

Saved in a Basket, or Daph and Her Charge.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Charlie little knew of the strong feelings which agitated the breast to which he was clasped, while his little sister lisped off the lessons learned at her mother's knee.

These days of Daph's sickness were precious days to Captain Jones, and he was almost sorry when the stout negro triumphed over her enemy, and came on deck to resume her charge.

The air grew chill, as the 'Martha Jane' sped on her northward course, and the white dresses of the children fluttered most unseasonably in the cool breeze. The ship's stores were ransacked for some material, of which to make them more suitable, though extempore, clothing. A roll of red flannel was all that promised to answer the purpose. The captain took the place of master-workman, and cut out what he called 'a handsome suit for a pair of sea-birds;' and Daph, with her clumsy fingers, made the odd garments. She felt ready to cry as she put them on, to see her pets so disfigured; but Captain Jones laughed at her dolorous face, and said the red frock only made his 'lily' look the fairer, and turned Charlie into the sailor he should be.

The 'Martha Jane' was nearing the familiar waters of her own northern home, when the captain called Daph into the cabin, one evening, to consult with her on matters of importance.

With the happy disposition of the negro, Daph seemed to have forgotten that she was not always to live on board the 'Martha Jane,' and under the kind protection of her sailor friend; she was, therefore, not a little startled when he addressed to her the blunt question:

'Where are you going, Daph?'

Now, Daph had a most indistinct idea of the world at large; but, thus brought suddenly to a discussion, she promptly named the only northern city of which she had heard. 'I'se going to New York,' she said; 'Miss Eliza, my dear missus, was born there, and it seems de right sort of place to be taken de sweet babies to.'

'Daph,' said the honest captain, 'we shall put into New York to-morrow, for I have freight to land there, but you had better go on with me to old Boston. There I can look after you a little, and put you under charge of my good mother; and a better woman never trod shoe-leather, for all her son is none of the best. Shall it be so, Daph?'

'Couldn't do it, massa Cap'in! Boston! Dat must be mighty far off. I nebber hear tell of such a place. New York's de home for my babies, just where missus was born. Maybe some ob her grand cousins may be turning up, da, to be friends to de pretty dears. Nobody would eber find us, way off in Boston!'

It was in vain that the captain tried to change Daph's resolution; to New York she would go; and he now attacked her at another point, asking, 'What are you going to do when you get there, Daph? Have you got any money?'

'Not so berry much to begin with,' said Daph, producing a bit of rag from her pocket, in which some small change, the result of her traffic in chickens, was stored. 'Not much money, massa Cap'in, as

you see for yeseff; but what do you tink ob dese?' Daph loosened her dress, and showed on her black neck several gold chains, hung with rings of great richness and value, and an old-fashioned necklace, set with precious stones. 'What do you tink of dese, massa Cap'in?' she repeated, as she displayed her treasures to his astonished sight.

Daph had put her valuables on for safe-keeping, doubtless, yet not without a certain satisfaction in wearing articles which so gratified the love of finery common to the black race.

The captain looked at the jewellery with a sober, pitying expression, as he said, compassionately: 'Poor Daph! If you should offer one of these rich chains for sale in New York, you might be hurried off to jail, as a thief, in a twinkling; then what would become of my pets?'

Daph betook herself to tears for a few moments, and then rallied, and said stoutly, 'Daph can work for de babies. She's a strong darkey. Heard massa say many a time, Daph would bring a big price. Daph will make heaps of money, and keep young massa and missus libbing like great folks, as dey should.'

At this idea, Daph's face regained all its usual cheerfulness, and she could not be shaken by the further doubts and fears brought forward by Captain Jones.

'Keep what you have round your neck, safely, then, Daph,' said the honest sailor, 'and never try to sell them unless you are ready to starve. Here's a little purse of solid gold, that I meant as a present for my mother; she, good soul, would rather you had it, I know. This will keep you till you can get a start, and then, maybe, you can work for the dear children, as you say. I have an acquaintance in New York, who may let you a room or two, and if she can take you in, you may get along.'

'I knew de great Lord would look out for us, his name be praised!' said the poor negress, gratefully, as she kissed the hand of Captain Jones. 'Ye won't lose your reward, massa Cap'in; he'll reckon wid ye!' and she pointed reverently upwards.

'May he reckon with me in mercy, and not count up my sins!' the captain said solemnly and then bade Daph 'good-night.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED HOUSE WITH BLUE SHUTTERS.

Captain Jones was a prompt and up-right business man, faithful to his engagements at any sacrifice.

He was pledged to remain in New York the shortest possible space of time; he therefore had not, after attending to necessary business, even an hour to devote to Daph and the little ones. It was a sad moment to him, when he strained Charlie to his breast for the last time, and kissed his 'water-lily,' as he loved to call Louise.

He had given Daph a letter to a sailor's widow, with whom he thought she would be able to secure a home, where she would escape the idle and vicious poor who congregated in less respectable parts of the city. After having made Daph count on her fingers, half-a-dozen times, the number of streets she must cross before she came to 'the small red house, with the blue shutters,' where she was to stop, he piloted the little party into Broadway, and, setting their faces in the right direc-

tion, he bade them an affectionate farewell.

As he shook Daph's black hand for the last time, she placed in his a small parcel clumsily tied up in brown paper, saying, 'You puts that in your pocket, Massa Cap'in, and when you gets to sea, open it, and you will understand what Daph means.'

Captain Jones did, almost unconsciously, as Daph suggested, as, with a full heart, he turned away from the little ones who had become so dear to him.

Once more, the only protector of her master's children, Daph's energy seemed to return to her. She wound the shawl more closely about Louise, drew Charlie to her honest bosom, looked after the various bundles, and then set off at a regular marching pace.

The strange appearance of the little party soon attracted the attention of the knots of idle boys, who even then infested the more populous parts of New York.

'Hello, darkey! where's your hand organ? What'll you take for your monkeys?' shouted one of these young rascals, as he eyed the children in their odd-looking red flannel garments.

Louise clung closely to Daph, who strode steadily, apparently unconscious of the little troop gathering in her rear. By degrees the young scamps drew nearer to her, and one of them taking hold of the skirt of her dress, cried out 'come fellows, form a line. Follow the captain and do as you see me do!'

A long string of boys arranged themselves behind Daph, each holding on to the other's tattered garments, and walking with mock solemnity, while the foremost shouted in Daph's ear the most provoking and impudent things his imagination and rascality could suggest.

Daph maintained her apparent unconsciousness, until she came in front of a large door, with a deep recess, which opened directly on the street, and but a step above the pavement.

With a sudden and unexpected jerk, she freed herself from her tormentor; then placing Louise and Charlie for a moment in the recess, she charged upon her assailants. Right and left she dealt heavy slaps with her open hand, which sent the little crew howling away, their cheeks smarting with pain and burning with rage. The whole thing was the work of a moment. Daph took Charlie in her arms, clasped the trembling hand of Louise, and resumed her steady walk as calmly as if nothing had occurred.

There was much to attract the attention of the strangers in the new scenes about them; but Daph kept her head straight forward, and devoted all her attention to numbering the corners she passed, that she might know when to begin to look out for the house so carefully described by good Captain Jones.

Louise soon grew weary of keeping pace with Daph's long strides, and the faithful negro lifted the little girl in her arms and went patiently on with her double burden.

A weary, weary walk it seemed even to the strong-limbed negro, before they passed the last corner, according to her reckoning, and stood in front of the very red house with blue shutters, which she had been so anxious to see. Much as she had longed to reach it, its appear-