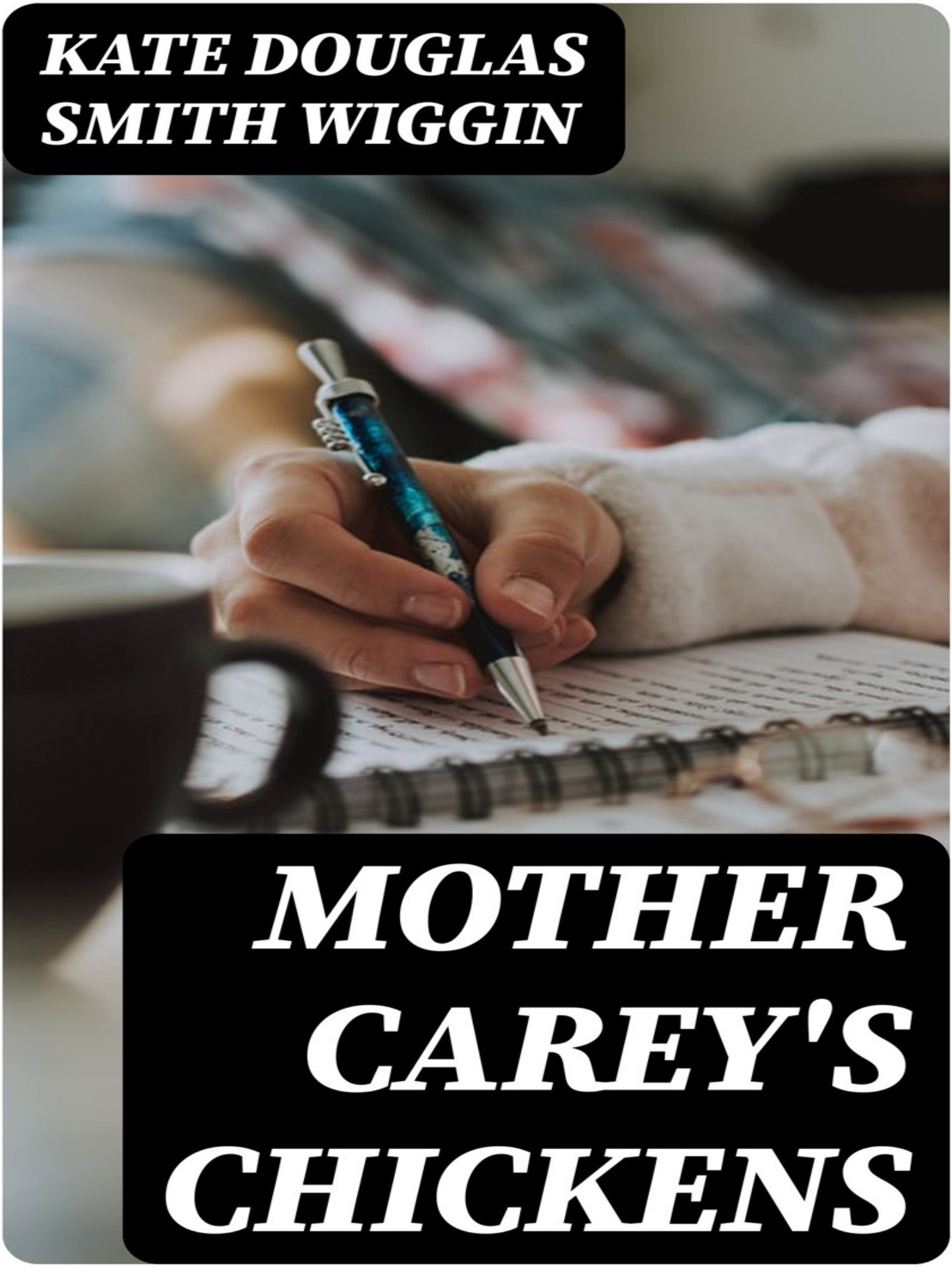
KATE DOUGLAS SMITH WIGGIN



MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKENS

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Mother Carey's Chickens

EAN 8596547375548

DigiCat, 2022
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MOTHER CAREY HERSELF

"By and by there came along a flock of petrels, who are Mother Carey's own chickens.... They flitted along like a flock of swallows, hopping and skipping from wave to wave, lifting their little feet behind them so daintily that Tom fell in love with them at once."

