her quiet time. She could sit upon the low rough wall and look on and hear stories of the day. She loved this time. There were not only vegetables in this garden. Dickon had bought penny packages of flower seeds now and then and sown bright sweet-scented things among gooseberry bushes and even cabbages and he grew borders of mignonette and pinks and pansies and things whose seeds he could save year after year or whose roots would bloom each spring and spread in time into fine clumps. The low wall was one of the prettiest things in Yorkshire because he had tucked moorland foxglove and ferns and rock-cress and hedgerow flowers into every crevice until only here and there glimpses of the stones were to be seen.

'All a chap's got to do to make 'em thrive, mother,' he would say, 'is to be friends with 'em for sure. They're just like th' 'creatures.' If they're thirsty give 'em a drink and if they're hungry give 'em a bit o' food. They want to live same as we do. If they died I should feel as if I'd been a bad lad and somehow treated them heartless.'

It was in these twilight hours that Mrs Sowerby heard of all that happened at Misselthwaite Manor. At first she was only told that 'Mester Colin' had taken a fancy to going out into the grounds with Miss Mary and that it was doing him good. But it was not long before it was agreed between the two children that Dickon's mother might 'come into the secret.' Somehow it was not doubted that she was 'safe for sure.'

So one beautiful still evening Dickon told the whole story, with all the thrilling details of the buried key and the robin and the gray haze which had seemed like deadness and the secret Mistress Mary had planned never to reveal. The coming of Dickon and how it had been told to him, the doubt of Mester Colin and the final drama of his introduction to the hidden domain, combined with the incident of Ben Weatherstaff's angry face peering over the wall and Mester Colin's sudden indignant strength, made Mrs Sowerby's nice-looking face quite change colour several times.

'My word!' she said. 'It was a good thing that little lass came to th' Manor. It's been th' makin' o' her an' th' savin' o' him. Standin' on his feet! An' us all thinkin' he was a poor half-witted lad with not a straight bone in him.'

She asked a great many questions and her blue eyes were full of deep thinking.

'What do they make of it at th' Manor—him being so well an' cheerful an' never complainin'?' she inquired.

'They don't know what to make of it,' answered Dickon. 'Every day as comes round his face looks different. It's fillin' out and doesn't look so sharp an' th' waxy colour is goin'. But he has to do his bit o' complainin',' with a highly entertained grin.

'What for, i' Mercy's name?' asked Mrs Sowerby.

Dickon chuckled.

'He does it to keep them from guessin' what's happened. If the doctor knew he'd found out he could stand on his feet he'd likely write and tell Mester Craven. Mester Colin's savin' th' secret to tell himself. He's goin' to practise his Magic on his legs every day till his father comes back an' then he's goin' to march into his room an' show him he's as straight as other lads. But him an' Miss Mary thinks it's best plan to do a bit o' groanin' an' frettin' now an' then to throw folk off th' scent.'

Mrs Sowerby was laughing a low comfortable laugh long before he had finished his last sentence.

'Eh!' she said, 'that pair's enjoyin' theirselves, I'll warrant. They'll get a good bit o' play actin' out of it an' there's nothin' children likes as much as play actin'. Let's hear what they do, Dickon lad.'

Dickon stopped weeding and sat up on his heels to tell her. His eyes were twinkling with fun.

'Mester Colin is carried down to his chair every time he goes out,' he explained. 'An' he flies out at John, th' footman, for not carryin' him careful enough. He makes himself as helpless lookin' as he can an' never lifts his head until we're out o' sight o' th' house. An' he grunts an' frets a good bit when he's bein' settled into his chair. Him an' Miss Mary's both got to enjoyin' it an' when he groans an' complains she'll say, 'Poor Colin! Does it hurt you so much? Are you so weak as that, poor Colin?'—but th' trouble is that sometimes they can scarce keep from burstin' out laughin'. When we get safe into the garden they laugh till they've no breath left to laugh with. An' they have to stuff their faces into Mester Colin's cushions to keep the gardeners from hearin', if any of 'em's about.'

'Th' more they laugh th' better for 'em!' said Mrs Sowerby, still laughing herself. 'Good healthy child laughin's better than pills any day o' th' year. That pair'll plump up for sure.'

'They are plumpin' up,' said Dickon. 'They're that hungry they don't know how to get enough to eat without makin' talk. Mester Colin says if he keeps sendin' for more food they won't believe he's an invalid at all. Miss Mary says she'll let him eat her share, but he says that if she goes hungry she'll get thin an' they mun both get fat at once.'

