthday been given a Bible, and that she could read the Bible with ease. Kitty was glad that her mother was not by to hear what the uncle had said, for her mother had declared only the day before, when Kitty spelled those same three words to her, that there never was, and never would be, a cleverer child than Kitty, who would

not have liked her mother to be disappointed of that belief. The child wondered how proud the mother of the other child must be. Yet Kitty somehow had a feeling that there could not be more love between those two than there was between her and her mother.

But Kitty tried to emulate the other child, because she feared that some day her mother might come to hear of that paragon of virtue, of whom grown-up relatives had so much to say. Kitty fancied that the other child must be a cousin, and there was a great danger that her mother would meet her. Then, Kitty thought, her mother, too, would urge her to be like the other child, to be like whom was so difficult. But as Kitty did not meet the other child there was a certain safety; the other child was apparently not near at hand. Kitty was glad of this because of her mother, who was so happy in thinking her child the best child in the world; but for her own sake she was sorry. If it would do her so much good to emulate the other child, it was a pity that they never met. Kitty was continually urged to model herself on this child, of whom all the world spoke with so much admiration and respect, but how could she copy

what she had never seen? It was one thing to be told of the goodness of the other child, another quite to grasp that goodness. If the other child could do all the things she was said to do, Kitty would have liked to see how they were done. The people who told of the other child never explained how the other child managed to be so good. The other child was naturally good, they said. Kitty did not exactly know what "naturally" meant, but dared say she was naturally naughty—people hinted that she was—which was rather a distressing thing to think when she tried so hard to be good.

Whether or not she was known by repute to the other child Kitty could not tell; but it did seem to Kitty that the other child was continually sending her indirect messages to be good. There were a score of persons who apparently spent their time going backwards and forwards between Kitty and the other child, and, as they told Kitty all that the other little girl did, she thought that perhaps they told the other child all that a naughty child named Kitty did. Kitty was alarmed to think that this might be so. She valued her reputation because she had parents who loved her, and she was sick with shame

when she thought that perhaps the other little girl, on hearing the reports that were taken to her, pitied the poor father and mother who had a child named Kitty. It was perhaps in this pity that the other child sent, with reports of her goodness, messenger after messenger, who took Kitty in a dock made of the knees spread apart, and solemnly delivered the reports to her; and that her mother might not be pitiable to the other child, Kitty strove to benefit by these reports. But, unless one were the other child, it seemed very difficult to be like her. Kitty was sure that she did not have the opportunities of goodness which came to the other child. Kitty often acted just as she thought the other child would, but somehow or other the result was not goodness. Good fortune in results was not for Kitty, but only for the other child. Kitty, hearing that the other child had done some sewing for her mother (a deed of which people talked for three months, it was so worthy of record), tried to do some sewing for her own mother. But Kitty, discovered at the task she had set herself that she might be as good as the other child, was not praised; she was scolded. Her mother was quite angry. She said that Kitty was never

to do such a thing again. She did not want Kitty to do sewing or anything for her; she wanted to do everything for Kitty. Kitty was not to try her eyes, or prick her fingers. Her mother would not allow her child to do that. Then her mother laughed. As if Kitty could sew! She seemed to think it absurd, but she had not heard of the other child, who, though three whole weeks younger than Kitty, could sew most beautifully. Kitty looked at her work, and wondered what she had been sewing. It was not a pocket-handkerchief, certainly, but she used it as such; for it brought tears to her eyes to be scolded when she had tried to be good. Why was she scolded when the other child was not? Kitty did not understand it at all.

Kitty searched through her acquaintances for the other child, but never met her. It was difficult to find some one who did not seem to have a name. Kitty had a vague idea that the name was Anne, but could not remember if she had ever been told the name. The mother of the other child was a person equally vague. She, too, seemed to be nameless. Kitty thought that she might like the other child, but had taken a dislike to the mother. If the other child were so

good, the mother was unnecessarily strict. When she was told of the severity with which the other child's mother treated the child, Kitty was extremely glad that she had been given to the mother she loved so passionately. Kitty often wondered what she would have done if she had unfortunately been anybody else's child. It would have been very dreadful to be somebody else's child, and then to meet the dazzling being whom God had, as it was, made her mother. In her filial pride, and in the security of her position, Kitty was a little sorry for the children of other mothers, and, if reports were true, there was a sort of enmity between the other child and her mother. The other child would not dare to do this or that, and for no better reason than that she feared her mother. People told Kitty that they did not know what the other child's mother would do to the other child, if she were like Kitty. Once, it seemed (and people apparently told this to stamp the reality of the other child), the other child had taken the liberty to speak when her mother supposed her to be silent, and, in consequence, her mother had sent her to bed, and kept her on bread and water for two days. Kitty often wondered what the other child had said,

that she could deserve such punishment; but, while glad to hear of the other child's one step from the paths of virtue, felt very angry with the mother for being so cruel. Children did not always know when they were supposed to be silent. Her own mother understood that, and, though she might be angry at times, was never cruel, and always forgiving. Kitty thought that perhaps, if she were afraid of her mother, she might be as good as the other child; bread and water should frighten any child into goodness; but Kitty was not afraid of her mother, although a loving fear of vexing her often decided the child's actions.

The other child long remained a mystery to Kitty. All the grown-ups of her acquaintance seemed to know the other child, and to take a great interest in her. They were very fond of the other child, and gave her presents, the like of which they would have given to Kitty, had she not been so naughty. To be the other child was to be popular; but Kitty reflected that that would be small attraction, if one also had to be afraid of her mother. Still, Kitty thought, if she were more like the other child, she would be worthy of her mother, and she tried really hard

to model herself on this most perfect little girl, of whom everybody talked.

One day Kitty learned that she was to see an aunt and a cousin whom she had not seen before.

"Don't go flirting with your little cousin, Kitty," said her father.

Kitty may have known how to flirt, but did not know the meaning of the word, and she opened her eyes very wide.

"It's a girl," said her mother, laughing.

"Oh! so it is, I remember now. Its name is Anne—just Kitty's age too."

Kitty started. So she was at last to meet the other child. Anne, and just her age! Yes, this was the other child. Kitty was frightened, for she remembered that her mother, too, was to meet the other child. Her mother would see that there was a better child than her own Kitty in the world. Kitty spent the morning in fear. It was true that she had often been anxious to see the other child, but now that the chance offered, her heart failed her. She was very conscious of her shortcomings, and did not care to stand side by side with this wonderful other child in her mother's gaze. Her mother, seeing the other child and comparing her with Kitty,

might be sorry that God had given her Kitty instead of the other child. Kitty's heart was very heavy, and jumped now and then, as though to assure itself that it was as light as a child's heart should be. Kitty was wondering how comparison between herself and the other child could be avoided. If her mother was to be happy, she must never know that the other child was such a much better child than Kitty, but, if Kitty and the other child were to stand side by side, as contemporaneous cousins are sometimes put to stand, it would be patent that Anne was the embodiment of virtue, and Kitty the naughtiest child in the world. Kitty surveyed herself in a glass, and thought how naughty she looked. She looked naughty even when the other child was not by for a foil.

Early in the afternoon her mother came to Kitty to prepare her for the visit of the other child.

"I want you to look ever so pretty," said her mother. "Of course you always look pretty, but I want you to look extra pretty."

"Is she pretty?" Kitty asked.

"Anne? yes; that's why I want you to look your best."

"Is she nice?"

"Oh! yes. She's very nice and good, I believe."

Kitty grew very sad. This was certainly the other child, and Kitty did not want to meet her.

"Tell nurse to put you on your blue frock," said her mother. The child shook her head, and her crisp brown hair bobbed up and down.

"Oh, Kitty, look like that all the afternoon. It's just sweet."

Kitty burst into tears.

"I don't want to meet her," she cried.

"Who? Anne?"

She gulped and nodded.

"Why not?"

"She's the other child," Kitty sobbed.

"What other child?"

"The good child. The child they all talk about. The child who's so much gooder than me."

"I have yet to hear of that child, Kitty," said her mother.

"No, you don't know her, but everybody else does. They say I ought to be like her, but I can't be; I'se so wicked."

"But who is she?"

"Anne. Her name's Anne; I'm sure it's Anne, and I don't want to meet her."

"Not meet Anne! But I believe she's very nice."

"Oh, muvvie, you won't like her better than me," Kitty cried in alarm.

"Kitty, you're very wicked. As if I could!"

"Yes, I'm very wicked, and she's so good."

"Anne?"

"I don't know—the other child."

"You've been dreaming bad dreams again, Kitty. Who and what is the other child?"

"The child I ought to be like."

"I never said you ought to be like anybody but yourself."

"No, but they all do. They're angry 'cos I'm not like her. She's never naughty, and I'm just howwid. They all say so. They're very sorry 'bout me, but they like her."

"But you haven't told me who she is."

"Her name's Anne."

"Well, I've seen this Anne. She's all right, but I wouldn't have you like her for anything."

"Isn't she the other child?"

"She's another child, but certainly not the one you're talking about."

"Who's the other child?"

"My dear Kitty, I don't know unless she's a bogey nasty people have been trying to frighten you with."

Kitty sighed relief, and opened her eyes.

"Isn't there any other child then?" she asked.

Her mother laughed, and caught her, and kissed her. "No, Kitty," her mother cried, "there's only one child in the world, and she's got to get into her blue frock at once."

"I'm gooder than Anne?"

"Of course," said her mother; "but don't despise her because of that. Be kind to her. She tries to be good, even if she can't be as good as you."

Kitty was kind to Anne, for Kitty was happy all that afternoon in her relief at finding that the other child did not exist. But people still talked to her of the other child. Kitty wondered why. If it were a fairy story, she was getting rather tired of it, and it frightened her. As a rule she liked to think that her mother believed in fairy stories, but was glad that her mother did not believe in this one.

THE WANING OF PASSION

THEY pulled the blinds down, and told her that she must not make any noise.

"Why?" she asked.

"Oh, grandmother's dead," her mother replied.

"Oh," said the child. She thought that it was strange she did not feel particularly unhappy. She had an idea that it was naughty of her to be so unmoved. Yet she saw no signs of great grief in others who were likely to feel the bereavement more than she did. Both her mother and father were dry-eyed. It was her father's mother who had died, but he seemed only solemn, and not very sad. The death, she knew, had been impending for some time. There had been startings at every bell, and the hourly expectation of a hasty summons. "Poor old mother hangs on," her father had said. "I shall be almost glad—for her sake—when she dies; she suffers so." He spoke quite dispassionately, and yet the child

had felt that she ought to be more than ordinarily kind to him. He had not talked very much then —before the death—and she had felt tender and maternal towards him, and had offered all her love to him, and he had seemed grateful; but now, when the death had come, a change came over him. He was brisker and brighter, and his voice rose a tone. He bustled about in the darkened house on this morning when he knew the worst. He was going to London, and seemed almost to look forward to the trip.

"I shall be back to-morrow," he said. "The funeral will be from here."

He hurried off with a light step to the station, and Kitty and her mother looked after him from the door.

"We must be very kind to father," her mother said. "He's awfully cut up."

There were no lessons that morning. The child was taken into the little town to be measured for a black frock. After she had been measured she sat and saw her mother measured. A feeling of importance came to her. The dressmaker showed marked respect, and evinced great interest in all that was said. She expressed conventional sympathy, and seemed to wish to

hear the whole story of the death over again. Outside, in the streets of the little town, several persons stopped the child and her mother, and said how sorry they were to hear the news. Kitty began to think that the whole world must know of the death in the family. Persons, who ordinarily would have gone by with a nod, stood, talking, for several minutes. Yes, the child felt a new and not unpleasant importance; but, once back in the shaded house, a sense of gloom settled upon her. It occurred to her that it would be unseemly to do anything but sit still, and the afternoon stretched very long before her.

"Oh, look here, darling," her mother said, "you haven't got to be sad. That won't do at all. You can play about if you like."

"Oh, may I?" Kitty asked.

"Of course you may." They were in the nursery, and her mother looked towards the window. "And there's no need to have the blinds down here. Nobody can see these windows." She crossed the room, and she drew up the blinds. "There, that's better," she said, as she let in the light. "Now make yourself as happy and as comfie as you can, Kitty, for you'll be all by yourself for the whole afternoon; I

shall be so busy ; I've got hundreds of things to do. Play away to your heart's content, and promise me that you won't be unhappy. Promise."

