Sylvie and Bruno Concluded

by Lewis Carroll

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

Charles Lutwige Dodgson (Lewis Carroll)

1832-1898

Born 1832. Matric, Ch. Ch. Oxford, 23 May 1850; Student, 1852-70; B. A., 1854; M. A., 1857. Ordained Deacon, 1861. Mathematical Lecturer, Ch. Ch., 1855-81. Works: "A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry," 1860; "The Formula of Plane Trigonometry," 1861; "A Guide to the Mathematical Student," 1864; "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" (under pseud. "Lewis Carroll"), 1866; [1865]; " An Elementary Treatise on Determinants." 1867; "The Fifth Book of Euclid treated Algebraically," 1868; "Phantasmagoria" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1869; "Songs from 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,'" 1870; "Through the Looking-Glass" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1871; "Facts, Figures and Fancies, (reprint of part of Phantasmagoria), 1871; "Euclid, Bk.V., proved Algebraically."

1874; "The Hunting of the Snark" (by "Lewis Carroll"). 1876; "Euclid and his Modern Rivals," 1879; "Doublets" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1879; "Rhyme and Reason" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1883; "Lawn Tennis Tournaments," 1883; "The Principles of Parliamentary Representation," 1884; "A Tangled Tale" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1885; "Alice's Adventures Underground: a facsimile of the original MS.," 1886; "The Game of Logic" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1887; "Curiosa Mathematica," pt. L, 1888; "Sylvie and Bruno" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1889; "The Nursery 'Alice,' " 1890; "Sylvie and Bruno concluded" (by "Lewis Carroll"), 1893; "Symbolic Logic," pt. L, 1896; He has edited: Euclid, Bks. i, ii, 1882.—Sharp, R. Farquharson, 1897, A Dictionary o} English Authors, p. 83.

PERSONAL

It would be futile to attempt even a bare list of the children whom he loved, and who loved him; during forty years of his life he was constantly adding to their number. Some remained friends for life, but in a large proportion of cases the friendship ended with the end of childhood. . . . These friendships usually began all very much in the same way. A chance meeting on the seashore, in the street, at some friend's house, led to conversation; then followed a call on the parents, and after that all sorts of kindnesses on Lewis Carroll's part, presents of books, invitations to stay with him at Oxford, or at Eastbourne, visits with him in the theatre. For the amusement of his little guests he kept a large assortment of musical-boxes, and an organette which had to be fed with paper tunes. On one occasion he ordered about twelve dozen of these tunes " on approval," and asked one of the other dons, who was considered a judge of music, to come in and hear them played over. In addition to these attractions there were clock-work bears, mice, and frogs, and, games and puzzles in infinite variety. ... It was only to those who had but few personal dealings with him that he

seemed stiff and "donnish;" to his more intimate acquaintances, who really understood him, each little eccentricity of manner or of habits was a delightful addition to his charming and interesting personality. He very seldom sat down to write, preferring to stand while thus engaged. When making tea for his friends, he used, in order. I suppose, to expedite the process, to walk up and down the room waving the teapot around, and telling meanwhile those delightful anecdotes of which he had an inexhaustible supply. . . . At meals he was very abstemious always, while he took nothing in the middle of the day except a glass of wine and a biscuit. Under these circumstances it is not very surprising that the healthy appetites of his little friends filled him with wonder, and even with alarm.—Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson, 1898, The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll, pp. 367, 369, 389.

To have ever known such a man as he was is an inestimable boon. To have been with him for so long as a child, to have known sc intimately the man who above all others had understood childhood, is indeed a memory on which to look back with thanksgiving and with tears. ... He was afflicted with what I believe is known as "Housemaid's Knee," and this made his movements singularly jerky and abrupt. Then again he found it impossible to avoid stammering in his speech. He would, when engaged in an animated conversation with a friend, talk quickly and well for a few minutes, and then suddenly and without any very apparent cause would begin to stutter so much, that it was often difficult to understand him. He was very conscious of this impediment, and he tried hard to cure himself. For several years he read a scene from some play of Shakespeare's every day aloud, but despite this he was never quite able to cure himself of the habit. Many people would have found this a great hindrance to the affairs of ordinary life, and would have felt it deeply. Lewis Carroll was different. His mind and life were so simple and open that

there was no room in them for self-consciousness, and I have often heard him jest at his own misfortune, with a comic wonder at it. The personal characteristic that you would notice most on meeting Lewis Carroll was his extreme shyness. With children, of course, he was not nearly so reserved, but in the society of people of maturer age he was almost oldmaidishly prim in his manner. When he knew a child well this reserve would vanish completely, but it needed only a slightly disconcerting incident to bring the cloak of shyness about him once more, and close the lips that just before had been talking so delightfully.—Bowman, Isa, 1900, The Story of Lewis Carroll, pp. 3, 10.

