STORY TELLING AT THANKSGIVING

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Johnnie -
from Mother.

Dec. 25. 1852.

Jenny R. Black
from aunt
Reed.
Jan. 1. 1877.

Carrying flowers to Aunt Milly.

WINNIE AND WALTER;

OR,

STORY-TELLING

AT

THANKSGIVING.

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CHAPTER I.

WINNIE AND WALTER'S HOME.

A FEW YEARS ago, in a neat, pleasant house not a great many miles from the city of Boston, lived two children, whose names we shall call Winnie and Walter. Their father was a merchant, and used to go every day, except Sundays, to the city. In the evenings he was almost always at home with

his family, and the children used to enjoy very much having him with them at that time. After supper, he told them a great many stories, and played with them until the hour came for them to go to bed.

At the time of my story, Winnie was a little girl of about eight years, and Walter was about six. I do not pretend that they were the best children that could be found in the world. I think they were pretty much like a great many other happy children — no better and no worse. They dearly loved to hear stories, and what bright and happy child does not?

Their house stood in a very green and shady place, a little apart from all the other houses of the village, and there was a barn, and, what was still better,

a very nice large garden, in which grew a great many beautiful flowers. Little girls are almost always fond of flowers, and Winnie took great delight in this garden. Her mother used often to make her a beautiful bouquet and let her carry it and give it to some of the neighbors. There was an old woman who lived a little way off, and she was poor, and lived in a small cottage, but she had every thing neat and nice, and was, besides, a very kind, good woman, though she was now quite aged and infirm. Ever since Winnie was a very little girl she used, from time to time, in the bright summer days, to carry bunches of flowers to Aunt Milly, sometimes going alone, and sometimes with her little playmates. It used to be a great treat to these little girls to go and see good Aunt

Milly. She liked the beautiful flowers which they brought, but she liked a great deal better to see their bright and happy young faces, and to tell them stories about the times when she was a little girl.

I think it was a great deal better for these little children to live in this way out in the open country, where there were flowers and trees and green grass, and where they could hear the birds sing, and see the sun rise and set, than to be shut up in the close and narrow city. And Winnie's father thought so too, and it was partly because he thought it would make his children more healthy and happy, that he built this house in the country.

It was now the fall of the year, in the month of November, and Winnie and

Walter were looking forward with great delight to Thanksgiving. It was the plan this year, that their old grandfather and some of their uncles and aunts and cousins, should come and visit them, and spend Thanksgiving with them. The year before they had gone to spend Thanksgiving away from home, but now they were to stay at home and their friends were to come and visit them.

I cannot tell you how long the time seemed to these children before Thanksgiving day arrived. They had been looking forward to it with such longing that the days dragged away very slowly to them, though they were quite short enough for all the grown up people.

But at length the happy morning came, and the house was full of uncles and aunts and cousins. There was Uncle

William and Aunt Susan, Uncle Oliver and Aunt Mary, and Cousin Alice, and several more besides, not to forget the dear old grandfather, whom I have spoken of before. Some of these who lived nearest, came the morning of Thanksgiving day, and some had come the night before. I shall not stop to tell you much about the day — how the little folks played together, and the old folks went to church — and how much they all enjoyed their nice Thanksgiving dinner. I shall leave all these things, because I wish to hurry along and come to the evening. It was agreed, in order to please the children, that when night was coming on, they should all gather around the bright open fire, in the large sitting-room, and tell stories — not stories which they had heard from others, but stories about themselves.

So when the time came, the big arm-chair was fixed for grandfather, right in the centre of the room, before the cheerful fire—a good distance back so as to make a large circle, and then the grown up folks sat next to him, on each side, and the little children were in the corners.

It was a beautiful sight to look upon that pleasant circle, gathered about the cheerful fire just as the night was coming on. It was not stormy without, as it often is on Thanksgiving days. It was clear and cold. The stars began to sparkle in the heavens, and the sharp, chill wind whistled around the corners of the house, and shook the leafless trees which stood near. They all said that they did not want any light, except what the fire made. They thought they could tell

their stories better by this wavy and dreamy light, than if lamps or candles were brought into the room.

Grandfather was to tell his story first, because he was so old that all wanted to do him honor, and so, after thinking a little while, he began.

CHAPTER II.

GRANDFATHER'S STORY

IT IS very pleasant for me to be here to-night, and to see my children and grandchildren so well and happy. I have now grown to be an old man, and I know that I cannot stay upon the earth a great many years longer. And yet it does not seem so very long ago since I was a little boy like Walter, and was wishing, as I have no doubt he often wishes, that I was older and larger. I remember quite well what took place in my childhood, a great deal better than I do about many things that happened only a little

while ago. I know that old people almost always say so, but there is one reason why I recollect about my early life, that every one does not have. I saw so many terrible sights, and heard so much dreadful news when I was a little boy, and these things fixed themselves so deeply in my mind, that I could never forget them. I am very glad that my dear little grandchildren do not have to see and hear such things, and to pass such fearful days and nights as I did, but that they live in a land of peace, and in quiet homes, where there is nothing to disturb and trouble them.

I was born in a pleasant farm-house on the road leading from Concord to Boston, only a few miles from the city of Boston, and when the war broke out which made our country free, I was a

little boy, not more than six years old. I can just remember how my father used often to talk with his neighbors, about something that seemed to stir their feelings very much, and make them almost in a rage, but I could not exactly understand what it was. I used to hear the word "British" very often, and I remember how I wondered what they were, and why my father was so angry about them. But pretty soon things came to pass which I could understand to my sorrow.

I remember it was in the spring of the year, and I used to be out with my father in the fields, while he ploughed the ground, and was preparing to sow his oats and to plant his corn. I have since learned that that was a wonderful spring, and that the ground was ready

for planting, and peach-trees, and cherry and apple-trees were in blossom a good deal earlier than they often are. But then I did not know that it was any different from any other spring. One morning when my father was at work in his field, a little way from his house, a man came running and told him something, which made him start suddenly, and taking me in his arms he ran with all haste to the house. I was in a great fright, though I did not then know what the matter was. I have since found out that this was the nineteenth of April, 1775 — the day on which a part of the British army went up from Boston to Concord to seize some powder and balls, and provisions which our own people had laid up there for future use.

My mother was still more troubled

than my father. There were three little children of us, and the two others were younger than myself. The youngest was a little sister, who could hardly go alone. I know now very well what it was that made my dear mother feel so bad. My father thought that it was his duty to take his gun and go out with his neighbors and try to resist the British soldiers. My mother could not bear to have him expose himself to such danger, and then it was so dismal and lonely for her to be left there with her three little helpless children, when such fearful things were going on. While they were talking about this, and hardly knowing what to do, there was a sound of drums and fifes, and pretty soon a great company of soldiers came along in their red coats, armed with guns and swords, and march-

ing very proudly. It would have been a beautiful sight to me, only I knew well enough, from what my father and mother said, that they were not our friends.

They were quite a long time in passing our house, there were so many of them, but they did not do us any harm; only one of them seeing my father standing at the window, pointed his gun at him, in a very haughty manner, as if he was going to shoot him. This was when they were going up to Concord.

But a good many of those soldiers who marched up so proud and grand never lived to get back again to Boston, for though our people could not well stand against them in open battle, because they were so few in number and were so unused to war, yet on the re-

turn of these soldiers, our men, who had gathered from all directions when they heard what was going on, fired upon the red-coats from the woods, and from behind walls and barns and houses, and a great many of the soldiers were killed.

My father was one of those who fired upon the soldiers in this way, for though he stayed at home for some time after they went up, yet when his neighbors came along and urged him to join them, he could not refuse. So kissing my mother very tenderly, and all of us children, he took his gun, and went off. How sad and lonely it seemed after he was gone! It was all still about the house, except that every little while one of our people, or more commonly three or four together, would go running by with their guns. They were not dressed

in bright colors like the British soldiers, but they had on the same clothes in which they had been at work in the fields, and they did not march in order, to the sound of music, but they made their way along, every one in his own manner.

In the afternoon, when it had been still for a good while, and my mother often said she wished father would come back, we began to hear the sound of distant guns, and by degrees the noise and tumult seemed to draw nearer and nearer. My mother grew pale, and I think she came very near fainting away. But looking upon her dear little children, and knowing that they were left entirely to her care, she tried to gather courage and to set about doing something for our safety. I remember that

I cried very bitterly because I saw my mother was in such fear and trouble, and my little brother cried. But the baby sister was too small to know that any thing was the matter, and I think it likely she had heard me cry before. Still the noise grew louder and the tumult was without any doubt coming nearer, and so my mother let down the curtains, and locked the doors, and took us children all down into the cellar.

