

**THE
PALACE IN THE GARDEN.**

BY

MRS. MOLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "CARROTS," "SILVERTHORNS," "FOUR WINDS FARM," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRIET M. BENNETT



LONDON:

HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.

1887.

CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.](#) WE THREE

[CHAPTER II.](#) THE SCORED-OUT NAME

[CHAPTER III.](#) "ROSEBUDS"

[CHAPTER IV.](#) THE DOOR IN THE GARDEN WALL

[CHAPTER V.](#) WHAT GERALD FOUND

[CHAPTER VI.](#) OPEN, SESAME

[CHAPTER VII.](#) GRANDPAPA'S SECRETARY

[CHAPTER VIII.](#) STEPPED OUT OF THE FRAME

[CHAPTER IX.](#) OUR FAIRY

[CHAPTER X.](#) THREE STARLINGS

[CHAPTER XI.](#) BROTHER AND SISTER

[CHAPTER XII.](#) THE STORY OF THE OLD HOUSE

THE
PALACE IN THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

WE THREE.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"



I think the best beginning is the morning that grandpapa sent for us to come down to the study. Tib and Gerald, don't think so. They say I should begin by telling our names, and how old we were, and all that—at least, Gerald says so; Tib isn't quite sure. Tib very often isn't quite sure. She has got too grand ideas, and if she were going to write a story, she would make it like poetry, very difficult to understand, and awfully long words, and lots about feelings and sorrows and mysteries. I like mysteries, too—I think they are very interesting, and I *have* one to tell about, as you will see, only I must tell it my own way, and after all, as this story is only to be read by Tib and Gerald—and our children—we have settled that when we are all three grown-up and married, and have children, it shall be made into a book for them—I daresay it doesn't much matter how it is told.

Well, that morning we were all poking our heads as far as we dared out of the school-room window—Miss Evans hadn't yet come—to see the first primrose man that had passed that year. We heard his "All a blowing, all a growing," far off down the street, but we hadn't yet seen him and his basket with the beautiful light yellow bunches at the top, and we were wondering if we could get Fanny to run out and buy us twopence-worth, when Bland stuck his solemn and rather crabbed-looking face in at the door. Bland is grandpapa's "own man," as they say, and his name doesn't suit him at all—at least, it didn't then—he's not so bad now we're older.



"Young ladies and Master Gerald," he said, "my master wishes you all to come down stairs to speak to him before he goes out."

Down we all tumbled from the window-sill. Tib and I began smoothing our aprons and tugging at each other's hair—grandpapa was very particular. Gerald only looked at his hands.

"They are rather dirty," he said seriously. "But I did wash them so very well this morning, and it's not ten o'clock yet. Do you think, Gussie——?"

I knew what he was going to say, so I cut him short.

"Yes, I do think you'd better run and wash them *at once*—why, you might have had them done by now—they are just perfectly grimy."

For Gerald would any day talk for ten minutes about why he *needn't* wash his hands rather than run off and do them. I am afraid he was rather a dirty little boy—he'll be very angry if he sees that, for he is now getting to be very particular indeed—for though he liked bathing in the sea, he would do anything to avoid washing—regular good soapy washing. But he was too afraid of grandpapa to stand out when I said his hands were as bad as "grimy;" so off he went.

"Are we to come down at once?" asked Tib.

"Yes, miss. Your grandpapa has ordered the brougham to be round in ten minutes," Bland graciously informed us as Gerald started off.

"I wonder what it's about?" said Tib. "I hope he's not vexed with us."

For it wasn't often that grandpapa sent for us in the morning, except on birthdays or Christmas Day, when he had presents for us. He never forgot about that, I must say.

"Why should he be vexed with us?" I said. "We've not done anything naughty;" for Tib was standing there with the tears on their way to her big blue eyes, as I could see quite well—and I've no patience with people who look as if they had been naughty when they haven't.

"Well, you go in first, then, Gussie," said Tib. "I wish I wasn't frightened, but I can't help it."

By this time we were on the stairs, not far from the study door, and Gerald had run after us, with very red shiny paws, you may be sure, and in another moment we were all three in "the august presence," as Tib called it afterwards.

