

TIMOTHY'S QUEST.

BY KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

SCENE VII.—(Continued.)

Samantha told David after this that she didn't want to hear him open his mouth again, nor none of his folks; that she was through with the whole lot of 'em forever and ever, 'n' she wished to mercy she'd had sense enough to put her foot down fifteen years ago, 'n' she hoped he'd enjoy bein' tread underfoot for the rest of his natural life, 'n' she wouldn't speak to him again if she met him in her porridge dish." She then slammed the door and went upstairs to cry as if she were sixteen, as she watched him out of sight. Poor Dave Milliken! just sweet and earnest and strong enough to suffer at being worsted by circumstances, but never quite strong enough to conquer them.

And it was to this household that Timothy had brought his child for adoption.

When Miss Avilda opened her eyes, the morning after the arrival of the children, she tried to remember whether anything had happened to give her such a strange feeling of altered conditions. It was Saturday, — baking day, — that couldn't be it; and she gazed at the little dimity-curtained window and at the picture of the Denthed of Calvin, and wondered what was the matter.

Just then a child's laugh, bright, merry, tuneful, infectious, rang out from some distant room, and it all came back to her as Samantha Ann opened the door and peered in.

"I've got breakfast 'bout ready," she said; "but I wish soon's you're dressed, you'd step down 'n' see to it, 'n' let me wash the baby. I guess water was skerse where she come from!"

"They're awake, are they?"

"Awake? Land o' liberty! As soon as 't was light, and before the boy had opened his eyes, Gay was up 'n' poundin' on all the doors, 'n' hollarin' 'S'manfy' (beats all how she got holt o' my name so quick!), so 't I thought sure she'd disturb your sleep. See here Vildy, we want those children should look respectable 'tlic few days they're here. I don't see how we can rig out the boy, but there's those old things of Marthy's in the attic; seems like it might be a blessin' on 'em if we used 'em this way."

"I thought of it myself in the night," answered Vilda briefly. "You will find the key of the trunk in the light stand drawer. You see to the children, and I'll get breakfast on the table. Has Jabe come?"

"No; he sent a boy to milk, 'n' said he'd be right along. You know what that means!"

Miss Vilda moved about the immaculate kitchen, frying potatoes and making tea, setting on extra portions of bread and doughnuts and a huge pitcher of milk; while various noises, strange enough in that quiet house, floated down from above.

"This is dreadful hard on Samantha," she reflected, "I don't know's I'd ought to have put it on her, knowing how she 'ates confusion and company, and all that; but she seemed to think we'd got to tough it out for a spell, any way; though I don't expect her temper 'll stand the strain very long."

The fact was, Samantha was banging doors and slatting tin pails about furiously to keep up an ostentatious show of ill humor. She tried her best to grunt with displeasure when Gay, seated in a wash-tub, crowed and beat the water with her dimpled hands, so that it splashed all over the carpet; but all the time there was such a joy tugging at her heart-strings as they had not felt for years.

When the bath was over, clean petticoats and ankle-ties were chosen out of the old leather trunk, and finally a little blue and white lawn dress. It was too long in the skirt, and pending the moment when Samantha should "take a tuck in it," it anticipated the present fashion, and made Lady Gay look more like a disguised princess than ever. The gown was low-necked and short-sleeved, in the old style; and Samantha was in despair till she found some little embroidered muslin capes and full undersleeves, with which she covered Gay's pink neck and arms. These things of beauty so wrought upon the child's excitable nature that she could hardly keep still long enough to have her hair curled; and

Samantha, as the shining rings dropped off her horny forefinger, was wrestling with the Evil one, in the shape of a little box of jewellery that she had found with the clothing. She knew that the wish was a vicious one, and that such gewgaws were out of place on a little pauper just taken in for the night; but her fingers trembled with a desire to fasten the little gold ears of corn on the shoulders, or tie the strings of coral beads round the child's pretty throat.

When the toilet was completed, and Samantha was emptying the tub, Gay climbed on the bureau and imprinted sloppy kisses of sincere admiration on the radiant reflection of herself in the little looking-glass; then, getting down again, she seized her heap of Minerva Court clothes, and, before the astonished Samantha could interpose, flung them out the second-story window where they fell on the top of the lilac bushes.

"Me doesn't like nasty old dress," she explained, with a dazzling smile that was a justification in itself; "me likes pretty new dress!" and then with one hand reaching up to the door-knob, and the other throwing disarming kisses to Samantha, — "By-by! Lady Gay go circus now! Timfy, come, take Lady Gay to circus!"

There was no time for discipline then, and she was borne to the breakfast-table, where Timothy was already making acquaintance with Miss Vilda.

