AT THE PASTURE BARS.

ROCKY FORK

BY

MARY HARTWELL CATHERWOOD

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON
D. LOTHROP COMPANY
1893

CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

ROCKY FORK.

CHAPTER I.

DOCTOR GARDE'S LITTLE GIRL.

MORE than twenty years ago the morning sun looked down among the tall hills of central Ohio, and saw one little girl patting along a path. The path wound down through a hollow, and up, up over wood-clothed heights which she thought nearly touched the sky.

At first glance this little girl appeared to be a large slat sun-bonnet taking a walk on a pair of long pantalettes. But at second glance one brown, thin arm escaped from a short sleeve might have been seen carrying a calico bag by its drawing-string; and under the pantalettes a pair of stout-shod little feet skipped along.

It was not more than seven o'clock. The tall meadow grass was glittering, and every bird known

to the State was singing with his morning voice. When she reached the small run which twisted along the hollow, and put her foot on the first of the stepping-stones which crossed it, the little girl could not help stopping to gaze in the water. The minnows played around the stone with a quiver of their tiny bodies which fascinated the gazer. She stooped cautiously and tried to catch one in her hand, but sunshine on the pebbles was not more elusive.

"Good morning, little girl," said a winning voice; and the little girl jumped up, reeled, set one foot in the water, and brandished her reticule in the effort to regain her balance. The sugared butter-bread and sweet cookies tumbled against currant-pie and cherries, and all settled to an upside-down condition as she finally got on the bank and saw a gentleman preparing to trip across the stones.

It was an uncommon thing to meet any one, and especially a stranger, on that long two-mile path to school. But it was a wonderful thing to meet such a grand stranger. She dropped a bobbing curtsy, and the gentleman, having crossed, stopped and smiled. He had glittering black eyes, and curly hair and whiskers, glittering teeth and boots, fine clothes, and altogether the look of a "town gentleman."

"Whose little girl are you?" inquired this town

gentleman affably, rubbing the wet soles of his boots on the grass.

Under the long slat sun-bonnet a round face blushed all about its blue eyes and quite back to its auburn hair, and a timid voice piped from the calico funnel: "I'm Doctor Garde's little girl."

"WHOSE LITTLE GIRL ARE YOU?"

"Ah! where does Doctor Garde live?"

"Right back there in that big house."

"And who lives in this house I just passed?"

"Mrs. Banks. Her little girls go to school with me."

"Yes. And where do you go to school?"

"In the school-house 'way at the other side of the hills."

"Oho! many children go there?"

"All of 'em in our districk. There's Willeys', and Pancosts', and Harris', and Halls', and Banks', and Martins', and me, and my little sister's going when she gets big enough."

"Yes. Well, thank you. I may call there in the course of the day. Does that path lead back to your school-house?"

"Yes, sir. But you must turn to the right at the big sand-banks, and cross the foot-log over Rocky Fork by Hall's mill."

The gentleman nodded, and passed on smiling as Doctor Garde's little girl dropped him another curtsy. She skipped across the stones and hastened up rising ground to the Banks'. Theirs was a weather-beaten domicile, part log and part frame, with a covered stoop at one door on which Tildy sat plaiting her long hair preparatory to going to school.

Tildy, it must be confessed, was a raw-boned girl, but with a low-browed, serious face. Her nature leaned to the solemn side of life, as her sister Teeny's leaned towards what was merry. Matilda liked to sit in the grass and dress her locks, or to watch from the door-step the rocks and glooms on each side of her home.

Teeny appeared within, tying her bonnet, the string of her reticule across her arm. A bunch of old-fashioned pink roses was pinned to her dress, which hooked in front and was just long enough to sweep her heels when she walked. Teeny was a big girl who felt quite a young woman, since she was "going on" fifteen, ciphered in long division, and had finished a sampler with her name, "Christine Banks," embroidered under a beautiful piece of poetry. "We're takin' curran'-pie for our dinner to-day, Melissy," announced Tildy solemnly as Dr. Garde's little girl ran up.

"I got some, too," she responded with triumph. So little made a triumph in that region and time.

"'Tain't sweetened with sugar."

"'Tis too! I saw Liza put in heaps." She sat down on the steps and explored her reticule. There was rather a sorry mess in its depths, but the slices of bread were reduced again to their proper basis, and the other goodies piled carefully on them.

"Why don't you call me Bluebell?" she suggested with a rather hopeless accent.

"'Cause that ain't your name," said Tildy, strictly.

"I guess my father always calls me that."

"'Tain't your name, anyhow. Your name is Melissy Jane Garde, goin' on eight years old."

"It's just Melissy," cried the younger, doggedly, as if she would like to disown that.

"My mother called me Bluebell, too, and she's gone to heaven. I sh'd think you might call me what my mother called me."

"Your name's Melissy," repeated Tildy, looking with undisturbed eyes upon the distance. Here the argument dropped, as it usually did. The defeated party turned to other things.

"I pretty near fell in the run. The' was a man come along and scared me so. He was prettier than my father!" exclaimed Melissa, pausing after this climax; "that is, dressed up prettier; and he said he was coming to school to-day. I wonder what he's coming there for?"

"Prob'ly it's somebody the directors is sending to whip us," opined Matilda with serious resignation. "They say Mr. Pitzer ain't strict enough."

"Oh, do you s'pose it is?" cried the credulous little girl beside her. "I never got whipped at school yet."

"Now, Tildy," exclaimed the pink-faced elder sister, stepping out, "if you don't hurry up we'll go on and leave you."

"I think I'll stay at home," said Tildy, reflecting on the fine stranger's probable errand.

"No, you won't," cried her mother's voice from an

BLUEBELL. 13

inner room, making a pause in the monotonous rattle of a loom; and though it was a plaintive voice and not very decided, Tildy was moved by it to get her sun-bonnet and follow the other two. They were making a round of the garden, to gather pinks, hollyhocks, bouncing-betties, bachelor-buttons and asparagus sprays. Having tied up a bunch apiece, they left the house and began their root-matted and rocky ascent. There were levels above where the woods made a twilight at noon, where ferns crowded to their knees, and some stood as high as their waists. Who could help stopping to inhale that breath which is no plant's but a fern's?

"There's vinegar-balls on this oak," remarked Tildy, casting her eyes up as they passed under a dark-leaved tree. So, sticks and climbing being brought to bear upon the tree, one or two small apple-shaped bunches were brought down to yield a tart juice to sucking lips. I do not pretend to say the balls were wholesome. But the same lips loved the white, honey-filled ends of clover-blossoms, tender sticks of sweet-briar when stripped of its skin, and they doted on "mountain-tea" a winter-green of three rich fleshy leaves, which clung all over these heights in fragrant mats. The three girls were lovers of Mother Outdoors. Melissa especially gloried in

the woods. The noble tree arches, the dew, and sweet earth-smell filled her with worshipping joy. It was so nice to be a little girl with a sun-bonnet hanging off her shoulders by the strings, and the great woods cooling her face, and sighing away off as if thinking up some song to sing to her!

In due course they came to three giant ridges of sand. These stood in a clear place, and nobody in that region troubled himself about the geological cause of their existence in the heart of the woods. There they were, too tempting to be resisted. Melissa dropped her reticule, Tildy seriously followed her example, and Christine forgot her dress hooking in front and her claims to big girlhood. All three mounted the dunes, sat down, gathered their clothing close about their feet, and shot down the sides as if on invisible sleds. This queer sort of coasting was great fun. When it seemed expedient to adjourn, they shook the clean sand from their dresses, and the eldest and youngest untied their low shoes to turn them upside down. Matilda being barefoot and therefore free from such civilized cares, improved the time by taking an extra slide, which was too much for the other girls, so they tried it again.

Thus the morning waxed later. So by the time they crossed the foot-log over Rocky Fork and ap-

proached the log school-house, "books" were actually "taken up."

The school-house was chinked with clay and had double doors which opened close beside a travelled road. The woods and heights rose behind it, and at one side a sweep of play-ground extended into a viney hollow where hung the grape-vine swing for which all the girls in school daily brought pocketfuls of string.

CHAPTER II.

MR. PITZER.

CHRISTINE stepped over the threshold and dropped a curtsy which dipped her dress in the dust. Matilda followed and was taken with a similar convulsion on the same spot. Then the smallest bobbed violently; all this homage being paid to a somewhat threadbare man who sat behind a high desk opposite the door.

Continuous high desks on a raised platform extended around the walls, and continuous benches ran in front of them. Here sat the elders of the school—the big boys and girls, with their backs to smaller fry who camped on long benches set along the middle of the floor, swinging their heels and holding spellers in their hands. The benches were made of split logs, the flat sides planed smooth, and

the round sides bored with holes into which legs were stuck; as these legs were not always even, boys at opposite ends of a bench could "teeter-totter" the whole row of urchins between them. There were no backs against which you might rest your shoulders, but any tired little fellow might lie down if he took his own risks about rolling off. There had been teachers who would not allow the muscles thus to relax. But Mr. Pitzer was a kind, soft-hearted old man, who, as Matilda has hinted, was not considered strict enough. He had taught the school many seasons.

The directors said he might do for summer, but each winter they determined to engage some strapping modern pedagogue who could control the young men and wild young women who sallied knowledge-ward during the long term. Still Mr. Pitzer was found in his place. He taught manners and morals as well as the common branches, and his sweet, severe face under iron-gray hair became stamped on every mind that entered the double doors.

The tardy pupils, unchallenged, hung their bonnets and dinner-bags on nails in the wall, Teeny took her big-girls' seat, and straightway lay flat on her desk in the agonies of writing a morning copy, while

the other two sat side by side on a bench murmuring the first reading-lesson. A hum like the music of many hives sounded all over the room. "D-i-s — dis, d-a-i-n, dain, disdain," crossed "in-com-pat-i-bil-i-ty;" and the important scratching of slate-pencils in the hands of ciphering big boys, seemed to supplement a breathing and occasional sputter of quill pens.

"Second Reader may stand up!" cried the master.

Bluebell's class, including her tall friend Matilda, formed in a row in front of the master's desk, each holding his reader clinched before his face.

A polished walnut ferule lay at Mr. Pitzer's hand, and the text-book sprawled on the desk. He wore spectacles of so slight an iron frame that the glasses seemed suspended miraculously between his stern eyes and the eyes turned up to him. Like a commander giving some military order, he now cried out: "Attention!"

At the signal every girl dipped low and every boy bent forward with a bow. It would have been a misdemeanor for the girls to bow and the boys to curtsy, and they knew it. Then the boy at the top of the class began to read in a voice which could be heard on the opposite side of the road; he was followed by a timid little girl who put her nose close to the book and spelled and whispered; and she in turn by a merry

girl who had been put back from the Third Reader in one of the master's pets, for pronouncing ships wrecked, "shipses rick-ed." Very little did she care, for, knowing the Second Reader by heart, it was easy for her to rattle off the story of The Three Boys and the Three Cakes, with a moral. Bluebell read in a clear, sensitive, appreciative voice, and Tildy followed. They spelled the words which the master pronounced to them, and had another lesson set. The military order was then varied :

"Obedience!"

At this they saluted as before, and took their seats.

Business went on as usual. The large girls recited in smart, high voices, and the boys blundered in monotone, excepting little Jo Hall, who was such a mite of a fellow, yet so smart he knew almost as much as the master. Jo had ciphered farther into the jungles of arithmetic than anybody else, and could parse as fast as his tongue would run. He always had his atlas lessons, and some said had been clear through the geography, while his writing was so wonderful, the master sometimes let him set copies when he himself was very busy.

"Somethin's the matter with the master this mornin'," whispered Tildy to Bluebell, as they wriggled around trying to rest their backs.

It was true. He stalked about with his hands under his coat-tails, sticking his under lip out. Even Jo Hall's grandiloquent rendering of Fourth Reader text could not draw his mind from some internal strain; and after recess the trouble came out.

Mr. Pitzer read the rules of the school. Whenever he had heard complaint, he brought out those ponderous rules and visited them upon the pupils that they might know what he required of them, even if he did not exact it. Every listener, except the new or very dull ones, knew those rules by heart. They were written on tall cap sheets in the best of flourishes, and covered the whole duty of boy and girl.

To-day the master read them with frowns and a sonorous voice.

"ARTICLE THIRTEENTH!" he thundered at last; "*Every boy or girl in going to or from school shall treat with civility all persons whom they meet upon the highway, he or she making a bow or a curtsy as the case may be. It shall be a high misdemeanor to treat impolitely any stranger or strangers in the schoolroom, on the play-ground, or the highway.*"

And here as if to test Mr. Pitzer's pupils in their behavior, a strange man did step over the threshold, taking off his hat as he did so.

The schoolmaster stopped and glared. But Blue-

bell's heart came into her mouth. She felt unreasonably terrified and trapped by fate. For it was the curly, glittering gentleman who had promised to come to the school-house, possibly on that dread errand suggested by Tildy — to whip the whole school!

CHAPTER III.

THE GEOGRAPHY-SCHOOL TEACHER.

MAY I have a few minutes' conversation with you?" said the fine stranger to Mr. Pitzer. The schoolmaster bowed stiffly, said "Certainly, sir," with some pomp, and came forward. He evidently felt distrust, not to sav hostility; but after ARTICLE THIRTEENTH, he was bound to set the school an example in politeness.

There was a stricture around Bluebell's heart while she watched them talking in low tones near the door. The stranger was pliant, eager and voluble. Oh, *how* he did want to get at them all with his stick! *Would* Mr. Pitzer give them over to such shame and pain! She reflected about the black ripe cherries in her reticule, and wished she had propitiated the good old man by giving them to him at recess. The schoor

stopped droning, and held its breath, just as the earth does before a storm, to catch some hint of this colloquy. Mr. Pitzer seemed more and more mellowed to the man's proposals. The curves of his stern face turned upwards; he nodded his head at the end of every sentence; and finally, leading the way to his high desk, he told the school that Mr. Runnels had something important to impart to them.

Bluebell shut her eyes, and cowered. Little Jo Hall sat bolt-upright, and all the big scholars turned around on their seats.

"He's going to begin with them on this bench," whispered Tildy to Bluebell. Mr. Runnels smiled with his teeth and picked up the ferule.

Oh, how earth brightened again as his business unfolded! The faint, worm-eaten odor of the glass-smooth bench which she clutched, seemed quainter to Bluebell than ever before. She had heard the Fourth Reader class sing out the tale of Ginevra; and that chest, "carved by Antony of Trent," had just such an indescribable, pungent smell, she felt certain, as the desk and seats of this school-house. It had always given her a pleasant sensation; it now added to her joy; her heart expanded; Mr. Runnels was a very nice man. He did not even hint that a school ought to be whipped wholesale; Tildy Banks

didn't know anything about it. His errand was to organize a geography-school!

"The method," said Mr. Runnels, "is altogether new. I have a fine and complete set of painted maps representing every part of the earth's surface, and the exercise of storing the mind with this important science is not only vastly improving, but novel and delightful. All of you speak to your parents. The charge is trifling, but the benefit will be lasting. Everybody is invited free to the organization of the school to-night at Harris' chapel west of this school-house. All the boys and girls and young people of the next district will be there. So don't fail to urge your parents to bring you. So many bright eyes," said Mr. Runnels with a charming smile—

The school giggled with delight—

—"so many intelligent faces, instructed by a wise, kind master—"

Mr. Pitzer straightened his back and smiled around—

—"must surely take an interest in this beautiful globe on which we live."

Mr. Runnels went on and gave them a short lecture on geography. He told them anecdotes of that ignoramus who did not believe the world was round and turned on its axis, because, if this were

the case, his father's mill-pond would spill all its water. The children laughed uproariously, though few of them had ever thought of the earth except as an expanse of rocks, trees and robe-like sward, cleft by the Rocky Fork.

Mr. Pitzer and the geography teacher parted with ceremonious bows. The schoolmaster himself made a few cautious remarks to cool his own enthusiasm; but the next class, which was the grave elders' arithmetic, constantly broke out with fractional questions about a different science.

At last the sun had retreated from the middle of the floor to the very door-sill. By this token they knew it was high noon. Spellers were laid straight on the benches around the wall, desk lids were shut down over their miscellany. Eyes looked expectantly at the master, and all arms were folded. He uttered one magic word: "Dismissed!"

The school seemed to turn a complete summersault: every child projected himself like an arrow toward the door, whooping, singing, scampering and tumbling. Chaos surged to the brown wooden joists. Some nimble little boys got on the desks and galloped around, while others slipped out through the windows, which were set sidewise instead of lengthwise in the log walls, looking like windows that had

lain down to dream. The master, swinging a thick wooden cane, walked to his house which was near. It might confer distinction to go home to one's dinner, but this distinction was not courted even by children who lived in sight. Could anything be more delightful than that noon hour! Was it only an hour —that time stuffed full of events as a month? It was the kernel of all day, at any rate.

Bluebell and Tildy went to their playhouse to eat dinner. This summer residence was formed by a triplet of trees growing so close together as to form a deep alcove. The floor was carpeted thick with moss which Bluebell and Tildy changed every few days. They had some gnarly chairs, which you might have called chunks. Hanging their sun-bonnets up on scales of bark, they ate their dinners in society, much as foreign people attend the theatre. For all about them were similar boxes, or residences, whose occupants visited, and exchanged samples from each others' reticules, so what was cooked on one side of the district was tested on the other side.

Amanda Willey and Perintha Pancost knocked at the bark door of Misses Garde and Banks, and were bidden to come right in and take chairs. The residence being already comfortably full, however, and no chairs visible, they staid outside and took grass,

which was far more comfortable. Tildy and Perintha swapped a fragment of cherry-pie and a bit of rather stale cake, while Amanda gave Bluebell a piece of her cheese for some cherries. These were grave transactions, each party examining what she received with due caution, excepting Bluebell, who was willing to fling her repast right and left without considering whether she got its equivalent or not. Amanda Willey was a large-faced, smiling girl with very smooth hair cut short around her neck. Over her ordinary dress she wore a long-sleeved pink sack, and a pink apron tied about the waist like a grown woman's. The costume was most pleasing in Bluebell's eyes.

"I got a black-silk apron," she observed, smoothing and patting Amanda's drapery. I'm going to ask Liza to let me wear it to geography-school."

"I'm going," exclaimed Perintha Pancost. "The man's to board at our house. He had his breakfast there."

"I ain't," said Tildy. "He looks like a raskil. Mebby he's come down here to rob folks."

The blue eyes, brown eyes and hazel eyes around her stood out at this suggestion. Tildy spoke as if her acquaintance with rascals was thorough.

"I don't think that's very smart of you, Till Banks,"

said Perintha, the "raskil's" hostess. "My pa and ma don't have robbers at our house. He's the pertiest kind of a man. I like him."

"So do I," decided Bluebell with a sigh of relief. Her credulous nature had been staggered by Matilda. "I'll take my Noey's Ark book to read in at g'ography school."

The boys, having swallowed their dinners, were already shouting at "Bull in the Pen," when the girls gathered to take turns at the swing. How sweet these allotted ten or a dozen rushes through the air were, with some swift-footed girl running under you to send you up among the branches! The glee with which you grabbed a leaf, your slow reluctance in "letting the old cat die," and another succeed you! The number of games of "Black Man," "Poison," "Base," which can be crowded into one noon, has never been computed. Every muscle is strained, the hair clings to pink foreheads, lungs and hearts work like engines, and the outdoor world is *too* sweet to be given up when that rattle of the master's ferule against the window sash is supplemented by the stern call of "Books!"

Drenched in the dew of health, every little body rushed again to the hard benches. Bluebell told herself she always liked afternoon, it seemed so short;

and as the sun stooped lower and lower, a lump of homesickness grew in her for the old weather-stained house, her father's return from his daily rounds, and the baby's tow head and black eyes which were sure to meet her at the lower bars. Then there was the spelling-class which crowned every day's labor. Orthography may not be the most important element of education, but Bluebell thought it was, and she had a genius for it. While Tildy swung sleepy legs, Bluebell mentally counted her own "head-marks," and speculated on what the master's offered prize might be at the end of the term. Classes succeeded each other, and the sweet dream-producing hum went on, until Bluebell found herself again going triumphantly "down foot," having scored still another head-mark.

Then the roll was called, while reticules, bonnets and caps were slyly gathered off their pegs and passed from hand to hand, that no one might keep the others waiting. Jo Hall responded to his name with a shout, while Amanda Willey's voice could scarcely be heard; some pupils answered "half a day;" and for others there was a hurried cry of "absent," not always correct, as in the case of John Tegarden, who shook fist and head many times at Jo Hall for shouting absent to his name when he was there in the body. Jo

ducked his shoulders, and intimated by lifting his eyebrows, grimacing and nodding, that this was an oversight on his part. And John was obliged to carry his grievance outdoors, as he was the first boy on his bench. Dinner-bag and cap in hand, he stopped at the door to scrape and say "good-evening!" to the master, receiving a stately "good-evening" in return. Thus one by one they filed out, each child stopping to make that grave salutation, until the master was free to close the double doors and fasten them with chain and padlock.

It was more than two hours till sunset; but there were long shadows in the woods, and an evening coolness was stealing over the beautiful earth.

The Rocky Fork foaming over boulders or spreading into still pools at the feet of leaning trees, shaded, variable, but clear as spring water, cut the home path in two, and was spanned by a foot-log. The wheel of Hall's mill turned lazily here, and the mill-race made Bluebell's brain unsteady. Not so the shady pebbles in the stream. She sat and watched them after crossing until Tildy's voice up the ascent gave her warning to hurry.

All the country was in that afterglow of sunset when she reached the pasture-bars behind the house. And of course there was the little sister at the bars,

her curly tow hair dovetailed at the back, her black eyes spread and both white claws clinging around the wood.

"Some tump'ny's tum!" she cried.

CHAPTER V.

COMPANY.

THE announcement that there was company did not prevent Bluebell from climbing the bars and giving Roxy a warm hug, but rather added strength to the embrace.

"You little darling, it's been so long since I saw you! Ear-ly this morning sisser went away. Who's come? Hope it isn't somebody that'll keep us from playing and having a good time."

The tow-headed sister spread her nervous little hands and attempted description while trotting along.

"Lady with turls: nice, nice lady!"

"Is father home?"

"No."

"Doesn't Liza know who she is?"

"No. Liza say, 'Take off your fings. Doctor be home pretty soon.'"

THE TUMP'NY.

"Oh! It's somebody to be doctored."

"It's tump'ny!" urged Rocco. "We goin' to have plum p'serves for supper."

This settled it. Liza was a discriminating housekeeper who did not regale calling patients with her best preserves. The doctor's house was also his office where people came for medicines or treatment, and the Rocky Forkers were willing to make it a free hotel; but Liza was not.

Liza had been spinster mistress of the house for twenty-five years. Her mother died only the year before her cousin Doctor Garde and his orphans came, and the short, plump, merry, quick old maid had taken care of her mother for a long time. She liked taking care of people. It was really for the privilege of taking care of the children that she rented her premises to her cousin. He came with two babies, and a new medical diploma to build up a practice among the hills, and threw himself entirely into work, leaving Liza to bring up the children as she saw best. She was a woman with a wholesome soul, and they all got on comfortably. While she thought the doctor remarkable in his profession, and felt pride in his cases and cures, outside of that, being considerably his senior, she took the attitude of a protecting aunt.

To-night the children saw her standing in the back door, looking comely and important, her black hair sleeked down to her cheeks.

"M'lissy," she exclaimed — for when Liza was anxious or grave, she called the child by her real name — "go into my room and put on your blue calico, and your white stockings and slippers. I'll come and braid your hair."

"Who's come, Liza?"

"It's some of your kin. Mind, now, don't go through the sitting-room."

Then Bluebell knew that the awful presence was there. She walked on tiptoe past the closed door, Rocco at her heels, and slipped up the staircase to that half nursery, half bedroom, which the children occupied with Liza. It contained some of their mother's furniture: a mahogany chest of drawers, bulging in front; a stuffed rocking-chair in which Bluebell told the little sister stories; a crib, and a trundle-bed which was not pushed under Liza's white-valanced and quilt-covered four-poster, but stood under a window that the cherry-boughs scraped. The room was whitewashed as fair as a lily, even to the hewed wood joists. Liza's dresses hung on nails along the wall, and Bluebell's hung beneath in a row which she could reach.

Her heelless slippers and fine open-work stockings came out of the chest of drawers; and she was soon struggling to hook the blue calico, but ineffectually, when Liza came up like a breeze, brushed and braided her hair in two short tails, tied the tails with yellow brocaded ribbon from her own ribbon-box, and looked her over approvingly.

"Now don't forget your curchy," she admonished. "Come here, Rocky: let me braid your hair, too, while I'm about it."

Rocky demurred, but it was no use. Her lint locks were swiftly made into two tiny strands and also tied across with yellow ribbon, giving her an ancient and grotesque appearance. The children trod downstairs a step at a time, hand in hand, Bluebell trembling with bashful self-consciousness. It choked her voice and made her dizzy when she entered the sitting-room, so that she stumbled on a strip of the home-woven carpet laid loose upon the floor. There were a few chairs, including one gilt-ornamented rocker, and a case of the Doctor's books, in the sitting-room; and nothing more; for the guest in white curls was on the porch looking up the amphitheatre of woods surrounding her.

She was certainly a great lady. Her dress of plum-colored poplin had a long pointed waist; she wore a

broad embroidered collar turned over ribbon, and just as the children appeared, put a large, open-faced gold watch back into its pocket. Her hair was coiled on the top of her head and fastened with a shell comb, two full curls being left at each side of the forehead.

Bluebell felt overwhelmed when this lady turned her delicate face from the hills and reached two transparent hands toward the country children. Bluebell made her obeisance, and the lady seemed pleased with the conscientious gravity with which she did it.

"Don't you know me?" said this lady, pressing a hand of each child.

"No, ma'am."

"I am Miss Calder. Your father has told you about me? I became responsible for you when you were an infant, and you received my name, Melissa."

Bluebell searched her memory painfully. She was very anxious to know her namesake, who seemed the daintiest woman alive; but having no recollection of the matter herself, she was forced to admit she did not know she had one.

"I s'pose father forgot to tell me," she observed, bringing forward the best excuse she could think of for him.

"I dare say," said Miss Calder. "He has not been the same man since your mother died." The fair old lady began to tremble. She took a handkerchief out of the beaded reticule hanging to her arm, and, hugging Bluebell to her, cried for several minutes with an agitation which shook them both. Bluebell was much embarrassed. She felt that she ought to be very sorry, and heaved several deep sighs; but the pain in her nose, which Miss Calder was squeezing against the watch-case, kept her from fully giving herself up to grief, and it was probably just as well, as she had a whole lifetime in which to miss her mother.

The rose-leaf maiden lady dried her eyes, and sat down with the children, one on each side of her.

"Are you 'sponsible for Rocco, too?"

"No. I do not know who named her. Your parents were living in another place at that time, and your mother died soon after her birth. I have not seen you since you were a babe in arms. Your mother was a very lovely woman."

"We've got a daguerreotype of her."

"Indeed! will you let me see it?"

"Father will when he comes. He keeps it locked in his desk drawer. I took it to school one day to show to the scholars, 'cause Printhy Pancost said she

knew my mother wasn't pretty, and he said I musn't take it any more."

The fair lady smiled slightly, and said again, "Indeed!" This appeared to be a polite word which she uttered without the least emotion, merely to indicate that she was listening.

"What do you study at school?"

"Reading and spelling. I'm in the Second Reader. We've read as far as the 'Three Boys and the Three Cakes,' and we're spelling in 'A-base.' I could spell over to 'In-com-pat-i-bil-i-ty,' but the rest can't. And there's going to be a g'ography school, and I'll ask father to send me."

"Indeed. You are very smart in your studies, Melissa. Little Roxana doesn't go to school?"

"No, ma'am."

Here little Roxana, unwilling to be presented to company as totally unaccomplished, rubbed her long fingers over the lady's watch-guard and asserted herself:

"I can sing at the foonerals!"

Bluebell felt disconcerted. She feared to shock the rose-leaf guardian; but Rocco took no notice of her signal to drop the subject.

"I can sing 'Back any more,' and 'Cap in a father's hand.'" To prove which the baby began at once and sang in a clear, bold voice:

"This is the way I long have sought,
I neva' turn back any more:
And mourned a-tause I foun' it not,
I neva' turn back any more:
Away the holy proph-ups went,
I neva' turn back any more:
The road 't leads from bam-shum-ment,
I neva' turn back any more!"

"Why, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Calder. But, like a wound-up musical box, changing her tune, Rocco went on:

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away:
There saints and glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.
Caps in a father's hand,
Love cannot die."

"I know 'Jucy-crucy-fide-him,' too."

"She means 'The Jews, they crucified Him,'" said Bluebell.

"I sing it to the white chicken's fooneral, and the black chicken's fooneral, and the speckled chicken's fooneral."

"You see," said Bluebell, hot in the face, but constrained to answer the raised eyebrows of this lady

who probably never pulled off shoes and stockings or rolled down a sand-bank, or so much as looked at a dead chicken, when she was a little girl, "we got a little graveyard. And there were so many pretty little chicks died. And Liza lets us take the fire shovel. We dig a nice little hole and fence it all round with sticks in the bottom, and wrap the chicky up; then we 'tend like this porch was the church, and we sing and have a funeral like they did when Mary Jane Willey died — I just preach about what a good chicken it was," stammered Bluebell; "and then we 'tend like we're cryin' and put it in our box that we pull with a string, and have a percession to the grave." She became so interested in the description that she ended with some gusto.

Miss Calder put her handkerchief to her lips, shaking a little, and Bluebell felt afraid she was going to cry again.

"Isn't that an unhealthy kind of play?" she finally asked.

"Oh no, ma'am — the chickens is just as clean!"

"But your feelings are so disturbed."

"We just *let on* we feel bad. We got ten chickens buried, and headstones and footstones to 'em all. We enjoy ourselves so much!"

Miss Calder's smile now escaped from the

handkerchief and ran up her delicate shrivelled face.

"I have something for you in my trunk which may amuse you in a different way." So saying the lady rose and rustled into the sitting-room, where in one corner stood a small, round-lidded hair-trunk just as the driver from the station had left it. She opened this with a key from her reticule, while Bluebell and Roxana stood one at each end of it, their hands behind them and their pulses beating with expectation. A scent of lavender and rose-leaves came from under the cover. Miss Calder lifted musky robes of lawn, dazzling white embroidered garments, and her cap and bonnet-box out, before she came to certain packages which she methodically unwrapped.

Bluebell swallowed several times, and the little sister opened her mouth.

The first thing which came to sight was a string of blue and white beads braided in a rope; that Miss Calder tied around Rocco's honored neck. Then followed a rattle and whistle, also for Rocco, whom the good lady had evidently pictured to herself as yet an infant. But when two flat packages revealed themselves, "Tales from Catland" in red and gold and "Stories from Roman History" in black, flexible backs, Bluebell felt unspeakably rich. This was, after all, a comparative state. The superlative was

reached when the last bundle of all came out of several newspapers and folds of tissue paper. There were some glimpses of pink gauze, the unmistakable presence of small gaitered feet, then the actual dawning of rosy face and flaxen hair.

"Here's a wax-doll for you," said Miss Calder, making the presentation as if wax dolls were a common addition to every well-regulated little girl's family. This was the first of that particular class of dolls the children had ever seen. Several cheap ladies with broken heads were lying about the house; for whenever the Doctor made a journey he brought one of the children a doll and the other a book — the books being always histories, or solid sciences.

Bluebell, I must confess, was too much an out-door child to be a tender mother of dolls. But this beautiful creature with real hair, woke rapture in her. Her breath came short when she thanked the new friend. The splendor of such a possession made her ashamed of her unmaternal care over the plainer dollies who had fallen one by one into Rocco's untutored hands.

"What will you call her?"

"I think the prettiest name in the world is Georgiana," said Bluebell, hesitating. If this darling must

be called Melissa it seemed more than she could stand!

"That suits her very nicely," agreed the fair maiden lady. Bluebell was emboldened to go up closer and make her lips into an expectant bud.

"You want to kiss me, do you?" said Miss Calder, smiling; so she inclined her cheek towards the bashful, eager little face, and Bluebell felt as if she had kissed a white hollyhock's yielding petal.

"I have some pretty pieces to make Miss Georgiana more clothes. Do you know how to sew?"

"I can hem a little, but it sticks my finger."

"Have you begun a sampler yet?"

"No, ma'am. But Liza's going to start one for me. Teeny Banks has got one done, but she's a young woman."

