

Arabella

Anna T. Sadlier

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Chapter 1. A FIRST JOURNEY

Arabella stood thoughtfully there on that ridge of land, where the brown earth was studded with daisies and mulleins, the common children of the soil. The sky was a clear gold at the horizon, and Arabella, gazing thereon, pondered on something she had just heard. She had suddenly become an heiress. She looked down on her plain, brown frock, at her coarse shoes, and at her hands roughened by work about the house. She had been the orphan, the charity-child, and now

Her gaze slowly turned from the golden skies to the house, wherein she had spent her childish years. It was large, barn-like, of a dull, cheerless brown, altogether bare and uninviting. The glint of the sun shone upon the attic window of the room wherein she had been lodged. It was the one spot which she regarded with affection. It represented home. Her eyes rested there now, wistfully, with something of longing and of affection. As she stood thus, she heard a voice calling and went slowly towards the house. There was Mrs. Christie waiting for her with a new expression upon her rugged face and a look in the dull eyes as if a light had been suddenly kindled there.

"Arabella," she called, "come in and eat your dinner. We'll have to go to the city this afternoon."

Arabella glanced at her quickly. Her breath came fast. She had never been to the city; she had always longed painfully to go, since to her it was a wonderland. Yet she felt a sudden catch in her throat. She thought, perhaps, she was going forever, and she remembered vividly, painfully, her familiar little room, bare and miserable though it was, her one friend, a woolly, brown-haired dog, and the woods and fields, whither she went in her few leisure

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hours. She asked, therefore, with something of a gasp in her voice "Not not for always?"

The woman looked at her curiously as she answered curtly "No, not for always."

Arabella without further remark followed her passively into the dining-room, where the table was laid as usual, with thick, crockery cups, chipped and otherwise unsightly, and where Silas Christie already sat, heavy-featured and taciturn, taking no manner of notice of the child. Even the recent change in her fortunes had excited no apparent interest in him. In the long years of his residence there he had grown in some sort to resemble those clods of earth upon which he daily worked during the long, summer months. Of late years he scarcely ever read the daily papers. He merely existed. The amount which he made yearly from his farming sufficed to give him a rude sort of comfort. He asked no more.

With Mrs. Christie it was otherwise. True, she, too, had been dulled by the dreary monotone of her cheerless existence. But within her smouldered, as sparks amongst ashes, some fire of imagination, some gleam of her old, girlish enthusiasm.

Arabella had suddenly become to her an object of keen interest, as if a gold mine with more or less limited possibilities had been suddenly discovered upon their premises. She began to dream dreams, realizing as Arabella had not yet done, the power of wealth. Long dead visions woke within her of a black silk dress, a velvet hat with feathers, and other finery wherewith to dazzle the neighbors. She had almost given up church, partly for reasons connected with her wardrobe, though, in fact, the neighbors mostly frequented every other place of worship than the Catholic. Still, the churchward road lay in the direction of many of the homesteads and she saw herself mentally proceeding there, resplendent. This was her one weakness. Otherwise she was a woman of unusual and unbending strength of character, which had lent her a certain hardness.

Arabella devoured her share of the boiled beef and potatoes, and the coarse bread, washed down with water. Then she helped as usual with the dishes, after which she was bidden to go and make ready for the journey. Her little room had an oddly unfamiliar aspect that day. She looked around at the rough, unpainted washstand and chairs, the deal table, and that rudely-contrived recess in the corner for her clothes, hidden by a faded curtain.

She proceeded presently to that receptacle, after the other preliminaries of her toilet, and took down her best jacket and skirt. They were of a nondescript color, and scarcely less shabby than the brown frock she was wearing. She surveyed them with complacency, however, her untrained eye failing to note their deficiencies. As she dressed, she regarded affectionately her few treasures two or three colored prints cut out of a Christmas newspaper and stuck upon the wall; a cardboard box with a glass cover, enshrining a rose, which had been a birthday gift from Mrs. Christie, and a book of fairy tales. This latter had created for her an entire new world, to which she compared people, things and events.

She had scarcely completed her costume by an ugly and unpicturesque hat, trimmed by Mrs. Christie's unskillful hand, when she heard the latter's voice calling her at the foot of the stairs. She gave one last look about the room, as though she were bidding it farewell, and then ran down to join her travelling companion. Mrs. Christie was quite pale with emotion, and, to Arabella's eyes, quite resplendent in an old-fashioned costume of dark green serge. As the two were about setting out, Trot, the brown spaniel, came leaping and barking about Arabella, supposing that she was going for a ramble in the woods, and that he was to be of the party.

"You go and put that dog in the barn," ordered Mrs. Christie sharply, and Arabella, calling the dog after her, ran round the side of the house, and stooping down to pet the woolly head and bid her favorite good-bye, she shut the deceived and disappointed animal into the outhouse, whence his dismal whines and scratching at the door pursued Arabella until she was actually off the premises. As the travellers finally started, Silas Christie, heavy-eyed and ponderous, stood in the doorway looking after them, and taking the pipe from his mouth to call out a word or two of warning.

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"Don't take the wrong train, mother," this was his familiar name for his wife "and don't you get lost down to the city."

To these unnecessary instructions Mrs. Christie vouchsafed no reply, only throwing back a hurried "Good-bye," to her husband, and seizing her satchel in one hand and holding Arabella by the other, she hastened down the road.

They arrived at the station nearly an hour too soon for the express which was to convey them into the city. Scarcely anyone had as yet appeared, and the two sat down forlornly, very close together, and feeling more in sympathy than they had ever been before. A sense of blank desolation, in fact, came over them, chilling the pleasant glow of anticipation. When, at last, however, the station began to fill with hurrying feet, and an acquaintance or two, who were setting out for the great journey, and seemed undisturbed by the circumstance, threw them a friendly greeting, their spirits began to rise.

With one last bound of the heart, Arabella beheld the huge, puffing, gleaming, monster coming up out of the distance, and realized that she was really going upon a journey. She cast a farewell look around upon the road by which she and her companion had lately come, upon the fields and the trees, browning now and turning to the sere and yellow under the touch of autumn, and then she was hurried aboard. There had never been any remarkable sympathy between her and Mrs. Christie, but oh, how profoundly thankful she felt that that strong and self-reliant personage was with her. It was tolerably clear, moreover, from the strong grip of the other's hand, that she fully shared this sentiment.

Once comfortably seated, however, on the plush-covered seats, which appeared very magnificent to Arabella, with their valise and other impedimenta, in the shape of a small hand-bag and umbrella, securely bestowed, they began to look around them with something like cheerfulness of spirit. This was still farther increased by the sight of their neighbors and acquaintances, likewise comfortably ensconced, and smiling recognition at them.

Arabella fairly thrilled when she heard the parting whistle, a wild shriek from the engine, and the conductor's stentorian "All aboard!" Then the first movement was apparent very slowly at first, then quicker, the train began to move out of the station. One by one the familiar objects disappeared, and in a very brief interval of time, as the locomotive drew the cars upon their steaming, unsteady course, Arabella, with a tremulous joy, more than half awe, experienced the delights of travel.

Chapter 2. ARRIVAL IN THE CITY

The light faded slowly out of the sky, the landscape grew dim, and the train sped on through the darkness. Mrs. Christie, imitating the nonchalance of her neighbors, settled her head back upon the velvet cushions, and, wearied by her early rising and the unwonted excitement of the day, fell into a doze. But Arabella looked out with strained, eager eyes into the gloom, striving now and again to catch some object, and thinking wonderful thoughts. She scarcely noticed the passage of time until at last the occasional groups of lights, denoting some town or village, began to grow numerous and concentrated, and once more, with a quick beating of the heart, Arabella felt that the city was near.

As she saw the passengers beginning to collect their small bits of luggage and to re-arrange their costumes, she felt that her surmise was correct, and she touched Mrs. Christie upon the arm. The latter started up, confused for the moment, and uncertain of her whereabouts, while the train thundered on through the tunnel, and the brakeman, hurrying through the cars, announced:

"New York."

Arabella

That was a thrilling moment, though with Arabella the awe just then predominated over the joy. She clung closely to her companion, as the latter summoned to her aid all her native energy. Together they threaded their way through the dizzying crowds. One of their acquaintances, the son of a neighboring farmer, who by reason of his business as a commercial traveller was held in great repute, advanced to Mrs. Christie, inquired with kindly interest as to her destination, and made an offer, which was eagerly accepted, to put them both on board the cable car. This, he explained, would take them to their very door. He carried his solicitude so far as to give a friendly hint to the conductor, who promised to look after the two women.

They were a quaint and somewhat forlorn-looking pair in their countrified costumes, both of which had been resurrected and bore evident marks of being months behind the fashion. Of this they were thus far happily unconscious. The cable car pursued its way along Forty-second Street, turning downwards at Third Avenue. The noises seemed deafening to Arabella, the crowds terrifying. She glanced, from time to time, at Mrs. Christie, who sat bolt upright, never moving a muscle, and looked as if she were undergoing a terrible ordeal. When they had gone a few blocks down Third Avenue, the conductor, jerking the bell, cried:

"Here you are!"

To this address no one responded, but each began to look at his neighbor to know for whom it was meant. At last the functionary, striding towards the two unconscious women, informed them, with a certain gruff kindness, that "here was their street."

The passengers descended and stood looking helplessly about them. The car sped on its way, and Mrs. Christie said to Arabella:

"My sister lives in that street, quite close to the corner."

But which corner? They surveyed each one in turn. On one corner was a thriving grocery, and next door to it a tall tenement. On another a big department store, extending nearly half the block and closed for the night. A third was a liquor store with a red light burning at the door and sounds of revelry from within, which caused the two women to turn away. The fourth was a small and dingy dwelling, which somehow looked more encouraging.

"I guess it's the second door after that," Mrs. Christie exclaimed. "Let's try it, anyhow." They both brightened up at the bare prospect that this might be their destination, and paused in front of a small structure, the lower story of which consisted of a bright-looking fruit shop. Therein they found a clean and civil German woman, and with her aid discovered that the number over the door, obscured by the darkness, corresponded to that which Mrs. Christie had inscribed upon a slip of paper. The rosy and benignant mistress of the shop further informed them that the Fraulein Norris lived upstairs, and came out to show them a neighboring door and a narrow staircase, which led to her quarters.

Mrs. Christie thanked her cordially, and following the given directions, mounted a pair of clean and freshly-painted stairs, covered with a bright-colored jute carpet. They presently found themselves at a door, and quite unacquainted with the use of the electric bell indicated by the button at the side, Mrs. Christie braced herself for action. She had already recovered much of her resolute and energetic bearing, and as Arabella hung in the background she knocked loudly at the door.

There was no answer at all for a moment or two, and Arabella's heart began to sink. she felt that if this were the wrong place, and if they were really lost in the wilderness of the great city, she could not go out again into that darkness, now and again relieved as it was by those glaring lights, or that silence alternating with hideous clamor. Suppose, thought she, that there was no Miss Norris here, or that she was even more formidable than Arabella, until this memorable day, had held Mrs. Christie to be. The prospect was terrifying.

Arabella

Moreover, the girl, strong as she was, began to feel utterly weary. Unwonted excitement is a sure cause of fatigue, and the emotions of the day had been so many and varied as to produce a complete exhaustion and an almost paralyzing numbness. She had also eaten less than usual in the hurry of departure, and felt both hungry and weak. In her present mood Arabella was convinced that she hated the big city, with its noise and its jostling crowds, and almost wished herself back in her little attic room, with the quiet sense of freedom and security which she enjoyed when the elder people had retired and she was at liberty to dispose of her time as she saw fit, provided only that she did not burn more than her allotted piece of candle.

Those few moments of suspense were altogether the most trying of the day. It seemed as if the door would never be opened. She was sure that if Mrs. Christie's sister were not there, or should refuse to receive them, that she must let fall from her tired eyes those tears that were gathering there, and sit down in utter weariness upon the stairs, powerless to go farther. So far, however, with the self-control which adverse circumstances had engendered, she had given no outward nor visible sign of her inward discomposure.

Her companion was disturbed by no such apprehensions. She knew that she had the number and the street right, having copied them from her relative's own letter, and she knew her sister. Her only fear pointed to the chance that the latter might have been absent, and had not received the letter announcing their arrival. Her anxiety awakened by this conjecture, she pounded with still more vigorous knuckles upon the door. There was no mistake about the quality of the knock. It echoed and re-echoed within; it resounded down the stairs. At last the two wayfarers began to hear responsive sounds from within.

In the first place, the mewing of a cat, which sounded precisely as if it were answering the summons, and caused Arabella to feel like laughing hysterically. In the second place, the opening of some inner door, a distinct noise as of frizzling, and lastly a curious sound of shuffling feet hastily approaching, which caused the girl's heart to beat more quickly and her pulses almost to throb. She knew not what she was going to see.

Next instant the door was thrown wide open, and Arabella stared with all her might at the singular little figure which presented itself upon the threshold, and the like of which the girl thought she had never seen before.

As she drew in her breath sharply, however, and stood far back against the wall, it became apparent to her that their wanderings were over, and that they were at least secure of a night's lodging and a place to rest their weary bones. For this is what she saw and heard.

Chapter 3. MRS. CHRISTIAN'S SISTER

Upon the threshold stood the tiniest, the whitest, the quaintest-looking woman imaginable. Her hair was snow-white, and fastened in a knot at the top of her head, whence descended, on either side, a bunch of curls. Her face was of a deadly paleness, enlivened by the gleam of a pair of bright brown eyes. Her costume was for the moment all of a white, since a large linen apron, long-sleeved and high-necked, enveloped her completely. Somehow, the apron and the curls presented an incongruous appearance. Arabella thought at once of a doll she had seen at a bazaar, springing on wires.

But the glance of the brown eyes was quick, vivacious, above all kindly; and Arabella was reassured even before she heard the cordial welcome uttered in a small, chirping voice, which seemed to proceed as from an automaton. She flew at her tall sister, who stood stiff, straight and embarrassed, being quite unaccustomed to demonstrations of any sort. Yet there was a grim kindness in her expression such as Arabella had never perceived there before.

"Well, sister," piped the chirping voice, "it's good to see you again, and in my own home, too; my tiny, little home. And who's that behind you? Why, of course, it's Arabella, whom I never have seen, but of whom I've often heard. Come, Arabella, and give me a kiss."

Arabella

The girl so addressed, and to whom such an invitation had never before been extended, did not respond to the invitation, but stood twisting her fingers and shifting from one foot to the other. The little woman, with a light, pleasant-sounding laugh, darted at her and kissed her with so much cheery kindness that the tears started to Arabella's gray eyes. From that time forward the two were the best of friends.

"And now come in, both of you. Here I am keeping you both standing, and I am sure you are tired most to death, and chilled, and famished for something to eat."

As the travellers crossed that hospitable threshold their nostrils were met by the most savory and delightful smells proceeding from the kitchen, which made Arabella, at least, realize how very hungry she was. The frizzling sound, much louder now, was clearly from the same source, and the hostess, bidding them take off their things, first there in her parlor, rushed breathlessly back to the culinary tasks which their arrival had evidently interrupted.

Arabella, as she followed Mrs. Christie's example and removed her hat, coat and gloves, surveyed the apartment. It was so small that, after the barn-like spaciousness of the Christie homestead, it resembled a toy, or a box from which had just popped out the kind little woman. Tiny as was the room, however, it contained a sofa and two big arm-chairs, the latter before a miniature fire-place, full, just then, of glowing coals. Curtains of some heavy, but bright-colored material shut out the darkness. A drugget of warm red, which appeared superfine to Arabella, but which was in fact of the coarsest and most ordinary description, covered the floor. A few prints, likewise of the most cheerful hue, adorned the walls. An air of cosy comfort pervaded everything. Then, for the first time, the impression of home was borne in upon her mind. The cat came rubbing against them as they warmed themselves at the fire, and looked up at them with big eyes that gleamed like amber in the fire-light. It almost seemed to the girl's excited fancy as if this animal were the genius of the place.

After a brief interval the voice of the little woman summoned them into the adjoining apartment. She inquired if they would like to "wash some first" before seating themselves at the table.

"I guess we would like to wash our faces and hands," agreed Mrs. Christie, "to get some of that train soot off."

She looked at Arabella as she spoke, and added, laughing:

"That child's most as black as a nigger."

Miss Norris ushered them into a pair of tiny little rooms, not much bigger than the cabin of a ship, but with that all-pervading air of comfort and cleanliness which penetrated Arabella with a new delight.

"This is your room, my dear," said the little woman, leading her thither and giving her a kindly pressure of the hand. "I hope you'll be able to fit in the bed. It's so very small."

Their ablutions being speedily made, the two were presently summoned to supper. The daintiest little table, that might have come up from fairyland, stood in the center of this second room, with its carpet of bright green, wherein flowers of various sorts grew at random. The tablecloth was of snowy white; in its center was a New Jerusalem cherry, with its festive-looking berries. A Japanese tea-service arranged upon a silver tray appeared to Arabella very much like those things of which she had read in her fairy book. The cutlery and plated spoons were immaculately clean and polished.

At the end of the table was a dish of deliciously browned and still frizzling sausages. Arabella did not know what they were, the food at home being all of the more solid and heavy variety, suited to Silas Christie's appetite. Hence this homely, but appetizing dish was quite new to her, and she more relished it in her present hungry condition. They were supplemented by fried potatoes and a few slices of cold tongue, purchased from a

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neighboring delicatessen. Arabella, with the healthy appetite of thirteen, sharpened by the journey, presently overcame all shyness and did justice to those crisp and delicious morsels, which Miss Norris had cooked to perfection. After these were removed the hospitable hostess produced a steaming dish of pancakes, fresh from the griddle, with plenty of syrup and hot coffee. This last was a beverage which Arabella had never before tasted. With abundance of boiled milk and sugar, it tasted to her like the nectar of the gods. Mrs. Christie was in no way behind her young companion in doing justice to the viands. When her sister apologized for the want of variety, the worthy woman interrupted with her habitual truthfulness.

"It's many a year, Alicia, since I tasted anything so good, and I don't believe Arabella ever did in her whole life. So there!"

Supper over, the dishes were washed up, a function in which both guests, being well accustomed to work, took a share, despite the remonstrances of their hostess. There was a brief interval after that, during which Arabella was ensconced in one of the big arm-chairs near the parlor fire, listening to her elders talk. The cat, after reconnoitering cautiously, leaped into Arabella's lap and coiled herself up luxuriously. Mrs. Christie sent her companion to bed early, however, declaring that she must be tired out, and wouldn't be good for anything next day. It was when Arabella was alone in her little room that she fully realized the strangeness of her surroundings.

She lay quite still in that little bed, which fitted her as closely, almost, as if she had been in a box, and which was snowy white and soft as down, and into which Miss Norris had tucked her with a good-night kiss. And lying there thus, she listened to the roar of the electric trains rushing by, and the ceaseless din of the thoroughfare, and looked at the electric light, which seemed to her so wonderful after the pitchy darkness of night in the country, shining in through the figured curtains of chintz upon the window. Gradually the noises became indistinct to her ears, the lights began to grow blurred and faint, and she forgot her wonder, her delight, and, in fact, all her rapidly succeeding impressions, in a sound and dreamless sleep, whence she awakened with a start, and in the manner hereafter to be described.

