

Richards Laura Elizabeth Howe

Five Minute Stories



Laura Richards

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Laura E. Richards Five Minute Stories

TO

JOHN AND BETTY

BETTY

When I sit and hold her little hand,
My Betty,
Then all the little troubles seem to shrink,
Grow small and petty.
It does not matter any more
That ink is spilt on parlor floor,
That gown is caught upon the latch,
And not the smallest bit to match,
That cook is going, housemaid gone,
And coming guests to meet alone;
It matters not at all, you see,
For I have Betty, and Betty has me.

When I sit and hold her little hand,
My Betty,
Then all the simple, foolish baby talk
Grows wise and witty.
I'm glad to know that Pussy Mow
Was frightened at the wooden cow,
I weep for Dolly's broken head,
And for the sawdust she has shed;
I take with joy the cups of tea
From wooden teapot poured for me,
And all goes well, because, you see,
I play with Betty, and Betty with me.

When I walk and hold her little hand,
My Betty,
Then every humble weed beside the way
Grows proud and pretty.
The clover never was so red,
Their purest white the daisies spread,
The buttercups begin to dance,
The reeds salute with lifted lance,
The very tallest trees we pass
Bend down to greet my little lass;
And these things make my joy, you see,
For I love Betty, and Betty loves me!

TWO CALLS

Beau Philip and Beau Bobby stood side by side on the doorstep of their father's house. They were brothers, though you would hardly have thought it, for one was very big and one was very little.

Beau Philip was tall and slender, with handsome dark eyes, and a silky brown moustache which he was fond of curling at the ends. He wore a well-fitting overcoat, and a tall hat and pearl-gray kid gloves.

Beau Bobby was short and chubby, and ten years old, with blue eyes and yellow curls (not long ones, but funny little croppy locks that *would* curl, no matter how short he kept them). He wore a pea-jacket, and red leggings and red mittens.

There was one thing, however, about the two brothers that was just the same. Each carried in his hand a great red rose, lovely and fragrant, with crimson leaves and a golden heart.

"Where are you going with your rose, Beau Bobby?" asked Beau Philip.

"I am going to make a New Year's call," replied Beau Bobby.

"So am I," said Beau Philip, laughing. "We may meet again. Good-by, little Beau!"

"Good-by, big Beau!" said Bobby, seriously, and they walked off in different directions.

Beau Philip went to call on a beautiful young lady, to whom he wished to give his rose; but so many other people were calling on her at the same time that he could only say "good-morning!" to her, and then stand in a corner, pulling his moustache and wishing that the others would go. There were so many roses in the room, bowls and vases and jars of them, that he thought she would not care for his single blossom, so he put it in his buttonhole; but it gave him no pleasure whatever.

Beau Bobby trotted away on his short legs till he came to a poor street, full of tumble-down cottages.

He stopped before one of them and knocked at the door. It was opened by a motherly looking Irish woman, who looked as if she had just left the washtub, as, indeed, she had.

"Save us!" she cried, "is it yersilf, Master Bobby? Come in, me jewel, and warm yersilf by the fire! It's mortal cowld the day."

"Oh, I'm not cold, thank you!" said Bobby. "But I will come in. Would you – would you like a rose, Mrs. Flanagan? I have brought this rose for you. And I wish you a Happy New Year. And thank you for washing my shirts so nicely."

This was a long speech for Beau Bobby, who was apt to be rather silent; but it had a wonderful effect on Mrs. Flanagan. She grew very red as she took the rose, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Ye little angil!" she said, wiping her eyes with her apron. "Look at the lovely rose! For me, is it? And who sint ye wid it, honey?"

"Nobody!" said Bobby. "I brought it myself. It was my rose. You see," he said, drawing his stool up to the little stove, "I heard you say, yesterday, Mrs. Flanagan, when you brought my shirts home, that you had never had a New Year's call in your life; so I thought I would make you one to-day, you see. Happy New Year!"

"Happy New Year to yersilf, me sweet jewel!" cried good Mrs. Flanagan. "And blessings go wid every day of it, for your kind heart and your sweet face. I had a sore spot in my heart this day, Master Bobby, bein' so far from my own people; but it's you have taken it away this minute, wid yer sweet rose and yer bright smile. See now, till I put it in my best chiny taypot. Ain't that lovely, now?"

"Isn't it!" cried Beau Bobby. "And it makes the whole room sweet. I am enjoying my call very much, Mrs. Flanagan; aren't you?"

"That I am!" said Mrs. Flanagan. "With all my heart!"

A NEW YEAR SONG

When the year is new, my dear,
When the year is new,
Let us make a promise here,
Little I and you,
Not to fall a-quarrelling
Over every tiny thing,
But sing and smile, smile and sing,
All the glad year through.

As the year goes by, my dear,
As the year goes by,
Let us keep our sky swept clear,
Little you and I.
Sweep up every cloudy scowl,
Every little thunder-growl,
And live and laugh, laugh and live,
'Neath a cloudless sky.

When the year is old, my dear,
When the year is old,
Let us never doubt or fear,
Though the days grow cold.
Loving thoughts are always warm;
Merry hearts know ne'er a storm.
Come ice and snow, so love's dear glow
Turn all our gray to gold.

NEW YEAR

The little sweet Child tied on her hood, and put on her warm cloak and mittens. "I am going to the wood," she said, "to tell the creatures all about it. They cannot understand about Christmas, mamma says, and of course she knows, but I do think they ought to know about New Year!"

Out in the wood the snow lay light and powdery on the branches, but under foot it made a firm, smooth floor, over which the Child could walk lightly without sinking in. She saw other footprints beside her own, tiny bird-tracks, little hopping marks, which showed where a rabbit had taken his way, traces of mice and squirrels and other little wild-wood beasts.

The Child stood under a great hemlock-tree, and looked up toward the clear blue sky, which shone far away beyond the dark tree-tops. She spread her hands abroad and called, "Happy New Year! Happy New Year to everybody in the wood, and all over the world!"

A rustling was heard in the hemlock branches, and a striped squirrel peeped down at her. "What do you mean by that, little Child?" he asked. And then from all around came other squirrels, came little field-mice, and hares swiftly leaping, and all the winter birds, titmouse and snow-bird, and many another; and they all wanted to know what the Child meant by her greeting, for they had never heard the words before.