A well-known, ringing neigh came from the lane which led through woods from the main road.

"That's Ballie! Father's at the bars. I'll go and tell him you're come."

Father had flung himself out of the saddle, and the slender-legged, delicate Arabian mare followed him into her stable. Her chestnut coat had the richness of satin. She had one white stocking and a white face, pink, sensitive nostrils and an arching neck. She had been known to do marvels of speed, to

breast swollen streams, to pick her way carefully around dangerous cliffs in the darkest night. She and her master moved together like one of the old sylvan Centaurs; but if Bluebell climbed her back, as she sometimes did, the Arabian stepped as gently as a nurse.

Accustomed to her father's habits, Bluebell waited on the barn floor until he stabled the pretty creature. She still held Miss Georgiana carefully in her arms. He came out, unfastened his leggings, and hung them in their usual place. His face was square, serious and sweet. His light hair hung below his high standing collar. He was a young man, scarcely thirty, and so lovable when he got into the arms of his children. Still, Bluebell had been taught not to address him by the diminutive of papa. His own bringing-up had been austere, inclining to plain, strong words like father, mother, children.

"See what I got!" cried his little girl.

Father lifted her up, doll and all, relaxing into a smile.

"Where did you get that?"

"Father, Miss Calder has come. And she brought Rocco some beads and me some books, and Rocco a whistle, and me a doll, and she's got a gold watch and white curly hair! Oh, I'm so glad! And may I

go to g'ography school to-night? There's a man going to teach in the church."

Father put her down and took her hand.

"When did she come?" he inquired as they walked towards the house.

"Before I got home from school. I guess a man brought her. And, father," advised Bluebell, confidentially, "don't say anything to her about mother, for if you do, she'll burst out a-crying!"

He looked down at the auburn head with wistful eyes.

It occurred to her afterwards that grown people seemed to pay little attention to what children said; for when she came in with Rocco to supper, father was showing Miss Calder the daguerreotype, and she was crying in her web-like handkerchief.

Bluebell heard her say, "She was like a daughter to me." The Doctor sat with his head on his hand. But Bluebell was prevented from witnessing their meeting by Roxana's singular behavior. This lint-locked damsel stood beside the house, her hands locked behind her. The whistle and rattle lay despised upon the earth, though her beads still hung beneath her sulking chin. Bluebell's heart misgave her. But she tried persuasion.

"Darling, don't you want to go and help sisser

hunt up the old, *pretty* dollies, and set 'em in a nice row?" Rocco's whole body shook a negative.

"Would you like to *hold* the wax dolly in your hands, and be *real* careful?"

Rocco kicked backward with her heel to indicate her contempt for the wax dolly.

"Oh dear," sighed Bluebell, who had been taught it was the duty of an elder sister to give up to the younger. "*Do* you want to take my doll right out of my mouth, when it was a present, too, and pull her hair out and rub dirt on her face, and break her all to pieces?"

Roxana wriggled a very faint negative. But still it was evident that wax doll stood between her sister's heart and hers.

"I don't da'st to give her away to you," pleaded Bluebell, safe on that point; still she looked ruefully at the fair Georgiana's dissension-creating face.

"I don't want the ole fing!" exclaimed Rocco, sticking her lip further out and scowling. She really did not know what was swelling in her tender little heart.

"Then, honey-dew," argued Bluebell, whose affection would burst into pet names which she would not on any account have had her elders hear, "what you poutin' for?"

"GEORGIANA, I GOT JUST ONE ROCKETY-POPPERTY."

She held the disturbing Georgiana aloft.

"Georgiana," said the elder sister, "I got just one little Rockety-popperty, and I love her and hug her, and our mother's dead, so we're half-orphans. And we play together and have the best times! Buryin' chickens and all."

Rocco's long fingers twisted nervously, and one full tear splashed on the toe she was scowling at.

"And now a good friend's come, and brought you, and my little sister's got mad! It makes me feel so bad I don't want to play! You can just stay here under this tree. I'm goin' off in the woods or some place. And our company will want to know what's become of me, and folks will say, 'she went off and lay down like the babes in the woods 'cause her sister didn't love her any more!'"

Roxana uttered a mournful whoop. Her heart broke under its heavy weight, and the freshet washed over her face.

"*I* ain't mad, B'uebell," she surrendered, piteously.

They flew and caught each other in a tight embrace, Bluebell stooping to the baby.

"I do love you any more!"

"You old darling!"

"Don't go off to the woods!"

Rocco was such a delicious little sister in her melt-

ing moments, so wet-eyed, so tremulous in the breast, clinging with such loving arms, that the least pliable person could not resist her.

SUCH A DELICIOUS LITTLE SISTER!

"No, I won't go off to the woods, honey-dew," vowed Bluebell.

"You can have my eggs in the rob — rob — robin's nest," hiccupped Rocco, who in the triumph of affection gave up all things.

"And you can be Georgiana's mother, and I'll be her grandmother! Then you'll own her too, and I won't be givin' her away!" This flash of Bluebell's genius fused the whole difficulty.

Rocco's tears were carefully wiped off on the wrong side of her apron. A smile like the brightness after rain spread from her black eyelashes all over her face, a reflection of the smile Georgiana had been so steadily bestowing on her small maternal relative, her grandparent, the dark, weather-beaten house, the cherry-trees, and all animate and inanimate nature.

CHAPTER V.

THE GEOGRAPHY SCHOOL.

AFTER supper Miss Calder professed herself very much fatigued; so Liza showed her at once to the best room, and Doctor Garde, before setting out on a night ride, carried her trunk into it.

This gorgeous apartment was situated on the ground floor, opening directly from the sitting-room; and as the rest of the family slept up-stairs, the timid lady felt an unacknowledged chill running down her spine. She considered that she had come into a wild and uncivilized region, and remembered the brigand-like workmen at the Furnace who seemed to regard her with curiosity.

"Are you not afraid, alone with the children, when Doctor Garde is gone?" she asked Liza, while laying out her toilet-set.

"Oh no, I never think of such a thing. Mother

and me lived here alone so long. They say it is unsafe over in the Harris neighborhood. But nobody ever tried to break into this house."

A screech-owl screamed, and Miss Calder shuddered. These spinster ladies were very polite to each other, but they really stood in social opposition.

"She's used to fine living, and she'll think this is no place to bring up the children," was Liza's secret fear.

"The children seem healthy and happy enough," was Miss Calder's silent comment, "but they never will learn manners here. Maurice must be roused and reminded of his duty to them."

There was a fire-place in the spare bedroom, now filled with asparagus and roses set in a huge blue pitcher. The toilet-stand was covered with ruffled dimity. The bed-valance was also of ruffled dimity, and a mountain of feather-beds, dressed in the best linen and showiest quilts the house afforded, offered Miss Calder repose. Liza had once been to Frederick-town, and she flattered herself she knew how town-folks fixed their company rooms. A chest on legs and a brass-knobbed bureau stood in opposite corners. The flowered bowl and pitcher would be eagerly seized by china-fanciers in these days. A

long gilt-framed glass, with a gaudy landscape at the top of it, was shrouded in gauze, like the face of a Turkish wife. On each paper blind was represented a colossal vase of flowers, so gorgeous that real roses were put almost out of countenance by them. And the chairs were all wooden seats instead of split-bottom, and had gilding on their backs. On the wall was a framed certificate of Liza's church-membership; and the plaster-of-Paris images of a cat and a parrot ornamented opposite ends of the mantel, while "Little Samuel" knelt pacifically between them.

"There's no lock on the door that opens on to the porch," bustled Liza, "but you needn't be afraid. Nobody could open that door without waking you."

Miss Calder saw this door with cold perspiration, and thought of her cozy upper chamber at home, and her two bell-ropes which on the instant would arouse Maria and the man.

But she smiled as pleasantly as possible, while thinking, "My nerves will not bear such a strain long."

Liza wished her good-night, and went to put the baby to bed, and attend to her milking.

The cows were at the lower bars, waiting in content. Night had not fairly set in, for twilight lingers so long among the hills. There was dead blackness

up the pine slopes, but an after-glow along the valley. Bluebell sat on the fence watching these bovine mothers. She had called them from the other side of the run, with long intonations: "Su-kee; Pi-dey! Ro-see! Su-ukee!" Pidey's bell had tinkled accompaniment, recording their progress on the way. Now it dingled down the opposite hill with such a clamor that Bluebell could fancy the knock-kneed trot of both cows; and now it thumped as they plunged into the run; then it wandered along, pausing over some very sweet bunch of grass, jerking at a mouthful of sweet-briar, and finally coming to the bars in perfect marching time: "*te-ding, te-ding, te-ding, a-ding, ding.*" Bluebell had never heard an organ or an orchestra. She thought that cow-bell in the dim landscape, with echoes coming back from the hills, the most softening music in the world. The sound brought with it a smell of roses, of grass after rain, and clover.

But another sound now attracted her ear, and she turned on the fence. Ballie was neighing at the upper bars. The doctor had one foot in the stirrup and was rising to his seat when his daughter's voice burst out in appeal:

"O father, won't you please take me to g'ography school?"

She clung panting to the fence. "The whole school's goin', and it's only to Harris' chapel!"

He felt very tender toward his children this evening, though he thought himself always too indulgent.

"But I haven't time to take out the buggy now."

"Can't I ride behind you, father? I'm all dressed up 'cept my Sunday flat."

"Well, run and get it then, I can leave you at the chapel, and pick you up when I come back. Tell Liza to pin a shawl around you."

Bluebell was presently climbing to a seat behind the Arabian's saddle, and holding around her father as they trotted away. Her mother's black-silk, heavily fringed shawl was pinned tightly under her chin. It must be confessed that Liza had not seen her wrapped. Liza was with the baby, and Bluebell knew she would put the horrible old broche around her — a wrap beautiful in its time, but now as old as Liza's self, and much the worse for wear. So the damsel knocked hastily at Miss Calder's door, to gain access to the chest within.

Miss Melissa opened it with some hesitation lest it were an early housebreaker. She had on a flowered dressing-gown and was brushing out her puffs.

"I only want to get my shawl out of the chest," said the little girl, and she hurried to lift the heavy lid.

BRUSHING OUT HER PUFFS.

"Are you going out, my dear?"

"Father's goin' to take me to g'ography school."

"To geography school?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm to ride behind him on Ballie, and he'll leave me at the door, and call for me when he comes back. It will be such fun!"

Miss Melissa looked as if she hardly thought so. Her inward comment was, "Dear me! how negligent and ignorant of a mother's duty a man is!"

Bluebell dragged out the heavy embroidered black shawl, and ran with it. The silk apron was not attainable; but this royal garment and her "flat" were more than she had hoped for. The "flat" was a brown crimped straw with flopping brim, tied under the chin — a head-covering for Sunday.

It was quite an adventure to be going towards that unknown delight of geography school, behind on Ballie, who, though kind, curvetted and begged to know why *she* was asked to do double duty like any old hack.

They rode by the skirts of the pines, and down a knotty, steep wagon road, over the bridge of the run to the cross-roads. Lights from various cabins twinkled along their way. The horse's hoofs struck the county thoroughfare which led past the school-house, but paused at a small white building, and

here Bluebell alighted. Her mind had been too busy for talk, and her young, grave father, occupied also, whistled under his breath all the way. It made her feel sad to hear father whistle so — it was like the far-off sigh of the pines.

"I'll stop for you," he said as he cantered off.

Harris' chapel was lighted; and through its two open doors you could see it was crowded. Its gable-end was towards the road, and a flight of wooden steps led up to each door. Bluebell entered on the "women's side." No kind of meeting could be held in the building which would make it proper for these doors to be used indiscriminately. All the men and boys entered at one door, all the women and girls at the other; a certain partition in the benches separated the house into two sides, one of which was composed of bonnets, and the other of bare heads having the hair cropped around their ears.

But never had the chapel presented so enjoyable a sight to Bluebell's eyes as now. She liked the nine-o'clock Sunday-school, and even the sermon, though the minister always pounded and the echoes of his voice made your ears ache: but when the windows were open such pleasant air came in, the children looked so nice in their Sunday clothes, and their mothers so peaceful, and even ugly old Mr. Harris

seemed quite pleasant, when he started the singing, keeping time with his foot, and rolling out cheerfully:

> "Come, let us anew
> Our journey pursue,
> Roll round with the year,
> And never stand still
> Till the Master appear."

But to-night the whitewashed walls glistened under tallow candles stuck in tin sockets at regular intervals around them, besides those lights in the great chandeliers made of cross-pieces of wood pierced with holes. At the pulpit-end of the room, large maps covered the wall; and below them stood Mr. Runnels with a long pointer in his hand. The seats seemed filled to overflowing with everybody for miles around, as Bluebell tiptoed up the aisle. The flat flopped and the fringed shawl trailed. Some one put out a hand and pulled her, and she found Perintha Pancost had squeezed a seat for her, which she thankfully took, settling her little blushing face into the mass. She found Mandy Willey on the other side of her. Mandy Willey had on the black-silk apron, and her white sun-bonnet. She had also a pocketful of fresh mountain-tea, which she divided with the other girls.

"What did you wear your flat for?" whispered Perintha disparagingly. "Take it off!" Her school bonnet lay in her lap, and she looked comfortable.

"I shan't do it," whispered back Bluebell with some asperity.

"My maw has an old shawl like that," added Perintha, fingering the fringe.

"Your maw!" retorted Bluebell, stung by the implied stricture when she thought herself looking her grandest. She concentrated all her scorn on the soft diminutive. "*I'd* say mother!"

"Humph!" snuffed Perintha.

"Miss Calder's come," continued Bluebell in a dignified fashion. "She's a town-lady. She brought me a doll with real hair that you can comb out, like mine."

"I don't care if she has," retorted Perintha. "My cousin in Frederick has two dolls nearly as big as I am, and *both* of them has hair!"

So they might have gone on, trying to outshine each other in lustre borrowed from their friends and relatives, much as grown people do, had not Mr. Runnels now claimed everybody's attention. He gave a brief, plain lecture on the divisions of the earth's surface. Then selecting the map of North America, he requested the best singers to take their places on

front seats. Old Mr. Harris, who had come to keep a proper check on proceedings, felt touched and complimented by this appeal. He always led church singing; so, tip-toeing officiously about, he weeded out a laughing girl here and an awkward young man there, in some other place a middle-aged farmer who was noted for bass, or a matronly shrill-voiced sister who responded with reluctance, and placed them in array, himself at the head, good-naturedly ready to lend his influence to education.

Then Mr. Runnels turned to the old schoolmaster who sat smiling and prominent on a chair brought down from the high pulpit, and begged that the school-children might be brought forward. Upon this, Mr. Pitzer tiptoed along the aisles, summoning this one and that one of his flock and ranging them behind the front row, where the heads of some scarcely reached above the high backs of the seats. Bluebell felt important and excited, and regretted having left behind her Noah's Ark book, which she had proposed to herself as a text-book to the maps. Perintha and Mandy forgot to munch mountain-tea. Little Jo Hall set beside the master, on the men's side, the master secretly proud of this boy's quick mind and alert manner, though pretending to be oblivious to

them lest parents of other children present might say he "showed partiality."

The geography-teacher explained the map, and old Mr. Harris was the first to go up and "point out" different countries. He made mistakes and chirped pleasantly over them, but encouraged one or two blushing girls to follow him, and a lumbering boy who was so frightened when the pointer was placed in his hand that he could not tell land from water.

Then little Jo Hall stepped forward and covered himself all over with glory; he had the countries so thoroughly by heart that nobody could puzzle him, though John Tegarden confusedly called for "Russian Central." The master smiled furtively around while he took off his glasses and rubbed them.

But now the beauty of a geography-school came into full play. The improvised orchestra was instructed to lift up its voice and sing off the map while Mr. Runnels indicated each country with the pointer. The melody was a sort of chant, but it was a lively chant, and every rustic took it up with enjoyment:

"Greenland, a desolate and barren region,
Greenland, a desolate and barren region!

"Russian America, New Archangel,
Russian America, New Archangel.

"British America has no capital,
British America has no capital.

"United States, Washington,
The government's republican:
United States, Washington,
The government's republican.

"Mexico, Mexico city,
Mexico, Mexico city.

"Central America, New Guatemala,
Central America, New Guatemala."

It sounded so wonderfully learned. These geographical names were caught up with gusto by everybody in the house except a few quiet old folks who respected "good learning," but felt that their day was too far advanced to attempt it. In short, the geography-teacher and his method made an excellent impression; and when he called a recess that "signers" might come forward and enroll themselves in his classes, as future lessons would be given with closed doors, a majority of all present were put upon his lists. Even Mr. Pitzer joined the adult class; not that he had anything to learn in the science of geography; but he said he always liked to throw his influence on the right side.

"Ain't your paw going to send you?" inquired

Perintha of Bluebell. Perintha was promenading with the air of a proprietress, just because the geography-teacher boarded at her house!

"'Course he is," exclaimed Doctor Garde's little girl, anxious for his return; "he always wants me to learn everything I can."

She stood on a bench and stretched up to one of the high windows to peer in the direction he had taken. The boys and girls trooped in and out enjoying their recess; the elderly people gathered in groups; and she felt quite left out and behind the fashion, until little Jo Hall called her attention.

"Bluebell Garde, your father wants you."

"Where is he?" she asked, scrambling down.

"He's up there talking to Mr. Runnels. I guess he's signin' for you."

He had enrolled her name and paid the fee, in an absent way, but he did not seem greatly impressed by the smiling geography-teacher.

"The children's class will meet on Saturday afternoons," said Mr. Runnels. "Your little girl seems to have a wonderful mind. She has learned the map of North America already."

He said this, drawing his breath over his teeth and bowing in a way which made Bluebell uncomfortable, "it seemed so affected" — she had heard Liza speak

of "affected people" with such condemnation that they seemed next door to criminals. The young father looked down at her, possibly flattered by this tribute to his child's talents.

"She needs holding back instead of urging forward," he said briefly; and taking her hand, he nodded adieu to Mr. Runnels.

"Can't I stay till it's out, father?" begged Bluebell, trotting by his side as he stalked out, his old patients right and left greeting him.

No. He had another call to make on the way home, and had no time for the geography-school.

So she was obliged to console herself, as they cantered along, with rehearsing the chant which meant in her ears a triplet of gruesome sounding names for one country:

"Greenland, a des-o-late and barren region!"

They drew up at Ridenour's gate. Her father went in, with his black-leather medicine-cases called "pill-bags" over his arm, merely throwing the Arabian's bridle over a post. Bluebell crept forward into the saddle, and began to stroke the mare's soft neck. She put her foot into the strap above the stirrup and took a firm seat, imagining herself flying at full gallop. It would have frightened Miss Melissa beyond

expression to see her in this unprotected, perilous plight.

Suddenly the flat did flop with violence, and she found herself clinging with all her might to the plunging Arabian's mane.

"I want you!" said the rough voice of a man, appearing through the darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NARROWS AND MARY ANN FURNACE.

OH!" added the man, frightened to see such a little shape cling to the plunging horse, "I thought it was the doctor."

The doctor was fortunately making a short call; and he now appeared to quiet the still snorting creature.

"I held on tight, father!" said his little girl, trembling in every nerve.

"I didn't mean to scare anything," apologized the furnace-man with some compunction, though with his own anxiety and errand uppermost; "but I saw the horse, like you was startin' away and I wanted to stop you. We've had an accident down to the Furnace. I went in to your place, but Liza said you'd gone this way, so I come along expectin' to meet you. Eli Ridenour fell over the Narrows."

"I'll come," said the Doctor. "Is he at the Furnace?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you go in and tell the family. Cautiously, mind; his mother isn't strong yet. And have them send a wagon with plenty of bedding to bring him home."

The furnace-man entered the house without ceremony, according to the custom of the country, and Doctor Garde swung himself again into the saddle, taking his little girl this time before him.

"You ought to be in bed," he observed as they flew up the slope. "Guess I better let you down where the lane turns off. You can run along then, can't you?"

Run along that dark lane, half a mile in length, through blackness, all alone! Fathers are not mothers; and this father, though the tenderest in intention, was so accustomed to heroic methods himself, that he did not realize what terror his proposition held for his little girl.

"Don't make me get off," she pleaded, patting his shaven cheek. She thought of Billy Bowl. It is impossible to explain how this mythical character could haunt her after dark. He was a monster of ingratitude in a story, and Bluebell had a greater

horror of him than of any other image her mind could call up. Billy Bowl was a bow-legged fellow who slipped into a pit: there he lay bellowing for help — Bluebell could fancy his hoarse cries — until some good man came along and pulled him out. It was easy to picture this excellent person reaching into the pit and taking hold of Billy's repulsive hand. And being pulled out, what did the bow-legged Billy do? He turned around — how strongly the case was stated in that! — he *turned around* and pushed in the man who pulled him out! Many a night Bluebell wished Billy Bowl had been left in the pit! Many a time did she regret Liza had ever told her the story. She believed him always abroad, an element of evil on the air! She could not tell any grown person about it. Father would laugh, and show the absurdity of the fancy.

Father had not the slightest idea that his little girl nursed any Bugaboo or felt her flesh creep at braving Billy Bowl the whole length of that lane! With a shade of disapproval, however, he did observe:

"I hope my little girl isn't a coward?"

Fear of Billy Bowl and general cowardice were two distinct things in Bluebell's mind.

"'Course I'm not!" she answered with direct truth. "Didn't I hold tight and not get throwed off?

And I didn't scream, either. But do take me along, you never took me to see any patients. I like to go with you, father," confessed Bluebell, half-ashamed to reveal how much she enjoyed his society. And she added, patting his shaven cheek again:

"Little father!"

"Little father" was not displeased by the caress. He kissed her on the forehead, and thought what a companion she would grow to be for him. They cantered past the turning off of their lane. The road soon required all his attention. They entered what was known about Rocky Fork as the Narrows: a shelf dug out along a precipice. It was only a mile or so in extent, but being of semi-circular shape, those who used the pass could see but a few yards ahead of them. Above it the hill rose perpendicularly in masses of rock and distorted pines as high as Bluebell could see. Below it — many jagged, straight-down yards below it — the Rocky Fork murmured along a bed of boulders.

About the middle of the Narrows a huge mass of rock hung over the way, threatening every passer: it was called the Table. Every hard storm brought part of it down, and a dangerous gully was worn under it. The road was comfortably wide for horsemen, though in passing, the one who had a right to

the wall was thankful therefor; but vehicles could not possibly pass each other.

Whenever two carriages met on the Narrows, the driver nearest the entrance unhitched his horses, fastened them to the rear of his vehicle and drew it backward into a broader place. No railing of any sort protected the edge. No one but a native, or a person perfectly familiar with every step of the way, would cross the Narrows, especially after night.

The doctor's horse picked her way, not too close to the mountain-wall. Rock-splinters and flint-dust rolled over the edge and were heard dropping and dropping until the brain turned dizzy following them. She knew every foot of the road, but snorted frequently as if her disapproval of it was unconquerable. Bluebell's fingers tightened on her father's coat. Her face was toward the ravine. It was a gulf of darkness: there was no moon, and it was just as well that little could be seen except the white flinty track. Just after they passed the Table rock, where Ballie had to tread quite on the outside to keep from knocking her rider's head, they heard footfalls advancing toward them. Bluebell knew father would take care of her! still they must turn to the right, and the right was the outside.

The footfalls quickened, they thumped tumul-

tuously: it was a horse galloping. No man in his senses would make a horse gallop along that perilous cut. Bluebell could feel her father gathering himself, tightening his hold on the bridle and around her little body to a cruel clench. He leaned forward and whispered, "H——st!" to the mare, and then shouted ahead:

"Look out there!"

The galloping horse, which they could see was riderless, plunged back and reared directly in front of them. The Arabian recoiled, her hind feet went over the precipice, and she scrambled like a cat to hang on with her front hoofs and regain her hold. Father leaned to her neck — Bluebell felt almost crushed for an instant; then they were on the solid road, the riderless horse had dashed around the curve, and the agile Arabian, trembling in every limb, turned her head back to throw the glare of her eye upon her master's face.

"Well done!" he said, patting her.

She uttered an exultant neigh, and hurried forward with a quicker step.

"Did I hurt you?" the doctor asked his little girl.

"No, sir," she replied, breathing hard, but proud of having controlled herself in this second fright.

"There isn't another horse in the world as smart as Ballie!"

"She has brought me out of so many tight places," said the doctor, "I could trust my life to her. But I wish you were in bed."

"I didn't make any fuss!"

"No," said father, "I'm glad you didn't; you showed your old Irish pluck, the pluck of your great-great-grandfather, old Sir James. During the Irish rebellion in the last century, rough mobs gathered with pikes at every bridge to spear men of his belief.

"What's a pike, father?"

"A pole with a sharp knife on the end. Once when he came by with his followers the bridge was full, and he rode straight through, fighting them on all hands, and the rioters missed the pleasure of throwing his speared body in the stream."

"It was right for him to fight, was it, father?"

"It is right to meet any emergency with pluck, and overcome it."

Bluebell felt her heart swell. She determined to show her Irish pluck in every emergency of life.

The road broadened and a glare fell across it: they had reached the Furnace. The Furnace, which was called Mary Ann to distinguish it from other furnaces in the ore region, was an open brick building built

into the hillside. It furnished an industry for many poor men. Here iron was melted, and the fires seldom went out. Even in sunny days smoke hung over the cluster of houses in a valley below, which was named from the Furnace, Mary Ann Post-office.

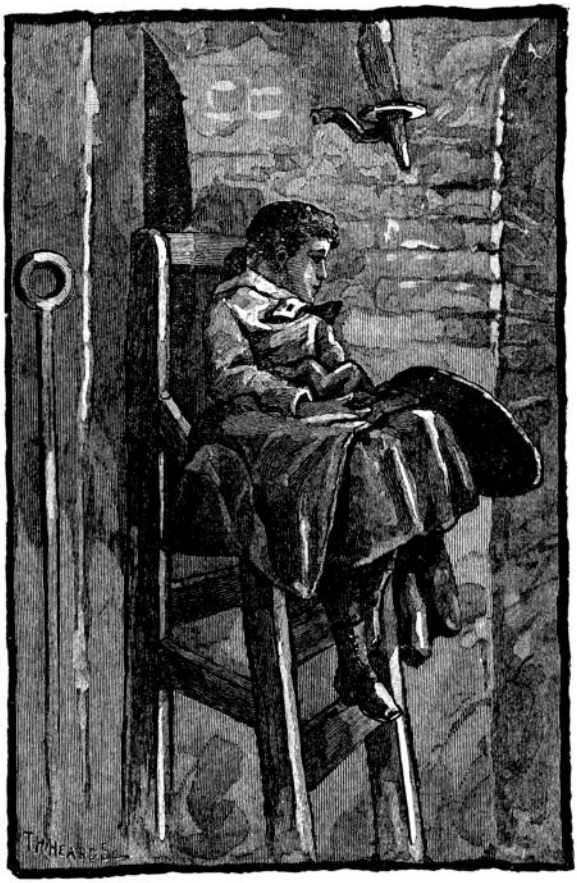
It was a wonderfully picturesque sight which the riders came upon. A flare lit up the coal-dust road, and you could look between brick pillars at what seemed to be the centre of the earth on fire. Men passed to and fro, thrown into strong relief, and each one wore a red-flannel blouse known thereabouts as a "wamus;" the "wamuses" did not lessen the general effect.

Bluebell felt excited. She did not miss a point of the picture. Her father, she thought, was like old Sir James riding through danger.

But the doctor dismounted at once to serious business. One furnace-man tied his horse, and another gave Bluebell a seat on a stool behind one of the brick pillars.

"I met a horse galloping around the Narrows," said Dr. Garde.

"'Twas Eli's," said a furnace-man. "It throwed him just at this end of the Narrows, and went gallopin' down to Mary Ann. And just a few minutes ago back it came on the homeward road. We tried



BLUEBELL AT THE MARY ANN FURNACE. 81

to catch it, and that set it off on the run again. You had a pretty close shave of it, didn't you, Doc?"

"Very close," replied the doctor. He went to his patient, who lay outside on a bed of coats.

Bluebell set quietly watching the fires and feeling sorry for the injured man when he groaned. She heard somebody say it might have gone worse with him, and that he was not badly hurt after all. Her head settled against the brick pillar, and the men came and went before her like figures in a dream. She wondered if it were true, as John Tegarden said, that all the coal underground for rods around had been on fire since the old furnace burnt down some years before. He said horses' feet sunk through and were in danger of burning off! Then she heard frogs in the Rocky Fork singing their loudest, as if to drown the far-reaching cry of insects which make the summer night ring; and the cool wind and a smell of blossoming laurel rushed over her face.

But, waking next morning on her own bed, she had not the least idea how she got there. Nor had she dreamed that the events of that finished day were to make a great change in her life.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS MELISSA FURTHER DISAPPROVES OF THE ROCKY FORK.

FATHER had started on his rounds again when his daughter came down to breakfast, and Miss Calder and Liza were at table, talking politely. Liza wore a cool, faded lawn, one of her best afternoon dresses, over which her kitchen apron was tied. Miss Calder, with less of the sun in her blood, was in a black barège relieved by white sleeves and collar. Each woman seemed so sweet and fair in her way, that Bluebell hardly knew which to admire most.

Liza settled the little girl's dress with a matronly twitch and fastened a loose hook or two: then poured out her glass of milk and helped her to bread and butter and fried chicken.

"You won't want to go to school to-day, will you, Bluebell?" she said.

"Bluebell?" repeated Miss Calder, questioningly. "She is not commonly called Melissa?"

"Well, no," replied Liza apologetically; "seems like her mother give her a kind of a pet name when she was a baby, because her eyes were so blue. But laws! they're gray now to what they were before she had the whooping-cough. Whooping-cough is very hard on children. She had it two years ago, and so had Rocco, and I was worryin' about them the whole summer."

Bluebell had been considering the sacrifice of a school-day. She thought of her head-marks, and the probability of Perintha Pancost or Tildy Banks accumulating wealth of that kind to her detriment, in her absence. She thought of the noon play, and the geography-school excitement. Giving up school for the day, and for perhaps as many days as Miss Calder stayed, was a serious sacrifice. Still, what little girl *could* go off to school when her friend was on a visit to the family?

"I won't go," said Bluebell, hoping Perintha Pancost at least might not get the head-mark.

"You must not stay at home on my account," said Miss Melissa. "I want to see your school. Your father said he would be driving by that way in the afternoon and would fetch me home."

"But it's so far!" cried the little girl eagerly. "Can you walk all that way?"

"I think I should enjoy it," replied Miss Calder, smiling. "I am quite a pedestrian."

Bluebell at once felt it was to be an important day. Teeny and Tildy Banks would be aides-de-camp in the march. She would show her friend off before the school. Perintha Pancost needn't take on airs about the geography-teacher. She could not remember when so distinguished a visitor had honored the school. The whole pageant flashed before her mind, even to the finale when her father's low-seated buggy would be whirled up before the step by Ballie, and Miss Calder disappear in a cloud of dust.

So after breakfast they set out, Miss Melissa carrying a blotting-book to fill with flowers and ferns for her herbarium: a possession everybody should have, she informed Bluebell.

Bluebell carried a most superior lunch — not in the calico bag, which smelled of stale bread-crumbs and had been used rather freely in getting the "last tag" of various girls on separating for the day — but in a willow hand-basket with lids, so cumbersome that she envied Teeny and Tildy when they sallied forth with their slim reticule. However, *they* had not company.

"And how did you like the singing-school?" inquired Miss Melissa as she and Bluebell walked down toward the run.

"It was a g'ography school. Oh, it was *so* nice! He had them sing the countries — I wish Rocco had waked 'fore we started: I'd learned it to her."

"This country seems very romantic," said Miss Calder, inhaling the air with delight. "But it needs cultivation. You should see the smooth, beautiful hills around Sharon."

"Is that where you live, ma'am?"

"Yes, that has been my residence all my life," said Miss Calder with nice precision. "And, my dear, you may, if you please, call me aunt Melissa. Your mother called me aunt Melissa."

"Yes'm. Thank you," murmured Bluebell. She was about to curtsy, but hesitated lest it might not be a suitable occasion. "Aunt Melissa, is Sharon a great big place — as big as Fredericktown?"

"I know nothing about Fredericktown. But Sharon is not a city. It is a delightful small town of about two thousand inhabitants."

