

FICTION

Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman

The Adventures of Ann



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A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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THE ADVENTURES OF ANN

STORIES OF COLONIAL TIMES

BY

Mary E. Wilkins

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STORIES OF COLONIAL TIMES

I

The Bound Girl

This Indenture Witnesseth, That I Margaret Burjust of Boston, in the County of Suffolk and Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. Have placed, and by these presents do place and bind out my only Daughter whose name is Ann Ginnins to be an Apprentice unto Samuel Wales and his wife of Braintree in the County afores^d, Blacksmith. To them and their Heirs and with them the s^d Samuel Wales, his wife and their Heirs, after the manner of an apprentice to dwell and Serve from the day of the date hereof for and during the full and Just Term of Sixteen years, three months and twenty-three day's next ensuing and fully to be Compleat, during all which term the s^d apprentice her s^d Master and Mistress faithfully Shall Serve, Their Secrets keep close, and Lawful and reasonable Command everywhere gladly do and perform.

Damage to her s^d Master and Mistress she shall not willingly do. Her s^d Master's goods she shall not waste, Embezel, purloin or lend unto Others nor suffer the same to be wasted or purloined. But to her power Shall discover the Same to her s^d Master. Taverns or Ailhouss she Shall not frequent, at any unlawful game She Shall not play, Matrimony she Shall not Contract with any persons during s^d Term. From her master's Service She Shall not at any time unlawfully absent herself. But in all things as a good honest and faithful Servant and apprentice Shall bear and behave herself, During the full term afores^d Commencing from the third day of November Anno Dom: One Thousand, Seven Hundred fifty and three. And the s^d Master for himself, wife, and Heir's, Doth Covenant Promise Grant and Agree unto and with the s^d apprentice and the s^d Margaret Burjust, in manner and form following. That is to say, That they will teach the s^d apprentice or Cause her to be taught in the Art of good housewifery, and also to read and write well. And will find and provide for and give unto s^d apprentice good and sufficient Meat Drink washing and lodging both in Sickness and in health, and at the Expiration of S^d term to Dismiss s^d apprentice with two Good Suits of Apparrel both of woolen and linnin for all parts of her body (viz) One for Lord-days and one for working days Suitable to her Quality. In Testimony whereof I Samuel Wales and Margaret Burjust Have Interchangably Sett their hands and Seals this Third day November Anno Dom: 1753, and in the twenty Seventh year of the Reign of our Soveraig'n Lord George the Second of great Britain the King.

Signed Sealed & Delivered.

In presence of

Sam Vaughan Margaret Burgis

Mary Vaughan her X mark."

This quaint document was carefully locked up, with some old deeds and other valuable papers, in his desk, by the "s:^d Samuel Wales," one hundred and thirty years ago. The desk was a rude, unpainted pine affair, and it reared itself on its four stilt-like legs in a corner of his kitchen, in his house in the South Precinct of Braintree. The sharp eyes of the little "s:^d apprentice" had noted it oftener and more enviously than any other article of furniture in the house. On the night of her arrival, after her journey of fourteen miles from Boston, over a rough bridle-road, on a jolting horse, clinging tremblingly to her new "Master," she peered through her little red fingers at the desk swallowing up those precious papers which Samuel Wales drew from his pocket with an important air. She was hardly five years old, but she was an acute child; and she watched her master draw forth the papers, show them to his wife, Polly, and lock them up in the desk, with the full understanding that they had something to do with her coming to this strange place; and, already, a shadowy purpose began to form itself in her mind.

She sat on a cunning little wooden stool, close to the fireplace, and kept her small chapped hands persistently over her face; she was scared, and grieved, and, withal, a trifle sulky. Mrs. Polly Wales cooked some Indian meal mush for supper in an iron pot swinging from its trammel over the blazing logs, and cast scrutinizing glances at the little stranger. She had welcomed her kindly, taken off her outer garments, and established her on the little stool in the warmest corner, but the child had given a very ungracious response. She would not answer a word to Mrs. Wales' coaxing questions, but twitched herself away with all her small might, and kept her hands tightly over her eyes, only peering between her fingers when she thought no one was noticing.

