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A Child in the Nineties

By Edith Horton



1971

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Places

There were a great many places in the world. Some of them you did not like at all and some of them you wished that you might stay in always.

There was kindergarten. It was in an upstairs room of the Library Building, and Miss Jones was the teacher. She had brown eyes behind gold-bowed spectacles, and a fringe of gray curls across her forehead. Every morning when you went there you sang, "Good morning, Merry Sunshine." That was all right. If you could have gone on singing it would have been all right. But you couldn't. You had to sit at a table and sew around the outline of a maple leaf or an oak leaf on white card-board, and what was the use in that when there were beautiful leaves growing on trees, and you could pick up all that you wanted from those that had fallen on the ground?

In kindergarten each child furnished his own chair, and the most spoiled little boy had a beautiful wicker one with gay ribbons woven in and out of the holes. Yours was of plain wood and hard to sit upon.

On special days if you could do anything you had to do it. The most spoiled little boy could play the violin, and so he did, and the next most spoiled little boy could sing and so he did.

Once Miss Jones announced, "Mrs. Bard will play the piano for her son, David, to sing," and Jimmy Kerr shouted, "Come on, son David."

You couldn't do anything and so you didn't.

Then there were Church and Sunday School. They didn't

seem to be much fun either. In Church you had to sit very still, and no matter what happened you couldn't laugh or say a word. You could look wonderingly at the pictures in the windows, and listen to music that sometimes was pleasant, and that was all.

Sunday School was even worse, for you had to learn of the strangest people, who had lived you didn't know when, and who, so far as you could see, had no connection at all with your self-sufficient, well-ordered little life.

But there was a lawn you knew! It was triangular in shape. One side was bordered by the house and the other by a seldom-used road that was scarcely more than a lane. And the base of the triangle was a garden of vegetables and flowers.

At the foot of the steps leading down from the dining-room porch were identical pear trees with a hammock between them. You could lie there on warm summer afternoons and watch the shadows growing longer, while your Grandfather moved back and forth with the lawn-mower, and the scent of freshly-cut grass filled the air. Now and then you touched the tip of your toe to the ground, and the hammock swung back and forth, and you closed your eyes happily.

Besides the sitting-room windows there were weigelia bushes with fragrant pink blossoms. On the corner there was a tall pine tree, a lone reminder, perhaps, of the time when the lawn had been a forest, and beside it there was a post bearing a glass-enclosed kerosene lamp, which your Grandmother filled every morning and your Grandfather lighted every evening, to guide those who walked up and down. Only when there was a moon it was not lighted.

In the center of the lawn was a beautifully shaped cut-leaf birch tree, whose delicate silver leaves quivered in every little wind. You could peel off its thin white bark, and it made your fingers feel different.

There were pink and white roses on trellises, and a grape-arbor which sheltered a red pump. In one place a spring had

been filled in with stones, and cat-tails and tiger-lilies grew there. But most wonderful of all was an old, old apple tree which had tipped until you could walk right up it and curl comfortably in a hollow with your doll and your kitten.

Back of the fruit trees and the scarlet-berried currant bushes was a croquet-ground. It was fun to play croquet because you could almost always win unless someone cheated. If someone did, you told him about it, and then everyone quarreled and threw down his mallet, and that was the end of that.

At night, just before sunset, your Grandfather brought out the hose and let you water the closely-clipped lawn and the dusty road. The mud oozed up between your bare toes and the water dripped down your dress. . . .

There were a great many places in the world, but this was the loveliest.

Dancing School

Dancing school was on Saturday. Your Mother brushed your hair more carefully than usual and tied it with a fresh pink bow. Then the gray cashmere dress was slipped over your head. You particularly loathed the gray cashmere dress. It had been handed down to you from a cousin. In the first place you hated its lack of color, and in the second place it hung straight from the shoulders when every other little girl was wearing a belt. Your slippers were put in a black sateen bag. On the corner you met Jimmy and Jane. Together you went poking up State Street, looking in the windows, the slipper-bag bumping against your legs. On Tioga Street you turned, and in a few moments began to climb the three long flights of stairs. You knew you were late, for the sound of music came floating down to you as you climbed sturdily. It grew louder, until on the fourth floor it assailed your ears crashingly.

In the dressing-room you took off your hat and coat, and sat down to put on your slippers. Through the door-way you could see little boys and girls dancing over the vast sea of polished floor. Professor Leo, an old man with gray curls, was pirouetting from one to another, carefully watching the steps of each child.

In the corner on a platform sat Miss Rose Leo at the piano. The light came glaringly through long windows at the back. A little group of mothers sat near the door.