"It means that God is giving us another year!" said the Child. "Four more seasons, each lovelier than the last, just as it was last year. Flowers will bud, and then they will blossom, and then the fruit will hang all red and golden on the branches, for birds and men and little children to eat." "And squirrels, too!" cried the chipmunk, eagerly.

"Of course!" said the Child. "Squirrels, too, and every creature that lives in the good green wood. And this is not all! We can do over again the things that we tried to do last year, and perhaps failed in doing. We have another chance to be good and kind, to do little loving things that help, and to cure ourselves of doing naughty things. Our hearts can have lovely new seasons, like the flowers and trees and all the sweet things that grow and bear leaves and fruit. I thought I would come and tell you all this, because sometimes one does not think of things till one hears them from another's lips. Are you glad I came? If you are glad, say Happy New Year! each in his own way! I say it to you all now in my way. Happy New Year! Happy New Year!"

Such a noise as broke out then had never been heard in the wood since the oldest hemlock was a baby, and that was a long time ago. Chirping, twittering, squeaking, chattering! The wood-doves lit on the Child's shoulder and cooed in her ear, and she knew just what they said. The squirrels made a long speech, and meant every word of it, which is more than people always do; the field-mouse said that she was going to turn over a new leaf, the very biggest cabbage-leaf she could find; while the titmouse invited the whole company to dine with him, a thing he had never done in his life before.

When the Child turned to leave the wood, the joyful chorus followed her, and she went, smiling, home and told her mother all about it. "And, mother," she said, "I should not be surprised if they had got a little bit of Christmas, after all, along with their New Year!"

A LESSON SONG

Oranges and apples,
And baby's ball, are round;
And my pretty picture-book,
That is square, I've found;
And an egg is oval,
And the corners all,
When you take them by themselves,
Triangles they call.

I am perpendicular
When I stand up straight,
I am horizontal
When in bed I wait;
And from sitting quite erect,
If I chance to swerve,
Then my rounded shoulders make
What is called a curve.

See! a sheet of paper
I roll together neat,
Straight and smooth, and then I have
A cylinder complete;
But if thus I widen out
Either end alone,
Look! it makes a different thing, —
That is called a cone.

Points there are, a many,
On my pencil one,
Two on mother's scissors,
Five a star has on;
And our doggie has one
Right upon his nose,
And my dancing-master says,
"Children, point your toes!"

Oh! the world of wonders
Is so very full,
How can little children learn
Half enough in school?
I must look about me
Everywhere I go,
Keep my eyes awake and wise,
There's such a lot to know.

THE RUBBER BABY

The ascent of the Rubber Baby took place in the back yard on the afternoon of last Fourth of July. It was an occasion of great interest.

We were all in the yard, – Mamma, Papa, Tubby, Toots, Posy, Bunny, Bay and Mr. Bagabave. (This boy has another name, but he prefers Mr. Bagabave because he made it himself.)

There was also the best cousin, who is nine feet tall, more or less, and a kind gentleman who was a friend of the best cousin, and came to see that he did not hurt himself with the firecrackers.

Well, there we all were, and we fired crackers and torpedoes the whole afternoon without stopping. The best cousin and the kind gentleman did it to amuse the children, and the rest of us did it to amuse ourselves.

We had cannon-crackers a foot long; we had double-headers, which papa threw up in the air, oh, ever so far, so that they exploded long before they reached the ground. Then there were dear little crackers, very small and slender, just made for Bay, though it is quite strange that the Chinese people should have known about her, when she is so very young.

Now we fired off single crackers, great and small, with a bang and a bang and a bang-bang; then we put a whole bunch under a barrel, and they went snap, crack, crickety, crackety. Yes, it was delightful.

But Papa, who has lived long and fired many crackers, began to pine for something new, and he said, “Let us have an ascension!”

Then we took counsel, and Mr. Bagabave said, “We will send up the Rubber Baby.” Now the Rubber Baby belonged to Bay, and she loved him; but when Bunny and Mr. Bagabave told her what a fine thing it was to get up in the world, and how many people would like to go up farther than the Rubber Baby would go, Bay consented, and went and brought the Rubber Baby, who smiled and thought little of the matter.

Then Papa brought the biggest cannon-cracker of all, and made a long fuse for it, and set it up in the ground; and over it he put a tomato can, and on the tomato can he set the Rubber Baby.

Now all was ready, and we all stood waiting for the final moment. I do not know what were the thoughts of the Rubber Baby at this moment, but we were all in a state of great excitement.

“Get out of the way, children!” cried Papa. “Run away, Bay! Get behind the maple-tree, Mr. Bagabave! She’s going. Now, then! One, two, three, and away!” and Papa touched off the fuse.

A moment of great suspense, a tremendous report, a dense cloud of smoke. Up soared the Rubber Baby, higher than the top of the big maple-tree, almost to the very clouds (or so Bay thought).

We watched in silent rapture; then, as the intrepid air-traveller came down, still smiling, a loud cheer broke from the whole crowd.

No, not from the whole crowd; there was one exception. The kind gentleman who came to keep the best cousin from hurting himself gave a howl so loud and clear that we all started, and ran to see what was the matter.

The poor gentleman had been holding a cannon-cracker, which he was going to fire just when Papa gave the signal for sending off the Rubber Baby. In the excitement of the moment he forgot the cannon-cracker, and it went off in his hand, and burnt him quite badly.

We were all very sorry, not only for the poor gentleman’s own sake, but because now there was no one to see that the best cousin did not hurt himself.

A pretty young lady came, and tied up the poor gentleman’s hand so nicely with her soft handkerchief that he said he was glad the cracker had gone off in it.

The Rubber Baby said nothing, but sat still in the middle of the gravel walk. Perhaps it was waiting to see if some lovely young lady would come to cheer and comfort it; but no one came till little Bay took it up, wiped off the dust and powder, kissed it, and put it to bed.

THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE

Dorothy was all dressed to see the Fourth of July procession. She had on her white dress, her blue sash, and her red shoes. Her cheeks were red, too, and her eyes were blue, and when she pushed up her full muslin sleeves, she saw how white her fat little arms were as soon as you got past the sunburn. "I'se red, white and blue mine-self!" said Dorothy.