Nancy stopped reading and laid down the copy of "Water Babies" on the sitting-room table. "No more just now, Peter-bird," she said; "I hear mother coming."

It was a cold, dreary day in late October, with an east wind and a chill of early winter in the air. The cab stood in front of Captain Carey's house, with a trunk beside the driver and a general air of expectancy on the part of neighbors at the opposite windows.

Mrs. Carey came down the front stairway followed by Gilbert and
Kathleen; Gilbert with his mother's small bag and travelling cloak,

Kathleen with her umbrella; while little Peter flew to the foot of the
stairs with a small box of sandwiches pressed to his bosom.

Mrs. Carey did not wear her usual look of sweet serenity, but nothing could wholly mar the gracious dignity of her face and presence. As she came down the stairs with her quick, firm tread, her flock following her, she looked the ideal mother. Her fine height, her splendid carriage, her deep chest, her bright eye and fresh color all bespoke the happy, contented, active woman, though something in the way of transient anxiety lurked in the eyes and lips.

"The carriage is too early," she said; "let us come into the sitting room for five minutes. I have said my good-byes and kissed you all a dozen times, but I shall never be done until I am out of your sight."

"O mother, mother, how can we let you go!" wailed Kathleen.

"Kitty! how can you!" exclaimed Nancy. "What does it matter about us when mother has the long journey and father is so ill?"

"It will not be for very long,—it can't be," said Mrs. Carey wistfully. "The telegram only said 'symptoms of typhoid'; but these low fevers sometimes last a good while and are very weakening, so I may not be able to bring father back for two or three weeks; I ought to be in Fortress Monroe day after to-morrow; you must take turns in writing to me, children!"

"Every single day, mother!"

"Every single thing that happens."

"A fat letter every morning," they promised in chorus.

"If there is any real trouble remember to telegraph your Uncle Allan—did you write down his address, 11 Broad Street, New York? Don't bother him about little things, for he is not well, you know."

Gilbert displayed a note-book filled with memoranda and addresses.

"And in any small difficulty send for Cousin Ann," Mrs. Carey went on.

"The mere thought of her coming will make me toe the mark, I can tell you that!" was Gilbert's rejoinder.

"Better than any ogre or bug-a-boo, Cousin Ann is, even for Peter!" said
Nancy.

"And will my Peter-bird be good and make Nancy no trouble?" said his mother, lifting him to her lap for one last hug.

"I'll be an angel boy pretty near all the time," he asserted between mouthfuls of apple, "or most pretty near," he added prudently, as if unwilling to promise anything superhuman in the way of behavior. As a matter of fact it required only a tolerable show of virtue for Peter to win encomiums at any time. He would brush his curly mop of hair away from his forehead, lift his eyes, part his lips, showing a row of tiny white teeth; then a dimple would appear in each cheek and a seraphic expression (wholly at variance with the facts) would overspread the baby face, whereupon the beholder—Mother Carey, his sisters, the cook or the chambermaid, everybody indeed but Cousin Ann, who could never be wheedled—would cry "Angel boy!" and kiss him. He was even kissed now, though he had done

nothing at all but exist and be an enchanting personage, which is one of the injustices of a world where a large number of virtuous and well-behaved people go unkissed to their graves!

"I know Joanna and Ellen will take good care of the housekeeping," continued Mrs. Carey, "and you will be in school from nine to two, so that the time won't go heavily. For the rest I make Nancy responsible. If she is young, you must remember that you are all younger still, and I trust you to her."

"The last time you did it, it didn't work very well!" And Gilbert gave Nancy a sly wink to recall a little matter of family history when there had been a delinquency on somebody's part.

Nancy's face crimsoned and her lips parted for a quick retort, and none too pleasant a one, apparently.