Mrs Sowerby laughed so heartily at the revelation of this difficulty, that she quite rocked backward and forward in her blue cloak, and Dickon laughed with her.

'I'll tell thee what, lad,' Mrs Sowerby said when she could speak. 'I've thought of a way to help 'em. When tha' goes to 'em in th' mornin's tha' shall take a pail o' good new milk an' I'll bake 'em a crusty cottage loaf or some buns wi' currants in 'em, same as you children like. Nothin's so good as fresh milk an' bread. Then they could take off th' edge o' their hunger while they were in their garden an' th' fine food they get indoors 'ud polish off th' corners.'

'Eh! mother!' said Dickon admiringly, 'what a wonder tha' art! Tha' always sees a way out o' things. They was quite in a pother yesterday. They didn't see how they was to manage without orderin' up more food—they felt that empty inside.'

'They're two young 'uns growin' fast, an' health's comin' back to both of 'em. Children like that feels like young wolves an' food's flesh an' blood to 'em,' said Mrs Sowerby. Then she smiled Dickon's own curving smile. 'Eh! but they're enjoyin' theirselves for sure,' she said.

She was quite right, the comfortable wonderful mother creature—and she had never been more so than when she said their 'play actin'' would be their joy. Colin and Mary found it one of their most thrilling sources of entertainment. The idea of protecting themselves from suspicion had been unconsciously suggested to them first by the puzzled nurse and then by Dr Craven himself.

'Your appetite is improving very much, Master Colin,' the nurse had said one day. 'You used to eat nothing, and so many things disagreed with you.'

'Nothing disagrees with me now,' replied Colin, and then seeing the nurse looking at him curiously he suddenly remembered that perhaps he ought not to appear too well just yet. 'At least things don't so often disagree with me. It's the fresh air.'

Chapter 24

'Let Them Laugh'

THE secret garden was not the only one Dickon worked in. Round the cottage on the moor there was a piece of ground enclosed by a low wall of rough stones. Early in the morning and late in the fading twilight and on all the days Colin and Mary did not see him, Dickon worked there planting or tending potatoes and cabbages, turnips and carrots and herbs for his mother. In the company of his 'creatures' he did wonders there and was never tired of doing them, it seemed. While he dug or weeded he whistled or sang bits of Yorkshire moor songs or talked to Soot or Captain or the brothers and sisters he had taught to help him.

'We'd never get on as comfortable as we do,' Mrs Sowerby said, 'if it wasn't for Dickon's garden. Anything'll grow for him. His 'taters and cabbages is twice th' size of any one else's an' they've got a flavor with 'em as nobody's has.'

When she found a moment to spare she liked to go out and talk to him. After supper there was still a long clear twilight to work in and that was

'Perhaps it is,' said the nurse, still looking at him with a mystified expression. 'But I must talk to Dr Craven about it.'

'How she stared at you!' said Mary when she went away. 'As if she thought there must be something to find out.'

'I won't have her finding out things,' said Colin. 'No one must begin to find out yet.' When Dr Craven came that morning he seemed puzzled, also. He asked a number of questions, to Colin's great annoyance.

'You stay out in the garden a great deal,' he suggested. 'Where do you go?'

Colin put on his favorite air of dignified indifference to opinion.

'I will not let any one know where I go,' he answered. 'I go to a place I like. Every one has orders to keep out of the way. I won't be watched and stared at. You know that!'

'You seem to be out all day but I do not think it has done you harm—I do not think so. The nurse says that you eat much more than you have ever done before.'

'Perhaps,' said Colin, prompted by a sudden inspiration, 'perhaps it is an unnatural appetite.'

'I do not think so, as your food seems to agree with you,' said Dr Craven. 'You are gaining flesh rapidly and your colour is better.'

'Perhaps—perhaps I am bloated and feverish,' said Colin, assuming a discouraging air of gloom. 'People who are not going to live are often—different.'

Dr Craven shook his head. He was holding Colin's wrist and he pushed up his sleeve and felt his arm.

'You are not feverish,' he said thoughtfully, 'and such flesh as you have gained is healthy. If we can keep this up, my boy, we need not talk of dying. Your father will be very happy to hear of this remarkable improvement.'

