That Little Girl of Miss Eliza's

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license.

Title: That Little Girl of Miss Eliza's
Author: Jean K. Baird
Release Date: April 10, 2011 [EBook #35822]
Language: English
Character set encoding: UTF-8

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THAT LITTLE GIRL OF MISS ELIZA'S ***

Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net.

THAT LITTLE GIRL OF MISS ELIZA'S

A STORY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY
JEAN K. BAIRD

ROCK ISLAND, ILL.
Augustana Book Concern

Printed in the United States of America.

AUGUSTANA BOOK CONCERN, PRINTERS AND BINDERS
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS

CHAPTER I.

"The poorest farming land in all the country," someone called it. "The best crop of stones and stumps, I ever saw," someone else had said. Everyone smiled and drove on, and Shintown and its people passed from their knowledge.

"Shintown? Where in the name of goodness did they get such a name?" the elderly gentleman in the touring car asked his companion.

"Have to use your shins to get here. It used to be that Shank's mare was the only one that could travel the miserable roads. They were mere foot-paths. Even the railroads have shot clear of it. See over there."

There was truth in the words. Shintown, which was no town at all, but a few isolated farmhouses, looked down from its heights on one side upon the main line of the Susquehanna Valley, five miles away. On the other side, at a little more than half the distance, the branch of the W. N. P. and P. wound along the edge of the river. Both roads avoided Shintown as though it had the plague. The name was quite enough to discourage anyone. Nature had done its best for the place, the people had done their worst. It stood in the valley, and yet on a higher elevation than the country adjacent, the mountain being twenty miles distant. It was as though a broad table had been set in a wide country, with the mountain peaks as decorous waiters standing at the outer edge.

The houses were sagging affairs. They were well enough at one time, but were now like a good intention gone wrong. The storm had beaten upon them for so many years that all trace of paint was gone. The chimneys sloped as far as the law of gravity allowed. Gates hung on one hinge, and the fences had the same angle as an old man suffering with lumbago.

The corners of the fields were weed-ridden. The farmers never had time to plow clear to the corners and turn plumb. The soil had as many stones as it had had twenty years before. The whole countryside was suffering from lack of ambition. Crops were small, and food and clothes were meager. The stock showed the same attributes. It was stunted, dwarfed, far from its natural efficiency in burden bearing, milk-giving or egg-laying.

There was one place not quite like this—the old Wells place at the cross roads. The house was neither so large, nor so rambling as the others. It stood deep among some old purple beeches, and in summer it had yellow roses clambering over one entire side. The color was peculiar, and marked its occupant and owner just a little different from other people in the community. Everyone conceded that point without a question. She was just a little different. The house was all in shades of golden brown; brown that suggested yellow when the sun shone. It was a color that not a man in Shintown or a painter at the Bend or Port would have thought of putting on a house. Who ever thought of painting a house anything but white with green shutters or a good, serviceable drab? Golden browns in several shades! Why, of course, the woman must be peculiar. She did the work herself too. She arose at daylight to paint the upper portion and she quit work when travel on the highway began.

That was another peculiarity which the countryside could not understand; a woman who could be independent enough to choose what color she would, in defiance of all set laws, and yet afraid to let folks see her climbing a ladder to the second story.

If peculiar means being different, Eliza Wells was that. She was thirty, and never blushed at it. She had even been known to mention her birthdays as "I was twenty-nine yesterday. How time does fly!" And she said it after the manner of one who might have said, "To-morrow I set the old Plymouth Rock on a settin' of Dominick eggs."

But the country folk were kind enough and overlooked her not being as themselves. There was a knowing smile now and then, a sage nodding of the head. Now and then someone went as far as to say, "That's Liza's way. She never did act like other folks."

Eliza knew she was peculiar and tried her best to be like those about her. She had never known any other kind of people; for she had been born and bred in the little place. But do as she could, her own self would break loose every now

and then. In spite of her effort to be like other people, there were times when she could be nothing but her own unusual, individual self.

It was not that she admired the ways of life of the people about her. Had she done so, it might have been easier to have become like them. But she argued in this fashion: if all these hundred souls lived in one way and declared that to be the right way, then surely she was wrong, and her ideas had all gone awry somewhere; for one could not stand against a hundred.

The old Wells place had all the finger-marks of having a peculiar occupant. Hollyhocks all along the walk to the milk-house, nasturtiums climbing over a pile of rock; wistaria clinging to the trunk of a dead tree; wild cucumber vines on a trellis shielding the wood-pile and chip yard. In the recess of the old-fashioned front entrance were old blue bowls filled with nasturtiums.

The old blue delft had been in the family of Eliza's grandmother Sampson for generations. Everybody knew it; but Eliza paraded them and seemed as proud of them as though they had just been purchased from Griffith's "five and ten." But she couldn't fool the people of Shintown. They knew a thing or two and they were certain that the bowls were over a hundred years old.

On hot days, she ate on her kitchen porch, which she had enclosed with cotton fly-net, and she stuck a bunch of pansies in a teacup and had them beside her plate.

That was quite enough to show that she was peculiar. No one else in the country put flowers on the table. Indeed, no one raised them. What was the use? They weren't good to eat.

But Eliza's place was not a farm, else she could not have wasted so much time on worthless things. Two acres was all she owned, and she kept half of that in yard and flowers.

She would have had more room for garden if she would have cut down one or more of her purple beeches, but she would not do that. When Sam Houston suggested it to her, saying in his blunt way, "If you'd plant less of the 'dern foolishness,' you'd have more room for cabbages," she replied, with a merry glint in her eye, "Sometimes, I think cabbages is the worst foolishness of all."

Sam could make no reply to that. A man couldn't reason with a woman who had no more sense than that.

Eliza Wells could afford to be a little different from anybody else. In the vernacular of the country, "she was well-fixed." This meant not that she had millions, or even a hundred thousand, but there was money enough out at interest to bring her in fifteen dollars each month. This, with her garden truck and home, made her independent.

To have money in the bank was a distinguishing mark of rank. Not a soul at Shintown except Eliza could boast so much. Sam Houston was the only one in

the countryside who had tales to tell of a father and a grandfather who lived on interest money.

Her financial independence made Eliza's peculiarities a little more bearable. They were the idiosyncracies of the bloated capitalist.

Eliza drove to the Bend the first of each quarter to draw her interest money. She wore a black silk dress and a little bonnet. How she hated the stiff shininess of black silk. How miserably awkward she felt with the caricature of black lace and purple pansies, which custom called a bonnet, on her head. But she had been reared to believe that black silk was the only proper dress for a woman, no longer young, and the days after twenty years were always placed to the credit of age.

So she wore her black silk, although she saw nothing pretty in it. The women of Shintown envied her the possession of such a mark of gentility and declared that Eliza had a good bit of style for a woman of her age, and after a fashion all their own were proud of her.

She always drove Old Prince when she went to the Bend. There was always a little shopping before she came home. Quarter day fell on the first of July. The sun was fairly blazing upon the stretch of dusty road which knew no shadow of tree.

Miss Eliza was anxious to get home. Her hands were sweating in their heavy gloves. Not a breeze was stirring. The stiff black silk was not an easy or comfortable dress for a hot day. Yet she let Old Prince take his time. The flies bothered him considerably, and he shied like a young colt at every object in the road. He had not been out of the stable-yard for a week and what energy had been left to him had been bottled up for this trip to town.

In his youth, some years before, he had been a vicious animal which only a man with a steady nerve and strong hand could manage. But age had made him tractable. He went home at a steady gait with the reins hanging loose on his back, except when Eliza shook them to dislodge an annoying fly.

As they turned the bend of the road at Farwell, Old Prince shied suddenly and turned the wheels deep in the ditch. Eliza steadied herself and seized the reins. "There, old fellow, go quiet. There hain't nothing here to disturb you."

Her words sounded brave enough, yet she glanced apprehensively about. The new railroads had brought their following of tramps, and Eliza was fearful. She peered into the clump of elder bushes which grew up along the hillside. It was a beautiful rather than a fearful sight which met her eyes. A big woman with great braids of yellow hair sat in the shade of the underbrush. Eliza did not notice that her dress was exceedingly shabby. She did notice, however, that a little child lay in her arms. Both were sound asleep as though utterly exhausted by their travels.

They were strangers. Eliza knew that at a glance. She knew all the residents

of the valley. A small traveling bag lay beside the woman. Her hand resting lightly upon it, as though even in sleep she would keep it in custody.

Miss Eliza spoke to Prince who would persist in frolicking and garotting about like a colt. The public road was not a safe sleeping place for a woman and child. Eliza recognized her duty. Leaning forward, she touched the woman's hand lightly with her whip. She did this several times before the woman's eyes opened.

"I've been trying to waken you," said Eliza. "The road is not a safe place to sleep."

The woman looked wonderingly about, yawned and rubbed her eyes. It was some minutes before she could get her bearings. When her eyes fell on the child, she smiled and nodded back at Eliza and then got upon her feet and began to put herself to rights.

"Where are you going?" asked Eliza.

The woman hesitated, puckered her brows and at last said, "I—I bane gone to Yameston."

"Foreign," said Eliza mentally. She had no idea where 'Yameston' was, but it was reasonable to suppose that the woman was cutting across country to take the flyer at the Port where it stopped to change engine and crews.

"It's no place for a woman to rest. Tramps are thicker than huckleberries. Climb in and I'll drive you and your baby part of the way."

The woman could not understand, but she did grasp the meaning of Miss Eliza's moving to the opposite side of the seat and reaching forth her hand to help her get into the carriage.

When they were safely seated, Miss Eliza touched Old Prince with the whip. At that instant, the oncoming flyer, as it entered the yard, whistled like a veritable demon. The two were too much for the old horse, who had been a thoroughbred in his time and had never known the touch of a whip. He reared on his hind feet, and then with a mad plunge went tearing down the road which was hemmed in on one side by the hills, and whose outer edge lay on the rocky bluffs of the river.

Miss Eliza held to the reins until they cut into the flesh. Bracing herself against the dash board, she kept Old Prince to the middle of the road. Just as she felt sure that she could manage him, the rein on the hillside snapped. The tension on the other side turned the animal toward the edge of the bank. Eliza dropped the useless rein, seized the child in her arms and held it close to her breast, hoping by her own body to protect it from the fall. It was all the work of a second. She shut her eyes even as she did this.

CHAPTER II.

Eliza never could tell how long it was before she opened her eyes again. She was conscious at first of the sun beating down upon her face. Bewildered she opened her eyes only to close them again quickly against the unbearable light of the sky at midday. She tried to move, but her muscles were bound. A delicious sense of languor was again stealing over her, when she moved her hand slightly and felt water running over it. This aroused her again, and set her thoughts in motion. Little by little it all came back to her; her drive, the woman and child and the run-away horse. She knew now where she was. She need not open her eyes to see. She was lying at the foot of the stone wall at Paddy's Run hill. She could hear the noise of running water. She thought of these things in a dreamy, far-off fashion as though it were something she might have read sometime. The child! Then she realized the awfulness of what had happened. Had she killed them both! She did not dare think of anything so horrible. She lay quite still, straining every nerve to listen for some sound of life. She heard it at last. It was the most beautiful sound she had ever heard in all her life. A low gurgly coo and then the touch of baby fingers on her face.

"Pitty ady—det up. Pitty ady, don't seep so long." The laughing dimpled face of the child looked down at her. It had escaped then. It was with a delicious feeling of thankfulness that she closed her eyes, not to open them again for several hours.

She was back in her own home then, lying on the old mahogany davenport with all the neighbors for miles about bending over her. She could hear Sam Houston holding forth in the kitchen. She listened, and there came to her in a listless sort of way that Sam always was a brag.

"I was just settin' out to walk down to the office," he was saying, "and when I came on to the road, who should I see but that old rascal of a Prince come walking along with one shaft hanging to his heels and the reins floppin' down on his side. He looked as quiet as a lamb, for all the world as though he had been put to grazin' instead of up to some devilment. I tell you right here, it didn't take me long to know that something was up. I called Jim-boy, and off we started as

fast as legs could carry us, and sure enough there the hull three of them lay—"

"Three! Three! Three of them!" The words kept running off in Eliza's mind. There were three—herself, the baby and—she could not remember who the third was. Then she did remember. Like a flash all was clear. She raised herself and was about to get up.

"There—there, Liza, you mustn't." Mrs. Kilgore would have forced her back on the pillows.

"I must get up. There's nothing at all the matter with me." Pushing aside the detaining hands, she stood upon her feet. For an instant she was a little giddy, but she steadied herself. Her muscles ached as she moved. Her black silk waist had been cut open the full length of the sleeve and she saw that her arm was black and blue. It was badly swollen. She could move it though, and bruises will soon heal.

"Where's the woman—the woman who was with me?" she asked. She looked about on the faces. Every woman in Shintown was there. Old Granny Moyer sitting hunched up in the corner, using snuff and gloating. Mrs. Kilgore, bustling about with liniments and medicine bottles, her face radiant with the happiness of waiting upon the sick. From the room beyond came the heavier tones of men's voices. None of the women had attempted to answer Eliza's question. Her head was whirling so that she forgot in an instant that she had asked it. She listened to the voices from the parlor. Then, with all the energy of which she was capable, she moved quickly across the room and entered what the countryside termed 'the parlor.' This room was one of the things which Eliza disliked. She never said so. She never gave her thoughts tangible form even to herself. She simply avoided the room because she never felt at ease or comfortable when she sat within it.

There was a heavy Brussels carpet with bold design in bright colors. The chairs had backs as stiff as a poker. They were upholstered in red plush with ball fringe everywhere it could be stuck on. The walls were made hideous with life-sized crayon portraits. Chenille curtains were draped at the windows and a rope portière impeded the opening and closing of the door. A large marble-topped table stood in the center of the room. It was all hideous enough even if the odor of camphor and moth balls had not been in the air. It was an awful example of clinging to customs which are hideous.

Eliza never could sit there. She always felt irritated and fussy whenever she put it to rights, but yet she had not reached the stage of advancement which seeks the cause and removes it.

Bracing herself against the jamb of the door, she raised her aching, bruised hand and pushed aside the rope drapery. The center-table with its marble top had been removed from its accustomed place and something else was there.

Eliza stood for a moment to look about her. Squire Stout stood by, leaning on his cane. He was a little shriveled-up creature with snowy hair. His lips were thin and cruel. There was the air of an autocrat, a demagogue about him. Near him was Doctor Dullmer, whose face even now had lost nothing of its helpful, cheery, optimistic expression. There were other men in the group. They had all been talking; but they ceased at the sight of Miss Eliza standing in the doorway.

"You?" exclaimed Doctor Dullmer, advancing and extending his arm for support. "What do you mean? You should be in bed!"

"I am all right. Just bruised. That is all."

She clung to his arm as she moved toward the little group, which separated to make room for her as she advanced.

Then she saw why the center-table with its square marble top had been pushed to the wall The woman lay there. Her beautiful yellow hair was coiled about her head like a golden crown. She looked so smiling and happy that Eliza could not feel one pang of sorrow for her. She bent over and smoothed the stranger's forehead.

"I wonder who she was," she said at length.

"Don't you know?" the question came from every man there and from the group of women who had packed the narrow doorway. They were too fearful and too nervous to enter.

"No, I do not," said Eliza. "I know neither her name nor her destination."

"Sit down," said Doctor Dullmer brusquely, pushing forward a chair and forcing her, none too gently, into it. She sat bolt upright and looked at the men about her. She forgot that her arm was aching with its bruises, and that a great cut near her temple, which the doctor had stitched, was making her head throb and tremble like an over-pressure of caged steam.

"But she was with you."—"You were driving her." "We supposed right along that she was some of your kin."

Eliza shook her head. "I'll tell you how it happened so," she began. "I never saw her—"

"Don't talk about it now. Better wait until to-morrow, until you are better," advised Doctor Dullmer.

"I must talk now. It's better to tell about it at once so there can be no misunderstanding. It will help me to get it off my mind."

"Well, just as you please," said he, but he drew a chair beside her and watched her closely. He alone realized that she was on the point of collapse which might come suddenly upon her. He thought only of her physical condition. He had not estimated the power of will which is able to put aside all physical discomfort and carry a thing through because it is right to do so.

So Eliza sat bolt upright in the stiff chair, hideous with its red plush uphol-

stery, and related all that had happened the several hours before.

The men listened with a question at intervals. When the story was ended, Miss Eliza got upon her feet.

“You’ll go to bed now,” said the doctor.

“Send everyone home but Mrs. Kilgore. I cannot rest with so many about me.”

Mrs. Kilgore had overheard the words and was already ridding the house of the neighbors.

“You’d better go, Granny. Your old man will want supper soon.”

“I think your baby would be crying for you, Mrs. Duden.”

“Hain’t you afraid to leave the twins alone in the house with matches and oil about?” So by dint of suggestion, she turned them all homeward and locked the door.

Miss Eliza went back to the davenport and, arranging the pillows, laid down her throbbing head and closed her eyes.

Mrs. Kilgore bustled about, closing doors and drawing shades. She was as happy as could be. She was in her element in the sick-room. She found thorough enjoyment in officiating at the house of sorrow. She drew down the corners of her mouth and assumed a doleful expression, but a pleased excitement showed itself in spite of all.

“Pitty adee—pitty adee.” A few toddling steps, and the child came close to the davenport where Eliza lay. Her baby hands rested lightly against the bandaged head.

“Pitty adee—hurted. Me’s sorry. Me kiss ’ou an ’ou get well.” Standing on tip-toe, she put her lips again and again against the bandage.

Miss Eliza trembled. A strange thrill went through her. She had never known much about children. She had been the only chick and child of her parents. She had not realized that a baby could be so sweet. A strange joy filled her at the touch of the lips. The term ‘Pretty lady’ found a responsive chord in her heart which vibrated. She had lived alone all her life. No one had ever touched lips to hers. No one had ever found her attractive or beautiful. For as many years as she could remember, no one had ever called her ‘pretty’. She did not think whether it were true or false. She accepted it as something new and delightful. She was a human being, though she had always been alone, and she craved affection just as every one of humanity does.

She drew the child close to her. It cuddled up as though it had known only love and tenderness and feared no one. At length it crawled up on the davenport and nestled close in her arms, with the little head on her breast. All the while, it kept up a prattle of sympathy for the ‘pitty adee who was hurted’ and the baby hands touched Eliza’s cheek lightly. So both fell asleep.

The news of the accident had spread quickly enough. Telegrams had flashed over the country and local newspapers sent reporters at once to secure particulars. Williamsburg was the nearest city of importance. *The Herald* was the daily with the largest circulation. It was always looking for a "scoop."

When the telegrams came in telling of the accident, Morris was the only man in the outer office. McCoy nailed him at once.

"Get to Shintown as fast as you can. Find out everything. Write a column or two and get back before the press closes for the morning edition."

Morris started. Until this time, he had written nothing but personals. He was eager to advance. This looked to him like a rung in the ladder. He would "make good" for himself and his paper. There was no passenger train due, but he caught a fast freight and "bummed" his way to the Bend and walked from there to Shintown.

He was admitted without question to the parlor of the old Wells place. The men had departed, leaving only a watcher beside the dead.

The boy took out his note-book and asked questions which the man who sat in waiting and Mrs. Kilgore eagerly answered. He looked at the woman with her mass of yellow hair about her head like a crown. He had been brought up inland. He knew little of that great wave of surging humanity which yearly seek our shores in search of a home. He had seen the German type with fair skin and yellow hair. It did not come to him that a far northern country had these characteristics intensified.

The presses closed at midnight. He had four hours to reach the city and have his copy ready. He fired questions rapidly, and wrote while the answers came. Then he fairly ran down the country road to the Bend where he caught the late flyer.

It was almost eleven when he began to make copy. Suddenly he stopped. He had neglected to ask the sex of the child who had been made motherless by the accident. He paused an instant. He had no time to find out. He would use a reporter's privilege.

The next morning's edition of the *Herald* came out with triple headings on its front page.

Accident at Village of Shintown
One Killed—Two Badly Hurt
A German Woman Who Cannot be Identified
Killed by Runaway Horse. Her Little
Son in Care of Strangers.

