HENRY AND BESSIE;

OR,

What They Did in the Country.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LITTLE SUSY'S SIX BIRTH-DAYS," "FLOWER OF THE FAMILY," "ONLY A DANDELION," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

"MAMMA," said little Bessie, "when I grow up, can I do just as I please?"

"Tell me first what you would please to do," said her mamma.

"Well, mamma, I would wear nice thick shoes, and a long-sleeved apron, and sit up in a tree all day, reading."

Her mamma smiled.

"A grown-up woman in a long-sleeved apron!" said she.

"Oh! but I wouldn't be a grown-up woman—I would be a little girl."

"But you can't always be a little girl," said her brother Henry. "Mamma, how our Bessie does talk! I never heard any body talk as our Bessie does."

"'*Our Bessie*' is a dear little girl," said her mamma, "at any rate."

"If I had money enough I would buy a tree for her to sit in," said Henry. "But I don't suppose I have half enough. Let me see—there's my gold dollar, and there's my three-cent piece, and that's a dollar and three cents; and there's my silver dollar—that's two dollars and three cents; and if that isn't enough, I am sure Bob would give me his eagle; wouldn't he, mamma? And it wouldn't need to be a very large tree for Bessie to sit in."

"Dear me!" said his mamma, "what a boy you are!" But she kissed him, for all that.

"Where would you plant my tree?" said Bessie.

"Oh! I don't know," said Henry,

doubtfully. "It wouldn't do out in the street."

"Oh! *no*," said Bessie.

"And out in the yard there isn't room. Well, when I'm a man I know what I will do. I'll be a farmer; and you shall come and live with me, and I shall have *lots* of trees for you then."

"But I shall be a great big woman by that time," said Bessie, mournfully. "And I shall be a *great deal* too big to be climbing up into trees."

Henry loved Bessie dearly. He could not bear to have her look disappointed. He went to the window to see if he could find any comfort there. All that he could see, however, was a long row of brick houses, exactly alike, standing side by side, stiff, and straight, and red.

"I don't like New-York," said he. "I won't live here when I'm a man. I'll live in the country, and keep hens. I'll have as many as twenty hens. I mean to save

up all my money to buy my hens with. And if they ever have any chickens I'll give them to you, Bessie." Bessie forgot at once all about her thick shoes, her long-sleeved apron and her tree, and thought of nothing but the chickens that Henry had promised her. All the time her nurse was dressing her for dinner, she kept chattering away about it, and clapping her hands, and dancing round the room.

"You'll never be dressed, at this rate," said her nurse, at last. "You tease my very life out of me, flying round so."

"I didn't mean to tease you, you good Maggy you," said Bessie, turning round and kissing her nurse.

"You mustn't mind my speaking sharp," said Maggy; "it came before I thought. Indeed you don't tease me, you little darling, it's only I that tease you." And so they kissed each other, and Bessie stood very still, and had her hair nicely curled, and her clean frock put on, and her tiny

little slippers, just in time to fly down like a bird into her papa's arms, as he came in at the hall door.

"O papa!" said she, "Henry and I have been making such nice plans! Henry is going to be a farmer, and keep hens and trees, and have chickens; only he is going to give the chickens to me; and it's *delightful*."

Her papa smiled, and kissed her, and went up stairs to get ready for dinner.

"Our Bessie is a real country girl," said he to her mamma.

"I'm glad of it," said her mamma. "But it makes a city life tedious to her. For her sake I wish we lived in the country. Even a few years of freedom would be pleasant for her to look back upon. I do love so to remember the days when I went berrying, and all about the frolics in the hay, and the hunting for eggs!"

"Yes, and I used to go for the cows when I was a boy. I don't think I enjoy any

thing nowadays as I used to enjoy going for the cows. I do believe we ought to give our children a good taste of the country—a *good long taste.*"

CHAPTER II.

So, out of this little beginning, it came to pass that Bessie's papa bought an old-fashioned house in the country, and the first warm day in spring welcomed them into it.

They went most of the way to this country house in a steamboat; but after landing there were two miles to ride or walk to the village, and another half-mile through its one pretty street. For this old house had left all the other houses behind it, and had gone out to live by itself, near the fields and woods and little brooks.

The moment the steamboat touched the wharf where they were to land, Henry and Bessie began to look about for their new

home, and they were disappointed to find that there were still miles between them.

"I should like to walk," said Henry, "if I only knew the way."

His father, however, told him that was out of the question, and after a time they were all crowded into the carriage that stood waiting for them, and rapidly approaching their journey's end. Every thing was new to the children, and every thing looked beautiful. Bessie could not help getting up from her seat to dance with joy, whenever she saw any thing that pleased her, till at last her papa said:

"Bessie, if you will be so good as to wait till we reach home, instead of dancing here on my feet, I am sure my toes will be very much obliged to you."

Bessie laughed; but she was sorry she had hurt her papa's feet by jumping up and down on them, so she sat very still till the carriage stopped before the gate of a large

white house, and she found that now they had really got home.

"May we run about and see what we can see, papa?" said Henry.

Their papa said they might go into the big barn and the orchard, but not farther that night. So away they flew, wild with delight, peeping in here and there, but not staying a moment in any one place. As soon as they reached the orchard, Bessie fairly screamed with delight. The apple-trees were all in bloom, and she had never seen any thing half so beautiful before.

"O Bessie!" cried Henry, "here it is."

"Here is what?" asked Bessie, looking round.

"Why, your *tree*." And when Bessie came running back to meet him, there he sat in the funniest little seat you ever saw, on the trunk of an old tree. This seat was so near the ground that Bessie could easily jump up into it, and when nicely seated

there her head was sheltered by a great branch full of leaves and blossoms.

"Oh! how nice! Oh! how funny!" she cried.

If this tree had ever had any thoughts, and had talked as well as thought, this is what it said: "Well, I've grown a foot straight up in the air like other trees, and now I'm getting tired of it. I don't see why I should do just as all the rest do. Why shouldn't I show my independence, and grow sideways, if I've a mind? To be sure, people might say I took airs upon myself. But what of that? I think I *will* grow sideways, in spite of them. But then all the other trees will look down upon me, and say they are taller than I am. I know how to manage it—I'll send out two branches; one shall go up into the air, and the other shall run off towards the stone wall." So it went on for a while, and the tree grew and grew, and the branch that shot out towards the wall determined to

grow just as it pleased, and it pleased to grow very crooked indeed—so crooked that at last it was just the shape of the letter U, or at least very nearly so, and this made Bessie's arm-chair. As for the branch that was going up straight, it got tired of that after a while, and came and leaned in a friendly way over the crooked branch, and this made the shelter for Bessie's head.

While the children were thus busy in the orchard, every body inside the house was busy in unpacking and trying to get things ready for the night.

"That tea-kettle has gone and staid behind," said the cook, "and I should like to know how I am to get tea."

"Boil some water in the sauce-pan, of course," said Maggy.

"But there isn't a sauce-pan to be found," said the cook; "and if there was, how am I to get water, I should like to know?"

"There's plenty in the well, I reckon," said Maggy.

"And I wish you was there, too, for hiding away things at such a rate. To my notions this is a poke of a place, and I wish myself fairly back again in New-York."

But now Bessie's mamma came smiling into the kitchen, and if she couldn't find the tea-kettle she *could* find the sauce-pan, she was sure; and pretty soon her pleasant face seemed to cheer up the great desolate kitchen, and make it a little home-like.

"It's always dull in a strange place at first," said she, "but we'll soon make it delightful here. Mr. Prior has engaged some fresh butter in the village, and some delicious-looking bread, so if we can only find a few plates and things, we'll have tea, and that will rest us all."

And pretty soon Henry and Bessie were called in, and some sat on boxes and some stood up, and some had knives and some hadn't any, but every body had such a nice supper! Mr. Prior said, as he always did about every thing good, that the bread

tasted like his mother's bread; and Mrs. Prior said she was glad to see a drop of real milk once more; and Henry and Bessie said every thing the rest said, and a great deal besides.

At bed-time the children found they were to sleep on the floor, and that was fun indeed—such fun that they came near lying awake all night. Henry called out to Bessie from his little room, and she answered him, and they kept getting wider and wider awake, until at last their mamma forbade their speaking another word that night.

"Mayn't I say just *one* thing now, mamma?" said Bessie.

"Not unless it is something very important, my dear. It is ten o'clock, and you ought to have been asleep two hours ago."

"It *is* very important, mamma," said Bessie. "I want to ask you to call me at four o'clock, so that I may see how it looks early in the morning."

Her mamma only smiled, however, and

when Henry and Bessie awoke next morning they found that every body else had breakfasted long ago, and that it was nearly eight o'clock. They had tired themselves with running about so much, and their mamma would not have them awakened.

"Mamma," said Bessie, "will you do me one little favor?"

"To be sure, my darling, what is it?"

"Only to go down into our orchard and see my arm-chair, mamma."

"She means her tree," said Henry; and thereupon he began to describe the crooked seat they had found, and twisted himself into all sorts of shapes in order to do so, but could not make himself look like a tree at all.

Their mamma then let herself be carried to the orchard, when she admired the tree to their hearts' content, but said they must not ask her out again until things in the house were in order. So they amused themselves without disturbing her again,

and played all day long as if this was to be their only day in the country, so that the moment their heads touched their pillows at night they fell fast asleep, and did not move hand or foot till late next day.

CHAPTER III.

"I WONDER if I could trust these little folks to go up to one of the farm-houses?" said Mrs. Prior, after breakfast. "We want some more of Mrs. Dawson's nice butter."

"Oh! do let us go, mamma," cried Bessie, "and then I shall feel like Little Red Riding Hood, when she went to carry a pot of butter to her grandmother."

"If I were sure you would not lose the way," said her mamma, doubtfully.

"Oh! I'll take care of Bessie," said Henry, "and if we do lose our way we can ask some body to show it to us."

"But you may not meet any one, my dear. However, I think I will trust you. Come up stairs, and I will point out the house to you; you can see it from the front

windows. Now, you are to go straight along that road till you come to the house. The road is hilly, so you must go slowly. When you reach the house, ask for Mrs. Dawson, and tell her your mother would like some more of her nice butter, if she can spare it."

"How much more, mamma?"

"Oh! I don't know. It isn't likely she can spare more than you can easily bring."

The children could not wait to hear any more, and very soon they set off, with a bright tin pail between them, Bessie "making believe very hard" that she was "Little Red Riding Hood."

"Henry," said she, "suppose you should be the wolf, and want to eat me up."

"But I don't want to eat you up," said Henry.

"No, but only *make belicve* you want to Come, now, ask me where I am going."

So Henry got down on all-fours, and tried

as hard to look like a wolf as he had before tried to look like a tree.

"Where are you going, little girl?" he asked.

"I am going to my grandmother's with a little pot of butter and a little flask of wine."

"Well," said the wolf, "you take this way, and I'll take that, and see which will get there soonest."

By this time Henry and Bessie had become so interested in their new play that Bessie quite forgot that she was not really going to her grandmother's. Henry, too, almost believed himself a wolf; and he looked so fierce, and opened his mouth so wide, that Bessie began to feel a little afraid of him. So, without another word, instead of going straight up the hilly road their mamma had pointed out to them, Little Red Riding Hood turned off into a lane on the left hand, and the wolf trotted on all-fours into a piece of woods on the right.

Bessie ran on a short distance down the lane, when suddenly it struck her that she was, after all, only little Bessie, and that Henry was, after all, only little Henry; so she stopped and looked back, thinking she should see him coming out of the woods to meet her. No Henry, however, was to be seen, and she quickly turned and ran into the woods, in the very place, as she thought, he had entered. She still saw nothing of him.

"I'll call him," thought she. So she stopped running, and cried:

"Henry!"

But there was no answer. All was as silent among the tall trees as if no body had ever set foot there since the world was made. Bessie's little heart began to beat very fast, and her voice was thick and indistinct, when she called the second time:

"*Henry!*"

But it was still again. She listened eagerly, but could hear only the faint twitter

of far-off birds, and the hum of little new-born insects who were just beginning to live, and fly about in these dim woods.

"I'll try once more," thought Bessie, and she lifted up her voice, all choked with tears, and cried again:

"O Henry, Henry!"

"Why, you little foolish thing, you!" said Henry, starting up at her very feet; "here I was all the time, right behind this bush."

"Oh! I was so frightened," sobbed Bessie.

"I didn't mean to frighten you; I was only playing," said Henry. "I thought it was such nice fun to hide here and hear you calling for me."

"I was afraid there were wolves, or bears, or lions out here," said Bessie, "and that perhaps they had eaten you up."

"Oh! there are no such wild beasts here, or mamma would not have let us come," said Henry.

"But she *didn't* let us come," said Bessie; "we came ourselves. She told us to go

straight up the road, and we didn't. We have been very naughty."

"Well, let's get back into the road again," said Henry. "I'm sure it wasn't naughty just to play wolf a little bit. I don't believe mamma will say any thing. We'll go right back into the road."

"Which way is it?"

"Oh! right here, this way, don't you see?"

"I don't think that's the way," said Bessie, doubtfully.

But Henry went on, and Bessie followed; but he was wrong, after all, and every step carried them farther and farther into the woods. His courage began to fail.

"I'm afraid we're lost," said he. "But don't be afraid; I'll take this big stick, and if any body tries to hurt you I'll knock him right in the head with it."

He put his arm around her, and felt very brave and dreadfully terrified, both at once. Bessie wanted to cry, but she wouldn't.

She knew it would distress Henry to see her cry. So they walked valiantly on together till Henry said:

"Bessie, I'm Giant Great-Heart now!'

Bessie smiled; a faint little make-believe smile it was.

"If we should die here in the woods, do you think the robins would cover us with leaves?" she asked, in a mournful little voice.

"I don't know," said Henry, glancing up at the trees above his head, to see if there were any birds there who looked as if they would do them such a favor. "But, Bessie, where's your bonnet?"

"I don't know," said Bessie; "it must have dropped off when I was running so. And you've lost your hat, too. Hark! what was that?"

"What did it sound like?"

"It sounded like—like a—*robber!*" said Bessie, trembling.

"And suppose it *was* a robber, what

have you got to give him?" said a well known voice.

"*O Maggy!* is that you?" said Bessie, throwing herself into the arms of her nurse, and crying now with all her heart.

Henry threw down his stick, and looked very brave indeed.

"A pretty hand you are to take care of your little sister," said Maggy. "Scaring the poor soul into fits, and decoying her into the woods!"

"It wasn't his fault," said Bessie; "you see he was a wolf."

"Yes, yes, I dare say he was a wolf, and a very naughty wolf indeed; and we shall see what we shall do to wolves when we catch them!" said Maggy.

Now Maggy was only making believe she was angry with Henry; but he did not know that, and he walked along by her side, feeling very guilty, and wondering what his mamma would do to him when he got home.

"Put on your hat, Bessie," said Maggy, "for now we are coming into the road, and the sun is hot. As for that old wolf, I suppose he doesn't wear hats."

"Where did you find it?" asked Henry; "and how came you to find us, either?"

But Maggy said she was afraid of wolves, and so she took Bessie by the hand, and began to run down the hilly road towards home, and so they got there first.

"Well," said Bessie's mamma, "so here you are. I thought how it would be."

"Dear mamma," said Bessie, "I'm *very* sorry. We didn't mean to get lost. We were playing together, and I was Little Red Riding Hood, and Henry was the wolf; and some how it stopped being make believe, and Henry was a *real* wolf; and then we ran away from each other, and we got lost; and, oh! I'm so tired!"

Bessie's poor little face was quite pale, her frock was torn, and one of her hands

was badly scratched. Her mamma took her upon her lap and comforted her.

"I sent Maggy to follow you, darling," said she; "for I was pretty sure two such little folks as you would get to playing on the way. I am sure I shall never need to have you watched again, because your fright will teach you to take care of yourselves."

Henry now came in, and was very grateful to his mamma for kissing him instead of calling him a naughty boy; for neither he nor Bessie had dreamed of doing any thing wrong.

"Come here, old wolf," said his mamma, "and let Maggy wash your black paws, which look as if they had travelled a long way to-day; and then you and Red Riding Hood may have some of my dinner."

