So he told them how, when he sat alone, ill and dull and irritable, Ram Dass had tried to distract him by describing the passers by, and there was one child who passed oftener than any one else; he had begun to be interested in her—partly perhaps because he was thinking a great deal of a little girl, and partly because Ram Dass had been able to relate the incident of his visit to the attic in chase of the monkey. He had described its cheerless look, and the bearing of the child, who seemed as if she was not of the class of those who were treated as drudges and servants. Bit by bit, Ram Dass had made discoveries concerning the wretchedness of her life. He had found out how easy a matter it was to climb across the few yards of roof to the skylight, and this fact had been the beginning of all that followed.

'Sahib,' he had said one day, 'I could cross the slates and make the child a fire when she is out on some errand. When she returned, wet and cold, to find it blazing, she would think a magician had done it.'

The idea had been so fanciful that Mr Carrisford's sad face had lighted with a smile, and Ram Dass had been so filled with rapture that he had enlarged upon it and explained to his master how simple it would be to accomplish numbers of other things. He had shown a childlike pleasure and invention, and the preparations for the carrying out of the plan had filled many a day with interest which would otherwise have dragged wearily. On the night of the frustrated banquet Ram Dass had kept watch, all his packages being in readiness in the attic which was his own; and the person who was to help him had waited with him, as interested as himself in the odd adventure. Ram Dass had been lying flat upon the slates, looking in at the skylight, when the banquet had come to its disastrous conclusion; he had been sure of the profoundness of Sara's wearied sleep; and then, with a dark lantern, he had crept into the room, while his companion remained outside and handed the things to him. When Sara had stirred ever so faintly, Ram Dass had closed the lantern-slide and lain flat upon the floor. These and many other exciting things the children found out by asking a thousand questions.

'I am so glad,' Sara said. 'I am so GLAD it was you who were my friend!'

There never were such friends as these two became. Somehow, they seemed to suit each other in a wonderful way. The Indian gentleman had never had a companion he liked quite as much as he liked Sara. In a month's time he was, as Mr Carmichael had prophesied he would be, a new man. He was

always amused and interested, and he began to find an actual pleasure in the possession of the wealth he had imagined that he loathed the burden of. There were so many charming things to plan for Sara. There was a little joke between them that he was a magician, and it was one of his pleasures to invent things to surprise her. She found beautiful new flowers growing in her room, whimsical little gifts tucked under pillows, and once, as they sat together in the evening, they heard the scratch of a heavy paw on the door, and when Sara went to find out what it was, there stood a great dog—a splendid Russian boarhound—with a grand silver and gold collar bearing an inscription. 'I am Boris,' it read; 'I serve the Princess Sara.'

There was nothing the Indian gentleman loved more than the recollection of the little princess in rags and tatters. The afternoons in which the Large Family, or Ermengarde and Lottie, gathered to rejoice together were very delightful. But the hours when Sara and the Indian gentleman sat alone and read or talked had a special charm of their own. During their passing many interesting things occurred.

One evening, Mr Carrisford, looking up from his book, noticed that his companion had not stirred for some time, but sat gazing into the fire.

'What are you "supposing," Sara?' he asked.

Sara looked up, with a bright colour on her cheek.

'I WAS supposing,' she said; 'I was remembering that hungry day, and a child I saw.'

'But there were a great many hungry days,' said the Indian gentleman, with rather a sad tone in his voice. 'Which hungry day was it?'

'I forgot you didn't know,' said Sara. 'It was the day the dream came true.'

Then she told him the story of the bun shop, and the fourpence she picked up out of the sloppy mud, and the child who was hungrier than herself. She told it quite simply, and in as few words as possible; but somehow the Indian gentleman found it necessary to shade his eyes with his hand and look down at the carpet.

'And I was supposing a kind of plan,' she said, when she had finished. 'I was thinking I should like to do something.'

'What was it?' said Mr Carrisford, in a low tone. 'You may do anything you like to do, princess.'

'I was wondering,' rather hesitated Sara—'you know, you say I have so much money—I was wondering if I could go to see the bun-woman, and tell her that if, when hungry children—particularly on those dreadful days—come and sit on the steps, or look in at the window, she would just call them in and give them something to eat, she might send the bills to me. Could I do that?'

'You shall do it tomorrow morning,' said the Indian gentleman.

'Thank you,' said Sara. 'You see, I know what it is to be hungry, and it is very hard when one cannot even PRETEND it away.'