To Dodgson's shyness may partially be attributed the circumstance that his friendships were carried on more by letter than by personal intercourse; and it may account to some extent for the fact that his most cherished intimates were little girls, in entertaining whom he was tireless. There is also no doubt that the dictates of a conscience which was perhaps over exacting for daily life were obeyed too closely for him to be companionable to ordinary adult persons. He made, however, acquaintance with eminent men—among them Ruskin, Tennyson, Millais, and Rossetti—of who he has left valuable photographs, amateur photography having been successfully practiced by him almost from boyhood.— Lucas, E. V., 1901, Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, vol. a, p. 142. He must have been, if all the stories still told about him are true, one of the most eccentric of Eccentrics. He did not care for young men, it seems, but he liked young women, who all liked him; and Oxford is now full of women, mature and immature, who adore the gentle memory of the creator of "Alice." One of them, still a young woman, who was but a baby when " Wonderland " was originally visited, says of him that, "he was a man whom one had to read backward." He had to be looked at " As. Through a Looking Glass." She describes him as moody, and as a man of strong

dislikes. But he liked her; and, hand in hand on the roofs of the College, she, as a child, and he used to wander, he always amiable and full of queer conceits of speech and of imagination.—Hutton, Laurence, 1903, Literary Landmarks of Oxford, p. 77.

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND (1866)

Mr. Dodgson's specialty, as all the world knows, was mathematics; his passion,— children. He wasted no time on "grownups" that could be given to the little ones— girls, I should add, for he paid little attention to mere boys! " Alice in Wonderland," as all the world also knows, originated in a series of stories told to his particular pet child, Alice Liddell (Mrs. Reginald Hargreaves), and her two younger sisters. . . . We have Dr. George Macdonald to thank for the Lewis Carroll books. Their author had no idea of publishing them, but his friend. Dr. Macdonald. who had read them, persuaded him to submit them to a publisher. ... To the surprise of author and publisher, two thousand copies of the book were sold at once, and "Alice" increased the bank account of her creator for many years.—Gilder, J. L., 1899, The Creator of Wonderland, The Critic, vol. 34, pp. 138, 139.

It is now more than thirty years ago since "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" was first published. The book at once met with wide-spread appreciation. Some years later, a companion volume, entitled, "Through the Looking Glass," made its appearance, and soon became equally popular. How many editions of these inimitable books have since been reprinted, we know not; yet we may surely take it for granted that, since their publication, few children, amongst those who are fortunate enough to enjoy the privilege of having children's books, have been brought up in ignorance of these "classics of the nursery." But the two "Alices" are not merely "classics of the nursery," they are something more. How

many older children— "children of an uncertain age," as their author naively calls them in his preface to "The Nursery Alice"—have delighted in their pages and laughed over their droll humor! There is, indeed, much in that humor which appeals only to such "older children;" and no books written for children within recent years, have enjoyed such a marvelous popularity, or have been so extensively quoted in all sorts of connection as the "Alices."—Airman, C. M., 1899, Lewis Carroll, The New Century Review, The Living Age, vol. 220, p. 427. "Lewis Carroll" may be numbered with those writers of our day who have added a new note to literature; therefore his books have that in them which is likely to win them readers for many years to come. "Alice in Wonderland" may well prove to be one of the world's books whose freshness time cannot stale.—Johnson, E. G., 1899, Lewis Carroll of Wonderland, The Dial, vol. 26, p. 192.

"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" is a play in which the subordinate actors are quite as excellent in their way as the leading character. They are differentiated from each other by a variation in their personalities, rather than by an inequality in their ability to entertain. Creatures are they of a vagrant fancy, which, like a rushing mountain stream, ofttimes reflects distorted images, but is ever pure, with the sunlight glancing from its bosom. But, like the rapid-flowing brook, there are placid pools in its course, and in one crystal, reposeful spot is the face of Alice. " Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" is a book which appeals alike to young and old. It is an object-lesson that tends to make us realize the truth of the adage, "Men are but boys grown tall."—Newell, Peter, 1901, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Harper's Magazine, vol. 103, p. 716.