She went and stood on the top doorstep, which was very near the street. Pretty soon the trumpets began to sound and the drums to beat, first far away, then nearer and nearer. At last the procession came round the corner. First the drum-major, with his huge bearskin cap, tossing his great gilded stick about; then came the musicians, puffing away with might and main at their great brass horns and trumpets, and banging away at their drums and kettle-drums. It was a splendid noise; but they were really playing a tune, the "Red, White and Blue."

The standard-bearer dipped his flag as he passed Dorothy's house, for there was a great flag draped over the doorway, and red, white and blue streamers running up to the windows, and Dorothy waved a little flag as she stood on the top doorstep. "Three cheers for the red, white and blue!" sang the soldiers as they marched by.

"Sank you!" said Dorothy, spreading out her frock and patting her sash. "I'se the red, white and blue! See mine sash!"

The soldiers laughed and cheered.

Then came a soldier who looked straight up at Dorothy, and held out his arms, though without stopping. And it was Dorothy's own Papa!

In less than half a minute Dorothy was in his arms, and he had caught her up, and put her on his shoulder.

Dorothy waved her flag, and jumped up and down on Papa's shoulder, and cried, "Three cheers for the red, white and blue! three cheers for me!" and all the soldiers shouted and cheered and laughed, and so Dorothy and the procession went on their way all through the village.

TOTTY'S CHRISTMAS

They call me Totty, because I am small. I had a funny Christmas, and Mamma said I might tell about it.

I have the scarlet fever, and I live all alone with my Mamma in her room. Nobody comes in 'cept the doctor, and he says he sha'n't come any more to see a girl who feels as well as I do.

Mamma wears a cap and an apron, and we have our own dishes, just like play, and she washes them in a bright tin pan, and then I have the pan for a drum, and beat on it till she says she shall fly.

I always stop then, for I do think I should be frightened to see Mamma fly. Besides, she might fly away.

Well, yesterday was Christmas, and I could get out of bed and sit up in a chair; it was the first time.

So I sat up to dinner, and it was a partridge, but we played it was a turkey. There was jelly and macaroni, and for desert we had grapes and oranges. Mamma made it all look pretty, and Papa gave her roses through the door, and she put them all over the table.

When she had washed the dishes, she turned the big chair round so that I could look out of the window, and Hal and John came out on the lawn and made a snow-man for me to look at.

It was a fine man, with two legs and two arms, and they kept playing he was the British, and knocking his head off.

Mamma told me I mustn't turn round till she said I might, but I didn't want to, anyhow, the man was so funny.

I heard Papa whispering at the door, and I *did* want to see him, but I knew I couldn't, 'cause the other children haven't had the fever: and then I heard things rustle, paper and something soft, like brushing clothes.

They went on rustling, oh, a long time! and there was jingling, too, and I began to want to turn round *very* much *indeed*; but I didn't, of course, 'cause I said I wouldn't.

At last Mamma came up softly and tied something over my eyes, and told me to wait just a minute; and it really did not seem as if I could.

Then she turned the chair round, and took the thing off my eyes, and —*what* do you think was there?

A Christmas tree! A dear little ducky tree, just about as big as I am, and all lighted with red and blue candles, and silver stuff hanging like fringe from the branches, and real icicles. (No! Mamma says they are glass, but they look real. They are in a box now, and I can play with them.)

And everything on the tree was for me. That makes a rhyme. I often make them.

There was a lovely doll, all china, with clothes to take off and put on, and buttons and buttonholes in everything. I have named her Christine, because that is the most like Christmas of any name I know.

And a tin horse and cart, and a box of blocks, and a *lovely* white china slate to draw on, and a box of beasts, not painted, all carved, just like real beasts, and a magnet-box, with three ducks and two swans and four goldfish and a little boat, all made of tin, and lots of oranges and a lovely china box full of cream candy (the doctor said I might have it if Aunt May made it, and she did), and a box of guava jelly, and a little angel at the top, flying, all of white china.

And *everything* will wash except the things to eat, 'cause everything I play with has to be burned up, unless it can be washed, so they all gave me washing things.

Even Christine has china hair, and all her clothes are white, so they can be boiled, and so can she, and Mamma says it won't hurt her at all.

So I never had a nicer Christmas, though, of course, I wanted the other children; but then, *I* had Mamma, and of course *they* wanted *her*, poor dears!

And nobody need be afraid to read this story, 'cause it is going to be *baked in the oven* before it is printed.

A CERTAIN BOY

I know a little bright-eyed boy
Who lives not far away,
And though he is his mother's joy,
He plagues her, too, they say.
For when his task he's bid to do,
He sits him down and cries, "Boo-hoo!
I can't! I can't! I can't! I can't! I can't!"

Yes! whether he's to practise well,
Or do his horrid sums,
Or "Hippopotamus" to spell,
Or clean to wash his thumbs:
It matters not, for with a frown
The corners of his mouth go down, —
"I can't! I can't! I can't! I can't! I can't!"

Oh! what a joyful day 'twill be
For mother and for son,
When smiling looks they both shall see
Beneath the smiling sun.
For in his heart he knows 'tis stuff,
And knows that if he tries enough,
He can! he can! he can! he can! he can!

THE NEW SISTER

“Look carefully!” said the kind Nurse, turning down a corner of the flannel blanket. “Don’t touch her, dears, but just look.”

The children stood on tiptoe and peeped into the tiny red face. They were frightened at first, the baby was so very small, but Johnny took courage in a moment.

“Hasn’t she got any eyes?” he asked. “Or is she like kittens?”

“Yes; she has eyes, and very bright ones, but she is fast asleep now.”

“Look at her little hands!” whispered Lily. “Aren’t they lovely? Oh, I do wish I could give her a hug!”

“Not yet,” said Nurse. “She is too tender to be hugged. But Mamma sends word that you may give her something, – a name. She wants you and Johnny to choose the baby’s name, only it must not be either Jemima, Keziah or Keren-Happuch.”

The Nurse went back into Mamma’s room, and left Johnny and Lily staring at each other, too proud and happy to speak at first.

“Let’s sit right down on the floor and think!” said John. So down they sat.

“I think Claribel is a lovely name!” said Lily, after a pause. “Don’t you?”

“No!” replied Johnny, “it’s too girly.”

“But baby *is* a girl!”

“I don’t care. She needn’t have such a *very* girly name. How do you like Ellen?”