Bluebell silently wondered who counted the people. She had vast respect for cities and towns. She could not imagine anything ill-kept or disgusting about a town. Presently they came to the run, and Miss

Melissa uttered one or two exclamations as she staggered across the stones.

"This isn't anything to the foot-log," said Bluebell. "But, O aunt! wouldn't it scared you last night if you'd been on Ballie when she slipped over the Narrows! It's an awful steep place!"

"Yes," said the lady, turning quite pale; "the man who fetched me from the cars drove along there. He assured me there was no other road, or I never should have allowed it."

"But there *is* another road."

"He said there was none. And I have trembled ever since to think of returning. I trust your father does not ride that way often?"

"Oh, yes, I guess he does."

Miss Melissa trembled now to think how soon the little speaker might become doubly orphaned.

"We rode that way last night," repeated Bluebell, "and a runway horse come by and pushed us off! Ballie was all off but her fore feet, aunt, and she just jumped back! I was scared," she pursued, plodding along innocently, her dark bare arms drooping with their load of basket; "but I showed my Irish pluck and didn't make any fuss. I didn't make any, either, when father left me on Ballie and went in to Ridenour's. A man come along and made her plunge so

she would have run away or throwed me off if I hadn't held tight!"

"Indeed," said Miss Melissa faintly. But a most determined look grew in her shocked, affectionate face. "The poor children," she ruminated, "will not only have the bringing up of boys, but their very lives will be continually endangered by their absorbed young father, if I do not interfere."

"You see we had to go to Mary Ann Furnace to 'tend to a man that fell over the Narrows and got hurt," Bluebell went on; but by this time they had reached the Banks', and Teeny and Tildy were waiting.

Teeny walked beside Miss Calder, trying to feel quite a grown woman and striking her dignified heels against her own dress at every step; but Tildy hung back and helped Bluebell with the basket. Tildy felt a motherly patronage for the smaller girl. They were chums, though Bluebell's arm had to reach up to Tildy's waist, and Tildy's arm lay most comfortably on Bluebell's shoulder. Whatever else might be in Tildy's disposition, she was a devoted partisan. These friends seldom disagreed. Bluebell accepted Tildy's solemn dictum with credulous readiness, and was usually her partner when the school marched, or in the delightful rainy-day game of "Round and round in a green sugar-tree, one cold and frosty morning."

There were, however, two things which Bluebell felt she could not yield to Tildy, and these were the spelling-prize, and their one disputed "piece" on Friday afternoons when "speaking" was in order.

To be sure, there were plenty of other pieces which might have been added to their reportory, such as "*My bird is dead, says Nancy Ray,*" "*Twinkle, twinkle, little star,*" and "*I like to see a little dog,*" all fresh as the lips that mumbled them in class; but both Tildy and Bluebell would speak "*Mary had a little lamb,*" or they wouldn't speak anything! They both loved and doted on this piece: they not only knew it by heart, but each claimed it with a jealousy passing that of authorship. If Mr. Pitzer called Bluebell's name first, she flew to the middle of the floor and shrilled "*Mary had a little lamb,*" with a triumphant wag of her head at Tildy. If Tildy had the first opportunity, the case was reversed, and Bluebell, with a sense of injury, declined to contribute to the afternoon's literary exercises. The sweet-hearted schoolmaster smiled at their weekly controversy, and perhaps the scholars got tired of the ever-recurring lamb; but the literary range of the school was not very wide, and there were other repetitions than Bluebell's and Tildy's.

The schoolward-going group this time walked with

decorum past the downs. But Miss Calder made frequent pauses on mossy logs while the others brought her forage of ferns. They chewed sassafras leaves and peeled long withes of spicewood. She could see distant laurel heights through breaks in the woods, and they made a long detour to get her bunches of the pinky-white blossoms. So it was actually late in the forenoon when they came to the foot-log by Hall's mill. Though Miss Melissa had walked with spirit, she shrank from the boiling Rocky Fork, and asked for the bridge, and even proposed going back rather than trust the giddy foot-log. But this was not to be heard of, and Teeny distinguished herself for firmness. She took tight hold of the fluttering lady's hand, and Tildy walked behind steadying her by the dress. So after a tilt and a shriek or two, they brought her safely to the other side in time for her to witness Bluebell's intrepid passage of the log, laden with all the baggage of the party except the blotting-book, which Tildy went back to bring.

Then they all moved upon the mud-chinked schoolhouse. Miss Melissa's gentle face expressed a refusal to be reconciled to this as an institution of learning. She was a professor's daughter, and had spent her days in an academic atmosphere. She had even taught in the Young Ladies' Institute one year

after her graduation, in order to ground herself more firmly in polite knowledge. This was a long time ago; but all her life her society had embraced college-

MR. PITZER'S SCHOOLHOUSE.

bred people. So to speak, Miss Melissa had never come in contact with the common schools of her native land.

Mr. Pitzer got down from his desk and met them at the door; and Bluebell, who had been whispering

over to herself all the way from the foot-log a formula of introduction, there kindly suggested by Miss Calder, turned red as the old-fashioned roses on the master's desk, and felt her breath broken short by every beat of her heart. But she came out bravely with the introduction:

"Miss Pitzer, allow me to present you to Mr. Calder."

Then she dropped her own curtsy and hid her face in her calico bonnet as she hung it up. For some of them *would* laugh, and she was wrapped in flames of mortification.

However, Miss Calder made a grand impression, and the schoolmaster walked back three steps to make his bow longer. Then he handed her to his chair on the platform, and he himself took a lower seat, leaving Bluebell's friend to appear the autocrat of the school. She looked around at the chinked walls and ink-splashed, knife-marked desks, at the sincere, reflective, bovine eyes which always distinguish country children — eyes that seem as full of woodsy sweets as the violets. And she looked at the flushed schoolmaster, who pushed his spectacles quite into his hair, and puckered his mouth into very wise shapes while he went on explaining to Jo Hall and the big boy who ciphered with him a deep prob-

lem in common or vulgar fractions. It might have been that Mr. Pitzer was out of his depth, though he was a great schoolmaster; or that the explanation was too pompous. Miss Calder's eyebrows went up in the very least degree, though not for the world would this gentle creature have hurt the self-esteem of any one. After Jo Hall and the big boy had marked the extent of their next lesson with their thumb-nails, the schoolmaster said some learned things to Miss Calder about the importance of mathematics: and as this was a very apt class he hoped to take it through the book. And she asked him if the course embraced Algebra and Geometry, and was going on to mention Trigonometry and the Calculus, when she observed the poor schoolmaster grow red and stammer. He did not want to be put to shame before his pupils, but spoke out with a humble spirit:

"No, madam, my researches have never extended so far."

And something in the old man's tone touched her so keenly that she was shocked with herself, and wondered if she, Melissa Calder, had been rude! Such a fear drove her to the extreme of kindness and gentleness. When the schoolmaster found she was a living and breathing graduate — alumnæ were as

scarce as authors then — his deference towards her became much greater. The true-hearted old gentleman loved knowledge; he begged that she would make a few remarks to the school, which would be much better than a continuation of the exercises. Miss Melissa blushed; but everybody who entered a school in those days felt bound to "make remarks" if called upon to do so. So Miss Melissa began:

"Young ladies and gentlemen" — which made the little boys giggle and nudge each other; but as her soft, fine, cultivated voice went on, they all listened and were drawn to her, except, perhaps, a few who thought Bluebell Garde felt herself proprietress of a lion.

Bluebell felt indeed happy. Her reading-class was called after the schoolmaster beamed his satisfaction over Miss Melissa's talk, and she read her loudest and glibbest. Then noon came on, and there never was a more delightful noon. The hot day brought rank, sharp smells from everything: even the dog-fennel along the road yielded a pungent fragrance, and jimson-flowers were not to be despised.

Miss Melissa was pressed into the swing by an ardent group, and flung up a few times among the leaves, where her white curls danced like sensitive spiral springs. And all the big girls sat around her to eat

their dinners, and talked quite as if they had known her all their lives. But Perintha Pancost mimicked her behind a tree, and refused to be caught, when Bluebell Garde, the Blackman, patted her one, two, three, right on her back! Perintha also had brought the first summer pippins in her reticule, and she gave bites to every girl in school except Bluebell and Tildy Banks.

The afternoon was devoted to festivity. Mr. Pitzer felt that so distinguished a visitor must be entertained. Miss Calder might disapprove of him, with everything else she had seen at Rocky Fork, but she could not help liking the old master.

Pieces were "spoke," as a matter of course. Jo Hall, in a shrill, confident voice, told them he had

> "Stood beneath a hollow tree,
> The wind it hollow blew:
> He thought upon the hollow world
> And *all* its hollow crew!"

without one misanthropic shade in his apple face. Two of the boys had a dialogue, in which a tiny Mr. Lennox looked up to a lubberly Peter Hurdle and told him he was a contented boy and quite a phil-os-o-pher. And two of the girls had a dialogue which

sounded like one end of a telephonic conversation as it is heard nowadays; for one girl shouted that she had lost her thimble, Mary, and would you please lend her yours; in reply to which you heard only a murmur. There was quite a colloquy, and the silent girl evidently gave a great deal of good advice, but listen as you might you could only get it by inference from what the loud-voiced girl said. Then John Tegarden shouted "*The boy stood on the burning deck*," until he came to the most exciting part, when his memory failed and he retreated mumbling and injured, not so much by the trick it had served him, as by Jo Hall, who ducked his head and imitated John's slouching, disappointed attitude. John picked some clay out of the wall and watched for an opportunity to shy it at Jo, but reflected that it might hurt; and being the tenderest hearted boy in the world, he crumbled it slowly away and watched Teeny Banks lead out a group of embarrassed damsels and station them in a circle around herself, it being understood that she was the mother and these her daughters gathered in an easy family group to discuss the seasons. One declared her rhymed preference for Spring, another for Summer, a third for Autumn, and a fourth for Winter, when Teeny chimed in with a sweet monotone informing them that each season in

its round held certain delights, and they must see the Creator's hand in all.

Well was it for Tildy and Bluebell that Mary's dis-

WHICH SHALL CHOOSE UP?

puted lamb was not called out that day. For Dr. Garde drove up just at this stage of the proceedings, and Miss Calder bade the schoolmaster adieu, and

the schoolmaster went outside to see her in the buggy, the wind blowing the hair from his dear old forehead, while during his absence several charges of paper wads were exchanged across the house, to the scandal of the big girls who picked the missiles from their hair or dresses, and with impressive shakes of the head threatened to "tell master."

There was too much electricity in the air, and the school was too boisterous to settle down to routine again that afternoon. All besought Mr. Pitzer to let them have "spelling-school," even Bluebell, who had declined riding home on account of her head-mark; and the smiling schoolmaster consented.

They decided to "choose up and spell down," instead of "choosing across." Then Jo Hall and Amanda Willey, being nominated by the schoolmaster, approached each other and took his ferule between them. Jo grasped it above Amanda's hand, and Amanda grasped it above Jo's hand, and this continued until Jo's hand came last at the top. This result entitled him to the first choice; and he and Amanda, taking their stations with backs against opposite walls, he chose:

"Bluebell Garde."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH TREATS OF THUMB-PAPERS.

BLUEBELL GARDE was deep in a discussion with Tildy Banks, and heard not her name till it was repeated.

The conference had begun while the master was out of doors bidding adieu to Miss Calder. The afternoon was so hot that little paper-fans, made of old book leaves and fastened in the middle with pins, were fluttering all over the house; the long windows and the door were wide open; still a stifling heat made everybody feel aggressive. And at this unfortunate time Tildy made a discovery which she imparted to Bluebell in a harrowing whisper:

"P'rinthy Pancost's got your thumb-paper!"

Bluebell looked across at Perintha. Then she grasped her own spelling-book and reader, and turned the leaves with a rapid swish, her eyes sparkling more

at every turn. No thumb-paper reposed in any of its accustomed places. It was made of a leaf of Jo Hall's copy-book, and ornamented with birds which seemed to wear pantalettes. Bluebell was very neat with her books, which she loved as friends; and not one word was erased by a sweaty little thumb-mark. And P'rinthy Pancost had *stolen* her thumb-paper!

LOOKING FOR THE THUMB-PAPER.

The school was swarming with thumb-papers. Every youngster in his hours of idleness employed himself folding bits of paper into the required shape, and it was an art, I assure you, which required skill. She could make, or accept from willing hands, a dozen others in as many minutes. But that was not the

point. She had suffered spoliation, and, menacing Perintha Pancost, she cried out in a loud whisper:

"You give me back my thumb-paper!"

"'Tain't yours," replied Perintha, coolly unfolding it. This was a crowning insult. To unfold a thumb-paper was to destroy its individuality and make it a mere square scrap.

"'*Tis* mine!"

"'Tain't!"

"The master'll whip you!"

"Yah-yah!" taunted Perintha, whom the weather was reducing to impishness.

Bluebell's tears started, but she staunched them bravely with a corner of her apron.

"Cry-baby cripsey!" whispered Perintha, leaning towards her.

"I'll tell my aunt Melissy on you!" threatened Bluebell, feeling that this authority must crush her.

But Perintha sniffed.

"Your Aunt Melissy's nobody's daddy," she said quite aloud, copying from the boys this strong phrase which was calculated effectually to put down upstarts.

To be told that you were "nobody's daddy" was to be robbed of all dignity and consideration in this world; it was a snub which the meekest and most

peaceable must feel. But to have your great aunt Melissa called "nobody's daddy" was not only a family outrage, but an attack on the infallible dignity of all grown people.

Bluebell shook her auburn head and whispered to Tildy, "I'll tell the master what she said!"

But Tildy, constituting herself second in the affair, advised with head-shakings and dark looks that they deal with her themselves.

"The master would just make her give you the thumb-paper, and he wouldn't do anything to her," said Tildy, remembering how she had appealed to him against her enemies in vain, and had afterwards taken ample satisfaction with her nails.

The master came in, and arrangements were made for the spelling-school, during which Bluebell returned to the grievance on her mind. "Mary's lamb" was no wall of separation now. The dark head and the auburn head rubbed against each other. Perintha looked defiant, and was evidently making partisans of Minerva Ridenour and the other girls on her seat.

"Bluebell Garde!"

Bluebell started as Jo called her name the second time, and went to take her place with some pleasure in being chosen first among the good spellers. Perintha was chosen nearly last on the opposite side. I

am afraid there was exultation over this under the auburn mass of hair. Jo Hall gave her a handful of wheat from his father's mill to chew. Tildy was below the big boys and girls on Jo's side, so there was no chance to confer with her, if the spelling code had not forbidden whispering. Bluebell, therefore, munched her wheat and gave herself up to the excitement of the occasion.

They spelled across: that is, the schoolmaster, standing between, pronounced a word first to one side than to the other. Alas that little words should have slain so many! If he had begun in words of three syllables, many of them could have rolled the letters glibly. But among the ie's and the ei's Teeny Banks and half a dozen other big girls stranded. The lines thinned rapidly; those who missed, retiring to central benches and watching the fortunes of their sides with great anxiety.

Fortune favored Perintha Pancost. Easy words came to her, and she stood among the last three on her side. Still, with Jo Hall and Bluebell Garde opposing, though they stood alone, what could her side expect? The contest waxed very hot; and constantly was Perintha Pancost favored with words she could spell. Her leader went down; her only other supporter went down.

Then Bluebell found herself overflowed with a word that had "ation" in it, and Perintha spelling pertly at it stood an instant longer than she did. Of course it floored her, but she could now boast that for once she had outspelled Bluebell Garde!

Jo Hall stood up three lines longer, spelling tremendous-sounding words; and when he tripped, there was such a storm coming up that the master said he would dismiss early that afternoon.

Already the thunder could be heard echoing among the hills. The roll was hastily called. Tildy waited outside for Bluebell; under her slat bonnet the hair was clinging to her temples, but the gloom of her eye and firm pucker of her mouth indicated fullness of purpose.

"When she comes out," said Tildy.

"Yes," said Bluebell, piteously, from the depths of defeat and injury and physical lassitude.

Perintha's name came away down among the P's, and she was ranged accordingly on a bench which never got free as soon as the B's and G's on the girls' side.

"When she comes out," repeated Tildy, "we won't scratch her—"

"Oh no!" exclaimed Bluebell. She could not bring her mind to that.

"Because the marks would show," pursued Tildy; "and we won't whip her with sticks."

"The master might whip us!" exclaimed Bluebell in terror. She prided herself on never having been punished at school. And all teachers were not like Mr. Pitzer in those days.

"Yes, he might," assented Tildy, evidently having foreseen that objection to the sticks; for when Mr. Pitzer had severe cause he could be strict as the strictest.

"But I tell you what we *will* do," said Tildy, leaning forward and laying the utmost emphasis on every word. She lifted her forefinger, and her reticule slid down to her elbow:

"WE WILL CHURN HER!"

CHAPTER IX.

THEY CHURN.

A flare of lightning in the northern sky may have frightened Perintha as she stepped over the sill; or she may have suspected an ambush at each side of the school-house. At any rate, a strong desire to be once more under her father's roof, gave swiftness to the little bare feet, and her pantelettes danced at a lively pace through the dog-fennel. Her black eyes gave one quick look behind, and after that look her reticule, like a swelling sail, stood straight backwards in the wind. But Tildy had her before she was more than screened by the fence of Martin's wheat-field.

"Take hold of her other arm!" commanded Tildy. And Bluebell, panting, took hold.

"Now churn!"

And they churned. Up and down they churned until it seemed all the buttermilk of Perintha's

nature must go to the bottom and the pure butter of repentance stand up to be gathered by their correcting hands. So interested in their undertaking were the reformers that Perintha's cries and struggles seemed to make no impression on their senses. Their sun-bonnets hung by the strings around their throats, and their loosened hair switched up and down, keeping time to the churning. It was so absorbing a gymnastic performance that Bluebell felt Perintha must almost enjoy it, if she did strain to get away.

The churners were brought to a pause by hands laid on their shoulders, and lo! there stood Mr. Pitzer with a following of half the school. Perintha's face came out of the crown of her sun-bonnet, all smeared with tears and curly hair, and the black-eyed, piteous look she threw up to the schoolmaster, cut Bluebell to the heart.

Dr. Garde's little girl was terrified to find herself in the position of a culprit; but this was endurable compared to the sudden rush of remorse caused by Perintha's helpless look. She had been churning a malicious little imp, and behold here was the grieved face of her daily playmate! All the pretty things Perintha had ever done, flashed before her. Perintha sent some tissue-paper birds to Rocco when Rocco was sick; yes, and she made the baby a set of paste-

board chairs in a box house. And what fragrant apples had come to Bluebell's teeth from Perintha's reticule! She would always let you have the first swing, too; and what did that old thumb-paper amount to?

"She didn't act so till I got mad to her first," thought Bluebell, making one of the principal figures in a procession to the school-house, the master's finger and thumb carrying the lobe of her ear. Tildy walked on the other side of him, her ear similarly supported. Perintha, bidden to follow, sobbed as mourner behind them, and a sympathetic though silent crowd supported her.

This, however, was dispersed at the door. The master waived all hangers-on away; and the nearer-rolling thunder gave them additional warning. Even Teeny, after wavering with a concerned face around the windows, was obliged to take to the foot-log and leave these culprits to their fate.

"Now, sir!" said Mr. Pitzer, taking his judgment-seat. And the thunder rolled directly overhead. When Mr. Pitzer said "Now, sir," to a girl, he had forgotten she was anything but a culprit. He took out the Rules of the School, and putting on his spectacles, and peering through the darkening air, read Article Ninth:

"ARTICLE NINTH: *Pupils are under the jurisdiction of their parents from the time they leave home until they appear upon the play-ground. But from the time they enter the school-house until they enter their parents' door at night they are under the jurisdiction of the master, and accountable to him for all misdemeanors.*"

His spectacles flared at the three.

"They ketched me and shook me up and down, and I wasn't doin' anything to them!" burst out Perintha with a sob, leaving Article Ninth entirely aside from the question.

"She stole Bluebell Garde's thumb-paper," said Tildy, somber but collected. Her reticule dangled from her elbow, and her bare toes squirmed along a crack in the floor. Her face expressed determination coupled with a gloomy distrust in Mr. Pitzer's ability to deal out justice. A brisk rush of air came through the open window, which made the dear old man sneeze and take off his spectacles. Bluebell was weeping in the bottom of her apron, which she lifted to her face.

"I thought I was sh-showin' my Irish pluck," she broke out, wringing her small pink nose; "but I guess I wasn't! and it makes me feel so bad to think I hurt her!"

The master laid his hand on her head. The other

hand he laid on Perintha's. Tildy stepped back as if she feared he might have a third hand for her.

"P'rinthy can have my thumb-paper," continued Bluebell; "and I don't care for the other things, 'cause she was good to my little sister when my little sister was sick — and I got mad first."

There was now a hearty duet of sobs performed by Bluebell and Perintha. The latter thrust her arm up to the elbow in her pocket and drew out the most crumpled and defaced of thumb-papers, which she held out to Bluebell.

Tildy put her nose up. She'd like to see herself "knucklin' under, that way, to P'rinth' Pancost or anybody else!"

But the master's face glowed in the gathering dimness:

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature to;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For God hath made them so:
"But children, you should never let
Your angry passions rise —"

One jagged knife of lightning, reflected on the school-house door, cut short his exhortation.

"It's going to storm," he said, looking up as if the

fact had just presented itself to him. "You better all run home now, and try to be good friends hereafter." He put up the Articles, took down his hat, and busied himself shutting the windows. He paused to say, "Good-evening," three separate times as the three went out courtesying to him for the second time that evening.

Tildy stalked straight toward the foot-log. Perintha paused after turning her bonnet's mouth homeward, and twisted back, looking at the ground.

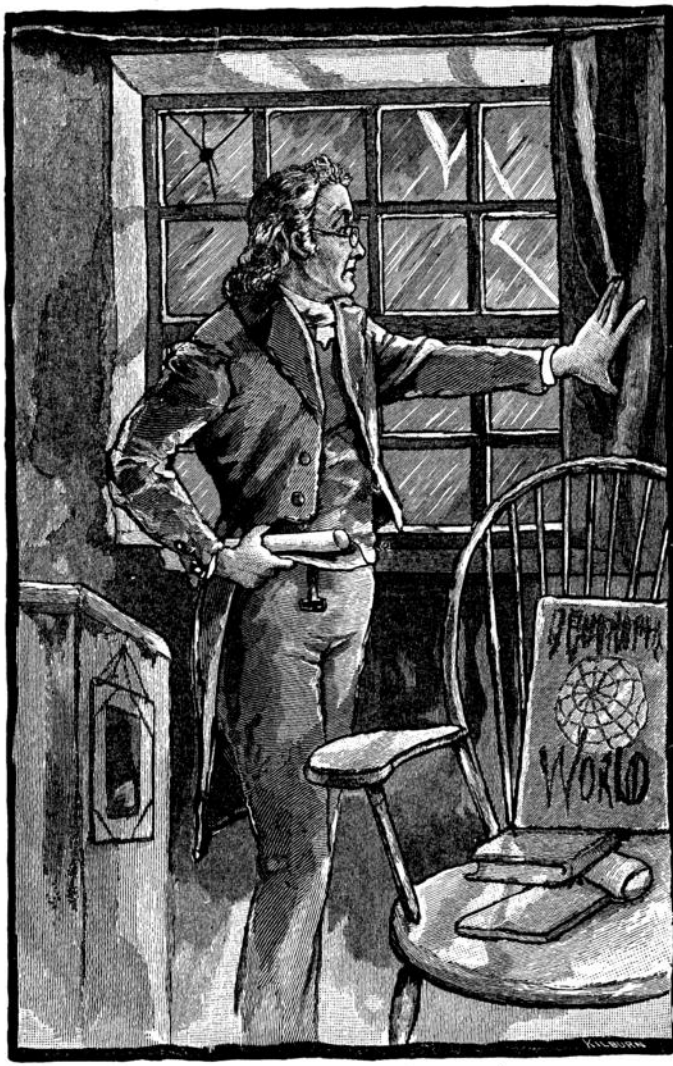
"Good-bye, Bluebell. I'm going to bring you some pippins to take to your aunt Melissy to-morrow."

This was equivalent to a full apology, and Bluebell hastened to acknowledge it.

"Goody! will you?"

"Yes," said Perintha, lifting her still wet lashes.

The two little girls looked into each other's eyes and smiled. It was a treaty of peace. Then a cloud of dust travelling up the road enveloped them; Perintha scudded away with it, and Bluebell, her mouth and eyes filled, ran towards the Rocky Fork after Tildy's retreating figure.



"'IT'S GOING TO STORM,' HE SAID."

CHAPTER X.

MOTHER OUTDOORS DISTURBED.

WAIT, Tildy!" called Bluebell, when she reached the foot-log and saw a figure climbing the heights beyond.

The wind may have carried her voice away, for it almost blew her off the log, and a trampling sound far off, like the rush of an army of giants through the woods, filled one's ears. The heavy basket caught on bushes as Bluebell scrambled up the rocky path, and tired her hands, while Tildy's reticule sailed straight on.

"O Tildy, wait!" panted the little girl. Among the windings, or in some short cut, Tildy's figure ever and anon appeared and disappeared, and Bluebell faced the storm alone. How black its gloom was in the woods! The very rocks and trees which had been smiling landmarks so long, seemed strange and

threatening. A quick patter caught her, and then a deluge mixed with frightful glares and deafening roars burst over the world. The trees rocked and twisted, and just ahead of her she saw one tall chestnut bend as if swooning, and fall across the way with a long, sublime, whistling crash. Even in her terror Bluebell heard and felt that wonderful cry of the falling tree which cannot be forgotten. The splinters of its broken trunk stood up like pale yellow icicles in the air. She made a detour among hazel-bushes to pass it, and ran along the path, trembling in every nerve, yet under her fear delighting in this revolution which had overtaken Mother Outdoors. The warm summer rain dripped from every thread of her clothing and soaked her body in its delicious bath. The footway turned into a miniature canal; and every tree-trunk stood in startling blackness against the general gloom. Before the first dash had quite thinned its gray sheet to sprinkles, that far-off trampling arrived in earnest; the storm pelted and poured; the lightning flashed in her very eyes, and its answering thunder was instantaneous; a tree swept down here carrying others with it; and there two went down together, until the whole woods seemed cracking and wailing around her.

With streaming garments, and shoes that spurted

"WAIT, TILDY!"

water at every step, the little girl still ran ahead. She could scarcely see the downs when she passed them, but they appeared dimly, like the desert islands in Mr. Russell's maps. Again and again the lightning seemed barely to miss her, and she jumped as the thunder crashed around her ears. She ran until she was out of breath, and then panted along among the drenched ferns. In spite of the confusion and loneliness and closing darkness, there was exhilaration in the warm, soaking rain.

It ceased to pour as she passed down the slope; the wind lulled; and through openings she could see distant long dark threads stretching from cloud to earth, then suddenly disappearing. The confusion in the woods died away. But there was no clearing up, no emerald flash of wet grass in the setting sun; no rapid drying of branches and laugh of leaves. The rank, fresh smell of wet earth was mingled with scents from the peppermint that bordered the run below, but the faintest suggestion of old dead leaves came with them. The lightning retired toward the horizon and threw a silent or distantly answered dazzle through the woods once in awhile. And night was coming early without any sunset.

Bluebell saw a man advancing through the bushes, drawing showers upon himself at every step. She re-

flected that it was not far to Banks' now, and if he tried to carry her off they could hear her scream; so she trotted forward, a desirable object to kidnap, her shapeless bonnet hanging around her neck, which it discolored with its strings, her dress and pantalettes clinging to every line of her vigorous little figure. Still the man paused to parley with her, and his parleying consisted in offering her two fingers of his left hand and turning back.

"O father, I'm most drowned! And the woods fell down!"

"It's been a hard storm," said father. He had a closed umbrella in his right hand. Branches and underbrush would interfere with it if open here. He paused, setting it against a tree, and reached down to his little girl.

"Perhaps I'd better carry you."

"O father, I'm wet as sop."

He lifted her up and took his umbrella. He had on his gum coat and boots which he wore over ordinary clothing when riding in the teeth of storms.

Bluebell threw one arm across his shoulder, from which dangled the big basket.

"That might have been left at the school-house," said father.

"It's Liza's," said Bluebell, "and all the rain has

rained through it and through my dinner cloth."

"I might have brought it in the buggy. Did you get across the Rocky Fork before the rain?"

"Yes, sir. And Tildy ran on ahead."

She was progressing royally down the slope, rained on by every branch, but so comfortable right by father's light, long locks. He moved sure-footed from stone to stone. The dark was closing around them. The cry of frogs and of the disconsolate cows came up from low places in the valley. But Dr. Garde's little girl had the task of telling her father she had "been called up by the master" that day. His code was stern. He had told her if she received punishment at school and came home with complaints, she would be punished again. Bluebell was very proud of her standing and integrity at school. The closing night seemed so dismal. What would he say if he knew she was called up!

She cuddled her free hand under his ear to have some vantage ground, and broke forth:

"I churned P'rinthy Pancost, father!"

"Did you? How do you play that?"

"We didn't play, father. We did it a-purpose, Tildy and me. We had a fallin' out. And the master called me up after school!"

Father walked on with the low pine-like whistle under his breath.

"But we made up," his little girl went on, unwilling to enter into the enormity of Perintha's sin against aunt Melissa; "and she's going to bring apples to-morrow."

"That's right," said father. "Always treat your little mates kindly, and obey the master."

"Yes, sir," assented Bluebell, giving his neck a little squeeze. "I do like the master, father. I guess I'm going to take the prize in our class in spelling!"

Father delivered a short whistle, and looked around into her face, smiling. This signified that he was pleased. It was his note of acclamation over his daughter's achievements.

"I don't *think* anybody else has near as many head-marks as I have. Father, won't it be polite for me to go to school while aunt Melissa's here? Can't I go in the *afternoons*, anyhow?" coaxingly.

"Do you like to go so well?"

"Oh, yes, sir! We have such fun noons. And somebody else would get my head-marks!"

He did not reply at once, and they came by Banks' house. The candle was lighted, a smell of supper came forth; and Tildy in dry clothes was standing at the door.

"Why didn't you wait?" called Bluebell.

"I couldn't," said Tildy, tartly.

"P'rinthy's goin' to bring some apples to-morrow," assured Bluebell.

But Tildy sniffed. "Some folks is awful thick, all at once," she commented.

Bluebell looked down at her father's ear, and wondered why it was mean to make up with folks.

Tildy's mother came to the door, drawn by the sound of voices, and looked out anxiously. She was a very tall, ungainly woman, bent in the shoulders, with gray, black-lashed eyes which Tildy's were like. She wore a clinging black calico. Her face was careworn but very motherly. Bluebell knew that her husband was dead, that he had worked at the Furnace in the winter, and in the summer farmed his own land, which lay along the valley between the hills and the run. He must have been a pleasant man, for he was cousin to Liza at home. Mrs. Banks' name was also Eliza; and the neighbors to distinguish them called this one "Robert's Liza."

"Did she get hurt?" cried Robert's Liza, when she made out the doctor's arm-load.

"Not a bit," he replied, facing around and smiling.

"Come in and have some tea or something before

you go on, do! Tildy was a sop, and I expect Bluebell's wetter yet. Teeny got home before the trees began to fall, but I've been that frightened about the children!"

"We can't stop," said the doctor. "I have to start out when I get back with this soaked pappoose. The run's rising, Liza. You'd do well to take your crocks out of the milk-house to-night."

"I'll do that," said Liza; "but do *you* mind the Rocky Fork, Doc — it's dreadful when it gets up."

"Oh, never mind me," replied Bluebell's father. He plashed on down the slope with her; and through the humid dusk Bluebell heard the run boiling, along with a sound of the Rocky Fork itself, which was quite outside its banks, muddy and angry; and she could not be sure that certain eddies did not swirl above the buried stepping-stones. But father seemed sure of it, for he put his feet through the eddies, and then the water reached the ankles of his gum boots. He stepped firmly up on the meadow green, and during that short interval between the run and the bars, condensed all that he had meant to say to his little girl during the walk.

"Put me down now, father," she said. "Ain't you tired?"

He put her down and gave her two of his fingers

again, while he took the basket. Two fingers just filled her grasp.

"How do you like to live at the Rocky Fork?"

This question surprised her so she looked up at him; but his face was a white blur in the general dimness.

"Would you rather live in the town where your aunt Melissa does, and go to a fine school?"

The prospect was like a dazzling flash to Dr. Garde's little girl, through even this gloomy weather.

