

Douglas Amanda M.

Kathie's Soldiers



Amanda Douglas

Kathie's Soldiers

«Public Domain»

Douglas A.

Kathie's Soldiers / A. Douglas — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	11
CHAPTER III	16
CHAPTER IV	21
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

Douglas Amanda M. Kathie's Soldiers

CHAPTER I ENLISTING IN THE GRAND ARMY

"HURRAH!" exclaimed Robert Alston, swinging his hat in the air, as he came up the path; "hurrah! there's going to be a draft at Brookside! Won't it be jolly?"

The group assembled glanced up at him, – a fair, fresh, rosy boy, without any cowardly blood in his veins, as you could easily tell, but given, as such natures often are, to underrating the silent bravery of others.

"What will there be so jolly about it, Rob?" asked his uncle, with a peculiar light in his eye.

"Why, – the whole thing," – and Rob made a little pause to think, though it did not seem half so funny now as out on the street with a crowd of boys, who had been singing at the top of their lungs, "John Brown's Body," and "My Johnny has gone for a Soldier," – "the surprise, Uncle Robert, when some of the fellows who have been skulking back and afraid to go find themselves compelled."

"So you think it rather funny to be forced to do what you would not choose of your free-will?" and Uncle Robert gave a queer little smile.

"But – " and Rob looked around considerably perplexed at not finding his argument at hand, and overwhelming. "O, you know what I mean!" throwing himself down upon the grass. "If men haven't patriotism enough to volunteer when their country needs them, why, I think they ought – I just wish I was old enough! I'd go in a moment. I'd like the fun of 'marching on!'"

"There is something beside marching," said Kathie, in her soft voice, thinking in a vague way of General Mackenzie.

"Well, I'd like all of it!"

"The being drafted as well?"

It was Uncle Robert who spoke.

"No, I'd never be drafted!" and Rob's fair face flushed with a boy's impulsive indignation; "I'd go at once, – at the first call."

"But if you were a man and had a wife, as well as bairnies, three or four, or half a dozen, and were compelled to leave them to poverty?"

"There is the bounty, and the pay."

"Neither of which would be as much as a man could earn in a year at home. And if he never came back – "

"But, Uncle Robert, don't you think it right for a man to be patriotic?" asked his nephew, in a little amaze.

"Yes. One can never approve of cowardice in any act of life. Still, I fancy there may be a great many brave and good men who have not volunteered, and who, if they are drafted, will do their country loyal service. It may not look quite so heroic, but God, who can see all sides of the question, will judge differently."

"The soldiers don't feel so, Uncle Robert. It seems to me that the men who volunteer *do* deserve a good deal of credit."

"A great many of them do; but still numbers go for the novelty, or, as you say, the fun. They like a rambling, restless life, and care little for danger, little for death; but is it an intelligent courage, – the highest and noblest kind? Does not the man who says, 'If my country in her sorest

strait needs me, I will go and do my duty to the utmost,' deserve some credit, especially if he gives up what most men hold most dear?"

"I believe I didn't look at it in that light altogether. It seemed to me that it was only the cowards and the selfish men who waited to be drafted."

"Then you think I ought to volunteer?" said Uncle Robert, with a dry but good-natured smile. There was a very general exclamation.

"You!" exclaimed Rob, aghast at the unlooked-for application.

"I have neither wife nor children. I am young, strong, in good health, and though I do not fancy a military life above all others, I still think I could endure the hardships like a good soldier, and if I stood in the front ranks to face the enemy I do not believe that I should run away."

He rose as he said this, and, folding his arms across his chest, leaned against the vine-covered column of the porch, looking every inch a soldier without the uniform.

It would break his mother's heart to have Uncle Robert go, and there was Aunt Ruth, and Kathie, and Freddy; but – what a handsome soldier he would make! Major Alston, or Colonel Alston, – how grand it would sound! So you see Rob was quite taken with military glory.

Kathie came and slipped her hand within Uncle Robert's. "We could not spare you," she whispered, softly.

"But if I were drafted?"

"Well," exclaimed Rob, stubbornly clinging to his point, "the boys over in the village think it will make some fun. There's a queer little recruiting shanty on the green, and a fifer and a drummer. If our quota isn't filled by next Wednesday, – and they all say it won't be, – the draft is to commence. I'm glad I'm not going away until the first of October. I only wish – "

"I wish you were, if that will do you any good," answered Mr. Meredith, glancing up from his book which he had been pretending to read.

"I'd rather enlist than go to school."

"Maybe enlisting in the home-guard will prove a wise step for the first one."

"Home-guard?" and Rob looked a bit perplexed.

"Yes. We all do considerable soldiering in our lives unconsciously; and if it comes hard to obey our captains here, I am not sure that we should always find it so easy out on the field. There are some things that take more courage than to march down to the valley of death as did the 'Six Hundred.'"

"O," said Rob, fired again with a boy's enthusiasm, "that's just the grandest thing that ever was written! I don't like poetry as a general thing, it always sounds so girlish to me; but Marco Bozzaris and that are so fine, especially the lines, —

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

"After all, dying is not the grandest thing," said Aunt Ruth, quietly; "and the detached instances of heroism in one's life have not always required the most courage."

"No, indeed," answered Mr. Meredith, warmly. "I know men who have acquitted themselves bravely under fire, who at home possessed so small an amount of moral courage that they really could not resist temptations which were to their mental and physical detriment."

"But it is the fighting that interests me," said Robert.

"One may be a brave soldier with purely physical courage, but to be a good soldier one needs moral courage as well."

Just then Ada Meredith came down on the porch. She was Kathie's little New York friend, and her uncle had brought her to Cedarwood for a few days. She was growing tall rapidly, and considered herself quite a young lady, especially as she had been to Saratoga with her mother.

So this made a little break in the conversation. Rob somehow didn't get on very well with her; but then he admitted that he didn't like girls anyhow, except Miss Jessie. He was rather glad, therefore, to see Dick Grayson coming up the path, taking it for an excuse to get away.

Ada looked after them with secret mortification. Dick was quite a young man in her estimation, and only that morning he had been very gallant. She hated to have Rob take him off to the lake or any other haunt, so she bethought herself of a little stratagem.

"You promised me a game of croquet," she said to Kathie, with great earnestness.

Kathie glanced up in surprise. When she had proposed it that morning Ada declared it stupid, and said she had grown tired of it. Uncle Robert, knowing nothing of this, answered for her. "Of course," he said; "there are the boys. Rob, don't go away, you are wanted."

Rob made an impatient gesture with his hand, as if he would wave them all out of sight. Uncle Robert walked down to the boys. "Ada would like to play croquet," he remarked, pleasantly.

"I'm just in the humor for a game myself," answered Dick; but Rob's brow knit itself into a little frown.

"Come, girls!"

Mr. Meredith accompanied them. "We will be umpires," he declared.