“Oh, Johnny! why, *everybody’s* named Ellen. We don’t want her to be just like everybody. Now Seraphina is not common.”

“I should hope not. I should need a mouth a yard wide to say it. What do you think of Bessie?”

“Oh, Bessie is very well, only – well, I should be always thinking of Bessie Jones, and you know she isn’t very nice. I’ll tell you what, Johnny! suppose we call her Vesta Geneva, after the girl Papa told us about yesterday.”

“Lily, you are a perfect silly! Why, I wouldn’t be seen with a sister called that! I think Polly is a nice, jolly kind of name.”

“Well, I don’t.”

“You needn’t get mad if you don’t. Cross-patch!”

“You’re perfectly horrid, John Brown; I sha’n’t play with you any more.”

“Much I care, silly Lily!”

“Well!” said Nurse, coming in again, “what is the name to be, dears? Mamma is anxious to know.”

Two heads hung very low, and two pairs of eyes sought the floor and stayed there. “Shall I tell you,” the good Nurse went on, taking no notice, “what I thought would be a very good name for baby?”

“Oh yes! yes! do tell us, ’cause we can’t get the right one.”

“Well, I thought your mother’s name, Mary, would be the very best name in the world. What do you think?”

“Why, of course it would! We never thought of that. Oh, thank you, Nurse!” cried both voices, joyously. “Dear Nurse! will you tell Mamma, please?”

Nurse nodded, and went away smiling, and Lily and John looked sheepishly at each other.

“I – I will play with you, if you like, Johnny, dear.”

“All right, Lil.”

BUTTERCUP GOLD

Oh! the cupperty-buts! and oh! the cupperty-buts! out in the meadow, shining under the trees, and sparkling over the lawn, millions and millions of them, each one a bit of purest gold from Mother Nature's mint. Jessy stood at the window, looking out at them, and thinking, as she often had thought before, that there were no flowers so beautiful. "Cupperty-buts," she had been used to call them, when she was a wee baby-girl and could not speak without tumbling over her words and mixing them up in the queerest fashion; and now that she was a very great girl, actually six years old, they were still cupperty-buts to her, and would never be anything else, she said. There was nothing she liked better than to watch the lovely golden things, and nod to them as they nodded to her; but this morning her little face looked anxious and troubled, and she gazed at the flowers with an intent and inquiring look, as if she had expected them to reply to her unspoken thoughts. What these thoughts were I am going to tell you.

Half an hour before, she had called to her mother, who was just going out, and begged her to come and look at the cupperty-buts.

"They are brighter than ever, Mamma! Do just come and look at them! golden, golden, golden! There must be fifteen thousand million dollars' worth of gold just on the lawn, I should think."

And her mother, pausing to look out, said, very sadly, —

"Ah, my darling! if I only had this day a little of that gold, what a happy woman I should be!"

And then the good mother went out, and there little Jessy stood, gazing at the flowers, and repeating the words to herself, over and over again, —

"If I only had a little of that gold!"

She knew that her mother was very, very poor, and had to go out to work every day to earn food and clothes for herself and her little daughter; and the child's tender heart ached to think of the sadness in the dear mother's look and tone. Suddenly Jessy started, and the sunshine flashed into her face.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "why shouldn't I get some of the gold from the cupperty-buts? I believe I could get some, perfectly well. When Mamma wants to get the juice out of anything, meat, or fruit, or anything of that sort, she just boils it. And so, if I should boil the cupperty-buts, wouldn't all the gold come out? Of course it would! Oh, joy! how pleased Mamma will be!"

Jessy's actions always followed her thoughts with great rapidity. In five minutes she was out on the lawn, with a huge basket beside her, pulling away at the buttercups with might and main. Oh! how small they were, and how long it took even to cover the bottom of the basket. But Jessy worked with a will, and at the end of an hour she had picked enough to make at least a thousand dollars, as she calculated. That would do for one day, she thought; and now for the grand experiment! Before going out she had with much labor filled the great kettle with water, so now the water was boiling, and she had only to put the buttercups in and put the cover on. When this was done, she sat as patiently as she could, trying to pay attention to her knitting, and not to look at the clock oftener than every two minutes.

"They must boil for an hour," she said; "and by that time all the gold will have come out."

Well, the hour did pass, somehow or other, though it was a very long one; and at eleven o'clock, Jessy, with a mighty effort, lifted the kettle from the stove and carried it to the open door, that the fresh air might cool the boiling water. At first, when she lifted the cover, such a cloud of steam came out that she could see nothing; but in a moment the wind blew the steam aside, and then she saw, — oh, poor little Jessy! — she saw a mass of weeds floating about in a quantity of dirty, greenish water, and that was all. Not the smallest trace of gold, even in the buttercups themselves, was to be seen. Poor little Jessy! she tried hard not to cry, but it was a bitter disappointment; the

tears came rolling down her cheeks faster and faster, till at length she sat down by the kettle, and, burying her face in her apron, sobbed as if her heart would break.

Presently, through her sobs, she heard a kind voice saying, "What is the matter, little one? Why do you cry so bitterly?" She looked up and saw an old gentleman with white hair and a bright, cheery face, standing by her. At first, Jessy could say nothing but "Oh! the cupperty-buts! oh! the cupperty-buts!" but, of course, the old gentleman didn't know what she meant by that, so, as he urged her to tell him about her trouble, she dried her eyes, and told him the melancholy little story: how her mother was very poor, and said she wished she had some gold; and how she herself had tried to get the gold out of the buttercups by boiling them. "I was so sure I could get it out," she said, "and I thought Mamma would be so pleased! And now –"

Here she was very near breaking down again; but the gentleman patted her head and said, cheerfully, "Wait a bit, little woman! Don't give up the ship yet. You know that gold is heavy, very heavy indeed, and if there were any it would be at the very bottom of the kettle, all covered with the weeds, so that you could not see it. I should not be at all surprised if you found some, after all. Run into the house and bring me a spoon with a long handle, and we will fish in the kettle, and see what we can find."

