

THE ADVENTURES OF A DOLL



In Ainslie Place and Blackfriars, Edinburgh





"The children ran up to the nursery to exhibit their new possessions to the two maids. 'Look at my doll! look at my doll!' cried each at once as they ran into the room."—Page 11.

Mary Wellwood Dalgleish

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THE
ADVENTURES OF A DOLL

IN

Ainslie Place and Blackfriars Wynd

RELATED BY HERSELF

EDITED BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROSE DOUGLAS"



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THE

Adventures of a Doll.



IT was a few mornings before the Christmas of 1851, that I found myself placed, for the first time, in one of the windows of Harvey's bazaar, in Princes Street. I had been lying in a dark box, well wrapt up in cotton and silk paper previously, and I felt the change a very pleasing one. I was also satisfied with my appearance, for my dress was very rich, and much more elegant in every respect than that of my companions. Dolls are quite as vain as human beings, in general.

I was attired in a pale blue silk frock, flounced, and very full in the skirts; my

mantelet was of real lace ; and my round Leghorn bonnet was encircled by a wreath of rosebuds mingled with forget-me-nots. In short, nothing could be more perfect than my whole costume.

“What a beautiful doll it is !” said the shopwoman who had placed me in the window, to her companion. And I listened to her with much complacency. “Some one will be sure to take a fancy to it immediately,” said the other. And she also, I thought, was a person of great discernment.

It was early in the forenoon. The shop was just being arranged ; and for a considerable time I was much interested in watching the proceedings of the two young females. They were occupied in displaying toys and various sorts of pretty things to the best advantage ; but they occasionally cast favourable glances on me ; and these

excited my vanity. I looked at myself, and then at my companions ; and ere long began, as little misses do sometimes to their friends, to despise them for being so plainly dressed.

“ What a very shabby frock you have on ! ” said I, at length, scornfully to the one nearest to me, who was simply dressed in white muslin, with a pink sash. “ I wonder you are not ashamed to stand beside so handsome a doll as I am ! ”

She looked frightened, and made me no answer ; but a young gentleman attired in the Highland costume, who was also standing in my part of the window, and had overheard my impertinence, began to reprove me so warmly, that to avoid seeming to listen to him, I pretended to look earnestly out of the window. The object that then caught my eyes fascinated them, and I could not withdraw them.

It was a beautiful, clear, frosty morning. The sun looked like a great ball of fire in the sky; the lofty irregular buildings of the Old Town opposite were very quaint and picturesque; and by squinting a little—not much, for I was afraid of injuring my eyes—I could see Sir Walter Scott's monument, and a little bit of the old grey castle.

I was so interested with what I saw, that I quite forgot the doll in white, and even the fiery little Highlander, and continued to gaze out in a sentimental mood, repeating short scraps of poetry applicable to the scene before me, to myself, till my attention was roused by hearing a voice a little to the right say, "I wonder if any one will buy us!"

I looked in that direction, and saw that the remark had proceeded from a plain jointed doll, dressed as a Newhaven fish-woman. She was very fresh and jolly

looking, but, of course, not in the least elegant.

“I do not think there is much chance of such a doll as you being bought soon,” I said contemptuously; “as for me, I expect to change my quarters before another hour is over.”

“And so, madam, you believe that no one can care but for an over-dressed doll like you,” said the Highlander, again looking fiercely at me.

“I did not speak to you, sir, and I will thank you to spare your remarks,” I said, assuming an air of dignity; “very likely, indeed, that any one would buy a doll with a muslin cap and woollen petticoats who could procure so distinguished a person as I am.”

“Well, madam, we shall see,” said the Highlander significantly.

“We shall see,” said I.

At this moment I observed an individual pause and contemplate the show in our window with great attention. I had no doubt that I was the object which attracted his regards; and anxious to mortify the Highlander, I endeavoured to look as fascinating as possible. After gazing in for a few moments, he entered the shop, to inquire my price I fully expected. But judge what my disappointment was, when I heard him request one of the shopwomen to favour him with a nearer view of the very doll I had treated with scorn! She gave me a glance full of meaning as she was lifted down. The gentleman examined her; then asked her price, and being satisfied with it, he had her rolled up in paper, and carried her away in his pocket as a Christmas present to his little niece, he said.

“Now, you see,” said the Highlander, looking at me triumphantly.

“Well, I don’t care,” I said, tossing my head so saucily that my bonnet nearly fell off; “she is only a half-crown doll, and I believe he could not afford to buy me. I shall go next.”

But hour after hour passed by; and though many people entered the shop to purchase articles, and more than one requested an introduction to me, I remained unsold. The little Highlander was evidently gratified by my mortification; and so much did this vex me, that if I had not been afraid of his retaliating, and perhaps spoiling my dress, I would have given him a hearty box on the ear. However, I told him he was no gentleman; but he only laughed when I said so, and informed me, that every one but an ignorant person like

me, knew that a Highland chief was necessarily the very finest gentleman in the world. As I had never heard in London, which was my birthplace, of such a personage, I, of course, could answer nothing to this; but unwilling to betray my ignorance, I smiled contemptuously, and again turning to the window, I watched the passers-by.