So Maggy washed them both, and smoothed their tangled hair, and then they had a real country dinner — bread

and milk, and fresh eggs, and apple-pie; and if you had seen Henry eating his, perhaps you would have called him a wolf indeed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Bessie's papa was to go back to the city, and breakfast was early on that account.

"The children ought to be up in better season," said he. "Why, when I was a boy, I wonder what my father would have said to see me in bed after four o'clock?"

"But our children are not used to so much exercise as they take here. They get very tired. I think it best to let them sleep as long as they wish now, and by and by they won't get so tired, and will awake of themselves," said their mamma.

"I dare say you are right, my dear. And I'll tell you what I mean to do—I will get a little dog for them, and then you

will feel less uneasy about them when they ramble about."

"Oh! I don't like dogs," said Mrs. Prior.

"There's no danger in a dog—none at all; and they will be safer with one, if they ever happen to get lost again. They can't always have Maggy running after them. I want them to be free as the air they breathe.

'And thou, my child, shalt wander like a breeze,'

you know," he added, smiling.

Mrs. Prior smiled too, and that settled the question.

Both Henry and Bessie were surprised and pleased when, after breakfast, their mamma said to them:

"Now you may go for that butter you failed to bring me yesterday."

They kissed her hands, they kissed her lips, they kissed her cheeks; and when they heard her send Maggy on another

errand, and knew they were not to be watched, how grateful they were!

You may be sure that this time they reached Mrs. Dawson's in safety, for love to their dear, kind mamma went with them all the way.

They knocked at the door, which was opened by Mrs. Dawson herself.

"Mamma says, will you please let her have some more of that nice butter?" said Henry.

"Who is your mamma?" asked Mrs. Dawson.

"Her name is Mrs. Prior," said Bessie, looking up anxiously into Mrs. Dawson's face.

"We don't make much butter to spare at this time of year," said Mrs. Dawson, "but I suppose I could let her have two pound."

"Two *pounds*," said Bessie, quickly, and before she thought. Then, reflecting that she had been correcting the language of a

grown woman, she blushed, and felt so ashamed that she did not dare to look up again.

Mrs. Dawson, however, had not observed what the child said, so she now invited them into her clean kitchen, while she went for the butter.

"What a nice place this is!" said Henry. "I'll bet my house will be just like this."

"O Henry! it's *wicked* to bet," said Bessie.

"I mean to have a great big dog in the yard of my house," continued Henry.

"What for?"

"Why, to bark at people who wanted to come in."

"But people would be afraid to go to see you if you had a great dog there. They would be afraid he would bite them."

"Oh! but you see I am going to keep him chained up."

Bessie said *she* meant to keep a little bit of a cat in her house, to mew at people.

While she and Henry were laughing at this witty speech—for they thought it wondrous witty—Mrs. Dawson came in with the butter. She brought, also, some sweet, fresh milk, and a plate of doughnuts, which she offered the children. Henry took some without delay, but Bessie said:

"No, thank you, ma'am."

As soon as they got out of the house, Henry asked Bessie how it happened that she was not hungry.

"I was hungry," she answered.

"Then why didn't you take a doughnut?"

"I was afraid to."

"Then I will give you one of mine."

But just as Bessie was opening her mouth to refuse to take away Henry's doughnut, they came in full view of a poor girl, who sat a little off the road, under a tree. She was ragged and dirty, and her hair looked as if it never had been combed. Both Henry and Bessie had often met poor children in the streets at home, but their nurse

never would stop to allow them to speak to any such, and they now stood still before the little girl, and looked kindly upon her, without daring to utter a word.

Bessie saw a basket of flowers upon the

ground, at the girl's side, and that unlocked her tongue.

"Are you going to sell those flowers, little girl?" she asked.

The poor girl made no answer, but looked

very sharply at the doughnut in Henry's hand.

"I think she's hungry," whispered Bessie; "may I give it to her?"

"Yes, indeed," said Henry.

The girl snatched it eagerly, and ate it up without ceremony.

"I never heard of selling flowers," said she.

"What are you going to do with them, then?"

Why, there's a lady—she's a pretty lady, and she said she wanted some flowers; and she told me to get some for her, and if I would get some she would give me a frock without any holes in it."

"Won't your mother give you any frocks?"

"I haven't got any mother."

"Won't your father?"

"Where's my father to get frocks, I wonder?" said the child, roughly.

Bessie sighed, she hardly knew why;

and then she and Henry went on their way.

To their surprise, the poor little girl followed them, and as they entered the gate she still kept on.

"Are you coming in here?" asked Bessie, in astonishment.

"The pretty lady lives here," said the girl.

"It's *mamma!*" cried Bessie, clapping her hands. "And she is going to give you one of my frocks, I dare say."

She ran in joyfully. In a few moments Mrs. Prior came back with her to the door.

"Come in, Tabby," said she, kindly.

The child did not move, however, but stood quite still upon the door-step.

"May I get something for her to eat?" whispered Bessie.

But Maggy was before her this time. She came with a bowl of bread and milk and a plate of meat. The little girl seized the meat, and ate it with her fingers.

When she had eaten it, she looked at the plate, as much as to say, "I wish you were full again," and then dispatched the bread and milk.

"Mamma, couldn't *we* have gathered those flowers?" asked Henry, following his mother into the house. "There are plenty just like them, all about here."

"Yes; but, you see, I wanted that poor girl to earn her frock, and so I let her gather the flowers for me. It will, perhaps, make her value her dress more."

"Is she a good girl?" asked Bessie.

Her mamma replied: "If my little Bessie had a wicked father, and no mother to care for her; if she never heard loving words, and often was hungry, and cold, and lonely, what sort of a child would she be, do you think?"

Bessie only sighed again; but after a minute she went back to the door-step, and whispered to the girl, who now sat waiting for the promised dress.

"Shouldn't you like to have me wash you?" was the little, soft whisper.

"I don't know," said the girl. "Ain't you too proud?"

Bessie only smiled, and held out her own clean, fat hand towards the dirty brown one of the poor girl.

"I'll get a sponge, and some soap, and a towel, and make you as clean as a penny, pretty soon. What did you say your name was?"

"Tabby."

"Well, Tabby, you come out here behind the kitchen, and wait while I run in for the things."

Tabby looked like a machine. She did not seem pleased or displeased, but quite stupid. But the soap and water brightened her up.

"Did you ever wash any body before?" she asked.

"Why, yes; my dolls," said Bessie.

"I don't expect them was so dirty as I am."

"No, not *quite* so dirty. But, you see, I bathe them every day."

Tabby was silent, and did not speak another word till Bessie led her back in triumph to the front door.

"Dear me!" said Maggy, "what have you been about?"

"Only washing Tabby before she has her new frock on."

"Couldn't the lazy thing do it herself, I wonder? I'll warrant you've caught some dreadful thing of her. A pretty piece of work that will be. If you're going to be washing all the beggars you meet, you'll have your hands full."

"I ain't a beggar," said Tabby, fiercely.

"Here's the frock you are to have, and Mrs. Prior says it's to be saved for Sundays, and your old duds patched up for every day."

"But let her wear it home," pleaded Bessie.

Maggy made no objection, and the dress

was put on. Tabby said not a word of thanks, but darted off, and was soon out of sight.

"That's manners!" said Maggy

"If you please, ma'am," said the cook to Mrs. Prior, "are dirty beggars to be washed in my tubs, just as I've got them filled with nice rain-water?"

Mrs. Prior looked puzzled.

"I don't know what you mean," said she.

"Only that dirty Tabby, as they call her, has been right into one of my tubs, and Miss Bessie scrubbing and rubbing her with soap and sand."

Mrs. Prior could not help laughing. "It shan't be done again," said she, "or at least not in one of *your* tubs, but only in one of mine. Bessie, darling," she added, as the little girl made her appearance, "I wouldn't meddle with the tubs outside the kitchen door again. It is never right to annoy one person for the sake of another."

"I won't do so again, dear mamma. But was I naughty to wash poor Tabby?"

This hard question was never answered, for at that moment a carriage drove up to the door, and a lady with two children was seen alighting from it.

CHAPTER V.

This lady introduced herself as Mrs. Grey, and she and Mrs. Prior conversed together, while the children looked gravely on. Bessie felt that she ought to say something to the young visitors, but she could not possibly think of any thing that seemed wise enough. Mrs. Grey's children looked like pleasant, sweet children. They, too, were trying to make themselves speak, but every minute's delay made it harder and harder.

At last the eldest, whose name was Lily, broke the ice.

"Do you like the country?"

"Oh! yes, I like it *dearly*," said Bessie. "We have all sorts of nice times here, and it's a great deal pleasanter here than it is in New-York."

"Are you going to stay all winter?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but I don't know. Are you?"

"Oh! yes, we *live* here. Don't you know that large brown house about two miles from here, on the county road?"

"No, I never saw it," said Bessie.

"Well, we live there; and we've got a baby-house of our own, right by the side of it."

"What! a real house?"

"Yes, a real house, just like mamma's, only smaller. It is painted brown, and it has a little tree behind it."

"It will be a big tree some time," said little Charles, who had not taken his eyes off Bessie's face since he entered the house.

"Do your dolls live in the house?" asked Bessie.

"Yes, Mary Ann and Georgiana live in it. And they keep a cook."

On hearing this, Bessie laughed, and that made them all laugh.

"The children seem to be enjoying themselves," said Mrs. Grey; and pretty soon she took leave, after inviting them all to visit her.

"O mamma! what a sweet little girl that was!" said Lily Grey.

"She ought to be, if she is at all like her mother," said Mrs. Grey. "I think we shall find them very pleasant acquaintances."

"Mamma," said Bessie, "don't you think, Lily Grey says her dolls have a house of their own, and keep a cook! Lily Grey is a real funny girl. And, oh! did you see little Charles?"

All this time Henry was missing. He was busy in digging a well in the yard, and had not seen the carriage till just as it was driving off.

"I wonder if they've got any boys?" he asked, after listening to Bessie's account of the visit.

"Why, that little Charles is a boy," said Bessie.

"Oh! I don't mean *little* boys like him I mean great boys as big as I am."

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

"Why didn't you ask, then?"

"I did not think of it."

"I wish I knew," said Henry. "But here comes that Tabby again. What does she want now, I wonder?"

Tabby came running towards them with a tin pail in her hand. She looked tired and flushed.

"She's got a pail, and is coming a-begging," said Henry.

"It looks like *our* pail," said Bessie. "O Henry! what did we do with our pail?"

"Why, I don't know. We brought it home, didn't we? No, I do believe I set it down when I was putting my hand in my pocket to see if there was any thing there fit to give Tabby. And she has found it. She's a real honest girl."

"I *ain't* an honest girl!" cried Tabby. "I hid your pail in the bushes, and I was

going to keep it, only that girl was so good to me, and so I've brought it back where it belongs."

She was turning away, but Bessie ran after her.

"You *are* a good girl," said she, "and God will love you.

"I've been a very bad girl," said Tabby, sadly.

"What have you done?"

"I've told lies, and I've stolen things. I've got a great many bad ways. I shouldn't think you'd want to speak to me."

"*Jesus* used to speak to all sorts of people," said little Bessie, "and he wants us to do just as he did. He washed a man's feet once. Only to think, *Jesus washed people's feet!*"

"Was that the reason you washed me?"

"Yes, I *think* that was the reason."

Tabby's eyes filled with tears.

"I suppose you are always good," said she.

"Oh! no, not always. No, indeed!"

"Do you tell lies?"

"Oh! no."

"Do you steal?"

"Oh! *no!*"

"What *do* you do, then?"

Bessie was silent. After a little thought, she said,

"I was naughty to wash you in the cook's tub, because she had caught it full of water to wash her dishes in. But I didn't think."

Just then Mrs. Prior came to the door and called Tabby.

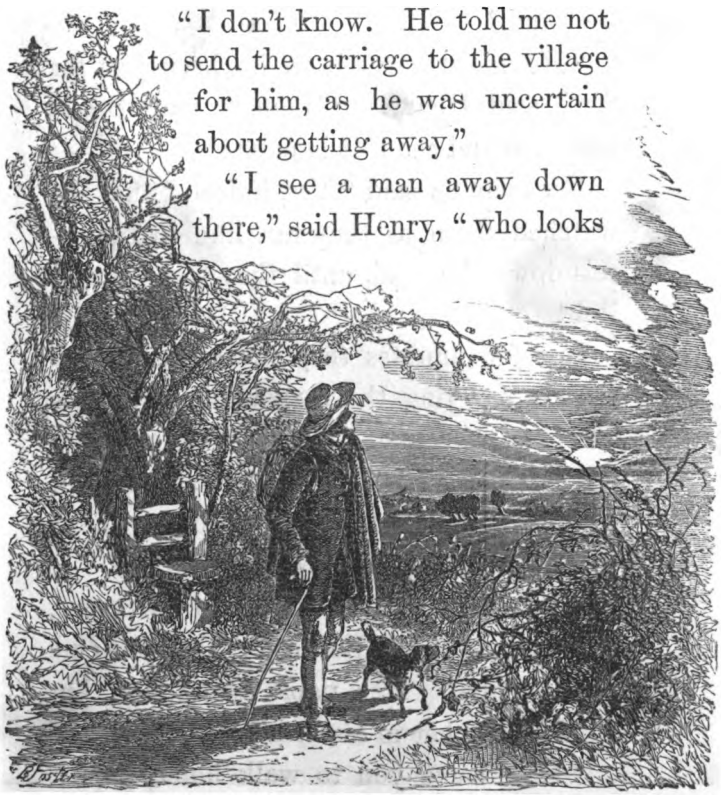
"You were very kind to bring home this careless little boy's pail," said she. "We all thank you. Should you like to come to-morrow, and get it full of milk?"

Tabby said she should, and turned away.

"Why didn't you give her something now, mamma?" asked Henry.

"Because I want her to come to-morrow. I can't help hoping we shall make something of her yet."

"Is papa coming home to-night?" asked Henry.



"I don't know. He told me not to send the carriage to the village for him, as he was uncertain about getting away."

"I see a man away down there," said Henry, "who looks to me like papa. There's a carpet-bag, or something, on his back."

"Papa wouldn't have a carpet-bag on his *back*," said Bessie; "he always carries it in his hand."

"He might carry it on his back just for fun," said Henry. "Mamma, may Bessie and I go and see if it is papa?"

His mamma said "Yes, indeed," and she watched them, as they ran like two squirrels down the road, until they were out of sight.

In a few minutes they came back. Bessie was carrying the carpet-bag, papa was carrying her, and Henry was capering around a noble little dog, who looked up in his face, as much as to say, "Do you mean to be kind to me, I wonder?"

"You must be too tired to carry me, dear papa," said Bessie. "Do put me down, papa." Her papa kissed her, but would keep her in his arms.

"How came you to walk home, papa?" asked Henry. "And where did you get this splendid dog?"

"I walked home in order to buy him in the village," replied his father. "He is to be your own dog, and you are to teach him to follow you about, and to take good care of Bessie."

"Thank you, papa," said Henry. His heart was full of love and gratitude, and he said to himself, "I *will* be a good boy, papa is so kind to me."

Mrs. Prior, meanwhile, was coming to meet them, and Mr. Prior let Bessie get down from his arms when he saw her mamma, and they were very glad to see each other. Mr. Prior said it was beginning to be warm and dusty in town, and that he was glad they were all safely out of it.

They had a deal to tell each other, and there were all sorts of plans talked over about making gardens and arbors, and keeping cows and hens.

"Bessie must have a little garden of her own," said her mamma.

Bessie's answer was a great clapping of hands, and after tea they all went out to select a good spot for it.

Henry was so nearly crazy about his dog that he could not think of any thing else.

"You see now how lucky it was that I dug my well yesterday," said he.

"No, I don't see," said Bessie.

"Why, my dog will want a well to drink out of."

Henry's papa laughed on hearing this, and said it reminded him of the man whose turn it was to board the school-mistress a week. He wanted to know when she was coming, so as to buy a *barrel of flour* for her.

"But my well is only a little one," said Henry.

"Is there any water in it?"

"No, papa, there hasn't any water come into it yet, but I suppose some will come pretty soon."

He was disappointed to hear that his well was not deep enough for that.

"Then I'll dig it deeper," said he.

"But your dog will fall in and get drowned, if it is very deep," said Bessie.