Jessy's face brightened, and she ran into the house. If any one had been standing near just at that moment, I think it is possible that he might have seen the old gentleman's hand go into his pocket and out again very quickly, and might have heard a little splash in the kettle; but nobody was near, so, of course, I cannot say anything about it. At any rate, when Jessy came out with the spoon, he was standing with both hands in his pockets, looking in the opposite direction. He took the great iron spoon and fished about in the kettle for some time. At last there was a little clinking noise, and the old gentleman lifted the spoon. Oh, wonder and delight! In it lay three great, broad, shining pieces of gold! Jessy could hardly believe her eyes. She stared and stared; and when the old gentleman put the gold into her hand, she still stood as if in a happy dream, gazing at it. Suddenly she started, and remembered that she had not thanked her kindly helper. She looked up, and began, "Thank you, sir;" but the old gentleman was gone.

Well, the next question was, How could Jessy possibly wait till twelve o'clock for her mother to come home? Knitting was out of the question. She could do nothing but dance and look out of window, and look out of window and dance, holding the precious coins tight in her hand. At last, a well-known footstep was heard outside the door, and Mrs. Gray came in, looking very tired and worn. She smiled, however, when she saw Jessy, and said, —

"Well, my darling, I am glad to see you looking so bright. How has the morning gone with my little housekeeper?"

"Oh, mother!" cried Jessy, hopping about on one foot, "it has gone very well! oh, very, *very*, *very* well! Oh, my mother dear, what do you think I have got in my hand? *What* do you think? oh, what *do* you think?" and she went dancing round and round, till poor Mrs. Gray was quite dizzy with watching her. At last she stopped, and holding out her hand, opened it and showed her mother what was in it. Mrs. Gray was really frightened.

"Jessy, my child!" she cried, "where did you get all that money?"

"Out of the cupperty-buts, Mamma!" said Jessy, "out of the cupperty-buts! and it's all for you, every bit of it! Dear Mamma, now you will be happy, will you not?"

"Jessy," said Mrs. Gray, "have you lost your senses, or are you playing some trick on me? Tell me all about this at once, dear child, and don't talk nonsense."

"But it isn't nonsense, Mamma!" cried Jessy, "and it did come out of the cupperty-buts!"

And then she told her mother the whole story. The tears came into Mrs. Gray's eyes, but they were tears of joy and gratitude.

“Jessy dear,” she said, “when we say our prayers at night, let us never forget to pray for that good gentleman. May Heaven bless him and reward him! for if it had not been for him, Jessy dear, I fear you would never have found the ‘Buttercup Gold.’”

ONE AFTERNOON

Papa and Mamma went out to row,
And left us alone at home, you know, —
Roderick, James and me.
“My dears,” they said, “now play with your toys
Like dear little, good little, sweet little boys,
And we will come home to tea.”

We played with our toys the *longest* while!
We built up the blocks for nearly a mile, —
Roderick, James and I.
But when they came tumbling down, alas!
They fell right against the looking-glass, —
Oh! *how* the pieces did fly!

Then we played the stairs were an Alpine peak,
And down we slid with shout and with shriek, —
Roderick, I and James.
But Jim caught his jacket upon a tack,
And I burst the buttons all off my back,
And Roderick called us names.

Then we found a pillow that had a rip,
And all the feathers we out did slip, —
Roderick, James and I.
And we made a snowstorm, a glorious one,
All over the room. Oh! wasn't it fun,
As the feathery flakes did fly!

But just as the storm was raging around,
Papa and Mamma came in, and found
Roderick, James and me.
Oh! terrible, terrible things they said!
And they put us all three right straight to bed,
With the empty pillow-case under our head,
And none of us had any tea!

THE STOVE

Betty has a real stove, just as real as the one in the kitchen, if it is not quite so big. It has pots and kettles and a frying-pan, and a soup-pot, and the oven bakes beautifully, and it is just lovely! I went to spend the afternoon with her yesterday, and we cooked all the time, except when we were eating. First, we made soup in the soup-pot, with some pieces of cold goose, and we took some to Auntie (she is Betty's mother), and she said it was de-licious, and took two cups of it. (They were doll's cups; Betty says I ought to put that in, but I don't see any need.) Then we made scrambled egg and porridge, and baked some custard in the oven, and it was just exactly like a big custard in the big cups at home. The cake was queer, so I won't stop to tell about that, though Rover ate most of it, and the rest we crumbled up for the pigeons, so it wasn't wasted; but the best of all was the griddle-cakes. Oh, they were splendid! The griddle is just the right size for one, so they were as round as pennies, and about the same size; and we had maple syrup on them, and Maggie the cook said she was so jealous (she called it "jellies") that she should go straight back to Ireland; but I don't believe she will. I don't feel very well to-day, and Betty wasn't at school, either. But I don't think it had anything to do with the griddle-cakes, and I am going to play with Betty again to-morrow, – if Mamma will let me.

JOHN'S SISTER

What! no elder sister?
I wouldn't be you!
Who buttons your jacket?
Who ties up your shoe?

Who gives you a boost
When you climb a tree?
Who bathes your bumps,
As kind as can be?

Who guided your oar
The first time you paddled?
Who blows your bird's eggs,
E'en when they're addled?

Who sets your moths,
Your butterflies, too?
Who mops up the floor
When you spill the glue?

Who makes you taffy?
(I tell you it's fine!)
Who baits your hook,
Untangles your line?

Who takes out your splinters,
All in a minute?
Who tells you stories,
And sings like a linnet?

No sister! I pity you,
Truly I do.
And oh! for a whole farm
I wouldn't be you.

NEW YEAR SONG

“New Year, true year,
What now are you bringing?
May-day skies and butterflies,
And merry birds a-singing?
Frolic, play, all the day,
Not an hour of school?”
But the merry echo,
The laughing New Year echo,
Only answered, “School!”

“New Year, true year,
What now are you bringing?
Summer roses springing gay,
Summer vines a-swinging?
Jest and sport, the merriest sort,
Never a thought of work?”
But the merry echo,
The laughing New Year echo,
Only answered, “Work!”

“New year, true year,
What now are you bringing?
Autumn fruits all fire-ripe,
Autumn horns a-ringing?
Keen delight o’ moonlight nights,
When dull folks are abed?”
But the merry echo,
The laughing New-Year echo,
Only answered, “Bed!”

WHAT WAS HER NAME?

“Wake up!” said an old gentleman, dressed in brown and white, as he gently shook the shoulder of a young lady in green, who was lying sound asleep under the trees. “Wake up, ma’am! it is your watch now, and time for me to take myself off.”

The young lady stirred a very little, and opened one of her eyes the least little bit. “Who are you?” she said, drowsily. “What is your name?”