Then a whistle blew and the children formed a line along one side of the room. Professor Leo stood in front of them. The

music of a waltz slipped through the cool dusty air of the room from Miss Rose Leo's fingers.

"Vun, two, tree; vun, two, tree," said Professor Leo moving forward, "Vun, two, togeder," he urged us earnestly.

(You were sure that Helen wore a silk petticoat. It rustled.)

"Vun, two, tree."

The whistle blew again and the line broke into groups. You saw the little boy with whom you most hated to dance coming toward you, and you almost ran into the dressing-room. He danced so stolidly, so woodenly. He didn't feel the music pulsing through him as you did. He led you solemnly straight around the room, turning conscientiously at each of the four corners. When the music stopped you fled from him. Other little boys asked you to dance and you were glad. Some little girls weren't asked. They sat looking stonily ahead pretending that they didn't care, until Professor Leo led up a little boy. The little boy bowed from the waist and asked if he might have that dance. Sometimes it was a waltz, sometimes it was a two-step, and always once during the lesson there were lancers, through whose maze-like figures you moved wonderingly.

And then, in no time at all, Miss Rose Leo was playing a grand march, and Professor Leo was standing by the door, shaking hands with each little boy, bowing to each little girl, who curtsied in reply.

Dancing school was over. For another week the gray cashmere dress and black sateen slipper-bag could be hung away and forgotten.

The Band

Sometimes the Band marched up and down the pleasantly shaded streets, and when you heard them in the distance you ran eagerly to the corner to watch them pass. Mr. Patsy Conway, tall and with the distinguished bearing of a general, walked in front waving his baton lightly, and just behind him was Mr. John Fisher, a shining silver horn wrapped around and around his portly figure.

Sometimes they played in the circular band-stand which stood in the center of DeWitt Park. There you drifted with your Father and Mother on fragrant summer nights, walking about under the great trees which seemed to touch the stars. It was a friendly neighborly crowd. Young men and young women walked hand in hand, and to a child that was a curious thing. Music flooded the warm air, now softly gentle, now loudly triumphant, drowning out the murmurs of those who walked slowly across the grass, or up and down the paths.

But best of all were the times when the Band gave a Concert at Renwick. You knew about it before-hand. A picnic basket was packed with potato salad and hard-boiled eggs, and cold-tea which always became luke-warm, in a quart can. With your family you walked up to Tioga Street and stood waiting importantly for the street-car. Once aboard you went bumping along happily, past the houses, past Percy Field, the smell of the lake growing stronger, around the curve, and there it was, Renwick!

You climbed down and ran to find the best table for the

picnic. There you put the basket and unpacked it. There were the bears to feed, and deer, slender and startled, and a chattering monkey who was always eating peanuts.

After you had eaten twilight fell, the sunset turning the lake to rose, then came night, the sound of lapping water, and the twinkling of many lights. The Band climbed into the round stand, Mr. Conway raised his baton, and unforgettable music floated out across the darkness. Row-boats and canoes glided in and out of the shadows near the shore. Mosquitoes sang about your ankles. Fans moved back and forth. You ate buttered popcorn and leaned sleepily against your Father. . . .

Buying a Bicycle

Suddenly bicycles descended upon the world. The fat boy who lived in the large stone house down the street had one. He let you sit upon it while he pushed you up and down the shady curving drive. Then the prettiest girl on the block appeared on one, a red one. She did everything better than anyone else, and so, scorning the seat, she rode nonchalantly on one peddle, her curly brown hair floating out behind, her face eager and happy. Then everyone had one.

You wanted a bicycle passionately. A cinder path was built beside the woods where violets grew in the spring, and it led to Renwick and the lake. Those fortunate ones who had bicycles could ride down to Renwick. It was a joy too great to be missed without a struggle.

You asked your Father if you might have a bicycle, but of course you couldn't, for they cost twenty-five dollars. There was a bicycle shop on Cayuga Street. Its owner had one glass eye which always looked straight ahead, and he was deaf, so that when you wanted to speak with him, he unwound a tube from about his neck and let you talk through one end while he put the other in his ear. You hung about the place gloating over the beautiful shining things, but never daring to approach the man with whom you would have to communicate in so strange a fashion.

One day you went down to the willow shaded Avenue with the fat boy and the prettiest girl. You mounted the red bicycle and they ran beside you while you went unsteadily down the

road. You did it again and again, until, you didn't know when, they let go, and you were riding alone. You were riding a bicycle.

