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“Oh! I must go over there.”

Maud's Two Homes.

FRONTISPIECE.

See page 10.

MAUD'S TWO HOMES.

BY

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"BROOKSIDE FARM-HOUSE," "THE SHANNONS," "ALLAN'S FAULT."
&c., &c.



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MAUD'S TWO HOMES.

CHAPTER I.

MAUD RAYMOND was an orphan. Her father and mother had both died before she was three years old. She was about six when our story begins, and was living with her uncle and aunt in a handsome house in a large city. Mr. Raymond, Maud's uncle, was very rich. He had no children of his own, and he loved Maud very dearly, but her aunt did not care much about her. She was a gay

lady and went out a great deal and had not much time to give to Maud. She hardly ever came down to breakfast; for she was often out at a party in the evening, and did not get home and to bed till very late, which made her feel unwilling to get up early in the morning. Then, as she often wanted to sleep or had a headache, she could not bear any noise in the house; and so Maud was kept in the nursery most of the time, and told that she must not sing, or jump about, or talk very loud, lest she should disturb her aunt. The little girl used to grow very tired indeed of being shut up in that one room so much of the time, and having to

be so quiet; and she would long to get out of doors and run and shout and make as much noise as she pleased.

Mrs. Raymond did not mean to be unkind to Maud; she provided her with a good nurse, who kept her neat and clean, gave her wholesome food, and took her out to walk every day in pleasant weather. She dressed her very handsomely too, and gave her plenty of pretty toys and picture-books; but she did not give her love. She seldom kissed her, or stroked her hair, or patted her cheek, but often scolded her, and called her noisy and troublesome. She forgot how hard it is for little folks to be still and

to keep from talking; and when Maud was in the room with her, she would hardly allow her to move or speak. So that, though Maud often got very tired of staying alone in the nursery, or with only Hannah for company, she liked still less to be with her aunt. She loved her uncle much better, for he would often take her on his knee and kiss her and talk kindly to her; and he liked to have her talk to him too. But then she seldom saw him except for a few minutes at breakfast; for he went away to his store as soon as he was done eating, and did not come home to lunch, which was Maud's dinner; and she always had an

early tea in the nursery by herself, and went to bed about the time the grown-up people were taking their late dinner.

Opposite Mr. Raymond's house was a fine park, with broad graveled walks, green grass and trees, and a fountain throwing up jets of water; and here, at almost any time of day, ladies and gentlemen might be seen walking about or sitting under the trees; while merry groups of boys and girls were jumping the rope, playing ball or trundling their hoops, laughing and shouting with noisy glee. Maud often watched them from the window of the nursery, and longed to be with them and

taking part in the sport. But she knew it was a useless wish; for her aunt said it was very rude and unladylike for little girls to race about in that way, to laugh so loud and call to each other so noisily, and Maud must never do it.

Hannah, the nurse, often took Maud into the park when they went out to walk, and the little girl liked to go there, and get near to the pretty fountain and to the children at play, and sometimes she begged Hannah to let her join them. But Hannah always said,

“No, Miss Maud, you know your aunt won't allow it, because you would spoil your nice clothes; and

besides, she wants you to behave like a lady ”

And Maud would say, “Oh, dear, I wish I didn't have to wear nice clothes! and I don't want to behave like a lady.”

One warm, bright morning in June, Maud was alone in the nursery, as usual, standing by the window, and looking with longing eyes at the pleasant shady walks in the park and the children at play there. “Oh dear!” she sighed, “I do wish I could go over there and play with them! I'm so tired of being shut up in the house, and I've nobody to play with me. Why, what's that? It's a man with an organ and two

monkeys; and he's gone into the park, and is beginning to play. Oh, I must go over there! I wish Hannah would take me over now ;” and running out into the hall, she called Hannah at the top of her voice. But Hannah did not answer, and Maud ran down stairs, calling, “Hannah! Hannah! take me over to the park now; hurry, Hannah, for I want to see that man with the monkeys, and he'll be going away.”

Mrs. Raymond was lying on a couch in her room, half asleep, while Hannah was moving quietly about, putting things in their places.

“Dear me!” said the lady, open-

ing her eyes, "what a racket that child is making! She'll be the death of me yet, for my poor head will never stand it. Hannah, step to the door and tell her to be quiet."

"Miss Maud," said Hannah, opening the door. "your aunt says you must stop screaming so."