"Oh, yes, sir! I'd like to live there! But" — with a rising pang — "Mr. Pitzer is so good, and he let us have spelling-school this very afternoon. Do they have mountain-tea there?"

"Probably not. So you've been happy up here in the hills, have you, Bluebell?"

"Yes, sir." She could barely remember a home in a city, and one pillared church where music was made by unseen people. She had been happy, and the Rocky Fork was the only place she had lived in.

"Miss Melissa has been speaking to me," said the doctor. "I can't attend to Rocco and you as your mother would have done. I want to be a good father." There was an unusually tender tone in his voice.

"Why, father," exclaimed Bluebell, climbing up

the bars, so she could take him around the neck when he lifted her over, "you're such a nice, nice man! I don't think anybody could be gooder; I would be so sorry if you was anybody else! I like you, father!"

He laughed half under his breath, and got over the bars with her.

"My daughter flatters me."

"'Deed, father, I'm in such earnest! 'Deed and double-deed!"

"Ah? Well! Miss Melissa was a great friend of your mother's, and I think she has some right to advise about the future of you children. You must be educated."

Bluebell imagined herself an educated, faultless woman like aunt Melissa!

While she was imagining, her father lifted her up again and kissed her, saying as he set her down, "Run right in now to Liza. She has dry clothes and a nice supper ready for you."

CHAPTER XI.

BLUEBELL MAKES A POEM.

IN the night Bluebell was wakened by the cherry boughs scraping her window — and how they did scrape! The rain was tramping; it beat the house and roared on the shingles; the pines were making a high, thrilling noise which she did not know was like the voice of the sea. All within was so dry and comfortable; all without so muddy and dark. Yet off in the woods there were sweet smells, and birds' nests tucked in forked branches, and the May-apples were rank, and even old rotten logs crumbling to yellow dust had a pungent odor of their own. What did the birds do in a storm? Did they turn their tails down like chickens? And how did the naked birds that were all furry bill and sprawling limbs like the baby swallows under the shed-eaves, get along?

Father on his night-ride, was the thread on which

these thoughts were strung. She thought of him first, and he ran through everything else. Ballie's firm, quick step was moving on distant roads; the pill-bags were fastened behind the saddle; father whistled softly between his teeth; and anxious people looked into the storm for him. It scarcely occurred to Bluebell to wish him indoors. He and rough weather were old acquaintances. She had seen him come to the open fire stamping, the frost in his hair, or take off cloth leggings covered with mud, or stiff-frozen from the ford. What did he care for summer-rain, housed as he was too, in rubber coat and boots, and on the most sensible horse in the world! Bluebell decided to ask Liza if she might not put on her very oldest dress and stand under the eaves where the water ran over in a constant shower.

But in the morning everything looked so dreary and soaked she did not care to do it. Clouds scudded close to the earth; the hill above the house showed black under its foliage; the elder-flowers by the rock play-house were beaten to the ground; and hollyhocks in the garden leaned down as if about to swoon. The cherry-leaves had a higher polish and intenser green, but little unripe apples strewed the orchard.

Dr. Garde had not come home. Liza said she did

not expect him before night. In very bad weather she had known him to be gone two or three days. Still, she kept some warm chicken in the old-fashioned Dutch oven before the fire while she did her baking.

AFTER THE STORM.

The air was oppressive. But Miss Melissa moved around wrapped in a thick shawl. Liza took the roses out of her fireplace and started a warmer color dancing over some sticks. The low-scudding clouds began to pour again.

Bluebell spent the morning with Miss Calder

making doll-clothes, and wondering if Tildy's mother let *her* go to school. Only a few of the children who lived nearest would be there, for so many had to cross the numerous bends and turns of the Rocky Fork. They would have to play in the house if it did not clear before noon, and the tracks of the boys' bare feet would look so funny on the floor. Today seemed years removed from yesterday. This was a bit of dingy autumn thrust through a summer day. Bluebell enjoyed the dress-making with zest, but she hoped it would clear.

Rocco had her high chair drawn to the kitchen table, and helped Liza with the baking. Her tow hair was braided back, the ends turned up and tied with black thread, and her slim claws as clean as soap and water could make them. She had Bluebell's little rolling-pin and baking tins and Liza's thimble before her. Liza was making caraway seed-cake; she watched the baby fondly, giving her dabs of dough which Rocco rolled out, cut up and placed in her tins. As soon as they were baked she divided them evenly on two saucers; for Rocco never ate any treat of which Bluebell did not have exactly half. She had been known to keep a mellow apple or pear from morning till dusk when Bluebell came home;

smelling it and turning it over wistfully, but waiting its division.

The rain poured while they ate dinner.

"It comes down by bucketfulls," said Liza. "I do hope Abram will get round and look after Liza-Robert's stock. Lambs is so simple, and hers are always gettin' into the run."

"Why doesn't she let her farm to a tenant?" suggested Miss Calder.

"Well, that's not the way around here. Abram, he's her brother-in-law and my first cousin; he lives about half a mile above us, and he 'tends to things for her. Liza's no manager."

Soon after dinner Miss Melissa lay down for her daily nap. Georgiana sat on the sitting-room mantle in an incomplete gingham dress, smiling on the weather with unchanged serenity. Liza went up garret to do a small "stent" of spinning. She always spun on dismal afternoons when the needle would lag in sewing. She knit winter stockings for the family. Bluebell and Rocco followed her, and the wheel could be heard soon after the children's feet ceased sounding on the stairs.

When the children's feet ceased sounding on the stairs, they were in the garret. It was one big dusky room, extending over the whole house, with a chasm

in the floor through which the stairs came up. At each side the roof sloped so that even Rocco might knock her head. There were windows in the gables; and from all the rafters hung dried peppers, pennyroyal, ears of seed-corn, bags of seed, and sage, and of dried raspberries, and blackberries, cherries, and peaches, for in those days the art of canning fruit was not generally known to housewifery. Liza's special jams and preserves stood along a system of shelves, in stone jars, broken nosed tea-pots and flowered bowls tied up closely with white cloths. The floor was clean and dustless. A retired rocking chair which had lost one rocker in the battle of life, was settled in one corner where it lived on a pension of the children's favor. For right by it was their mother's old trunk, the black and white hair worn off it in patches, leaving a tough hide exposed.

In this casket Bluebell kept many of her playthings and all her most precious books. She had "Emma and Caroline," a paper-book some three inches square, a diminutive Mother Goose, several histories, and a work on geology suitable to advanced students which her father had brought her, and her school prizes — notable among them a pink-backed volume of Dr. Watts's hymns which she had learned by heart. Here also reposed her last Sunday-school

book, which had rather harrowed her mind; for it was the Memoir of Jane Ann Smith, who caught fire and burned to death; the picture of Jane Ann running out of the mill door all on fire, was put in as a lively frontispiece. There were almost no books for children in those days. Hannah More's tracts and memoirs of very pious people constituted the library from which Bluebell and all the other little Rocky Forkers chose; if it could be called choosing when the librarian held the backs of an armload of books towards you, and you might pick out only one at a hazard. Bluebell had found one delicious story of a little girl whose uncle came and took her away to India where she had no end of wonderful times. But most of the books were grown-up, or very serious, or consisted of advice to young English servants when starting out to service. So Bluebell unfolded from its wrappings with tremulous delight that real fairy-book, "Tales from Catland" which Aunt Melissa brought her. It was a book with some long words in it, but even these were a sonorous pleasure; the Countess Von Rustenfustenmustencrustenberg, Grandmagnificolowsky, the tall page, Glumdalkin, the cross cat, Friskarina, the amiable cat. Bluebell settled into the one sided rocker, and lived in castles and woods and palaces, while the rain beat the

shingles directly overhead as if it were playing thousands of small castanets, and Liza's wheel sang high or low.

Rocco sat down on the front of a small flax-wheel which worked with a treadle, and afforded the baby just sitting-room, to watch Liza spin.

The great wheel stood in the centre of the garret; on its long bench lay a pile of wool-rolls. Liza took hold of the end of a roll, attached it to the spindle in some mysterious manner, and turned the wheel around and around and around with a smooth stick which she called her wheel-pin. The spokes seemed to approach each other, then melted together into a transparency, the hum rose higher and higher until it became a musical scream, and Liza stepped back drawing her roll off the spindle into a long woolly thread. Back and forth she moved, from the spindle to the gable window; now hurrying up the wheel, and now letting it sing, as it seemed, away down in the sloping bench which supported it.

The rain rained on. Bluebell forgot her head-marks. When she had read two stories and let the Cat-book sink to her knees, her imagination was so stimulated that she craved half-unconsciously to make a story herself. But Liza's wheel put rhythm

into her head, and Liza's presence mixed the practical with the purely ideal.

For a long time she sat and thought, constrained to form into shape what she had in her mind; and if the thing itself was simple and the shape grotesque, many an author since Bluebell will confess to having given very poor expression to the finest inspiration.

"I believe it's going to quit raining," said Liza as a very pale ray slanted through the window and shone on the point of the spindle.

She pulled out the last roll and stopped her wheel.

"What's that noise?"

It seemed to be some one knocking perseveringly at the kitchen door. Liza gave the wheel one more vigorous turn and finished her stent before she started down.

"I expect it's Abram," she said. "Don't let Rocco fall down the stairs, Bluebell, and don't play with my spinning."

"No, ma'am, I won't."

Roused from the spell which wheel and book had cast, the children turned to each other for a romp.

Bluebell paused impressively as she caught the little sister in her arms, and proceeded to make a confidant of her.

"Honey-dew, sisser's made a pretty piece!"

"Piece o' what?"

"Poetry! Like 'Poor Jane Ray' and 'Twinkle, twinkle.'"

Rocco heard these standards of literary excellence mentioned without any emotion.

"I'll say it to you."

"Le's p'ay," suggested Rocco instead.

"It's somethin' pretty — about Liza," urged the poet, tasting the first difficulties of securing a public.

Rocco paused in the mad-career of a tumble and consented to listen.

"See that pretty maiden,"

("That's Liza, you know," explained Bluebell,)

"Spinning in the rain."

"'Tain't wainin'," said Rocco; "it's twit."

"It was, though. Now you just listen:

"See that pretty maiden,
Spinning in the rain:
The wheel goes round and round to make
Our stocking-yarn again.

The wind goes roar and roar,
The wheel roars with its band;
The maiden turns it with a pin
For fear she might hurt her hand."

137 THE POETESS AND HER AUDIENCE.

"Isn't that pretty?"

Rocco meditated. The subject of poetry had aroused other thoughts within her; and the faculty of association carried her on from a hymn Liza frequently sung to her —

> "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
> And cast a wistful eye
> On Canaan's fair and happy land
> Where my possessions lie —"

to the family who represented the idea to her. So without making any comment on Bluebell's poem, she said decidedly,

"I want to go to Jordan Stormy Banks' house."

CHAPTER XII.

"JORDAN STORMY BANKS."

"ALL well as common, Liza?" inquired Abram, knocking the mud off his feet at the kitchen door.

"Yes," she replied, but with a shade of anxiety. "The doctor hasn't got home yet. Come in, Abram. Have you been over the run?"

"I guess I won't come in," said the farmer. He was large-framed, stooping, and clothed in homespun wool of an indescribable dull color. His wamus was belted in; his broad slouching hat showed several holes. He placed a hand on each side of the doorway and leaned in while he talked. "Yes. I've been over there. Liza-Robert came nigh to loosin' her milk-house last night. The milk-lids was afloat and the spring is clear under water."

"Tuh! tuh!" ejaculated Liza. "And I expect the Rocky Fork is clear out of its banks."

"I should say it was," imparted Abram deliberately. "It's half-way up the Narrows and all over the meadow t'other side. Table Rock came down in that blow yesterday!"

Liza uttered a cry. Table Rock had overhung the Narrows ever since her memory began.

"Hall's mill has been carried off and lodged in the bottom-lands. The stone's sunk and the frame's split in two or three pieces."

"Why, Abram!"

"Yes, it's consider'ble high waters. Ridenours was out in a canoe over their cornfield this mornin'."

"How's Eli?"

"Doin' well, as far as I know."

"The doctor said he'd maybe have to stay by him a while last night. Seems like he was threatened with inflammation."

"If Doc's t'other side of the Fork he'll not ford it for a while. It's all 'round the school-house. Willey told me this mornin' Mr. Pitzer couldn't take up school till the water went down again. That g'ography man'll have to put off his doin's too. There's a sight of timber down on the hill. I don't know when we've had such a storm."

"Did it do you any damage?"

"Well, no. Uprooted a few apple trees. That's

about all. Any chores you'd like done out doors?"

"I'm much obliged to you, Abram, but there isn't anything. The cows always come up to the bars. I s'pose Samantha's well?"

"So's to be around. The children's folks have come to see ye, have they?"

"Yes, it's a kind of an adopted aunt of their mother's."

"Well," said Abram, taking his hands off the sides of the door, "I must get on toward home."

He came back after going a few steps.

"I'll look in again before night, Liza."

"I'd be obliged if you would, Abram."

Neither spoke of feeling anxious about the young doctor. Still Liza girded herself more cheerfully to go out and gather her demoralized poultry. A primrose-colored west brightened the whole landscape. The beaten-down grass had already begun to lift itself, and a pleasant, drying breeze was flowing down the valley. The broken clouds drifted to all parts of the sky. Liza gathered drenched and gaping chickens into her apron, where they trod upon each other with cold pink feet, and piped shrilly for food and comfort. She had a special basket behind the stove for these weather-orphans, where their down would curl once more, and all of them subside into a butter-

cup colored mass, too sleepy to peep. There was one chicken that ran persistently through the weeds away from her, yet calling with all his might for aid from some quarter. He stretched his thin neck here and there and disconsolately shook his pin-feather wings. Now lost in a forest of rag-weed, he made the tops quiver over him as he ran; and now slipping through the garden palings, he scampered dismayed up and down the bank of a deep canal, the channel whereof he had known before the deluge as a neat garden path between beds of vegetables. Liza reached through and gathered him to the asylum in her apron just as she observed Bluebell picking her way to the lower bars. The run was roaring through the meadow, and she rose up apprehensively.

"Don't go down to the water, Bluebell. You can't cross now."

"But Tildy's on the other side and beckoned to me: I just want to talk across to her."

"I'm afraid you'll fall in if you go too near. Remember the run's up."

"I'll be careful. Tildy can't come over, and she does want to see me so bad!"

"You've both been weather-bound," said Liza smiling. "Well, you be careful. Where's the baby?"

"She's talking to aunt Melissa. I gave her my new doll to hold."

Precious as little sisters may be, there are times when the mature girl of nine or ten feels that she cannot have them "tagging" after her; when she gives them a sop in the shape of her best plaything, or engages them in conversation with some elderly and charming relative, while she slips out to gallop where heedless baby shoes would have to be carried.

Tildy had been signaling at the other side of the run for some time.

Bluebell ran down the wet meadow, feeling joyful at being out of doors once more. The hills were half smiling. She could not help noticing how the trees tossed. In the southwest was a cushion of foliage so large, so green, so apt to dimple with the wind, that the little girl never could help wishing to sit and tumble about on it.

The run showed wide and turbid from the back door, but on near approach it seemed a ranting young river. Sticks and even rails were being eddied away by what was day before yesterday a few strands of clear water.

How wide was the separation between Bluebell and Tildy!

Resentment of the Perintha Pancost truce had been swept from Tildy's face by later occurrences.

"We can't go to school any more," she called.

"O, yes, we can when the waters go down."

"The' won't be any school-house. The Rocky Fork's all around it. Our spring-house pretty near went, and if the run rises much higher it'll carry off our house and your house, too."

Bluebell looked back at the weather-beaten homestead.

"It would look like Noey's Ark. But it says there isn't to be another flood, Tildy, 'cause the rainbow's put in the sky for a sign that the waters shall no more cover the face of the earth!"

"Hain't been any rainbow this wet spell," said Tildy impressively.

Bluebell searched the whole sky, and brought her eyes down again clouded with apprehension. There had been no rainbow this wet spell.

"I don't believe it will rise to the roofs of the houses and the tops of the mountains," she cried, with an upward inflection of appeal.

"I wish't it would. Then you could sit on your roof and I could sit on mine, and sail sticks and boats across to each other. I've been havin' lots of fun with mother's old bread-bowl. Why didn't you

come down soon as it quit rainin'? I beckoned to you."

"I didn't see you. Where's Teeny?"

"She's helpin' mother with her weavin'. Why don't you take off your shoes and stockin's?"

"I don't know," replied Bluebell looking down at her low shoes and then at the lush soft grass. She always had envied Tildy her untrammelled toes, but her father had a prejudice against bare feet in all weathers. Tildy, that fortunate creature, could walk sidewise in the dusty summer road, dragging one foot and thus making a beautiful broad mark, with stopping posts indicated, like the picture of a fence. But if Bluebell attempted it she filled her stockings with dust and rendered her shoes a dismal sight.

Tildy now came down to the brink and made her impression in the yielding soil.

"Look there," said she, displaying two fine black slippers of glossy mud. "Take yours off, too, and maybe we can wade some."

Bluebell found a dry stone, sat down upon it, and peeled her feet pink and bare.

"Come along up the run," called Tildy. "I've got my boat up here."

So they scampered along on each side, the ooze coming between Bluebell's toes with a delicious rush.

The bread-bowl beached on Tildy's side, was ready for service. She had a pole to steer it with, and setting it afloat, ran along turning and guiding it as anxiously as if it were a bulrush basket with another little baby in it. Bluebell ran by her side of the stream, and begged that the vessel might make a voyage to her. With a push of the pole, Tildy turned its prow, but it got caught against a snag, and she labored long to free it. Finally, the cracked and rather unseaworthy vessel came triumphantly in, and Bluebell caught it with joy.

The two girls felt as if they had shaken hands across the separating stream. Bluebell had some of the baby's seed cookies in her pocket. She wiped the bowl very dry with bunches of grass, and made a nest of fresh grass in the centre, on which a handful of thimble cakes were then carefully deposited, and the gallant craft started on its return trip.

It moved down stream, and both girls accompanied it. Tildy poled with care lest the cargo might get slopped. Now, there was a rail coming down stream in the centre of the current, pointing like a long black finger to the fact that that bowl must be got out of the way, or there would be a collision on the high seas.

Bluebell danced and exclaimed while Tildy poled in set determination. Alas for the noble bread-bowl!

In despair she stuck the pole into it, brought it with a swish to land with its grass and seed-cakes scattered to the stream, and losing her balance fell partly in herself.

"O, Tildy!" screamed Bluebell, when Tildy scrambled on the bank, dripping to her waist.

"This makes the second time this week I've got wet," said she solemnly. "I don't b'lieve I want to wade now." She sat down on the grass and wrung her clothes. Her mood was very sombre indeed.

"I expect I'll take sick and die," she said. "Father used to get wet to his hide before he took bed-fast. And I'm a good deal his build."

"Just as soon as my father comes home," cried Bluebell, "I'll ask him to ride Ballie over the run and give you some medicine."

"You needn't throw it up to me that you've got a father when I ain't got any," said Tildy, dismally.

"Why, Tildy! I *never!*"

"You did, too. But mebby you ain't got any either, now."

"My father's comin' home to-night!"

"Mebby he is."

"He's just gone to see his patients, and he's comin' right straight home!"

"Table Rock fell down over the Narrows yesterday."

SHE HEARD A LONG, RINGING NEIGH FROM THE LANE.

"I don't care if it did!" warded off Bluebell, with quivering lip.

"My Uncle Abram says it could 'a hit your father just as easy as not!"

"But it didn't!"

"But somethin' may have happened to him. If he tries to cross the Rocky Fork now, he's sure to get drownded! Uncle Abram says he feels uneasy. Looky there, now! Mebbe that's his hat comin' down the run!"

Bluebell suspended a great sob and watched the black object approaching. It reeled nearer and nearer — it looked *so* much like father's black hat: she saw the band: she saw the brim dip —

"Ho!" cried Doctor Garde's little girl triumphantly, "that's just a chunk o' burnt wood, Miss Tildy Banks, and my father ain't any more drowned than you are!"

Tildy, who felt herself more drowned than she wished to be, and decidedly uncomfortable — for there is a difference between sky-water and run-water — merely responded, "Huh, Madam!"

Bluebell started back to pick up her stockings and shoes. She heard a long ringing neigh from the lane.

"There!" she cried, shaking a shoe at Tildy, "there's my own father come home to my house this

very minute! I'm going right to the bars," she added, thrusting her tender feet into the shoes after wiping them on her stockings, "and I'll tell him all the mean things you said. And I won't ask him to give you the medicine, so I won't."

"I don't want it," responded Tildy: "he hain't got any but nasty stuff."

Doctor Garde's little girl did not stay to argue. She scampered to the lower bars, flung over them, and splashed across the puddles to the upper bars. Ballie's glossy, tossing head appeared around the barn-corner. But her saddle was empty and turned to one side, the pill-bags dangling, her bridle hung loose, and as soon as she saw the little girl, she uttered a neighing scream.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABRAM HAS A THEORY.

THE Arabian mare's long cry reached Liza's ear, also. She was putting her chickens in the basket, and having covered them, went toward the bars.

"There's something wrong, the way that horse whinnies," said Liza aloud. "Why, look at her now! He's been thrown!"

Ballie was walking from one end of the bars to the other, resenting the saddle and dangling saddle-bags, resenting the bridle which hung to her feet, but more than all distressed by the absence of her master. As soon as she saw Liza she uttered another interrogative wailing cry.

A pair of small stockings hung across the fence: Bluebell's figure was flying down the lane at the foot of the pine hill.

"O, my gracious!" cried Liza, smiting her hands.

"Now *she'll* go off and get killed. Come back, Bluebell! come back here! She runs right on and doesn't hear me!"

Ballie heard intelligently, and jerked her bridle from under foot, seeming, as she did so, to fling a wail after Bluebell.

Liza got over the bars and mechanically relieved the mare, unfastening the pill-bags and saddle, and turning the bridle back over her neck. Leaving her tied to the post, Liza flung her apron over her head and started running towards Abram's house. It was a mile to Abram's. When she had passed the orchard and was nearly across the east meadow, she remembered Miss Calder had been left with only Rocco in the house, unconscious of what had happened. Still running, Liza dipped into a gulch-like hollow which divided the stony meadow in halves. It was oozy and slippery, and she climbed the other side nearly out of breath. Abram's house appeared beyond its orchard.

When Liza had scaled the orchard fence, and recovering breath a little, came running towards the front of the house, she found Abram and his wife talking with a man in the road.

Bounce, the house-dog, had barked all the way up the orchard, but they had never turned their heads.

LIZA IS SURE THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG.

"O Abram!" she cried. At this Abram looked around, and showed a face as distressed as her own.

"We've just heard the doctor's been drowned," said Samantha solemnly.

Liza was not prepared for this statement. Her burning face bleached.

"Who says so?" she exclaimed aggressively.

"The g'ography-teacher and him both tried to cross the Rocky Fork at the ford, and his horse acted up some way and got him off."

Liza groaned.

"I don't believe it," she said next: "why didn't you help him?"

The geography-teacher was splashed and muddied from head to foot. His face looked haggard, and on Pancost's tall gray horse he appeared singularly gruesome. Liza despised him at first sight. She longed to pull him from his uncertain seat, and have him punished for this trouble for which she unreasonably held him accountable.

"I couldn't help him, ma'am. I just escaped with my own life, and rode as hard as I could to the first house I saw, to give the alarm."

"There's four houses between this and the ford! His horse just came to the bars! Abram! Why don't you stir yourself? Go and help him! He isn't

drowned, I know. Why, he can swim like a fish! If you'd only stopped to be of some account!" she cried, flashing her excited eyes up and down the geography-teacher.

"Liza," said Abram, "I'm startin' to the stable for a horse. But you hain't heard the particulars."

He cantered away, and Samantha, who had gone into the house, came out with a camphor-bottle. She bathed Liza's face, while that good spinster held to the fence and denounced Mr. Runnels.

"Where's your particulars, now? If you'd stood by him like a man, as he'd a stood by you! Where is he? What did he do after he got into the water?"

"You don't know what you're talking about, ma'am," said Mr. Runnels, avoiding her eyes, and speaking in a dejected way without heat. "His horse got to plunging and the saddle slipped. The current was so strong we were both carried away below the ford, and when I got out, his horse had kicked him loose."

"Ballie kick *him!* She never kicked him!"

"I can't help that. She was climbing the bank and a heavy log hit him and he went under. I called for help, but nobody came. Then I put my horse to a gallop and rode as hard as I could to the first house I saw."

"Sit down, Liza," begged Samantha, pushing her upon a stool they used in picking fruit. Liza sat down. "There goes Abram to the ford fast as he can go. And if he don't find anything he'll warn out all the neighbors. Don't take on so!" sobbed Samantha in her own apron.

Mr. Runnels turned his horse and followed Abram. Dripping and wretched and in need of hospitality as he certainly was, it had not occurred to either of the women to offer him anything. He faded from their view merely as the bearer of bad tidings.

But a capable woman like Liza could give up to smelling camphor for a moment only. Within half an hour she had created a revolution in her own house. The sitting-room was turned into a hospital ward, with every appliance for restoring wounded or half-drowned people. A fire made the black chimney-piece sparkle. Miss Melissa followed her around, awed and colorless, but anxious to help. She did marvels of lifting and carrying, scarcely knowing it. A chill struck through the air as the day closed. Only the baby, who sat in the big rocker with Georgiana and the soles of her own feet broadside to the fire, could sing with any enjoyment of life. The unusual bustle and the climbing fire seemed things of good cheer. Unconscious of any trouble and feeling

in a musical mood, Rocco improvised recitative, crescendo and diminuendo, knitting her fine eyebrows with an artist's concentration.

"I NEVVA TURN BACK ANY MORE!"

"O — my — GOOD — GWacious! Jawgeanno! — I neva' turn back any mo'. An' it WAINED: AND Juicy-crucy-fied 'im. Cap in my father's

HAN'! An' the' was a little guyl had a nice dolly, b'ronged to her sisser B'uebell. O Jawge-ANNO!"

Liza-Robert came tip-toeing in on her heavy shoe-soles. She had got the news some way, and going nearly a mile up the run, found a narrow place where she could get across by the aid of rails and so reach the troubled house. She had been crying on the way, and when she saw Rocco toasting her soles with such musical satisfaction, the poor woman buried her face in her apron.

"Poor little innocent!" she said, passing her hand down Rocco's head; "poor little innocent!"

Rocco was accustomed to Liza-Robert's widowed expression, and laughed up in her face.

"Dreat big doll," she said importantly, turning Georgiana for inspection.

Then, as if a peg had slipped in the music-box of her little chest, she straightway struck off again:

"On Missus — JORDAN STORMY Banks's house, I cast a Rishful EYE!"

Miss Melissa came in from the banistered porch where she had been watching, and Liza from the kitchen.

"Did you see or hear anything?" inquired Liza. Her plump, well-preserved face looked shrunken.

"Nothing," replied Miss Melissa, spreading her transparent, trembling hands to the fire.

"I'll make you acquainted with my cousin's widow, Miss Calder," said Liza.

Miss Calder bowed to the raw-boned, sad woman. Liza Robert inclined her head:

"How do ye do, ma'am?" Then she wiped off a rolling tear with her apron. There was a natural majesty in her which fully appreciated culture and delicacy in another; but now she met this lady without a thought of the difference between them.

"He staid by me night and day when I had the lung fever, and the other doctors giv me up to die. If it hadn't been for him I wonder who'd be carin' for my children now! I'm just a hard-workin' woman that's had trouble, but he always was as good as an angel to me and mine."

Liza went to the door; then to the bars. The day was gone: she was startled to find it so near twilight.

Presently she came back with an heroic air, patted the prepared bed and laid it open, turned a stick on the fire-dogs over, and hurriedly brought in a candle.

"I thought I heard some one comin'," she said.

It seemed to be the tramping of another horse at

the bars. Ballie, still tied to the ignominious post, neighed to it interrogatively.

Abram came striding in.

"Where is he?" said Liza.

Abram looked at the three women piteously.

"I don't know. We ain't found him."

"Who's lookin'?" cried Liza with a sharp tone.

"All on this side the Fork. The men goin' home from the Furnace all turned in."

"I thought mebby 'twas only that curly-headed g'ography-teacher," said Liza. She burst out sobbing in her apron again. Miss Calder sat down. Rocco was frightened, and got down with Georgiana hanging across her shoulder, to stare at Abram.

"We did get his hat," said Abram, swallowing as if his very prominent Adam's apple were choking him. "And I have a kind of a theory now."

He proceeded, without much encouragement, to explain his theory:

"Mr. Runnels says a log hit him and he went down right by the ford. They're gettin' Ridenour's canoe and 'll drag over that spot. But I hev a kind of theory — I don't know whether I'm right or not —"

The three women lifted their heads expectantly.

"My theory is, it didn't stop there."

The pronoun sent a shudder through his hearers.

"It's down below the Narrows, and I'm goin' to Mary Ann and warn out the men for a search there."

At this hopeless view of the case, Liza walked the floor in a transport of grief, and Liza-Robert tried to repress her own sorrow and attend to Miss Calder, who seemed fainting.

"Oh, the poor boy! And him so noble-hearted! Night after night, day after day, through rain and shine and cold and heat he's rode! And it made no difference whether it was to the rich or the poor! They was all alike to him if they needed doctrin'—and he never expected to get pay for half he done!"

Here Rocco raised her voice and howled.

"He was good to me," said Abram. "I never knowed a man I thought more of."

"Honey," said Liza, coming to the baby, and trying to control herself, "Liza'll put you to bed now."

"I don't want to go," howled Rocco. "I want B'uebell to sit in the chair and wock me."

Liza flashed a glance all around the room. Then a recollection ran over her face leaving it more faded.

"Oh, didn't that child come back? She ran down the lane to hunt him. Abram, where's Bluebell?"

CHAPTER XIV.

BLUEBELL HAS NO THEORY.

WHEN Doctor Garde's little girl started down the unfenced lane, she acted on an impulse given by terror. She ran with all her might at the side of the lane, tangling her feet in fragrant pennyroyal, and bounding over bunches of ground-cherries, so that it seemed a whole year before she reached the place where it joined its mud to that of the main road. This was a steep, stumpy place: young saplings had been ridden down, and bent their bruised backs to draggle torn tops on the ground. On the black hill above, all those pines were whistling softly between their teeth, as father did. Hundreds of odd thoughts rushed pell-mell through the little girl's mind.

Ballie's track here melted into others; but as Bluebell had not thought of tracing Ballie's course, she did not pause on account of losing the clew. She

stood still an instant and looked back toward the house. She was so little. Grown-up folks would know better what to do. The house was almost out of sight among trees. She had no distinct idea except that father was certainly in danger somewhere and must be found. The primrose light was fading out in the west. If she went on and nobody knew where she was, she might slip over the Narrows and be killed, and against this her sound flesh and wholesome blood rebelled utterly. Still, her pause was only an instant long: she laced up the leather strings of her shoes and tied them firmly, waded around mudholes, and ran on toward the entrance of the Narrows.

Just here the Rocky Fork burst upon her sight. Bluebell held to the flint wall feeling giddy. She had never seen such an expanse of water. It covered nearly the whole of a wide meadow, and on the side next the Narrows licked at the earthen cliff, crumbling it by slow handfuls. She felt it was climbing step by step to grab her as she started on.

There was a current like a mill-race over the hidden bed of the Rocky Fork. Logs, brush, rails, whole trees, skated along on it. The child could not keep her fascinated gaze off this current, and it made her so dizzy she was obliged every few moments to stop, reeling against the hill-wall and hugging its

BLUEBELL HAS NO THEORY.

stones with her hands. She was going in the direction of the current. Just as Bluebell entered on this narrow track she heard violent galloping begin of a sudden behind her. She thought of Billy Bowl, and seizing a root above her head, made herself as flat as possible against the wall. She thought also of the loose horse which met father and her upon the Narrows, and turned desperately to frighten it back. But this horse was a lean gray one and had a rider, and both were dripping from head to foot; the rider looked wildly toward the Narrows and wheeled his horse away from them. Then he flew away as fast as the animal could gallop on a sled road, arching by through the pine woods which led to the road past Abram's, but was seldom used except by wood-cutters. He had not noticed Bluebell.