'I won't have him told!' Colin broke forth fiercely. 'It will only disappoint him if I get worse again—and I may get worse this very night. I might have a raging fever. I feel as if I might be beginning to have one now. I won't have letters written to my father—I won't—I won't! You are making me angry and you know that is bad for me. I feel hot already. I hate being written about and being talked over as much as I hate being stared at!'

'Hush-h! my boy,' Dr Craven soothed him. 'Nothing shall be written without your permission. You are too sensitive about things. You must not undo the good which has been done.'

He said no more about writing to Mr Craven and when he saw the nurse he privately warned her that such a possibility must not be mentioned to the patient.

'The boy is extraordinarily better,' he said. 'His advance seems almost abnormal. But of course he is doing now of his own free will what we could not make him do before. Still, he excites himself very easily and nothing must be said to irritate him.'

Mary and Colin were much alarmed and talked together anxiously. From this time dated their plan of 'play actin'.'

'I may be obliged to have a tantrum,' said Colin regretfully. 'I don't want to have one and I'm not miserable enough now to work myself into a big one. Perhaps I couldn't have one at all. That lump doesn't come in my throat now and I keep thinking of nice things instead of horrible ones. But if they talk about writing to my father I shall have to do something.'

He made up his mind to eat less, but unfortunately it was not possible to carry out this brilliant idea when he wakened each morning with an amazing appetite and the table near his sofa was set with a breakfast of home-made bread and fresh butter, snow-white eggs, raspberry jam and clotted cream. Mary always breakfasted with him and when they found themselves at the table—particularly if there were delicate slices of sizzling ham sending forth tempting odors from under a hot silver cover—they would look into each other's eyes in desperation.

'I think we shall have to eat it all this morning, Mary,' Colin always ended by saying. 'We can send away some of the lunch and a great deal of the dinner.'

But they never found they could send away anything and the highly polished condition of the empty plates returned to the pantry awakened much comment.

'I do wish,' Colin would say also, 'I do wish the slices of ham were thicker, and one muffin each is not enough for any one.'

'It's enough for a person who is going to die,' answered Mary when first she heard this, 'but it's not enough for a person who is going to live.

being snubbed since the snubbing meant that the lad was gaining strength and spirit.

he returned to the canopy tree his cheeks were flushed and he looked triumphant.

'I did it! The Magic worked!' he cried. 'That is my first scientific discovery.'

'What will Dr Craven say?' broke out Mary.

'He won't say anything,' Colin answered, 'because he will not be told. This is to be the biggest secret of all. No one is to know anything about it until I have grown so strong that I can walk and run like any other boy. I shall come here every day in my chair and I shall be taken back in it. I won't have people whispering and asking questions and I won't let my father hear about it until the experiment has quite succeeded. Then sometime when he comes back to Misselthwaite I shall just walk into his study and say 'Here I am; I am like any other boy. I am quite well and I shall live to be a man. It has been done by a scientific experiment."

'He will think he is in a dream,' cried Mary. 'He won't believe his eyes.'

Colin flushed triumphantly. He had made himself believe that he was going to get well, which was really more than half the battle, if he had been aware of it. And the thought which stimulated him more than any other was this imagining what his father would look like when he saw that he had a son who was as straight and strong as other fathers' sons. One of his darkest miseries in the unhealthy morbid past days had been his hatred of being a sickly weak-backed boy whose father was afraid to look at him.

'He'll be obliged to believe them,' he said. 'One of the things I am going to do, after the Magic works and before I begin to make scientific discoveries, is to be an athlete.'

'We shall have thee takin' to boxin' in a week or so,' said Ben Weatherstaff. 'Tha'lt end wi' winnin' th' Belt an' bein' champion prize-fighter of all England.'

Colin fixed his eyes on him sternly.

'Weatherstaff,' he said, 'that is disrespectful. You must not take liberties because you are in the secret. However much the Magic works I shall not be a prize-fighter. I shall be a Scientific Discoverer.'

'Ax pardon—ax pardon, sir,' answered Ben, touching his forehead in salute. 'I ought to have seed it wasn't a jokin' matter,' but his eyes twinkled and secretly he was immensely pleased. He really did not mind

I sometimes feel as if I could eat three when those nice fresh heather and gorse smells from the moor come pouring in at the open window.'

The morning that Dickon—after they had been enjoying themselves in the garden for about two hours—went behind a big rose-bush and brought forth two tin pails and revealed that one was full of rich new milk with cream on the top of it, and that the other held cottage-made currant buns folded in a clean blue and white napkin, buns so carefully tucked in that they were still hot, there was a riot of surprised joyfulness. What a wonderful thing for Mrs Sowerby to think of! What a kind, clever woman she must be! How good the buns were! And what delicious fresh milk!