"I wasn't screaming—I was just calling you," said Maud; "and I want you to put on my hat and take me right over to the park, because there's an organ-man there, with monkeys; he's just gone in; so please, Hannah, hurry."

"No," said Hannah, "I can't go now, nor for an hour yet."

“Oh dear!” said Maud; “then give me my hat and let me go by myself; I can just as well as not.”

Mrs. Raymond heard all they said, and she answered: “No, Maud, I shall not allow you to go out by yourself; but if you will keep still and make no noise, you may come in here and look out of the window. Very likely you can see the monkeys almost as well from here as if you were in the park.”

Maud hurried to the window, but on looking out, said “I can hardly see at all, for the trees. Do, aunt, please do, let me go over.”

“No,” said Mrs. Raymond, “I

told you I would not, and you needn't ask again."

"But I want to go," said Maud, beginning to cry.

"Go up to the nursery," said her aunt. "I will not have you crying or making any noise here; my head will not stand it."

Maud did not dare to disobey, and went sobbing from the room.

"What a trial children are!" said her aunt, sighing; "they are always making a noise, or wanting something they can't have."

Maud went back to her window in the nursery, and just as she reached it the man came out of the park gate with his monkeys, and for a minute or two she could

see them quite plainly. This comforted her so much that she stopped crying at once. "O Hannah," she said, as the nurse came into the room, "I did get a good look at the monkeys, after all."

"Did you?" replied Hannah; "well, I don't think you deserved it after crying so. But come, you're to be dressed up and go down to the parlor. Some ladies have called, and they asked to see you."

"I don't want to be dressed up," said Maud, fretfully.

"Oh fie, Miss Maud! do you want to be a dirty, slovenly little girl?" asked Hannah, beginning to comb the child's hair.

“No, I don't want to be dirty,” said Maud, “but I'd like to wear a calico frock, like some of the little girls that play in the park; and then I could run about without aunt all the time saying, ‘Maud, be still; you will rumple your dress. Maud, keep your hands off your sash; you will soil it.’”

“That's naughty,” said Hannah. “I'm sure those little girls that wear the calico frocks would be very glad to have such beautiful white dresses, all tucked and worked, and such fine silk sashes, as your kind aunt buys for you.”

“They wouldn't if they had to keep still and behave like ladies

all the time," said Maud. "O, Hannah, how you pull! I wish I hadn't any curls; and I don't want ever to be a lady; and when I get big enough to do as I like, I'll have calico frocks, and run out of doors without any bonnet, and jump the rope, and skip and hop and laugh and sing; and I'll have somebody to play with me then. Oh, won't I have a good time!"

Hannah laughed: "You'll not want to hop and skip and jump when you're grown up," she said; "years will take the friskiness out of you."

CHAPTER II.

THE next day Maud was again at her window looking out at the park, and fretting because she was so tired of being shut up in the house, while the sun was shining so brightly and it seemed so pleasant out of doors. Her nursery was a beautiful room, with handsome furniture, nice cool matting on the floor, pretty white curtains at the windows, and a white spread on the bed; but she had been there all alone for several hours, amusing herself with her doll and

picture-books, and now she was tired of them all; and so weary and lonely she felt that presently she sat down in her little rocking-chair, and, covering her face with her hands, began to cry quite bitterly.

She heard the door open, but thought it was Hannah coming in, and went on sobbing without looking up, till a hand was laid gently on her shoulder and a kind but strange voice asked, "Why, my dear child, what is the matter?"

Maud took her hands from her face and looked up quickly, with the tears still on her cheeks. It was a kind, sweet face that bent above her—one that she seemed

to have seen before, and yet she could not feel sure that she ever had.

“Do you not know me?” asked the lady, smiling. “I am your Aunt Lucy, and I have come all the way from my home in the country to see little Maud and take her back with me, if she would like to go;” and she drew the little girl to her bosom, and folded her arms round her and kissed her as if she loved her very much. “Will you go with me, darling?” she asked.

“Oh, may I?” cried Maud, eagerly; “will aunt and uncle let me?”