And now we could hear the sound of the guns quite plainly, mingled with loud cries and angry voices. Soon the whole crowd seemed to be passing our house, and some men came up behind the house and fired, and very soon we heard the crashing sound of bullets as they broke through our windows and the sides of the house. But we were none

of us hurt. By degrees, the confusion ceased, and the whole crowd seemed to have gone by, and we could hear the same noise in the distance in the other direction. Not very long after, we heard my father's voice at the door, and my mother made all haste to open it, and oh, how glad she was, and how glad I was, to have him back again safe and sound. But he came to tell my mother that there were one or two men near by our house that were wounded, and that they were going to be brought in and taken care of.

Presently some men came bringing them in their arms. The first who was brought was one of our own people, and the other was a British soldier; for my father thought, and thought right, that though this man had been our enemy,

yet now that he was wounded and suffering he ought to be kindly taken care of, just like any other person. It is likely the man himself did not wish to fight against us, but he had to do it, because his king — King George of England — made him do it.

All these things took place at the time when the battles of Lexington and Concord were fought, which were the first battles in that long and dreadful war, by which at length we became a free nation. And you may well suppose that, though I was but six years old, I never should forget such scenes as these.

This was the beginning of trouble, for now people seemed to be more angry than before, and all the talk was about the British in Boston — what they had done, and what they were going to do,

and who were killed, and who wounded, on this fearful day which I have just told you about.

And here I must not forget to say, that the poor British soldier, who was brought into our house, died in two or three days. He was dreadfully hurt, and though my father and mother tried to take the best of care of him, yet he could not live. We found that the poor man had a wife, and some little children of his own, far over the water, in his own land, and he used to talk a great deal about his dear little pets, and he seemed to be very glad to have us children around, because it made him think of his own loved ones so far away. He wanted to have my mother write to his dear wife, and tell her all about his death. We found, though this man was our enemy

and had been fighting against us, yet he seemed to have just as kind a heart, and the same tender thoughts about home and wife and children, as any of our own people; and we learned to pity and to love him.

The other wounded man was soon taken away by his friends, who lived not very far off, and was carried to his own home. He was not so badly hurt, and after a week or two, we heard that he was getting quite strong and well.

But, as I was saying, all the talk now was about the British, and what they were going to do, and what great and dreadful thing would happen next. My father had hardly any time to work upon his farm, there was so much talking, and so much excitement and fear. Quite a number of weeks passed away

in this manner. Everybody that came to our house talked about these things, and they hardly ever talked about any thing else.

One day, I remember it perfectly, my father said he must go to Boston, and join with our people to fight again against the British, — that he must not stay at home, when his country called him, but he must go and contend for freedom and for right. It was a sad day for my mother and for me. I had now seen enough of war to know that it was something fearful, and when my poor mother cried, I cried too, and held on to my father's clothes to keep him from going. But though he felt very bad, and tears ran down his cheeks, he said he must go; and so kissing us all, and bidding us a kind good-by, he left us.

Oh, how long those days seemed, and how dismal the nights were! there were so many things in those times to make us timid, that when the hour came for the little folks to go to bed, my mother did not compel us to go alone, but she used to stay close by our bedside, until we were all fast asleep. She tried to be calm and cheerful, so that we might not be afraid, and she sang songs to us to make us go to sleep. But I have heard her say many times since, that though she tried to be so calm, yet when we were all sound asleep, such fears used to come upon her, and she would be so startled by every little noise in the night, that many a time she would not close her eyes all the night long.

It was very difficult to know exactly what was going on at Boston. My

mother used to inquire of almost every one she saw, how things were, and what was about to happen. Some thought one thing and some another, and it was a part of my mother's trouble that she could not know any thing clearly and truly.

But at length, one day, we heard a great noise of the firing of cannons and guns in the direction of Boston. The uproar was so great, that it seemed at times to fill all the air, and then it would die away a little, and then grow louder and fiercer again. We knew by this that there was a battle, and though we could see nothing of it, we knew well enough that my dear father was there, and that a good many men would most likely be killed. I know now that that was a terrible day to my poor mother.

For though she tried to keep as calm as she could for the sake of her children, yet her heart was filled with dreadful fears, and in spite of herself, she often wept and groaned aloud.

It was near night, and the noise of the firing had long ceased, when some men came by and told my mother about the battle. There had been very hard fighting, and a great many had been killed and wounded on both sides, for though the British had gained the victory, it was only after the loss of many of their best soldiers. These men could tell my mother nothing about my father. They had not seen or heard of him.

This was the battle of Bunker Hill, about which all the world has known now for a great many years, for it is one of the famous battles of the world. But

the time seemed very long then before we could hear about it, at least before we could find out that which we most wanted to know.

I need not stop to tell you much about this battle — how our people worked in silence, all through the summer night, to build themselves a kind of fort, — how in the morning the British saw and knew for the first time what had been going on, — how they fired upon the fort with their big cannons from the great ships of war which were in the harbor, and then sent a large body of soldiers to go up and drive our people out; and how our men waited until the soldiers came near, and then fired such a dreadful volley from their muskets, that a great many of the red-coats were killed and wounded, and the rest had to run away, — how they

were sent up again, and again were met in the same way, and had to flee; and how the third time our poor soldiers had no more powder, and could not stand before the British soldiers, who had powder in plenty, so that many of our people were killed. All these things you can read in books, a great deal better than I can tell you of them. I suppose that all my little grandchildren have been to see the great monument of stone which is set up on the spot where this battle was fought, and if they have not, I hope they will go and see it.

But where was my father? That was what we wanted to know, and it seemed a long, long time, before we could find any one to tell us. All through the night after the battle my mother walked the house, and listened to every sound,

in hope she should hear my father's step, or that some one else would come and tell us about him. But he did not come, and we heard nothing; and the next morning dawned, and we were in the same dreadful doubt. My mother then hired a man to go to Boston, and see if he could hear of him. All day long we waited, and just at night the man came back, and told us that my father was not killed, but that he was wounded, and had been taken to the hospital along with many other wounded soldiers — that his wounds had been dressed, and that he would have kind care taken of him, but that it would be a good while before he would be able to come home.

This was very sad news to us, and my mother felt as if she could not wait, but must go at once and see him. Still she

could not leave her three little children, and she could not take them with her. But one of our neighbors — a kind woman, who felt very sorry for my mother — told her she might bring us to her house, and she would take good care of us, while my mother was gone.

So she went where my father was, and he was very glad to see her, and she stayed with him two or three days, trying to comfort and make him easier in his pain, and doing kind things, too, for other wounded men, who had no wife or sister there to wait upon them. At night she used to go out of the hospital to sleep, and return in the morning.

When she came home she was very glad to be able to tell us that my father was better, and that the doctor thought now that he would get well, only it

would take him a long time. And it was a long time: but at last he was able to come home, and how joyous we all were to see him! As long as he lived he bore upon his face and body the great scars which were left after his wounds were healed.

But this was not the end of the war. It was only the beginning. All through those years from that time on till I was twelve or thirteen, I heard little except about battles, and how many were killed on one side, and how many were killed on the other; and how our poor soldiers suffered from cold, from want of clothing and from want of food, and how hard the great and good Washington toiled to keep up the spirits of our people, and lead them on to victory and freedom. All these things were talked over and

over in my childhood, and I remember them as though they were but yesterday.

But at last our people gained the victory, and peace came. What joy there was all through the land at this sound of peace! Though there were mourning and sorrow in a great many homes, because a son, a husband, a father, a brother, could come back no more, yet in the land at large there was joy.

I want all my dear children and grandchildren to remember, after I am dead and gone, how many men and women, and children too, had to suffer in order to bring about that peace and quiet, that order and plenty, in the midst of which we now live. We ought to be thankful, first of all, to the great and good God, through whose kind care and under

whose guiding hand, all these blessings came; and next, to the brave men and women, who fought and endured so much to make us free.

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE WINNIE'S STORY

I HARDLY KNOW what to talk about, now that I have to tell a story. There are a great many things that I could tell you something of, because out here in the country we have such nice times, and so many pleasant things happen.