Then followed an incorrect account of the accident. The nationality of the

woman, her relation to the child, the sex and age of the latter were so far removed from the truth, that people hundreds of miles away read in eager hope, only to lay the paper aside, disappointed that this was not she for whom they were searching.

CHAPTER III.

No one came to ask concerning the strangers, and she was laid away in the Wells burial lot, and Miss Eliza paid the bills that necessarily followed.

Mrs. Kilgore and Dr. Dullmer, with Squire Stout standing by and looking on like a bird of ill omen, went over every article of the attire of woman and child in the hope of finding some means of identification. There was a small traveling bag of fine leather. It contained the articles necessary for a journey of several days. There was a small drinking cup, a child's coat, comb and brush. There were neither tickets nor checks, nor a cent of money. This led Miss Eliza to believe that somewhere there must have been a second purse. She went with the men over the scene of accident and retraced every step from the time she had first seen the woman sleeping in the shade of the bushes. But nothing was found to help them out of the unfortunate situation. Still, they believed that checks and tickets were somewhere. A tramp might have picked them up, or some dishonest, careless person found and retained possession of them. But after a careful search, all hope in that direction was given up.

The dead woman's clothes were ordinary. A coat-suit and shirt-waist of cheap material, underwear with a bit of hand-made lace of the old-fashioned kind. Her hat was cheap and rather tawdry; but everything about her was clean and whole. All gave the appearance of her being a self-respecting person in poor circumstances.

Two things belied this, however. The dress which the little child wore and a second one in the traveling case were exquisite in quality and handiwork. The little petticoats were dainty and showed expenditure both of money and good taste. The little beauty pins which fastened the dress were solid gold with the monogram E. L.

In the traveling case was a small box containing several quaint rings and a

brooch.

Miss Eliza knew little of jewelry. The people with whom she had been reared had never been financially able to indulge themselves along this line and had consequently put upon it the ban of their disapproval. Her experience had been so limited that she knew no values. The articles were rings and pins, and were pretty. That was as far as she gave them thought. They had no dollar mark attached to them.

There was only one course left to her to follow. She put every article which the child wore, the traveling case and all its contents safely away with the few legal documents and valuables she possessed. She had the business instinct and forethought sufficient to mark each one, and to write a full letter of explanation as to how they came into her possession.

"You're taking a heap of trouble," said Mrs. Kilgore sadly. She had been following Miss Eliza over the house, always keeping a few steps behind her. She put on a big, green-checked apron when she dressed in the morning, and wore it until she prepared for bed at night. She never took it off at other times unless she had an errand to the store or post-office. Then she merely removed the work-marked one for that which was fresh from the iron.

She always had a broom in her hand. She followed in the footsteps of Eliza and brushed up after her, or stopped to pick up a thread or bit of lint, or straightened out a misplaced book, or flicked away a bit of dust with the tail of her apron.

This gave the impression that Mrs. Kilgore was a conscientious, indefatigable housewife who busied herself from morning until night with duties. It was all in appearances. Her house was a litter. Garments hung from parlor to kitchen, from attic to cellar, at every place where a nail might be driven in wall, beam or door.

She sighed and looked doleful and "put upon" every time she stooped to pick up a stray bit of lint, but deep in her soul she was happy. She was posing as an over-worked martyr and was not doing enough to tire herself. She was getting barrels of credit for a tin cup of effort.

"You're taking a heap of trouble," she repeated. "It's more than I'd take."

"I'm taking a little now to save a great deal for some one when I'm not here. The time may come when the girl's own kin may be found. I want things to be in order so that they'll not doubt that she's their own. I'm of the opinion that she belongs to folks that are something. Her little white dress is enough to make me think that. Sometime, somebody will be coming along to look her up."

This was a new idea to Mrs. Kilgore. It appealed to the sentimental side of her nature. In her mind's eye, she pictured the child's kin appearing in splendor and bearing her away with them. Another element of the case presented itself to her. She paused in her "sweeping up" and looked at Miss Eliza. She looked at

her in a new light.

"They may do a heap for you for being so good to her and burying her mother decent and respectable in your own folks' lot and not in the poor field. They may do a heap for you."

"I'm not thinking of that. I had a right to do what I did. It was the very least I could do, and I've got to provide for the little girl until some one comes for her. It was my fault that she's dead. I hain't finding fault with myself for asking her to ride back with me. Any Christian woman would have done the same; but I didn't do right to touch the whip to Old Prince. That's where I was at fault; but"—pensively, "who would have thought that an old worn-out brute like him could have had so much ginger in him. It was my fault at not knowing and not understanding a brute animal that I'd driven for six years. No; I'll be good to the child—as good as I can be. I've hurt her a powerful lot by taking her mother from her. I'll do what I can to make up for it. It won't be for long. Her kin will come to claim her."

Had Eliza not felt responsible, she could have been nothing but good to the child. Mothers of the locality fixed the age of the little girl at about three. Others placed it as high as five. There she was dropped in among them without a name or even a birthday. She was a well-formed, beautiful child with brown ringlets clinging about her little plump neck; and eyes matching in color the blue of the midsummer sky. She was good-tempered and healthy. She smiled from the time she awoke until she fell asleep from sheer weariness. She prattled and hummed little tunes, only a few of the words of which she could remember. She followed Eliza wherever the woman went, and crawled into her lap and cuddled close to her the instant she seated herself. "Pity adee" was the only title she knew for Miss Eliza. After a few days, the name was fixed: "Adee." The little girl could not be persuaded to call her foster-parent by any other name. A child can manage to thrive and yet have no birthday; but a name it must have. For several days Eliza referred to the stranger as "the little girl." This was not satisfactory.

"She must be called something. It's simply heathenish not to have a name of some kind. I'll name her myself if I cannot find out what her name is," concluded Miss Eliza. She set about to find the real name. The monogram E. L. on the pins was the only clue. The child might remember something. Taking her up in her lap, Eliza began a system of catechising.

"What shall Adee call you?"

"Baby." She smiled back at her interlocutor until the dimples came and went.

"A prettier name than Baby. Shall I call you Elizabeth—Beth—Bessie?" She pronounced each name slowly, watching if it might awaken any show of memory. But it did not. The little girl smiled the more, even while she shook her head in

negation.

"No, no—Izbeth not pitty name. Baby—'Itta one' pitty name."

Eliza would not let herself become discouraged. "Little One" and "Baby" were pet names given by some adoring fathers and mothers. Perhaps the child had seldom heard her correct name. Guided by the letters on the pins, Eliza repeated every name beginning with E; but it was without results.

"You must be called something," she at last cried in desperation. "It must begin with E too. Elizabeth will do as well an anything else. It's dignified enough for her when she's grown up, and Beth or Bess will be well enough for a child. I've just got to call her something."

So Elizabeth she became. Beth was what Eliza called her. Adee was the only title that the child could be induced to give to her foster-mother.

"Some one will claim her before the week passes," Eliza had told herself again and again. She was hopeful that it would be so. A child is a great responsibility, and the woman had no desire to take it upon herself. July passed and no one came. August had come with all the glory of color and life rampant in yard and field.

Never before had flowers bloomed so luxuriantly even for Miss Eliza. The nasturtiums were blazing with burnt orange and carmine. Petunias flaunted their heavily laden stocks. The scarlet sages glowed from every shaded nook. There was braggadocio in every clump and cluster as though every flower being in flower-land was proclaiming, "See what we can do when we try." High carnival of bloom! Gay revelry of color! Flaunt and brag! Flaunt and brag through all those wonderful days of August.

Eliza went from flower to flower and Beth followed. There was no need to tell the child not to step upon them or to pluck them ruthlessly. She picked her steps. Her fingers touched each petal caressingly. She loved them as much as the woman herself did.

Eliza was busy weeding. Bending over, she was patiently removing with the aid of a kitchen fork the sprouts of chick-weeds which would creep in among her treasures.

Beth, who had been following her closely, suddenly proved a laggard. Missing her at last, Eliza retraced her steps to the east side of the house where she had last seen the child. There she was down on her knees at the edge of the pansy bed and her head bent close over them.

"Whatever are you doing, Beth? Not hurting Adee's flowers?"

"No, indeedy. I was ust a tissin 'em. A has so pitty itta faces. A ast me to tiss em." There she was, putting her lips to each purple-yellow face, and talking with them as though they were real live babies. Eliza had nothing to say. She would have done that same thing herself when she was a child if she had dared.

With a mad plunge he went tearing down the road.

She knew exactly how Beth felt.

Sam Houston had come around the corner and had been a witness to the pretty scene. He had come over to borrow a hatchet and some nails. A board had come off his chicken-yard and the hens had destroyed what they could of his garden.

"Laws, Eliza!" he exclaimed. "You'll not be able to get much from that child. She'll not be practical. Common sense and not sentiment is what is needed in this world. She'll be for settin' out flowers an' lettin' cabbage go. I declare to goodness." He was yet watching Beth kissing the pansies. "She'll be as big a fool as you are about posies an' sich like."

"Do you really think so?" cried Eliza joyously, her face brightening up as though she had been paid a great compliment. Sam sniffed, "I've come over to get the lend of your hatchet and some nails. Those dern chickens got out somehow. The wimmen-folks must have left the door open."

During July, Eliza had prefaced the duties of each morning with the reflection, "Her own kin will come for her before the week is out."

During August, she changed her views. "'Tain't likely they'll come this

week. The weather is so uncertain. There might be a downpour any hour."

But it was not until September set fairly in that the hope was fixed. She grew fearful that they would come. Her anxious eyes followed every strange vehicle which came down the road. She gave a sigh of relief when it passed her door.

"We'll have a nice winter together—Beth and me. 'Hain't likely that they'll come at winter time."

So she satisfied her longings and kept the child with her.

CHAPTER IV.

The months passed. Before Eliza was aware of it, the winter had passed. They had been strange months, filled with new experiences to the woman. When twilight fell, Beth had always crawled up into her lap and, snuggling close, demanded a story.

Eliza had never been fed on stories. She knew absolutely nothing about them. She had never tried to make up any, for the demand for them had never come.

"Tory, Adee. Tory, Adee." There was no resisting that little appeal. There could be no denial for the tender caressing hands, and the sweet rose-bud mouth.

"What shall I tell about?" asked Eliza pausing for a time.

"Anyfing. F'owers what talk and tell tories; efefants, and Santa Claus and fings like that."

Eliza gasped for breath. Flowers were the only things she knew about. She did her best with the material on hand. She told a story of a poppy which was proud and haughty because its gown was gay and because it stood high above the other flowers. In its pride it ignored the humble, modest little violet which could barely raise its head above the sod. But when the second morning had come, the petals of the poppy lay scattered. Its glory was gone; but the violet yet smiled up from its lowly place and gave color to all about it.

"I's booful, Adee. Tell me—a more one."

Eliza put her off. One story at bed time was quite enough. A strange sensation of thrills had gone through her body while the story had been growing.

She had never believed herself capable of anything half so fine. She had created something. The sensation of power was tingling through every nerve and muscle. She did not know it; neither did the child whose eyelids were closing in slumber; but with this experience she had crawled from the shell of dead customs, hide-bound, worn-out ideas and laws. There had been a real self hidden away for many years. It had never found a way for self-expression until now.

The black silk gown had undergone renovation since the day of the accident. A new sleeve had replaced the torn one, and the torn breadth in the skirt had been hidden by a broad fold. It was quite as good as ever.

The first time Eliza put it on, Beth took exception to it. The child stood in the middle of the room at a distance from her foster-parent, and could not be induced to come near her.

"Ug-e, ug-e dwess. Baby don't like ug-e dwess."

"Don't you like Adee's Sunday dress?" asked Eliza. The child shook her head to and fro, and persisted in calling it "ug-e dwess".

"Then I shall wear another," said Eliza. She made her way upstairs and Beth toddled after her. Going to the closet, the child began to tug and pull at a cheap little gown of dimity. Eliza had paid a shilling a yard for it the season before and had made it for "comfort". But she could not keep the artist soul from showing in it any more than she could keep it from showing in the living room and gardens. The neck was just a little low and the sleeves reached just to the elbow. The ground was white with sprigs of pale pink roses scattered over it.

"Pitty dwess—pitty dwess," Beth kept repeating. To please her, Eliza took it down and put it on. She looked at herself in the mirror and was better pleased with what she saw than she had been with the reflection of the black-robed figure. While she was dressing, Beth danced about her, exclaiming with delight at her pretty lady and the pretty dress.

So two things became fixed habits in the new household,—a story before bedtime and the pretty dresses in place of black.

So the year passed. The Jersey cow, the chickens, the vegetables from the summer provided for their needs. They needed little money. Wood was supplied from the trees on Eliza's land.

Beth needed clothes; but her dresses were yet so small that little material was needed, and the shoes were so tiny that they cost but little.

Eliza made the little dresses. She went to the Bend for patterns and material. She even bought a book of styles to see how a child should be dressed. When she sat in the big living room with needle and thread, Beth sat beside her sewing diligently at doll clothes, or cutting fantastic shapes out of paper.

Beth quite fell in love with the pictures in the fashion plates and selected the finest ones of all as Adee.

"'Is is Adee and 'is is Adee," she would repeat again and again, laying her finger on the representations of splendid womanhood shown on the pages.

Eliza began to look beyond the year. She felt now that no one would ever claim Beth. She would have the child always. She was glad of that. She would need money to educate her. She would need more each year as the child grew older. So she watched the pennies closely. She wore shabby gloves all year in order to lay the money by.

"We'll both need new clothes by summer time," she told herself. "There'll not be much. We'll get along on little."

Indeed they needed little. The people about them had enough to keep them warm—and no more. So Eliza and the little girl needed, for the time, only necessities. The flowers which filled the bay windows; the great fire-place with its burning, snapping logs; Old Jerry, the cat, who made up the domestic hearth; Shep, the dog, who played guard to them, and the stories at twilight were sufficient to develop the cultural, sentimental side of life.

During the winter, few callers came. The roads were not good. Sometimes for days the drifts would fill them. It was impossible to go out at night, for no way was lighted. There were services of some kind each Sunday morning; Sunday-school and prayer meeting combined. Twice a month the supply minister came from one of the adjoining towns and held regular services, yet in spite of being alone, these two were never lonely.

The following summer, Eliza found that she would find an unexpected expense in her household account. The sugar box was emptied more quickly than ever before. Sometimes, she would fill a sugar bowl after the midday meal and would find it empty before supper time.

Yet Beth did not care for sugar. She would not touch it in her victuals, if it were there in sufficient amount to be noticeable.

One afternoon, Eliza found Beth standing on a chair before the shelf which bore the household supplies. Her little fists were crammed with sugar.

"What are you doing with it, Beth?" asked Eliza.

"I'se feed'n em. Ey wikes it. Tome and see."

She made her way out the back door, crossed the yard and garden to where, at the border of the woodland, was a slight elevation.

Eliza followed. The slopes of the hill were alive with ants hurrying to and fro, each carrying a burden. Round about the entrance to the ant hills, Beth had made a circle of sugar.

"Ey wike it so. Ey is so very hungry." Eliza did not scold her. She herself had been repressed along such lines when she was a child. Although she had long since forgotten the experience, the sympathy and understanding still remained with her.

Later she explained to Beth about not helping herself from the household store. She compromised, however, by promising to fill, and place where Beth could reach it, a small tin cup of sugar with which to feed the ants for the day.

Two years passed in such fashion. There came a time when Beth was undoubtedly of school age. The township school was a mile or more from the old Wells place.

Eliza thought little of that. A mile meant little to one accustomed to walking. She remembered something of the conditions of the school in her own childhood. She herself had been of such a nature that she had not been contaminated. Her presence had repudiated all that was not pure and fine. From the standpoint of a woman, she saw the matters in a different light. She visited the school several times. Forty children were packed in one small room. There were classes from primary to grammar grades. The poor little tots in the chart class sat on hard seats until their backs ached. At recess and noon—almost all carried their dinners—they were turned out to play without restraint, the rough and boisterous with the gentle and timid, the vicious and unruly of older age with the tractable little folks whose minds were as a sheet of clean paper upon which no impression had been made.

Miss Eliza decided then that that particular school was not what she wished for the little girl she was to train for womanhood. For some months, she had learned all she could of new methods of teaching. For the first time in her life, she knew that the A, B, C's were out of date and that children were taught after a different fashion.

The school at the Bend had grown during the last five years. A supervisor with new ideas, and trained progressive teachers were making the grades equal to the best in the country. Eliza had heard of the work. Because she was interested, she had questioned and investigated.

The Bend was too far away for a child of Beth's age to walk alone, but Eliza was not one to give up easily.

"If the main road's closed against me, I'll find a foot-path or—I'll break a way through the underbrush," she was accustomed to say. She did that very thing now.

She visited the primary grades at the Bend. She sat an entire afternoon drinking in everything she could about teaching children. When the pupils were dismissed, she talked long with Miss Davis.

This teacher, who thought only of the help she might be to the child, copied the work she had laid out for the month, gave a first reader and slate to Miss Eliza, and explained how "Willie has a slate" should be taught for the first lesson.

Eliza started in her work. At the close of each month she visited Miss Davis and copied the teacher's plan for the next four weeks. So the second year of Beth's

life with Miss Eliza passed. The child learned the numbers to twelve. She knew the stories which the first grade children should know, and she read the reader through from cover to cover. Added to this was a vocabulary of fifty words which she could write.

Miss Eliza was happy. The child had ability to learn. Eliza had a great admiration for book knowledge. She had lacked so much in that line herself. It was the unattainable to her; consequently she put great value upon it.

Miss Davis and her corps of teachers taught Eliza more than methods in teaching first grade work. They were fully as old as Eliza herself; but they wore gowns which were quite up-to-date. They arranged their hair to bring out the very best of their features.

They talked about skating and literary clubs, and calls, and afternoon teas. One had even gone out with her pupils and coasted down hill, and not one was shocked or even thrilled when she related it.

Eliza listened. She was not a dullard. To use the vernacular of Shintown, "Eliza Wells was no one's fool, in spite of her queer old ways." Her queer old way was loving flowers, giving artistic touch to the dullest places.

She showed her best qualities now in listening and culling the best from these teachers whose opportunities were broader and whose lives were fuller than hers had been.

They found her enjoyable; for she had a quaint wit, and a refined, gentle manner.

That night when she went home to Beth, she cuddled her close in her arms.

"What story to-night, Adee dear?" was the first question.

"A make-believe story which is really true," she said.

Beth gave a little sigh of satisfaction. The make-believe stories which were true were better even than fairy stories which never can be true. This was the story she told:

The Wood Baby.

Once upon a time, the angels brought from heaven a little child and placed her in a little house in the woods and gave her a plain old farmer and his wife as parents.

The hut in which they lived was small—only four bare walls, a door and a window. It was night when the angel carried the child to its new home. The child was asleep. It lay in slumber in the arms of its mother. The neighbor folk came and looked at it, and spoke dolefully of the cold, unpleasant world into which it had come.

The child awakened, but it did not open its eyes. It lay and listened.

"It's only a poor bare hut with smoke-covered walls that I have to give as a home for my baby," the mother was saying.

"It will find only work and trouble here," a neighbor wailed. "It's a hard, hard life."

The baby heard, and being nothing but a baby and knowing nothing of the world, believed what it heard. It grew as the days and months passed. The time came for it to walk, but it would only creep upon the floor. It would not raise itself on its feet to look from the window. It would not open its eyes. It had never done so since the night that the angel had carried it to its new home.

Years passed. The baby, now a woman in years, moved about between the four walls which its great-grandparents had built. Yet she opened not her eyes; she never let a ray of light enter.

"What is the use?" she told herself. "Is not the world dark and miserable and barren? Why should I look at anything which is so painfully homely? As to walking, why should I take the trouble? I cannot go beyond this hut which my great-grandparents built. Creeping will do very well."

Then one morning something happened.——

Eliza paused in her story. She knew what effect it would have on her listener. Beth immediately sat bolt upright with her eyes brimming with interest and curiosity.

"What happened?" she cried. She gave a little gasp for breath, she could wait no longer.

"Something happened," continued Eliza. "It was a beautiful morning, but the woman did not know it. Suddenly she heard a song of a bird at her door. She did not know it was a bird; but the sound was sweet, alluring, enticing. She listened an instant. Then she got upon her feet and hurried to the door and flung it wide open.