“Yes,” said Aunt Lucy. “I have

been talking to Aunt Raymond, and she says she would like to have you go; and Hannah is coming up presently to get you ready and pack up your things. But now tell me what you were crying about, and what I can do to make you happy;" and she stroked Maud's hair, and kissed her again, and looked so sweet and kind that Maud threw her arms round her neck and returned the kiss, saying,

"Oh, Aunt Lucy, I love you ever so much already; and I sha'n't cry any more if you will let me go with you. I only cried because I was so tired staying up here all alone. I want to get out of doors,

and to have some other little girls to play with me."

"Ah, well," said Aunt Lucy, "at my house you shall play out of doors all day long, if you choose, when the weather is suitable, and there will be plenty of little folks to play with you. There is Ned, who is a year older, and Lilly, a few months younger than you, and little toddling Susie, and May, who enjoys play as well as any of them, though she is nine."

"Oh how nice!" cried Maud clapping her hands; "and will you let us laugh and sing, and make as much noise as we please?"

"My little folks make a good deal sometimes," said Aunt Lucy,

laughing. "But here comes Hannah to get you ready."

"So you have been crying again?" said Hannah, as she took hold of Maud and began to dress her for her journey. "Don't you think, Aunt Lucy, that a little girl who lives in such a fine house, and has plenty to eat and drink, and beautiful clothes to wear, and loads of toys to amuse herself with, ought to be contented and happy?"

"I think such a little girl has much to be thankful for," replied the lady; "and yet I don't wonder little folks want to get out and run about, and to have others to play with them. But I hope

Maud does not need a large, handsome house and fine furniture to make her happy, for I have only a plain little country place to take her to."

"Oh no, Aunt Lucy, I don't care at all about those things," said Maud; "I'd rather live out of doors than in any house."

Aunt Lucy and Hannah both laughed at this, and Maud quickly added,

"In the day-time, when it doesn't rain, I mean."

Maud was soon dressed, and then she and Aunt Lucy went down stairs and had some lunch with Aunt Raymond, while Hannah packed the trunk. Maud

could not eat much for thinking about her ride and the new home she was going to, and her aunts too had soon finished.

“Good-bye, Maud,” said Aunt Raymond, giving her a kiss; “be a good girl, not noisy or rude, but quiet and ladylike; and don’t run out of doors without your bonnet or hat. I don’t want you to get tanned.”

“You must not expect to see her come back quite so fair as she is now,” said Aunt Lucy, smiling, “but I hope she will be fatter and rosier.”

Uncle Raymond’s carriage stood at the door waiting for them, with Maud’s trunk already on it. She

and Aunt Lucy quickly got in, saying good-bye to Hannah, who stood on the door-step waiting to see them off; and Tom, the servant-man, drove them to the depot, where they took the cars. It was a pretty long ride, but Maud enjoyed it very much after they got out of the city, and could see green fields and trees and flowers and running brooks; they were so lovely she thought she should never tire of looking at them. But at last, as the cars stopped for a moment, Aunt Lucy said they must get out. A kind, pleasant-looking man caught Maud in his arms as she was stepping from the car, helped Aunt Lucy down

and kissed her, and then the little girl.

“This is your uncle Joe, Maud—your mother’s own brother, and my husband,” said her aunt.

“Yes, and Uncle Joe is very glad to see his little niece,” he said, carrying her to a gig that stood near and putting her in it. Then he helped Aunt Lucy in, put Maud’s trunk on behind, and jumped in himself, and away they went along a beautiful road, that took them past fields and meadows, gardens, orchards and farmhouses, and now and then across a little stream of bright, clear water, until at last, just as the sun reached the tops of the trees,

they stopped before a gate and Uncle Joe sprang out, saying, "Here we are at home!"

"Oh what a nice, pleasant place!" cried Maud, looking about her with dancing eyes.

"Yes, dear, and I hope it will be a happy new home to you," said Aunt Lucy, as Uncle Joe helped them out.

"I hope it will indeed," he said; "so happy that she will want to stay a long time with us."

It was a very pretty place; the house stood higher than the road, and the ground sloping gradually down from it to the gate, made a fine large yard, which was covered with soft green grass, that

looked almost like velvet, and shaded by several large trees; and instead of a fence there was a pretty green hedge all around it.

Uncle Joe had opened the gate, and two girls and a boy came running down to meet them, crying out, "Oh, mother's come back! mother, we're so glad you've come. And is this our Cousin Maud?" they asked, crowding around her.

"Yes, this is Cousin Maud, and I hope you will all be very kind to her," said Aunt Lucy. "Maud, my dear, these are May and Ned and Lilly, the little cousins I told you of. Now come up to the house and see grandma and wee Susie."

