

TWO LITTLE OLD LADIES,

Two little old ladies, one grave, one gay, In the self-same cottage lived day by day. One could not be happy, "because," she said, "So many children were hungry for bread. And she really had not the heart to smile, When the world was so wicked all the while. The other old lady smiled all day long, As she knitted, or sewed or crooned a song. She had not time to be sad she said, When hungry children were crying for bread. So she baked and knitted and gave away, And declared the world grew better each day. Two little old ladies, one grave, one gay, Now which do you think chose the wiser way? St. Nicholas.

OUR ROBIN.

CHAPTER III (CONTINUED).

"What an awful woman!" exclaims Robin. "I hope, for all our sakes, it is not the formidable Alice that we see yonder." "No," I respond, with a vague shake of my head. Then, as the figure slowly moves round the pond in the direction of the distant house, a chill runs over me. "It must be some stranger staying in the village who has gained admission to the grounds," I add, trying to reassure myself; for, surely, never was stranger so like in form to Lucy. "Most probable," assents Robin, while her bright eyes follow the retreating form. "Shall we resume our way?" she pursues, with an evident wish to dismiss the subject. "I see the most lovely tuft of primroses on ahead!" "I wonder whether John saw her?" I muse, turning reluctantly from the contemplation of the distant figure. "You must ask him," remarks Robin. "Ask him!" I repeat after her, in indignant astonishment. "Well, really, Robin, I should have credited you with more tact! Why, aunt Louisa and I always avoid all mention of the Lovers' Walk, for fear of awakening painful memories. "I beg pardon, I am sure," says Robin, a little satirically; "but, you see, I did not know that this was a land of mysteries. "Not mysteries, but tender recollections," I answer, slipping my arm within hers as we resume our way. "How prettily you put it!" Can it be that I detect a faint laugh from Robin? If so, she smothered it before I can turn my head, and continues seriously and with a frankness which sounds almost barbarous—"Do you know, I think, Blanche, that you have a somewhat over-strained sense of delicacy. It seems to me that you and Miss Crick have done your best to nurse and keep alive your brother's romantic attachment—you have not allowed him to forget. His trouble has been wrapped up in cotton wool and carefully kept and tended. If you had said it a little sometimes, instead of making a *le-tout-noire* of it, he would never have moped as he is doing." "John never mopes," is my rather indignant answer; "but, of course," with a kind of pity—"you can't quite fathom his great melancholy all at once. He will never forget—he will never be happy again." "Dear, dear! What a frightfully romantic set of people I find you—quite too—too utterly romantic!" says Robin, falling into an attitude with upraised palms, and eyes fixed rapily on the tree-tops. My irritation suddenly gives way, and I burst out laughing. "And you," I rejoin, letting fly my last shaft of wrath, "are too—too utterly prosaic!"

CHAPTER IV.

It was about the middle of May when Robin first put in her appearance amongst the first of the young. She seems to have installed herself at Podmore. The old house has in great measure lost its gloom. Even the dark oak staircase seems brighter, now that her buoyant, light-robed figure is forever fitting up and down its shallow steps. Windows, long shut, stand open to the merry sunshine, bunches of bright-hued flowers meet one face to face in out-of-the-way corners. Rippling of joyous laughter echo through the formerly silent rooms, and the somewhat stiff piano keys are beguiled into rattling dances and stirring marches. Robin sits in her room, here, there, and everywhere, restless, cheery, impetuous, like her very name-sake. She wins aunt Louisa's heart by a ready sympathy in all household matters and an evident appreciation of the many dainty dishes which she knows so well how to prepare, and which have hitherto been unheeded for and untouched by her unsatisfactory niece and nephew. By dint of her untiring energy and perseverance, Robin draws John occasionally into almost spirited arguments. He never grows really angry with her, and but seldom even brings the shaft of his satire into play against her ready wit. He treats her condescendingly, and smiles at her overflowing and sportive in a superior kind of way, as he would smile at the petulance or sauciness of a child. As for myself, I seem to have lost my identity. Instead of creeping about the house, languid and low-spirited, I spend half my time in the open air. Robin ruthlessly insists upon changing the style of my hair, and, after overhauling my wardrobe informs me, with curling lip, that there is not a dress in my collection juvenile enough for a woman of forty. So she has her way, and a week after my friend's arrival sees me arrayed in dresses more becoming my age. As I survey myself robed in a morning gown of spotless white, I remark: "You know Robin, I never did care much about dress, so I have always left the matter entirely in the hands of the dressmaker." "Who loaded you with flounces and fringes to her heart's desire," laughs Robin. "Of course it is very high-minded and superior not to care how you look, but at the same time don't you think it is a trifle hard on your friends?" "I should hope my friends are above caring what dress I wear!" is my rather scornful reply. "You vain creature!" cries Robin, looking quite shocked. "Of course we know a diamond is a diamond, whether set in gold or brass—and a beauty a beauty, whether she dresses in sackcloth or velvet—only ordinary