Kitty promised, not unwillingly.

"Remember now," said her mother, "you've promised, and I shall be very angry if you're not happy. You're such a silly little dear ; you always contrive to fret if you can. But there's nothing to fret about this time. I don't see in the least why you should shed tears for your grandmother. Of course it's very sad, but you scarcely knew her. She's been ill so long, and it's months since you saw her last. And don't you fret about father. He's very sad, of course, because she was his mother, and you'd be sad if I died, wouldn't you, Kitty ?"

Kitty shrugged herself as though the very thought were hateful.

"Oh, muvvie, I'd die too," she said.

"Yes, but it's different when it was a grandmother you hardly knew. And father'll get over it soon. He's half glad she's dead. Poor old granny was very ill, and the longer she lived the more she suffered. But don't you worry, Kitty. I'm so busy I can't have you worrying and wanting to be comforted."

Her mother kissed her and left her. Kitty was somewhat relieved to find that she was not expected to be sad. To tell the truth, her grandmother's death did not leave her with a very great sense of loss. Squatting before her dolls' house, the child, from a sense of duty, tried to remember what she could of her grandmother. It seemed to Kitty that on such a day as this she owed it to the dead to think of the dead, and she sought out her recollections of her grandmother, and remembered a tall, gaunt old woman who had inspired her more with awe than with love. Kitty had, she found now, been rather afraid of her grandmother. Though she did not know it, there had always been a silent antagonism between her mother and her grandmother. No one had spoken of this antagonism, or had ever dared to entertain it in thought even for one moment, but it had existed, and, unconscious of it as the child might have been, it had entered into her soul, and, her mother's champion, she had, without knowing it or actually feeling it, been hostile to her grandmother. With regard to the course of her little life, the care of her little soul, the treatment of her little body, and the clothing of her little form, there had

always been a difference of opinion between her mother and her grandmother, and Kitty had naturally sided with her mother. Not that the child knew anything about it, or had ever thought that she disliked her grandmother. But she could not help feeling, now that her grandmother was dead, that she was not quite so sorry as perhaps a good child ought to be. It was, too, so long since she had seen her grandmother that she could not conjure up more than a dim recollection of the old woman's figure. Kitty tried to believe that she would feel her grandmother's death more if she had seen her grandmother more frequently of late. But if the child were not excessively sad, she was filled with the solemnity of what had happened. It was a mother who had died—her father's mother—and to remember that brought a little flutter of insecurity to Kitty. Mothers died. Suppose her own mother died! Kitty tried not to think of it. For her her mother's death would mean the end of all things, all hope, all joy, even of existence, she thought. And yet her father had not even cried; she knew that he was sad, but he had not cried. She pictured herself sobbing and shrieking if her own lovely

mother died, and she was puzzled to know how her father could bear his grief so silently. She supposed that everything was different when one grew older; one did not feel things so keenly. At first Kitty nursed this thought with joy, for she longed for the time when her little heart would not be so ready to ache and so prone to bleed, and then in horror she threw the thought from her. Would there come a time when she would not love her mother as dearly as she did now, when her mother would not be so lovely as now, but old and gaunt like the woman just dead, when she and her mother might be separated for months at a time, and yet not feel the separation? Would, could such a time come? It seemed impossible, and yet perhaps her father, in his time, when he was a child, had thought the thing impossible. To feel that possibly her mother and she might some day be less near and dear to one another than they were now sent a chill through Kitty. It was horrible to contemplate; she did not want to think that it could ever be. Kitty was a passionate lover, and she loved her mother devotedly. The child was too young as yet to think that she would ever come to love

others even as she loved her mother, come, possibly, to love a husband and children of her own. All she knew was that her little life was love, and that her mother was love, and that her life and her mother were so merged that she could not see how she could ever live without her mother. Yet she had before her the spectacle of her father sad at his mother's death, and yet not heart-broken. She knew that her own sweet mother must die some time, and wondered what that death would mean to her. Would it mean utter misery, or would it mean no more than her grandmother's death meant to her father? She scarcely knew which to hope. The first would rob her of her own life, with which she was not eager to part, and the second seemed disloyal to her mother. She looked right through her dolls' house into the awesome faces of these thoughts, and then, remembering her promise not to fret, shook the thoughts from her, and, that mother-doll and child-doll might never be parted, on the instant granted her dolls immortality. Never, never, never should any of her dolls die, she determined on this afternoon when the weight of death lay on the house. A death had occurred

which affected her only remotely, but she was feeling the oppression of it. Death had not before approached so near to her; this was the first time it had ever removed any one she actually knew, and it was startling, telling as it did of the inevitable, though probably by no means imminent nearer approach. She had to toss her head and to shake the halo of crisp brown curls which surrounded it to clear her mind of vague shadows. The actual fact that her grandmother was dead did not trouble her much, but respect for the dead had drawn down the blinds in her heart, and the shades were deep therein. But, as her mother had let up the blinds in the nursery, so the child let up the blinds on her play, and, with her dolls, she contrived to be happy, though the preoccupied atmosphere of the house was a little depressing, when now and again she paused, as it were, to listen to it.

She was still playing with her dolls when dusk fell. Her mother came then, and lit the gas.

"Not had your tea, Kitty?" her mother asked.

"No."

"Wherever is nurse? I suppose she's gossiping somewhere. Servants do love a death. But

you must have your tea at once. We don't want two funerals, do we? We can't spare you yet, Kitty."

Yet! Kitty thought the word over. Then there might be a time when the death of one or other of them might not be so horrible to her or her mother.

"Could you ever, muvvie?" she said, speaking her thoughts aloud.

Her mother caught her up and kissed her.

"No, never, never, Kitty," her mother cried; "so let's hurry up your tea."

The evening was very quiet. Kitty stayed till bedtime with her mother.

"Kitty," her mother said, "we'll have to be very good to father now. He's dreadfully sad."

"Poor father. Is he?"

"Yes, awfully. But you don't understand, child. You expect to see him cry, as you would if I died. But he's different. He's grown up, and a man, and he doesn't cry. That's the worst of it. He feels it all the more. I wish he did cry. It would do him good."

"Poor father," Kitty said again. She felt a little guilty at having thought her father's grief less keen than perhaps it was. Still, she did

hope that her grief in the terrible event of her mother's death would be less restrained and wilder than this. Sitting before the fire, at her mother's feet, and rubbing her small head along her mother's thigh, and feeling in every fibre the love that existed between her and her mother, she thought that she would hate herself, if she were not utterly and irrevocably miserable, should her mother die. For her to be anything but overwhelmed with grief there must first come a lessening in this great love, and to contemplate even the least lessening was unwelcome, almost intolerable.

"You mustn't ever die, muvvie," she whispered.

Her mother's hand came down, and gripped Kitty's arm tightly.

"Nor you, Kitty."

"No," said Kitty.

Her father came back next day. His manner was ordinary. His voice was firm, and he went about, straight and confident. Kitty wondered that his voice did not shake, and that he did not stumble blindly through the house. His mother was dead, and yet he attended to his business, and ate his meals. She could not understand it. She was ever placing herself

in his position, ever imagining herself under his trouble, and she saw herself so different from him. She saw herself mad and violent or prostrate, and then looked on him, calm and upright. Too kind to pass any judgment on his manner, she yet dreaded to think that some day she, too, might be equally impassive, and would be able to bear her grief so coldly. But before that could be she knew that there must be a great alteration in her whole nature. Her passions, which were now all in all to her, the very essence of her life, would have to be worn wofully bare. She hated to think of a time when there might be less love in her being, but her father's bearing of his grief foretold that time for her, and she was almost angry with him that his manner did so. Perhaps she was selfish and greedy of kisses and caresses, but she was thinking that, as her love for others cooled, so would others' love for her diminish. The world ahead looked very chill.

On the third day the body came down from London. The coffin was placed on trestles in one of the rooms, and the child peeped in at it. She had expected to be very frightened,

but there was nothing awful in the coffin. Indeed, her artistic sense was gratified by the light polish and symmetrical lines of the coffin. That her grandmother was in the coffin she scarcely realised, or at least realised without horror. This fact struck her very forcibly as she turned away from the room, and made her thoughtful. Was her love for people already cooling? Were her passions dying out? Not yet, she hoped—not just yet. She wished that the coffin had inspired her with more horror, for she wanted to think that she could still love deeply and fiercely. But it was without the least feeling of tears that she came away from the coffin. Fearfully sensible of her cooling passions, she sought out her mother; the child could not rest until she had put to the test the old love between her and her mother. To her relief Kitty found that this passion at least had not cooled. They loved each other dearly. The feeling that had come to her when she looked at the coffin, that her love was lessening, made Kitty cling to her mother for the rest of the day. Away from her mother, the child experienced with little shudders that dread foreseeing of the slow but steady dwindling of

love as a power in her life. But, close to her mother, she forgot the future in the sufficiency of the present.

The funeral itself was exciting to Kitty. The importance which she had felt, when persons stopped her and her mother in the street to express sympathy and consolation, returned with the actual ceremony. It was a big funeral, such as Kitty would have liked for herself. Her grandmother until quite recently had lived in the village, and she had been well known in the neighbourhood. Her coffin was borne from the house to the old churchyard by the very men from the mills, who had carried her husband, their master, on the same journey some six or seven years ago. Behind the coffin came Kitty's father and mother, and his brothers and sisters, and their wives and husbands; and then the grandchildren of all sizes, with Kitty among them; next, other relatives, distant cousins, and various friends, mill-owners, doctors, lawyers, a squire or so from the hills and the Vale, many farmers, and mysterious persons whom no one could identify; behind them the mill-hands, men and women, walking two and two with heavy tread; and, last of all, the

general population of the village, holiday-making for the purpose. Kitty thought there must be thousands of persons in the procession which wound through the half mile of lane from the house to the churchyard; certainly there were hundreds. With the thrill in her of the procession's tread and the wonder, which every peep behind her brought her, of the number of people in the world, the child was not sad. At the graveside she heard the lap of the crisp little waves of the clear canal water running along the edge of the old churchyard rather than the voice of the clergyman; the rustle of the few leaves that remained on the trees rather than the words of the service. Her attention strayed, and she looked at her little cousins, and picked and chose which of them she liked and which she disliked. Some of them had come a long way, and were strangers to her. She studied them critically, and they studied her. Then she felt suddenly that the wind was cold, and, looking up, saw that the sky was dark and full of rain. She found herself hoping, because her frock was new, that they would get home before it began to rain. All the while she had the feeling that the solemn part of the service was about

to begin, and that she must collect her thoughts. It was with a sudden shock that she found that the service was over.

"Look in, Kitty," said her mother, "and see the last of grannie."

Kitty, holding her mother's hand, looked into the grave. There she saw her grandmother's coffin with little clods of earth upon it, and other coffins, the coffins of generations of her father's family. Kitty did not cry, nor did she feel like crying; nor did she see or hear any one cry.

"That's the last coffin they'll be able to get in there," she heard one of her uncles say. "It's just about full."

The wind turned bitterly cold, and she felt the first spot of rain. She half hoped never to grow up if it meant that one, having arrived at years of discretion, could speak so casually over the grave into which one's mother had just been put. Kitty gripped her mother's hand tight, to persuade herself that she would never be so callous at her mother's funeral as to be able to make such remarks. Then she remembered that there had been a time when she had thought that she would howl at the death

of her grandmother; but her grandmother was dead, and had just been buried, and Kitty had to remember that she had not cried or even felt near to tears. The rustle of the wind in the trees and the lap of the water along the edge of the churchyard grew loud in the air, and seemed to Kitty to tell her that love was something which died as one grew old, and that she would be as unemotional as any of them when she was a woman. It was a desolate prospect, and Kitty, determined to have love now, while it lasted, tightened her grasp on her mother's hand.

"You're not falling in, are you, Kitty?" her mother asked.

"No, don't ee vall in, missie," said a farmer, whom curiosity had drawn to the edge of the grave.

"Let's go home, muvvie," Kitty said.

"Yes; it's going to rain."