“My name is Winter,” replied the old man. “What is yours?”

“I have not the faintest idea,” said the lady, closing her eyes again.

“Humph!” growled the old man, “a pretty person you are to take my place! Well, good-day, Madam Sleepyhead, and good luck to you!”

And off he stumped over the dead leaves, which crackled and rustled beneath his feet.

As soon as he was gone, the young lady in green opened her eyes in good earnest and looked about her.

“Madam Sleepyhead, indeed!” she re-echoed, indignantly. “I am sure *that* is not my name, anyhow. The question is, What *is* it?”

She looked about her again, but nothing was to be seen save the bare branches of the trees, and the dead, brown leaves and dry moss underfoot.

“Trees, do you happen to know what my name is?” she asked.

The trees shook their heads. “No, ma’am,” they said, “we do not know; but perhaps when the Wind comes, he will be able to give you some information.”

The girl shivered a little, and drew her green mantle about her and waited.

By and by the Wind came blustering along. He caught the trees by their branches, and shook them in rough, though friendly greeting.

“Well, boys!” he shouted, “Old Winter is gone, is he? I wish you joy of his departure! But where is the lady who was coming to take his place?”

“She is here,” answered the trees, “sitting on the ground; but she does not know her own name, which seems to trouble her.”

“Ho! ho!” roared the Wind. “Not know her own name? That is news, indeed! And here she has been sleeping, while all the world has been looking for her, and calling her, and wondering where upon earth she was. Come, young lady,” he added, addressing the girl with rough courtesy, “I will show you the way to your dressing-room, which has been ready and waiting for you for a fortnight and more.”

So he led the way through the forest, and the girl followed, rubbing her pretty, sleepy eyes, and dragging her mantle behind her.

Now it was a very singular thing that whatever the green mantle touched, instantly turned green itself. The brown moss put out little tufts of emerald velvet, fresh shoots came pushing up from the dead, dry grass, and even the shrubs and twigs against which the edges of the garment brushed broke out with tiny swelling buds, all ready to open into leaves.

By and by the Wind paused and pushed aside the branches, which made a close screen before him.

“Here is your dressing-room, young madam,” he said, with a low bow; “be pleased to enter it, and you will find all things in readiness. But let me entreat you to make your toilet speedily, for all the world is waiting for you.”

Greatly wondering, the young girl passed through the screen of branches, and found herself in a most marvellous place.

The ground was carpeted with pine-needles, soft and thick and brown. The pine-trees made a dense green wall around, and as the wind passed softly through the boughs, the air was sweet

with their spicy fragrance. On the ground were piled great heaps of buds, all ready to blossom; violets, anemones, hepaticas, blood-root, while from under a huge pile of brown leaves peeped the pale pink buds of the Mayflower.

The young girl in the green mantle looked wonderingly at all these things. “How strange!” she said. “They are all asleep, and waiting for some one to waken them. Perhaps if I do it, they will tell me in return what my name is.”

She shook the buds lightly, and lo! every blossom opened its eyes and raised its head, and said, “Welcome, gracious lady! welcome! We have looked for you long, long!”

The young girl, in delight, took the lovely blossoms, rosy and purple, golden and white, and twined them in her fair locks, and hung them in garlands round her white neck; and still they were opening by thousands, till the pine-tree hollow was filled with them.

Presently the girl spied a beautiful carved casket, which had been hidden under a pile of spicy leaves, and from inside of it came a rustling sound, the softest sound that was ever heard.

She lifted the lid, and out flew a cloud of butterflies.

Rainbow-tinted, softly, glitteringly, gayly fluttering, out they flew by thousands and thousands, and hovered about the maiden’s head; and the soft sound of their wings, which mortal ears are too dull to hear, seemed to say, “Welcome! welcome!”

At the same moment a great flock of beautiful birds came, flying, and lighted on the branches all around, and they, too, sang, “Welcome! welcome!”

The maiden clasped her hands and cried, “Why are you all so glad to see me? I feel – I know – that you are all mine, and I am yours; but how is it? Who am I? What is my name?”

And birds and flowers and rainbow-hued butterflies and sombre pine-trees all answered in joyous chorus, “Spring! the beautiful, the long-expected! Hail to the maiden Spring!”

A LESSON SONG

Bow down, green Forest, so fair and good,
Bow down, green Forest, and give us wood!
The forest gives us tables,
The forest gives us chairs,
The bureau and the sideboard,
The flooring and the stairs;
The ships that skim the ocean,
The cars in which we ride,
The crib in which the baby sleeps,
Drawn close to mother's side.
Bow down, green Forest, so fair and good,
Bow down, green Forest, and give us wood!

Give up, ye Mines, so dark and deep,
Give up the treasure that close ye keep!
The mines are dug
In the earth so deep,
'Tis there that silver
And gold do sleep.
Copper and iron,
And diamonds fine,
Coal, tin and rubies,
All come from the mine,
Give up, ye Mines, so dark and deep,
Give up the treasure that close ye keep!

O Sea, with billows so bright, so blue!
Full many a gift we ask of you:
Corals, yes, and sponges,
Clams and oysters, too,
And the radiant pearl-drop
The oyster hides from view.
The fish we eat for dinner,
The shells upon the shore,
The whalebone for our mother's gown,
All these and many more.
O Sea, with billows so bright, so blue!
Full many a gift we ask of you.

Ye broad, green Meadows, so fresh and fair,
Oh, ye have many a treasure rare!
Flowers the loveliest,
Barley and corn,
Oats, wheat and clover tops,
Berry and thorn;

Grass for the flocks and herds,
Herbs for the sick;
Rice, too, and cotton,
The darkies do pick.
Ye broad, green Meadows, so fresh and fair,
Oh, ye have many a treasure rare!

So earth and air, so land and sea
Give kindly gifts to you and me.
Should we not be merry,
Gentle, too, and mild?
Then the whole wide earth doth wait
On each little child.
Should we not, in quiet,
At our mother's knee,
Praise our Heavenly Father,
Thank Him lovingly, —
Since earth and air, and land and sea
Give kindly gifts to you and me?
Since earth and air, and sea and land,
Come from our Heavenly Father's hand?