I should love to tell you about the beautiful flowers we had last summer in our garden, and how much I enjoyed picking them and making them into bouquets. In the long days of summer, when my father used to come home be-

fore night, it was so pleasant, after tea, when he used to take a book and sit in our summer-house, and I used to gather a great heap of flowers and sit down near him, where I could ask him questions, and then make bouquets to give to my father and mother, and some of them I used to carry to Aunt Milly.

But I have just thought of one story, and I will tell you all about it.

I know you will all like to hear about my kitten, for though my mother sometimes calls him naughty, and scolds him very hard, I think he is a very nice kitten indeed. I know he is often very cunning and sly, and steals things out of our pantry when the door is left open, and though it would be very wrong for me to steal, yet it does not seem to be so bad for my kitty to do it. I think my

Minnie with her flowers.

mother is very kind to me, but I do not think she is very kind to my darling kitten. I call him my kitty, though he has grown to be a big cat now.

My mother used to say, she did not like cats, and she would not have a cat about the house, and so you will wonder how she came to let this kitty live with me. And so I must tell you all about it.

One day a good while ago, Walter and I were playing in the barn, when we heard a queer strange noise, such as we had never heard there before, and though we were a little afraid at first, we thought we would stop a moment and listen, and then we heard it again — a weak little "*mew*." We ran out, and there was Patrick working in the garden, and we told him to come quick, and find out what the matter was in the barn.

So he came, and kept still, and we all kept still, and then in a minute we heard the same "*mew*." Patrick said there were some little kittens in the barn; so he looked where he thought the sound came from, and sure enough, in the manger, on some hay, he found an old black cat, and a little tiny kitten. There was only one kitten. Patrick said he thought he should find three or four, but there was only one. And now I must tell you about this black cat. She was not our cat, because I have told you that my mother would not have any cat about. She did not seem to have any home, and so she used to come and stay in our barn. I guess somebody turned her out of doors, because she had been naughty, and so she had to go off and find a place to live by herself. We had often seen

her about, but she was wild, and if Walter and I tried to come where she was, she would look at us very sharp, and then run off as hard as she could go.

But now when Patrick found her, though she was wild and would growl at us, yet Patrick said she loved her little kitten so, that she would not run away and leave it. Well, this was a very nice thing indeed to find a real live kitten in our own barn. So Walter and I used to go very often to the manger, and peep in carefully to see the little fellow; but the old cat would always hear us coming, no matter how still we kept; and she would growl so, and her great eyes would shine so like fire, that we did not stay very long at a time, I can tell you. Then we used to carry out a little dish of milk and set it in the

manger, and though the old cat would growl at us just the same, yet after we had gone away, she would eat the milk all up.

But one morning, not long after, we both went out to look for the kitten, and it was not there; and we felt very bad, because we thought we had lost it. But pretty soon we heard its "*mew*," and then we knew it was somewhere in the barn. We kept going about where we thought we heard the sound, and we found that it came from behind some boards and shingles, which were piled up in the barn. I guess you don't know that cats can take their little kittens right up in their mouths, without hurting them, and carry them where they please. Patrick told us this, and he told us that it was because the old cat did

not like to have us come and look at her kitten so much, that she had taken it off and hid it. I suppose God taught them this way of carrying their kittens, because he has not given them any arms and hands, such as we have, to lift them with.

It was quite a long time now, and we saw nothing of the kitten, only we used to hear it very often when we were playing about the barn, and we used almost every day to see the old cat going in and out. At length one day we saw the old cat coming out of the barn, and the kitten was with her. He was following along behind her, a little fat, clumsy fellow, only he had grown a great deal bigger than when we saw him last. When the old cat saw us, she growled and stared at us with her great big eyes,

and then started to run, looking back all the while, to see if kitty was coming. The kitten seemed to have grown just as wild as the old cat, and it was great sport to see him try to scamper away. He would fall down and pitch head over heels, when he tried to run very fast. But though they used to walk out in this way almost every day, they still made their home in the barn. The kitten was growing now quite fast, and soon he could walk and run a great deal better than at first, and it was nice fun for Walter and me to see him run as hard as he could to keep up. Once when the old cat was thus taking her kitten out for a morning walk, Walter and I ran after them, and the old cat starting off very fast, my kitty was not able to keep up, and thinking Walter

and I were getting most too near, and that he should be caught if he did not look out, he jumped for a hole he saw in the wall of the house. He did not know that that hole was the cellar window, and so down he went right into the cellar. This frightened him so that he flew around and crawled into a hole in the cellar wall. We went down to find him, and we could just see the end of his tail sticking out of the hole in the wall. But when we tried to catch him, he would twist his little body so that we could not reach him. But by and by the old cat came around and called him, and in some way she helped him up, so that he got out of the cellar, and they went off to the barn together.

One day my mother told me, as this little kitten had come to us in this way,

I might ask Patrick to catch him if he could, and bring him in the house, and then I might try to tame him, and have him for my own kitten. So when we saw them come out of the barn, I went and told Patrick, and he ran after them, and after a while he caught hold of the kitty. You ought to have seen how he spit and scratched and growled when Patrick first caught him, but he could not get away. We were sorry for the old cat, who seemed at first to feel very bad. She would come up as near the door as she dared to and "*mew*" a long time, and try to call her kitty out. But we kept the little fellow shut up so that he could not get out. Mother said she felt sorry for the old cat, but she guessed she would pretty soon forget all about it. And sure enough after a little while,

she did not seem to remember that she had ever had any kitty.

At first, when we brought the kitten into the house, he was very wild, and would skulk away behind a chair, or in some dark corner, and he did not want to have us touch him. But we used to put a little saucer of milk close up to him, and then go away, and when he began to feel hungry he would eat some of the milk. After a time he began to feel more at home, and with a little coaxing he would sit in our laps, and let us stroke him. So he grew more and more tame, and then he was ready to have a nice frolic. He would stick up his back, and canter round the room, in a way that made Walter and me laugh very loud. It was so funny to see him run after a string or a ball of yarn, and play

with it, that we used to have great times, I can tell you. And so he kept growing larger and stronger, and was one of the nicest play-fellows that we could possibly have.

I have told you that my mother did not like him so well as we did. She used sometimes to catch him doing mischief, and would whip and scold him. But I always felt sorry for my kitty when he had to be punished in this way, and I used to take him out of the way and stroke him and try to comfort him.

But I suppose he was something of a rogue, for one day he made me a great trouble, and much as I loved him, I boxed his ears soundly. I must tell you about this.

Last spring a beautiful robin came and made her nest in the green fir-tree, that

grows right in front of our house. From our chamber window we could see her when she was building her nest. There was another robin that helped her all the while she was building it. They used to bring straws and little sticks and mud, and put them together so nicely that it was my great delight to go up and look out of the window carefully, so as not to frighten them, and see them work.

After a while the nest was done, and then pretty soon we could see one little blue egg in it. Then the next day there were two, and after a little while there were four nice blue eggs. Then the robin sat upon the nest almost all the time, and the other robin would bring her little worms and bugs and crumbs to eat. After a time there were four little fat homely robins, and then Walter and

I used to watch the nest a great deal, to see these birds feed their young ones. Whenever one of them came near the nest, with something for them to eat, they would all stick up their heads and open their mouths very wide, until the big bird would drop what she had into one of their mouths, and then fly away to get some more. I was afraid that one of these little birds would get it all, and I used to wonder how the old birds could tell when they had all been fed, because they looked so very much alike. But I suppose they had some way by which they could know them apart better than I could.

These little birds grew very fast, and feathers began to come out all over them, and soon they filled the nest up full and stuck out over the top. My

mother told me they were almost big enough to fly, and that they would soon leave the nest and hop about among the trees, and I should see them no more in the nest.

Well, one day, when my mother was busy with her work, and Walter and I were at play, we heard a great noise and crying among the birds, and going out, sure enough, there was my kitty, and he had caught one of those little birds and was eating him up. You know that when little birds first leave their nest, they are clumsy and awkward, and cannot fly very well. And so one of these little birds in trying to fly, had come down upon the ground, and my kitty had jumped and caught him. Oh, how bad the old birds seemed to feel. They kept up a great crying, and flew

about this way and that for a good while, and the other little birds, that sat up on the limbs of the trees, where pussy could not reach them, they made a great noise too, as much like the old birds as they could. I told you that I boxed my kitty's ears for that naughty act. I think he has been a better kitty since, and I love him very much. And so I have told you the story about kitty.