At home there were no tears. Men, in awkward black, drank wine and ate biscuits, and spoke of trains to catch and of to-morrow's engagements. How different, Kitty thought, it would be if it were her mother who was dead. Could she, Kitty, in such a case, think

of to-morrow's engagements? No, Kitty thought, for her there would be no morrow; she could not live without her mother. But to these men and women, the sons and daughters of her grandmother, the loss of their mother seemed of little importance. Her father behaved just as he did at other times. Yet, she supposed, he had once loved his mother as she, the child, loved hers. It was to see how his filial love had shrunk from a passion as intense as hers to this seeming indifference to his mother's death that frightened her. Would his love for her, his child, shrink in the same way, so that he came at last not to care whether she lived or died? Somehow the thought was growing within her heart that love lessened with age, and she was frightened to think of this lessening. She had to-day seen that the time came when children no longer needed their mother, and she could look forward with any pleasure to that time, for now her mother was all in all to her. Very thoughtful, Kitty stole away to her nursery. Presently her mother joined her there.

"I wish those men would go," her mother said. "Father wants to be alone."

"Is father sad, then?"

"Yes, Kitty, very."

Kitty thought it over. Her mother said that her father was sad. Perhaps he was, but why didn't he show it? Was he ashamed of it? Why should he be ashamed of it? Did grown-ups think it wicked to show grief? She could not make it out, and tried not to think about it. She did not want to judge her father when her own eyes had been so dry at the funeral.

After a while her father came up. He stretched himself, and yawned.

"Thank God, they're gone," he said. "I thought they never would go."

Then he walked about the room, humming to himself. He stood before Kitty's toys, picked them up, and idly examined them.

"What time's dinner?" he asked suddenly.

"Seven," said Kitty's mother.

"Good! I'm hungry."

He stood by the fire and raised himself, first on his toes and then on his heels. He was still humming, and Kitty thought that he didn't look much like a man who had lost his mother. He lit a cigarette, and frowned at it.

"I'm a bit tired," he said.

He sat down, and with an impatient exclamation threw the cigarette into the fire. He scraped his hand up and down under his chin, and over his cheeks, and over his lips; and then, his elbows on his knees, nursed his chin. His shoulders bent, and slowly the whole of his face sank into his hands and was covered up by them. Kitty looked at him. Was he crying? She crossed softly to him, and, standing before him, tugged at his wrists with her little hands. He took his hands away from his eyes. The palms and his cheeks were wet as he looked at her. He was crying. Kitty's heart leapt with joy to see his tears. She pitied him in his grief because she loved him, but to see his tears was to have a great load taken off her mind. They told her that love of one's mother lasted late into life, and scattered the doubts that had assailed her in the past few days. No, love did not die as one grew up; it altered in appearance—that was all. Her father cried when the mother he loved was dead, and she felt that in the silence of his tears there was as much pain and love as there would be in her own boisterous passion. She knew sympathetically that his heart was half broken, and though she was

in a way glad to see his tears, she was sorry for him, and wanted to comfort him.

"Kiss me, kiss me, father," she said impulsively. "I want to comfie you."

He kissed her, and she nestled to him.

"Good Kitty," he said. "Yes, comfort me, for I'm very sad."

THE WEATHER

SHE took a tender interest in the weather. For some reason or other she had come to feel sorry for it. It seemed to her that the weather had passed its prime and was not able to do now the great things it had done in the middle of the century. Apparently, in the days of her grandparents, the weather had so exerted itself to accomplish great and extraordinary performances that to-day it was but a poor weak thing with a crick in its back. So she felt sorry for the weather, which had lost its vigour and had fallen from its one-time high estate. There was something so pitiable in its efforts to equal its records made in the last generation. All night long the wind would bluster round the house and bellow in the chimney, frightening her so that she drew the clothes well up over her head, but, when in the morning she remarked awfully what a terrible storm had raged over-night, some one

would be sure to remember that a much more terrible storm had occurred in 1858; and a quarter of a mile up the road a tablet had been placed on the wall of the inn, some two or three feet above the level of the road, and this tablet showed the height to which the waters of the flood of 1852 had risen.

Even now, in these degenerate days, the weather was able to produce floods once or twice each winter. The river lay to the back of the house, perhaps half a mile away, and sometimes the water crept across the meadows towards the house. Then was the child happy. All the artist in her nature went out towards the watery landscape. She would climb to the top of the house and look eagerly out on the glassy meadows. Her eyes hungrily took in every detail of the scene. The meadows, so monotonously green at other times of the year, were now all dancing silver, and the trees and such parts of the hedges and ricks and barns as stood above the water were more definite of shape, more delicate in outline, and darker in colour than she had hitherto thought them. But such an outlook was only a short-lived joy. Presently the trees became more like their usual

selves, the hedges and barns and ricks grew downwards from their tops, and the silver of the water became spreckled with little black dots. These dots gathered into patches and streaks that spread quickly across the meadows, and next morning she would wake to find that the water had all gone back into the river, and the world was green again.

Once a very strange flood came from the river. It was May, and warm and fine, but far away on the distant hills rain had been falling heavily for several days, and one morning the river topped its banks, and the water came quickly across the meadows, and a licking tongue crept down either gutter of the road, moving a little barrier of dust before it. Presently the two tongues joined across the crown of the road, and the road became a river and the raised causeway along the side looked like a tow-path. Higher and higher the water rose, and splashing carts gave way to a boat with a boisterous crew. In time the flood encroached upon the footpath, and rolled in tiny ripples to the feet of the child, who stood just outside the gate of her home. Soon these ripples had borne a cork under the gate, and the child, her feet wet, was ordered

back by her nurse and mother to the drier drive. All that afternoon the cork passed leisurely in and out under the gate, but the flood rose no higher. But, surely, the child thought, this flood was deeper than the flood of 1852. Her father, however, who went up the road in a canoe which he had found buried in the lumber of a loft over the stables, brought back word that the tablet on the wall of the inn was well above the surface of the water. The child was grievously disappointed. She had hoped that at last the weather had broken a record, but, according to her father, it had failed to touch record by at least two feet, and she could almost have cried in her disappointment. She turned away dejectedly from watching the cork; for the moment she had lost all interest in the world. The weather was truly a poor, broken-down miserable thing compared with what it had been before 1860. Her heart became very sad as she thought of this; it seemed to her that the best of life was being withheld from her, but, after all, it was a flood to which the local papers devoted long accounts, and the child realised, when her disappointment became less keen, that the weather had done in her lifetime

at least one thing of which she might, in later years, tell her own children with bated breath. She envied her parents and grandparents their recollections of storms and floods; and, though she felt that she could never have such tremendous recollections of the weather as her elders had, she hoped that to the ears of the next generation her account of this flood would sound quite as wonderful as her grandfather's account of the great flood of 1852 sounded to her own ears. For a whole day her home had been an island, completely surrounded by water and entirely cut off from the rest of the world. She longed for the day, thirty years or so hence, when she might recount to some little girl how the water had crept under the gate, and how men had sculled up the road, which she supposed, if the weather continued to lose its powers, would be always dry in the days of that little girl who was to come. But she knew that she would never tell her tale with the relish with which her grandfather told his, for he had to tell of a horse drowned in the stables and of a piano which floated out of a window.

What vexed the child most was that the weather was never seasonable. When they

read to her in books of white Christmases, she could but feel that the world was decaying. She longed to see snow on the ground at Christmas. But Christmas came and went each year without even a frost.

"What a beautiful day!" her father and her mother would exclaim.

But the child thought it anything but beautiful; it was a day that spoiled all the beauties of Christmas, that laughed, it seemed to her, at all the traditions of the season. Somehow such weather, with the birds singing brightly in the morning when she awoke, made her stocking seem not half so full as it really was. There was no cosiness about a Christmas when it seemed more pleasant to be out-of-doors than indoors. It was so galling to hear her parents speak of that far away Christmas, long, long before she was born, when the snow was so deep that it came up to the window-sills, and the front door could not be opened. She felt sure that she would have enjoyed that Christmas far more than her parents professed to have enjoyed it, and yet it had been granted to them, and was denied to her. The world certainly was full of injustice, and she the victim of a most blundering fate. Nor was it

particularly conducive to a proper Christmas appetite to have elderly relatives—uncles who had walked some distance — coming into the house, puffing and blowing and vowing that it was as warm as summer, ever so many degrees in the shade, and begging that a window might be opened, and that they might sit as far as possible from the fire. These people brought an atmosphere of indigestion into the house, and the figures they quoted as given by their thermometers appalled her, not because she understood the figures, but because her uncles grew so excited and even quarrelsome with each other in talking of them.

Later in the winter snow promised, but it rarely came. Now and again a biting wind, which smelt of snow, would cover the sky all day with a blue-grey rack, and she would hear people say that they felt snow in their bones. Then would she go to bed with joy and fear in her heart. To-morrow might show her a world covered with snow, or to-morrow might not. In the morning it was probably long before she dared to look out of the window. When her nurse pulled aside the curtain, the child kept her eyes to the wall. In time, of course, she was obliged

to look out, and then, as a rule, a bitter disappointment awaited her. The world was just as it had been yesterday—the same old green and black world.

But at long intervals, perhaps once a winter, her wish for snow was granted. Evening would fall early on one of these biting, cloudy days, and after tea she would sit before her nursery fire, praying earnestly that it might snow. Every few minutes she would go to the window, and, her eyes shaded and her face close against the pane, would peer out into the night. The night without would be very black, the swaying, whispering trees darkly black against the lesser black of the sky, but she would think she saw a stray flake eddying past the window. She would go back with more hope to the fireside and to her prayers. Then, perhaps, she would hear her father come in. With a throb of joy she would hear that he stamped his feet as he took off his overcoat in the hall. She would know what this tramping meant; he was shaking snow off his boots. She would go to the door to listen.

"Beastly night, snowing like the devil," would be his greeting of her mother.

The nursery would suddenly light up into

double cosiness, and the child would feel ecstatically happy. Snow was come at last. Perhaps, after all, this would prove just such a winter as that which her father remembered — the great winter when an ox was roasted whole on the ice on the river, and wagons crossed the river by the ice instead of by the bridge.

But next morning, about eleven o'clock, she would hear drip, drip, all round the house, and her heart would sadden. The snow, so long delayed, was quickly going ; the weather no longer had the stamina it had once possessed.

THE AGONY

HER mother was ill; they would tell her no more. That much she knew already; it was an old knowledge with her, a crushing, terrifying knowledge which seemed to go right back to the very beginning of her life, eating out all the joy she had ever had. It was possible that the clock had ticked away scarcely half-an-hour since it had first dawned upon her that something awful had happened to her lovely mother, but the child had already suffered an eternity of anguish, and she could not believe that ever in her life she had been happy. What she wanted to know was: How ill was her mother? Was she dangerously ill? Would she live? The child stood, trembling and miserable, outside the door of her mother's bedroom, and asked these questions pantingly of all who went in or out of the room. No one would answer her; they all scolded her and told her she was very naughty. Why it was

naughty to be in such an agony of love she could not tell. If it were naughtiness, it was a naughtiness of which she would gladly have been innocent. But it was an obstinate sin which would not be corrected. They might scold her, they might try to slap her out of her tears, but so long as her mother lay ill her little heart must break, no matter how wicked that breaking might be. She was aware that her grief did her mother no good, and that fact heightened her misery. She loved her mother passionately, but she could not help her mother when her mother was ill and needed help. Standing, useless and helpless, weakly crying, and in everybody's way, outside that door behind which was a horror the extent of which she did know, the child realised the one-sidedness of her relations with her mother. It was all giving on the mother's part and all receiving on the child's. The mother could comfort and soothe the child out of any pain ; the child could only be naughtily, wickedly, impractically broken-hearted when her mother was in pain. A great fear struck into her heart that they would tell her mother how her little girl was grief-stricken, and so add to her mother's pain, for her mother would grieve to hear that her child was unhappy.

Her father came out of the room; she caught at his hand and poured out her tearful questions. He shook her off, and she staggered back.

"Get away," he said roughly, and passed on.