She had behaved after the same fashion all the way from Boston, as Mr. Wales told his wife in a whisper. The two were a little dismayed, at the whole appearance of the small apprentice; to tell the truth, she was not in the least what they had expected. They had been revolving this scheme of taking "a bound girl" for some time in their minds; and, Samuel Wales' gossip in Boston, Sam Vaughan, had been requested to keep a lookout for a suitable person.

So, when word came that one had been found, Mr. Wales had started at once for the city. When he saw the child, he was dismayed. He had expected to see a girl of ten; this one was hardly five, and she had anything but the demure and decorous air which his Puritan mind esteemed becoming and appropriate in a little maiden. Her hair was black and curled tightly, instead of being brown and straight parted in the middle, and combed smoothly over her ears as his taste regulated; her eyes were black and flashing, instead of being blue, and downcast. The minute he saw the child, he felt a disapproval of her rise in his heart, and also something akin to terror. He dreaded to take this odd-looking child home to his wife Polly; he foresaw contention and mischief in their quiet household. But he felt as if his word was rather pledged to his gossip, and there was the mother, waiting and expectant. She was a red-cheeked English girl, who had been in Sam Vaughan's employ; she had recently married one Burjust, and he was unwilling to support the first husband's child, so this chance to bind her out and secure a good home for her had been eagerly caught at.

The small Ann seemed rather at Samuel Wales' mercy, and he had not the courage to disappoint his friend or her mother; so the necessary papers were made out, Sam Vaughan's and wife's signatures affixed, and Margaret Burjust's mark, and he set out on his homeward journey with the child.

The mother was coarse and illiterate, but she had some natural affection; she "took on" sadly when the little girl was about to leave her, and Ann clung to her frantically. It was a pitiful scene, and Samuel Wales, who was a very tender-hearted man, was glad when it was over, and he jogging along the bridle-path.

But he had had other troubles to encounter. All at once, as he rode through Boston streets, with his little charge behind him, after leaving his friend's house, he felt a vicious little twitch at his hair, which he wore in a queue tied with a black ribbon after the fashion of the period. Twitch, twitch, twitch! The water came into Samuel Wales' eyes, and the blood to his cheeks, while the passers-by began to hoot and laugh. His horse became alarmed at the hubbub, and started up. For a few minutes the poor man could do nothing to free himself. It was wonderful what strength the little creature had; she clinched her tiny fingers in the braid, and pulled, and pulled. Then, all at once, her grasp slackened, and off flew her master's steeple-crowned hat into the dust, and the neat black ribbon on the end of the queue followed it. Samuel Wales reined up his horse with a jerk then, and turned round, and administered a sounding box on each of his apprentice's ears. Then he dismounted, amid shouts of laughter from the spectators, and got a man to hold the horse while he went back and picked up his hat and ribbon.

He had no further trouble. The boxes seemed to have subdued Ann effectually. But he pondered uneasily all the way home on the small vessel of wrath which was perched up behind him, and there was a tingling sensation at the roots of his queue. He wondered what Polly would say. The first glance at her face, when he lifted Ann off the horse at his own door, confirmed his fears. She expressed her mind, in a womanly way, by whispering in his ear at the first opportunity, *"She's as black as an Injun."*

After Ann had eaten her supper, and had been tucked away between some tow sheets and homespun blankets in a trundle-bed, she heard the whole story, and lifted up her hands with horror. Then the good couple read a chapter, and prayed, solemnly vowing to do their duty by this child which they had taken under their roof, and imploring Divine assistance.

As time wore on, it became evident that they stood in sore need of it. They had never had any children of their own, and Ann Ginnins was the first child who had ever lived with them. But she seemed to have the freaks of a dozen or more in herself, and they bade fair to have the experience of bringing up a whole troop with this one. They tried faithfully to do their duty by her, but they were not used to children, and she was a very hard child to manage. A whole legion of mischievous spirits seemed to dwell in her at times, and she became in a small and comparatively innocent way, the scandal of the staid Puritan neighborhood in which she lived. Yet, withal, she was so affectionate, and seemed to be actuated by so little real malice in any of her pranks, that people could not help having a sort of liking for the child, in spite of them.

