



THE
LITTLE
NIGHTCAP LETTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"NIGHTCAPS," "NEW NIGHTCAPS," "BABY NIGHTCAPS,"
ETC., ETC.

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FANNY BARROW,
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Southern District of New York.

Dedication.

THESE LITTLE NIGHTCAP LETTERS

ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED

TO MY DAUGHTER,

"LITTLE ALICE."

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NIGHTCAP LETTER No. 2 FROM AUNT FANNY.

You little darling:

What *do* you think happened the other day? why, a lady came to see me, bringing with her just about the dearest little Kitty that ever lived. Not a Kitty with whiskers, and four paws, and a fur coat, but a sweet little girl *named* Kitty, with lovely blue eyes, a great many soft brown curls, and the same number of sweet rosy lips that you have. How many is *that*, I should like to know? I had never seen the lady, or the little girl before, and of course I did not know their names until afterwards. So I bowed, and smiled, and looked as pleasant as ever I could.

Then Kitty said in a sweet trembling voice—"Is you Aunt Fanny?"

I laughed a little bit, and answered, "Yes, dear."

What happened then? Why in a moment she ran up to me, climbed upon a chair close by,—threw her arms around my neck, and gave me such a precious little smothering hug, and so many sweet kisses, with her soft face pressed with all her might upon my cheek, that I almost lost my breath, and was perfectly astonished, as well as delighted.

Then the little girl said: "Oh thank you, dear Aunt Fanny, *twenty-ten* times, for my Baby Nightcaps! I love them! I love you! I love you *dreadfully*!" Oh! how glad I was to hear that! I was glad "*twenty-ten*" times. It was sweeter to me, than a whole basket full of sugar candies would be to you—and I kissed her on both her round dimpled cheeks, and sat down, and took her on my lap, and hugged her to my heart, and said—"what a darling! what a dear little thing!"

Then I looked at the lady. She was laughing and blushing, and I was laughing and blushing, and the little girl was laughing and blushing. Don't you think we three were having a very funny kind of time? *I* did.

At last the lady said: "I hope you will excuse me for bringing Kitty to see you; but she begged so hard for 'just one little look at Aunt Fanny,' I could not bear to refuse her. I am afraid she has taken a great deal more than 'one little look.' I hope she has not kissed a piece out of your cheek?"

At this, Kitty looked up in great alarm at my cheek—but seeing that it was not bleeding, and had no hole in it, she patted it softly with her little tender dimpled hand, and said: "Aunt Fanny, Aunt Fanny," in a little speck of a whisper to herself a great many times.

Then I said: "I am so glad to know that you were pleased with Baby Nightcaps. Would you like me to ask poor lame Charley's mother for more?"

With a joyful little scream, she hugged me again, and kissed my cheek—*very softly* this time, for fear of hurting me, and said: "Oh! Aunt Fanny! if you only will, I will give you a whole paper full of *perlasses* candy, and one of my new *handkerchicks*; and when you are

old and blind, I will take you in my arms, and carry you up stairs, and put you in my lap *and teach you your letters*, and ask mamma to read the Bible to you—all about Joseph, you know, and his wicked *bredders*; it will make you *ki*."

Wasn't she a cunning little thing? I could not help laughing, to think of such a little mite of a child, talking of taking me in her arms; and then I could not help the tears coming, at her offer to have her own mamma read the Bible to me—was it not sweet? *You* would have done so too, wouldn't you? You see, it must have been Kitty's greatest pleasure, to have God's Holy Bible read to her; so she promised me, what she thought was the very best thing in the whole world. And so it is.

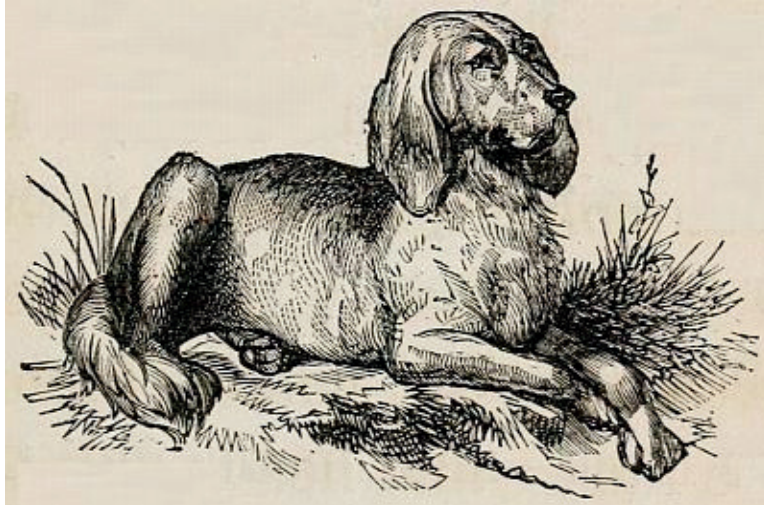
You may be sure, that I told her, I would try to get the stories very soon.

Pretty soon Kitty and her mamma went away; but not before we had given each other one more real good kiss, and I had prayed in my heart that God would bless the precious little child, and guide me with my new book, so that it would help Kitty and you to be good, obedient children, His precious little lambs here upon earth, and His bright, beautiful angels in Heaven.

In the evening I put on my bonnet and shawl, and went to see lame Charley's mother. As I rang the bell, I heard such a quantity of laughing voices, and so many little feet pattering, I was almost certain, that at least twenty cousins must have come to town to help them have a good time: but when the door was opened, I saw they were all Nightcap Children, rushing down stairs together. They had gone up to wash their faces and hands and brush their hair, and were coming down all laughing and talking at once, so you may be sure it made a great noise.

Bless their little chattering tongues, and pattering feet! You can't expect children to be as grave and solemn as judges—of course not. I, for one, would not give a pin for a child that did not make a noise—that is—a pleasant noise.

So they were jumping and tumbling down, when I entered, and in a moment they were all about me crying. "How-de-do, Aunt Fanny? Come in, come in, mamma is in the parlor, and Charley is sitting in her lap—and the TREMENDOUS DOG is asleep on the rug—and we are not to have a Nightcap story to-night—but something grand! splendid!"



THE TREMENDOUS DOG!

"Somesing 'tonishing," chimed in little Minnie—"tome! kick!"—by which she meant me to "come quick"—and not to tell me to kick anybody—oh dear, no!

So we all hurried along—and how I got into the room, without stepping upon some of their dear little toes, I am sure I don't know, but nobody seemed to be hurt—and heads and toes came in all safe—and Charley lifted up his sweet pale face for a kiss, and his mother shook hands with me, and then we all sat down, and the boys said "hush," and the girls said "hush," till it sounded so much like a room brimful of cats sneezing, that I laughed; and that made the children laugh, and then of course they had to jump up and down in their seats, and the girls had to twirl round and make cheeses, and this made the TREMENDOUS DOG laugh, which he did by wagging his tail, like a flag in a high wind, and giving two or three short barks, and it was just as good as going to Barnum's Museum, to see such a "happy family." If you had asked *Barnum* about it, he would have said it was ever so much better.