"We're very glad you've come,

cousin," said May and Lilly, each taking one of Maud's hands.

"Yes! indeed," said Ned; "we all wanted mother to bring you."

There was a pleasant porch all along the front of the house, and here grandma and wee Susie were waiting and watching as the little party came up the hill. Susie clapped her little hands and screamed with delight at sight of her mother.

"So you've got home, Lucy; I'm glad to see you back again," grandma said; and then she asked, "Is this little Maud?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is Maud; does she not look like her dear mother?" said Aunt Lucy; and grandma

took the little girl in her arms and kissed her tenderly, saying, "She does indeed; and God grant she may be like her in more than looks! You must love grandma, dear, for she loves you."

Maud began to think she was going to have a great many to love her in this new home; and that made her very glad, for she had often wanted love.

Supper was on the table, and soon all gathered about it. Uncle Joe asked a blessing, and then helped each one, beginning with grandma. It was a nice supper, and tasted very good to Maud; and then it was so much pleasanter to be eating here with so

many kind, bright faces about her, than all alone in the nursery at Uncle Raymond's.

When supper was over all went into the sitting-room. Aunt Lucy had Susie on her lap, and Ned and May sat down near their mother, and grandma took Maud and Lilly, one on each side of her, while Uncle Joe opened the big Bible and read a chapter; then they knelt down while he prayed to God, thanking him for all his goodness to them, and asking him to forgive their sins and take care of them while they slept. All this was new and strange to Maud, for Uncle Raymond never did so; but she thought it was pleasant too.

“Now, children,” said Aunt Lucy, “bid good-night to grandma and father, for it is time to go to bed. Here, papa, is wee Susie, wanting a good-night kiss;” and she held the baby up to Uncle Joe, who kissed her and patted her cheek, saying, “Good-night, papa’s little darling.”

Then May and Ned and Lilly each claimed a kiss in turn from their father and from grandma; and Uncle Joe took Maud in his arms again and kissed her as tenderly as he did the others; and she heard him say very low, as he pressed her close to him, “God bless my little niece, my sister Maud’s orphan child.”

It made Maud feel so happy that she threw her arms round his neck and hugged him, saying, "Dear Uncle Joe, I love you ever so much already!"

"That's right, for Uncle Joe loves you, little one," he said, setting her down.

"And now you will come and say good-night to grandma, too, won't you, dear?" said the old lady, holding out her hand.

"Yes, indeed I will; I think it's nice to have a grandma," said Maud, running to her, and holding up her face for a kiss.

"I should think it was," said May and Lilly both together.

"Now come, Maud; mother has

gone up stairs with Susie and Ned, and we must go too," said May.

"You are to sleep in our room, Maud," said Lilly; "May and I sleep together in one bed, and you are to have another, a nice little one, all to yourself. Won't it be pleasant?"

"Yes," said Maud, "but where do Aunt Lucy and Uncle Joe sleep?"

"Just in the next room, with the door open between, so they can take care of us," replied Lilly.

"You forget, Lilly, that it is God who takes care of us," said May.

"No, I don't forget," said Lilly; "I know father and mother can't

keep' us alive and well; only God can do that; but then he gives us our parents to do other things for us that we need."

The little girls were going up stairs while they talked, and by this time they had reached the door of Aunt Lucy's room. It stood wide open and they walked in. Aunt Lucy was undressing Susie, and she said, "You may go on into your own room, children, and help one another till I get baby in bed, and then I will come to you."

Aunt Lucy's room looked very neat and pleasant, and so did the one next to it, into which May and Lilly led their little cousin,

saying, "This is our room, Maud; isn't it pretty?"

"Yes," said Maud; "and is this my little bed? I shall like to sleep in it, I'm sure."

They had no lamp, but the moon shone so brightly in at the window that they could see quite plainly.

"O, Maud, I wish it was morning," said Lilly, "we have so many things to show you—our hens and the little chicks, and the old cat and her little kittens, and—"

"There, Lilly dear, that will do till morning," said her mother, coming into the room; "I don't want you to talk any more now,

because you will keep Susie awake."