She was quick to learn, and smart to work, too, when she chose. Sometimes she flew about with such alacrity that it seemed as if her little limbs were hung on wires, and no little girl in the neighborhood could do her daily tasks in the time she could, and they were no inconsiderable tasks, either.

Very soon after her arrival she was set to "winding quills," so many every day. Seated at Mrs. Polly's side, in her little homespun gown, winding quills through sunny forenoons--how she hated it! She liked feeding the hens and pigs better, and when she got promoted to driving the cows, a couple of years later, she was in her element. There were charming possibilities of nuts and checkerberries and sassafras and sweet flag all the way between the house and the pasture, and the chance to loiter, and have a romp.

She rarely showed any unwillingness to go for the cows; but once, when there was a quilting at her mistress's house, she demurred. It was right in the midst of the festivities; they were just preparing for supper, in fact. Ann knew all about the good things in the pantry, she was wild with delight at the unwonted stir, and anxious not to lose a minute of it. She thought some one else might go for the cows that night. She cried and sulked, but there was no help for it. Go she had to. So she tucked up her gown--it was her best Sunday one--took her stick, and trudged along. When she came to the pasture, there were her master's cows waiting at the bars. So were Neighbor Belcher's cows also, in the adjoining pasture. Ann had her hand on the topmost of her own bars, when she happened to glance over at Neighbor Belcher's, and a thought struck her. She burst into a peal of laughter, and took a step towards the other bars. Then she went back to her own. Finally, she let down the Belcher bars, and the Belcher cows crowded out, to the great astonishment of the Wales cows, who stared over their high rails and mooded uneasily.

Ann drove the Belcher cows home and ushered them into Samuel Wales' barnyard with speed. Then she went demurely into the house. The table looked beautiful. Ann was beginning to quake inwardly, though she still was hugging herself, so to speak, in secret enjoyment of her own mischief. She had one hope--that supper would be eaten before her master milked. But the hope was vain. When she saw Mr. Wales come in, glance her way, and then call his wife out, she knew at once what had happened, and begun to tremble--she knew perfectly what Mr. Wales was saying out there. It was this: "That little limb has driven home all Neighbor Belcher's cows instead of ours; what's going to be done with her?"

She knew what the answer would be, too. Mrs. Polly was a peremptory woman.

Back Ann had to go with the Belcher cows, fasten them safely in their pasture again, and drive her master's home. She was hustled off to bed, then, without any of that beautiful supper. But she had just crept into her bed in the small unfinished room up stairs where she slept, and was lying there sobbing, when she heard a slow, fumbling step on the stairs. Then the door opened, and Mrs. Deacon Thomas Wales, Samuel Wales' mother, came in. She was a good old lady, and had always taken a great fancy to her son's bound girl; and Ann, on her part, minded her better than any one else. She hid her face in the tow sheet, when she saw grandma. The old lady had on a long black silk apron. She held something concealed under it, when she came in. Presently she displayed it.

"There--child," said she, "here's a piece of sweet cake and a couple of simballs, that I managed to save out for you. Jest set right up and eat 'em, and don't ever be so dretful naughty again, or I don't know what will become of you."

This reproof, tempered with sweetness, had a salutary effect on Ann. She sat up, and ate her sweet cake and simballs, and sobbed out her contrition to grandma, and there was a marked improvement in her conduct for some days.

Mrs. Polly was a born driver. She worked hard herself, and she expected everybody about her to. The tasks which Ann had set her did not seem as much out of proportion, then, as they would now. Still, her mistress, even then, allowed her less time for play than was usual, though it was all done in good faith, and not from any intentional severity. As time

went on, she grew really quite fond of the child, and she was honestly desirous of doing her whole duty by her. If she had had a daughter of her own, it is doubtful if her treatment of her would have been much different.