In a short time I saw a very handsome carriage, in which were a lady and two children, draw up before the door. The children were a boy and girl; both were looking eagerly at the shop; and the little girl, who was a very pretty child, and elegantly dressed, pointed to me, and spoke earnestly to her mamma. I was pleased by this; but sorry to observe that my insolent companion the Highland chief, as he called himself, had attracted the notice of the boy, who was younger than his sister; and I

feared, from his expression of countenance, that he was asking the lady to purchase him.

The mother and children alighted—the latter in great spirits—and walked into the shop. As I anticipated, I heard the lady allude to me; and in another moment I was lifted from my place in the window, and exhibited to her.

“It is a beautiful doll indeed!” exclaimed the lady, after turning me round and round and examining my dress.

“Oh! what a pretty doll!—what a lovely doll!” cried the little girl, dancing round her mamma in her delight; “you know you promised me a doll, mamma, at Christmas, and please to give me this one.”

“I am afraid it will be a very expensive doll, Jessie,” answered the lady; “but as you have been a good child lately, I think I will gratify you.”

“The Highlander!—I must have the Highlander! Do you hear, mamma!” cried the little boy, who had been pulling at his mother’s dress ever since they had entered the shop, and now could bear to wait no longer.

“Freddy ought not to say *must*; it is not a proper word for a little boy to use,” said his mamma; “but as it is Christmas time, he shall have the Highlander.”

And my friend the chief was speedily placed in the child’s arms. I disliked him so much, I was glad to see that the little boy crushed his fine plume of feathers by the first hearty squeeze he gave him. “He wont be decent a week!” thought I with pleasure. It was very wrong of me to wish evil to my neighbour. I did not know this then, but I have learnt it since.

The lady paid for us both, and we were

carried in the children's arms to the carriage. I was proud to ride in so fine an equipage, and would have felt perfectly happy if the ill-tempered Highland chief had not accompanied us. He and I quarrelled a little on the way home; but as dolls have a manner of communicating their thoughts to each other unknown to human beings, the lady and children were not conscious of it.

We soon reached Ainslie Place, where Mrs. Somers resided; and the children, the moment they alighted, ran up to the nursery to exhibit their new possessions to the two maids. One of them was an elderly woman, and she had a baby on her lap; the other, who was younger, was engaged in sewing. Both seemed happy to see the children.

“Look at my doll! look at my doll!” cried each at once as they ran into the room.

I was glad to find that the maids preferred me to the Highlander. Indeed, for some time they were so interested in examining my dress and commenting upon it, that they entirely neglected him. I saw he did not like this, and I heard him mutter the following:—

“What a set of fools, to admire that tawdry Miss, and forget a gallant soldier like me! But that is the way with most people; all they care for is show and dress.” And he snuffed up the air as Highlanders do when they are angry, and looked scornfully at me. I returned his look of scorn with interest; for, indeed, at that period I was a vain foolish doll, having never encountered adversity, and looking forward to spend my days in happiness and ease. Ah! little did I dream of the change that awaited me in a year’s time!

When the children's papa and mamma had dined, the former carried us down stairs to the dining-room. Mr. and Mrs. Somers admired us both; but it was evident that I was the favourite. It happened just as I expected; Freddy rumbled my friend the Highlander's dress so much, that already he began to look shabby; but Jessie, who was a careful little thing, did not displace a single fold of mine, to my great satisfaction.

When bed-time arrived, we were taken from the children,—to Freddy's disappointment, who, for long, positively refused to go to bed unless his Highlander were allowed to sleep with him. To this the nurse would not consent; and there ensued a sad scene of screaming and passion, which was only put an end to by threatening to send for his papa. Freddy was frightened by this,

for he knew his papa would punish him for being naughty; so, at length, he permitted the maid to undress him, and the Highlander and I were locked together into an empty drawer.

There we lay side by side, and not the very best companions in the world; but, ere long, after hearing him sigh deeply on account of the rough usage he had experienced all evening, I began to pity him, and offered to shake hands with him, and be friends.

To do him justice, though he was a fiery little creature, and disliked my conceit, he had a kind heart; so he willingly shook hands with me, and ever after, I must say, we were firm friends. We were soon parted, however, for in less than a fortnight little Freddy, in one of his passionate fits, threw him into the fire, where he was

wholly consumed, no servant being near to rescue him.

“Ah! dear friend,” said he to me as he was on the point of expiring, observing that my eyes were fixed with a horror-struck expression upon him, “prepare yourself for misfortune; your mistress will probably weary of you as my master has of me.” He could say no more, for at that moment he was reduced to ashes.

From that hour I lived in constant dread of the same fate. If my little mistress approached the fire-place with me in her arms, the perspiration would appear on my face, from apprehension that she might be tempted to follow her brother's example; and I rejoiced when the warm weather arrived, and my enemy the fire was dispensed with in the nursery.

