

Alice and Beatrice

Grandmamma

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Alice and Beatrice



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CHAPTER I.

VISIT TO GRANDMAMMA—WALKS TO THE SEA-SHORE—BATHING IN THE SEA.

ALICE and Beatrice were two little girls of about four and six years of age. They were staying with their grandmamma. Alice and Beatrice were very glad to be with their grandmamma, for she lived in the country and near the sea. They liked to see the green fields, full of pretty flowers, and to play in the nice large garden, and to walk up and down the high hills that were on all sides of the house, and also they liked to go to the sea-shore and look on the wide sea.

Grandmamma loved Alice and Beatrice very much, and she liked to have them with her, and she tried to make them good and happy. Every morning they said their prayers to her, and every evening before they went to bed; and they never forgot to thank God, who had taken care of them during the night, and to beg God to bless and take care of them, and all those they loved, that day and always. Little Beatrice could not say her

prayers quite so well as Alice, but she said them better and better every day.

After breakfast grandmamma had to order the dinner, and whilst she went to the kitchen to speak to the cook, she let the two little girls run up and down the long verandah which was in front of the house, and which led to the pretty garden.

Alice read to her grandmamma, learned by heart and said some verses from her hymnbook, and little Beatrice always learned one verse every day. Then Alice did some sums, and after she had shown them, and grandmamma had found them all right, Alice wrote her copy. As soon as Alice began to write, Beatrice brought her letters and tried to learn to know them. Grandmamma told her when she knew them all she would give her a book with large letters and words.

After the lessons were over, the little girls went out for a walk with Mary.

Mary was a kind person and very fond of the two children, and they liked Mary very much. Mary went with Alice and Beatrice down the sloping walks, till they came to a gate, which they opened; they then went across a little wooden bridge, and down a very steep path and some steps that led to the sea-shore.

Alice and Beatrice liked to go to the sea-shore very much. Mary sat on the sand and worked, whilst Alice and Beatrice played about. They had each of them a pretty wooden basket and a little wooden spade, and they dug in the sand on the sea-shore, and filled their baskets with sand or stones. Sometimes they

dug large holes for the sea to come in, and they liked to see the waves come higher and higher, till the large holes were full of water. Sometimes Alice and Beatrice dug a long ditch down the sloping shore to the edge of the waves, and the water ran down it into the sea, and they called it their river. When they were tired of digging, they asked Mary if they might look for pretty stones, and shells, and sea-weed.

There were plenty of pretty stones and sea-weed, and even shells, to be found. Some of the shells were pretty and white and smooth, and the children took great care of them, and took them home to play with. They often found sea-weeds of all colours, red and yellow, green and brown, and some sea-weeds were small and fine, like hair or moss; and grandmamma helped them to dry them, and put them on paper. There was another kind of sea-weed that was very long and heavy, and looked like large black rushes. Mary told them not to take those home, for they were not nice, and they could not be dried.

One day Alice found a pretty stone, or pebble, as it is called: it was very clear, not quite so clear as glass; but when she held it towards the sun, she could see through it.

‘I will take the pretty stone home, Mary,’ said Alice, ‘and give it dear mamma.’

‘Perhaps,’ said Mary, ‘your mamma will have it cut and polished for a brooch.’

‘Yes, I am sure she will,’ cried Alice; ‘I am so glad that I have found it!’ and Alice put it into her pocket.

'I will try and find a pretty stone too for mamma,' said Beatrice, and she ran along the sand, close to the waves: and just when Mary called her to come away, a large wave came higher up than the others had done before, and wetted little Beatrice's shoes and socks.

Beatrice ran back to Mary, and she was a little frightened, and she said, 'Mary, I did not hear you call me till that big wave came up to my feet, and I could not run away quick enough, and my feet are so wet.'

'We must go home directly, Miss Beatrice,' said Mary, 'and make haste and change your shoes and socks;' and they went home.

Another day they went to the beach again, and their grandmamma went with them. As they went through the pretty garden, they stopped to look at the rose-trees that were beginning to bloom; and grandmamma gave Alice a white rose and Beatrice a dark-red one. She cut off the thorns from the stalks, and Beatrice asked her, 'Why do you cut off those things, grandmamma?'

'Those things are called thorns, my dear child; they would prick your fingers, for they are very sharp.'

