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Children's Department

THE MYSTERY OF AMABEL.

"Let Nanny go alone," cried Nanny's mother with an arm squeezed tight about her little daughter. "Certainly," said Nanny's father "Why, Boston isn't the North Pole! You say she needs a new coat and hat, and you can't possibly undertake a day's shopping yourself, or I shall have you ill again. I'll put her on the train in care of the conductor, and her Aunt Kate will meet her at the other end, and buy whatever is needed. Nanny will only have an hour on the cars, after all. You won't be afraid, will you, daughter?" Now if Nanny's father had asked her in that tone whether she, felt afraid of the most alarming dragon in her fairy book Nanny would have tried to think that she did not; so she answered, "Course not! Not the leastest bit afraid!" in a tone which almost reassured her anxious mother. "Well" said Mrs. Richards, "I shall write her name and address on a card and sew it into her pocket." Doctor Richards laughed and went away to write to Aunt Kate, and so the matter was settled. Nanny's mother did not forget the card, and while it was being sewed into the pocket of her little brown coat Nanny said:—"Mother, will you write a card for Amabel, too?" "Are you going to take Amabel?" said Mrs. Richards, doubtfully. "I'm afraid you may lose her, dear, in the crowd." "Mother!" cried Nanny. "S if I could have any pleasure without Amabel! O mother, mayn't I take her?" So Mrs. Richards wrote on a tiny card: Amabel Richards, Daughter

of Miss Nanny Richards. Care Doctor Richards, Brookfield, Mass. Amabel's pocket was so small that she had to carry her handkerchief up her sleeve in order to accommodate the card; but Nanny assured her that she would find it handier when she wished to wave good-bye. Doctor Richards drove Nanny and Amabel to the station, and put them into a seat on the shady side of the car. Then he stood outside and talked to Nanny through the open window. He dropped ten bright new dimes into a little red purse and tossed it to Nanny. "You'd better buy some new frocks for your doll," he said, with a nod toward Amabel. Then the train gave a start and he drew back. Nanny's round face looked very small framed in the big window, but she was smiling gaily as she waved her own handkerchief and Amabel's. "Plucky little lass!" thought her father. "I wish I had her safe at home again." The train puffed away, and the busy doctor hurried off to his patients, while Nanny's mother "rested" all day, so as to feel strong enough to go to the station at night to meet her little girl. That was to be a surprise for Nanny. Five o'clock came at last, and the train brought Nanny home again, but, oh, what a tragic little face Nanny had. Her eyes were swollen with crying, and at first she was quite speechless. When they were safe in the carriage and Nanny gathered into her mother's arms, she sobbed hoarsely, "O mother, I've lost Amabel! I've lost her!" That was all Nanny could tell. How or when Amabel had left her arms she could not remember. She had missed her suddenly. Aunt Kate had retraced their route and had made inquiries everywhere, but nothing could be heard of the lost doll. Kind Uncle Stephen, who took Nanny to lunch, wanted to buy another Amabel, but poor Nanny only sobbed harder than ever at the thought of a substitute for her darling; and all her pleasure in the pretty things Aunt Kate bought for her was gone. Nanny slept late the next morning, and when she ran down-stairs, still heavy-eyed, she found every one at breakfast, and a tiny envelope at her plate, addressed to Miss Nanny Richards. "Perhaps it is a party," suggested her father, hopefully. He hated to see his little girl unhappy. Nanny took the note to her mother, and Mrs. Richards un-