After that you began to haunt the bicycle shop again. Every one said that the Columbia was the best, but you knew that you could never have that expensive kind. You would be content with a very cheap one indeed. Then one day you summoned all your courage and stepped up to the proprietor. He unwound his tube and you were asking, did he have a bicycle for sale which didn't cost very much? He nodded, went into the inner room, and came back wheeling one. It was not new, it was small, and it did not shine, but it was red, and it was cheap.

You ran home. Could you possibly wait until your Father came to tell him about it? You swung on the gate and looked up the street. At last he came and you told him. You talked about it all during supper, and when the dishes were done the whole family walked up to see it. There it was. Didn't they think it was lovely?

And then, miraculously, you too had a bicycle. Your Father paid for it and you wheeled it home. Now you would be one of that procession which filled the streets, that procession of bicycles and tandems, into which a frightened horse now and then intruded. You too would feel the cool wind blowing across the marshes as you rode down to the lake, or the hot sun beating down upon your bare head as you pedaled doggedly through the dust of the Five Mile Drive. You too would go flying down over the cobblestones of State Street hill, your heart beating fearfully, your braid with its loosened hair-ribbon flying out behind. Life was good. You had a bicycle.

Covered Bridge

The covered bridge was dark and it trembled when a horse and wagon went over it. Boards had been laid on top of boards when a place needed mending. There were small diamond-shaped openings too high for a child to reach unless you climbed up. If you did, you could look down upon brown water flowing over flat stones and low willow-trees which grew along the bank and hung over the water, making dark shadows. Farther down the creek, a dam had been built. Beside it there was an old mill. The dam made a little pond. If you had a boat, you might row there. The bridge smelled of dust and manure and decaying timber. Almost any place was pleasanter.

Money

Once in a long time someone gave you five cents and you pondered what you should do with it. There were all-day-suckers. You might reach up over John Francis' high counter and give him the money, and he would give you five all-day-suckers. But then, if you didn't want your brother to call you, "Pig," you would have to divide with him. . . .

There were ice-cream sodas and five cents would buy one. You could go up to Mr. Haskin's drug-store and sit upon a high stool and suck the entrancing bubbling liquid through a straw, but in just a moment it would be gone. . . .

You couldn't go to Renwick because although five cents would take you down it wouldn't bring you back, and some time you would have to come home. But it would take you around the loop, and you could see a great deal of the world when you went around the loop. . . .

Then you might buy a note-book at Mr. Osborn's store, and write a fairy tale in it, only you couldn't think of a fairy tale. . . .

And there was your bank. It was a little house made of iron, and you put your money through the chimney. Once it was in, you couldn't get it back again unless you shook and shook, and then you might not. If you ever should save five dollars you would take it to the big red stone bank uptown, but you never did. . . .

You pondered. It was very difficult to decide what to do with money.

Growing Up

One autumn you found yourself in the Seneca Street Annex of the old High School building, and life was very pleasant. Your teacher was—well, not really pretty—but prettier than any that you had ever had, only every day she wore a blue skirt and a yellow and red striped shirt-waist and you wished that once in a while she would wear something else.

And then, during the middle of the term, when you knew each little child very well, and all their clothes and what they knew, Margaret came.

She was a plump little girl with brown shining hair and gray eyes and pink cheeks, and she came from very far away. Before she came your teacher had thought that you were pretty bright, but when Margaret came she was the brightest child and you didn't care, for you knew at once and Margaret knew that you belonged to each other.

Each noon you walked with your arms about each other's waists around and around the square of grass on the corner. The big girls from the High School walked there too. They had put up their hair in high pompadours and lengthened their skirts, and you thought them very elegant, indeed, and you pointed out your cousin who walked with them, and if she deigned to speak to you, you were overcome with confusion and pride.

Every night after school you did something together. All the way home you discussed what it should be. Sometimes it was paper dolls. These were large, gorgeously colored ladies and

gentlemen and children which you had begged from the dress-maker on the corner. The young ladies were named for your favorite real young ladies, and the story of their families continued from day to day. Sometimes you played with small jointed dolls which had golden curls, and for them you made beautiful clothes from scraps of silk, and Margaret took the tiniest stitches and every one marveled at them, but no one marveled at yours.

If the day happened to be pleasant, perhaps you walked up South Hill and watched the sunshine sparkling on the fountain-like reservoir, or played games in the field beyond. And when the Morse Chain Works bought it and built a factory there, you felt that something that was yours had been taken away.

Once after supper on a May night, when you went out upon the back porch to hang the dish-towels on the line, you looked up at the sky and for the first time you really saw the moon and the stars, and the silver night, sweet with lilacs and apple-blossoms, called you and drew you out, and you became part of it. You drifted up the street to Margaret's house and sat upon her porch and neither of you talked very much, and her Mother brought out a pitcher of lemonade, and after a while, unsatisfied, you drifted home again, and the beauty of the fragrant white night seemed to be beating upon you and hurting you.