Her mother intervened quietly. "We'll never speak of 'last times,'
Gilly, or where would any of us be? We'll always think of 'next' times.
I shall trust Nancy next time, and next time and next time, and keep on
trusting till I can trust her forever!"

Nancy's face lighted up with a passion of love and loyalty. She responded to the touch of her mother's faith as a harp to the favoring wind, but she said nothing; she only glowed and breathed hard and put her trembling hand about her mother's neck and under her chin.

"Now it's time! One more kiss all around. Remember you are Mother

Carey's own chickens! There may be gales while I am away, but you must
ride over the crests of the billows as merry as so many flying fish!
Good-by! Good-by! Oh, my littlest Peter-bird, how can mother leave you?"

"I opened the lunch box to see what Ellen gave you, but I only broke off two teenty, weenty corners of sandwiches and one little new-moon bite out of a cookie," said Peter, creating a diversion according to his wont.

Ellen and Joanna came to the front door and the children flocked down the frozen pathway to the gate after their mother, getting a touch of her wherever and whenever they could and jumping up and down between whiles to keep warm. Gilbert closed the door of the carriage, and it turned to go down the street. One window was open, and there was a last glimpse of the beloved face framed in the dark blue velvet bonnet, one last wave of a hand in a brown muff.

"Oh! she is so beautiful!" sobbed Kathleen, "her bonnet is just the color of her eyes; and she was crying!"

"There never was anybody like mother!" said Nancy, leaning on the gate, shivering with cold and emotion. "There never was, and there never will be! We can try and try, Kathleen, and we *must* try, all of us; but mother wouldn't have to try; mother must have been partly born so!"

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THE CHICKENS

It was Captain Carey's favorite Admiral who was responsible for the phrase by which mother and children had been known for some years. The Captain (then a Lieutenant) had brought his friend home one Saturday afternoon a little earlier than had been expected, and they went to find the family in the garden.

Laughter and the sound of voices led them to the summer-house, and as they parted the syringa bushes they looked through them and surprised the charming group.

A throng of children like to flowers were sown
About the grass beside, or climbed her knee.
I looked who were that favored company.

That is the way a poet would have described what the Admiral saw, and if you want to see anything truly and beautifully you must generally go to a poet.

Mrs. Carey held Peter, then a crowing baby, in her lap. Gilbert was tickling Peter's chin with a buttercup, Nancy was putting a wreath of leaves on her mother's hair, and Kathleen was swinging from an apple-tree bough, her yellow curls flying.

"Might I inquire what you think of that?" asked the father.

"Well," the Admiral said, "mothers and children make a pretty good picture at any time, but I should say this one couldn't be 'beat.' Two for the Navy, eh?"

"All four for the Navy, perhaps," laughed the young man. "Nancy has already chosen a Rear-Admiral and Kathleen a Commodore; they are modest little girls!"

"They do you credit, Peter!"

"I hope I've given them something,—I've tried hard enough, but they are mostly the work of the lady in the chair. Come on and say how d'ye do."

Before many Saturdays the Admiral's lap had superseded all other places as a gathering ground for the little Careys, whom he called the stormy petrels.

"Mother Carey," he explained to them, came from the Latin *mater cara*, this being not only his personal conviction, but one that had the backing of Brewer's "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable."

"The French call them *Les Oiseaux de Notre Dame*. That means 'The Birds of our Lady,' Kitty, and they are the sailors' friends. Mother Carey sends them to warn seafarers of approaching storms and bids them go out all over the seas to show the good birds the way home. You'll have your hands full if you're going to be Mother Carey's chickens."

"I'd love to show good birds the way home!" said Gilbert.

"Can a naughty bird show a good bird the way home, Addy?" This bland question came from Nancy, who had a decided talent for sarcasm, considering her years. (Of course the Admiral might have stopped the children from calling him Addy, but they seemed to do it because "Admiral" was difficult, and anyway they loved him so much they simply had to take some liberties with him. Besides, although he was the greatest disciplinarian that ever walked a deck, he was so soft and flexible on land that he was perfectly ridiculous and delightful.)