Chapter 4. THE EXCHANGE OF CONFIDENCES

Mrs. Christie, tired as she was, remained up an hour or so later than Arabella, chatting with her sister before the fire, that was constantly replenished with shovelfuls of coal. She, too, like her young companion, enjoyed the rest, the quiet, so foreign to her ordinary laborious and drearily monotonous existence, though she did not yield herself thereto with the same completeness as did Arabella. Habit was too strong for her, and during her brief visit she was perpetually looking about for something to do. However, on that first night of her arrival she permitted herself the untroubled enjoyment of the arm-chairs the stillness within doors, at least which the noises of the thoroughfare only accentuated, and her sister's society. Having ascertained, by tiptoeing to the door, that Arabella was really sound asleep, she proceeded to give Alicia, in her own terse and forcible way, the chief points in Arabella's history. These were almost entirely new to Miss Norris, who had been aware only in a general way that her sister had adopted an orphan.

"Yes," said Mrs. Christie, "we got her from the Sisters when she was little more than a baby. She didn't know anything about that. I guess you remember when that was near thirteen years ago."

Alicia agreed that she did.

"Well, there ain't much more to tell concerning that part of it," Mrs. Christie declared. "She lived with us ever since. When she got big enough she helped with the work."

"Did you ever find out who she was?"

"Well," answered Mrs. Christie, "the Sisters were most sure she had some rich relations because of a locket and ring that were left with her, and a few lines in writing. The jewelry was to identify her, if ever she was wanted. Mr. Christie, he never believed that anyone would come after her. He always said he guessed somebody was well rid of her."

"And did anyone ever come?" Alicia inquired, eagerly. The little woman had in her composition a strong flavor of romance, and she was always weaving stories to herself there in her tiny rooms, as fairies weave beautiful fabrics out of sunbeams.

"I'm coming to that!" declared Mrs. Christie, settling herself comfortably in her chair, "But first I must tell you, the Sisters bound me to bring up the child a Catholic."

"Why, of course!" Alicia assented.

"Well, it was not so very easy," Mrs. Christie said, shifting uncomfortably in her chair and unwilling, just then, to meet the bright, dark eyes that were fixed upon her.

"You couldn't have brought her up anything else, dear," piped Alicia, "since you were a Catholic yourself, and such a good one, when we went to the Sisters' school long ago."

Mrs. Christie's face took on something of defiance, though her dull eyes softened, too, as she remembered the days when she used to take her little sprite of a sister by the hand and proceed to the school near the church.

"Oh, then it was easy enough," she answered, "but when I married Silas Christie he wasn't a Catholic. I thought at the first go-off it would be kind of easy to make him one. I tried, but it didn't work worth a cent. He ain't nothing in particular now."

"But as long as you are," Alicia interposed, mildly.

Mrs. Christie sighed.

"Well, to tell you the honest truth," Mrs. Christie said, "the church is far off, and I've got lots of work to do on Sunday morning, and and Silas didn't care very much about seeing me go there. Most of his folks are Methodists, and there ain't no Catholics around except a few farm hands and such like, and so "

She paused. Alicia's quaint little face was puckered and the big tears falling from her eyes.

"Oh, sister," she cried pitifully, "don't you remember the jewel we used to talk about, the bright jewel of faith that the teacher told us we were never to let grow dim?"

Mrs. Christie turned upon her, irritated by her remonstrance and by the sharp pang of remembrance which shot through her heart.

"It's easy for you, Alicia," she cried, "that ain't got any husband or people-in-law to interfere with your affairs."

"I know, I know, dear," Alicia answered, "it was hard. But what about the child?"

And the little woman hastily dried the tears which she saw were aggravating to her sister, while Mrs. Christie, momentarily ignoring the question, continued her self-justification.

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"I ain't goin' to say nothin' about the daily nag, nag, that went on for close upon seven years, until I stopped my church—going 'most altogether. When there was talk about adoptin' a child, the Sisters, as I told you, insisted that it must be a Catholic, and I insisted, too. I jest kicked up my heels and fought it right out with Silas. 'Silas,' says I to him, 'if that baby girl comes to this house it's got to be a Catholic, and a good one, too; not the sort that you've made of me.'"

"And then?" inquired Alicia.

"I told him right off that if ever he went for to interfere with Arabella's religion, why that minute I'd take her back to the Sisters. Well, Silas is the sort of man, if once he agrees to anything it's all right. I can trust him. So I've done my best with the girl, and I sent her to a Catholic school, though it's a poor one, where she can't get much schooling. It's jest kept by an old woman in the village. And I sent her to church and Sunday school right straight along."

Alicia grasped her hand.

"That was so good of you, dear," she whispered. "You kept the jewel of her faith bright, anyway."

"Yes, and Arabella, she's a Catholic all right enough. She loves her church, and she can talk about it like a book, once she gets started."

Alicia was delighted with this intelligence for she had known very well that her sister's Catholicity had wavered and grown dim in the years of her married life. She herself was staunch in the faith, and had striven hard to instill it into those pupils who were put into her charge in a neighboring parochial school. Just as she had retained a greater refinement of speech and manner than her sister, so had she practised in her daily existence the teaching of the Sisters. She was, therefore, very much pleased to hear that the poor little waif whom the Christies had adopted had been brought up, as far as possible, a child of the church. She did not, however, insist further just then upon the subject of religion, but began to ask if any further information had ever been received about Arabella's parentage.

"Why, to be sure," answered Mrs. Christie, "and that's jest what brought me to town."

Chapter 5. ARABELLA OVERHEARS

Alicia's eyes were aglow with interest. Their expression said more than a whole volley of questions, while Mrs. Christie, settling herself more comfortably in her chair, pursued her narrative.

"Well, everything went on jest the same till a week ago Tuesday. Then, jest as I was fussin' round with a squash pie I was gettin' into the oven, in comes a little man, sort of smart and dapper lookin'."

Alicia waited breathlessly.

"He walked right into the kitchen, where I was standin' with my hands in the flour, and he began to talk about Arabella. He beat around the bush some, and seemed as if he warn't too anxious to come out with what he had to say, until I up and told him to speak right out. He asked me Arabella's name. 'Christie,' says I. 'She ain't your daughter,' says he. 'No,' says I, 'she ain't.' 'And,' says he, 'her name ain't Christie.'"

"She hain't got any other that I know of," says I. 'We're comin' to that,' says he.

"Well, do you know that I felt kind of squeamish when he said them words, for the girl's a good girl, as girls go,

Arabella

and we've got used to her."

Alicia nodded, her eyes full of tears.

"'You got her,' said he, reading out of a notebook which he took from his pocket, 'on the 29th day of October, 18 , from Sister Mary Peter.'"

"Well, I had to own up that we did, and the fellow went on reading. He said that they'd got there a description of the clothing that had come with the child, and which were in my keeping except one or two things that the Sisters had kept for the purpose of identifyin' her. When he asked me if I had got them clothes, I made answer that I had them that didn't wear out in the natural course of things. He asked then, cautious like, if I'd got any bit of jewelry, and after hemmin' and hawin' a little I owned that I'd a locket. He wanted to know if there were any marks on it, and at last I told him that there were three, A. R. A., which made me call the girl 'Arabella.' He laughed at that, and then he told me that he had some good news for the girl, and like as not for me, too, and that we'd hear from him in a day or two. I didn't ask him any more questions, for it ain't my way to pry into other folks' consarns."

"And you didn't find out what the good news was?" the little woman inquired, with glistening eyes and bated breath. "Why, the child might be anybody."

"Well, we found out a good deal more since then," Mrs. Christie declared, shortly, as if the news were not altogether pleasing to her. It seems that the girl's father had married against his father's consent, and both himself and his young wife had died when their baby was only a few months old. The neighbors, not knowing what to do with the infant, sent it off to the Foundling Asylum with the clothes and the locket and some writing, to tell all they knew about the business. Well, the grandfather, when he found he was goin' to die, got sorry for what he'd done, and made a will, leaving a big pile of money to that there child, provided it was still livin' and could be found. Detectives got on to the story, and they traced Arabella to our house, and it seems she's got folks right here in New York, big bugs over on Fifth Avenue."

Alicia drew in her breath sharply. Her face was aglow. All the romance of her nature was up and astir.

"And her name ain't Arabella at all," added Mrs. Christie, "though Arabella I'll call her as long as I have anything to do with her."

"Isn't it wonderful!" cried the little woman. "Isn't it just like stories we read?"

"Well, I don't know as I ever read a story like that," Mrs. Christie dissented. "I ain't much of a reader, anyway, and I don't hold much with stories. Trash, they mostly is."

"And Arabella is really rich? An heiress?"

"Yes, jest about that. She's got a heap of money and a lot of rich relations."

Mrs. Christie relapsed into silence after she had said that, her ordinarily dull face expressive of some powerful emotion.

"And how did you feel when you heard everything?" the sister asked.

"Well, I was kinder set up at first," Mrs. Christie acknowledged. "It was most as if a fortune had been left to myself, and I began to think of things the money might get for me and for the house."

"Oh!" said Alicia, as if she were disappointed.

Arabella

"Then," continued Mrs. Christie, "I began to remember that she'd got them rich relations, who would most likely take her away, and " She stopped, staring into the fire, while her sister watched her eagerly.

"I jest wish they wouldn't," she declared.

"Because of the things?" the little woman asked in a low voice; then, impulsively laying her hand on her sister's arm, "Surely not on account of the things?"

"No," replied Mrs. Christie, "though it's natural that I'd hanker after them. But it ain't that, Alicia. It ain't that."

Alicia brightened up.

"It's kind o' lonesome down to the old place now. Silas Christie's beginnin' to put on the old man and he never was very lively at the best of times, and I ain't as young as I used to be, and I hate strangers 'round. Arabella, she's a good girl, and I'm fond of her, and I don't want to see her go away. So there."

She ended up defiantly, her rugged face working, and a sudden burst of tears the first she had shed in many years shaking her stony composure as a storm shakes the trees of the woods.

Alicia watched her in silence, wiping away sympathetic tears from her own eyes, and when the outburst of grief had spent itself she threw two little arms around her big sister's neck.

"I always knew you had a kind heart, Catherine," she said, "though you never were one to show your feelings."

And as Catherine Christie wiped her eyes and sniffled, striving by every means to regain her composure, and as Alicia smiled through her tears like the sun through a snow mist, and gulped and tried to speak, and gulped again, neither of the two was aware that that little scene had had a spectator, who was likewise an auditor.

Arabella, waking suddenly, bewildered by her strange surroundings, got out of bed in her long, white night dress, with her brown hair in a towsled mass on top of her head, and stole into the adjoining room. There she clearly perceived the two women sitting before the fire, and as she gradually began to realize who they were and where she was, she caught the sound of her own name. Almost involuntarily she stood, a fascinated listener, hearing with wonder and amazement the strange tale concerning her which Mrs. Christie unfolded. Until that moment, she vaguely knew that she had fallen heir to some money left by somebody, and had not at all realized that with the fortune she had come into possession of rich relations.

Her astonishment gave place to awe when she beheld the most wondrous sight of all Mrs. Christie crying, and the little woman wiping sympathetic tears from her own eyes. Hitherto she had always believed that grown people never cried, and least of all, Mrs. Christie. Moreover, the sight touched a new and strange chord in her own kindly and generous nature, and she was deeply touched to hear the woman say that she would be lonesome for her, Arabella. For her, too, those tears were falling.

It marked a new era in her life, and the impression thus made upon her she never lost. She felt for the first time that someone really cared, and this knowledge had an important influence upon her future course of action. She did not, however, let the others know of her presence, but crept back to bed. There her attention was divided between the strange and unaccustomed noises without and the thrilling story she had heard. She repeated over and over to herself, as she lay awake, "I won't go to any rich relations. No, I won't. I'll stay with her, if she wants me."

And so resolving, she fell asleep, only to be awakened, next time, by the flood of morning sunshine which came streaming into her room through the chintz curtains. She thought for a moment she was dreaming, so oddly did the strange medley of noises, induced by the bustle of the thoroughfare, intensified now with the coming of day,

Arabella

break upon her ears. Amongst them all, however, she presently heard Alicia's chirping voice in the adjoining room, exclaiming: "Oh, sister, let the child sleep as long as she can. It will do her good, after the fatigue of the journey."

To which the curt, dry tones of Mrs. Christie responded:

"Alicia, you'd spoil Arabella in jest about a week. Why, she ain't never slept after six o'clock in her life."

Then Arabella remembered everything, and lost no time in getting up and dressing as quickly as possible. She went out into the dining room, where she was presently regaled with some of that delicious beverage now known to her as coffee, golden brown and piping hot, some buttered toast and crisp bacon. The little woman waited upon her as if she had been a princess, and solely from the goodness of her own heart, and in her delight at having a guest. These attentions were prompted by no other motive. A word here, a little act there, added to the comfort of both visitors, but especially to that of the little girl. Never in her life before, nor in her many after vicissitudes, did Arabella enjoy a more delightful experience than during her stay in those quarters over a shop, within a stone's throw of noisy, over-crowded Third Avenue.

Chapter 6. A SHOPPING EXPEDITION

On the following morning, after breakfast, the first question mooted was that of visiting the shops. "I've got to get Arabella a dress," Mrs. Christie declared, "and a hat and shoes as well, before I take her to see her folks."

Arabella shivered at the mention of "folks," though with the reticence which her lonely, unchildlike life had engendered, she made no allusion to what she had overheard. Mrs. Christie, too, felt oppressed by the dreaded ordeal before her of "facing the folks," and the little woman was heartily in sympathy with her fears.

"We must make Arabella look as well as possible," she agreed, "and the Third Avenue shops won't do. We'll have to go over to Sixth Avenue, or even Broadway. Of course, things will be more expensive there, but we must manage."

"There ain't much need of managing," laughed Mrs. Christie. "The lawyer gave me a cheque for present expenses."

Alicia's eyes opened wide.

"How much?" she inquired.

"Two hundred."

"Two hundred!"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Christie, with her grim smile. "I never handled so much money in my born days, and Arabella, she hasn't ever had more 'n a nickel at a time."

Arabella, half stupefied, unable to realize, to understand, listened to this conversation vaguely. When the trio were about ready for the start, Alicia called her sister aside.

"Dear," she said, "I've got a little money saved. I really don't need it now, and you'd better buy a new bonnet before you go with Arabella to see her people."

Arabella

Mrs. Christie hesitated. Long ago in the olden days, before she had married Silas, when she was a fine, strapping girl, much admired by some of the local youth, she had been very fond of finery. This taste had survived in an active form during the first years of her married life, but it had soon been rendered inoperative by the rigid economy of Silas Christie. Beauty in the matter of dress did not appeal to him. Vague, shadowy gleams of this old desire had, however, remained in the shape of dreams that arose at times and haunted her imagination, and which had sprung up into renewed strength with the suggestion of wealth for Arabella. Amongst these dreams was a velvet hat with a long feather. That would most certainly make an impression upon Arabella's folks, and she did feel that her present head-gear was scarcely suitable to the occasion. Her shrewd common sense, however, suddenly reasserted itself.

"Alicia," she answered, "you keep your money. It's better for her folks to see at once what kind of people the girl's lived among, and I guess they won't care what sort of a hat I've got on."

This silenced Alicia, who secretly had to admit that her sister was right, though she was not quite convinced, and would have dearly liked to send her off to the dread encounter clad in new attire, for the little woman's eyes were sharp and observant, and she knew that the hat which Mrs. Christie wore was far from being in the latest fashion, and that its trimmings were somewhat faded and inclined to tawdriness.

To Arabella it was an exciting moment, when she was actually setting forth to buy new clothes. She had a young girl's natural desire for pretty things, though, indeed, her experience was so limited that she was only vaguely aware that her attire was of an extremely ancient cut, and painfully home-made in appearance. She put on her hat, happily unconscious that it was almost as many years behind the styles as that of her protectress. Miss Alicia, too, looked quainter than ever after she had arrayed herself in a trim little suit of gray, with a toque to match, which fitted her surprisingly well and had quite a smart appearance. For the first time, Arabella, glancing from her costume to that of Mrs. Christie's, and thence to her own, felt something like doubt.

When they went forth Arabella was conscious of an unusual exhilaration and lightness of spirit on seeing the vast city, clothed with the morning sunshine as with a garment. The moving panorama of the crowds, which had terrified her the night before, now amused and interested her. She loved to watch them, as also the number and variety of the vehicles. Alicia hurried them on, away to the westward, saying that they could take the Sixth Avenue elevated train down to the shopping district. She chatted as they went, pointing out now one building, and then another, and giving them little bits of information about the city.

To the young girl, and, indeed, to her older companion, it seemed a wonderful thing, mounting the iron stairs and stepping from the platform into a train, which having received its quota of passengers, darted into space. For a moment Arabella's heart leaped into her mouth. They were so high up, and the huge mass of cars was moving so quickly, that it appeared as if they must certainly be precipitated into the street below.

She was naturally fearless, however, and she presently began to laugh at the glimpses obtained through the windows, and the curious interiors displayed. She also experienced a growing sense of enjoyment in the swift, flying movements. The two women silently watched her, Alicia smilingly responsive to her laughter, and pleased at her pleasure; Mrs. Christie with a grim curiosity, as one making an experiment. She had herself been long enough away from the city to find everything new and strange; changed, too, in many particulars, yet she was most interested in discovering how it would all appear to Arabella. Arabella, who had never seen anything save country sights.

The three descended to the street at the Twenty-third Street station, Alicia declaring that they could walk down from there to visit the big department stores.

It would not be of the least use to attempt a description of Arabella's frame of mind as they went from shop to shop and saw bewildering piles of stuff, and millinery of every description. They were moderate in their

Arabella

purchases for that day. They did not even know how to shop as rich women yet, and kept thinking of the pennies and the shillings. Arabella's breath was fairly taken away as it was, when Alicia, the bolder of the two, chose a few articles.

What most delighted the little girl was a checked silk, blue and white, a very ordinary one, indeed, but in her eyes a perfect dream. She had never before possessed had never even dreamed of possessing anything in silk. Its very rustle had been awe-inspiring, and now to have one of her own, and such a sweet pattern, seemed almost too much good fortune.

Alicia, seeing her delight, ventured farther and bought her a couple of very elaborate stocks, some bright ribbons, dainty little collars, and also two pairs of fancy hose. These latter remained for long afterwards a thing of wonder and delight to Arabella, as she surveyed them upon her feet with their bright polka dots. These were supplemented by a dainty and very pretty pair of shoes, and wonder of wonders, gloves.

Against some of these items Mrs. Christie almost rebelled. She called it a tempting of Providence to spend money on such frippery, but Alicia stood firm in her metropolitan knowledge, fortified by Arabella's half bewildered joy in all these new possessions. When they had ventured much farther than Arabella's thoughts had ever gone, even her fairy book scarcely furnishing her with a parallel, Alicia proposed that they should go and take a bite to eat. This latter expedition was to be altogether at her expense.