Little Jessie, however, was a very quiet,

gentle child, and not apt to tire of her playthings like Freddy. She was very careful never to leave me in his way, for fear of his injuring me; so, when she did not wish to play with me, I was always locked up in the drawer.

I led a very happy life in Ainslie Place, all things considered. I had my walk every day with the children and nursery maids; and at these times attracted a great deal of observation, principally from young people, who seemed to envy Jessie the possession of so charming a doll. But I took less delight in hearing myself praised than formerly. I loved my little mistress, who was so fond of me, and cared not much what the rest of the world thought of my appearance, if she were satisfied with it. My dress, however, was beginning to look a little faded by this time, and my cheeks were

losing their colour. The reason for the latter was, I think, that the heat of the fire, during the winter, had not agreed with my constitution,—it, at least, made me pale and thin.

My little mistress, though a sweet child, had a number of faults. She was very fond of sweetmeats, and she used to spend all the money she got—and her aunts and uncles gave her a great deal—in purchasing them. She was sometimes ill in consequence; and the doctor had to be sent for to make her well again. I was very sorry that Jessie was so foolish and greedy. Besides, when she was ill, I had to lie in the dark drawer till she got better, and I did not like this at all. If she had understood the doll's language, I would have remonstrated with her; but, unfortunately, she did not. It is a pity that so many

children are guilty of the same fault as Jessie. The money that they spend on sweet things might buy them many nice books, and would enable them to be kind to the poor. When you have read all my story, you will see how usefully it might be employed.

When the pleasant summer weather came, Mr. and Mrs. Somers and their children went to live in a beautiful house that belonged to them in the country. Jessie took care that I should accompany them. The children had now got a governess to teach them. Her name was Miss Munro. She was very kind to them; and I liked her extremely, for often, when my dress was crushed and untidy, she would put it to rights for me. We were all very happy together. She always walked with us; and many a delightful ramble we had

among the woods and fields, where the children gathered wild flowers and rushes, which they plaited into crowns and sceptres. I daresay, when they wore these, they were far happier than real kings and queens. My little mistress had got a small green veil to protect my complexion from the sun; but notwithstanding this, I lost, when in the country, the slight remains of colour the fire had left to me.

The Moat, as Mr. Somers' house was called, was a nice old-fashioned house, surrounded by thick woods, and standing in a lawn, sprinkled over with fine spreading trees. Sheep used to feed upon the lawn; and it was pretty to see the lambs running by their mother's side. On the south side of the house was a terrace, on which one could step from a window in the drawing-room. The grass of this ter-

race was kept very short and smooth—indeed it was as smooth as velvet—and there were handsome vases and pots of flowers ranged round it. The wall of the house on that side was covered with jessamine and roses, which grew so luxuriantly, that old David, the gardener, had often to prune them for fear they should obscure the windows. The view from the terrace was very fine, extending over woods and green fields, watered by many streams, and adorned with villas and cottages, to the foot of a range of rocky hills. The terrace was a pleasant spot; and it was there Mrs. Somers loved to sit in the sunny weather, for it was shady as well as sheltered. The children often played beside her; even the baby used to lie on a shawl spread on the turf, kicking up his chubby legs, and crowing with delight. Jessie often

made a bed for me there by spreading her pocket handkerchief on a corner of a garden-seat; and there I would recline, looking up to the sky, and watching the white fleecy little cloudlets sail along it.

I was naturally a very observant doll; nothing escaped my notice when out of doors, unless, indeed, my little mistress had forgot, as sometimes happened, to open my eyelids, which I had not the power of doing for myself. I used to watch the bees as they flitted from flower to flower on the terrace, and wonder how they contrived to extract the honey from them; and I knew all the butterflies by sight, and was always glad when one came fluttering down beside me on the chair, as if it intended to say, "How d'ye do?" Pretty creatures! I loved them all; but more especially the birds that sang so

sweetly in the neighbouring woods. I became very intimate with a blackbird that lived there. He used to perch on the balustrade of the terrace, and serenade me; and, indeed, his music was the most delightful I ever listened to. Poor fellow! I wonder what has become of him.

I liked this terrace very much; but a misfortune happened to me there which materially injured my health and feelings. Jessie placed me in the usual corner one evening before going to play with Freddy; but when they were finished she returned to the house and forgot me, so that I was exposed during the night to a heavy rain, which almost entirely spoiled my dress. It was the first time she had neglected me, and she was so grieved that I could not but forgive her. During the first part of the night I rather relished my situation,—in-

deed I thought it a very good joke to be left thus, and lay complacently looking up to the moon, trying to recollect all the poetry I had ever heard in its praise; but as that was a hopeless undertaking, I soon relinquished it, and commenced watching the bats as they wheeled about in the night air, and listening to the soft clear murmur of the brook that wandered through the adjacent wood. Ere long, however, the clouds began to gather and obscure the moon, which only appeared in glimpses through them; the wind rose, ruffling my silk frock in a very rude and boisterous manner, and whistling mournfully through the trees; and finally the rain fell, first slowly, and then in torrents. It grew very dark, and I felt chilled and frightened, and longed sadly for my cosy drawer in the nursery. Such a night! I shall never forget the sufferings

both of body and mind that I endured through it. The wonder was, that I was not crippled with rheumatism ever after.