Even her father would not tell her, even her father was angry with her. She went away with a sob. It was no use staying by the door. It only angered them to see her there; she was not wanted there; that was the cruellest cut of all; she was not wanted there, when the mother she loved, and adored, and worshipped lay ill. She was ready to do any help in her power, but God had made her love nothing greater than a misery to her; her love, intense though it might be, served no practical purpose. She crept away, numb with misery. She went into the nursery, and stood at the window, looking out. It was late in a May afternoon, and the sunshine was a cold, yellow haze which turned the garden and the fields all cheerless. She scarcely recognised the objects upon which she looked; her grief altered the focus of her vision; she gazed on a vague new world which was very different from the world of yesterday. Nothing was green, as it had been then; all was a sickly, jaundiced yellow; she hated now the sight of many things

she had formerly loved. To look at anything for more than a moment was to find that thing driving cruelly into her heart the memory of the time when, in much happier circumstances, she had looked upon this and other objects. The calf, rubbing its neck against the railings, reminded her of those many occasions when she had stood with her mother, happily watching it, this new joy out-of-doors, which seemed never likely to die out. To recall how the calf would feed from her mother's hand caused her heart to reel and tumble right through her; the calf might never feed from her mother's hand again. What would the child care for all this world without her mother to guide her through it, to point out all the little humours of it? She dared not think, she would not think, she could not think. The world without her mother was too horribly impossible; most mercifully it was beyond her comprehension.

Not only was her heart broken, but her pride was wounded, and her sense of justice hurt. Was she, the child, nobody, that they would tell her nothing, that they would not answer her questions? Did she not count amongst those who loved, and were loved by, her mother, that they

should drive her away when her mother was ill? Why was her solicitude so frowned upon? Why did they deny her the right of filial grief? She supposed that there was no virtue in love from such a wicked heart as hers; her mother, always so kind, had tolerated this unworthy love, but these others, who now took her mother from her, knew what a poor, wretched love it was and kept it from her mother, lest it should hurt her as she lay ill and weak.

What was it they wouldn't tell her? Was her mother dying? Was her mother dead? Was the truth so awful that they were afraid to tell it to her? But could anything be worse than this suspense, this not knowing? Her credulity fostered a hundred dread probabilities; her imagination made facts of the remotest possibilities. In the agony of her uncertainty the tip of the first finger of each hand ground round and round on the inside of her thumb. It was an action of which she was not aware, and she did not feel that her little nails tore her flesh. The pain of not knowing what there was to know and of dreading to know it, the jar which had come to her love, the bruising her tender heart had received, the horrible questions that tortured her

because no one would answer them, the choking excursions of her imagination blocked out from her senses such a thing as physical pain.

She grew indignant. She was her mother's child, and had a right to know how ill her mother was. If the servants knew, why should not she? Why should they know, if she did not know? They knew without being scolded; she was scolded for wanting to know; they scolded her. It was her mother, not theirs, who lay ill. It was not fair, it was not right, it was almost sacrilege that they should know more about the mother than her own child did. The child, who had tried to be all in all to her mother, who had loved her mother heart and soul, and to whom her mother had been all in all, had indignation, fierce, passionate indignation, added to her grief when she thought how these other people were allowed the dear and terrible knowledge that was withheld from her. She hated them; she even hated her father. He would not tell her what he knew, and what she wanted to know. He drove her away from her mother's door as though she had no right there. He wanted her mother all to himself in this, perhaps the last, moment of her mother's life. The child's

soul was very bitter. She had loved and loved, she had racked and tortured herself with love, she had lived all her little years in the constant pain of love, and yet her father would not believe that her mother was so near and dear to her, or that she was so near and dear to her mother, that he should share with her his grief at her mother's illness. He took the servants into his confidence, he let the servants go to her mother's room, but to her, the child, he would only speak angrily, and he drove her away from the door. She had loved with every fibre in her little body, with every chord in her nature, and now it was not thought to concern her that her mother was ill and suffering ; they were even angry, very angry with her for being concerned. It was an unjust, a slighting construction they put upon her love. It hurt her even through her grief at her mother's illness. She knew that she was a very naughty child, with every inclination to do what was wrong, but she did think that she loved as a child should love, and she had thought that she was loved as a child should be loved. In her affections she had given her best, though possibly that was very little, and this was the return, a scolding because her love brought her to tears

and questions. She was made up of love, but her love was counted as nothing when the real test of it came. If her love were nothing, if her love were not needed, she was nothing, she was not needed, for she and her love were one. All that she prided herself upon, all that she could show to God for commendation, all that made, as she thought, the world tolerate her was spurned when her mother was ill; they would have none of it; it was useless, worthless when her mother suffered; they would not care to remember it, she would not care to remember it, she did not think she would live to remember it if her mother died. But she could not believe that it was quite worthless, she dared not believe that it was; it was her love which had enabled her to live in hope of being led to better things; she must give way altogether, she must sink under the weight of living, if she thought her love, her one virtue, was and had been nothing. She could not understand why they should be angry with her because she loved her mother even more passionately when she was ill than when she was well. What was the sin in it? But she supposed that, even if she could not understand, they knew, who were so much older than she and were so angry with her.

Suddenly the long black shadows of the trees ate up all the yellow evening world, and her heart seemed as if it would never beat again. She knew now why they were angry with her, why even her father was angry; she knew, most miserably knew. She saw it all in a flash, and for the moment every nerve in her body stopped. She did not see, nor hear, nor feel; she was only aware, in some vague way, of being deep down in a great emptiness. Then slowly her senses returned. She saw the calf butt foolishly at some vision of its ruminating mind; she heard the one pigeon left by the cats fly with a melancholy whir and whistle of wings to its desolate cote; she felt the chill of evening, and shuddered; lastly, the power of thought returned, and her mind went back again into the afternoon, and she saw with horror what had not occurred to her before. It was her fault that her mother was ill. She had hurt her mother, perhaps had killed her mother. It was easy now to understand why every one was so angry; she was as angry with herself as any one else was; for all her love, she had hurt her beautiful mother. She had not meant it, she had not meant it; it was all an accident; it had hap-

pened in a moment, a moment so short that until now she had not connected it with her mother's illness. She had not done it wickedly, only in carelessness, but they were angry with her, and she could not forgive herself. Perhaps she had killed her mother. Soon they would come and tell her, and take her to prison. She hoped they would hang her. She did not want to live, she could not live if she had killed her mother. Her nails ground and ground into her thumbs, which were now wet with blood; and the blood smeared over the skirt of her little white frock.

She was thinking of the afternoon, since which had passed an eternity. She and her mother had been for a walk over the fields. On the top bar of one of the stiles the child had stood, balancing herself, for one proud moment, in which she felt that she ought to be a performer in a circus. But the bar was worn by the sitting of many people, and was smooth and slippery, and one of her little feet had shot out into mid-air. Her mother had caught at her, snatching at her hand, to save her from a fall, and the fall had become but a leap to the ground, where she landed, unhurt and laughing. But she had been

one side of the stile, and her mother the other, and her little weight had drawn her mother sharply up against the stile. There had been a dull shock as her mother's shoulder came against the heavy top bar, and her mother's eyes had closed, and a puzzled look of pain had knotted up her brow.

"Oh mother, you're hurt!"

"Oh no, Kitty," her mother had gasped, "but you gave me such a shock. I thought you were going to fall."

Then they had walked home, her mother talking wildly and breathlessly all the way. She had wanted to take her mother's hand, but her mother drew her hand away with a little cry.

"The other hand, for mercy's sake the other hand, Kitty."

It had been strange and unfamiliar, holding the other, the unusual hand, and it had seemed to the child that her mother stumbled as she walked, but they had got home very quickly. In the hall they had come upon her father, who was in his flannels and was lacing up upon his tennis shoes.

"Hello, Molly," he had said; "like a game of tennis?"

Her mother had tried to answer him, had swayed to and fro, had tottered forward, and then had fallen down on the tiles with a groan. The child had thrown herself weeping on her mother, and had called upon her mother, who lay still and pale as stone, to speak to her, to speak to her little girl and kiss her. She did not know what had happened, except that it was very horrible and very like things which they had read to her in books. Her mother had fainted as mothers did in books; perhaps her mother would die as they did in books, only mothers in books nearly always died when their little girls were quite babies. The child had remembered what things happened in the books which were read for her amusement and edification, and had grown sick with apprehension. Then her father had dragged her roughly back, and, lifting up her mother, had carried her mother away.

Yes, it was her fault that her mother was ill. Her little foolish childish game on top of the stile, where she had tried to do what it took people in circuses years to learn to do, had resulted in a great injury to her mother. She recalled her mother's look of pain at the stile, and how her mother, by talking so quickly all

the way home, had tried to hide her pain, because she knew that the child would be grieved to think that she had caused her mother hurt; and her great love for her mother mingled exquisitely with an agony of remorse. She was no longer surprised that they were angry with her, she only wondered that they were so little angry, that they did not come and reproach her, and with blame aggravate the misery of her torn heart. Nothing that they could do to her could be so harsh that she did not deserve it; she would submit to any punishment; she wished that by putting her to some punishment they could repair the mischief of which she was the author. But perhaps the mischief was irreparable. Could any one, could anything remove the hurt she had done her mother? She longed to know, and yet dreaded to know. She dared not ask now; she could not bear the ordeal of listening to the answer. There was just a little hope in her uncertainty, while in the truth there might be none. And she could face no one now that she remembered that she was the cause of her mother's illness. She wanted to hide from them all; she was bitterly ashamed of herself. She could not go to them; she shuddered to think

that soon they would come to her. This loneliness in the darkening room was horrible, but it was the best thing that life had for her at present. She shrank when she heard footsteps in the house; once she gave a little nervous gasp, for in her fancy she thought she felt some one touch her. As she could not have her mother, she was glad to be alone. At any rate it was peaceful here by the window. She wondered at her peace; she was angry with herself for being so calm, when her mother lay ill, perhaps dying. How was it she was not mad with grief? True, she was very miserable and very frightened, and her heart throbbed and throbbed, but it made her love seem so much smaller than she had hoped it was, that she could stand here and listen passively, as it were, to the great clamour of her fears. Her thoughts might whirl and whirl in an agony of remorse and reparation, but at times she rose up out of her mental chaos as up through the core of a whirlpool, and for a moment found herself, still and quiet, a motionless little figure which she could not understand, in the twilight by the window. She hated herself for that her eyes were not blind with tears. She did not truly love her mother if, when she had

hurt her mother so that her mother had fainted, she could look out of the window and see clearly the long, jagged black line of the landscape against the pale dying gold of the sky. She felt that she ought to fall to the ground and lie there, a little sobbing heap. But, though her grief was as intense as ever, she had no inclination to sob now. Her soul was in torment, but this awful calm possessed her body. She could not cry; she doubted that she could stir a step from where she stood. Her thoughts ranged space with all its horrors; her soul fled, haunted, through eternities of emotion, but her flesh was rooted here in ghastly peace, at the window of her nursery.

She had had no tea, but she did not remember that. She only felt the cold, a cruel, creeping cold which clutched at her heart and turned her blood to water in her veins. The chill trickled through her, and she had not the power to move hand or foot to check it. She was almost certain now that her mother was dead. She had never known the house so silent. What did this great silence mean? She had heard that death came silently with hushed tread and muffled wings. She strained her ears, but not a sound

came to her from the house. Outside, too, all was silent. The road behind the shrubs gave none of its usual noises. The numb peace of her body had spread to the house, the garden, the fields, and the road. Death was peace, they had told her once, when, in a child's nightmare, she had wakened up, wildly afraid of death, and they had tried to send her to sleep again. Here was peace, complete, unbroken. Was this peace the death of her mother? They were hiding something from her; the death of her mother was a thing they would be likely to hide from her. There were other explanations of this peace no doubt, but they were no easier to substantiate than was this one which had a thousand fears to urge its acceptance.

What did she know to help her to her choice of an explanation? Only that they would not tell her something, and that that something must be very terrible or they would not keep it from her. It was impossible to drive away the half belief that, when she jumped from the stile, she had killed her mother, who now lay, still and white, in her room, from whose door the child had been harshly told to go. If her mother had been alive, they would surely have let the

child go in to say how sorry she was she had hurt her mother; they would not have denied the child that. But they had not let her go in, and they were all very angry. What then was she to think?

