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### Joan's Visit to London.

Such a contented, happy little soul was Joan Macpherson! She seemed to want no other amusement than her daily duties and the simple pleasures which, as a small farmer's daughter, fell to her share. Whether she milked the cows in the upland meadow, or churned the butter, or sat at her mending, or knitted, or gathered flowers for market bunches, she was always bright and blithe, singing over her work like a bird.

"I wonder at you, I do!" said Joan's cousin, Helen Lovett, one day when the girls were walking out together. Helen lived in London, but had come to spend a month in the Highlands on account of her health. Her parents were well-to-do tradespeople, but the girl had grown up with some very foolish and unwholesome ideas.

"Why do you wonder at me, Helen?" asked Joan, stooping to pick a wild flower at her feet.

"Why? Oh, because you seem so happy with this life, and never want anything different."

"I don't know why I should want anything different," said Joan, quietly.

"Well," replied Helen, "it's all very well for a few weeks; even I can stand

that! But to live here? No, thank you!" and Helen turned up her nose, and held her frizzled head very high.

"If only you would come back to London with me, Joan," she went on, "you'd soon see the difference. Only, mind you never tell my friends that you're used to tramping about the fields in the morning without shoes or stockings."

Joan did not reply. It had never occurred to her that this was anything to be ashamed of, or that the simple country life she had led could be looked down upon. But now the thought rankled in her mind. She began to compare her cousin's dress and manners with her own; to be dissatisfied with the lot which had hitherto been so sweet and peaceful, and to hanker after a visit to London.

"Let her go, Molly," said Sandy Macpherson to his wife; "Let the bairn go. If I'm not much mistaken, she will soon be wanting to come back to us."

So it was settled that Joan was to return with her cousin; and in another fortnight our little Highland lassie found herself in the great city, which afar off had seemed such a Paradise of delights, but now that she was really in it, was just a world of noisy, dirty streets, where she dared not go out alone for fear of losing her way, and where she felt as little at home as a fish out of water.

So, after a little while, Joan began to feel as if she were an intruder, especially as her cousin had her own friends—friends who wore smart dresses and many coloured flowers in their hats, and who sneered or laughed at the little dowdy Joan, as they called her.

But this the child would hardly have minded, if Helen herself had taken her part; but Helen, instead of standing up for her, often joined in the rude fun at the child's expense, and this wounded her heart, and took away all confidence and affection.

Altogether, such of the wonders of London as Joan was taken to see, by no means recompensed her for the loss of the peace and happiness which had been hers all her life till now.

"To-morrow is my birthday, Joan," said Helen one evening, "and some of my friends are coming to tea. They'll all be finely dressed. What do you think of wearing?"

"Why, you know I have only two frocks, Helen," replied Joan; "I shall have to wear my dark blue Sunday dress, I suppose."

"You can't do that," said Helen. "It isn't half smart enough. As you

haven't anything pretty to put on you'll have to stay upstairs in your own room, for I should be ashamed for you to be seen by my friends."

Joan did not reply, though she was disappointed to miss the birthday party, and sorely hurt by her companion's words. But she knew that all the talking in the world would do no good.

In the course of the evening of the birthday, some of the girls came up into Helen's bedroom, which adjoined that of Joan. There was much whispering and laughter, and presently the little Scotch girl heard her name spoken in Helen's voice. "But who is this Joan Macpherson?" asked one of Helen's visitors.

"Oh, she's my cousin, I'm ashamed to say," replied Helen; "but I should not care for every one to know it, for these country cousins are no credit to one. I'm sick of her, I am; and I wish she'd go back to the north where she came from. But I daresay her parents were glad to get rid of her, and we may have to keep her longer than we want to."

But just then Helen was startled by the sudden opening of the door between her room and Joan's. There stood the Scotch lassie, her eyes ablaze with indignant protest.

"I couldn't help hearing every word, Helen," she said; "and after what has passed I would not remain here for anything. My parents did not want me to come at all; but I was silly, and fancied that life would be happier than at home. I know better now. To-night I'll write to father to come and fetch me away."

Two days after, Joan, with a very pale face and eyes red with crying, burst into the little parlour of the farmhouse, where her mother was sitting.

"Oh, mother," she cried, throwing herself into the arms that opened to receive her, "how good it is to get back again! I've been so very miserable all the time, and just longing for you and father, and the peace and quiet, the fields and flowers, the cows and chickens, and all I've been used to from a baby."

"I fear you've had a hard lesson, my dear," said Mrs. Macpherson; "but it won't have been thrown away, lassie, if it teaches you that God knows just what sort of life is best for us, and that to be content with His choosing is the only happiness for God's children."

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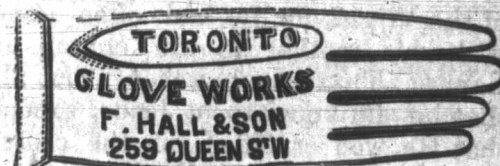
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