'Yes, yes, my dear,' said the Indian gentleman. 'Yes, yes, it must be. Try to forget it. Come and sit on this footstool near my knee, and only remember you are a princess.'

'Yes,' said Sara, smiling; 'and I can give buns and bread to the populace.' And she went and sat on the stool, and the Indian gentleman (he used to like her to call him that, too, sometimes) drew her small dark head down on his knee and stroked her hair.

The next morning, Miss Minchin, in looking out of her window, saw the things she perhaps least enjoyed seeing. The Indian gentleman's carriage, with its tall horses, drew up before the door of the next house, and its owner and a little figure, warm with soft, rich furs, descended the steps to get into it. The little figure was a familiar one, and reminded Miss Minchin of days in the past. It was followed by another as familiar—the sight of which she found very irritating. It was Becky, who, in the character of delighted attendant, always accompanied her young mistress to her carriage, carrying wraps and belongings. Already Becky had a pink, round face.

A little later the carriage drew up before the door of the baker's shop, and its occupants got out, oddly enough, just as the bun-woman was putting a tray of smoking-hot buns into the window.

When Sara entered the shop the woman turned and looked at her, and, leaving the buns, came and stood behind the counter. For a moment she looked at Sara very hard indeed, and then her good-natured face lighted up.

'I'm sure that I remember you, miss,' she said. 'And yet— '

'Yes,' said Sara; 'once you gave me six buns for fourpence, and— '

'And you gave five of 'em to a beggar child,' the woman broke in on her. 'I've always remembered it. I couldn't make it out at first.' She turned round to the Indian gentleman and spoke her next words to him. 'I beg your pardon,

Chapter 19

Anne

NEVER had such joy reigned in the nursery of the Large Family. Never had they dreamed of such delights as resulted from an intimate acquaintance with the little-girl-who-was-not-a-beggar. The mere fact of her sufferings and adventures made her a priceless possession. Everybody wanted to be told over and over again the things which had happened to her. When one was sitting by a warm fire in a big, glowing room, it was quite delightful to hear how cold it could be in an attic. It must be admitted that the attic was rather delighted in, and that its coldness and bareness quite sank into insignificance when Melchisedec was remembered, and one heard about the sparrows and things one could see if one climbed on the table and stuck one's head and shoulders out of the skylight.

Of course the thing loved best was the story of the banquet and the dream which was true. Sara told it for the first time the day after she had been found. Several members of the Large Family came to take tea with her, and as they sat or curled up on the hearth-rug she told the story in her own way, and the Indian gentleman listened and watched her. When she had finished she looked up at him and put her hand on his knee.

'That is my part,' she said. 'Now won't you tell your part of it, Uncle Tom?' He had asked her to call him always 'Uncle Tom.' 'I don't know your part yet, and it must be beautiful.'

She choked down a sob as she pushed the attic door open, and then she broke into a low cry.

The lamp was flushing the room, the fire was blazing, the supper was waiting; and Ram Dass was standing smiling into her startled face.

'Missee sahib remembered,' he said. 'She told the sahib all. She wished you to know the good fortune which has befallen her. Behold a letter on the tray. She has written. She did not wish that you should go to sleep unhappy. The sahib commands you to come to him tomorrow. You are to be the attendant of missee sahib. Tonight I take these things back over the roof.'

And having said this with a beaming face, he made a little salaam and slipped through the skylight with an agile silentness of movement which showed Becky how easily he had done it before.

sir, but there's not many young people that notices a hungry face in that way; and I've thought of it many a time. Excuse the liberty, miss,'—to Sara—'but you look rosier and—well, better than you did that—that— '

'I am better, thank you,' said Sara. 'And—I am much happier—and I have come to ask you to do something for me.'

'Me, miss!' exclaimed the bun-woman, smiling cheerfully. 'Why, bless you! Yes, miss. What can I do?'

And then Sara, leaning on the counter, made her little proposal concerning the dreadful days and the hungry waifs and the buns.

The woman watched her, and listened with an astonished face.

'Why, bless me!' she said again when she had heard it all; 'it'll be a pleasure to me to do it. I am a working-woman myself and cannot afford to do much on my own account, and there's sights of trouble on every side; but, if you'll excuse me, I'm bound to say I've given away many a bit of bread since that wet afternoon, just along o' thinking of you—an' how wet an' cold you was, an' how hungry you looked; an' yet you gave away your hot buns as if you was a princess.'

The Indian gentleman smiled involuntarily at this, and Sara smiled a little, too, remembering what she had said to herself when she put the buns down on the ravenous child's ragged lap.