GENERAL

Equal to the author of "Fly Leaves" in fame, but diverse in his peculiar genius, stands the immortal "Lewis Carroll," the inventor of what may be called the modern domestic humour, the creator of that fascinating dreamland through which, veiled in a sunny mist of ethereal mirth, the daily round of life, its peaceful joys, its inanities, its fuss, friction and augmentation pass before our eyes in admired disorder. " Father William," " The Walrus and the Carpenter" and "Jabberwocky" would, it is needless to say, have been more remarkable by their absence from our collection than anything which could have taken their place.—Powell, G. H., 1894, ed. Musa Jocosa, p. 18. "Sylvie and Bruno" was issued in 1889, and its sequel "Sylvie and Bruno Concluded " followed four years later. In this work, Mr. Collingwood says, are embodied the ideals and sentiments most dear to the author. It is didactic in aim, written with a definite purpose of turning its writer's influence to account in enforcing neglected truths; but it falls short of the fresh and spontaneous " Alice" books as a work of art—considerably short of them, we think.—Johnson, E. G., 1899, Lewis Carroll of Wonderland, The Dial, vol. 26, p. 192.

What more healthy influence can be at work in the world than that which inclines busy, careworn men to identify themselves with an eternal youth? Genial, kindhearted, loving Lewis Carroll! What better tribute can be paid to his excellence than to say that it was his mission in life not only to popularize purity in child literature, but to incite an emulation in other writers, productive of results the extent of the beneficent effects of which it is impossible to estimate.—Newell, Peter, 1901, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Harper's Magazine, vol. 103, p. 716.

Although like Lear's in some respects, Lewis Carroll's nonsense is perhaps of a more refined type. There is less of the grotesque and more poetic imagery. But though Carroll

was more of a poet than Lear, both had the true sense of nonsense. Both assumed the most absurd conditions and proceeded to detail their consequences with a simple seriousness that convulses appreciative readers, and we find ourselves uncertain whether it is the manner or the matter that is more amusing. Lewis Carroll was a man of intellect and education; his funniest sayings are often based on profound knowledge or deep thought. Like Lear, he never spoiled his quaint fancies by over-exaggerating their quaintness or their fancifulness, and his ridiculous plots are as carefully conceived, constructed, and elaborated as though they embodied the soundest facts. No funny detail is ever allowed to become too funny; and it is in this judicious economy of extravagance that his genius is shown. — Wells, Carolyn, 1902, ed., A Nonsense Anthology, Introduction, p. XXVII.

Sylvie and Bruno Concluded

> Dreams, that elude the Maker's frenzied grasp—
> Hands, stark and still, on a dead Mother's breast,
> Which nevermore shall render clasp for clasp,
> Or deftly soothe a weeping Child to rest—
> In suchlike forms me listeth to portray
> My Tale, here ended. Thou delicious Fay—
> The guardian of a Sprite that lives to tease thee—
> Loving in earnest, chiding but in play
> The merry mocking Bruno! Who, that sees thee,
> Can fail to love thee, Darling, even as I?—
> My sweetest Sylvie, we must say "Good-bye!"

Bruno's Lessons

During the next month or two my solitary town-life seemed, by contrast, unusually dull and tedious. I missed the pleasant friends I had left behind at Elveston—the genial interchange

of thought—the sympathy which gave to one's ideas a new and vivid reality: but, perhaps more than all, I missed the companionship of the two Fairies—or Dream-Children, for I had not yet solved the problem as to who or what they were whose sweet playfulness had shed a magic radiance over my life.

In office-hours—which I suppose reduce most men to the mental condition of a coffee-mill or a mangle—time sped along much as usual: it was in the pauses of life, the desolate hours when books and newspapers palled on the sated appetite, and when, thrown back upon one's own dreary musings, one strove—all in vain—to people the vacant air with the dear faces of absent friends, that the real bitterness of solitude made itself felt.

One evening, feeling my life a little more wearisome than usual, I strolled down to my Club, not so much with the hope of meeting any friend there, for London was now "out of town", as with the feeling that here, at least, I should hear "sweet words of human speech", and come into contact with human thought.