This was another and delightful experience to the little country mouse. Even the very modest restaurant to which Alicia led her guests seemed palatial to Arabella. She felt a certain awe of the waiter, and was amazed that the gentle little woman should so freely give him her orders. And what nice things he brought, and how the plated silver shone, and the mirrors reflected everything in a most marvelous way! The little girl delighted in pouring out her own coffee from the dainty little coffee pot, and putting in the cream and sugar from the diminutive jug and bowl. For, after all, it is the little things of life that often please children, as well as grown people, and add to their enjoyment.

It was good to see Arabella's brown eyes dance with merriment and quite redeem the decided snub of her nose and the complexion that had grown too red from exposure to sun and wind. Alicia constantly nodded and smiled at her, and the child smiled back again. For already she loved the little woman, and considered her as an important factor in her present happiness. She appeared, indeed, like some benevolent fairy, very trim and dapper in her neat suit of gray, with her curls escaping from underneath her toque. Mrs. Christie, looking at her admiringly, wished that she, instead of herself, could go to meet the awful bugbear of the grand relations.

Orders were left for a hat to be trimmed for Arabella, which the smart little milliner could not promise for three days, at least.

After their luncheon they repaired to a dressmaker, who undertook to make a cloth street costume in the same period of three days, and also to make and send the cherished silk dress after them into the country. This three days gave them a respite. They could not go to see the grand relations before Arabella's things came home.

When the orders were all given, Arabella said to the little woman, for she had not lost her awe of Mrs. Christie, though she felt very kind and grateful towards her because of the sentiments she had expressed on the previous night.

"Is that money mine?"

"Yes, dear," answered the little woman, in some surprise.

"Then," said Arabella, "I want you to buy Mrs. Christie a hat, too; a nice one; oh, a very nice one."

Arabella

The little woman pressed her hand. She would have liked to hug her. It was a proud and joyful moment for Arabella when Mrs. Christie consented to choose a head-gear which partially, at least, realized her dreams, though to Arabella's disappointment, neither of them would consent to venture on a feather, nor would they agree to any further purchases on her part. It was well that the happy trio could not see the smiles that passed among the milliners, nor hear the witty remarks of the dressmaker's assistants on the unusual customers. And the sum of happiness is not so great, for anyone, that it can afford to be spoiled by ill-natured remarks.

But neither Arabella nor Mrs. Christie was to appear before the great folks in that mode which they had chosen. The fancied security of the three days was rudely broken by the appearance in Alicia's little home of the same smart lawyer's clerk who had carried confusion into the Christie homestead. He came to say that, according to the instructions of his employer, they were to lose no time in presenting themselves to the relatives. When they objected on the score of dress, he dismissed the matter so entirely that they were ashamed to insist any further. For, though he had satisfied himself by a hasty glance that their worst fears on that score were, indeed, justified, he well knew that the improvements they were likely to make would be of small consequence to the new relations, who were prepared to accept Arabella with varied emotions, in which favorable anticipation played no part.

They expected nothing but the worst, and perhaps it was as well that they should see the worst at once. In any case, instructions were instructions, and Arabella had to be formally accepted by her newly found kindred, and her claim on them established before it was possible to decide upon any future course of action. Her grandfather if, as seemed almost certain, she was the rightful heir had left her curiously free, and had even insisted that she should not be thwarted in anything save grave matters of right and wrong. The situation was a difficult one. The lawyers were anxious to shift or to share the responsibility.

Hence the two women, dressed precisely as they were, followed the dapper youth down stairs and were handed into a cab. Mrs. Christie sat very erect, steadying herself with as dignified an aspect as possible upon the velvet seat of the carriage. Inwardly she was quaking as she had never quaked before in her life. Arabella, too, was disturbed, and she was awkwardly conscious of the young man, who sat opposite her and scrutinized her keenly, as he would not venture to do, once she had been accepted.

She, on her part, took a dislike to him on the spot, and somewhat unreasonably decided that she hated him. Otherwise she would have enjoyed her first experience of a city carriage. And so with mingled feelings they jolted over the pavements or glided over the smooth macadam into another life for that child of good fortune.

Chapter 7. ARABELLA MEETS HER GRAND RELATIONS

The carriage stopped before a large and very substantial mansion of brown stone, upon the older part of Fifth Avenue. Its very aspect sent a chill to the hearts of Arabella and her companion; a cold and sickening feeling possessed them. Mrs. Christie braced herself and brought her native energy of character to bear upon the situation. Arabella, who was imaginative in an unusual degree, suffered more. Her eyes had an unnatural, strained appearance, and the fixed red of her weather-beaten cheeks deepened in color. If the smart lawyer's clerk felt any inward perturbation, he gave no sign.

He inquired of the servant solemnly opening the door if Mrs. Winslow could see them, then, giving the names in answer to the man's demand. The latter ushered them through the wide hall into a room which was clearly a library. Bookcases ran around three sides of the room; busts of celebrated authors were arranged on pedestals; large, leather chairs stood bolt upright, giving an appearance of stiffness. Arabella felt an immediate repugnance to the busts, and shrank away from them. They seemed to stare at her with stony, impassive faces, and she sat down on one of the smaller and less formidable of the chairs. The others were likewise repellant to her, as if they should be occupied by magnates. The silence of the house seemed oppressive. Footsteps were muffled in the pile

Arabella

of the rich, soft carpet, and if there were any voices they must have spoken in whispers.

All of a sudden the handle of the door turned gently. Arabella's heart leaped. Mrs. Christie settled herself more securely on the edge of her chair and tried to look at ease. There was a rustling of silk, a delicate and subtle, yet powerful perfume, and a lady, clad in deep mourning, entered the room. Her hair, which was of an ebony blackness, glossy and lustrous as a raven's wing, was elaborately arranged in a high pompadour, into puffs and curls filling up the spaces on the top of her head. Her brown eyes had, as Mrs. Christie at once observed, a curious resemblance to those of Arabella, with, however, a marked difference in the expression, as if they had looked at widely differing objects, and regarded life itself from another point of view. The complexion was delicately fair, and the arched eyebrows gave a cold and supercilious aspect to the face, which was belied by a certain softness about the mouth and chin.

To Arabella she seemed very beautiful, and like a queen in the perfectly-fitting black dress, which fell around her in graceful folds.

Advancing into the room, she greeted the lawyer's clerk, Mr. Brown, with an indescribably courteous ease, which yet held him completely at a distance, and turned her eyes towards his companions. They had instinctively risen at her approach, Mrs. Christie bolt upright and stiffly defiant, and Arabella nervous and confused, with downcast eyes and burning cheeks. Motioning them all to be seated, Mrs. Winslow sat down herself and began at once, with the air of one who has a duty to perform and would fain be done therewith.

"So, Mr. Brown, you have brought Mrs." she referred by a hasty glance to a slip of paper in her hand "Mrs. Christie."

She smiled as she spoke, with a slight, courteous nod to the elder woman.

"Mrs. Christie and my niece to see us, as you promised."

"Yes, Madam," said the young man, all deference and civility now, which made Arabella feel that she hated him more than ever, "and I have brought all necessary documents to establish the young lady's identity. Mr. Van Duzen, of our firm, is coming himself later."

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Winslow. "So very good of him. And my brothers will be here very, very shortly, and then we shall proceed to business."

This announcement of the coming of the lady's brothers was a terrible one to poor, trembling Arabella, and she glanced at her equally uncomfortable companion, who seemed to her a very tower of strength at that moment, and who, in fact, maintained a brave and unshaken demeanor.

"And this," continued the lady, smiling at the young girl; "this is "

"Arabella," put in Mrs. Christie.

"Arabella!" repeated the other. "What a quaint name. I had fancied it was " here she again refreshed her memory by glancing at the paper, "Anna Rosetta."

"But you must remember, Madam," explained Mr. Brown, "that neither the Sister Superior nor Mrs. Christie was acquainted with the child's real name."

"Oh, of course not," assented Mrs. Winslow, "how very stupid of me. And was it you, Mrs. Christie, who gave her the name of Arabella?"

Arabella

"Yes," explained that personage, clearing away a slight nervous huskiness in her throat and raising her voice. "I gave her that flame because of the three letters upon the locket."

"How very clever of you," cried the lady. "What a very good idea!"

Mrs. Christie did not add that the suggestion conveyed by the three letters had further been supplemented by a book from the local library, whereof "Arabella" was the heroine.

"I will always call her by that name," added Mrs. Christie with a touch of defiance, "as long as I have anything to do with her."

"It is very natural that you should," agreed Mrs. Winslow, inwardly wondering why her brothers and the lawyer did not come, that the interview with "these people," which she found wearisome, should terminate. It occurred to her, moreover, that one of them might necessarily become her guest, for an indefinite time. The idea was far from agreeable. She favored Arabella, nevertheless, with a smiling, propitiatory glance.

"We must get to know each other very well, must we not?" she observed.

"Yes, ma'am," said Arabella, not knowing what else to say.

Mrs. Winslow shuddered imperceptibly, and her further efforts were interrupted by the sound of voices in the hall, one of which had a cheery and pleasant tone. Nevertheless, poor Arabella began to quake, and cast an appealing glance towards Mrs. Christie, who maintained, by a valiant effort, her absolute composure. The door was thrown open by the same wooden-visaged functionary who had previously admitted Mr. Brown and his companions.

Of the two men then entering the room, one was tall, thin and dark, bearing a strong resemblance to the lady of the eyebrows; the other was short, round-faced and jovial, with just a suspicion of gray in his chestnut hair. The first, after a word with Mrs. Winslow, nodded carelessly to the lawyer's clerk.

"How d'ye do, Brown!" he exclaimed, and with a slight bow to the others, dropped into a chair. He put one leg over the other, nursing it as though it were a precious object. The other man, saluting Mrs. Winslow cheerily, addressed a pleasant greeting to the lawyer's clerk, and said, in that same hearty, cordial voice already heard in the hall:

"This is Mrs. Christie, is it not?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Winslow. "Permit me, Mrs. Christie, to introduce my brother, Mr. Frederick Allston, and another brother, Mr. Robert." She added this, turning towards the tall man, who arose hastily from his chair and bowed, while the short one extended his hand.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mrs. Christie," he said, and Mrs. Christie's grimly set face relaxed into an answering smile.

"And I know, without need of introduction," he continued, "that over here in the corner is the little mouse who has been making all the trouble."

He advanced and held out both his hands, taking the girl's in a strong, reassuring grasp, and looking into her face with so kindly and sympathetic an expression that Arabella never felt afraid of him again.

"Poor Jack's daughter," he murmured, "and very like, don't you think so, Clara?"

Was it a tear that glistened in the eyes looking into her own? Arabella could not be sure.

Arabella

"What is your name, my dear?" he inquired.

"Arabella," answered the girl.

"Of course," interposed Mrs. Winslow, "her real name, as you know, is Anna Rosetta. She was called Arabella by Mrs. Christie because of the three initials on the locket, A. R. A. Wasn't it a good idea? So clever and original."

She included all the spectators in her glance, and the tall man answered:

"Oh, yes, by Jove, very clever."

The short man made no comment.

"Mrs. Christie," he said, still holding Arabella's hand in his, "you have taken excellent care of this, our little girl."

"I couldn't do much for her," blurted out Mrs. Christie, "I hadn't the means nor the time."

This speech, in its blunt honesty, commended itself to Mr. Frederick, and even his languid brother regarded the speaker with a touch of interest. Honesty is always a respectable quality, and commands favorable attention. After that they got to business, only it was first proposed that Arabella might as well retire.

"She will be better with the children while these matters are being discussed," suggested the short gentleman.

Mrs. Winslow agreed with this proposition, and Mr. Robert languidly examined his fingernails and offered no opinion. Arabella cast a terrified glance towards Mrs. Christie. She felt as if she were being torn from a strong bulwark of protection, but Mrs. Christie, though reciprocating the sentiment, was powerless. Her presence and testimony were indispensable at the proposed business conference.

"I think I shall ask Carrie to come and get her," suggested Mrs. Winslow to Mr. Frederick, who nodded approval, and an order was given. When the door opened again Arabella thought it was a vision which appeared upon the threshold. A little girl with large, soft, violet eyes, and hair carefully curled, which fell in a golden shower over the white dress she wore. She advanced, smiling, into the room, where she was warmly greeted by the two men, even Mr. Robert forsaking his finger-nails and calling her by a pet name, which sounded at once appropriate and caressing.

"Carrie," said Mrs. Winslow, leading her over to the corner where poor Arabella sat gazing, "this is your cousin" there was ever so slight a pause before the word "Anna Rosetta."

"Otherwise Arabella," laughed the short man. And this was the introduction.

Chapter 8. ARABELLA IS INTRODUCED

"Carrie," said Mrs. Winslow in her soft, carefully modulated voice, "you are to take your cousin to the school-room and introduce her to the boys."

"Yes, mamma," answered the little girl, speaking in clear, distinct tones, and offering her hand to Arabella. "Will you come, cousin?"

Arabella took the offered hand stiffly, uncomfortably, fully realizing for the first time the difference between herself and these new relations to whom she had been introduced. They went up the stairs together, their feet lost

Arabella

in the thick pile of the Axminster carpet, wherein even the country girl's thick-soled, clubby shoes made no impression. "I have two brothers upstairs," said Carrie, volunteering the information as they proceeded. "Reginald is the older, and George is next."

Arabella made no comment.

"Have you got any brothers?" the little girl inquired next.

"No," said Arabella, "I have nobody."

The unconscious pathos of the tone and words struck even her inexperienced listener.

"I am so sorry for you," remarked Carrie. "Do you live all alone?"

"No. Of course, there is Mrs. Christie."

Carrie looked puzzled.

"She is the one that came with me to-day. And then there is her husband, Mr. Christie, but he is old, and hardly ever speaks."

Arabella added this last in a burst of confidence.

"I suppose old gentlemen don't care much for little girls," Carrie said, "unless they are their grandchildren."

By this time they had reached the school-room door, whence proceeded a loud, shuffling sound, almost the first that Arabella had heard in this noiseless house. When the door was opened the cause of this noise was revealed. It was a thick-set, chubby boy of about thirteen, who was turning a series of somersaults, while astride upon a chair, and observing his gyrations, was a tall, slim lad, evidently a couple of years older. As the two girls appeared upon the threshold the tall lad stood up, while the other paused in one of his acrobatic feats, resting upon his hands, head downward, and peering up at the new arrivals. He slowly let himself down and arose.

"Boys," said Carrie, "this is our cousin, Arabella."

"Our cousin!" cried the short lad, drawing near and gazing at her. Arabella returned the gaze with something of defiance.

"Well," cried he, "you are a guy! What a queer hat you've got on; and such frocks; and just look at your shoes!"

Arabella grew crimson with mortification, and the tears forced themselves into her eyes. How fervently she wished that she had got those new things that Alicia Norris had chosen for her. As he spoke the cruel words, George broke into a roar of laughter, at which the elder brother stepped forward, and seizing him by the collar, swung him aside.

"You unmannerly cub," he cried, "how dare you speak so to your cousin."

And then he extended his hand.

"How do you do, cousin?" he said, politely.

Arabella

"Very well," Arabella strove to answer, but her voice choked and broke, while Carrie, looking at her sympathizingly, apostrophized her brother George.

"Oh, what a shame, Georgie, to be so rude."

"I don't care," said Georgie, "she is dressed queerly; and her face is red, like a cook."

Again the elder boy interposed, trying to silence the incorrigible youngster, and both he and Carrie, who was plainly vexed and mortified, strove to lavish their attentions upon Arabella. But the iron had entered into her soul. The boy had been rude, and the others were kind and polite, but the miserable fact remained that her face was red, and that her clothes were queer and different from the others. Therefore, as Georgie stood glowering in the corner, Arabella said to him, and not to the others:

"The clothes I've got on are the best I have. We bought some others to-day, but they're not ready yet, so how could I help it?"

Her protest was indignant, and at the same time it was appealing, and choked by the tears of mortification which rose to her eyes. Georgie, by a swift movement, came over to her.

"Well," said he, "of course, if you couldn't help it; if they're the best things you've got, there's nothing to be said. And you have nice eyes, and perhaps your face is only sunburned."

"It is sun-burned," Arabella said, brightening, and less awed by this boy who spoke the brutal truth than by the others, "for my forehead's quite white under my hair. And the others I mean Mrs. Christie and her sister said that I was not to wear these clothes any more."

"Oh, then you'll be all right!" declared George, confidently. "I don't care much about clothes myself. They say I'm always tearing mine, or getting stains on them. But you did look mighty queer, and nurse is always telling us that we mustn't play with children that wear shabby clothes and rough shoes."

Arabella was conscious of another pang at finding herself thus thrust out from the sphere to which these children belonged, but her first passionate resentment against this boy, which had flamed up in her heart, died suddenly, and in an odd way she felt more at ease with him than with the slim and gentlemanly boy, who closely resembled his uncle Robert, below stairs, and who could never, under any circumstances, have committed a rude action. Arabella, in her impulsive fashion, already loved and admired the gentle little girl who had seemed so sorry for her, but it was at a distance, almost as if she had been one of the characters in her favorite fairy-book.

Amity being once restored, the four were soon engaged in a merry play with one of the nursery games. The prim and sedate nurse, who had been sitting in an adjoining room with one of the housemaids and giving her a graphic and humorous account of Arabella's appearance and costume, now entered the play-room. She begged of Miss Carrie not to let the "little lady" spoil her good clothes by sitting down on the floor. As she spoke thus, George looked up at her with a quick, quizical glance.

"Arabella hasn't got any good clothes on today," he declared.

"Oh, fie, for shame, Master George!" cried the nurse.

"But she's all right, anyway," continued the incorrigible. "I like her, and she says she'll be better dressed next time she comes."

Arabella

"You must excuse him, miss," cried the nurse, addressing Arabella. "He says such very rude things, but he has a good heart."

"You said yourself," argued George, "that we mustn't play with children who wore shoes like that," pointing as he spoke to Arabella's, "because it would make us rough."

"You are very naughty," chided the nurse, "and I hope the young lady won't mind."

"I don't mind, now," Arabella said, "because after all, it's true, and I can't help it."

"Let us go on with the game," suggested Reginald, believing that to be the surest way of suppressing his brother and relieving an awkward situation. "It's your play, Carrie."

The game was continued with zest, and Arabella, who was naturally genial and sympathetic, would have thoroughly enjoyed almost her first experience of playing with other children, except during recess at school, had it not been for the soreness of her heart and the bitter mortification, which had left behind its sting. Children are so often unconsciously cruel to each other, even when the barbed arrows they employ are gilded with truth. How much more so when they are false, wanton and malicious.

Meantime, the grown-ups below stairs, in solemn conclave, received the proofs in favor of Arabella, though, in point of fact, scarcely a doubt had remained as to her complete identification when Mr. Brown was instructed to introduce her. The additional evidence supplied by Mrs. Christie, coinciding in every particular with that already in possession of the lawyers, together with the marked resemblance borne by the countrified and sun-burned girl to the late Jack Allston, made assurance doubly sure. There could be no reasonable doubt that Arabella was the daughter of the deeply offending, yet favorite, son of the recently deceased head of the family, the multi-millionaire, Lawrence Allston.