"A wonderful sight met her eyes. A world, a glorious world with ripening grain, exquisite coloring of flowers, soft breezes laden with the most delicate perfume, and the song of birds everywhere."

"And then—then what did she do?" asked Beth.

"For a time, she stood and felt sorry for herself that she had kept herself blind for so long. Then she said, 'But here is all this beauty for me to enjoy—me and the little song-bird which made me open my eyes.' Then she took the bird in her hand and held it close up to her cheek, and went with it out into the beauty of the world, and the little bird sang all the while."

"O-o-h," sighed Beth. "That is beautiful. Who was the baby the angels brought. Who was the woman? Did you know them?"

"I was both the babe and the woman, and you the little song-bird that called me out to see the sunshine and hear the music."

CHAPTER V.

On some of Beth's visits to town, she had made the acquaintance of Helen Reed, a girl of her own age and lucky enough to have five brothers and four sisters. They were the jolliest set imaginable, all packed as close as matches in a box. Helen's hair was as yellow as puffed taffy. Her eyes matched the blueness of the summer sky. It takes a large check to clothe, feed and educate ten children. The Reed children had early learned how to make the most of hair ribbons, and to trim over hats from the season before. They dressed plain enough, goodness knows, but they had an "air."

Helen when barely seven would cock up a hat at the side, stick in a quill, slap it on her head and have the general effect of a French fashion plate.

She was a dear little girl who looked out for her own rights while she remembered the rights of others, just as any little girl learns to do when she has been reared with nine other children.

Helen and Beth fell in love with each other at first sight. The former, living in a flat in town, found the yard and trees at the old Wells place most delightful. Early in June when school was out, she came up to visit Beth.

"Your trees are pretty, Beth. I think you'd feel like a queen sitting under them."

Beth looked at them with new eyes. She had always had them, and did not fully appreciate them.

"Let's play we're queens," cried Helen. "Under that big locust tree on the bank, we'll build a palace."

"It isn't a locust tree. They don't grow so. It's an oak," said Beth.

"Locust sounds prettier, so I'll call it that," said Helen, who did not know one tree from another. "It doesn't matter what kind it is. Let's build a palace."

"I don't see how it can be done," said Beth.

"Then I'll show you." She was already picking her way gingerly across the public road. The girls were in their bare feet and the skin was yet tender. They stepped as carefully as they could, for the bits of gravel and sand could be cruel.

"This will be the drawing room," cried Helen, moving quickly now that she

had gained the greensward under the trees. "Then we'll have a wide hall with a library on one side, a den, and right here will be the nursery." She had been jumping about like a cricket from one place to another, locating the different apartments of the household.

"I'm not sure where I wish the dining-room. I'd like to have something pretty to look at while I'm eating."

"Have it on this side and we can look at the trees and Adee's flowers," suggested Beth. She had played second in the game. She could not yet see how Helen could build such a large and elegant affair from nothing at all.

"That's just the thing," cried Helen. "We'll play that the yard is the conservatory. Now, let's put up the walls."

"I don't see how you can," began Beth.

"Help me carry up these nice stones from the beach and you'll see."

She started down the bank, and Beth followed blindly with faith in Helen's power to make something from nothing. For an hour they carried up small flat stones until they had quite a number piled together under the trees. All the while, their tongues had kept clacking like the shuttle of a machine.

"Now we'll build. It's going to be a gray stone mansion," said Helen.

"I always did like stone houses," said Beth. She had never seen one, but she knew at that moment that she always had preferred them to any other.

Helen had already laid down a line of stones. "Start at this corner and make a line over to here." She laid a stone down to mark the corners of a large rectangle which was to be the living room. "Right here will be the door on to the front porch. Don't put stones there,—here will be a large double door into the library. We'll leave that open."

It took a little time to lay the stones around until the general outline was that of the ground plan of a large house. The stones were the walls. Open spaces were the doors and windows.

The little girls stood in the drawing room and looked about with an air of pride. "It's all ready now but the furnishing," said Helen. "We must have some dishes, too, for the china closet."

"I have some saucers and cups without handles. I'll get them." She started toward the house. Helen gave a scream of horror and clutched at Beth's arm.

"Look what you are doing," she cried. "Do be careful. Come back," and she forcibly brought her back.

"What's the trouble? What ever am I doing? I can't see that I've done anything wrong."

"You've stepped over the walls. Who ever knew any one to leave a room by stepping over the wall. Do be careful and go through the doors."

"Oh, I thought the way you screamed that it was a snake—one of those little

green ones." She obediently moved through the open space meant for a door and went for the broken dishes.

By the time she had returned, Helen had furnished the drawing room. A discarded wash-boiler, turned upside down, served as a piano. A shingle resting upon two stones did very well as a music rest. Helen was down on her knees before it, singing with all her might and thumping with her knuckles until the tin resounded.

Beth had learned her lesson and came into the room by way of the door rather than over the wall. She surveyed the drawing room with pride.

"Scrumptious, isn't it?" asked Helen.

"It's certainly kertish," replied Beth. Kertish was a new word to Helen.

"Now what does ker-tish mean, Beth Wells? You are forever using it."

"It means scrumptious and a whole lot more," said Beth. "I can't just exactly explain. It means just what the drawing-room is now."

"It does look rather nice," said Helen complacently. "These chairs in pink velvet and brocade are certainly scrumptious."

She pointed to several billets of wood which she had stood on end to serve as chairs. Then she seated herself cautiously upon them, for pink velvet chairs made from a cross-cut on square timber will wobble sometimes in spite of one.

"They certainly are 'kertish'," said Beth. She had made up that word herself. It expressed all she had in her mind, and being her very own word, she could thrust it about to fit any feeling or any condition. She was moving about the drawing-room in a dignified fashion, arranging at regular intervals wild roses on the heavy sod. Helen watched her.

"The green velvet carpet with pink roses is just the thing to go with these chairs," said Helen. "I must say that in all my travels I never saw anything more scrumptious."

"It is the most kertish thing I ever saw," said Beth.

"Who are we anyhow?" asked Beth at last. "I mean who are we besides ourselves."

"I am Mrs. Queen of Sheba," said Helen, "and you can be Mrs. Princess of Wales."

So it was. Royalty had set up housekeeping under the shady trees which covered the bank before the old Wells place.

Royalty is not domestic. Before a second day had passed, Mrs. Queen of Sheba grew tired of the monotony of housekeeping.

"Princess of Wales, we will take a trip around the world," she said. "The ship is ready." She pointed majestically to an old row boat which, water-logged and unseaworthy, lay abandoned on the beach. "We will go on board at once."

"I am ready, Mrs. Queen of Sheba."

An hour later, they were ship-wrecked and forced to wade ashore from mid-ocean. A little accident like this did not deter them. They were on a voyage of experience and discovery.

"While we are waiting for a ship to rescue us, let us explore the land," said the Queen of Sheba.

"It would be the most kertish thing we could do."

They proceeded slowly, making their way around Great Island, which the uninitiated might have called the big rock lying out well toward mid-stream. They crossed Knee-Deep Gulf and came to Cant-Wada Bay where they were forced to turn back. Along the shore, they had a horrible experience. Helen screamed and sank down, pulling Beth with her.

"Look," she whispered, pointing her finger to the opposite shore. "There are cannibals. Do not let them see us, or they will roast us and eat us alive."

Beth sank down with a shiver, clutching at Helen's bare feet as though to find protection in them. At length, she found courage to raise her eyes and look where Helen pointed. "Those—those—cannibals," she cried. Her voice was a mixture of relief and scorn. "They're only boys in swimming. That big one is Jimmy—"

"They are cannibals, and that big one is the chief. Don't let them see us. Let us creep softly away." They crept. It was a horrifying experience. No one could tell what might have happened, had not a distant sail appeared.

"A ship! A ship! We shall be saved," cried the Queen of Sheba, kicking up her sunburnt legs and waving her arms with delight.

"A ship! A ship! We are saved," and Mrs. Princess of Wales indulged in antics which are not generally practiced by people of royal blood.

"Put up a signal of distress," said Mrs. Queen of Sheba.

"Here is a flag. Put it on the pole," cried the Princess of Wales. She promptly stuck her sunbonnet on the end of a stick and waved frantically to and fro.

So while the cannibals were shrieking and performing wild antics on the opposite shore, the Queen of Sheba and the Princess of Wales crept on board the water-logged boat and were saved.

These were glorious days. The little girls lacked for nothing. What was not theirs in actuality, became theirs by the gift of imagination. They reveled in motor cars, airships, mansions and pink velvet furniture. They were billionaires, with all the possessions and none of the trouble of taking care of them.

They were happy together for several weeks. Then Helen invited Beth to her birthday party, and Beth was heart-broken. Even Adee could not comfort her for a time.

CHAPTER VI.

"Helen Reed was born on the tenth of July. When's my birthday, Adee?"

Eliza had never foreseen such a question. She could not reply at first.

"When was I born, Adee?"

Eliza was not one given to evasion. To her there could be but aye or nay.

"I do not know," she replied.

"Why do you not know, Adee? Helen's mother knows the very day that Helen was born. I think you would remember about me."

"But, Beth dearest, you were not a tiny baby when you were sent to me. I do not know how old you were. I think almost two years old. No one told me about your birthday."

"They kept me in heaven longer than most babies, then," said Beth sententiously. "Most babies are just a minute old when they are sent down on earth. The angels must have liked me very much. Don't you think so, Adee?"

"I am sure they did," Eliza assured her. This comforted Beth somewhat. It is nice to feel that the angels feel pleasure in one's society. Yet it had its disadvantages too. One could not be quite sure of one's birthday; and thereby one was short of presents and festivities of various kinds.

"I should think, Adee, that you would have asked them," she said after some time. Eliza had let her thoughts go back to her household duties and, some time having elapsed between this question and the remarks which had preceded it, she had forgotten the subject of conversation.

"Asked what—of whom?"

"My birthday—of the angels when they brought me."

"You were not brought directly to me. I am not your real mother."

"Not my real one?" Beth dropped her play-things and came close to Eliza and leaned against her knee. There was surprise, consternation, pathos in her face and voice, as she leaned her head against Adee's arm.

"Not my real one? I don't see any different, Adee. You're just like Helen's mother, only you're a good deal nicer. She's a real mother, why hain't you?"

"I mean, you are not my child by birth."

"Wasn't I born your little girl?"

"No," said Adee. "When you were born you did not belong to me."

There was nothing more to be said. Beth was quiet—too quiet, Eliza thought, and turned to look at the child. Beth's lips were quivering and trembling, but she was pressing them hard so as to make no outcry. The tears were very near the surface, but Beth would not let them fall. One glance at the brave little face, and Eliza turned and, throwing her arm about here impulsively, hugged her tight to her bosom.

"What is it, Beth?"

"I want to be some one's born child," she said. "I want to be your born child."

Eliza hesitated. What was conventionality in comparison to the little girl's peace of mind? She would put aside her own sense of the fitness of some things and make the child happy. "You may be my born child, then," she said. "You may be born in my love, in my heart. You may be my own little girl, exactly as Helen is her mother's little girl. Will that please you?"

"Yes, now what about my birthday?" asked Beth. "Every one of the Reeds have birthdays, and they are always talking about pulling ears and what presents they got. They don't have their birthdays all the same time. They've scattered them about so that one comes after each pay-day."

"Not a bad idea", said Eliza, "especially when there is a birthday with candles. You may have a birthday, too, just like the other girls. You came to my house the first day of July. We'll celebrate that; so far as you and I are concerned that day is correct."

Beth gave a sigh of satisfaction. That was the only trouble she had had in her life. It was nice that it was disposed of so satisfactorily.

"We'll have a cake too, Adee, with candles. How many candles?"

"Seven," replied Eliza promptly.

Beth had come to the years when a child questions and begins to reach out for the reason of things. She was not at all stupid. She was quick to see how people conducted themselves; how they spoke and dressed. She was always attracted toward the refined and gentle. Eliza's heart rejoiced at this. She believed that 'blood would tell', and all Beth's attributes and natural tendencies were proof that her people were self-respecting gentlefolk.

Eliza had long since given up wearing black silk and little bits of bonnets perched on her head, too small for grace or beauty. Beth had not liked them. Beth had declared them not 'pitty', and Eliza had accepted her decision. There were white dresses and cheap thin prints, but they were artistic and suited Eliza far better than the dark, somber colors. Perhaps it was easy to follow Beth's wishes in regard to the matter of clothes, for Eliza's heart had always hungered after

daintiness and brightness. Yet she had never felt herself equal to going against the conventions and unwritten laws of the narrow little hamlet; but with Beth's encouragement, it was easier to follow the dictates of her own desires.

Eliza was really a handsome woman, but she never suspected that herself; nor did the people of Shintown. Their taste was inclined toward buxom figures, red cheeks, and black, curly hair. Years before, some one had declared this the type of beauty, and the folk of Shintown had accepted it then, and their grandchildren looked upon it as a matter of course even now. So to them Eliza Wells was not beautiful. Her broad, white forehead with the soft, smooth chestnut hair like a band of velvet; her big, clear, gray eyes, serene and calm until she was vexed or excited, when they glowed like embers; her lithe, willowy form, all this meant nothing to them.

"Eliza's got a big mouth. Did you ever see the like of it," had been Sam Houston's comment on her appearance for years, and everyone grinned then and ever afterward whenever he repeated it. It was large, perhaps, but it displayed beautiful teeth, and its curves were exquisite. There was strength and sweetness both in it. Yet, in Shintown, she was not even considered fine looking. It was merely a difference of standards, and somehow all about her was bigger than their measure.

Beth was arriving at the age when she asked questions and had thoughts all her own. One afternoon during the heat of summer, Eliza sat in the living room, taking a few stitches in her weekly mending. The room had been darkened save where she had raised the blinds sufficiently to let the light fall on her work. Her profile was distinct against the white draperies of the inner hangings.

Beth was taking her afternoon nap on the davenport at the end of the room. It was the same big old affair of mahogany on which Sam Houston had placed her when Prince had run away—five years before. It was big and cozy and comfortable. Beth had slept soundly and long. When at last she opened her eyes, she was dazed and just a little dull. She lay looking at Adee's profile against the window draperies.

What was in her mind, what shadow of a far-off dream had come to her, no one could tell. She watched her foster-mother, and at last said, "You don't wear your hair like you used to, Adee. Why don't you? It was prettier, much prettier the other way."

"You're dreaming, Beth, child. I always wore it just this way—at least, since I have grown up."

"No, Adee, I'm sure you didn't. You used to have fussy little curls about your face, and you used to wear flowers—pink rosebuds and carnations. Don't you remember, Adee?"

Eliza was startled, but wisely did not contradict the child. "When did I wear

flowers in my hair, Little One? Was it in this room, or where? Tell me about it."

Beth laughed in a lazy sort of way. She was not fully awake. Was she partly dreaming, or did some recollections of her babyhood days intrude themselves? Was a little portion of her brain opening and bringing to light impressions of the hours when she had been with someone else than Adee?

"You're not one bit of a good 'rememberer,'" she replied slowly, dreamily. "You used to wear your hair all fussiness and have flowers in it, stuck down over your ear so, and your dresses would be long in the back. Don't you remember, you'd come in my room and pick me up and hug me and call me Baby—and something else, but I've forgot. What else was it that you called me, Adee?"

"I've forgotten. Go on with your remembering. The other name will come back after a while."

Adee's heart jumped even as she spoke. Perhaps the child could remember enough that some trace of her people could be found. There was no joy to Eliza in this thought. Beth gone! Her limbs grew cold and her heart felt like ice in her breast at the mere thought of it.

"Was it a pretty room, Beth, where you slept?"

"Of course, Adee. There were curtains around the bed. It was shiny and yellow—the bed. You hadn't any carpets on the floor. It was pretty, all right, but not one bit like where I sleep now. Did you give my little bed away, Adee?"

"You must not ask impertinent questions," said Eliza with what lightness she could muster. "You are such a big girl now. Surely you would not wish to sleep in a little baby-crib."

"No, but it would be nice for my dolls," said Beth. "If we had it ready, we might get a live baby to put in it sometime."

Eliza took her stitches slowly. Beth must be dreaming. Surely, the woman in gowns with long trains and fluffy, fussy hair in which flowers were fastened were tricks of the child's imagination. Eliza had a picture in her mind of the big, fair woman, shabbily dressed, whom she had found along the roadside. This woman's hair had been braided and coiled tight about her head. It had been beautiful, but it was not fussy, and it was straight as hair could be.

It was a question in Eliza's mind, whether she should change the subject, or whether it would be wiser to encourage the child in these remembrances or fits of fancy, whichever they were. She concluded that anything was better than uncertainty.

"What about the big woman with blue eyes and long braids of yellow hair? She used to have it wrapped close to her head. There were no curls anywhere. She wore very plain dresses—black skirts—"

"And big white aprons," cried Beth, sitting up suddenly and clapping her hands. Then she laughed joyously. "That was Bena, Adee. Wasn't Bena funny?

“Now we’ll build a gray stone mansion,” said Helen.

She had such funny words.” Then suddenly a new mood came to the child. Getting down quickly from the davenport, she crossed the room and, standing directly in front of Eliza, asked with direct tenseness:

“Where is Bena, Adee? What has become of her? What did you ever do to Bena? She hasn’t been here since I was a little bit of a baby. Where is Bena?”

Eliza shook her head. “I do not know, Beth. I am sorry, but I do not know.”

CHAPTER VII.

There were no playmates at Shintown. The nearest neighbor, Burtsch by name,

was nearly a mile away. The family consisted of the father and mother, and Rose who was a year older than Beth was supposed to be. There had been half a dozen children before Rose came, but they had died when mere babies.

Mrs. Burtsch frequently referred to the loss of her children as "the strange working of Providence." She had a thin, high-pitched voice. She was angular, long-limbed. She wore basques and straight, narrow skirts. Her hair was in a knob behind and drawn so tight that the muscles of her forehead and temple had a habitual upward tendency. As though to maintain an even balance, she always directed her glances toward the earth, and the lines of her mouth went downward. She was ingratiating, self-depreciating, and presumably humble. She was always declaring that she was just as good as Mrs. Somebody-or-other, if she was poor. It was no disgrace to be poor. But it was in her case. Poverty was her shame, for had she and her husband been up and about their work, making the most of their farm in place of trying to sustain themselves with the maxim, 'Poverty is no disgrace,' they would have had all the comforts desirable and might have been able to help others. Mrs. Burtsch had a whining voice that got upon one's nerves after a time. She made a point of coming in to see Eliza, and in an insinuating way found out all she could, suggested where she dared and criticised in her exasperating way. She brought Rose with her. While Mrs. Burtsch talked, the children played, or presumably did so; but Rose's ears and eyes were wide open. She never missed a word that her elders said. She was a skinny, owlish-looking child who could sit for hours and listen, but whose tongue could run as long and as easily as a ball-bearing machine. She knew every bit of gossip of the country-side, and repeated it with all the insinuating humility which was characteristic of her mother.

Rose and Beth were cutting out paper dolls. Eliza kept at her sewing while Mrs. Burtsch, rocking slowly, slowly, kept the conversation going.

"Beth looks stout, Miss Eliza. I've noticed frequently how stout she looks. But then that hain't no sign that she is going to live. Her own folks might have had consumption. You can never tell. Like mother, like child, you know. Her mother couldn't have had a constitution to brag on when a little thing like falling on a stone killed her quick like it did. If I were in your place, I'd be mighty careful of her. Don't let her breathe no night air, and keep her housed up well."

Eliza had long since passed this stage in child-rearing. When she realized that Beth might be with her always, she set about at once to learn something of bringing up a little girl, just as she had learned all she could about feeding chickens. She had long since discovered the futility of discussing any question with Mrs. Burtsch when the latter had the other view of the case. It was always a harangue and nothing else.

"She's healthy enough. She's never had a cold. I'm not at all concerned

about her."

"You never can be sure. She's got a dreadful color in her cheeks, and her eyes are too bright for health. I'd worry considerable about her."

"What good would that do? It would not improve her condition even if she was in the last stage of consumption."