'Magic is in her just as it is in Dickon,' said Colin. 'It makes her think of ways to do things—nice things. She is a Magic person. Tell her we are grateful, Dickon—extremely grateful.'

He was given to using rather grown-up phrases at times. He enjoyed them. He liked this so much that he improved upon it.

'Tell her she has been most bounteous and our gratitude is extreme.'

And then forgetting his grandeur he fell to and stuffed himself with buns and drank milk out of the pail in copious draughts in the manner of any hungry little boy who had been taking unusual exercise and breathing in moorland air and whose breakfast was more than two hours behind him.

This was the beginning of many agreeable incidents of the same kind. They actually awoke to the fact that as Mrs Sowerby had fourteen people to provide food for she might not have enough to satisfy two extra appetites every day. So they asked her to let them send some of their shillings to buy things.

Dickon made the stimulating discovery that in the wood in the park outside the garden where Mary had first found him piping to the wild creatures there was a deep little hollow where you could build a sort of tiny oven with stones and roast potatoes and eggs in it. Roasted eggs were a previously unknown luxury and very hot potatoes with salt and fresh butter in them were fit for a woodland king—besides being deliciously satisfying. You could buy both potatoes and eggs and eat as many as you liked without feeling as if you were taking food out of the mouths of fourteen people.

Every beautiful morning the Magic was worked by the mystic circle under the plum-tree which provided a canopy of thickening green leaves after its brief blossom-time was ended. After the ceremony Colin always took his walking exercise and throughout the day he exercised his newly found power at intervals. Each day he grew stronger and could walk more steadily and cover more ground. And each day his belief in the Magic grew stronger—as well it might. He tried one experiment after another as he felt himself gaining strength and it was Dickon who showed him the best things of all.

'Yesterday,' he said one morning after an absence, 'I went to Thwaite for mother an' near th' Blue Cow Inn I seed Bob Haworth. He's the strongest chap on th' moor. He's the champion wrestler an' he can jump higher than any other chap an' throw th' hammer farther. He's gone all th' way to Scotland for th' sports some years. He's knowed me ever since I was a little 'un an' he's a friendly sort an' I axed him some questions. Th' gentry calls him a athlete and I thought o' thee, Mester Colin, and I says, 'How did tha' make tha' muscles stick out that way, Bob? Did tha' do anythin' extra to make thysel' so strong?' An' he says 'Well, yes, lad, I did. A strong man in a show that came to Thwaite once showed me how to exercise my arms an' legs an' every muscle in my body.' An' I says, 'Could a delicate chap make himself stronger with 'em, Bob?' an' he laughed an' says, 'Art tha' th' delicate chap?' an' I says, 'No, but I knows a young gentleman that's gettin' well of a long illness an' I wish I knowed some o' them tricks to tell him about.' I didn't say no names an' he didn't ask none. He's friendly same as I said an' he stood up an' showed me good-natured like, an' I imitated what he did till I knowed it by heart.'

Colin had been listening excitedly.

'Can you show me?' he cried. 'Will you?'

'Aye, to be sure,' Dickon answered, getting up. 'But he says tha' mun do 'em gentle at first an' be careful not to tire thysel'. Rest in between times an' take deep breaths an' don't overdo.'

'I'll be careful,' said Colin. 'Show me! Show me! Dickon, you are the most Magic boy in the world!'

Dickon stood up on the grass and slowly went through a carefully practical but simple series of muscle exercises. Colin watched them with widening eyes. He could do a few while he was sitting down. Presently

'You have been asleep,' said Colin.

'Nowt o' th' sort,' mumbled Ben. 'Th' sermon was good enow—but I'm bound to get out afore th' collection.'

He was not quite awake yet.

'You're not in church,' said Colin.

'Not me,' said Ben, straightening himself. 'Who said I were? I heard every bit of it. You said th' Magic was in my back. Th' doctor calls it rheumatics.'

The Rajah waved his hand.

'That was the wrong Magic,' he said. 'You will get better. You have my permission to go to your work. But come back to-morrow.'

'I'd like to see thee walk round the garden,' grunted Ben.

It was not an unfriendly grunt, but it was a grunt. In fact, being a stubborn old party and not having entire faith in Magic he had made up his mind that if he were sent away he would climb his ladder and look over the wall so that he might be ready to hobble back if there were any stumbling.