commonplace people like the gold and the muslin best." "How can there be vanity in not caring for dress?" I protested. "It is the very height of vanity—it shows that you think yourself above dress. There, now, don't scold—don't scold! I am sure you ought not, for you look scrumptious in white—positively scrumptious! I should not wonder in the least if Harry kissed you ten minutes without stopping." "How can you, Robin? Harry never—" "Well, never—what?" asks Robin, looking at me with mischievous eyes. "Never what?—now, speak the truth." "Never—never—looks at my dress," I blunder out, laughing. "Admirably turned, mademoiselle," answers Robin, with a meaning nod; "and allow me to tell you that it is no wonder he never looks at your dress; really it was enough to make one shudder." Harry, however, does not appear until evening, and certainly Robin would have had some reason to triumph had she not seen his greeting. He has come to dinner, and is standing alone in one of the long bow windows in the drawing-room when I enter. My white morning dress is replaced by the palest, primrose-colored muslin, down the front of which meanders a row of most innocent little bows. "Why, Bee, what have you done to yourself," he cries, advancing and holding me at arm's length, at the same time scanning me with a look of the most profound wonder. "What have you done to yourself? I never saw you look half so jolly before. I declare I didn't know you when you came into the room; I thought you were some swell or other come on a visit." "Yes, I am a swell," I admit rather ruefully, "but it is not my fault. Robin, in changing the style of my hair and dress; she said I was altogether out of date." "I begin to think she must have been right," he remarks, with decision, "and I shall propose a vote of thanks to her." "What for changing my gowns?" "—a little scornfully. "For freshening the whole atmosphere of Podmore," he answers, laughing. "Why, even John seems less melancholy than of yore—she has a wonderful power of diffusing brightness around her." "I have a little sigh of envy. "I wonder you did not choose a livelier person," I say, with a pout, "since you seem to admire sprightliness so much." "A grand idea!" answers Harry, who is in one of his teasing moods. "I'll think it over. Let me see, I must fall in love with Miss Wolstencroft—I dare say it would not be difficult—and propose to her; of course she would accept me. Then you will bring an action for breach of promise, and come out with damages ten thousand pounds. Ah, no! Bee, it wouldn't pay—were it not for the 'damages' it might do." "Pray don't trouble yourself about the damages," I say loftily; "you are perfectly free." "Which is more than you can say for yourself, Miss Impertinence," cries Harry; and, before I know what he is about, he seizes me round the waist, and— Robin suddenly opens the door, she shuts it again with a laugh, which she makes no pretence of hiding. "Robin, Robin!" I cry, disengaging myself, and running to open the door. She enters, with a smile lingering round the corners of her mouth, and greets Harry in her usual cordial manner. "Blanche and I were going to have a bit of a walk," explains Harry with more than his usual truth. "Then I am just in time to play for you," answers Robin demurely. Thereupon she takes her seat at the piano, and rattles off a somewhat lively *trois temps*. Jack, entering the drawing room a few moments later, pauses on the threshold, agitated at the sight of two figures spinning in and out amidst the crowded furniture. "Don't look so horrified—we are only having a carpet dance!" says Harry, laughing, as he leaves me breathless and crimson beside the piano. "After that warm for dancing, I should have thought, with the thermometer at eighty-five degrees in the shade—and everybody to his taste," answers John superciliously. "I told you so," says Robin, with a most provoking and knowing nod; "though I came down later on purpose, you see I was still too early!" "Nonsense!" I say, somewhat irascibly. "Of course it is nonsense," rejoins Robin coolly; "but one never expects sense from an engaged couple." The next morning is the fourth of June. I am aroused from my heavy morning sleep by a bunch of dew-laden thyme which is drawn across my face, and I open my eyes to see Robin, ready dressed, and holding a little basket in her hand, standing by my bed. "Oh, Robin, can't you let me rest?" I cry, half angry, half laughing. "Go out, if you must, yourself, and gather every flower in the garden if you like, but do leave me in peace." "Indeed I won't!" answers Robin, resolutely. "You have no idea what the morning is like. I never in my life heard birds singing as they are singing outside at this present moment." "Fiddle-de-dee!" "No, they are not singing fiddle-de-dee," affirms Robin, with a shake of her head; "they are indulging the world in a mad chorus of gladness; the sun is glittering like diamonds on every blade of grass; and the pinks are smelling like an old woman's spice box." "Well, do go out and enjoy it all," I suggest hopefully. "Yes, I am going; I only just came in, out of pure charity, to wake you," says Robin—then she continues, consulting her watch with clock blooded precision—"It is now exactly half-past seven—if you don't meet me at the sundial at eight sharp I shall have the pleasure of reminding you of your remissness." "I don't believe there is such a word as remissness in the dictionary," I cavil, as Robin with a flourish of her basket, leaves the room. A laugh echoes back up the staircase, and that is all the answer Robin