He had broken with his son on the occasion of the latter's marriage to a penniless and obscure girl, and as a compensation he had left to the child of this marriage a large share of his fortune. The child had been known to exist, though after the premature death of her parents and the removal of those who had temporarily taken her in charge to another city, her whereabouts had been unknown, and it was only through the exertions of detectives that she had been traced to the Foundling Asylum and thence to the dwelling of the Christies.

Apart from all other considerations, Mr. Allston had made it imperative upon all the relations to receive the girl, and to treat her with kindness and consideration, under penalty of losing that which they already possessed, and other favors and privileges which awaited Masters Reginald and George and Miss Caroline and others interested, on their respective coming of age.

The will was at curious one—a distinct effort to repair an old wrong, to make the child of Jack's unpalatable marriage a definite and important member of the family, with power, moreover, to do precisely what she pleased in so far as was consistent, as the document declared, with "duty and propriety."

Arabella was at liberty to live wheresoever she pleased. She was to be offered the option of a home with any of the family, but she was free to refuse, provided she elected to live with reputable people and in a becoming manner.

The other heirs, were, without exception, well-disposed and conscientious people, with a strong desire to do the right thing and act honorably towards everyone. Not one amongst them had ever consciously injured another, nor were they capable of meanness. Still there is little doubt that in the heart of Mrs. Winslow, at least, was an unspoken, probably an unacknowledged regret, that Anna Rosetta had been found, and a fear lest she should be introduced into her well-regulated, if conventional household.

Arabella

When Arabella was brought down again to the library, where her elders were assembled, she found their numbers increased by the arrival of the family lawyer, Mr. Van Duzen, employer of the smart clerk. He had come to give the weight of his importance to the final deliberations. He sat now, with spectacles on nose, caressing his clean-shaven chin and bending his formidable eyes, before which many a criminal had quailed, on Arabella. The little girl was more shame-faced and self-conscious than ever, for now she knew the full truth, which these well-bred elders had failed to make known to her, but which had been blurted out by George. They had never, by word or sign, displayed their disapproval of her dress or manner. Yet she knew now, what possibly she had dimly guessed before, that not only was she different from these people, but that her costume, her hat, her shoes, her red and weather-beaten face, must be extremely distasteful to their eyes.

She felt this new truth with the keen and poignant mortification of a sensitive and intelligent child, and it far out-weighed, in her mind, any realization of her own present importance or the knowledge that she really belonged to these grand people, and was one of themselves. Therefore the next half hour was one of the most trying and uncomfortable of her life, as she always afterwards remembered. She got as near as she could to Mrs. Christie, who was still outwardly brave and undisturbed, but who, as Arabella now perceived with a quick pang of understanding and of sympathy, was also roughly and meanly clad in garments which were altogether out of date.

The lawyer, Mr. Van Duzen, treated Arabella with curious deference. He who was in a position to know the whole story could not help feeling a distinct regard for the power of wealth, the golden garment with which this hitherto nameless waif had been suddenly invested. He was aware that she was by far the wealthiest person present, and that her magnate of a grandfather had bestowed upon her special powers of aggrandizement or of privilege for others. What, then, did clothes matter, or awkward rusticity, or bashfulness, or oddity of manner? All those things were certain to disappear, or if they did not it mattered little.

To the others present these things mattered much. Many things mattered, indeed, besides the mere possession of wealth, which could only be the ultimate goal of very ordinary and uncultured beings. They were, however, resolved to do their duty. Even Mrs. Winslow, with her chilling artificiality of manner and possible absence of that quality known as heart, was prepared to accept Anna Rosetta precisely as her grandfather had desired. There they all sat, concealing their varying emotions under the same outward covering of good breeding, and awaiting the crucial moment when Arabella should make her decision.

Chapter 9. ARABELLA MAKES HER CHOICES

A great sunbeam made its way into the library and lay across the velvet pile of the carpet like a message from the Almighty, the loving God, whose children are all of equal value in His eyes, and who draw near to Him, not at all by their wealth or their importance in the eyes of the world. There was silence in the room, to Arabella an oppressive, awe-stricken silence, as the lawyer put on his spectacles and began to read from a paper handed to him by his assistant which was the formal acceptance of Arabella by her new relatives and the provisions regarding her from the will of the late Lawrence Frederick George Allston. The girl scarcely understood those pompous-sounding phrases, still less did she fully realize all that they meant to her.

The others listened to the various announcements, with most of which they were already familiar, with philosophic composure, their faces hidden by the impenetrable mask of conventionality. Mrs. Christie felt her breath fairly taken away by the mention of all the wealth that was coming to Arabella in money, stocks, bonds and real estate more, far more, in fact, than her limited view could comprehend. As she listened she realized, with a strange sinking of the heart, how far the little girl had been suddenly removed from her by this almost appalling wealth. It is to the credit of human nature that she was more disturbed by the fear that she might lose the companion of so many years than elated by the prospect of possible advantage to herself.

She remembered how sturdily Arabella had undertaken her share of the work, and how thoroughly it had been

Arabella

done. She thought, likewise, of the lonely, dreary afternoons, when the dusk of autumn or winter closed in about the homestead, when Arabella was at hand to listen if she chose to talk, putting in a word now and again; or occasional long winter evenings when Silas had gone to play cards with a neighbor or to attend some political meeting, and only the little girl remained between her and desolation. She could recall many an evening, indeed, when the fierce wind swept eerily past the house, and when she was exceedingly glad of the quiet little figure in the shabby frock, sitting near her and helping her to mend the pile of rough garments or to darn Silas Christie's socks. She realized now how she would miss her, when Arabella had come to live, as seemed probable, in this grand house with every comfort and luxury, with servants to wait on her, and no work whatever to do.

She looked curiously at Arabella while these thoughts were passing through her mind, but there was only confused discomfort visible in the girl's face, and no trace of joyfulness or exultation. The brown eyes were fixed with pathetic bewilderment upon the lawyer as he read. She did not even see the looks of encouragement that were cast upon her by the short gentleman, nor Mrs. Winslow's somewhat forced but kindly smile.

So the lawyer detailed, in his clear, distinct voice, the various sums of money bequeathed and devised to the said Anna Rosetta Allston, whom Arabella began to suspect might be herself, daughter of the late John Cecil Allston, and co-heiress with several others to the estate of Lawrence Frederick Allston. The crucial moment came, however, when the lawyer was to put the question to Arabella as to where she wished to live.

The tall, thin gentleman who had been introduced to the child as Uncle Robert looked up for the first time, interestedly, from the contemplation of the toe of his boot where it rested upon his knee; the short man described as Uncle Frederick leaned forward eagerly, with his cheery smile; Mrs. Christie sat bolt upright, striving as best she could to conceal all trace of feeling. She scarcely doubted what the child's decision would be. Her experience of life had been limited, but it had taught her many a cruel lesson, and one of them was to expect little from others. Arabella had had, in many ways, a hard time with her. She would have an easy time with these people. Her course was clear.

Mrs. Winslow leaned back in her chair so that her face was in shadow. She was disposed to believe that Arabella would decide to cast in her lot with them. Her emotions were many and conflicting, and she strove to repress the desire which arose strongly in her heart that Arabella should go away again, and be lost in obscurity, leaving her household undisturbed as heretofore.

It was a moment of thrilling interest, indeed, when the lawyer fixed his spectacled eyes upon Arabella and asked her in his half jocular, half deferential way:

"And now, my fair client, the moment has come for you to make an important decision. It will not bind you, it is true, for life. At any time you are free to change. But I ask you now to say whether you will accept the home which Mrs. Winslow is kind enough to offer you. Am I not right, Mrs. Winslow?"

"Quite right," assented Mrs. Winslow. "Arabella may make her home with me at any time."

"Or whether," continued the lawyer, bowing in the direction of the short gentleman, "you will accept the hospitality of Mr. Frederick Allston, which I understand is offered."

"A hospitality which is heartily at your service, my dear," said Mr. Frederick, smiling his genial smile at Arabella.

For a moment the girl wavered. She had taken an instantaneous fancy to this kind-hearted, whole-souled relative.

"Or would you prefer to take up your abode with Mr. Robert Allston, who is also prepared to receive you?"

Arabella

"If you are not afraid of the discomforts of a bachelor establishment," murmured the tall, thin man. His tone was courteous, even kind, for he could not have done or said a rude thing, and he spoke with evident sincerity. He felt sorry for the little thing in the trying ordeal which she had undergone. Arabella gave him a grateful glance, but she had no hesitation about that offer. The girl's eyes had been wandering from one face to another until they rested upon the homely and rugged countenance of Mrs. Christie. Thereon was an odd look of pathos, of regret, a forlornness in the very weariness of her attitude, that went to Arabella's heart. Amongst all these strangers, too, her face, hard as it had sometimes appeared, was the only one familiar.

"Or should you wish any other manner of life," He hesitated. It seemed so unlikely. It was so inadvisable. Yet he felt it his duty to put the question. "Or to go back to the country with Mrs. Christie?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Arabella, rising to her feet in the eagerness of her desire and throwing out her arms in a passionate gesture, which was unconsciously dramatic and appealing. "Let me go back with Mrs. Christie. Let me go home!"

It was a pathetic cry. It brought tears to the eyes of more than one present, and it won for her golden opinions. It gave evidence of a loyalty, an affection and a disinterestedness that were certainly to be respected. Yet each one felt called upon in turn to enter a protest. Mrs. Christie could scarcely believe her ears. She made an ineffectual effort to speak, but her voice, choked with emotion, failed her, and her eyes, which had grown dull and weary with the monotony of her life's dreary landscape, blinked hard in an effort to restrain unwonted tears. Arabella went over to her after having spoken, and stood with a hand resting upon the elder woman's shoulder, looking half timorously, half defiantly, at the rest.

Oddly enough, it was the languid Mr. Robert who first disturbed the silence that followed. He crossed the room deliberately and shook Arabella by the hand.

"Bravo, little woman!" he said. "Bravo! You are of the right metal!"

Then half ashamed of his vehemence, he sat down again. Mr. Frederick, meanwhile, was blowing his nose with suspicious vigor, and there was something like moisture in his eyes. Mrs. Winslow, who could not help feeling pleased with the decision, for that very reason felt bound to enter the first protest.

"For the present," she said, addressing Mr. Van Duzen, "We shall, of course, abide by our niece's decision. But I cannot help feeling, and I am sure Mrs. Christie will agree with me, that such an arrangement can scarcely be permanent. Arabella must have all possible advantages of training and education to fit her for the position she will have to occupy, and in the country it is so difficult."

She turned apologetically to Mrs. Christie as she thus concluded.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Christie, "it is difficult, and our house is the last place on earth for her to get such training."

"Can't both be combined?" inquired Mr. Frederick. "Can't she have a governess, or something of that sort, to go on with until she's older?"

Arabella looked gratefully toward the speaker, while Mrs. Christie showed perturbation at the mention of a governess.

"Would that be possible?" Mrs. Winslow asked. Then seeing and understanding the look upon Mrs. Christie's face, with that quick intuition which she shared with her niece, she added:

"The governess need not be resident, you know; that is, if there is any one in the village."

Arabella

Mrs. Christie suddenly brightened.

"The Purple Lady!" she said joyfully.

It was Arabella's turn to look aghast, for the personage in question had been the awe and terror of her childhood. Mrs. Christie, however, satisfied Aunt Winslow in a few brief sentences that here was possibly an instructress who would solve the vexed problem of Arabella's education and training, and relieve her own conscience, for the present, at least. She took down her address, and declared that she would write to her the very next day.

"And of course," she said, and her brothers heartily echoed the sentiment, "we must see you very often, my dear, and you must become better acquainted with your cousins."

"And," suggested Mr. Frederick, "shall we not all agree, for greater uniformity, to call her Arabella?"

This suggestion was adopted, after a slight hesitation on the part of Mrs. Winslow. And so the great conference broke up, the lawyer took his leave and Mrs. Christie and her charge were whirled away again in the cab by the lawyer's clerk, and this time Arabella thoroughly enjoyed the drive.

Mr. Frederick lingered to say a few serious words to his sister.

"Of course," he said, "we can't shake off our responsibility concerning poor Jack's child like this. Mrs. Christie seems an honest, reliable sort of woman as far as she goes, and no doubt it is best to leave Arabella with her for the present, since the girl has so chosen. But she is only a child, and cannot be made to bear the burden of a decision which might influence her whole future life."

"Of course not," agreed Mrs. Winslow with a sigh. "And we must do all we can, but I don't mind confessing, Fred, that it is an immense relief not to have to take her just now."

Mr. Frederick turned aside. "Poor little waif," he said in an undertone. "Poor little girl! She has chosen wisely."

There was nothing, however, to be gained by discussing the matter, nor did he make the attempt.

Chapter 10. THE DAYS IN TOWN

Never were any storm-tossed mariners better pleased to reach a haven than were those two wearied and sorely-tried companions to find themselves once more in Miss Alicia's tiny home above the shop, in the unaristocratic neighborhood of Third avenue. They did not have to wait this time. Alicia stood at the open door and ushered them into the cheeriness of a blazing fire, the smell of homely but savory viands, and the atmosphere of freedom and kindness the atmosphere of home.

Arabella then fully realized, for the first time, what the idea of home meant, and in her mind, which already seemed to have developed through the experiences of the day, she resolved to make for herself a home. And herein she was right, since it is beyond doubt the most precious thing upon earth. When they sat down together at the little round table and partook with excellent appetites of the good things which Alicia had provided, and drank the fragrant tea that could scarcely have been better anywhere, Arabella felt happier than she had ever done before. After the pleasant meal was over the three gathered once more around the fire, recounting the various experiences of the day, and heartily in sympathy. And this sympathy sometimes was indicated by long periods of silence, during which each was free to follow out her own thoughts.

Mrs. Christie felt deeply grateful to Arabella for her decision, and she really rejoiced in the prospect of having her

Arabella

still at the homestead. The possibility of her departure had given her an added value. Arabella, too, had learned to recognize that under all her exterior grimness Mrs. Christie was her friend. Alicia, for her part, could not feel sufficiently grateful to the little girl who had elected to remain with her sister, and who had shown such good will toward those who had sheltered her in youth. The little woman had an almost unlimited capacity for listening, which is an excellent and very popular gift to cultivate. She was never tired of hearing every detail of the memorable interview of the interior and exterior of the house; of Mrs. Winslow, her dress, manners and appearance; of Mr. Frederick and Mr. Robert, whom Arabella had not yet learned to consider as uncles, and also of the children.

Arabella, in the rugged sincerity which she had learned from Mrs. Christie, told everything that was painful and mortifying, as well as what was pleasant. She repeated George's exact words, which caused Alicia to flush painfully as she exclaimed:

"Oh, my dear, wasn't that hard on you? am afraid he wasn't a very kind-hearted boy."

"Yes, he was," answered Arabella. "At least I think so. I liked him afterwards."

And she proceeded to relate the further happenings in the nursery, and how George had said he liked her and that he didn't care about clothes, so that Alicia was appeased in a moment, and declared that his first rudeness must have been only a boy's thoughtlessness.

Once, after a long pause, Arabella said decidedly:

"We must buy a lot of nice things for the house carpets, curtains and new furniture."

"Wait," interposed Alicia, though she smiled in sympathy, "until you have a home of your own."

"That is my home," said Arabella, "for I will never go to live with any of my rich relations. They must come and see me, but I will never live anywhere else."

"But," protested Mrs. Christie, slowly, "it ain't any sort of a home for you, now you're rich."

"We can make it better," Arabella said. "We can have it papered and painted. That is," she added, as an afterthought, "if Mr. Christie doesn't mind."

Mrs. Christie sighed.

"Ah, you may well say, 'if Mr. Christie doesn't mind!'" she exclaimed, not without a touch of bitterness, "for there's just the point."

That night it was Mrs. Christie who made the first move to go to bed. The one day of city life, to which she was so long unaccustomed, and the unusual strain which she had undergone, had left her utterly wearied and exhausted. Arabella pleaded to be allowed to sit up a little longer with Miss Alicia, and the two fell into a confidential chat, during which the new-made heiress confided to her friend some of the plans which were floating disjointedly through her mind.

"You know," she said, "I would like to make the house more home-like, if Mrs. Christie is willing."

"I should think she would be delighted," answered Miss Alicia, "for you see, poor soul, she has never been able to do much. But I am not sure that Mr. Christie will agree."

Arabella

"No," said Arabella, "neither am I."

For a sudden remembrance flashed into her mind of Silas Christie's fixed ways of acting, and his dislike to change and confusion of any sort.

"Well," said Alicia, hopefully, "perhaps you and his wife between you can persuade him," and being like Arabella herself, a dreamer of dreams, she could not quite help entering into her views and planning plans, even if they were never to be carried out.

"And you must come down next summer," Arabella said. "I know everybody will be glad to have you."

"Oh, my dear child," cried Alicia, "I have not been away from here for years and years. I can't afford to travel."

"But you must let me send you a ticket," Arabella answered. "Don't say no, please don't. For what's the use of my having money if no one will let me spend any of it."

"Well, we shall see about that when the summer comes," Alicia declared, "but in any case I suppose your aunt and cousins will go to visit you."

Arabella weighed this proposition in her mind. "I don't think the lady "

"Your aunt," corrected Miss Alicia.

"Well, my aunt. I don't think she will ever come, but George and the little girl, and perhaps Reginald may."

"You will ask them all, of course. Reginald, from what you say, seems to be a very nice, gentlemanly boy."

"Yes," answered Arabella, "but he mightn't care much for the country."

"Oh, I'm sure he will," cried sanguine Alicia, "and then the others."

"The gentleman with the bald head," Arabella began.

"You mean your uncle Frederick," put in Alicia, who had a good memory. "And your other uncle?"

"Oh, he would never come," Arabella decided, "though I would be glad to have him."

So these two artless souls talked and laid plans until Alicia suddenly remembered that her little guest would be tired for all that was yet to come, and made her go to bed. And this was an excellent precaution, for the next three days were very busy ones indeed. In the first place a civil note came next morning from Mrs. Winslow, saying that she would send the carriage to bring her niece for luncheon at her house, after which they should do some shopping. They had scarcely finished reading this note when a loud knock sounded on the outer door, followed by the appearance of kindly Mr. Frederick.

"I came over very early," he explained, "to know what Arabella is going to do, and if there is anything Mrs. Christie and she would like to see."

Arabella then told him about the invitation already received, and her uncle said:

"In that case you will have to keep to-morrow for me. My little girl, Marion, is in a fever of excitement to see you. You have not heard, perhaps, that she is lame and has to go on crutches, so that she could not come to see

you."

Mr. Frederick's bright eyes had been roaming around the little apartment, which pleased him very much, and he noted with pleasure the quaint but exquisitely neat figure of Alicia, to whom he was presently introduced.