As you progressed together through the maze of rooms connected by unexpected hall-ways and cloak-rooms and steps, toward Buffalo Street and the High School, you met other little girls whom you loved. There was Gladys. She was tall and slender and laughing. When you went to her house after school her Mother and Father were always sitting before the fire drinking tea and eating little cakes, and that was an amazing thing. But they never gave you any. All that you had was an orange and then you went upstairs and played house with Gladys' great doll-house. And there was Elsie who looked exactly like the picture of "Alice in Wonderland," and who did

strange things to words, and your Father said that she made puns, and they made everyone laugh. And there was Sally who was so sweet and whose long waving hair was so pretty.

It was Gladys who thought of a Club. It was called the X.Y. Club, and its pin was a silver shield which you wore proudly. If Corrina had had her way each meeting would have been a play. She wrote them, furnished the costumes from her attic, coached them, arranged the stage, and was always the triumphant hero. Sally was always the heroine because she was the prettiest. And so filled with divine fire was Corrina, that the rest of you listened spell-bound and did what she told you.

But if Helena and Lucia had had their way the meeting would always have been a musical. Helena played the piano and the rest of you played violins and guitars and mandolins, and it sounded beautiful to you.

Sometimes you went down the lake on the "Horton" for a picnic at Sally's cottage. Your favorite place on the "Horton" was the small elevation in front of the pilot-house. Here no one disturbed you, and the wind blew on your cheeks and through your hair, and it was like flying, as the "Horton" went bobbing up and down over the waves. You knew each cottage and who lived in it, and the "Horton" stopped at nearly every one, bumping against the creaking dock, while the deck-hand jumped down and wound the rope about a spile, and the passengers got off, and the ice and the groceries were left and children came out with carts for them. At Sally's cottage you all jumped down, and when you were settled, you climbed the ravine and went rowing, and then you ate your lunch on the beach. After that of course Corrina wanted to give a play, and in no time at all the "Horton" was whistling at the next dock on its last trip, and you hurried to collect your things, and ran down and jumped aboard and climbed the steep narrow stairs to your favorite place breathlessly. All the way up the lake you sang, and when you reached Renwick every one decided to stay on

and go up the Inlet so that they would have a longer ride. The Inlet was calm and beautiful with a rose and silver mist hovering about it, and the trees' dark over-hanging shadows along the shore, and you sang, and Buffalo Street came far too quickly.

Sometimes in the autumn on a blue and gold day when the trees were flaming and the golden-rod and the purple asters were turning gray, and the milk-weed pods were bursting and scattering their seeds, you went on a hay-ride. Some little girls curled up on the straw and some sat with their legs dangling over the sides, while the driver stood up in front, miraculously balancing himself. Slowly the horses plodded up the Trumansburg Hill. If you passed a chestnut-tree the driver obligingly stopped and you all climbed down and gathered the small brown nuts lying so cozily in their soft white nests that outside were covered with prickles. And there was one orchard which you always robbed of big red apples that were cold against your teeth when you bit them.

Oh flaming trees! Oh sun! Oh wind! Oh silver night! Oh lovely life!

Traveling

Home was a very pleasant place. It was a large square house upon a corner with a lawn at one side. An apple-tree grew on the lawn and its branches tapped the windows of your bedroom at night.

As you lay there on warm summer evenings, boys strolled past on the street below singing, "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight," "In the shade of the old apple-tree," and "Wounded and bleeding upon the field."

Back of the house were peach-trees. They were easy to climb because they were low. Rich brown gum oozed from them. It looked delicious, but when you pried it off and ate it, it had a bitter taste. Still farther back there was a barn, but it was rented to someone who had a horse. It was a pity. You could do so many things in a barn.

Inside the house there were large square rooms covered with soft carpets of yellow which had old-rose flowers strewn across them. Lace curtains were at the windows and plants grew in the sunny bay-window. In the center of the sitting-room there was a square table with a gas lamp, topped by a Welsbach mantle, upon it. At night every one sat about the table, Father reading the paper, your Mother sewing, the children playing games or studying.

Home was all right, but just eight miles away was Heaven. You seized every opportunity which presented itself to go there. Usually you went back with someone who had driven to town for the day. You sat on a stool at their feet in the narrow

buggy, while the horse plodded up, up, up, through woods and past farm-land. When he switched his tail the coarse hair hit your face, stinging it. Sometimes he stopped to rest under the branches of an over-hanging pine. At one spot when you looked ahead there was a barn which always seemed to be exactly in the center of the road, but when you reached it, you found it was sitting decorously at one side, and you passed it as you passed other barns. And then, finally, you came to the little village which you loved.