Eliza smiled to herself. Beth, the picture of health! Her bright cheeks and dancing eyes were more the result of good, plain food, quiet, happy home life and fresh air and sunshine. She looked all she had been breathing in.

"You never can be sure. My William Henry was as strong a baby as you'd see in a day's travel, but he went off like a flash with pneumonia. You remember, Miss Eliza?"

She did remember. She knew how a sick child had been left to drag about in wet grass, and left lying at home, sick with rising fever, while the mother dilly-dallied over the fields looking for a weed that the Indians had found infallible for colds.

Mrs. Burtsch was now well launched on the subject. She discussed in detail the taking away of each one of her children. She called their early death "strange and mysterious workings of Providence." It was far from just to put the blame on Providence when each death had been the direct result of careless, ignorant mothering, or lack of mothering.

Miss Eliza listened. She had heard the story all her life. It had been a quarter of a century since William Henry had died. There was nothing to do but listen. One could not have turned Mrs. Burtsch from the beaten path of her conversation. The only thing to do was to let her go on until she had run herself out.

Eliza listened and threw in a "yes", an "indeed", at the proper place; but for the most part her attention was given to her sewing. It had required close accounting to make her income provide for herself and Beth. Each year the expenses would be greater; Eliza tried to lay a few dollars of her interest money aside. She believed in being ready for emergencies. Her trunk had, hidden in its capacious depth, all the odd pennies which came her way.

Now, she was reducing her own wardrobe to fit Beth out. When her shirt-waists were worn at the collar and cuffs, she took the fronts and backs and made guimpes for Beth.

Mrs. Burtsch had ultimately spun her story to a finish. Rose and Beth were yet intent upon cutting out ladies from a magazine. The former paid little attention to what her mother was saying. She had heard it so often that its charm had worn off. As far as Rose was concerned, it fell on dull ears.

Suddenly, Mrs. Burtsch leaned forward and, seizing an end of Eliza's sewing, took it up critically. "What do you mean to do with it?" she asked.

"The tucks hain't so bad, though the rest does look like it went through the mill. It's a sin and a shame to throw it away, 'Liza. I do hope you hain't going to be wasteful. It always cuts me up to see anything throwed away."

Her own yard was a waste of weeds. Her household a waste in every way. Hours and hours of each day were spent as she was spending these, at a harangue that did no one any good, which sapped the energy and left no gain whatever.

"I don't think I'll grow recklessly extravagant;" replied Eliza. "I've worn this white dress for three summers. It's out at a good many places and I've put on just enough flesh to make it too tight over the hips. I'm making it over for Beth. I can get quite a nice little dress for her. The ruffles are just as good as new." She held up the skirt and looked it over. "There's plenty of material to make her a nice little dress. I'm relieved at the thought of it. She does need one badly enough, and I could not see my way clear to get her something nice and fine."

Mrs. Burtsch had been fingering the dress with a hypercritical air. At Eliza's words, she leaned back in her chair and sighed. That sigh spoke volumes.

"You're very foolish, Miss Liza. Everyone is saying so and has been saying so ever since Old Prince got away from you. I don't like to tell you what folks are saying. I never was no hand at carrying news; but I feel that it's my duty to let you know. That's what a friend's for, to set us right when we go wrong. I feel it my duty to tell you."

"Don't put yourself out," said Eliza, biting off a thread closely, and with just a little touch of vindictiveness. "I'll not treasure it up against you." She was not angry. Amused came nearest to express her state of mind.

"I wouldn't be doing right," continued the visitor in her meek, whining, apologetic voice. "I never set up to be much. I know I hain't educated, and me and John are poor, but that hain't anything against us. Being poor hain't any disgrace, I've always tried to do my duty, as I saw it. If I've failed it hain't because I hain't tried. It hain't no matter to me how I hate to do a thing or how disagreeable it is, if it's my duty, I do it. That's the way I feel about telling you. I hain't going to shirk my duty by you living alone as you are."

The meeker Mrs. Burtsch tried to be, the more "hain'ts" she made use of. They were the negative expression of herself and her thoughts. Eliza said nothing at all, but picked her stitches carefully.

"Folks think that you are clean gone crazy about keeping this little girl. It hain't as though you was a married woman with a man to provide for you. Of course you've got money, put out on interest, but moths corrupt and thieves might break in and steal. That means not to count too much on what you've laid by.

"Now, folks say that you have no call to keep this child and treat her just

like she was of your own family. You're bringing her up just as fine as a lady."

"Why not?" asked Eliza. "She's a little lady now and I hope she'll be a big lady by and by. That's what I'm raising her for."

Rose's shears had not missed a snip; but her sharp little eyes narrowed down to slits and her ears pricked themselves up. This was a new subject to her. Wasn't Beth really Miss Eliza's little girl after all? The wonder of it was that she had never found out before. Her mouth fairly watered for this morsel of news. Yet she never so much as turned her head or lost one snip with her shears.

"Well, to my way of thinking it hain't right. Every one I've spoke to says the same thing. It hain't right to take a tramp child and bring her up as though she was somebody. If you'd train her so she's be handy for working out, folks wouldn't have so much to say, but you're spoiling her so that she won't make even a good hired girl."

"I don't want her to be that, Liza Burtsch. She's just a baby yet. I really haven't thought much what I'd like her to be. All I think about now is to keep her sweet and wholesome and teach her all that other little girls learn in schools. There's time enough to think about other things when ten years more have gone.

"There's something else, Livia Burtsch, that we'll settle right here. Beth is no tramp child and never was. You have no right to call her that, and I will not allow it."

"Seems to me that I've got a good bit of right. Folks hain't as blind as you're suspicioning them, Liza Wells. Tramp child, now what else could she be called but tramp. Maybe she's worse for all I know. You can't tell me things, Liza Wells. I've lived too long to have the wool pulled over my eyes. You know and I know that no decent self-respecting woman what has a home or any folks is tramping on foot through the country with a baby. No woman that thinks anything of herself is walking through a strange country and taking naps under bushes by the roadside. You can't tell me. The child's mother was nothing but a worthless scal—."

"Stop! Not another word." Eliza's voice was low—too low for peace. It was as clear cut and metallic as a blade of steel. Mrs. Burtsch was awed by it. For an instant she looked at Eliza with wide-open eyes and hanging jaw, but she soon recovered her rigidity of feature and posture.

"Well, I guess I'll say what I see fit to say when it's the truth. That's what cuts you, Eliza. It's the truth and you know it. Tut, tut, what's the world coming to if folks can't speak what's in their mind. Beth's just a tramp—."

Eliza had risen. She stood like an offended goddess before the woman. "Not another word in my house, Livia Burtsch. Not another word. You always have been a news-carrier, making trouble wherever you go. I've borne with you a good many years without saying a word in return. I've put up with it too long.

Now, we'll understand each other. If you can come in my home and visit without carrying news, and slandering everyone in the neighborhood, well and good; you may come and I'll make you welcome. If you can't be civil and can't keep from bothering about my affairs—stay away."

Mrs. Burtsch had also arisen. She was fairly trembling with offended pride. She looked at Eliza as though she had never seen her before. Indeed, she had never seen such an Eliza before. She could not say a word. She made an effort, but it only ended in a clack of her tongue against her false teeth. With what dignity she could command, she turned and, jerking Rose up by the hand, fairly pulled her from the room.

Her tongue was loosened before she reached home. Rose listened to a storm of abuse against Eliza and her fosterchild. She learned all the particulars of Beth's advent into the Wells home.

When they had gone, Eliza went back to her sewing. Her hand trembled with nervousness. Beth came and stood back of her chair. "Adee, I think I'll fix your hair like you used to wear it when I was a baby."

She loosened the smooth bands until the soft chestnut locks fell loosely about the high, broad forehead. The roll of hair was too heavy for the child to manage, so Adee herself coiled it loosely as Beth wished it to be.

The child disappeared for a moment, but soon returned with some sweet peas in a delicate pink.

"This is the way you used to wear them, Adee." She stuck them in with her light, easy touch.

"Now, look how sweet you look, Adee," she cried. Eliza viewed herself in the big mirror and smiled. She recognized beauty when she saw it and—well, she was growing to look like her own flowers, and her own heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Burtsch remained away all the remainder of the summer and until late in the fall. Rose, of course, was prohibited from visiting Beth. For her own part, Eliza was better pleased than otherwise with the arrangement of affairs. She regretted that Beth was cut off from intimate companionship with those of her

own age, yet Rose had never been the most desirable acquaintance. Being alone was preferable to undesirable friends.

Eliza made a point of inviting Helen Reed from Friday until Sunday evening. The two little girls had the best of times. There were bushels of popcorn and barrels of apples. When the weather was not too cold, they spent hours playing in the attic. Eliza had given them each a play skirt which could trail behind, and they were happy.

There was a box of antiquated hats in the attic. Beth and Helen at once set up a millinery shop and sewed braids and trimmed hats until their fingers were sore. They had quite a fine assortment before they had finished. It was only too bad that they had no customers and were forced to buy their own goods.

Winter months in the country are never propitious for visiting unless one is able to keep a driving horse. The people at Shintown had only the work horses. During the coldest months these were taken to town to haul ice from the river to the big store houses, and so were unavailable. So the folks of Shintown ploughed their own way through the snow to church or Sunday-school which was always held in the school-house.

Eliza caught glimpses of Mrs. Burtsch and tried to speak to her, but the offended lady would accept no overtures. She took her place opposite Eliza and never looked in her direction. When Beth after services would have run after Rose, Mrs. Burtsch drew her offspring away with, “Come, Rose, this instant. Hain’t I told you that I want you to be particular who you are friends with.”

Even at the sauer-kraut supper, which was the annual event for the last week in November, when money was raised to pay the minister’s salary, Mrs. Burtsch ignored her neighbors of the old Wells place. Eliza was washing dishes and Mrs. Burtsch carrying plates heaped with pork, sauer-kraut and mashed potatoes.

After several attempts, Eliza gave up and accepted Mrs. Burtsch’s attitude as a matter of course. Since the day when Beth had fluffed her hair and stuck sweet peas in it, Eliza had kept it so. The garden flowers had all gone. There were plenty of house plants at the Wells place, however. The evening of the supper, Beth stuck a pink geranium in her foster-mother’s hair.

“You’ll be the very sweetest one at the party Adee,” said Beth.

She was a true prophet. Eliza’s work and the overheated room had given her cheeks the same tint as the flower in her hair.

“Eliza Wells haint so bad looking,” said Sam Houston to some one near him. “It’s wonderful how she does keep her looks. She’s thirty-five if she’s a day.”

More than one pair of eyes were attracted toward her. Mrs. Kilgore sighed when she overheard some one mention Eliza’s fine coloring. She shook her head sadly. “I don’t like the looks of it,” she said. “Old Sally Caldwell, her great aunt

by marriage on her father's side, had just such high coloring and she was took off sudden as could be with galloping consumption. You can't tell me. Such things are inherited. Mark my words, Eliza Wells will be took off before the year is out. It hain't natural. A woman ought to look a little faded by the time she's Eliza's age. It's only natural that she should."

"Don't let that worry you none," laughed Mrs. Burtsch in her bitter, cynical fashion. "Those red cheeks won't have nothing to do with Eliza's going off unless she goes off with just plumb foolishness. We could all be blooming out and looking like young colts if we wanted to spend our money at a drug-store. Pink cheeks! Buy them at twenty-five cents a bottle at Swain's drug-store."

Sleet set in before the supper was over. It was almost nine o'clock before the social event of the season was over and the lights in the school-house were ready to be turned off. The weather had moderated and the sleet had become a rain. The walking was bad. Slush with pools of water had filled the road.

Old Squire Stout had come over with his three-seated "carry-all".

"I'll carry you and Beth home," he said to Eliza. "You'uns folks is farthest out and you hain't got no men folks with you. You'd better ride along."

"I should like to. Beth's so tired that she can barely keep on her feet."

They were ready to start when Mrs. Burtsch came out of the school-house with her basket over her arm. "I most forgot my potato-kettle," she explained. "I never could get along without that."

"Oh, is that you, Livia," cried the squire in his way. "Better climb in and we'll carry you home. Always room for one more. Crowd in somewhere. Let the youngsters sit on the floor."

Mrs. Burtsch was about to comply when she saw that the only seat not already crowded to its full capacity, was occupied by Eliza and the squire's wife. They had moved closer to make room for her.

"Not to-night, but I thank you kindly just the same, squire. I'll keep to Shank's mare yet awhile. I'll trot on alone and I'll be sure to be in good company."

"Suit yourself, Livia," said the squire, touching his whip to the flanks of the off horse. "It's a right fool thing to walk two miles on a night like this when you could just as well ride. But I hain't no way responsible for your foolishness. You always was plumb set in your ways."

Later events proved that Mrs. Burtsch was foolish. Sam Houston brought the news to Eliza. Sam and his wife had the best intentions in the world. They were "chock-full" to the throat with fine theories about how to run a farm and anything else that came up for discussion. They meant to put their theories into practice, but somehow they never got around to it. He knew when sauer-kraut should be made and just how it should be made. He got as far in working it out as to have his cabbage piled on the back porch with bran sacks over it to keep it

from freezing. His "working germ" took a vacation there. The week following the sauer-kraut supper, he came around to Eliza's back door. He was careful to "stomp" the snow from his boots before he entered the kitchen.

"Why—you, Sam?" exclaimed Eliza. "I hope nothing has happened to Mary Jane." Sam was not one to make early calls.

"No, the missis is all right. She just sent me over to get the lend of your kraut-cutter. You hain't using it, I calculate."

"Mercy, no. I've got mine made long ago. The cutter's out in the wash-house. You'll find it hanging up behind the door."

"We're a little slow somehow about making ours. 'Pears to be so much to do. There's chores, and then I had some carpenter work to do on the chicken-coop. But last night, the cold nipped the top layer of the cabbage heads, so Mary Jane said we'd better make the kraut right off or it would all be spoiled. She spoke to set up with Livia Burtsch to-night."

"Livia Burtsch?" exclaimed Eliza. "What's wrong with her?"

"Got water-soaked the night of the church-supper and took 'monia'. They've had the doctor from the Bend. The parson's been to see her. She's right bad. Somebody's had to set up with her every night now for three days. She gets out of her head."

Sam moved on to get the sauer-kraut cutter. There was no question in Eliza's mind as to her duty.

"I'm going over to see Mrs. Burtsch, Beth," she said. "I'm not sure that I'll be back in time for dinner. You can take some bread and milk. I don't want you to fuss with the fire and try to cook while I'm away. Mrs. Burtsch is sick and may need me."

There were more ways than one in which Mrs. Burtsch would need help. Eliza knew that. Olivia was not one to "cook up" anything. She was generally out of bread and never made jelly, or canned what she called "truck". Eliza knew how she would find matters in the Burtsch household, so she took her biggest basket and filled it with some fresh bread, some jelly and several bottles of home-made grape-juice.

She wasted no time in apology or explaining when she entered the Burtsch household.

"Well Livia, this is too bad that you're laid up. Have you had any breakfast yet?"

"Lem did bring me in some, but I couldn't eat," she said.

"A man's cooking! It wouldn't be expected of you. I'll get something for you."

The kitchen was not the sight to please the eye of a housekeeper. Lemuel and Rose had made a shift at cooking but had made no attempt at cleaning up.

Dishes were piled high on every available space of the table. The floor was slippery with grease. The frying pan with bits of what had been intended for the patient's breakfast was on the back of the stove. Eliza sniffed at it. Salt pork! Scarcely a tempting breakfast for an invalid.

She prepared toast with an egg and a cup of tea. The neighboring women had been kind, but they had their families and households to see to, and had not been able to accomplish all they wished.

When the breakfast was disposed of, Eliza cleared away the accumulation of dishes. She pressed Rose into service. She put the house into some semblance of order in the very few hours she had and prepared dinner for Lemuel Burtsch. She knew what his meals must have been if he had had the preparation of them himself. She was a slow, deliberate worker. She could not rush about and do much in a little time. But she was not irritating in her efforts. Her serene, calm way soothed Olivia.

Rose was of little help. She whined and cried when matters went askew. Mrs. Burtsch worried about the child's doing without her meals. Altogether Rose was of little value in the house.

"Does Rose help you? Is there anything she can do?" Eliza asked Lemuel as he sat at the dinner table. He looked about bewildered. He had never been the head of his own house, and now with his wife sick, he was like a canoe with the paddle gone.

"She hain't much good. She's not very old yet Miss Eliza, and her mother always calculated not to make her work until she was considerable older."

"She's really too much of a baby yet to help anyone. If she is no help, I'll take her home with me and take care of her until Olivia gets around, or until you can find a good woman."

"That's powerful good, Miss Liza. Your folks was always great hands for helping other folks out and you're a chip from the old block. I'll be relieved a heap if you'll sort of look after her."

It was evident that the child's mother was quite as relieved as Lemuel himself.

It was long after the dinner hour when Eliza set forth with Rose. Mrs. Houston had come over to "set" for a spell and promised to see to the patient until the evening when some one else would relieve her.

Beth was watching at the window. When she saw Eliza and Rose coming, she ran from the house and down to the gate to meet them. She flung her arms about Adee's neck and then hugged Rose who stood as stiff and irresponsive as an iron post.

"I'm dreadful glad, Rose. Now, we can play. Helen and I made about a million hats. They're up in the attic. We'll play millinery store."

"Run along and play until I call you to supper. We'll have it early. Beth has had only a bowl of milk since breakfast. Run along; I'll call you."

They needed no encouragement. Eliza went to the kitchen and began her preparation. Meanwhile the girls had examined the hats in the attic and commented on the grace and elegance of several. Rose's tongue was going clickety-clack. She talked more freely when her elders were not present.

"Mrs. Kilgore got a new hat before the church supper. She thought she wouldn't get it at first. It cost an awful lot," and so on and so on, petty details of other people's affairs which she had heard her elders discuss, and which was really no business of hers, or theirs either.

"Let's play store. You be selling hats and I'll be the Queen of Sheba come to buy," suggested Beth. She had learned this particular "stunt" from Helen Reed who would have no dealings with anybody but royalty when she played make-believe.

"I'll have a train. This one is too short and don't rustle." Beth proceeded to pin a half of a curtain to the tail of her gown. Then she pranced forward where the gable was highest and trailed her gown after her.

"You'll be the shop-keeper and I'll be the Queen," said Rose.

"No, I'll be the Queen first. You've never played the game and you don't know how a queen is supposed to act. They don't act like just common, every-day people." Beth paraded up and down, spreading her train and looking back over her shoulder to see the effect. So the discussion continued for several minutes.

"Much you know about queens. You'd better play like you was a tramp." There was more than childish teasing in the speaker's voice. There was the keen cutting desire to hurt which marked her mother's conversation.

"I don't know nothing about tramps. I never saw one in all my life. Oh, ain't this train perfectly 'kertish'?" and she cavorted about to show off to the best advantage.

"You don't! You never saw one! Then you'd better look in the looking-glass. For you're a tramp yourself. You were found—"

Eliza had come to bring the little girls to supper. She caught the last remark. Quick as a flash, she stepped into the room and, seizing Rose by the arm, silenced her. She held her thus while she turned to Beth.

"Go down and eat your supper, Beth, dear. Rose and I will have a little talk."

Sending Beth ahead, Eliza held Rose, cringing and shaking, by the arm and led her to a bedroom on the second floor, where she took her in and sat down with her and tried to show how contemptible and mean her act was.

CHAPTER IX.

Two serious questions concerning Beth's rearing presented themselves to Eliza. After her experience with Rose, she knew that her foster-child would be forced to bear the insults and unkind remarks of every ill-bred person who chose to express themselves.

As for Rose, Eliza felt that she had quieted her only for such time as she was a visitor at the Wells home. The child was a sort of leader after a fashion of her own, and what she did the half dozen children near her age would do.

It meant simply this. Beth would be the subject of the caprice, ill-temper or ill-breeding of the children. The best thing was to put her with those who had kindness in their heart. She would be able to teach her for a year more. Then she would enter her in the schools at Farwell.