When little Winnie had finished her story, Aunt Susan said, that she had often thought it was with little birds very much as it was with little children. So long as they could stay snug at home in their nest, where their parents could see to them and take care of them, they were a great deal safer than when they started to go abroad. She said she had

always felt very easy about her own children so long as they were small and she could keep them under her eye, and attend to all their little wants. But when they grew larger, and went away from home, then she knew that there were a great many dangers around them, and they were a much greater care to her, than when she took the whole care of them herself. And I guess there are a great many fathers and mothers who think so too.

CHAPTER IV.

AUNT SUSAN'S STORY.

MY EARLY life was among the hills. From the windows of my father's house, we could see a few dwellings scattered about on the distant hillsides, but the country was quite rough and wild; and in the winters, when the deep snows came, and the cold howling winds heaped it in drifts, several days would sometimes pass away, and we would see none of our neighbors, nor any human being except those who dwelt in our own house. Then the time seemed very long and lonely, and I used to stand at

the windows and watch to see if somebody would not come in sight; and long to have the roads broken, so that we might meet our playmates from the other houses.

For though these dwellings were so far apart, all the people who lived in them knew each other a great deal better than people often do in cities who live side by side in the same street, or even in different parts of the same house. There was not a girl or boy in all the region that I did not know, and that did not know me. Sooner or later, we were pretty sure to hear of almost every thing that happened in these houses, for the neighbors used to drop in and talk over all their affairs. And especially if any one died in these families, we all knew of it very soon, and we were all there at

the funeral, just as much as though it was our own brother or sister. If any baby was born, the children all got news of it very quickly, and by the time the little stranger was a fortnight old, they were pretty sure to make his acquaintance.

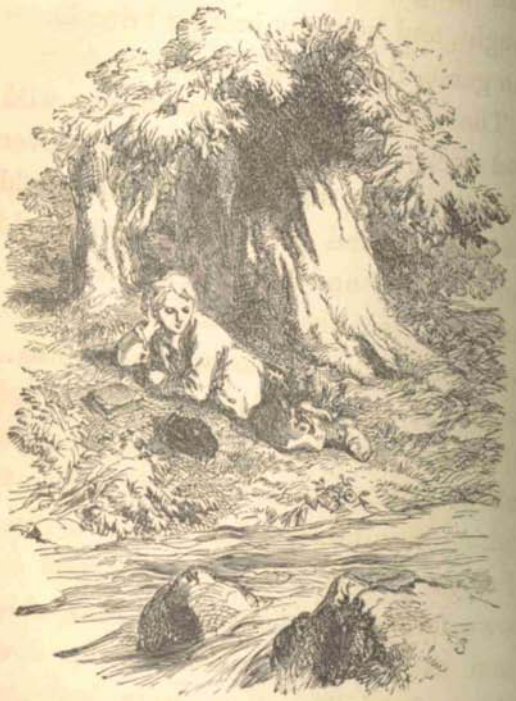
Though the winters, as I have said, were often very long and cold and dreary, yet when at length the spring came, and the leaves started into life all through the forests, and the soft green grass covered the fields, oh how delightful it was to go out again in the warm sun and balmy air, and hear the rich music of the birds, and the voices of every living thing, that seemed to be praising God for his goodness and care.

My father's farm — all the best part of it, where he raised his hay and corn and

potatoes, was in a snug little valley, through which ran a clear, beautiful stream; but he had also large stony pastures, where the cows and oxen and sheep used to feed in the summer; and scattered here and there over these pastures were large spreading chestnut-trees, which were left standing alone when the old forests were cut down, and had now grown to be mighty trees, from which in the fall we used to gather great baskets of chestnuts for our winter use. Often in the cold mornings of October, when the frost of the night had opened the chestnut-burs, I used to go with my brother, before the sun was up, and while all the fields were white with frost, to pick up the chestnuts which had fallen during the night; and sometimes we would come back to breakfast,

bringing with us two or three quarts of chestnuts, but with very cold toes and fingers.

Further up, on the hills, were the great spreading woods, where the squirrels and rabbits and partridges lived. There I used often to go with my brother, who had some snares set to catch the simple partridges and rabbits, which were so nice when cooked. At first I used to be a little shy and timid about these woods; for often in the evening, and sometimes after I had gone to bed in my little chamber, I used to hear strange wild noises coming out of them, which they told me were made by the barking of foxes. But in the bright morning, when the cheerful light was again upon the earth, and with my brother, who was older, I was not very



My brother's favorite spot.

much afraid. And it was such a pleasure to go and find what had been caught, and help my brother bring home the game, that I soon lost all my fears.

The whole region around us was wild and rocky and romantic. In whatever direction one might wander, he would be sure to find rough hills, strange old forests, noisy and brawling streams coming down swiftly over their stony beds, and quiet little nooks, where he would seem to be completely shut out from all the world besides. There was one spot about half a mile from our house, to which my brother had taken a great fancy. It was a little way beyond our own farm, and where the stream, which ran through our meadows, came down from the hills. Here were large old trees, which had been growing for hun-

dreds of years. The stream running by with rapid motion, bending in and out among the rocks and stones, made sweet and gentle music. It was the great delight of my older brother, in the bright summer days, when he had a leisure hour, to wander to this spot, sometimes with a book in his hand, here to lie and muse and lose himself in pleasant day-dreams.

Only a few rods from our house, there ran a beautiful little brook. It came from the rough hills which stretched away to the north of the house, in an opposite direction from the farm. All day long in the bright summer weather, this little brook went singing on its way down the hills, where it soon joined the other larger stream which I spoke of, that ran through the valley. Shining in

the bright sunlight, with its silver ripples, winding this way and that along its clean bed of stones and gravel, it was something in which we children used to take great delight, and many of our hours of play were spent about this brook. My brothers used to build dams across it of turf and stones, so that they could turn their little water-wheels, and the girls used to have their baby-houses and tea-parties on its pleasant banks. Sometimes, when the long and hard rains came in the spring and fall, or even in the summer, when a thunderstorm broke upon the hills, the water would come pouring down so fast and strong as to wash away the dams and wheels, and then the work had to be done over again. But for the most part it was the bright clear water from the moun-

tain springs, and it rippled and shone in the summer sun like polished silver.

One warm summer afternoon, when I was about twelve years of age, my mother, who had been busy all the morning about her cheese and the dinner, and who had washed and nicely put away all the dinner dishes, thought she would take her knitting and go over to one of the neighbors, whose house was about half a mile off, and stay a few hours. My father, with my older brother John, was at work upon the farm at some distance from the house, and I was to see to the other children until my mother should come back.

There were four of us at home, Julia, who was next younger than myself, and Freddie and Kitty. Freddie was a stout, driving boy of six years old, very coura-

geous, as such boys generally are, when there is no danger about, but pretty apt to keep close by their father or mother if they think there is any thing to be really afraid of. Kitty was a plump, beautiful little girl of four years, — the baby — the darling — the plaything of the house. After my mother left, my sister Julia took herself off to her chamber, where she amused herself with her dolls and playthings, so that I heard very little of her. Freddie and Kitty went out to play by the brook as was their wont. I had to finish my daily task of knitting, and after that I might read or play, just as suited me best. I sat by the window for some time, where I could see my sister and brother at their play, and hear their joyous prattle, as they built houses, or did any thing else, just

as their fancy took them. After I had finished my knitting, I sat down to a book, which I had drawn the Sunday before from the Sunday School Library. It was "Pierre and his Family," and I soon became so much taken up with this deeply interesting story of the wanderings and sufferings of the poor pilgrims among the Alps, that I lost all thought of the children, and did not know how much time had passed away.

Suddenly I heard a low rumbling sound like thunder, and starting up and looking out of the window, I could see a dark cloud that was rising in the west, but when I looked where my little brother and sister had been playing, they were not there. I ran out of the house in great fright, and called, sometimes one and sometimes the other, but

there was no answer. Filled with fear for my dear little brother and sister, and with shame that I had neglected to take care of them, as my mother had told me, I ran this way and that, — up the road and down the road, — round the house and round the barn, — calling all the while as loud and fast as I could call, but I could see or hear nothing of them. My sister, hearing my cries, came running out of the house, and was so filled with fear, partly through the fear which she saw in me, and partly because she was old enough herself to know and understand the nature of the case, that at first she could do nothing but wring her hands, and cry out, "Oh dear, what shall we do?"

