

The Bloomfield Times.

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The Step Daughter's Triumph. OR Annie Rathburn's Trials.

"HALLO! Sam, Frank, Freddy!
don't let them pelt you so. Come
here, quick, under my umbrella! Then I
guess the snow-balls won't touch you—
quick!"

The little urchins addressed followed the
wise advice, and began to scamper as fast
as their little legs could carry them toward
the offered shelter, tumbling down several
times in their haste, but scrambling up
again, and soon reached the friendly shelter
of the umbrella. They huddled together
under it, and then lowered it to the ground
on the side next their young assailants, rais-
ing it now and then to utter shouts of de-
fiance, or throw a volley of snow-balls, if
their adversaries ventured too near. Thanks
to their miniature fortress, they came off
victorious in the contest.

A young girl was passing at the moment.
Her face, all coldness and passionless, did
not denote one quickly or easily moved into
either interest or amusement. This ex-
pression, or rather want of expression,
seemed habitual, whether natural or assumed.
Now, however, as she witnessed the
scene, a smile, slight but perceptible, play-
ed around her lips, but even the smile had
something bitter in it, and it quickly faded,
first into thoughtfulness, then sadness, then
was lost in inanimation.

In spite of its need of heart-warmth and
light, her face interested. One could see
that with this need supplied it would be ir-
resistibly beautiful, and longed to make
the attempt to wake into life the chilled or
sleeping powers—if powers there were—
of love and happiness.

"Heighho! I wish I could get under an
umbrella!" she exclaimed, unconsciously
aloud, as she passed slowly on.

Now Annie Rathburn did not precisely
mean that she would like to creep under an
umbrella like the boys did. She had alto-
gether too keen a perception of the ridicu-
lous, and possessed too nice a sense of
propriety to suppose a young lady could do
as little boys did. Besides, although it
had snowed a little in the morning and had
threatened to prove a stormy day, it had
only been "make believe"—the sun was
now shining brilliantly; and secondly, if the
threat had proved reality, she had no fear
of wind, or snow or rain.

But Annie *did* mean that she wished
protective shelter from the elements of domestic
discord—from the cold shower of petty
annoyances and persecutions which daily
pelted down upon her poor heart, till all its
hope and love, and life, seemed to have died
out, and it only send out a feeble wall in
the exclamation just uttered.

"A strange wish, young lady, when the
sun shines so brightly; but, however, you
shall get under my umbrella if you wish—
it is large, and strong, and blue."

Annie met the scrutinizing look of the
old lady, who had addressed her, coolly and
composedly, and surveyed her in turn,
though scarcely at first, with so much interest
as curiosity. She might have been near
sixty, though the healthful color that still
flushed the scarcely wrinkled cheeks, the
keen bright eyes and full erect figure, would
have denoted a much younger age. Her
voice was harsh, yet not unpleasant, her
manner abrupt and independent. It was
easy to decide her position to be higher
than her dress indicated, and easier yet, to
perceive her to be an eccentricity.

Annie's pride was disarmed by this very
eccentricity, and she answered:

"Though your umbrella may be large,
and strong, and blue, madam, it is neither

large enough, nor strong enough, nor blue
enough to protect me. Keep it."

"How know you that young lady? You
may sometime think very differently," she
replied, with a keen glance of her small,
grey eyes. "It is a good staunch umbrella,"
and she held it up before Annie's eyes;
"but, however, since you disdain it, per-
haps I can give you directions for making
one, which will serve your purpose much
better. Take a square, a very large square
of patience, young lady, striped equally
with kindness and firmness for the covering.
But the frame-work is the most important
my child," and her voice grew solemn,
"that must be strong—equal to any weight
which may either expectedly or unexpect-
edly be placed upon it—strong, invincible
in Divine love and grace. The points of it
must be tipped with the jewels of love,
faith, charity, humility, forbearance, and
all other Christian graces. Delay not in
making it. It is well to be prepared for
storms even when the sun shines."

Annie was startled out of her composure.
"How could this singular person have read
so well the meaning of her exclamation?"
she exclaimed, half mockingly, half sadly.

"All these materials! Where should I
find them?"

"Where? I hoped you would find some
or all in your own heart, my child; but if
not there, you will find them only at the
foot of the Cross. Search for them. Make
it. It will shield you from many a trouble.
Let me find its protecting shelter over you
when we meet again. Farewell."

Annie became lost in a reverie so deep,
after the old lady left her, that she almost
forgot several important errands, but fortu-
nately remembered them in season, and
after performing them, turned her steps
homeward, lingeringly and reluctantly.