So Henry gave up having any well.

CHAPTER VI.

The next day was Sunday. Soon after breakfast, they all set off for the village church. Mr. and Mrs. Prior, and Bessie, went in the carriage, but Henry was allowed to go in the wagon with Maggy and the other servants. After they were all out of the house, Maggy locked the door, and put the key in her pocket.

Henry sat upon some straw in the bottom of the wagon, and enjoyed his jolting ride very much. As for Bessie, her heart was full of sweet thoughts; and as she rode along through the beautiful country, it seemed to her she had never been so happy in her life. The little church was three miles off. As they drew near, they saw some carriages and a number of open

wagons also approaching, and sun-burnt farmers, grave farmers' wives, and nut-brown children were passing in at the one door.

Bessie was not one of those children who spend their time at church in looking about, but she could not help glancing more than once at a distant corner where Tabby sat, and wishing that she could make her listen to the sermon. She did not know that this was the first time poor Tabby had been seen in church for years. The fact is, Tabby had come there partly to display her new dress, and partly to meet Bessie, whom she had seen driving past her father's house.

As soon as the congregation was dismissed, almost every body hurried out, as if time was very precious. Mr. and Mrs. Prior, and Bessie, and Mrs. Grey and her children were still left, and Lily and Bessie smiled at each other across the empty pews, and liked each other better than ever.

As they were driving away, Bessie observed that the sexton locked the church door, and was carrying off the key on his little finger. She also observed that the church stood in the midst of the graveyard; and as they passed by, she read on an old stone these words:

"Robert Sherwood,

Died Aug. 8, 1735.

AGED ONE YEAR."

"Mamma, how many years is it since 1735?" she asked.

"More than a hundred."

"Then that little baby has been in heaven *a hundred years!* O mamma! what a happy little baby!"

Her mamma drew her closer to her side, but made no answer, for she was thinking over and over again, "What a happy baby!"

Henry had seen a great many things which he was eager to tell Bessie as soon

as they got home. He had seen two boys eating gingerbread during the long prayer; he had seen two old men nod this way and that, all through the sermon; and he had seen a number of girls and boys go into the grave-yard after church, open their baskets, and take out bread and cheese, pie, cake, hard-boiled eggs, and doughnuts, and sit down among the graves to eat their dinners.

"I never heard of such a thing as eating dinner in a grave-yard," said Bessie.

"Nor I either; but it must be real fun. I mean to ask mamma to let me carry my dinner next Sunday."

"I don't believe she will let you."

"Those children were all going off to another service in the school-house," said their papa.

"In the school-house!" said Henry.

"Yes; the minister only preaches here half a day. He goes in the afternoon to preach in another village, seven miles off.

So the people here have a little meeting in the school-house."

"Who preaches, papa?"

"No body preaches. They pray and sing, and sometimes have a sermon read."

"Are we going?" asked Bessie.

"No, not to-day. Perhaps next Sunday we shall. But I did not understand how things were arranged until it was too late."

"Papa, do you think Tabby heard any of the singing or any of the praying to-day?" asked Bessie.

"*Tabby!*" cried her papa, who thought only of a gray cat.

"I mean a poor, wicked girl, named Tabby, who was here yesterday. Mamma gave her a dress to wear to church, and I saw her there; but I'm afraid she didn't hear any thing."

"Perhaps she did not understand, even if she did hear. Some Sunday, I think I must make a little sermon for the children, and go and preach to them in the school-

house. Why, Bessie, when I was a boy I used to go to meetings in the school-house, and in the winter evenings each man carried his own candle, and as soon as he came in he would light it, and so the room kept growing lighter and lighter till every body could see to use his hymn-book."

"Were there candlesticks there?"

"No; but in each desk there was a hole lined with lead, and this made a sort of candlestick; then when we went home each man blew out his candle, and if there was any of it left, took it home with him."

The children were much interested in hearing this, and Henry was seized with a sudden desire to go to an evening meeting. He could hardly bear it when his mamma laughed at him, and said a good bed was the proper place for children of his age.

After dinner Mr. Prior had a little meeting for them all, in the parlor. He read a chapter in the Bible and explained it, and they all sang hymns together. Then each

chose a book, and soon the house was so still that you would not have known there was any body in it. Henry and Bessie went out to the little porch at the end of the house, and sat before the open door. It was a warm day for the season, and quite pleasant in the open air.

Bessie's book was "Anna Ross." She had read it at least twenty times, but it was still new to her, and as she read it now, her heart warmed towards little Anna, and she wished, like her, to choose God for her Friend.

Henry's favorite book was "*Jonah* Ross." He liked it next best to "Robinson Crusoe." He said he did not want to read about good girls and boys—it was more fun to read about bad ones. Between every sentence, however, at this time, he talked to his dog.

"Here, Watch! come here, Watch!" he would cry; and then, fancying Rover a better name, he would call, "Rover! Rover! poor fellow! poor fellow!"

"I think Frisk would be a pretty name," said Bessie, looking up from her book.

"Or Whisk," said Henry. "Don't you see how he whisks his tail about?"

"No, he *wags* his tail," said Bessie.

"Then his name shall be Wag. Wag! Wag! come here, old Wag!"

Bessie laughed heartily on hearing this, and Henry was so pleased that he got up and stamped with all his strength—a fashion he had when amused, and which in a little girl would have been dancing.

"Pretty works down there!" said a voice above them; and on looking up they saw Maggy's head thrust out of the window over their heads.

"A fine way of keeping the Sabbath day!" said she.

Henry colored a little, and Bessie colored a great deal.

"Ah!" thought she, "I shall never be so good as Anna Ross!" She forgot that Anna Ross was a little human girl like her-

self, and that, though a Christian child, she often did wrong. She forgot that God is not a hard Master, judging us as men and women do, but a tender, pitiful Saviour, ever more ready to forgive than to condemn. Little children who are trying to do right can't be told too often that "God is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day little Bessie's garden was marked out, and her papa promised to send up a man from the village to put a fence about it. They were very sorry to have their papa go back again to the city, for he would not return to them for a whole week.

"Papa, why need you go?" said Bessie. "Why can't you *live* here with us!"

"Oh! I must be getting money to buy things for you and for mamma."

"I would rather have you than the things," said Bessie; "and so would mamma, I know."

"But you must have bread to eat, and clothes to wear."

"And haven't you got money enough to buy them for us?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But, Bessie, the truth is, I rather *like* to work, and you know I should have nothing to do here."

"You might make my fence, papa."

Her papa laughed.

"I can't have a good time here, at all," said Bessie. "I shall keep thinking and thinking, when it is hot and dusty, that there's papa down in the city, working for me, while I am running about in the woods, and having a garden, and eating fresh eggs."

"But I did just so when I was a little boy," said her papa. I *lived* in the woods and fields, and as for fresh eggs, dear me! I had *stacks* of eggs."

This comforted Bessie very much, and she let her papa go very cheerfully.

He had not been gone long when a man came to the house with some little garden-tools, which were directed to "Miss Bessie Prior."

"I was to say your papa brought them from the city on Saturday," said the man.

"And I was to put up a fence somewhere about here."

Bessie hugged up the tools in her arms as she would a baby, and ran before the man to show him the place where the fence was to be placed. While he was looking at it, she looked at him. and did not like him at all.

"He doesn't look like a good man," thought she; so she left him to finish measuring her land, and ran to exhibit her tools to Henry.

Henry said he wished he had some like them.

"But you've got Wag, you know."

Henry laughed, and said he meant to call him Wag all the time.

A few hours later Tabby came stealing into the yard.

"Can I speak to father?" asked she.

"Is your father here?" asked Bessie.

"Yes, I suppose so; he came to measure for a fence."

"Is *that* your father?" said Bessie, in a pitying voice.

"Yes; and he's not to drink any rum while he's working here. Your father said so; I heard him. 'Jones,' says he, 'could you do a little job for me?' 'Yes,' says father. 'But I have a rule that no man shall drink a drop while he's working for me,' says Mr. Prior. 'I never drinks,' says father. But that was a wicked lie, for he does, every day, and what I'm afraid of is, that he's got some in a bottle now. So I thought if I could go and watch him may be he wouldn't dare to take it out, for fear I should tell."

Bessie was so shocked that she could not speak a word. She pointed out the place where Jones was at work, and then ran to her mamma.

"What are you here for?" asked Jones, roughly, when he saw Tabby.

Tabby made no answer, but her eyes were busy in prying into his pockets.

"There's a bottle sticking out of your pocket," said she.

"Well, what of that?"

"You promised not to drink while you was up here."

Jones laughed, and taking the bottle from his pocket, he put it to his lips, and drank.

"Who's to know it?" he asked, laughing again.

"Mr. Prior will know it."

"How?"

"I'm going to tell him."

"You are, are you, Miss? We shall soon see to that."

"O father! please don't drink any more," said Tabby—"please don't."

"What's got into the child? She's so proud of her new frock there's no living with her. But I'll soon take the stiffening out of her. Go home, child!"

Tabby lingered; her father struck her; she turned and ran, and he threw a block

of wood after her, which failed to reach her.

Jones finished his work quietly. He was going and coming for some days. On Thursday Bessie's fence was done.

"Is Tabby pretty well?" asked Bessie, as he was taking leave.

"Yes, she's well," said Jones, laughing.

"I don't like Tabby's father," said Bessie, after he had gone. "I don't believe he is kind to her."

"I hoped to see that poor child before this," said her mamma.

Bessie was so busy with her garden that she did not think of Tabby as much as she had done. She walked with her mamma in the woods and fields every day, gathering flowers, of which there were now a variety. Her mamma knew their names, and Bessie soon learned to chatter about her Solomon's-seals, her fringed polygalas, and the host of other flowers that now adorned every nook and corner.

Henry did not care for such things, but he cared a good deal for Bessie; so, in order to beautify her empty garden, he went off one morning, and dug up in the woods as many of her favorites as he could bring home. They did not live long, to be sure,

but when they died he went for more, and they would pull up the old and replace them with new ones. Children not skilled

in gardening almost always do so. Meanwhile, their papa sent home various shrubs, bulbs, and roots. Bessie had hyacinths and crocuses rather out of season, to be sure, but lovely for all that; and in time she would have tulips and dahlias, and lilies of the valley and moss roses. Henry was making a garden for himself, by his mamma's leave. Bessie let him use her tools just as if they were his own, and in return he let her feed Wag. Henry would not have any flowers in his garden. He planted corn, and potatoes, and squashes; he sowed onions, and radishes, and turnips. He made a great ado to find one apple-seed, and begged every body to look out for peach-stones. He also boasted of the currant-bushes he was going to have, and of a strawberry-bed that was yet to be, and advised Bessie to have a pair of gloves bought in which she could pick raspberries from his land without scratching her fingers.

They were as busy and happy as two

little birds are in the spring, when they've just got to housekeeping, and Mr. Bird says to his wife, "Hadn't you better lay an egg?" and they go chatter, chatter, chatter; and by and by she lays some eggs, and then there's some more chatter, chatter; and then there are some little birds, and Mrs. Bird says to her husband, "My dear, hadn't you better help me feed these young ones?" and then there's more chatter, chatter, flutter, flutter, till you laugh, and put your hands on your ears, and fairly run away.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bessie had a great many things to make her happy, but her own contented little heart was, after all, the best thing she had. Some children are never satisfied, no matter what they have. They are like the little girl who wanted every thing she saw, and when some one said to her, "You will be wanting the moon next!" began to cry, and said: "I want the moon! give me the moon! I must have the moon!"

Bessie certainly had often wished she had a little chicken of her own, but as she did not expect to have every wish indulged, she had never said a word about it to any one. One day, about two weeks after the garden fence was done, Tabby came again to see them. She had found Henry's knife, which

he had lost when digging up plants for Bessie, and had come to restore it to him.

"Why haven't you been here before?" asked Bessie. "And, O Tabby! you haven't been to church for two Sundays!"

"I could not go to church," said Tabby.

"Why not?"

"Father wouldn't let me."

Bessie was very sorry to hear this. "My father is going to have a little meeting in the school-house next Sunday," said she. "Won't your father let you go?"

Tabby began to cry, and cried so hard that Bessie could not bear to see her distress. She ran in to find her mamma, who soon came out to see what was the matter. For a long time Tabby refused to speak, but kept on crying bitterly; at last she said that her father had taken away her new frock, and sold it for rum; and that he had kept her tied up four days because she had said she would tell Mr. Prior about his drinking.

"You should not threaten your father,"

said Mrs. Prior, "but speak gently to him."

"He *isn't* my father," sobbed Tabby; "he's nothing but a man that married my mother; and he beat her and teased her so that she died."

Mrs. Prior reflected a little.

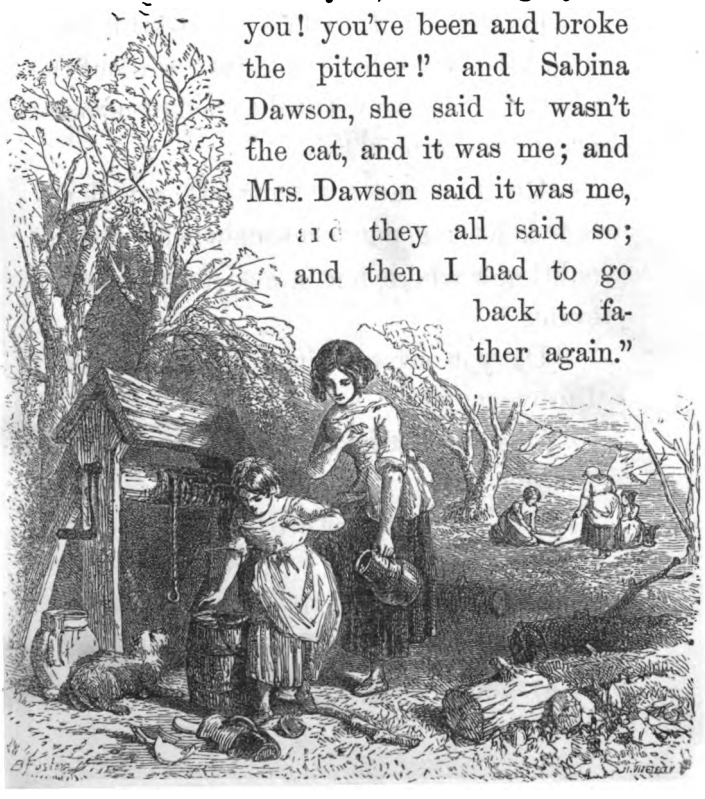
"If I should find another home for you, Tabby, would you try to be a good girl?"

"It ain't no use to get good homes for me," said Tabby. "There was Mrs. Grey, she took me into her house, and tried to make me behave; but I didn't. And Mrs. Dawson, she let me come there once when father drove me out in a rain-storm; but she said I made the children naughty. But indeed I was trying to be good then, and it was a mistake, and all because I had a bad name beforehand."

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Prior.

"Why, you see there was three stone pitchers, and we used to fetch water in them; and one day Mrs. Dawson sent Sarah

and I to the well for water, and I had left my pitcher a-standing there, and when I came up to it there it lay, all broken to smash. And the old cat, she sat close by, and says I, 'You naughty cat you! you've been and broke the pitcher!' and Sabina Dawson, she said it wasn't the cat, and it was me; and Mrs. Dawson said it was me, and they all said so; and then I had to go back to father again."



"But you were really naughty at Mrs. Grey's?"

"Yes, I was bad there—I know I was bad there, and she was afraid I would harm the children."

This confession, made in a sorrowful tone, made Mrs. Prior believe the story about the pitcher. She determined to make one more effort for the poor child.

"I will go and see your father, and ask him to let me put you somewhere; I don't now know where, but in a good home, at all events."

"Do you want a little chicken?" asked Tabby, eagerly.

"I dare say Bessie would like one," said Mrs. Prior.

"Then I'll give her my little chicken. It is as fat as butter."

Bessie thought to herself, "I shouldn't like to take away poor Tabby's chicken—I have so many things, and she hasn't any thing!"

After Tabby had gone, Bessie stood looking after her, with a troubled face.

"I know your thoughts," said her mamma, smiling.

Bessie shook her head doubtfully.