The day when the children were christened Mother Carey's chickens was Nancy's tenth birthday, a time when the family was striving to give her her proper name, having

begun wrong with her at the outset. She was the first, you see, and the first is something of an event, take it how you will.

It is obvious that at the beginning they could not address a tiny thing on a pillow as Nancy, because she was too young. She was not even alluded to at that early date as "she," but always as "it," so they called her "baby" and let it go at that. Then there was a long period when she was still too young to be called Nancy, and though, so far as age was concerned, she might properly have held on to her name of baby, she couldn't with propriety, because there was Gilbert then, and he was baby. Moreover, she gradually became so indescribably quaint and bewitching and comical and saucy that every one sought diminutives for her; nicknames, fond names, little names, and all sorts of words that tried to describe her charm (and couldn't), so there was Poppet and Smiles and Minx and Rogue and Midget and Ladybird and finally Nan and Nannie by degrees, to soberer Nancy.

"Nancy is ten to-day," mused the Admiral. "Bless my soul, how time flies! You were a young Ensign, Carey, and I well remember the letter you wrote me when this little lass came into harbor! Just wait a minute; I believe the scrap of newspaper verse you enclosed has been in my wallet ever since. I always liked it."

"I recall writing to you," said Mr. Carey. "As you had lent me five hundred dollars to be married on, I thought I ought to keep you posted!"

"Oh, father! did you have to borrow money?" cried Kathleen.

"I did, my dear. There's no disgrace in borrowing, if you pay back, and I did. Your Uncle Allan was starting in business, and I had just put my little capital in with his when I met your mother. If you had met your mother wouldn't you have wanted to marry her?"

"Yes!" cried Nancy eagerly. "Fifty of her!" At which everybody laughed.

"And what became of the money you put in Uncle Allan's business?" asked
Gilbert with unexpected intelligence.

There was a moment's embarrassment and an exchange of glances between mother and father before he replied, "Oh! that's coming back multiplied six times over, one of these days,—Allan has a very promising project on hand just now, Admiral."

"Glad to hear it! A delightful fellow, and straight as a die. I only wish he could perform once in a while, instead of promising."

"He will if only he keeps his health, but he's heavily handicapped there, poor chap. Well, what's the verse?"

The Admiral put on his glasses, prettily assisted by Kathleen, who was on his knee and seized the opportunity to give him a French kiss when the spectacles were safely on the bridge of his nose. Whereupon he read:—

"There came to port last Sunday night
The queerest little craft,
Without an inch of rigging on;
I looked, and looked, and laughed.

"It seemed so curious that she
Should cross the unknown water,

And moor herself within my room—
My daughter, O my daughter!

"Yet, by these presents, witness all,
She's welcome fifty times,
And comes consigned to Hope and Love
And common metre rhymes.

"She has no manifest but this;
No flag floats o'er the water;
She's rather new for British Lloyd's—
My daughter, O my daughter!

"Ring out, wild bells—and tame ones, too;
Ring out the lover's moon,
Ring in the little worsted socks,
Ring in the bib and spoon."[1]

[Footnote 1: George W. Cable.]

"Oh, Peter, how pretty!" said Mother Carey all in a glow. "You never showed it to me!"

"You were too much occupied with the aforesaid 'queer little craft,' wasn't she, Nan—I mean Nancy!" and her father pinched her ear and pulled a curly lock.

Nancy was a lovely creature to the eye, and she came by her good looks naturally enough. For three generations her father's family had been known as the handsome Careys, and when Lieutenant Carey chose Margaret Gilbert for his wife, he was lucky enough to win the loveliest girl in her circle.

