

The Story of Waitstill Baxter

By KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

[Concluded from last week.]
CHAPTER XXX.
Two Heavens.

At the very moment that Deacon Baxter was starting out on his quest for a housekeeper, Patty and Mark drove into the Mason dooryard, and the sisters flew into each other's arms. The dress that Mark had bought for Patty was the usual charming and unsuitable offering of a man's spontaneous affection, being of dark violet cloth with a wadded cape lined with satin.

Waitstill in her plain linsley-woolsey was entranced with Patty's beauty and elegance, and the two girls had a few minutes of sisterly talk, of interchange of radiant hopes and confidences before Mark tore them apart, their cheeks wet with happy tears.

As the Mason house faded from view Patty waved her muff until the last moment, turned in her seat and said: "Mark, dear, do you think your father would care if I spent the twenty dollar gold piece he gave me for Waitstill? She will be married in a fortnight, and if my father does not give her the few things she owns she will go to her husband more ill provided even than I was. I have so much, dear Mark, and she so little."

"It's your own wedding present to use as you wish," Mark answered, "and it's exactly like you to give it away. Go ahead and spend it if you want to. I can always earn enough to keep you without anybody's help."

And Mark, after cracking the whip vaingloriously, kissed his wife just over the violet ribbons, and with sleigh bells jingling, they sped over the snow toward what seemed Paradise to them, the New Hampshire village where they had been married and where their new life would begin.

So a few days later Waitstill received a great parcel which relieved her of many feminine anxieties, and she began to shape and cut and stitch during all the hours she had to herself. They were not many, for every day she trudged to the Boynton farm and began with youthful enthusiasm the household tasks that were so soon to be hers by right.

"Don't waste too much time and strength here, my dearest," said Ivory. "Do you suppose for a moment I shall keep you long on this lonely farm? I am ready for admission to the bar or I am fitted to teach in the best school in New England. Nothing has held me here but my mother, and in her present condition of mind we can safely take her anywhere. We will never live where there are so many memories and associations to sadden and hamper us, but go where the best opportunity offers and as soon as may be. My wife will be a pearl of great price," he added fondly, "and I intend to provide a right setting for her!"

Ivory was right. Waitstill Baxter was indeed a jewel of a woman. She had little knowledge but much wisdom, and after all knowledge stands for the leaves on a tree and wisdom for the fruit. There was infinite richness in the girl, a richness that had been growing and ripening through the years that she thought so gray and wasted.

them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

The quiet wedding was over. There had been neither feasting nor finery, nor presents nor bridal journey, only a homecoming that meant as deep and sacred a joy, as fervent gratitude as any four hearts ever contained in all the world. But the laughter ceased, though the happiness flowed silently underneath, almost forgotten in the sudden sorrow that overcame them, for it fell out that Lois Boynton had only waited as it were for the marriage and could stay no longer.

*** There are two heavens ***
Both made of love—one, inconceivable
E'en by the other, so divine it is;
The other, far on this side of the stars,
By men called home.

And these two heavens met over at Boynton's during these cold, white, glistening December days.

Lois Boynton found hers first. After a windy moonlit night a morning dawned in which a hush seemed to be on the earth. The cattle huddled together in the farmyards and the fowls shrank into their feathers. The sky was gray, and suddenly the white heralds came floating down like scouts seeking for paths and camping places.

Waitstill turned Mrs. Boynton's bed so that she could look out of the window. Slope after slope, dazzling in white crust, rose one upon another and vanished as they slipped away into the dark green of the pine forests.

Then,
*** there fell from out the skies
A feathery whiteness over all the land:
A strange, soft, spotless something, pure
as light.

It could not be called a storm, for there had been no wind since sunrise, no whirling fury, no drifting, only a still, steady, solemn fall of crystal flakes, hour after hour, hour after hour.

Mrs. Boynton's book of books was open on the bed, and her finger marked a passage in her favorite Bible poet.

"Here it is, daughter," she whispered. "I have found it, in the same chapter where the morning stars sing together and the sons of God shout for



"Our little brother is never in the way."

joy. The Lord speaks to Job out of the whirlwind and says, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail? Sit near me, Waitstill, and look out on the hills. Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? No, not yet, but please God I shall, and into many other treasures soon," and she closed her eyes.

All day long the air ways were filled with the glittering army of the snowflakes, all day long the snow grew deeper and deeper on the ground, and on the breath of some white winged wonder that passed Lois Boynton's window her white soul forgot its "earth lot" and took flight at last.

They watched beside her, but never knew the moment of her going. Her face was so like an angel's in its shining serenity that the few who loved her best could not look upon her with anything but reverent joy. On earth she had known nothing but the "broken arcs," but in heaven she would find the "perfect round." There at last, on the other side of the stars, she could remember right, poor Lois Boynton!

For weeks afterward the village was shrouded in snow as it had never been before within memory, but in every happy household the home life deepened day by day. The books came out in the long evenings; the grandmothers told old tales under the inspiration of the hearth fire; the children gathered on their wooden stools to roast apples and pop corn, and hearts came closer together than when summer called the housemates to wander here and there in fields and woods and beside the river.

Over at Boynton's, when the snow was whirling and the wind howling round the chimneys of the high gabled old farmhouse, when every window had its frame of ermine and fringe of icicles and the sleet rattled furiously against the glass, then Ivory would throw a great back log on the bank of coals between the firelogs, the kettle would begin to sing and the cat come from some snug corner to curl and purr on the braided hearth rug.

