

LITTLE NAN.

Written for Progress.

It was the close of a hot summer day; Elisabeth Farren dropped her busy hands in her lap, and bent forward slightly to watch the passers by.

The quaint yellow stone cottage in which she lived stood well back from the road in its own grounds; the door was at the side, where the flower garden was laid out in beds of bloom; the window at which Elisabeth sat looking down to the road. Two fine cherry trees, well laden with fruit, stood near the gate; Elisabeth could remember when they were planted. She and Nancy and Jack had all looked on, and now she was the only one left; and getting quite old, she told herself, thirty years old next week; why, even Jack would not know her if he ever came back; but there was small chance of that, fourteen years was a long, long time, and men soon forget. "We were only children," she thought, but a tender light shone in her eyes, as she lived again in the bygone times. And Nancy, little Nancy, the pet and darling of the house. Oh! who could say where she was? And the tears started to Elisabeth's eyes.

A voice broke in on her musings, "Elisabeth, do watch those boys, and see they don't steal the cherries."

Elisabeth rose, and the next moment passed the window, on her way to the gate. Leaning over it she watched the passing school boys out of sight, then slowly returned to the house, breaking off a spray of wild roses as she passed, and tucking them in her belt returned to find all in confusion, where she had left peace. To find the invalid mother in tears, and her own name being called in angry accents by her father, and the cause of all this disturbance—a little child.

Seated in the middle of the floor, where she had been discovered, two seconds before, by the angry old man; vainly trying to replace a shoe on an obstinate little foot, was a tiny little girl, with her blue eyes very wide open as she contemplated the disturbed countenances before her. Elisabeth gazed in speechless amazement. There was no child there when she left the room, and no one had passed her; it would be a bold child indeed who entered those gates while Squire Farren was able to be about. This evidently was a bold child, for it was not in the least disturbed by its position, but gazed calmly around as if at home.

"How did she come here? Who dared to bring her?" stormed the squire.

"Hush, Father, you will frighten her, I will try to find out;" and Elisabeth dropped on her knees by the little one, with a queer pain at her heart, as she noticed a strange resemblance to that long lost sister of whom she had been thinking only that afternoon. Did they notice it? she wondered.

"Who are you, dear?" she asked.

The child looked up in mild wonder. "I'm little Nan," came in calm baby tones. A burst of tears from the sofa, and an impatient exclamation from the squire greeted this answer.

"But where's your home?" asked Elisabeth, trying in vain to keep her voice from trembling. A burst of merry laughter came from the merry lips, and the owner evidently thought it all a joke, as she answered, "Yite here, of course."

Squire Farren made a hasty step forward, this was no joke to him. "Stop this fooling at once, Elisabeth; he ordered roughly. "Where did you come from, child? Who brought you here? Tell me at once."

"Little Nan" seemed to realize that it was no joke, now, for her pretty underlip dropped, and with a genuine howl of fright, she took refuge in Elisabeth's arms, hiding her face on her shoulder, and sobbing out some unintelligible speech, of which the words "Zuck," "old me," and "little Nan," oft repeated, were all that Elisabeth could understand.

"What does she say?" asked the squire, chafing helplessly under the storm he had brought upon himself.

"I think she is trying to tell us, that someone she calls Jack brought her, and told her this was her home."

"I'll wager he did. Some thrifless scamp trying to foist his child on us. But I'll find him; I'll have him put in jail. Children! indeed, I've had enough children, I think. No child shall stop here, mind that, ma'am," and with an angry glance at the sofa on which his wife lay, still sobbing, Squire Farren stamped out, to search the grounds and village, and expend his wrath on a police force, that spent all their time in the ale-house, instead of running in the tramps who stole and left their children at other people's doors.

The Squire's search was unsuccessful; for of course it never occurred to him, that the stranger, who arrived by the late afternoon train and was staying at the inn, could have had anything to do with the child who had startled them; even though the gentleman had left his luggage at the station, and walked the whole way in, and seemed to take such an interest in his search. He walked home, swearing softly to himself all the way, for it was something new for him to find himself thwarted. The sitting room was empty, save for his wife on her sofa, from which she rarely moved in the daytime. Today there was a shade

of pink in her cheeks, and she looked more animated than her husband had seen her look for years. She had faded slowly since the day her youngest daughter, the pride of her father's heart, had dared to cross his will, and marry the poor struggling doctor she loved with all her heart, instead of the wealthy man he had chosen for her.