Grandpapa had just finished his breakfast. He used often to have it like that, just on a little tray in the study. It didn't look very comfortable, and he might quite as well have had it in the dining-room all nicely set out, and Tib and me to pour out his coffee in turns. But he did not think of it, I suppose, and at that time I don't think we did, either. We had never seen any other "ways;" we didn't know how other families lived—families where there were mammas, or any way grandmamas, or aunts, as well as children, and we were so young that we just took things as we found them. I think children are generally like that, especially if they see very little outside their own homes.

Grandpapa was not old-looking at all—not the least like the pictures in old-fashioned books of a very aged man, with a gentle and rather silly face, and a white beard, and a stick, sitting in a big arm-chair by the fire, and patting a very curly-haired grandchild on the head. I'm quite sure grandpapa never patted any of us on the head; and *now*, of course, we're too big. But I didn't mind his not being like the pictures of grandpapas, and now I mind it still less, for I'm really proud of his being so nice-looking. That morning I can remember quite well how he looked as he sat by the table, with the tray pushed away, and a whole bundle of letters before him. He glanced up at us as we came trooping in, with his bright dark eyes and

a half smile on his face. We were not very fond of that half smile of his: it made it so difficult to tell if he was in fun or earnest.

"Well, young people," he said, "and how does the wind blow this morning?"

He looked at Gerald as he spoke. Gerald was staring at his red hands.

"I don't know, grandpapa," he said; and then seeing that grandpapa's eyes were still fixed on him, he got uncomfortable, and tugged Tib, who was next him. "Tib knows, p'r'aps," he said. "I'm only seven, grandpapa."

Grandpapa moved his eyes to Tib.

"It strikes me," he said, "that you're getting too big, young woman, to be spoken of as if you were a kitten. You must call your sister by her proper name, Gerald."

"It's hard for him to say, grandpapa," said Tib. "That's why Gussie and he always say Tib, instead of Mercedes."

"Umph!—yes—Tom-fool name!" said grandpapa, which made me rather angry.

"No, grandpapa, it's not a Tom-fool name," I said. "It's Spanish; and it was because our papa and mamma lived in Spain that they called it her."

I daresay I spoke pertly. Any way, I was punished, for my words had the effect of bringing the eyes upon me in my turn.

"Called it her? called it her?" he repeated slowly. "What English! Miss Evans is to be congratulated on her success! So Mercedes is a Spanish name, is it? Thank you—thank you very much indeed for the information. Now perhaps you will all be good enough to listen to some information from me."

I had got very red while grandpapa was speaking, quite as much from anger as from shame, for I wasn't so easily put down as Tib and Gerald; I had a quicker temper. But when grandpapa spoke of having information to give us, I felt so curious to know what it could be that I tried to look as if I hadn't minded what he said. So he went on:

"I'm going to send you all off to the country next week; I don't want to keep this house open. I am very busy, and I would rather live at my club." Grandpapa stopped a minute. I think he wanted to see what we would say.

"Are we to go to Ansdell Friars so soon?" I said. I suppose I didn't seem very pleased, and no more did Tib or Gerald. It wasn't very long—only three or four months—since we had come from there, and there was nothing at Ansdell we much cared about. We knew it all so well. It was a regular big, grand country house; but its bigness was not much good to us, as we were strictly shut up in our own rooms, and sharply scolded if we were found out of them; and there was nothing amusing or interesting there. The country is not pretty, and the walks are not to be compared with those at—never mind where; I shall tell you the name of the place in a little while. So we had no particular reason for being glad to go back there; on the whole, I think we liked London better. We had less of Miss Evans in London, for she only came every day; but at Ansdell Friars she lived with us. Grandpapa had persuaded her to do so, but she didn't like it, and we didn't like it, so we were not very happy together. She didn't like children, and was only a governess because she had to be, not because she liked it, and she was always telling us so. I used to think then all governesses were the same, but I know better now. There are some *awfully* nice, who really like teaching, and aren't always scolding the children, as if it was their own fault that they are children and have to be taught.

"And is Miss Evans coming?" said Gerald, dolefully.

"You are not going to Ansdell Friars at all; and, I am sorry to say," grandpapa went on, "Miss Evans is not able to go with you. Nurse will have to look after you till I can find another Miss Evans."

Our faces fell, I have no doubt, at the last sentence. Another Miss Evans! Still, it was very nice to think there'd be *no* Miss Evans for a while. Nurse looking after us meant, as we knew very well, that we should do pretty much as we liked; for nurse spoiled us most horribly. It was a very delightful prospect.