At last I said: "Dear little Charley, I have put the stories told to you, and Minnie, and the rest, into three Nightcap books. They have pleased the children very much. I know this, because I have received a great many letters; such nice letters! telling me how the children laughed and cried, and not one single word in any of them to say that anybody put his mouth out of joint, yawning over the stories. Instead of that, they all want more; and this very day a sweet little girl came to see me to ask for more. She was not like poor Oliver Twist, asking for food for her body. Oh no! she was a plump, merry, rosy-cheeked darling, just like Minnie, and eat just as much good bread and milk as she wanted, and molasses candy, too—for she promised to give me ever so much, if I would only give her another Nightcap book—and what is more and better, she has promised to read the Bible to me, when I am old and blind."

"Did you ever!" shouted the children; "Aunt Fanny, old and blind! We'll read to you, too, the whole Bible, and all the books in the bookcase beside! When are you going to be? Will you walk with a long black cane like old Granny Van Winkle? Do begin pretty soon, because we want to be kind to you, and read to you, too!"

"Ah—no!" said the sweet voice of lame Charley. "Dear Aunt Fanny, we *don't* want you to be old and blind; you shall have all mamma's pretty stories without it. I am glad the children like them. *I* think them lovely; my back does not hurt me near so much while she is telling them, and when I die, which I think will be very soon now, I hope the children will think of me sometimes, and love my darling mamma, who has given them and me so many pleasant hours. This is my birthday, Aunt Fanny. I am ten years old to-day. Perhaps it is my last birthday. See what my brothers and sisters have given to me."

In the midst of a sad silence, (for the children were now quite still, and were looking at Charley, with their eyes full of love and tears,) I went up to a table, at which he had pointed, and saw what looked like a large tin box. It proved to be a splendid magic lantern! The children had saved all their money for many months to be able to buy it, and the little mother told me, that when they came in a body that morning and gave it to Charley, with their dear love and many kisses, their faces glowing with pleasure, it was the sweetest sight in the world to see, and Charley thought he could never thank or love them enough, and that very morning he made this little prayer, and added it to his others:

"Oh God, I am a poor little suffering child. Very often, I cannot help crying with pain. But many children suffer as much as I do, and have not one of my blessings; and Jesus, my Saviour, suffered far more. He was innocent and good, while we, for whom He suffered, are sometimes very naughty. Please, God, to forgive me for being naughty, and bless and love my dear brothers and sisters who are so kind to me, and please bless my darling mother, and if I die before another year, may we all meet again in heaven, I pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

The tears came into my eyes as I listened to this little prayer—and I bent my face down and kissed Charley's white forehead to hide them—and whispered to him that I would tell it to the children outside in the world, and perhaps this little prayer might be learned by some other sick child—and it would comfort them, and I would also give them the new stories—at which he smiled and said: "Oh, yes, do!" and all the rest said: "Do, Aunt Fanny; and stay to-night—and see the magic lantern—then you can tell them about that, too, you know; they'll be so glad, they won't know what to do."

So I staid; and pretty soon there was a great scampering, and bustling, and climbing up on chairs, to fasten a large sheet over the opening of one of the doors, and then the grandest of the company—which consisted of Charley, the TREMENDOUS DOG, and myself—were put, with a great many polite speeches, into the best places in front; and the rest shook, and jumped, and tumbled themselves into seats behind us—and all the lights were put out, and everybody was in a perfect state of delightful expectation, as they shouted: "Here we are, mamma, with all our eyes staring at the sheet ready for the show."

Then the little mother went into the next room with the magic lantern, and lighted a lamp inside, and placed it close to the sheet. In a moment, a large, bright circle of light appeared on the sheet—and in a moment more, we saw a splendid picture of Daniel in the Lions' Den; the lions with their fierce-looking mouths wide open, and their sharp claws spread out as if they would snap up Daniel the very next instant—upon which the children

raised such a shout that I thought my head was coming off—and it was quite fortunate that the picture was changed to one of Moses in the Bulrushes, which delighted the children beyond every thing; but when there came a picture of little Samuel praying—a low murmur of—"Oh! how lovely! what a good little Samuel! how I love him!" sounded softly through the room.

There was one picture of a cross old school ma'am, with a great hook nose, and a long whip, looking so savage at three poor little children that did not seem to know their lessons—that Minnie cried out:



THE PICTURE IN THE MAGIC LANTERN.

"Oh! see the poor chillens! they don't know their A, B, C. Ah! I so sorry for them!" and then all the children said: "Poor things! why don't they run away—I would! Because she looks so cross! let's scratch a smile on her face with a pin, and *make* her look pleasant."

But the best picture of all was Noah's Ark. First the ark came on alone—then a plank seemed to be put down—then came the great elephants, lions, tigers, and bears, marching up the plank two and two into the ark—and after them all the rest of the animals in the world, getting smaller and smaller, until little wee monkeys, and kittens, and mice, and robins, and grasshoppers, and blind beetles, and big spiders, and tumble-bugs, ran and hopped, and skipped, and crawled up the plank in such quantities, that it was quite a wonder they were not all suffocated in such a crowd. But didn't the children clap their hands and cry: "Look! look!" when Noah and his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their families, marched gravely past, looking straight before them, and went into the ark, and the ark sailed slowly off! It was perfect! they wished they could have gone into the ark, too, to put apples into the elephant's trunk, and play with the monkeys, and

count all the animals—George guessed there must have been at least a thousand—while Annie thought a million went in. How many do you think, you dear little darling?

The magic lantern was a great success, and Minnie said: "the magic *nightcat* was the bestest of all."

After the show was over, I kissed everybody, and went home quite happy in the promise of my new stories—and you may be sure, you dear little poppet, that Kitty, and you, and all the darling children shall have them as fast as the printer can print them. If you like them, just go to Mr. Appleton's, and coax him to tell you where I live; and then run up to my house on your dear little feet, and give one real good kiss to your loving Aunt Fanny.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE evening the little nightcap mother said: "Children, I have had a most charming present. It is a copy of some letters and stories that were written and told to your little friend, Bella Curtis. They are a kind of baby stories, for children like Minnie. Do you think you shall like them? Do *you* Charley?"

Then the children all shouted out "Certainly! Of course! the baby stories are the best! no, not the best, but just as good as the *old* stories—yes, mamma, do read them. Letters! why that is something new—how very nice."

"But I don't want to hear A—B—C," cried little Minnie, who was just learning her letters, and thought it very hard work—"I don't like letters a bit."