Ada chose Dick for a partner. Rob thought it wasn't much fun playing with Kathie. He was rather careless, and in the first game they were badly beaten, which made Rob altogether out of humor. Why couldn't the girls have stayed on the balcony and talked?

"I can't play!" he said, throwing down his mallet.

Uncle Edward picked it up. "Now, Kathie, let us beat them all to ribbons and fragments!" he exclaimed, gayly, taking her brother's place.

Rob fell out of the ranks to where his uncle stood in the shade of a great tulip-tree.

"Soldiers!" he said, in a low, half-laughing tone.

Rob colored. "I didn't want to play a bit! I wish girls – "

"But a brave soldier goes off of the field after a defeat in good order. If he has done his best, that is all that is required of him."

Rob knew that he had not done his best at all, although he was angry with the mortification of losing the game.

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,"

said Uncle Robert, using his quotation against him.

"But that doesn't mean paltry little matters like this!" – with all a boy's disdain in his voice.

"It means everything when one is right. As Mr. Meredith said a few moments ago, there is a good deal of soldiering in life which must be all voluntary. That ought to suit your ideas. And I think the great Captain is often very patient with us, Rob. He bought us all with a price, you know, whether we serve him or not."

"But it is so hard for me to be" – Rob made a great effort and said, frankly – "good-tempered."

"I do not think that is it altogether."

"What then?" and Rob looked up in a little astonishment.

"We will put it on a military basis, – shirking one's duty because it is not pleasant."

"There was no particular duty about playing croquet!" – in the same surprised tone.

"Why did you do it at all then?"

"Because – "

"Courtesy to a guest becomes a duty in a host."

"But there was Kathie. Dick and I were going down to take a row."

"I have a fancy Dick likes the croqueting as well as he would have liked the rowing."

Dick Grayson's pleasant laugh floated over to them as he said, "Not so bad a beat, after all, Mr. Meredith."

"The life soldiering is not quite so arbitrary. A good deal of it is left to conscience. But if a sentinel at some outpost followed his own devices and let a spy pass the line – "

"He would be shot, of course."

"It seems hard, doesn't it, just for one little thing? Yet if one or two men escaped punishment the army would soon be in a state of insubordination. Then when a captain came to lead them in battle each man might consider his way and opinion best. Would it answer?"

"No, it wouldn't," replied the boy. "But, Uncle Robert, if God had made us – stronger."

"He offers us his strength daily."

"But it is so – I mean you never can think of it at the right moment."

"That is the secret of our duty to him, – to think of his wishes at the right time. He means, in this life, that we shall not seek to please ourselves altogether; but there is no guard-house, no bread-and-water rations, only a still, small voice to remind us."

Rob was silent for some moments, watching the players, and wondering why everything fretted him so easily. Were all the rest of the world to have their own way and pleasures, and he never? "Uncle Robert," he began, presently, "don't you think it fair that I should follow out my own wishes *sometimes*? Is it not unjust to ask me to give up always?"

"Are you asked to give up always?" – and the elder smiled.

"Well – " Rob grew rather red and confused.

"Which would give you the most satisfaction, – to know that you had made two or three people happy, or to enjoy some pleasure alone by yourself? This is the chief thing the Captain asks of us voluntary soldiers; and did not a wise man say that 'he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city'?"

"There is more in volunteering than I thought," Rob said, gravely, after a long pause; "I am afraid, after all, that I am one of the kind waiting for a draft."

"And, if you wait for that, you may be left out altogether. Rob, it is not very easy work to march and countermarch, to dig trenches, throw up earthworks, keep your eyes open and your senses keen through dreary night-watches and the many other duties that fill up a soldier's life. It is harder for some men to keep faithful to these than to go into battle and die covered with glory. But on the other side there will be a few questions asked. What was the man's life? I often think of what the Saviour said, – not be faithful *in* death, but be 'faithful *unto* death.' There, we have had quite a sermon. Next month you will be a new recruit, you know."

"Two games!" exclaimed Dick, as they advanced. "Each party has won one."

"And I am tired," said Ada, languidly.

"Just one more," pleaded Dick; "I know that I shall have better luck."

"I can't," Ada replied.

Rob's first impulse was to say, "I'll take her place"; but he felt that would leave Ada to her own resources again. He did not care anything about Ada's noticing him, – indeed, she rather ignored him when Dick was around; but he had a fancy that Dick was *his* friend, and did not belong so exclusively to the girls.

"Rob, I'll try you," Mr. Meredith exclaimed, remarking the wistful face.

So Ada and Dick had a ramble about the grounds, as Kathie, feeling she was not very earnestly desired, lingered to watch the players. It was a pretty sharp game, but Robert beat.

"Though I do not think you played your best at the last," the boy said.

Uncle Edward gave a queer little smile that set Rob to musing. What if people sometimes acted a little differently, for the sake of sparing his unlucky temper!

"I shall have to fight giants," he confessed to himself, understanding, as he never had before, how serious a warfare life really is.

Dick could not be persuaded to remain to supper, though Ada made herself very charming. But they passed a pleasant evening without him. Indeed, it seemed to Rob that there was some new element in their enjoyment. Was it because Ada was more gracious than usual?

Uncle Robert could have told the secret easily.

"Don't you get dreadfully dull sometimes?" Ada asked as they were alone in their room, for Ada had chosen to share Kathie's.

"Dull!" and Kathie gave her pleasant little laugh.

"When there is no company? For it is not quite like the city, where one can have calls and evening amusements."

"I hardly ever think of it. You know I was not here last winter, and the summer has been so very delightful!" Kathie's cheeks glowed at the remembrance.

"But your brother will be away this coming winter."

"Yes." It would make some difference, to be sure, but Kathie fancied that she should not be entirely miserable.

"If I were you, I should want to go to boarding-school. Where there is a crowd of girls they always manage to have a nice time."

"But I have nice times at home. I do not want to go away."

"What a queer girl you are, Kathie!"

It was not the first time she had been called queer. But she said, rather gayly, "In what respect?"

"I shouldn't like to do as you have to. Why, there are five servants in our house, and only one in this great place! And we have only four children, while your mother has three. It is hardly fair for you to be compelled to do so much work when there is no necessity."

"Mamma thinks it best," Kathie answered.

"If you expected to be very poor – or would have to do housework –"

"I might," returned Kathie, pleasantly. "People are sick sometimes, and servants go away."

"Isn't your uncle willing that you should have a chambermaid?"

"I suppose he would be if mamma desired it."

"So you have to keep your own room in order, and dust the parlor, and do all manner of little odds and ends. I believe I saw you wiping some dishes in the kitchen this morning."

"And it did not injure me," returned Kathie, laughingly.

"But all this work makes your hands hard and red. Mine are as soft as satin. I believe no money would tempt me to sweep a room!"