In the mean time I heard the heavy thunder, which was growing louder and

nearer, and I saw the dark cloud in the west, slowly rising higher and higher. Having looked everywhere, as I thought, and looked in vain, I told my sister to run in all haste to the field to call my father and brother. I dreaded to have them know how careless I had been, but I did not dare to put it off any longer. While she was gone, and I was still making my search over the same ground where I had looked so many times before, I saw my mother coming up the road. She had heard the distant thunder, and had started at once for home. Ashamed and affrighted, I ran towards her, and as well as I could, I told her the painful story. She did not reprove me at that time, partly because she saw how very bad I felt, but mainly because her thoughts were turned so strongly toward

the lost children. Her one great care was to know what had become of them, and how and where they might be found.

What made the matter seem more dreadful was, that a wild thunderstorm was soon to break upon us, and whether the children were near home, or whether they had wandered far off, it would be a fearful thing if they must remain out of doors, and away from their friends, during this fierce tempest of wind and rain and thunder. For it was plain now that the storm must soon come. The sun was already hidden behind the great masses of black clouds which were fast rising, and the strong wind which so often goes before these sudden showers of summer, already began to howl through the forests, and sweep over

the fields. Never shall I forget how my mother wrung her hands in agony, feeling that she could not have it so, while she ran this way and that, calling her dear ones by their names, but with no answer.

She could have but little hope that they might have wandered away to some of the neighbors, and would be safely housed and taken care of until the storm was over; for we had no neighbors near enough to make it likely that this was the case. She herself had just come from the house nearest to ours, and she had seen or heard nothing of them in that direction. In the mean time, my father and brother, who had left their work because of the coming storm, had met my sister, and from her had heard the sad news, and now came up with all

haste, reaching the house almost as soon as my mother.

There was no time to be lost. My father and brother instantly set off in search of the little wanderers, while my mother, my sister, and myself were to remain near home, looking for the dear ones as long as we could, and then we might take refuge in the house when the pouring rain should drive us from our search. My eye followed my father and brother, until they were lost to sight among the hills at the north of our dwelling, for it was most likely they had strayed in that direction. Had they gone the other way, it would have led them down upon the farm, where they would pretty surely have been seen.

Oh, how strong was my wish, how earnest was my prayer, that God would

guide my dear father to our poor lost lambs, who were wandering they knew not where, and who most likely at that very moment were filled with dreadful fears, and were uttering loud and piteous cries for help.

It was not long before the storm burst upon us in all its power, forcing us to fly to the house for shelter. Darkness, almost like night, settled down upon the hills, except when the quick lightning, followed soon by the crashing thunder, lighted up every thing with its sudden and awful gleam. I was always, when a child, frightened by the glare of the lightning, and by the terrible noise of the thunder, and many a time have I stopped my ears and hid my face in my mother's lap, that I might, if possible, shut out these fearful sights and sounds.

I have since learned to know that God can take care of us in the storm, as well as in the sunshine, and that the thunder and darkness and rain, which seem so fearful to us, are His way of watering the thirsty earth, and making the air and the sky more clear and beautiful. But I have always thought there was something more awful in the storms which used to break over my native hills, than in those which visit us in the more open country where I now dwell. The clouds would shut down so close upon the tops of the hills as to make the valleys fearfully dark; and the thunder echoing from mountain to mountain, filled the whole region with a wild tumult and noise. But often as I had trembled at the fury of the storms, never had I passed through one which

seemed so dreary and dark and terrible as this. The thought of the dear ones exposed to it, and the dreadful uncertainty which hung over them, made the moments pass away like hours.

In the pauses of the thunder, we would keep still and strain our ears to listen, if perchance we might catch the sound of voices; but nothing could we hear but the loud beating of the rain against the windows, and the mournful sighing of the wind as it swept through the trees. Little could we say or do to comfort each other, and my mother, seeing my own sorrow and anguish, could not find it in her heart, in that sad hour, to say any thing to make my trouble greater.

Slowly the time wore away, and at length the rain ceased. The dark clouds

had passed over into the east, and the sun, which was now sinking in the western heavens, suddenly broke forth in all his brightness, and threw his glorious covering of light over the woods and the fields. The rainbow in all its beauty spanned the black cloud, which only a little while ago had been so fearful in its power.

My mother, looking out upon the world thus made so beautiful to the eye, seemed to catch a feeling of courage and hope. "It is the bow of promise," said she, "and it is sent to cheer us in our hour of darkness and fear." Still the time passed wearily away, and our hearts often sank within us.

But just as the sun was setting, we heard the voice of my brother ringing out in clear full tones, and looking in

the direction of the sound, he soon came in sight with our darling Kitty in his arms, and my father soon came up with the other little truant. But oh, what a sight! Wet as though taken from the river, with the drenching rain, their clothes rent and torn in every part, their legs and ankles scratched and bleeding, the poor little wayfarers had evidently had a sorry time of it. But young blood is warm, and scratches soon heal on plump young legs; and so on being put into thick warm clothes, and having a nice supper and a good night's sleep, they got up in the morning sore and smarting it is true, but somewhat wiser children than they were the morning before.

They were found by my father and brother, not very far from home, but

after quite a long search. The poor, desolate things were crying in their loneliness, as if their little hearts would break, and it was the noise of their crying that guided those who were searching for them to the spot where they were. They had evidently been in a panic of fear, and had rushed around in their fright, tearing their clothes and limbs, but still keeping close to each other, and when they were found, they were sitting in very weariness upon the wet ground, and the dear, darling Kitty was nestled close to her brother's side.

So near as we could make out the case from the story which my little brother told, it was this. While they were playing together by the brook, a stranger came along the road, and seeing two pretty children, thought he would stop

and talk with them. I myself had seen the man when he was doing this, but I thought nothing of it, because in that lonely country, where one as he passes along would see very few persons, it was very common for strangers to stop and say a kind and pleasant word to us. It seems that he was one of those men who think, when they talk to children, they must tell them things to excite their wonder, without any regard to real truth.

And so, in his talk with my innocent little brother and sister, he told them that the brook by which they were playing was a most beautiful little brook, and that if they would follow it up to the place where it came from, they would find it running out from a *beautiful golden fountain.*

My father and mother did not talk to children in this way, and so we were all wont to believe what older people told us. The stranger chatted with the little prattlers in this loose, careless manner for a few moments, and passed on. After he was gone, Freddie began to think what a nice thing it would be to find this beautiful golden fountain, and so he took his little sister by the hand, who was not old enough to know what he was about, and off they started.

The rest of the story has already been told. The little darling Kitty, who tried to make the best of every thing, and who thought it was all right, had been lifted and pulled and pushed over the rocks and through the bushes, often falling down and hurting her, until at length the dark shower came upon them, and

the poor little things were filled with terror at the thunder and wind and pouring rain.

I have often thought since that time, as I have been passing along in the journey of life, that very many of our hopes and wishes and expectations were not any wiser than were those of my little brother and sister. We often think, when we set out upon some new path, or when we enter upon some new scene of life, that we are going to find that which will be as beautiful to us as that golden fountain would have been to them. And like them we often find, that what promises so fair, and fills us with such joyous hopes, leads us after a little while into trouble and sorrow and disappointment.

But there was one lesson which I then

learned, which I have never forgotten, and I trust I shall never forget. Though my father and mother did not punish me for my neglect, yet they talked to me so earnestly, and my own heart so sharply reproved me, that I have since tried to be more true and faithful to every trust committed to me. It only takes a little neglect and a little carelessness often, to bring about the greatest evil and sorrow. How many times have I shuddered at what might have been, if those poor little wanderers had not been so soon found — if they had been compelled to stay in the open fields or woods a single night. Wet and hungry, and filled with fear, they might have perished before the morning.

And another thing I learned, — that it is not right — that it is very wrong —

to impose upon little children, who naturally believe what is said to them, by telling them strange and wonderful things, that have no truth in them. Many people do this, because they love to see children puzzled, and hear what they will say. But there are true stories enough with which to amuse children, without making up falsehoods, and telling them things which have no reality in them.

CHAPTER V.

COUSIN ALICE'S STORY.

MY COUSIN Winnie has told a very pretty story about her kitten and the robins, and I guess I could tell some queer and funny things about our good old dog Ponto. He and I have played together a great deal, and we have had some very nice times.