However, almost the first face I saw there *was* that of a friend. Eric Lindon was lounging, with rather a "bored" expression of face, over a newspaper; and we fell into conversation with a mutual satisfaction which neither of us tried to conceal.

After a while I ventured to introduce what was just then the main subject of my thoughts. "And so the Doctor" (a name we had adopted by a tacit agreement, as a convenient compromise between the formality of "Doctor Forester" and the intimacy—to which Eric Lindon hardly seemed entitled—of "Arthur") "has gone abroad by this time, I suppose? Can you give me his present address?"

“He is still at Elveston—I believe,” was the reply. “But I have not been there since I last met you.”

I did not know which part of this intelligence to wonder at most. “And might I ask—if it isn’t taking too much of a liberty —when your wedding-bells are to—or perhaps they *have* rung, already?”

“No,” said Eric, in a steady voice, which betrayed scarcely a trace of emotion: *“that* engagement is at an end. I am still ‘Benedick the unmarried man’.”

After this, the thick-coming fancies—all radiant with new possibilities of happiness for Arthur—were far too bewildering to admit of any further conversation, and I was only too glad to avail myself of the first decent excuse, that offered itself, for retiring into silence

The next day I wrote to Arthur, with as much of a reprimand for his long silence as I could bring myself to put into words, begging him to tell me how the world went with him.

Needs must that three or four days—possibly more— should elapse before I could receive his reply; and never had I known days drag their slow length along with a more tedious indolence.

To while away the time, I strolled, one afternoon, into Kensington Gardens, and, wandering aimlessly along any path that presented itself, I soon became aware that I had somehow strayed into one that was wholly new to me. Still, my elfish experiences seemed to have so completely faded out of my life that nothing was further from my thoughts than the idea of again meeting my fairyfriends, when I chanced to notice a small creature, moving among the grass

that fringed the path, that did not seem to be an insect, or a frog, or any other living thing that I could think of. Cautiously kneeling down, and making an *ex tempore* cage of my two hands, I imprisoned the little wanderer, and felt a sudden thrill of surprise and delight on discovering that my prisoner was no other than *Bruno* himself!

Bruno took the matter *very* coolly, and, when I had replaced him on the ground, where he would be within easy conversational distance, he began talking, just as if it were only a few minutes since last we had met.

“Doos oo know what the *Rule* is”, he enquired, “when oo catches a Fairy, withouten its having tolded oo where it was?” (Bruno’s notions of English Grammar had certainly *not* improved since our last meeting.)

“No,” I said. “I didn’t know there was any Rule about it.”

“I *think* oo’ve got a right to *eat* me,” said the little fellow, looking up into my face with a winning smile. “But I’m not pruffickly sure. Oo’d better not do it wizout asking.”

It did indeed seem reasonable not to take so irrevocable a step as *that,*, without due enquiry. “I’ll certainly *ask* about it, first,” I said. “Besides, I don’t know yet whether you would be *worth* eating!”

“I guess I’m *deliciously* good to eat,” Bruno remarked in a satisfied tone, as if it were something to be rather proud of.

“And what are you doing here, Bruno?”

“That’s not my name!” said my cunning little friend. “Don’t oo know my name’s ‘Oh Bruno!’? That’s what Sylvie always calls me, when I says mine lessons.”

“Well then, what are you doing here, oh Bruno?”

“Doing mine lessons, a-course!” With that roguish twinkle in his eye, that always came when he knew he was talking nonsense.

“Oh, *that’s* the way you do your lessons, is it? And do you remember them well?”

“Always can ‘member *mine* lessons,” said Bruno. “It’s *Sylvie’s* lessons that’s so *drefully* hard to ‘member!” He frowned, as if in agonies of thought, and tapped his forehead with his knuckles. “I *ca’n’t* think enough to understand them!” he said despairingly.’ It wants *double* thinking, I believe!”

“But where’s Sylvie gone?”

“That’s just what I want to know!” said Bruno disconsolately. “What ever’s the good of setting me lessons when she isn’t here to ‘sprain the hard bits?”

“I’ll find her for you!” I volunteered; and, getting up I wandered round the tree under whose shade I had been reclining, looking on all sides for Sylvie. In another minute I *again* noticed some strange thing moving among the grass, and, kneeling down, was immediately confronted with Sylvie’s innocent face, lighted up with a joyful surprise at seeing me, and was accosted, in the sweet voice I knew so well, with what seemed to be the *end* of a sentence whose beginning I had failed to catch.