Ada uttered this in a very lofty fashion.

"Mamma thinks it best for me to learn to do everything. She was brought up in a good deal of luxury, but met with reverses afterward."

Kathie smiled inwardly at the picture she remembered of the little room where her mother used to sit and sew, and how *she* did errands, swept, washed dishes, and sometimes even scrubbed floors. Her hands were not large or coarse, for all the work they had done.

"I think it would be hard enough if one was compelled to do it. I am thankful that I have no taste for such menial employments. I do not believe that I could even toast a piece of bread"; and Ada leaned back in the low rocker, the very picture of complacency.

Kathie was silent, revolving several matters in her mind "all in a jumble," as she would have said. She knew it would be useless to undertake to explain to Ada the great difference between their lives. Mamma, Aunt Ruth, and Uncle Robert believed in the great responsibility of existence. Weeks, months, and years were not given to be squandered away in frivolous amusement. To do for each other was one of the first conditions, not merely the small family circle, but all the wide world outside who needed help or sympathy. And if one did not know how to do anything —

"But when you go to school you cannot do so much," pursued Ada. "There will be all your lessons. I suppose you will study French and Italian. You cannot think how I was complimented on my singing while I was at Saratoga. Several gentlemen said my pronunciation was wonderful in one so young. I hope I shall be able to come out next summer."

"Come out!" repeated Kathie, bewildered.

"Yes, be regularly introduced to society. I am past fifteen, and growing tall rapidly. I hope I shall have an elegant figure. I want to be a belle. Don't you suppose you shall ever go to Saratoga?"

"I don't know," – dubiously.

"It would be a shame for you to grow up here where there is no society. You would surely be an old maid, like your Aunt Ruth."

"She isn't so very old," returned Kathie, warmly.

"But every woman over twenty-five is an old maid. I mean to be married when I am eighteen."

Kathie brushed out her hair, hung up her clothes, and waited for Ada to get into bed so that she might say her prayers in peace. Ada had outgrown "Our Father which art in heaven," and "had no knack of making up prayers," she said.

But it seemed to Kathie that there were always so many things for which to give thanks, so many fresh blessings to ask. She almost wondered a little, sometimes, if God didn't get tired of listening.

CHAPTER II

DRAFTED

MISS JESSIE smiled a little at Ada's assumption of womanhood when the two girls came over to drink tea.

"Ah," said Grandmother Darrell, wiping her glasses, "she's no such a girl as Kathie! The child's worth half a dozen of her. After all, there's no place like the country to bring up boys and girls."

For Grandmother Darrell, like a good many other people, fancied everything that came from the city must be more or less contaminated.

"I think Miss Darrell *would* make your uncle a very nice wife," Ada said, graciously. "Do you suppose there is anything in it?"

Kathie flushed scarlet, remembering the pain and trouble of last winter. "I don't want to talk about it," she answered, in a low tone.

Ada nodded her head sagaciously. It was quite evident that she had hit upon the truth.

Some of the Brookside girls thought Ada "so splendid," Lottie Thorne among them, who now treated Kathie in a very amiable manner, and always took pains to speak with her as they came out of church. Of course, Lottie was growing older and a little more sensible, as well as worldly wise.

They took Ada to all the pleasant haunts, rowed over the lake, made two or three visits, and Mrs. Alston invited some girls, or rather young ladies, to tea; but Ada showed a decided preference for the young gentlemen. Even unsuspecting Kathie remarked how soon her headaches disappeared, and how ready she was to sing if some of the boys would stand at the piano and turn her music.

"A budding coquette," said Aunt Ruth, with a quiet smile.

"What a pity that girls should be reared to such idle, frivolous lives, and have their minds so filled with vanity and selfishness!" Mrs. Alston replied. "Can such blossoming bring forth good, wholesome fruit?"

Mr. Meredith felt a little annoyed. The visit was not quite the success he had hoped, and he saw more clearly than ever the difference between the two girls; but ah, how unlike their mothers were!

Was he growing more serious, clearer-eyed? What was there about this family that charmed so insensibly? The higher motives, the worthier lives, with a more generous outlook for neighbor and friend!

Kathie was ashamed to confess it even to herself, but she said good by at the station with a sense of relief. For days a horrible thought had been haunting her, – suppose Uncle Robert *should* be drafted! The abruptly terminated conversation had not been renewed; indeed, there had been so many pleasures at Cedarwood that one hardly wanted to bring in such a subject. But if it did happen, Kathie felt she should want no stranger eyes to witness her grief.

For when the question came directly home, she felt that she could not give him up; yet how brave she had been last winter! If General Mackenzie could look into her heart, he would find that she hardly deserved all his praise.

But all Brookside was much excited over the prospect. Business was very dull and bounties tempting; so numbers enlisted.

"Uncle Robert," Kathie said, as they were riding homeward, "could a drafted man offer a substitute just the same?"

"Why, yes, to be sure."

He uttered the words in such a light-hearted manner that she felt quite relieved, but lacked courage to pursue the subject further. A little quiver would keep rising from her heart to her throat, interfering with the steadiness of her voice.

By Monday night seventy men were still needed to complete the quota. That gave Brookside about forty.

Kathie wondered how they could all go on with their usual routine. Aunt Ruth, even, sat by the window and sang "Bonnie Doon," as she sewed upon Rob's outfit. His uncle had decided upon a school about sixty miles distant, a flourishing collegiate institution, in a healthy locality, – a quaint, quiet, old-fashioned town, with a river where the boys could have boating and swimming.

"It is so far!" Mrs. Alston had said at first.

"Not too far, though. Of course we do not expect him to come home every few weeks. That always unsettles a boy."

So she made no further demur. The principal, Dr. Goldthwaite, was a truly religious man, and the place was held in high esteem. Perhaps this took their thoughts a little from the subject that was so absorbing to Kathie.

Rob went over to the hall and hung about all the morning. He did find a good deal of amusement in it. The crowd was disposed to be rather jolly, and several of the men took their luck with great good-humor. It was as his uncle had said. While they would not willingly leave their homes and families, still, if the country had need of them in her imminent peril, they would go. Others, sure of a substitute, took the news with unconcern. Only a few exhibited any anger, or declared loudly what they would and what they would not do.

At three o'clock the printed list was complete, and the notices were being made up.

"So your uncle's in for it, Rob!" exclaimed a voice at his side.

"No, you're mistaken. I listened to every name."

"Here it is, – Robert Conover!"

Rob followed the grimy finger down the list. Sure enough! His heart stood still for a moment.

"He will get a sub, though! He'd be a fool to go when he's rich enough to stay at home!"

"Yes, that's it!" and a burly fellow turned, facing them with a savage frown. "It's the poor man this 'ere thing comes hard on! Rich men are all cowards! They kin stay to hum and nuss themselves in the chimbley-corner. I say they're cowards!"