The children looked at the thorns, and put their fingers to them, and said, 'They prick like needles.' They thanked her for the roses, and smelt them, for they were very sweet.

They went on to the gate, and then grandmamma opened it, and gave Beatrice her hand across the narrow bridge, and down the steep path, and the many steps.

Alice ran on alone, jumping along, and pulling some wild flowers that grew in the grass on each side the path, and she came first to the beach, and then ran back to meet her grandmamma and little sister.

When they came to the sea-shore, they saw that Mary was there waiting for them with a large basket. They knew that the basket was full of their bathing dresses; for their grandmamma liked them to bathe in the sea whenever the weather was warm and the sun shone.

There was a tent at the foot of the cliff, for a steep cliff rose very high a little way from the sea-shore on each side of the narrow valley through which they had to come. In this tent the two little girls went to undress and get ready for bathing. Mary helped them; and when they had put on their bathing dresses, Mary did the same, and went into the sea with them.

Alice ran into the water alone, and jumped over the little waves that came rolling gently on to the shore. Beatrice took hold of Mary's hand, but she was not afraid, and she dipped her face and hands into the waves, and she tried to jump about like Alice.

Then Beatrice asked Mary to let her float; and Mary held Beatrice's head, and the little girl lay quite stiff and quiet on the water, and her feet and body floated, which she liked very much.

'Please, Mary,' said Alice, 'let me try and float too.' And Mary let Beatrice stand by her side and floated Alice backwards and forwards.

'When I am a little older,' said Alice, 'grandmamma says that I must learn to swim.'

'And I, too,' said Beatrice.

After the children had jumped about a short time in the waves, and were quite warm, their grandmamma said—

'Come out now, you have been in the water long enough;' and the little girls came out and ran into the tent, where they were soon dried and dressed, for their grandmamma helped them too, and they made haste to go home, up the many steps and steep path, and were glad to have their dinner, because they were hungry after their bath.





CHAPTER II. EVENING WALK—STEAMER— LACEMAKING.

THE weather had been very hot—so hot that the children had had no walk, but had spent most of the day in the shade under the long verandah, and in the afternoon they had played under a large tree in the garden. When the evening came it was much cooler; and after the little girls had had their tea, grandmamma told them that she would take them over the high hill at the back of the house to visit a poor woman who had been ill. Their grandmamma's house was half-way up the hill—you could see the sea through a narrow valley; and opposite the house on the other side of the valley was another high hill, and behind that hill was the town.

Grandmamma walked slowly up the hill, up a zig-zag path, and rested on a bench half-way up, for it was a very steep hill. The little girls were not tired, and they ran on before and waited for their grandmamma at each turn of the path. They went higher and higher, till at last Alice called out—

'How much I can see now, grandmamma! I can see all the town, the houses, and the church!'

'I can see two churches,' said Beatrice; 'and what a lot of ships!'

'Please, grandmamma,' said Alice, 'come up higher. Pray, dear grandmamma, make haste, there is a great smoke on the sea; it comes from a ship. Is the ship on fire?' she asked a little anxiously.

Their grandmamma was soon by the children's side.

'That is a steamer or steamship, dear Alice; it has a fire in it that causes the smoke, but it is not on fire, and you can see that the smoke comes out of a tall black chimney. You have seen the train come and go often, and you know how much smoke it makes.'

'Yes, I know; but the smoke from the train is not black like that, and why is that?'

'You are right, dear child, it is not black; but that is because they burn a different kind of coal, called coke, in trains. Trains and steamers are made to move by the same means, which is by steam. Some clever man made steam turn wheels and raise heavy beams up and down, and thus it is that ships and trains are made to move. Steam is made to grind corn, and to make biscuits, and to saw wood, and steam helps to make nearly everything we wear.'

'Oh! grandmamma, how wonderful! I do not understand how steam can do all that. The man must have been very clever to have thought of this. Do you know his name?'

'James Watt was his name; he made the first good and useful steam-engine, I believe, about seventy years ago; but he was not the first man who had found out that steam could be made useful, or who made the first engine.'

When they came to the top of the hill they saw several cows feeding on the grass.

'Will these cows hurt us?' asked Alice.

'No, my dear, they will not, unless you tease them.'

'But why do people run away when they see cows?'