Still, Ann was too young to understand all this, and, sometimes, though she was strong and healthy, and not naturally averse to work, she would rebel, when her mistress set her stints so long, and kept her at work when other children were playing.

Once in a while she would confide in grandma, when Mrs. Polly sent her over there on an errand and she had felt unusually aggrieved because she had had to wind quills, or hetchel, instead of going berrying, or some like pleasant amusement.

"Poor little cosset," grandma would say, pityingly. Then she would give her a simball, and tell her she must "be a good girl, and not mind if she couldn't play jest like the others, for she'd got to aim her own livin', when she grew up, and she must learn to work."

Ann would go away comforted, but grandma would be privately indignant. She was, as is apt to be the case, rather critical with her sons' wives, and she thought "Sam'l's kept that poor little gal too stiddy at work," and wished and wished she could shelter her under her own grandmotherly wing, and feed her with simballs to her heart's content. She was too wise to say anything to influence the child against her mistress, however. She was always cautious about that, even while pitying her. Once in a while she would speak her mind to her son, but *he* was easy enough--Ann would not have found him a hard task-master.

Still, Ann did not have to work hard enough to hurt her. The worst consequences were that such a rigid rein on such a frisky little colt perhaps had more to do with her "cutting up," as her mistress phrased it, than she dreamed of. Moreover the thought of the indentures, securely locked up in Mr. Wales' tall wooden desk, was forever in Ann's mind. Half by dint of questioning various people, half by her own natural logic she had settled it within herself, that at any time the possession of these papers would set her free, and she could go back to her own mother, whom she dimly remembered as being loud-voiced, but merry, and very indulgent. However, Ann never meditated in earnest, taking the indentures; indeed, the desk was always locked--it held other documents more valuable than hers--and Samuel Wales carried the key in his waistcoat-pocket.

She went to a dame's school, three months every year. Samuel Wales carted half a cord of wood to pay for her schooling, and she learned to write and read in the *New England Primer*. Next to her, on the split log bench, sat a little girl named Hannah French. The two became fast friends. Hannah was an only child, pretty and delicate, and very much petted by her parents. No long hard tasks were set those soft little fingers, even in those old days when children worked as well as their elders. Ann admired and loved Hannah, because she had what she, herself, had not; and Hannah loved and pitied Ann because she had not what she had. It was a sweet little friendship, and would not have been, if Ann had not been free from envy and Hannah humble and pitying.

When Ann told her what a long stint she had to do before school, Hannah would shed sympathizing tears.

Ann, after a solemn promise of secrecy, told her about the indentures one day. Hannah listened with round, serious eyes; her brown hair was combed smoothly down over her ears. She was a veritable little Puritan damsel herself.

"If I could only get the papers, I wouldn't have to mind her, and work so hard," said Ann.

Hannah's eyes grew rounder. "Why, it would be sinful to take them!" said she.

Ann's cheeks blazed under her wondering gaze, and she said no more.

When she was about eleven years old, one icy January day, Hannah wanted her to go out and play on the ice after school. They had no skates, but it was rare fun to slide. Ann went home and asked Mrs. Polly's permission with a beating heart; she promised to do a double stint next day, if she would let her go. But her mistress was inexorable--work before play, she said, always; and Ann must not forget that she was to be brought up to work; it was different with her from what it was with Hannah French. Even this she meant kindly enough, but Ann saw Hannah go away, and sat down to her spinning with more fierce defiance in her heart than had ever been there before. She had been unusually good, too, lately. She always was, during the three months' schooling, with sober, gentle little Hannah French.

She had been spinning sulkily a while, and it was almost dark, when a messenger came for her master and mistress to go to Deacon Thomas Wales', who had been suddenly taken very ill.