But I think I will not tell you about him now, but about my dolls. I have had a great deal of comfort, and a great deal of trouble too, with my dolls.

The first one I had was when I was a very little girl. My mother made it all

herself. She sewed some cloth together, and stuffed it with cotton, and made some great fat arms and hands, but no fingers, some legs and feet without any toes, and then she took a pen and made the eyes and nose and mouth, and dressed it up in a little calico frock. I do not think now that she was ever very handsome, but when I first had her I thought a great deal of her, and used to play with her all day long. I have this dolly now, and I have some nicer ones too. But when I play school, or have a party, I like to get all the dolls I can, and so, although this doll has had one of her legs pulled off, and has lost both her arms, and has been sat down upon and trod upon a great many times, so that her face is very flat and dirty, she has to take a part along with the others,

though I think sometimes she looks rather ashamed of herself.

After a while my mother bought me another doll for a Christmas present. She did not tell me when she bought it, but after I had gone to bed in the evenings, she dressed it very nicely, and on Christmas morning, when I woke up early, I jumped out of bed, and felt around on the door, and there I found my stocking hanging on the latch, and this doll in it. I found some candy, and sugar plums too, and some other things which I shall not stop to tell you about. I took this dolly back into bed with me, where it was nice and warm, and wished her a merry Christmas, and talked to her, and told her stories until it was time for me to get up. This dolly was a great deal prettier than my other one.

She had beautiful plump red cheeks, and black eyes, and a funny little nose, and her hair was very neatly parted.

But I told you in the beginning that I have had a good deal of trouble as well as pleasure with my dolls, and a very sad thing happened to this dolly after I had had her a few days. One day I was playing with her, and I laid her on the floor and was running around after something, when I was not careful, and stepped on her head, and that beautiful face and head were all crushed and broken into very small pieces, and she was a sad sight to see.

I had a good hard cry that day, for my mother said that she could not buy me dolls unless I took better care of them than that. But when my father came home I told him all about my

troubles, and he said if I would be more careful he would buy me another doll.

So, sure enough, in two or three days he brought me home another very beautiful dolly. This was not like the last one. Her head was hard as stone, and her face was very smooth and shiny. I thought her mouth and nose and eyes and hair were prettier than the last one. I could dress her up in the same clothes that my mother had made for the one that was broken. I kept this dolly a good while, and had very nice times with her.

But one day, when my dolly was lying on the little bed which I had made for her in one corner of the room, up in the chamber where I slept, all nice and warm and quiet, and I had gone out to play with some little girls who had come

to see me, my little brother Willie, who was two years younger than I, and who was just as full of mischief as he could be, went up stairs very slily, when my mother did not know it, and he took my dear little dolly and pounded her against the side of the house, and broke her head off. My mother heard the noise, and went up, and there was Willie, and he had hold of dolly's legs, and was striking her against the wall, and there lay the beautiful head on the floor.

My mother caught hold of him and asked him what he was about, and he said the dolly had been naughty and he was punishing her. He had heard me, you know, tell my dolly that she was naughty, when I was playing with her, and I made believe punish her, but I only used to pat her on her cheek, and

scold her a little. But this was just like a boy.

I do not see what boys were made for. They don't seem to do any good, and they are always plaguing the little girls, and doing mischief in one way or another. They don't care any thing about dolls or baby-houses or flowers. They always want to be riding on a stick, with a whip, or pounding on a board, and they are so rude and rough, that you cannot do any thing with them. The little girls who came to see me said that that was just the way *their* brothers did. If they built a nice baby-house, and had it all fixed up with little dishes, when they had gone away, their brothers would come and tear it all down. I think it is real mean, and they ought to be whipt, every one of them.

One of the little girls told a story which she had heard from her mother,—how a number of little girls who used to play together a great deal, had built a neat baby-house, and had it all fitted up nicely with little pieces of broken china, but when they went away and left it, somebody would come and knock it all down, and they did not know who it was. This had happened a good many times. So one day they thought they would hide themselves near by and watch, and after a while a little boy came and went to knocking the house down. So they all sprang out from their hiding-place and caught him, and there were so many of them they held him and tied his hands and feet together, and took and laid him in a mud-puddle. I think it was good enough for him, but boys are such great,

strong, rough fellows, and they would kick and strike so, that I should not dare to do such a thing.

But my father soon bought me another doll, just like it, because, you see, I was not to blame about that, and then next Christmas my dear Uncle William, who is here now, he sent me a most beautiful dolly. Her eyes will open and shut, and she has soft and silky hair, — real hair, just like mine, and I keep her laid up in a drawer, and only take her out once in a while, when little girls come to see me. Besides, I have one or two more, which have been given me, so that I can make up a fine party.

I think I have told you enough now about my dolls, so I guess I will stop.

When Cousin Alice had finished her

story, little Walter, who had been sitting very quietly, spoke up and said that he guessed those little girls could n't have tied him up in that way, and laid him in a mud-puddle.

CHAPTER VI.

AUNT MARY'S STORY.

I REALLY DO not know as I have any story to tell. A great many things have happened to me in my lifetime, and I have been trying to think of some of them. But though I can remember a great many little things, which might amuse the children for a moment, if I should tell them, yet when I try to put them together so as to make one good long story, I do not think I succeed very well.

However, when Aunt Susan was telling her story about her little brother

and sister that were lost, it brought to my mind some things of a similar kind, which I had known of, and as I cannot very well tell one long story, I will tell two or three short ones.

I believe almost all little children have a fancy at some time to run away. I know that some are a great deal worse about this than others, but almost all of them, at one time or another, if they have a chance, will steal off, and have to be hunted up. I do not suppose that they always mean to run away, when they start off in this manner. Sometimes, I have no doubt, they go wandering along without thinking what they are doing, looking at things around them, until they do not know where they are. But a great many of them are little rogues, and the moment a door is left

open, and they see that no one is looking, they are up and away.

Now there was my dear little Nellie, who died a few summers ago. She was one of the best and happiest little children that ever I saw in my life. She made nobody any trouble, but was able always to amuse and take care of herself. It was like a pleasant song of music in the house all the day long, to hear her prattling voice while she was busy at her play. Whether she was in the same room with me, or was up stairs, or up in the attic, I always used to feel that she was doing no mischief, so thoughtful and careful and true was she at all times. And yet this dear little creature took it into her head one day, when she was three years old, to run away, and the time she took for doing it, and the manner, were the oddest you can think.

Without saying any thing to any one, she went up in the attic and found some old clothes, that belonged to the older children, and put them on over her own, but she could not hook and button them up very well, and then she put on an old bonnet, so that she was one of the drollest looking little figures that ever you saw in your life. Then she came quietly down from the attic, and down the front stairs, and went out the front door, which happened to be partly open, and started off. It was a rainy day in summer, and the warm, still rain at the time was coming down quite fast, but she did not mind any thing about that. We had several neighbors living quite near, and one of them happened to look out of the window, and she wondered where such a queer looking child as that came

from, and why she was walking about in that quiet and easy manner in the pouring rain. She watched her for some time, as she was slowly going away and thought there was something very strange about it, so she took her umbrella and went after her, and when she came up to her, and looked in her face, it was our Nellie. She asked her where she was going. She said she was going to see her grandma. Now the fun of it was, that she had no grandma living within twenty miles of where we lived. She asked her if she did not want to go back home and see her mamma. She was very willing to go back, so the good woman led her to our door. No one in the house knew that she had gone out, and it was very funny indeed to see such a droll-looking creature as she was, coming in, all dripping with the rain.

But one of our neighbors lost a little boy once, and it was a more serious matter. The first I knew of it, his mother came into our house, in great haste, about the middle of the afternoon, and wanted to know if any of us had seen her little Johnny. He was a happy little fellow, between two and three years old, and his mother said he had been playing about the door, but was gone, and they could find nothing of him. She had been to almost all the other houses that were near, and she could hear nothing, and she began to be anxious. It always touches the heart to know that a little child is lost and cannot be found, and especially it makes the hearts of fathers and mothers who have little ones of their own, feel very tender and sad, and they are willing to do every thing they

can to find the little wanderer. So the men around all left their work, and the women, too, and they went in every direction, but for a long, long time they could get no trace of him. The longer they looked the more anxious they grew, because it seemed as if they had been to every place where he could possibly be. The father and mother were very much troubled, as well they might be. They did not know but he had gone to the river, which was a little way off, and had fallen in and been drowned. But all the people kept up the search, and others who lived further off, when they heard of it, came to help. It was now almost night, and little Johnny had not been heard of.