The Rajah did not object to his staying and so the procession was formed. It really did look like a procession. Colin was at its head with Dickon on one side and Mary on the other. Ben Weatherstaff walked behind, and the 'creatures' trailed after them, the lamb and the fox cub keeping close to Dickon, the white rabbit hopping along or stopping to nibble and Soot following with the solemnity of a person who felt himself in charge.

It was a procession which moved slowly but with dignity. Every few yards it stopped to rest. Colin leaned on Dickon's arm and privately Ben Weatherstaff kept a sharp lookout, but now and then Colin took his hand from its support and walked a few steps alone. His head was held up all the time and he looked very grand.

'The Magic is in me!' he kept saying. 'The Magic is making me strong! I can feel it! I can feel it!'

It seemed very certain that something was upholding and uplifting him. He sat on the seats in the alcoves, and once or twice he sat down on the grass and several times he paused in the path and leaned on Dickon, but he would not give up until he had gone all round the garden. When

arm, and perhaps he made some charmer's signal no one heard, for when he sat down, cross-legged like the rest, the crow, the fox, the squirrels and the lamb slowly drew near and made part of the circle, settling each into a place of rest as if of their own desire.

'The 'creatures' have come,' said Colin gravely. 'They want to help us.'

Colin really looked quite beautiful, Mary thought. He held his head high as if he felt like a sort of priest and his strange eyes had a wonderful look in them. The light shone on him through the tree canopy.

'Now we will begin,' he said. 'Shall we sway backward and forward, Mary, as if we were dervishes?'

'I canna' do no swayin' back'ard and for'ard,' said Ben Weatherstaff. 'I've got th' rheumatics.'

'The Magic will take them away,' said Colin in a High Priest tone, 'but we won't sway until it has done it. We will only chant.'

'I canna' do no chantin',' said Ben Weatherstaff a trifle testily. 'They turned me out o' th' church choir th' only time I ever tried it.'

No one smiled. They were all too much in earnest. Colin's face was not even crossed by a shadow. He was thinking only of the Magic.

'Then I will chant,' he said. And he began, looking like a strange boy spirit. 'The sun is shining—the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing—the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic—being strong is the Magic. The Magic is in me—the Magic is in me. It is in me—it is in me. It's in every one of us. It's in Ben Weatherstaff's back. Magic! Magic! Come and help!'

He said it a great many times—not a thousand times but quite a goodly number. Mary listened entranced. She felt as if it were at once queer and beautiful and she wanted him to go on and on. Ben Weatherstaff began to feel soothed into a sort of dream which was quite agreeable. The humming of the bees in the blossoms mingled with the chanting voice and drowsily melted into a doze. Dickon sat cross-legged with his rabbit asleep on his arm and a hand resting on the lamb's back. Soot had pushed away a squirrel and huddled close to him on his shoulder, the gray film dropped over his eyes. At last Colin stopped.

'Now I am going to walk round the garden,' he announced.

Ben Weatherstaff's head had just dropped forward and he lifted it with a jerk.

he did a few gently while he stood upon his already steadied feet. Mary began to do them also. Soot, who was watching the performance, became much disturbed and left his branch and hopped about restlessly because he could not do them too.

From that time the exercises were part of the day's duties as much as the Magic was. It became possible for both Colin and Mary to do more of them each time they tried, and such appetites were the results that but for the basket Dickon put down behind the bush each morning when he arrived they would have been lost. But the little oven in the hollow and Mrs Sowerby's bounties were so satisfying that Mrs Medlock and the nurse and Dr Craven became mystified again. You can trifle with your breakfast and seem to disdain your dinner if you are full to the brim with roasted eggs and potatoes and richly frothed new milk and oat-cakes and buns and heather honey and clotted cream.

'They are eating next to nothing,' said the nurse. 'They'll die of starvation if they can't be persuaded to take some nourishment. And yet see how they look.'

'Look!' exclaimed Mrs Medlock indignantly. 'Eh! I'm moithered to death with them. They're a pair of young Satans. Bursting their jackets one day and the next turning up their noses at the best meals Cook can tempt them with. Not a mouthful of that lovely young fowl and bread sauce did they set a fork into yesterday—and the poor woman fair invented a pudding for them—and back it's sent. She almost cried. She's afraid she'll be blamed if they starve themselves into their graves.'