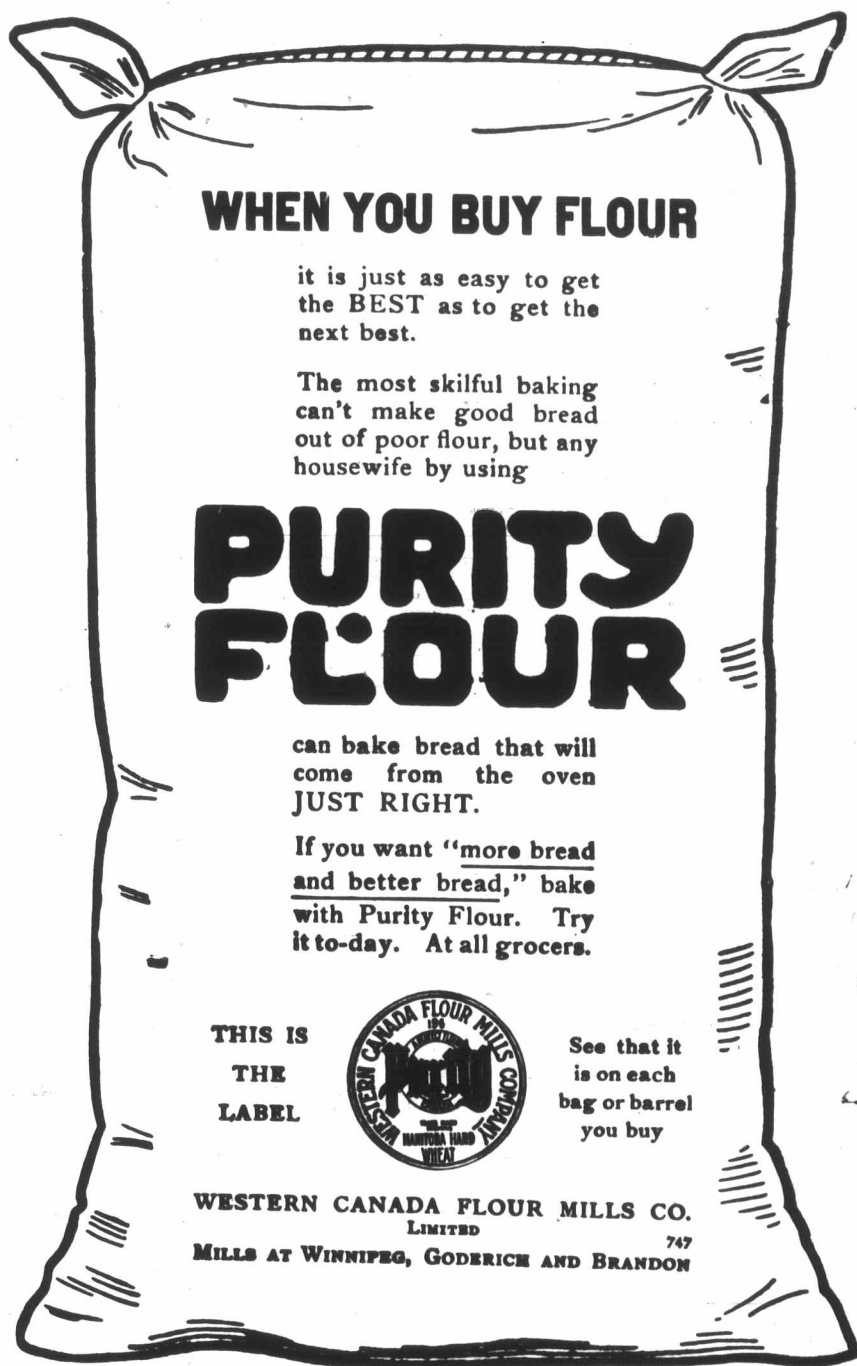
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folded it. "Why, Nanny!" she said, and then she read aloud:—Boston, September 25th. "My Darling Mother. I am afraid you have suffered great anxiety on my account, and I hasten to assure you that I am in excellent health. I have no words to describe my feelings when I found myself torn from your arms. My adventures have been numerous and painful, but I am now in the hands of friends. Owing to a misfortune, my pink frock is so torn as to be quite unfit for wear, and I think it best to remain in the city long enough to replenish my wardrobe. I trust you will approve of this course. Expect me Friday, without fail. I am all impatience to embrace you once more. With many kisses, Your devoted daughter, Amabel. P.S. I enclose my picture that you may feel sure of my well-being." And there, to be sure, gummed to the last page of the note, was a wee photograph of Amabel, looking calm and happy, although her frock hung about her in tatters. Nanny's father and mother gazed at each other and at the note, and said, "Well!" Nanny danced up and down, crying, "O mother, how many days to Friday—how many days?" It seemed as if they would never pass—those three days. When at last it was Friday morning, Nanny could scarcely tear herself away from the window for an instant. She almost expected to see Amabel drive up

in a hack. Even Doctor Richards, when he came in to lunch, asked anxiously: "Has Amabel come yet?" Just as he spoke there was a ring at the door, and Norah came in, smiling, with "An express package for Miss Nanny." It was Amabel. She was packed most carefully in tissue-paper and excelsior, and when Nanny's trembling fingers had uncovered her, it was apparent that her brief stay in the city had done wonders for Amabel's appearance. Her hair, which had been worn so thin as to cause Nanny grave concern, was now thick and curly, and of a much brighter shade of gold. Her hands, which had been very pale since Nanny's baby cousin was discovered sucking them, were now the prettiest rosy pink. And her toilet! Amabel was beautiful to behold in a pale pink cashmere frock, with silk stockings and slippers of exactly the same shade. She wore a black velvet coat lined with pink silk, and a velvet bonnet faced with pink and trimmed with a long, plummy feather. "Where has Amabel been?" cried Nanny's mother. They all examined the box, but there was no word or sign to throw light on the mystery. "Amabel, where have you been?" coaxed Nanny. But although she has been asked that question many times a day since her journey, Amabel has never told. That is her secret.—"Youth's Companion."