Then some men started to go over into the fields, further than any one had

been before. There was a road leading from the barn out into the fields, where they went with the cart and oxen, and Johnny had sometimes been there with his father. But they thought they had looked far enough that way. There were large, rough pastures beyond, which stretched on and on a long distance, but they did not think he could be there. However, the men thought they would spread themselves out so that they could look over the ground for a wide space, and go up further into the pastures. It was after sundown when a man found him fast asleep by a rock. He had wandered about till he was tired, and then he sat down and fell asleep. What a shout of joy went up from those fields, one calling to another that the lost boy was found! They hurried back with

him to his mother, whose heart was so full that she could not speak. She could only take him in her arms, and fondle and kiss him, and drop her warm tears of joy upon his face.

The little fellow was not hurt at all, because the weather was so warm and pleasant, only I guess he was very glad indeed to see his mother again.

But there is one story more of a boy who was lost. He was older, and, as my story will show, he was a very naughty boy. He did not live in our neighborhood, but in a village a little way off. His parents did not govern him very well, and he was allowed to be out evenings, playing with other boys, when he had much better have been at home, reading his books. One evening he had been out in this way, and nine o'clock

came and he did not return. His parents began to be anxious about him, but they waited a little longer, and as he did not come, his father went out to see if he could find him. The boys that had been out at play had gone home, and the streets were mostly empty, and the lights were blown out in many of the houses, because the people had gone to bed. He looked for him for some time, and not finding him, he thought he would go back and see if he had reached home. But he was not there, and it was now ten o'clock. Then the father and mother began to be anxious indeed. So they called up some of their neighbors, and told them their trouble, and the men, some fifteen or twenty of them, turned out with lanterns and went in every direction to see if they could find him.

After a while they came back, but none of them had heard any thing of him. Then it was agreed that they should start again, and should wake up others to help them, and because they would be so widely scattered, it was agreed, if the boy was found, that the village bell should be struck two or three times to call them all back. So they went off, and spent almost all the night in hunting for the fellow, but in vain.

But the next morning he made his appearance. He had been in the evening to one of the neighbors, whose house was a little way off, and told them that he had come up to sleep with another boy that lived there. He did not tell them that his parents had not given him leave to do so. They supposed that he had liberty to come, and as the house

was so far apart, they had not been called upon to help find him, and so they knew nothing about what had been going on until the morning.

Such a boy as that, if he does not mend his ways, will be likely to come to some bad end. The men who had lost their night's sleep in hunting for him, would not be likely to look upon him with a very pleasant eye, and I don't think, if he were really lost, they would be apt to turn out from their warm beds again to find him.

CHAPTER VII.

UNCLE WILLIAM'S STORY.

AUNT SUSAN and Aunt Mary have both told us stories about lost children; and when Aunt Mary was saying that she thought almost all little children had a fancy, at one time or other, to run away, I saw her look at me as much as to say, "and some older ones, too." And so I suppose that I must tell you my story.

I was born on the wild and rocky coast of Massachusetts, down in the region of Cape Ann. My father was a farmer, and as soon as I was old enough

to help him, I was put to work upon the farm. The land about there was good enough, when you could get at it. I remember that the farmers around used to boast of their rich lots, and I suppose they were rich where the rocks and stones did not cover them all up. It was one part, and a very large part too, of our work to dig out these rocks and stones from all the fields where we wanted to plant and sow, and cut our hay; and build them into great, thick, heavy stone-walls. Many of the farms, and my father's among the rest (all that part of them which we worked upon), were cut up into very small lots, and the reason why the lots were so small was, that there might be walls enough to use up the stones that were dug out of them.

The rocks in the pasture-grounds we

did not mind any thing about, and it used often to be said there, as I know now is said in many of the rocky parts of New England, that the sheep ought to have their noses sharpened so that they might stick them down between the stones and eat the sweet grass. Many a time, in the early morning, when the cold dew was on the ground, have I been across these stony pastures barefoot, stepping all the while upon the stones, because they were warm with the heat which the sun had given them the day before, and they were so near together that I could step from one to another without any trouble, and so keep my feet off from the cold, wet grass. There are a great many men who have been brought up in New England, and a great many boys that are

now growing up, that could tell you they had done so too.

I don't think I ever took any great fancy to farming. The men who owned the farms seemed to be very proud of them, and to take great delight in them, and I have no doubt they led a very happy life. I think I should like it now a great deal better than I did then. I used to go to school about four months in the winter, and this I liked, for several reasons. In the first place, I did not have to work; in the next place, I met with other boys and had a good chance to play; and then, besides all the rest, I rather loved to study, and was what would be called a pretty good scholar.

But if the farm did not please me, there was one thing that did, — and that was the sea, — the great, restless, noisy,

rolling ocean. From the upper windows of our house we could see it quite plainly, but we had a much better view of it from some parts of the farm. Indeed our pastures, where the cows and oxen fed, reached entirely out to the rough and craggy coast, so that we did not have to build any fences on that side of our farm. How often in the warm summer days, when I have been hoeing corn or turning the hay, and the hot sun was beating down upon me, have I stopped a moment to watch the white sails, sometimes near the shore, and sometimes far out upon the sea, and as I looked upon them, gliding along so quietly, how often did I wish that I could in some way escape from the farm and live the free, roving life of the sailor. I ventured sometimes to tell my father

so, but I used to speak of it more often to my mother, because she was very kind to me, and I did not stand in so much fear of her. But I found that neither of them wanted to hear any thing of my going to sea. They wanted me to stay at home, and live with them, and work upon the farm.

But it was not alone in the bright summer days that I loved the sea. Even in the stillest night, when hardly a breath of air seemed to be stirring, there was the low, wild murmur of the surf, as it broke along the rocky shore, with the rising and the falling tide, filling the ear with a strange music; and many a night, in my little dark chamber, have I been lulled to sleep by this saddest and yet sweetest of all songs.

But when the great winter storms

broke upon us, and the sea was driven into fury by the east wind, then the breaking of the waves against the rocks was grand and terrible. The solid earth seemed to shake, and all the air was filled with the wild noise. Often when these fierce storms were raging, the salt spray from the dashing waves, borne onward by the wind, would beat against our windows all the night long. Then I used to shudder at the thought of being a sailor, and I often used to lie awake and pity the poor fellows who might at that hour be out on the ocean in their little vessels, struggling with the wind and the waves.

But when fair weather came again, I forgot all my fears, and still I longed for the sea. Sometimes, just at night, if I had worked well through the day, my father

would allow me to go down to the shore and fish. Many a time, as I have been sitting among the rocks, with the low murmur of the sea around me, waiting for the lazy fish to bite, I have watched the beautiful and changing light which the setting sun threw over the waters, making the ocean so lovely in my eyes, that it seemed to me I could not bear to wait any longer. But in all my talks with my father and mother, I saw that there was very little chance that I should ever gain their consent to my going to sea.

And so by degrees I began to think of doing a very naughty thing. I thought of running away. I knew from books which I had read, that this had been often done, and I set myself to plan how it might be done in my case.

The evil companion.

It was quite a long time after I first began to think of it, before I did it. But I kept turning it over in my mind, and said nothing to any one.

This wrong purpose was made stronger in me by a visit which I made about this time to a neighboring seaport town, where I saw ships and sailors in great numbers, and where I fell in with a companion who was nearly of the same age and was of the same mind with myself. I had many long and secret talks with him about the sea, and as he seemed to understand the whole matter a great deal better than I did, I gave myself wholly up to his influence. He made a great friend of me, and I felt very much honored by his attentions; but I have known since that he was a very poor friend indeed, and all his talk only had

the effect to make me more restless and unhappy, and to strengthen in me the spirit of disobedience to my parents.

One day in the spring, when I was fourteen years old, my father had scolded me because he thought I was lazy, and had not done so much work as he expected. In the first warm spring days I think we are all apt to feel very weak and languid, and the idea of hard labor upon the farm was very disagreeable to me. I had just finished the winter school, and now I saw that the heavy spring and summer work was coming on, and my father had, as I thought, been cross to me, and I resolved that that night I would run away.