"It's the g'ography teacher," said she hurrying on. "And *he's* fell in the water and wet all his nice clothes, and he looked *just like Billy Bowl!*"

Nothing else happened in her dizzy, long journey around the Narrows. Midway she could not look at the waters, but their sound filled all the country silence. Bluebell's road remained in light after the shadows settled on them. A huge hole was left over the gutter where Table Rock had hung: the earth was broken all around. Bluebell got by it as well as

she could. When she reached the Furnace the day-workmen were about to start to their homes.

All the way around, though Doctor Garde's little girl had been showing as much Irish pluck as she could muster, her chin had shaken with sobs and her heart felt bursting with a mighty homesickness for father. She looked into the Furnace now, unreasonably expecting to see him on a bunch of coats or wamuses, tended as they had tended Eli Ridenour.

She saw glittering eyes and smutted faces, and heard a line of song roared out.

"Where's my father?" she cried to the nearest Furnace-man.

Several came to her at once.

"It's Doc. Garde's little girl."

"What's the matter, sissy?"

"Is my father here?"

"No. He hasn't been past the Furnace since night before last. What's the matter?"

"He's got hurt someway," wailed Bluebell, the tears dropping to her breast. "The horse came home with her saddle all turned, and I can't find him."

The Furnace-men looked at each other, and the alarm flashed around.

"Which way was he ridin'?"

"I don't know. I thought maybe he fell over like

Eli Ridenour and you'd brought him here. Oh, if you don't find my father, I can't stand it at all!"

"He must have been trying to ford the Fork," exclaimed the biggest of all the Furnace-men. "We'll go down there."

They swarmed around each other in what appeared a scarlet confusion of unbelted wamuses, then trooped in a hurry to the Narrows. They forgot the child. She stood crying beside a brick pillar, too overwhelmed with trouble to think of anything but its pain. Where *was* father? And was he badly hurt?

CHAPTER XV.

THE FORD.

IN an hour the banks about the place where the country road forded the Rocky Fork in low water, were studded with what seemed from a distance large, unblinking fire-flies. And on the stream itself two or three other fire-flies in a cluster moved back and forth, here and there. Bad news need not be telegraphed in the country. It flies faster than the wind. The whole neighborhood on each side the Rocky Fork knew that Doctor Garde had been carried down in the Rocky Fork, and men of all ages turned out in the search.

The Furnace-men brought dried pine sticks for torches. Three people paddled Ridenour's canoe about, trailing light on the muddy water. The trees took on a weird appearance as these torches lit up the inner mystery of their branches, and some sleepy

birds that had just comfortably settled for the night, chirped inquiringly. Overhead the stars appeared by ones and groups through a clear sky, from which the trailing mists were blown away.

The men in the canoe had a log-chain and hook which they trailed along the bottom. Others followed the banks down stream, being obliged to go around deep bogs and back-waters which nearly covered what had been grape-vine thickets. Doctor Garde's felt hat had been found in a thicket by one of the boys, and Abram had ridden off home with it: but when he got there he had not had the heart to carry the soaked and dreadful token in, but had laid it in a corner of the porch while he entered to tell about it and state his convictions.

Mr. Runnels remained by the ford, walking his borrowed steed here and there, and stretching fearfully toward every object which attracted notice.

"They say Pancost come nigh losin' his old gray," said Mr. Willey grimly, laying his hand on the neck of this steed.

"I barely got out," replied Mr. Runnels. "It seemed as if we were both to go."

"What possessed ye to try the Rocky Fork when it's so high?"

"I wanted to carry around word to all my pupils

on this side that the lessons would be stopped till the water went down. I was about to turn back, but Doctor Garde was just venturing in, and I thought a man might follow where he went."

"Oh! but Dr. Garde wouldn't turn back from anything. And he had the prettiest piece o' horse-flesh in the whole country. She could swim like a duck, and take a straight up-and-down bank, and in the darkest night he could give her the bridle and go to sleep. The trouble with Doctor Garde, sir, was that he didn't know danger when he saw it. This is a rough piece o' country, but he'd cut right across the hills, and once he got his eyelid cut open riding against a branch, and it hung down to his cheek. But he goes home and sews it up himself, and keeps on ridin' as if nothing had happened. Ain't many men could stand what he could."

"I should think not."

"No, sir. I couldn't. And he was the best doctor, sir, I ever had in my family. There's Hall over yonder. His mill went with these high waters, but I believe he feels a sight worse about the doctor.

The men with the grapple-chain hooked something. It was no easy matter to keep out of the current and the course of limbs and various flotsam from wood-cutters' piles. They got into a still place scummed

over with powdered rotten-wood, and here they carefully drew in the laden hook.

Men on the opposite bank called to each other and came running to the verge, while those by the scummy bay knotted together and held their lights down.

"Have you got anything?" they called.

Those around the hook fell back and looked up:

"No, nothing but a little stump."

CHAPTER XVI.

A TRIO AND CHORUS.

THE homesickness for father grew to agony in Dr. Garde's little girl. She stood just outside the Furnace pressing her hands together.

When she was a smaller girl she dreamed once that father was dead. It was a smothering dream. Her heart weighed her down so she thought she could never skip or play blackman again. Driven by unendurable loneliness which nothing but the presence of father could cure, she persistently hunted him till she came to an enormous mansion which was heaven. Here she asked for him, and was told that he had just passed into another apartment, which she entered just in time to see the last fold of his garment disappearing through an opposite door. So from one vast room to another she still followed, calling him as she ran; but he never heard, and she never touched even

the hem of his robe. The place grander than any town, was full of carvings, pictures and nameless elegances, such as Bluebell could not remember ever having seen before. Then she was in a forest where a wind-storm had passed. Fallen trees made a limitless bridge from her feet into the horizon, and there was the most brilliant moonlight over the whole visible world. She was crying to herself, hopeless of ever seeing father again, when he came walking over that endless corduroy bridge toward her. He came walking in a long white robe which covered him with light and trailed on the logs, his square serious face full of concern about her. He did not seem pleased to find her crying there, though he picked her up and soothed her! Then he told her she must be kind to the baby and be a good girl; and without her being able to detain him, he turned and trailed again out of sight across the moonlit logs.

This dream had made such a painful impression on Bluebell that she never had forgotten it. It always came across her mind at serious times. It seemed to belong to the same class of untold terrors as her superstition about Billy Bowl. But now it came up before her like reality. Or perhaps the reality which the child was facing stood before her like that dream.

The Fork's roar came up through humid dusk

which was thickening every minute to darkness. Some whippoorwills in the trees below the road were uttering their cry almost under her feet, so that she heard the guttural which preceded it:

"G' — whippoorwill,
G' — whippoorwill!"

But presently out of the intermingled sounds of whippoorwills, water and frogs, there came something else very different.

It was not at first distinct; but when Bluebell listened intently, she did hear a voice calling:

"Hillo!"

The little girl ran along the road toward Mary Ann until she came to where the Narrows broadened to a hilly shoulder which sloped gradually to the Fork. Bluebell knew nothing about the descent. Within this hill and along under the Furnace, John Tegarden's coal-fires were supposed to be perpetually burning. But her eyes were accustomed to the dark, and there was a fine starlight overhead.

It did seem dreadful to come down to the very edge of the Rocky Fork. Flecks of foam showed on it like threatening teeth. Black objects were continually passing down, out in the current. Sometimes

these fish etched their fins on the low sky on the other side, when you saw that there were twigs and limbs of a floating tree.

When Bluebell had climbed down almost to a level with the Rocky Fork, she held on to a bush, and listened.

"Hillo!" called the voice again.

It was farther from her, and must be just under the Narrows opposite the Furnace.

"Father! Is father there?"

"Hillo! somebody come and help me!"

"O father, are you drownin'! O what shall I do?"

"Is that you, Bluebell? Who's with you?"

"Nobody, father, but just myself! I can't get to you, father — the water's so deep!"

"Don't think of trying to come to me!"

There was a pause. The Rocky Fork, the frogs, and the whippoorwills uttered their voices. Bluebell thought she heard a groan contributed to the chorus.

"O father! *are* you drownin'? Can't you get out somehow?"

A horse's feet made heavy thuds overhead: they sounded so loud she was not sure he heard her.

"Father! what must I do?"

"Bring somebody here."

"But you'll drown while I'm gone!" cried Bluebell, adding a blubbering sob by way of period.

"No, I sha'n't."

His little girl's nerves were not equal to facing the bare possibility, and she sent up a wail.

"Don't make a fuss," came father's voice, somewhat sternly.

"Who's that down there?" called a voice from the road overhead; "Bluebell?"

"Sir?" She held to her bush and looked up: there was a blurred man on horseback against the deeper background of hill.

"Is that Bluebell Garde?"

"Yes, sir. My father's here in the Rocky Fork, and I don't know how to get him out!"

The man made his horse's feet clatter, and he could be heard immediately afterwards, making his way down the bank himself.

"Who's that?" called the doctor from his invisible position.

"It's me, Abram Banks. I don't seem to make you out, doctor."

"I'm here in the shadow on a log."

The Rocky Fork and the frogs and whippoorwills came in with a full chorus while Abram paused and caught his breath.

"Can you hold on a bit longer?"

"I think so. The water's quiet. But my arm's broken, and I can't help myself, and it may turn me faint pretty soon, again. I've nearly fainted several times."

"If you could hold on till I gallop back and get Ridenour's canoe."

Bluebell sobbed in her dress-skirt.

"Can't you get a rope up at the Furnace, Abram? If I had one end of a long rope I could fasten it to the log, and then you could tow me to where you are."

"Is it a big tree?"

"No, rather small. I managed to get it out of the current — broke off some branches and paddled."

"Bluebell," said Abram, deliberately pulling off his wamus and boots, "you go up the bank and see what my horse 's doin'. I tied him in such a hurry he may get loose, and then we'd be in a box for a way to git your father home."

The little girl scrambled up, holding to the grass in places, and before she reached the top, she heard a plunge which told Abram had taken to the water.

Abram's horse was tied to a sapling across the road, and was stretching his neck to browse.

The breathing of the Fork and the frogs was interrupted by splashings and half-exclamations. Bluebell

was reassured by hearing her father's voice more plainly. The log was being pushed cautiously out of its harbor. He directed Abram not to turn it towards the current, but to steer it against another log. Abram's replies were interspersed with grunts.

It was not a very long time before they struggled up the hill, Abram helping the doctor. His own hair was sending little streams of water down his wamus, but Doctor Garde was dripping from head to foot. When the light from the Furnace fell on him, he showed in a ghastly plight.

"Have you got a knife, Abram?" asked the Doctor.

Abram groped in his homespun and brought out what he called a jack-knife.

"Now, cut my sleeves open, will you?"

This was done. The doctor took his coats off.

"That rubber sleeve compressed it, or seemed to. It's considerably swollen." He examined his right arm. Bluebell could see him closing his lips.

"Just git on the horse now and I'll put sissy up behind you. Or can't you manage it?"

The doctor took the horse's bridle in his left hand, and placing one foot in the stirrup, leaped up as he did on his Arabian. But this time he sank back and leaned on the plough-horse's neck.

"Afraid I can't do it, Abram. A few ribs a little out of normal condition, too."

"Can't you step on that rock, father?" said Bluebell, caressing his sound elbow. In her comfort at having him again, she would have been his stepping-stone herself.

The faintness passing away, he followed Abram and the horse to a rock and succeeded in mounting from that. The farmer flung up Bluebell behind him, and took the bridle. This small cavalcade started at once.

"It'd be safer to go the long way around the hill," suggested Abram. "They're a-huntin' you b'low at the ford, and we might meet 'em with lights or somethin', and this horse might cut up. She's always simple along the Narrows.'

"The nearest way will be the safest to-night. I want to get home, Abram."

So they passed the Furnace in a quick walk and entered the Narrows. The night-workmen were busy inside, and probably speculating about the recovery of Doctor Garde's body.

"Father," cried Bluebell, hugging him carefully below his arms, "Ballie came home with the saddle all turned over!"

She laid her cheek against his dear wet back,

ashamed to make louder demonstrations of joy. Now that he was out of the water, the whole disaster seemed a mere extension of that painful dream.

"And you started out to find where she left me, did you?" said father in a bantering tone which indicated that he was touched.

"Yes, sir, and I thought you fell over the Narrows."

"Did you say they were searching at the Ford?"

"Got out Ridenour's canoe and draggin' with a log chain."

"Who?"

"The whole neighborhood, nigh about. That g'ography man he first brought word to me, and the Furnace-hands heard, and they come. But it wasn't my theory that it — that you'd stop there. I felt pretty clear you'd went with the current. Liza, she come runnin' to tell me some mischance had happened to you. The g'ography-teacher, he looked scared out of a year's growth," said Abram, having recourse to the time-honored humor of his region.

"He was badly scared." The young doctor's face shone with a phosphorescent smile. "If I had left him to his fate he couldn't have stood it, perhaps, as well as I can. It was folly in him to try the Fork, any way. But he plunged in because I did, and I felt bound to help him over."

"He told us," remarked Abram slowly, "that you was kind of took off by the current and your horse kicked you, and you sunk."

The doctor laughed.

"Well, he certainly was scared out of his senses. Why, I had crossed the current, diagonally, as the mare always takes a swift current, and was just at the opposite bank, when he yelled to me. He had come in holding his horse's head down, and it was about to drown; they spun around in the current and started down stream. When I got to him I seized his bridle and tried to lead him out, and then the horse began to struggle, and the first thing I knew I was dropped off and thrashed around, and his gray gave me a few kicks which might have been fatal out of the water, and I saw Ballie spinning along the road with her gearing half off, and the young man getting safely out on his horse. I tried to swim, but my best arm was so numb I couldn't use it, so I just kept out of the way of drift as well as I could, and finally found a log I could crawl upon. I think he called me once or twice, but I found it necessary to fix my whole mind on what I was doing. When I got on my log and as far as the Narrows, it took hard work to get out of the current. Can't we move on a little faster, Abram?"

The horse's pace was quickened. Bluebell had not listened for the crumbling of earth below, nor did she much mind the gutter under Table Rock hole. Her soul was given up to indignation.

"He didn't act the man, appearently," pronounced Abram, having turned all the incidents over.

"I'll never go to his g'ography-school again!" cried Bluebell from a bursting heart.

"Tut!" said father, "little girls should be seen and not heard. Abram, would you mind trotting? I think I could stand it."

They trotted.

Bluebell's face intensified behind the wet back. Her imagination rehearsed a scene. She put Mr. Runnels before the geography school, and especially before Mr. Pitzer's spectacles, and pointing to him said, "He is just as bad as Billy Bowl, for he let my father get pushed into the Rocky Fork after my father had helped to pull him out! "Old Billy Bowl! Old Billy Bowl!"

CHAPTER XVII.

DOCTOR GARDE LISTENS TO REASON.

THE run had gone down, and the Rocky Fork was within its banks and falling every hour. Hall, with a number of his neighbors, was raising another mill on the site of the old one, and Mr. Pitzer's boys went down at recess and noon to watch the process and get in the way.

Wreaths of drift on the play-ground showed where the water had been, and the lower logs of the school-house had threads of green springing in their cracks and knot-holes.

Everybody had heard how Doctor Garde got into and out of the Rocky Fork, and the geography master met some rough bantering which he answered as best he could. The young men in his night school talked in knots in the grave-yard about tar and feathers for him; but tar and feathers were a favorite sub-

ject with them, principally because they had never seen any and had some curiosity about the effect of such a combination. Mr. Runnels did his best to remove the prejudice against him, and he was so amusing, they forgave him, especially as Doctor Garde had nothing more to say about the matter.

Doctor Garde was badly hurt; and one of the other country doctors who set his bones made sad work with the swollen arm. The whole neighborhood on the safe side of the Fork got upon their plough-horses and came to see him, according to custom. Healthy as his physique was, so many strains and annoyances brought on fever, and Liza-Robert hovered mournfully around the kitchen, taking Liza's place, while Liza nursed him past the worst days. Miss Calder took charge of the children, though one of the doctor's fancies was to have them both placed on the foot of his bed where he could see them while they sang to him. With one hand propping up his head, he watched them through half-smiling eyes.

Ballie neighed long and frequently in her stable. Bluebell fed her standing on the barn-floor, and smoothed her velvet nose, telling her minutely all that had happened, and whether father was better or worse. Still, Ballie felt lonesome; and as there was no stable boy to groom her down, Liza at last turned

her into the meadow, where she sailed like a lark.

On Saturday afternoon Tildy Banks, barefooted, slipped into the kitchen.

The doctor was very much better. She edged to the room where he lay, and looked in. It was warm, dazzling weather, and all the doors stood open.

Father was having his dinner. Bluebell and Rocco camped beside him, occasionally getting a bit, and finding the invalid fare a great deal nicer than their own unlimited dinner.

"There's Tildy!" said Bluebell; "come in Tildy: Rocco's telling father a story. And take a chair."

"I don't want to," responded Tildy, briefly.

The doctor turned his head and asked her how Jacob the soap-boiler was. Tildy's eyes snapped; for Jacob the soap-boiler was an imaginary person whom the doctor placed before Tildy's mind as a possible future tyrant. He found the children one day playing a very stately play, with much curtsying and singing:

> "Here come three lords just out of Spain
> A-courting of your daughter Jane."
>
> "My daughter Jane she is too young
> To listen to the wiles of a flattering tongue."

Tildy was especially serious in the performance;

and he at once put in a plea for another and absent lord, by title, Jacob the soap-boiler who desired his loyal duty to Matilda instead of to Jane.

"He's about as well as usual," she returned with a stoical countenance, but her nails felt quite long.

"The' ain't any soap-boiler," now pleaded Bluebell, making coaxing faces to her father. "And then what happened next, Poppetty?"

The baby leaned her head towards one shoulder and then the other in a bashful pause.

"I guess there isn't any more of it," suggested Bluebell.

"Yes, the' is, too! 'Nen, — 'nen — 'nen they eat haws and forn-berries and winter-dreens, and 'ey didn't have good honey and bwed and chickun — 'tause the' wasn't any. An' the boy say to his sisser, 'Don't try: I git a gun I shoot!' And birds put leaveses all over 'em. 'Nen they laid down on drown'; an' the ole bad mans go off and fight wiz sor-ruds an' 'ey git killed. An' the' wasn't any church-house or anyfing. Thus' trees all 'roun'. An' the babies didn't have any krunnel-bed, nor any nice drurio wiz drors to keep the' Sunday clo'es in. An' the birds put leaveses all over 'em. An' they rished they was to their house. An' they bofe died. 'Nen they

touldn't go any furver 'tause they was so tired! They thus' laid them down and *di-de!*"

Rocco folded her claws and fixed her black eyes impressively on father's face.

"An' birds put leaveses all over 'em," she repeated.

"Yes," said father, "that's a very mournful tale. Now, if you'll kiss me very carefully you may both get down and run out to play. I ought to get a nap."

They both kissed him very carefully and went out with Tildy.

Tildy dug her toes into the soil, and made the following remark:—

"Come and go to 'r house."

"Well, if Liza'll let us."

"She told mother you could come to-day. Mother sent me over to fetch you. They don't want you 'round while your father's so sick."

"He ain't so sick! He's most well."

Tildy looked fixedly at her toes:

"He looks awful bad."

"Well, I guess you would, too, if your ribs and your arm was broke! That day we played down by the run you said he was going to get drowned, but he didn't!"

"He come nigh it," observed Tildy, with satisfaction.

"Well, he didn't get *clear* drowned, nor he ain't goin' to for all o' you!" retorted Bluebell with stinging asperity.

Tildy dug her toes into the soil, ploughing quite a furrow.

"My father's got a pretty verse on his tombstone," she said, suggestively. "It says:

> 'Remember, friends, as you pass by,
> As you are now, so once was I:
> As I am now, so you must be —
> Prepare for death and follow me.'"

"That's on 'most all of 'm in the grave-yard!"

"And it's what they'd put on your father's."

"Tildy Banks, I don't like ye!"

"The' ain't no love lost betwixt us," observed Tildy; and she turned toward home.

Bluebell felt bruised and astounded. Rocco stood by, gazing up through the tunnel of her sun-bonnet.

"You'll feel sorry when I'm gone off to live somewheres else!"

Tildy pursued her way deafly, straight as an Indian.

"Tildy!"

The distance widened.

THEY ALL PROCEEDED DOWN THE MEADOW IN SILENCE.

"Tildy, what did you go and get mad for? Are you leavin' us? I don't think that's a nice way to mind your mother!"

Tildy paused near the bars, and turned, but without any intention of stooping to parley.

"Melissy Garde, if you're goin' to 'r house you better come on."

Roxana's sister came on, hurrying her by the hand. It was such a grief to be at variance with anybody, and especially with Tildy, who must indeed love her, they had played together so long.

Tildy helped the baby over the bars, and they all proceeded down the meadow in silence. Ballie was scouring across the flank of the hill, making the woods echo with her whinneys. Whatever was green looked densely so, and the shade was black against the light. The more distant landscape seemed to vibrate in the heat. Grasshoppers fled from their approach in every direction, and down the run Pidy and Rose stood up to their knees in a deep place, chewing their cuds and switching their tails. On such a summer day Nature is a tender mother: the out-door world is better than the best fairy-books.

"You ought to see my doll aunt Melissa brought me," began Bluebell in a conciliatory tone. "Her face kind of melted." At this moment Bluebell

felt she could bear that sad change in Georgiana if it would only mollify Tildy.

"She's wax, you know, and Rocco held her too near the fire, and one cheek run, like she cried the red off."

"She did try!" exclaimed Rocco, in distress. "Liza tried and I tried and Jawgeanus tried — *I* didn't hurt her, B'uebell!"

"No, honey, you didn't. Aunt Melissa says she thinks she can paint it over."

Tildy stalked ahead, helping to lead the baby.

"Did you go to school yesterday, Tildy?"

"I gener'ly go to school!"

"Did you get the head-mark?"

"Your dear Printh' Pancost got that."

Doctor Garde's little girl looked piteously at the uncompromising sun-bonnet.

"I wish you'd got it, Tildy."

"*I* don't care about head-marks."

"But I'd rather you'd have the prize than anybody else if I go 'way. We've always been cronies, you know."

Tildy's sun-bonnet turned its mouth toward her, and the scrutinizing gray eyes focused themselves on their affectionate minion.

"If you'd been some folks' young one you'd

had to go to school every day after the water went down."

"Well, Tildy, I felt too bad to go when my father was so sick. And I guess he isn't goin' to send me any more. We're goin' to move away!"

Tildy's countenance softened by degrees to actual wistfulness. Still she combated the assertion.

"That's just talk. My mother says he won't leave the Rocky Fork."

"Oh, but Liza and aunt Melissa and him say it's so. Aunt Melissa wants us to live at her house, and she knows lots of people that will let my father doctor them. And maybe I'll go to a seminary," said Bluebell with awe. "That's a grand, very fine school, Tildy, where you learn to play on a py-anna, and paint flowers, and everybody studies big books! Aunt Melissa says, 'You are running too many risks, Maurice, and how are you going to educate the children?' And he says, 'I thought of the children when I was in the water.' Liza she cried on her apron, and aunt Melissa took her handkerchief out of her reddycule and cried on that, and father looked very solemn and says, 'They owe everything to you, Liza.' Then Liza says she won't stand in anybody's light, and she's seen it all along. So they talked a good many times. And every time, they talked more

like we's goin' away. Liza has begun to knit my speckled white-and-red winter stockings."

They had now reached the run. Tildy took Roxana up and lifted her across the stones. On the other side, it was her proposal to make a saddle to carry the baby up the slope. So Bluebell grasped one of her own wrists, palm downward, and Tildy grasped one of her own, and with their free hands they then grasped each other's free wrists, thus forming a square and substantial seat on which Rocco sat down when they stooped for her. She held to Tildy's shoulder and Bluebell's neck as they went on. Riding on this kind of saddle is most exhilarating. If your bearers stumble you have the chance of alighting on your feet, yet you see the world from an elevated position and at your ease.

They heard the loom before they entered the house. Mrs. Banks was weaving, and Teeny was sitting on the doorstep in the shade, sewing quilt-pieces. Teeny was quite devoted to this industry. She had a very young-womanish air. Her hair was twisted in a knob with some pinks in it, and her mother's largest apron was tied around her plain-waisted dress.

The floors were all bare at Liza-Robert's house, though she wove endless carpets for her prouder

AT THE DOOR OF THE SPRING-HOUSE.

neighbors. The children went into the loom-room, which was nearly filled by that huge frame. There were threads stretching diagonally and crossing each other in front of her, between which she shot a shuttle from side to side; then she pulled an overhanging frame-work twice, and it sent the bobbin-thread, which was called a filling, home to its place in the web, with a not unmusical sound. The web this time was a linsey cloth with variegated threads through it, intended for the girls' winter dresses.

She took Rocco up on her lap, let her struggle to guide the shuttle through, and made believe that the baby pulled the frame-work.

"Little innocent!" said Liza-Robert; "it'll be the only stroke she'll ever weave. They have things different in fine towns."

"I want a drink," said Tildy. She went out, followed by her faithful Bluebell. They ran down to that spring-house spared by the late flood, and opened the door into its coolness. The ground was clear again, and the yellow-faced crocks stood in their accustomed places with the overflow of the spring purling around them. The spring itself was so clear and cold and alive to its duty that there was pleasure in only hanging over it to see your face below. Tildy broke off leaves from peppermint stalks, and bending

them so they could be pinned with stems, made cups for Bluebell and herself. They dipped and emptied these thimble-sized cups until the breasts of their dresses were wet, utterly ignoring the gourd which hung on a nail just at hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BLUEBELL AND TILDY.

THEN they went behind the garden and along the eastern hill-slope, and gathered unto themselves large families of elders.

A little girl who has never played with these woods-babies cannot realize the delight there is in them. Warm from the sun and freshly green, they seemed more *alive* than the most complete doll. It always gave Bluebell a heartache to come upon a pile of withered elders left from a former play. She would dig out Rosa, or Lilly, or Alice, and look sorrowfully at the crackling drapery and shrunken body of that departed companion.

The elders were in bloom, so Tildy and Bluebell "p'tended" the white, fragrant smear made of so many little cups was a daughter's white skirt hanging below her green gown; for it was quite the thing

then for a child's embroidered skirt to show its rich hand-work below the short dress. The girls plunged into the midst of the elder thicket, surrounded by its incense, and came out with rustling arm-loads. To make an elder doll, you break it smoothly from the parent stem, and how beautifully the pith shows in the top of its head! then you leave arms at a suitable distance below — the elder's branches spring on exactly opposite sides — and strip all the leaves from these, except three at the extremities, which are hands. And last, you give the darling a length of bare stem for waist, and place her before you to admire the delicate brown bark of her face, which has an expression individual and distinct from the faces of her sisters.

Tildy and Bluebell sought their favorite play-houses up the hill, their arms loaded, and each leading an active young elder by the hand. The play-houses were some distance from their school-path.

"We ain't been here for so long," remarked Bluebell, panting up the steep with her family; "I wonder if anything's broke our acorn dishes?"

Tildy's house was a big rock cropping out of the soil. She had "up-stairs and down-stairs," for it was easy to go around behind and step on the top of the rock. Her down-stairs was well rugged with moss,

but the gray floor up-stairs stood bare and cool in the wood-shadows. Bluebell's residence was a mighty stump, cut clean and smooth at the top. She had dragged a fragment of rock near for a doorstone, and lived on that smooth, many-ringed floor. She had a back kitchen, of course, behind the stump, where her acorn delft was stored on little shelves made of bark, propped with pebbles from the run. A fleece of vivid moss, finer than the most gorgeous Persian rug, covered this kitchen. The late storm had only brightened this; but alas! her shelves and acorn cups were all to be built and stored again.

They placed themselves in their respective dwellings, surrounded by daughters, and talked across.

"Now, le's play *Thinks-I-to-Myself!*" said Bluebell; "it's such a funny book; and there's Miss Mandeville, and Robert, and Miss Twist, and old Mrs. Creepmouse — ain't that a queer name, Tildy! I read it all through, and skipped the parts where it was long. You have one of your dolls be Robert, and I have one of mine be Emily Mandeville."

Tildy allowed this to be done. The hero of *Thinks-I-to-Myself* was made of a very jaunty elder switch; and the girls put themselves into parts and at the same time moved their puppets. Robert sent a valentine of a grape-vine leaf to Miss Mandeville;

and Miss Mandeville used the language which she did in the book; and Miss Twist appeared at the ball pinned all over with flounces of her natural bloom, while an emerald chain of grass graced her neck. It was very interesting; but when they came to the marriage of the hero and heroine, the movers of the drama were at a loss for a suitable ceremony. They had never seen a wedding.

"Just join their hands," said Tildy, "and I'll say 'Bow-wow-whiddle-ink — Bow-wow-whiddle-ink!' That will do as well as anything."

So the three-leaved palm of Miss Emily was laid in the three-leaved palm of gallant Robert, and twisted together, and the couple propped by a tree. Overhead great branches were rocking with a musical rustle, and further up the hill a squirrel barked. Ants crept up the drapery of the bride-expectant, and a bunch of ferns moved as if to fan her.

Tildy took her stand in front, and Bluebell stood by, grouped around with the other characters in *Thinks-I-to-Myself*, such of them as could not stand lying gracefully on their backs. Tildy opened her mouth and said "Bow —" when Teeny, leading the baby, appeared on the scene.

"Didn't you hear me call you to supper?" she asked.

IN THE ELDER THICKET.

"No, we didn't hear anything."

"What you doing?"

"Ain't doin' anything," returned Tildy, somewhat shamefaced. Her weakness for elders was something Teeny failed to appreciate.

"We've played a story out of a book," explained Bluebell, "and now they are standing up to get married, and Tildy is going to say 'Bow-wow-whiddleink!"

"No, I ain't!"

"O, Tildy, please go on. And old Mrs. Creepmouse died, and we buried her under grass, with bushes for stones at her head and feet."

Teeny gurgled in her throat. She was a real grown young woman, you know, who sewed quilt-pieces and had one "Rising Sun" and "Pride of the West" done and quilted in shell-pattern and laid away. Still she did not laugh out loud, and kindly volunteered to help the bridal party out of their predicament.

"You can marry them by the old Connecticut law."

"How, Teeny! Oh you do it!"

So Teeny approached and said:

"By the old Connecticut law,
I marry this Indian to the squaw;
Kiss her and take her for your bride:
Now I pronounce you man and wife
All your life."

"Oh, how beautiful that was!" sighed Bluebell. "It doesn't make any difference 'cause they *wasn't* Indians, does it? Now le's put 'em in the houses, and cry 'goodb-y.' Everybody in the book *cries* when they talk. I don't see what made 'em cry when they just say something. It says 'cried my father,' 'cried Miss Mandeville.' I s'pose they felt bad."

Rocco helped to pile the elder-people, who had served their time and must lie shrivelling to-morrow, upon the rock and the stump. Then the human dolls who would have so many stories to play in their lives, went down hill chattering together, and sat on split-bottomed chairs around Liza's table. Rocco was lifted by *Josephus* and the other available books in the house. Their most luxurious dishes were custard and red currants; and the yellow faces of some of the crocks had yielded up their rich wrinkles, and they had cookeys, which Liza indulgently let them crumble in the cream.

"Don't go home yet," commanded Tildy, when the first star was trembling out of the evening light and the household gathered outside the door on chairs or step. "I'll take you clear to the bars, so you won't be 'fraid if it's dark."

"I ain't a coward," remarked Doctor Garde's val-

iant little girl. Doctor Garde's baby sat by Liza-Robert's knee. The evening milking was strained away in the spring-house, and the day's tasks were told. Teeny had pieced a dozen blocks; the mother folded her bony and work-worn hands, and looked toward the horizon with patient, meditative eyes.

"Hush!" said Tildy; "if you'd hear mother tell about the child in the blackberry patch, it 'ud make you a coward!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHILD IN THE BLACKBERRY PATCH.

"Tell it," begged Bluebell.

Liza Robert removed her eyes from the horizon and shook her head at Tildy. Her own girls were companions, to whom she freely imparted the most eldritch tales and wonders; but Doctor Garde objected to having his children's imaginations tinctured with the folk-lore of the region. She was so tender and indulgent, however, that no child need plead with her long. All gathered closer around her knees to hear the story of the child who wandered in the blackberry patch.