'She looked so hungry,' she said. 'She was even hungrier than I was.'

'She was starving,' said the woman. 'Many's the time she's told me of it since—how she sat there in the wet, and felt as if a wolf was a-tearing at her poor young insides.'

'Oh, have you seen her since then?' exclaimed Sara. 'Do you know where she is?'

'Yes, I do,' answered the woman, smiling more good-naturedly than ever. 'Why, she's in that there back room, miss, an' has been for a month; an' a decent, well-meanin' girl she's goin' to turn out, an' such a help to me in the shop an' in the kitchen as you'd scarce believe, knowin' how she's lived.'

She stepped to the door of the little back parlour and spoke; and the next minute a girl came out and followed her behind the counter. And actually it was the beggar-child, clean and neatly clothed, and looking as if she had not been hungry for a long time. She looked shy, but she had a nice face, now that she was no longer a savage, and the wild look had gone from her eyes. She

knew Sara in an instant, and stood and looked at her as if she could never look enough.

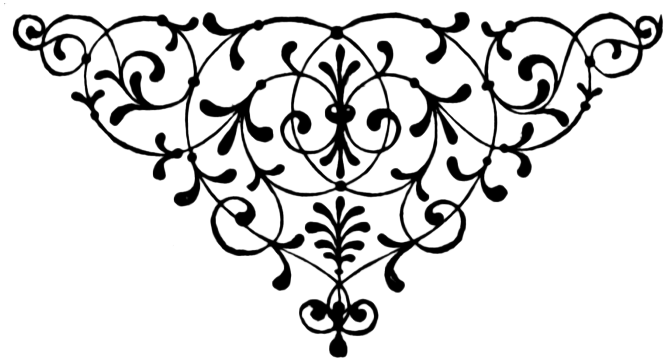
'You see,' said the woman, 'I told her to come when she was hungry, and when she'd come I'd give her odd jobs to do; an' I found she was willing, and somehow I got to like her; and the end of it was, I've given her a place an' a home, and she helps me, an' behaves well, an' is as thankful as a girl can be. Her name's Anne. She has no other.'

The children stood and looked at each other for a few minutes; and then Sara took her hand out of her muff and held it out across the counter, and Anne took it, and they looked straight into each other's eyes.

'I am so glad,' Sara said. 'And I have just thought of something. Perhaps Mrs Brown will let you be the one to give the buns and bread to the children. Perhaps you would like to do it because you know what it is to be hungry, too.'

'Yes, miss,' said the girl.

And, somehow, Sara felt as if she understood her, though she said so little, and only stood still and looked and looked after her as she went out of the shop with the Indian gentleman, and they got into the carriage and drove away.



'There WERE diamond mines,' she said stoutly; 'there WERE!' Open mouths and open eyes confronted her.

'They were real,' she hurried on. 'It was all a mistake about them. Something happened for a time, and Mr Carrisford thought they were ruined— '

'Who is Mr Carrisford?' shouted Jessie.

'The Indian gentleman. And Captain Crewe thought so, too—and he died; and Mr Carrisford had brain fever and ran away, and HE almost died. And he did not know where Sara was. And it turned out that there were millions and millions of diamonds in the mines; and half of them belong to Sara; and they belonged to her when she was living in the attic with no one but Melchisedec for a friend, and the cook ordering her about. And Mr Carrisford found her this afternoon, and he has got her in his home—and she will never come back—and she will be more a princess than she ever was—a hundred and fifty thousand times more. And I am going to see her tomorrow afternoon. There!'

Even Miss Minchin herself could scarcely have controlled the uproar after this; and though she heard the noise, she did not try. She was not in the mood to face anything more than she was facing in her room, while Miss Amelia was weeping in bed. She knew that the news had penetrated the walls in some mysterious manner, and that every servant and every child would go to bed talking about it.

So until almost midnight the entire seminary, realizing somehow that all rules were laid aside, crowded round Ermengarde in the schoolroom and heard read and re-read the letter containing a story which was quite as wonderful as any Sara herself had ever invented, and which had the amazing charm of having happened to Sara herself and the mystic Indian gentleman in the very next house.

Becky, who had heard it also, managed to creep up stairs earlier than usual. She wanted to get away from people and go and look at the little magic room once more. She did not know what would happen to it. It was not likely that it would be left to Miss Minchin. It would be taken away, and the attic would be bare and empty again. Glad as she was for Sara's sake, she went up the last flight of stairs with a lump in her throat and tears blurring her sight. There would be no fire tonight, and no rosy lamp; no supper, and no princess sitting in the glow reading or telling stories—no princess!

herself like a little princess even when she was a beggar. She did—she did—like a little princess!' And her hysterics got the better of the poor woman, and she began to laugh and cry both at once, and rock herself backward and forward.