So far the matter was settled. The next question was one of finance. There were several dollars monthly tuition for pupils who did not reside in the borough. Eliza had so little to go on. She determined that she would be ready for the expense when it came. She would not deny Beth, but she could and would make sacrifices for herself. All winter, not a cent was spent needlessly. She sold her butter close, and studied her chicken manual and fed her hens so scientifically and kept the coops so warm and comfortable that the fowls were under the impression that spring had come and took to laying at once; this when eggs were forty cents a dozen.

When Beth was ten years old, she entered the B grammar grade at Farwell. So far Eliza had kept in touch with her work and had taught her all she knew. She had a tug at her heart strings that first morning in September when she walked into town with Beth. It seemed to her that there had come a parting of the ways when each must walk a little more alone.

Beth was radiant with new tan shoes and stockings. Her white dress was fresh from the iron. Eliza felt not a little conscience-stricken whenever she bade her little girl wear this particular dress. It had been made from the linen sheets which Eliza's grandmother had woven and bleached. Eliza loved family traditions. She had thought a long time before she put her shears into these heirlooms.

But she concluded at last that the welfare and advancement of the living were to be considered before the traditions of the past.

It was a beautiful morning when they started forth on the road to knowledge. The way from the Wells homestead led down a gradual slope. Here one could go by way of the public road, or take a little foot-path which wound in and out through the woods and at length came in just at the edge of Farwell.

Eliza and Beth had given themselves plenty of time. The foot-path was enticing. They took it. Eliza walked slowly, pausing now and then to look at the scene about her, or to pluck a bit of golden-rod or wild aster. Beth was flitting from flower to flower like a butterfly. Yet in the midst of her excitement and haste, she stepped carefully on the tips of her shoes so that she would not scuff them. Tan shoes were not to be had for the asking.

The slope of the hill stretched to a ravine through which ran a little stream. In spring, it was something worth while; but the heat of summer had dried it up, so that now there was barely enough of it to make a gurgling sound. Once there had been fields along the stream. An apple orchard had stretched over the hillside. The trees were still there, to be sure, but they had degenerated until the fruit was hard, small and bitter.

Portions of an old rail fence were to be seen, and close under the one solitary forest-oak which some generous hand had left standing, was a small house built of square timbers. Wild ampelopsis were clambering over it everywhere. A broad stone chimney built for an outlet to the grate within was standing as intact as the day its rough stones were laid.

No one had ever lived here since Eliza could remember. The windows and doors had been boarded up for years. Nature had softened the colors and vines and bending branches of oak had made it a beautiful place. The Oliver place, people called it; but nothing remained of the Oliver family but the name of this place. They had come and gone, and that was all the Shintown folk could tell of them.

Eliza stopped and looked at the place, as she did every time she passed it. It had always been attractive to her, even when she was a child. It was mellowed in color; it stood aloof from all life, and suggested sentiment and romance.

Beth had run on ahead. Seeing that Eliza was not following, she ran back and stood beside her. There was a moment's silence, until her mind grasped what was holding her companion's attention.

"Isn't it simply lovely?" she exclaimed. "It would be simply 'kertish' for a play-house. When Helen brings her cousin over to spend Saturday, I'll bring them down here to make a play-house."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Eliza. "The place may be full of snakes. Old houses like that are often dens of rattlers."

“We could kill them, couldn’t we?” asked Beth.

“We’ll not risk it,” said Eliza. “Just stay away. Then I’ll feel sure that you are on the safe side.”

It was barely eight o’clock when Eliza and her charge entered the school building. Miss Harmon had charge of the B grammar grade. Providence was being good to Beth when she put her in this woman’s charge. She was a fine teacher. Her school-room held more than books. Children were built up, strengthened and made happy. She believed firmly that one can be happy only by being of some use in the world. She considered it sinful to be depressed and blue; for such an attitude of mind showed lack of faith in God. She had a part in every good work in town. She knew every one and had a kindly word of greeting for each one, from drunken, worthless Jerry Hennesey to the Judge who stood as a beacon light of morality and high thinking.

“And Beth is to be with me this year?” she said after greeting her visitors. “I am glad of that. We’ll have a lovely time.”

“I shall miss her,” said Eliza. “I’ve been teaching her up to this time. Of course I had to do some studying, but I enjoyed it. I’m sorry to give it up.”

“Why give it up? Why not continue as you have begun?”

“It would be useless. Two years more and she’ll take up Latin and Algebra. I’ve never had them. I know nothing of Botany. I know the wild flowers here about, but nothing about the science.”

“You know the finest part if you know the flowers,” was the reply. “What matters it if Beth begins Latin! If you keep side by side with her, could you not begin too?”

“I’m too old. Why, Miss Harmon, I’m thirty—”

“Don’t, please. I don’t wish to know. Years are not counted any more. Why, you and I are babies yet with a lot of glorious things to learn. Mind is not subject to years. It can keep working as long as there is a body to hold it.”

This was a new idea to Eliza. Somewhere hidden in her brain had been this same thought; but she had pushed it back from the light. It had been so different from what every one else thought, that she had believed it must be wrong. She listened to Miss Harmon talk along this same line. She had little to say; but she did a great deal of thinking.

“Youth can always dwell in the heart and the mind. We can find joy in living, spontaneity in action, and delight in study as long as we live.”

She paused and then laughed softly while a flush stole over her cheeks. “I am going to be personal, Miss Wells, just to prove to you that I know what I’m talking about. I’m ten years older than you—you have been thinking all the while that I’m much younger. Do you know why? I have never let myself think I was too old to learn anything. I’ve kept my mind and muscles flexible and they cannot

get stiff."

"I know you are right," said Eliza at last. "I used to think a good deal on that line, but I never could talk of it to any one. It seemed as though no one thought as I did. They always acted as though I was just a little peculiar."

"They called Galileo crazy; Plato was sneered at because he taught the immortality of the soul when every one else believed something else. We can't depend upon our friends for some things. Each one of us must be a Columbus and discover for himself the unfathomed country of his own soul. There is no knowing how big and glorious a possession we may have."

The gong sounded here and the children came trooping in. Miss Eliza arose to leave. The teacher came with her to the door.

"You will come again and see how Beth is getting along? Don't give up your studies. You'll regret it if you do. Some time when I have leisure I would like to talk with you about our Club. I know you would be interested and would like to join."

Eliza went her way. Already the horizon had broadened. A Columbus to her own soul! She grasped what that might mean. No one could tell her own possibilities, her own capabilities, until she cast aside prejudice, servitude to customs which were accepted only because they had been in existence for centuries, and started forth to express the sweetness and strength of her own life.

Eliza hurried along with buoyant step. Her feet were light and her hopes high. Her white dress had been mended, but it was the perfection of daintiness. She was good to look at as she went her way, a graceful, gracious, smiling woman.

"Slow up, or there'll be a head-on collision," cried a merry voice. "I declare I'm always 'flagging' people to prevent a wreck."

Eliza brought herself to a sudden stop. Doctor Dullmer, smiling and gracious, stood before her.

"I beg your pardon, I didn't see you. I was preoccupied," she stammered.

"I believe you. Thoughts in the clouds and heels on the pavements. But I'm not surprised. That's the way I'm being treated these days. Handsome, attractive young women don't care to notice a fat, seedy old doctor."

Eliza laughed at his jest. "It doesn't matter though how I'm treated. I'll not forsake my friends. To prove it, I'll walk down to the crossroads with you. It is unseemly that a young girl like you should be roaming the streets alone at this hour." His expression was quite grave and his voice as serious as though he were diagnosing a case.

Doctor Dullmer had a thousand subjects to talk upon. He flitted like a bee from one to another, taking out a bit of honey everywhere. When they came to the corner of Champlain Avenue and Sixth Street, which was the beginning

of the State Road, Doctor Dullmer pointed across the river to where the base of the mountains spread out into a broad level plain, fully a hundred yards higher than the valley in which Farwell lay. The view from this elevation must have been magnificent, for it extended so that the river swept about it and one could see for miles east and west. Every little village was in sight, and beyond lay the magnificent heights of the Alleghanies.

"Notice those workmen over there. That means something. That means that we are going to be society. Next summer we take to swallow-tailed coats and low-cut vests. We are getting on. We will have a summer hotel there, and the fashionables will come and tell us what beautiful mountains we have. As though we didn't know that the instant we were able to peep from beneath our perambulator blankets to look at them."

He turned to gaze quizzically at Eliza.

"You'll have to do like the rest of them. You'll be cutting off the collar of your frock and putting a tail to your skirt. That's the fashionable caper for women, they tell me—. Here's my turning-off place." He was gone before Eliza could speak.

She stood a moment looking at the swarm of workmen excavating. She had heard rumors of a summer hotel being built. It was really true then!

She smiled as she recalled the doctor's words about evening gowns and trains. How ridiculous!

Very strange things happen. Before many years had passed, Eliza was really trailing after her a robe of—. But this is anticipating. Why speak of it now, when she herself never suspected all the strange occurrences which would follow from the hotel's bringing its influx of guests.

CHAPTER X.

Before the year had passed, Beth had learned many things which were not in books. The first was that school and clothes cost money. She gave no hint to Adee that she had grown wise in this respect. What was the use of discussing matters and worrying oneself when no good could come of it? She could keep her eyes open and look about her, to see in what way she could help her foster-

mother. She saw, for the first time, a great deal. Adee's shoes were patched and her gloves shiny. Having her eyes opened, Beth saw a great deal. At the first opening of spring, she had had new shoes and a new school-dress. The walk was hard on footwear. A pair of shoes had lasted her but a month.

She looked at her new shoes and decided that they must last her until the last of summer. Thereafter when she set out for school, she slipped around to the front stoop, and when she set forth again, she had a bundle under her arm. A month passed. Beth had come home from school. Adee had met her at the foot of the slope. By some strange chance, Adee's eyes fell upon the shoes the little girl was wearing.

"It's wonderful how your shoes are lasting. They are not even scuffed and you have worn them five weeks. That has been about as long as a pair lasts you."

"Yes," said Beth. Her face grew crimson, and she turned her eyes away that she might not meet Adee's glance.

"Did you bring home a library book?" asked Eliza, reaching forth for the books under Beth's arm. "I hope it is something worth while. We can read it aloud." For the first time, she saw the other bundle under Beth's arm.

"What is it, Beth?" she asked.

Beth burst into tears. Then with a sudden impulse she opened the bundle and forced it into Eliza's hands. It was nothing at all formidable—nothing to shed tears over.

"Your old shoes! What are you crying about them for, and what ever possessed you to carry them with you? Were they too valuable to leave at home?"

"I'm crying because I didn't wish you to know about it, and now you've found out." Beth dried her tears. "I saw how many shoes I was wearing out, and that I always had new ones and you had old patched ones. I thought I'd save. I put on these old ones when I get out of sight of the house and just at the edge of town I put on the good ones again. I've always looked nice in school, Adee, and I didn't wear out the good shoes on the rough road."

"It's all right," said Adee. "But what did you do with your old shoes while you were in school? I do hope you did not set them up on your desk as a decoration."

Beth knew her own Adee, and accepted this remark as a humorous sort of pleasantry. She laughed, "You know I did not. I hid them under an old log alongside the road. You're not vexed, Adee?"

Eliza put her arm around the child and drew her close to her as they walked up the hill. "No, I think I'm pleased. Indeed, I am quite sure I am. I'm glad that you think of some one else. But don't worry about your shoes, I want you to look well in school. If you stand well in your class, and behave yourself nicely, I shall be satisfied. Somehow, I think this is all a little girl need do."

"It's all right though to save my shoes this way?"

"Yes, if you wish to. I'll leave that to you. You may do as you please. It will save me buying a new pair for some time."

So Beth continued this. Her shoes lasted through the school term which closed the last of May.

The high school at Farwell was only a district one of the third class. There was a three years' course, and the average age for graduation was sixteen. Beth entered when she was twelve—or, rather when Eliza thought she was that age. She may have been eleven or thirteen for all either of them knew.

The freshman class was made up of pupils from three grammar grades from different sections of the town, so that at least two-thirds of her class-mates were strangers to Beth. She and Helen had been put in different divisions, and Beth found herself virtually alone as far as any friends were concerned.

Several days passed before the girl back of her spoke to her. Beth already knew her name, having seen it on the wall slate. It was Tilly Jones. She was a fat, fair-haired girl—the senior of Beth by several years. She was rather stupid about books, and her movements slow and ponderous. Her father was an ignorant, uneducated man, yet with a certain skill about molding, so that he was able to make the sand pattern by simply having the blue-print before him, and taking no measurements. He was a genius in this one line. He was a valuable man in the foundry and made "big money." Tilly had ribbons and furbelows. Her fat, pudgy fingers were covered with rings; she wore a bracelet and a necklace.

Friday morning, she leaned forward and asked, "What are you going to wear this afternoon?"

"Wear? Why, this—" replied Beth.

"But it's Friday afternoon," was the reply. Beth could see no reason why this day of the week would make any difference. Tilly enlightened her. "Literary society, you know. Everybody fixed up for that. I'm going to wear a net gown over a blue lining. It looks just like silk. You'd never tell until you touched it. My mother paid Miss Foster six dollars to make it. My dress cost almost twenty dollars."

Beth had nothing to say to this. She could not have said it, had she the words in her mouth, for the teacher had moved down the aisle and had her eyes upon the corner from which the sound of whispering came.

At noon Tilly came up to her in the cloak-room and explained the customs of the school. She had failed in her examinations, consequently this was her second year in the freshman class and she knew all about the "ins" and "outs."

"Everybody who is anything dresses up for Friday afternoon," she said.

"I can't," said Beth. "I don't go home for dinner. I bring my lunch."

"It's too bad. You'll feel so embarrassed. Your hair ribbons are old ones,

too. This is the first time I've worn mine. They cost fifty cents a yard."

She talked for some minutes, at the end of which Beth knew how much every article she wore cost. They were interrupted by the appearance of two other classmates. Beth knew them only by name. Carrie Laire was slight, with dark hair and eyes. Sally Monroe was very fair. She was slender and wiry. Her hair was drawn loosely and hung in a thick braid down her back.

"I'm the chairman of the Program Committee," began Sally. "Do you recite or write poetry? I want you to be on the program for two weeks from to-day. You can select your own work. You see, I cannot tell what each one does best."

"I'll write a story," said Beth. "A fairy-tale; will that do?"

"It would be lovely. You're a perfect dear to help me out." She was writing Beth's name in her note-book.

"Don't you live in town?" asked Carrie Laire. Beth told her where she lived.

"Is Miss Wells your aunt?" was the next question. Beth had never thought of that.

"No, she isn't," she replied and was about to move away, but Carrie followed her. The question had made Beth uneasy. Adee was not her aunt. Why did she live with her then, and why did she not have a home with brothers and sisters like other girls?

"Is your father dead?" Carrie continued. "I suppose he must be, and your mother too, or you wouldn't be living with some one who isn't even your aunt."

Sally overheard the questions. She had always been in Carrie's classes and knew how prone that young lady was to ask impertinent questions about matters which were really none of her business. She came to the rescue now.

"I'm glad you can write fairy-stories, Beth. It is so hard to get anyone to do anything of that sort. The girls will recite and sing, but essays and stories make them nervous." Slipping her arm within Beth's she led her away, ignoring alike Carrie's presence and her impertinent questions.

"I'll bring my lunch with me, too," continued Sally. "I believe you and I could get along very well. Let us eat together. I haven't any particular friend. Mabel Reynolds was, but she is away. I'd dearly love to have you for a friend."

"I'd love to be your dearest friend. I never had a real intimate friend, except Helen Reed, and she's in the other division."

In the joy of these friendly overtures, Beth forgot Carrie and her questions.

Just before the afternoon session, Tilly came in breathless. Her fat body was palpitating like jelly. She wore a net dress made over a lining of blue near-silk. Her ribbons were new and crisp; her shoes and stockings white.

"I've heard a piece of news," she began the instant her eyes fell upon the girls. "There's a whole party planning to motor over from Point Breeze to visit school. They'll be here for our program. They're swells everyone of them. Mrs.

Laurens is one of them. I've seen her. They've been all the summer at the Point Breeze Hotel. Her room costs twenty dollars a week. I'm glad I'm dressed up. I'm awful sorry for you, Beth. If I were you I'd sit back so they wouldn't see me. They may never notice that you're in the room. It's a good thing that I sit in front of you and that I could go home and dress. I'm glad I wore this sash. My mother bought it in New York. It's imported. She paid ten dollars for it."

"Perhaps the visitors will be looking at your sash and not see us," said Beth dryly. "Thank you for your suggestion; but I'll not sit back away from your view. If Mrs. Laurens and her friends do not like my looks, they can turn their eyes some other way. It is my school and my seat and my dress. If anything about it doesn't suit them, they know what they can do."

It was rather a fiery speech for Beth. Sally squeezed her arm to give her a sort of moral support. Harvey Lackard, the freckle-faced boy with the crimson topknot, chuckled aloud.

"Give it to her, Beth," he encouraged. "I never knew you had so much spunk. You don't strike often, but when you do, you give it to them under the belt."

Tilly took no offense. She had a good disposition even though the price mark was attached to everything she said. She turned toward Harvey and smiled blandly.

Carrie Laire was quite as excited as Tilly.

"Did you know that Mrs. Laurens is coming and Judge Creswell and Colonel Evans? Why, but I'm all worked up over it. I have a piano solo, and I just know I'll break down. Do you know any of them? You may thank your stars that you're not on the program. Judge Creswell is awful famous. Have you any judge in your family? What did your father do?"

Just an instant, Beth's face flushed. She did not wish to make an enemy of Carrie, yet she could not put up with these questions. She stiffened her quivering lip and said lightly, "Are you merely curious, Carrie, or do you wish the information?" Her companion turned to look at her. Beth continued, "I'll take a tablet and write out all the information about me that you may ever need—age, height, weight, and everything else."

"Why, Beth Wells, you are just as hateful as you can be. You know that I only ask you because I'm interested in you, and then you turn on me and say such sharp things."

The conversation was interrupted by the gong. The girls moved slowly toward the assembly room, and were taking their time, when Miss Hanscom rapped sharply with her ruler. She was a rigid disciplinarian, who could not discriminate between the magnitude of offense. She had been in the Farwell schools for five years. Her work had been strenuous. She had fought her own way, against heavy odds. The result was that she was hard in manner, self-sufficient and not

a little aggressive.

Pupils always spoke of how well she had taught them, but not one had ever said that she had awakened sympathy. She was nervous now and spoke sharply, for from her window she had seen two touring cars slow up at the curb, and she knew that visitors were "upon them."

CHAPTER XI.

Miss Hanscom was nervous when she called the school to order. Her voice was sharp and her body rigid as steel. Her state of mind was felt all over the room. The silence was ominous. It was not that of a healthy, well-disciplined set of boys and girls. It was a condition impelled by fear.

The girls sat bolt upright, not daring to glance at the door through which the visitors were being ushered by Miss Ward, the vice-principal. The boys twisted the tops of the ink wells or sat with their hands deep in their pockets, trying their best to appear unconcerned, while their eyes were anywhere but upon the visitors.

Miss Ward was a wholly different type from Miss Hanscom. She never thought of herself or the impression that she might be making. Her desire was to make everyone about her comfortable and happy. It follows, of course, that one loves that person who brings out the best in one. The instant Miss Ward entered the room there was a relaxation of tense muscles and a sigh went over the room. Unconsciously each boy and girl felt easier. Miss Ward made them feel at ease. They could do their best if she were presiding in the school-room.

The guests who were being ushered in were worth notice. The dignified, stately judge with his silver hair, and judicial, yet kindly bearing; Colonel Evans, who bore the marks of military training in every move, although years were heavy upon them. Mr. Laurens, a prominent engineer and construction man who had built the finest bridges in the world, and who was always called in for conference whenever any great engineering feat was in prospect. He was a man in the forties, perhaps. He was particularly fine appearing, with no thought of self in his bearing or expression. Indeed, his whole attitude was centered upon his wife. He was careful of her comfort, and most considerate toward her in

every way. She was a dainty woman, slender in physique, with delicate, exquisite coloring, and wonderfully expressive eyes. She smiled and laughed as she talked with Miss Ward, yet her face, when at rest, expressed only sadness.

