

Family Department.

AT LAST.

The weary years seem long to wait
As they stretch out dim before,
But I sit quite patient now, and still,
Nor hurry as of yore;
Whenever I long for days that were
Or sorrow for dreams now past,
I say to myself, thy heart's desire,
It cometh to thee
At Last.

Sometimes I weave me fancies fair,
They flutter to and fro,
But ere long they fade and vanish,
I ask not where they go;
I used to love loud battle songs
Away in the far-off past;
Now I only sing of the heart's desire
Which cometh to me
At Last.

Joyous, is morning sweet and fair:
Golden the noonday's prime,
When sunshine is bright on lawn and len
In merry summer time,
Far dearer to me is the twilight gray,
When the toilsome day is past;
Then I sit and think of the heart's desire
Which is sure to come
At Last.

LOUIE.

Over The Sea Wall.

CHAPTER IV. (CONTINUED).

"Now don't say 'but' any more Maudie," returned Guy in his imperious little way. "It's a word I don't like, and girls and women are so awfully fond of it. I'm sure in French it would belong to the feminine gender. They're a lot of silly words like that that I should like to turn out of the dictionary. Miss Sea-Gull, you will be on my side, won't you? You'll let me have the cave?"

I laughed as I stroked his hair.

"You shall play in the cave as often as over you like, dear," I answered; "the oftener the better. You shall come and see me very often now that we are friends; and then, by the time Brother Reginald has come, or is just coming, perhaps we shall have thought of a plan that will make everything come right."

Maudie's face was lifted to mine in a swift look of gratitude and confidence that sent a thrill through my heart. Yes, I *would* do something for these children. They should not put their trust in me for nothing. Guy had turned round upon my knee and was giving me a bear-like embrace.

"You are a brick!" he cried.

I observed that he liked to air his little bits of slang, and all the more so from the fact that Maudie was just a little bit shocked by his freedom of speech.

"I said so from the first, didn't I, Maudie? When Mrs. Marks told us about you, Maudie first said she should be frightened to go to such a grand house to see you; but I said I'd take care of her, and I wasn't frightened a bit. I said you were a brick to ask us, and so you are. I made Maudie say she'd come; but she wouldn't have done without. I wonder what it feels like inside to be a girl and to be so frightened about nothing? I'm never frightened. Things always come right in the end."

I suggested then that we should go and have tea, as it must be getting nearly four o'clock by this time. Guy was off my knee in a trice, leading the way up the path to the higher level. He could never be still long together, and rush-

ed on ahead, shouting aloud in the highest of spirits.

Maudie stayed beside me, her hand still in mine.

"Cousin Olivia she whispered softly, "do you mean that you will really help us—about Brother Reginald?"

"I will do everything I can to help you, dear. What is it that you are most afraid of?"

"Being sent away to different schools," answered the little girl. "He said something about schools in his letter; not school, but schools—as if he should choose different ones. And oh, Cousin Olivia, I don't know what I should do if Guy were sent away from me. I have nobody but him; and I promised mother to try and be a little mother to him. And how can I keep my promise if they send him away and I never see him? And perhaps he will forget mother—I think boys forget faster than girls; and he is nearly three years younger than me. And he might forget the things she taught us—the things she wanted us to think about every day. We do think about them now, and Guy likes me to read to him as mother did. But if he goes away to school to be with a lot of other boys—"

The sentence was not finished, but the silence that followed was as eloquent as any words. I squeezed the little hand fast in mine, and said, without pausing to consider my words beforehand—

"Well, darling, I will promise you one thing, that if you are sent to different schools—and it may be rather difficult not to do that now you are both getting big—I will do my very best to get Brother Reginald to let you spend the holidays always here with me. Then you will see Guy quite often. The term only lasts twelve weeks at a time, and I do not think he will forget everything if you see him as often as that; and this will be a sort of home for you to come to and meet each other."

"Oh, Cousin Olivia!"

That was all—that one breathless exclamation that spoke a whole volume in itself. I could not wish the words unsaid, although the moment they had passed my lips I knew that they had been foolish and premature. I hardly knew my little *protégés* as yet. It was much too much to think of any definite plan for them. Aunt Lois would have been horrified at such outspoken impulsiveness. I might find myself in a regular scrape if I went on in this way; and yet, with Maudie's sweet, wistful little face before my eyes, I cast prudence to the winds altogether.