"We'll try to be very good, grandpapa," said Tib.

"Umph!" said grandpapa.

"And when are we going, please?" I could not resist putting in. I was burning with curiosity, and so, I am sure, were the others, though they were afraid to ask. Grandpapa looked at me.

"Upon my word, Gustava," he said, "I think you might give me time to tell you. When I was young, children were not allowed to cross-question their elders. You are going to a little country house I have which you have never seen nor heard of. It is much nearer town than Ansdell Friars, so I

shall be able to come down every now and then to see you, and to hear if you are behaving properly. It is a much smaller place than Ansdell—in fact, it's quite a small house. But there's a good garden; you will have plenty of space to play in. Only I wish you to understand one thing: there are other houses near—it isn't like Ansdell, all alone in a park—and neighbours, of course. Now, I won't have you make friends with any one unless I tell you you may. You are not to go into other people's houses or to chatter to strangers. Do you understand?"

"Yes, grandpapa," we all three replied, feeling rather frightened. I don't think we did quite understand, for we never had made friends with any one. We had lived very solitary lives, without any companions of our own age—for we had scarcely any relations, and none that we knew anything of. And as people don't miss what they have never had, I don't think it would ever have come into our heads to do what grandpapa was so afraid of. He certainly made us think more about other people than we had ever done before.

"What is the name of the place, please, grandpapa?" asked Tib in her soft voice.

If it had been *me* that had asked it, he would have snubbed me again. But it was certainly true, as the servants all said, that he favoured Tib the most. Perhaps it was that she was so pretty—perhaps it was for a reason that I can't tell just yet.

"The name of the place," he repeated—"of the house, I suppose you mean? The name of the place does not matter to you. You will not have to take your own tickets at the station. The house has an absurd name, but as it has always been called so, it is no use thinking of changing it. It is called 'Rosebuds.'"

Grandpapa stood up as he spoke, and just then Bland opened the door to announce the carriage. So we all said good-bye to him and trotted off. We knew we should probably not see him again for two or three days, but we were so used to it we did not care; and we had plenty to interest our minds and give us something to talk of.

"What a very pretty name 'Rosebuds' is," Tib exclaimed, as soon as we were safely out of hearing. "I'm sure it must be a very pretty place to have such a name. I daresay it's a white cottage, with beautiful old-fashioned windows, and roses climbing all over."

"I don't like cottages with roses growing over them," said Gerald. "There are always witches living in cottages like that, in the fairy tales. There is in *Snow-white and Rose-red*."

"Well," said Tib, "it would be rather fun to have a witch at Rosebuds. I do hope there'll be something interesting and out of the common there—something *romantic*." Tib said the last word rather slowly. I don't think she was quite sure how to say it, and I am quite sure none of us knew what it meant.

"I hope there'll be nice hide-and-seek places in the garden, and nice trees for climbing up, and perhaps grassy hills for rolling down," said I. "If grandpapa only comes to see us now and then, and there's no Miss Evans, and only old Liddy"—old Liddy was nurse—"it *will* be very jolly. I shouldn't wonder—I really shouldn't—if it was more jolly than we've ever had anything in our lives—more like how the children in story-books are, you know, Tib."

For about this time we had begun to read a good deal more to ourselves, and among the old books in grandpapa's library we had found a nest which contained great treasures; many of the volumes had belonged to our father when he was a boy, and some even had been grandpapa's own childish books. Grandpapa had given us leave to read them, and you can fancy what a treat it was to us, who had had so little variety in our lives, to get hold of *Holiday House*, and the *Swiss Family Robinson*, and the *Parent's Assistant*, and best of all perhaps, the dearest little shabby, dumpy, dark-brown book of real old-fashioned fairy tales. I have it still—no shabbier for all our thumbing of it: it is so strongly bound, though it is so plain and dingy-looking, and I mean to keep it for my children.



Click to ENLARGE
Among the old books we had found great treasures.

"But grandpapa said he was going to find another Miss Evans, Gussie," said Gerald.

"Never mind. She isn't found yet; and I don't believe there *could* be another quite as bad as this one," I said, consolingly.