Its broad Main Street curved beside a creek, and on the other side of the creek a steep hill rose abruptly. There were always cows upon the hill, and you wondered how they managed to stick there and not come rolling down. The branches of the great trees met overhead above the street, and it was lined with comfortable white houses, each set in its lawn and garden. At every house you were welcome. You drifted in and out of them happily, pausing to eat at long tables covered with satiny damask.

A little stream ran through one of the lawns. Water-cress grew beside it, and in the spring, blue forget-me-nots. You lay near it closing your eyes, listening to the silver sound the water made flowing over the small pebbles.

There was a great bed of pansies. You stooped above it wondering which color you liked best. The grape-arbor made a shady place to play when the sun was hot, and when it rained there was a wood-house, with its clean smell of newly chopped wood, and apples, and sweet-clover which someone had hung in bunches from the rafters. There was a swing in which you could go ever so high, while the rain pattered upon the tin roof.

And just down the street was your Grandfather's General Store. It was a great thing to have a Grandfather who owned a General Store. All the cloth upon the shelves, all the sugar in great barrels, all the candy in one case and the jewelry in another! And you could have anything you wanted! It smelled

delightfully of bananas and cheese and kerosene-oil and denim. In winter old men sat about the round stove in the back, sometimes talking, often silent. In summer they sat on the broad step outside, their chairs tilted back, their hats low over their eyes.

And then, inevitably, the letter arrived saying that it was time that you came home. No one happened to be driving to town and so you must go by train. The railroad was two miles away and was reached by a three-seated-wagon called a hack. It called for you a half-hour before train-time, and you climbed in. Often you were squeezed between two people, and if it were stormy and the curtains were down, it was a very stupid ride indeed, but if it were pleasant and you had a seat by yourself, it was charming.

The road, dusty in summer, deep with mud in spring, led down a hill. At one side there was a creek-bed which gradually descended into a deep ravine from which the sound of swiftly running water came up to you. On the other side of the road was a forest which climbed a hill, where ferns and columbines grew.

Down, down, down you went, the old hack lurching from side to side, the great horses holding back with all their strength. The station was only a speck down there in the valley, but presently you were driving up beside the wooden platform, and Ed, the driver, was tossing you down over the wheel. You felt very important when you paid him and went in to buy your ticket.

And then the great engine came shrieking down upon the little station, shaking it until you were frightened, and put your fingers in your ears. A man in a blue uniform swung you aboard, and there you were. In a half-hour you would be at home again. They would fly to meet you when they saw you coming, and ask you all the news as befitted a returned traveler. Well, after all, home was a pleasant place.

Dances

There was a dark, damp room in the basement of the old High School building where the two fraternities and the two sororities met. Each club had its own appointed day and hour when it entered into solemn conclave in this bare room. There were straight uncomfortable chairs against the walls, and in the center a square oak table where the officers sat. Each meeting ended with something called a spread, and so the smell of stale food mingled with the dampness of the unventilated room, lingered from day to day and week to week. But in this room, four ideas germinated each year which flowered eventually into four beautiful things, for the meetings of the sororities and the fraternities were almost wholly concerned with discussions of the annual dance which custom decreed that each one should give.

For months beforehand, printers, decorators, caterers and musicians were consulted and committees reported. If you wished to save money you might make your own decorations, meeting all through the winter to fold and cut and twist yellow tissue paper into roses. And each club tried to make its dance the loveliest.

Engraved invitations were sent out punctiliously two weeks before the chosen time, and when the day of the dance finally arrived, and it was your sorority which was giving it, you spent hours collecting cushions and rugs for the patroness corner. For this, some kind merchant usually lent you a wagon, and you rode through the streets on piles of pillows. The dances were always held in Masonic Hall. To have held them anywhere

else would have been a sacrilege. This meant many, many trips up and down three long flights of stairs, and when night came you were as fresh as though you had done nothing all day. You took a long, last look at the Hall, to be sure that everything was as it should be, and then went home to dress.

You wore white muslin with a broad sash of blue ribbon and a hair-ribbon to match, and if you had been sent soaring straight to Heaven by having Bool's wagon stop at your door, you pinned a bunch of violets or roses at your waist, and sat down in the midst of an admiring family to await your escort.