“and I think he ought to have *finished* them by this time. So I’m going back to him. Will you come too? It’s only just round at the other side of this tree.”

It was but a few steps for *me;* but it was a great many for Sylvie; and I had to be very careful to walk slowly, in order not to leave the little creature so far behind as to lose sight of her.

To find Bruno's *lessons* was easy enough: they appeared to be neatly written out on large smooth ivy-leaves, which were scattered in some confusion over a little patch of ground where the grass had been worn away; but the pale student,

who ought by rights to have been bending over them, was nowhere to be seen: we looked in all directions, for some time in vain; but at last Sylvie's sharp eyes detected him, swinging on a tendril of ivy, and Sylvie's stern voice commanded his instant return to *terra firma* and to the business of Life.

"Pleasure first and business afterwards" seemed to be the motto of these tiny folk, so many hugs and kisses had to be interchanged before anything else could be done.

"Now, Bruno," Sylvie said reproachfully, "didn't I tell you you were to go on with your lessons, unless you heard to the contrary?"

"But I *did* heard to the contrary!" Bruno insisted, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"What did you hear, you wicked boy?"

"It were a sort of noise in the air," said Bruno: "a sort of a scrambling noise. Didn't *oo* hear it, Mister Sir?"

"Well, anyhow, you needn't go to *sleep* over them, you lazy-lazy!" For Bruno had curled himself up, on the largest "lesson", and was arranging another as a pillow.

"I *wasn't* asleep!" said Bruno, in a deeply-injured tone. "When I shuts mine eyes, it's to show that I'm *awake!"*

"Well, how much have you learned, then?"

"I've learned a little tiny bit," said Bruno, modestly, being evidently afraid of overstating his achievement. *"Ca'n't* learn no more!"

“Oh Bruno! You know you *can,* if you like.”

“Course I can, if I *like,”* the pale student replied; “but I ca’n’t if I *don’t* like!”

Sylvie had a way—which I could not too highly admire —of evading Bruno’s logical perplexities by suddenly striking into a new line of thought; and this masterly stratagem she now adopted.

“Well, I must say *one* thing

“Did oo know, Mister Sir,” Bruno thoughtfully remarked, “that Sylvie ca’n’t count? Whenever she says ‘I must say *one* thing’, I *know* quite well she’ll say *two* things! And she always doos.”

“Two heads are better than one, Bruno,” I said, but with no very distinct idea as to what I meant by it.

“I shouldn’t mind having two *heads,”* Bruno said softly to himself: “one head to eat mine dinner, and one head to argue wiz Sylvie—doos oo think oo’d look prettier if oo’d got *two* heads, Mister Sir?”

The case did not, I assured him, admit of a doubt.

“The reason why Sylvie’s so cross—’ Bruno went on very seriously, almost sadly.

Sylvie’s eyes grew large and round with surprise at this new line of enquiry—her rosy face being perfectly radiant with good humour. But she said nothing.

“Wouldn’t it be better to tell me after the lessons are over?” I suggested.

“Very well,” Bruno said with a resigned air: “only she wo’n’t be cross then.”

“There’s only three lessons to do,” said Sylvie. “Spelling, and Geography, and Singing.”

“Not *Arithmetic?”* I said.

“No, he hasn’t a head for Arithmetic—”

“Course I haven’t!” said Bruno. “Mine head’s for *hair.* I haven’t got a *lot* of heads!”

“—and he ca’n’t learn his Multiplication-table—”

“I like *History* ever so much better,” Bruno remarked. “Oo has to *repeat* that Muddlecome table—”

“Well, and you have to repeat—”

“No, oo hasn’t!” Bruno interrupted. “History repeats itself. The Professor said so!”

Sylvie was arranging some letters on a board—E-V-I-L. “Now, Bruno,” she said, “what does *that spell?”*

Bruno looked at it, in solemn silence, for a minute. “I know what it *doesn’t* spell!” he said at last.

“That’s no good,” said Sylvie. “What *does* it spell?”

Bruno took another look at the mysterious letters. “Why, it’s ‘LIVE’, backwards!” he exclaimed. (I thought it was, indeed.)

“How *did you* manage to see that?” said Sylvie.

“I just twiddled my eyes,” said Bruno, “and then I saw it directly. Now may I sing the King-fisher Song?”