"We must talk to Brother Reginald when he comes," I added. "Perhaps things may not be so bad after all. He may send you to some home where people take children whose parents are in India—boys and girls together. Whilst Guy is little that could be done. But don't let yourself get sad or troubled about it, dear; for we will try hard to bring things right in the end."

She gave me one of her eloquent glances.

"I don't think I shall ever trouble about anything more," she answered softly. "It's just what mother always said—things came right if we only prayed about them; and tried to believe they would. I didn't see how this ever could; but we did as mother told us—and now you have come."

If I had been an angel straight from heaven the child could hardly have regarded me with more trusting confidence. It made me feel a little humiliating, a little more self-distrustful, a little more humble than was my wont. Oh, how I hoped that I should never do anything to destroy that trusting love! I must try and govern myself, and learn unselfishness and gentle forbearance and patience, if I were to keep my place in the estimation of those two bright-eyed and intelligent children.

"Hurrah! hoorooosh! hurrah!" shouted Guy's voice a little ahead. "Oh, Maudie, come,

I say! Just look at this tea! I never saw such a spread. I say, Miss Sea-Gull, do you have tea like this every day? I'd like to come often if you do. Strawberries and cream! Oh, hoorooosh, Miss Sea-Gull! Did they come out of your garden?"

We sat down to our meal, and a merry one it was. Guy's remarks were most entertaining, and it was pretty to watch the motherly little way in which Maudie watched over him, tried to keep in bounds his wild spirits, and to check the stream of questions he would ask when once he got started upon some train of thought. But there was nothing in the least impertinent in his questions, though they were inquisitive to a degree. They were asked in such perfect good faith that one could only laugh if they became too personal to be categorically answered. I think we all enjoyed ourselves very much. I am sure the children could not have been happier than I. Towards the close of the repast, Guy, who had been unusually silent for a time, suddenly burst forth in his most eager fashion.

"Miss Sea-Gull, I've got such a beautiful plan."

"Yes, Guy; what is it?"

"Well, listen and I'll tell you. Do you know what a guardian is?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm glad you do—that'll save time. Well, Miss Sea-Gull, now listen. Don't you think it'll be a capital plan for you to be our guardian?"

"Your guardian, Guy! How can I be!"

"Mine and Maudie's, I mean. Well, I don't see why you shouldn't. We've got to have a guardian, Mrs. Marks says, because we're not grown up yet. She says Brother Reginald is our guardian; but we don't want him, and I don't see how he can be, 'cause he's never seen us or taken care of us or anything. I'm *really* Maudie's guardian; but Mrs. Marks said that wouldn't count, 'cause I was younger than she was. I don't see what difference that makes, 'cause I'm a boy; that ought to count for a lot of things. Anyhow, she says I can't be. I said she'd better be; but she said she couldn't 'cause she wasn't gentry, and wasn't rich enough. Now you see you are gentry, and you are lots nicer than Brother Reginald, and we are very fond of you. Miss Sea-Gull, won't you be our guardian? Say 'Yes.'"

The last words were spoken, so coaxingly that I longed to take the little fellow in my arms and vow on the spot to be his guardian from that moment forward. Maudie was listening with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, holding her very breath till she heard my answer. I hardly knew what to say. Prudence and impulse were pulling different ways so hard.

"Well, Guy," I said, "I don't think we can quite settle anything about that until Brother Reginald comes home, because it was your mother who made him your guardian. But if he doesn't want you, and doesn't know what to do with you when he does come, I'll try and see if he'll will let me have something to say about what you do when he goes away again."

"That'll do!" cried Guy, with shining eyes. "We'll make him do what we want, or else we'll hide away in the cave where he can't find us. Oh, Miss Sea-Gull, you are nice! I think your one of the nicest people in the world!"

CHAPTER V.

CONQUEST OF AUNT LOIS.

"Well, my dear, did your little friends come? and did you have a pleasant afternoon?"

"Yes, very, thank you, Aunt Lois. Did you see us in the garden? I thought perhaps you would have come to us there."

"I had letters to write for the post when I got in, and I thought perhaps I should only spoil the fun. I heard plenty of laughing and chattering. Your little guests seemed to enjoy themselves very much, I thought."