Maud's trunk stood beside her bed, and Aunt Lucy opened it and took out a night-gown for the little girl. Then she helped her to undress, while May and Lilly helped themselves and each other. They were used to it, and could do it very well; but Maud had always had Hannah to dress and undress her, and hardly knew how to help herself. When her night-gown had been put on, she said, "Good-night, auntie," and was just going to get into bed, but Aunt Lucy asked, "Do you not say your prayers first, little Maud?"

"No, ma'am, I get into bed

first and then I say, 'Now I lay me.' ”

“That is a good little prayer,” said Aunt Lucy, “but I want to teach you another—a prayer that our dear Saviour taught his disciples; and I want you to kneel down beside the bed while you repeat it after me.”

“Yes, ma'am, I will,” said Maud, and she knelt down and said “Our Father” after her aunt, and a few words more, asking God to make her his own dear child, for Jesus' sake; then her other little prayer, and then she rose up and climbed into bed. May and Lilly were in bed too, by this time, but they had said their prayers first.

Aunt Lucy sat down beside Maud, and taking the little girl's hand in hers, "Do you know, dear child," she asked, "who it is we call our Father in heaven?"

"No, ma'am," said Maud.

"It is God," said Aunt Lucy—"God who made us, and takes care of us, and gives us every good thing we have. Do you know, little Maud, what is his best gift to us?"

"No, ma'am."

"Mother, may I tell?" asked Lilly.

"Yes, my dear," replied her mother.

"It was Jesus," said Lilly—"the dear Lord Jesus who died on the

cross for us. The Bible says, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

"And what is it to believe in him, Lilly?" asked her mother.

"Oh, mother, it means to love Jesus, and believe that he loves us, as he says, and will save us from our sins and from going down to hell."

"Mother, tell us about it, won't you?" begged May. "Perhaps Maud never heard the story, and we would like to hear it again."

"No, I never did," said Maud; "nobody ever told me one word

about Jesus. Is it a pretty story? Please, auntie, tell it. I like stories so much."

Then Aunt Lucy told that old, old story about Jesus being born a little baby and laid in a manger; and how the angels came to tell the good news to the shepherds as they watched their flocks by night; how the wise men came from the East to worship him, and gave him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh; what a good and wise and holy child he was; and how, when he became a man, he went about doing good to the souls and bodies of men; and how at last he died upon the cross that sinners might be saved. The tears

ran down Maud's cheeks as her aunt told of the cruel mocking and scourging, the crown of thorns, the nails pounded through his hands and feet, and the spear that pierced his side.

"Oh, aunt," she said, "what wicked, cruel men! and would nobody save him?"

"No," said Aunt Lucy, "they all forsook him and fled, and there was none to help him; yet he might have saved himself if he would; for he was God, and could have struck all those cruel men down dead in an instant; but, Maud, he knew that if he did not die on the cross we could never be saved, could never go to heaven,

but must all perish for ever in that awful hell; and he so loved us that he was willing to bear it all that we might live."

"Oh, aunt," she said, "I love him, and I wish I could have been there to tell him how sorry I felt for him."

"He is here, Maud," said her aunt; "he is God, and though we cannot see him, he is always close to us, and we may tell him all that is in our hearts; he loves to have us do it. And, my child, if you do really love him, you will be sorry for your sins, because they helped to nail him to the tree, and you will hate them and try to forsake them. You must ask him to help

you to do this. But now good night; it is time for you to go to sleep." She bent down and kissed Maud tenderly as she spoke; then went to the other bed and bade good-night in the same way to her own two little girls, and softly left the room.



CHAPTER III.

THE sun was shining brightly when Maud awoke, and May and Lilly were almost dressed.

“Oh, Cousin Maud,” they said, “we have been keeping very quiet, to let you sleep; but now, if you will get up, we will help you dress. Breakfast will soon be ready, and then father will have worship, and then we will show you everything.”

“What?” asked Maud.

“Why, our playhouse and our dollies and our hens, and the wee little chicks,” said Lilly.

“And the swing father made us

under an apple tree in the orchard, and our garden, and Whitey's little calf that was born only yesterday, and is the prettiest little thing you ever saw," said May. "But why don't you begin to dress, Maud? You will not be ready for breakfast."

"I don't know how to dress myself," said Maud. "Hannah always dressed me at Uncle Raymond's."

"I think you'll have to learn, then," said May, with an air as if she were quite grown up; "mother says children should learn to wait on themselves as soon as possible."

"I can't," said Maud, looking just ready to cry.