Rob's heart swelled within him for a twofold reason. First, the shock. He had not been able to believe that the draft would touch them, and the surprise was very great. Then to have his uncle called a coward! All the boy's hot, unreasoning indignation was ablaze.

"He is not!" he answered, fiercely.

"Say that agin and I'll knock you over!"

Rob was not to be dared or to be bullied into silence. He stood his ground manfully.

"I say that my uncle is no coward, whether he gets a substitute or not!"

The fellow squared off. It was Kit Kent, as he was commonly called, a blacksmith of notoriously unsteady habits.

"None of that!" and a form was interposed between Bob and his assailant. "Hit a fellow of your size, Kent, not a boy like that."

"Let the youngster hold his tongue then! Much he knows!"

Rob did not stir, but his lips turned blue and almost cold with the pressure. If he had been a little larger, it seemed to him that he could not have let Kent alone.

"There's a chance for you to make some money," exclaimed a voice in the crowd. "Six or seven hundred dollars, and you're grumbling about being out of work! It's a golden opportunity, and you'll never find another like it."

That turned the laugh upon Kent. Rob walked off presently. Turning into a quiet street, he nearly ran over two men who stood talking.

"The trouble is that you can hardly find a substitute. Most of the able-bodied men who will go have enlisted or been drafted. The look is mighty poor!"

That startled Rob again. He began to feel pretty sober now. What if —

Kathie and Aunt Ruth had gone out into the garden, and were taking up some flowers for winter.

"O Rob!" exclaimed Kathie, with a cry, "is there any news? It's the worst, I know," answering her own question, her breath almost strangling her.

"Yes, it is the worst!"

"Uncle Robert has been drafted!" Kathie dropped her trowel and flew to her mother. "But he won't go," she sobbed; "do you think he will? How can we spare him?"

"It would be no worse for us than for hundreds of others," replied her mother. "Kathie, my darling, be brave until we know, at least."

"Where is he?"

"He went to Connor's Point with Mr. Langdon. Hush, dear, don't cry."

Kathie wiped away her tears. "It is very hard," she said. "I never realized before how hard it was."

But the flowers lost their charm. Kathie put away her implements, laid off her garden-dress, as she called it, — a warm woollen sack and skirt, — and sat down, disconsolately enough, to practise her music. Next week she was going to school.

She heard Uncle Robert's voice on the porch at the side entrance. Rob was talking in great earnest; but somehow she couldn't have gone out, or trusted the voice still so full of tears.

He came in at length. "You have heard the news, Kitty?"

She rose and went to his arms, hid her face upon his shoulder. "O Uncle Robert!"

"What ought I to do, little one?"

It was such a solemn question that she could not answer it readily, selfishly.

"Rob came very near getting into a row on my behalf. It was rather funny. Poor boy! I believe he would go willingly in my stead."

The story interested Kathie a good deal, and turned the current of her feelings somewhat. Then one or two of the neighbors came in, and they had no more quiet until they gathered round the supper-table. Freddy thought it a great honor to be drafted.

"Is it true that there is a scarcity of substitutes?" asked Rob of his uncle.

"I believe it is. Mr. Langdon put in one about a month ago, and paid a thousand dollars."

"But you could afford that," said Rob, decisively.

"What about the cowardice of the proceeding?"

Rob colored. The matter appeared so different to him now.

"O Uncle Robert!" — in a most deprecating tone.

"I will not perplex you, nor keep you in suspense," he said, gravely. "If your father was alive I think I should not hesitate a moment. The country is at her sorest need, and calls upon her loyal children for assistance. It is the duty of every man who can be spared to answer the call, to swell the list so that the struggle may be brief. It seems to me that another year will certainly see our war ended, now that we have such brave and able generals in the field, but if the stress should be any greater, I *must* respond. Now, however, I shall do my best to procure a substitute."

They all drew a relieved breath. Kathie looked up with a tender light in her eyes.

"I am so glad!" she said afterward, nestling beside him upon the sofa. "Did it surprise you when you heard that you were drafted?"

"I must confess that it did. I had a presentiment that I should escape, so it seems such things are not always to be depended upon."

Kathie was silent for some time, her eyes engrossed with a figure in the carpet.

"Well, Miss Thoughtful, what is it now? Are you not satisfied to have me stay, or am I less of a hero in your eyes?"

"No, Uncle Robert. I was only thinking of the men who were compelled to go and did not want to, who had families to leave – "

"My darling, it is not necessary to lay the cares of others so deeply to heart. Instead, we must do all we can for those who are left behind."

"I don't think a draft quite a fair thing, after all," declared Rob, coming out of a brown study.

Mrs. Alston entered the room. "Mr. Morrison is over here and wishes to see you, – Ethel's father."

Uncle Robert rose and went out.

In the mean while Aunt Ruth and Rob had quite a warm discussion concerning the draft. Kathie somehow felt very tender-hearted, and was silent.

Presently they heard steps in the hall and the door opened.

"I have brought Mr. Morrison in to see you all," Mr. Conover said, "and to explain to you that he desires to go in my stead, a willing substitute."

There was something very solemn and withal sweet in Uncle Robert's voice. Rob winked away a tear, Kathie walked over to Mr. Morrison and laid her hand in his, – a pretty white hand if she did dust the rooms and do gardening with it.

"It is so very kind and generous in you," she began, falteringly, thinking of another love and another substitute.

"No, Miss Kathie, it isn't all pure generosity, so don't praise me too soon. If I'd been real lucky about getting work, maybe I shouldn't have taken the idea so strongly into my mind, or if poor Ethel's mother had lived. But times are unsettled, and business of all kinds is so very dull that I'd half made up my mind to 'list and get the bounty. That would be something for my little girl in case she didn't have me. Then when I heard talk of the draft I thought to myself, 'If Mr. Conover gets taken I'll offer to go in his place'; and so I waited. Being an Englishman, I am not liable, you know."

"And that makes it the more noble," returned Kathie, softly. "It was so good to – to think of him"; and her voice sank to a whisper.

"You have all been so kind to my poor old mother, and to me, for that matter, as well. I seem to owe some sort of duty to you first."

"Did you mean to enlist any way?" asked Kathie.

"Yes, miss, it would have come to that; for, said I, 'Here is a country and a government battling in a good cause, begging for men, and willing to provide for the little ones they may leave behind.' Though I should be no skulk, nor eye-server, Miss Kathie, if I did go for the money."

"We should never think that of you," returned Uncle Robert, warmly.

"So I'll be glad to go in your place, sir, if it's any favor; and if you'll look after Ethel a little, if anything should happen to me. If I'm too bold in asking – "

"No," said Aunt Ruth; "it will be a sacred duty, and a pleasure as well; but we shall count upon your return."

"Life is uncertain with us all," was the grave reply. With that he rose and bowed. Uncle Robert left the room with him, for he had much more to say.