Thus it was still the handsome Careys in the time of our story, for all the children were well-favored and the general public could never decide whether Nancy or Kathleen was the belle of the family. Kathleen had fair curls, skin like a

rose, and delicate features; not a blemish to mar her exquisite prettiness! All colors became her; all hats suited her hair. She was the Carey beauty so long as Nancy remained out of sight, but the moment that young person appeared Kathleen left something to be desired. Nancy piqued; Nancy sparkled; Nancy glowed; Nancy occasionally pouted and not infrequently blazed. Nancy's eyes had to be continually searched for news, both of herself and of the immediate world about her. If you did not keep looking at her every "once in so often" you couldn't keep up with the progress of events; she might flash a dozen telegrams to somebody, about something, while your head was turned away. Kathleen could be safely left unwatched for an hour or so without fear of change; her moods were less variable, her temper evener; her interest in the passing moment less keen, her absorption in the particular subject less intense. Walt Whitman might have been thinking of Nancy when he wrote:—

There was a child went forth every day
And the first object he looked upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the
day
Or for many years, or stretching cycles of years.

Kathleen's nature needed to be stirred, Nancy's to be controlled, the impulse coming from within, the only way that counts in the end, though the guiding force may be applied from without.

Nancy was more impulsive than industrious, more generous than wise, more plucky than prudent; she had

none too much perseverance and no patience at all.

Gilbert was a fiery youth of twelve, all for adventure. He kindled quickly, but did not burn long, so deeds of daring would be in his line; instantaneous ones, quickly settled, leaving the victor with a swelling chest and a feather in cap; rather an obvious feather suited Gilbert best.

Peter? Oh! Peter, aged four, can be dismissed in very few words as a consummate charmer and heart-breaker. The usual elements that go to the making of a small boy were all there, but mixed with white magic. It is painful to think of the dozens of girl babies in long clothes who must have been feeling premonitory pangs when Peter was four, to think they couldn't all marry him when they grew up!

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THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

Three weeks had gone by since Mother Carey's departure for Fortress
Monroe, and the children had mounted from one moral triumph to another.
John Bunyan, looking in at the windows, might have exclaimed:—

Who would true valor see
Let him come hither.

It is easy to go wrong in a wicked world, but there are certain circumstances under which one is pledged to virtue; when, like a knight of the olden time, you wear your motto next your heart and fight for it,—"Death rather than defeat!" "We are able because we think we are able!" "Follow honor!" and the like. These sentiments look beautifully as class mottoes on summer graduation programmes, but some of them, apparently, disappear from circulation before cold weather sets in.

It is difficult to do right, we repeat, but not when mother is away from us for the first time since we were born; not when she who is the very sun of home is shining elsewhere, and we are groping in the dim light without her, only remembering her last words and our last promises. Not difficult when we think of the eyes the color of the blue velvet bonnet, and the tears falling from them. They are hundreds of miles away, but we see them looking at us a dozen times a day and the last thing at night.

Not difficult when we think of father; gay, gallant father, desperately ill and mother nursing him; father, with the kind smile and the jolly little sparkles of fun in his eyes; father, tall and broad-shouldered, splendid as the gods, in full uniform; father, so brave that if a naval battle ever did come his way, he would demolish the foe in an instant; father, with a warm strong hand clasping ours on high days and holidays, taking us on great expeditions where we see life at its best and taste incredible joys.

The most quarrelsome family, if the house burns down over their heads, will stop disputing until the emergency is over and they get under a new roof. Somehow, in times of

great trial, calamity, sorrow, the differences that separate people are forgotten. Isn't it rather like the process in mathematics where we reduce fractions to a common denominator?

It was no time for anything but superior behavior in the Carey household; that was distinctly felt from kitchen to nursery. Ellen the cook was tidier, Joanna the second maid more amiable. Nancy, who was "responsible," rose earlier than the rest and went to bed later, after locking doors and windows that had been left unlocked since the flood. "I am responsible," she said three or four times each day, to herself, and, it is to be feared, to others! Her heavenly patience in dressing Peter every few hours without comment struck the most callous observer as admirable. Peter never remembered that he had any clothes on. He might have been a real stormy petrel, breasting the billows in his birthday suit and expecting his feathers to be dried when and how the Lord pleased. He comported himself in the presence of dust, mud, water, liquid refreshment, and sticky substances, exactly as if clean white sailor suits grew on every bush and could be renewed at pleasure.