"It was just after I was married," said Liza Robert, "and long before Christeeny was born, that Robert come home one night from the Furnace and told us he had heard something in the blackberry patch. That was before we bought this land, and we

TILDY'S HOUSE.

lived in part of the old homestead and Abram's lived in the other part. It was a good three miles to the Furnace, but Robert walked there and back every day, and usually got home after dark. This was a summer night, and drizzlin' rain. He said it was yellow in the west, and the last thing the sun did as it went down was to make a rainbow, and that rainbow stood with one foot across the Rocky Fork, and the other away up in the laurels. Robert he crossed the blackberry patch about dusk."

"I know the blackberry patch," said Bluebell. Her mind mapped and tinted it. A high, undulating place terraced around with hills, and a large notch of sky showing in the west; blackberry thickets were grouped over it; there the katydids and cicadæ sang unceasingly, and grasshoppers thumped all over you, penetrating to the tightest part of your clothing, apparently seeking to be crushed, or to be relieved of a leg, while their bulging eyes expressed sulky reproach. It was a very lonesome place, full of echoes, and rank with grass, in which some of the boasted copperheads of the region had been killed.

"But it was lots wilder then," pursued Liza. "Part o' the bushes have been grubbed out since that time. But there was a sort of path some o' the men

livin' on the east road had worn right straight through it.

"So Robert he was about the middle of the patch when he hears a child begin to cry like its heart was breaking. Thinks he, somebody has been here pickin' berries to-day, and left a child behind. So he begun to call to it and tell it not to be afraid, Bob Banks was there, and he'd take it home. He waded into the grass and looked in different places for it. Now it seemed right at his hand, and now it would sound away off up the hills. It was the most mournful crying he ever heard; but hunt as he might he couldn't get sight of the child. So, after waitin' till it got too dark to see, he came home, and was for going back with Abram and a lantern to find that child.

"They got the lantern and went back and hunted that patch high and low, but never saw any child nor heard any cheep of it, and their wamuses was ready to ring out when they got home.

"Next day was Sunday, and we all went to mornin' meetin'. The neighbor women hadn't any of 'em been blackberryin' the day before, and hadn't heard of any lost child. So we'd have laughed at Robert if Eli Ridenour hadn't come past the Furnace Monday with *his* story. *He'd* heard the child in that patch.

He was coming through there about midnight Sunday night, when the most sorrowful cryin' anybody ever heard begun right close to him. Eli was always cowardly, and he took to his heels. He said it sounded like a woman swishin' through the grass with her long dress, and cryin' lonesome-like. But Robert stuck to it, it was more like a child scared half to death.

"People begun to think there was something wrong with that patch. Some said it was a gang of bad men that wanted to steal and had a cave somewhere near the patch; for there was a gang took in a cave 'way up the Rocky Fork when I wasn't much older than this baby. Mother Banks often told about it. And some said it *was* a child brought there to be lost and wander 'round till it died —"

"Like the babes in the woods," murmured Bluebell.

—"By folks that wasn't as good as they ought to be. And all kinds of stories were told. Some saw it settin' 'way up in a tree all in white, and some heard it under the ground, as if it was buried up and couldn't get out. Mr. Willey offered to go before a 'squire and make affidavit that he saw its eyes through the bushes, and they looked like live coals.

"So the neighbor men got together and staid in

the patch at night; they was bound and determined to find that child. They didn't hear a thing of it, and along in the night all of 'em fell asleep except Robert and Mr. Willey. They were all lying on the grass by a lot of blackberry bushes, and several of the men had their guns, for there was all kinds of suspicions, you know. And Robert said all of a sudden that crying begun again, up the hill at the back of the patch, and it was enough to melt a heart of stone. Mr. Willey and Robert they takes their guns, and they slips along —"

The children clustered closer to Liza's knee. Rocco opened her mouth; her black eyes scintillated through the dusk; and Bluebell threw a glance at the dark woods above the house.

"So they slips along and along, close to the ground. It was starlight enough to make things out pretty well. And what do you think they came across right at the edge of the woods?"

"Oh, a little lost baby!" cried Doctor Garde's little girl, "just like Mr. Post in the First Reader! I always loved that story."

Tildy puffed in derision.

"It was somethin' with great big shinin' eyes —"

"Oh," pleaded Bluebell, "it *wasn't* the thing that came after Peggy's Gold Leg?"

"No," said Liza, laughing; "it was an animal a good deal bigger than a dog; and it was all ready to spring off of a limb at them when Robert fired his gun, and over it rolled!"

"'Twas a painter!" announced Tildy, with a flourish of triumph.

Bluebell crouched in her seat. Had Tildy pronounced it panther, this would have meant little to her. But a "painter!" The Rocky Fork colloquialism bristled with terrors. A "painter" had degrees of ferocity which even a bear could not attain. Lions were the only superiors to "painters," and, after all, the name of lion had not that hollow, frightful sound to be found in "painter!"

"Oh my!" breathed Bluebell.

Roxana hid her head under Liza's apron.

"They skinned it," said Liza; and this enabled the children to breathe more freely. A skinned "painter" cannot be as formidable to the mind as one with his robes on. "And we've got the skin yet. I've heard tell painters would cry like women or children to draw folks near so they could eat them. But that's the only one shot on the Rocky Fork since this country was new. We always called it 'The Child in the Blackberry Patch.'"

There were those dear elder dollies lying in the

play-houses up hill. All night they must hear the trees whisper — now low, as if just dropping asleep;

BLUEBELL'S RESIDENCE.

now loud, and breathing deeply, as if startled by something more than a fresh breeze: they must hear the

mysterious crackling of twigs, the fall of some crumbling part of a rotten log, the hoot of night-owls, the rattle of the tree-frog, and the dense cry of insects which made the air one unbroken sheet of sound; the dew would gather on their barky faces. Of course they were nothing but elders — but were they at all afraid? — or telling "painter" stories among themselves? Hour by hour their juices would dry, and to-morrow the bright and blooming Emily Mandeville and the bedizened Miss Twist would be old and withered elders, and day after to-morrow you might grind them to powder!

A voice calling from the lower bars with a horn-like rise and fall — a homely, but a comfortable sound — summoned not Rose and Pidey, but the children, to come home.

"Ah!" sighed Bluebell, as she rose reluctantly. She was very loath to ask, but she wanted to know so badly. "That painter's *dead* now, ain't it, Liza?"

"Why, honey, it was killed long before Teeny was born!" This was indeed a relief.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST TIME.

WHEN everything was settled, the Rocky Forkers said they were not surprised that Doctor Garde was going to move. A man always ought to better himself; but they hoped he *would* better himself. The Rocky Fork was rough and hilly, but some towns might be worse.

Miss Calder was to take the children home with her; but the Doctor, able to ride about with his arm in a sling, had to collect fees and settle his business before departing to a new field.

So Bluebell came the last time to the log schoolhouse. She might not see it again.

"The children shall visit you every summer, Liza," said the young man.

"And you must come to see them," urged Miss Melissa. But Liza knew the old time was forever

broken up. And Bluebell knew that when she came back the schoolhouse would not be her schoolhouse, nor Mr. Pitzer, if he still reigned, her master; yet in her bustle and anticipation, regrets were crowded to a corner of her mind, and she felt important on this last day. Mr. Pitzer had written a beautiful parting address to her on half a tall foolscap sheet, in his fairest hand, upstrokes light and downstrokes artistically shaded, with such wonderful turning W's and other capitals, throwing fantastic vines all around. He had ornamented the top with a bird and a fish in red and green inks, each being deftly finished by a continuous flourish without the pen having been lifted from the paper. The address began, "Dear Youth;" and went on to describe life as a stream, and a child as a young voyager who was bidden to beware of quicksands, whose sky your old friend hoped might be ever free from storms. "How touching was a young and interesting mind just unfolding its petals to the sunlight! Whoever should bring it to perfect flower, it would always be a source of pleasure to your old friend to remember that he was the first to lead it in the ways of knowledge. May heaven bless and richly endow my young friend! Your schoolmaster,

"THOMAS PITZER."

Bluebell folded the paper reverently. She could not

read many of the words; it was necessary to add more years to her life before this production could be appreciated in its magnitude. But she was very

"THEY BROUGHT BACK BUNCHES OF HONEYSUCKLE."

grateful for such a testimonial, and some odd tender string began vibrating in her little heart. O dear

Mr. Pitzer! and dear old benches that smelled like the chest carved by Antony of Trent! The very dunce-cap was a thing of joy when she thought of it! How funny it looked on a blubbering little boy who would not repent of his misdeeds until he was stood in the middle of the floor with that paper cone on his head! Should she ever know again the hungry smell of a reticule that has a few stale crumbs in it? She had her way all day. She visited, and when she and Tildy asked to go after the water, not a soul in school would have been a rival candidate for the same office.

They brought back bunches of honeysuckle from Langley's well, and the smell of that flower became forever associated in Bluebell's mind with worm-eaten benches, clay-chinked walls and the stirring air of the hills. She wore her best blue calico, and felt so dressed up as to have lost part of her identity. So Tildy rested the pail-handle on a stick, and silently carried the short end herself. And when they put the water-pail on its bench in the corner, Jo Hall got permission to pass it around (another fat office in primitive school-life), and not one mouth within those walls could refuse to press the dripping gourd when it presented itself, splashing cold drops on bare feet, or sending delicious shudders through thinly covered

limbs. When Jo Hall reached Bluebell, he dropped in her lap not only a thumb-paper bearing her name, but a lot of birds ingeniously folded in the pattern generally accepted by the school.

Perintha Pancost had her pocket so bulging full of new apples that it weighed her down, and all the scholars on her bench swallowed expectantly. But, one after the other, they were passed to Bluebell, through hands which only stopped them on the way for a smell; so Bluebell's pocket bulged, and she and Perintha exchanged the most amiable and confiding smiles. Mr. Pitzer was so busy mending pens, he perhaps saw no occasion for bringing out and reading that article of the rules which forbade eating "*apples, condiments, and nuts, or going to dinner-bags in school hours.*"

How kind all those boys and girls were! John Tegarden showed her the "Death of the Flowers," in the Fourth Reader, which he was learning to speak before summer school was out, for the "last day;" and, as it had a melancholy tone, Bluebell felt vaguely complimented. She would be away off in Sharon on that day; she would not even see the prizes distributed, to say nothing of missing that spelling prize herself.

Some of the parents who were not too busy harvest-

ing, would be there in their Sunday clothes; the children themselves would appear in different character, all shod in stiff shoes or jaunty slippers; the fortunate girls in white dotted swiss, or book muslin, with rosettes of ribbon in their tightly braided hair, the poorer ones in starched calico; the boys dressed exactly like their fathers, and looking like little old men, very much subdued by the calamity of clothes.

But still there probably were grander gala days in Sharon.

Amanda Willey would have Bluebell stand next to her in the ring at noon when they played "*I lost my glove yesterday, found it to-day.*" Of course Tildy stood on the other side, and Perintha, who went around with the glove—which was simply and solely an empty reticule, there being no glove in the entire school wardrobe—dropped it behind Bluebell. They abstained from "*Drown the Duck,*" because she hated the tiresome ins and outs, and was sure to be drowned by dashing straight at the leader.

Even the boys left "*Bull in the Pen,*" and "*Mad Dog,*" to say nothing of "*Base*" and "*Three Old Cat,*" and condescended to play for once with the girls, if the girls would play that variation of "*Hide and Seek*" known to them as "*Hickamy-dickamy;*" and to Bluebell was reserved the right of repeating the cabalistic

formula by which the panting and eager crowd was narrowed down to the one party who had to hide his eyes. With dipping forefinger she went the rounds, rejoicing in the liquid roll of the words:

> "Hickamy-dickamy, aliga-mo;
> Dick slew, aligo-slum;
> Hulkum, pulkum, peeler's gum:
> France — you're out!"

The lot fell on Minerva Ridenour, that little baby-faced thing who was always standing about with her mouth open, as if perpetually astonished at the world, and who could not even eat an apple without showing how her white first-teeth made cider of the fruit. There were plenty of places to hide: behind logs and trees, behind the schoolhouse and the schoolhouse door. Before she had counted a hundred, with her eyes hid against the base, not a bobbing head or glint of calico could be seen in the landscape; and when, rubbing the smear which darkness had made, off her sight, she wandered cautiously a few yards from the base, lo! there were half a dozen long-legged fellows patting it, having swooped from overhanging branches or from behind logs. Forms appeared everywhere, and the little Black man ran valiantly, but overtook only one or two at the base, where she

patted excitedly, calling the individual names of the entire school, until she was checked, and reminded if she called anybody's name before he appeared, that party could "come in free." Jo Hall and John Tegarden remained out when all the rest stood in a scarlet and perspiring group! and it was ludicrous to see Minerva fly back to the base as if drawn by an elastic rope which she had stretched, every time an alarm rose behind her or she saw a suspicious spot. On the other hand, the found majority shouted warning or encouragement to the invisibles:

"Lay low, Jo!"

"Run, John, now's your time! Run! run! run!"

John had hid in the hollow towards the Rocky Fork, and his long legs at his distance were pretty equally matched against Minerva's tardier feet at her distance. It was an exciting moment, in which the majority patted its hands and knees and shouted with all its might. Minerva came in gallantly, but John reached over her at the last instant and patted the base: "One, two, three!" And then his impetus carried him sprawling on the ground. It was John's nature to throw his entire sensitive soul into what he undertook, and he did not enjoy the girls' laughing and the boys' hooting as he scrambled upon "all-fours." He did not know he was to do martial service

for his country and to die the death of a soldier. The noble possibilities of the boy were at that time only apparent in his tenderness of heart. It was an aggravation to an awkward fellow like John to see Jo Hall sail in and encircle the base while Minerva was farthest from it, as if Mercury's wings grew on his neatly moving heels; pat it triumphantly, and step back with his head up, as if graceful success was a matter of course for him.

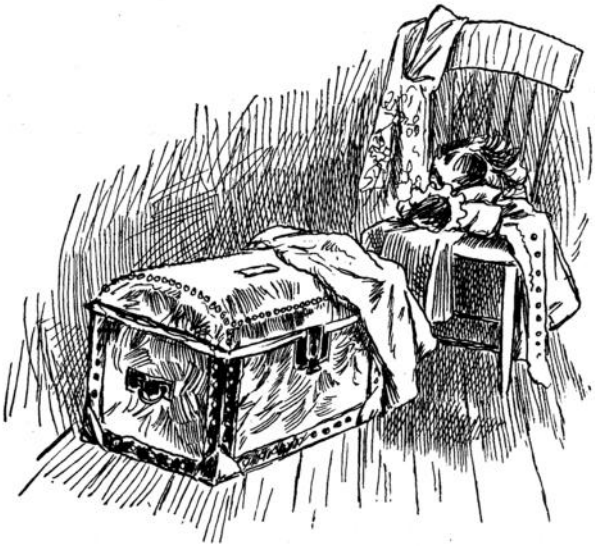
Oh, they had so much fun! If there was anything in the world more exhilarating than running right through when the Black Man calls, Doctor Garde's little girl had yet to encounter it. Then there was that similar play, with a shiver in it:

> "How many miles to Barley-bright?"
> "Three score and ten."
> "Can I get there by candle-light?"
> "Yes, if the witches don't catch you!"

But the school-day ended. Bluebell put her reader and spelling-book into her reticule. She got one last head-mark. And the lessons the higher classes had read that afternoon, made a background of thought in her mind — the magnificently worded "Con-fla-gra-tion of an Am-phi-theatre," and that rousing story of a son's return, beginning, "It was

night. The widow of the Pine Cottage had laid on her last fagot."

One by one the boys and girls went out, bowing or



BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE GARRET.

cortesying to the master, and he laid special emphasis on the "*Good*-evening" which he gave Bluebell.

How soon it was all over! And how soon the very evening before her departure had come! The clothes she was to wear on the journey were laid out on a

chair, and her mother's trunk brought down from the garret, repaired and packed. After all, it was decided to let Roxana stay with Liza until her father was ready to depart. In her own flutter, Bluebell scarcely anticipated missing the baby.

Tildy came over to stay all night, and they played until late. She brought her John Rogers' Primer as a parting gift for Bluebell to "remember her by." Its frontispiece represented the martyr, John Rogers, burning at the stake, surrounded by soldiers with axes, and his numerous family, in very short-waisted gowns or mature-looking coats. The delightful rhymes within its covers almost repeated themselves:

> "Time cuts down all,
> Both great and small."

> "In Adam's fall
> We sin-ned all."

> "Zacharias he
> Did climb a tree,
> His lord and master
> For to see;"

and many others with an old-fashioned tang like that of a winter apple kept far into the spring. And there was, besides, John Rogers' address to his children.

On receiving this precious pamphlet, Bluebell drew from her own stores her oldest and dearest book, the "*Hymns for Infant Minds*," in pink pasteboard covers. There was this prime favorite:

> "My father, my mother, I know,
> I cannot your kindness repay;
> But I hope as the older I grow,
> I shall learn your commands to obey.
> You loved me before I could tell
> Who it was that so tenderly smiled;
> But now that I know it so well,
> I should be a dutiful child."

And there, too, was Mr. Pitzer's battle piece:

> "Let dogs delight," &c.,

And,

> "I thank the goodness and the grace
> Which on my birth has smiled;"

with dozens of other gently stimulating hymns which Bluebell had long known by heart. In giving this book to Tildy, she gave as nearly a part of her identity as could be separated from herself.

Morning came—early, but moist and shady among the hills. The girls were up before anybody else

in the house. Tildy hooked Bluebell up with maternal care, and combed the tangles out of her hair with an energy which came near straining their friendship at that last moment.

Then Liza bustled about breakfast, and the baby waked in the unusual stir. Miss Melissa moved out of her chamber in the dignified habit which she had laid aside after her arrival at the Rocky Fork. Father did not ride away until the party was ready to start. Abram with his spring-wagon was to drive them to the station: father was still a left-handed horseman.

The last, and almost the very best, breakfast of Rocky Fork life was just over, when Robert's Liza and Teeny came trailing up the meadow, their dresses deeply touched with dew. Teeny brought her rough-coated china lamb as a parting gift; she had outgrown such toys; but Bluebell could only give her a kiss in return, for all her treasures were under lock and key.

Then a rattling was heard along the lane, and Abram appeared with his horse and spring-wagon. He had two split-bottomed chairs for his travellers, but for himself, a board across the wagon was good enough. He let down the bars, and drove in to take on the trunks. And then Bluebell realized that she was going away from home!

"GOOD-BY, B'UEBELL, GOOD-BY!"

Does the child leave you so lightly, old weather-beaten house! Never mind. Years will bring you your revenge: you will live in her mind forever, a symbol of joy which does not come when we are older.

She is squeezing the little sister, responding to Tildy's stoical hug—and Tildy starts straight to the lower bars, her brimming eyes turned from the company. Liza-Robert is caressing her with some pious words, and now she is tight in Liza's arms, just realizing how soft and comfortable and dear they have been. She hangs to Liza while Miss Melissa makes her adieux, and Teeny gives her another pat as Abram hoists her into the vehicle.

Father is ready on his Arabian to ride beside them as far as Mary Ann post-office. They will take the long way around the hills.

The bars are put up behind them. Bluebell looks back and sees her group of friends moving into the house, and hears Rocco's voice—like the voice of the old house — calling persistently:

"Good-by, B'uebell, good-by! Good-by, B'uebell!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST RAILROAD TRAIN.

"FATHER," said Doctor Garde's little girl, when she saw the branching road ahead on which he must ride away from her, "you won't get into the Rocky Fork again, *will* you?"

"If I do, it will barely reach my saddle-girth now," replied father, smiling.

"But you'll be careful, won't you, father?"

"Yes, I'll be careful."

Both his horse and Abram's wagon were checked when the roads separated, while a few adieux were said. He shook hands with Miss Melissa and kissed his little girl. In a few moments he was cantering away, and Bluebell felt launched on the unknown world by herself. There was Abram, however, a figure to whom she had been accustomed so large a part of her life. And though he seemed nothing but

a figure now, driving silently and looking straight ahead, for Abram was a reticent man, he was most significant of home. It was a long drive to the railroad station. Mary Ann post-office was quite back in the wilderness, and Bluebell had always thought it a suburb of the great world.

They stopped in the woods far from any house, and had their dinner. Liza had put up the best of lunches and plenty of cold tea. Abram unhitched his horse and led it to a stream to drink; then he took a sack of feed from the space behind the trunks, and fed it. Miss Calder and Bluebell sat on their chairs, but Abram took his dinner resting on the grass. When they had stopped half an hour by Miss Calder's time, he hitched the horse again, and they moved briskly forward lest they should be too late at the station for the afternoon Baltimore and Ohio passenger train.

As they came down a slope, Doctor Garde's little girl saw what she thought was an immense long boat sliding across a grassy plain with a roar which terrified her. It was as strange a sight as a blue or scarlet moon in the sky.

"Oh, look at that!" she cried: "what is it?"

"That's the east-bound passenger," said Miss Melissa. "Our train will be down soon now."

So that strange vision was "the cars."

She had heard of their rapid motion, and was prepared to see them shoot like a meteor; they were a little disappointing in that respect. But the smoke, the noise! And the possible danger! Suppose that train had changed its direction, and had run up the slope straight at Abram's wagon! Bluebell had no doubt the mysterious sliding power could move where it pleased. But when they alighted at the station, she saw stretching in front of it, and as far as eye could see on each side until the parallel lines became points or disappeared behind hills, iron rails laid on a prepared road. This was the railroad; the flying boat could not leave it for a turf track and prosper. Here was matter for congratulation; but a new fear arose in the little girl's mind which she would not on any account have betrayed. If the cars ran on wheels, as aunt Melissa explained that they did, how *could* those wheels keep from slipping off the polished tops of the rails? and if they departed ever so little, Bluebell knew what must follow. Her vision of riding on the cars began to take a lurid nimbus. Still, other people had ventured and lived.

The station was a small lonely building, but several handsome farm-houses could be seen in the landscape. There were two rooms inside, in one of which a little machine clicked all the time. There were poles all

along the railroad, with wires stretched along their tops, and Bluebell noticed that these wires came down through a window to this machine. She knew what that was. It was the telegraph. She had heard things went more quickly over that than over the railroad.

"I hope father and Rocketty will ride on that when they come to aunt Melissa's house," she thought. "Wouldn't the baby's eyes pop when they went spinning along so fast! But what do folks do when they get to the poles? I should think the tops of the poles 'ud hit 'em. I guess they just swing round the poles and go on. I don't believe I could go very fast if they *was* telegraphin' me."

Miss Melissa sat on a bench in the station. Abram had attended to the tickets and had the trunks marked for delivery at Newark. He then drove his horse some distance away, and having secured it, came back to see his party off.

Bluebell slipped her hand into his and stood by him on the platform.

"You'll soon be off now," said he.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you glad to get away from the Rocky Fork?"

"Oh, *no*, sir! But I want to learn at a big seminary."

"That's a fact," said Abram, as if deliberation had convinced him of it.

"Mr. Banks, I s'pose you'll see Tildy?"

"It's likely I will; yes, it's pretty likely."

"If you do see her, I wish you would please tell her to write to me; I forgot to ask her."

"I don't know's she can write."

"But Teeny can. And Tildy said she was going to have a copybook as soon as her mother bought her some foolscap paper. I am going to learn to write. I am going to play music, too, Mr. Banks."

"Yes, it's likely you'll learn a heap of fine things."

"Don't you s'pose Teeny would write a letter *for* Tildy?"

"That don't seem onreasonable," admitted Abram. "Christeeny writes a fair hand. Robert, he was a good scholar. He read the Bible and Josephus clear through."

"Yes, sir. And Jo Hall said they were singin' so nice at g'ography-school now."

"That's good learning," said Abram, drolly; "but ther's many another thing a man'd better know than singin' g'ogr'phy. F'rinstance: how to ford a creek!"

Before Doctor Garde's little girl could do complete justice to this pleasantry, which she and Abram, of

all persons, were able to appreciate, the air was rent with a scream that turned the whole landscape for one instant into a nightmare.

"That's the cars," said Abram; "don't you see the smoke comin' round the hill?"

Miss Calder came out on the platform. The glittering monster of the rails bore down upon them as if determined to have their lives. The station agent stood ready to attend to baggage or express matter.

Before Bluebell could get her breath evenly, she was being helped up steps after Miss Calder, was walking along a long narrow room with windows on each side, and being seated beside aunt Melissa on a velvet-upholstered seat. Red, bright velvet, gayer than Rocco's best flowered winter dress which Liza made of a remnant of brocaded velvet among mother's things. The seats were very soft and spongy, too. Bluebell furtively bounced up and down while Miss Melissa was settling comfortably. She sat on a seat facing her. A man obligingly turned it over for them. All at once the station began to slide backwards; and before she could recover from this, the woods and hills gently slipped away as if they had grown tired of such everlasting rest. The train was moving! What was a wagon or a horseback ride compared to this! Teetering on a sapling, or on a board stuck

through the fence, or swinging in a grape-vine, must forevermore be secondary methods of motion. But where was Abram? She stretched her head out of the open window, and Miss Melissa nervously pulled her in just in time to save her flat from a flight.

But Bluebell had seen Abram far back, plodding up the road behind the station.

"I didn't bid him good-by," she thought ruefully, as this last symbol of her country home vanished from sight. She felt a momentary pang, such as maybe shoots through a little plant torn from its cherishing ground to be transplanted.

But there was aunt Melissa sitting up so grand, her veil over her face and her delicate gloved hands enclosing her vinaigrette, ready for the headache which threatened her when travelling. She was a symbol of that larger life opening before the child.

Miss Calder was suffering a peculiar martyrdom. In every fibre of her sensitive nature she felt that she had robbed the lonesome spinster among the hills, who had not half her resources. But, on the other hand, she had but performed her sacred duty to the dead and the living. She knew she was considering the welfare of the children more than her own wishes. It was a waste for the refined young doctor to spend his life and energies at the Rocky Fork when by her

influence she could help him to a position better suited to him. He was so humble and sorrowful himself, he had not considered that he owed a future to his dead wife's children.

Still Miss Melissa felt she had performed a very painful duty, and regretted that she had not done it years before; for anything neglected brings with it long arrears of interest.

But Bluebell was in a fever of delight. Every object seen on that journey was stamped upon her mind for life.

When they slid into Newark, at which point their trip by rail ended, the city glamour enveloped her. To be sure, they passed squalid houses, worse than the most illy kept cabins about the Rocky Fork; and she got swift glimpses of dirty children and pens of back yards, — in short, of all the unsavory sights which spot the outskirts of a city. But these seemed picturesque. The folks must have a good time living "in town." If the children were filthy, they could have candy every day, probably, and walk on sidewalks. Teeny said folks in Fredericktown never soiled the soles of their shoes. And oh, how beautiful the tall buildings were, when the slowly moving train, ringing its bell in state, gave glimpses of them! Streets stretching far as eye could see, carpets, dry

goods, immense windows, people hurrying about dressed in their Sunday clothes and looking as if they felt the importance of living in town; carts rattling, long painted and gilded carriages with a man riding on top, appearing and disappearing around corners; and more than all, the roar of human life! How grand was a city! She even loved the smell of it, which consisted principally of escaping gas, not in good odor with more experienced noses.

Doctor Garde's little girl was in a nervous hurry to follow aunt Melissa out of the train when it stopped. She remembered its imperceptible starting, and what should she do if it carried her off by mistake? A man in blue clothes lifted her down from the last high step, and she kept close to Miss Calder. From the dingy brick dépôt came a light-haired smiling man in very neat clothes. He carried a whip in his hand.

"How do you do, Archibald?" said Miss Calder with great affability. "Have you got the carriage here?"

Archibald took off his hat and bowed, smiling all the time in the most laughter-provoking way, and replied that he was quite well, and hoped he saw Miss Calder looking well. The carriage was on the other side of the dépôt.

Miss Calder said she was in excellent health, but felt threatened with a headache and would be glad to get home. She hoped everything had gone well.

Archibald assured her everything had moved as usual, except the house didn't seem the same; and he would put her trunk up behind the carriage immediately if she could wait one minute.

"There are two trunks," said Miss Calder: "that one beside mine which that man is pulling out of the way, is Melissa's."

Archibald applied himself to loading the baggage on a rack behind the carriage. Then he made haste to open the door, let down the steps, and help his mistress and her charge in. The carriage was roomy and comfortable, and drawn by two fat sleepy-looking horses, black as coal and groomed until they glittered. They seemed on the best of terms with Archibald, who called them Coaly and Charley.

Miss Calder leaned back with a satisfied sigh as they started. The cushions were easy and the stuffed back supported one to the shoulders.

It was quite sunset when they left Newark behind and drove towards the yellowing west. The three or four miles intervening between the railroad town and Sharon was a succession of lovely landscapes, and seemed one of those suburban extensions

which rich men love to beautify with their villas. There was no ruggedness like that about the Rocky Fork. The hills rose in majestic proportions but softened outlines. In the afterglow left by sunset the country had an unearthly beauty. The road constantly broadened; villa after villa appeared, each standing in spacious grounds. They reached the top of an ascent, and saw Sharon set below, surrounded by hills and glittering like a huge topaz in the evening light. As they descended they lost sight of her. She was drowned from view among her abundant foliage. Bluebell began to think the road had turned aside from her, when they came sweeping around a curve and past an artificial lake, and were in Sharon's main street, so broad that many carriages like Miss Melissa's could drive there abreast. The street was quite lively with carriages, and Miss Calder exchanged greetings with numbers of people. One tall white building was beginning to glitter with lights from roof to ground. She knew it must be an important place, and asked with awe what it was.

"That's the seminary," replied Miss Calder.

Doctor Garde's little girl felt almost dizzy as she was obliged to withdraw her eyes from the great mill of learning.

They drove far up this wide street and turned down

another. The carriage stopped. Archibald opened a gate and drove half way around a sweep under tall trees, and brought them to the steps of a large old house. It was brick. Bluebell could see vines massed over one whole end of it. There was a tall pillared veranda extending along the entire front.

The hall-door was open, and within, a globe of light hung suspended from the ceiling. Bluebell thought of the Discontented Cat who went to live with the Countess Von Rustenfustenmustencrustenberg, as she was ushered into this hall and the double parlors which opened from it. She walked on bouquets of velvet flowers as large around as a tub. The lofty rooms appeared to Bluebell one vast collection of treasures. She did not know there were such pictures, such chairs and ornaments and lounges and curtains in the world.

In this house three or four generations of Calders had lived and died. It was the first fine house built in Sharon by one of the Massachusetts colonists when the country was new. It had been remodeled and added to, and its furniture changed with the family tastes or fortunes. But the Calders never destroyed an old thing. Its former belongings were sure to be preserved in some way.

Miss Melissa entered her own room which opened

from the back parlor, and took off her wraps, bidding Bluebell take off hers also. And again Dr. Garde's little girl was astonished by the sumptuousness of her surroundings. Then aunt Melissa opened a door into a bathroom, and refreshed herself by bathing her hands and face at a marble stand, and called Bluebell to do likewise.

CHAPTER XXII.

MISS BIGGAR.

BUT in spite of its beauty and spaciousness, this seemed rather a lonely house, Bluebell thought, when she was ready for tea, and had nothing to do but gauge her surroundings. Aunt Melissa floated about, showing fatigue in every motion, but anxious to examine into the state of her house. Doctor Garde's little girl wished for Rocco, or that Tildy would walk in, poking her toes into the pile of the carpets. Wouldn't Tildy be s'prised! About this time, she and Teeny were sitting on the front steps. And the wind from around the hill was rustling through the elders — dear elders! Rose and Pidey were standing to be milked. There was moonlight all over the Rocky Fork — but not like this lonesome-looking moonlight sifting through aunt Melissa's trees. Maybe that big white seminary wasn't

half as nice as the log schoolhouse when you came to find out. And what master could be kinder or know any more than Mr. Pitzer? O Rocky Fork, how this little heart ached for you! Maybe father would get hurt again. Oh this pain of homesickness for what you love! If she could just hug the baby one blessed minute, or feel Liza's fostering hand tying up the ends of her auburn braids!

"Why, my dear!" exclaimed Miss Melissa moving back from a closet, "what can be the matter? Is it possible I hear you crying?"

She stooped and put her hand under Bluebell's chin. The child smeared her face vigorously with her palms.

"I guess it's only some water runnin' out of my eyes," she said with heroism and a hiccup.

Miss Melissa set on a sofa and drew her charge's head to her thin shoulder.

"You feel lonely. But plenty of nice little girls will come to call on you; and think! your father and little Roxana will be here soon."

"Yes'm," struggled Bluebell, smothering down her sobs. This was no way to show Irish pluck.

Miss Melissa trembled slightly.