So when bedtime came I went up stairs as usual, as if to go to bed. But I did not go to bed. I kept very still, and

packed up my clothes in a little bundle which I tied up in a handkerchief, and I took two or three dollars, which I had picked up in one way and another, and put in my pocket. Then I waited until I was very sure that all the folks were asleep, when I raised the window carefully and dropt my bundle on to the ground. I listened a few moments to see if anybody had heard this noise, and as all was still, I stole softly in my stocking-feet down the back stairs, which were away from where my father and mother slept, and out of the back door. I put on my shoes, which I had brought in my hand, as quickly as I could, without stopping to tie them, and caught up my bundle and ran. I think I have forgotten to tell you that I had no brother. There were three sisters younger than

myself, but I was the only son my father ever had.

Well there I was, out in the open air, in the still night, with the stars shining upon me, actually running away. I would not have thought, a few years before, that I could have done so wicked and cruel a thing. I say *cruel*, for I might have known well enough that it would almost break the hearts of my father and mother, and I did know it, only I did not allow myself to think much about that. I ran for some time, until I was quite a good distance away from the house, and then I thought I would stop and tie up my shoes. After which I went on pretty briskly, sometimes walking and sometimes running.

I was old enough now not to be very much afraid of the darkness of night,

and yet I was not quite so bold and courageous as I thought I should be. I confess that I was a good deal startled, many times, by noises which I heard, and by objects on before me along the road which I could only dimly see. I have no doubt that I was a good deal more timid than I should have been if I had been doing right. I knew the road I was going, for I had been on it before, but it seemed very lonely to me now. When I came to a spot of woods, I went through them on tiptoe, and in a very lively manner, I can tell you, and it seemed good to come in sight of a house. Though the people were all asleep and the lights blown out, yet it seemed like having company to be near a dwelling. Now and then I passed a house in which a dim, faint light was burning in the

chamber, and I fancied some one there might be sick or dying, and I went very softly by such houses, lest some one should hear or see me.

I was on the road to Salem, and towards morning a man came along who had some things to sell, and was going to Salem to sell them. He had taken a very early start, and when he overtook me I asked him for a ride, which he granted. He asked me some questions about myself, and I meant to deceive him and did deceive him.

But I must not make my story so long. When I reached Salem I lay still and kept out of sight through the day as much as I could, spending a part of the day in sleep. When night came again, I started for Boston. When I reached the city in the early morning, I skulked

about the wharves, inquiring of persons I met whether they knew of any one who wanted to hire a boy to go to sea. At last I heard of a man who was in want of a boy, and I found him as soon as I could and made a bargain with him. His vessel was to sail the next day, which was all the better for me, as I wanted to get out of sight of land as soon as possible. I kept very shy all that day, for fear my father, or some one whom I knew would come along and break up my project. I do not think that this sea-captain ought to have made any such bargain with me, without finding out who I was, and where I came from, and whether I had leave to go. But at the time, I was very grateful to him for making such short work of the matter. I did not stand very long about

the wages which he was to give me, because my great object then was to find a chance to get away.

I soon came to know that this captain was such a man that he would not be very apt to ask whether a thing was right or wrong, if it only suited him to do it, and I might have known, if I had stopt to think, that a man who would hire a boy in this way, would not be likely to treat him very well after he had hired him. But I was so bent upon getting off, that I had no time to reason about these things.

But I had time enough to think of them after we were fairly out at sea. I had never been away from home before to stay; and now, when all the excitement of getting off was over, a dreadful home-sickness came upon me. I would have

given every thing if I could only have been put back again into my quiet home. At night, when I had crept into my little narrow and dirty bunk, with all the smells of the vessel and cargo in my nose, and the noise of the waves dashing against the sides in my ears, I used to lie and weep and sob aloud, thinking of father and mother and home, and the little sisters in their white night-gowns, that perhaps were just then saying their prayers and going to bed. But in the daytime, if the sailors saw any of this, they used to laugh at me, and call me a *greeny*, so that I tried as hard as I could to hide all these feelings from them. And because I had to strive so hard to conceal them during the day, they were all the more ready to break out as soon as I was alone and in the dark.

I had sometimes thought my father cross to me, and as I have told you, I ran away at the time I did, because I was offended with him for scolding me. But here was a man who ordered me around all day, and threatened to flog me with the rope's end, and who swore at me, and talked to me in a way I had never been talked to before. When I thought of these things, and remembered how kind, on the whole, my father and mother had been to me, and especially my mother, who loved me, her first-born, her only son, as she loved her own soul, and who would often stoop to kiss me, when she came into my chamber, after I had gone to bed, even after I had grown to be a big boy, — when I remembered these things, and thought how bad they were now feeling because I had left

them, it seemed to me sometimes that I could throw myself into the angry sea to hide my sorrow and shame.

I had been in such a hurry to get away, that I had not once asked where the vessel was going, nor did I know until we had been out a day or two, when one of the sailors told me that we were bound for the South of Europe, — for the Mediterranean. I knew then, that much as I wanted to get back, it was useless to think about doing it at present, and that I must go through the voyage. But I resolved that if ever I reached my native land again, I would go at once to my poor father and mother and ask their forgiveness for what I had done, and would try ever after to be a dutiful and obedient son.

I shall not stop to tell you much about

the voyage, for it is not my object to relate to you the wonders of the sea, or the strange things which may be seen in other lands. I want rather to make you know how wicked it is for a boy to treat his parents as I did, and how bad he will feel, if he is not entirely hardened, when he comes to think of what he has done.

Well, the time wore away very slowly We reached at last the port where we were bound and unloaded our cargo, and then we cruised about here and there, stopping at different places, often staying some time, and taking in cargo to bring back. At last we were ready to sail, and my heart bounded for joy when we came out of the Straits of Gibraltar, and saw the broad ocean before us, which was the pathway to my native land and my home. The captain's treatment of me

had always been harsh, and once, when he was in anger, and had been drinking, he struck me. But I could put up with almost any thing now, because I hoped so soon to be out from under his hateful rule, and to find my way again to my mother's heart, which I knew would be full of love for me, notwithstanding I had abused that love.

It was late in the autumn when we drew near our own loved shore. We had had rather a rough and stormy voyage all the way across, and had been often driven out of our course, making the time much longer than I had thought it would be. But now our trials seemed almost over, and in a day or two more I hoped to stand upon my native shore. But our troubles were not yet over. There came upon us one of those long and fearful

storms from the north-east, which are the terror of our coast, and which have so often strewn our shores with the wrecks of ships and the dead bodies of men. By degrees the wind increased in violence, until it howled through our rigging and the waves rolled as I had never seen them roll before, except when I had stood on the safe foundation of my father's farm, where they could not harm me. The air was filled with the driving storm, half rain and half snow, which froze the ropes, and every thing which we had to handle, and almost blinded us when we attempted to open our eyes to attend to our duties. And I can tell you, at such times on shipboard, duties come very thick and fast. Every one has to exert himself to the utmost, and there is no sleep or rest until the danger is over.

When the night closed in upon us, with this storm raging in all its power, it was the most fearful and gloomy night that I had ever passed. In the midst of my work, I had time enough to think that after all I might never see my poor father and mother again, and that it was perhaps to be the just punishment for my disobedience, to perish almost within sight of my father's house. Our great object now was to keep out at sea so that we might not be driven, by the sweep of the wind and waves, on to the rocky shore, where we should have been dashed to pieces in a moment. This would take us far out of our course, but that was not a matter to be thought of at such a time as this. We must keep off the coast if possible at any cost.

Well, we survived the storm, else I

should not have been here to-night to tell you about it. We had gone so far out of our way that it took a week to get back again and into Boston harbor. But we reached it at last, and as soon as I could be released and had received my pay, I went straight to my father's house as I had resolved to do. I found the family all alive and well, though my parents had been full of grief for me, and full of doubt and care and anxiety on my account. They had had no certain news of me since I left home, though they thought I had gone to sea, because I had so often talked of it.

I asked their forgiveness, in the best way I could, and they forgave me, and clasped me to their hearts again, as parents will who have found a long-lost son.

After a time my father told me, if I did not like to work upon the farm, I might go into a store with a friend of his in Boston. This suited me very well, and so in the course of time I became a merchant. But so long as my father and mother lived, I used to go very often to see them, and I think I really tried more to make them happy, because of the great wrong which I had once done them.

After Uncle William had finished his story, Winnie's mother said that it was high time for the little folks to be in bed, and so after they had kissed all round, and all agreed that they had had a very nice thanksgiving, they went chatting up to their rooms, and there we will leave them, wishing them happy dreams.

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