After a long time the door-bell rang, and there he stood, resplendent in evening clothes, (rented for the occasion). He held your Mother's evening coat for you and guided you down the steps and across the walk to the hack with its prancing steeds, which stood waiting at the curb. You turned to wave to the family who had assembled to behold your grandeur, and stepped into the hack. Inside, there were always another boy and girl, for a hack cost three dollars at Mr. Seaman's Livery Stable, and as you can readily see, if there were two boys, it would cost each one only a dollar and a half.

The Hall was only a few blocks away, and you could easily have walked to Buttermilk and back, but custom decreed that you must have a hack. You settled back on the cushions and the people on the street looked in at you, and you knew that they were wishing that they too were sitting on the soft cushions of a hack, and going to a dance where they would have the happiest time in the world.

In a few moments you were one of a procession of hacks driving up before the old Savings Bank Building. You stepped out and entered the long, broad hall with the others. On the third floor you went into the dressing-room, took off your coat and settled your flowers, and went out to join your escort. On his arm you went up the last carpeted flight of stairs, and the Hall in all its beauty burst upon you.

At the right as you entered, was a shining white table with its lemonade-filled punch-bowl and its rows of sparkling glasses. Just beyond, in the patroness corner stood a line of beautiful, smiling ladies in long skirts and trains, and at the opposite end of the room was the platform where Mr. Coleman's orchestra sat hidden behind the palms. It was very simple. You knew every one there and your program had been made out for days. The first and last dances and the supper-dances were always taken by the boy who had sent you the flowers and paid for the hack. For the rest of the time he was forgotten except when you caught glimpses of him now and then as you floated upon the music of a waltz or galloped up and down the shining floor in a two-step.

Surely such ecstasy must go on forever, but before you could believe it possible, Mr. Coleman was playing "Home Sweet Home," and you knew that it was twelve o'clock. Slower, and slower, and slower, fainter, and fainter the music came, until, you didn't know when, it really stopped, and you went on dancing . . . and dancing . . . and dancing, and dancing. . . .

Purple

The purple pansies were the loveliest. On the front porch a width of chicken-wire was stretched from the ground to the roof, and a clematis-vine grew up it. There were great purple star-like flowers against the green leaves.

The gnarled wisteria-vine at the kitchen door suddenly blossomed in lavender flowers that dripped down. Beside the house there were purple violets on long stems that smelled more sweet than anything you knew. Your Grandfather lifted you in his arms to pick the lilacs that grew on high bushes on the curving road that led to the bridge.

A beautiful lady from New York called upon your Grandmother. Her hair was red-gold and her skin was like cream. She wore a purple dress and a hat made of lavender flowers. A lovely fragrance floated all about her.

Purple was the most beautiful color in the world. You would wear it always when you were a lady.

Company

At your house company came and went. When you went home from school you never knew whom you might find sitting in the parlor. It made life very exciting.

Perhaps it was someone who had driven to town for the day. Sometimes they would put their horse in Weed's livery stable, and sometimes they would tie him at your hitching-post. They would do their banking and their trading and come to your house for dinner. They were your Mother's people and the light that never was on land or sea enveloped them.

But if it were your Father's family whom you saw sitting there, no happy little prickles went flooding through you. They only liked you if you were a good little girl and ate what was put before you and helped your Mother wipe the dishes while they sat in the sitting-room. It did not matter to your Mother's family whether you ate what was put before you or not, and they went into the kitchen and wiped the dishes themselves.

Sometimes your Father called some of the people who came to your house "lame ducks," but there wasn't any sense in that, for they weren't lame and they weren't ducks. There was Mr. Eudorus Kenney. Every year when spring came he followed it north and deposited himself at your Father's hospitable door. Your family looked at each other out of the corners of their eyes, drew long breaths, and settled down to endure it.

Mr. Eudorus Kenney was a retired teacher of mathematics. He had a brown beard and celluloid cuffs with big gold cuff-buttons that rattled when he moved his arms, and he was

always moving his arms. He spent the winters in Washington and so he always knew what was going on in the world, and he talked about it a great deal, and you felt what a fine thing it would be for the country if it would make Mr. Eudorus Kenney President. He would know so much about running it.

Mr. Eudorus Kenney wrote songs. One was about when the circus came to town, and one was about a little girl who loved to go out barefoot. He played on a strange instrument called an auto-harp, which he held on his lap. At night he would take it from its case, tune it, and ask your Mother to accompany him on the piano. And your Mother would sit there playing when you knew that she would rather be doing something else. You knew, too, that the family would rather be doing anything than sitting there listening and pretending to enjoy it.

Once when you came in from school with a crowd of little boys and girls trailing behind you, you found him on the floor drawing the constellations, and you watched his white slender fingers in fascinated wonder, and forgot the cookies for which you had come.