"You must all come and take luncheon with me to-morrow," he declared genially, "and first, if the day be fine, we can take a spin in the park."

So unaffectedly cordial was his manner that the two elder women, surprised and somewhat flustered by the invitation, felt constrained to accept the proffered hospitality.

A third message arrived very shortly after Uncle Frederick had taken his departure, bringing a large box of sweets, such as Arabella had never seen, much less tasted, before. They were accompanied by a card, "From Uncle Robert."

It seemed to Arabella during that wonderful day as if some of the stories in her fairy book must surely have come true. She had not, however, much time to reflect upon these marvels, for she had to prepare for the mid-day meal at Mrs. Winslow's, which that lady called luncheon, but which Arabella still described as dinner.

Alicia, indeed, whirled her away to purchase a ready-made suit, a pair of trim walking shoes and a hat, which, though not so fine as that ordered upon the previous day, was a great improvement upon the one Arabella was wearing.

"They will not be able to make any remarks about your clothes this time," Alicia said, triumphantly, as she put the various parcels into the hansom cab hired for the occasion. This conveyed them home so quickly that the little girl had plenty of time to dress and confidently await the Winslow carriage. The latter vehicle conveyed the transformed heiress to the mansion on Fifth avenue.

Mrs. Christie felt a bit aggrieved at Mrs. Winslow's determined overlooking of her presence. Yet, after all, as Alicia said, such grand people could not be expected to ask them to their house, and they were happier and better where they were, which, indeed, proved to be the case, for they sat and talked, after they had taken their comfortable dinner of boiled bacon and cabbage with mealy potatoes and a custard rice pudding. And they fell into a pleasant vein of reminiscence, conjuring up from the past a thousand and one little happenings which had lain dormant in their minds, recalling the vanished and the dead, bringing to life their ghost-like girlhood and far-off, misty childhood. Hence the shadows that filled the room as the autumn afternoon wore to twilight were peopled with many that the two had known and loved. It was Arabella who almost seemed unreal as she burst in upon the gray-haired women, full of news, cheerful, exhilarated, and in the best of spirits. That night, when Alicia was tucking her into bed, she said, gravely:

"You will have to pray every day, dear child, that your heart may never grow hard nor selfish, for prosperity is less easy to bear than adversity, and riches sometimes make people forget a lot of things."

"I will never forget you, Miss Alicia," Arabella answered, earnestly, "nor Mrs. Christie. And I don't want to get hard. I would rather not be rich."

"Our Heavenly Father loves the rich and poor alike," Alicia added, gently, "and I hope He will keep you always as you are to-day."

Chapter 11. A DAY WITH THIS WINSLOWS

Mrs. Winslow found Arabella's appearance much improved by Miss Alicia's purchases, and she was sincerely grateful for the change, since she had dreaded taking the little girl into the various shops with her, and to her own particular modiste.

Arabella had luncheon with Mrs. Winslow alone, as the children took their meals separately, in an apartment adjoining the schoolroom. Everything was very strange, and somewhat oppressive to the little heiress, in that great, solemn-looking place, where the portraits on the wall seemed to stare down at her. One of these was especially pointed out by Mrs. Winslow before sitting down to the table.

"That, my dear Arabella," she explained, "is your grandfather, Lawrence Allston, your father's father."

She did not add "who has left you all the money," nor was that fact uppermost in the little girl's mind. She was more impressed by the idea that that splendid gentleman, with his stern, bearded face and air of self-conscious importance, should be her grandfather, the parent of that father whom she had never known. The portrait, being a very real one, appeared to dominate the room. Arabella stole many a glance thereat, as she sat opposite Mrs. Winslow at the table, with its exquisite napery, glass and silver, and ate mechanically of the various dishes, which were all new to her, and most of which she did not like. Mrs. Winslow, who wanted to be kind, strove not to notice various details of the child's table manners, which jarred upon her excessively, and which appeared all the worse now that Arabella was sorely oppressed by her presence and that of the butler, who waited upon her with such stony impassibility. He was as silent, save for an occasional monosyllable, as the portraits on the wall. Even the dainty sweetmeats, and the fruit, which at another time she would have enjoyed, were eaten uncomfortably or refused altogether, out of very shyness.

She had a nervous suspicion that her grandfather was likewise observing her from out his gold frame, whence he seemed as if he were on the very point of speaking to her. When the meal was concluded Mrs. Winslow, trying to be kind, took Arabella's hand in her own slim and delicate one and led her about the room, showing her the other portraits.

"That is your grandmother," she observed, pausing before the representation of an elderly lady in a brocaded gown, with auburn hair smoothly brushed away from a high forehead.

"Oh, she is pretty!" cried Arabella, attracted by the face, which was so much milder than that of her husband.

"Yes, dear mother was very beautiful in her youth," said Mrs. Winslow, smiling at the child and pleased by her admiration, "and your father was very like her."

"You are very like her, too!" Arabella declared, bluntly, though she felt, without being able to express, the subtle difference. The pictured face was so much gentler, as if all the years which she had lived had smoothed away all that was hard or merely superficial, and the elder woman had evidently been much fairer in coloring.

"Ah, little flatterer!" Mrs. Winslow exclaimed lightly patting the child's hand, "I believe I am considered like her, though with a difference. And now, should you like to go up to the schoolroom and have a game with the children while I am dressing to go out? And I may as well confess that I take a little nap after luncheon."

To Arabella it seemed very strange that anybody could possibly go to sleep in the middle of the day, but she had come to the conclusion that everything was strange in this atmosphere. Mrs. Winslow rang the bell, and the nurse was summoned to take Miss Allston to the schoolroom, where George was the first to greet her.

Arabella

"Oh, halloa!" he cried. "I'm glad you came. I want to show you a new book I just got from Uncle Fred."

Reginald and Carrie also greeted Arabella warmly, being, in truth, delighted to see any one who broke in on the monotony of their daily lives, for they were almost as tired of everything as their elders, upon whom pleasure and amusement, and all that money could buy had palled. George, meanwhile, from a shelf upon the wall, had produced a book, and squatting down upon the floor, invited Arabella to sit upon a tiny stool near by. While the little girl was hesitating about accepting the invitation George suddenly looked up and said:

"Say, Arabella, you look ever so much better to-day. You've got on those new clothes you were talking about."

"George!" said Carrie, reprovingly.

"It isn't any harm to say her clothes are nice," George remonstrated, indignantly. "Every girl likes to hear that. And her shoes are pretty, too. Just like yours, Carrie."

Arabella flushed with pleasure.

"We bought them yesterday," she answered, "just as soon as I was asked to come here."

"Did you get a hat, too?" George inquired, with interest.

"Yes," answered Arabella, "it's downstairs. But these ain't the clothes I told you about. They're not ready yet."

"You can get all the clothes you want," George observed, reflectively. "You're very rich, now."

"I suppose so," the heiress answered, carelessly. "I don't know nothing about money."

"It was our grandfather left it to you," George explained, ignoring the grammar.

"Yes, but I guess he was mine, too, wasn't he?"

"I suppose so. Did you ever see him?"

"No," Arabella answered, shaking her head.

"We often saw him. Didn't we, Carrie?"

"Yes," said Carrie, who had stood by exchanging glances with Reginald about George's bluntness. "He used to give us sweets, and silver money. Once he gave us a five dollar gold piece."

"Were you afraid of him," Arabella asked, thinking of the portrait below stairs.

"No; oh, no," answered Carrie. "I don't think children are ever afraid of their grandfathers."

"I was scared of his picture downstairs," Arabella confessed.

"Scared of a picture!" scoffed George. "Girls are such cowards, anyway. What harm could a picture do you?"

"It wasn't that," Arabella answered, "but all the time I was at the table I kinder felt as if he was lookin' at me, and that he was a-going to talk."

Arabella

George pondered, feeling that the situation so described might be uncomfortable.

"But he couldn't speak," he exclaimed, at last. "Why, he's dead!"

Arabella did not attempt to explain further. She sat down upon the stool indicated, with Carrie kneeling beside her at one side and George upon the other, and together they examined the splendid, new book, full of beautiful pictures. Reginald sat down with something of the loftiness of his additional two years and read a book on his own account. The time passed pleasantly enough until the nurse, who, like the governess, had disappeared, leaving the children to their own devices, now reappeared to tell Miss Carrie that she must come and be dressed to go out driving with her mamma and her cousin.

Carrie clapped her hands with delight, and instantly obeyed the summons. Reginald excused himself at the same moment, saying he had to go down town on a message for his another, and Arabella was left alone with George. He was disposed to grumble that he could not go out driving, too, but he knew, as did everyone in that well-ordered house, that there was no appeal from any decision.

Arabella suddenly said, after a pause:

"I wonder why that old gentleman left me all that money."

"Why, because he was your grandfather, silly," answered George.

"I know!" declared Arabella, "But still, he didn't know me."

"Grandfathers always leave money," George decided. "He left us all some, too. Not that I care much for money. I'd like to be poor, and go and play with the boys in the street, and wear ragged clothes."

Then he regarded Arabella very earnestly, and said in a whisper:

"If I were you I'd stay poor. I shouldn't take the money."

Arabella looked puzzled.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you can have a great deal more fun," George answered.

"Still," objected Arabella, "it's nice to have money and be able to buy things. I want to get presents for Mrs. Christie and Alicia, and if Mr. Christie will let me, I want to paint and paper our house."

"Oh, that'll be fun!" cried George. "Are you going to do it-yourself? I'd like to come down and help you. Where do you live?"

"In the country. At Kenoosha."

"Kenoosha? Where's that? Is it far away?"

"Pretty far. It took us a good while to come here in the train."

"Oh," said George, with a heavy sigh, "I'm afraid I won't be allowed to go, then."

Arabella

"Perhaps you could in the summer," suggested Arabella. "Lots of folks come down there in the hot weather."

"Hurrah!" cried George. "I'm going to ask mamma to let me go."

"And I'll ask Mrs. Christie to let you come," Arabella added, "after the house is papered and painted."

"Why, isn't it your house?"

The girl shook her head.

"Oh, then, mamma won't let me go!"

"Perhaps she will, if Mrs. Christie asks; and the little girl can come, too, and your brother."

"That would be tip-top, for Reggie might bring his pony and Carrie her phaeton, and I'll bring well, I don't know exactly what. But it would be more fun before the painting and papering are done. I'd like to wear overalls, like the man that's doing the house opposite, and paint."

Arabella was doubtful about this latter proposition, remembering the exact methods of Silas Christie.

"I guess Mr. Christie will want to do the painting himself," she admitted, despondently, "and he won't let no little boys help."

George sighed again, still more heavily, for well he knew the limitations of a boy's life. By that time, however, Carrie was ready, and Arabella was summoned by the obsequious nurse to have her hair tidied and her hands washed.

It may be said at once that the shops they visited that afternoon and the dressmakers to whom orders were given were very different, indeed, from those which Miss Alicia had patronized, and the purchases far beyond her wildest imaginings. And this despite the fact that Mrs. Winslow believed in simplicity for young girls, and eschewed finery which would be suitable only for their elders. But it was in the number and variety of things chosen, in the fineness of material and perfection of cut that her exquisite taste was displayed.

Mrs. Winslow was well aware of the unsuitability of some of these toilet accessories to life in the Christie homestead, but she considered the possibility of frequent visits to town on the part of her niece, and she was resolved that she should be provided with things requisite for every occasion.

In her communication to the personage known at Kenoosha as the "Purple Lady," concerning whom Mrs. Winslow had made discreet inquiries from the parish priest, she had clearly explained everything, and that in the event of her assuming the responsibility of Arabella's training she would be expected to cultivate her table manners, to correct her pronunciation and her grammar, and, in fact, to mould her to the requirements of her new station, and make association on an equal footing possible with her relatives and others of their set. She was thus, in every way, preparing for that constant communication between Arabella and the Allston family which the future seemed likely to bring forth.

She and Carrie made rapid strides towards a warm, childish friendship in the course of that afternoon, so that Arabella confided to her dainty little cousin that same project of which she had already spoken to George, of having them all down at Kenoosha in the summer.

"Of course, Mrs. Christie's house, where I live, ain't grand like yours," she said, "but city folks don't seem to care in the summer. There's lots of woods 'round there, and a lake to fish ill and nice walks and rides."

Arabella

Carrie was almost as enthusiastic as George over the proposed expedition, and mentioned the subject to her mother, who did not give a very decided answer, but smiled and gently minded Arabella that she was not living in her own house.

That evening, on returning to Alicia's flat, the little girl told Mrs. Christie of what she had said to the children, and was surprised to find that Mrs. Christie received the proposition with something like dismay.

"For the land's sake!" she cried. "What on earth should I do with people like that? Why, there ain't a decent stick of furniture in the house; and the carpets, where there is any, is worn threadbare, and the paint is off most everywhere."

Arabella, crestfallen, nevertheless renewed her previous offer of spending enough money to renovate the house completely. Mrs. Christie kindled somewhat at the inspiring thought, a flush rose to her cheek and a light came into her faded eyes. Then the light faded and the flush died.

"I've been thinkin' over what you said the other night," she declared slowly, "but I'm most sure it can't be done. Silas Christie, he's awful set in his own way, and I don't expect he'll let us overhaul the house."

Arabella's face fell, and her hopes sank low. She remembered Silas' grim countenance, and slow, methodical ways, and began to fear that, indeed, the wife was right, and that it would scarcely be safe, even so much as to mention the subject before him. She went to bed feeling very downcast, and arguing within herself that it wasn't much use having money if you couldn't spend it as you wished. Her pleasant vision of a visit from her city cousins faded, also, for how could she ever invite them to the homestead, even if Mr. Christie were willing, with things in their present condition. She had already learned enough herself to be able to fancy how Reginald's politeness and Carrie's gentleness would strive to cover deficiencies and conceal their secret wonder, while George would, no doubt, express his honest surprise, and mortify them all by open criticism. Besides, it was always possible that Silas would not permit the invitation to be given at all, and Arabella began to realize that in her new elation and the fullness of her heart she had been guilty of an indiscretion in acting as if the house where she had merely been sheltered was actually her home. And yet, so curious are the workings of human destiny, that, as shall be seen hereafter, it was really Silas Christie who furthered her design, though not precisely as she had intended.

Chapter 12. MR. FREDERICK'S DAUGHTER

Meanwhile, Arabella had to make the acquaintance of another cousin, and to enjoy her last day's outing in the city. After that, she and Mrs. Christie were to take the afternoon train homeward on Saturday, and so be settled before Sunday. At half past ten the following morning an unwonted sight met the eyes of the shop people below, and all the dwellers in that neighborhood. This was the appearance before the door leading to Miss Alicia's quarters of Mr. Frederick Allston's handsome motor car. Mrs. Christie and her sister were much flustered. The former had never, before coming to the city, seen one of these machines, which were still unknown in Kenoosha, and Alicia had only viewed them from afar.

"I thought," said Mr. Frederick, addressing Mrs. Christie, "that you would all enjoy a spin in the park before going home to have a chop with my little girl."

It was a memorable occasion, never to be forgotten by any of the good gentleman's guests. As they frankly declared before starting that they had never been in an automobile in their lives, Mr. Frederick advised them to put on veils, which should prevent their hair from flying and the dust from being troublesome. This wise counsel was followed by the two women, but Arabella could scarcely be persuaded so much as to keep on her hat, so that her brown hair floated in the wind, and as the motor left the city behind and bowled over the smooth roads of the park she simply forgot her manners and yelled with delight, a delight which found an echo in the breast of her

Arabella

good natured uncle and added to his own pleasure. He took particular pains to show every sight, only regretting that nature had austere withdrawn the bravery of her mid-summer verdure from the trees and withered the grass.

Poor little Miss Alicia felt as if she were dreaming, and enjoyed herself thoroughly, an enjoyment which was considerably marred for Mrs. Christie by her dread of the swiftly moving machine, which she expected might at any moment fly to pieces and precipitate her into space. She bravely repressed an inclination to start at every puff and groan of the motor, every creak of the machinery. She confided to Alicia, and also to her husband and an admiring circle of the neighbors long after, that for her part she guessed she preferred a horse any day, and a good, solid wagon. She didn't hold, she declared, with any of these newfangled inventions.

To Arabella, on the contrary, that drive was pure delight. The automobile is the vehicle by excellence for youth. It comes nearest, perhaps, to a realization of their swift, impetuous longings, their ardor, their hopes ever speeding before, their inexhaustible vitality. Moreover, the sky overhead was deepest blue, the sunshine at its brightest, the autumn air clear and bracing. Like all things earthly, however, that drive came to an end, and the motor stopped before the door of Mr. Frederick's handsome apartments in Madison Avenue. Peering out of the plate glass window, from between the rich silk curtains, Arabella caught sight of a weird, pallid little face, with two eyes of greenish gray, that almost startled her, and at the same moment Mr. Frederick exclaimed, his voice softening and his face growing tender:

"There's my little one looking out for us Poor little mite! Poor little Marion!"

Then he added hastily, as if to prepare the others for the appearance of the child:

"You know, she has never walked. the nurse let her fall when she was an infant."

The tears came into his eyes, and he turned away his head. Arabella felt so sorry for him and for the little girl that a lump rose in her throat. She looked at her own strong, young limbs, and it suddenly occurred to her how much she had to be thankful for in her own excellent health and vitality. She had often secretly lamented that her life was so lonely, and had wondered how other little girls felt who had a home and parents of their own, but here was a child who had many things which she had coveted, and yet was deprived of so much.

She had little time for reflection, as in another moment Mr. Frederick had ushered them in through the portico, all hard wood and polished marble, and the spacious hall, where a shining ebony-colored janitor smiled at him, and into the large, high ceilinged rooms which constituted those handsome ground-floor apartments.

Arabella thought she had never seen any place so absolutely bright and cheerful, except, perhaps, green meadows stretching under the blue sky of heaven on sunshiny days. The floors, also of hard wood and highly polished, were covered with bright colored rugs. The silk curtains were of yellow, to catch every ray of light. Flowering plants stood about in profusion. An orange tree and some blossoming shrubs gave the appearance of a garden or southern grove. The furniture consisted of gold-colored brocade, or of wicker adorned with gay-tinted ribbons. The few but handsome ornaments were all of a cheerful tendency. Pictures of smiling women and children looked from the walls. Mirrors flashed back the various objects displayed within the room, and the large bay window gave an excellent view of the street.

In fact, every detail of a general plan had been carefully considered to create the most cheerful atmosphere possible for the poor, wan, little creature, who sat upon a sofa near the window, propped up with cushions and attended by a negro nurse. The cripple's wan face was aglow with interest and pleasure as she turned towards her father and his guests.

"Oh, papa," she cried, "you were so long away! Wasn't he, nurse? And I was so anxious to see my new cousin!"

Arabella

"Well, here she is, at last," Mr. Frederick answered, bending over her tenderly. "And I am so sorry, darling, if you found the time long."

"Oh, it doesn't matter, dear," Marion answered, stroking his face with her thin little hand. "I shouldn't be so impatient."

Arabella felt the tears come into her eyes as she took that small, wasted hand, and stood looking down from the height of her own strength and vitality.

