

Happy Days

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GRETCHEN'S PROMISE

BY E. P. A.

A little Gretchen was trotting home on her sturdy fat legs, along the streets of Haarlem, she came to a full stop and gave a little cry of pleasure. Her noisy wooden shoes had stopped their clatter before a little old house whose upper story looked as if it had gone to sleep and was nodding over into the street. The sight that had caught her eye was a little ruffled white pin-cushion at the door. You, my dear little Canuck, would not know what that meant, but Gretchen knew well enough, and broke into a run, that she might get home quickly and tell her mother.

"Ah, mother dear," she cried, bounding into Madame Grossbeck's clean kitchen, "there is a new baby at Madame Van der Brock's—a girl, because the fashion is white. Do let me go and see the dear little thing, mother, at once."

"Very well," said mother Grossbeck, smiling; then, laying down her par-

knife, she prepared a dainty basket of bread and milk as a present to the mother of the new baby. "Now, Gretchen," she



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said gravely, taking the little daughter's hand, "I do not want you to stay but a quarter of an hour. When the great

grow into just such a girl— one who cannot break a promise" But Gretchen only screwed up her short nose and winked

market-bell strikes twelve will you come away? And Gretchen promised.

Madame Van der Brock's house might look old and dingy on the outside, but inside it shone like a piece of the sun. The china plates and bowls fastened against the wall, the pictured tiles, the kettles, churn-presses, mounds and furnaces looked as if they had been covered with newspaper every day.

And in a little wooden box built against the wall you would never know it for a bed was the new baby another dear little Gretchen. Ah, how fast the minutes flew while our Gretchen played with the queer pink velvet fingers and toes! The bell struck twelve all too soon, and the madame begged her to stay longer. "I will explain to your mother, my child," she said coaxingly.

"That might do, madame," answered the little maid resolutely, "if I had not promised; but one must never break a promise."

And when she was gone Madame Van der Brock said to the pink baby, "Don't hear, Gretchen? These must