And then, when Mr. Eudorus Kenney died, it was discovered, to the surprise of everyone, that he had had a great deal of money, and that he had left it all to Cornell University. And you pondered on the bitter injustice of this, for had Cornell University ever had to sit and listen to him sing and play on the auto-harp while his cuff-buttons rattled?

Sometimes Miss Sue Upjohn came to your house. She was a plump, jolly, little Dutch lady, with sleek black hair parted in the middle and drawn back tightly, and a twinkle in her eyes. And the things that she could do with her thick short fingers with their square tips were unbelievable. If she sewed a rose on a hat, or made a few yards of cloth into a dress the result was entrancing. It wasn't any wonder that the Astorbilts in New York were awfully glad to have her for a seamstress. And as she sewed she talked constantly of the great city

which you had never seen, and of the Astorbilts and their town house and their country house, and of Miss Sally Astorbilt and her beauty and her beaux. And with Miss Sue Upjohn you wondered whether Miss Sally would marry the Count or the Polo Player, and afterward when you saw her picture in a magazine you felt that you knew her very well indeed, for it was the same picture which Miss Sue Upjohn had shown you.

And then Miss Sue Upjohn herself married and moved a long way off, and you never heard any more about Miss Sally Astorbilt.

Perhaps the visitor whom you most enjoyed was Miss Hester Stone. She was a tall lady, stiff with age, but the aroma of attar-of-roses hung about her, and the glamorous light of far-away places was upon her, for she had lived abroad for years. Miss Hester Stone wore more jewelry than you had ever seen in your whole life. Not one string of beads but many, were hung about her neck. Long ear-rings fell from her ears, and her arms were heavy with bracelets and her fingers with rings.

She told you stories of strange places. There were churches called mosques with minarets where muezzins called. There were deserts and you rode across them on a camel, and almost died from heat and the terrible motion that the camel made when he walked. And there were narrow dark streets lined with small booths where you bought perfume and rugs and amber, while flocks of sheep ran over the cobble-stones, and laden donkies brayed, and dirty children covered with flies sat in the doorways.

You sat on a little stool at Miss Hester Stone's feet and listened, while you watched the light sparkling on the blue and red and green stones which she wore.

It was exciting to go home from school, for you never knew who might be sitting in the parlor. At your house company came and went.

Some People Were Charming, Others Not

Some people, like your Mother, made everything charming for you. There was your Uncle Doctor. He was an old man with a pointed white beard. When he saw you coming on the street he smiled and waved his cane and called, "Hurrah!"

And there were Uncle John and Aunt Mary. Uncle John sat by the stove in the kitchen, peeling apples and cracking butter-nuts for you. There was no other sound in the room except the ticking of the clock upon the shelf, and the coals falling lower in the stove as the ashes went through the grate.

On the cupboard door by the window there were marks which showed how tall you were. Every time that you went there you stood very straight with your heels against the cupboard while Uncle John put a ruler across your head and marked the place with your name and the date, and you always cheated by standing on your toes.

Back of the house there was a pond where frogs croaked, and in the cold April twilights there was the high shrill sound of peepers, and that meant that Spring was coming. It was like the robins. Sometimes when the sun was setting on Summer nights, the robins would make a different song, and your Aunt Mary would say, "The robins are calling for rain," and in the morning you would hear it raining on the tin roof above your head.

Your Aunt Mary was small and she moved very quickly. She made you think of a little brown bird. Her sitting-room smelled of tube-roses and pot-pourri. There was a what-not in the corner whose shelves were filled with shells and strange

shapes of coral from far-away Florida. (Every Winter when she went there she sent you back an orange.) There were always two pies in the pantry, and a chicken cooking on the kitchen stove. She scalded the milk so that it would stay sweet and took it down cellar where it was cool.

It mattered a great deal to Aunt Mary that the steel knives and forks in the kitchen should not be stained. After each meal she took a brick of polishing dust from the cupboard under the kitchen sink and rubbed them.

On Winter nights she always set a lamp in the window, and it made a pathway across the snow.

When you went home she ran to the garden to pick you a bouquet of pansies and sweet-peas and mignonette and wrapped the stems in wet paper, and you held them in your hand all the way.

At school nothing was charming. It was an ugly gray wooden building, set in a cobble-stone yard. Your teacher was too fat to move about, and so she sat all day in a chair beside her desk, waving a palm-leaf fan. The Principal had piercing black eyes that could see all you did . . . and there was a strap in her desk.