Even Gilbert was moved to spontaneous admiration and respect at the sight of Nancy's zeal. "Nobody would know you, Nancy; it is simply wonderful, and I only wish it could last," he said. Even this style of encomium was received sweetly, though there had been moments in her previous history when Nancy would have retorted in a very pointed manner. When she was "responsible," not even had he gone the length of calling Nancy an unspeakable pig, would she have said anything. She had a blissful consciousness that,

had she been examined, indications of angelic wings, and not bristles, would have been discovered under her blouse.

Gilbert, by the way, never suspected that the masters in his own school wondered whether he had experienced religion or was working on some sort of boyish wager. He took his two weekly reports home cautiously for fear that they might break on the way, pasted them on large pieces of paper, and framed them in elaborate red, white, and blue stars united by strips of gold paper. How Captain and Mrs. Carey laughed and cried over this characteristic message when it reached them! "Oh! they *are* darlings," Mother Carey cried. "Of course they are," the Captain murmured feebly. "Why shouldn't they be, considering you?"

"It is really just as easy to do right as wrong, Kathleen," said Nancy when the girls were going to bed one night.

"Ye-es!" assented Kathleen with some reservations in her tone, for she was more judicial and logical than her sister. "But you have to keep your mind on it so, and never relax a single bit! Then it's lots easier for a few weeks than it is for long stretches!"

"That's true," agreed Nancy; "it would be hard to keep it up forever. And you have to love somebody or something like fury every minute or you can't do it at all. How do the people manage that can't love like that, or haven't anybody to love?"

"I don't know." said Kathleen sleepily. "I'm so worn out with being good, that every night I just say my prayers and tumble into bed exhausted. Last night I fell asleep praying, I honestly did!"

"Tell that to the marines!" remarked Nancy incredulously.

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THE BROKEN CIRCLE

The three weeks were running into a month now, and virtue still reigned in the Carey household. But things were different. Everybody but Peter saw the difference. Peter dwelt from morn till eve in that Land of Pure Delight which is ignorance of death. The children no longer bounded to meet the postman, but waited till Joanna brought in the mail. Steadily, daily, the letters changed in tone. First they tried to be cheerful; later on they spoke of trusting that the worst was past; then of hoping that father was holding his own. "Oh! if he was holding *all* his own," sobbed Nancy. "If we were only there with him, helping mother!"

Ellen said to Joanna one morning in the kitchen: "It's my belief the Captain's not going to get well, and I'd like to go to Newburyport to see my cousin and not be in the house when the children's told!" And Joanna said, "Shame on you not to stand by 'em in their hour of trouble!" At which Ellen quailed and confessed herself a coward.

Finally came a day never to be forgotten; a day that swept all the former days clean out of memory, as a great wave engulfs all the little ones in its path; a day when, Uncle Allan being too ill to travel, Cousin Ann, of all people in the universe,—Cousin Ann came to bring the terrible news that Captain Carey was dead.

Never think that Cousin Ann did not suffer and sympathize and do her rocky best to comfort; she did

indeed, but she was thankful that her task was of brief duration. Mrs. Carey knew how it would be, and had planned all so that she herself could arrive not long after the blow had fallen. Peter, by his mother's orders (she had thought of everything) was at a neighbor's house, the centre of all interest, the focus of all gayety. He was too young to see the tears of his elders with any profit; baby plants grow best in sunshine. The others were huddled together in a sad group at the front window, eyes swollen, handkerchiefs rolled into drenched, pathetic little wads.

Cousin Ann came in from the dining room with a tumbler and spoon in her hand. "See here, children!" she said bracingly, "you've been crying for the last twelve hours without stopping, and I don't blame you a mite. If I was the crying kind I'd do the same thing. Now do you think you've got grit enough—all three of you—to bear up for your mother's sake, when she first comes in? I've mixed you each a good dose of aromatic spirits of ammonia, and it's splendid for the nerves. Your mother must get a night's sleep somehow, and when she gets back a little of her strength you'll be the greatest comfort she has in the world. The way you're carrying on now you'll be the death of her!"