Samantha entered, and Vilda glancing at her nervously, perceived with relief that she was "taking things easy." Ah! but it was lucky for poor David Milliken that he couldn't see her at that moment. Her whole face had relaxed; her mouth was no longer a thin, hard line, but had a certain curve and fulness, borrowed perhaps from the warmth of innocent baby-kisses. Embarrassment and stifled joy had brought a rosier color to her cheek; Gay's vandal hand had ruffled the smoothness of her sandy locks, so that a few stray hairs were absolutely curling with amazement that they had escaped from their sleek bondage; in a word, Samantha Ann Ripley was lovely and lovable!

Timothy had no eyes for any one save his beloved Gay, at whom he gazed with unspeakable admiration, thinking it impossible that any human being, with a single eye in its head, could refuse to take such an angel when it was in the market.

Gay, not being used to a regular morning toilet, had fought against it valiantly at first; but the tonic of the bath itself and the exercise of war had brought the color to her cheeks and the brightness to her eyes. She had forgiven Samantha, she was ready to be on good terms with Miss Vilda, she was at peace with all the world. That she was eating the bread of dependence did not trouble her in the least! No royal visitor, conveying honor by her mere presence, could have carried off a delicate situation with more distinguished grace and ease. She was perched on a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, and immediately began blowing bubbles in her mug of milk in the most reprehensible fashion and glancing up after each naughty effort with an irrepressible gurgle of laughter, in which she looked so bewitching, even with a milky crescent over her red mouth, that she would have melted the heart of the most predestinate old misogynist in Christendom.

Timothy was not so entirely at his ease. His eyes had looked into life only a few more summers, but their "radiant morning visions" had been dispelled; experience had tempered joy, Gay, however, had not arrived at an age where people's motives can be suspected for an instant. If there had been any possible plummet with which to sound the depths of her unconscious philosophy, she apparently looked upon herself as a guest out of heaven, flung down upon this hospitable planet with the single responsibility of enjoying its treasures.

SCENE VIII.

The Old Garden.

JABE AND SAMANTHA EXCHANGE HOSTILITIES, AND THE FORMER SAYS A GOOD WORD FOR THE LITTLE WANDERERS.

"God Almighty first planted a garden, and it is indeed the purest of all human pleasures," said Lord Bacon, and Miss Vilda would have agreed with him. Her garden

was not simply the purest of all her pleasures, it was her only one; and the love that other people gave to family, friends, or kindred she lavished on her posies.

It was a dear, old-fashioned, odorous garden, where Dame Nature had never been forced but only assisted to do her duty. Miss Vilda sowed her seeds in the spring-time wherever there chanced to be room, and they came up and flourished and went to seed just as they liked, those being the only duties required of them. Two splendid groups of fringed "pinies," the pride of Miss Avilda's heart, grew just inside the gate, and hard by the handsomest dahlias in the village, quilled beauties like carved rosettes of gold and coral and ivory. There was plenty of feathery "sparrow-grass," so handy to fill the black and yawning chasms of summer fireplaces and furnish green for "bouquets." There was a stray peach or greengage tree here and there, and if a plain, well-meaning carrot chanced to lift its leaves among the poppies, why, they were all the children of the same mother, and Miss Vilda was not the woman to root out the invader and fling it into the ditch. There was a bed of yellow tomatoes, where, in the season, a hundred tiny golden balls hung among the green leaves; and just beside them, in friendly equality, a tangle of pink sweet-williams, fragrant phlox, delicate bride-tears, canterbury bells blue as the June sky, none-so-protties, gay cockscombs, and flaunting marigolds, which would insist on coming up all together, summer after summer, regardless of color harmonies. Last, but not least, there was a patch of sweet peas,

on tiptoe for a fight, with wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white.

These dispensed their sweet odors so generously that it was a favorite diversion among the village children to stand in rows outside the fence, and, elevating their bucolic noses, simultaneously "sniff Miss Cummins' peas." The garden was large enough to have little hills and dales of its own, and its banks sloped gently down to the river. There was a gnarled apple tree hidden by a luxuriant wild grapevine, a fit bower for a "lov'd Celia" or a "fair Rosamond." There was a spring, whose crystal waters were "cabined, cribbed, confined" within a barrel sunk in the earth; a brook singing its way among the alder bushes, and dripping here and there into pools, over which the blue-harebells leaned to see themselves. There was a summer-house, too, on the brink of the hill; a weather-stained affair, with a hundred names carved on its venerable lattices, — names of youths and maidens who had stood there in the moonlight and plighted rustic vows.

If you care to feel a warm glow in the region of your heart, imagine little Timothy Jessup sent to play in that garden, — sent to play for almost the first time in his life! Imagine it, I ask, for there are some things too sweet to prick with a pin-point. Timothy stayed there fifteen minutes, and running back to the house in a state of intoxicated delight went up to Samantha, and laying an insistent hand on hers said excitedly, "Oh, Samantha, you didn't tell me there is shining water down in the garden; not so big as the ocean, nor so still as the harbor, but a kind of baby river running along by itself with the sweetest noise. Please, Miss Vilda, may I take Gay to see it, and will it hurt it if I wash Rags in it?"