"Why are you crying?" asked Marion, fixing her solemn eyes upon Arabella's face. "I hope you didn't get hurt, or anything."

"Oh, no!" cried Arabella, brushing away the tears. "It was lovely out, and I never was in one of them cars before."

"Neither was I," declared Marion. "They say it would jolt me too much. For you see I am a cripple, and can't even walk. But I go out in the carriage."

Arabella could find no words to say, she felt so very sorry, and Mr. Frederick relieved the pause by bringing Mrs. Christie and her sister forward. Mrs. Christie shook hands stiffly with the little girl, but Miss Alicia, moved by an impulse of pity which leveled all distinctions, stooped and kissed her. Marion stroked her cheek and seemed pleased.

"You've got such pretty white curls," she said. "Are you the little girl's mamma?"

"No, my dear," answered Miss Alicia, "she has got no mamma."

"Poor little girl," exclaimed Marion, "I have none, either, but perhaps she has got a papa."

Miss Alicia shook her head.

"Oh, what does she do?" cried the cripple, in a voice of real emotion. "Arabella, I am so sorry for you."

Mr. Frederick once more made a diversion by sending the negro mammy to assist the two women and Arabella in taking off their wraps, which that functionary did with the kindly effusion of her race. This done, luncheon was served, Marion being carried by her father into the dining room and placed beside Arabella, at the beautifully appointed table. That apartment, fairly flooded with sunshine, was quite as cheerful as the other, and the repast was a delightful one. There was not an atom of formality, so that the guests felt at their ease immediately. Everybody laughing and chatting as they enjoyed the well-cooked and appetizing viands. Arabella, in particular, had brought in a ravenous appetite from the park, so that she was almost ashamed of eating so very much, especially as Marion scarcely took anything at all.

The luncheon over, she went off with Marion and the negro nurse to the playroom, where were every conceivable kind of books and toys. They had a glorious time playing together, and the nurse told them stories, and they talked, the eager, speculative talk in which children indulge, embracing past, present and future. They had very soon confided to each other every detail of their history. Arabella, after what Mrs. Christie had said, did not actually invite Marion to come to Kenoosha; but she threw out vague hints, hoping that matters might in some way be arranged, and feeling quite sure that neither Mr. Frederick nor his daughter would mind very much if the paint were worn off or the carpets threadbare. She even decided in her own mind upon a very sunny and cheerful room in the homestead, which might be got ready for Marion, if Mr. Christie would consent. And Silas, as Arabella knew, was not an inhospitable man, and would most likely welcome these people who had been kind to his wife. Arguing thus, with the shrewd and precocious wisdom which circumstances had given her, she felt quite

hopeful that her desire in this case might be fulfilled.

Marion's imagination immediately took fire at the thought of cool, shady woods, meadows and lanes, where wild flowers grew in abundance, though, as she said, pathetically, somebody else would have to pick them for her, and bushes loaded with berries and a lake, whereon boats were constantly plying. Marion had quite made up her mind to visit Kenoosha the next summer, and only deplored that so many months must intervene. And she said so to her father.

"You must come and visit us," declared Mrs. Christie, charmed at the hospitable reception she had met with in that delightful household, "you and your father, too, if you won't mind our plain, homely ways."

"I think you will be almost certain to see us in Kenoosha this summer," agreed Mr. Frederick, reserving to himself the option of accepting or declining the proffered hospitality, as circumstances might dictate, "and I know Marion will begin to count the days from this time on."

Always, when the three got back to Miss Alicia's flat, they were like birds flying homeward to a nest, glad of the quiet after the roar and bustle of the thoroughfares, the strange sights and sounds. That evening, however, Arabella could talk of nothing but Marion. She had begun to like and to feel friendly with her other cousins, but she had taken little Marion into her inmost heart, whence she was never to be dislodged. And Marion felt towards the newly arrived relative as she had never felt towards any of those others whom, brought up as she was herself, she had known all her life. Arabella seemed to bring with her the freshness and breeziness of the country, the marked individuality and the power of sympathy, so often born of adversity. Her intelligence had been quickened by circumstances, her views of life were new; even her speech was original. And because of these things she proved attractive to many, and straightway won this particular cousin's affection and consequently that of the father.

Chapter 13. HOME AGAIN

It was with real sorrow, the sharp, poignant sorrow of childhood, that Arabella bade good-bye to Miss Alicia and her cozy, little home that remained forevermore engraved upon the girl's memory as the type of all that was comfortable and happy. She was somewhat consoled by Miss Alicia's cordial invitation to come again and spend some days with her, and by her promise to visit the homestead next summer. Arabella, indeed, beguiled the tediousness of the return journey with many delightful speculations regarding that summer and its doings.

At the station Silas Christie met them with "the team." Characteristically, he asked not a single question, nor did his wife at that moment offer any information. They drove silently home through the darkening landscape, with the pale stars gleaming out here and there through the November grayness, and the lights of the village twinkling from afar, or at intervals down the road, like the lesser stars of earth.

The homestead certainly looked to Arabella, and no doubt to Mrs. Christie, the most forlorn and desolate place possible. It had but one saving grace, a homely familiarity. It was a rude shelter, as it were, from the buffeting the uncertainties of that beautiful, brilliant world they had quitted. The two went indoors silently, while Silas drove around to the stable to unharness. In the hallway the woolly, brown dog, in raptures, welcomed Arabella by short barks and whines and frantic rushings up and down and leaping upon the beloved object. Had a human being so conducted himself he would most certainly have been considered daft. Arabella bent over him, feeling a certain warmth at her heart in the affection and greeting of this dumb creature. She caressed him and called him by name, whispering into his woolly ear. Mrs. Christie went on into the sitting-room and lighting the lamp, looked about her, as if she had never seen the place before.

"Well," she observed, with a sigh, addressing Arabella, "it ain't quite so grand as them houses we've bin seein' and

Arabella

it's a long way behind Alicia's place in coziness, but I'm kinder glad to get here, anyhow. For, after all, I'm used to it and it's used to me."

Despite the dreariness of the dwelling and the lack of comfort in their home-coming, Arabella had something of the same feeling, that sentiment, which, partly, at least, had caused her to refuse the luxurious life she might have had with any one of her rich relations.

Nor was the place ever quite so dreary again, as shall appear in the sequel. For that visit to the city, hitherto but dimly remembered, had opened Mrs. Christie's eyes, or rather it had been like putting on powerful spectacles. The supper was very coarse and rude, indeed, and Arabella noted the barren plainness of the table, with forks and knives and other appurtenances thrown on almost at random, the table cloth coarse and not too spotless, and the boiled beef and potatoes and the sodden bread pudding. At the table, Mrs. Christie threw out one or two crumbs of information. She knew Silas Christie's peculiarities, and had no mind to provoke his ire or incite him to grim sarcasm by long recitals of their experiences, while Arabella had already relapsed into the reticence of years. Mrs. Christie, indeed, looked at her curiously from time to time, perfectly aware of the difference, and feeling that this was scarcely the same child who had been so communicative with Alicia, or so merry and light-hearted in Frederick's motor in the park. She, however, made no comment but began to give Silas Christie homeopathic doses of news.

"Alicia, she's got a neat, pretty sort of little place there."

Silas made a sound expressive of assent.

"It's mighty nice and comfortable."

"Seems to me she'd get lonesome at times."

"No, I guess not. she lives in a lively quarter of the town."

Then there was dead silence, broken only for a considerable interval by the clatter of knife and fork.

"Arabella, here, she's got a pile of money."

"Yes," assented the man, indifferently, "I guess that's what took you down to town."

"She had the chance to stop there."

"She was a fool not to take it."

"She's got some mighty big relations."

"Most ways they're not much use to any one. Better without."

Silence again.

"Why didn't you ask Alicia to come up for a spell?" Silas Christie asked, after a while. He had pleasant recollections of his sister-in-law.

"I guess she may in the summer time."

Arabella

"Afraid of the cold, is she?" Silas asked. "City folks always has it in their head that the country's colder than the town."

"It ain't that so much, but I thought summer would be the best time."

"Just as you please, mother," Silas agreed, and after that no more was said till the dishes were all cleared away, the cattle fed outside, and Silas took his clay pipe and sat down near the kitchen fire. The kitchen was a large, barn-like room; indeed, all the rooms might be thus described. There was not a single line of grace or beauty in the whole establishment. Before sitting down, Mrs. Christie finished her various tasks precisely at the same time and in the same way as if she had never been absent. Arabella sat demurely, with the woolly dog, contented and happy, curled up at her feet, and Silas Christie surveyed her occasionally from under his shaggy eyebrows. He was pondering deeply on the fragmentary information he had received.

"So you came back again to Kenoosha?" he observed.

"Yes," answered Arabella, uncomfortably, "I came back."

She felt far less at ease in the company of this rugged, bearded man, with his shaggy eyebrows, unkempt hair and shabby clothing than, for instance, with the genial Uncle Frederick.

"They asked you to stop down thar?" Silas inquired next.

"Yes," said Arabella, "the lawyer asked me."

"But did your folks ask you themselves?"

"Yes, they did," replied the little girl.

There was a gleam of curiosity in the eyes, usually as impassive as Mrs. Christie's own, that glowered from under the shaggy eyebrows, as Silas asked:

"Why did you come back here, then?"

"Because I wanted to."

Silas was silent over that for several minutes, blowing out wreaths of smoke and pondering once more.

"So you didn't want to leave the Missis?" he resumed, at last, with an odd, softened kindness in his tone.

Arabella shook her head.

"And strange, too," Silas said, thinking aloud, "how set most folks is on home, even when it's the uncomfortablest place in creation."

There was a long silence after that. The man seemed to have forgotten the quaint little figure of the child sitting so quietly on the opposite side of the table.

Mrs. Christie soon came to take her accustomed place in a stiff, high-backed chair, where the click, click of the needles made themselves heard.

Arabella

Long after Arabella had retired that night and had counted over her treasures, and glanced into the pages of her fairy book, and felt the odd sense that what is most familiar seems unfamiliar after absence, the two below sat for the most part in a grim silence, such as they had sat in for years. Only their vigil was prolonged that night, an unparalleled thing, for so long after Silas' bedtime, and an occasional question was put by him and a terse and telling answer given by his better half. In the meantime Silas had heard, spasmodically, and without any continued narrative, almost all that there was to tell.

He knew of the scene at the Winslow's when Arabella had made her decision, of the girl's introduction to her cousins, of the shopping excursions, and of the drive in Uncle Frederick's motor car, and the luncheon at his apartments, of her own talk with Mrs. Winslow, and the latter's determination to put Arabella's education, if possible, into the hands of the Purple Lady. Last, but not least, for Mrs. Christie was wise in her generation and possessed the wifely sagacity born of long years of married life, she seized the present favorable opportunity to tell him of Arabella's proposal to remodel the house.

Silas in his undemonstrative fashion showed his pleasure at her return and was, consequently, more disposed to listen and to talk than he had been many times in this thirty odd years of matrimony. Therefore, when she told him of Arabella's offer, he did not relapse into his gruff humor, as his wife had expected, nor protest emphatically, against such doings.

"It's a good offer," he said, deliberately, "and it shows that the girl's got a head on her shoulders and a heart. By jingo, it does. I don't say just now as I'll accept of it, nor allow her to make my house her'n. But I've got a notion in my head, and I'm pretty well satisfied that it's a good one."

Mrs. Christie was too wise to put a direct question, so she kept silent, her needles clicking away more busily than ever, as if they were her thoughts.

"And my notion is," added Silas Christie, "to let the girl have her home and us ours."

"But," objected Mrs. Christie, aghast at this ruthless destruction of the hopes she had secretly entertained, "don't you understand, she's set on stayin' right here with us?"

"That's all right," said Silas. "And I don't say as we're not mighty glad to keep her here. And it do seem right. You've had the trouble of rearin' her, and you had oughter have some good of her money."

Once more Mrs. Christie was silent and waited, Silas being, as rarely happened, in a loquacious mood. She felt sure he would tell what was in his mind. She laid down her needles, however, and drew over the lamp on the table, and snuffed the wick, carefully replacing the chimney and shade. After which she resumed her interrupted stocking. Great clouds of smoke were, meanwhile, being sent forth from the clay pipe and completely enveloping the smoker.

Presently he moved his hand to disperse them and blow them away, as a magician might disperse the dreams of enchantment. There was a suppressed sparkle of eagerness in the eyes of the wife, while she expected the unfolding of that project at which Silas had mysteriously hinted. What could it be? With all her years of training she could scarce restrain an impatient exclamation which rose to her lips and the eager question burning upon her tongue.

"My notion is this," Silas said, again, giving a preliminary cough.

"For the land's sake!" cried Mrs. Christie, "tell us what your notion is, and don't beat around the bush."

Mr. Christie stared. He narrowed his eyes under their bushy brows as he said, slowly, "I believe I'll wait till to-morrow. It's gettin' late now."

Then Mrs. Christie rose in her wrath, though never, for many a long year, had she controverted her husband's views.

"Silas Christie," she cried, "you tell me right now. It won't take any more'n a few minutes, any way, and I want to know."

She was half afraid herself of this open defiance. She stood with her hands on the back of the chair and gazed at him, while he sat wreathed in smoke, like some grim geni. He regarded her for a few seconds in bewildered silence. He could scarcely remember when she had disputed his arbitrary will before, except, perhaps, as a slip of a girl. Then he burst out laughing.

"So," he said, "I reckon it won't do to let you go down to town often. You'd get demoralized, I guess, like some of them women that are stumpin' the country makin' tarnation fools of themselves. But mebbe for this once I'll let you have your way. So sit right down and listen."

Mrs. Christie silently did as directed, and her husband proceeded to unfold his views.

Chapter 14. SILAS CHRISTIE'S PLAN

"I reckon," Silas Christie said, "that now Arabella's got the cash she'll want another sort of livin' from what she can get here. And it's in natur' that she'll have her fine city folks comin' down to visit her. Now, I've been thinkin' as I sot here smokin' that the best way to get 'round the matter was to build an addition to this here house."

"Why," cried Mrs. Christie, in astonishment, "the house is a sight too big for us now."

"That's all right. But the house is mine and I intend it'll stay so till I pass in my cheeks. That's why I propose to build a two-story frame addition. It can take in a dinin' room, a kitchen, a parlor, and a half dozen small sleepin' rooms."

"But, look here," objected Mrs. Christie, still doubtful and wondering, "how am I goin' to do all that extry work? I got more'n enough to do now, I can tell you, and so has the help, and Arabella can't do it as things are, if she's got to go to school."

"Wait a moment," said Silas, "don't cry out till you're hurt. Who asked you to do any extra work, or Arabella, either? She kin have all the help she wants. And as for goin' to school, why, I was thinkin' of that, too."

He stopped and smoked a while, after the unwonted effort of these long sentences, and Mrs. Christie still waited, her faculties bewildered.

"You were talking about the Purple Lady down yonder being hired to teach her. Waal, I guess she's goin' to undertake the job. I gave her a lift yesterday, as she was walkin' through the woods."

"Gave her a lift?" echoed Mrs. Christie, wondering much that he should have thus come into communication with that strange, solitary personage who had hitherto held aloof from all the town. Silas Christie nodded, as he answered:

"Yes, and glad enough to get it, too, she was. She's gettin' kinder feeble, I should judge; she'd walked farther than

Arabella

she was able, and found the way home a durned sight too long."

Again the smoke clouds soared up almost to the rafters of the kitchen.

"Besides, I knowed a thing or two about her, though she didn't guess that I did. Her little place yonder is goin' to be sold out by the sheriff a month from to-day, if she don't pay up the rent."

"The Purple Lady's house!" cried Mrs. Christie. "Waal, it's goin' to rack and ruin anyway, it ain't fit for any one to live in."

"That's so," assented Silas, "but she'd got the letter from some of Arabella's folks in New York, askin' her to teach the girl and train her up to be a fine lady. She's mighty pleased to undertake the job, only she began to cry and come right out with the truth about her house, not knowin' as I was on to all that bizness before. So I said, says I, 'You undertake that job and we'll see about the rest.'"

Mrs. Christie's eyes opened wider and wider at every word. Her curiosity was at fever pitch.

"Now," continued Mr. Christie, impressively, "that old woman's house is a good half mile from here, and spooks or no spooks, it's a tumble-down old rookery, where, like as not, Arabella'd get her death of cold. My notion is, mother, that as soon's the addition's built to this house, which will be in a few weeks' time, we'll bring the Purple Lady straightway over here and let her set up housekeepin' with Arabella. Then she kin have all the fine folks she wants down here and run the establishment jest the way them big bugs is used to. Arabella won't have no long walks in the winter days, and everything'll be as snug as a bug in a rug."

Mrs. Christie, heedless of the inelegance of the comparison, was lost in admiration of the wisdom of this arrangement and the happy solution of all the difficulties. Arabella would still be under their roof, but would be perfectly free and independent. "The fine folks could come jest as often as they'd a mind, without her bein' pestered to death in tryin' to have things to their likin'. For, as everybody knew, the Purple Lady was one of their own sort. Of course, it was a bit creepy to have her so near, but it would be a real charity to take her away from that tumble-down old ruin and give her a comfortable home."

So reasoned Mrs. Christie, while but one objection presented itself to her mind, and this she put into words.

"Arabella used to be powerful scared of her."

"Jerusha Jane, she must get over that nonsense," cried Silas. "Why, the old woman's as harmless as a tame kitten, and Arabella, she kin have two hired girls livin' right in them rooms with her. Have you got anything else to say agin the plan?"

"No, I ain't," answered Mrs. Christie. "It's a real, good plan, and I don't see how you ever come to think of it, Silas Christie."

The man chuckled and his wife continued:

"Though I always did know you were mighty smart about lots of things when you set your mind to them."

Silas fairly beamed at the unwonted praise, for their busy lives had left them but little time for the amenities. The truth was, Mrs. Christie fairly fluttered with delight. Her impassive face shone, her eyes were alight, her cheeks glowed, as she nervously clasped and unclasped her hands.

"You look ten years younger, Catherine," said Silas, suddenly, "the jaunt down to town must have done you good."

"Taint that so much," Mrs. Christie responded, her eyes filling with tears, "it's havin' all these frets and worries straightened out. It's real good of you, Silas, to take so much thought about it."

"I'd do more'n that for you, old girl," the man replied. "I'm a rough hoss to travel with, but steady in the traces, and I guess I know how to value what I've got."

He patted her head with rough kindness as he rose up to go at the warning sound of the kitchen clock, rusty somewhat upon its wheels, striking out eleven o'clock. After he had gone the rounds of the house, as was his custom, inspecting bolts and bars, Mrs. Christie sat alone, staring through the open door of the stove at the dying fire, her heart full to overflowing with joy and thankfulness, that everything promised to be so happily arranged, and that Silas had lent himself to the various plans and had even found means to work them out in an effective manner.

Visions of the furnishing of that new wing, of visitors to come, of all the pleasant excitement that had been hitherto crowded out of her life, rushed upon her mind and caused her to linger for some time while the rest of the household was wrapped in dreamless slumber.