How the children did laugh when they saw Minnie's long face, and heard her queer speech; but they soon explained to her, that these letters were a new sort of delightful story—upon which she folded her little fat hands and sat down quite comforted, that these letters had nothing to do with her A, B, C.

And Charley said: "I love that dear little Bella, mamma, and I shall be so pleased to hear her letters. I thank her very much for sending them to you."

Then the children seated themselves, and puckered up their mouths—so as to keep all the little laughs in. They couldn't keep their eyes from sparkling; but as that could be done without making a noise—it was rather a help, as it showed how delighted they expected to be—and gave the little mother such a happy look, that they came very near all rushing upon her to kiss her; but they managed to keep still, and the new nightcap letters began as follows:—

THE NIGHTCAP LETTERS, HOW THEY CAME TO BE WRITTEN.

BELLA'S mother was quite ill; and the doctor said she must go for awhile to the sweet, sunny South—far away from the cold March winds.

Poor little Bella did not want her mother to go. When she heard of it, she began to cry, and climbed up into her mother's lap, and kissing her cheek said: "Stay with Bella, mamma, do please; Bella will take care of you, and make you well."

"But the doctor says I must go, my darling," answered her mother. "If you cry, it will make me worse, because I shall feel so miserable to see you crying; but you mean to be good, don't you? and when I get to Charleston, I will write you ever so many little letters one after the other, and you must tell papa what to say, and he will write the answers. Won't that be nice? The postman will bring you your letters, and then you must pay him two cents apiece for every one of them, think of that! Dear me! how much money it will take! do you think you will have money enough?"

"My *pasense*," exclaimed Bella; "what a heap of letters! Oh, how glad I am! I'll buy every one, mamma! I'll go and count my money now!"

So she ran to her drawer, and took out a little velvet purse. It looked very fat and heavy.

Then she sat down on the carpet and opened it, and out tumbled ever so many bright pennies into her lap—quite enough to astonish the postman, and make him wish he could sell her six letters at once. Bella clapped her hands and laughed, and thumped her heels merrily up and down, and made the pennies jingle in her lap so pleasantly, that it seemed as if they were singing a little song.

The thought of the letters was such a comfort to Bella, that she saw her mother's trunks packed without crying a bit, though a poor little sigh would come out once in a while; but she told Edith, her elder sister, that she meant to behave in the "*goodest manner*," and almost to seem glad that her dear mamma was going away, because that would help to make her well.

It would have delighted you to see little Bella "helping." She ran all round the room, to find something to put in the trunks. She tucked a little cake of soap into one corner, and half a dozen hair pins in another; and then hunting in her funny little pocket, she found two gum drops, which her Cousin George had given to her—these she did up in a scrap of paper, and very carefully stowed away under the fold of a pair of stockings.

Well, at last the time came to say "good-bye," and poor little Bella clung to her mother, and the great sobs *would* come, and no one could blame her, for her mamma was crying too—and her little Bella's face was covered with tears as well as kisses. But this dear mamma had to go—and the steamship went swiftly away with her, and in a little while she could no longer see the great city of New York, where her darling lived.

Bella cried a long time, and did not want to go back into her mamma's room. At last she thought she would go. On the bed was a large paper parcel. Something was written on the paper, and she called her sister to "read the reading" to her.

"Why! what's this?" exclaimed Edith. "'For my little Bella.' How very strange."

"Dear me," cried Bella, giving a jump; "it must be for me—'spose I look? I want to look so much."

"Certainly," said Edith. Then the paper was taken off by the little girl's dimpled fingers, and there was displayed a most beautiful bedstead, with a lovely baby tucked up in it, fast asleep!

I only wish you could have seen the dimples on Bella's face then! and the sparkles in her eyes! She softly lifted the baby up—and pop! her blue eyes opened as wide as possible—and she never cried a bit, but just looked at Bella, not the least afraid of being among strangers.

Then Bella laid her gently down, and the good little thing shut her eyes and went fast asleep again.

"My pasense!" said Bella, "I'm *apprised*! What a dear baby! Is it for me?"

"It must be," said Edith; "but wait, here is a little letter pinned fast to her sleeve. Let's see what it says."

"A letter," cried Bella; "must I pay two cents for it?" and she ran to get her little velvet purse.

"You will not have to pay for this one, because the baby brought it—it is only the postman that wants two cents."

So Edith opened the letter, and Bella jumped up and down all the time her sister was reading these loving words:—

FIRST LETTER.

"DEAR DARLING BELLA:

"Here is a present for you of this little bedstead, and the pretty doll baby; who will go to sleep the moment you put her in bed. Don't cry any more, my little kitten, and rosebud, and pearl, and dove. I will pray to our Heavenly Father to take care of us both, and before long you will be clasped tight in the arms of your loving *mother*."

The little girl's lip trembled, as Edith finished the letter; but she lifted up the baby just then—and the blue eyes opened so suddenly, that it set Bella laughing—and she said lovingly: "*Pessus keeter*, come to mamma," and so the little mamma that couldn't say "precious creature" plain, forgot to cry.

"Why! only see here!" exclaimed Edith, "here is another bundle under the bedstead! It must have come from the moon;" and drawing it out, she handed it to Bella.

"Oh! how 'lightful," cried Bella. "Two bundles! I shall jump out of the window for joy."

And now the paper was eagerly taken off, and lo! and behold! there was a most beautiful pair of little brown gaiter boots.

"With heels!" screamed Bella. "How grandy! like a big lady! look, Edith—heels!"

"Did I ever!" said Edith, lifting up her hands, "you will tumble down stairs the very first time you wear them."

"Boots with heels!" and Bella began to try them on. Something stiff rattled inside—and she put in her hand and pulled out—another letter! It was almost too good to be true.

But Edith soon read these kind words:

SECOND LETTER.

"*My little Darling:*

"Here are a pair of boots for your dear little feet, with the heels on them, that you wanted so much.

"Be careful to go down stairs *very slowly*, for fear you might catch your heels on the edge, and fall and hurt yourself.

"Don't let your little heel,
Bump your little head;
That would hurt a deal,
And make it very red.
Then so bad 'twould feel,
Like a lump of lead.
First with careful zeal,
Very gently tread;
Do not jump or squeal,
Precious little maid.
But, when at your meal,
Eating milk and bread,
Sing a merry peal,
Without any dread.
Dance a little reel,
Then skip up to bed."

"Oh, how nice," cried Bella, when Edith had finished. "I like that. It is so jingly and jangly."

"Why! how you talk!" said Edith, laughing. "It's poetry."

"Is it?" said Bella. "O—h!"

She put both her precious letters in her drawer, and then played with her baby all the rest of the day. I believe the good little thing went to sleep, and woke up again that day about fifty-nine times—maybe sixty.



A LETTER FOR MISS BELLA CURTIS! TWO CENTS!!