"I couldn't have uttered a word," exclaimed Rob, his voice still a little tremulous. "Why, it's just like a dream! There are noble and heroic men who may go to war even for the money, though I think they are a good deal sneered at, – subs, as the boys call them; but I shall never ridicule them again, – never, although bad men may do the same thing."

"It is not quite the same," subjoined Kathie.

"No, the motive makes a great difference."

Uncle Robert returned and took his seat between the children. He appeared to be invested with a new virtue in their eyes, as if he had just escaped an imminent and deadly peril. And there is something in the simplest act of chivalry that touches one's soul.

"It was so good in Mr. Morrison to think of you," Rob said, after a while.

"Yes; going farther back, I don't know but we owe it all to Kathie. If she had not thought of our trusty and efficient gardener, we should never have known his brother. The lodge has made a charming home for them, and they feel deeply grateful."

"It is worse to go away to war than I imagined," Rob continued, gravely following out his own musings.

"You have been looking at the glory and listening to the music, my boy; but there is quite another side to it. It is one thing to go out as a mounted officer, in glittering uniform, with a servant to wait upon you, and if you fall in battle to have whole cities weep your loss, and quite another to tramp as a common soldier, often weary and footsore, to be subject to the caprice of those in authority, to work night and day sometimes, to stand in the front rank and be swept down by a terrific charge, be trampled under foot and thrown into a nameless grave, perhaps forever lost to your kindred. It is no light matter, Rob, and requires a good deal of courage when a man does it intelligently."

"You wouldn't have gone out as a private, though!"

A grave smile crossed Uncle Robert's face "I should not have gone for the glory, but the duty. Yes, Rob, I should have taken my place in the ranks, and if the great Captain of all had said, 'Friend, come up higher,' I should have trusted through his grace to be ready for the promotion. But one goes in my stead."

Kathie thought of the One who had gone in the place of us all, been mocked, derided, spit upon, and put to a cruel death. Maybe the rest remembered it too, for there was no more talking. Their hearts were too full.

CHAPTER III

TRUE TO ONE'S COLORS

THERE was a week of great excitement at Brookside. Head-quarters were established on the confines of the town to render it accessible to Taunton and the adjacent places. Hundreds thronged the camp daily; uniforms were sent down, and drilling commenced in good earnest.

Kathie began school on Monday morning. A large, pleasant room had been obtained, and Mrs. Wilder opened with ten young ladies, though nearly as many more had been enrolled.

"I feel as if I were drafted," she declared to Uncle Robert. "I know it is my duty to go and do the best that I can, but I would so much rather have remained at home."

"You find, then, that no one is quite exempt from the warfare?" and he smiled. "Still, I think I can trust you to be a good soldier."

"I am second in the regiment," she said. "Mr. Morrison must always stand first."

It seemed very quiet and lonesome in that large room, where you were put upon your honor not to speak, and the silence was broken only by the recitations, or some remark of Mrs. Wilder. A long, dull day, though the session closed at two, there being no intermission.

Lottie Thorne was the only girl Kathie was well acquainted with. That ambitious young lady had pleaded very hard for boarding-school, and, being disappointed, was rather captious and critical. Emma Lauriston sat next to her, and Kathie fancied she might like her very much. She had met her in the summer at the rowing-matches.

But she was glad enough to get home. Rob had his head full of Camp Schuyler, and Freddy had arrayed himself in gorgeous regimentals and sat out on a post drumming fearfully.

"I want a little more talk about this substitute business," said Uncle Robert, at the table. "Mr. Morrison offered to go for seven hundred dollars. He has three hundred of his own. Now what do you think we ought to give him?"

He addressed the question more particularly to Rob and Kathie.

Rob considered. In his boy's way of thinking he supposed what any one asked was enough.

"Would a thousand dollars be too much?" Kathie ventured, timidly. "It doesn't seem to me that any money could make up to Ethel for –"

There Kathie stopped.

"He will come back," exclaimed Rob.

"We were talking over Ethel's future this morning. Mr. Morrison would like to have her educated for a teacher. I am to be appointed her guardian in case of any misfortune."

"It ought not to be less than a thousand," said Aunt Ruth.

"I thought so myself. And I believe I shall pledge my word to provide a home for Ethel in case of any change at her uncle's."

Kathie's deep, soft eyes thanked him.

The next day the bargain was concluded. Mr. Morrison handed his small sum over to Mr. Conover for safe-keeping, and the whole amount, thirteen hundred dollars, was placed at interest. Then he reported himself at Camp Schuyler for duty.

Kathie tried bravely to like her school, but home was so much dearer and sweeter. It was quite hard after her desultory life, and spasmodic studying made so very entertaining by Uncle Robert's explanations, to come down to methodical habits and details. She meant to be a good soldier, even if it did prove difficult in the early marches.

But this week was one of events. On Thursday afternoon Mr. Meredith surprised them all again. It seemed to Kathie that there was something unusual in his face. Uncle Robert was absent on important business, and at first he appeared rather disappointed.

"It is such a glorious afternoon, Kitty, that I think you will have to invite me out to drive, by way of comfort. Are the ponies in good order?"

"Yes, and at home. How fortunate that Rob did not take them!"

Kathie ordered them at once.

"You have had great doings here. So you came near losing your dear uncle, my child?"

Kathie winked away a tear. There would always be a tender little spot in her heart concerning the matter.

"It is best under the circumstances," was Mr. Meredith's grave comment. "I should not want him to go."

They took their seats in the phaeton. "Where shall we drive?" Kathie asked. "To – " breaking off her sentence with a little blush.

"Miss Darrell is away from home. It is owing to that circumstance that you are called upon to entertain me"; and he laughed a little, but less gayly than usual.

It was a soft, lovely autumn day, full of whisperings of oaks and pines and cedars, fragmentary chirps of birds, and distant river music, Kathie drew a few long breaths of perfect content, then with her usual consideration for others she stole a shy glance to see if Mr. Meredith was enjoying it as well, he was so very quiet.

"I am afraid something troubles you," she said, softly; and her voice sounded as if it might have been a rustle of maple branches close at hand. "Is it about Uncle Robert?"

"No, child," in a grave, reflective tone; "it is – about myself."

She did not like to question him as she would have done with Uncle Robert.

"Kitten," he began, presently, "I have been thinking this good while, and thinking slowly. A great many things puzzle me, and all my perplexities have culminated at last in one grand step; but whether I am quite prepared for it – "

The sentence was a labyrinth to Kathie, and she was not quite sure that she held the clew.

"I am going to enlist – at least, I am going out for three months – with my regiment. They have volunteered, most of them."

"And what troubles you?" in her sweet, tender voice, and glancing up with an expression that no other eyes save Kathie Alston's could have had.

"Child," he asked, "how did you stand fire last winter when you were so suddenly brought to the front? About the singing, I mean."