There was a quaint old garden at the Moat, and Miss Munro and the children spent a great deal of their time in it. There was a mosshouse in one corner, which made a nice schoolroom. Did you ever see a mosshouse? It is thatched within and without with moss. It has a bench made of small bits of unbarked wood nailed in patterns upon a frame, and fastened to the wall, and a table of the same kind in the middle. It is a nice place a mosshouse; and this one was covered on the outside with roses.

The garden walks were all of grass between high hedges of holly or beech. Oh! how stately those great hedges were! Then there was such a profusion of flowers; they

dazzled the eye. Mrs. Somers was very fond of flowers, and so was the old gardener. In one part of the garden grew an old tree, whose branches extended a great way on every side, and drooped till they touched the grass. It was a lime-tree, and thousands of bees used to buzz among its flowers. It was surrounded by a bench, and it stood in the middle of a plot of the greenest grass, sprinkled over with lilies and cowslips. Here Miss Munro and the children often sat and watched the gardeners at work. There were two gardeners at the Moat,—old David and his son John. David was very kind to the children, and often brought them fruit, which Jessie would pretend to share with me ; but, alas ! I could not open my mouth to receive it. What a shady place that seat under the tree was ! It was pleasant to sit there and

listen to the sound of the bees among the boughs. Did you ever listen to the deep hum of bees in a lime-tree?

There were no children of Jessie and Freddy's ages in the neighbourhood of the Moat; so they never paid visits when there, though their papa and mamma did; but they played very happily by themselves. Freddy had now got a little white dog, whose tricks often amused them. Freddy taught him to stand on his hind legs and beg; and if a stick was thrown to a distance, little Carlo—for that was the dog's name—would run after it, and bring it back in his mouth. Carlo was a clever dog, and very pretty; but before we left the Moat, I had begun to think him very disagreeable.

My reasons for disliking him were, that one day he had seized me in his mouth, and almost torn my frock to pieces before

Miss Munro could rescue me from him, and because I saw that my little mistress preferred him to me. No wonder, for I was getting very shabby and tattered. I now often thought of the last words of my poor friend the Highlander, and feared that Jessie was beginning to weary of me.

We left the country at the end of October. The weather was become very cold, and all our favourite paths were littered with fallen leaves. The great lime-tree in the garden was nearly bare; when one stood beneath it now and looked up, it was easy to see the sky through its great interlacing branches. I was glad to return to town, and to enter the old nursery again. But we were not long arrived when I regretted leaving the Moat. My dress had now grown so shabby, that Jessie did not choose to carry me to the street when she

walked there with Miss Munro. She was ashamed to appear in public with me.

I now led a very solitary life. I had to pass all my time in the nursery—not, as formerly, in a snug drawer, but often in uncomfortable situations ; sometimes in one corner, sometimes in another, and often on the floor, or under the beds. No one seemed to care about me now. My head was quite bald. That mischievous little dog Carlo had pulled off all my hair. My right eye was gone, and my skin was very much scratched and disfigured. It was difficult to distinguish the original colour of my dress, so obscured was it with grease spots ; my lace mantelet was all in shreds, and my Leghorn bonnet had been forgotten in the hollow of a tree in the country. I was really far from respectable in my appearance, having only the faded remains of former finery hanging about me.

Christmas at length drew near; but I had no happiness in anticipating its arrival. My heart was very sad. I felt lonely and neglected. Besides, I had overheard one of Jessie's aunts promise her a new doll at that season, and I therefore knew that my day was over. I was lying behind the chest of drawers at that time. I had fallen there the previous evening accidentally, and no one had been at the trouble of picking me up. There I lay, all battered and bruised, with my head down, and my feet sticking in the air,—a most disagreeable position for either doll or human being. Judge what my feelings were! Indeed, they are much more easily imagined than described. I thought, while standing thus on my head, of the happy old times when my little mistress, whom I still loved, notwithstanding her neglect, used to carry me in

her arms through the gay, busy streets. I thought of the terrace at the Moat, and of the flowers, and butterflies, and sunshine there. I thought of all the walks and plays Miss Munro, and I, and the children, had had together; and next summer, mused I sorrowfully, they will all be there, and my successor with them, and I shall be forgotten.

For some time I felt very jealous of the new doll which Jessie expected. I was in an irritable and revengeful humour; but, ere long, I began to see that this feeling was wrong; I myself had succeeded to a former doll, and had never thought of her fate. Besides, it was not her fault that she was coming in my place,—so I, at length, reasoned myself into a better mood, and resolved to be resigned to my future lot, whatever it might be. It was

as well I succeeded in this, for, as you will now learn, there was a great change of life in store for me.

The evening before Christmas arrived, and there I was still sticking behind the chest of drawers. No one, as yet, had missed me. The younger nursery-maid was arranging the room, and she at length discovered my disagreeable situation.

“Dear me, Miss Jessie,” she said “here is your doll lying in the dust behind the drawers!” and putting down her arm, she caught hold of my right leg, and drew me up.