THE FIRST LETTER FROM CHARLESTON.

ABOUT a week after this, there came such a tremendous ring at the bell, that both the fat cook and the waiter rushed to the door, and when it was opened, there stood the postman! bawling out, "A letter for Miss Bella Curtis! Two cents!"

How Miss Bella Curtis did scamper for her two cents to pay the postman! and how delighted she looked when he gave her the letter! The postman thought there must at least be a gold watch inside of it, she seemed so pleased.

Bella tore the envelope all to pieces in her hurry to open her letter; and then she fell over sideways from the little bench in her hurry to sit down—but at last she was settled as still as you could expect under such delightful circumstances—and Edith read this.

THIRD LETTER.

"CHARLES TON, *March.*

"DEAR DARLING BELLA:

"Here I am all safe, sitting in a pleasant room, with the window opened—listening to the singing of the pretty birds, and looking at three little black picaninnies over the way, playing with a small white dog. They throw a little stick as far as ever they can, and then the little dog rushes after it, in such a hurry, that you would think he was going to leave his tail behind him; but he don't, because it is fastened on so very tight. The next minute he trots back with the stick in his mouth, and hands it with his *mouth*, you know, very politely to the children, while they jump up and down, and squeal, because they are so pleased.

"Now they have all scrambled heels over head into the yard, and shut the dog's tail in the gate; but he pulled it through, and so I can't see them any more.

"I hope the doll baby has been good, and the little heels on the boots have behaved themselves. Good-bye, my darling. Pray to God every night and morning for your loving

"MOTHER."

Bella smiled, and patted one little hand with the other, and a sweet loving expression came into her eyes as the last words of the letter was read to her, and she said: "Darling mamma. I love her. I want to go to Heaven with her."

The dear little child had been told that there would be no pain or crying in Heaven, and so she knew it must be a very happy place.

When her papa came home, Bella ran up to him with her letter, exclaiming: "Oh papa, see! see the letter mamma *writed* to me!"

"Is it possible! Why, what a big woman you are getting to be!" and he took her upon his knee, and read the letter—out loud of course, for Bella could have heard it fifty times with delight.

"Ah! that is a beautiful letter," said her papa; "you must answer it, you know."

"Oh yes, papa; and I want to, 'ight away now."

"Oh! do you? Well, here is a sheet of paper, and pen and ink. Put out your tongue; dear me, how long it is! it looks in very good talking order. Now you talk, and I'll write, and see if we won't have a letter, for which mamma will give two cents, and all her old shoes, to the postman. Come! *you* must begin first."

Then Bella put her little curly head one side, and stared up at a corner of the ceiling. She was thinking, you see. Presently she put her finger in her mouth, as if to pull the words out—then she looked at her father. Her father smiled, which made her take her finger out of her mouth, and shut her eyes—for she felt funny—and a little bashful. You see this was a very grave business—writing a letter that her mamma would have to pay two cents for—very serious business indeed.

All at once her eyes rested on her dolly, fast asleep in her pretty bed; and then the words came right out—"Oh, dear mamma! I love my little baby, and the heels, and the bedstead, and—and—oh, papa! I love mamma the mostest. I gave my baby a piece of apple pie for her dinner. It was made of paper, just for fun, you know; not really apple pie. She hates pepper, it makes her tongue bite—mine too. She wants you to come home s—o bad—the bedstead wants you to come home, and I want the postman to bring me a letter, and you too—and—and—I don't know any more this day."

"That is a beautiful letter," said her father; "now sign your name just here—and I will seal it up, and direct it on the outside, and send it to the post office."

So Bella made such a funny little scratch with the pen for her name, that it looked as if a fly had turned round and round, with ink on its legs, and then the letter went off on its travels.

The next day her cousin Stanny came to spend the day with Bella. Stanny was a dear little fellow, with light hair, and great blue eyes, and cheeks as fat as butter—they were so fat that the dimples had hard work to make holes in them.

Bella loved Stanny, and she ran to kiss him, and show him her new baby, and the other things; and what do you think Stanny did when he saw the baby in the bed? Why, he tilted up the bedstead, and out fell dolly flat on her nose! That was just like a boy—they will never do to be mothers, like little girls—because they play so roughly.

"Oh Stanny," cried Bella, picking up the dolly tenderly, "she's most killeded."

"Why don't she cry then?" said Stanny.

"'Cause she isn't a cry baby," said Bella.

"I mean to punch her and make her cry," said Stanny.

So he doubled up his fist and gave the dolly a great punch in the stomach—but the dear little thing just stared at him without winking, and never said a word. You see the truth was that she had no crying place made inside of her, as some of the babies have—and I for one think it was quite an improvement, for who wants to hear a baby squealing like a pig—you don't, do you? you little kitten!

Bella did not like to have her baby treated in this manner—and it was very fortunate that their grandmamma came in the room just then, with two large slices of bread, with the most delightful currant jelly spread all over them, and gave one to each of the children, or

perhaps Bella might have turned into a cry-baby—and that would have made you and me very sorry.

Pretty soon a lady came in—whom the children called Cousin Caroline, and said: "Oh! here is Stanny; why, where did you come from, little boy?"

"I come from Brooklyn. What you got your hat on for, Cousin Caroline? Say."

"Because I am going to see old Mrs. Badger, up the street."

"Are you? Which do you like best, Mrs. Badger, up the street, or grandmamma?"

"Why, Stanny! I like grandmamma a great deal the best."

"But, why for?" said Stanny.

"Why, because she is my aunt," said Cousin Caroline.

"Your aunt!" cried Stanny, in a tone of severe reproof. "Oh, Cousin Caroline, aren't you ashamed to call my grandma an *ant*! a little ugly black thing, crawling on the ground. She isn't an ant, now! she's a big grandma."

You may be sure that Cousin Caroline and grandma laughed at this long speech—and then Stanny and Bella laughed—and they all thought it was a very funny idea—to make a little black ant out of a big grandma.

The rest of the day Bella played she was the mother and Stanny the grandfather; and except he wanted to whip poor dolly very often, because he said she was naughty, they got along pretty well; and upon the whole they both had a very pleasant day.

FOURTH LETTER.

"A LETTER for Miss Bella Curtis," said the postman; "two cents."

Oh, what delightful words those were. Bella began quite to love the postman; and she asked him if he wouldn't please to take *three* cents—which astonished him so much, that I do believe nobody had ever thought of saying so to him before.