But a brilliant idea struck Tib. She stopped short on the top step but one—we were climbing up stairs by this time—before the school-room landing, and turned round so as to face us two—Gerald and me.

"I tell you what, Gussie and Gerald," she said: "suppose we were to be very, just *dreadfully* good at our lessons for a little, don't you think it *might* make Miss Evans tell grandpapa that she really thought we should be the

better for a holiday. I should think even *she* would like to do something good-natured before she left."

Gerald and I stood listening. It was a grave matter, and we did not want to commit ourselves hastily.

"Do you mean being very quiet in the school-room, never whispering to each other, or making even the least little bit of funny faces when she's not looking? or do you mean doing our lessons for her just awfully well?"

"Both," said Tib, solemnly.

"Oh, I don't think I *could*," I replied. "It is so very nice to be naughty sometimes."

"But, Gussie," said Gerald, "any way, you might settle to do our lessons terribly well. Don't you see, if we did them quite well Miss Evans might think we knew everything, and she might tell grandpapa we didn't need to learn anything more."

"And you might settle to be naughty with *us* or with Liddy," said Tib, persuasively. "Gerald and I will promise not to mind, won't we, Gerald? And we'll explain to Liddy."

"I'll think about it," was all I could say.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCORED-OUT NAME.

"How new life reaps what the old life did sow."

Edwin Arnold.



was the naughty one of the family. I dare say you—whoever you are—that are going to read this will have found this out already, and it was best to make it plain at the beginning. Tib and Gerald were really very good—at least, they would have been if I had let them. But still, as I used often to say to them as a sort of a make-up for the troubles I got them into, it *would* have been rather dull work had we all three been extra good. And even the great thing that I have to write about, *the* thing that put it into my head to write at all, would never have come but for our being in a way naughty—that is very queer, isn't it? To think that good and nice things should sometimes come out of being naughty! I have often puzzled about it. I think it must be that there are different kinds of naughtiness—*perfectly* different—for nothing good could come out of real, wicked naughtiness—telling lies, or being cruel to each other, or things like that; but the sort of naughtiness of just being mischievous, and of being so bubbling over with the niceness of being alive, that you *can't* keep quiet, and remember about not knocking things over and tearing yourself, and the naughtiness of hating your lessons on a beautiful day, when it's really too tempting out-of-doors—all these kinds of naughtiness and lots of others I could tell you, for I've thought so much about it—all these kinds are different, surely? And one can fancy good and nice things coming out of them without getting one's ideas muddled. That's one thing I'm going to be very particular about with my children—I'm going to explain to them *well* about the two kinds of being naughty, so that they won't get all into a puzzle about it. I think I even shall settle to have two kinds of words for them; for I do know, I am sorry to say, what it is to be really naughty too. Just a few times in my life I can remember the dreadful feeling of real, boiling anger at some one—I had it several times to Miss Evans, and once or twice to—no, I won't say;

it's all so different now. And *once* I told what wasn't true, quite knowing all about it. But I *never* did it again. The horribleness of the feeling was too bad, and in *that* way my naughtiness did me good!

Our plan for getting Miss Evans to help us to a holiday hadn't much chance, as you shall hear.

When we got to the school-room we found she hadn't come, though it was a quarter to ten, and she generally came at half-past nine.

"Everything seems going topsy-turvy to-day," said I, seating myself on the high guard, and swinging my feet about. It was a very dangerous seat, as the guard was anything but steady, and if it toppled over, there was no saying but that you might be landed in the middle of the fire. "Miss Evans late—and us going away to a place we never heard of before! It's almost as nice as if the sun had forgotten to get up—what fun that would be!"

"I don't think that would be fun at all," said Gerald. "I'd much rather he should forget to go to bed some night. Which would you rather, Tib?"

But Tib wasn't listening. She was pressing her face against the window, her thoughts intent upon primroses again.

"Hush!" she said; "I'm sure I heard him. He can't be far off yet, or else it's another man. Listen." And as she held up her finger there came softly through the distance again the "All a growing, all a blowing."

"I wonder why things seem so much prettier far off," said Tib, thoughtfully. But just then the cry came again, and this time unmistakably nearer. Off darted Tib. "I will try to get Fanny to catch him," she said; and in five minutes she was back again in triumph.