I am aware I was a sad fright. I was covered with dust; and a large spider had begun to weave his web about my face. I thought him very impertinent for doing so, but could not prevent him.

Jessie looked at me with great disgust.

“I don’t want her any more, Mary,” she said; “Aunt Ellen has promised me a new doll to-morrow; so take her away, and do what you like with her.”

“Then I will just throw her among the ashes, Miss Jessie,” said Mary, “and the dustman will carry her away in the morning, for she is very dirty.”

And she put me into a dust-pan, and took me down stairs; and, ere long, I found myself half-buried in a heap of ashes, which the housemaid emptied on the street at night, to be in readiness for the dust cart, which passed by early in the morning.

There I lay all night, half-smothered and helpless. I thought the morning would never come; but my greatest grief was, that I should see my little mistress no more. It was a cold bitter night; the

wind was from the east, and I was very miserable.

“Oh! will nobody come and pull me out?” I often thought. But nobody came, though I heard feet occasionally passing by. I suppose they were those of the watchman, for the same tread passed again and again through the long dismal night.

Morning at length seemed to be breaking, though I could not see it, on account of the mass of ashes which lay upon me; but I supposed so, because I could distinguish voices on the street, and a certain hum or murmur in the adjacent district.

Some persons at last paused beside the heap, and began to stir it up, for I felt the ashes move. But I lay at the very bottom, and it was some time before they reached me. I listened with all my might, and I distinguished the voices of a woman

and child. They spoke, however, in a strange coarse style, to which I had never been accustomed, and I had some difficulty in understanding them. The woman was evidently finding fault with the child, who answered her very pertly, and the former threatened to strike her in consequence. But the little girl, suddenly catching sight of me, snatched me up, and retreated out of reach.

“What’s that you’ve got there, you brat?” said the woman suspiciously.

“It’s just a doll,” answered the child, keeping at a distance from her mother, and carefully watching her movements.

“Let me see it this minute, or it’ll be waur for ye,” said the latter angrily, evidently suspecting that the little girl had got something valuable in her possession, which she wished to conceal from her. The

child was obliged to obey, though unwillingly; but her fears were quieted by seeing her mother examine me contemptuously. "It's no worth a sixpence!" she said, tossing me back to the little girl, who received me joyfully.

They were beggars, and had come out in the early morning to gather ashes and the refuse of coal, to burn for fuel.

Ah! my little friends, few of you know anything of the sad shifts to which the poor are exposed! They search every dust heap in Edinburgh; and things that you would loathe to touch, they are thankful to obtain. Many of them live all the year round in cellars, where the light of day can only gain entrance through the door-way. Some of them have no beds, but lie all night on the cold floor; others sleep on a few shavings of wood, or on straw, with mere rags

to cover them. When you are lying in your warm comfortable beds, and you hear the wind whistling in the chimney, and the rain pattering on the window, do you ever think of the shivering and wretched poor? They are not far from you. Those dark, lofty, strange-looking piles of buildings you see in the Old Town, contain thousands of them. They live in the wynds and narrow filthy closes which intersect these. There are many little children among them, half-naked, hungry, and cold. Worse than all, these children will grow up to be beggars and thieves, like their parents, unless efforts are made to prevent it. Should you like to aid such a good work? It is in your power, and by and by I will shew you how.

This little beggar girl and her mother were very wretched-looking creatures. They were dressed in rags, and extremely

dirty. The woman's face was red and swollen with drinking ; but the child's was very pale and thin. It was a sharp clever face, however ; but it had a cunning expression that I did not like. The children of the poor are compelled to seek their own living at so very early an age, that it often prematurely sharpens their intellects. At an age when other children are allowed to play, they are taught to work or steal. Poor little children ! many of them have never heard of a God and Saviour, and do not know that they have a soul. Instead of playing among green fields or in gardens in summer, as you do, they run about the dirty gutters and dark airless lanes of the town. They have no healthy innocent pleasures. Do not you pity them ?

The little girl wrapt me hastily up in her tattered frock, as if afraid some one

might come and take me from her. I was very valuable in her eyes. Her pleasure in possessing me, however, was so great, that she could not help, every now and then, taking a peep. I was glad to be liked by anybody, for experience had made me humble ; but yet I could not avoid shuddering a little,—the child was so dirty. I had determined, however, to be reconciled to my lot, whatever it was, and though I had never dreamt of sinking so low as to be the property of a beggar, I resolved to shew my philosophy by adhering to my intention. It was seeing the world, at all events.

When the woman and child had rummaged all the dust-heaps in the neighbourhood, putting what they got into old sacks, they began to think of returning home. On the way they went down a number of area stairs, and begged at the kitchen

doors. I was struck with their manner of begging. They spoke in such piteous tones that I scarcely recognized their voices; and they told a great many lies. For instance, they assured every one that they had not tasted food since the previous morning. Now, they had got some broken victuals the first house they called at, and they had been eating them as they went along the street. I was much shocked to hear them utter this falsehood, and longed to be able to reprove them. But, alas! as I have already informed the reader, there are few human beings who understand the dolls' language, and they were not of that gifted number.