"This place seems strange to you. But your mother used to play all over this house. She sat in

this very room and sewed and talked with me many an afternoon."

Bluebell looked about, feeling less repelled. Her mother's presence had touched this and that, and in some sense still lingered there for her.

"I am growing to be an elderly lady, and all my relatives are distant or dead. The warmest friendship of my life was formed for your mother, and I could not help wanting to bring her children into my house, that I might do all I can for them."

"Yes'm," responded Bluebell, having conquered her sobs and shut them below her throat with a large lump laid on their heads.

"And I did hope you might be happy, that maybe you would want to make your old auntie happy — "

"O aunt Melissa, you ain't old!"

"Old enough to feel very lonely."

This touched Bluebell, in her present mood, more deeply than anything said before. She put one arm around aunt Melissa's narrow waist; the lady patted her.

"There, now, we'll try to be cheerful. I presume you are hungry and tired, and the tea-bell has been ringing while we were talking. When you have something to eat and are rested you will feel a great

deal better. Run and bathe your face, and then we will go into the dining-room."

In the dining-room a real fairy feast was set forth. As for the silver and china, Bluebell had never imagined its like. The table was round and cosy, and though she sat opposite aunt Melissa, they seemed quite near together. The neatest and plumpest of women came in to wait on them. This was Maria, who had been with Miss Calder a dozen years. Maria looked pleased and rosy as she exchanged greetings with the lady of the house.

"I hope you found everything right when you came in, ma'am. I had some cake in that I daren't leave a minute."

"Everything seems in excellent order, Maria. Were there any letters?"

"A good many papers. I put them on the libr'y table."

"That was right."

Maria went out, and Bluebell went on carefully with her supper. Eating and drinking were made beautiful. It was a joy to sip her milk — with a little hot tea poured into it as a tonic for her spirits, which Miss Calder approved of — from a cup so transparent it seemed too strong a breath must blow it away; to watch the tall shining urn and chased

tray, and even the carved wooden clock on the wall, from which, while Bluebell watched it, there suddenly

MISS LIBBIE BIGGAR.

dipped out a little bird, calling, "Coo-coo!" eight distinct times.

Before his last note quite ceased, a sharp pat of slipper-heels came flying through the hall, and a small person appeared at the dining-room door.

"Oh, that's you, is it, Libbie? I was just hoping you would come in."

"When did you get home?" cried Libbie in a clear, high voice.

"About a half-hour ago. Is your grandmamma well?"

"She is very well, I thank you."

Libbie was taking an inventory of the little girl opposite Miss Calder.

"Melissa," said Miss Calder, in the formal manner which she considered it requisite to use even towards children, "let me present Miss Libbie Biggar. Miss Libbie, my namesake, Melissa Garde."

Miss Libbie stepped back, placing the toe of her right foot across the heel of her left, and made a graceful bow. She did it evidently without thought. Her manner was perfectly easy. Bluebell struggled to get up, and dropped a poor little half-courtesy.

"I hope you are well," said Miss Biggar.

Bluebell replied that she was *tolerably* well. This young lady, no older than herself, confused and humbled her. She admired Miss Libbie's air and composure, her low-necked and short-sleeved white

dress, her small slippers, the ribbon around her waist, and the tiny ring on her hand. But her head — it was the most wonderful head Bluebell had ever seen. Its heavy dark hair was shingled close, "like a boy's, only cut shorter!" The effect was fine. Bluebell despised her own auburn braids. And Miss Libbie had black eyes, a short nose, and a few charming dots of freckles sprinkled over her altogether piquant face. She came towards Miss Calder, and took that lady's hand within her dimpled fingers, and on invitation sat down to have a bit of cake. Every motion was watched by Doctor Garde's little girl. How hopeless her own bashful awkwardness seemed! Wouldn't Tildy be s'prised to see a little girl act so much like a grown-up lady!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DUCK AMONG SWANS.

AFTER tea was over they went into the back parlor; and here Bluebell noticed for the first time a large, shining object standing on carved and claw-footed legs. The top was partially covered by an embroidered cloth. But Miss Libbie Biggar was perfectly familiar with it. She tried to move the front of it, and Miss Melissa finally opened a folding lid for her, disclosing a long row of brilliant black and white ivory keys.

"Do you play on the piano?" inquired Miss Libbie politely, turning to her new acquaintance.

"Melissa is going to take lessons at once," replied Miss Calder for her.

This, then, was a py-anna! Oh wonderful instrument! While yet voiceless, it threw its glamour over Doctor Garde's little girl. She at once re-

solved to master its harmonies. Some stray poetic instinct, of which she was half ashamed, made her love the irregular tinkle of a cow-bell among the hills, the echoing ring of a blacksmith's hammer; and she had often followed a bird, called at the Rocky Fork a "medder-lark," with her head upturned and her breast thrilling, till her unguided feet perhaps betrayed her to the run or some mud-hole.

Miss Libbie climbed upon the music-stool, ready without invitation to make a display of what she had superficially learned. But from the instant her fingers touched the key-board, one listener sat rapt almost beyond expression. The richness of the instrument was wonderful to Bluebell. Its harmonies, which the young performer could not even hint at, yet suggested themselves to the silent child. Miss Libbie's hands, and the dimple each finger showed at its root when lifted to strike a note, seemed most admirable. Oh to be so accomplished! The performer played some little march, and such various exercises as she could remember. While she played, Bluebell was struggling with a dumb sense of having been defrauded thus far in her life. She ought not to be so behind that little girl. What had gone wrong? Was it her own fault? How could she learn music at the Rocky Fork? Still, she was

conscious of grief and shame, and many other unreasonable sensations.

"What pieces do you like best?" inquired Miss Libbie in a general way, wishing to be agreeable to this queer little girl.

"Oh, I like them all so much!" exclaimed Bluebell. Then a sob followed her voice. She ran to Miss Melissa, and was folded to that lady's shoulder. This spontaneous action helped the sore little heart, and she was able to stop her crying before it became a freshet.

"Oh dear!" said Libbie, turning around on the music-stool, "what's the matter? Have *I* done anything?"

"Everything is strange to her," murmured Miss Melissa; "she has never been away from her father before. She must go right to bed, and she will feel better in the morning."

Bluebell tried to smile over her shoulder at the caller.

"I think it's the music makes me cry!"

Libbie descended from the music-stool, evidently not flattered.

"Because I like it so much!" stammered Doctor Garde's little girl, ashamed of the confession thus wrung from her.

Miss Melissa patted the auburn head.

"Indeed! Well, you shall have all the music you want, my dear, and before you get through you may cry in another key over some difficult exercise."

Bluebell was marched up-stairs, overstrung and humiliated by her *début* into her new home. Libbie chose to follow, though her grandmother's domestic had been sent in to call her home.

Miss Calder perhaps had a little speech ready as she opened the door of the room Bluebell was to occupy. But she merely said with a tremor, "Your mother often occupied this room, Melissa."

And again the child felt that invisible presence which seemed to open such great vistas to her. The room itself was so sumptuous she dreaded damaging it.

Libbie gravely perched herself upon a chair, and watched while Miss Melissa laid out a nightgown from Bluebell's trunk which stood near the closet door waiting unpacking.

Doctor Garde's little girl undressed herself with tremulous hands and crept humbly into the unadorned cotton gown Liza had made. Then she said her prayers, and aunt Melissa tucked her under the cover, and reached up to turn off the gas.

"Are you coming down now, Libbie? Your grandmamma wants you."

"Yes'm, in a minute."

The little girl in bed thought, "She doesn't mind very well, anyhow;" and this was the first debit she found for Miss Libbie Biggar.

"Well, don't keep Melissa awake long to-night," said Miss Calder. She left the gas burning and hastened down-stairs, for the knocker made a mighty clang on the front door, and she knew some neighbor had come to welcome her back.

Miss Biggar sat up and looked at Doctor Garde's little girl, evidently interested in her. Bluebell turned her bashful face down on the pillow.

"Are you going to cry again?" inquired Miss Biggar. "Do you cry all the time?"

"I ain't crying," responded Bluebell, showing her face with some asperity.

"Your nose looks all swelled on the end. Why don't you have your hair shingled?"

"I don't know how," replied Bluebell, bewildered.

"Why, just go to a barber, and he'll shingle it. Grandma let me have mine done if I'd have my tooth pulled out so another could grow in. How old are you?"

"Goin' on nine."

Miss Libbie considered.

"What makes you say 'goin' on'?"

Bluebell might have replied that it was the custom

of the country where she came from. But she could not explain her provincialisms.

"I don't know."

"*Is* your name Melissa?" inquired Libbie, with a compassionate emphasis.

"Yes, it's Melissa Garde; but they always call me Bluebell."

"*Well.* That's a *great* deal better than Melissa. I wouldn't be called Melissa!"

"What's your name?"

"Elizabeth Biggar. I live with my grandma. My papa and mamma are both dead."

"My mother's dead."

"Have you got all her rings and jewelry?"

"No-o," replied Bluebell. "I don't believe she had any."

Libbie gave the speaker a long, compassionate stare. Then she turned to contemplating her own case.

"*Oh!* I have the *loveliest* things, and a gold watch in a satin case, and diamond ear-rings; but I have to wait till I'm eighteen years old before I can wear them, grandma says. Once we had a children's party and I wore my blue silk dress, and grandma let me put on the *handsomest* locket! I wish I would hurry and be eighteen."

"That's very old, isn't it?" said Bluebell.

"Yes. I'll be a young lady then."

Doctor Garde's little girl cast her eyes on the wall, and wondered if she would ever be a young lady. Teeny Banks was only a young woman. She could discern the difference, but her convictions were very strong that she could never become such an ornamental being as Miss Libbie Biggar. So, leaving this perplexity, she turned back for information.

"What do they do at a party?"

Miss Libbie stared again.

"Who?"

"Why, the children."

"Why, don't you know?"

Bluebell shook her head. She had "stayed all night" at Tildy's, marched, and spoken pieces at school, but her experience never comprehended a party.

"Well, didn't you ever go to a party?"

Doctor Garde's blushing little girl acknowledged her shortcoming.

"Oh my! Why, where did you use to live?"

"At the Rocky Fork."

"And didn't the children have birthday or Christmas parties there?"

Another shake of the auburn head.

"Well, that is the queerest thing!"

"But what do the children do at a party?"

"Why, they do just like grown people at their parties," replied Miss Biggar satisfactorily; and Bluebell sat up in bed and thought it over.

"Only," explained the young lady, "they go in the afternoon instead of evening. When my cousin came from Newark"—thrice happy Miss Libbie to have a cousin who lived in a city!—"to visit me, I had a lovely party, about twenty girls and most as many boys, and we had ice-cream at supper."

"What's that?"

Libbie rose from her chair, walked to the bedside, and seriously looked over her interlocutor.

"Vanilla ice-cream. Didn't you ever eat any?"

Doctor Garde's little girl felt that she was about to be routed with great slaughter. She had alighted upon a new world where the customs of the people were all strange to her, and it behooved her, she had at last the tact to perceive, to be more circumspect than to betray her ignorance so openly.

She changed the subject, and also her companion's attitude from the offensive to the defensive.

"Do you go to school?"

"Yes, I go to the seminary."

"I'm going there too. What do you study?"

"Music and Mental 'Rithmetic; and we print, and I'm going to take drawing lessons."

"And what do you read in?"

"The First Reader."

"Ho!" ejaculated Bluebell; and a shade of uneasiness came over Miss Libbie's face.

"What do *you* read in?" she inquired.

"I can read in most anything," replied Doctor Garde's little girl. "I'm in the *Second* Reader, pretty near to the Third. How far have you got in spelling?"

Libbie looked mystified.

"Can you spell in-com-pre-hen-si-bil-i-ty?"

"I don't want to."

"I can spell all the big words in the spelling-book."

This educated creature began to assume a formidable aspect in the eyes of Miss Biggar.

A rap on the door heralded Maria's head.

"Miss Libbie," said she, "your grandma says for you to come right home this minute. She's got something nice for you, and it won't keep."

"I'm coming now. I know what it is. It's ice-cream. You say I'm coming, Maria."

Maria withdrew her head.

"I live in the very next house," continued Libbie to Bluebell. "You must come and see me."

"I will," promised Bluebell.

"I'll bring some of the girls to call on you."

Bluebell did not know what to reply to this formidable proposal, so she said nothing.

Libbie's hand was on the door-knob; she had said good-night and received a response, but came running back with a most charming, childish impulse. She climbed on the bed and dabbed a quick soft kiss on Bluebell's lips. The door banged after her, and her slipper-heels clattered like a goat's feet on the padded stairway.

"She's a nice little girl, and she just reads in the First Reader, after all," thought Bluebell, dozing off, and not comprehending that this was a beginning in her life of finding wonderful images and proving them to be human.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISS MELISSA DROPS A FEW HINTS.

WHEN Bluebell waked in the morning she heard the cherry-tree whispering in her ear, and saw Liza's dresses hanging on the opposite wall. But the windows were misplaced, and everything swam after she got her eyes open, until the change in her habitation occurred to her. Then the Rocky Fork receded and this new home came forward with half-painful reality.

Before the child was dressed a tap at the door announced aunt Melissa. Aunt Melissa came in, looking delicate in a white trailing wrapper, and kissed her namesake good-morning. Then she unpacked the trunk, putting everything in its place, and pushed the small inconvenient thing outside the door for Archibald to carry up garret.

She left out Bluebell's best calico dress, and the

BEFORE THE CHILD WAS DRESSED.

little girl put it on, feeling that a perpetual but very serious holiday had come. That dress was good enough to wear to Sunday-school at the Rocky Fork. Tildy and Teeny's best dotted robes did not look any better. She liked it much better than her white. That white was such an unlucky dress. When she had it on she felt so extremely dressed that it distracted her attention from all the pleasant things in life. The first time she wore it she felt her importance expanding to the horizon all around; Tildy and Teeny in their dotted calicoes were mere maids of honor on her royal progress to church. But a man came along the deep-rutted road in his farm-wagon, and as Bluebell stepped out of his way, the wheel sank with a chug into a hole filled with mud preserved especially for bespattering the proud. Bluebell was splashed from head to foot; even her open-work stockings shared the eruption. The saddest part of such a humiliation is, that nobody in the least shares the heartbreak of it.

Teeny said she was sorry, but there was no time to stop to scrape the mud off. It would dry as they went along. Her manner plainly implied that in the case of very little girls like Bluebell, it made no difference at all if they looked like frights at church.

"You better run back home," said Tildy, holding

her parasol-handle across her shoulder, much as a woodman carries an axe, though the sun was making her wrinkle her freckled nose frightfully. Tildy considered that she knew the proper poise for parasols, and if the sun did not accommodate himself to that, it was his fault and not hers. Bluebell stood crying.

"You better run back home," said Tildy again, patronizingly.

"Won't you go back with me?" begged the victim.

But Tildy remembered her stiff-necked and conscious demeanor at the outset. Besides, *she* was not spattered, and she wanted to go to meeting. She declined going back. Doctor Garde's little girl was smitten with consternation that her own familiar friend refused to share her affliction. She went crying alone through the pine lane. And though the white dress came immediately to the wash-tub, still that recollection clung to it like a stain, and she liked the blue calico much better. It "dressed her up," but raised no wall of separation between her and her fellow-mortals. It simply relieved her of all anxiety about the appearance of Bluebell Garde, and left her the free use of her muscles. The blue dress had a broad belt and a very short skirt, a low neck and short puffed sleeves. Miss Melissa made it

more ornamental by a fine mull ruffle around the neck.

"Shall I put on my black silk apron too?" inquired Bluebell, as she stood to be hooked up, full of desire to bring herself up to her surroundings.

HOMESICK.

"I don't think I should," said Miss Melissa gently. Her hands were very soft and cool. She unfastened the pig-tails of auburn hair. "I have some pieces of old blue silk which I think we can turn into a very pretty bodice that you will like to wear better than

an apron. Libbie Biggar has a pink silk bodice which is very becoming. I notice there is very good velvet on the apron. With some lace I have, it will make you lovely bretelles."

Bluebell's head swam. If she could be spoiled by clothes, Miss Melissa was in a fair way to spoil her. A seamstress was to come that very day to fit the child out, and Miss Melissa looked forward with gentle excitement to this dressing of a living doll. Blue silk bodices and bretelles! But with that ready acceptance of beautiful things as a right which characterizes all children, and grown people too, un.il their fairy-faith is broken by accumulated loads of care, this little girl was able in a few moments to contemplate her prospects with serenity.

"But what are bretelles, auntie?"

"Ornamental straps or ladders which little girls wear over light dresses."

With a happy sigh, Bluebell gave up the black silk apron; it occurred to her to regret she had not worn it more. We do not realize that our good things in this world are all transitory, and to be enjoyed promptly, each in its season.

They went down-stairs to breakfast. The table was laid as exquisitely as the night before; in fact, the best things about the house seemed to be used

every day, without any reference to company.

"I am going to give you"—here aunt Melissa paused in pouring coffee to adjust something about the service, and Bluebell waited with a bit of buttered roll poised half-way to her mouth—"a little party, in a few days, to introduce you to your little associates."

"Me?" said Bluebell, stretching up her thin neck and opening her eyes quite wide.

"Yes, my dear."

"I never had a party! The little girl that came in last evening, Miss Libbie Biggar, said she'd had lots of 'em. I don't know any more about havin' parties than about playin' music."

"You may begin your music soon. The seminary vacation lasts some weeks yet. I noticed they had the seminary lighted up last evening for trustees' reception. But you need not wait until school opens, Melissa, my dear."

Miss Calder lifted a bit of steak very delicately with her fork: the forks were sterling silver, and very different from those to which this little girl had been accustomed.

"You are forgetting to eat with your fork, my dear."

Bluebell crimsoned. "Why, Liza always told me to eat with my knife!"

"But that is not the custom in good — here. I mention it," said Miss Melissa delicately, "because your little associates would probably notice it; and besides, you want to form your manners, don't you, my dear?"

Bluebell was so anxious to form her manners that she longed for a fairy wand to change herself into just what she ought to be. With native diffidence, however, she concealed this intense desire for perfection, and merely nodded her blushing face, saying, "Yes, ma'am."

"I notice that you are very observing. If you watch others and do as they do, your manners may be formed easily. And Melissa, my dear," — again auntie paused, and altered the arrangement of something on the table with her sensitive hands — "when little boys or girls are introduced to you —"

"Oh my! do they introduce little boys in Sharon?"

"Why, certainly; little gentlemen and ladies should be presented to each other as such. I was suggesting, when you are introduced to any one in fact, it has become the fashion to bow instead of to courtesy."

Bluebell wondered if she could do anything so boyish. But remembering Miss Libbie Biggar's model bow, her mind was fired with emulation.

CHAPTER XXV.

EVENTS.

SUNDAY came.

Dr. Garde's little girl was richer by one music-lesson, which Miss Melissa herself gave her; and by a blue shirred silk bonnet and muslin-gingham dress, as well as long black mitts, the like of which she had never seen before. Sunday was an important day in Sharon. This old Massachusetts colony retained many Puritan customs. All day the various church bells rang—for Sunday-school, for forenoon, afternoon and evening services. Miss Melissa and Bluebell moved on crowded sidewalks on their way to church. The little girl was astonished by the architecture which she saw around her. The church they entered seemed a sublime pile. They ascended a flight of broad steps, and passed through a matted vestibule into the vastest and whitest place Dr. Garde's little

girl had ever seen. The aisles were carpeted, many of the seats were cushioned, the pulpit was a sumptuous small parlor by itself, and music, so full and mighty that it made the air shudder with delight, came from some invisible place. She followed Miss Melissa's rustling clothes up the central aisle, and was placed beside her in one of the most comfortably padded pews, with footstools under foot, and books in the racks. The tremendous congregation spread on every hand. There were no men's side and women's side! Families sat in their own seats. The bald head of a father might be seen beside the dancing, bonneted head of his daughter. Everybody seemed solemn but exceedingly comfortable; and when the music ceased nothing but a whisper of fans could be heard. Through a door at one side of the pulpit came a saint-faced man, who ascended and opened the Bible. He looked very nice, and not a bit like that Mr. Joel Clark at the Rocky Fork who cruelly mortified her one Sunday when she ventured to peep between the leaves of her book while he was preaching in very loud and long-sounding words. Her eye had just caught an old English wood-cut — possibly one of Bewick's — when it seemed the world was tumbling about her ears! She could not believe

her senses. Mr. Clark was pointing his finger at *her*, and sinking her in seas of shame.

"That little girl," said he, "who is reading there, had better close her book and listen to the sermon."

Then the whole congregation looked at her as if they had always known she was a wretch. Perintha Pancost and Minerva Ridenour, who were just going to look into their books, sat up and appeared virtuously wrapped in the discourse, while Mr. Clark went on as if it was just right to crush a shrinking child by the way. And may be it *was* right. How did Bluebell know? He was a grown-up, good man, and a preacher, and she a little girl, of no account except in her relationship to Dr. Garde. She held the tears back with heroic struggles, but her face burned with hot blood; a mark was set upon her; and whenever Mr. Clark came around on the circuit, she could not bear to pass under his eye; and if he made an address to the Sunday-school, she cowered down behind the tall seats. This preacher in the Sharon church did not look as if he would point out little girls: therefore Bluebell liked him. The congregation stood up and turned around to sing, and then she saw the source of the music: two or three key-boards like a treble piano, on which a young man played, and a great row of pipes in a mass of woodwork which she

did not understand. There were some people who stood in a class holding singing-books, and this singing school was up in a high place like a slice of a second story, and this second story extended also around the sides of the church.

Miss Libbie Biggar sat in a pew the other side of a partition, in the most beautiful cherry silk bonnet, tied under her chin with ribbon. It was made like Bluebell's, with a slight flare. What else Miss Libbie wore, was concealed by the high partition. Beside her sat an old lady as fair as a lily, in mourning clothes. But that her hair was as white as dandelion-down, Bluebell must have believed her young; for nowhere in the church could be found a smoother, more delicate face. An old woman, according to Bluebell's observation, was a bent, brown person, wrinkled like a withered apple, like Granny Ridenour.

The two little girls exchanged glances; then the people stood up; they sang out of books instead of having their hymns lined two lines at a time by the minister, which Bluebell thought a great improvement herself.

Libbie took advantage of this new position to lean over the partition and whisper:

"I'm going to call on you to-morrow. We went to

Newark, so I couldn't come before. Orpha and Orrell are coming too."

"Yes," nodded Bluebell in trepidation, making signs, for the minister seemed looking over people's heads at them. She wanted to ask what made him lay a pile of writing on the pulpit beside the Bible. The people suddenly kneeled, and Bluebell hurried to drop to her footstool as she saw aunt Melissa do. It was all beautiful, and made her feel good; but Libbie Biggar reached over the partition to whisper again:

"You've got a pretty bonnet."

Her grandmother pulled her dress as she subsided, and Bluebell could hear her industriously turning over hymn-book leaves. Then everybody resumed his seat; and the music which had so pleased her glad ear at first, began again triumphantly, and the people in the class up-stairs sang a very beautiful piece, which never afterwards quite left Bluebell's mind. She learned in time to know it as the Te Deum.

"There's Orrell," whispered Libbie again, indicating a flossy-haired child at the side of the church.

"Oh, don't!" begged Bluebell; "he mightn't like it." She cast her eye at the pulpit.

"Our minister don't care. I like him. He takes tea at our house. His boy whispers and squirms all the time. Look at him up there."

Bluebell looked at the boy in a front pew, and felt thankful to see him twisting very restlessly. He was a handsome little fellow; but, as Mr. Cook would say, not in harmony with his environments.

The sermon began, and Libbie's grandmother moved nearer to her.

"I don't have to come at evening, do you?" said Libbie to Bluebell, when service was over.

"I don't know," said Bluebell.

They moved out in different streams of people, and did not see each other again.

After dinner, aunt Melissa brought out her good books and instructed her namesake. They read some poems; and, before the gas was lighted, had a long talk, sitting with their arms around each other, in which the duties of guardian and charge were discussed.

On Monday morning Bluebell practiced her music lesson while aunt Melissa was shopping. After dinner she put on the muslin gingham, for in this town people frequently wore their Sunday clothes on common days! — and sat down by her auntie to learn herring-bone stitch. The French clock on the mantel ticked: it was black marble, with a shepherd leaning across the top; the piano stood open; when Bluebell had stitched a strip or two, she might prac-

tice again. Afternoon checker-work moved on the porch, and shadows chased each other up and down the pillars. Bluebell felt like some grand little girl in a story, who had a fairy godmother. How pleased father would be to see her learning to be such a lady! Probably at that moment the scholars in the log school-house were just mopping their faces after recess. What fun they had had!— but how different the log school-house was from aunt Melissa's drawing-room! Bluebell's polish at this period began to have a vulgar, varnishy odor. She wondered if it was the proper thing to have gone to school in a log school-house. Libbie Biggar had evidently never done such a thing, and that pretty, fluff-haired girl at church could not understand how the benches had a queer, foreign smell, and Mr. Pitzer let them have such good times. Doctor Garde's little girl was noting the diferences in externals, and the refining influence of beautiful surroundings; and in her anxiety to improve, she was in danger of forgetting what she owed to the country hills.

The knocker was lifted and came down with a boom, ushering in the prettiest and most laughable bit of comedy. Miss Libbie Biggar introduced her friends Misses Orrell Pratt and Orpha Rose, and the three diminutive ladies sat down in large chairs,

and acted grown-up. They had on all their ornaments, and their white dresses were distended with the hoops which at that time were coming into vogue. Sweet and kissable in their ribbons and bright bonnets, they were a charming study as to manners. Orrell held her little sunshade in her crossed hands, and drooped her eyelids prettily, as she inquired about Miss Melissa's health, and delivered her mamma's compliments. Bluebell, at a signal from Miss Calder, had put her work out of hands, and she too sat up, trying to reflect as faithfully as a mirror these pinks and patterns of juvenile society.

Miss Orpha had difficulty with the small wire framework, known as a skeleton, which surrounded her person, but she managed it with a great deal of tact.

"How do you like Sharon?" inquired Miss Biggar, as if she had never done so rude a thing as to talk across partitions in church.

"Oh, I think it's beautiful!" exclaimed Bluebell, with immediate consciousness that enthusiasm was out of place in the presence of such well-balanced ladies.

"Where did you live before you came here?" inquired Miss Orpha.

Bluebell blushed! When she was older she blushed to remember that she blushed. But these girls seemed so finished, and she was so little in accord with their

past, that her beginnings looked raw and humble.

"It was a very hilly place called the Rocky Fork."

"There are a great many hills here," remarked Miss Orrell.

"Yes; they are very pretty."

Bluebell's nerves twitched, she was on such a strain of propriety.

If the conversation flagged, the young ladies sat looking at each other and their young hostess, or Miss Calder, with calm, unchildlike nonchalance, which threw Dr. Garde's little girl almost into despair. Her former standard of being agreeable was to talk much and fluently; a pause was a breach of politeness, and put pins and needles into her flesh. How then could she ever hope to attain to such silent self-possession? Afterwards, at school, she discovered that Orrell was naturally dull, and Orpha not half as charming and amiable as first acquaintance seemed to warrant. She asked them about their dolls without arousing much maternal enthusiasm. As they went away, however, their voices could be heard in quick chatter along the street. Timidity had not ruled them in the least. They had simply been making a proper, dressed-up call, like their mammas did.

Then followed, in due course, that great day of the party. Bluebell was nearly worn out with anticipa-

tion before afternoon came. She had a new fluffy dress of a material called tarletan, spread over innumerable skirts and a skeleton. Aunt Melissa became her maid, and filled the office with the greatest care. The little girl's hair was braided loosely and tied in two ropes with long satin ribbon. Miss Melissa was guilty of shoeing her in white satin slippers, but they were heelless. This vision of little girl paraded up and down before the long glass in the parlor, overlooking her thin arms, and delighted with her fairy disguise. Promptly at four o'clock, some ladies and gentlemen began to arrive, some under the chaperonage of mothers or elder sisters, but the majority in twos, or covies like partridges. Bluebell, previously instructed, and much awed by the good company, did not run to meet her future playmates and ask them to go to the playhouse, or up-stairs to the garret for a play; even the luxury of a chicken funeral was far from her mind. She stood by aunt Melissa, and each little girl and boy, on emerging from the dressing-room and entering the parlor, was presented to her. There was a dressing-room upstairs for the boys; the girls took off their hats and laid down their parasols in aunt Melissa's room. And they had doting elders who stood by and retwisted their curls or adjusted the "set" of their hoops.

When everybody had arrived, the parlors swam with sweet faces, white full-blown tarletan flowers, white pants and black jackets. The boys had not the ease of the girls: it drew Bluebell's heart to them to see their awkward postures and attempts at behaving. The boys intended to come out strong at tea-time.

The older people who came along started games; the children played "Hunt the Slipper," and this created some real noise and scrambling. Then they played "Forfeits" and "Consequences;" and just before supper a grown young lady in enormous crinoline sat down at the piano and cried, "Partners for a French Four."

Immediately certain little couples took their places on the floor, and Johnny Pratt, evidently prodded by his sister, stepped up to Bluebell.

"Come on," said Johnny.

"What they going to play?

"Goin' to dance a French Four."

But Doctor Garde's little girl hung back, full of dismay.

"Come on!" exclaimed Libbie Biggar, "it's your party and you have to lead off. Isn't that the way, Miss Ann?"

The young lady at the piano turned half way

around and said she believed it was. She looked at Doctor Garde's disconcerted little girl with a kind smile.

"What's the trouble?"

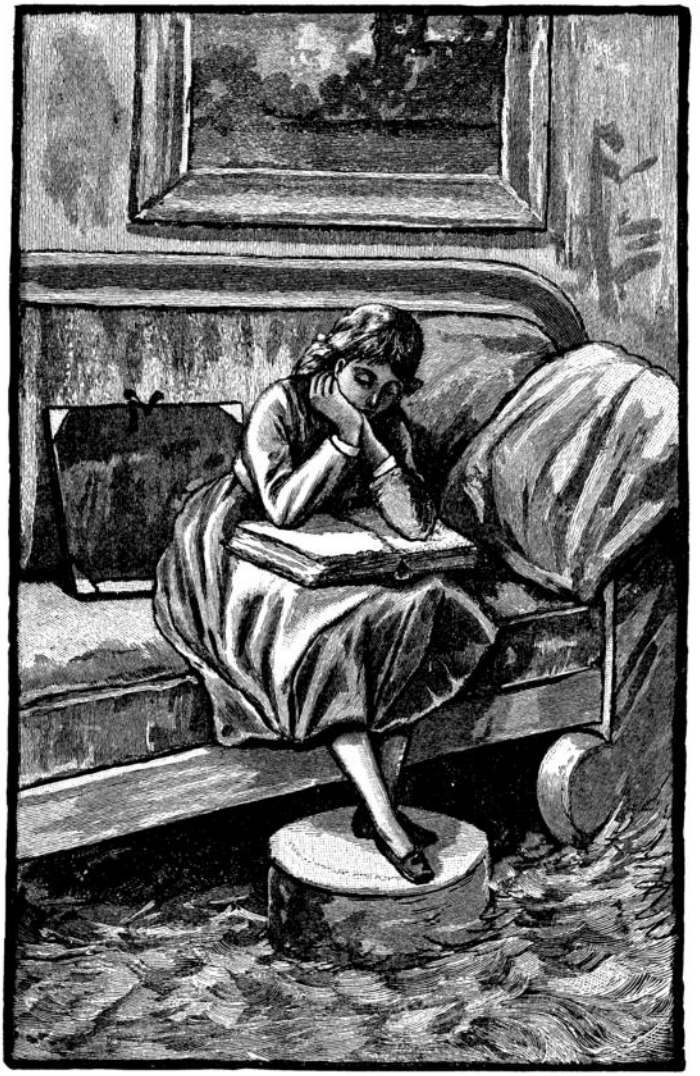
Oh, it was dreadful to have the room full of children and several irreproachable grown-up folks looking at her as if she were some peculiar savage.

"Why don't you come on?" cried Libbie with an impatient stamp.

"But I don't know how. I shan't mind if somebody else plays in my place."

Somebody else would not do, in the eyes of a few sticklers; so Bluebell was pushed and huddled through the figures, and merrily laughed at. And it seemed the most dreadful performance she had ever heard of, and mortified her sadly. She was consumed with a desire to step and act gracefully; the motion was exhilarating; but how could she put her toe out just so, and remember which hand to give every time! The others made precise steps with which she was unacquainted, and to imitate them in her timid way was to make a caricature of herself.