Chapter 15. THE PURPLE LADY

Next morning Silas Christie had relapsed into his wonted taciturnity, which was even increased by the calculations he was making about the quantity of lumber that would be required, and the number of men that could be set to work at once on the construction of the new wing. As he was going out the door, he turned back to say to his wife:

"You tell the girl what I said and find out if she cares to go to the expense of having that addition made to the house, and let me know when I come back."

Mrs. Christie had no doubt at all about that part of the matter. She knew that Arabella was to receive from that time forward a settled income, which she was free for the most part to expend as she saw fit. Silas was so far certain that, with characteristic energy, he occupied the interval of his absence in interviewing various mechanics, pricing the necessary materials and arranging, in fact, to have the work of construction rushed.

After the breakfast dishes were washed up and the ordinary household work done, with the assistance, of course, of "the help," a buxom lass from the village, Mrs. Christie summoned Arabella to a conference in the best parlor, whither the domestic was not likely to penetrate. As the elder woman had surmised, Arabella turned pale at the thought, not only that she was to be taught by, but actually to live in the house with the Purple Lady. Fear of the latter personage was deeply ingrained in all the children of the neighborhood. Arabella had often flown, tremblingly, past her house, where it stood isolated, in the dusk of summer evenings or in the wintry moonlight.

"I'm scared of her," she exclaimed, shudderingly, and Mrs. Christie very well knew that reasoning in such a matter was unavailing. Perhaps she was not altogether free herself from the superstition. But she had plenty of strong common sense, and as she knew there was much to be gained by overcoming what was probably an idle fear, she made up her mind to employ the very best means to that end.

"Look here," she decided, "I'll get a horse harnessed up and you and me'll drive right over there. Nothin' is so good for scary things as to get right close to them."

Arabella

Arabella at first shrank back in alarm from this proposal. Still, in most respects, she was naturally fearless, and like many children she had a strong spice of the adventurous in her composition. The very audacity of the project appealed to her. To enter that dwelling which had always haunted her by its fascinating mystery seemed in itself worth doing.

"When we've seen and spoken with her," continued Mrs. Christie, "you kin make up your mind. If she scares you after that, thar's no more to be said. The plan's got to fall to the ground, and I guess you'll have to go away to school for a spell.

Now, this was an alternative which Arabella by no means relished. Boarding-school had always seemed to her inexperienced mind as a place but little removed from a jail. Every other detail of Silas Christie's plan had captivated her. To live at the old homestead and yet to have a place which she could call home, and whither she could invite whom she pleased, seemed to her an ideal settlement of the affair.

As the two drove along, Mrs. Christie, moreover, appealed to the sympathy of Arabella's generous and compassionate heart by detailing all that Mr. Christie had said concerning the Purple Lady's poverty and the danger of her house being sold over her head.

"Oh," cried Arabella, "even if we are too much scared to have her come and live with us, I'll pay for her house, that is, if I have enough money."

"Enough money, child?" echoed Mrs. Christie, "why, you could buy and sell pretty near the whole village if you'd a mind. But you mustn't run away with the idea that you kin pay everybody's debts and keep all the poor in the neighborhood."

The little, old house at which they presently arrived was invested with a peculiar air of privacy. It was surrounded by a little bit of ground fenced in with an iron railing, which lent it that exclusive, not to say mysterious, character which, no doubt, had done much to foster its ill reputation. For in sociable Kenoosha most of the houses were built close to the street, so that everybody could enjoy a gossip with the neighbors.

In the bit of ground the brown and seared grasses were plentifully sown with weeds; shrubs stood neglected and forlorn. The house itself, a wooden structure, almost bereft of paint, displayed a worn and shabby appearance. The door was opened by a little woman bent nearly double from age or illness, and she presently ushered them into a small room where a semblance of comfort and refinement banished the rude spectres of poverty and neglect. There, seated in a high-backed chair by the fire, was that personage of whom Arabella had hitherto caught only dim and shadowy glimpses, but whom she had never before beheld face to face—the Purple Lady herself. She was somewhat above the medium height, of fine, erect carriage, with unusually sloping shoulders, which gave her the appearance of an old portrait. Her hair, plentifully streaked with gray, was somewhat elaborately arranged, though in the fashion of an elder day. Her face had the languor and weariness, with a curious pallor, which might have come from sorrow or ill-health. Yet it was a striking countenance, once seen never to be forgotten. The eyes possessed a rare sweetness in their depths, as if they had looked only upon the beautiful things of life, her mouth was sensitive and gentle, her complexion of a roseleaf softness.

Her costume was of the inevitable hue which had procured for her from the people of Kenoosha her singular cognomen. It was of a deep tint of heliotrope shading into purple. She had never been known to wear any other color. She greeted her visitors with a perfect courtesy, which reminded both of Mrs. Winslow, only her manner far surpassed that other's in the warm kindness, the gentleness, instantaneously felt by all who came into her presence. When she had heard Arabella's name, she took Arabella's roughened, stubby hand in both her own exquisitely soft and delicate ones.

Arabella

"And this is the little girl of whom Clara Winslow wrote," she said, in her soft voice. "Perhaps you know, my dear, that your aunt and I were great friends long ago, when I lived in New York. I also knew your father and others of your relatives."

Arabella continued to gaze at her with wide-open eyes, no longer of terror, but rather of admiration and of sympathy, born of the keen perception of childhood.

"Well, what do you think of me?" asked the Purple Lady, with that smile which, from its very sadness, was unusually winning. "Shall you care to let me teach you?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Arabella, decidedly. "I would like you to teach me better than any one."

The lady smiled again, flushing slightly, as if pleased at the blunt declaration.

"Well," she said, "we shall have to see how it can be arranged. I may be moving away from here "

Her voice trembled as she said those words, and Mrs. Christie interposed:

"If you're thinkin' of moving why I guess that'll make things pan out all right."

The Purple Lady looked inquiringly, and Mrs. Christie proceeded to give, at least, an outline of her husband's plan.

"So," murmured the lady, in a low voice, and as if speaking to herself, "it is ever thus with those who trust in Providence. If one door is shut, another opens wide."

And neither Arabella nor Catherine Christie understood precisely what the lady meant.

However, that visit settled the matter. There was never any doubt after that that the Purple Lady was to be the presiding genius of Arabella's future home, and it was, of course, arranged that she should bring with her her sole attendant, Margaret McCloskey, who had grown old in her service.

When Silas Christie came into dinner that day he was very much gratified to hear where the two had been and with what results. He warmly commended his wife's happy thought, and was much relieved at the information that Arabella had not only lost all fear of the Purple Lady, but had taken a great fancy to that mysterious personage, and was most anxious to be under her tuition.

Therefore, the work of building was hurried on with a degree of haste that had never been seen before in Kenoosha, and the new wing of the Christie household promised to be in a very short time an accomplished fact. Arabella wrote in her childish, unformed hand to Miss Alicia telling her of all that had been undertaken, and reminding her of her promise to pay a long visit to Kenoosha in the following summer. She also wrote to her cousins, a letter addressed to Carrie, but intended for the boys as well, and giving them all a cordial invitation to visit her whenever they chose, once her new quarters were completed. It may be supposed that she did not neglect her chief favorite amongst the new-found relatives, Mr. Frederick's crippled daughter.

Mrs. Winslow, taking Carrie's letter down to the library, where sat Uncle Frederick, regarded the rough paper, the ill-spelt and worse expressed ideas, the unformed, uneducated handwriting, and said to her brother:

"There is so very much to be done before we can make her presentable."

Arabella

"But splendid soil on which to work, golden stores for the digging," added Uncle Frederick. "We may be thankful that, as matters stood, she fell into such safe hands, and that there is nothing perverted, nor mean, nor base about the child. Mark my words, she has the making of a fine woman. And," he added, after a moment's pause, "Millicent Van Brugh must have changed very much, if she cannot smooth rough places and temper the whole with her own fine culture."

Mrs. Winslow cast a hasty glance at her brother as he said those words. For long before Millicent Van Brugh had been unhappily married, and had buried the sorrows of a premature widowhood as the Purple Lady of Kenoosha, and before good Mr. Frederick had married Marion's mamma, it was generally supposed in the Allston's exclusive circle that the two were destined for each other.

"She was the sweetest, the purest, the noblest woman I ever met," Mr. Frederick continued, thinking, as it were, aloud and gazing abstractedly out of the window. "How strange it is that she whom I would have chosen out of the whole world to undertake such a task, should be thus providentially appointed to care for this poor waif, Jack's only child."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Winslow, "there could be, I feel assured, no better arrangement, and Millicent, if any one, can civilize the girl. I used to be very fond of Millicent. I should like to see her again. But as to this plan of Mr. "

She referred to Arabella's letter, which she still held in her hand.

"Mr. Christie," said Mr. Frederick, somewhat curtly, supplying the information.

"Well, I think his plan a very good one, don't you?"

"In so far as I understand it, a capital one."

"It really shows," pursued Mrs. Winslow, "considerable tact and consideration on the part of this man. It will make it so much easier for the cousins to know each other. I am sure, if Millicent Van Brugh is once in charge, I shall have no hesitation whatever in allowing Carrie and the boys to pay her a visit."

"My Marion will give me no peace till I take her down there, whether the plan be carried out or not," declared Mr. Frederick, "but I suppose that can scarcely be before the summer."

"It will be summer before any of them can go," Mrs. Winslow agreed. "I shouldn't wish my children's lessons to be interrupted sooner, and I am sure they will enjoy it better then."

So that Silas Christie's plan met with the unanimous approval of every one of Arabella's grand relations, and it set them all to anticipating a delightful visit, for the young people, at least, as soon as the winter should have worn away, and the warm weather taken its place.

Chapter 16. ARABELLA BECOMES MISTRESS OF A HOUSE

The work of construction proceeded very rapidly under Silas' vigilant superintendence. He never relaxed his efforts, nor permitted others to do so. And magically, almost, it seemed, the new wing was added to the Christie homestead. Day by day, Arabella watched with wondering eyes, and Mrs. Christie, with far more practical ones, the gradual progress of the work. By special arrangement with her landlord, the Purple Lady remained in her former domicile, and Arabella went thither daily to begin her lessons. For she herself was anxious to lose no time. She wanted to learn as much and know as much as her cousins. And having so many hopes, so many pleasant

Arabella

anticipations, she had the more incentive to learn, and her intelligence was kept bright and active.

In the course of a very few weeks the new domicile was roofed over and heated, and it became one of Arabella's great pleasures to be permitted to roam through the empty rooms, to plan all sorts of plans, and to play her solitary plays in and out of the corner cupboards, the linen press, the china cupboard, and the pantry.

A delightful period for her was that of decorating and furnishing the interior. Of course, she was mainly guided by the counsels of her instructress, who conferred with a special agent sent down by a leading firm of decorators in New York. Each room had its idea, and the idea was in the best possible taste. The blue color scheme prevailed here and pink there, yellow in yet another, neutral tints here and warm hues there. The painting was, of course, in harmony with the papering, and the carpets, likewise, matched. The prettiest, the most dainty curtains were secured for the plate-glass windows, a few choice water-colors and engravings were put upon the walls. The furniture was purchased for each room according to its size and the general character of the establishment. Nothing heavy, nothing massive was permissible.

"It looks just as cheerful as Uncle Frederick's house," said Arabella, who had learned at last to distinguish her new relations one from the other, and to call them by their proper names.

"I guess it does!" cried Mrs. Christie. "There ain't anything more cheerful than this."

For she took almost as much pride and pleasure in the arrangements as Arabella herself, and never allowed a thought of envy to creep into her mind, though it was sometimes hard, as she perceived the contrast between this exquisite little abode and her own dingy rooms, carpetless, or with threadbare coverings.

Arabella, however, in conjunction with the Purple Lady, and with Silas' knowledge and consent, planned a surprise for Mrs. Christie, and ordered, with the other carpets from New York, a handsome Brussels stair-carpet, and rugs of the same durable texture, for the "best parlor" dining-room and her own bed-room, with curtains and various other odds and ends, which considerably changed the aspect of the Christie homestead. By some maneuvering on the conspirator's part, Silas took his wife away to a neighboring village for the whole afternoon. While they were gone the improvements were made, Arabella running up and down in glee and superintending everything. When Mrs. Christie returned home, she was so delighted that she sat down and cried with pure joy and gratitude.

One of the things which most interested Arabella was the arrangement of her own kitchen, with its gas stove and coal-range, its rows of shining copper vessels, its dresser, and its complete outfit, even to a spice-box. She took the keenest pleasure in helping to stock the storeroom and pantry with groceries and other supplies. The Purple Lady, who should have been more correctly called Mrs. Wharton, declared that with Arabella's practical training and her own intimate knowledge of the proper conduct of a household, she was going to make the little girl into a model housekeeper.

The vital question of servants was satisfactorily solved by the importation of two nieces of Margaret McCloskey, strong, willing and capable girls, with bright faces and kind hearts, who were intelligent enough to understand that everything they learned of domestic economy was so much gain to themselves.

Altogether, the household promised to be a very happy one, and Mrs. Wharton had seen to it that the element of religion was not excluded. A small, three-cornered room, which Arabella considered one of the prettiest in the house, was fitted up as an oratory, with a beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart, a statue of the Blessed Virgin and a handsome crucifix. There, as Mrs. Wharton arranged, they were to have morning and evening devotions. She also invited the parish priest, Father Dolan, to come over and bless the house.

Arabella

"It is beautiful," she said, "to have a priestly blessing, the blessing of God, on the very threshold of your new life, my dear. It will increase joy and lessen sorrow, and, like the patriarchs of old, you will be living and moving under the shadow of the Most High."

Mrs. Christie was deeply moved by all these things. The tears came into her eyes as she stood in the oratory. It reminded her of school days at the Sisters' Academy in New York, where she had been as a little girl.

"My, ain't it beautiful!" she exclaimed, as she stood in the oratory, and it flashed into her mind that she and Arabella had both missed much in all these years, by being deprived, as it were, of the vital warmth which alone can bring true comfort and happiness into any home. The blessing of the house was quite a function. Even Silas and some of his Methodist relations were present, and declared that it was quite a pretty ceremony, and that there was nothing against Scripture, either.

At last came the great day of moving in. A furniture van, under Silas' direction, went over to the Purple Lady's now dismantled home, to convey her belongings to the new quarters. They served to give a touch of distinction to the little household, which the newness of its appointments might otherwise have lacked. Some old china, some superfine glass, a few pictures and dainty ornaments, several quaint chairs and sofas, were such as could not be bought for love or money.

And quietly, after all, the two, with Margaret McCloskey and her nieces, took possession of the new abode. Arabella, for the first time, as mistress of her own house, sat down at the little round table in the dining-room, which, in its air of home-like comfort, reminded her of Miss Alicia's house; in its dainty appointments, of the Winslow's stately dining-room; in its perfect cheerfulness, of Uncle Frederick's apartments.

Mr. and Mrs. Christie came to high tea with them on the following day, which was a delightful occasion to Arabella, though she felt a little shy of playing hostess. Mrs. Wharton, however, assured her that she must get accustomed to that role, since she expected to entertain so many visitors during the summer.

So Arabella entered upon her new life, under the wise guardianship of the Purple Lady, who, by her influence, example, and constant watchfulness, was to effect such a change in the little girl's manners, appearance and views of life. That personage herself, so long mysterious, still wore her picturesque, if somewhat old-fashioned, gowns, in various shades of a pansy, so that she often reminded those who looked at her of that flower. She had a wonderful power of adaptability to her surroundings, and as the neighbors gradually lost their awe of her, she became a mighty influence for good in that neighborhood. Arabella became, through her influence, a pious and charitable little girl, Mrs. Christie, a practical Catholic. The prejudices of Silas and of his "folks" disappeared wonderfully when they saw a fine lady like her, who had so long lived amongst them, as an "angel unawares," attending the Catholic church, which improved health now permitted her to do, together with Arabella, and, as was afterwards seen, her grand relations. A whole volume might be written, and yet leave much unsaid, as to the new dwelling and its occupants. But it will be only possible within the limits of the present story to chronicle the arrival of the long-anticipated guests, and a few of those events which marked the limits of their visit.

Chapter 17. THE GRAND RELATIONS COME TO KENOOSHA

On a beautiful day in June, Arabella stood once more where she had stood that other day, with wild flowers, the children of the soil, upspringing once more at her feet. she looked at the blue arch of heaven and the sunlight meadows all around, and thought she must surely have been dreaming. She was clad no longer in a coarse, brown frock and stubby shoes, but in a neat and very pretty print, her hair, shining and glossy, tied by a ribbon, her shoes fitting her feet perfectly, her hands much softened, her cheeks glowing, indeed, but her whole countenance refined and improved by her spiritual and mental development, and the growth of her knowledge.

Arabella

She was as impatient as any little girl could be, and thought she would never hear the whistle of the noon train by which Alicia was, first of all, to arrive. She had demurred very much about coming at the same time as the "grand relations." But Arabella, with that sturdy force of character, which developed every day, insisted. Alicia had finally compromised by declaring that she would come to Kenoosha and stay with the Christies in their part of the homestead, while being able to give as much time as seemed advisable to Arabella.

Silas had driven over to get her himself, in the buggy, and the train was presently heard in the distance, and soon after the sound of wheels. The little girl forgot all those manners in which she was being drilled every day, but which left great scope for freedom and naturalness, and ran far down the road to meet the carriage, only having to run back again, to be at the foot of the steps when Alicia should alight. Laughing and crying together, the two flew into each other's arms, whence Mrs. Christie extricated her sister to give her a cordial embrace, while the Purple Lady came forward with gracious cordiality to do her share in the greeting.

Though the others were not to arrive till the afternoon train, Arabella no longer found the time of waiting tedious. She had to show Alicia all over her house. Not even a corner was omitted, the visitor wanting to see everything. As Arabella said, she was the most delightful person to show things to, for she was interested in the smallest detail, and asked a thousand questions, and was loud in her admiration of the whole. She and the Purple Lady were friends from the first, since there was a real affinity between them, despite the difference in their position and upbringing.

In the afternoon, Silas, who had hired a 'bus from a neighbor to accommodate all the expected guests, invited Arabella to accompany him to the station, which she did, nothing loath. When, therefore, Mrs. Winslow looked out from the car window, as the train came steaming in, she remarked at once to her brothers that she would never have known Arabella. The girl, strong and large of frame, to be sure, and with a healthy color in her cheeks, was neat and carefully dressed, and smart and trim in appearance. Upon this transformation George likewise remarked as soon as he descended from the car.

"I say, Arabella," he cried. "You look exactly like one of those city girls we see on Fifth Avenue, only your face is redder."

"George!" exclaimed Mrs. Winslow, severely, and the boy was instantly reduced to silence. Arabella was, nevertheless, elated by the remark, and felt much more confidence in shaking hands with her uncles, Frederick and Robert, the latter of whom, it must be owned, she was very much surprised to see, standing upon the platform. He held Arabella's hand in his, and seemed so unaffectedly kind and so glad to see his niece again, that from that moment the latter liked him almost as well as his brother. Shaking hands cordially with Reginald, the young hostess inquired, anxiously, where were the others, Carrie and Marion.