"Yes, I do. In the first place, you think that as Tabby has only that one chicken, she ought not to give it away. In the next place, you would rather I should have it, if any one does, because Tabby offered it to me first."

Bessie smiled.

"Now then, let me tell you my thoughts. In the first place, I think it will afford Tabby more pleasure to give away her chicken than to keep it. She has nothing else, it is true, but I shall see that she has something better than a chicken, to take its place. "Don't you think that would be more kind than to pain her by refusing the only gift she has it in her power to offer us?"

Bessie's face brightened; she saw that her mamma was right.

"In the next place, let me give you my reason for proposing to her to give it to you rather than myself. I am sure she would prefer you should have it, because you are near her own age, and have, besides, been very kind to her."

"But then, mamma, if she wanted me to have it, why didn't she say so?"

"I think it likely she fancied it would be more proper to offer it to me first. At that moment, too, she was feeling very much delighted with my promise to go to see her father. Now when I go to see him I will take you with me, and you can carry a basket and bring your chicken home in it."

CHAPTER IX.

THAT afternoon, as soon as possible after dinner, Mrs. Prior set off to make the promised visit. Tabby had assured them that they would find her father at home, as he was not well. Maggy and Henry went too, and so did Mr. Wag, who was taking in this way his first lessons in good manners. An empty basket made up the party. They were obliged to ride, as it was too far to allow them to walk both ways. Mrs. Prior promised the children, however, that she would walk home.

"Is there any thing in the basket, mamma?" asked Bessie.

On learning that there was not, she looked disappointed.

"There would be no use in giving Tabby

any thing now," said her mamma. "Her father would take it away, as he did her frock."

Old Jones' house stood at the top of a hill, and as they drew near, they saw what a miserable place it was. The fences had stood their ground as long as they could stand his neglect of them; but now, for want of a timely nail here, or a bit of board there, they were all trembling and tottering, waiting only for some gust of wind to speak the word, to tumble down in a forlorn heap. Two ancient hay-stacks stood near—the remnants of better days, when no body said "Old Jones," but "Mr Jones"; when there was a white cow graz ing in the bit of pasture-land, and they made hay for her winter's supply. Now the white cow had gone away, and been turned into rum; the pasture-land had gone too; the old hay-stacks were ready to follow, but no body wanted them.

"It doesn't look nice here a bit!" said

Bessie, after looking about her on every side.

"I don't wish you children to go into the house," said their mamma. "You can sit in the carriage with James; or, if you like, I will send Tabby out, and you may run about with her."

Then Mrs. Prior and Maggy went into the house, and presently Tabby came out.

"Father is worse this afternoon. He is very sick," said Tabby. "But don't you want to help me catch your chicken? and then you can carry him home with you."

The children sprang out, and Wag followed them.

Pretty soon they caught sight of a little round ball of yellow and black down, that had two little yellow and black legs to it.

"There he is," said Tabby.

"Oh! what a little dear!" cried Bessie; and she, and Tabby, and Henry, and Wag at once began to rush toward the chicken, scaring it half out of its wits.

"Biddy, Biddy, Biddy!" cried Bessie, in a coaxing voice. "Come, Biddy!"

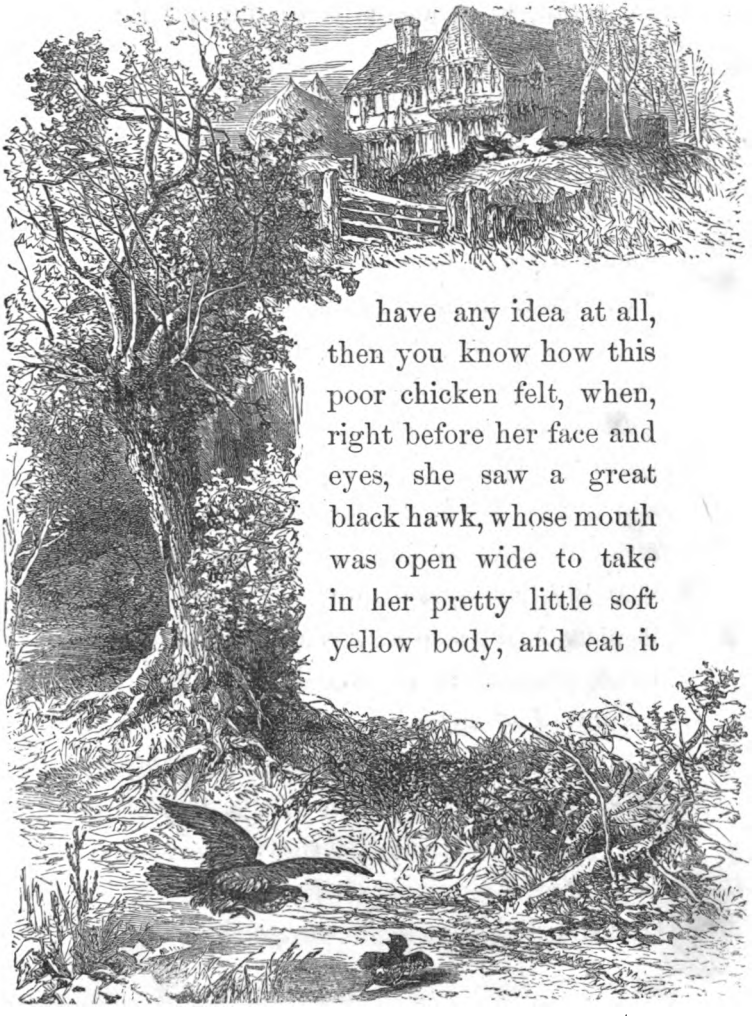
But Biddy only ran the faster on those two poor little legs.

"Chick! chick! chick!" said Tabby.

"Bow-wow-wow!" said Wag.

The chicken ran behind a tub; it hopped up on to a piece of the broken fence; it said "Peep! peep!" in the most plaintive tone; it tried to fly; it scampered; it fairly got away, and vanished, no body knew where. The truth was, that, getting too near the edge of the hill, it had rolled off, and gone, half-tumbling, half-flying, down, down, till it reached the ground, not a bit hurt, but a good deal out of breath.

Now, if you had been chased all over your papa's yard and garden by three giants and a little wolf, and had at last got safely away, how do you suppose you should have felt if you had seen a large black bear come growling at you, with his mouth all open to swallow you up? If you



have any idea at all, then you know how this poor chicken felt, when, right before her face and eyes, she saw a great black hawk, whose mouth was open wide to take in her pretty little soft yellow body, and eat it

up without so much as thanking her for being so fat!

Poor Biddy! This time she did not run, she did not hop, she did not fly. She opened her own mouth as wide as it could possibly be stretched, and all her downy feathers stood upon end with terror. She felt herself as good as dead.

But just at that moment, Wag, who had rolled, and tumbled, and scrambled after the chicken when she went down the hill—good Mr. Wag came darting along with his tail in the air, his ears standing up stiff and straight, and *his* mouth wide open to say that Biddy belonged to him. And he said it in such a fierce way that the old black hawk spread his wings and flew off in the twinkling of an eye.

By this time the children had come down by a winding path to the very spot, and not a little pleased they were to find Wag keeping watch over Miss Biddy, so that she could not again escape them.

"O Mr. Wag!" said Tabby, "you must have been used to taking care of chicks."

"Oh! no; he knew how all himself," said Henry.

"Pooh!" said Tabby, and put Miss Biddy into the basket, and covered her safely, so that she could not get out. Biddy felt very solemn when she found herself in darkness; she thought it couldn't be time to go to bed; and yet it must be night; what had she better do? While she was thus meditating, the basket was put into the carriage, and James and Maggy were charged to take it safely home.

Mrs. Prior and the children then set forth on their walk. As they went along, she told them that Jones was very sick, and that she had directed James to stop on his way home, to ask the Doctor to step up to see him.

"And what about Tabby, mamma?"

"Why, her father was so sick that I did not think it best to vex him by speaking of

her at all. If he is as seriously ill as I think him to be, we shall soon be able to do what we please for the poor child."

"Do you think he will die, mamma?"

"I think he is very sick, my dear; and he thinks so himself. He says he never had such strange feelings before."

Bessie was a long time silent and thoughtful. In her secret heart she asked God not to let that poor wicked man die without making him fit for heaven.

Her mamma, seeing her look so anxious and troubled, began to talk with her cheerfully about the many beautiful things that met them along the way.

"Do you see that lovely green moss?" said she.

Bessie stooped down and felt of the moss by laying her own soft cheek upon it.

"I mean to get a *lot* of it," said Henry, "and make a seat of it."

"Why, so we might!" cried Bessie; "and

I might make a border for some of my beds with it."

"We shall find it nearer home," said their mamma.

"Oh! I wish I had a basket!" cried Bessie.

"What for?" asked Henry.

"Why, I thought if we should find any strawberries, we should want a basket."

"It is hardly time for strawberries," said her mamma. "At any rate, you won't find any more than you will want to eat on the spot."

Bessie's bright eyes at this moment fell upon one solitary berry at her very feet.

"O mamma! here's a strawberry!" she cried, joyfully; "and you must eat it, dear mamma."

Her mamma smiled, and held up another that she had herself just found.

"If I eat yours, you must eat mine," said she.

"If I should dig up a strawberry-plant, root and all, and plant it in my garden, would it grow and bear fruit, mamma?"

Her mamma thought it likely; so Bessie begged Henry to dig one for her. "One with blossoms on it," she whispered; "be sure and have blossoms, for I have a *special reason*."

Henry laughed, and with the help of his knife they secured a thrifty little plant which lived and throve in Bessie's garden as if it knew she had a "special reason" for wanting it to do so.

When they reached home, their hands were full of pretty and curious things. Mrs. Prior had flowers; Henry had three canes and a switch; Bessie had bits of moss, her strawberry-plant, and a variety of leaves. Tea had been ready and waiting an hour, and they were very ready for it.

When Bessie was going to bed, she told

Maggy what a hard time they had had in catching the chicken.

"What were you and mamma doing all that time?" she asked.

"Your mamma was talking to old Jones, and I was putting things a little to rights."

"Who do you suppose will take care of him to-night?"

"I don't know. If he is as sick as he seems to be, very likely the Doctor will get some body to go."

"Maggy, do you think he is sorry he has been so wicked?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; but I know your mamma was faithful to him, at any rate."

"What is being faithful?"

"Why, it means telling a man what an awful sinner he is."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; I suppose so."

"But I'm sure mamma wouldn't just

say that and nothing else. Didn't she tell him any thing about Christ?"

"Of course she did. She talked like a book."

"And what did he say?"

"I didn't rightly hear what he said. It was something about his old mother. How she used to pray for him."

"Oh! did his mother use to pray for him? Then I guess he'll go to heaven!" said Bessie, in a joyful tone.

"How can you suppose such a dreadful man as that can go to heaven?" said Maggy.

"Why, I thought God could change him and make him into a good man. Why, Maggy, don't you remember about the thief on the cross?"

Maggy yielded, and concluded she *would* let old Jones go to heaven, if God would change him very much indeed; and Bessie got into bed, put her hand under her cheek, and fell asleep in the sweet confi-

dence that He who had given that poor man a praying mother, could give him, even at this late hour, the blessings laid up for him through her prayers.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Prior went, in a few days, to return Mrs. Grey's visit, taking both the children with her. They found Mrs. Grey at home, as well as Lily and Charley, and were delighted with the beautiful house and grounds, which were on the banks of the river. As they were taking leave, Mrs. Grey said that Charley would be five years old on the twenty-ninth of June, and that if Henry and Bessie did not feel too old to visit such a little fellow, she should be happy to have them spend the afternoon with him. Now Bessie had not been admitted into the baby-house about which Lily had said so much. Lily said she was "cleaning house," and that her dolls would be offended if she let visitors in when they

were in such confusion. But this only made Bessie the more curious to make the acquaintance of these remarkable dolls, and her eyes said very plainly to her mamma, "Oh! *do* say yes!" So Mrs. Prior replied that Bessie would be delighted to help celebrate Charley's birth-day, but as for Henry, he must answer for himself. Henry said he should be very glad to go; and so the matter was settled.

Mrs. Prior then drove down to inquire about old Jones. On the way they met the Doctor, who stopped to say that the poor man was very sick, and not likely to live many days

"Who is taking care of him?" asked Mrs. Prior.

"I sent in one of the neighbors last night; but all our people about here are very busy at this season, and I was thinking of trying to hunt up young Jones."

"Has he a son, then?"

"Yes, he has a son—a simple fellow, but

as far as I know, harmless enough. He wanders about the country in a restless way, doing almost any thing for a living that comes to hand. He knows enough to take care of his father, with Tabby's help."

"Why, Tabby is a mere child."

"That is true; but she is a quick-witted child, and can supply the lack of memory under which poor Leonard suffers."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"He is off on a fishing expedition. It would not be hard to find him, if one had time."

"I have time," said Mrs. Prior; "but I know nothing about this neighborhood."

The Doctor reflected a little. "I think I can direct you, so that you will find him without difficulty. You have only to follow the course of the river for about five miles, when you will come to a little village where he is well known. Almost any one you meet there can tell you whether he is at hand."

Mrs. Prior received a few more directions, and the Doctor passed on.

"Do you children wish to go too?" she asked.

"I do," said Henry.

"So do I; but I'm hungry," said Bessie.

"That's because you wouldn't eat any of Mrs. Grey's luncheon," said Henry.

"I don't like to eat before strangers," said Bessie.

"We'll go home, then," said her mamma; "but you won't have time to stay to eat your dinner. We shall have to take it with us."

"Oh! that will be nice!" said Bessie.

So home they drove. Maggy packed a basket of cold ham, bread and cheese, and away they went in high glee.

They soon reached the little village the Doctor had described; and on asking the first boy they met, if he knew Leonard Jones, he replied, "Why, every body knows *him*."

"And where is he now?"

"He's off yonder, fishing," said the boy.

And on looking in the direction pointed out, they saw a lad of sixteen or seventeen, wading along the shore, and very intent on

his business. On reaching him, he did not turn his head, or seem in any way to notice them, but kept steadily on with his work.

"Leonard," said Mrs. Prior, kindly, "do you know how to take care of sick people?"

The lad did not even then raise his head. He answered, however: "I don't know how to do any thing."

"But if your own father is sick, you can sit by his side, and give him drink; and if he is worse, run and call in a neighbor?"

"Why, that's as easy as fishing," said Leonard, now looking up, so that they could see his face.

It was an innocent, pleasant face, that no body would fear to trust.

"Jump in, then, my man," said James, "and we'll set you down at your father's door."

"I guess I'd better get on behind," said Leonard, slowly, and looking at his bare, wet feet.

"He'll be kind to his father, I know," whispered Bessie to her mamma.

It was late when they reached Jones' house; but Mrs. Prior went in to see if the poor man needed any thing for the night.

Leonard moved softly about the room, more like a gentle girl than a great boy; and Mrs. Prior was satisfied that he could do all that was necessary for the present.

As she was taking leave, he said to Tabby, "Give her some of the fish."

So Tabby opened the flat basket which Leonard had brought on his back, and took out several fishes, which James wrapped in a paper and tossed into the carriage.

"We'll have them for supper," said Mrs Prior, smiling her thanks.

"I wish they were fried, and that I was eating them this minute," said Henry, as they drove home.

And indeed they all wished so too, for their long drive had given them appetites worth having.

Early the next morning, Tabby appeared at the gate; but, as usual, would come no farther.

Bessie ran out to meet her.

"Father is worse," said Tabby. "Leonard says so; and Leonard knows, for he took all the care of mother when she was sick."

"Mamma wants to know if there is any thing she can send up?"

"No; there isn't any thing as I know of." But poor Tabby's face said there *was* something she was afraid to ask for.

"Mamma would *love* to send him something," said Bessie. "You know you gave me such a beautiful chicken."

Thus encouraged, Tabby said that the minister had been to see them, and so had the minister's wife, and they had brought nice jelly and other things; but her father wouldn't touch them. There was only one thing he wanted, and that—she was almost afraid to tell—that was a bit of ice, big enough to cool his mouth, if it was only for once before he died.

"Why, we have an ice-house full," said Bessie; "and I know mamma will give you some."