deigns to give me. I know my friend too well to doubt her word, and feeling pretty strongly convinced that all chance of slumber is gone—for this one morning at least—I comply with her demands, and join her in the flower-garden a few minutes before the time specified. I find her sitting placidly in the full blaze of the morning sun, her eyes closed in rapt attention as she drinks in the song of the birds, and her basket and lap overflowing with dew-laden blossoms. I feel strongly tempted to wreak some sudden revenge on the disturber of my morning slumbers; but Robin's eyes are raised as I approach her with stealthy step. "Come and back—it is delicious," she remarks slowly and lazily. I have to own a little reluctantly that Nature clothed in her spangled morning veil is a sight worth seeing. "And yet you lie in bed morning after morning until the freshness of the day is lost," observes Robin wondrously. I cannot gainsay her, since she speaks the truth. "Don't you think you had better put on your hat?" I ask practically. "The sun is very fierce." "No," replies Robin, with a laughing shake of her head; "my only object in life at present is to get sunburnt. Besides, my hat is at present otherwise engaged." I turn my head in the direction to which she points, and faintly discern the straw brim of her inverted hat peeping forth from beneath a heavy load of blossoms. "I'll ask aunt Louisa to hunt you up an old market basket," I say, with a touch of satire. "You never seem able to find anything big enough to hold your flowers." Robin only laughs softly. "Aren't they just lovely?" she cries, burying her little white nose for a moment amidst the fragrant heap on her lap. "But I must set about putting them in water, poor dears; or they will begin to droop." So saying, she rises from her seat, gathering up her apron in one hand, her hat and basket with the other. "It won't take me ten minutes and then I will come out again," she says, looking at me doubtfully, to see whether I have any intention of moving; but I shake my head, laughing. "No, no, my Robin," I remark, as I produce the second volume of a novel, dreamy enough to suit even my constitution. "I came out of doors to please you, and I am going to stop to please myself—come back when you have finished the flowers." So Robin trips off towards the house, and settling myself comfortably on the low stone seat, I plunge into my fictitious fairyland. For some time I read in peace, then I am interrupted by a tickling sensation on one of my hands; glancing up I become aware that a precocious earwig is taking his morning constitutional on my second finger. To fling the insect from me, vigorously rise and shake my skirts, lest any of his kindred should be lurking thereon, is the work of a few moments. Then I pick up my book, dropped in the skirmish, leave a rather impatient sigh, and make my way to the house. Robin is not in the hall, where I expected to find her. The big marble table is strewn with leaves, stems and twigs, a big pair of scissors, and two water-jugs, but my friend is nowhere visible. "Robin, Robin!" I cry, sending my voice first in the direction of the dining room and then up-stairs. "Where are you?" The response came from a totally unexpected quarter. "Here!" answered Robin, in her low clear tones. Can it be that the sound emanates from John's study? Surely not! And yet the voice certainly comes from behind me. I turn and move toward the door; it stands ajar. I can distinguish the flutter of a white robe amidst the darkness beyond. For a moment I stand aghast. John must have forgotten to lock his sanctum, I suppose, yet the audacity of Robin takes away my breath. I push open the door and enter, just as my friend noisily sends up the lower half of the heavy window-sash. "Musty, fusty, and no mistake!" she says, greeting with a sniff of relish the rush of fresh outdoor air. "Oh, Robin, shut it down again!" I cry in a hushed whisper, and vainly putting all my strength into a struggle with the stiff framework. "Help me to close it at once, and take away these flowers!"—nodding in the direction of the table—"and come away." "And why, pray? Give me a reason, demands Robin, glancing round the dusty room with an air of disparagement. "Oh, John never allows any one—not even me!"—with emphasis—"to come in here! The room is always cleaned out once a month; but we give him a warning, so that he may look up all his precious things." "Dear me! I don't see anything very precious," observes Robin, still gazing around; "nor is there a mystery so far as I can make out"—lifting the table cover and peering underneath. "Of course there is no mystery!" I answer impatiently. "But as a rule men—clever men particularly—hate to have their pet books and things handled." "Oh, and is your brother supposed to be clever?" asks Robin, with a slight elevation of her eyebrows; and she begins prying into the titles of the volumes scattered about on the table. "Supposed to be?" I echo a little scornfully. "He is clever—awfully clever." "I have no wish to argue the point," returns Robin indifferently. "Now I am not clever, not in the least; but I do know this much, that fresh air is good for everybody, and I shall make a point of telling him so." "He will never forgive you if he hears that you have been in his room." "How very alarming—for I shall certainly tell him!" She has actually seated herself in his round-backed writing chair, and with profane fingers is turning over the yellow leaves of a book which lies open before her. I still stand by the window, half amused, half angered, and wonder how in the wide world I am to induce her to move. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Jet trimmings are more popular than ever, and are worn in every variety of new and elaborate patterns. Current Wit. Love is blind, they say. Before marriage he certainly is, and after marriage he needs to be—Somerville Journal. Joseph Chamberlain says that the home rule question is losing its importance. Perhaps he will not think so after he has been married longer. When it is a man who is about to be told a secret he shuts the door. When it is a woman she opens it to make sure there is no one listening outside. "The only color," says a scientific note, "that can be determined by the sense of touch is blue." True enough. A man always knows when he feels "blue." Judge—"Miss, how old are you?" Witness—"Well, I am thirty." "Thirty what?" Well, between thirty and forty." "I'll put your age down at thirty-nine; I guess you won't lose anything by that." There was company at dinner and Bobby's mother was somewhat surprised when Bobby refused pie. "Why, Bobby," remarked one of the guests, "aren't you fond of pie?" "Yes, marm, I'm as fond of it as any little boy, but my sister made that pie." The Little Judge—"On what grounds do you wish me to hold this man?" Officer Lammen—"Well there was a murder committed, sir; and, although I have no doubts about this man being the criminal, it wouldn't do to let him go until we catch another felly."—Puck. Helen, six years old, had a copy of "Esop's Fables" given to her. She looked at the title page attentively for a few moments, noticing probably the dipthong *Es*, in capitals, for the first time. "That's A is in a hurry, isn't it, Auntie?" she said. "Why, so?" said her aunt. "Because it's crowding the E."—Boston Times. A mother was correcting her little boy the other day, and appealing to him, asked how he would feel if he had a son who didn't do this and didn't do that, and so on. When she had reached the end of the inquiry he answered: "Well, mamma, I had a little boy eight years old, I don't think I'd expect the earth of him." Society Reporter—"I'd like a vacation of a month, sir." City Editor—"Why, what do you mean? We can't spare you now, right in the midst of the season. What's the matter?" Society Reporter—"Oh nothing much; only in writing up the Blount wedding I said: 'The happy pair enter life under auspicious circumstances,' and it appeared in the paper southwards. I guess I'd better go south for the rest of the winter."—Toledo Blade. Joshua, said a farmer who lived a few miles from a Western town, in conversation with his son, where do you think we had better plant our potatoes next Spring.—I don't know, father, I hadn't thought of it. How would the land down by the creek do?—Down by the creek? repeated the old man, scornfully. We'll plant them at the corner of One Hundred and Eighteenth and Gay street, lot 6, block 317, Jenkin's addition to the city of Swamp Hollow. Von Bulow was walking one day in Berlin, when he met a man with whom he had formerly been on some intimate terms, but whose acquaintance he was desirous of dropping. The quondam friend at once accosted him. "How do you do, Von Bulow?" delighted to see you! Now I'll bet that you don't remember my name!" You've won that bet," replied Von Bulow, and turning on his heel he walked off in the opposite direction. A teacher in the infant department of an Eighth Ward Sunday-School recently observed a five-year-old girl in the class making desperate efforts to suppress the exhibition of something which seemed to please her wondrously. Thinking that relieving her mind might quiet the child, the teacher inquired the cause of her merriment. "Why," exclaimed the child, "my mamma's dead, and papa's gone to let me sing at ze funeral zay afternoon." An English rector in a Sussex parish once visited a poor old widow who had nine or ten children. All of them except the daughter had gone out into the world and left her. At last the daughter married and left the mother alone. "Dame," said the rector, "you must feel lonely now, after having had so large a family." "Yes, sir," she answered, "I do feel it lonely, I have brought up a large family, and here I am now living alone. And I misses'em and I wants'em; but I misses'em more than I wants'em." Philadelphia man (in Dakota): "What did that man do, steal a horse?" Leader lynching mob. "Worse." "Kill somebody?" "Worse." "Bring me a young man and tell me what his physical health is, and what his mental capacity is, and I will tell you what you will be his destiny for this world, and the destiny for the world to come, and I will make five inaccurate guesses out of the five hundred. All this makes me solicitous in regard to young men, and I want to make them nervous in regard to the construction of their lives. I give you a paragraph of my own experience. My first settlement as pastor was in a village. My salary was \$800 and a parsonage. The amount seemed enormous to me. I said to myself, "What! all this for one year?" I was afraid of getting worldly in my views. I resolved to invite the congregation to my house in groups of twenty-five each. We began, and as they were the best congregation that we ever had, we felt that nothing was too good for them. We filled all the luxuries on the table. I never completed the undertaking. At the end of six months I was in financial despair. I found what every young man learns by the way to save himself, or too late, that you must measure the size of a man's body before you begin to cut the cloth for his coat. When a young man is worldly and of choice, having the comforts of life, goes into the contraction of unpayable debts he knows not until what he goes. The creditors will be angry when he gets up in the morning, and they will be angry when he goes to bed at night. They meet him as