School was in session, and Ivory and Rod had their textbooks of an evening, but, oh, what a new and strange joy to study when there was a sweet woman sitting near with her workbasket—a woman wearing a shining braid of hair, as if it were a coronet; a woman of clear eyes and tender lips, one who

could feel as well as think, one who could be a man's comrade as well as his dear love! Truly the second heaven, the one on "this side of the stars, by men called home," was very present over at Boynton's.

Sometimes the broad seated old hair-cloth sofa would be drawn in front of the fire, and Ivory, laying his pipe and his Greek grammar on the table, would take some lighter book and open it on his knee. Waitstill would lift her eyes from her sewing to meet her husband's glance that spoke longing for her closer companionship and, gladly leaving her work and slipping into the place by his side, she would put her elbow on his shoulder and read with him.

Once Rod from his place at a table on the other side of the room looked and looked at them with a kind of instinct beyond his years and finally crept up to Waitstill and, putting an arm through hers, nestled his curly head on her shoulder with the quaint charm and grace that belonged to him.

It was a young and beautiful shoulder, Waitstill's, and there had always been and would always be a gracious curve in it where a child's head might lie in comfort. Presently with a shy pressure, Rod whispered: "Shall I sit in the other room, Waitstill and Ivory? Am I in the way?"

Ivory looked up from his book quietly shaking his head, while Waitstill put her arm around the boy and drew him closer.

"Our little brother is never in the way," she said, as she kissed him.

On midsummer evenings the windows of the old farmhouse over at Boynton's gleam with unaccustomed lights and voices break the stillness, lessening the gloom of the long grass grown lane of Lois Boynton's watching in days gone by. On sunny mornings there is a merry babel of children's chatter, mingled with gentle maternal warnings, for this is a new brood of young things, and the river is calling them as it has called all the others who ever came within the circle of its magic. The fragile harebells hanging their blue heads from the crevices of the rocks; the brilliant columbines swaying to and fro on their tall stalks; the patches of gleaming sand in shallow places beckoning little bare feet to come and tread them; the glint of silver minnows darting hither and thither in some still pool; the tempestuous journey of some weather beaten log, fighting its way downstream—here is life in abundance, luring the child to share its risks and its joys.

When Waitstill's boys and Patty's girls come back to the farm they play by Saco water as their mothers and their fathers did before them. The paths through the pine woods along the river's brink are trodden smooth by their restless, wandering feet. Their eager, curious eyes search the waysides for adventure, but their babble and laughter are oftener heard from the ruins of an old house hidden by great trees. The stones of the cellar, all overgrown with blackberry vines, are still there, and a fragment of the brick chimney, where swallows build their nests from year to year. A wilderness of weeds, tall and luxuriant, springs up to hide the stone over which Jacob Cochrane stepped daily when he issued from his door, and the polished stick with which three-year-old Patty beats a tattoo may be a round from the very chair in which he sat, expounding the Bible according to his own vision. The thickets of sweet clover and red tipped grasses, of waving ferns and young alder bushes hide all of ugliness that belongs to the de-

serted spot and serve as a miniature forest in whose shade the younglings foreshadow the future at their play of home building and housekeeping. In a far corner, altogether concealed from the passerby, there is a secret treasure, a wonderful rosebush, its green leaves shining with health and vigor. When the July sun is turning the hayfields yellow the children part the bushes in the leafy corner and little Waitstill Boynton steps cautiously in to gather one splendid rose, "for father and mother."

Jacob Cochrane's heart, with all its faults and frailties, has long been at peace. On a chill, dreary night in November all that was mortal of him was raised from his unhonored resting place, not far from the ruins of his old abode, and borne by three of his disciples far away to another state. The gravestones were replaced, face downward, deep, deep in the earth, and the sod laid back upon them, so that no man thenceforward could mark the place of the prophet's transient burial amid the scenes of his first and only triumphant ministry.

"It is a sad story, Jacob Cochrane's," Waitstill said to her husband when she first discovered that her children had chosen the deserted spot for their play. "and yet, Ivory, the red rose blooms and blooms in the ruins of the man's house, and perhaps somewhere in the world he has left a message that matches the rose."
THE END.

Ministers and Ambassadors.

The first minister plenipotentiary from the United States to England was John Adams. Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina became the first minister to England under the constitution. The United States continued to be represented by ministers until 1803, when Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware became the first American ambassador to the court of St. James. The first British minister to the United States was George Hammond, who was appointed in 1791. Lord Pouncefoot became the first British ambassador to Washington in 1803.

He Fell Right In.

His Wife—I met our maid Anna just now on the street and she pretended not to see me. Her Husband—You ought to point out to Anna the impropriety of such conduct. His Wife—But how can I? You see, she had another girl with her, and it was quite evident she didn't want her friend to know she was working for a woman who wore a two dollar and fifty cent hat.—New York Post.

Peace With a Punch.

"Here, what's all this row about?" asked the copper breathlessly. "Why, this woman is collecting money for the peace society, and when I refused to contribute she knocked me down," explained the meek looking man.—Buffalo Express.

Great Scheme.

"How's your play?" "A great success. My creditors are all coming to see if I am making money, and through their patronage I am."—Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Your Friends.

Treat your friends as you do your bank account. Don't be reckless with them just because you've got them.—Detroit Free Press.

—They are all good enough, but the WATCHMAN is always the best.

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