She understood. He referred to the Sunday evening at Mrs. Meredith's when she had refused to join Ada in singing songs. The remembered pain still made her shiver.

"There *is* something about you, Kathie, just a little different from other children, – other girls. You often carry it in your face; and for the life of me I cannot help thinking how the wise virgins must have been illuminated with their tiny lamps while the others stood in darkness. Is it a natural gift or grace?"

She knew now what he meant. She was called upon to give testimony here, and it was almost as hard as in Mrs. Meredith's grand drawing-room. She felt the warm blood throbbing through every pulse.

"You did a brave thing that night, little girl. I shall never forget it – never. *Can* you answer my question? What *is* it?"

She could only think of one thing, one sentence, amid the whirl and confusion of ideas and the girlish shrinking back, – "The love of Christ constraineth us."

"It wasn't merely your regard for your mother or Uncle Robert?"

"It was *all*," – in her simple, earnest fashion.

"I'm going out there, Kathie," nodding his head southward, "to stand some pretty hard fire, doubtless. I am not afraid of physical pain, nor the dropping out of life, though existence never was sweeter than now; but if, in the other country, the record of my useless years rises sharp against

me, what shall I answer? I have never tried to do anything for the glory of God! Child, you shame all our paltry lives!"

"O, don't!" with a suggestion of pain in her voice; "what I can do is such a very little."

She would never know how the simple acts of her life, springing from the hidden centre that was deeper even than her every-day thought, was to bear fruit on wide-spread branches.

"And yet we – I – do nothing. I should have to go empty-handed."

She cast about for some words of comfort. As girl or woman Kathie Alston would never be able to realize all the frivolousness, to say nothing of vanity, selfishness, and deeper sins, crowded into this man's life, which still looked so fair by outward comparison with others.

"Ever since Mr. Morrison offered to go in Uncle Robert's place this verse has been lingering in my mind: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' It seems to me that it doesn't mean physical life altogether, but all the times and places when we take something precious out of our own lives and put it into that of others. And every man who goes now may be called upon to suffer in some other's stead. If he do it bravely, is it not a little of the good fruit? I can't explain all I mean, only just as the Saviour loved us we ought to love every one else."

Edward Meredith had listened to many an eloquent sermon, and dissected it in a purely intellectual fashion, his heart never warming with any inward grace, or hungering after the true bread. But he understood now the secret of this little girl's life. Not doctrine, not so much creed, or form, or rule, "but the taking something precious out of her daily existence and noiselessly placing it in that of others." And the same love which enabled her to do this rendered her brave, pure, and sweet. A child's religion, that a year or two ago he would have sneered at, and now he had come to learn of her because he was too proud to ask others, and perhaps ashamed.

"But you had a substitute!" she said, presently, bethinking herself.

"Yes. He has served his time out honorably, has had the good fortune to come home without harm of any kind. You remember how Mackenzie bantered me last winter, though he was in dead earnest. But the country is at her extremest need now; if Grant, Sherman, and our other generals, are strengthened by good reinforcements, it seems to me that in six months we might have peace. I have done a good deal of holiday soldiering in my life, but this is to be sober earnest."

He looked as if it might be.

"When will you go?"

"We start for Washington on Saturday morning."

"So soon! Does – Miss Jessie know?" Kathie could not help but ask it, though the lids trembled over her shy, downcast eyes.

"She should have received my note this morning. I suppose she did not, or she would have been at home. Kathie, I ought to thank you for your rare delicacy in keeping our secret. There are some matters that one does not like to have talked about."

What would Miss Jessie say? Of course she loved Mr. Meredith very much. Kathie's heart ached a little in silence, but this was one of the burdens that could not be borne by another.

On they went through lovely scenery, now and then catching a glimpse of the river that wound around like a silver cord through its bed of green. Here in the stillness they heard the chatter of squirrels and the sound of dropping nuts, or an autumn-tinted leaf went floating on the air like some gorgeous bird with his wings all aflame. Golden-rod and great clumps of purple Michaelmas daisies starred the roadside, with frequent clusters of scarlet sumach, pendent bitter-sweet berries with the still glossy green leaves, and the dark tint of spruce and fir.

Kathie began to realize how her heart and intellect had expanded. She was no longer a little girl. How she had grown within and without was a great mystery, as well as how her soul had enriched itself with drawing near to others, and going forth again with the sweet, half-comprehending sympathies of girlhood.

"I have been a dull companion," Mr. Meredith said, at length. "But, Kathie, I shall never forget the happy days I have spent at Cedarwood. To have known you is one of the bright events in my life."

They were coming up the avenue, and saw Uncle Robert standing on the broad porch. She might never have another opportunity to speak, and he had been so peculiarly serious this afternoon.

"O Mr. Meredith, you won't forget – when you are out there – that there is another service, and another Captain –"

"Pray for me, Kathie, that I may be one of His faithful soldiers to my life's end."

She ran up stairs afterward, and the two gentlemen had a long talk in the library. After supper Mr. Meredith said good by, as he expected to leave the Darrells' to take the early morning train.

"I do believe everybody is going to war!" exclaimed Rob, rather ruefully. "I wonder if we shall ever have such good times again."

Rob spent the next forenoon in packing.

"How all these things are to be gotten into one trunk I cannot imagine!" he exclaimed, in despair.

"I fancy that you had better put the clothes in first, and leave the 'things,' as you call them, until the last," said Aunt Ruth, with a quiet smile.

"But I shall want them all, I'm sure."

"Not your whole tool-chest!"

"Some of the articles would come in so handy."

"To assist you in learning your lessons?" asked his mother.

"O, you know what I mean. Now, mother, you won't let Freddy meddle with them while I am gone, – will you? He always does manage to get into everything."

"The best way will be to put all that you can in the closet of your play-room, and give Uncle Robert the key. Lock all your drawers as well."

One would have fancied that Rob was going to Europe, to say the very least. After he had tumbled the articles in and out about twenty times, he concluded that he would go down to the stable to see about some trifle.

So his mother soon had the trunk in order, though she quietly restored half the "traps" to their place in the play-room, and I doubt if Rob ever missed them.

Saturday was another very busy time with him. He had to take a farewell glimpse of Camp Schuyler, to visit hosts of the boys, to take a last row, a last ride, a last game of ball, and one might have imagined from all these preparations that he was about to enter a dungeon and leave the cheerful ways of life behind.

But Rob was beginning to have quite serious moods occasionally; and the last Sunday at home was one of them. He did not feel nor understand the transition state as keenly as Kathie, he was such a thorough, careless, rollicking boy. He would play until the last gasp, – "until whiskers began to sprout," he said, – and he would make one of the men to whom recollections of boyish fun would always be sweet.