She tried to shut her mind to all thought. She would not think that her mother was dead. But the thought, the half belief, and the full misery ever hovered by. It sprang on her and crushed her down; she struggled with it and half conquered it, and it crushed her down again. She did not tell herself that her mother was dead, but she pictured the world as it would be if her mother were dead. She saw herself, hopeless and helpless, in a world which was empty of her mother. Her father would be there, kind perhaps, but ever reproaching her with that she had killed her mother, the lovely woman they both loved passionately. She did not suppose that he would always be so angry as he was this evening; he would probably forgive her, as she did not deserve to be forgiven, when his grief grew less; but she would always feel that she had robbed him, by her foolish little game on the stile, of all that he lived for. She would have taken her

mother from him, and have destroyed his love for herself. She would always be good to him, trying to make up in every way she could for what she had done; she would love him, even though he could love her no more; she would be a good child, a far better child than she was now. She promised God that she would be better, that she would never balance herself on stiles again. Then she turned giddy, the peace of her body broke a little, she fell to her knees, so that her head rested on the sill of the window. Tears were nearer to her eyes than they had been for more than an hour now, but still she did not cry. She was wondering miserably how she could keep this promise, how she could be good in a world which did not hold her mother. Her whole life so far had been governed by her love of her mother. What object would she have in life, what purpose in being good, if her mother were dead? She could not live without her mother, she could not be good. There would be nothing to live for, no one to guide her. If her mother were dead, the child must die too. But the child did not want to die. She was afraid of death. She could not die willingly, cheerfully;

yet she did not see how she could live without her mother. To her grief at her mother's death was added the terror that she herself must die. Sobbing came to her at last. She would not believe that her mother was dead. God would not have allowed her to kill her mother in a little playful accident; God would not have allowed her mother, in bravely preventing her child from falling, to hurt herself so badly; God would not let her mother die, who was so good and beautiful; God would let the child live, who would be good and didn't want to die, and would let her have her mother back; for God was good. It was a wonderful thing to believe that God was good; it made her think that the world was not perhaps quite so illogical as she had thought it was, and that her little fault on the stile would not bear such disproportionate and monstrous fruit as in her fears she had half believed it had; but it was only a momentary relief that came to her. She choked when the question occurred to her mind: Why should God listen to her, when she it was who had hurt her mother? What right had she to ask Him to set right what she had put wrong? It was

no use praying. Who would listen to her, the naughtiest child in all the world, the child who had hurt and perhaps had killed her mother? Her agony grew worse. She was swept away into a great maze of pain, in which only one idea was distinct—she wanted her mother, she was dying without her mother, and her mother did not come.

Later, she found that she was standing up again. She felt sick; and her legs were very weak, and ached. She was tired, for it was long past her bedtime. It was strange, she thought, that no one had put her to bed. Something had happened; her heart had broken, and the pieces were gone; perhaps other people's hearts had broken, and they had forgotten to put her to bed. She was too sick to think it all out, or care very much about it. She knew that there was something far more awful about which she cared, and that was enough. A certain cunningness made her never quite recollect what it was, made her believe that the memory had been carried away in the broken pieces of her heart. A big moon was rising. The rays came in obliquely through the window and caught her face; they hurt her

eyes. She put up her hands to cover her eyes. Her fingers touched deadly cold, and yet there was something warm on them. She held up her fingers in the rays of the moon. There were dark patches on her fingers. She did not wonder what the patches were; she only wondered why they were there, and felt with dull pain that her mother would never tell her. She fingered the patches; they were mostly sticky. Then she came to one on her thumb; she touched it, and a stab of fire ran up her arm and through her shoulder and neck to her head. What was worse than the stab of fire was the thought that her mother would never kiss the place. Until her mother kissed it, it must go on stabbing with pain. It stabbed now more fiercely every second. Would her mother never come to kiss the pain away? No, her mother would never come. The child, in her stupor, was not so cunning to herself that she could prevent herself from knowing that. So she bore her pain quietly. It would be foolish to cry when there was no one near to comfort her; it would be adding to her misery to no purpose.

Suddenly she awoke to all her senses. She

heard steps without the door. They were coming to tell her all. She cowered back into a corner of the window, and held out her little hands before her in terror. She did not want to hear, she did not want to know. She would rather live for ever in this uncertainty, in which she knew nothing except that she was unhappy.

"Kitty."

It was her father. He was coming to scold her. But she did not mind; her heart was so broken that he could not hurt her more than she was already hurt.

"Kitty!"

She started. She thought it was her mother's voice, and she was very much afraid. She hoped that it was her mother who called, and then knew dismally that it could not be. She had killed her mother, and they were coming to tell her. Her heart beat fast, and she felt colder and weaker than ever. But still her body was at peace. She stood quietly in the window, waiting, waiting; her hands, for a moment held out before her in horror, had fallen back to her sides; she made no sound, unless the riot of her pulses was as audible to the rest of the world as it was to her.

The door opened, throwing into the room a broad fan of light. Her eyes were dazzled, and she closed them.

"There she is, like a little ghost in the window."

It was her mother. She supposed that her mother was dead, and had come to fetch her. But she did not want to die, though she wanted to be with her mother; she shrank back farther into the window; she could not, she would not die without a struggle; she wanted her mother here on earth. And her mother was here, standing black in the light of the door. The child was bewildered. It was granted her to be with her mother, but whether in life or death she did not know. She dared not think it was in death; it frightened her, it crushed out of her all the joy of seeing her mother again. She tried to cry out, but her voice failed her, and she thought she was dumb with the dead.

"What are you doing there, child? We thought you were in bed hours ago, and you don't know how frightened we were when we went up to kiss you good-night and couldn't find you."

She did not know even now what to believe.

She stared at her mother's dark figure, and resigned herself to a feeling of great relief. But it troubled her that she was not overjoyed to find that her mother was not dead. Her mother was standing here, alive apparently, and yet the child still felt very sick and weak, and she had not the strength to run forward to her mother. If she truly loved her mother, surely she would not be so heavy of limb, so listless and dull, as to remain unmoved when she saw her mother who, she had thought, was dead, come into the room. She tried to live up to her ideal of her love of her mother; she tried to stretch out her little arms to her mother; she tried to say, "Mother, mother;" but all her efforts were unavailing; she made neither movement nor sound. The love she had thought was strong was dead. The evening had truly broken her heart. She had no longer the power to love. It was very horrible to think that she could love no more, when her mother was restored to her.

There was another dark figure in the room. It was her father. He came towards her; he took hold of her and drew her from the window.

"What's the game, Kitty? What are you playing at?"

She thought that, if she had not felt so sick and giddy, she would have been indignant at having her long agony put down as a game. Her father brought her into the centre of the room. He forced her into a chair, and then lighted the lamp. She sat very still, and blinked in the light. She saw dimly that her mother was all bound up on one side; her right arm and shoulder were enveloped in great white bandages. Then her mother was badly hurt. The child knew that it was more than the sudden light that made her eyes blink; it was tears that her mother should be suffering, and all because her little girl had stood on top of a stile. But the child did not feel the tears; she only felt overpoweringly drowsy.

"You are a funny child, Kitty. Why are you so solemn to-night?"

She did not answer her father. She could only think her words; she could not speak them, and in a moment she had forgotten the words she thought. He was very distant and shadowy. Her mother would have been distant and shadowy too but for the great white bandage that glared from her arm at the child. There was a little shriek. The glaring white bandage

hurled itself forward, and a loving left hand blundered, for all its love, over the child.

"Kitty, Kitty, what have you been doing? Where are you hurt? You're all covered with blood. What has happened?"

Her father drew her mother gently away.

"Don't get so excited, Molly. You'll put your shoulder out again."

"I don't care. How can I help being excited! Look at Kitty. She has half bled to death. She's as cold as a stone. What does my shoulder matter? She's in a much worse state than I am. Kitty, Kitty! Tell me what's happened! Where are you hurt? Tell me! I must know, you must tell me!"

She did not know where she was hurt. She was bleeding, they told her. That might be because her heart was broken. Then she remembered that her hands had been sticky, and her thumbs had throbbed. She held out her hands, half thinking that they might tell her parents what they wanted to know. Her hands were seized and kissed a hundred times. It hurt a little, but all the same it was very delicious. It brought some warmth into her body.

"Good God!" her father cried; "she has been frightened. She always does that when she's frightened. What was it frightened you, Kitty?"

"I thought mother was dead," she said weakly.

"You thought me dead?" said her mother; "but why, Kitty?"

"Nobody would tell me anything. Father wouldn't tell me anything."

She cried to think how much suffering she might have been spared if only some one had answered her questions. She raised her heavy eyes to her father, and he read the reproach which she could not hide, though she loved him so well. He stooped over her and kissed her.

"Oh Kitty, I never thought. I know you asked me, but I was so busy. I was angry with you and didn't answer you. Mother's shoulder was out and it wouldn't go back, and we didn't know what to do because mother was suffering so. But I'm sorry, Kitty."

"What's the good of your being sorry, when you've nearly killed her?" cried her mother angrily. "Why didn't you tell her?"

He hung his head.

"You don't deserve to be Kitty's father," she continued.

"No, you oughtn't to have given me Kitty."

Her mother laughed a little joyous laugh.

"But I wanted her so much myself," she said, smothering the child with kisses.

"Mind your shoulder," said her father.

"I must kiss poor Kitty's hands."

"And I must bind them up."

He brought some rag, and made the two little thumbs look like two small rag dolls. Her mother looked on critically.

"Well," she said, "I suppose fathers are some use when mothers have only one hand to use."

"Yes," he said, "fathers sometimes try to be useful."

He had the child on his knee. The child, nestling to him, felt that a mother was a necessity, and a father a luxury which was very pleasant at times. Her mother, who had been standing by, came nearer, and her free left hand strayed all over the child.

"You bad, wicked man," said her mother; "you're taking Kitty all to yourself now that I'm disabled."

"I don't often get the chance," said the father.

The child knew how dearly they loved her, but was not quite certain as to her own love of them. Did she love them enough? Her mother's bandage glared back an answer in the negative.

"Mother, you forgive me for hurting you?" the child asked timidly.

"You didn't hurt me, Kitty. What will you think next?"

"The stile—when I jumped?"

"Thank God, you didn't hurt yourself."

The child was too sleepy to argue it out.

"I thought I had killed you," she whispered dreamily.

"It would take a lot to kill me, Kitty. I love you too well to be easily taken from you. I'm never, never going to die, Kitty, so long as I've got you."

"We should die miserably if we tried to live up to Kitty's love of us," said her father. "It would be more than we could do."

The child scarcely understood him, but found in his words a reason for nestling nearer to him.

"To think that she stood there in agony, believing me dead, when all the time I was enjoying my dinner!" cried her mother.

"I wish some one would beat me black and blue," said her father.

"Wait until my shoulder is well," said her mother.

"Then you will be too busy in making up arrears in huggings of Kitty."

That was a great thing to look forward to, when her mother should be well enough to hug her again—and the child fell asleep to dream of it.

THE MESSAGE

THE message was important, and had to be delivered to the aunt by word of mouth. But it was too late to send it to-night, for the aunt retired early to bed. It was imperative, however, that she had it before she left home to-morrow, which would be directly after breakfast.

"Send it by post," said the child's father.

"Oh! that would never do," answered her mother. "It's so important. All about the Carnival Committee. I couldn't put it in a letter."

"Then I can't tell you what to do."

The father returned to his game of patience, at which he systematically cheated himself for hours every evening. The mother leaned her elbows on the table, and, taking her face between her hands, thought it all out as she stared at the lamp. The child had listened to the discussion

with a sense of impending disaster. She knew that soon she would be involved in the taking of the message.

"Ah! I know," cried her mother suddenly. "Kitty's going to be a good little girl."

The child tried not to hear this complimentary forecast of her behaviour, for she knew that it laid upon her obligations of gratitude which would have to be fulfilled.

"And she's going to please her mumsie," continued her mother, and the child in her corner shrank back until she thought herself hidden in the shadows. "She's going to run round early in the morning to see Auntie before she goes out."

With something akin to horror the child heard her morning thus planned out. She always dreaded any encounter with her aunt, whose embrace was so prickly with beads. She looked forward to this early morning visit with anything but pleasure, in spite of her mother's assurance that she was a very fortunate little girl to find this way of spending at least a portion of what would otherwise be a somewhat irksome morning.

"You'll like it, won't you?" said the mother. "You always enjoy seeing Auntie."

"Yes," said the child from her corner, love and obedience forcing her into the sin of lying.

She slept uneasily that night. An ordeal was being forced upon her, against which every nerve in her little body revolted. If there were one thing she disliked more than another, it was going to her aunt's. Her aunt breathed about her an atmosphere of terror, which took possession of the child and caused her the most exquisite nervous agony. But the message had to be taken, and, as she had been told that she would enjoy taking it, she supposed that her reluctance to go was part of that wickedness which she was so often reminded that she possessed. So to her terror was added the feeling that the terror was wrong and wicked, and her night alternated between horrid dreams of dragon-aunts and guilty wakefulness. By morning she was mentally a wreck, full of fears, shuddering at every touch and starting at every sound. A sickly taste of cold tea seemed to have taken the place of her heart, and she could scarcely touch her breakfast.