The Squire never spoke to her again. He told her to choose between her doctor and her home, and she made a choice, and passed out of their lives. That the one on whom he had lavished the most of his love should have dared to cross his will, was more than the proud, self-willed man could bear; her name was never spoken before him, was rarely spoken even by Elisabeth, for the least mention upset her mother, and the least sign of agitation on her part would call up the demon of ill-temper, which rarely slept now, in the Squire's heart. He had nursed his pride and ill-will, until he had become a slave to them, and though he saw that the separation from her daughter was slowly breaking his wife's heart, he loved his own way too well to give it up even for her sake. Something in her look today, took him back to old times, and he stooped and kissed her, before asking, in a milder tone than he had thought possible a minute before:

"Where's that child? Has Elisabeth found its parents?"

"No, Robert. She sobbed herself to sleep, so Elisabeth went to lay her down on her bed. Did you find who she belonged to?"

"They took pretty good care not to let me find them. But they need not think I'm going to keep her. She goes to the workhouse tomorrow."

I think the Squire fully expected his wife to protest, when he would have had the pleasure of maintaining his own way regardless of any one else; but the little woman was wise in some things and knew from experience that opposition only made her husband keener after his own way, so she said nothing; privately thinking it a good sign that he had not insisted on her going tonight.

Elisabeth slept little that night, it was such a new sensation to feel tiny arms around her; and the likeness and name awoke a hundred conjectures. She stepped softly about the room in the morning, till a merry laugh told her the little visitor was awake, and had evidently slept off the fright of last night. A bewitching little picture she made, with her tangled golden curls, and rosy cheeks; not one mite afraid of her new surroundings, she sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes with her tiny fists, and looking Elisabeth up and down, in an old-fashioned way that was irresistibly funny.

"Well, do you know who I am?" asked Elisabeth, laughing, stroking the golden tangle as she spoke.

The answer astonished her, for instead of the laughing "no" she expected; Nan answered calmly. "You is aunt Bess, isn't you?"

"Who told you that, little Nan?" asked Elisabeth breathlessly.

"Muzzer told me, and Zick, Zick had a picture, but you was a little girl in it, and he said to call you 'aunt Bess,' but I said, 'aunt muzzer said 'aunt Bess,' and muzzer knows."

Elisabeth's heart beat so quickly, she was forced to sit down, before she could speak again. It was true then, the suspicion she had had, and this was really Nancy's child, her own little niece. She needed no further proof than the names of her childhood: who had ever called her by them but the little sister, and the playmate of long ago. And then it came to her to wonder how they had come together, and where was Jack now.

But a call from her father told her she had no time to waste in questioning, and hastily dressing little Nan, she led her into the dining-room.

"What made you so late? Your mother wants you," said the squire testily. "And can't you keep that child out of my sight till she goes to the workhouse?" Elisabeth turned and faced him, her face white, in expectation of the storm of rage which would burst upon her. "Father," she said, and her voice trembled as she spoke, for she was not a naturally brave woman, "father, I am sure that this is Nancy's child. I have obeyed you all these years, though I have longed to know something of my sister, but if you send little Nan away, you will send me too."

She waited with drooping head for the storm to burst, but the Squire had no words ready. That his meek, quiet daughter who had borne his overbearing temper so patiently, should suddenly oppose his will was too much. The old man felt as if he had received a shock.

Elisabeth, finding herself unanswered, caught up a tray on which her mother's breakfast was set, and hastened from the room, forgetting in her excitement, the innocent cause of it.

When the Squire's astonishment and wrath had cooled sufficiently to allow him to speak, he found himself as he imagined alone, and going over the speech which had enraged him in his mind again, he wandered away from it into the long ago, called up by the name that was never long absent from his mind though never spoken.

Squire Farren was in his chair to all appearances, but in reality he was far away, wandering through the lanes, with an imperious little maiden tugging at his hand, and demanding the roses which grew beyond his reach.

Was he still in the long ago, or was he dreaming? Surely this was Nancy herself, demanding her breakfast in an injured tone. He came to himself with a start. Little Nan, tired of being left to herself, had crept to his side. "I'm hungry, give Nan her bektas, please," came again in a plaintive tone.

With the old memories still fresh in his mind, Squire Farren lifted the little girl on a chair, and proceeded to spread her bread, and pour her milk. It seemed like a dream to him as he did it, and he half hoped he would not wake up.