It was a good idea, and the dose had courage in it. Gilbert took the first sip, Kathleen the second, and Nancy the third, and hardly had the last swallow disappeared down the poor aching throats before a carriage drove up to the gate. Some one got out and handed out Mrs. Carey whose step used to be lighter than Nancy's. A strange gentleman, oh! not a stranger, it was the dear Admiral helping mother up the path. They had been unconsciously expecting the

brown muff and blue velvet bonnet, but these had vanished, like father, and all the beautiful things of the past years, and in their place was black raiment that chilled their hearts. But the black figure had flung back the veil that hid her from the longing eyes of the children, and when she raised her face it was full of the old love. She was grief-stricken and she was pale, but she was mother, and the three young things tore open the door and clasped her in their arms, sobbing, choking, whispering all sorts of tender comfort, their childish tears falling like healing dew on her poor heart. The Admiral soothed and quieted them each in turn, all but Nancy. Cousin Ann's medicine was of no avail, and strangling with sobs Nancy fled to the attic until she was strong enough to say "for mother's sake" without a quiver in her voice. Then she crept down, and as she passed her mother's room on tiptoe she looked in and saw that the chair by the window, the chair that had been vacant for a month, was filled, and that the black-clad figure was what was left to them; a strange, sad, quiet mother, who had lost part of herself somewhere,—the gay part, the cheerful part, the part that made her so piquantly and entrancingly different from other women. Nancy stole in softly and put her young smooth cheek against her mother's, quietly stroking her hair. "There are four of us to love you and take care of you," she said. "It isn't quite so bad as if there was nobody!"

Mrs. Carey clasped her close. "Oh! my Nancy! my first, my oldest, God will help me, I know that, but just now I need somebody close and warm and soft; somebody with arms to hold and breath to speak and lips to kiss! I ought not to sadden you, nor lean on you, you are too young, —but I

must a little, just at the first. You see, dear, you come next to father!"

"Next to father!" Nancy's life was set to a new tune from that moment. Here was her spur, her creed; the incentive, the inspiration she had lacked. She did not suddenly grow older than her years, but simply, in the twinkling of an eye, came to a realization of herself, her opportunity, her privilege, her duty; the face of life had changed, and Nancy changed with it.

"Do you love me next to mother?" the Admiral had asked coaxingly once when Nancy was eight and on his lap as usual.

"Oh dear no!" said Nancy thoughtfully, shaking her head.

"Why, that's rather a blow to me," the Admiral exclaimed, pinching an ear and pulling a curl. "I flattered myself that when I was on my best behavior I came next to mother."

"It's this way, Addy dear," said Nancy, cuddling up to his waistcoat and giving a sigh of delight that there were so many nice people in the world. "It's just this way. First there's mother, and then all round mother there's a wide, wide space; and then father and you come next the space."

The Admiral smiled; a grave, lovely smile that often crept into his eyes when he held Mother Carey's chickens on his knee. He kissed Nancy on the little white spot behind the ear where the brown hair curled in tiny rings like grape tendrils, soft as silk and delicate as pencil strokes. He said nothing, but his boyish dreams were in the kiss, and certain hopes of manhood that had never been realized. He was thinking that Margaret Gilbert was a fortunate and happy woman to have become Mother Carey; such a mother, too,

that all about her was a wide, wide space, and next the space, the rest of the world, nearer or farther according to their merits. He wondered if motherhood ought not to be like that, and he thought if it were it would be a great help to God.

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HOW ABOUT JULIA?

We often speak of a family circle, but there are none too many of them. Parallel lines never meeting, squares, triangles, oblongs, and particularly those oblongs pulled askew, known as rhomboids, these and other geometrical figures abound, but circles are comparatively few. In a true family circle a father and a mother first clasp each other's hands, liking well to be thus clasped; then they stretch out a hand on either side, and these are speedily grasped by children, who hold one another firmly, and complete the ring. One child is better than nothing, a great deal better than nothing; it is at least an effort in the right direction, but the circle that ensues is not, even then, a truly nice shape. You can stand as handsomely as ever you like, but it simply won't "come round." The minute that two, three, four, five, join in, the "roundness" grows, and the merriment too, and the laughter, and the power to do things. (Responsibility and

care also, but what is the use of discouraging circles when there are not enough of them anyway?)