“Never mind, Maud,” said Lilly, “I’ll show you how; and you’ll find it very easy when you’ve learned;” and sitting down on the carpet beside her cousin, she very kindly and patiently helped her to put on her shoes and stockings. “You’re not going to wear that pretty silk dress you had on yesterday, Maud, are you?” she asked; “I don’t think it would do to run about the fields in.”

“No, there’s a calico wrapper for mornings,” said Maud.

“Oh - yes, mother has laid it out,” said Lilly; “but I think you will want calico or gingham for all day here in the country.”

“Yes, I wish I had some,” said

Maud, sighing, "because when I wear my fine frocks I must stay in the house and keep still, for fear of spoiling them. I'm 'most dressed now, but who will curl my hair?"

"I will," said May; "I curl my own and Lilly's. 'most every day now, and mother says I can do it nearly as well as she can."

May had been making the beds while Lilly helped Maud to dress.

"I never saw such a little girl as you," said Maud, looking wonderingly at her; "why you can work just like a grown-up woman."

"Mother teaches us to work," replied May; "she says it is good for us."

The breakfast-bell rang just as



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The Chickens.

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Maud's curls were done, and the three little girls ran down to the dining-room. They bade good-morning to grandma, Aunt Lucy and Uncle Joe, and were about taking their places at the table, when Ned rushed in from the kitchen, crying out, "Oh, May and Lilly! Mrs. Smith has laid an egg, and so has Mrs. Coffee, and Tibbie is beginning to set, and Mrs. Brown has just come off the nest with fourteen little chicks."

"Oh! oh!" cried his sisters. "Mother, mayn't we run out to see them?"

"Not till after breakfast, my dears," she said.

Maud's eyes were very wide

open. "What does Ned mean, Aunt Lucy?" she asked.

"He is talking about the hens, my dear," said her aunt, smiling.

"But all sit down now and be quiet while father asks God's blessing on our food."

Maud's place was close beside Uncle Joe, and he spoke so kindly to her and attended so carefully to her wants that she loved him better than ever, and thought she should like always to live with him.

"Now come, Maud, let's go and see Mrs. Brown's little chicks," cried Lilly, seizing her cousin's hand as soon as breakfast and worship were over; and they ran

out together to the chicken-yard, followed by Ned and May, and Aunt Lucy with Susie in her arms.

Mrs. Brown—a large motherly-looking hen, with black and brown feathers—was strutting about with her fourteen little chicks—some brown, some yellow, and some almost white.

“Oh, what beauties!” cried the children; “what darling little creatures! See, mother, aren’t they pretty?”

“Yes,” she said; “I have always thought little chickens very pretty.”

“Pretty, pretty!” cried wee Susie, clapping her little hands, and then reaching for the chickens.

“They’re yours, mother,” said

Ned, "because Mrs. Brown is your hen."

"Yes," she said, "but as you each have one or two hens, I shall give this one, with her brood, to Cousin Maud, if she will promise to feed and take good care of them."

"Oh yes, auntie, indeed I will, if May and Lilly will show me how; and oh thank you ever so much!" said Maud, fairly jumping for joy.

"Oh yes, we'll show you," said her cousins; "we all like to feed the fowls."

"We've got ducks and geese too, but they're down at the brook; they like to swim so well,

you know," said Ned; "we'll take you to see them too."

"Let me tell you the names of the rest of our hens and chickens, Maud," said May. "That white hen yonder is Mrs. White; the speckled one beside her is Mrs. Smith; that other speckled one is Mrs. Coffee—Jack Coffee gave her to us, and we named her for his mother; those are the two that laid the eggs this morning, you know. That gray-and-black one we call Mrs. Gray, and that's all of the hens except Tibbie; she's on her nest in the hen-house yonder, and she's speckled too."

"But who are those other ones that aren't quite so big, and

haven't such long feathers?" asked Maud.

"Oh, those are young things," said Lilly; "some are May's, and some are Ned's, and some are mine. Some of them are going to be hens, and some roosters. There, that white one is mine, and I call it Charlie; see how it likes me;" and she ran and took it up in her arms and held it, stroking its feathers and patting it lovingly.

"We can all do that with our chickens," said Ned; "we're good to them and they like us. Look at that big, handsome rooster, Maud; he's mine."