THE PATIENT CAT

When the spotted cat first found the nest, there was nothing in it, for it was only just finished. So she said, “I will wait!” for she was a patient cat, and the summer was before her. She waited a week, and then she climbed up again to the top of the tree, and peeped into the nest. There lay two lovely blue eggs, smooth and shining.

The spotted cat said, “Eggs may be good, but young birds are better. I will wait.” So she waited; and while she was waiting, she caught mice and rats, and washed herself and slept, and did all that a spotted cat should do to pass the time away.

When another week had passed, she climbed the tree again and peeped into the nest. This time there were five eggs. But the spotted cat said again, “Eggs may be good, but young birds are better. I will wait a little longer!”

So she waited a little longer and then went up again to look. Ah! there were five tiny birds, with big eyes and long necks, and yellow beaks wide open. Then the spotted cat sat down on the branch, and licked her nose and purred, for she was very happy. “It is worth while to be patient!” she said.

But when she looked again at the young birds, to see which one she should take first, she saw that they were very thin, – oh, very, very thin they were! The spotted cat had never seen anything so thin in her life.

“Now,” she said to herself, “if I were to wait only a few days longer, they would grow fat. Thin birds may be good, but fat birds are much better. I will wait!”

So she waited; and she watched the father-bird bringing worms all day long to the nest, and said, “Aha! they must be fattening fast! they will soon be as fat as I wish them to be. Aha! what a good thing it is to be patient.”

At last, one day she thought, “Surely, now they must be fat enough! I will not wait another day. Aha! how good they will be!”

So she climbed up the tree, licking her chops all the way and thinking of the fat young birds. And when she reached the top and looked into the nest, it was empty!!

Then the spotted cat sat down on the branch and spoke thus, “Well, of all the horrid, mean, ungrateful creatures I ever saw, those birds are the horriddest, and the meanest, and the most ungrateful! Mi-a-u-ow!!!!”

MATHEMATICS

I studied my arithmetic,
And then I went to bed,
And on my little pillow white
Laid down my little head.

I hoped for dreams of dear delight,
Of sugar-candy bliss;
But oh! my sleep, the livelong night,
Was filled with things like this.

Add forty jars of damson jam
To fifty loaves of cake,
Subtract a cow, and tell me how
Much butter it will make.

Then add the butter to the jam,
And give it to a boy,
How long will 't take ere grievous ache
Shall dash his childish joy?

If twenty men stole thirty sheep
And sold them to the Pope,
What would they get if he should let
Them have the price in soap?

And if he slew each guileless beast,
And in pontific glee
Sold leg and loin for Roman coin,
What would his earnings be?

Next, if a Tiger climbed a tree
To get a cocoanut,
And if by hap the feline chap
Should find the shop was shut;

And if ten crabs with clawing dabs
Should pinch his Bengal toes,
What would remain when he should gain
The ground, do you suppose?

Divide a stick of licorice
By twenty infant jaws,
How long must each lose power of speech
In masticating pause?

And if these things are asked of you,
While you're a-chewing of it,
What sum of birch, rod, pole or perch
Will be your smarting profit?

I woke upon my little bed
In anguish and in pain.
I'd sooner lose my brand-new shoes
Than dream those dreams again.

Oh! girls and boys, who crave the joys
Of slumber calm and deep,
Away then kick your 'rithmetic
Before you go to sleep!

BY THE FADING LIGHT

There was only one chapter more to finish the book. Bell did want very much indeed to finish it, and to make sure that the princess got out of the enchanted wood all right, and that the golden prince met her, riding on a jet-black charger and leading a snow-white palfrey with a silver saddle for her, as the fairy had promised he would.

She *did* want to finish it, and it seemed very hard that she should be interrupted every minute.

First it was dear Mamma calling for a glass of water from her sofa in the next room, and of course Bell sprang with alacrity to answer *that* call.

But then baby came, with a scratched finger to be tied up, and then Willy boy wanted some more tail for his kite, and he could not find any paper, and his string had got all tangled up.

Then came little Carrie, and she had no buttons small enough for her dolly's frock, and did sister think she had any in her work-basket?

So sister looked, and Carrie looked, too, and between them they upset the basket, and the spools rolled over the floor and under the chairs, as if they were playing a game; and the gray kitten caught her best spool of gold-colored floss, and had a delightful time with it, and got it all mixed up with her claws so that she couldn't help herself, and Bell had to cut off yards and yards of the silk.

At last it was settled, and the little girl supplied with buttons, and Bell sank back again on the window-seat, *so* glad that she hadn't been impatient, and had seen how funny the kitten looked, so that she could laugh instead of scold about the silk.

"And when the golden prince saw the Princess Merveille, he took her hand and kissed it, for it was like the purest ivory and delicately shaped. And he said – "

Tinkle! tinkle! went the door-bell, and Bell, with a long sigh, laid down the book and went to the door, for Mary was out. It was old Mr. Grimshaw.

"Good-day, miss!" he said, with old-fashioned courtesy, "I have come to borrow the third volume of 'Paley's Evidences.' I met your worthy father, and he was good enough to say that you would find the book for me. I am of the opinion that he mentioned the right-hand corner of the third shelf in some bookcase; I do not rightly remember in which room."

Bell showed the old gentleman into the study and brought him a chair, and looked in the right-hand corners of all the shelves; then she looked in the left-hand corners; then she looked in the middle; then she looked on Papa's desk, and in it and under it.

Then she looked on the mantel-piece, and in the cupboard, and in the chairs, for there was no knowing *where* dear Papa would put a book down when his thinking-cap was on. All the time Mr. Grimshaw was delivering a lecture on Paley, and telling her on what points he disagreed with him, and why; and Bell felt as if a teetotum were going round and round inside her head.

At last, in lifting Papa's dressing-gown, which hung on the back of a chair, she felt something square and heavy in one of the pockets; and —*there* was the third volume of "Paley's Evidences."

She handed it to Mr. Grimshaw with her prettiest smile, and he went away thinking she was a very nice, well-mannered little girl.

And so she was; but – oh dear! when she got back to the window-seat the daylight was nearly gone.

Still, the west was very bright, and perhaps she could just find out.

"And he said, 'Princess, my heart is yours! Therefore, I pray you, accept my hand, also, and with it my kingdom of Grendalma, which stretches from sea to sea. Ivory palaces shall be yours, and thrones of gold; mantles of peacock feathers, with many chests of precious stones.' So the princess – "

"Bell!" called Mamma from the next room. "It is too late to read, dear! Blindman's Holiday, you know, is the most dangerous time for the eyes. So shut the book, like a dear daughter!"