Mrs. Prior wondered at herself for not having thought of it, and she instantly sent off as much as Tabby could carry, directing her to keep it well wrapped in flannel, and to come or send for more, twice every day.

Tabby's dull, meagre face looked almost beautiful as she took the pail containing the ice.

"I'm sure she's not so bad as people think," said Mrs. Prior. "See how pleased she is to do a kind act for that wicked man, who has done nothing but abuse her as long as she can remember."

In the evening, Leonard came for the ice. He said his father had grown so fond of Tabby that he wouldn't let her go out of his sight.

"How is he to-night?" asked Mrs. Prior.

"He's like a lamb, ma'am," said Leonard. "He keeps crying, and getting hold of Tabby's hands, and begging her to forgive him for being such a bad father to her. And he says we're to be as little like him as we can; and not to forget our mother, but do all she used to bid us do."

These were new times for Tabby; and her poor little heart, already softened by love to Bessie, was full now of tender

ness towards the dying man. She forgot how many times he had driven her out to beg or to steal. She forgot that the hand that now caressed her had often fallen rudely and savagely on her bare shoulders. And so she was very gentle, and almost loving to him now; and when he said to her, in a sort of crying voice, "Tabby, don't you remember how I kicked you, one day, when I was angry?" she said, softly, "No, father, I don't seem to remember." And then the wicked old man burst into tears, and asked God to bless her.

When Leonard got back with the ice, Tabby said her father had been saying his prayers, and had gone to sleep. And when Leonard looked at the pale face, he said that he would never wake again.

CHAPTER XI.

THE twenty-ninth of June was a fair summer's day, just as smiling and pleasant as little Charley's birth-day ought to have been.

Henry and Bessie went to Mrs. Grey's at two o'clock, and found Lily and Charley expecting them.

"Now let's go down to the baby-house," said Lily. So away they all ran; she and Henry first, and Bessie and Charley, hand-in-hand, trotting after.

It was a beautiful house indeed. It had a rustic porch, covered with climbing roses and honeysuckles, and real lattice windows. Inside there were three rooms. In the front parlor sat Miss Mary Anne and Miss Georgiana, looking very prim in their best clothes.

"We have had a regular *time* with our dolls," said Lily. "Don't you think, they say they are old married ladies, and won't be called Mary Anne and Georgiana any longer. They say their names are Mrs. Van Tromp and Mrs. De Bage."

Bessie laughed heartily on hearing this, and still thought Lily Grey a very funny, delightful girl.

Mrs. Van Tromp looked very young to be married, and Mrs. De Bage looked almost too old. They each had a family of children, and Lily now took Bessie into the nursery, and showed her six little dolls sitting in a row, each with a hymn-book in her lap.

"These are the De Bages," said she. "They are learning their lessons. As for Mrs. Van Tromp, she's got a pair of twins."

So Bessie peeped into the cradle, and there lay a pair of infants, about an inch long.

"What are their names?" asked she.

"Oh! they haven't any names yet; they're too young. Mrs. Van Tromp declares they're as big as they'll ever be; but we'll see."

Bessie did nothing but laugh and look astonished; while Henry condescended to smile now and then, and to look upon Lily with a favorable eye. Little Charley by this time was beginning to feel less shy than he had done, so he said to Bessie:

"Don't you want to see my birthday presents?"

"Yes. Where are they?" said Bessie.

Charley showed her several things; some were from his mamma, and some from Lily.

"And this ball," said he, "was a present from Mrs. Van Tromp, and this strong bag was from Mrs. De Bage."

"What do boys want of *bags?*" said Henry.

"It's a *strong* bag," said Charley. "I am to carry it with me when I go to get shells and stones, and such things."

"You see," said Lily, "we always make

our dolls give us presents. It's the least they can do after all we've done for them Why, last Christmas, Georgiana hung up her stocking, and she got it *full* of things. And Mary Anne hung up a great bag—she's so greedy—and she got a new frock, a new pair of shoes, two sticks of candy, and a little baby."

"I never saw such a girl as you are!" said Henry, now quite overcome with Lily's talk. "You're the funniest girl in the world!"

"Am I?" said Lily, quite astonished, and wondering what she had said that was funny.

"I must show you the kitchen," she continued, "and then we'll go and swing, if you like."

They went into the third room, which was as neat as the parlor. On the walls hung the little tin cups, and on the shelves stood rows of small dishes, plates, and cups and saucers.

Bessie would gladly have spent her whole time in this charming baby-house; but Henry was eager to try the swing. It was under an apple-tree; and after they had begun to swing, Bessie did not care to do any thing else. But Lily said she must have a drive in the little carriage drawn by two goats, which had been sent them from abroad by their uncle. Both Henry and Bessie left the swing, and they all ran to the lawn to look for the carriage. Lily expected to see it awaiting her; but to their

disappointment, they found Joe, a boy not much older than Henry, was making use of

the goats to carry off the new hay from the lawn.

"What are you doing, Joe?" cried Lily. "Who said you might harness the goats into the cart?"

"I was bid to do it," Joe answered.

"It's too bad," cried Lily. "We wanted Henry and Bessie to have a ride."

"Let's ask mamma," said Charley.

They hurried into the house to find their mamma, who laughed when she saw the four eager, anxious faces.

"I might have known how it would be," said she. "There have those foolish goats run wild these four weeks, and now, just because I have at last found use for them, you little rogues must want them too."

"But Henry and Bessie want to have a ride," said Lily. "We are tired and sick of it ourselves, but it isn't likely they ever rode in a goat-cart."

On hearing herself described as wanting to do what would be inconvenient

to Mrs. Grey, Bessie felt herself blush all over.

"It's no matter," she whispered to Lily; "it isn't a bit of matter."

Henry, however, stood looking at Mrs. Grey with wistful eyes, for it now seemed to him that nothing in the world could be entertaining but to be drawn by goats.

Mrs. Grey saw his look and Bessie's blush, and she said, kindly, that if Joe got through in season, the goats should be at their service, but if not, there would be time on some other day, when she would send for them on purpose.

The children were all satisfied, and ran back again to the lawn to tell Joe to hurry with all his might.

Henry was so fascinated with the goats that he could not think of any thing else. He began to help Joe fill the little cart with the sweet, new hay, and finding this business more to his taste than looking at dolls, he kept hard at work all the afternoon. Mrs.

Grey peeped at him now and then from her window, and laughed all by herself to see how happy he was.

"May I take turns with you, and drive the goats?" she heard him ask; and then with what an air he pulled off his jacket and set to work! Meanwhile, Lily took Bessie down to the bank of the river, where there was a lovely little arbor, and they all sat down to look at the beautiful view from it.

"There's one thing I never get tired of," said Lily, "and that's the river. We sit hours and hours here looking at it."

"I am sure I should if I lived here," said Bessie; "I should sit here and read, too."

"Oh! we do all our reading here in the warm weather. Have you read 'Anna Ross?'"

"Why, that's my favorite book!" said Bessie.

"So it is mine," said Lily; and by this time she had her arm around Bessie's waist.

"I wish you were my sister," she added.

Bessie blushed, and smiled, and looked pleased.

"Oh! let's play something," said Charley; "I don't want to talk, when it's my birthday—I want to play."

"Yes, we ought to play with him," said Lily. "We'll play whatever he wants us to—won't we, Bessie?"

"Well, I should like to play—let me see—I should like to play catch."

There was a little grove of trees near the house, where it was shady and cool. Thither they all ran, and played till Charley was quite satisfied.

"Oh! I'm *so* tired!" he at last cried out, throwing himself upon the ground.

"Can't we go back to the arbor now?" asked Lily.

"Yes, you may, if you'll tell me a story."

Lily laughed, and they all ran down to the arbor again.

"Stop a minute, while I go and get Mrs.

De Bage," said she; "she's so fond of hearing stories."

"Isn't our Lily funny?" asked Charley. "And she's good, too."

Lily soon came flying back. She knew a great many stories, and had a list of their names in her hand.

"Now choose which you will have," said she, beginning to read.

"The 'Little Golden Chickens,'" said Charley.

Lily told it very well. Every now and then a peal of merry laughter was heard in the room where Mrs. Grey sat, and whenever she heard it she laughed too, and looked away from her book to listen.

"And now," said Lily, springing up, "let's dance round the barberry-bush. Come, Bessie! come, Mary Anne! come, Charley!"

Bessie and Charley sprang up, and then, how they did dance! Poor Mary Anne's little legs dangled this way and that, but

she didn't seem to care; and round and round they flew, till, fairly exhausted with

laughing, Bessie let go the doll's hand, and sat down to recover her breath.

"There's the tea-bell," said Charley, joyfully.

Supper was waiting for them under a tree near the house. There was nice white bread and butter, and brown bread and butter: there were birth-day cakes and

pitchers of new milk; but, best of all, there were strawberries and cream—as many strawberries and as much cream as each child could want.

Charley helped them all round, and looked very happy and very tired.

But they were all refreshed by their delicious supper, so that they were as bright and fresh as birds. They all set off to play again, as gaily as ever, and Henry drove all around the grounds in the little carriage, and Bessie went a little way, but wouldn't go far because she was afraid the goats were tired.

"Well, my darlings, have you had a pleasant visit?" asked their mamma, when, just before dark, they came chattering in.

"I've had a *splendid* time!" said Henry.

"So have I," said Bessie.

And then Henry told his mamma how hard he had worked, and how many loads of hay he had got in. Bessie gave an account of every thing she had seen and

heard, and all about the baby-house, and the strawberries, and Lily and Charley.

"We must have them here some day," said Mrs. Prior.

"We haven't so many pretty things to show them," said Bessie; "but I guess we should have a good time. And, O mamma! we had tea out of doors—I forgot to tell you we had tea out of doors! It was so nice!"

CHAPTER XII.

The next morning, at breakfast, Mrs. Prior told Bessie that Tabby had gone to live with Mrs. Dale, the wife of one of the farmers.

"Why didn't her brother keep her?"

"Oh! he never stays any where long at a time. He's restless, and goes wandering about the country. I don't think he is able to earn his own living. But I do not think Mrs. Dale ought to have the care of Tabby; she has a large family of children, and a great deal of hard work to do. I am going to see her, however, and will take a bundle of clothes with me, so that Tabby need not be too much of a burden."

"May I go with you, mamma?"

"Certainly, my dear; and if you think

of any thing Tabby would like—a book, or a toy, or a doll—you may take that with you."

"I don't believe she knows how to read. There's Harriet; do you think she would like Harriet, mamma? She's a very decent-looking doll, and has got a new dress and a white apron."

"We can see," said Mrs. Prior. So Harriet was neatly dressed, and they set off.

"I'm going to be real good now," whispered Tabby to Bessie, running to meet her kind little friend as she approached the house. "I'm going to school, and they're to teach me sewing, and reading, and spelling."

"Next Sunday papa is going to have a little children's meeting. Will they let you go to it, think?"

"Oh! yes, they're all going. Mrs. Dale says she wouldn't miss it for a sixpence."

"But it's for *children*," said Bessie.

"Well, I know it. But Mrs. Dale says

she's going, and all the Dales are going, and the one that remembers the most of the sermon is to have a present."

"Oh! but there won't be any sermon—my father isn't a minister."

Mrs. Dale now made her children come in and stand before Mrs. Prior, which they did, smiling and blushing, and looking awkward enough, as who wouldn't?

"Are these all?" asked Mrs. Prior, when she had given a friendly, but not too curious, glance at each rosy face.

"Oh! no, ma'am. David is off in the field with his father, and Dorothy is in a factory, and Joe—perhaps you've seen our Joe; he lives up to the widow Grey's."

"I've seen him," said Bessie; "I saw him yesterday."

"It was very kind in you to take in this poor child, when you had already a house full," said Mrs. Prior.

"Well, I don't know. Somebody had got to take her. As long as old Jones lived,

it wasn't of any use, he made her behave so shameful; but now he's gone—and we won't say where, for it isn't for us to judge—he's gone, and the child is left; and, as I was saying, somebody had got to take her in."

"I brought up some frocks for her, thinking it would be troublesome for you, at this busy season, to make her tidy; and there's a pair of shoes, and other things. If they don't fit Tabby, perhaps one of your little folks would like them."

"We've got all sorts and sizes," said Mrs. Dale; "and to be sure I had to take the clothes off my own girl's back, as you may say, to put on to the poor creature. I'm sure we're obliged to you."

"Tabby looks already like another child."

"Well, she's getting tame, it's a fact; and she's a smart, driving child. She's took all the care of the baby since she came; and my little Sam—he's as fond of her!"

Mrs. Prior and Bessie now rose to go, and

Bessie remembered that Harriet had not yet been taken from the carriage.

"Come out a minute, Tabby—I've got something for you. It's a doll. Do you think you should like a doll?"

Tabby's astonished smile made Bessie laugh.

"What makes you look so queer?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Tabby. "I felt sort of queer to think of having a doll."

Miss Harriet was now displayed, and was received by Tabby with as much respect as if she had been alive.

"She's 'most too handsome for me," said she, looking at her hands, which were not very clean.

"You must undress her every night," said Bessie. "Here's her night-gown; and her face can be washed."

Tabby's smile grew wider and wider, till it almost stretched across her face. Yet her eyes were so brimful of tears that

Mrs. Prior hurried Bessie off; and as soon as they were out of sight, Tabby sat down on the ground and began to cry.

"What's the matter?" said a kind little voice behind her.

"Why, I've got a baby," said Tabby; "and her name's Harriet; and she's mine."

"Her name is Halliet," said little Sam, looking down with his bright eyes upon the doll; "and she make Tabby k'y. Naughty Halliet!"

But Tabby took her new treasure into the house, and all the Dales admired it; and Mrs. Dale said there should be room made in her upper bureau-drawer, where it could safely lie with her best cap, her four silver tea-spoons, and her mother's gold beads.

It was a very warm day; and when Bessie got home, she found it was too late to work in her garden.

"I know what I'll do," thought she. "I'll go out and sit in my arm-chair, and read. I

haven't had any time to read lately—I've been so busy."

She ran up stairs to select a book. Maggy was sitting there, sewing.

"O Maggy! do you know where Henry is?" she asked.

"What do you want of him?"

"I don't want any thing. I was only going out to sit in my arm-chair, and read, and I thought perhaps he'd go too."

"Well, I promised not to tell where he had gone. It's a secret."

Bessie looked very curious.

"How came he to tell you?" asked she.

"He had to."

Maggy looked down at her work with an air that said, "Why, don't you see what I'm doing?" and Bessie now perceived that she had Henry's jacket in her lap.

"He's torn his jacket, that's plain," said Bessie. "I should think you might tell me where he is."

"Yes; but how did he tear it? That's the question," said Maggy.

"How can I guess?" said Bessie, beginning to feel a little vexed at Maggy's teasing manner. "He might have torn it, climbing a tree."

Maggy shook her head.

"Or getting over a fence."

Another shake of the head.

"Perhaps he fell down."

Another shake, and a very provoking smile.

"I don't care; I'm going out to sit in my arm-chair."

So Bessie went away with her book, feeling more or less out of humor. She climbed into her arm-chair, and began to read; that is, she opened the book, and held it up before her eyes.

"Maggy is a real tease," she said to herself. "She's always teasing me. I've a good mind to tell mamma; but mamma always laughs at me when I tell tales. I

wonder where Henry can be! I mean to go and look. This isn't a very interesting book. At any rate, I don't feel like reading."

She jumped down, and went back into the yard. Her mamma was standing at the door, giving some directions to a boy who sometimes came to do little jobs about the grounds.

"Mamma, do you know where Henry is?"

"Why, yes; I believe I do."

"Where is he, then?"

"Oh! you'll see him pretty soon. Never mind, now. Have you weeded your garden?"

"I forgot it before breakfast, and after that it was too hot out in the sun; at least it was too hot after we got home from Mrs. Dale's."

"Dinner will be ready in a few minutes; don't go far from the house, or you'll not hear the bell."

Bessie walked slowly away, feeling discontented and uneasy. She missed Henry, and she felt still a little vexed with Maggy.

As she came round to the side of the house, she walked right into Henry's arms, who gave her a good hug, and seemed in fine spirits.

"What have you got on your linen sack for?" asked Bessie, who felt very happy now that she had found Henry.

"Why, because it was so warm," said Henry; "and besides, my jacket got torn, and Maggy is mending it."