Dr Craven came and looked at Colin long and carefully. He wore an extremely worried expression when the nurse talked with him and showed him the almost untouched tray of breakfast she had saved for him to look at—but it was even more worried when he sat down by Colin's sofa and examined him. He had been called to London on business and had not seen the boy for nearly two weeks. When young things begin to gain health they gain it rapidly. The waxen tinge had left Colin's skin and a warm rose showed through it; his beautiful eyes were clear and the hollows under them and in his cheeks and temples had filled out. His once dark, heavy locks had begun to look as if they sprang healthily from his forehead and were soft and warm with life. His lips were fuller and of a normal colour. In fact as an imitation of a boy who was a confirmed invalid he

was a disgraceful sight. Dr Craven held his chin in his hand and thought him over.

'I am sorry to hear that you do not eat anything,' he said. 'That will not do. You will lose all you have gained—and you have gained amazingly. You ate so well a short time ago.'

'I told you it was an unnatural appetite,' answered Colin.

Mary was sitting on her stool nearby and she suddenly made a very queer sound which she tried so violently to repress that she ended by almost choking.

'What is the matter?' said Dr Craven, turning to look at her.

Mary became quite severe in her manner.

'It was something between a sneeze and a cough,' she replied with reproachful dignity, 'and it got into my throat.'

'But' she said afterward to Colin, 'I couldn't stop myself. It just burst out because all at once I couldn't help remembering that last big potato you ate and the way your mouth stretched when you bit through that thick lovely crust with jam and clotted cream on it.'

'Is there any way in which those children can get food secretly?' Dr Craven inquired of Mrs Medlock.

'There's no way unless they dig it out of the earth or pick it off the trees,' Mrs Medlock answered. 'They stay out in the grounds all day and see no one but each other. And if they want anything different to eat from what's sent up to them they need only ask for it.'

'Well,' said Dr Craven, 'so long as going without food agrees with them we need not disturb ourselves. The boy is a new creature.'

'So is the girl,' said Mrs Medlock. 'She's begun to be downright pretty since she's filled out and lost her ugly little sour look. Her hair's grown thick and healthy looking and she's got a bright colour. The glummest, ill-natured little thing she used to be and now her and Master Colin laugh together like a pair of crazy young ones. Perhaps they're growing fat on that.'

'Perhaps they are,' said Dr Craven. 'Let them laugh.'

'Well,' he said, 'you see something did come of it. She used the wrong Magic until she made him beat her. If she'd used the right Magic and had said something nice perhaps he wouldn't have got as drunk as a lord and perhaps—perhaps he might have bought her a new bonnet.'

Ben Weatherstaff chuckled and there was shrewd admiration in his little old eyes.

'Tha'rt a clever lad as well as a straight-legged one, Mester Colin,' he said. 'Next time I see Bess Fettleworth I'll give her a bit of a hint o' what Magic will do for her. She'd be rare an' pleased if th' sinetifik 'speriment worked—an' so 'ud Jem.'

Dickon had stood listening to the lecture, his round eyes shining with curious delight. Nut and Shell were on his shoulders and he held a long-eared white rabbit in his arm and stroked and stroked it softly while it laid its ears along its back and enjoyed itself.

'Do you think the experiment will work?' Colin asked him, wondering what he was thinking. He so often wondered what Dickon was thinking when he saw him looking at him or at one of his 'creatures' with his happy wide smile.

He smiled now and his smile was wider than usual.

'Aye,' he answered, 'that I do. It'll work same as th' seeds do when th' sun shines on 'em. It'll work for sure. Shall us begin it now?'

Colin was delighted and so was Mary. Fired by recollections of fakirs and devotees in illustrations Colin suggested that they should all sit cross-legged under the tree which made a canopy.

'It will be like sitting in a sort of temple,' said Colin. 'I'm rather tired and I want to sit down.'

'Eh!' said Dickon, 'tha' musn't begin by sayin' tha'rt tired. Tha' might spoil th' Magic.'

Colin turned and looked at him—into his innocent round eyes.

'That's true,' he said slowly. 'I must only think of the Magic.'

It all seemed most majestic and mysterious when they sat down in their circle. Ben Weatherstaff felt as if he had somehow been led into appearing at a prayer-meeting. Ordinarily he was very fixed in being what he called 'agen' prayer-meetin's' but this being the Rajah's affair he did not resent it and was indeed inclined to be gratified at being called upon to assist. Mistress Mary felt solemnly enraptured. Dickon held his rabbit in his