God pity those who have a just dread of
their homes! Better far better, to be a
homeless wanderer on the face of the wide
earth, than have and fear the place which
heaven designed should be the safest refuge,
the dearest spot to the world-weary—
world-troubled—to be approached with
eager steps and longing hearts; the one
oasis amid an earth-wide desert, where the
never-ceasing springs of love, and peace,
and happiness should ever be found.

The house which the young girl shrank
from entering bore no appearance of pov-
erty or discomfort. On the contrary it was
a large fashionable brick house, with cheerful
looking windows, into which the sunlight
smiled, with doors of inviting aspect.

Annie Rathburn had in that house a step-
mother, a step-sister, two half-sisters, and
a half-brother. Why was there aught for
dread in that fact? We will answer. Since
the time the widow Hartley entered that
house as its mistress, the wife of Mr. Rath-
burn, and step-mother to his only child,
the latter had been an object of envy and
dislike to the lady; and as her prejudices
were strong, and her disposition arbitrary
the martyrdom of the child Annie com-
menced; not by blows or harsh language,
any of the luxuries to which the child was
accustomed. She was too polite for that,
and regarded the opinion of the world too
highly to hazard that; but by cutting sar-
casms, wounding the child in the tenderest
points, and the yet more effective weapon
of ridicule; by willful misunderstanding and
artful misrepresentations to her father,
thereby alienating from her, in a great
measure, her father's affection.

Had Annie Rathburn been of a weak
character, or humble disposition, she had
been crushed long ere this, into the submis-
sive thing Mrs. Rathburn wished, with no
will of her own; but the resolute, high-
spirited child seemed unconquerable. Her
step-mother sometimes became discouraged
and regretted that since she could not con-
quer her, she had not rather endeavored to
manage her by artful flattery and pretended
affection; but the time for that had long
since gone by.

Surely Mrs. Rathburn might have been
satisfied. Her work was apparent enough.
Annie from a glad some, warm-hearted,
impulsive, generous child, had become a
proud, cold, unsocial, unsympathizing girl
of eighteen.

There was one warm place in Annie's
heart yet, however, and her little half-
brother, Willie, had crept into it. He was
only six years old and had been an invalid
almost from his birth—a little, helpless
cripple. He was the only one of the chil-
dren who resembled her father in features
or disposition; and beautiful was the affec-
tion subsisting between Annie and this
child: he depending almost entirely upon
her for his pleasures—she ever tenderly
ministering unto him. It was the wonder
of the family, that of them all, Willie car-
ed most for cold, quiet Annie, and was ever

happy when she was with him. But it was
only when alone with him that Annie mani-
fested the least tenderness;—but then—ah!
well might he persist in saying; "he *knew*
sister Annie loved him."

Lilly, the youngest child, was four years
old, Eva just bursting into womanhood,
and Edith Hartley a few months older than
Annie.

Both Edith and Eva were radiantly beau-
tiful, strongly resembling their mother in
features as well as in mind. The former
was vain, selfish, and unfeeling; but she
seemed so amiable and artless, and was so
brilliant, and could render herself so agree-
able, it was difficult at first to read her true
character. Eva was less artful; and was
kind and pleasant enough when her wishes
were not thwarted, but ill-tempered and
unreasonable otherwise. It may well be
believed, that with their mother's example
and training, they did not assist in mak-
ing Annie's home pleasanter to her.

Annie's position was scarcely altered by
her father's death, three years before our
story opens. He was an easy, unsuspecting
man, and his wife had long swayed him
completely by her superior art and stronger
will. He trusted her completely; and be-
fore his death, made no separate provision
for his children; but, by his will, both they
and his considerable property, were left to
her sole guardianship.

Now as before, Annie was treated as one
apart from the family. In the frequent
family consultations, she was never con-
sulted. All their arrangements were made
without the slightest reference to her wishes
or convenience. She was in every way
made to feel her isolation. Now, as before
there was a silent contest going on between
her step-mother and herself—she strugg-
ling bravely though quietly for her rights;
the former, to withhold them. The contest
was unequal; but, if Annie was sometimes
apparently subdued, she was never con-
quered.

There was an additional reason why An-
nie was unwilling to return home this par-
ticular day. She expected to find there
Mrs. Lothrop, an old and valued friend of
her father's, who had written three weeks
before, that she was coming to make them
a long visit; and that, on her return, she
would invite one of the young ladies to
make her an indefinitely long visit.

The wildest hopes had been raised in
Mrs. Rathburn's bosom by the reception of
this letter; for Mrs. Lothrop was possessed
of an enormous fortune, without a single
relative in the world—save a great-nephew
who was also heir to a large property, as
much as any reasonable man need wish to
have. Her grandson and destined heir had
died three years before. What so proba-
ble, then, as that she was about to choose
an heiress to her wealth, and had thought
—as it was proper she should think—of the
children of her most valued friend? She
certainly must have some particular object
in proposing this visit at this time, when
she had never visited them before, though
often urged to do so. Mrs. Rathburn had
never seen her.