“Geography next,” said Sylvie. “Don’t you know the Rules?”

“I think there oughtn’t to be such a lot of Rules, Sylvie! I thinks—”

“Yes, there *ought* to be such a lot of Rules, you wicked, wicked boy! And how dare you *think* at all about it? And shut up that mouth directly!”

So, as “that mouth” didn’t seem inclined to shut up of itself, Sylvie shut it for him—with both hands—and sealed it with a kiss, just as you would fasten up a letter.

“Now that Bruno is fastened up from talking,” she went on, turning to me, “I’ll show you the Map he does his lessons on.”

And there it was, a large Map of the World, spread out on the ground. It was so large that Bruno had to crawl about on it, to point out the places named in the “Kingfisher Lesson”.

“When a King-fisher sees a Lady-bird flying away, he says *‘Ceylon,* if you *Candia!’* And when he catches it, he says ‘Come to *Media!* And if you’re *Hungary* or thirsty, I’ll give you some *Nubia!’* When he takes it in his claws, he says *‘Europe!’* When he puts it into his beak, he says *‘India!’* When he’s swallowed it, he says *‘Eton!’* That’s all.”

“That’s *quite* perfect,” said Sylvie. “Now, you may sing the King-fisher Song.”

“Will oo sing the chorus?” Bruno said to me.

I was just beginning to say “I’m afraid I don’t know the *words”,* when Sylvie silently turned the map over, and I found the words were all written on the back. In one respect it was a *very* peculiar song: the chorus to each verse came in the *middle,* instead of at the *end* of it. However, the tune was so easy that I soon picked it up, and managed the chorus as well, perhaps, as it is possible for *one* person to manage such a thing. It was in vain that I signed to Sylvie to help me: she only smiled sweetly and shook her head.

“King Fisher courted Lady Bird—
Sing Beans, sing Bones, sing Butterflies!
‘Find me my match,’ he said,
‘With such a noble head—
With such a beard, as white as curd—
With such expressive eyes!’

“‘Yet pins have heads,’ said Lady Bird—
Sing Prunes, sing Prawns, sing Primrose-Hill!
‘And, where you stick them in,
They stay, and thus a pin
Is very much to be preferred
To one that’s never still!’

“‘Oysters have beards,’ said Lady Bird—
Sing Flies, sing Frogs, sing Fiddle-strings!
‘I love them, for I know
They never chatter so:
They would not say one single word—
Not if you crowned them Kings!’

“‘Needles have Eyes,’ said Lady Bird—
Sing Cats, sing Corks, sing Cowslip-tea!
‘And they are sharp—just what
Your Majesty is not:
So get you gone—’tis too absurd
To come a-courting me!’”

“So he went away,” Bruno added as a kind of postscript, when the last note of the song had died away “Just like he

always did."

"Oh' my *dear* Bruno!" Sylvie exclaimed, with her hands over her ears. "You shouldn't say 'like': you should say *what'.*

To which Bruno replied, doggedly, "I only says 'what!' when oo doosn't speak loud, so as I can hear oo."

"Where did he go to?" I asked, hoping to prevent an argument.

"He went more far than he'd never been before," said Bruno.

"You should never say 'more far'," Sylvie corrected him: "you should say *'farther'."*

"Then *oo* shouldn't say 'more broth', when we're at dinner," Bruno retorted: "oo should say *'brother'!"*

This time Sylvie evaded an argument by turning away, and beginning to roll up the Map. "Lessons are over!" she proclaimed in her sweetest tones.

"And has there been no *crying* over them?" I enquired. "Little boys *always* cry over their lessons, don't they?"

"I never cries after twelve o'clock," said Bruno: "'cause then it's getting so near to dinner-time."

"Sometimes, in the morning," Sylvie said in a low voice; "when it's Geography-day, and when he's been disrobe—"

"What a fellow you are to talk, Sylvie!" Bruno hastily interposed. "Doos oo think the world was *made* for oo to talk in?"

“Why, where would you *have* me talk, then?” Sylvie said, evidently quite ready for an argument.

But Bruno answered resolutely. “I’m not going to argue about it, ‘cause it’s getting late, and there wo’n’t be time—but oo’s as ‘ong as ever oo can be!” And he rubbed the back of his hand across his eyes, in which tears were beginning to glitter.

