



From the Painting by B. Ploekhorst.

"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO TO ME."

CAPTAIN JANUARY.

(By Laura E. Richards.)

CHAPTER V.—CAPTAIN JANUARY'S STAR.

And where was little Star, while all this was going on down on the beach? Oh, she had been having a delightful afternoon. It was cloudy, and Daddy was going to be busy, so she had determined to spend an hour or so in her own room, and enjoy all the delights of "dressing up." For the great chest that had been washed ashore from the wreck, the day after she herself had come to the island, was full of clothes belonging to her "poor mamma"; and as we have seen, the little woman was fully inclined to make use of them.

Beautiful clothes they were; rich silks and velvets, with here and there cloudy laces and strange webs of Eastern gauze. For she had been a beautiful woman, this poor mamma, and it had been the delight of Hugh Maynard, her proud and fond husband, to deck his lovely wife in all rare and precious stuffs. Some of them were stained with sea-water, and many of the softer stuffs were crumpled and matted hopelessly, but that mattered little to Star. Her eyes delighted in soft, rich colors, and she was never weary of turning them over and over, trying them on, and "playing s'pose" with them.

"S'pose," she would say, "my poor mamma was going to a banquet, like the Capulet one, or Macbeth's. Oh, no! 'cause that would have been horrid, with ghosts and daggers and things. S'pose it was the Capulets! Then she would put on this pink silk. Isn't it pretty, and soft, and creamy! Just like the wild roses on the south side of the meadow, that I made a wreath of for Imogen on her birthday. Dear Imogen! It was so becoming to her. Well, so my poor mamma put it on—so! and then she paced through the hall, and all the Lords turned round and said, 'Mark'st thou yon lady?' 'Cause she was so beautiful, you know. This is the way she paced!" and then the little creature

would fall to pacing up and down the room, dragging the voluminous pink folds behind her, her head thrown back, and a look of delighted pride lighting up her small face.

It was the funniest little place, this room of Star's, the queerest, quaintest little elfin bower! It was built out from the south side of the tower, almost like a swallow's nest, only a swallow's nest has no window looking out on the blue sea. There was a little white bed in a corner, and a neat chest of drawers, and a wash-stand, all made by Captain January skillful hands, and all shining and spotless. The bare floor was shining too, and so was the little looking-glass which hung upon the wall. And beside the looking-glass, and above it, and in fact all over the walls, were trophies and wonders of all kinds and descriptions. There was the starfish with ten legs, pinned up in sprawling scarlet; and there, beside him, the king of all the sea-urchins, resplendent with green and purple horns. And here were ropes of shells, and branches of coral, and over the bed a great shining star, made of the delicate gold-shells. That was Daddy's present to her on her last birthday. Dear Daddy! There, sitting in the corner, was Mrs. Neptune, the doll which Captain January had carved out of a piece of fine wood that had drifted ashore after a storm. Her eyes were tiny black snail-shells, her hair was of brown sea-moss, very thick and soft ("though as for combing it," said Star, "it is impossible!"), and a smooth pink shell was set in either cheek, "to make a blush." Mrs. Neptune was somewhat battered as Star was in the habit of knocking her head against the wall when she was in a passion; but she maintained her gravity of demeanor, and always sat with her back perfectly straight, and with an air of protest against everything in general.

In the window stood the great chest, at once a treasure-chamber and a seat; and over it hung one of the most precious things of Star's little world. It was a string of coconut-shells. Fifteen of them

there were, and each one was covered with curious and delicate carving, and each one meant a whole year of a man's life. "For the nuts was ripe when we kem ashore, my good mate Job Hotham and me, on that Island. So when the nuts was ripe agin, ye see, Jewel Bright, we knowed 'twas a year since we kem. So I took my jack-knife and carved this first shell, as a kind of token, ye know, and not thinkin' there'd be so many to carve." So the first shell was all covered with ships; fair vessels, with sails all set, and smooth seas rippling beneath them; the ships that were even then on their way to rescue the two castaways. And the second was carved with anchors, the sign of hope, and with coils of rope, and nautical instruments, and things familiar to seaman's eyes. But the third was carved with stars, and sickle curved moons, and broad-rayed suns. "Because ye see, Peach Blossom, earthly hope bein' as ye might say foundered, them things, and what was above 'em, stayed where they was; and it stiddied a man's mind to think on 'em, and to make a note on 'em as fur as might be." And then came one covered with flowers and berries, and another with fruits, and another with shells, and so on through the whole fifteen. They hung now in little Star's window, a strange and piteous record; and every night before the child said her prayers, she kissed the first and last shell, and then prayed that Daddy Captain might forget the "dreadful time," and never, never think about it again.