The little girl pulled off the envelope with trembling eagerness, and Edith read this:

"DEAR, DARLING BELLA:

"I was so delighted with your letter that I kissed every word once, and the dear little scratch, that meant your name, about a dozen times. Yesterday was Sunday, and I went to church. Just in front of me sat a dear little girl so like you, that I wanted to lift her over the back of the pew and kiss her. She was such a little thing, that she did not know how to sit still. She had on a pair of worsted sleeves, and the very first thing she did, was to poke all the fingers of one little hand through the ruffle round the other, just as you do with your sleeves. Then she smiled at me, and I smiled at her; then she spread out her little pocket handkerchief, and found a small hole in the corner, about as big as a three-cent piece. She stuck her finger through that, and held it up, and danced it up and down; then she dusted the pew with it, which made it rather dirty. She was such a little bit of a thing that you could hardly expect her to sit quite still; but this that I am going to tell you now, was really naughty.

"There was a boy in the pew just in front. She gave him three pretty hard taps on the back of his head, and when he looked round, she pretended to be asleep. What a girl!

"When we came out I shook hands with her, and said: 'I have a little girl at home in the North, her name is Bella; what is your name?'

"My name is Bella, too,' she said. Wasn't that wonderful?

"As I walked home, I saw such a sweet little white girl, carried in the arms of a great black woman, whose head looked like an immense butterfly, fastened on her shoulders; for she had a handkerchief on it, of all the colors of the rainbow, and it was spread out on either side like wings.

"The sweet little child seemed to love her black nurse dearly, for as I walked behind, I saw her press her tender, lovely, pink and white cheek, close against the dusky face of her nurse, and I heard her say in a sweet lisping tone: 'Oh, Binah, I love you. When I go to Heaven, I will take you with me. Oh, B-i-n-a-h!' she said this last word just like the cooing of a little dove.

"Bress de darlin' chile,' said Binah. 'I am gwine back *now*, little missis. Ole Binah hab to go to Heben fust, and wait dere for little darlin' missis.'

"You see Binah meant by 'gwine back now,' that she was old. When people are old, they say, they are going 'down hill,' but Binah said, 'going back.' You are climbing *up* the hill of life, my dear little Bella; and I pray that God will lead you in the right path, and then the hill both up and down will end in a happy home in Heaven.

"Dear me! what a long letter. Give my best love to papa and sister; and kiss yourself on your dear little cheek if you can, for your loving

"MOTHER."

Here is Bella's answer:

"DARLING MAMMA,

"I was so glad to get your letter! What a naughty little girl that was in the church! She behaved twice as bad as me. I speak out loud sometimes, not very often; only sometimes. I had a party yesterday—Minnie, and Lilly, and Jeannie; and we had tea out of my cups and saucers that Cousin Caroline gave me—real tea—and one orange that papa brought home—it was all pulled to pieces, and we eat it all up.

"We played with my paper dolls; and one of them, Miss Hattie Smith, knocked down a little table and *broke* one of my glass candle *stickers*, that Cousin Caroline gave me.

"Really, and truly, I FOUND it broke; but we made believe that she broke it because she is so ugly.

"Dolly has been very naughty. She fought with sister's Kitty, and Kitty tore all the lace off her cap. Kitty slapped her first. Then sister Edith told dolly and Kitty about 'dogs delight to bark and bite,' and dolly was so sorry, and Kitty too; and they never mean to do so any more—never—sister Edith mended the cap, and she is good now—next time papa brings me candy, I will give her a big piece—only pretend, you know—for her mouth can't open like mine, it is all shut up tight—what a pity! Oh mamma! I want to see you so much, I don't know what to do. Why can't the postman bring you home? Oh mamma, I can't wait any longer."

Here poor little Bella began to cry; and her papa thought her letter was long enough, and that the little thing was tired, as well as grieved. So he folded up the letter, and took Bella upon his knee, and kissed her, and wiped away her tears, and said: "My darling little pet, would you like to hear a story that I know?"

"Oh yes, papa," said Bella, lifting her head from his breast, and smiling: though a great tear still trembled on her long lashes, "I love a story."

"And I love you," said her papa; "so here it is."

PAPA'S STORY.

THE DINNER PARTY.

"Once upon a time, there lived a little girl, named Edith. She was a dear good little puss, and that was the reason everybody loved her. Don't you think it was a very good reason?"

"Yes, papa," said Bella; and she squeezed her soft cheek lovingly against him, and he gave her a little hug; and then they went on again quite comfortable with the story.

"Well, one day her papa said to her mamma, 'My dear, I shall not be home to-day to dinner; but what shall I order for yours?'

"'Well, dear,' she answered, 'I think one beef-steak, and some green peas, and potatoes, will do for Edith and me; and the cook shall make a poor man's pudding, with raisins in it; that will be a very nice little dinner.'

"'If I see any thing very nice, I will send that too.'

"'Very well.' Then Edith's papa kissed all the family. It did not take him very long, for he had only Edith and her mamma for a family at that time; and then he went away.

"Pretty soon after, Edith said: 'Mamma, will you please to let me go next door, and play with Annie, and Mary?'

"'Yes, dear,' answered her mother; 'but do not forget to come home at five o'clock to dinner.'

"Edith promised to come, and then skipped joyfully off—with her best doll, Miss Polly Dolly Adeline, and two big apples to play 'party' with, and in a few minutes her mother thought there must be at least twenty children next door, instead of three; for they were having such a good time that they made noise enough to frighten the crows into fits, if any crows happened that way.



WHO SHOULD COME IN BUT THE FAT COOK, WITH A GREAT GOOSE.

"As her mother was sitting at her sewing, some one knocked at the door, and who should come in, but the fat cook, with a great goose, fatter than she was; who cried out: 'Only see what a big goost, mum; and only you and Miss Edith to eat it; besides a beef-steak to brile, and peas and potatoes.'

"'Dear me,' said her mistress, 'we could not eat a quarter of that goose. Save it for to-morrow, Mrs. Jellybag. Only cook the beef-steak and vegetables; and make a poor man's pudding, with raisins, for dessert; that will do nicely.' So the fat cook put the fat goose carefully away in the refrigerator; then she shelled enough peas for a small dish, and peeled about a dozen potatoes, and prepared the raisins for the pudding, and had them all nicely done in time.

"When five o'clock came, the bell rang for dinner, and Edith's mother went down, and took her seat at the table.

"Just then she heard a whole chorus of merry little voices, and to her great surprise, in marched Edith, and seven little girls after her! They were all nearly of the same size, with their hair braided in two tails apiece, as fine as you please.

"'Why, Edith!!' exclaimed her mother.

"'Yes, mamma,' said Edith, 'I told them to come in and get some dinner, and some nice poor man's pudding, with raisins in it; they are Annie's and Mary's cousins. They are real nice, and we are having such fun!'

"You see Edith had no idea that her mother would not like her bringing the little girls in to dine with her; she did not *mean* to do wrong; and her eyes glittered so brightly with

pleasure at having so many friends, that her mamma burst out laughing; and then Edith and all the children giggled in such a funny way, that I do believe if the Mayor of New York could have seen their happy faces, he would have given his best wig, to have such pleasant people at *his* dinner parties.