"Now, you know what you have to say?" asked her mother.

"Yes," answered the child, whereupon she

was kissed and told that she was a dear, good little girl, who made mother very happy. There was some comfort in this praise; but she wished that making other people happy did not involve so much unhappiness in herself.

The roads were bright with the morning sun, and every one that she passed seemed extraordinarily cheerful. But none of this brightness and cheerfulness was for her. She was out of it all. She was possessed of a great care, while the rest of the world was unusually lighthearted. She envied, almost to the extent of hating, the gay, careless, laughing children she passed. It struck her as unjust that they should be happy and she miserable. She could remember nothing very naughty that she had done which made it right that she, of all children, should be signalled out for a punishment which was all the harder to bear because no one could understand what she was suffering.

Wishing to get the ordeal over, she yet lingered on the way. In spite of the importance of the message she half hoped that she might arrive after her aunt had gone out. But her mother, when she told her that she was a good child,

had cunningly touched her pride, and the child's conscience smote her when she thought that she was belying the estimate so lovingly made of her character, and by a series of spurts she managed to make up for the minutes she had lost at the beginning of the walk.

Arrived at her aunt's house, she opened the gate carefully, almost guiltily. But for all her care the gate groaned and screeched loudly on its hinges; and, as it swung back, closed with a clatter that almost stopped the beating of her heart. She crept up the path and steps on tip-toe; trying to hide herself in the scanty porch, from the aggressive bow-window on her right, she timidly rang the bell. The bell pealed as though it would never stop. As she waited for it to be answered it seemed to her that every window in the house was gazing at her with burning eyes. She felt across her shoulders the flash of critical, disapproving glances. She shrank back against the door, and waited with throbbing heart.

Within the house the stairs creaked, a heavy footstep fell along the hall, and she heard the rasping of a bolt that was being withdrawn. The door opened partially, reluctantly. A stout,

middle-aged servant in a red print dress looked out suspiciously.

Was Miss Hudson in?

The servant answered that Miss Hudson was in, but had not come down yet. Would the child wait?

Her impulse was not to wait, but her mother had kissed her, and said that there was not a better little daughter in the whole world, and she did not want her mother to have said what was not true. Yes, she would wait.

Passing through the hall, which echoed as the halls of other people's houses invariably do, she was ushered into the little drawing-room with its glass cases and antimacassars. Thick lace curtains covered the window, and, shutting out all sight of the world, made the room tomb-like. Here she must wait, in the subdued, timid, expectant atmosphere of somebody else's home, until her aunt came down. The prospect was not pleasing. She wished to be done with the delivery of the message, and free to enjoy her morning in some occupation, which was not suggested by a misunderstanding elder as the one which would most please her.

Though the actual greeting of her aunt was

that part of the ordeal which she most dreaded, she hoped her aunt would not be long in coming down. It was torture to sit in this muffled room, repeating again and again to herself the message she had to deliver, and anticipating countless times in her imagination the greeting of her aunt. The clock ticked monotonously and drearily. It was a small sound, but it beat heavily against her ears, for the room was very still. She only remembered once before having heard a clock tick so aggressively, and that was one morning in the doctor's waiting-room, where she sat in silence with her mother for two fearful hours, during which she imagined that she suffered from the most horrible diseases. Tick-tock, tick-tock the clock had then beaten in soft persistent mockery of her misery, and in her mind distress had ever since been more or less connected with that ticking-tock, so that to-day the clock brought a profound melancholy to her. Sitting on the edge of a chair, and pretending to be interested in the ugliest of the several ugly pictures on the walls, she felt an extraordinary pity for herself, in spite of an underlying suspicion that she was wicked and deserved no pity. The heavy lace

curtains cut her off completely from the rest of the world, of which she could see nothing, and only heard the chirp of birds and the occasional rattle of a cart. The room was a cell, and she for some crime was shut up in it. She was literally a prisoner; fear chained her to her chair. She dared not stir one step from her seat, for everything in the room was ready to cry out loudly if she made the least movement. Rather than wake the slumbering noises of the many pieces of furniture in the room, she was determined to remain fearfully quiet until some one came to her. If nobody came, she supposed she would sit on that chair for ever. Alone, she would not have the courage to cross the infinity of strange, unfamiliar floor between her chair and the door. She was almost afraid to breathe in this still, heavy atmosphere; the whole house seemed to be listening for the slightest movement that she might make.

The stifling horror of the room communicated itself to the picture at which she stared. Ordinarily, she supposed, the portrait of a child, this picture rolled itself before her staring eyes into the most fantastic shapes. From a child's face

it became an old house, and finally a mountain. There seemed to be nothing it would not become, if she stared at it long enough. Its one object was, apparently, to fill the room and crowd her out of it. It spread over the wall and advanced towards her; then popped back to its original shape and size. While it fascinated her, she grew quite frightened of it. She felt so very much alone in the brooding silence of the room.

But presently the silence was broken. Overhead was the heavy tread of stockinged feet. The weights swung and the globes rattled on the gasalier. She concluded that her aunt was getting up, for she believed that the room overhead was her aunt's bedroom. But it had never occurred to the child that so many movements were necessary in the performance of one's toilet; across and across the floor went the aunt. She visited every corner of the room, and now and again thumped something or other heavily on the floor; so that the child thought the globes would dance off the gasalier.

For fully twenty minutes this thunderous and earthquaking toilet continued. Then the child heard a door creak above, and the slow, balancing tread, on the stairs, of a person with flat

feet. Nearer and nearer came the heavy tread, and the child tried to appear interested in the picture that had worried her so much. It would be rude, she thought, to seem uninterested when her aunt came down. The door opened, and a big, stout woman entered.

"Oh!" this woman exclaimed, throwing up her hands, "it's Kitty."

This was the dreadful moment, but the child screwed up her courage to the sticking point and went bravely through with it. Slipping off her chair, she came forward and submitted herself to the beady embrace. Then she delivered the message.

"Thank you, dear," said the aunt, "and you'll stop and have a little breakfast."

But the child thought she had done quite enough to justify her mother's telling her that she was a good little girl, and she most naughtily said that she was obliged to be back home by half-past nine. The aunt seemed by no means displeased to hear this, and, embracing her vigorously, conducted her to the hall door; and the child went down the steps, feeling deliciously free and no longer an outcast from the brightness of the day.

"I find you needn't have gone to aunt's," said her mother to her on her return. "I remember now that I told her everything the last time I saw her. But it was quite a little outing for you. You enjoyed it, didn't you?"

"Yes," answered the child, which was partly the truth and partly a lie. At the time the taking of the message had been a real ordeal, but now she looked back upon it with the feeling of having been a very good little girl, and her conscience lightened considerably.

THE DANCE

HER parents expressed themselves delighted that she should be invited to the dance. She, too, expressed delight, for she knew that they would be disappointed if she did not, but the invitation was heavy on her heart for many days. The prospect of this evening of pleasure and excitement sobered her; it would suddenly come upon her in the middle of her games on the nursery floor, and, pushing the games back from her mind, take their place with cares and fears. It was to be remembered that she was going to this dance not so much because she was herself as because she was her mother's child. She remembered how her mother had once given a children's dance, and how, in discussing the invitations, she had said, "There's Annie's little girl, there are Mary's children, and the Thompson kids," and so on, not naming the children, but the parents, and expressing a desire

to discharge a duty to the parents rather than any wish to please the children. So the child had come to regard such a dance as the one she was invited to as a way in which the persons who had invited her hoped to please her parents. She felt that, if her parents were to be as pleased by the invitation as they were meant to be, she would have to bring back from the dance some tale how little boys had flocked around her baby beauty, and how an elder, attracted by her appearance, had asked her who she was. The uncertainty of being able to bring back such stories as these troubled her greatly as the dance came nearer. The purpose of the invitation would have failed altogether, if she were not to delight her parents' ears with accounts of the pleasurable excitement she had caused at the dance. To please her mother and father the child would gladly have told untrue tales to her discredit, but, when it came to telling untrue tales to her credit for just such a loving purpose, she found love and honesty warring one with another. She could not possibly say that she had attracted attention when she had not; it required more courage than was hers; and yet she knew that her parents would want

to hear such news, and would be quite unhappy if they did not hear it. Suppose she sat, unheeded, all the evening in a corner, suppose she upset something at supper or tore somebody's frock—how would her parents feel then? They would be miserable, knowing that their little girl was not worthy of them. The child felt that for the dance they had entrusted her with their reputation, and that her duty was to maintain it as spotless throughout the evening as it was when the care of it was granted to her. It was a heavy responsibility, and caused a hope to rise in her heart that she might be ill when the day of the dance came; her only hope of not failing in this charge was to be too ill to undertake it. But in spite of every effort to take cold, she retained her usual good health. She found that she might chill herself to an ague in the cold winter wind, and yet suffer no harm when she got back to her warm home. One morning she stood for some seconds over an open drain, and prayed that the smell coming therefrom might be typhoid or something equally dangerous, but she became frightened after a really good sniff of the malodorous gases, and turned away quickly. It occurred to her that

it would not be fair to her mother to catch typhoid; her mother would nurse her through the illness, and so expose herself to the danger of catching it, and the child knew how even the least little pain in her little body made her mother grave and sad, and for that reason forsook the idea of illness, consoling herself with the wicked and only half-formulated hope that one of her little cousins might die, and the consequent spread of mourning prevent her from going to the dance, which she dreaded more and more as its date drew nearer. She was almost certain that she would disgrace her parents in some way at the dance; she wished and wished that she might wake up and find that she had only dreamed that she was invited. If she had been asked as Kitty, it would have been very different; she would have gone with responsibilities which affected only herself; but she had no doubt that she had been asked as "Molly's child," Molly being her mother; she could picture the father of the children from whom the invitation had nominally come, scanning a list which the mother had handed him, and, having scanned it, looking up and exclaiming, "You've missed out Molly's child; you

must put her in or Molly will be vexed," and the mother crying, "Goodness! how fortunate you thought of her." She remembered the omissions which her own father invariably pointed out, just in the nick of time, in such invitation lists as her own mother made, and morbidly supposed that she was, in her turn, one of those children who were somewhat grudgingly thought of at the last moment in order that their parents might not be disappointed. Going as herself, she might extract a little pleasure from the dance, but going as her mother's child she would, from the first moment to the last, carry a burden lovingly entrusted to her, and perilously balance, as it were, on the tip of her manners, a reputation that was not her own. She prayed nightly that God, with Whom all things were possible, might so set back time that she had not been invited to this dance.

But, though she prayed earnestly, she woke one morning to remember, almost as soon as her eyes were open, that the dance was to-night. Her soul at once clouded; all interest in the day before her was crushed by the heavy thought of the ordeal of the evening; there seemed to be no escape from the dance now; she thought it

impossible that anything could happen in the few hours that remained, to prevent her going. She wondered if, should she be all day just as naughty as she could be, her parents would forbid what they deemed to be the great ecstatic pleasure of the evening. She was afraid not. It was notorious in the family, and even outside the family also, that her father and mother were far too lenient in their treatment of her, and, out of their excessive love for her, were making a rod for their own backs. She did not know in what way she was being made a rod for their backs, for she knew that, however big and wicked she grew to be, she would never, never, never beat them; but she did wish that to-day they would be as strict as any of her uncles and aunts could wish, and would find such faults in her as it was necessary to punish by keeping her back from the dance. But she felt too much sobered to be naughty. She was very sedate and quiet all through breakfast and her morning lessons, and her afternoon walk left her character unstained. She ate very little tea, having a weak, uncomfortable feeling about her heart. She was sad and dispirited without knowing why.

The nursery was very cosy, and she would have liked to stay in it for ever. But she knew enough of the clock, towards which she turned her eyes every few minutes, to be aware that soon, very soon, she would be hauled away from all this cosiness and plunged into the cold intricacies of an elaborate toilet. She stroked the purring cat nervously. She envied the cat, which was free to doze all the evening before the fire. It seemed to her very strange that anybody should ever want to leave home in the evening.

They dressed her in a pink frock that shone and glinted, pulled the thinnest of pink stockings over her legs, and put little pink shoes with clacking heels on her feet. They spread out her crisp brown hair so that its bunches bobbed springily all round her head when she walked in her high, uncomfortable shoes. They added to her a little pink flower on one side of her head. Then, having spun her round many times before the glass, they took her downstairs. Her father and mother ran out into the hall to see her.