So, on this gray day, when other things were going on out-of-doors, Star was having a "good time" in her room. She had found in her treasure-chest a short mantle of gold-colored velvet, which made "a just exactly skirt" for her, and two ends trailing behind, enough to give her a sense of dignity, but not enough to impede her movements. "For I am not a princess to-day!" she said; "I am delicate Ariel, and the long ones get round my feet so I can't run." Then came a long web of what she called "sunshine," and really it might have been woven of sunbeams, so airy-light was the silken-gauze of the fabric. This my lady had wound round and round her small person with considerable art, the fringed ends hanging from either shoulder, and making, to her mind, a fair substitute for wings. "See!" she cried, running to and fro, and glancing backward as she ran. "They wave! they really do wave! Look, Mrs. Neptune! aren't they lovely? But you are envious, and that is why you look so cross. 'Merrily, merrily, shall I live now, under the blossom that hangs on the bough.'" She leaped and danced about the room, light and radiant as a creature of another world; then stopped, to survey with frowning brows her little blue stockings and stout laced boots. "Ariel never wore such things as those!" she declared; "if you say she did, Mrs. Neptune, you show your ignorance, and that is all I have to say to you." Off came the shoes and stockings, and the little white feet were certainly much prettier to look at. "Now," cried Star, "I will go down stairs and wait for Daddy Captain, and perhaps he will think I am a real fairy. Oh, wouldn't that be fun! I am sure I look like one!" and down the stairs she flitted like a golden butterfly. Once in the kitchen, the housewife in her triumphed for a moment over the fairy; she raked up the fire, put on more wood, and swept the hearth daintily. "But Ariel did such things for Prospero," she said. "I'm Ariel just the same, so I may as well fill the kettle and put some apples down to roast." This was soon done, and clapping her hands with delight the "tricksy spirit" began to dance and frolic anew.

"Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands!"

she sang, holding out her hands to invisible companions.

"Comptesid when ye have, and kissed
(The wild waves whist)
Foot it feathery here and there."

"Oh! foot it feathery, and feat it footly, and dance and sing, and tootle-ty ting!" cried the child, as she flitted like a golden cloud about the room. Then, as she whirled round and faced the door, she stopped short. Her arms fell by her side, and she stood as if spellbound, looking at the lady who stood in the doorway.

The lady made no motion at first, but only gazed at her with loving and tender eyes. She was a beautiful lady, and her

eyes were soft and blue, with a look of tears in them. But there was no answering softness in the starry eyes of the child; only a wide, wild look of wonder, of anger, perhaps of fear. Presently the lady, still silent, raised both hands, and kissed them tenderly to the child; and then laid them on her breast, and then held them out to her with a gesture of loving appeal.

"I don't know whether you are a spirit of health or a goblin damned," said Star; "but anyhow it isn't polite to come into people's houses without knocking, I think. I knowed you were a spirit when you looked at me yesterday, if you did have a red shawl on."

"How did you know that I was a spirit?" asked the lady, softly. "Oh, little Star, how did you know?"

"'Cause you looked like my poor mamma's picture," replied the child, "that my poor papa had round his neck. Are you my mamma's spirit?"

The lady shook her head. "No, darling," she said, "I am no spirit. But I have come to see you, little Star, and to tell you something. Will you not let me come in, Sweetheart?"

Star blushed, and hung her head for a moment, remembering Captain's January's lessons on politeness and "quarter-deck manners." She brought a chair at once, and in a more gracious tone said (mindful of Willum Shakespeare's lords and ladies), "I pray you sit!"

The lady sat down, and taking the child's hand, drew her gently towards her. "Were you playing fairy, dear?" she asked, smoothing back the golden hair, with loving touch.

Star nodded. "I was delicate Ariel," she said. "I was footing it feathery, you know, on these yellow sands. Sometimes I am Puck, and sometimes Titania; but Daddy likes Ariel best and so do I. Did you ever play it?" she asked, looking up into the kindly face that bent over her.

The lady smiled and shook her head. "No, dear child," she said, still with that motherly touch of the hand on the fair head. "I never thought of such a pretty play as that, but I was very happy as a child playing with my—with my sister. I had a dear, dear sister, Star. Would you like to hear about her?"

"Yes," said Star, with wondering eyes.

"Was she a little girl?"

"Such a lovely little girl!" said the lady. "Her hair was dark, but her eyes were like yours, Star, blue and soft. We played together always as children, and we grew up together, two loving, happy girls. Then my sister married; and by-and-by, dear, she had a little baby. A sweet little girl baby, and she named it Isabel, after me."

"I was a little girl baby, too," said Star, "but I wasn't named anything; I came so, just Star."

"Little Isabel had another name," said the lady. "Her other name was Maynard, because that was her father's name. Her father was Hugh Maynard. Have you ever seen or heard that name, my child?"

Star shook her head. "No!" she said; "my poor papa's name was H. M. It was marked on his shirt and han'k'chief, Daddy says. And my poor mamma's name was Helena, just like Helena in Midsummer Night's Dream." The motherly hand trembled, and the lady's voice faltered as she said, "Star, my dear sister's name was Helena, too. Is not that strange, my little one?"

The child looked curiously at her. "Where is your dear sister?" she asked. "Why do you cry when you say her name? Is she naughty?"

"Listen, Star," said the lady, wiping the tears from her eyes, and striving to speak composedly. "My sister made a voyage to Europe, with her husband and her little baby. They spent the summer travelling in beautiful countries; and in the autumn, in September, Star, ten years ago this very year—think of it, my dear!—they sailed for home. They came in a sailing-vessel, because the sea-voyage was thought good for your—for my sister. And—and—the vessel was never heard from. There was a terrible storm, and many vessels were lost in it."

"Just like my poor mamma's ship!" said the child. "Perhaps it was the same storm. Do you think—why do you look at me so?" she cried, breaking off suddenly.

(To be Continued.)