The morning was considerably advanced when they arrived at their own abode. It was situated in a very dark, dirty, and noisy lane, called Blackfriars Wynd, which

is in the neighbourhood of the High Street and Cowgate. I had only got an occasional glimpse of the town on the way, for little Peggy Macrae—that was the child's name—kept me more carefully hidden than ever as she approached the old part of the city. I suppose she was afraid some child like herself might covet and snatch me from her. But still she could not get on without an occasional look at me. Her mother was constantly scolding her for lagging behind for this purpose.

I began, at length, to take a kind of interest in Peggy, notwithstanding her appearance. With much pain I remembered the look of disgust which my former mistress cast on me, as I was pulled from behind the chest of drawers. The pleasure the possession of me afforded to this beggar child, soothed and gratified my wounded

spirit. My curiosity was also roused. I wanted to know how such children as Peggy lived. In short, I was a doll of a very inquisitive temperament.

My first view of Blackfriars Wynd, however, nearly dissipated my growing partiality to Peggy; I thought it such a very dreadful place to live in. As we walked along the High Street, I had discovered a convenient rent in the frock, through which I found I could peep unobserved, and I was not slow in availing myself of it. As we proceeded down the wynd, the gloom of the place,—the sky being almost obscured by the lines of ragged clothes stretched far above our heads to dry,—the clamour of tipsy men and women, and the disagreeable sights and smells, shocked and terrified me.

“This is a sad place,” I thought, “for

a doll accustomed to genteel society to live in ;” and I had some difficulty in composing my fluttered spirits so as to be able to continue my observations.

There were many children in the Wynd ; some were playing on the dirty stones ; some were sitting by doors binding up wooden faggots to sell through the town ; and some were quarrelling and fighting. It was a squalid scene altogether ; and once or twice I obtained a peep through an open door into houses, which convinced me, that if things looked bad without, they were equally so within. Peggy’s mother had got some money from a gentleman, to whom she had told a lamentable story of her being a widow and having five children to support, and now she went into a spirit shop to buy some whisky with it. When she came out her face looked very red, and she seemed

tipsy ; for she began to quarrel with the people she met in the wynd. Many of them were in the same state as herself, and were equally dirty and ragged.

At last they reached home. It was a cellar without windows, but having a fireplace. The door was wide open, to admit light. When Peggy entered, she took me out of her frock, so that I was able to look about me and notice everything. But the place was so dark that it was some moments before I could distinguish objects. When I could do so, I found myself in a small room, or rather vault. An old rusty grate was filled with the red-hot cinders of the previous day's gathering. It was well ; for the man and boy who were cowering over it were also dressed in rags. A heap of straw, with a dirty tattered blanket spread over it, was the only bed of the family. The

furniture consisted of an old stool, two stones as substitutes for chairs, and a rotten shelf nailed against the wall, on which stood two plates and a broken bowl. There was neither chest nor cupboard; all the clothes the inmates of the room possessed, were upon their backs. A battered kettle with a broken spout was on the hearth;—and this was all. It was a sad home.

The man was a sullen, ruffian-looking individual. He received us very ungraciously, and began to scold his wife for being drunk. He then demanded something to eat. The woman gave him what she had brought in her lap. He seized it greedily, and commenced to eat, offering none of it to the boy,—who, however, watched his opportunity, and, snatching some of it, ran out of the room. There were some cold potatoes mixed with the bread, and

the man toasted them by the side of the fire, and then ate them. I thought him very selfish not to give Peggy one of them. She had sat down on the other side of the fireplace with me in her lap, and I saw she looked eagerly at the potatoes, though she did not dare to touch them. But he took no notice either of her or me, continuing to devour the food with his eyes fixed upon the fire. I did not like him; he seemed to me more like a wild beast than a man. I discovered afterwards that he drank, as well as his wife, and that though they were miserably poor, they spent every farthing they could get by stealing or begging—for they did not work—on whisky. And then they quarrelled, and sometimes the police had to come in and separate them.

The boy and girl were their only children. It was a sad example that was set before

them ; but the parents never thought of that. They were very wicked people ; they had no fear of God before their eyes. But, alas ! they had never been taught about Him when young, and now their hearts were very hard. Sometimes a missionary called and spoke to them about their souls ; but if they saw him approaching, they would shut the door, and pretend they were not at home, that they might not be troubled listening to him. As for the children, they were sent out every day to beg, and were not allowed to return home without bringing a certain quantity of broken food or money with them. If they ventured back without it, the father and mother beat them, and forced them out again.

When I first knew them, those children could not read, and had received no educa-

tion. They saw no harm in stealing; no one had taught them it was wrong. But they had been often told that it was a clever and meritorious thing to take what belonged to others, if it was done so as to avoid detection. Can you wonder, then, that those children were growing up to be equally wicked and ignorant as their parents? No one could, indeed. But soon after I became acquainted with them, an event occurred which prevented this. I am sure you will be glad to hear of it. Indeed, it was to tell you of it, and to ask your help for the rescuing of other little beggar children from sin and wretchedness, that I have written this history of myself.