"What a swell!" said her father, bringing his ash-laden pipe perilously near.

"Oh you dear!" cried her mother, kissing her.

She felt in her hair to see that the little pink flower had not been disarranged, and returned the kiss. She hung long to her mother. It was very lonely, going out without her mother, and in such an unsympathetically beautiful frock, into the big, wide world. There was a ring at the bell, and she half hoped that it might be a message to say that there was, in consequence of this or that, no dance. It was, however, the cabman who had rung. When the door was opened, his voice came in gruffly with the cold evening air, and, looking out, she saw the steam of the horse passing over the carriage lamps; she heard also the horse champing its bit—a portentous sound which had often told of arrivals and departures, of separation and reunion; of her mother and father going away and coming back; of new servants and visitors. The wind stole up her thinly clad legs, and she shuddered.

"Mind you keep warm," said her mother.

Her nurse put a cloak on her, and her mother fetched a shawl, and wrapped her up in it. Her father looked at his watch.

"It's time you were off," he said.

The dance evidently was to be. The eleventh hour had come without a reprieve. She determined to go to her doom bravely. She kissed her mother again, kissed her father in a cloud of smoke, and turned to the door. Her hands were bound up in the shawl, and her nurse lifted her into the cab, and then got in after her. The cabman tried the window, and closed the door, and, mounting laboriously to the box, tucked his rugs about him. Her father and mother stood in the doorway to wish her good-bye. She thought they looked dear, good, kind shadows in the bright rectangle of the door, and that the hall behind them was very bright and comfortable. The impulse was strong to cry out and beg to be allowed to stay with them, but the tightness of the shawl about her restrained her emotions; she could not stretch out her arms, as she wished, to her mother, and so make the appeal irresistibly pathetic. She knew, too, how disappointed her parents would be if she did not go, and she felt that it would be wicked to be so weak as to fail to give them the pleasure they expected to derive from her going. They were so merry and

happy, and proud of her as they stood there in the door that she would have given her life to do her duty to them, and she checked the cry that was on her lips, and sat back, silent, in the gloom of the cab.

"Be sure and enjoy yourself," said her mother.

Her father filled the door with smoke, and out of the middle of the cloud made an old joke of his, the point of which neither himself nor any one else could recollect.

"Bring me home the text," he said.

The brake clicked as it was put back; the horse started; all that she loved suddenly fell away from sight and hearing, and the cab bowled down the darkness of the drive. The child felt very solemn and frightened.

On and on went the cab. The reflection of the lamps raced along the wall on either side of the lane, now darting up pillars and now dodging into gateways, but never falling behind, in spite of its many excursions. Presently they neared the town, and street lamps swung their rays at intervals across the interior of the cab, first lighting up the nurse, who sat with eyes closed and hands placidly folded, and then falling with momentary brilliance into

the child's own eyes. In time they came to a street where the cab rattled and swayed on the stone setts of a tram-line, and the light was no longer broken and fitful, but a steady yellow glare from the shops. People bobbed alongside with a strange springy step which she had never noticed before, and they seemed half to turn their heads to look into the cab as it passed them. She envied these people who had no other care than their shopping; she wished that, instead of being a little girl going to a dance as her mother's child, she were one of them. She had not the least idea that probably some of those who saw her, so dainty and so pretty, in the cab, envied her in their turn. Soon the cab ran more evenly as they came to a quieter road, and there was no glare from the shops, but only the growing and waning, slanting and wheeling light of the street lamps. The rhythm of the hoofs and wheels was soothing; the gloom of the cab was a hiding-place, and the child wished that she might ride on for ever in this peaceful way. She wondered how many hours they had been on the journey, and if they were driving on to the end of the world.

"Here we are," said the nurse.

The cab turned sharply, the light of its lamps danced away into the depths of shrubs, and then ran back up a wall and almost into the child's face. The wheels were scrunching gravel, a bright window flashed by, and the cab drew up. The door opened, and she was lifted out and marched across a hall which was all brightness and emptiness, and up stairs which were equally bright and empty. She heard a babel of voices, distant music, and the clacking of heels, and she passed many people, but she knew that, until she had discarded her shawl and cloak, and had been given some refreshment, she was quite invisible in this house. Some unwritten law which governed the giving of parties demanded that she should come apologetically, surreptitiously, hooded and disguised, upstairs, and should not be recognised until what time she chose to present herself downstairs in all her pink splendour. It was not soothing to the nerves to come so like a thief, but it was comforting to linger upstairs in the blessed peace of that still, quiet room where she contributed her small wraps to a mighty collection of such things which spread over the broad surface of

a large bed. She would have liked to stop here until her heart beat less heavily, but her nurse insisted that she must get on down, for the dancing had already begun.

She went down far less confidently than she had come up. She was visible now—terrifyingly visible, as a glimpse told her, which she had caught of her pink little figure in a glass at the top of the stairs. On every other step children were seated, who were supposed to be enjoying each other's conversation and society, but who neither spoke to, nor looked at, each other; and these children, as she made her way through them, at last found something to interest them, and stared fixedly at her. She shrank under their gaze. They seemed to be looking at her legs, over which the concentration of their eyes exercised a strange influence. Her feet were beyond her control; they stumbled and tripped, and kicked into the backs of little boys and girls. She knew that she ought to say prettily that she was sorry, but she was too mortified to find her tongue. She does not know how she got to the bottom of those stairs. When at last she did get down, only one of her heels clicked on the tiles, for her left shoe was three steps behind

her. She rescued it and put it on, and, when she rose from this operation, she felt that her face was as pink as her frock. She was very much ashamed of herself, first of herself as Kitty, and then, when she found that a stout, middle-aged man had witnessed this accident to her shoe, of herself as her mother's child. She had begun the evening very badly.

The middle-aged man seemed much surprised.

"Lord!" he said; "it's the Barton child."

She wondered why he was so surprised. Had she made some mistake and come without being invited? Her heart almost stopped when she thought of that. Or was something wrong with her clothes? She felt for the flower in her hair, and found that it was safe; she looked down her frock, but discovered no glaring fault in it. The pink in her cheeks deepened. Why should he start at the sight of her? It was not until later in the evening that she noticed that this starting was merely a trick of his manners.

"How d'y do? How d'y do? Better go to the ballroom; dancing's begun. My wife's there, my wife's there," he said breathlessly.

She went to the door towards which he pointed, and stood there, looking in on the

whirl of dancing children. Nobody paid any attention to her, and she felt sure now that she had not been invited. People brushed past her, and bustled into her; she seemed very much in everybody's way. A big, lanky school-girl took up her position just in front of the child, and, stepping back, pressed her against the wall. The child, though half suffocated, had not at first the courage to make her presence known. The prickly, scratching muslin which was forced painfully into her face seemed to her a judgment upon her for being where she was not wanted, and she was not altogether sorry to be hidden in this way; she would have liked to remain all the evening in such obscurity as this. But she remembered that she had come here as her mother's child, and felt that she owed it to her mother's child to assert herself, if for no other reason than to uphold the family dignity; and she pushed her little knuckles sharply into the backs of the big girl's thighs. The girl paid no attention at first, but, as the knuckling continued, began to wriggle her shoulders irritably. At last she turned and looked behind her. At first she affected not to be able to see so small a being as the child was, and seemed

to be uncertain whether it would be rude or merely superior to remain in front of Kitty, who anxiously awaited the result of her temerity. The girl eventually decided to move, and, stepping aside, exposed a pink little figure to the gaze of all the room, which did not seem to have seen the figure before.

Somebody kissed the child; somebody asked after her mother; somebody had apparently been looking for her all the evening; somebody gave her a programme, which she clutched fearfully lest she should lose it; somebody asked her if she would like to dance. This avalanche of attentions squeezed out of her a hesitating affirmative to the last question. Yes, she would like to dance. It was not strictly true; it was only as her mother's child, charged with her mother's social reputation, that she cared to dance; her inner little self would far rather have sat down to cry.

They led her away to a solemn little boy, who showed great alarm when they told him that they had brought him a nice little girl to dance with. He did not say that he did not want to dance, but he looked it, and that made the child almost like him; she felt that he was a companion in

distress. Gravely she put her hands in his, which were very clammy, for he had lost his gloves; and, in fright at discovering his loss, had perspired freely. The warm wet of his hands darkened the pink fingers of her gloves, and she shuddered. She hated physical contact with other people. She cared to touch, or to be touched by, only her father and mother, and she gave only her finger-tips to this little boy. They, small as they were, seemed rather more of her than he cared for, and he held them very gingerly. She stood thus with her partner for some time until some one gave them both a push, which launched them into the centre of the room, where they slowly walked around each other, paying no heed to the music; at times they looked furtively into each other's faces, but as a rule they kept their eyes averted; neither was brave enough to look upon the misery of the other. Dutifully they walked around each other until they heard a great laughter coming from the dim walls of the spinning room. They loosed hands quickly, and found that they had the floor all to themselves. The music had stopped a minute back, but they, in their desire to show that they were far happier than they really were, had gone

on with their solemn movements. To their infant minds, dancing was a circling around some one which could be done just as easily without music, and was, at the best, rather a nuisance. But now a volley of laughter told them that they had done something which was not provided for in the etiquette of dancing, and they fled. At first she was pleased to find that the little boy fled from her, and not with her. Then she remembered that he had rudely deserted her mother's child, who, if she loved her mother, ought to attract and not repel little boys, and she felt that in letting the boy go off in this way she had injured her mother's fair name. Other mothers' little girls were apparently much better liked than she was. For herself she did not altogether mind this, for she disliked publicity, but it hurt her to think that her mother should be the mother of the least attractive child in the room. The child had, however, the satisfaction of having accomplished at least one duty. She had danced; nothing could take that fact away from her; she had not altogether failed in the requirements of the evening. She wished that she might go home now; but, as no one seemed to be departing, she supposed that it was not time yet.

They left her in peace now by the wall. She thought that probably her exhibition in the last dance had warned them not to introduce her to other little boys. For her own sake she was thankful; she did not know how she could go through the ordeal of another dance without bursting into tears; but for her parents' sake she blushed; their child, whom they were foolish enough to love, was shunned by people who were not so blind to her faults. She tried to appear happy and interested; she followed the dancing with eyes which ached in their zeal to see everything. All the while she was conscious of glances and noddings interchanged, as it were, over the top of her little head. She endeavoured to appear unconscious of these glances, for she was aware that she was too young to be supposed to know when she was being talked about. But she moved uneasily. She felt as she did when her uncles and aunts plotted in audible whispers for her welfare. She expected soon to be told that she was very naughty. She hated an interchange such as this, of glances; it invariably told of a scolding for her. A hand fell on her shoulder, and she started guiltily. Two women looked down at her.

"You don't know me?" said one of them.

The child did not, but thought it would be polite to protest that she did.

"I'm sure you don't," continued the woman.

The child now perceived that it would be polite to say that she did not. It surprised her to find, perhaps for the first time, that politeness lay in the truth. To be polite to her uncles and aunts she had always had to tell lies, which, her mother had said, were pardoned in Heaven because they were kind on earth.

"No, of course you don't. But I knew you when you were quite a baby."

There were many of these strangers who had known her when she was quite a baby. In those far-away days of her babyhood, when, as a photograph told her, she was very different from what she was now, her parents had apparently had an extraordinary number of friends. But her growing up into her present wicked self seemed to have driven them all away. Her parents had chosen between her and these people. She felt that it had been a very foolish choice, but she dared not think what would have become of her if their choice had been otherwise.

"So you're Molly's child."

The woman stepped back and surveyed the child. The woman seemed very much surprised at what she saw. Her companion, who had a large, loose mouth, and wore glasses that twitched on her nose, almost seemed surprised, and echoed—

"And so you're Molly's child."

The child hung her head in shame. She knew why they were surprised. They were disappointed with the result of Molly's experiment in motherhood; they could scarcely believe that the beautiful and good Molly was the mother of this naughty and unlovely child. It had always been a great wonder with her that she had come to be the child of so glorious a creature as her mother was; it had always seemed to her a serious blunder on the part of Providence; and she did not care to be reminded of it. She wished these people would not look at her. When they gazed on her, they gazed on her mother's misfortune, and pitied her mother. The child would have burst into loud sobs, if she had not been determined that her mother's child should not show herself a cry-baby.

