

14 THE QUALITIES OF MERCY

rather like a dear little pink pig—only he was so much bigger.

"Why, because he's a very naughty boy," explained Mercy. "At least I think so. For grandmamma tells me I am naughty if I cry only a little. But Chera Bim and Sera Fim continually do cry." Mercy ~~has~~ dropped her voice and added with a touch of awe, "And I rather think that they cry in church—and I never do that."

"No; you don't do that. You behave very well in church. I've noticed that myself. You belong to Quentin Easter—the big house that these woods belong to."

"Yes. You see my daddy was the eldest son, only he was killed in India. That was long, long ago—before I was born. I came here to be borned, and my mother died too. I've heard nurse say so. And so I've always lived here; 'cause I've not got any other home. But I've got lots of uncles and aunts. The aunts is all mawwied; but they come and stay—and some of them bwing babies. There's Auntie Hilda, and Auntie Grace, and Auntie May; and then there's Uncle Fwank, who's a bawwister, and Uncle Alec, who's a soldier—I think I love him most, 'cause my daddy was a soldier—and Uncle Roddy, who's a sailor. I've almost forgotten him; but he's coming back soon. I like it when there are plenty of uncles, and so does Captain Muggs. Muggy dear, *how* thirsty you have made yourself barking like that! And he won't uncurl—they are so silly! Oh, look at Captain Muggs! He hears something coming. Oh, shall I wun away, do you think? No, I won't. Captain Muggs is pleased! Oh, it's only Uncle Alec on his big black horse! Uncle Alec doesn't count!"

And Mercy ran forward with outstretched arms and an adorable smile of welcome.