Thus Mrs. Rathburn reasoned; and she
determined that either Edith or Eva should
be the future heiress.

Great were the preparations made for
the expected guests—for Mrs. Lothrop's
nephew, Mr. Kirkwood was to accompany
her, and many hints given to Edith and Eva
concerning their bearing to both—for Mrs.
Rathburn had her designs on both aunt
and nephew.

From childhood Annie had heard of Mrs.
Lothrop. She had been charmed with the
various stories told of her great-heartedness
and eccentricity, and cherished the most
exalted opinion of her character; but much
as she would have liked to see and know
her under other circumstances, the knowl-
edge of her step-mother's designs made her
apprehend that the visit would be produc-
tive of too much unhappiness and mortifi-
cation of herself, in her step-mother's fear
that she might find favor in the eyes of her
father's friend, to desire it.

Slowly, therefore, she ascended the steps.
The trunks yet in the hall, the unusual
bustle that prevailed, and confused mur-
muring of voices, admonished her that the
expected guest had arrived.

When she entered the parlor, a short
time after, Mrs. Rathburn said: "This is
Annie," in a tone that at once told her that
she had been the subject of previous con-
versation—and she knew full well that
whatever her step-mother might have to
say about her, could not have been to her
advantage.

The rare smile seldom seen on Annie's
face, which had lighted it at the antici-
pation of seeing her father's friend, faded

away at this *something* in her mother's tone;
but still, with more cordiality than she was
wont to show, she advanced to the lady.
What was her astonishment, when she
perceived her to be the stranger who had
accosted her on the street. With a start,
and a bright smile of recognition, she held
out her hand. With mortification she saw
that the lady either did not or would not
recognize her. Her hand was just touched,
not taken, and a brief inquiry made after
her health in a business-like tone, to which
Annie, instantly relapsing into even more
than her usual iciness of manner, replied
laconically, almost haughtily. Her step-
mother's glance sought Mrs. Lothrop with
an expression which said: "You see it is
as I told you."

Annie was then named to the elegant
and distinguished looking stranger, con-
versing with Edith Hartley, in the bay
window, and who was so engrossed with
his fair companion, that he barely gave her
a bow, scarcely a glance.

Mrs. Rathburn was delighted at Anne's
cool reception from Mrs. Lothrop, so dif-
ferent from what Edith and Eva's had
been. She did not reflect that these young
ladies, acting according to her instruction,
had given the lady no choice, but had re-
ceived her with such rapture, and over-
whelmed her with so many attentions and
caresses, that she could not have repulsed
them without absolute rudeness. But Mrs.
Rathburn did not consider this, and con-
gratulated herself that her hints regarding
Annie had so marked an effect.

Annie was not mistaken in her apprehen-
sion of annoyances and mortifications: they
were, indeed, innumerable. She never op-
posed words to injustice, or condescended
to explanations. When a child, goaded at
times beyond her quick, warm temper to
bear, she gave way to the most violent pa-
roxyms of tears and passion; but that was
long ago, and she had had both time and
opportunity to learn command of tongue
and temper; therefore she endured taunts
and sarcasms, apparently hidden from
by their clothing of smiles and kindness—
the wrong construction put upon her words
and the false motives ascribed to her ac-
tions, silently and with an immovable
countenance; and when, at last, she took
refuge with Willie the greater part of the
time, Mrs. Rathburn, with a pained air,
"hoped Mrs. Lothrop would excuse poor,
dear Annie's incivility in neglecting to
render the attentions due to her, and the
unnecessary absenting of herself from her
presence. She had ventured to hope that
Annie would at least treat with respect so
dear a friend of her father's. As for af-
fection—she had long since despaired of her
feeling that for any one; indeed she seem-
ed to be without heart or feeling—she cared
for no living thing but for herself. No one
could tell the grief and trouble she had
caused her—so different from her other
children with their affectionate and self-
ish dispositions, who would do all they
could to repair Annie's neglect; they
themselves were obliged to bear a great
deal from her."

As Mrs. Lothrop listened to this and
other like remarks with attention and in
silence, Mrs. Rathburn became sure of her
sympathy, and grew less guarded in her
manner of speaking to her of Annie.

One morning, Mrs. Lothrop who had
come in her own carriage, said she would
be happy to have two of the ladies accom-
pany Mr. Kirkwood and herself on a short
drive. Mrs. Rathburn, whose income did
not permit of an establishment, replied
that Edith would be delighted to go—she
herself would be most happy to accompany
them, but some domestic affairs required
her personal superintendence, therefore
Eva would take her place.