The school-room smelled of chalk-dust and dirty children. If you didn't know the exports of Russia, Jimmy Kerr raised his hand, or if you didn't know nine times six he would say the answer. Jimmy Kerr always knew the answer and you loathed him. If you picked the bleeding-hearts in his yard, Mr. Orange P. Hyde came out of his house and sent you away.

Sometimes Professor Dann came down and talked of a strange new thing called rhythm, or Miss Comstock came into the room and put a blue vase on the desk and told you to draw it, or a gentleman in a cap and gown descended from the remote gray stone buildings on the Hill and talked to you about birds and flowers.

Those things were better, but they happened only once in a long time. Almost always nothing was charming.

Grandfather

Grandfather was braver than anyone. Twice he took your hand and led you in to stand, once before a new life that had come into the world, and once before an old life that had gone.

You had been staying in the large white house at the foot of the lane that was Grandfather's. Upon a cool sunny morning in September, Grandmother slipped your arms through the sleeves of your new blue coat and tied your bonnet under your chin. With your hand in Grandfather's you toiled up the hill under the bright trees. At your own house you went up the steps and into the sitting-room. There was a fire in the big round black and silver stove, and you stood beside it with Grandfather.

Beyond in the bed-room you could see your Mother lying in the great walnut bed, her dark braid falling to the floor. A woman whom you had never seen before was coming toward you. She wore a white apron and carried a flannel-wrapped bundle carefully in her arms. She stooped low before you and parted the flannel, and you stood on tip-toe and looked. It was a sleeping baby. Your eyes questioned Grandfather wonderingly.

"It is your new brother," he told you.

You had begged your Mother to get you a baby, and she had. You were very happy. Now you would never have to pretend Lottie and Thurza again. You would have someone to play with always.

But Grandfather thought that you might be hurt, and he

pressed your hand gently to tell you that he loved you more.

The bed-room carpet was stretched tightly over straw. It went up and down beneath your feet as you walked across the room to kiss your Mother. And then Grandfather led you out again into the cool, blue and gold day.

Time slipped away, and a few years later, when you had left the big gray house at the top of the lane and moved to the city, Grandmother was very ill and Grandfather was bringing her to your house from the Sanitarium.

Your Father rented a hack and went to the station to meet them. You waited for them at the front door, for you had a new trick that you wanted to show Grandmother. It was sliding down the balustrade beside the steps.

The hack drew up before the curb and they lifted Grandmother out.

"Look, Grandmother," you cried, and slid down, but Grandmother did not open her eyes nor smile. Groaning faintly, she was carried into the house.

That was a strange, hushed summer, lived in a queer green light which the closed shutters made. You had to learn to dress yourself and comb your own hair. For the first time you stood before a mirror and looked at yourself. Your brown-gold hair was combed back tightly in two braids tied with narrow ribbons. Your nose and cheeks were speckled with freckles and your new teeth were too large, and you knew that you were very homely indeed, but you only thought about it when you stood before the mirror. No one noticed you except to tell you to be quiet. And all the time, Grandmother lay upon the bed in the large bed-room which opened from the sitting-room, speechless, with closed eyes, while a nurse sat fanning her.

And there came a time late in the summer when you went to spend the night with the lady across the street, and that was delightful. But when you looked out of the window in the morning there were long black streamers on the door of your

house and the lady was looking at you pityingly, her eyes brimming with tears. Bewildered, and sick with apprehension, you dressed and ran across the street and in at the dining-room door. The room was filled with people, and only your Mother was not crying. Her eyes very bright, her back very straight, she moved about serving breakfast.

And again it was Grandfather who came and took your hand.

"Come and see dear Grandmother," he said gently.

Together you went into the bed-room. It was dark and the bed had been taken away, but a cot stood under the windows, and Grandfather led you up to it and slowly drew back the sheet. Suddenly you were looking at the terrible thing that had been your beautiful Grandmother. You wanted to run away, but Grandfather held your hand, and Grandfather was not afraid. Gradually fear left you.

And again time slipped away and Grandfather's house was never the same again. House-keepers did strange things to it. One hung a sign in the dining-room which said, "Christ is an unseen guest at every meal," and it dismayed you. Grandmother would not have hung it there.

And in a little while there came a day when Grandfather said, "If I get much thinner you won't have a Grandfather any longer." And by and by he lay all day upon the hard horse-hair sofa in his room.

One afternoon as you sat with your Mother beside him, he said suddenly, "Kiss me." And you stooped and kissed his forehead, and you knew, and Grandfather knew, that it was for the last time, and for the first time in your life you bore what was unbearable.

Never again so long as you lived would there be anyone to take your hand and lead you gently and tenderly up to meet Life and Death, but Grandfather had shown you how to meet them bravely.