It was on Christmas day, you remember, that I was found in the dust-heap by little Peggy Macrae, and carried to Blackfriars Wynd. What a change from my former

Christmas! That was spent in a nicely-furnished room in a fine house in Ainslie Place. My little mistress, Jessie Somers, was elegantly dressed, and my own attire was not inferior to hers. Everything around me was handsome, well appointed, and comfortable.

Now this Christmas was passed in a cellar, damp, dirty, and gloomy. I was in the society of thieves and beggars, and heard nothing but oaths and angry language. When night arrived, all the inmates of the room crept, still in their ragged clothes, into the same bed, and I was placéd by Peggy on a corner of the shelf, out of her father's sight; for she knew he would not hesitate to throw me into the fire when he was angry. There I remained all night in the darkness, listening to the breathing of the sleepers in the

wretched bed, and musing sadly on the vice and misery which surrounded me.

Early in the morning Peggy and her mother left the house to visit the dust-heaps, —returning, after an hour or two, with a supply of fuel and broken victuals, which they had begged for as formerly. This day the woman was not drunk ; she had been unsuccessful in obtaining money. The man did not go out except at night—he was ashamed of his rags—but the boy did, and he brought in some scraps and money in the afternoon. The money was immediately expended on whisky.

And this is just a picture of their daily life,—one day was like another, marked only by their gains being more or less. The father and mother got drunk, quarrelled, and fought with each other, and afterwards lay in a state of stupor on the

floor, while the children cowered by the fire in utter unconcern.

This is a shocking description to present to you, my little friends. Perhaps some of you may not like to read it; but if we did not know something of the wretchedness that abounds in this world, we would do nothing to aid in removing it. Now that you are no longer ignorant on this subject, let me see if you can deny yourselves a few trifling gratifications, to save children, such as I have described, from crime and misery.

Many weeks passed over in this manner. When Peggy was out, I spent my time on the corner of the shelf, carefully concealed from her father or any one who entered. My eyes, or rather eye—for you remember I had lost one of them—had now got so accustomed to the gloom of the dwelling, that nothing escaped my notice. I knew

every cobweb on the walls, and could distinguish every rat from his neighbours.

During this period the missionary had more than once called at the house ; but, as usual, had not gained admittance. At length he succeeded in obtaining it. He came at an hour when he was not expected, and as the door was open, he walked in. All the family were fortunately assembled, —Peggy sitting on one of the stones with me on her knee. He was a kind, but serious man. He addressed himself to the father and mother in a very earnest way,—remonstrating with them on the wicked life they led, and for the manner in which they were bringing up their children. They held down their heads while he did this, and looked disconcerted and angry. I do not think they were sorry. Peggy and her brother listened attentively, I saw; and I



was glad of it, for I thought the truths they heard might do them good.

“You have never sent your children to the Ragged School yet, though you promised to do so the last time I saw you,” the missionary said to the parents. “Why have you not sent them?”—“We are puir folk,” said the woman sulkily, “and we canna afford it. The bairns maun beg for their living.”

“But they will be fed there, and I will procure them some old clothes in place of those rags,” he answered. “It is very selfish to keep them here in such wretchedness of soul and body, merely to beg for you,—that is the true reason of your unwillingness to consent, I know.”

The parents could not deny it, and they returned him no answer.

“Children,” said the good man, turning

to them, "should you not like to go to the Ragged School?"

"I dinna ken," said the boy, who was as sharp-looking as Peggy. "What kind of place is it?"

"It's a place," said the missionary kindly, "where you will be taught to know about God, and to read and write. You will be taught a trade also, so that you may hereafter support yourself respectably, instead of stealing and begging. You will get food and clothes there, too, and be treated with kindness."

"I should like to gang there," said the boy.

"So should I," said Peggy quickly; but she looked at her father and mother as if she feared they would not permit her.

"Do you hear this?" said the missionary to the parents; "your children are willing

to go ; surely you will not be so unnatural as to persist in your refusal ?”

“ They may gang if they like,” said the father doggedly ; “ I care nothing about it.”

“ In that case,” said the missionary, “ I will take them immediately,—come, children !” and only allowing Peggy time to put me in my usual hiding-place, he led them out of the room,—leaving the parents, who were very sulky, alone together.

The woman began immediately to scold her husband. She was angry because he had allowed the missionary to take away the children ; and she called him a great many names. She had been drinking just before, and this always made her quarrelsome. He at length got angry too, and they commenced to fight. I had now got accustomed to this, and it did not alarm me so much as it once did. But I was very

much shocked when the woman, on receiving a severe blow on the head from her husband, fell down on the floor, and lay there motionless. He was frightened too; but after looking at her stupidly for some moments, instead of raising her up, he ran out of the house. They had made a great deal of noise when fighting, and some of the neighbours came in to separate them just as he made off. They were horrified to see the wretched woman lying on the floor, apparently dead. And soon there was a large crowd of people assembled both within the house and without; and they talked so much, and made such a clamour, that I got quite confused listening to them. Some said the woman was dead; others, that she was only in a state of insensibility. But nothing was done for her till the police arrived; and then she was placed upon a

shutter, and carried away to the Infirmary. After this the crowd began to disperse; but some people still stood about the door, conversing on what had happened. I heard one of them say, that the police had already found the man, and taken him away to prison.