Bell shut the book, of course; but a cloud came over her pleasant face, and two little cross sticks began beating a tattoo on her heart.

Just at that moment came voices under the window, – Carrie and Willy boy, talking earnestly. “Would a princess be very pretty, do you suppose, Willy? prettier than Bell?”

“Ho!” said Willy, “who cares for ‘pretty?’ She wouldn’t be half so nice as Bell. Why, none of the other fellows’ sisters – ”

They passed out of hearing; and even so the cloud passed away from Bell’s brow, and she jumped up and shook her head at herself, and ran to give Mamma a kiss, and ask if she would like her tea.

TOBOGGANING SONG

When the field lies clear in the moon, boy,
And the wood hangs dark on the hill,
When the long white way shows never a sleigh,
And the sound of the bells is still,

Then hurry, hurry, hurry!
And bring the toboggans along;
Tell mother she need not worry,
Then off with a shout and a song.

A-tilt on the billowy slope, boy,
Like a boat that bends to the sea,
With the heart a-tilt in your breast, boy,
And your chin well down on your knee,

Then over, over, over,
As the boat skims over the main,
A plunge and a swoop, a gasp and a whoop,
And away o'er the glittering plain!

The boat, and the bird, and the breeze, boy,
Which the poet is apt to sing,
Are old and slow and clumsy, I know,
By us that have never a wing.

Still onward, onward, onward!
Till the brook joins the meadow below,
And then with a shout, see us tumbling out,
To plunge in the soft, deep snow.

Back now by the side of the hedge, boy,
Where the roses in summer blow,
Where the snow lies deep o'er their winter sleep,
Up, up the big hill we go.

And stumbling, tumbling, stumbling,
Hurrah! 'tis the top we gain!
Draw breath for a minute before you begin it —
Now, over, and over again!

SONG OF THE TILT

Up and down and up we go!
I am an eagle and you are a crow:
Flap your wings, and away we fly,
Over the tree-top, up to the sky.

Up and down and up we go!
I am an albatross white as snow,
You are a sea-gull, winging free
Out and away to the open sea.

Up and down and up we go!
I am a wild duck sinking low,
You are a wild goose soaring high,
The hunter is after us! fly! oh, fly!

Tumble and bump! and down we go!
My leg is broken! oh! oh! OH!!
Your nose bleeding? poor little Tot!
Well, never mind! let's play we are shot!

THE LAZY ROBIN

The mother robin woke up in the early morning and roused her three children.

“Breakfast time, my dears!” she said; “and a good time for a flying lesson, besides. You did well enough yesterday, but to-day you must do better. You must fly down to the ground, and then I will show you how to get worms for yourselves. You will soon be too old to be fed, and I cannot have you more backward than the other broods.”

The young robins were rather frightened, for they had only had two short flying lessons, taking little flapping flutters among the branches. The ground seemed a long, long way off!

However, two of them scrambled on to the edge of the nest, and after balancing themselves for a moment, launched bravely out, and were soon standing beside their mother on the lawn, trembling, but very proud.

The third robin was lazy, and did not want to fly. He thought that if he stayed behind and said he was sick, his mother would bring some worms up to him, as she had always done before. So he sat still in the nest, and drooped his head.

“Come along!” cried the mother robin. “Come, Pecky! Why are you sitting there alone?”

“I – don’t feel very well,” said Pecky. “I don’t feel strong enough to fly.”

“Oh!” said his mother, “then you had better not eat any breakfast, and I will send for Doctor Woodpecker.”

“Oh no, please don’t!” cried Pecky, and down he fluttered to the lawn.

“That’s right!” said the mother robin, approvingly. “I thought there was not much the matter with you. Now bustle about, my dear! See how well your brother and sister are doing! I declare, Topsy has got hold of a worm as long as himself. It will get away from him – no, it won’t! There! he has it now! Ah! that was a good mouthful, Topsy. You will be a fine eater!”

Pecky sat still, with his head on one side. He felt quite sure that if he waited and did nothing, his mother would take compassion on him and bring him some worms. There were Topsy and Flappy, working themselves to death in the hot sun. He had always been his mother’s favourite (so he thought, but it was not really so), and he was quite sure that she would not let him go hungry.

So he gave a little squeak, as if quite tired out, and put his head still more on one side, and shut his eyes, and sat still. Now his mother did not see him at all, for her back was turned, and she was eating a fine caterpillar, having no idea of waiting on lazy birds who were old enough to feed themselves.

But some one else did see Master Pecky! Richard Whittington, the great gray cat, had come out to get his breakfast, too, and he saw the lazy robin sitting still in the middle of the lawn with his eyes shut.

Richard could not have caught one of the others, for they all had their wits about them, and their sharp black eyes glanced here and there, and they were ready to take flight at a moment’s notice.

But Richard Whittington crept nearer and nearer to the lazy robin. Suddenly – pounce! he went. There was a shrill, horrified squeak, and that was the last of poor Pecky Robin.

The mother robin and her two other children flew up into the tree and grieved bitterly for their lost Pecky, and the mother did not taste a single worm for several hours.

But Richard Whittington enjoyed his breakfast exceedingly; and he was as good-natured as possible all day, and did not scratch the baby once.

THE BOY'S MANNERS

The Boy was going out to Roxbury. He was going alone, though he was only five years old. His Aunt Mary had put him in the horse car, and the car went directly past his house; and the Boy “hoped he *did* know enough to ask somebody big to ask the conductor to stop the car.”

So there the Boy was, all alone and very proud, with his legs sticking straight out, because they were not long enough to hang over, – but he did not mind that, because it showed his trousers all the better, – and his five cents clutched tight in his little warm hand.

Proud as he was, the Boy had a slight feeling of uneasiness somewhere down in the bottom of his heart. His Aunt Mary had just been reading “Jack and the Bean-stalk” to him, and he was not quite sure that the man opposite him was not an ogre. He was a very, very large man, about twelve feet tall, the boy thought, and at least nine feet round. He had a wide mouth, full of sharp-looking teeth, and he rolled his eyes as he read the newspaper. He was not dressed like an ogre, and he carried no knife in sight; but it might be in one of the pockets of his big gray coat.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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