'And now you've lost her,' she cried wildly; 'and some other school will get her and her money; and if she were like any other child she'd tell how she's been treated, and all our pupils would be taken away and we should be ruined. And it serves us right; but it serves you right more than it does me, for you are a hard woman, Maria Minchin, you're a hard, selfish, worldly woman!'

And she was in danger of making so much noise with her hysterical chokes and gurgles that her sister was obliged to go to her and apply salts and sal volatile to quiet her, instead of pouring forth her indignation at her audacity.

And from that time forward, it may be mentioned, the elder Miss Minchin actually began to stand a little in awe of a sister who, while she looked so foolish, was evidently not quite so foolish as she looked, and might, consequently, break out and speak truths people did not want to hear.

That evening, when the pupils were gathered together before the fire in the schoolroom, as was their custom before going to bed, Ermengarde came in with a letter in her hand and a queer expression on her round face. It was queer because, while it was an expression of delighted excitement, it was combined with such amazement as seemed to belong to a kind of shock just received.

'What IS the matter?' cried two or three voices at once.

'Is it anything to do with the row that has been going on?' said Lavinia, eagerly. 'There has been such a row in Miss Minchin's room, Miss Amelia has had something like hysterics and has had to go to bed.'

Ermengarde answered them slowly as if she were half stunned.

'I have just had this letter from Sara,' she said, holding it out to let them see what a long letter it was.

'From Sara!' Every voice joined in that exclamation.

'Where is she?' almost shrieked Jessie.

'Next door,' said Ermengarde, 'with the Indian gentleman.'

'Where? Where? Has she been sent away? Does Miss Minchin know? Was the row about that? Why did she write? Tell us! Tell us!'

There was a perfect babel, and Lottie began to cry plaintively.

Ermengarde answered them slowly as if she were half plunged out into what, at the moment, seemed the most important and self-explaining thing.

Colophon

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924) published at least two earlier forms of this story—a short story 'Sara Crewe: or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's', which was serialised in *St Nicholas Magazine* in 1887–1888; and a 1902 play *A Little Un-fairy Princess*—before its 1905 publication by Charles Scribner's Sons in London (UK), under the title *A Little Princess: Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Being Told for the First Time.*

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neither truthful nor grateful. I suppose'—to Sara—'that you feel now that you are a princess again.'

Sara looked down and flushed a little, because she thought her pet fancy might not be easy for strangers—even nice ones—to understand at first.

'I—TRIED not to be anything else,' she answered in a low voice—'even when I was coldest and hungriest—I tried not to be.'

'Now it will not be necessary to try,' said Miss Minchin, acidly, as Ram Dass salaamed her out of the room.

She returned home and, going to her sitting room, sent at once for Miss Amelia. She sat closeted with her all the rest of the afternoon, and it must be admitted that poor Miss Amelia passed through more than one bad quarter of an hour. She shed a good many tears, and mopped her eyes a good deal. One of her unfortunate remarks almost caused her sister to snap her head entirely off, but it resulted in an unusual manner.

'I'm not as clever as you, sister,' she said, 'and I am always afraid to say things to you for fear of making you angry. Perhaps if I were not so timid it would be better for the school and for both of us. I must say I've often thought it would have been better if you had been less severe on Sara Crewe, and had seen that she was decently dressed and more comfortable. I KNOW she was worked too hard for a child of her age, and I know she was only half fed— '

'How dare you say such a thing!' exclaimed Miss Minchin.

'I don't know how I dare,' Miss Amelia answered, with a kind of reckless courage; 'but now I've begun I may as well finish, whatever happens to me. The child was a clever child and a good child—and she would have paid you for any kindness you had shown her. But you didn't show her any. The fact was, she was too clever for you, and you always disliked her for that reason. She used to see through us both— '

'Amelia!' gasped her infuriated elder, looking as if she would box her ears and knock her cap off, as she had often done to Becky.

But Miss Amelia's disappointment had made her hysterical enough not to care what occurred next.

'She did! She did!' she cried. 'She saw through us both. She saw that you were a hard-hearted, worldly woman, and that I was a weak fool, and that we were both of us vulgar and mean enough to grovel on our knees for her money, and behave ill to her because it was taken from her—though she behaved