"And now the children began to stare at the beef-steak with hungry eyes; and Edith's mother thought it grew smaller and smaller, and was afraid if she gave each one a piece, they would swallow the whole of it at once like a pill. Dear me! how she did wish the goose had been cooked; but there was no help for it now: so seven extra plates were set, like buttons round the table, and seven extra knives and forks were laid across like button holes, and seven extra *goblins* (as little Edith called the 'goblets') stared down at the plates, and seven extra chairs were rattled up and scratched up to the table, by the children themselves, because the waiting-maid was almost crazy with so much company; and down they sat in a prodigious hurry, and the dinner began.

"Such a famous dinner as it was! Perfectly delicious. If there had only been a little more of it. But never mind, the knives and forks rattled merrily, and the children laughed, and the two long braids of hair on each head flew right and left so fast, that the flies couldn't get near the table to taste of a thing, and were almost distracted when they saw every single crumb eaten up, and the plates nearly scraped into holes.

"Here is the portrait of the cook as she looked when the waiter brought the beef-steak dish.



"But when the poor man's pudding came in, smoking like a Turk, and speckled in every direction with great black raisins, oh! then was the time for bright looks! and when one little girl clapped her hands, and exclaimed, 'My! that looks good!' all the rest laughed, and whisked their heads round so, that it was quite fortunate their braids were fast at one end, or they would have been shaken off up the chimney, and out of the door, and nobody knows where else.

"The best thing was, that there was plenty of pudding, and the children thought it was the very nicest they had ever eaten, particularly as the maid brought to each one the bowl of powdered sugar—so that they might *help themselves* to as much as they liked—*that* made a great difference, I can tell you! and they showered down the sugar in grand style—they put it on good and thick, just as much sugar as pudding, and that was what made it so

very nice; besides, Edith had whispered to her mamma to give the company '*all the raisinest parts!!*' because that was the way to be polite to company,' and so her mother did—and they had a grand time picking out the raisins to eat by themselves—and the little spoons went so fast, chopping at the pudding, and clicking on the plates, that Edith's mother said it sounded like little stone-cutters at work—at which they grew perfectly red in their faces laughing at themselves.

"Didn't they have a fine time? I think so—and I laughed very much—oh!—I mean, Edith's papa laughed, when he came home and heard about the grand dinner-party, all out of one small beef-steak, and a poor man's pudding. There! how do you like that story?"

"Oh, papa! *I* know," exclaimed Bella, laughing, and patting his cheek. "I found you out! it was sister Edith! wasn't it? Dear me! what a funny girl! Did you ever!"

"Yes, it was her, and she was a funny girl—and you are a little darling—and now, kiss papa, and run off to bed."

FIFTH LETTER.

"A LETTER for Miss Bella Curtis; two cents!" bawled the postman.

He was in a hurry this time, and Bella had to run so fast for the money, that it was quite a wonder that she did not get thin after it—only she laughed, too, just as much—and perhaps that may be the reason.

She began to feel as if she was quite a big woman, to be giving the postman so much business to do; and she carried her new letter in great state to her sister, and listened to the reading of it with all her heart and both her ears.

It began thus:—

"SAVANNAH.

"DEAR, DARLING BELLA:

"I was perfectly delighted with your funny little letter, telling me all the news about your party, and dolly, and Kitty.

"I am now in Savannah. It is a most beautiful city, and the people in it are very good and kind. The evening before I left Charleston, a lady came to see me, bringing with her a dear little boy who looked and acted just like Stanny. I told him the story of 'Little Red Ridinghood,' and I thought his eyes would pop out of his head when the wolf eat her up. You see, I growled and snapped my teeth, just like a wolf.

"Then I drew him a picture of the wolf in a bob-tailed coat, talking to Little Red Ridinghood in the wood; and I made him a paper fly-cage, and a paper windmill.

"He looked at them very much pleased, and said: 'But—say—I don't know which to give to my little brother.'

"I laughed, for I saw that he wanted them all himself, and yet loved his little brother so much that he wanted to give them to him, so I said: 'If you will kiss me and call me "Aunt Fanny," I will make some for him, too.'

"Then he put his arms round my neck, and kissed me so hard, that it made his dear little nose quite flat for a moment, and said: 'Thank you, Mrs. Aunt Fanny;' and I made him another picture, and cage, and windmill, and then he was delighted.

"There are two beautiful little children in this house, who are twins, because they came into this world at the very same time. They are each six years old—a boy and a girl.



"I asked Richard where he came from? He said: 'Why, don't you know? Sally and I were dug up from under a cotton tree.' Wasn't that funny?

"Then his mamma said: 'Richard, sing "Morning's ruddy beams, in the Eastern sky,"' and he shouted out—

"'Morning's *ready* beams
Eascum eascum skri,'

then stopped, and giving one eye a queer little twist, said: 'How does *that* suit you?' In the afternoon the children went to a party, and Richard brought home an orange for his mother, and said: 'I'm going to save this for your Christmas present,' which sounded very funny as Christmas was eight months off.

"The next morning we had flannel cakes for breakfast. Really, and truly, they are made of eggs, milk, and flour; but just for fun I pretended to be astonished, and exclaimed: 'Flannel Cakes! Dear me! who ever heard of such a thing? Why, Richard, what *are* they made of? Flannel?'

"'Why, no, you goose,' said Richard, 'they are made of *flannel flour*.'

"I could not help laughing when he called me a goose; but his mother said he was very naughty; and then he ran and hid his head in her dress and began to cry. You see, he was a little bit of a boy—and did not mean to be impolite—and I think myself, I would have been a goose, if I *had* really and truly believed the cakes were made of flannel; don't you, you little darling?

"I have a very curious snake-skin to show you when I return. Edward, Richard's big brother, found it in the woods, and made it a present to me. A snake! What a present! and to think of a snake wanting to wriggle out of his skin! You wouldn't do such a thing, would you?"

"Yesterday a beautiful little mulatto girl came to see me, and brought me, from her mistress, a basket full of splendid flowers. She was about five years old. A great black man with his head covered with white wool came with her to take care of her, because she was so little. He looked as if he had been out in a snowstorm without his hat; but really his head was white because he was so old. His name was Jeringo. 'Well, little one,' said I, 'what is your name?'"

"My name Georgia, and I can tell you a story. It is about Blue Man's Beard."

"Oh," said I, "I would like to hear that very much indeed."

"Then she put one little fat hand over the other, drew a long breath, and began: 'Blue Man's Beard, he drefel cross, I tell you; and he say to he *sister*, "Now, don't you go in de rooms; you hear?" and she say, "No, neber;" but she tell story, and go; and oh, my! she drop de key, and de key he cum all over wid blood, and she try, try, try, to wipe um off. But he no cum off—and Blue Man's Beard, he say: "If you don't cum down I gib you popping." Den her brother he cum and tote her off to he home, and make a big fire, and burn Blue Man's Beard all up in de fire.'