Beth's eyes rested upon her and remained there. She fairly held her breath. Never in her life had she seen anything so exquisite as this woman. Her heart gave a great leap. Beth watched her while she was talking and until she moved across the room and took her place with the others before the school. Then the woman sat silent, and the peculiar look of wistful sadness came to her face. Beth felt it. She did not know what had caused the change in her own feelings; but her heart sank, and great tears sprang to her eyes.

"She's so sweet that it makes my heart ache," she told herself. "Wouldn't it be heavenly to be her little girl. I'd love her to death. I'd hug her until she couldn't breathe."

Poor little prosaic Beth had grown sentimental. She sat quite still with her eyes upon the woman. She neither spoke nor moved. She forgot that there was any one else in the room. As far as she was concerned, Mrs. Laurens was the only one.

But the woman's glance never turned in Beth's direction. After that sweet, fleeting glance over the room, she had let her eyes droop upon her hands folded in her lap, and she did not raise them again. Her husband sat near her. He talked with those about him and seemed a part of everything, yet it was evident that his wife engrossed his thoughts, for his tender, yet uneasy glances were turned upon her. She seemed unconscious of this and sat quiet as though in deep thought.

The program began. There was a general stiffening of spines. Carrie Laire leaned over to ask Beth if she didn't think Mrs. Laurens the most beautiful creature in the world, and if she was not sorry that she did not have a mother who would come to visit school. Adee had come and was sitting up in front among the visitors. Mrs. Laire was near her.

"I have Adee. She's better than any mother I ever saw. She's the prettiest woman there—except Mrs. Laurens," she said.

Tilly Jones was straightening out her hair-ribbons. She smoothed her sash and drew it over the edge of the seat that it might not muss. Then she adjusted her rings and bracelets. Her fussiness brought the eyes of the visitors upon her. Tilly was not abashed. She met their glances and turned to give a loving pat to her sash. Then she leaned forward to speak to Beth. "Look at Mrs. Laurens' motor-coat. Isn't it simply divine? It must have cost fifty dollars. Look at the heels of her shoes. They're the most expensive shoes that can be bought. My aunt Tilly—." She continued her monologue in a whisper. Beth was not listening to a word she said. Her eyes and mind were upon the wonderful woman who sat at the front of the room.

The fairy-stories and "make-believe" tales between Adee and Beth had continued all the years that they were together, so that the child's native imagination had been well developed. This would be such a lovely story. The lady would be the princess or queen who had had a great sorrow. Beth thought it all out as she sat there. She would write about it, and read it at the next meeting of the Literary Society. She was glad that Sally Monroe had put her on the program.

The exercises were progressing nicely. Some one thumped out a solo on the piano. There were essays on subjects which a sage would have hesitated to handle. THE HIGH SCHOOL DAILY was presented. Harvey Lackard, the red-headed, freckle-faced boy, was editor-in-chief and read the edition. There were editorials and poems. Beth sat up to listen. This was something new and really worth while. She forgot for a time the sweet-faced woman sitting before her. She laughed aloud when Harvey read, "What They Remind Me Of." There followed a list of the pupils with some characteristic appended.

Tilly Jones—An Animated Price List.
Carrie Laire—The Living Question Mark.
Sally Monroe—A Lubricating Oil Can.
Beth Wells—The Verbal Pugilist.

Beth laughed as heartily as any at the gibe at herself. It was a little odd. Only twice in her life had she spoken sharply. Harvey had been present. He knew nothing of the thousand times she had maintained a discreet, though painful, silence.

She laughed, but nevertheless she was sorry that Harvey had received such an unpleasant impression of her.

Tilly Jones was to recite. When her name was called, there was a little flutter of excitement about her desk, she straightened her sash and turned her bracelet about so that the sets might show. She did this while she walked up the aisle. All the while she watched the visitors to see how her elegance was impressing them. They smiled. She accepted this as a sign of admiration, and, self-confident, took her stand in the middle of the platform. There was a moment's silence. She twisted her bracelet, put her hand back of her and coughed. This was followed by a longer silence. She raised her eyes imploringly toward Miss Ward. The teacher knew the symptoms.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf," repeated Miss Ward.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf," cried Tilly confidently. Then she paused, coughed, and brought her hands to the front.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf," she said again. After this, she straightened herself, changed her weight to her left foot, and caught the ends

of her sash. She bent her head as though trying to recall the elusive next line. She pressed her lips and fixed her eyes vacantly upon a picture at the farthest end of the room.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf—like a wolf—"

"Take your seat," said Miss Ward.

Tilly obeyed. As she passed Harvey Lackard he whispered, and every one heard: "All price lists marked down." Tilly smiled good-naturedly. She had not grasped the wit of his remark and in no way thought it applied to her.

Mrs. Laurens's eyes followed her until she took her seat. Beth had moved so that her face was in full view. The eyes of the woman fell upon her. Then she leaned forward, looking intently at Beth, studying her face as an artist might study that of the subject he would put on canvas.

A moment she sat intent, rigid, with her eyes fixed on Beth's face. Then turning to her husband, she laid her hand upon his arm and spoke to him in a low tone.

He looked startled, surprised. Then he too looked at Beth with more than passing interest. He turned to his wife and talked with her. Then he arose and, offering his arm, led her from the room.

"Mrs. Laurens has become faint," he said. "If you will excuse us, Miss Ward."

"Miss Hanscom, escort them to the teachers' room," said Miss Ward. The younger teacher did as requested. The rest room was across the hall. Mr. Laurens found a chair for his wife.

"You are very foolish, Ermann," he said gently, "do give up this feeling. Control yourself, please do."

"Have I not up to this? I have kept everything to myself until now. The resemblance was startling. She looks just like you and your sisters, Joe."

"Such resemblances often appear," he said, sitting down beside her.

"It might be—strange things happen, you know. I've always had a queer feeling about coming here. I've had a premonition. You know how I felt. I have not been so eager for anything for years. She's such a dear looking child, Joe, and just about the age that our girl is."

"Would have been," he corrected. "You know we decided over a year ago that we would give up hope of finding her. We'll think of her as dead. That will be a better way of looking at it."

"I try, but I can't. Something within me will not let me think of her but living. Who knows, Joe? This might be. We might have been led here."

"I think it nonsense," was the reply. "No doubt the child's parents live here. You saw that she was dressed well, and looked happy. She looked like a child of well-to-do parents."

"But Joe, you might inquire," she pleaded. No one could resist the entreaty

of her eyes.

"I will, but make up your mind that the thing cannot be true. You know how you feel after a disappointment. I'll ask, but you must expect nothing. I'll not have you 'fagged.' Remember that you have me yet. You must brace up and be cheerful for my sake."

"I'll try, Joe. You'll ask?"

Miss Hanscom had gone into the class-room adjoining. Mr. Laurens went to her.

"Who was the little girl who failed in her recitation?" he asked.

"Tilly Jones. We always expect Tilly to do that. We never permit her name on the program when visitors are present. We always have the same experience with her. Your coming was unexpected."

He waved her suggested apologies away.

"And the little girl who sits in front of her?" Walking to the swinging doors, he pushed them slightly open. "She's sitting there now. Who is she?"

Miss Hanscom peeped into the room.

"That's Elizabeth Wells, or Beth, as we call her."

"Ah, yes. Her face attracted me. Does the family live here?"

Miss Hanscom really did not know, but she never was at a loss at giving information. She would not say, "I have been here but a few years and do not know all the people about here." Not to know was to argue herself unknown. So she straightened her shoulders and set forth impressions as though they were facts.

"The Wells family have lived here for a century. Their farm was one of the first cleared. It's about two miles out of town. Eliza Wells is the last of the family, except this little girl who is her brother's daughter."

"If she was a sister's child, her name would not be Wells," thought Miss Hanscom to herself as she justified her last remark.

Mr. Laurens moved away. "You heard, Ermann?" he said to his wife who had joined them.

"Yes," she said dully, as though she had lost interest in everything about her. "Let us go to the car. I wish to go home."

"Yes, Ermann," he said. He escorted her, half leaning on his arm, into the main hall. The girls in the freshman class were preparing for dismissal and were passing into the cloak room, which was a division of the main hallway.

Mrs. Laurens dropped her hand from her husband's and, erect and intensely interested, watched them. Suddenly, as Beth came near, she threw out her arms and hugged the girl to her, kissing her on brow and cheeks.

"Dear little girl, love me a little for the sake of my baby who is gone."

"I do—I did from the first," said Beth.

"Ermann, dearest," remonstrated her husband, "you are making a scene. Come, the car is waiting."

She loosened her arms about Beth and, without another word or glance in the direction of the cloak room, permitted her husband to escort her to the car waiting below.

CHAPTER XII.

Beth did not mention this occurrence to Adee. She scarcely knew why she did not. Perhaps for the same reason that one does not discuss sacred things. In each one's heart is a tenderness, a thought which is hers alone and which she can tell no one. It was this feeling of delicacy which restrained Beth from speaking of the matter to Adee. She was very quiet on her way home. Adee was too, for that matter. There had been something about Mr. Laurens which had impressed her. She had a feeling that she had met him somewhere. His voice had thrilled her, like a voice she had heard and forgotten. She found herself trying to recall where she had met him. She checked herself, however. Her experience had been limited. She had been but rarely away from her native town. It was ridiculous to think for a moment that she had known him.

Without a word, the two walked side by side until they came to the ravine. Here they instinctively paused. "Look at the Oliver place," cried Eliza. "I wonder who would be foolish enough to move in there. Tramps, like enough."

"Tramps."—Beth came closer to Eliza's side. All she knew of them was that she had a dim remembrance that Rose Burtsch had called her a tramp's child and Adee had shaken Rose. A tramp must be a dreadful creature, so Beth had reasoned. She drew instinctively closer.

As they walked up the slope, they had a better view of the log house. The boards had been removed from the doors and windows which stood wide open to the breeze. A narrow path had been cut through the brambles to the public road. Smoke was coming from the chimney. The sound of some one whistling came to the ears of Beth and Eliza. There was the sound of an axe. As they turned the corner, they saw some one cutting the old fence rails into proper length for wood. He paused when he saw them coming up the slope and leaned lightly against the

axe as he rested. What a fine looking tramp he was. Fully six feet, with broad shoulders and long, slender limbs. There were no drooping muscles about him. He had a white brow with dark hair about it. His eyes were clear and keen. His mouth was as big and firm and tender as Eliza's own. He wore trousers of khaki cloth and a soft shirt open at the throat. The sleeves were rolled up, exposing his arms to the elbow.

"I did not know that tramps were so nice," said Beth. "I thought that they were something dreadful."

"They are. You can never tell by looks. Hereafter never go or come this way unless I am with you, and never come to the woods to pick flowers."

"I'm sorry he's moved in there. I had planned to camp out here next summer. Helen Reed and Sally Monroe and I intended to camp out and do all our own cooking."

Eliza smiled and wondered if the other two were as ignorant of culinary arts as Beth herself. The whistling had ceased and a song had taken its place.

"Just a song at twilight when the lamps are low."

The words followed them clear up the slope.

"He's a queer sort of tramp," said Eliza to herself. "I should not have believed that they knew such things."

She might have said something about this to Beth, but at their own gate, Jim-Boy, Sam Houston's youngest son, met them. Jim-Boy was in his bare feet. His apparel consisted of a pair of jean overalls and a hickory-colored shirt which had belonged to his father. He was a bashful lad, and braced himself against the post of the gate before he could find courage to speak. "Say, Miss Liza, pap wants the lend of your log chain."

"Dear me. I do not know whether I have one. It's been years since I thought of it."

"Yes, you have. Pap says it's hanging up in the old harness room. He's coming over to look at your stone-boat. He doesn't know whether it's all right or not. He says it hain't been used for years. If it's all right, he'll come over and borrow it off you."

All this was said as though his father's borrowing would be a great favor conferred upon Miss Eliza.

"The stone-boat. What does your father intend to do?"

"He's got a job hauling stone to fix the wall at Paddy's Run. The man was up to see him yesterday. The wall's bulging out. They mean to tear some away and build it in and higher than it was."

Miss Eliza shuddered at the mention of the wall. It was a retaining wall built to hold the public road and railroad from the water. At this point, the river had come so close to the mountain that the way for the railroad had been cut out.

To make this safe, a high stone wall had been built.

It had been here that Prince had gone over. That had been ten years before, but even yet Miss Eliza could recall the sensation of dizziness, of feeling herself falling, which she had felt then.

"Look for the chain. As to the stone-boat, tell your father that I'll sell that to him if he finds he needs it. I'll never have use for it."

Jim-Boy went his way. Eliza and Beth went into the house and began the preparation of the evening meal. Beth was not a cook, but there was a score of things she could do to help Adee. She arranged the table and did the errands to the cellar and milk-house.

When the meal had been finished and she sat with Adee in the living-room, she drew close and began wistfully, "I want to ask you something, Adee. One of the girls asked me questions. That put it in my mind. I couldn't answer anything she asked. I don't know whether I have a father or mother, or if I ever had one. I do not know if they are living or dead. She asked me if I was your niece and I could not tell her. Am I, Adee?"

There was silence. Eliza had nothing to say. She had known that the time would come when Beth could not understand and would ask questions. It had come sooner than she expected.

"Will you tell me, Adee? I do not know what to say when people ask me, and I feel ashamed that I do not know. Every little girl in school has a father and mother and I have none. I cannot understand it."

"Your mother is dead. She is buried near my mother, in our own family lot. I do not know her name. I saw her but once in my life. I always feel that I caused her death. This is how it happened."

Then Eliza recounted the events of that dreadful day when she had asked the mother to ride. She described Beth's mother, her dress and manner.

"That accounts for the dreams I have—waking dreams, Adee. Do you remember that I told you once that you did not look like you used to. It was some one else I remembered. I can see, as plain as can be, a lady with coils about her head, and flowers stuck in her hair. She wore dresses trailing over the floor. I can see her bending over my crib to kiss me. There was always a man with her."

"But the woman who had you did not look like a woman who would dress so. She was a respectable person, but poorly dressed and, I am afraid, not very cultivated. Do you remember what they called you? Do any names stay with you?"

"No, except Bena and Baby. I remember that I tried to say those words. Bena must have been a made-up word. Surely no one was ever called so."

"No, it seems hardly possible," said Eliza. "We looked over the ground everywhere where the accident occurred, but could find no purse. We thought she

might have had her checks or name somewhere in that. I have a dim remembrance that she had such an article in her hand, but we could find nothing. I saved everything that you or the woman wore. You had a little baby pin with E. L. engraved on it. I called you Elizabeth for that reason."

"Have you them yet, Adee? Will you show them to me?" There was a high-strung, nervous eagerness in Beth's voice. She was trembling from head to foot. There was a sadness because of the loss of parents she had never known; and an eagerness to see those things which were part of her life somewhere else.

"Would it not be better to put it off until tomorrow?" asked Eliza.

"No, please, Adee, this evening—now." There was no denying the eager, trembling request. Without another word, Adee arose and, taking up the lamp, made her way upstairs.

"They are packed away in a trunk in the closet in the spare-room," she said. Beth ran ahead, and in the dark had pulled out the trunk on to the middle of the floor before Eliza appeared.

There was nothing said as they knelt before it and opened the lid. Eliza had put everything away so that moths nor air could destroy it. She slowly removed the papers and covers and at last laid out all on the floor before them.

"This is what your mother wore—that day."

Beth's hands touched the plain black skirt, the belt and waist.

"I'll speak plainly, Beth. It is better so, now. I do not wish you to raise any false hopes about who your parents were. I really think, child, that you are as well off, as far as material affairs are concerned, with me as with them. This is why I think so. Look at the underwear. It is coarse and very poorly made. I think your mother was a very good woman. I'm sure she was. She had a good face, and she was gentle with you; but I am quite sure that she was poor and not well educated. Here are the rings which were in the traveling bag. I think they are of some value—not much. I should say ten or twelve dollars.

"I wish you would always keep these until you find your own people. It may be years from now when I am gone. I have written the date and all the circumstances down in this little book, so that you may have it, if you need it."

She began to fold the articles. She pinned each one close in its foldings of paper as carefully as though it were a most precious thing, and laid them away in the trunk.

"Some day, we'll know everything about who you are," she said as they were about to leave the room. She tried to speak lightly but failed. Putting her arm about Beth's shoulders and drawing her close to her, she continued, "But just now you are my own little girl, and I'm thankful for it."

The scene was hard for them both. It was well that an interruption came. A knock was heard at the living-room door. Beth hurried downstairs.

"Permit me, madam, to present the roses."

"Don't open the door until I come. It might be a tramp," Eliza called after her. Beth hesitated. Eliza came into the living-room with a lamp in hand. Beth kept close to her while the door was opened.

It really was a tramp—the same one they had seen at the Oliver place. But he was good looking, clean and smiling. He even removed his hat while he addressed Miss Eliza.

"Good evening; I have come up to ask a favor," he said.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I'm to be your neighbor for the winter," he said. "My experience as house-keeper

is limited. I set up my Lares and Penates to-day and forgot that man must eat. Will you sell me bread and fresh eggs?"

"Lares and Penates," both Eliza and Beth knew the meaning of those words. Roman mythology! A strange tramp, indeed, who could quote this.

"Will you come in?" asked Eliza. Tramp or not, his clear gray eyes were too fine and commanding to permit his being kept outside the door.

He entered and took the proffered seat before the grate in which a few chunks of wood were smoldering.

"These wood-fires are delightful," he said. "I do not wonder that the age of poetry and romance have passed away. It was one with the open grate. What mind of man can conceive of poetry being written before a register or radiator?"

Eliza had nothing to say to this. The conversation was not just what she expected from a tramp. She went to the kitchen and counted out the eggs and took a loaf of fresh bread from the box. She was sorry for the man. He looked so fine and interesting. It was to be regretted that he allowed himself to be a wanderer. Miss Eliza felt a sense of duty. It grieved her to see one who appeared so bright and attractive waste his life wandering upon the earth. When she heard him sing and whistle in the woods that afternoon, she had thought him a young man. There was the joyousness and buoyancy of youth in his looks and voice. To-night, however, she saw that he was not a boy, but a man fully her own age. She prepared his basket for him, while her heart was heavy.

He arose when she re-entered the living-room and extended his hand for the basket, at the same time laying out a dollar upon the table.

Miss Eliza was surprised. "I—I—did not think of pay," she stammered.

"Surely," he said. "You do not think that I came up to beg. While we are on the subject, I'd like to settle about getting milk, eggs and bread regularly from you. I should like plenty of them. I find they are about the only reliable things one can find in tramping over the country. All cooks are not like our blessed Yankee ones."

"You intend to stay about here?"

"Until spring is fairly settled. I've a little place down here in the woods. I'm sure that I shall be mighty comfortable there all winter. When the weather permits, I suppose I'll wander forth again to find new experiences. When the wanderlust takes possession of one—" He waved his hand as though the subject were not worth continuing.

"It must be a very unprofitable life," said Eliza. "You look so well and strong, I should think you would settle down to some useful work. You don't look a bit like a tramp."

"Ah—a—h," the word came from the stranger's lips slowly. A peculiar twinkle shone in his eyes, and for a moment his lips curled into a smile. He controlled

himself, however, and said, “But what a gay life it is! One can see so much—now as to the eggs and milk.”

Miss Eliza promised that he could get them daily.

“My name is Hillis,” he said. Again the amused expression came to him. “Even a tramp must have a name, you know.”

He was gone, leaving Miss Eliza wondering what strange circumstance made such a man a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Thereafter he came every morning for milk. During the week, he had fresh bread and eggs. He always paid for them as he received them.

In personal appearance he was the most exquisite tramp that Eliza had ever seen. She laid it down to the fact that her acquaintance in the line had been limited. He always sang or whistled as he came up the hill, and after a while, Eliza found herself expecting him at a regular time in the morning and listening for the song which never failed. Such songs as they were! She could not have believed that words and air could be so exquisitely sweet. The tears actually came to her eyes when she heard, for the first time, his voice ringing through the woods:

“I hear you calling me.
Through all the years, dear one,
I hear you calling me.”

One afternoon as he was passing, he paused to speak to Miss Eliza, who was plucking the last of her chrysanthemums.

“You should see them in Japan,” he said. “We cannot raise them here as the Japanese do. There’s something lacking, either in our skill or our soil. You should see the real Japanese flower.”