"How did you tear it?"

"Ah! that's a secret."

"I should think you might tell *me*," said Bessie, in a grieved little voice.

"I will tell you as soon—let me see—as soon as it gets cooler."

"There's the dinner-bell," said Bessie, "O Henny Penny! can't you tell me before dinner?"

"You'll be sorry if I do. No; I said I wouldn't, and I can't. It's something nice."

So Bessie had to wait.

CHAPTER XIII.

"It is getting cool now," said Bessie, half an hour after dinner. "Don't you think it is cool?"

Her mamma said she thought it even warmer than before dinner. Bessie tried to be patient, but it was hard work. She put on her straw hat and went out to see her chicken. It was hopping about, picking up crumbs of bread, seeds, and bits of gravel, and looked rounder, plumper, and yellower than ever.

"How do you do, Dumpling?" said Bessie. "Aren't you rather lonesome out here? Don't you wish you had a little brother, like mine? or not like mine, either, but like a chicken."

Dumpling only hopped about on her

yellow feet, and ate seeds as if for her life.

"If I could take you up and kiss you, I should like you a great deal better than I do now," said Bessie. "Or if I could sit and read, and hold you in my lap; but now all I can do is just to throw crumbs at you."

Dumpling made no answer.

"I'll go in and read, if you won't speak to me," said Bessie. And this time she fixed her mind upon her book, so that an hour slipped rapidly away.

"Now, Bessie!" said Henry. He stood before her looking very much pleased.

"Where are we going?" asked Bessie, jumping up.

"You'll see. Mamma! are you ready?"

Their mamma took down her sun-bonnet, armed herself with a parasol, and they set off, in the direction of the orchard.

"It isn't far," said he. "Come, mamma! come, Bessie!" He stopped in triumph be-

neath an immense chestnut tree, where he vanished.

"Why, where is he?" cried Bessie.

"Look up here!" cried Henry. And looking up, Bessie saw little save the foliage of the tree and a number of green bars.

"You are to run up these steps, I suppose," said her mamma, smiling.

Bessie then observed a sort of ladder, leaning against the tree, and running easily up, she found herself in a room which had been built in the very midst of the tree among the large branches. It was made with a good strong floor, but the sides were formed of light bars, which had been painted of a shade of green as nearly as possible like that of the leaves. The room, in fact, was not so very different from a great nest; its ceiling was made of fresh, living boughs; it was surrounded on all sides by green branches, and so cosy and shady that one would almost be willing to be a bird for the sake of living there. It was large

enough to hold six or eight persons very comfortably.

Bessie was delighted. "O mamma! won't you come up?" she cried.

Mrs. Prior came carefully up the step-ladder, and enjoyed Bessie's pleasure with all her heart.

"How does my little birdie like her new nest?" asked she.

"Oh! it's beautiful!" said Bessie. "We might read here, or play, or do almost any thing."

"We were to take tea here on Saturday night when your papa came up from the city, but Henry must needs find it out before-hand, and so we had to tell you," said Mrs. Prior.

"I had the wood-work done at the village, and it was to come home last evening after you children were in bed. But it didn't keep its word; so while we were at Mrs. Dale's Henry got a peep at it."

"You see I was playing round here," said

Henry, "and all at once I heard some body hammering away up in the tree. At first I thought it was a wild beast—"

"A wild beast with a hammer!" said his mamma.

Henry smiled, and went on.

"Then I concluded to climb up and see what was going on. And when I got up, I saw two men driving large spikes into the floor of this nice room. I asked them what it was for, and who told them to make it, but they wouldn't tell me. When I was getting down I tore my jacket."

"Oh! what a story Maggy told, then! She said you didn't tear it climbing a tree."

"Well, I didn't. I tore it coming down. Don't you see?"

"Mamma," said Bessie, "why can't we have tea here, as it is?"

"I don't think it is worth while. Your father and I merely proposed that by way of giving you children a pleasant surprise. But I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll have

the Greys to spend the afternoon, and you shall have tea here then."

Henry and Bessie spent the rest of the afternoon in the Bird's Nest, or in running up and down the ladder. Henry said it would be a safe hiding-place if they were ever attacked by an army.

"We could pull up the ladder, and then they couldn't get at us," said he.

"Do you think papa and mamma would come up here and hide, too?"

"Mamma would, I dare say. But papa and I should be fighting, you know."

"O Henry! you aren't big enough to fight."

"I should be big enough by that time."

"But it would be a great deal better to stay up here. I don't believe mamma would want you to fight."

"I wonder what they made that table for?" said Henry.

"Why, it's to have our supper on."

"Oh! I suppose they thought we shouldn't

want the trouble of getting a table up here every time we needed one. I mean to study my lessons here."

"So do I," said Bessie.

"And when Bob comes home we'll sit up here and sing, and people will think it's birds."

This made Bessie laugh.

"Let's sing now," said she.

So they began to sing, and their little joyous voices rang through the house and reached Maggy's ears as she sat at her work in the nursery.

She got up and ran to tell their mamma to listen.

But their mamma had heard, and was listening with all her heart, and she said to herself: "People may talk about their cat-birds and their whip-poor-wills as much as they please. But there's nothing in this world so sweet as the voice of a child!"

When Bessie was going to bed that night,

she remembered that she had felt rather vexed with Maggy in the morning, so she said to her :

"Maggy! was I naughty to you when you would not tell me where Henry was?"

"Naughty! no indeed."

"I had some naughty *thoughts* to you," said Bessie. "I thought you was always teasing me."

"I did tease you, I know. But you mustn't lay it up against me. I wasn't in a very good humor just then. That jacket was in such a state! I got it done, though, and then I made this new bonnet for one of your dolls."

"O Maggy! how good you are! It's a dear little bonnet! Is it for Ellen?"

"No, it doesn't fit Ellen. So I had to give it to Henrietta. It fits her beautifully."

Bessie sat up in bed and tried on the new bonnet. "You're a real good Maggy!" said

she, "and when I grow up you shall come and live with me, and I'll take care of you. You shan't do any work; you shall just sit still and rest."

CHAPTER XIV

When Mr. Prior came up from the city on the next Saturday night, he brought with him two long, hard rolls, which excited great curiosity.

"Are these sticks, papa?" asked Henry.

"They feel just like canes," said Bessie.

But their papa would not tell any body what they were.

The next afternoon they all drove to the school-house to attend the children's meeting. They found it quite full. The children were seated together in front, while their parents sat behind. Bessie got a seat next Lily Grey, and Henry perched himself up on the top of a desk, all the benches being full.

Mr. Prior stood in the teacher's desk, and

read a hymn which they all sang. He then prayed a short prayer; so simple that every child listened; and so short that not one child began to fidget.

"Now, children," he said, pleasantly, "I want you all to look at this picture." So saying, he unrolled from a long round stick, a large picture, which he fastened upon the wall where every one could see it.

Henry and Bessie looked at each other, as much as to say, "Oh! they were pictures, weren't they!" and then they turned to examine the one on the wall as all the rest were doing.

All the children could see it plainly, for it was very large, much larger than those you see here, though otherwise exactly like them.

"Now tell me what you see," said Mr. Prior. "I want every child here, to speak."

"I see lambs," said one.

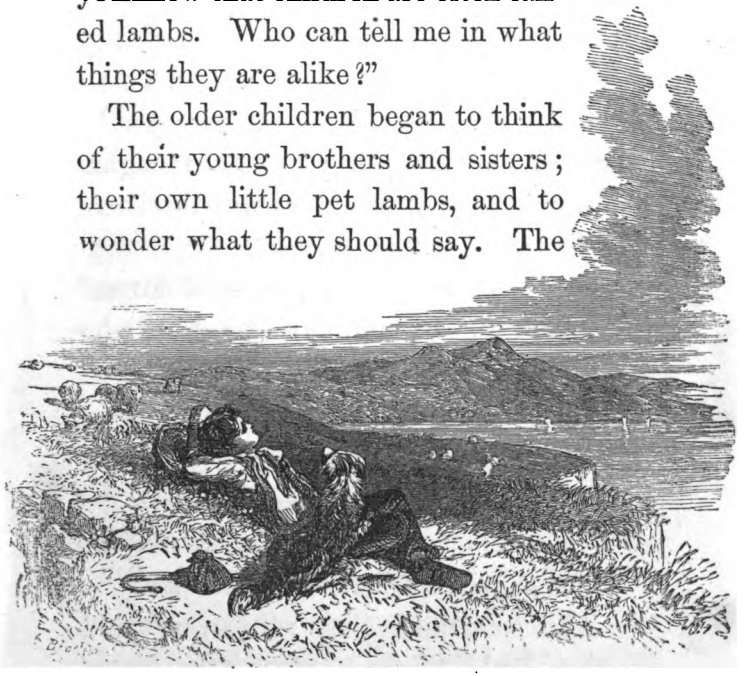
"And there's a dog," said another.

"And some water," said a third.

"I see a boy lying on the ground," said a fourth.

"Very well," said Mr. Prior. "Now you know that children are often called lambs. Who can tell me in what things they are alike?"

The older children began to think of their young brothers and sisters; their own little pet lambs, and to wonder what they should say. The



silence was broken by a small voice that cried out:

They've got eyes!"

On hearing this, every body laughed, and some body said in a loud whisper, "Why, Sammy!"

Mr. Prior, however, looked kindly at the little fellow, who was already frightened to think he had spoken, and said, "That's right, Sammy! So they have, two eyes."

Meanwhile Lily Grey, whose thoughts had wandered to her two sweet little sisters who had gone to heaven, said:

"Lambs are gentle; and so are children."

"And they're playful," said Tabby, who was thinking of Sammy Dale.

"And they—they—they're easy to make them mind you," said Susan Dale, blushing very red, and dreadfully ashamed that she could not think of the word she wanted.

"Yes, they're docile," said Mr. Prior.

"And sometimes they run away," said another little boy, who had 'run away' himself more than once.

"And they're helpless," said Bessie.

"Now then," said Mr. Prior, "you may

tell me what sort of a man a shepherd is, and what he has to do for his flock."

There was another silence. At last Henry said, "He leads them about to the best places."

"And is kind to them," said another.

"It says in the Bible that He carries the lambs in his arms," said Lily.

"Oh! and it says He leads them into green pastures and beside the still waters," said Bessie.

"Why no! it's *Jesus* that does that," said Lily in a whisper.

Bessie looked at her papa, as if to ask if she were wrong. He only smiled, and said:

"There is a great deal in the Bible about shepherds, and about sheep and lambs. Almost every body kept sheep in those days. And the shepherds had a great deal to do. In the day-time they had to go out under the hot sun, to lead their flocks, and in the night they had to keep watch. You know it was to shepherds, watching their

flocks by night, that angels told the good news that Christ was born. Now Jesus says of himself in the tenth chapter of John, that he is the Good Shepherd. What does he mean by that? Who are his sheep and lambs?"

"I suppose little children are the lambs," said Lily. "And grown-up people are the sheep."

"In the land where Jesus lived, each shepherd had names for his sheep and lambs. He could call each one by name, and it would come to him. So Jesus says: 'He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.'

Mr. Prior then unrolled and hung up the second picture.

"Here," said he, "you see the sheep and lambs all quietly sleeping. But the shepherd has to keep awake. Just so, while you are sleeping, the Good Shepherd watch-

es over and keeps you. Oh! how happy those children are who are safe in His fold!"

Some one said in a whisper to her neighbor, "I wish I was in it!"

Mr. Prior heard the whisper; and he said: "Suppose Jesus should come here this afternoon, and call you each by

name, how many of you would go to him?"

No one spoke.

But Lily said in her heart, "I would!"

And Bessie said in hers, "I would!"

But poor Tabby thought, "I would *run!*"

"Now He really *is* here," said Mr. Prior. "When we first came into this room we sang a hymn to him, and he came and listened to it. And then we prayed to him. We asked him to come and stay with us all the afternoon. And he heard us, and I have not the least doubt he is here now, hearing every word we say, watching every boy and girl, and waiting to see what they will do."

It was very still in the room, now. The children all sat with their eyes fixed on Mr Prior's face.

"Now if you choose to have Him for your Shepherd, and to be his own little lambs, I will tell you what he will do for you."

"But it doesn't seem—" Lily began.

"Well, my dear?" said Mr. Prior.

"It doesn't seem as if we were *good* enough."

"Why, you know we just concluded that lambs are gentle, playful, helpless little creatures, that don't even know when they're well off, and often run away from the fold, and often are so weak that they can't keep up with the rest. Do you think a good shepherd would say: 'I can't have any *playful* lambs in my flock? Nor any *helpless* ones? nor any *naughty*, *foolish* ones that will be running away? nor any such weak ones that I shall have to carry them?'"

The children smiled, and all said, "No sir."

"Well, then, is not Jesus better than the best shepherd that ever lived? Did any body ever hear Him say, 'That little boy can't be in my fold because he is playful?' 'that little girl can't stay because she doesn't know how to take care of herself?' No,

indeed! No body ever heard the Good Shepherd talk so. But this is what he says: 'That little boy is very playful; I will take him into my fold, where he won't find any thing hurtful to play with. And that little girl can't take care of herself; I will let her come into my fold, and I will take care of her. When she is asleep I will keep awake, so that nothing can touch her, and when she is hungry I will feed her. And this naughty little one who keeps running away, may come back again, and *keep* coming back, and I will keep forgiving him. And that poor, feeble lamb, who can't even take one step, it is so little and so weak, why that one I'll take in my arms and carry it in my bosom.'"

The children listened to every word, and tears came into the eyes of more than one. Not sorrowful tears, but happy tears that came softly into their eyes, as their hearts warmed towards the Good Shepherd, in whose fold they longed to find rest.

"And now, my dear children," said Mr. Prior, "if there are any of you who are so fond of play that you are afraid to have Jesus near you lest He should frown upon you, remember what I have just told you.

"And you who can't take care of yourselves, and do not even know how to be good, let Jesus take care of you.

"And you who want to love him, and try to please him, but every now and then run away from him, and do foolish, naughty things, don't be discouraged. Keep running back, and he will keep opening the door to let you in. Keep trying and trying not to run away, and not to be naughty.

"And you little, little baby-children! Jesus will take you in his arms and carry you in his bosom!"

Then Mr. Prior closed his eyes and prayed to the Good Shepherd to do all that these poor helpless, sinful, feeble little children needed to have done for them, and

then they sang another hymn, and the meeting was done.

That night more than one child prayed to the Good Shepherd as it had never prayed before, and Lily Grey, and Bessie and Tabby, never forgot that meeting in the school-house as long as they lived.

When they reached home, Mr. Prior gave the two pictures to the children. Henry chose the one with the shepherd boy, because it had a dog in it; and Bessie chose the other, because she thought the shepherd was praying in the midst of the dark night when all the sheep and lambs lay sleeping around him. She hung it where she could see it as she lay in bed, and it gave her many sweet thoughts about that Good Shepherd who never slumbers or sleeps.

CHAPTER XV.

HENRY and Bessie had now learned their way all about the village, and knew almost every body by name. They could go to Mrs. Dawson's for butter whenever it was wanted, and to Farmer Woodford's for eggs, and to Mrs. Van Brek for her nice little cheeses as white and fresh as eggs. They had delightful rambles together in the woods and over the hills and fields, with Wag for company, and a basket that used to go away full of luncheon and come home full of moss and twigs, and strange plants, and no body knows what not. If their flowers wilted past recovery, on the way home, that made no difference. They gathered just as many the next day, and the next. And if they scratched themselves

with briers, that made no difference either. They went and scratched themselves again the next day. They were learning the names of all the flowers, and in what sort of places certain kinds would be likely to grow. For flowers are very particular where they grow. Nothing would tempt those that like moist, shady places, to go up and live on the hill-top; and those that love the warm sunshine would die of broken hearts if they had to move down into the marshes.

"I wish it was August!" said Henry, a great many times. No body asked him whether he wished for August because then his papa was to come home for a whole month, or that Bob was to be with them five weeks, or because blackberries, and blueberries, and whortleberries were to come and stay as long as they. Perhaps his wish was made up of papa, and Bob, and berries; perhaps of berries, and papa, and Bob. There's no knowing. August

came, without waiting to know; so did Bob; so did blackberries. Then how they did live out in the woods! Mr. and Mrs. Prior went a-berrying, and Bob went, and Henry and Bessie and Wag did nothing else. They ate berries off the bushes, they brought them home in pails and in baskets, they ate them for dinner in puddings and pies, they had them for supper with cream and sugar.