"Oh, they are here," cried Uncle Frederick, who was waiting at the steps of the train to take his daughter from the negro mammy. "We have left no one behind."

Marion's face looked wan and tired after the journey, but she clapped her hands at sight of Arabella.

"Oh, Carrie! there she is," she cried joyfully, and as Arabella rushed over to kiss her and bid her welcome, she added: "I am so glad to get here at last and to see you again, Cousin."

After that, every body was introduced to Mr. Silas Christie, and bundled into the 'bus, which began to drive away very slowly on account of Marion. For Silas was already much interested in her, and as gentle and sympathetic in settling her comfortably in the vehicle as any woman could have been. The villagers all came forth to their doors to stare at Arabella's "grand relations," and the dogs barked as though they were giving a welcome of their own.

Arabella

The children of the party, inhaling the pleasant country scents, the sweet clover and the blossoming trees, loudly expressed their delight, whilst their elders in more subdued fashion commented on the freshness and balminess of the country air.

At the homestead, Mrs. Christie and the Purple Lady Alicia retiring to the background stood side by side to receive the visitors, forming as complete a contrast to each other as could be imagined, but on the most friendly and cordial of terms.

As the 'bus drove up to the door, Mrs. Winslow said, in an undertone to her brother, who sat nearest, "Why, Frederick, Millicent is as beautiful as ever."

"You should rather say, 'more beautiful than ever,'" declared Mr. Frederick, who had been keenly observing the two upon the steps. His mind was busy with the past in that brief interval until he found himself shaking hands; courteously but quite conventionally, with the former Millicent Van Brugh, and calling her Mrs. Wharton.

"You have heard the nickname for me in Kenoosha," said the person so addressed, with a smile, "and it is so very convenient."

"Am I to call you the Purple Lady, then?" he said, quietly. "Shall I move a general resolve that we all adopt that name?"

"I don't think I can ever remember anything but Millicent," exclaimed Mrs. Winslow, with unwonted warmth.

Mrs. Wharton pressed her hand.

"Old friend," she answered, "it matters very little what you and I call each other, for we have the past to bind us together."

"That sounds very much like leaving us two out in the cold," said Mr. Frederick to Mr. Robert.

"Which has been done before," added Mr. Robert, and the remark may possibly have suggested to some amongst the little party assembled at the moment on the homestead steps, that whatever had been the case with Mr. Frederick, Mr. Robert had, for this woman's sake, preferred single blessedness.

Mrs. Christie's impassive face and undemonstrative demeanor relaxed as much as possible in the heartiness of her welcome. Presently, however, the whole party were hurried in doors, and through a passage which led from the main entrance hall straight into Arabella's delightful and almost fairy-like home.

Chapter 18. A HOUSEFUL OF GUESTS

Arabella made a charming hostess, with the Purple Lady in the background to keep her, as it were, up to the mark, and offer timely suggestions. There was, moreover, about the girl a sturdy character, inherited, probably, from dead and gone generations, which enabled her to rise to the occasion and acquit herself creditably of her duties as entertainer. Everything possible for the comfort and pleasure of the house-party was thought out and planned between these two, and therein they were ably seconded by Mrs. Christie and Aunt Alicia. Both of these latter were brought, in spite of themselves, very much to the front, by the desire of Arabella and the easy good breeding of the guests. Gentle little Alicia became a prime favorite with every one, while the sterling qualities of her sister were fully appreciated.

Silas Christie, aroused out of his taciturnity, especially when in company with Mr. Robert, Mr. Frederick and the

Arabella

boys, was a host in himself. He guided the masculine portion of the party to the best places for fishing and boating. He drove them to the most inaccessible places, and introduced them to half the country side. He had not the slightest awe of any of the fine folk, not even Mrs. Winslow herself, and his blunt simplicity of manner atoned in their eyes for his want of polish.

During the week which Mr. Frederick, Mr. Robert and their sister remained at Kenoosha, it is quite possible that one or both brothers would have been glad to renew their former relations with Millicent Van Brugh, but the latter, who understood the art of gracefully effacing herself, made them understand in her gentlest and most gracious fashion, that the belle of long ago no longer existed.

"My life is enveloped in the shadows," she said, half jesting, "the purple shadows which come at evening, and which can never take on the glory of morning. So you see that I have been well named."

In this fanciful manner she defined her attitude, and once she said to Mrs. Winslow, as she caught a wistful look upon her face:

"It is very peaceful, Clara. You must not pity me."

The children, of course, knew nothing of this little by-play, nor that one or two of their elders went away with real regret in their hearts. All the younger members of the party were left behind, the negro mammy charging herself with a general superintendence of those who needed her care.

Such a period of pure enjoyment as began after that it would be difficult to chronicle in cold black and white. For, after all, it is difficult to set down those delightful outings in the country, the wanderings through woods and cool, shaded roads, the drives on hay carts, the fishing, the bathing, the wading in cool streams, the rowing, or the sailing, or the driving. The boys in particular were devoted to out-door sports, George being on intimate terms with half the boys in the village, and rejoicing in the freedom he enjoyed of "getting to know other fellows," even if they wore shabby clothing, and in some instances had no shoes at all upon their feet. He liked going out with Mr. Christie in all sorts of vehicles and helping him at any work picking up quaint expressions from him and quite winning the old man's heart. One day George said confidentially to Arabella:

"I wish mother would let me come down here to live. I'd like to be a farmer or something like that. It's tiresome being rich and living in a brown stone house."

"Still, it's nice to have money," said Arabella, from the height of her experience. "I've tried both, and I know."

"Oh, It's all right for you, because you've got a house, or, at all events, a wing of your own, and, anyhow, you're a girl. Every boy ought to be poor."

"You might give away all your wealth," suggested Marion, who sat near, supported by cushions.

"I can't give it away," grumbled George, "because I haven't got it, but it's there, and I have to be a rich boy whether I like it or not. Now Carrie likes to be rich. she always wants good clothes and things."

"Carrie has got some sense," cried Reginald, taking up the cudgels for his little sister, who, quite undisturbed by the accusation, sat complacently dressing a doll.

"Not so much as Arabella," retorted George, "because she was poor once."

"Oh, shut up with your theories," exclaimed Reginald, " Arabella will think you crazy."

Arabella

"No, she won't," cried George, waxing somewhat fierce.

"You ought to be satisfied, George," Marion put in, gravely. "What would you do if you were like me, and what would I do if I were poor? Everybody ought to be satisfied."

"So they ought, honey," agreed the negro mammy, "and the good Lord He gibs everybody what's best for them to hab. Sure enough, honey."

George, finding public opinion thus against him, was reduced to silence, but drummed discontentedly on the window, and resolved in his mind various socialistic theories, only the usual order was reversed, and he did not want to possess himself of somebody else's wealth, but to get rid of his own. Arabella, seeing him thus disconsolate, followed him over to the window and addressed him with her usual common sense:

"There's no use bothering about it now," she said. "When you're a man you can give away your money, if you want to, and be a farmer or anything you like."

A further diversion was made by Silas putting his head into the room to announce that he had hired a yacht to take them all, including Marion and the mammy, and even Aunt Alicia, for a sail. It was after their return that evening that a story-telling party was suggested, and they all, with the exception of Silas, who had gone to play cards with a neighbor, and Mrs. Christie, who was busy in her own quarters, assembled in Arabella's parlor. The negro mammy, by special request, led off with a blood-curdling tale of her far-off Southland, "in dem cruel slav'ry days," which she told with her soft, Southern accent, and with unconscious dramatic power. She brought vividly before her listeners' minds the hut in the brushwood, where lived a hunted fugitive, and the supposed ghost, which haunted the fever swamp, but which turned out to be a "poor colored man, as had lost all de wits de good Lord gibbed him." The listeners could almost see the waving of palms, the clumps of dark foliage, enlivened by fireflies, and the hissing of reptiles in the slimy marshes. When the story was almost at its most terrifying climax, steps were heard approaching through the passage, and everybody jumped. It proved to be nothing more formidable, however, than Mrs. Christie herself, with a large dish of hot popcorn, which she had just manufactured.

"Aunt" Alicia was next called upon for a story, and told a very pretty one, but not at all frightful, since neither she nor the Purple Lady were in favor of over-exciting the imaginations of children, and especially delicate ones like Marion. Her story was a true one, of a little flower-girl who sold her wares every day on Twenty-third St., and who saved every penny to support an aged and bed-ridden grandmother. At last, one day, the child herself was rendered, for the time being, helpless. She was run down by an automobile, and had to be taken to a hospital. The driver of the motor proved to be a man of heart. He learned the history of the little flower-girl, interested himself in her welfare, as she gradually recovered, and undertook to provide, thenceforward, for both herself and her grandmother. The little girls, in particular, were charmed with this story, and declared that they should like to follow that gentle employment, which Alicia so graphically described, and tie up roses and violets and tuberoses and lilies of the valley, heliotrope, mignonette and carnations into bunches, and sell them to all comers.

The final story was told by the Purple Lady, who sat in the centre of the ring, her fine face full of thought and expression as she made haste to comply with the request of Arabella and the eager circle of listeners. She was very fond of telling quaint legends of little stories from the lives of the Saints for the instruction and edification of her pupil and these others who were temporarily in her care. And on this occasion she told, with much grace and beauty of diction, a tale of a gentle lad, a scholar in an ancient English monastery who, during his whole life, had had a great devotion to the Queen of Heaven. He lay upon a bed of mortal illness, and being rapt in ecstasy, beheld upon a throne of glory the Blessed Virgin herself, surrounded by a resplendent company of saints and angels. The Heavenly Lady inquired whether the youth would prefer to remain longer upon earth or to enter at once into that happy society. And he, seeing no sadness on the faces of those blessed people, begged that he might join them without delay. Then returning to consciousness, he told the Lord Abbot, and, as it were, obtaining his

permission, mounted upwards to join that blissful company.

Now, this story very well prepared every one for the evening devotions in the oratory. They, in their turn, were concluded by the singing of a hymn to the Blessed Virgin. This was so lustily rendered by all those young singers, that the praises of the Queen were sent far away through that atmosphere, which had never before vibrated to such supplications as:

"Show Thyself a Mother, Offer Him our sighs Who for us incarnate Did not Thee despise."

Chapter 19. CONCLUSION

It would be pleasant to continue this story of Arabella indefinitely, and to show how she improved and developed, learning the right use of money and its almost unlimited power for good, showing herself a devout and exemplary member of that little church in the neighboring parish, which she had so long attended and acting as its bountiful benefactress, until such time as, through her help and exertions, Kenoosha could boast a sanctuary of its own. All this and much more might be told. How she cheered and brightened the cold and comfortless life at the homestead, and gave its two occupants a new interest in everything; how she visited Alicia, the Winslows, and Uncle Frederick, in turn, and how they and the children, Carrie and Marion, Reginald and George, came back many times to Kenoosha, and always regarded their sojourn there as amongst the pleasantest of their experiences.

But as it is not possible within the limits of a single story to penetrate thus into the future, it is better merely to relate one or two incidents which marked the close of that first holiday time, when the children from town came to make the acquaintance of their newly found cousin. It may be remembered that Carrie had brought her pony and pony-carriage from town, and in this vehicle the children in turn took the most delightful drives. The pony was regarded as perfectly safe, no one ever apprehending that he would one day kick up his heels and run away. Yet this was what actually happened, and in the following manner. The two boys, George and Reginald, had gone fishing with Silas, and Arabella had walked over to the village, a distance of about half a mile, to ask for letters at the Post Office. Meantime Carrie had arranged to take Marion for a little drive and she had been carefully packed into the seat by the Mammy. It was a radiantly beautiful morning, such as only June can show, and which in its last lingering days it seems to intensify. The abundant foliage waved softly in a light breeze. The lanes and the roadside were overflowing with luxuriant bloom, the sky was nearly cloudless. The two little girls went along for some time in complete enjoyment and as they supposed, in perfect security. Neither of them could tell precisely what happened, possibly the broken branch of an overhanging tree, making weird shadows on the sward and striking the animal as he passed. Whatever was the cause, the effect was as certain as it was sudden. The pony stretched his limbs and fairly flew, getting completely beyond Carrie's control and dashing frantically, they knew not whither, on, on, with the chance of another vehicle colliding with theirs, or of being dashed over the high cliff downwards into the lake. Happily for the children, there was something in their training which had taught them self control, for they sat rigid and immovable with white, set faces and a prayer arising to their lips.

Meantime Arabella, having called at the Post Office, was returning homeward, lingering by the roadside to pick a flower here and there, and feeling the full enjoyment of the exquisite weather. Suddenly she heard the sound of wheels, and presently of flying hoofs. She stood still and listened, her ear was trained, and she knew that country folks did not usually drive at so reckless a pace. She moved to the side of the road and waited. Then she saw, in one swift glance, the familiar pony, flying as no one dreamed he could have flown, his mane in disorder, his eyes wild with fright. She saw likewise, the white, agonized faces of the children, and knowing that one of them was Marion, realized what it meant. The danger was imminent for them, it would be more so for her, if she did the only possible thing, and tried to stop the animal in its headlong career. She remembered a lesson, which the Purple Lady had been reading only lately:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his brother."

Arabella

The words flashed into her mind as she steadied herself and sprang forward, to save her two cousins and particularly that helpless one, for the sake of Christ. She planted herself firmly in the road and snatched at the bridle. The pony reared, plunged, struggled and darted forward again, dragging her with him. But she would not lose her hold, though her hands and knees were torn and bleeding and her strength seemed wholly unavailing. Nevertheless, the speed of the beast was checked, this weight clinging upon him and the pulling of the bridle, he began to slacken his pace, and finally stood still, trembling violently and covered with sweat, not half a dozen paces from the edge of the cliff.

It seemed almost miraculous that Arabella escaped with severe cuts and bruises, indeed, but without any serious injury. There were moments when the two in the phaeton believed that she would be killed before their eyes, and the doctor, who was called in, could scarcely believe that no bones were broken, and that, so far as he could discover, there was no internal injury. The feelings of the negro Mammy, of Mrs. Christie and of Mrs. Wharton, may be better imagined than described. Grave fears were likewise entertained that Marion in particular might suffer from nervous shock. But no such thing occurred. Her health, which had very much mended during her stay in the country, remained quite unimpaired, as did that of little Carrie. Mrs. Wharton was able, in fact, to write quite a satisfactory report of the affair both to Mrs. Winslow and Uncle Frederick. The latter was so relieved and so grateful to Arabella that he sent down on the very next day the most beautiful little diamond incrustated watch, within which was inscribed:

"To a heroine, with a father's grateful thanks."

And a heroine Arabella was, not only in the household, but to the whole village, so that there would have been great danger of her getting spoiled only for her strong common sense. She was up and around in a few days again. At first she had to remain in the house and amuse herself in various plays with Marion and Carrie. They played with dolls, and they played house and grocery-store, and a number of those other games wherein children of the gentler sex particularly delight. They also heard many a story from the Mammy, who could not do enough for Arabella to show her gratitude. And certainly both Mrs. Christie, Mrs. Wharton and Alicia testified, by every means in their power, their affection for the little girl and their deep thankfulness and rejoicing that she had been spared to them. Marion and Carrie were forevermore devoted to their cousin, and a nice, long letter came from Mrs. Winslow, which only a mother could write, and which few would have expected from that quarter. She thanked Arabella in the most moving terms for the services rendered to her darling Carrie, and prayed heaven to bless her with its choicest favors. Those were very pleasant, happy days, never to be forgotten, whatsoever the changes or vicissitudes of after life. And from that time Arabella's position in the entire family was established on that most secure of basis—love and admiration.

She progressed so favorably that she was able to be present at the grand celebration which marked the last day of her guests' visit to Kenoosha. After that they were all going away again, and things were to resume much of their former course at the homestead. This celebration took the form of a picnic to a lovely spot, a forest nook, in the glen overlooking the lake.

Mrs. Christie, Margaret McCloskey and the two maids had been busy for days previous in preparing the contents of the huge hampers, which were put into the 'bus driven by Silas himself. This vehicle accommodated the whole party, the domestics included. It was another glorious day, though June had given place to July, and it was quite warm enough to make the fresh, cool shelter of the woods and the breezes from the water delightful. Under the umbrageous shadows of oaks, hemlocks, birches and other forest monarchs the party gathered. With scents of pine, fir, sassafras and the countless odors of the woodlands regaling their nostrils.

In the various sports which were indulged in, Reginald, yielding himself to the joy of the moment, was quite as active as George. Silas forgot his taciturnity, and chuckled with positive delight. Mrs. Christie and Alicia entered entirely into the spirit of the occasion, and the Purple Lady, by her quiet, tactful suggestions and infinite resource, was a host in herself.

Arabella

Marion sat with the mammy under a great oak, her wan cheeks glowing with health, her eyes bright, while Carrie and Arabella brought her as much as possible into all their games, and offered her acorns and flowers and sassafras root and all the forest treasures.

The boys, under Silas' direction, and taking all necessary precautions, built a fire, where water was boiled and coffee made by more skillful hands than theirs. Potatoes and peanuts were roasted in the embers, morsels of cold meat spitted on forks and browned, while presently the contents of the hamper were unpacked. All the children except, of course, Marion, helped in this important ceremony. Tablecloths were spread on green knolls, one for the elders, the other for the young folk, with huge bunches of wild flowers in the centre. Japanese napkins and wooden plates were arranged, and the good things displayed in delightful profusion. Cold chickens and freshly boiled ham, jellied tongue and a pigeon pie, with cake and ice cream and jelly, and home-made candy, supplemented by a large box sent down from town by Uncle Robert, who, it may be mentioned, had kept Arabella well supplied during her late illness.

Healts were drunk in ginger ale and lemonade; the Purple Lady's health and Mrs. Christie's, Mr. Christie's and Aunt Alicia's, Mrs. Winslow's, Mr. Frederick's and Mr. Robert's; everybody's health, in short. But the most impressive moment was when Reginald arose to propose Arabella's health, which George supplemented by springing to his feet and suggesting an addition:

"Three cheers for Arabella! May she live long and prosper."

This latter sentiment was, of course, a quotation which he had learned, but it fitted the occasion and was promptly adopted by his hearers.

"Three cheers for Arabella!" echoed all the children, and the deep voice of Silas, "Hip, hip, Hurrah! may she live long and prosper!" and with that sentiment, which the woodlands reechoed and carried far over the lake, and which was repeated next day at the station, just before the train bore the guests away, this narrative may as well come to a close. The words seemed to ring in Arabella's ears, as she remained with tear-dimmed eyes upon the platform and watched the slowly disappearing train, and they followed her homeward, and haunted her, when she stood gazing once more at the homestead, with its cheerful, new wing, at the familiar surroundings, at the sky, now brilliant in the sunset, and thought of all that had come and gone. While she stood thinking the deep thoughts of childhood, the words seemed almost as a prophecy and a prayer, uttered in all sincerity by those childish voices and from the depths of unspoiled hearts.

"May you live long and prosper, Arabella. May you live long and prosper."