"THE SLAUGHTER." Dr. Talmage's Sermon at St. Louis. The Influence of Society and the Habit of Contracting Debts Lucidly Portrayed. St. Louis, April 7.—The Rev. Dr. W. D. Witt Talmage, D. D., of Brooklyn, preached here this evening to a vast audience. His subject was "The Slaughter," and his text, Proverbs, vi, 21: "As an ox to the slaughter." The eloquent preacher said: There is nothing in the voice of the man of the bargain so indicative of the ox that there is death ahead. The ox thinks he is going on to a rich pasture field of clover, where all day long he will revel in the herbaceous luxuriance; but after a while the men and the boys close in upon him with sticks and stones and shouting, and drive him through a narrow doorway, where he is fastened, and with a well aimed stroke the ax falls him; and so the anticipation of the redolent pasture field is completely disappointed. So many a young man has been driven on by temptation to what he thought would be a paradisaical enjoyment; but after a while influences with darker hues and swifter action close in upon him, and he finds that instead of making an excursion into a garden he has been driven "as an ox to the slaughter." I. We are apt to blame young men for being destroyed when we ought to blame the influences that destroy them. Society might be a great advantage to young men, if, however, "you must not get into appearances, whatever be your salary, you must cross as well as others, you must give as well as receive, you must smoke as well as others, you must go to the theatre, and you must live in as fashionable a boarding house. If you are a miser, you must borrow, if you can't borrow make a false entry in your account and there a bill from a bundle of bank bills; you will only have to make the deception a little more complete by borrowing in a year or two, you can make all right. Nobody will be hurt by it; nobody will be the wiser, and you will not be damaged. By that awful process a hundred thousand men have been slaughtered for time and slaughter for eternity. There is nothing wrong about borrowing money. There is hardly a man in the house [L] has some dark hair and swifter action close in upon him, and he finds that instead of making an excursion into a garden he has been driven "as an ox to the slaughter." II. We are apt to blame young men for being destroyed when we ought to blame the influences that destroy them. Society might be a great advantage to young men, if, however, "you must not get into appearances, whatever be your salary, you must cross as well as others, you must give as well as receive, you must smoke as well as others, you must go to the theatre, and you must live in as fashionable a boarding house. 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