"Oh," said I, "how glad I am! Aren't you glad?"

"Ah, no," she replied, "I don't want any body to be burn up—make 'em hurt:" which answer made me feel quite ashamed, because I was more cruel than she; then I gave Georgia some money, and sent her home quite happy. What do you think of that story? Don't the little mulatto girl talk queerly? All the black people talk so."

"The other night I felt quite ill, and the dear friend with whom I am staying sent Hannah, a black girl, up to me with a tub of warm water to bathe my feet. She dropped a little bobbing courtesy, and said: 'Please missis, you ain't berry well, I'se want to wash you foot.'

"Oh dear, no, Hannah, I cannot let you bathe my feet; I always do that for myself."

"Oh *do*, please missis; I ain't got noting to do. I *like* to wash um."

"But, Hannah, I shall feel very funny to have you poking at my toes."

"Now missis, *do*," said Hannah, in a coaxing tone; "I'll do um fust rate."

"Her eyes looked so big, and she made such a queer face at me, that I turned round to laugh; when I looked back she was standing at the long glass making courtesies to herself; then she turned round, and twisted her head till I thought she would crack it off—and stared at her back and made some more courtesies—and I had to laugh out loud, and she looked quite ashamed."

"Then I said: 'Hannah, do you really want to bathe my feet?'

""Strue as you live, missis.'

""Would you like me to read to you?'

""Oh do, missis! tank you.'

""Well, then, you may, and I will read Little Susy's Six Birthdays to you.'

"That seemed to be a most delightful idea—and she pulled off my boots and stockings in a great hurry, and lifted my feet into the water, and passed her hands so gently over my ankles that it really seemed to do me good; but when she poked between my toes, she tickled me so dreadfully that I squealed, and laughed, and came very near upsetting the tub of water.

"But she liked the book very much, and her great black eyes were full of love and gratitude as she thanked me; and I thanked her, and gave her a penny; but she liked my *thanking her* better than the penny.

"I have bought you a pretty little green parasol; and I love you, oh! so dearly! you precious little roly-poly tweedle-de diamond-darling! What do you think of that for a love name? you sweet little humpy-dumpy tweedle-dum rosebud robin! there's another; from your loving

"MOTHER."

How Bella laughed at the love-names, and how happy they made her, is more than I can describe; but she cuddled up to Edith, and whispered:

"Dear *little* mamma," and that was all she said.

The next day was Sunday. Bella was old enough to go to church, and she behaved very well.

Just before they went in, her father said: "Bella, there will be a collection taken up to-day, and here is a nice new penny for you to put in the plate."

"What plate, papa?"

"Why, the plate for the money that is given to the poor. You will see six of them on the table just under the pulpit."

Bella had never put any money in the plate before, and she was quite pleased.

When they were seated in their pew in the middle aisle, a little bit of a boy wanted to come in, because his papa's pew was quite crowded. His name was Eddie; and he knew Bella very well. So in he came, and the two children sat next the door.

Presently, Bella whispered: "Look, Eddie, look at my new penny. I am going to put it in the plate for the poor peoples."

"Why, I've got a penny, too, most as bright as yours; but where is the plate?"

They looked all over the church, and at last spied the plates on the table.

"When will we put it in?" said Bella.

"Why, now; let's go now," said Eddie.

"Why, of course," said Bella.

Then, before her father could stop her, she opened the pew door, and stepped out with Eddie, and hand in hand the two little children marched gravely up the aisle, to the table under the pulpit; and standing on tiptoe, put their bright pennies into the plate; and then hand in hand gravely marched back.

They did not know that they were doing what would make everybody look at them in astonishment. No, indeed! they were in a hurry to help the poor people; and I think everybody in the church understood it, and looked with loving eyes upon the little ones.

The next day Bella told her papa what to say, and he wrote her mother this letter:

"DEAR, DARLING MAMMA:

"Yesterday I gave the poor peoples a penny in church. So did Eddie. We went together and put it in the plate. Aren't you glad, the poor peoples have so much money? I am.

"Sister Edith showed me such a 'lightful play. She did put me on the end of the sofa, and I go backward and forward, backward and forward, and she sings:

'Grandmamma's sick,
And is going to die,
And nothing will cure her
But a TURN-over pie;'

and then I go tumbledy over backward on the sofa so nice! Don't you wish you could play it?

"Georgia told the story the wrong way; it was Blue Beard's *wife*, not his sister. Of course it was! She is a funny girl. I wish she would come and play with me.

"O dear, darling mamma! when will you come? I want you so bad. I hope you are most well this day. Can you bring me a kitten? Please do; and put it in a piece of paper, and tie it

up tight, so it won't get out. Miss Hattie's head is most torn off; but I don't care, 'cause she's only made of paper, and she is so ugly. I have painted her all over with red spots—and now she looks just like a leopard—I call her a *pig*-leopard—don't tell anybody.

"How funny for Hannah to tickle your toes! My toes make me squeal, too, when they are washed; and—and—I don't know any more, papa."

So this letter was finished—and Bella's mother thought this and the others were lovely letters—and I should not be surprised if she keeps them as long as she lives.

—

SIXTH LETTER.

"A LETTER for Miss Bella Curtis," shouted the postman; "four cents." It was quite a thick letter this time, and Bella had to pay twice two cents for it. How much was that? If you will give me a kiss I will tell you—two and two make four.

But, dear me! she was just as glad to get it—and I do believe if she had had four dollars she would have given every speck of it for one letter. Why, certainly! A letter from your MOTHER?—*you* would do so, too. Of course you would, you sweet little Ba-be-bi-bo-BOO!!!

So it was taken to Edith, and if you had been an hundred years old, you would have felt quite young again—only to have watched Bella's eyes while the letter was read—diamonds don't sparkle half as much, and I for one would rather have had her bright eyes to look at, than a whole bushel of diamonds, each as big as my head.

The delightful letter commenced thus:

"CHARLESTON.

"DEAR, DARLING BELLA:

"I have your sweet little letter, and I am so much obliged to you for telling papa such nice things to write to me, that I have sent you a long, long answer in return, which I hope will please you.

"I left Savannah yesterday. When I was leaving, I kissed little Richard, and said: 'Good-bye, Richard; don't forget Aunt Fanny.'



GOOD-BYE, RICHARD, DON'T FORGET AUNT FANNY.

"'I forgot you already,' he shouted. Then I kissed Sallie, the twin-girl, and she said so sweetly: 'Aunt Fanny, can you remember where Bella lives? If you can find her house, go and tell her I am coming to see her—next day before to-morrow.'

"Wasn't it funny that she should think I had been so long away from you, my little darling, that I had forgotten where you lived?