And though they went to bed every night, thinking they never should want to see another blackberry, they got up in the morning just as fond of them as ever. Tabby came up from the village with little Sammy Dale, with a large pailfull that they had picked for Mr. Prior, whose sermon, as they called it, had made them love him; and Mrs. Grey sent down a basket that Lily and Henry had picked. As for Wag he helped himself without ceremony. He stood up on his hind legs to reach them; he sprang into the air to get at the high

bushes; he kept his mouth opening and shutting till it wouldn't open and shut any more. Just as if he didn't like the country as well as any body!

The children did not now lie in bed in the mornings as they did at first. They had grown stronger, and better able to bear the fatigue of running about all day. They were up long before before breakfast, at work in their gardens, feeding Wag and Dumpling, or gathering flowers for the breakfast table. Robert made a house for Dumpling to live in, and helped Bessie in her garden, and gave Henry a great deal of good advice without charging any thing for it. He was a kind brother, only he felt pretty old, and thought Henry needed a vast deal of instruction, more than Henry cared to receive. In fact Henry liked blackberries a great deal better.

One morning Mrs. Prior heard a great talking under her window. She looked out

and saw Robert and Henry both leaning on the fence of Henry's garden.

"After I've taken all the trouble to make you a fence," said Robert, "you ought to take my advice, and do just as I say."

"But I like to do just as I please," said Henry. "Papa said I might."

"But you've got corn, and tomatoes, and beans all mixed up together. They'll never come to any thing. Now if you'd only let me fix them up! I'd put all the corn by itself, and all the beans by themselves. And as for the tomatoes! faugh! how they smell! I wouldn't have any tomatoes if I were you."

"But I *like* tomatoes," said Henry.

"How *can* you like them? I don't, I hate them."

"Well," said Henry, half-crying, "you may pull them up, if you want to."

"There, I knew you'd come to your senses before long. Now you'll see what a garden

I'll make. I'll have all these old bushes pulled up—"

"Oh! they're my currant-bushes!" cried Henry.

"Well, you don't want currant-bushes. And as for these old dead things—"

"Why those are my raspberries!"

"Raspberries! why, they're as dead as a door-nail."

"Papa said they might leaf out next spring. And if you're going to pull up every thing, I might as well not have any garden."

"Robert!" said Mrs. Prior, thinking it time to interfere. "Robert!"

Robert looked up

"What is it you want to do!" she asked.

"Why, I only want to put Henry's garden into some sort of order. Now it's all in confusion. Beans, and peas, and corn, and I don't know what not, all in a heap."

"But if you pull them up, what will he have left?"

"Why, he'll have room for *lots* of things."

"But it will be too late to plant any thing. I think you had better let it alone. As long as it pleases him, what matter if it is all in a heap? By and by, when he is older, he will do better."

Henry was highly pleased to hear his tastes defended, and to see Robert turn to something else.

He was perfectly satisfied with the bean, the two peas and a half, the three tomatoes, and the blossoms for a great many more, that some weeks later he pointed out in triumph to his mamma and Bessie.

Perhaps you remember Bessie's little strawberry-plant. When it had got used to its new home in her garden, it began to grow very fast, and its two white blossoms promised to turn into two red strawberries. These were to be for her mamma. Every day she watched them, and every day they went on keeping their promise, till on this very morning they had become all they had

said they would be. Two great, plump things indeed they were, and Bessie's little hands trembled with joy, as she picked them.

"Maggy!" she cried, running into the kitchen, "is there any cream?"

"Not a drop that I know of," said Maggy

"Not on my cup of milk? O Maggy!"

"Oh! I forgot your cup of milk. To be sure, you did save your milk last night. Let me see! Yes, here's a little bit of cream."

"Now some sugar, please."

Maggy brought the sugar; Bessie placed the strawberries in one of her doll's tea-cups, with the cream and sugar.

She then placed the tiny cup in its own saucer, which she filled with flowers also from her garden.

"Seems to me Miss Dolly is going to have a pretty nice breakfast," said Maggy.

"Miss Dolly!" cried Bessie. "Do you suppose any body but mamma is good enough to eat my strawberries?"

"I don't know. I could tell better after I'd tasted them."

Bessie was too busy and too happy to answer. She walked carefully and slowly to the dining-room, where her mamma sat waiting for breakfast.

"Here, dear mamma," said she, "here are two strawberries that want some body to eat them right up."

"Strawberries!" said her mamma, "why, where did they come from?"

"They grew in my garden!" said Bessie. "Only to think! They grew in my garden!"

"But, my little darling, I should like so much better to see you eating them yourself."

"O mamma! I've been watching them all summer, on purpose for you! And I wouldn't eat them for the world. Dear mamma! it was so nice to see them growing for you!"

"They were very kind, I'm sure, and so

was my little Bessie," said her mamma. "They must have been very lonely to be alive in the world after all their relations had been eaten up."

"Yes, they were," said Bessie, laughing. "And that's the reason they're in such a hurry to be eaten up now. So open your mouth, mamma, and let me put them in."

So Bessie's mamma opened her mouth, and the strawberries went in, and were never heard of more. But "though absent, they were not forgotten." To be sure it cost half a summer's watch and care to bring them to perfection, and it took only a moment to eat them up. But this little act of love gave a pleasure to Bessie that lasted till she was a woman grown, and to her mother even longer than that.

CHAPTER XVI.

Not many days later, Henry and Wag were wandering about the woods, when they met Joe Dale.

"Where are you going, Joe?" asked Henry.

"I'm going to the village for Mrs. Grey," said Joe. "One thing is, the watering-pot wants mending; and another is, I'm to go to the post-office; and I've had leave to go home, too."

"To stay?"

"No; only to see the folks a minute. But they'll all be at school, so it isn't much use."

"Your mother won't be at school," said Henry.

"Hark! What's that?"

"I don't hear any thing."

They walked on a few steps, when they saw a man with a large bow and arrow before them.

"It's an Indian," whispered Henry.

"No, it isn't; it's Leonard Jones," said Joe. "He's always rigging himself up in something. One time it's fishing, and then again it's shooting."

"He's trying to hit that bird," said Henry, looking up.

At that moment the wounded bird fell panting at their feet. Joe picked it up. It lay on his hand quite still, but you could see its little breast heave.

"It's a shame to shoot at little birds,"

said Henry, angrily, running after Leonard. "I say it's a shame!"

Leonard turned and looked back with his mild face, but did not speak.

"I wouldn't plague him," said Joe. "He doesn't know any better. I'll wring this bird's neck, and put him out of misery."

"Oh! don't!" cried Henry.

"What shall I do with him, then? If I leave him here, he'll starve to death."

"You might carry him home."

"It's too far," said Joe, "and I don't know as Mrs. Grey would like it."

"Oh! I didn't mean there. I mean to your real home."

They walked on. Joe looked from time to time at the little helpless creature, as it lay stretched on his hand, talking to it in a soothing voice, as he had heard his mother talk to a sick baby.

"Lie still, lie still, and you'll soon feel better, poor fellow. You're a young one—I know you are. Never mind, never mind;

we're most home, and then I'll tie up your wing for you."

"What will you tie up his wing for?"

"It's broken. That's what ails him. But

he's scared almost to death. You see he ain't used to being shot."

"I can't go any farther," said Henry, "because it's nearly dinner-time, and mamma won't like it if I am late. Good bye, Joe; good bye, little bird."

Henry and Wag turned back into the woods, and Joe hastened on towards home.

He found Tabby sitting on the door-step, neatly dressed, with her work in her hands.

"Is that you, Tabby?" said he.

"Yes, it's me," said Tabby. "I'm learning to sew. See here! this is my own work-basket. Mrs. Prior gave it to me. And your mother says I learn real fast."

"Where are the folks?"

"Your father's off with the men. Your mother's just gone to carry him his dinner."

"Why didn't you carry it?"

"I do, some days; but to-day she said she wanted to go herself; and all the rest of 'em are at school. I'm going to school pretty soon."

"Why don't you go now?"

Tabby looked a little ashamed.

"I didn't like to go till I knew my letters," said she. "I was afraid they'd laugh at me. And so Susan says she'll teach me. What's that you're doing? Where did you get that bird? O Joe! you've been robbing a bird's nest."

"No, I haven't, either. It's a bird that got hurt, and I'm trying to mend him."

"Let me help you. I know how. I've seen father tie up a bird's wing. It's a pretty bird. How did he get hurt?"

"Well, he got hit with an arrow."

"With an arrow? Then it was Leonard that did it. He's the only one about here that's got a bow and arrows. It's too bad! But folks say it isn't wicked for Leonard to shoot at birds, because he doesn't know so much as some folks."

"I don't know as it's wicked for any body," said Joe. "At any rate, a great many people do it just for fun. There, I guess we've fixed him up. He looks better, any how. Now I'll hunt up our old cage, and he shall have some water."

Joe found the cage, and tenderly placed the little bird in it. His mother came in just as he had turned to go.

"Ah! Joey! is that you?" said she, smiling. "How is Mrs. Grey?"

"She's well," said Joe. "See here, mother: I've brought home a bird. You tell Susan to take good care of it; will you, mother?"

"It's half-dead," said Mrs. Dale.

"It's *scared*," said Joe. "By and by, when we're out of the way, it will get lively, I guess. Some body shot it. I must go now. Good bye, mother; good bye, Tabby."

"That's as good a boy as is going," said Mrs. Dale, looking after him; "a boy that's civil to his mother and kind to dumb creatures. Was baby quiet while I was away?"

"He never stirred," said Tabby. "Here they come."

"Who? the children?"

"Yes, *marm*," said Tabby, who was trying, as she said, to "learn manners."

The children came laughing and talking in, and it was wonderful how much they had to tell mother. How Sammy went to sleep and fell off the bench; how Susan had got to the head of her class; how Sarah

Mant had made a face at her teacher; and what a rogue Tom Johnson was.

And then when they saw the poor disconsolate little bird, sitting all in a heap in his cage, each child talked a bookful.

"Where did he come from? What ails him? Has he had any thing to eat? What makes him look so sad? Whose is he?" And so on, and so on, till dinner stopped their mouths, and the timid bird was left in peace. He no sooner found himself alone than he began to come to life very fast. First he took a little water; then he picked at a bit of sugar that some body had given him; then he said something that no one heard but himself. By this time he felt pretty sure that he was alive after all. He could hop, he could drink, he could eat, he could chirp; it was a clear case; he *was* alive. When the children rushed to see him after dinner, he put on a few airs, and made believe he was still very ill; but by and by he got tired of that, and hopped, and ate,

and drank, and turned his little head to one side, to look now at one and now at another out of his little bits of bright eyes. Every thing he did amused the children, who soon learned to love him very much, and to call him "birdie," and boast of all his pretty little ways.

"I'm afraid it will be rather a cruel thing to keep him shut up in a cage when his wing is well," said Mrs. Dale.

The children all began to argue that they were so kind to him; how much sugar they gave him; what nice seeds, what fresh water. But their mother always kept on saying there was nothing for a bird like the woods and fields.

"And I can't think how you can like him so," said she. "I guess I shouldn't take much comfort in baby if I had to keep him shut up in a cage all the time, and never could hug or kiss him. Just think how cruel it would be to shut up little brother in a cage!"

"We'll let him go, mother," said Susan; "only it won't do till he's strong and well."

But the little bird was never to fly out in the green woods again. Just as he had got well, and the children had agreed to let their captive go free, a naughty cat came prowling along, and thrusting her paw into the cage, she scratched and squeezed the poor little thing to her heart's content.

They were all at school when this sad thing happened, and when they came home, there he lay upon his back, his feet up straight in the air, his bright black eyes closed. He was stiff and dead. Even Susan was not so big as to be able to keep from crying; and as for Sam, he never would have got over it if his mother hadn't given him a little pie.

That afternoon, at school, they told the sad news to their little friends, and invited them to the funeral. Joe happened to come home just in time to dig the grave. Tabby and Susan gathered flowers, and

George Thompson said he would be the pall-bearer.

"Let's lay him on one of our slates," said he; "that looks black and solemn."

"I'm going to line his grave with flowers," said Susan.

"And we'll plant a little tree at the head of it," said Joe.

So the little birdie was buried, and they covered him all over with flowers, and

planted a rose-bush, and made a little fence; and on the whole they enjoyed the funeral very much indeed. To be sure it is a shame to say so, but the funeral really comforted them in the loss of the bird.

CHAPTER XVII.

On the day that Henry met Joe in the woods, he was in search of a pond of which he had heard in the village, where there were lilies. Mrs. Prior was very fond of pond-lilies, and Henry had set his heart on finding some for her. Just at this time he was feeling grateful to her for persuading Bob to let him enjoy his garden after his own fashion. He was afraid, too, lest Bob should hear about the lilies, and so get them first. So he kept wandering about from place to place, trying to follow the directions he had received, but every day failing to reach the spot. Great was his delight, therefore, when, one day when he was not trying to find it, he came suddenly to the very pond, and found it covered

with the delicious flowers he had so longed for.

"Ah! Mr. Bob," thought he, "I've got them."

This, however, was not the case. A few lilies grew within reach, but the larger part of them were at a distance. He seized on those at hand, and then tried to reach others with his stick. In doing so, he lost his balance and fell, face foremost, into the water. The pond, near the bank, was not deep, so he had only to pick himself up, shake off the water, and try again. It was of no use, however. The lilies were there, but what good did it do to try to reach them?

"Wag," said he, "I should think you might go in and get them for me."

Wag looked up in his master's face as if he would say, "I'll try, at any rate."

Henry then threw his stick into the pond, and, to his great delight, Wag sprang in, seized it in his mouth, and soon brought it to his feet.

"Good Wag! good Wag!" said Henry, who now lost all desire to obtain the lilies, in the pleasure of seeing Wag's skill and intelligence. He kept throwing the stick into

the water, and Wag as often dashed in after it, till he was startled by hearing a voice near him. He turned quickly, and saw Leonard standing near, looking on.

"O Leonard! I wish you'd get some lilies for me," said Henry.

Leonard made no answer, but after a while he took off his shoes, rolled up his trowsers, and waded into the pond. In a few minutes he came back with his arms full.

"Thank you," said Henry. "They're for my mother. I've heard her say she was fond of them when she was a little girl."

Leonard sat down upon the grass and braided the long, pliant stems together, neatly, but still said not a word.

Henry looked at him with some curiosity.

"Where do you live?" he asked, at last.

"I don't know. Sometimes here, sometimes there."

"But where do you sleep?"

"There's plenty of hay about these times."

"But what do you eat and drink?"

Leonard saved himself the trouble of answering this question by putting his hand into his pocket and displaying a large piece

of bread. From another pocket he took a number of pennies.

"I suppose people give you bread," said Henry; "but do they give you money?"

"No. Sometimes I catch a fish, and they give me money for it. Sometimes I kill a bird, and they give me money for that. One day I shot a bird, and a boy picked it up and carried it away. One day I was to get lilies, but a boy wanted them for his mother."

Leonard looked like one talking in his sleep. He had already forgotten who the boy was that had taken his bird, or for whom he had gathered the lilies. Henry did not know Leonard well enough to understand this, and he felt half-vexed and half-mortified.

"I can do without your lilies," he said, throwing them upon the ground. "Come, Wag!" He hurried away in no pleasant mood, and as he drew near home, began to feel a little uneasy about his wet clothes.

"Mamma will say that I ought to have run home the moment I got wet," thought he. "I'll run now, at any rate."

He had not gone far when he was overtaken by Robert.

"See what I've got!" cried he. "This splendid bunch of pond-lilies! Just the very thing of all others to please mamma."

"They're not yours; they're mine," cried Henry.

"Yours! that's a pretty story. A boy just gave them to me," said Bob.

"But he gave them to me first."

"Why didn't you keep them, then?"

"I don't know exactly. He sort of hinted that he should have got money for them if I hadn't asked him for them."

"Oh! he 'hinted,' did he? We are getting quite a big boy, aren't we?"