The Carey family circle had been round and complete, with love and harmony between all its component parts. In family rhomboids, for instance, mother loves the children and father does not, or father does, but does not love mother, or father and mother love each other and the children do not get their share; it is impossible to enumerate all the little geometrical peculiarities which keep a rhomboid from being a circle, but one person can just "stand out" enough to spoil the shape, or put hands behind back and refuse to join at all. About the ugliest thing in the universe is that non-joining habit! You would think that anybody, however dull, might consider his hands, and guess by the look of them that they must be made to work, and help, and take hold of somebody else's hands! Miserable, useless, flabby paws, those of the non-joiner; that he feeds and dresses himself with, and then hangs to his selfish sides, or puts behind his beastly back!

When Captain Carey went on his long journey into the unknown and uncharted land, the rest of the Careys tried in vain for a few months to be still a family, and did not succeed at all. They clung as closely to one another as ever they could, but there was always a gap in the circle where father had been. Some men, silent, unresponsive, absent-minded and especially absorbed in business, might drop out and not be missed, but Captain Carey was full of vitality, warmth, and high spirits. It is strange so many men think that the possession of a child makes them a father; it does not; but it is a curious and very general misapprehension.

Captain Carey was a boy with his boys, and a gallant lover with his girls; to his wife—oh! we will not even touch upon that ground; she never did, to any one or anything but her own heart! Such an one could never disappear from memory, such a loss could never be made wholly good. The only thing to do was to remember father's pride and justify it, to recall his care for mother and take his place so far as might be; the only thing for all, as the months went on, was to be what mother called the three b's,—brave, bright, and busy.

To be the last was by far the easiest, for the earliest effort at economy had been the reluctant dismissal of Joanna, the chambermaid. In old-fashioned novels the devoted servant always insisted on remaining without wages, but this story concerns itself with life at a later date. Joanna wept at the thought of leaving, but she never thought of the romantic and illogical expedient of staying on without compensation.

Captain Carey's salary had been five thousand dollars, or rather was to have been, for he had only attained his promotion three months before his death. There would have been an extra five hundred dollars a year when he was at sea, and on the strength of this addition to their former income he intended to increase the amount of his life insurance, but it had not yet been done when the sudden illness seized him, an illness that began so gently and innocently and terminated with such sudden and unexpected fatality.

The life insurance, such as it was, must be put into the bank for emergencies. Mrs. Carey realized that that was the

only proper thing to do when there were four children under fifteen to be considered. The pressing question, however, was how to keep it in the bank, and subsist on a captain's pension of thirty dollars a month. There was the ten thousand, hers and the Captain's, in Allan Carey's business, but Allan was seriously ill with nervous prostration, and no money put into his business ever had come out, even in a modified form. The Admiral was at the other end of the world, and even had he been near at hand Mrs. Carey would never have confided the family difficulties to him. She could hardly have allowed him even to tide her over her immediate pressing anxieties, remembering his invalid sister and his many responsibilities. No, the years until Gilbert was able to help, or Nancy old enough to use her talents, or the years before the money invested with Allan would bring dividends, those must be years of self-sacrifice on everybody's part; and more even than that, they must be fruitful years, in which not mere saving and economizing, but earning, would be necessary.

It was only lately that Mrs. Carey had talked over matters with the three eldest children, but the present house was too expensive to be longer possible as a home, and the question of moving was a matter of general concern. Joanna had been, up to the present moment, the only economy, but alas! Joanna was but a drop in the necessary bucket.

On a certain morning in March Mrs. Carey sat in her room with a letter in her lap, the children surrounding her. It was from Mr. Manson, Allan Carey's younger partner; the sort of letter that dazed her, opening up as it did so many questions of expediency, duty, and responsibility. The gist of