I may tell you here, that the woman was really dead. But as her husband did not intend to murder her, he was only sentenced to be sent out of the country, which was done very soon.

I was very lonely the rest of that day. I longed for Peggy and her brother to return. I was afraid they might not come back, and that I should be left on the shelf till some one accidentally discovered me there. But in the evening they returned in company with the good missionary. He came to tell the parents how pleased the children were

with the school, and to beg they would allow them to attend constantly. He had not heard of what had occurred, having been in another part of the town during the day.

The children cried piteously when they learnt that their mother was dead, and their father in jail. But they had been so unkind to them, and were so wicked, that they could not grieve very long for them.

But I must tell you how improved both Peggy and her brother were in their appearance already. They had been thoroughly washed. Their hair had been cut and combed, and they were dressed in decent second-hand clothes, which some kind people had provided for poor children like them. I scarcely knew Peggy again, she was so clean and tidy like.

The missionary said he would take them

to a respectable woman's house, and he hoped to get some good lady or gentleman to pay her for taking care of them. So Peggy lifted me down from the shelf with her clean hands, and away we walked in search of the woman,—the missionary giving the children a great many good advices on the way. We soon reached the house, and as the woman knew good Mr. Dickson, she immediately consented to receive the children.

Though her house was small, it was very clean. It looked a palace to me after living so long in the dark cellar in Blackfriars Wynd. She had two other children as lodgers. They also attended the Ragged School. Those children had once been thieves, and had often been in the police office. At last the magistrates took them from their wicked parents, who had taught

them to steal, and sent them to the Ragged School. They had lived with this woman nearly a whole year, and were now very good and tractable. The woman had a large Bible lying on a shelf, which I thought a good sign. Before the children went to bed, she read some of it to them, and she taught Peggy and her brother to repeat a prayer.

It is now a great many months since dear little Peggy Macrae and her brother have gone to the Ragged School. They are already able to read, and they are learning to write. Peggy can now sew pretty well, and her brother can work. They go to church every Sabbath; and their teachers are so pleased with their behaviour, that they have promised, if they continue to do well, to procure them situations in the course of another year. There is now

every prospect of their growing up to be respectable members of society, instead of drunkards and thieves. What a pleasant thing to think of!

But if it is pleasant to think of this, how much pleasanter it must be to assist in rescuing such little children from a life of depravity! Ah! my dear young friends, how many of you spend, in pampering your appetites, or in buying foolish toys, what would, by God's blessing, save numbers of those children from misery in this world, and destruction in the next! We must pay for keeping up Ragged Schools. The teachers must be paid; the children's books and food, and sometimes their clothes, must be paid for. The lodgings of those who have no parents, or whose parents are so abandoned that the magistrates consider it a duty to remove their children from them,

must also be paid. Many kind people contribute for those purposes ; but still a great deal of money is needed, and there are many, many children still running about Edinburgh streets in rags, learning all kinds of vice, and scarcely conscious that they have a soul. What a glorious thing if all the rich children in this town would each give something to feed, and clothe, and teach the poor ones ! You have kind parents and friends ; you do not know what hunger, and cold, and wretchedness, mean. Who has made you to differ from these poor children ? Is it not God ? What return can you make to Him for His goodness ? Those texts of the Bible will tell you : “ He that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord.” “ Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Dear little friends, Christmas is now approaching. It is a happy season to children. But while you are enjoying yourselves, do not forget to think of the dark wynds and closes so near you, where so many poor children live. Spare something out of your abundance for them. I am now very near my dissolution. I shall have gone to pieces before the New Year arrives ; and in anticipation of this, I have dictated this little history to a friend of mine, who occasionally visits here, and who fully understands my manner of revealing my thoughts. She has promised to act as Editor.—Wishing you all many happy returns of this season, I remain, dear little friends,

Your affectionate well-wisher,

THE DOLL.

The Beggar Girl's Complaint.



I am hungry, cold, and naked,
And the streets are very wet ;
Oh! but mother will be angry
If I venture homeward yet !

From the morning till the evening
Thus I wander up and down,
Begging through the streets and alleys
Of this cold and cruel town.

In yon dark and filthy vennel,
In a cellar, I was born ;
Mother had no bed to lie on
On that drear December morn.

And my playground is the gutter,
And my schoolroom is the street,
Which I sadly patter over
With my little weary feet.

I have heard them talk of heaven,
Of a God who sees below,—
That He smiles on little children ;
Sure they mock who tell me so !

But no one has ever taught me
This great God to seek or find,
Though I sometimes think I hear Him
In the stormy wintry wind.

I am tired, and sad, and hungry,
All this day I've walked and toiled ;
Pity me, ye happy children !
Pity a poor beggar child !



