

her rich brown poll was faded, with none to care for it; while the dainty feet and hands, so sensitive as to a speck of dirt, were enough to bring the tears of pity into a careful mother's eyes.

"Gardy la! 'Ook 'e see, 'hot degustin' naily pailies! And poor Bardie duffin to kean 'em with!"

While I was setting this grief to rest (for which she kissed me beautifully), many thoughts came through my mind about this little creature. She and I were of one accord, upon so many important points; and when she differed from me, perhaps she was in the right almost: which is a thing that I never knew happen in a whole village of grown-up people. And by the time I had brushed her hair and tied up the bows of her frock afresh, and when she began to dance again, and to play every kind of trick with me, I said to myself, "I must have this child. Whatever may come of it, I will risk—when the price of butcher's meat comes down."

This I said in real earnest; but the price of butcher's meat went up, and I never have known it come down again.

While I was thinking, our Bunny came in, full of apples, raw and roasted, and of the things the children said. But at the very sight of Bardie, everything else was gone from her. All the other children were fit only to make dirt-pies of. This confirmed and held me steadfast in the opinions which I had formed without any female assistance.

In spite of all her own concerns (of which she was full enough, goodness knows), Bunny came up, and pulled at her, by reason of something down her back, which wanted putting to rights a little—a plait, or a tuck, or some manner of gear; only I thought it a clever thing, and the little one approved of it. And then, our Bunny being in her best, these children took notice of one another, to settle which of them was nearer to the proper style of clothes. And each admired the other for anything which she had not got herself.

"Come, you baby-chits," said I, being pleased at their womanly ways, so early; "all of us want some food, I think. Can we eat our dresses?" The children, of course, understood me not; nevertheless, what I said was sense.

And if, to satisfy womankind—for which I have deepest regard and respect—I am forced to enter into questions higher than reason of men can climb—of washing, and ironing, and quilling, and gophering, and setting up, and styles of transparent reefing, and all our other endeavors to fetch this child up to her station—the best thing I can do will be to have mother Jones in to write it for me; if only she can be forced to spell.

However, that is beyond all hope; and even I find it hard sometimes to be sure of the royal manner. Only I go by the Bible always, for every word that I can find; being taught (ever since I could read at all) that his Majesty, James I., confirmed it.

Now this is not at all the thing which I wanted to put before you clearly; because I grow like a tombstone often, only fit to make you laugh, when I stand on my right to be serious. My great desire is to tell you what I did, and how I did it, as to the managing of these children, even for a day or two, so as to keep them from crying, or scorching, or spoiling their clothes, or getting wet, or having too much victuals or too little. Of course I consulted that good mother Jones five or six times every day; and she never was weary of giving advice, though she said every time that it must be the last. And a lucky thing it was for me in all this responsibility to have turned enough of money, through skilful catch and sale of fish, to allow of my staying at home a little, and not only washing and mending of clothes, but treating the whole of the household to the delicacies of the season. However, it is not my habit to think myself anything wonderful; that I leave to the rest of the world: and no doubt any good and clever man might have done a great part of what I did. Only if anything should befall us, out of the reach of a sailor's skill and the depth of Bunny's experience, mother Jones promised to come straight in, the very moment I knocked at the wall; and her husband slept with such musical sound that none could be lonely in any house near, and so did all of her ten children who could crack a lollipop.

Upon the whole, we passed so smoothly over the first evening, with the two children as hard at play as if they were paid