He continued in this strain for some time, during which Miss Eliza learned about soils, and chemical compounds and fertilization. She had lived among farmers all her life, but never realized that in the fields lay a study for a lifetime, and that the soil needed as scientific treatment as a child. It was to be fed, to be rested, to be worked, all with judgment and science. All this, she learned from the tramp. She attributed his knowledge to the fact that he had traveled widely, and being naturally of a keen mind, had picked up information from all parts of the globe.

During the winter, he fell into the habit of bringing magazines to Miss Eliza. They opened a new world to her—a world of flowers and sunshine; the world where the artist soul expresses itself in making the world beautiful in color and form. He sometimes lingered to explain some plant or variety of flowers of which the magazines treated. Beth would sit and listen with open eyes. Sometimes she took part in the conversation. Once she laughingly said in connection with some

story of his, “That makes me think of the poppy story Adee told me when I was a little girl.”

“Tell it to me,” he said, seating himself by the fireside. “I fancy Miss Eliza would have a story worth telling.”

For some reason which she could not explain, Eliza’s face grew crimson at something in his voice, rather than his words, and hurriedly excused herself and went into the kitchen.

“Adee always told me stories when I was little. Because she had never read any children’s stories, she had to make them up.”

Beth began the story of the poppy, and the “tramp” listened with interest. When she had finished, he said simply, “Tell me more that Miss Eliza told you.”

Beth was only too glad to do so. She began at once. Eliza was back in the room before she had finished.

“Where did you get such fairy-tales?” asked the tramp. “I’ve read all that ever came in book form, but I missed these.”

Eliza tapped her forehead. “Here,” she said. “Don’t you think it was a pleasure to get them out?”

“Have you written them?” It was surprising how concise, how direct the tramp could be when he chose.

“Write them? I never thought of such a thing. I made up the stories simply to please Beth. I am not an author.”

“You don’t know what you are,” he said. “You have never found yourself, Miss Eliza. No one knows how great a thing he may be. In each soul lies an unexplored country. Be a Columbus to your own soul.”

He took up his hat and moved to the door. “I want you to write down these stories Beth told me. Don’t bother trying to make them fine. Scribble them. This is not a request, Miss Eliza. This is a command.”

Eliza had no time to remonstrate. The tramp was gone before she could reply.

“I would do it, Adee.” Beth smiled whimsically to herself and added, as she did when she was a baby, “Please, pretty lady.”

It was impossible to withstand both of these. Eliza began the very next day when Beth was away at school. She took tablet and pencil and, sitting down by the open grate, wrote just as she had told the stories to Beth. There was no attempt at fine writing. Her language was simple as a child’s. There were even quite serious mistakes in grammar and punctuation. The hours passed quickly. Beth was home from school before Eliza realized it. She had been happy all afternoon—happy in a different way from what she had been all these years.

“I am expressing myself. I am finding my own soul,” she told herself. She smiled at her own egotism, as she added, “What, if like Columbus, I should find

a great undiscovered country?"

She laid the stories away. What simple little things they were! The story of an ambitious little seed which was unhappy because it had been tied up in a paper all winter and then hidden in the ground. It wanted to do something great. It did not wish to hide from life and light. But as the days passed, it crept up from the earth into a life of whose beauty it had no conception. It cast shade and perfume on all about it. It burst in a hundred glorious flowers. Then it learned that its own way would have made it a failure, that there is something in one which must suffer and die before one can be a power.

The following afternoon she wrote again. There was little chance of interruption, for neighbors were at a distance, and the people of Shintown did not give themselves to bodily exertion.

One evening she handed them to the tramp when he came for his evening supply of milk and eggs.

"Quite a package," he said. "Is this all you can think of, or have you more in that head of yours?"

"More! My head has turned into a veritable widow's cruse. The instant I take out one story, another one slips in to take its place. I do not know where they come from. I am sure I do not try to think of them. They just pop in."

"Let them pop, and keep on writing," replied the man. "I came across several books I think you'd like, and a magazine article on the possibilities of the so-called worked out farm."

He laid them on the table, took up his milk-pail and went his way down the slope. His voice rang out clear and strong:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I'll not ask for wine."

"I wonder where he found all his songs. Hundreds of them I think I've heard him sing this winter."

"He must have picked them up tramping about," said Beth.

Moving to the table, Eliza took up the books and magazines which he had left her. The book was one on the wild flowers and weeds of the Alleghanies. It was handsomely illustrated and most comprehensive, dealing with their medicinal as well as floral values.

"It's written by Joseph Barnes Hillis," she said. "Isn't it strange that it should be the same name as the tramp's? The article in the magazine is by the same writer. How strange! I'll—"

She did not finish the sentence, for Sam Houston and old Squire Stout entered without knocking—one of the irregularities of social convention in the lo-

cality.

"Good evening, folks," said Sam. "Eliza, I've come over on strange business. It's queer how things do happen."

The squire took the most comfortable seat in the room and leaned back in his chair. "It's certainly a most curious circumstance," he said. He opened his coat and took from his pocket a weather-beaten, worn old leather purse.

CHAPTER XIV.

The squire laid the purse on the table with an air which spoke volumes. "It certainly is mysterious how things do work out," he said. He was always deliberate in speech, but fortunately, he said little. His particularly impressive method of procedure was to look wise.

Miss Eliza glanced at the purse. It was not attractive. Touched with mildew, soiled and almost filthy, it was rather repulsive. She had learned that Sam was not one to be questioned when he had a story to tell. The only way was to let him go slowly and interpolate with indifferent matters of all sorts.

"There ain't much to tell about the finding of the purse," he began. Then Eliza understood. But she did not reach forward to seize what might contain something which would reveal Beth's identity. It came to her that that meant losing Beth. For an instant she felt that she could not give her up.

"We were fixing the old stone wall at Paddy's Run," continued Sam. "The Morris Brothers have the contract, and Ab Morris came and asked me if I'd hand—."

"No use of telling all the details," said the squire sharply. "Keep to the point. There's no use telling what Ab said to you or you to Ab."

"Well, no need to cut me short. There's plenty of time to tell details, as you call them, and everything else that pertains to this here subject which we have in hand. We've been a wantin' to know these things for ten years and couldn't. Then what's the use of gettin' in a rush and tell everything in a minute."

"There's no danger of you ever doing those two things—getting in a rush and telling everything in a minute. You couldn't do it, Sam." The squire was habitually sarcastic.

"We'll drive slow. It may be a rough road, and we're driving in the dark, so to speak. We were fixing the wall, anyway. Bill Yothers, he was knocking out the loose stone, when he stops and says to me, 'Sam, that looks mighty like a purse, that I've knocked down there. You'd better get it.' Well, I did. I dropped the reins and went over and picked it up. I examined it carefully before I opened it, and—."

Eliza had taken up the purse. No doubt it had dropped from the carriage when Old Prince took his mad leap, and had lodged among the stones in the wall to be hidden away for over ten years. It had been partially protected from the weather.

Miss Eliza opened it gingerly. It almost fell to pieces as she did so. The leather flap at the top fell from it. Within the double compartment were pieces of paper thick with mildew. These were intact enough to show that they once were bills. There was a little silver, and a trunk check of brass. This was green with corrosion, so that the number had been effaced.

Without a word, Eliza took it and went to the kitchen. Beth was close at her side. Neither could speak, but the atmosphere was fairly vibrating with suppressed emotion. Eliza took down her scouring soap from the shelf and began rubbing the check.

"This will do little good," she said after a moment. "I'll dip it in lye and scour it with ashes."

"Yes," said Beth, hurrying into the wash-house and returning with the can of lye. Eliza put the check on a saucer and covered it for an instant with the lye. Then she rubbed it with wood ashes.

The men had grown impatient and had followed her into the kitchen. They came to the door just as Eliza had finished her inspection. "It has Baltimore on it," she said. "The number is 4536. It's very plain."

"Little good it will do you," said Sam. "That just shows you that it was checked from there. It doesn't show who sent it."

"It may tell us a great deal," said Eliza. Keeping the check in her hand, she led the way back into the living room. The men followed and seated themselves. She had been wishing that they would go. She wanted to be alone and think of the matter. She could see that Beth was very much excited, although she sat very quiet.

But the fire was too comfortable for Sam to leave. He had taken the most comfortable chair in the room. He put his legs far apart, bent over so that his elbows could rest on his knees, and his chin in turn upon the upturned palm. He began a recital of all the incidents of the day when Old Prince went wild, and he had first found Eliza and the child, and he continued telling how strange it seemed that he should be the one to find the purse.

"But there'll nothing come of it now," he concluded. "And to my way of

thinking, it's just as well. The little girl has been well took care of. Her mother's dead, we know that. We buried her out there in the old Wells' lot, alongside of your own parents, Eliza. If she had a father, no doubt he's gone and married again and has other children. It's just as well not to try to hunt 'em up."

Eliza thought so, too, for other reasons. She could not give her up. She would be too lonely without her. She simply could not live without her. While these thoughts were in her mind, another slipped in there too. She was not conscious that it was there. "The tramp would leave in the spring." He had said that weeks before. She never called him that any more, nor had she permitted Beth to do so.

In her own thoughts she had no name for him. He was just "he," nothing more. She told herself that she would miss his magazines and his help about her flowers. She had kept up with Beth in all her studies. She had read Latin, and worked out Algebra. Now this would be gone. There would be nothing at all left to her, except her stories, which she had still continued, and her club in town. But what would they mean, with Beth and him gone?

While she thought over these matters, Sam Houston kept up his monologue. Now and then Squire Stout flung in a sharp word, but Eliza heard nothing which was being said.

At length the men rose to go. Sam was yet busy narrating the events that led up to the find. The squire led him away. Eliza came to the door with them and held a lamp high in her hand to light the way. She heard Sam talking, as the two men walked on down the slope.

Turning back into the room, she went to where Beth sat huddled up and took a seat close to her.

"This has disturbed us," she said. "But it should not. I think the check will mean nothing at all. It will make no difference to you or me. You and I have been happy so far and we can continue to be. You will always be my little girl."

"I know, Adee, I know." The tears would have fallen, had not Beth by pure force of will kept them back. Her lips trembled so that she could not speak. She was silent a moment, until she was able to control herself. Then she said again, "I know, I know, Adee, that you will always want me for your little girl; but it is dreadful to have no people of your own."

Eliza could not debate that. It was true, and could not be disputed. She put her arm about Beth and drew her close. Thus they sat without saying a word for a long, long time. The log in the grate burned out. Then Eliza broke the silence.

"Go to bed now, Beth. I must attend to some work before I come up."

Beth obediently arose, kissed Adee good-night and left the room. She went to bed, but could not sleep. She could hear Adee moving about in the room below. When it grew quiet, Beth closed her eyes. She was yet wide awake, but she could

see plainly a picture that had come to her again and again for as long as she could remember. It was a little white bed in which she herself lay, and a beautiful woman with flowers in her hair and a long, soft, shimmering gown stood over her. “That is something that I saw often before I came to Adee’s,” she told herself. “It is so clear. Always the woman’s face slips away. I cannot see it.”

Meanwhile Eliza in the room below strengthened herself to do her duty. She wanted to keep Beth—oh, how much she wanted her; but if she could find out from where she came, it was only right, for the child’s sake, to do so. If Beth had kin living, it was Eliza’s duty to do everything to find them, even if her own heart-strings were torn to shreds in doing so.

After reaching this decision, she went to her writing desk and wrote to the baggage agent of that particular road, at Baltimore. She told him the circumstances of the check and asked him to spare no pains to find out where it came from or where the trunk was now.

“There may be letters or clothing in the trunk which will lead us to her people,” she told herself as she sealed the letter.

Neither she nor Beth could sleep much that night. They were two sorry-looking individuals the following morning. They were heavy-eyed, tired and listless. They had little to say at the breakfast table. They had worn themselves out with lying awake and letting their minds dwell on the matters which lay nearest their hearts.

There is an old adage that “troubles never come singly.” Better change it to suit the new philosophy of the day, “Joys never come singly.” Sometimes lives may move serenely on for months and months, or even years. They are like a broad stretch of level plain. They would grow monotonous after a time. The finest are lands interspersed with valleys and mountains. So it is with life—here the valley of humiliation, there the mountain of joyful exultation.

Eliza mailed her letter. She lost no time, but sent Beth off to the post-office immediately after breakfast, lest she regret and prove weak enough to keep it back.

That evening the “tramp” came up the slope earlier than usual. The ground was white with snow. The drifts were deep in the ravine, but he had kept the path broken. He stepped more briskly than usual. He whistled and sang exultingly. He carried a milk-bucket and had under his arm several letters and magazines. In one hand was a great bouquet of crimson roses, wrapped in oiled paper to keep them from the biting cold. His feet were eager to reach the Wells home. He sang and then laughed aloud to himself. He was a most peculiar sort of tramp. One could tell that from the great coat he wore. Rough cloth on the outside and black, shaggy fur within. Wind and weather never kept him back. There was something unusual in the air this night. He was fairly bubbling over with excitement.

He knocked at Miss Eliza's door and entered before she could respond. He came directly to where she stood, removed the oiled paper and let a score of crimson roses nod and smile at her.

"I want to be the first to lay my homage at the feet of the famous one," he said. "Permit me, madam, to present the roses to her who is making her name a household word."

He thrust the flowers between her hands. Eliza was confused. His manner was strange. Then, too, no one had ever offered her homage, or had bought her roses. Roses with the mercury ten degrees below zero. Eliza had never seen roses except in June.

Her face grew crimson. She tried to speak, but could find no words.

"You're all at sea. This will explain." Opening one of the magazines, he laid it on the table, holding it with finger and thumb that it might not close.

"Why—why—it's our house," cried Beth.

"And it's our Adee," said the man, turning the page where was a picture of Eliza herself standing under the trees with the leaves about her.

"I had my camera set for a week before I could get that," he cried triumphantly. "I was bound to get it by fair means or foul."

Eliza was mechanically turning the leaves with one hand. The other held the roses close in her arm. She could not understand. She tried to read the titles. A few lines, and the understanding came.

"You have printed my foolish little stories," she said.

"The editors did not think they were foolish," he said. "You'll find a number there. Here are the checks for them. My, my, you'll become a bloated capitalist. Poor Beth and I will take a back seat. It will be awful hard on the nerves, Beth, to live with a celebrity."

CHAPTER XV.

Before the week passed, Miss Eliza found herself the recipient of many honors. She had been a member of a club composed of women from Farwell since Beth had entered school.

These people began to drive out and to call upon Eliza. There were motors

and sleighs in evidence every day.

Mrs. Laire came out and brought Carrie with her. She kissed Eliza effusively.

"The idea of your never telling us a word of this. But as I said right along. It is always those quiet people who are the geniuses. I knew from the very first time that you attended our Club that you were head and shoulders above us. We women are not intellectual, you know. I can get the value of a dollar when it comes to managing a household, but I'd never even dare to think of writing stories."

Eliza blushed and tried to disclaim that any honor was due her, but Mrs. Laire would not listen. She liked to hear herself talk, which she did after an airy, dainty sort of fashion, like a bird picking a cherry.

"When I mentioned coming, nothing would do but that Carrie would come along. She thinks so highly of Beth. I'm sorry that she is not at home now. I wish you would let Beth spend a few days with us. I'm sure she and Carrie will be great friends."

"I have such a lovely new writing-desk that I wish her to see. How did you ever think about writing, Miss Wells?" began Carrie. Then, without waiting for her to answer, she continued, "Did Beth ever finish the story she meant to write? She had a fine one last fall for the Literary. I wonder if she ever wrote the story."

This was one of the things of which Miss Eliza had not heard. Beth had planned a story about the beautiful woman who had visited school and who had kissed her so rapturously. She had written it, too, and had it hidden away. She could not have shown it to anyone.

Mrs. Laire chatted on and Carrie threw in questions. All Eliza could do was to sit and listen.

This was not the only visitor. They came by the dozen, and each one chided Eliza for never telling them, and for modestly keeping her ability hidden so long. Eliza could not fully explain. She could not tell them that she herself had never known that she had a wonderful imagination and artistic spirit. Could she tell them that a wanderer, a tramp, had bade her to be a "Columbus" to her own soul, and he had proved her Queen Isabelle who made it possible? She could only listen in silence and to thank them for their good opinion of her.

When Beth came home from school, she brought the news that the doctor's sleigh had just driven away from the Oliver cabin. Furthermore, Sam Houston's little Jim-boy had met her and told her that the tramp was ill.

"Did he mean Mr. Hillis?" asked Eliza. She blushed when she said it and let her glance wander toward the roses which had passed their beauty and were now but dried leaves. She had not destroyed them. They were the first flowers that had ever been given her.

"Well, I thought he was a tramp. You know, that very day that we saw him months and months ago, you told me that he was a tramp."

"I did not know then. He's a gentleman, and we will always call him Mr. Hillis and never think of him as a tramp."

"I'm very glad to. He never seemed a bit like such a horrid person. I'm sorry he's sick. Couldn't we take him something to eat, or help him some way, Adee? It must be awful to be sick and alone."

Adee had been thinking of just that thing. Now, the custom of the country declared it to be highly improper for an unmarried woman to visit a man in his home. All the old, trite conventions were live issues with Adee. On the other hand, all the laws of Christian charity and gratitude told her to visit the stranger who had been a friend to her and who had brought inspiration and breadth to her life. She considered for a moment and decided that there were things bigger and better than convention.

"Yes, we'll take him something, Beth. Come and help me prepare it."

Beth needed no urging. In her heart were all the gifts of hospitality and kindliness. She ran to the closet at Adee's request and brought out the best currant jelly and a bottle of grape juice. There was cream and all the dainties a good cook may have on hand to tempt a sick man. Then they made their way to the sick man's house. On the way, they met Sam Houston. It is strange that it always happens so. One's best intentions are often misunderstood. Adee realized that when she made up her mind to visit at the log house and do what she could to relieve the sufferings of the sick. She was not at all surprised at Sam's knowing look and sage wagging of the head.

"He's a pretty good-looking fellow, Liza. I thought he'd take your eye."

"Did you really think? I'm glad something has put your brain-cells into play, Sam."

She was vexed with herself the moment she had spoken. Because Sam was narrowminded and misinterpreting her action was no reason why she should be sarcastic. She should have had strength and ability to rise above it.

"I'm sorry I spoke as I did, Beth. Nothing is gained by letting oneself down to that."

They had come to the hut. Eliza paused at the door. Since she as a child had come there to pick wild blackberries, she had not been so close. She remembered it as a miserable old place. The atmosphere had changed. The low, broad windows, close to the roof, swung outward. The logs formed a wide sill. Here were boxes glorious with blooming flowers. Outside, the logs had been covered with a stain or paint which gave them the appearance of being artistically weathered. The tramp had heard her footsteps and called to her to enter.

The interior was divided into two rooms. Eliza paused on the threshold.

The fireplace had a great oak log. The plank floor was hidden with skins. The walls had been washed with something that made them a golden brown. A great table of some dark wood stretched its length near the low windows. There was an alcohol-kettle and chafing-dish of brass. Rough pine shelves of the same restful hue as the walls were filled with books. A violin and bow lay on the table. There were piles of music and magazines everywhere. The master himself was seated in an easy-chair by the fireplace. He arose when Eliza and Beth entered.

"I'm not surprised. I felt that you and Beth would be here the instant you knew of the doctor's visit. I was tramping through the snow and had an accident, and lay for a while in the snow. That's left me with a cold and a touch of fever."

His cheeks were flushed. Eliza bade him go back to his chair.

"I will if you will give me a glass of grape juice at once. You see, Miss Eliza, I know what you have there without my looking in the basket. Better than grape juice even will be a cup of good coffee and a poached egg. I'll sit here, Miss Eliza, and let you wait upon me. You don't know how good it is to be waited upon. I've never had any of it in my life, and I've always wanted it."

Eliza set about it at once. Beth sat down on a low, rough footstool at the fireplace. The conversation drifted on until the man found himself telling of the foreign cities he had visited. He knew where the Aztecs had set up their civilization; he had watched the crocodiles show their ugly jaws on the banks of the Ganges.

"It must have taken a great deal of money to visit all those places," Eliza paused in her serving.