Aunt Melissa came in from the dining-room like a friendly sail to a half-wrecked sailor, and made a few smiling excuses for her little friend. Then she marshalled the children out, and their guardians



BLUEBELL AND ONE PICTURED TOME CALLED SHAKESPEARE. 289

looked in at the dining-room door to see what a charming company they made. Admiring mothers assisted aunt Melissa in serving refreshments, and from the first biscuit to the last dish of pink ice-cream there were exclamations of delight over the table.

After supper they played in the grounds until sunset; other games in the parlors followed; and by eight o'clock the last little girl was going home saying she had had a lovely time.

And all these things made a deep impression on Doctor Garde's little girl. She felt elated notwithstanding the French Four, and kissed aunt Melissa with quite the air of Libbie Biggar. Miss Calder was delighted with the pleasure she had given. Her own individuality was very slight: to be amiable and appear as well as the best Sharon people was her standard of manners, and she was glad to see her charge conforming to them.

Still, the sap of the woods is strong, and will rise in veins which it has nurtured. After all this civilized excitement, Bluebell fell asleep, late and dreamed a wordless and rhymeless dream which had no beginning or end, but chimed along, bringing the smell of ferns and oak-leaves, sweet-brier and sassafras, and the very breath of trees, all around her. Nobody sings

the full expression of dreams: if this dream had been sung, perhaps it would have sounded —

Oh, there was a very funny little pink-eyed man;
His hair stood out as only silk of dandelion can;
He whistled up the morning, and down the afternoon,
And slept inside a hollow tree all covered up with moon;
His dress was made of moss-hair that greener branches studs,
And fringed around with catkins of palest willow-buds;
He drove a sled of oak-leaf with katydids a span —
Oho! this world is rosy to a pink-eyed man!

His feet he bathed in violets; he tapped the big pawpaw,
And sucked, astride May-apple forks, each apple that he saw;
Peppermint and pennyroyal, sheep's-sorrel had he,
Spicewood and sassafras, and nuts from nutty tree;
His pockets sagged with dewdrops so bright they shone like sparks,
And he teetered on a grass-blade and threw the cores at marks.
He made a spider spin him a gray hammock on her plan, —
Sing, oh, this world is rosy to a pink-eyed man!

He made a brook-stone chimney within his little garth,
And piled a heap of fireflies to sparkle on his hearth;
All overhead were carvings of ancient wormy sort;
He tied up ants in couples and made them hunt for sport;
He had a little long-bow of throstle-quill; for string
He tore a strip of bat-leather out of a gray bat's wing;
And when he shot one June-bug, why, twenty others ran, —
Aha! this world is rosy to a pink-eyed man!

His boat was half a butternut all scooped and polished clear;
He had a crew of water-skates, and he need only steer;
He always wore an acorn-cap for fear his hair might burn;
And he sat upon a toadstool and fanned him with a fern;
Or in an empty bird's nest he piped whole afternoons;
The gnats would dance by thousands to hear such merry tunes;
The long sweet time in honey-drops of amber clearness ran,—
And oh, this world is rosy to a pink-eyed man!

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS BIGGAR'S POSSESSIONS.

EVERY afternoon the knocker clanged on Miss Calder's door, calls for her *protégée* being plentifully sprinkled among the visits of older ladies to her. Doctor Garde's little girl enjoyed driving out to make calls with aunt Melissa. In a town the size of Sharon, over twenty years ago, calling on your intimate neighbor with state and ceremony was a moral duty. The afternoons dreamed. Slow embroidering and careful hand-sewing were enlivened by rapid talk. It was delightful to be roused from a drowsy state by a pageant of friends in great bravery whose manners accorded with their clothes. The people of southern cities will have their *Mardi gras* mummery in spite of fever and famine: so, at that period, the ladies of large villages found their principal diversion in careful toilets and stately calling.

But the best thing after all at aunt Melissa's was the library. Bluebell was overwhelmed by her riches in that. Her own *Cat Book* paled by the side of *One Thousand Fairy Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. There were books of travels, and piles of *Graham's Magazine*, *Sandford and Merton*, Abbott's *Rollo Books*, *Robinson Cruso*, whole shelves of poets, immense cyclopædia volumes, and even a few gilt annuals, books of beauty, etc. Walter Scott and Irving inhabited one long shelf with Cooper. O world of books, what a great world thou art, and how large a part of many people's lives is projected into thee!

Miss Melissa herself was a gentle student. She felt her early relish revived by the fervor with which this child seized on the library. She directed Bluebell occasionally, but let her forage at will.

Doctor Garde's little girl calculated that this feast of books would last until she was quite old — almost twelve, in fact.

One pictured tome, called Shakspeare, hard to lift from the shelf, and very queer and hard to understand in some parts, had yet a fascination. She was delighted to find this the source from which came some of the best *Fourth Reader* pieces: Shylock at the trial; Prince Arthur and Hubert. She toiled carefully through both the whole plays, and would not

for anything have confessed to a grown person that she felt real sorry for poor old Shylock, though he was bad. It seemed so naughty of his daughter to carry off the ring he prized, — the one he had from his wife Leah, — and so dreadful for him to lose all his prop : — prop, Bluebell considered, must be short for property. But Portia and the caskets were great fun, and Antonio a man almost as lovely as her own father. She devoutly wished Hubert had taken Arthur away off into the country, — to some place like the Rocky Fork, — and had never told the king he still lived. Wasn't it nice the old bad king got so scared at those moons ! He was as bad as the uncle in *Babes of the Wood.*

But the very loveliest of everything was Midsummer Night's Dream. What could be cuter than Puck, or more delicate than Titania ! With a natural instinct for pronouncing, the little girl got nearly all the names right, though she branded Theseus as The-ze-us, unconscious of the Greek diphthong's shortness, and never in her life could she alter the charmed sound.

Plutarch's Lives was delicious in spots, but rather tough. Shakspeare, on the other hand, was never, never tough. She missed old and deep meanings intended for adult senses. Titania's infatuation with

the weaver was so funny she chuckled heartily. But the finer aroma of the plays was never missed once.

There were some copies of Dickens on the shelves too; but she happened on them late, for Dickens did not appear an attractive name.

Libbie Biggar came flying in and found Bluebell with her head supported by her hands and a fat volume propped open on the table.

"Come on!" exclaimed the shingled young lady; "Miss Calder said you might go to my house and stay the afternoon."

Dr. Garde's little girl looked up, absent and half distressed.

"Sit down and take off your hat," she murmured, with a glimmer of polite solicitude.

"I shan't stop a minute. What are you reading?"

"Oh, it is the nicest story! Oh, his mother was so sweet, and Mr. Murdstone was so mean, and so was Miss Murdstone. But I could hug Peggotty: she's as good as Liza was. And I almost wish Davy would go away off and visit his funny old aunt that flattened her nose against the window."

"Well, come on. I don't care anything about that. You're always reading. Orpha Rose says you went and huddled down in a corner with a book when she had you to her house to tea."

"It was Undine," pleaded Dr. Garde's little girl, turning red. "I did want to know so bad what became of her."

"I don't think it's nice to be reading all the time."

That settled it. Libbie Biggar, who had been carefully brought up from birth, ought to know what was nice. Still, Doctor Garde's little girl felt her individuality too strong for her in spots. She inwardly decided that it was nice, too!

"But I don't read all the time. I began Davy last week, and I've only read a little piece, about little Em'ly and the boat-house and all, and where Mr. Murdstone whipped him, and Davy bit him — oh, good!"

"Well, if you're coming to my house to play little dinner, come on. I don't see any fun in just reading and reading and reading."

Miss Biggar spoke with a tang of injury; and with a similar tang on her part, Bluebell marked her place in Davy and hid the book lest somebody else might appropriate it. To be hauled by the ears all the way from a distant country called England, to play ever such a fine play, was sudden. But there was no appeal. Doctor Garde's little girl must always be under the dictation of some companion.

She followed Libbie as obediently as if the latter were Tildy, and the stage of action the Rocky Fork. How far she would bear dictation the dictator never knew until he experimented and her swift and complete rebellion apprised him. But, after all, what little girl would not for the time prefer Libbie Biggar's playroom to all the libraries collected since and including that of Ptolemy Philadelphus?

It looked like a toy-shop. There were animals standing on wheels to be drawn by a string; animals which nodded their heads quite like life; cats that mewed, dogs that barked; rabbits and squirrels sitting up in plaster-of-Paris immobility; a whole Noah's Ark with a cargo of wooden survivors — Mrs. Noah, Mrs. Ham, and Mesdames Shem and Japhet in red or blue or yellow or green dresses of bright paint, and Noah to the life, looking so like the rest of his family that you could only distinguish him by his broader hat. As for dolls, Georgiana, who had come in Bluebell's arms, sat down in despair and felt nobody at all! There was a baby doll in a cradle, with real bald head and fat hands, wearing a long dress and baby cap. A very much dressed mother-doll sat by it in one chair of a satin and mahogany parlor set. A negro doll dressed in bright calico leaned against the head of the cradle to signify that

she was the most faithful of nurses. Various insignificant dolls with mashed *papier-maché* faces lounged about in faded finery, or sprawled staring at the ceiling as if counting flies. A wax lady as large as Libbie could handle — so immense in fact that she wore a little girl's shoes, and sat in an arm-chair.

O Georgiana! when thy doting relative felt that mighty doll's floss and saw her walk across the floor, and heard her cry "mamma!" instead of the inarticulate noise which was all thou couldst make in thy chest, didst thou not slide down and roll up thine eyes and decide that life was not, after all, worth living!

But what were the dolls beside the cooking furniture of that magic room! In those days every little girl had not a complete toy household at her command. Conveniences for cooking dolls' meals were rare, and many a doll sat down to a cracker on triangles of broken dishes, and thought herself well served.

But under the black mantel on the brick hearth of Libbie Biggar's playroom stood the completest little iron stove, with Liliputian lids, pots, pans, skillets, oven, tea-kettle. It was not to be looked at, but cooked with. In the left-hand corner by the fireplace was a cupboard, bearing a tea-set, and not the

kind which will barely fit your finger with thimbles of cups, but large enough to eat with. And a round table was drawn cosily near it; a table just large enough to spread above little girls' laps when they sat up to it on low chairs.

What a kingdom to come into! They set about kindling a fire in the stove with sticks prepared for that purpose, and very soon the little monster was roaring away, the pipe sending up small clouds to the chimney, the tea-kettle blowing out steam, and coals of actual fire grinning between the steel bars!

Mrs. Biggar, the floss-haired grandmamma, came in, smiled indulgently at their zest, and exhorted them not to set themselves on fire. She was going out, and if they wanted anything they might get it from the kitchen. After she was gone, the domestic, probably set to watch the fire, looked in once or twice, and left some goody each time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DINNER IN DOLL-LAND.

LIBBIE brought up dabs of dough made for her special baking, and rolled them out for biscuits, with a rolling-pin the size of her middle finger, cut them, and baked them in a pan on the bottom of the oven. Bluebell cut a potato into bits and boiled it in a pot. They made tea and laid the table. The cook donated preserves, cake, rice-balls and cold meat: these were mere side-dishes, not to be compared with what they cooked themselves.

Georgiana and the imported wax lady were placed at the table opposite each other, where they half-rolled up their eyes, and refused to be a bit sociable. The other dolls were laid in a hungry circle with their feet to the table, as if to draw in sustenance through the soles.

The biscuits were burnt; but, eaten with butter

and preserves they tasted better than any grown-up biscuit was ever known to do; and though the potatoes came up saltless and without any dressing, they were too mealy for anything. And the feasters drained the teapot dry.

The wax ladies were generously helped, and ate in an invisible way, though what was before them, frequently slid toward the head and foot of the table, guided by a plump white hand or a short brown one.

Outside, the cicada's summer song kept the air full of a pleasant monotone. Scarcely a breeze stirred. The afternoon was so slumbrous one could pretend or make believe almost anything. Occasionally a passer's foot sounded on the brick pavement. Doctor Garde's little girl, who sat in range of the street, often turned from the interest in hand to look, with the expectation that Someone was coming from Somewhere to her. Not exactly a nabob, or an elephant, or a fairy in gauze wings; but some herald from the wonderful future into which she seemed to be entering.

Miss Libbie Biggar's fancy reared itself only on substantial foundations.

"Mrs. Garde," she observed, leaning forward to fix her bead-black eyes on the shrinking Georgiana, "your daughter looks as if she had the mumps on

one side of her face. I had the mumps once, and made grandma give me some pickle, and it hurt — oh, you can't think how it hurt me! Mrs. Garde, if your daughter has the mumps, you shouldn't brought her into my large family."

"Oh Mrs. Biggar, it isn't mumps at all. She got too near the fire once when she was crying very hard, and her cheek began to run down with the tears, and forgot to run back. Mrs. Biggar, does your daughter take music-lessons?"

"Oh dear, yes! She can play the *Battle of Prague* clear through without looking at her notes."

"I s'pose you send her to the seminary to school?"

"Yes; but her health will not allow her to be confined too much." Mrs. Biggar was quoting from her seniors.

"I am going to send my daughter to the seminary. She loves to go to school. Her health is very stout. I will have to hold her back instead of pushing her ahead." Mrs. Garde also was quoting from her seniors.

"Won't you have something more, Mrs. Garde?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Biggar."

"Children, will any of you be helped to something more?"

The prostrate dolls, who camped with their heels

to the repast, and were supposed to be seated in a rosy circle around the general table, all responded in different tones that they didn't want any more, thank you. So the ladies ceremoniously rose.

Mrs. Biggar led the way to the parlor-set. All the dolls, except the wax ones and the blackamoor, were sent out-doors to play in a corner, but told they could not go on the sidewalk. The colored doll was directed to clear the dinner away, which she industriously did by leaning on her stomach across the table. The fire had gone down to white ashes in the stove.

Mrs. Biggar invited Mrs. Garde to take a seat upon the sofa. But as the sofa was only a little too large for Mrs. Garde to put in her pocket, that lady only pretended she sat upon it, while her real and substantial support was the ingrain carpet.

"My daughter will play on the piano for you," observed the hostess. "You ought to say you'd be delighted."

"I'd be delighted, Mrs. Biggar."

"This is the piano."

Mrs. Garde could see no key-board. And it stood square and boxlike without legs: a small dark polished case. Even when the tall wax doll was prevailed upon to favor them, she did not open the

instrument. Her mamma applied a key to it; but a vast amount of coaxing was necessary to overcome the young lady's reluctance.

"Come, my dear, give us some music," said Mrs. Biggar briskly.

"Mamma," replied a voice much thinner, but in other respects strangely like the maternal tones, "don't ask me. You know I don't play."

"You urge her," suggested Mrs. Biggar to the guest.

"What'll I say?"

"Why, you say, 'Oh do,' and 'Now don't disappoint us,' and 'You play *so* well,' just as big folks do when a young lady acts that way."

"Oh do play, Miss Biggar," pressed Mrs. Garde, "now don't disappoint us; you do play so well!"

"Mrs. Garde," responded the thin voice, though that wax doll sat gazing serenely forward, and never so much as wagged a curl, "please excuse me: I can't play a bit, and my throat is so sore I don't know what to do!"

"Now you know you can play ever so many pieces right straight along without stopping," said Mrs. Biggar reproachfully.

"Oh do!" chimed Mrs. Garde. Her mind flashed back to the time when pianos were an unseen mystery

to her and she wanted to play on one so badly that a piece of sheet-iron binding sticking from a box became a make-believe piano, upon which she

"OH DO PLAY, MISS BIGGAR," PRESSED MRS. GARDE.

thumped with rapture. But these retrospections were not imparted to the Biggar family, and Miss Biggar suddenly yielded to pressure, seated herself

before, and suffered her hands to be laid upon, the polished box.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Garde when the music started without visible assistance, "a——h! How *can* she do it? What kind of a piano is that!"

"That's a music-box, goosie," replied Libbie, descending from make-believe for an instant. "My grandma brought it to me when she went over the ocean. Didn't you ever see one?"

"No, I didn't."

"It played *Home, Sweet Home*, caught its breath, played *Old Uncle Ned*, caught its breath again, gave a Tyrolese melody, again clicked, played *Hail Columbia* and stopped.

"That's all," said Libbie. "Four tunes."

"Play your pieces over, Miss Biggar."

The music-box was put through its performance again.

"Now that's enough," said Libbie decidedly; "le's play something else. Dolls is so old."

"We might go out and run."

"No, I don't want to do that."

"There's somebody knocked at the door."

"It's just our cook. — What you want?"

"Miss Calder's sent for the little girl that's playing with you."

"For me?" Bluebell ran and opened the door.

"Yes; Archie's down-stairs and says she wants you."

"I got to go, Libbie."

"That's mean!"

"He says," added the messenger, "that somebody's come to your house."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOMEBODY ARRIVES.

ARCHIE was standing at the foot of the stairs. Bluebell thought him a most agreeable man. He always treated her with deferential indulgence.

"Did aunt Melissa send for me?" cried Bluebell, running down-stairs with Georgiana on her shoulder.

"Yes, ma'am, she did."

"And who's come, Archie? Oh, *is* it father and the baby?"

"It is a very fine gentleman, and a little girl considerable smaller than you."

"Good-by, Libbie. My father's come!"

Doctor Garde's little girl made rapid progress to the gate which united Mrs. Biggar's and Miss Calder's grounds. Archie kept at her heels.

"Did they just get there, Archie?"

"Just a minute ago. And besides the gentleman and little girl there was" —

ARCHER.

"Oh, it's Liza! Liza's come too! It was Liza's house where we used to live, you know."

"No, there wasn't any lady."

"Then it's somebody else; and maybe it isn't my father and the baby, either?"

She paused in disappointment.

"Oh, the gentleman's your father. I heard Miss Calder call him. Mr. Doctor Garde is the gentleman's name," said Archie, punctiliously.

Bluebell plunged up the side veranda. But here her new manners seized on her. What would father say if she ran in and grabbed him around the neck? And there was Rocco. She had learned enough to be a great pattern and example to Rocco.

The doctor was sunk in a haircloth chair in the dim parlor. Roxana sat on Miss Melissa's knee, half afraid of her in this new place which imaged its wonders in her swelling black eyes.

Through the open folding-doors came a correct figure in cool muslin gingham; the bare brown arms and collar-bones looked natural, but the face had a new expression.

"Is this Bluebell?" said father, extending his hand.

"Yes, sir."

The young lady took his hand and kissed him. She did give the silent Rocco an extra squeeze, but

her back was towards father and the fervor was hid from him. She drew her chair quite close to him, too, but in every other respect preserved the strictest propriety.

"And you rode all the way on horseback with the baby," said Miss Calder in a pleased flutter. "That must have been charming at this season of the year."

"Yes," said father. "I boxed the movables and had them sent by railway."

"I am so glad you are here, Maurice." Miss Melissa reached for her handkerchief. "You have no idea how much brighter the house has been since I brought Melissa home with me."

The doctor looked pleased. He also looked faintly disturbed.

"And I am sure you will not regret the change in — as to — I mean from a financial point of view, for all our friends are prepossessed in your favor already."

"As to that," said the young man, "I'll have to prove myself able to do something, as I did at the Rocky Fork."

"Yes; and I am sure you will indeed."

"Papa, how is Liza?"

The doctor started, and looked queerly at his little girl.

He said, however, "She's quite well."

"I am learning to play the piano."

His little girl made this announcement with the exact accent and expression of Miss Libbie Biggar.

"Are you?"

"Yes, sir."

He rubbed a finger across his forehead and looked at Miss Melissa. The delicate lady smiled.

"Don't you think she has improved very much?"

"Ye-es," said the doctor, "certainly."

He looked at his little girl.

"You may entertain your father awhile if he will excuse me, Melissa," said Miss Calder, putting Rocco down. "I want to have a few changes made about tea. And if you want to go to your room, Maurice, Melissa knows where it is."

So aunt Melissa went out, and Bluebell longed so much to tangle and squeeze Roxana that she was fain at least to draw her seat beside Miss Calder's vacant arm-chair, into which the baby had mounted on all fours and wiggled about into a sitting posture.

"Are you glad to see B'uebell, Rocco?"

"Uh — uuh," responded Roxana, still trying to take her bearings in these strange waters.

"You mustn't say that — it isn't polite," said Bluebell, shaking her head.

Father's square, serious face set itself to study her. His clothes looked plain compared to the clothes she had seen gentlemen wear in Sharon. They really had a woodsman look. But who could see father's resolute chin over his black neckcloth and not instinctively love him? His little girl did not state the matter in these words. Her impressions were instantaneous and languageless. The baby did look so funny, too. Bluebell wished one of her new dresses was small enough for the little sister. It was only that she did not want them to be behind herself in advantages.

"Have you been real well, papa?"

"That isn't polite," said father slowly.

His little girl turned red. She was beginning to think his steady look meant disapproval, after all, when she had tried *so* hard to learn deportment.

"What! To ask if you have been well?"

"To call me 'papa' when you know I want to be called 'father.'"

Bluebell's face and ears tingled.

"Libbie Biggar always says papa and mamma when she talks about her father and mother. They're dead."

"Who's Libbie Biggar?"

"Oh, she is such a nice little girl! She lives next door, and has the most toys you ever saw. A little stove and dolls and dishes, and a music-box that plays four tunes."

"Do you like her better than you do Tildy?"

"I don't believe I do. But she has such *pretty* manners, and she is *so* ladylike!"

Father smiled.

"Her grandma is very good to her. And there are lots of other little girls. I had a party."

"I'm afraid Miss Melissa has been spoiling you."

"Oh, no! She wanted me to get acquainted. Some of them wore *beautiful* dresses. We had ice-cream. Do you know what ice-cream is, father?"

"I have tasted it."

"Well, we had ice-cream. And Libbie Biggar just stamped her foot because I didn't want to dance a French Four. I didn't know how."

"She must have pretty manners," said father.

Bluebell colored again.

"Oh, she has. She knows how to do so much better than I do."

"Come here," said father, extending his hands.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DOCTOR GARDE'S LITTLE GIRL.

BLUEBELL approached father's knee with her heart swelling.

"Where's my little girl?" said he.

His long light locks and serious face seemed to hang on the outer surface of her tears. The tears were filling her eyes so fast; she struggled to hold them still, but a splash came down on one of the hands with which he was holding her waist.

"Why, I'm here!"

"I don't seem to find you."

"Why, father, I don't know what you mean!"

The cry was under full headway now. Her figure quaked. She groped piteously for her handkerchief, her eyes held in a charmed gaze by his. He drew her upon his knee. At that Roxana descended from her position and claimed a right on the other knee.

Sitting opposite her afflicted sister, she stroked the muslin gingham dress.

"Don't t'y, B'uebell. *I've* tum to your house."

"I would like to have my little girl stay a little girl," said father, "until Nature turns her into a woman. I don't say I am altogether right."

He paused, conscious that a child will accept its elder's dictum without question, and believe a thing to be unalterably good or evil, according to the decision of the adult who happens to be over it in authority. "But I don't like young ladies in short clothes."

"I thought you'd be pleased to see me learning fine manners," wailed Bluebell.

"*Don't* t'y," begged Rocco, puckering in sympathy.

"Fine manners are very nice," said the doctor. "But you seem to be imitating somebody else. I can't think it is a good thing to form yourself after other people. I may be wrong; but I like to see everybody live out his own nature."

"Don't you want me to learn to be a little lady?"

Father looked perplexed.

"I want you to learn everything which goes to make up a finished woman. Yes, I want you to be a lady, but"—with a pathetic tone in his voice which had vibrated only once or twice in her life-time—"I

wouldn't give my honest, simple-hearted little girl for all the fine airs and graces in the world."

Bluebell hugged him around the neck.

"That's all I mean. Perhaps there's a better way to bring up girls."

"Father, I just want to be your way. And I tried to do like the rest, for fear you'd be 'shamed of me 'side of Libbie and Orrell." The water-flow began to subside. Doctor Garde wiped its straggling droppings away with the hand which had supported his little girl. Then she leaned on his shoulder, nearer than she had ever been, and the arm was replaced.

"They always lived in Sharon, and I thought they knew better'n I did how to behave. Their hoops never stick out, and mine just act so mean!"

The doctor smiled again.

"Must you wear hoops?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, father! I *have* to wear them. Folks would laugh at you on the street if you didn't."

"Don't think," continued father carefully, "that I am finding fault with Miss Calder's kindness, or your trying to improve."

"I thought you'd think it was nice for me to sit up and talk like grown folks. But, father, I won't do it any more. Did anybody come with you, father?" added his little girl in the next breath.

DOCTOR GARDE.

"Nobody came but Rocco and me."

"On Ballie?"

"On Ballie."

"Are Tildy and Teeny well?"

She was asking with bright interest now, without aping anybody's manners.

"Very well. Tildy sent you a letter."

"Oh father! Where is it?"

"I think Liza packed it in my trunk. That's probably at Newark with the other baggage."

Bluebell resigned herself to waiting with a deep sigh.

"Did they all go to g'ogr'phy school?"

"I believe so. The geography school is out."

"Father, are you glad you came here?"

He looked deeply at the two on his knees.

"I shall always be glad if it proves a great benefit to my children."

"I have read ever so much. Libbie Biggar don't like reading." She put her head on one side and blushed. "Would you mind—?"

"Mind what?"

"Would you mind if I gave you an awful hard hug, little father? because I've missed you so, and couldn't get along just right without you."

It was some time after tea that Archie was favored

by visitors at the stable, — Bluebell, Rocco and Georgiana.

"I want to see her," said Doctor Garde's little girl. "Which is her stall, Archie?"

"Your father's mare, ma'am?"

"Yes. And you said somebody else came with them. There was nobody but father and Rocco."

"There was this very elegant creature, ma'am. Here she is in this stall. If you stand on the barn floor you can see her across the manger."

Bluebell took that position with the little sister, and then climbed into the manger among Ballie's oats to pat her tremulous nostril.

"Do you know me?"

The Arabian's soft whinny answered her.

"Oh Archie, I do think so much of her! She fell off the Narrows all but her fore feet, and jumped up again and kept father and me from being killed."

Archie was duly astonished. He polished her satin surface, and declared she was the finest piece of horseflesh that ever came into the stables.

"Charley and Coaly are fine animals, but they are too fat and too lazy. Now this here mare is all life; and look at them ears!"

"Oh Archie, I'm so glad you like her! She's so kind."

"She's most genteel," said Archie.

Bluebell did not like the word, though it was then commonly current. She had heard aunt Melissa use it. She had tried herself to be very genteel.

"I wouldn't say she was genteel, Archie. I would just say she was Doctor Garde's own horse; and that's enough."

"Your father's a very fine gentleman," declared Archie, smiling in his excessive amiability. "And your little sister, she's quite a little lady."

"Rocco," said Bluebell to the baby when she got her between house and barn among the shrubbery, "I like you *real* well, and better'n anybody in the world except father. Old honey-dew!"

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO LETTERS.

I. — THE ROCKY FORK TO SHARON.

Respected frend,

i take my pen in hand to let you know i am well and hope These few lines Will find you enjoyIng the same blessing . .

Christine is Writen this for me. the (Elders) is all ripe do you mind when we plade and Teny married them | the goggerfy school is out mr runNels brot his Wife which made the big girls feel Bad but Teeny sais that aint so . . .

Printhy pancost she got the most Headmarks so she got the prize Teeny got the prize in Spelin in the big class | We marched the last day and i spoke mary had a little Lamb there was 6 dialogues.

> If you Love me as i love
> you no nife can cut our love
> into.

jo hall is Well and sends his reSpecks. . When are you coming back Eliza is Lonesome . . i am learning to write

but cant make no out yet. . . mr pitzer give a treat the last Day we got three sticks of Candy apiece The big boys did not threaten to Lock him out he done it of his own accord i am going to send you some

Mountain Tea

Mother is well uncle Abram is well John Tiggard said his long piece the Death of the flowErs Amandy Willey sent her Respecks

excuse Mistakes Mother has got her weavin Most all done . . the Run has not been up since So no more at present Goodbye

Matilda Banks.

Teeny would not wright Half I wanted her to. Mother puts this on. I got Ferns pressin in the memoiry of Florence Kidder, write and Tell us how you get on, our sweetins is getting Ripe. don't you wish you was here.

remember frends as you pass by
as you are now so once was i
as I am now So you must be
Prepare For deth and follow me.

i thought I would end with some Poetry.

II. — SHARON TO THE ROCKY FORK.

SHARON THE 21

SEPTEMBER

DEAR TILDY

I HAD TO WAIT TILL I LEARNED TO PRINT. ALL OF THEM LEARN TO PRINT AT THE SEMNARY PREPARATORY

DEPARTMENT. THERE IS A LETTER BOOK BUT THE LETTERS AINT TO YOU. I THOUT YOUR LETTER WAS VERY NICE; THE MOUNTAIN TEA WAS SO GOOD. ALL THE GIRLS WANTED SOME. THERE WAS ELIZABETH BIGGAR AND ORRELL PRATT AND ORPA ROSE AND OTHERS TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION. I STUDDY THE 2ND READER SPELLING GEOGRAPHY AND MENTAL ARITHMETIC AND PRINTING. I LEARNED HOW TO PUT MARKS IN YOUR WRITING. THEY PUT THEM IN BOOKS. TILDY, DID YOU KNOW SHYLOCK IS IN SHAKESPEARE? AND GINEVRA IS A MAN NAMED MISTER ROGERS.

AUNT MELISSA IS VERY NICE, SHE MAKES SO MUCH OF US, BUT I LOVE LIZA TOO. GIVE MY LOVE TO LIZA. ROXANA SENDS HER LOVE. SO DOES ALL THE FAMILY. THANK YOU FOR THE MOUNTAIN TEA. BALLIE IS WELL. FATHER RIDES HER TO SEE SICK FOLKS. WE RIDE IN THE CARRIDGE. ROCKKO HAS A NEW WHITE AND A NEW PINK AND SOME GINGHAMB DRESSES. O TILDY, DONT YOU REMEMBER GOING FOR WATER AND BLACKMAN AND THE SPELLING AND GETING FERNS AND ALL THE GOOD TIMES? AND THE TIME YOU AND ME CHURNED PRINTHY PANCOST! GIVE MY LOVE TO PRINTHY AND MANDY WILLEY AND JO HALL AND JOHN TEGARDEN AND NERVY RIDEANHOUR AND TEENY AND ALL THE BIG BOYS AND GIRLS. GIVE MY

"MY PICTURE THAT AUNT MELISSA HAD TAKEN." 329

LOVE TO MR. PITZER. MY TEACHER IS A LADY. TELL HIM I CAN MOST READ THE BEAUTIFUL LETTER HE GAVE ME. TILDY, YOU MUST COME AND SEE US. LIZA MUST COME. SO MUST YOUR MOTHER AND TEENY. I HAVE GOOD TIMES, BUT I DONT FORGET THE ELDER DOLLS AND ALL.

MY HAND IS GETTING TIRED. GIVE MY LOVE TO YOUR MOTHER. I LOVE ALL YOU FOLKES AT THE ROCKY FORK. TILDY, I AM COMING TO SEE YOU WHEN THEY BRING ME. I SPOSE POOR MISS EMILY MANDEVILLE IS WITHERD TO DUST. I WISHT YOUD GOT THE PRIZE.

I WAITED TILL MY HAND GOT RESTED. MY ROOM IS PRETTY. IT HAS PICTURES AND A BLUE CARPET. I WISHED YOU WAS TO MY PARTY. DONT YOU REMEMBER THE BIG STORM, TILDY, WHEN FATHER FETCHED ME HOME? DO THE NARROWS LOOK JUST THE SAME? THEY DONT HAVE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOOKS LIKE WE DID. THESE HAVE NICE STORIES. FLORENCE KIDDER WAS NOT A BIT GOOD EXCEPT THE PICTURE. I AM GOING TO PUT IN MY PICTURE THAT AUNT MELISSA HAD TAKEN. IT IS ON PAPER. IT IS NOT LIKE MY MOTHERS DAGARTYPE. THIS KIND IS A NEW KIND. THEY CALL IT PHOTGRAPH. I HAVE ONE FOR LIZA TOO. AUNT M

WILL SEND IT. ROCCO WOULD NOT HOLD STILL. THEY WILL TAKE HERS NEXT TIME. MY HAND IS REAL TIRED. GOODBYE. BLUEBELL GARDE.

DR. GARDES LITTLE GIRL.