"Take 'you own bektas, dranpa," said Nan, regarding him with wondering eyes.

The squire woke up then, but he woke up from more than his dreams. Seeing tears in his eyes the little one left her chair, and climbing on his knee, patted his face with her tiny hands, and besought him "not to cry," adding as a special comfort, "Muzzer will be here soon."

The squire down and cried like a child, but the tears and little Nan's soft fingers loosened the icy band around his heart, and the seeds of love and goodwill sprang up there. Elisabeth came to the door, and paused there, amazed at the sight which met her view, then softly turning away to hear the good news to her mother.

A little later the Squire was summoned to the study there to find, in the person of the courteous stranger, who had been so interested in his search the day before; the boy, who had grown up with his children, till his father's removal from the village.

Jack Gibson told his tale in a straightforward, manly way, though there was evidently a slight uneasiness in his mind as to how the squire would receive it. Making his way slowly homeward, on the death of his father; he had come across Nancy, a widow, with one little girl, living in a town not very far away. Together they had formed the plan of letting the little one find her way to the Squire's heart, before the mother begged for that forgiveness she was not too sure of receiving. So Jack had brought Nan on, and entering the garden through a side wicket, familiar to him long ago, had watched his chance to leave her. Accustomed to meeting strangers, and having known of these new relations all her life, little Nan had done the rest, and Jack was well pleased to leave the house bearing the message for "muzzer to come soon." He did not leave the grounds however, till he had transacted a piece of business on his own account, and convinced Elisabeth that some men had excellent memories.

There was a wedding in the old village church not long after these events, but the chief interest of the onlookers was centred in a tiny little bride-maid, whom it was quite evident was of more importance to Squire Farren than even the bride.

A. PENNE.

Yet to be Found.

Old traditions die hard. The story that Bonaparte put a cheque for one hundred thousand francs in a silver five-franc piece, and that the coin is yet in circulation in France, has many believers. They say that the people did not want the five-franc piece, and that in order to create a demand for silver money of that denomination the Emperor resorted to the device mentioned. The cheque, or Treasury order, was written on asbestos paper and made in the coin. It would be interesting to know, if this story be true, how many five franc pieces have been broken open since the story of the cheque was first circulated.

Blackie on Singing.

The late Professor Blackie had a pleasant house, "Altna-craig," picturesquely situated among trees on one of the hills which overlook the lovely Bay of Oban, and he was formerly a familiar figure in the little town; but since the invasion of the railway, in 1880, he had almost deserted it. He used to be seen abroad in a grey blouse suit, with a red silk sash round his waist, as a variation upon the plaid, and, indoors or out, was generally humming a cheerful tune. "Sing, sing, man, sing!" said he, one day, to a good Scot with whom he lodged for a time. "Why don't ye sing? Ye'll never go to the devil if ye sing!"

Ups and Downs in South Africa.

A writer in the South African Standard and Diggers' News describes some of the characters to be met with in Johannesburg. Here, shuffling along, goes a grizzled old gentleman selling newspapers, who a little while ago was a prosperous merchant in Natal. There, another unwashed latter-day man, who was once a well-to-do business man on the very streets he now haunts; and here, again another scarecrow, casting hungry, fleeting glances into the bars, was

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Cure for Writers' Cramp.

Some stir has recently been made by the announcement of the discovery of a cure for writers' cramp. Massage and light gymnastics are given as the curative treatment. It is now about fifteen years since this course, with certain additions, was pursued by a number of persons in an American city. The same treatment has also been used as a cure for telegraphers' cramp or paralysis. One case in point occurred during the last illness of President Garfield. One of the most expert telegraphists in the United States was so far overtaxed that his arm became numb, and there was a very visible contraction and shriveling of the muscles. A person who had been cured of cramp by the process mentioned advised the young man to try massage, using at the same time applications of hot glycerine well rubbed into the muscles. For about five weeks the patient persisted in this treatment with the most satisfactory results, as the muscles regained all of their elasticity and the numbness and pain entirely disappeared. Since that time scores of persons have successfully tried the remedy.

Where Applause is Lacking

At the English court on the occasion of a state entertainment applause is unknown, and the writer of this paragraph has heard Mme. Albani sing some of her most beautiful notes, the only signal of success being an impressive hush on the part of the audience, and a gentle tapping on the hand by the Princess of Wales with her fan.



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