

The Family Circle

THE BEE'S WISDOM

Said a little wandering maiden
To a bee, with honey laden—
'Bee, in all the flowers you work,
Yet in some doth poison lurk.'

'That I know my little maiden,'
Said the bee, with honey laden;
'But the poison I forsake,
And the honey only, take.'

'Cunning bee, with honey laden,
'That is right,' replied the maiden;
'So will I, from all I meet,
Only take the good and sweet.'

TOPSY

Topsy, yes, that was her name; smiling, light-hearted Topsy.

She was seven years old, seven whole years—it seemed an age to her and as she thought of it, she presumed she must be very near a woman.

She was the joy and sunlight of the Wright family; without her smiling, winning ways, her quaint witticisms, and her never-ending baby prattle, what would father and mother have done?

Her brother Tommy was a bright-eyed, good-hearted boy, full of fun and mischief, and nearly two years older.

One of his characteristics (when Topsy was around) was a great contempt for girls and their mission in life, and often did he avail himself of expressing his thoughts to her, though she was his constant playmate and companion.

No one knew how she got her nickname; even her parents had forgotten. Certain it was that this was the only name she went by even if she had been christened Isabella. Isabella! She hardly knew how to pronounce it; Topsy suited her far better, it was so much prettier.

Perhaps—if you are anxious to know how she got this queer title—perhaps it was because when she was young (of course she was not now, for she was seven years old), she had turned everything topsy-turvy, or perhaps—well, there are a hundred reasons that could be guessed.

Topsy now sat on the front porch of the spacious house, calculating on the possibilities and probabilities of her future life, as any young lady of her mature age would have done under like circumstances.

On her head was a new sun-bonnet, a gift from mamma that very day—a birthday present she said.

Topsy had thought that hardly enough, but mamma had consoled her by saying that father was going to town that afternoon, and maybe he would get her something nice. However, the sun-bonnet was nice pink—the very prettiest shade, for Topsy was an admirer of bright colors.

Just at this juncture Tommy came around the corner, whistling what he considered a very fine tune. Among the arguments he used against being a woman, was that they couldn't whistle.

'Come, Tommy, let's go and play,' said Topsy, with as great an air of dignity as she could assume.

'Just like a girl,' commented Tommy; 'always wanting to do something that is of no use to the world.'

'Well I will let you know that I am seven years old, most as old—well, real old, and I don't care whether you play with me or not,' said Topsy, with great decision.

'I suppose a woman must have her own way, so come along and I will play with you,' for Tommy wanted to play even more than Topsy. His position as a man forbade him to surrender without a struggle.

Topsy jumped up quickly; she well enough knew that it would not be long before Tommy would forget all about his dignity, and the relative importance of man and woman.

They went first to the long, spacious old barn, situated immediately across the road, surrounded by numerous sheds, stacks, and outbuildings.

'I tell you what we will do,' said Tommy, for he was generally leader in all the sports, and Topsy a faithful follower; 'We will play hide and seek.'

Soon they were at play, and the barn echoed and re-echoed with their shouts and laughter. Now, Tommy would find Topsy with her head and body safely hidden beneath a pile of hay, her tiny shoe in plain sight; then she would find her brother in some out-of-the-way place.

'Well,' said Topsy to herself, after she had been repeatedly easily caught, and Tommy had as often told her that it was nothing to catch a girl, 'I am going to hide this time where he won't find me.'

Soon, as Tommy started out to count, she noiselessly glided out of the barn, out of the yard, and into the meadow lot beyond. The grass was still wet, caused by a heavy rain that had fallen the night before; but she did not mind that; her only thought was to safely hide from Tommy. On she trudged, until she came to the railroad track. This was one of the great lines of the West, and trains passed at short intervals.

She climbed the fence, and looked over: 'Mamma don't want me to go on the track: she has said that lots of times, but that was when I was younger, when she was afraid I would get hurt—when I wasn't seven years old. Of course she wouldn't care now,' and with these words she climbed over, and ran down the track.

It was forbidden ground, and sweet to tread. Both before and behind her lay the long steel rails, stretching away in the distance until lost to sight.

'Oh, how small the track is way yonder,' she said to herself.

While Tommy was at the barn looking in every corner and out-of-the-way spot, crying, 'Come, Topsy, you can come in free,' she was toddling along as fast as her tiny feet could carry her down the track.

On, on she ran, through cuts and over embankments, it was all the same to her, for she never dreamed of danger. At last she neared the river; she could hear the water splashing over the rock, and the noise seemed very loud.

She had forgotten all about Tommy now; her only thought was of the river. When she reached the bridge, the scene held her spellbound. Everything was so new and strange that it was some time before she discovered that the bridge was partly gone.

The hard rain of the previous night had done the work, and, though from a short distance it looked all right, it would have carried to destruction the first passing train.

Young as she was, she comprehended the impending danger: but how to avoid it she did not know.

She would go home and tell her father; and she started on her backward journey of over a mile, when perhaps a few miles behind her hundreds of human lives were being carried forward to a horrible fate. It was a long journey home; and tired, toddling feet make slow headway. She had not gone 40 rods before she saw a passenger train approaching with lightning speed.

How it came! Topsy had never seen anything travel so fast before. It made her flesh creep as she heard the steel rails by her side, snap, snap, the warning of approaching danger. She did not heed it, but walked bravely forward.

What could she do? Would she be killed? The engineer whistled a warning; she did not know its meaning, but, seizing the new pink sun-bonnet from her head, she took it by the string, waving it, frantically shouting, 'Stop, Mr. Driver, stop, stop!'

Would he understand, what would she do? Topsy never moved from the track. Her little arms continued to frantically wave the pink alarm; her little voice to pipe the cry of danger.

The monster machine uttered a series of wild shrieks, the air brakes were applied, and, grinding and