

The Little Girl considered him grave-ly, then she laid her little hand on his big one, and so they rode together in silence until they came to the low red house.

As they whizzed up to the porch the little old lady, with the brindled dog and the tame crow in attendance, came out to meet them. In the background were the four big cats, and the little cow moped in the distance.

"This is my Great-aunt Betsey," said the doctor.

"How do you do, Fairy Godmother?" said the Little Girl quaintly, and held out her hand.

"Such foolishness—at my age," chuckled the Fairy Godmother, but the doctor said, "The name just fits you," and they both laughed.

The Little Girl's summer experiences at fashionable resorts had not prepared her for the fascinations of the little farm—of new-hatched chicks, of pink-and-white little pigs, of kittens in a nest of hay, of waddle-tailed ducklings, of wobbly-legged calves, of bees in weather-beaten hives, of a well with a bucket that went down with a clink-clank of chains, to splash mysteriously in depths below; of a cellar, dim, dark, apple-scented; of a dairy, immaculate, with yellow cream rising in shining pans, and with a little round churn for making butter.

After the doctor had taken his leave she had some of the butter on a great slice of bread, with a cup of milk from the little cow, and a glass dish of preserve. The dish had a ship on it, and the preserve had been made from strawberries from the Fairy Godmother's own garden.

At bedtime the fire was lit in the fireplace, for the night was cool, and in front of it sat the four big cats warming their toes, and the brindled dog lay with his nose on his paws, and the tame crow was perched on the back of the wooden settle on which sat Great-aunt Betsey with the child in her arms. There was a dreamy silence, until the Little Girl said, "There isn't a book in your whole house," and Great-aunt Betsey replied, "Yes, there is one on the round table, and it's the Bible."

"We haven't a Bible in our house," said the Little Girl. "Tell me about it."

Then the little old lady told about the sheep that was lost and the Shepherd who went out into the wild hills and found it, and the Little Girl said, "He was a good man," and the little old lady quavered, "He was the Son of God."

That night as the Little Girl lay in the middle of a wide feather-bed and looked out at the stars, she said softly, "He is up there," but she forgot about the Book when the biggest cat came and curled itself up on the counterpane.

But the next day when the doctor came the Little Girl remembered, and she asked, "Do you know about the Son of God?"

The doctor looked into the depths of her eyes and answered, "I did know, but I had forgotten."

"You can read about Him in the big Book on the round table," the Little Girl told him. "Tonight I am to hear about the walking on the sea."

When the doctor came again she asked, "Did you read about the walking on the sea?" and the doctor said, "Yes."

Then the Little Girl said, "It was nice the way He said, 'Peace, be still!'"

And the doctor, looking off toward the low hills where the sky was gold with the sunset, murmured dreamily, "He was the Prince of Peace."

There was no need of books now, for the twilight brought stories of a Babe in a manger, of a Boy in a temple, of a City whose streets were of gold, whose walls were of jasper, and whose gates were twelve pearls.

"Don't make her too good," the doctor warned Great-aunt Betsey.

"No one can be too good."

"But she might slip away from us. It's the good ones that go first."

Jealously, therefore, he looked after the Little Girl's body, while Great-aunt Betsey tended her soul, and the Little Girl grew straight as a young sapling.

One night as she lay asleep in the little old lady's arms he came in out of

the wind and rain and stood looking down at her.

"What happiness to have a child like that," he said.

"Some day —" began Great-aunt Betsey, but he stopped her with a quick gesture.

"I put that away years ago," he said, his eyes brooding on the fire. "I think sometimes of dream-children—she is like them."

"And her mother ruined your life," complained Great-aunt Betsey.

He shook his head. "She changed the course of my life, but it is a much better life than if it had been lived with her."

"Is she happy?" questioned the little old lady.

"She will never be unhappy," he said. "Such women never are. But her husband bores her."

"And the child?" asked Great-aunt Betsey. "Who is she like, the father or the mother?"

"Like neither," he said.

Three months passed, and it was time to go home.

"But I don't want to go," said the Little Girl. "I want to stay here."

"There are your books," wheedled the doctor; "you can read now, if you wish."

"I don't want to read," said the child, a shadow in her eyes. "I want to go fishing with you, and catch the little golden fish."

So the day of departure was postponed, and they sat all the morning in an old punt on the pond, and dropped their lines in among the lily-pads and caught little shining fish that had spots like jewels on their sides. At noon they ate their lunch of chicken and bread and butter and berries, with a little round white cream cheese to top off with, and they came home in the fragrant twilight, hand in hand, and looked at the evening star and talked of the shepherds and the wise men.

And that night, when the child was in bed, the doctor struck his hand heavily against the mantlesheaf and said, "It is cruel that she should go back."

"It is her home," said Great-aunt Betsey.

"But her father crams her poor little mind, and the mother starves her poor little soul. What right have such people to a child?"

"Oh," said Great-aunt Betsey, "we cannot understand."

"I shall never understand," said the doctor bitterly.

When the Little Girl's trunk was all packed, and she was waiting for the doctor to come and take her away, she put her arms around the brindled dog's neck and cried and cried. And when she came to say good-bye to Great-aunt Betsey, she grew very white. "I can't say it," she sobbed, and the doctor came up in his motor just as she swayed and said, again, "I can't say it."

We was out like a flash, with his hand over her heart. "Listen," he said quickly, "you are not going home. You are to live here. Do you hear, precious heart? You are to live here with Great-aunt Betsey, and the brindled dog, and the four big cats, and the little cow." He tried to laugh, but his voice broke as he gathered her into his arms.

The colour came back slowly, and her eyelashes flickered and showed her eyes. "Truly?" she whispered.

"Truly," he breathed, with his cheek against hers.

They carried her upstairs and laid her on the wide feather-bed, and after a time she fell asleep happily. Then he took a newspaper from his pocket and handed it to Great-aunt Betsey silently. On the front page of the paper was a picture of the Butterfly Lady and of the Grave Gentleman.

"It was a terrible motor accident," said the doctor. "The Butterfly Lady is dead, and the Grave Gentleman has shut himself up in his laboratory, and has told me to keep the child."

Great-aunt Betsey sat down, trembling. "Terrible!" she whispered, in her old, old voice.

"Terrible!" echoed the doctor's lips, but in his heart he said, "The child is safe."

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Winnipeg, October, 1910.

The Western Home Monthly.

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