"Not when one is a tramp. The country roads, thank heaven, are free, and when one has a good pair of feet—." His eyes danced merrily as he looked at Eliza, who found herself blushing and turned aside that he might not observe it.

But his expression was neither one of amusement nor merriment, as his eyes followed her movements. She worked so easily and deftly, wholly unconscious that she was doing anything, just as her attitude had been about her story writing.

"I have always longed to travel," she said at last. "I presume every one has the same longing. I have seen no large cities and I am ashamed to say that I have never seen a steamer. I should dearly love to start out with some good friend and go where I wish and stay until I am ready to leave."

The man looked down at the log which was just about to break in the middle. "I can read your future and I see that your wish will be fulfilled. I see in the coals all that will transpire." He spoke so earnestly and kept his eyes on the fire as though he really read something in the embers. Eliza paused in the act of pouring coffee and let her glance follow his.

He paused. "Yes," exclaimed Eliza eagerly, for she wished him to continue,

“Yes.”

“Before the year is out your desire will be realized. I am a true prophet and I read aright. You will see great cities. You will view the wonders of the world. You will be a guest in palaces. You will be feasted and feted everywhere.”

“It sounds beautiful. I only hope it will come true.”

“And I will go with you, Adee!” cried Beth, clapping her hands. “Good, good. We’ll have a perfectly ‘kertish’ time.”

The man shook his head. “As I read the signs, you will not be with Adee. I cannot read your future; but you will not be with Adee—not all the time.”

“I should not like to go alone,” said Adee, “I’m very much afraid that would not be pleasant. Could you not read another story in the coals, and let Beth be my companion?”

“I cannot change it. It is written there. To be frank, I would not do so if I could. No fear that you will be lonely. You will not wish Beth with you when you start on the journey, for your companion will be dearer to you than even Beth is.”

“Impossible. Beth is—” Eliza had turned and looked at the man as she spoke. Words failed her. Something, she knew not what, kept her from saying that Beth would always be the dearest one to her.

The subject was getting too personal to please her. She turned from the two at the fireside and poured the coffee and brought it to the sick man. She did not raise her eyes. She did not look at him. The silence was constrained. Even Beth, who could not understand many things, felt that.

“Why is every one suddenly glum,” she cried at last. “Talking and laughing one minute and then as quiet as mice. I’ll tell you this, though. Nothing will keep me away from Adee. If she goes abroad to see strange sights, I’ll go too.”

“No, I think not.” He shook his head dubiously.

“It’s beyond my power to change what I have read. You could not go, Beth. A little bit of a girl as you are. You would not be able to stand it. It will be a sort of ‘tramp’ trip.” He laughed and looked toward Eliza, who was drawing on her great coat. “Come, Beth, it is time to move homeward,” she said.

CHAPTER XVI.

Spring had passed and summer was at hand before Eliza had her letter from Baltimore. It would be impossible to trace baggage from checks ten years old. All goods were sold after lying unclaimed for a certain length of time. That was all. Eliza was rather glad than otherwise. She had done her duty, satisfied her conscience, and Beth was still hers.

The same mail bore another letter. Miss Good, the president of the school, had written her, asking her to be one in the receiving line at the Club reception which would be held in the parlors of the Point Breeze. The hotel was filled with summer guests, many of whom were club members elsewhere, and the affair was planned that they might meet each other.

Eliza's writings were appearing in different periodicals. She knew not how they got in print. She wrote them merely. The man at the Oliver place managed the business and brought the checks to her. She had won quite a little fame and her name had become known over the country. This was the reason that she had been asked to receive in line. Some of the younger girls were to act as aids. Beth was popular in school. She was always sunshiny, and took things as they were without looking for trouble. She had never felt a distinction of class or clothes and treated every one with fairness and justice. She and Sally Monroe had kept up their intimacy. With Helen these made a trio as unlike as could be and as companionable and full of life as any one could wish.

Carrie Laire and Tilly were friends also, but never within the inner circle. Carrie was yet the interrogation point and Tilly the animated price list.

When the letter asking Eliza to assist in receiving and Beth to be one of the younger set was received, the latter executed a war-dance immediately and cavorted about like a young lamb.

"Don't be so frolicsome," cried Eliza. "Really, Beth, you make me think of the young goats which we used to watch up on Goat Hill. They always jumped about in just such fashion as you are doing now."

"I'm capricious, Adee. Capra is really Latin for goat. Then if one gambols around like a goat, one is capricious."

They were both excited and could scarcely eat their evening meal. There was so much to talk about.

"Adee, you must have a beautiful dress. Something soft and shimmery. I'll fix your hair too sweet for anything. I'll put a pink rose in it. I'd get a soft white dress, Adee. You could—couldn't you? You have money enough from the stories. Haven't you, Adee?"

"Yes," slowly, "but a new dress would cost a great deal. Perhaps, I had better write a note and tell them I cannot help receive."

"No, please do not, Adee. You'll meet the finest people in the world. Carrie Laire's mother buys dresses in Williamsport. The place where they are sold will

She stood as transfixed, her eyes upon Beth's hands.

change them to make them fit. You could go and buy a dress. You could easily get one to fit you. You're just the right size to be easily fitted. You could go in one day. I could stay at home. I wouldn't be afraid. I could ask Sally to come over. But then, maybe, I'd better go with you. You couldn't see how it would fit, and I'd tell you perfectly honest. I want you to look perfectly 'scrumptious.' I'm just positive, Adee, that you'll be the sweetest woman there."

"Beth, you are a flatterer. You'd make me vain as vain could be, if I listen to you. I'll promise you this: if I go to Williamsport, you shall go with me. I'll consider the matter."

"It is only ten days, Adee. I would not consider too long. A soft white dress with a train—"

Beth sighed with satisfaction. In her mind's eyes she saw Adee looking like the Princess in the fairy tale.

Eliza might not have decided in favor of buying a new gown, had not the man from the Oliver place come in that evening for his customary supplies. Beth, who could not keep anything to herself when she was excited, blurted out immediately that Adee was to help receive and that Sally, Carrie and herself were

to be present as aids.

"I can scarcely wait. It's weeks yet," cried Beth. "I've never been to a really grown-up party. I know it will be simply grand. I wish it was this very evening."

"Nonsense, that would give you no time to get your party togs. They tell me that for such affairs, women 'dike' themselves out as fine as peacocks. Gowns with trains coming after them like an afterthought, gloves up to the elbow. No, no, Beth, it is well for you that the reception is not tonight. It takes time to prepare one's togs for events as big as this will be."

Eliza, keen as she naturally was, never knew why he had spoken so. He knew how narrow and hemmed-in her social life had been. He would not have her go dressed unsuitably and made to feel ill at ease and out of place among other women. Eliza accepted it as a random remark but profited by it nevertheless.

"We're going to look fine," laughed Beth. "Adee and I have a plan. We'll not tell you. We'll keep it as a state secret until we burst upon you in all our glory. You'll be overcome. I know you'll say that we look fine."

"I'll believe that you do; but I'll not be at Shintown to see you. I'm going away tomorrow. The boards will go up on the log house again for—I cannot say how long."

"Going to leave?" Eliza was foolish enough to feel a strange sinking of the heart.

"Isn't this departure rather unexpected?"

"I always take to the woods and roads when fair weather sets in. I should have gone weeks ago. Now some of my old friends have warned me that the time has come to cut loose and show a good pair of heels. You see, Miss Eliza, not even a year of happy domesticity can make me break old habits. I'm starting out to visit old places. New cities have no attraction for me. By daylight, I'll be off."

He took up his milk-jug and was off. He had not even said good-bye or thanked Eliza for the little kindnesses she had shown him. Yet she felt herself his debtor. He had given her life a new impulse. He had opened a new line of work. Her pen would help her provide for her own old age and educate Beth. More than that, she found joy in expressing herself. She had gone from the beaten path, and had found the glorious possibilities which lay within her own soul, just as they lie in the soul of each one; though some are never discovered.

When Eliza and Beth went down the slope the following day, neither song nor whistling was heard from the Oliver log house. The windows and door had been boarded up. Already the place had an appearance of being abandoned.

"It makes me feel queer—sort of lonesome," said Beth. "I wonder if we'll ever see him again. I thought he was very nice, Adee. I think I never met any other man that I liked quite so well. I wish he had not gone. I wish he would come back and live here forever. We'll miss him dreadfully. Don't you wish he'd

come back to live here always, Adee?"

Eliza had stopped to pluck a flower and had nothing at all to say. During the walk to town, Beth did all the talking.

The time until the reception did pass. To Beth it dragged. It was as though the little god Time had hung leaden balls on his feet. Beth counted the nights between. They passed at last. The evening of the Woman's Club reception was at hand. Adee had yielded to Beth and bought a soft white gown of embroidered mull. It was just a little low at the neck and the sleeves ended in soft lace frills, just at the elbow. Best of all to Beth's way of thinking, there was a little sweep to it. The ruffles of val lace floated about Eliza's feet. Beth had put up her hair so that it was loose about the forehead and in a great coil like a crown upon her head. A pink rose finished it, to Beth's satisfaction.

When all was completed, the girl stood aside to contemplate her work. "You look like a dream, a perfect poem. You'll be the sweetest thing there, Adee. Oh, I'm glad I belong to you. Put on your gloves. Sally says to let the tops wrinkle; not to draw them tight. There."

Beth wore a simple white frock that had been made for the senior reception. When she had finished dressing, she came to the door of Eliza's room with a little box in her hand.

"Adee—I'll have no gloves, you know. The girls do not intend to wear them; but Sally and Helen both wear rings. Don't you think it would be all right if I would wear these?" She opened the box, and taking out the rings which she believed belonged to the woman who had been killed when Old Prince had taken fright, she held them up for Eliza to see.

"They fit me, Adee. I'd dearly love to wear them. They're rather odd, but I think they are prettier than the ones the girls wear. May I wear them, Adee?"

Eliza considered. "The only thing against your wearing them is that they might be lost. You may need them sometime if you ever meet your own people. You know that I have always had a feeling, Beth, that sometime you'll find, somewhere, sisters or brothers; perhaps you have a father living."

"It's strange he did not try to find me. Sometime, I feel, Adee, that no one but my mother wanted me. When she was killed, no one came. If any one had cared, don't you think they would have hunted for me everywhere. I'd walk from town to town until I dropped from weariness. But no one looked for me, Adee. I'm to be your girl always and forever, Adee. No one else ever wanted me, it seems." She smiled up at Eliza. She was really very happy and contented. Only a few times had she permitted herself to think that she was without kin of any kind. Sometimes she longed for her mother. She knew that no one, however kind and lovable, could ever take a mother's place. But she loved Adee dearly, and had made up her mind that she would make neither her foster-mother nor

herself miserable about that which could not be remedied. She stood looking at Eliza with an appealing look in her eyes.

"Well, I presume it really will make no difference. They are your rings and you are surely old enough now to take care of them. Wear them if you wish, Beth."

CHAPTER XVII.

The reception parlors were massed with ferns, palms and roses. The soft strains of an orchestra floated through the rooms. There were men in full dress and women in soft-tinted gowns, moving about like a swarm of gay butterflies. The receiving line was made up of a dozen women. Miss Ellis stood at the head, next to her was Mrs. Laurens who was an officer in the National Federation of the Club. Then came Eliza. They had barely time to take their places before the guests began making their way from the dressing-rooms on the floor above. A colored man, in full evening dress, stood in the doorway and called out the names of those entering. The head of the line shook hands, introduced the person to the next in line, and so each one passed on. There were so many that the names became but a jumble to Eliza. "Dr. James Smith, Mrs. Ellington Roche, Miss Brown," and so on. She smiled, shook hands and handed the guest on to the next. She was performing her duties in a mechanical sort of way, forgetting name and person the instant he had passed before her. Suddenly she started and became very much alert. Mrs. Laurens was addressing her personally. "Miss Wells, permit me to introduce Dr. William Barnes Hillis, the scientist. He has asked to be introduced. I am surprised that you have not met before. Dr. Hillis has been in your neighborhood for a year, living the life of a hermit in order that he might finish his new book and win new laurels."

Eliza extended her hand. Speech failed her. She looked up into the laughing eyes of the "tramp." He was dressed in conventional evening dress.

"Miss Wells, I am delighted to meet you." His smile was radiant. Eliza could not even smile. She stood quite still and looked at him.

"Beth was right about how fine you would look." He spoke so low that no one else might hear, and then moved along the line.

The greater number of guests had arrived. There was time for a word be-

tween the hostesses. Mrs. Laurens turned to Eliza. "I'm sure you will like Hillis—I presume I should say Dr. Hillis. He is authority on plant life and has delved deep into all kindred sciences. He shut himself up somewhere in the wilds the last year in order to devote his time to writing. He dropped in upon us last night and demanded that I give him a card to the reception. He told me something else. He's going to make a tour of the eastern countries. I think he starts early in the fall. He's not going alone. He told me that the prospective Mrs. Hillis would be here tonight, and defied me to discover her."

"Yes—how—interesting—romantic." Eliza did not recognize her own voice. It was hollow, stilted, false.

The last guest had been bidden welcome. The hostesses moved from the reception line, and mingled with those they were entertaining.

In a room adjoining, the young girls were serving fruit punch from a side-table. Helen and Sallie were ladling it from a bowl hidden among flowers and ferns. Beth and Carrie Laire were hidden amid masses of cut roses. As the guests came to them, they pinned a rose upon them.

Mrs. Laurens came up with a group of four.

"Roses presenting roses," said one of the gentlemen as Carrie pinned the flower on his coat. Beth's face had been turned away. She was selecting a fine half-blown rose for Mrs. Laurens. She turned to present it. Her hands with their peculiar old-fashioned rings were brought into evidence.

"Will you have a rose?" Mrs. Laurens did not answer. She stood as though transfixed, her eyes upon Beth's hands.

Suddenly she seized them tight into her own. "Your rings! Your rings! Where did you get them? They are mine. I'd give worlds to know of them. They're mine! They're mine!"

Her voice rang out clear and strong. Everyone in the great room heard. Poor Beth was frightened so that she could not speak. People came crowding closer. Eliza and Dr. Hillis, fearing that something had happened to Beth, hurried forward. There stood Mrs. Laurens clutching Beth's hands and crying out, "The rings! The rings are mine. I must know where you got them, child."

Dr. Hillis was the first to understand. He came to them. "You and Beth come with me into this little private parlor. We can explain better there." Taking them by the arm, he led them away. "Come with us," he said to Eliza. She followed. The door closed upon them, and there the explanation was given.

Very simple of course it was. Mrs. Laurens was Beth's mother, to be sure. It was as clear as could be when one knew it.

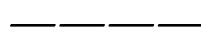
When Beth was a baby, Mrs. Laurens had taken her to Florida where Mr. Laurens had undertaken heavy contracts. She had with her Bena Benson, a Swedish servant who had been with the family for years and who dearly loved

Beth.

Mr. Laurens was taken ill during the winter and was in the hospital. A few weeks later, his wife was taken with the same low-running fever. The physician forbade their being moved north to their home. The little child could not be left in a hotel in a servant's care. There was a risk in staying in the infected region. The only thing to be done was to send the child and nurse north to friends.

Mrs. Laurens wore several rings which had come down to her from her mother's people. She was ill in the hospital. Fearing that the rings might be lost, she instructed Bena to take them home with her. At Baltimore, the Swedish woman had become confused. She asked for information as to the best way to "Yamestown," as she called it. Her pronunciation was foreign. Instead of selling her a ticket and checking her baggage to the right destination, the man in his hurry misunderstood and sent her hundreds of miles out of her way. She had realized her mistake when the train reached Farwell. She had left the train there and was walking to the Lehigh station in the hope of returning to Baltimore.

Weeks had passed before Mr. and Mrs. Laurens heard of her. They were too ill to be conscious of the lapse of time. When they began the search all trace was lost, even the newspaper accounts had gone astray.



So Miss Eliza lost Beth after all. I think not. We can never really lose those we love and those who love us. They are always ours.

She slipped away, leaving the mother and daughter together. She could not face the people in the drawing-room. She slipped into the open corridor, where the palms hid her from view and the lights were low. Here she stood leaning against the heavy columns which supported the ceiling.

"She was glad—so glad for Beth," she told herself. She repeated it mechanically as though she would force herself to believe that she really was glad.

"I'm glad—for Beth. I'm glad for Beth that she has a real mother." It was her lips only which said it. How could she go back to the lonely house? How could she sit down to her meals alone? How could she live without her little girl?

She tried bravely to keep back the tears, but they gathered in her eyes and fell down her cheeks. She choked back a sob. She could not reenter the room and face the people. She would go home alone. Alone—she could not do that. She would hang to that pillar all night rather than that. She could not, she would not go home alone.

"You are troubled, Adee." It was Dr. Hillis who addressed her. She controlled herself and said with what brightness she could, "Not troubled; lonely. Beth has found her mother. I am glad. That is, I am trying hard to be glad; but I

cannot help the thought that I will be alone."

"For that matter, so will I. Strange thing about this being alone. Just about the time one gets used to it, one finds that he simply cannot stand another day of it. I have been alone all my life, but I never realized it until the day I was ill and Beth came down to see me."

He paused. There was nothing at all that Adee could say to this. Silence was the only thing. Eliza felt that he was looking at her, keenly, but she did not raise her eyes.

"You will not be lonely long. You know what I read in the coals. Fall weather is fine for going about abroad; going where you want to and not leaving until you are ready. What do you think, Adee? Could you let me take Beth's place? Will you let the dream in the coals come true?"

"I'll not let you take Beth's place," she spoke slowly. "You must take your own place." She held out her hand. "But I can't possibly be ready very early in the fall."

So it ended like a fairy story. Nay, for it was far better than a fairy tale. All stories of human life are.

Beth, or Ermann, as her name really was, divided her time between Eliza and her own mother. It would have been a hard matter to decide which she loved most.

The prophecy concerning Adee which Dr. Hillis had read in the embers at the old Oliver Place came true. He and Adee were married and went abroad, where he was received with ovations because of the fine scientific work he had done. Adee was feted and feasted and entertained in palaces. Beth was not with her, of course. Strange to relate, Adee was not lonely. Sometimes her husband would tease her about her "tramp" friends. They would laugh heartily over the matter. All the best things of life had come to Adee because she had sacrificed her ease and denied herself to take care of a helpless little child. She might have sent Beth to a foundling asylum. How narrow, little and petty her life would have always been, had she done this.

Mrs. Laurens had suffered; but good came through it after all. After losing trace of her own little child she had devoted her money and time to making happy other motherless children. Through her own suffering, she herself was strengthened and developed, and hundreds of children were made comfortable.

Beth, or Ermann, finished a college course and then offered her services to the Fresh Air Society. She takes charge of babies who are motherless, or whose mothers are not responsible. She realizes what her life might have been if Adee had sent her away, and tries to give the little ones in her care the same love and tenderness that she knew.

So wonderful good came from suffering, because those who suffered were

strong, and fulfilled their duty nobly.

So ends the tale of Beth, or Ermann, just as you choose to think of her. But in her own thoughts, she thinks of herself as “That little girl of Miss Liza’s,” and so the old residents of the valley speak of her.

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THAT LITTLE GIRL OF MISS ELIZA’S ***

A Word from Project Gutenberg

We will update this book if we find any errors.

This book can be found under: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/35822

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the Project Gutenberg™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away – you may do practically *anything* with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

The Full Project Gutenberg License

Please read this before you distribute or use this work.

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at https://www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use & Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms

of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever

any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at http://www.gutenberg.org

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ web site (http://www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3. below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts,

Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES – Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND – If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS,' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining

provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY – You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, is critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org .

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at https://www.gutenberg.org/fundraising/pglaf . Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to

date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://www.pglaf.org

For additional contact information:

Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit https://www.gutenberg.org/fundraising/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: https://www.gutenberg.org/fundraising/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Each eBook is in a subdirectory of the same number as the eBook's eBook number, often in several formats including plain vanilla ASCII, compressed (zipped), HTML and others.

Corrected *editions* of our eBooks replace the old file and take over the old filename and etext number. The replaced older file is renamed. *Versions* based on separate sources are treated as new eBooks receiving new filenames and etext numbers.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

http://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.