'It is very foolish of any one to run away. When a poor cow or ox has been treated ill by naughty boys or cruel men, and frightened and made angry, it runs about; sometimes people have been tossed and hurt. But if you will treat a cow kindly, I am sure that it will never hurt you.'

The little girls walked through the green meadow when the cows were feeding, and the cows did them no harm. They soon came to a nice little cottage, with a few trees close by, and a little garden.

Their grandmamma spoke to an old woman who was sitting outside the cottage door, and said to her that she was glad to see her up and looking better; and the old woman replied that the warm weather had done her a great deal of good, and that she was very glad to see her and the little children.

Whilst their grandmamma was talking to the old woman, Alice and Beatrice looked about them, and examined with wonder a

cushion that the old woman had had on her lap when they came.

They then played with a little kitten that was in the garden till their grandmamma had finished talking. Then Alice asked, 'What is this cushion for, with all those little sticks hanging down on each side of it, and what was the old woman doing with them?'

'Mrs. Miller is making lace, dear Alice, and these sticks are called bobbins, and there is some very fine thread which she braids and twists together into a pretty pattern.'

The kind old woman came and took her cushion, and sitting down, began to show Alice and Beatrice how she twisted the little bobbins backwards and forwards, and threw them from one side the cushion to the other. She did this at first very slowly, that the little girls might see it more easily; but when they had looked enough, she threw her bobbins backwards and forwards so quickly that the children were quite surprised. Mrs. Miller then told them that all the little girls in the village begin to learn to make lace when they are seven or eight years old, and learn soon to make it nicely.

'How very pretty it is!' said Alice. 'I should like to learn to make lace. May I, grandmamma, when I am older?'

'Yes, you may, if you wish it; but you must first learn to sew neatly, for that is more useful than making lace.'

'But why do all the little girls here learn to make lace, grandmamma?'

'Because they can help to earn money for their father and mother. Among the poor people in the village, very young children begin to help to earn their own bread.'

Before the little girls went home, they ran about on the green meadow, and gathered a handful of yellow cowslips and other wild flowers; but when the sun went behind the opposite hill, and the clouds above the sun were red and bright like gold, and the sea looked nearly the same colour as the clouds, grandmamma said—

'We will go back now, for it is time for my little girls to go to bed.'

Then they all returned down the zig-zag path, and were soon home again, and Alice and Beatrice went to bed, after telling Mary first of all that they had seen.



CHAPTER III.

A RAINY DAY—STORY OF PRETTY AND THE BEAR.

WHAT a rainy day!' said Alice, one morning, when Mary came to call them, and to help them to dress. 'We cannot go out at all to-day.'

'What a pity!' said her little sister. 'I am so sorry.'

'What shall we do all day, if we cannot go out?' said Alice.

'The rain will make all your flowers grow, miss,' said Mary, 'and make the weather a little cooler.'

'But I want to go out and dig in the sand,' said Alice.

'And so do I,' said Beatrice.

Mary took no further notice of the children's words; but when they were at breakfast, Alice said, 'Grandmamma, is it not very tiresome that the rain is come to-day? We cannot go out. I wish that it would never rain.'

'Nasty rain,' said Beatrice; 'I can't bear the rain!'

'You must not say that the rain is nasty, for it does a great deal of good, dear children. God sends us the rain when we want it, and we thank God for it.'

'Why do you thank God, grandmamma,' asked Alice, 'for the rain? What good can the rain do?'

'It makes the grass grow; and horses, cows, and sheep, and all other animals that eat grass, live upon it; and the rain makes the corn grow, and from corn we make our bread; and what would you or I do, or any one else, if the corn did not grow and we had no bread? The rain makes the trees and the flowers grow, and all the fruit too, and my little girls would be sorry if there were no fruit.'

'Yes, indeed, grandmamma,' cried both children.

'But I thought,' said Alice, 'that the sun made the fruit ripe.'

'Yes, so it does; but the sun alone could not make the plants grow, and the rain alone could not make the flowers open their leaves, or the fruit or the corn get ripe. We want both sun and rain, and we must thank God that He gives us enough of each to do good on earth.'

After the two little girls had finished their little lessons, and done all that their grandmamma wished them to do, she said to them—

'As you have both been good this morning, and because it rains, I will tell you a story of my two dogs, when I lived in Russia.

'It was a hot summer's day, a long time ago, when my little dog Pretty came to me yelling and barking. I was busy writing in a

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