Sylvie’s eyes filled with tears in a moment. “I didn’t mean it, Bruno, *darling!”* she whispered; and the rest of the argument was lost “amid the tangles of Neæra’s hair”, while the two disputants hugged and kissed each other.

But this new form of argument was brought to a sudden end by a flash of lightning, which was closely followed by a peal of thunder, and by a torrent of raindrops, which came hissing and spitting, almost like live creatures, through the leaves of the tree that sheltered us. “Why, it’s raining cats and dogs!” I said.

“And all the *dogs* has come down *first,”* said Bruno: “there’s nothing but *cats* coming down now!”

In another minute the pattering ceased, as suddenly as it had begun. I stepped out from under the tree, and found that the storm was over; but I looked in vain, on my return, for my tiny companions. They had vanished with the storm, and there was nothing for it but to make the best of my way home.

On the table lay, awaiting my return, an envelope of that peculiar yellow tint which always announces a telegram, and which must be, in the memories of so many of us, inseparably linked with some great and sudden sorrow—something that has cast a shadow, never in this world to be

wholly lifted off, on the brightness of Life. No doubt it has *also* heralded—for many of us—some sudden news of joy; but this, I think, is less common: human life seems, on the whole, to contain more of sorrow than of joy. And yet the world goes on. Who knows why?

This time, however, there was no shock of sorrow to be faced: in fact, the few words it contained (“Could not bring myself to write. Come soon. Always welcome. A letter follows this. Arthur.”) seemed so like Arthur himself speaking, that it gave me quite a thrill of pleasure and I at once began the preparations needed for the journey.

Love's Curfew

“Fayfield Junction! Change for Elveston!”

What subtle memory could there be, linked to these commonplace words, that caused such a flood of happy thoughts to fill my brain? I dismounted from the carriage in a state of joyful excitement for which I could not at first account. True, I had taken this very journey, and at the same hour of the day, six months ago; but many things had happened since then, and an old man’s memory has but a slender hold on recent events: I sought “the missing link” in vain. Suddenly I caught sight of a bench—the only one provided on the cheerless platform—with a lady seated on it, and the whole forgotten scene flashed upon me as vividly as if it were happening over again.

“Yes,” I thought. “This bare platform is, for me, rich with the memory of a dear friend! She was sitting on that very bench, and invited me to share it, with some quotation from Shakespeare—I forget what. I’ll try the Earl’s plan for the Dramatization of Life, and fancy that figure to be Lady Muriel; and I wo’n’t undeceive myself too soon!”

So I strolled along the platform, resolutely “making believe” (as children say) that the casual passenger, seated on that bench, was the Lady Muriel I remembered so well. She was facing away from me, which aided the elaborate cheatery I was practicing on myself: but, though I was careful, in passing the spot, to look the other way, in order to prolong the pleasant illusion, it was inevitable that, when I turned to walk back again, I should see who it was. It was Lady Muriel herself!

The whole scene now returned vividly to my memory; and, to make this repetition of it stranger still, there was the same old man, whom I remembered seeing so roughly ordered off, by the Station-Master, to make room for his titled passenger. The same, but “with a difference”: no longer tottering feebly along the platform, but actually seated at Lady Muriel’s side,

and in conversation with her! “Yes, put it in your purse,” she was saying, “and remember you’re to spend it all for *Minnie.* And mind you bring her something nice, that’ll do her real good! And give her my love!” So intent was she on saying these words, that, although the sound of my footstep had made her lift her head and look at me, she did not at first recognize me.

I raised my hat as I approached, and then there flashed across her face a genuine look of joy, which so exactly recalled the sweet face of Sylvie, when last we met in Kensington Gardens, that I felt quite bewildered.

Rather than disturb the poor old man at her side, she rose from her seat, and joined me in my walk up and down the platform, and for a minute or two our conversation was as utterly trivial and commonplace as if we were merely two casual guests in a London drawing-room. Each of us seemed to shrink, just at first, from touching on the deeper interests which linked our lives together.

The Elveston train had drawn up at the platform, while we talked; and, in obedience to the Station Master’s obsequious hint of “This way, my Lady! Time’s up!”, we were making the best of our way towards the end which contained the sole first-class carriage, and were just passing the now-empty bench, when Lady Muriel noticed, lying on it, the purse in which her gift had just been so carefully bestowed, the owner of which, all unconscious of his loss, was being helped into a carriage at the other end of the train. She pounced on it instantly. “Poor old man!” she cried. “He mustn’t go off, and think he’s lost it!”