Annie, who was present, seemed to be
entirely out of the question. Mrs. Rath-
burn saw Mrs. Lothrop glance at her, and
replied to the look, by saying in a low
voice, but audible to all:

"I should have proposed Annie going,
but could not bare to inflict her upon you.
You know she does make herself so dis-
agreeable! She would not enjoy it herself,
nor suffer any one else to do so."

"Is the girl an idiot!" thought Mr.
Kirkwood, glancing at Annie's inanimate
face during this speech. It was the first
thought or glance he had given her, and
she was speedily forgotten in the fascinat-
ing attractions of Edith.

"Duped! duped completely by their art
and flattery!" thought Annie, bitterly; and
with a slight feeling of contempt for Mrs.
Lothrop's weakness, looking up for the
first time, as they were going out of the
room, and meeting the eyes of the subject
of her thoughts fixed upon her with the
same keen glance she had felt the morning

of their first acquaintance, seeming to read
her thoughts.

Servants are quick to learn the degree of
estimation in which the various members
of the family are held. A new servant
had been engaged for a few days before Mr.
Lothrop's arrival. She soon perceived it
was not necessary to take much pains to
please "only Annie." She entered the
room one morning to ask Mrs. Rathburn
where she should find some articles she
needed. Mrs. Rathburn was very busily
engaged, and replied:

"Ask Miss Edith if she will please—no!
there's Annie! tell her to show you."

The girl approached Annie, and said
familiarily:

"Annie! Mrs. Rathburn says you are
to show me where to find the new curtains
to the east chamber."

Annie neither moved or seemed to hear.
The girl repeated her name. Annie looked
up and asked quietly:

"Do you wish anything of Miss Annie?"
The girl understood the reproof, and
looked abashed. She said respectfully:

If you would please, Miss Annie, to show
me where to find the curtains."

The young girl rose and followed her
out, and was never afterwards addressed
by her, save in a respectful manner.

As Annie passed Mrs. Rathburn in
going out of the room, the latter said,
coldly, to Eva:

Annie's dignity seems to cause her a
great deal of trouble."

Susan was not the only person from
whom Annie was forced to exact respect.

The children were both in the library. It
was a cheerful sunny room, and little Wil-
lie had been carried into it during the air-
ing of the nursery. Annie was with them.

The door opened suddenly, and Mr.
Kirkwood looked in. He had seen but
little of Annie. It is doubtful, in truth, if
he could have told in what relationship she
stood to the beautiful Edith, so little had
he heeded her. That she was not consid-
ered of much importance in the family he
must have been aware, and, judging from
this as well as from her manner, concluded,
without giving the subject further thought,
that she was in reality the weak, charac-
terless girl she seemed.

This opinion might unconsciously have
influenced him, or else in his haste he was
forgetful; at all events, though he was
usually a courteous man, even to his in-
feriors, he said, without the morning salu-
tation:

"Ah! I thought Miss Edith was here.
Can you tell me where she is?"

Annie said, pointedly: "Good morning,
Mr. Kirkwood," and after a minute's
pause, replied to his question:

"Edith was here a moment ago. Sit
down, if you please; Lilly will call her."

The child went at her bidding.
The gentleman colored and smiled at the
idea that it was necessary that he, with
his advantages of society and travel,
should be taught manners by "only An-
nie." Concluded next week.

Never Satisfied.

"Johnny come here," said Dr. Fry to
his little boy, who was playing on the car-
pet in the dining-room; "here is an apple
for you."

It was so large he could hardly grasp it.
Dr. Fry then gave him another apple which
filled the other hand.

"Here is another," said he, giving the
child a third.

Little Johnny tried hard to hold it be-
tween the other two, but could not suc-
ceed; it rolled away across the floor. On
seeing this, he burst into tears.

"See," said Dr. Fry to a lady who was
present, "here is a child with more than he
can enjoy, and yet not satisfied. My child
is just like us all. We are ever seeking to
possess more and more of the world's treas-
ures, and yet we are never satisfied. Oh!
that we were equally in earnest in "grasp-
ing" the promise of the Gospel."

A lady promised to give her maid
twenty-five dollars as a marriage portion.
The girl got married to a man of low sta-
ture, and her mistress seeing him, was sur-
prised, and said,

"Well, Mary, what a little husband you
have got!"

"La!" exclaimed the girl, "what could
you expect for twenty-five dollars?"

There are many fruits which never
turn sweet until the frost has lain upon
them. There are many nuts that never
fall from the boughs of the forest, trees till
the frost has opened and ripened them.—
And there are many elements of life that
never grow sweet and beautiful until sor-
row touches them.