Henry's eyes flashed, and his color rose. He would gladly have given Bob a good beating.

But Bob did not wait for him to do this.

He was the pink of good-nature, and when he found he had really wounded Henry, he felt quite ashamed of himself.

"Come," said he, "you may have the lilies, and welcome. I meant you should have them all along, for I saw what a time you had to get them."

The hot tears began to dry on Henry's hot cheeks, and he struggled hard with himself to recover his temper.

"Wasn't it odd that you and I should both be hunting lilies at the same time?" said Bob. "Only you got them first, so I thought I'd give you fair play."

"Did you see me fall into the pond?"

"To be sure I did. I was just going to jump in after you, when you came scrambling out, looking like a drowned rat. Then I watched to see what you'd do next. And next news you were getting in a passion with that poor simple fellow, who wouldn't hurt a fly."

"I wasn't in a passion. I only was——"

"Well, no matter what you was in; you came near losing your lilies, and if it hadn't been for me, you would have lost them. You see what a fine thing it is to have a brother."

They walked on in silence. At last Henry said:

"I'll tell you what, Bob, you give mamma half the lilies, and I'll give her half."

"Or suppose I give my half to Bessie?" said Bob. "I don't believe she ever saw any."

"Well," said Henry. "But wait till I've changed my clothes, will you?"

Bob consented, and Henry ran into the house for his dry clothes.

"What are you up to now?" asked Maggy.

"I'm looking for my things."

"What things?"

"Why, dry ones."

"I declare! if you haven't been and tumbled into the well! I'll tell your mamma of you, you see if I don't!"

"I haven't been nigh the well," said Henry; "and as for telling mamma, I shall tell her myself."

He dressed himself quickly, and ran to find his mother. To his great sorrow, he found that she had gone out with Bessie, and was not to come home till after tea. The lilies, meanwhile, finding it near their bed-time, began to get ready for the night. They folded their white leaves slowly, slowly, one upon another, drew up the coverlid of brown silk, and were soon fast asleep.

"It's too bad," said Henry. "They're all shut up."

"I dare say they'll open in the morning," said Robert. "We'll have them on the breakfast-table if they do. Mamma always likes flowers on the table. Come, let's carry our supper up into the Bird's Nest, and while we're eating it I'll tell you a first-rate story."

"Bessie will be ready to cry if she finds

you've been telling stories while she was away."

"Oh! I can tell her a thousand when she gets home. Besides, she's having a good time somewhere, and why shouldn't you?"

So Henry ran for his bread and milk, and he and Bob climbed up into the Bird's Nest about twenty times before their supper was fairly arranged to their fancy; for when they carried up the butter, they forgot the knives; and when they went back to get the knives, they left the plates.

"We shouldn't make very good maid-servants," said Bob.

But at last every thing was in order; and if they did eat their supper in half the time it had taken to get it ready, what of that? They enjoyed the labor, and they enjoyed the good bread and butter, and milk and berries, that came after it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bessie was all this time having the nicest little visit you can imagine. Finding her somewhat lonely, with both her brothers wandering off so far, her papa proposed taking her to spend the afternoon at Farmer Hoyt's, four miles off.

"I used to know him when I was a boy," said he, "and a fine fellow he was, too. And it will be delightful to take tea once more in a farm-house."

Bessie thought it would be delightful indeed, and so did her mamma. So they lost no time in setting off.

Farmer Hoyt was not at home when they reached his house; but Mrs. Hoyt came out to meet them with a good hearty welcome, so that in five minutes they all

felt at home. She called one of her daughters to lead Bessie about and show her every thing there was to see, while she undertook to entertain Mr. and Mrs. Prior herself. Bessie felt rather shy at first, for Mary Hoyt was older than herself and looked somewhat grave. But as soon as they got out of doors, and Bessie began to express her delight at every thing she saw, Mary's face grew quite cheery, and she made her little visitor feel happy and at ease.

"I wish my father was a farmer," said Bessie, when she had run about till she could run no more, and they were seated on the door-step together.

"He'd have to work pretty hard," said Mary.

"He has to work hard now," said Bessie. "Oh! if we only kept ever so many cows, and ever so many hens, and if we made hay! Oh! if we only made hay!"

Mary Hoyt laughed.

"It's very pleasant at our house, though," continued Bessie. "We have very good times indeed. I've got a good many pretty things. There's Dumpling—that's my little chicken, you know; and there's our Bird's Nest—that's a house up in a tree; and then we've each a garden—at least Henry and I have."

"Should you like a little pet lamb?" asked Mary.

"A live one?" cried Bessie.

"Yes, to be sure. Because I've got two, and I know father will let me give one away. They'll follow you about wherever you go."

Bessie's face couldn't smile half as much as it wanted to at this pleasant prospect. Indeed it was a pity she hadn't two faces and two hearts, so that that one little heart of hers needn't be so full as almost to choke her.

Mary enjoyed the pleasure she had given, and she ran into the house and whispered

to her mother, who said, "I've no doubt he will."

"Mother says she's no doubt father will let me give you one," said she, coming back. "I wish you was going to stay here a week. Then I could show you so many things."

"I wish so, too," said Bessie; "but I'm afraid mamma wouldn't let me."

A boy had been sent for farmer Hoyt, who now came walking briskly towards the house. He was as glad to see them as even Bessie's little timid soul could ask, and he and Mr. Prior began to talk over their school-days, just like two boys.

"Isn't it time for supper, mother?" he said at last, turning to his wife, or rather to the chair in which she had been sitting, for she had gone to the kitchen to hasten and to help about matters there.

Bessie was very glad when they were at last called to tea, for she was sure that every thing in a farm-house must needs taste better than dainties elsewhere. And so it did.

It was as good as a story to see the table. To be sure, no body could begin to taste all the good things on it; but it is a comfort to be able to have plenty to say nay to. There was broiled ham, and there were pickles; there was white bread, and brown bread, and barley bread; there was honey, and there was dried-apple sauce; there was preserved quince, and there were preserved pears; here stood crackers, and there stood cheese; here there was a great plate of gingerbread, and there was a blackberry-pie; and it would almost have made a little city-bred pitcher of milk faint away, to have seen the giant pitchers of cream that stalked up and down that table. Bessie was not so busy with her supper as to lose sight of the other wonders of this great kitchen. The fire-place amused and astonished her beyond every thing else. No child who has failed to see an old-fashioned fire-place, need think he has seen the world. Just to think of having your chairs inside it! of learning

your lessons, of playing "hull gull," of popping corn all right in the fire-place! You may depend upon it, that when your grandpapa was a little boy he had the warmest corner, close by the back-log. If he didn't, it was because he gave it to your grandmamma, who was then a little girl.

There was time after supper, to see the cows come home to be milked. Bessie thought she could milk, after she had looked on awhile; and they told her she might try. But trying this time was of no use, not a drop would come at the coaxing of her little fingers.

"You an't much of a farmer," said the good-natured milk-maid, who had let Bessie try her skill. "I guess them little hands of yourn wasn't made to do much."

"Oh! yes they were!" said Bessie. "And they'll be bigger by the time Henry buys his farm. For my brother is going to buy a farm, and I'm to live on it with him when we grow up."

A very doubtful smile was the only answer, and then they heard the carriage driving round to the door, and Bessie said she supposed it was time to go. As she was bidding them all good bye, Mary whispered:

"Father says you may have one of my lambs and welcome, if your father is willing."

"O papa! may I have a lamb?" cried Bessie, eagerly turning to her papa. "A real, live lamb? Because Mary says she's got two, and she will give me one; and oh! lambs are so pretty!"

"Where could you keep it?" asked her father.

"Why, I don't know. Day times it would be following me about; and in the night—I don't know where it would stay in the night. Perhaps Robert will build a house for it just like Dumpling's — only bigger."

"You might fence off a corner of the orchard," said Mrs. Prior, in a low voice.

All this time Mr. Prior was sitting with the reins in his hand, all ready to start. Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt and Mary, and the boy who had harnessed the horses, were standing waiting.

"I don't know what to say about the pet lamb," said Mr. Prior, at last. "You are very kind to propose parting with one, but I am not sure we have any good place in which to keep it. I will drive up in a day or two and see about it. I shall find it hard work to refuse my little girl such a pleasure," he added, as he caught a glance of Bessie's anxious face. With smiles and good byes on each side, the Priors now drove off.

"O papa!" cried Bessie, "I thought I was going to carry my little lamb home to-night, and show it to Henry!"

"Carry it home? What in?"

"Why, in my lap, papa."

Her papa could not help laughing.

"My dear child," said he, "do you sup-

pose you could lift a great lamb? Why, we couldn't even make room for it in the carriage. I should have to send up the wagon for it."

"Well, papa," said Bessie, with a little sweet way she had, "it's no matter. I've got a chicken, and a garden, and a great many things. And it's no matter about a lamb.'

Her papa looked down kindly at her as she sat wedged in between her mother and himself, and she looked very little, and very dear, and very lovely to him.

"You shall have the lamb, and welcome, my darling," said he. "I'll give you a corner of the pasture behind the orchard."

"Yes, do let her have it," said her mamma. "Let her have all the romance she can, while she is a child."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE breakfast-table next morning was fragant with something better than coffee. The white lilies had waked up as fresh and pure after their night's rest, as so many sweet little children, and they gave Mrs. Prior as much pleasure as either of the boys could desire.

"We had a nice time, mamma," said Henry, "after we got home. We ate our supper up in the Bird's Nest. And Bob told me a splendid story about a giant."

"And we had *our* supper in a big kitchen," said Bessie. "O Henry! I did wish you was there! We had such a nice supper. Only to think! We had *pickles* for tea!"

"Ho!" said Henry, "do you call that nice!"

"Oh! but things in farm-houses taste better than they do anywhere else. And then there was such a large fire-place. It was as big as our bath-room."

"That's one of your big stories, I reckon," said Bob, laughing.

"No, indeed, it's a real, certain true story," said Bessie. "There were wooden seats inside the fire-place, for children to sit on, and all sorts of tin things hanging up, too."

"It is a very old house," said Mrs. Prior. "Mrs. Hoyt's parents and grand-parents lived there. I think it likely they have a stove in winter. But I don't know how that is."

"And there wasn't any plaster on the walls—"

"On the ceiling, you mean, my dear," said her papa.

"Yes, papa. And there were great big beams going all criss-cross over our heads,

and they had all sorts of things hanging to them."

"What sort of things?" asked Henry, quite amused at this description.

"Why, dried-apples, and onions, and ham, and bundles of newspaper full of weeds—"

"Full of herbs to be used in sickness," said Mrs. Prior.

"Oh! I thought it was queer they had so many weeds," said Bessie. "And there were some dry tomatoes."

"No, those were red peppers," said her papa.

"Why, they looked like tomatoes."

"If I lived there I'd have a swing," said Henry.

"What, right in the kitchen?"

"Yes, indeed. And I could sit in my swing, and when I was hungry all I should have to do would be to swing up to the wall and snatch a ham, or some onions."

The children all made themselves merry

at this idea, and even Bob thought he should like to visit Farmer Hoyt and see the great kitchen. His father told him he might take the wagon and go for the lamb in a day or two.

"What lamb! I haven't heard about any lamb," cried Henry.

"That's because you were up so late," said Bob. "For my part I haven't heard of any thing else these two hours. Papa! am I to make a fence for Bessie's lamb?"

"You can't do every thing, my boy. Besides, I may as well let him have the range of the whole pasture at present. It's not wanted for any other purpose just now."

So after breakfast Robert set off. Henry went with him. Their mamma gave them a great many charges not to drive too fast, and not to break their necks, and about stopping in the village to buy a piece of broad blue ribbon for the lamb's neck.

"He'll not keep it clean," said Bob.

"I know that," said his mother. "But I want him to look pretty when Bessie first sees him."

"A little bell would sound prettily," said Bob.

"Why, so it would," said Mrs. Prior. "Do try to get a bell down in the village."

"I don't believe they have any thing but cow-bells."

"You can try, at least."

So away they drove, and the broad, blue ribbon was found, and so was a tiny tinkling bell, and in a few hours Robert came back in triumph, not a little pleased with his morning's work. Henry had wonders to tell about the pie he had eaten and the milk he had drank, and his resolution to be a farmer not a little strengthened.

As for the pet lamb, he felt very forlorn indeed, and the blue ribbon and the little bell failed to comfort him.

Henry and Bessie soon became companions for him, however. He would eat

from their hands, and rub his head against their faces, and run after them as merrily as if they were two lambs also.

They enjoyed this new play-fellow wonderfully. Once a week he was washed in a large tub, and dried in the sun; so he was one of the whitest, cleanest, and happiest lambs in the world.

He and Bessie, and Henry and Wag, often ran races together, and it was plea-

sant to see how gracefully he would go bounding after them on his four feet. Then when they were tired, they would all sit down under the trees together; Henry and Bessie with their books, lambkin fast asleep with his head on the lap of his little mistress, and Wag curled up in a heap in the midst. These were happy days, and busy days too, for there was no end to the walks in the woods; the rambles in search of flowers and berries; the friendly visits to the Dales, and the drives to Mrs. Grey's. Then on the Sunday afternoons there were the children's meetings, which every body, far and near, came to attend, and which seemed to Henry and Bessie a part of their country-life, though they had been used to just such teachings ever since they could remember. August slipped away; summer was gone. Mr. Prior's vacation was over, and he was going back to the city, and Bob was to return to school. But they had to stay one day longer than they had intended,

and this was the reason. Mrs. Prior wanted to have all the children who were in the habit of going to the Sunday-afternoon meetings, come to take tea in their grounds. Mrs. Grey thought the plan a delightful one, and wished she might be allowed to help, which Mrs. Prior was glad to have her do.

So in the first place, a carpenter was sent for, to make two long narrow tables that could stand under the trees in the orchard. In the second place every body was sent hither and thither with pails, and pitchers, and bottles, to get cream. In the third place, Bob and Henry went off in the wagon to invite the children. In the fourth place there was a fire made in the big oven, and eggs were beaten, and cake was made, and lemons were squeezed, and dishes clattered. In the fifth place the tables were covered with white cloths, and cakes and flowers and fruit were arranged upon it by careful, tasteful hands. In the sixth place children came in wagons, and children came on foot;

babies came, and great tall sisters came; you never saw such a time! Mary Hoyt was there, and so were all the Dawsons, and the Dales, and Tabby, and Lily Grey and Charley Grey, and George Thompson and Katy Thompson, and the girl that made a face at her teacher, and that rogue of a Tom Johnson.

And Mary Hoyt, and all the Dawsons, and every one of the Dales, and Tabby, and Lily and Charley, and Georgy and every body, must needs climb up into the Bird's Nest, and sit in Bessie's arm-chair, and pay a visit to the pet lamb, and peep at Dumpling through the bars of her little coop. And so they ran here and ran there, and Mrs. Prior played on the piano while they all danced round the barberry bush, and Mr. Prior made them all sit down on the grass to hear a beautiful story, and then they played catch; Mr. and Mrs. Prior, and Mrs. Grey, and Bob and Henry and Bessie, and all of them. By this time supper was

ready; and besides the cakes, and the fruit, and the lemonade, there was pink ice cream, such you may depend as very few of those children had ever tasted before. And what if little Sam Dale did tie up a spoonful of his in a corner of his handkerchief, to carry home to "mother?" And suppose Katy Thompson went without her orange so as to give it to little sick Sarah who couldn't come? There was no body to laugh at them or to say nay. And though John Dawson had a patch on his neat jacket, and George Thompson had on a checked apron, and Susan Dale's stockings had been a good deal mended, and almost all had no stockings on; what of that? There was no silly young Broadway dandy there to ask them to look at his patent-leather boots, and his white gloves and his pert little cane. And no conceited little girl to cry, "Don't your mother know better than to send you to a party with an *apron* on?" or "do you see my five flounces?" So when they got

safely home at night, and their mothers asked them if they had had a good time, every one said: "Oh, I had a *beautiful* time! I never had such a nice time in my life!"

And so the party was ended; so was the summer; and so must this book end, or it will break its promise. For it promised to be a little book, and now it wants be a big one, and tell you what they did in the pleasant autumn. But even a book must keep its promises, and you will see that "Henry and Bessie" won't speak another word, but just—Good-bye!