The sermon in the morning touched him a little, and then the talk with Charlie Darrell. The Darrells felt very badly over the present loss of their dear friend; and Kathie just pressed Miss Jessie's fingers, but spoke no word.

"I do mean to *try*," Rob said, that evening, to Kathie. "It seems almost as if I were really going to war, as well as the rest of them."

"Yes," she answered, gravely; "you will find enough fighting to do, – foes without and within."

"I have learned some things, though," – with a confident nod, – "and I shall never forget about the giants. What odd times we have had, Kathie, from first to last!"

"I wonder if you will be homesick?"

"Pshaw! No. A great boy like me! No doubt there'll be lots of fun."

"But I hope you will not get into any troubles or scrapes. O Rob! it is real difficult to always do just what is right, when oftentimes wrong things seem so much pleasanter."

"I wonder why it is, Kathie? It always looked rather hard to me. Why didn't God make the wrong so that you could see it plainly?"

"If we see it, that is sufficient. Maybe if we kept looking at it steadily it would grow larger; but you know we often turn to the pleasant side when we should be watching the danger."

"I don't believe that I can ever be real good; but I'll never tell a lie, nor be mean, nor shirk, nor cheat! I want to be a real splendid man like Mr. Meredith!"

Rob would never outgrow that boyish admiration. Edward Meredith would have felt a good deal humbled if he had known how this boy magnified some of his easy-going ways into virtues.

They had a sweet, sad time singing in the evening. Kathie had begun to play very nicely, with a great deal of expression and tenderness; and to-night all the breaks, all the farewells, and the loneliness to come, seemed to be struggling in her soul. She was glad that no one saw her face, for now and then a tear dropped unbidden.

Rob and his mother had their last talk at bed-time. Her heart was sad enough at the thought of the nine months' absence, for at Westbury there were no short vacations. True, she would have the privilege of visiting him, but such interviews must, of necessity, be brief.

He lay awake a long while, thinking and resolving. How many times he had "tried to be good." Why couldn't he remember? What was it that helped his mother, and Uncle Robert, and Kathie? The grace of God; but then how was one to get this grace?

Wandering off into the fields of theology, Rob fell asleep, and never had another thought until the breakfast-bell rang. Then, as he recalled his perplexity, he said slowly to himself, "I don't believe religion comes natural to boys."

The parting was sad, after all. A thousand thoughts rushed into his mind. What if he should be homesick? Here was the roomy playhouse, with its store of tools, books in abundance, the ponies, the lake, the boys, – O, everything! and Rob's fast-coming breath was one great sob.

"A good soldier," Kathie whispered, as his arms were round her neck.

Uncle Robert did not return until the next day. The accounts were very encouraging. Clifton Hall had taken Rob's fancy at once. The boys were coming in on Monday; so there was little done beside fraternizing and being classified and shown to their dormitories. He had written a little scrap of a note stating that "everything was lovely."

They missed him very much. Kathie began to wonder if *her* winter wouldn't be lonesome. No gay Mr. Meredith to drop in upon them now and then; no noisy, merry boys such as had haunted the grounds all summer. She began to feel sadly disconsolate.

But she rallied presently. "I must fight as well as my soldiers," she said to herself.

The next event was Mr. Morrison's departure. Uncle Robert took both families over the day they "broke camp."

Mr. Morrison wrung Uncle Robert's hand warmly. "It will be all right, whatever comes," he said. "If I had not gone for you I should have done it for some one else, so never give yourself an anxious thought about it. I know my little lass is in good hands."

He kissed Ethel many, many times, and she clung to him with an almost breaking heart. Kathie's quick eyes saw a duty here.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE STEPS BY THE WAY

BUT Kathie found that the regiment's marching off to Virginia had not taken all the interest of life. They had left the woods behind, glowing with rich autumnal coloring, the glorious blue heavens, the ripening fruits, and the changeful scenes, that opened afresh every day.

Her afternoons were quite a delight. Uncle Robert always held himself in readiness, and they had either a ride or a ramble. There were new collections of ferns to make, and with these she often had an entertaining lesson in botany.

October was very pleasant indeed. There was no frost to mention until the middle of the month, and by that time the flowers were safely housed. Hugh Morrison had built a conservatory against the south side of the barn, and promised Kathie bouquets all winter.

Kathie began to look up her old friends as well, and she joined the girls in several nutting expeditions, at which they had rare fun.

Withal she had a brief note from Ada, who wondered if she approved the foolish step Uncle Edward had taken. Papa was positively angry about it! And then the idea of going out as a private, even if it was in a "crack" regiment. However, they really didn't mean to fight, and that was some comfort. He would be at home by the first of January.

But General Grant evinced no desire to go into winter quarters, while at the South and West there was unusual activity.

"It looks as if there might be considerable fighting before Christmas!" declared Uncle Robert.

For the few who chose to find them there were duties enough. Brookside, as well as other places, began to feel the effects of the war. There were soldiers' widows and orphans, the sick and the wounded who were sent home to make room for newer cases. Then the churches at Brookside decided to give a grand Fair and Festival for this benevolent object, to be held Thanksgiving week.

Kathie found her hands quite full. Still she found time to dust the parlor every morning and take care of her own room, and often managed to get half an hour for her music practice. To be sure, she did not dawdle over her dressing, neither was there a waterfall wonderfully constructed, and adorned with puffs and braids.

"I mean to keep my little girl simple in her tastes as long as I can," Mrs. Alston replied to the dressmaker. "Nothing can be prettier than her hair as it is, and I do not feel justified in dressing her expensively when there are so many children suffering with cold and hunger."

"But young girls feel so sensitive on these matters," was the reply. "They all want to look like their companions."

"I hope there are some sensible mothers left," returned Mrs. Alston with a smile.

Kathie was very much interested in getting contributions and making fancy articles, though hers tended rather to the useful. And Aunt Ruth, to her great amusement, made up a dozen stout gingham kitchen aprons with bibs, a stack of kettle-holders, and knitted some dishcloths out of soft cotton.

In the mean while Kathie was delighted with a letter from Mr. Meredith. He was in the gayest spirits and related a host of comical episodes. He had been in several skirmishes, but no regular battle, was well and hearty, and brown as a berry already. Just at the last he said, "I have not forgotten our pleasant ride, and the other fighting we talked about."

Mr. Morrison was doing very well also. Kathie began to think that it was not such a terrible thing to go to war, after all.

As for Rob, his record was pretty fair. He did confess to being a little homesick at first. The Latin was "awful tough work," and some of the rules "rather hard on a fellow who was new to them." But they had a "jolly set of boys," and he liked it first-rate.

So Kathie had no need to worry about her soldiers. She said a little prayer for them night and morning, and thought of them often. But she was so busy and so happy that she was little inclined to look upon the dark side.