Presently the two women moved away. The room was very quiet and empty now. There was

only the pianist in it, and he, melancholy and depressing in a borrowed evening suit, ate something out of a plate that rattled and slid on the top of the piano. She sat down in the grateful shadow of a screen, and wondered where everybody was. Elsewhere in the house she heard a merry babel of voices. She supposed that the dancers were cooling themselves after their exertions, but it occurred to her that it was an unusually long interval between the dances. She seemed to have sat for hours in the terrifyingly empty room, where every movement of hers was provocative of thunderous echoes, before the children came back. At length they filtered slowly in, to slide on the floor in unabashed single blessedness or to try a few steps in timid couples, who seemed undecided as to which member was gentleman and which was lady. Then the full and awful truth dawned upon the child. She had missed the supper! True, she had not wanted any, but she knew that there was a disgrace in not going in to supper; it was only those who were not all that their mothers could wish them to be who did not go in. And her mother had told her to be sure to go in to supper, and she had promised to go in.

Her heart stood still; her misery was utter. She had disobeyed her mother; she had disgraced her mother. Everybody would be saying to-morrow that Molly's child was a little stupid who hid behind a screen instead of going in to supper; her parents would have never a friend left now. She prayed forgiveness from God; she could not hope that her mother would forgive her.

The rest of the evening passed in a miserable whirl. Doubtless in her confusion and grief she committed a thousand unpardonable sins, but she remembered none of them; heart, mind, and soul, she was given up to the awful prospect of confessing to her parents that she had not gone in to supper. Why had they so impressed upon her that she must have supper, if it were not a great wickedness, a horrible solecism, a monstrous rudeness not to have any? She had half a mind to apologise humbly to her hostess for this great rudeness, but she was too confused to know who her hostess was; such a large number of persons had at various times been sufficiently pitying to profess themselves ready to do anything she might wish.

She cried softly to herself all the way home in the cab. She pictured the horror of her mother

and father when she made her dreadful confession, and they learnt how she had disgraced them before the whole world. She felt that she ought to ask them to let her go away from them to some place where she would trouble them no more; but she knew that she could never make the sacrifice, that she could never leave them, whether it were or were not her duty.

She was home again. She heard that the door was opened with feverish haste. Her mother ran out, and lifted her out of the cab, and carried her in. Her father stood in the hall in a cloud of smoke.

"Tired, Kitty?" he asked.

Her mother carried her into the cosy study, which was the room she liked best of all the rooms in the house. A big fire blazed in the grate. Her mother kissed her. She shuddered. Perhaps it was the last kiss she would ever receive, for the confession had to be made. In her heart of hearts she knew that she ought to have turned her little face away when she saw the kiss descending; she had received it under false pretences.

Her mother set her in a big chair before the fire, and felt her hands.

"Oh darling, you're cold," her mother cried.

Her father took off her shoes and felt her feet.

"They're like ice," he said.

He drew off her stockings and held out her feet to the fire.

"And did you enjoy yourself, Kitty?" asked her mother, who sat on one arm of the chair.

The child said nothing; two big tears rolled down her cheeks. Why were they so kind when she was so wicked? Why was she so wicked when they were so kind? How could she tell them the truth when they petted her so? She choked and sobbed. In a moment her mother's arms were around her, and a soft cheek against hers.

"Kitty, Kitty, whatever is it?"

She shrank away from her mother.

"I didn't have any supper," she wailed.

"Oh Kitty!"

"I meant to—I did, really I did, but——"

She could say no more; her grief convulsed her; she sobbed as she had rarely sobbed, even at the death of her best-loved doll. Her mother

lifted her up and, sitting down in the chair, hugged her to her and rocked her.

"Oh the nasty, horrid people! To give you no supper, not to give my little Kitty any supper. Poor Kitty's famished; poor, poor Kitty!"

The child felt that there was some misunderstanding, but she submitted to a shower of kisses. She had confessed. In her mother's caresses her sin had lost much of its importance; she half believed that it was a sin her mother could forgive; she half believed that her mother had forgiven her, for no mother would caress so a child she did not love. And it was beyond a human child to reject love so generously given, whether she deserved it or not.

"Oh the horrid, wicked people! I'll never speak to them again."

It was in this way, perhaps, thought the child, that her mother had lost the friends, who were now strangers to the child, but who professed to have known her when she was quite a baby. With her mother's arms around her, she felt very selfish; she wanted her mother all to herself; she hoped that her mother would never speak to

these horrid people, against whom she was now, as her mother was, somewhat aggrieved. It had been very rude of them not to give her any supper. Her tears were dried now, and she was even hungry. It had been worse than rude; it had been unkind.

"But Kitty shall have her supper now."

Her mother and father bustled about. They brought her cake and biscuits and milk. They poured out some wine for her. It was very nasty, and she wondered how it was one of her uncles took too much of it, but they told her it would do her good, and she drank it dutifully, though it took a whole tumbler of milk to quench the thirst it produced. Then, when she had finished her supper, they stood her up in the chair, and surveyed her in her pink beauty.

"She's too good for them," said her father. "They can't appreciate her, when their own little girl's so ugly."

Her father was not smoking now, but he was in a haze. Her mother, too, was in a haze. She toppled over against her mother.

"Kitty's tired," she said.

"Yes, and mummie will put you to bed herself, and you'll stay in bed all the morning."

Then she was borne away, all comfortable and glowing. Next day she was not sure whether or not she had enjoyed the dance.

GOOD-NIGHT

IT was dusk, and the room was full of the ruddy glow of the purring, flickering fire. Great red, black-crested waves of light swept across the ceiling, and broke against the edges in clouds of shadow. The corners advanced and retired as children do in a square game.

She sat on her little stool in front of the fire, her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands, and looked up at the clock which solemnly ticked away the seconds on the mantelshelf above her. The escapement rocked drowsily about its little jerking wheel, and the pointer came slowly down from seven towards the half-hour.

Every evening she sat thus, watching the clock, and, as the pointer crept down towards her bedtime, she summed up her day, and thought of its pleasures and its pains, and of her joys and her sins. Her little mind made

the most of these last moments of the day. She liked to have settled with her conscience before the half-hour after seven struck. There would come, she knew, a morrow, when she might repair her faults, but night was so infinite that she dared not go to bed with a sin-burdened soul. So she thought of her sins one by one, and prayed that they might be forgiven.

Half-past seven was the bedtime she had herself appointed. Nothing could induce her to stay up later, and yet she always went to bed unwillingly. The silvery chime of the clock brought a chill into her surroundings. She felt like one doomed to exile. But she had an idea that every minute, after half-past seven, which she spent out of bed, would add to her wickedness. There was a mystery about the later hours of the evening which she had never fathomed. In those hours there seemed to be crowded a whole world of the vague recreations and games with which adults pretended to amuse themselves. She asked no questions about these evening happenings. As they occurred when she was safely stowed away in bed, she included them among those things about which it was wrong to be inquisitive.

There were so many things connected with adults, to inquire into which was a grave naughtiness in a child. She often wondered why this was. It puzzled her to know why the very people, who, she was told, were models of goodness she would do well to copy, should whisper guiltily in her presence, or put away certain things hurriedly, or cease to do this or that, if suddenly disturbed by her. She had thought that only children were wicked; why, then, this starting of elders? Perhaps she broke in upon good deeds and virtuous conversation, which could not stand in the presence of her own great iniquities. She had so poor an opinion of her little self—an opinion born of the somewhat sorrowful, pitying love her parents showed her —that she imagined a sanctity of everything that was reserved from her. There were ornaments and bits of furniture that she was not allowed to touch because they were so precious. These little acts and sayings which were hidden from her, were, she supposed, precious too, and kept from her, lest she, the unfortunate and sinful, should defile and spoil them. It was a fear of intruding upon them and lessening her parents' enjoyment of them that sent her to

bed so regularly at half-past seven, when she would far rather have stayed downstairs much later, as indeed she would have been allowed to do.

The clock slowly ticked away the minutes, and the big hand came mercilessly down towards the half-hour. Only ten minutes more, and this cosy light and warmth would have to be exchanged for the chill darkness of bed. A desolate feeling crept over her. She was leaving the world, for which she had a very tender affection, and she had not the power to look forward, through the long night, to her return to the lovable scenes and incidents of the daylight. She did not doubt the existence of to-morrow, but to-morrow was over the horizon of her prophetic vision. She knew it was there, but she could not see it, and that made the distance to be covered before she could reach it appallingly long.

The night was to her a weary, fearful trudge across a horrid desert; from one oasis of day to another. She had not as yet fallen in the trudge, but she could not be certain that some night she might not sink down, exhausted, and perish miserably. So her evening parting

with the world was a far greater wrench than those who cheerfully kissed her good-night suspected.

The fire was temptingly bright, but time was inexorable; she could almost see the pointer coming down. There was a soft rustle in the dusk behind her. She knew it was her mother. It was comforting to hear this rasp of skirts; it relieved her of some of her loneliness. But she did not turn; she still sat, her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hand, gazing up at the clock. She dared not take her eyes away from the dial; she wanted to be prepared for the chime.

It seemed as if the clock would never strike. For an eternity of expectation she watched the pointer on the thirty minutes mark. At length when she almost believed that something was wrong with the clock, and that the half-hour would pass without the chime, the familiar sound floated out across the room. La-ta-ta-to, to-ta-ta-te ran the half chime in silver tones.

She rose up off her stool, and smoothed out her crumpled frock.

"Half-past seven," she said, with a fond, lingering look into the bright flames; then she

turned. Her mother was there—tall and beautiful—the ideal towards which her young ambition strove. She had no other wish for the future than to grow up to be as lovely a woman as her mother was. She scarcely thought it possible that the wish would be granted, but left nothing undone which might help its consummation, being most careful of her health and appearance. So often did she gaze at herself in the glass, so often did she get her nurse to do this or that to her hair to improve her looks, that one might have thought her vain. But what seemed like vanity was but filial love in the form of emulation. Her mother was her ideal of woman; to become what her mother was would be, she thought, to become the best woman in all the world. Perhaps there mingled with this filial admiration and imitation the maternal instincts which were slowly awakening in her young heart. She wanted her child, if ever she had one, to have just such a beautiful mother as she had.

Her mother was in that dress which set her amongst the forbidden things of the evening. It was a beautiful dress, and it made the child a little shy of her parent. Her mother, when

thus gowned, received any advanced demonstration of affection from her daughter with a little cry of alarm. Much as the dress appealed to the child's artistic sense, she hated it, for it took her mother from her, made her mother distant just at the time when a big hug would have been most consoling.

"Going to bed?" asked her mother.

"Yes," answered the child.

"There's a good little girl."

The child held up her face. Her mother stooped, and kissed it lightly. The child wanted a hug, but she dared not ask for it. Such things could only be had in the morning, when she did not seem to be so wicked or so apt to defile what was good and beautiful. The dress prevented it now.

Her mother moved to the mantelshelf, and peered along it for something she wished to find.

"Good-night," she said over her shoulder; "pleasant dreams."

It was a dismissal; the nightly excommunication from the bright world. The child was very reluctant to go. Her mother looked so lovely, all soft red and dainty blacks in the flickering

light of the fire. But the child suddenly remembered that it must be at least two minutes past the half-hour, and she hastened to go before another guilty minute stood against her.

"Good-night," she said again, and went to the door. Here she met her father. He, too, like her mother, was dressed in the costume of that distant evening world, into which it was naughty of her to intrude. She came plump upon him in the shadow of the door, and his shirt-front shimmered just above her head. She buried her forehead in his little strip of waistcoat.

"Hello! what's this?" he exclaimed.

"Good-night, father," she said.

"Oh yes," he laughed, "of course. Half-past seven," mimicking her tone of "half-past seven." "Bedtime for you. Dinner-time for me and mother. Well, good-night; sleep well."

He planted a kiss on the top of her head, and she went out into the hall and up the stairs to surrender herself to her nurse, who would put her to bed. At the top of the stairs she paused to take one last look down into the brightness of the hall. As she looked down, she sighed, and wondered why children were so wicked. What

unknown sin had she committed which forbade her to enjoy all this brightness—which sent her away when the house looked at its best? She could not tell; she could only carry the guiltiness of it through the long night, despairing ever of the advent of the soothing dawn.

THE END

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