"Ned," said Aunt Lucy, "run to the house, my son, and get the

pan of corn-meal and water Aggy has mixed for them, and the crumbs from the table, and give them their breakfast."

"Yes, mother, I will," he said, and away he went.

He came back directly, and Maud watched with eager delight while the chickens were fed.

The gardens were next visited, and Maud greatly admired the neat strawberry and flower-beds, and the rows of currant-bushes and early peas; and when Uncle Joe came out and said she too should have a little garden of her own, she felt very happy indeed. From the gardens they went down to the brook, a pretty little stream

of water that ran across her uncle's farm not very far behind the house. The water was very clear and bright, and made a pleasant, rippling sound flowing over the stones. In some parts it ran along quite fast, while in others it seemed very quiet and slow, and in one of these quiet places, in the shade of some water-willows, the ducks and geese were swimming and paddling about.

"Oh, how nice it is down here!" said Maud. "Won't we come here sometimes to play?"

"Oh yes," said Ned, "we often do; we watch the ducks and geese, and sail little boats and things on the water, or throw stones in to

see it splash; and sometimes we pull off our shoes and stockings and wade about; and we build little dams too: oh, I can tell you we have lots of fun down here!"

"I would like to stay now," said Maud, sitting down on the root of a tree.

"Oh no, not now, Maud," said her cousins. "You have not seen Whitey's calf, or the kittens, or our playhouses and dollies. Let's go back to the house now, and we'll come here again soon."

Maud admired the kittens quite as much as the little chicks. She could not decide which were the prettiest. The dolls she did not care very much about, for she had

several which were handsomer; and she greatly preferred playing with the kittens. One was given her for her own, and she felt very happy sitting with it in her lap or carrying it about in her arms. The playhouse was in one corner of the front yard, in the shade of the hedge and of a great elm tree that spread its branches far and wide. This tree was hollow, and inside Uncle Joe had put two or three little shelves; and that was the cupboard where the children kept their dishes. He had made them a little table too, and some seats. Maud thought it the prettiest playhouse in the world, or at least that she had ever seen, and

there she spent many a happy hour with her cousins.

May and Ned went to school, but Aunt Lucy thought Lilly and Maud too young yet for that; and so they stayed at home and said two lessons every day,—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—to grandma, who was so kind and patient, and talked so nicely to them, that she made them love their tasks. She often told them a story too, and that, you may be sure, they enjoyed very much. Each morning they fed their chickens and worked a little while in their gardens, then said their lesson, and by the time the dew was off the grass they were ready

to go to their playhouse, where they would often stay till dinner-time, amusing little Susie, nursing their dolls and kittens and playing tea-party.

Maud thought that was good fun. She liked to set the table and to wash up the dishes afterward, and put them back in the cupboard, either by herself or with Lilly's help. They never quarreled; for though Maud was sometimes a little selfish, Lilly was not, and would always rather give up than vex her cousin. Lilly was a Christian child; she loved Jesus, and when she felt tempted to be cross and selfish, she would ask him, in her heart,

to help her to be good and kind, that she might please and honor him.

Sometimes the little girls grew tired of playing under the big tree, and then they would take a walk down by the brook to watch the ducks and geese swimming about, or go into the orchard and try the swing. They were always glad when school was out and May and Ned came home; and on Saturdays, when there was no school, they used to have very fine times indeed.

But one Saturday, when the little girls got up, they found it raining hard.

“Oh, Lilly,” said Maud, looking

ready to cry, "what shall we do? we can't work in our gardens, or go to our playhouse, or into the orchard to swing, or down to the brook to play. Oh dear! I wish it would never rain!"

"But that is a bad wish, Maud," said Lilly. "God sends the rain, and without it nothing would grow for us to eat, and we should soon starve to death. God is very kind to give us rain; and we can have a very good time in the house. There's a big garret up stairs, where we play when it rains, and mother lets us make as much noise up there as we please. There are lots of old things that we can pull about and play with; and there's

a big rag-bag, where I always find such pretty things for my dolly."

"Oh, that's nice, Lilly!" said Maud; "let's go up there just as soon as we've said our lesson."

"So we will, if mother lets us," said Lilly.

"And I'll come as soon as I get my work done," said May. "You know I always have to help Aggy with the dishes and dust the sitting-room on Saturdays; and I'll have a towel to hem too; but I think mother will let me carry it up there, and I can play lady with you while I sew, for you know ladies sew."