“Let *me* run with it! I can go quicker than you!” I said. But she was already half-way down the platform flying (”running” is much too mundane a word for such fairy-like motion) at a

pace that left all possible efforts of *mine* hopelessly in the rear.

She was back again before I had well completed my audacious boast of speed in running, and was saying, quite demurely, as we entered our carriage, “and you really think you could have done it quicker?”

“No, indeed!” I replied. “I plead ‘Guilty’ of gross exaggeration, and throw myself on the mercy of the Court!”

“The Court will overlook it—for this once!” Then her manner suddenly changed from playfulness to an anxious gravity.

“You are not looking your best!” she said with an anxious glance. “In fact, I think you look *more* of an invalid than when you left us. I very much doubt if London agrees with you?”

“It *may* be the London air,” I said, “or it may be the hard work—or my rather lonely life: anyhow, I’ve not been feeling very well, lately. But Elveston will soon set me up again. Arthur’s prescription—he’s my doctor, you know, and I heard from him this morning—is ‘plenty of ozone, and new milk, and *pleasant society’!”*

“Pleasant society?” said Lady Muriel**,** with a pretty make-believe of considering the question. “Well, really I don’t know where we can find *that* for you! We have so few neighbours. But new milk we *can* manage. Do get it of my old friend Mrs. Hunter, up there, on the hill-side. You may rely upon the *quality.* And her little Bessie comes to school every day, and passes your lodgings. So it would be very easy to send it.”

“I’ll follow your advice with pleasure,” I said; “and I’ll go and arrange about it to-morrow. I know Arthur will want a walk.”

“You’ll find it quite an easy walk—under three miles, I think.”

“Well, now that we’ve settled that point, let me retort your own remark upon yourself. I don’t think *you’re* looking quite your best!”

“I daresay not,” she replied in a low voice; and a sudden shadow seemed to overspread her face. “I’ve had some troubles lately. It’s a matter about which I’ve been long wishing to consult you, but I couldn’t easily write about it. I’m *so* glad to have this opportunity!”

“Do you think”, she began again, after a minute’s silence, and with a visible embarrassment of manner most unusual in her, “that a promise, deliberately and solemnly given, is *always* binding except, of course, where its fulfillment would involve some actual *sin?”*

“I ca’n’t think of any other exception at this moment,” I said. “That branch of casuistry is usually, I believe, treated as a question of truth and untruth—”

“Surely that *is* the principle?” she eagerly interrupted. “I always thought the Bible-teaching about it consisted of such texts *’lie not one to another’?”*

“I have thought about that point,” I replied; “and it seems to me that the essence of *lying* is the intention of *deceiving.* If you give a promise, fully *intending* to fulfil it, you are certainly acting truthfully *then;* and, if you afterwards break it, that does not involve any *deception* I cannot call it *untruthful.”*

Another pause of silence ensued. Lady Muriel’s face was hard to read: she looked pleased, I thought, but also puzzled;

and I felt curious to know whether her question had, as I began to suspect, some bearing on the breaking off of her engagement with Captain (now Major) Lindon.

“You have relieved me from a great fear,” she said “but the thing is of course *wrong,* somehow. What texts would you quote, to prove it wrong?”

“Any that enforce the payment of *debts.* If *A* promises something to *B, B* has a claim upon *A*. And *A*’s sin, if he breaks his promise, seems to me more analogous to *stealing* than to *lying.”*

“It’s a new way of looking at it—to me,” she said; “but it seems a *true* way, also. However, I wo’n’t deal in generalities, with an old friend like you! For we *are* old friends somehow. Do you know, I think we *began* as old friends?’ she said with a playfulness of tone that ill accorded with the tears that glistened in her eyes.

“Thank you very much for saying so,” I replied. “I like to think of you as an *old* friend,” (”—though you don’t look it!” would have been the almost necessary sequence, with any other lady; but she and I seemed to have long passed out of the time when compliments, or any such trivialities, were possible).

Here the train paused at a station, where two or three passengers entered the carriage; so no more was said till we had reached our journey’s end.

On our arrival at Elveston, she readily adopted my suggestion that we should walk up together; so, as soon as our luggage had been duly taken charge of—hers by the servant who met her at the station, and mine by one of the porters—we set out together along the familiar lanes, now