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SOAP BUBBLES.

BY JEAN GOLD.

"Oh, auntie Bell, auntie Bell, you do not know what we are going to do?"

"Perhaps not; but I can guess very near the truth," and auntie Bell smiled in the roguish face that had come between her and her book, as she solemnly whispered, "mischief."

"Not a bit of it, hush, and I will whisper too. Mr. Will is going to—to—can't you guess?"

"Preach a sermon, probably. That is what he usually does—a milder form of mischief than some of yours—that is all the difference, Harry."

"Mr. Will does not preach sermons. Auntie Bell you are cross to-day, and I won't tell you what we are going to do at all. It is awful fun, though, and you will wish you were with us. We were going to ask you but we do not want cross people." Harry left the room as abruptly as he had entered, leaving the door into the hall open each way. His voice was now heard in the hall, a little depressed by the lack of sympathy he had met in the sitting-room, but still with much vigor—he was a vigorous child—this Harry of eight years—he cried out:

"Come, Mr. Will, we will have a good time any way. Auntie Bell is cross, and says she does not care to hear you preach."

The gentleman's face had changed color when the original remark was made, but he paid no attention to the repetition.

Isabel Murray, or auntie Bell, as she was more familiarly called, had joined her sister's family at a country boarding house, a fortnight before. "A large, commodious, old fashioned farm house, with capacious piazza, queer, deep window seats, in which one could sit comfortably, gazing out upon the green lawn," thought Bell, as she drove up to the door the first time. She had been graciously made welcome in the household, which consisted of three families besides her sister's, and had very soon fallen into her rightful place among them. It was a *dolce far niente* existence she led, lying most of the time on the sofa, in the cool sitting-room, where Harry found her. Her twentieth birthday was still in advance of her, and yet she considered herself, and her friends called her, an invalid. She had gone through the spring season of balls at home, the rush at Saratoga, and tipped off with Long Branch, taking there a severe cold. Recovering in a measure from that, she joined her sister to regain her strength, in the pure air and freedom from excitement, the physician ordered as absolutely necessary.

After a week of this, to her, dull life they were leading, she was decidedly out of sorts and cross. Craving excitement, this stagnant life was more than ever distasteful. Her appetite was ruined by a morbid desire for unsubstantial things. She lived on exciting, harrowing novels, stimulating her mind with overdrawn fancies. In truth, she was more ill of mind than body, and was living on a fictitious strength.

"With it all, she is very pretty in her delicacy; very attractive in her listlessness; with capabilities of being a noble woman, if she could only be aroused out of herself," so said Will Marshall to himself, the second day after her arrival among them.