"And I'll have a drug store and play doctor," said Ned, looking in

at the door; "and you must get sick, some of you, and send for me to make you well."

"Oh, that will be fun!" said Maud.

"Yes, Ned always plays doctor," said May; "he says he's going to be a doctor when he grows up."

"There's the breakfast-bell," said Lilly; "now we must go down, and we'll ask mother's leave to play there."

Aunt Lucy gave them leave to play in the garret, and Aggy said she would bake them each a cake and a turnover pie, so they could have a nice little feast; and when lessons were done, Maud and Lilly ran up there, and set to work to

make a playhouse. They chose a corner near a window and where there was a big trunk. On the top of this they spread some old coats and cloaks and called it their bed; then they had a little trunk and some stools for seats, and a box for a table, on which they set out their cups and plates ready for the feast; which they were to eat when Aggy got the cakes and pies baked, and May and Ned came up; for May was helping her mother now, and Ned was getting things ready for his drug store.

“Now,” said Lilly, “we’ve got our playhouse all fixed, and let’s take down the big rag-bag and see what pretty things we can find.”

“Will aunt let us?” asked Maud.

“Oh yes, she always lets us,” said Lilly, jerking it down from the nail where it hung. “I’ll empty it out on to the floor, Maud, so we can see what there is in it; and when we’ve got all we want, we must put the rest of the things back, and hang it up again in its place; that’s the rule.”

Ned’s drug store was to be in another corner, where there were two or three little shelves against the wall. His father had put them there for him; and on them he was going to place his medicines. Then he had, besides, a box for a counter, and an old arm-chair to sit in.

"Aggy," he said, coming into the kitchen with his hands full of old vials, "I want to wash these, and get them filled with something to look like medicine."

"Well," she said, "you can wash them there at the sink, and I'll think up something to put in them."

Ned washed them clean and brought them to her.

"I'll tell you, Ned," she said, "I'll fill one with molasses and water; that'll be brown; and another with vinegar off those cold beets; that'll make a pretty, red medicine; then milk and water will make a white one for another of your bottles; a little of the

yolk of an egg will make another yellow; and you can have clear water in that last one. Some medicine is clear you know."

"Oh, Aggy, how nice in you to think of it all!" said Ned; "but I wish I could make some powders and pills too."

"I'll give you a bit of dough," said Aggy, "and you can easily make that into pills; and a little flour will do nicely for powders."

"Oh, Aggy, how good you are!" cried Ned, clapping his hands and capering about with delight; "that'll be splendid!"

It took Ned some time to make his pills nice and round, and to put up his powders in little white

papers, such as he had seen the doctors use; but at last they were done, and much pleased with them he was, thinking they looked quite like the real thing.

Aggy had just taken the cakes and turnovers from the oven, and she put them on a small waiter, and gave Ned a little basket for his medicines, and he carried all up to the garret together.

Maud and Lilly were busy making and dressing little rag-dolls with scraps of bright new calico and bits of silk and old lace they had found in the rag-bag, which they had put back in its proper place, and May sat with them, hemming a towel, while

Susie was seated on the floor beside her, playing with a kitten.

“Here are the goodies,” said Ned; “now get your dinner ready while I put my medicines on my shelves.”

“Oh how nice they look!” cried the little girls, jumping up to take the waiter from him. “What a nice little feast we’ll have!”

“I’m the oldest; let me cut the pies and cakes,” said May.

“I don’t care,” said Lilly, “but let Maud help. I’m sure she’d like to;” for she saw her cousin looked vexed.

“I think it would be fair for each one to cut her own,” said Maud; and so it was settled, and

all sat down to the feast in high good-humor.

When they were done eating, Ned went back to his drug store.

“Make haste, girls,” he said. “I want one of you to get sick and send for the doctor.”

Lilly thought she would like to be the one to play sick, but she saw Maud wanted to, and kindly gave up to her. So Maud lay down on the big trunk, and tossed about and moaned and groaned as if she were in great pain, and Ned came and looked at her tongue, and said, “It looks very bad indeed. Now I must feel your pulse,” and he took hold of her wrist. “It’s very slow and weak,” he said; “I

think you've got a dreadful fever. You must take some of my drops, and a powder and a pill, and they'll cure you."

Maud soon said she was well, and then May and Lilly took turns playing sick until the dinner-bell rang.

THE END.



