

so I'll soon have finished. You might just go and get me the *Pilgrim's Progress* out of one of the shelves in the school-room if you're ready. Dan likes it better than anything—better even than *Misunderstood*, so I'm reading it all through again to him."

"I wonder who you can go and read to Sundays," she continued, when Molly had found the book, after a long hunt in the nursery cupboard, and they were both sauntering through the orchard, stopping every now and then to pick up a red-robin pear or a walnut which lay in their path. "There's old blind Betsy, if you don't mind her having such dreadful white eyes—they make me dream, and yet I can't help looking at them—or there's old Mrs. Sowell at the shop."

By this time they had crossed the churchyard and reached the plantation of the Grange, where young oaks and not bushes grew together, and where in spring time the ground was yellow with primroses, and the hazel boughs gay with "lamb's-tails," though just now it was being carpeted with leaves, and pert little robins had usurped the domain of the nightingales. In old days this plantation had been a source of great trouble and heart burning to Nan and her brothers, who eagerly longed to climb the railings, and played at "Robbers" and "Wild-beasts" on a grander scale than their own garden allowed: indeed so attractive was it that when Philip and Dick as little boys had prayed innocently every day not to be "led into plantation," their mother had not corrected them, knowing that their temptation did lie in that direction.

"This way," said Nan, and she scrambled through a gap in the hedge, leading into a funny old kitchen garden, where flowers, fruit trees and weeds all grew peacefully together, save for a snug little patch of cabbages and potatoes at one end. "We're going to the back of the house, you know; Dan lives just in two little rooms all by himself," and she stopped to point out the gray block of buildings, which looked uninviting enough with its shuttered windows, while only one thin thread of smoke rose from its many chimneys into the sill October air.

The door was open, and Nan paused on the threshold and beckoned to Molly to look in. There, sitting in a high-backed arm-chair, his head resting on one hand, while the other served as a marker in his big Bible, was the old man they had come to see, deep in the enjoyment of his Sunday nap. He stirred in his sleep as the little girl's shadow fell on him, and started up; a tall erect figure, on whom a big Inverness cloak hung loosely, showing beneath it a gay waistcoat, on which horses and hounds chased each other over a crimson background.

"I'm sorry we woke you up," said Nan, stepping forward. "This is my cousin that I've told you such a lot about, and I want you to show us both over the house by and by."

"Glad to see you, miss," he said, turning his grin but not unpleasant face to Molly. "I mostly doze a bit of a Sunday-afternoon; and it's rather close to-day, onseasonable weather for the time of year," and he pulled out a seat for her, and dusted it with his red cotton handkerchief, while Nan took possession of the opposite arm chair, and began to turn over the leaves of the little old fashioned *Pilgrim's Progress*, saying as she did so, "I can't quite remember where we'd got to; I always forget to put a marker in."

"Never mind, miss," replied the old man, "that's all good, read where you will," and, lighting his long clay pipe at the fire, he settled himself resignedly to keep awake and listen.

So Nan began about the House Beautiful in a high-pitched voice, which Molly looked solemnly round the barely-furnished room, taking in every detail with an interested wonder—from the Michaelmas daisies, which poked their heads through the open door, to the gay china dogs and the Toby jug which adorned the mantle-piece, in company with a tin tobacco box and several heads of last year's wheat.

Presently the big eight-day clock in the corner struck the half-hour, and Nan snapped the book to with a suddenness which started both her listeners, saying as she slipped off her chair, "We shant have very much time before church—please take us now."

(To be continued.)



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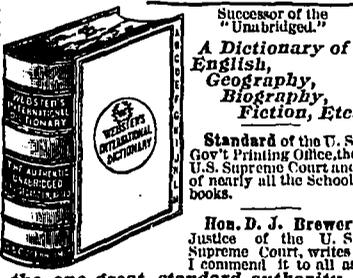
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