"Let 'em all go," suggested Samantha: "there's Jabe dwadlin' along the road, and they might as well be out from under foot."

"Don't be too hard on Jabe this morning, Samantha, — he's been to see the Baptist minister at Edgewood; you know he's going to be baptized some time next month."

"Woll, he needs it! But land sakes! you couldn't make them Slocums pious 'f you kep on baptizin' of 'em till the crack o' doom. I never hearn tell of a Slocum's gittin' baptized in July. They always take 'em after the freshets in the spring o' the year, 'n' then they have to be turrible careful to douse 'em lengthways of the river. Look at him, will you? I b'lieve he's grown sence yesterday! If he'd ever stood stiff on his feet when he was a boy, he needn't 'a' been so everlastin' tall; but he was for ever roostin' on fences' with his laigs danglin', 'n' the heft of his feet stretched 'em out, — it couldn't do no dif'rent. I ain't got no patience with him."

"Jabe has considerable many good points," said Miss Cummins loyally; "he's

faithful, — you always know where to find him."

"Good reason why," retorted Samantha. "You always know where to find him 'cause he gen'ally haint moved sence you seen him last. Gittin' religion ain't goin' to help him much. If he ever hears tell 'bout the gate of heaven bein' open 't the last day, he won't 'a' begun to begin thinkin' 'bout gittin' in tell he hears the door shet in his face; 'n' then he'll set ri' down's comf'able's if he was inside, 'n' say, 'Wall, better luck next time: slow an' sure 's my motto?' Good-mornin', Jabe, — had your dinner?"

"I ain't even hed my breakfast," responded Mr. Slocum easily.

"Blessed are the lazy folks, for they always git there chores done for 'em," remarked Samantha scathingly, as she went to the buttery for provisions.

"Wall," said Laigs, looking at her with his most irritating smile, as he sat down at the kitchen table. "I don't find I git thru any more work by tumblin' out o' bed 't sun-up 'n' I dew 'f I lay a spell 'n' let the univarse get het up 'n' runnin' a lectle mite. 'Slow 'n' easy goes fur in a day' 's my motto. Rhapseny, she used to say she should think I'd be ashamed to lay abed so late. 'Wall, I be, 's I, 'but I'd ruther be ashamed 'n' git up!' But you're an awful good cook, Samantha, if ye air allers in a hurry, 'n' if yer hev got a sharp tongue!"

"The less you say 'bout my tongue the better!" snapped Samantha.

"Right you are," answered Jabe with a good-natured grin, as he went on with his breakfast. He had a huge appetite, another grievance in Samantha's eyes. She always said "there was no need of his being so slab-sided 'n' slack-twisted 'n' knuckle-jointed, — that he eat enough in all conscience, but he wouldn't take the trouble to find the vituals that would fat him up 'n' fill out his bag o' bones."

Just as Samantha's well-cooked viands began to disappear in Jabe's capacious mouth (he always ate precisely as if he were stoking an engine) his eye rested upon a strange object by the wood-box, and he put down his knife and ejaculated, "Well, I swan! Now when 'n' where'd see that baby-shay? Why, 'twas yesterday. Well, I vow, them young ones was comin' here, was they?"

"What young ones?" asked Miss Vilda, exchanging astonished glances with Samantha.

"And don't begin at the book o' Genesis 'n' go clean through the Bible, 's you gen'ally do. Start right in on Revelations, where you belong," put in Samantha; for to see a man unexpectedly loaded to the muzzle with news, and too lazy to fire it off, was enough to try the patience of a saint; and even David Milliken would hardly have applied that term to Samantha Ann Ripley.

(To be Continued.)

A SONG OF SNOW-TIME.

Sing a song of snow-time,
Now it's passing by.
Million little floecy flakes
Falling from the sky
When the ground is covered,
And the hedge and trees,
There will be a gay time
For the Chickadees.

Boys are in the school-house,
Drawing on their slates
Pictures of the coasting-pace,
And thinking of their skates;
Girls are nodding knowingly,
Smilingly about,
Thinking of a gay time,
When the school is out.

Three o'clock, four o'clock,
Bang! goes the bell:
Get your hats, and coats, and wraps,
Hurry off, pell-mell!
Bring along the coasters all,
If you want some fun:
Up to the hilltop,
Jump and slide and run.

Steady now! Ready now!
Each in his place!
Here we go, there we go,
Down on a race!
Sing a song of snow-time,
When the flakes fall;
Coast-time, skate-time,
Best time of all!