"Fanny wasn't to be found, of course," she said. "But that good Liddy poked up the little page-boy—he's new, so he hasn't learnt to be impudent yet—and sent him down the street. We shall have the primroses directly. Oh, I say, Gussie and Gerald"—and Tib flung herself down on the hearth-rug, and rolled herself over, as if she were on a lawn of beautiful fresh grass—"just fancy if we were in the country, and could gather primroses for ourselves—as many as ever we wanted. *Wouldn't* it be lovely?"

"Perhaps we may—perhaps they won't be over when we go to that place," said Gerald.

"I wonder when exactly we shall go?" I said. And then our thoughts all returned to Rosebuds, and what our grandfather had said about it.

"I wonder why he doesn't want us to make friends with any of the neighbours?" I said. "I think it's rather crabby of him. There may be some nice children there, and we never have any playfellows."

"I suppose he's got some reason for it," said Tib. "Perhaps the people who live there are all very common. You know, grandpapa is right to be particular about us."

"I don't think it is that. I think he has some other reason. Tib, do you know," I exclaimed, as a curious idea flashed across my mind, "I have an idea that——"

But I was interrupted before I could say more by the entrance of old Liddy, bringing the primroses. They were not very big bunches, but they were very sweet and fresh, and we all sniffed at them in a way that must have astonished the poor things. Nurse smiled at us.

"I'd like to see you gathering them for yourselves, my dears," she said.

"Well, we shall, perhaps, if we go to the country so soon. Do you know that place where we're going to, Liddy?" asked Tib.

She shook her head—she had come to us from mamma's family, and she didn't know much about the Ansdells.

"No, Miss Tib. I never heard of it till your grandpapa told me last night about getting you ready. And that reminds me—Bland told me just now that his master forgot to say Miss Evans wouldn't be coming to-day."

"Miss Evans not coming to-day!" we all three exclaimed in the greatest astonishment, for it must be confessed Miss Evans was the most exact person possible. "Is she never coming any more, Liddy?"

Nurse shook her head.

"Nay, my dear, how should I know? I only heard what Bland said. Miss Evans isn't coming with us to the country, master said."

"But he's going to get another," said Gerald. "Will she be just *exactly* the same—will she have a big freckle on her cheek, and will she nip up her mouth the same, do you think, nursesey?"

We all burst out laughing at poor Gerald.

"It would quite spoil Rosebuds to have the big freckle there," said Tib. "But, nursesey, do you know grandpapa says we're not to make any friends there, and not to know anybody?"

This time Liddy nodded her head.

"I know, my dears. Well, it can't be helped. It'll be no duller for you there than at Ansdell Friars, any way, and it's a beautiful country for walks, cook says. She comes from somewhere that way."

"But why does grandpapa not want us to know anybody there—do you know, nurse? Does cook know, perhaps?"

Liddy looked uncomfortable.

"My dears, there may be reasons for many things that you're too young to understand," she said. "If your grandpapa had wanted to give his reasons to you, he'd have done so himself; and if he didn't wish to give you any, it would ill become me to be telling you over any fancies or chatter I might hear about master's affairs."

Tib's eyes grew very round.

"I do believe there's a mystery," she said. "Oh, how beautiful! Nurse, I'm sure you know something. What fun it would be if there was really a mystery, and if we were to find it out. Gussie, do listen."

But I wouldn't listen just that minute. The thought which had been put out of my mind by nurse coming in with the primroses had come back again.

"Wait a minute, Tib," I said, "I've got an idea. I'm only going down to the library to fetch a book. I may go as Miss Evans isn't coming," and off I flew.

The library was not a large room—indeed, it was a good deal smaller than grandpapa's study—but it held a great many books. It was nothing but books, for there were shelves all round it, packed as close as they could hold. In one corner were all the books that grandpapa allowed us to read. He had shown them to us himself, and simply told us we might read any of them we liked, provided we always put them back again in their places, but that we mustn't ever take any other books without asking his leave. That was one thing grandpapa was very nice about; though he was so cold and strict, he always trusted us, and never doubted our words. I'm sure that is the best way to make children quite truthful. Except that one time I've told you of, I don't remember any of us telling a story. It didn't seem to come into our heads to do so—we had been with grandpapa ever since we could remember, and he had always been the same. We had never known what it was to be loved or petted, except by Liddy, for both papa and mamma had died of a fever in Spain, and we had been sent

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