"Do you remember a story I once read to you, about 'Good Little Henry,' in a book called 'Nightcaps'? Well, strange to say, I know this Henry, and love him very much. He is now almost a young man, and just as good as ever; yes! better than ever, for he is the comfort and joy of his father and mother. Only think, dear Bella! that from a good and lovely little child he has grown better and lovelier every year, till now he is almost a man. God loves Henry; and He has helped him to be good, and He will love you and help you to be good, if you will ask Him.

"I tell you all this now, because in looking over my writing-desk a moment ago, I came upon an amusing story Henry wrote to me, about some little cousins of his."

Of course you would like to know what he wrote, and here it is:

"One day my dear Aunt Sarah was sitting up-stairs with the children, when the front door bell rang, and the servant came up and said: 'Mr. Robinson wants to see you, ma'am.' So aunt put on her best collar, and a little lace cap, and down she went.

"'My!' said Loulou, 'I should like to see him, too.'

"'So should I,' said Bolton, whose pet name is 'Pepper.'

"'Dear me! I, too,' cried Anna, whose pet name is 'Tot.'

"'And me! me! me!' said little Walter, jumping up and down.

"So Loulou, in a great state of delight, rushed up to the washstand and washed her face and hands; then she took Pepper and scrubbed him well—rubbing his nose almost off to

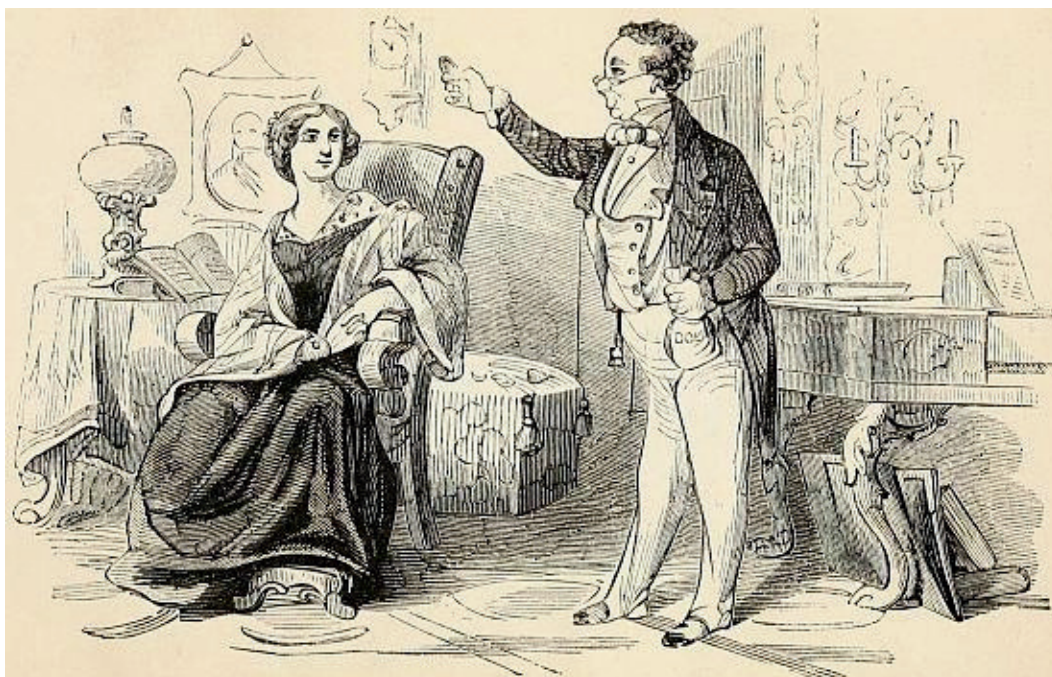
get his face dry—and dressed him in all his best Sunday clothes, and told him to sit down in his little chair, perfectly stiff and straight, till the rest were ready; and down little Pepper sat, and hardly dared to wink, for fear of getting his clothes tumbled.

"Then she took little Tot, and polished her face, and brushed her hair as hard as she could, and Tot never cried the least bit, when Loulou accidentally turned the brush round and gave her a thump with the back of it; but just sat down by Pepper when her dressing was over, and kept as still and looked as grave as if she were in church.

"And now Loulou took dear little Walter in hands, and made him as fine as you please; and then they all marched down stairs on tip-toe, trembling with expectation.

"They opened the parlor door and entered very softly, and stared with all their eyes. But where was he?

"There was nobody there but their mamma, and a very quiet-looking gentleman in a plain black coat, and a pair of spectacles, set on the very end of his nose, who appeared to be showing her some curious coins.



ROBINSON CRUSOE.

"The children stood perfectly still for a moment. They seemed to be struck dumb. Then Loulou exclaimed:

"'Why, *mamma*, we have come down on purpose to see ROBINSON CRUSOE!! all dressed in fur, with his monkeys and parrots, and Man Friday. Where *is* he, *mamma*? where *has* he gone?' and they looked again in every corner of the room.

"How her mamma did laugh! and how Mr. Robinson did laugh! when they found that the children thought that Robinson Crusoe had come to see them; but Loulou and the rest of the dear little children were dreadfully disappointed. Wasn't that a pity?

"And now I have a great secret to tell you; I am so much better, and I want to see you s—o much, that I mean to return home in the steamship which leaves on Saturday. This is Thursday—you will get this long letter next Monday—and on Tuesday have ready at least a hundred kisses, and fifty squeezes for your loving

"MAMMA."

THE RETURN.

"OH!" screamed Bella, joyfully, "mamma coming home? Oh! oh! oh!" and she commenced to dance about the room, and laugh, and sing so many little songs, that Edith thought there must be a musical snuff-box inside of her; particularly as she stopped to give two funny little sneezes, and then went on again. She could hardly sit still a moment all the rest of the day; and she begged to be put to bed earlier than usual, so that the "next day might come faster."

Sure enough! the next day a carriage drove up to the door. It was raining, and Bella had to stay in the room for fear she would take cold. She fastened her face to the window, and trembling with eagerness, saw the coachman open the door. A *gentleman* got out—Bella's face looked as if somebody had thrown a pail of cold water in it—but, the next moment, the gentleman handed out her mamma, her very own mamma! and then in an ecstasy of delight, the little girl rushed to the door, and then it was worth more than all Barnum's Museum to see the meeting. I believe I can't tell it—I cannot write it well enough; but all you dear little children know how glad you are to see your kind mothers after they have been away from you; and you can *feel* this, much better than I can write it.

And so ended the Little Nightcap Letters; and though Bella cherished them as her dearest treasures, and means to keep them, she says, to show to her children; yet, she would rather have her own "real, true" mamma to kiss, and love, and keep close to; and she never means to part with her again, if she can help it.

That is just the way you feel, isn't it, you little darling?

THE END.