The Fair was a decided success. It was held at Mason's Hall and opened on Monday evening. Emma Lauriston, and a number of the larger girls, were in attendance upon the tables. The band came up from Connor's Point and discoursed patriotic music. The hall was large, well lighted, and presented a very gay appearance.

But the most amusement was created by a "Dutch kitchen." Several ladies had transformed a small ante-room into a very attractive place of resort. There were great brown rafters overhead, from which depended hams, flitches of bacon, strings of onions, bunches of herbs, and at the edge were stowed away miscellaneous articles. A great eight-day clock, chairs, and an old brass-handled dresser that might have come over in the Mayflower, while four pretty young girls, in the quaint old costume of their grand-mothers, waited upon the table with all grace and ease. This was crowned with an immense dish of beans and pork, and a stout, rosy Dutch woman was baking waffles. Altogether this was the place for fun.

Kathie had been in and out half a dozen times. Her Fortunatus's purse was full to repletion, and every time she passed the door she saw some children standing there with wistful eyes. It was such a delightful thing to make any one happy.

Sauntering round, she came to a rather oddly arranged table, – Miss Weston's. She was the primmest and queerest of old maids, – a little body with weak eyes and flaxen hair, who always looked at you sharply through gold-bowed spectacles.

"O dear!" she exclaimed, "how you young things do go flyin' round! As for me, I'm that tired I'm just ready to drop. I've been here ever sence two o'clock and never set down a minnit. I fixed all my table myself, and I made nigh onto all the things. Cousin Hitty, she sent me them there child's aperns; but land! what a sight of folly it is to do all that braidin' and nonsense! I never had no sech thing when I was little! Been in the Dutch kitchen?"

"O yes, time and again."

"I'd like to go, I'm sure. I've been standin' stiddy on my feet sence two o'clock. If some one would come along and take my table!"

"Couldn't I?" asked Kathie.

"O, you're so flighty! All gals are nowadays. Why, when I was no older 'n you I had seven bed-quilts pieced, and had begun to lay by sheets and pillow-slips, and had a dozen pairs of as han'some hum-knit stockings as you'd find in a day's walk!"

Miss Weston really did look tired. Kathie was debating whether she should not insist, though this was an out-of-the-way corner, and rather dull.

"Well, I guess I'll go. You won't be likely to sell anything; nothing much sells the first night, and I hain't no nonsense and flummery. Good useful articles, but nobody can see their virtue nowadays. It's the way of the world!" – a little spitefully. "All the prices are marked in plain figgers, and I won't have a thing undersold. O dear, I am a'most beat out."

"I'll do my best," said Kathie, sweetly.

After giving about a dozen more orders Miss Weston moved slowly away, though, truth to tell, she was more anxious to go than she appeared; and whom should she meet just at the entrance but Mr. Denslow, who paid the ten cents' admittance fee. Mr. Denslow, moreover, was a widower, and Miss Weston had not quite given up the hope that the bed-quilts and the stores of linen might some day be called into use.

Kathie took her place behind the table, and, when the moments began to hang heavy, ventured upon a few improvements. The passers-by just gave the place a glance, and preferred to go where there were some pretty girls or some fun. Kathie found it exceedingly dull.

At last Mary Cox spied her out. Charlie Darrell was escorting her round.

"Why, Miss Weston," he said, softly, "where's your specs? And why isn't your hair done up in queer little puffs?"

"What an ugly table!" exclaimed Mary. "How did you come to take it?"

"Miss Weston was so tired."

"She is in the Dutch kitchen, desperately sweet upon Mr. Denslow. It's so seldom that she gets a beau that you needn't expect her for the next hour. What a lovely time you will have waiting!"

Charlie would have been very well satisfied to stay and talk to Kathie, but Mary wanted the amusement of rambling round and laughing with every one; and though Kathie said, beseechingly, "Don't go!" Mary replied, "O, we must!" and the child was left alone again.

Down at the end of the hall they were having a merry time. She saw grave Emma Lauriston laughing, and Aunt Ruth was talking and smiling. Why didn't some one think of her?

"How much fur these caliker aperns?" asked a country woman.

Kathie roused a little at the question, and took her eyes from the entertaining circle.

"Half a dollar!"

"Half a dollar!" – in the utmost surprise. "Why, they ain't wuth it! Ain't more 'n two yards of caliker in 'em, and I kin buy jest sich for fifteen cents a yard."

"But the making," suggested Kathie.

"O, that was throwed in! Always is in char'table objects. Tell you what I'll do, – give three shillin's apiece for two of 'em. It's a good object."

Now Kathie knew that the calico could not be bought for less than eighteen cents a yard, which would give just one cent profit; besides, Miss Weston had charged her particularly not to undersell. "The table is not mine," she answered; "I am keeping it for a friend."

Perhaps the woman considered there was a better chance of bargain-making; at all events she lingered and haggled until Kathie grew nervous, and wished Miss Weston would come.

"Well, you're dreadful dear, – that's all I've got to say"; and the woman flounced off angrily. "It's just the way at these fairs and things; but you can't cheat me out of my eyes, char'ty or not." Then Kathie was left alone again.

Presently Harry Cox ran over. "We're having such fun, and Charlie sent me for you. There's no one here, so why can't you shut up shop?"

Kathie longed to very much. She might keep an eye on the table and have a little fun besides; but it would be deserting her post. No true soldier would do that. "I'm obliged to you, but I think I had better stay; Miss Weston will soon be here."

"She's an old humbug!"

The sights and sounds were so tantalizing! What *was* Miss Weston doing in the Dutch kitchen all this while?

At last a bit of good-fortune befell Kathie. Mr. and Mrs. Adams and Mr. Langdon came along. Mr. Langdon had been away from Brookside for several weeks, and had a host of questions to ask.

"But what are you doing over here? You look as if you had quarrelled with your neighbors, and gone off in disdain."

Kathie explained that it was not her table.

"Have you sold anything?"

"Not a penny's worth!"

"Then I must patronize you a little," declared Mrs. Adams.

She found a number of useful articles, and some that she could give away to her poor parishioners. Kathie was quite proud of the four dollars in the small cash-box.

At last she was relieved, and gave a great breath of thankfulness.

"Is that *all* you've taken in?" asked Miss Weston, rather sharply. "Are you sure you've been here all the time? But you never can find any one who will do for you as you do yourself."

"I did not have but one customer," returned Kathie, in justification; and she felt that Mrs. Adams had made her purchases from a sense of personal friendship.

"I might better 'a' stayed with my table," was the ungracious answer; and that was all the thanks Kathie received for her kind deed and the discomfort. But she solaced herself with the consciousness that a great many good deeds meet with no reward in this world. Miss Weston must certainly have had some pleasure, or she would not have stayed so long.

Kathie was glad to get back to her mother and Aunt Ruth. The great source of amusement over here was the confectionery table with packages of "gift" candy, each parcel of which contained a present, and some of them were exceedingly comical.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.