Ann would have felt sorry if she had not been so angry. Deacon Wales was almost as much of a favorite of hers as his wife. As it was, the principal thing she thought of, after Mr. Wales and his wife had gone, was that *the key was in the desk*. However it had happened, there it was. She hesitated a moment. She was all alone in the kitchen, and her heart was in a tumult of anger, but she had learned her lessons from the Bible and the *New England Primer* and she was afraid of the *sin*. But, at last, she opened the desk, found the indentures, and hid them in the little pocket which she wore tied about her waist, under her petticoat.

Then she threw her blanket over her head, and got her poppet out of the chest. The poppet was a little doll manufactured from a corn-cob, dressed in an indigo-colored gown. Grandma had made it for her, and it was her chief treasure. She clasped it tight to her bosom and ran across lots to Hannah French's.

Hannah saw her coming, and met her at the door.

"I've brought you my poppet," whispered Ann, all breathless, "and you must keep her always, and not let her work too hard. I'm going away!"

Hannah's eyes looked like two solemn moons. "Where are you going, Ann?"

"I'm going to Boston to find my own mother." She said nothing about the indentures to Hannah--somehow she could not.

Hannah could not say much, she was so astonished, but as soon as Ann had gone, scudding across the fields, she went in with the poppet and told her mother.

Deacon Thomas Wales was very sick. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel remained at his house all night, but Ann was not left alone, for Mr. Wales had an apprentice who slept in the house.

Ann did not sleep any that night. She got up very early, before any one was stirring, and dressed herself in her Sunday clothes. Then she tied up her working clothes in a bundle, crept softly down stairs, and out doors.

It was bright moonlight and quite cold. She ran along as fast as she could on the Boston road. Deacon Thomas Wales' house was on the way. The windows were lit up. She thought of grandma and poor grandpa, with a sob in her heart, but she sped along. Past the schoolhouse, and meeting-house, too, she had to go, with big qualms of grief and remorse. But she kept on. She was a fast traveller.

She had reached the North Precinct of Braintree by daylight. So far, she had not encountered a single person. Now, she heard horse's hoofs behind her. She began to run faster, but it was of no use. Soon Captain Abraham French loomed up on his big gray horse, a few paces from her. He was Hannah's father, but he was a tithing-man, and looked quite stern, and Ann had always stood in great fear of him.

She ran on as fast as her little heels could fly, with a thumping heart. But it was not long before she felt herself seized by a strong arm and swung up behind Captain French on the gray horse. She was in a panic of terror, and would have cried and begged for mercy if she had not been in so much awe of her captor. She thought with awful apprehension of these stolen indentures in her little pocket. What if he should find that out!

Captain French whipped up his horse, however, and hastened along without saying a word. His silence, if anything, caused more dread in Ann than words would have. But his mind was occupied. Deacon Thomas Wales was dead; he was one of his most beloved and honored friends, and it was a great shock to him. Hannah had told him about Ann's premeditated escape, and he had set out on her track, as soon as he had found that she was really gone, that morning. But the news, which he had heard on his way, had driven all thoughts of reprimand which he might have entertained, out of his head. He only cared to get the child safely back.

So, not a word spoke Captain French, but rode on in grim and sorrowful silence, with Ann clinging to him, till he reached her master's door. Then he set her down with a stern and solemn injunction never to transgress again, and rode away.

Ann went into the kitchen with a quaking heart. It was empty and still. Its very emptiness and stillness seemed to reproach her. There stood the desk--she ran across to it, pulled the indentures from her pocket, put them in their old place, and shut the lid down. There they staid till the full and just time of her servitude had expired. She never disturbed them again.

On account of the grief and confusion incident on Deacon Wales' death, she escaped with very little censure. She

never made an attempt to run away again. Indeed she had no wish to, for after Deacon Wales' death, grandma was lonely and wanted her, and she lived, most of the time, with her. And, whether she was in reality, treated any more kindly or not, she was certainly happier.

II

Deacon Thomas Wales' Will

In the Name of God Amen! the Thirteenth Day of September One Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty & eight, I, Thomas Wales of Braintree, in the County of Suffolk & Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, Gent--being in good health of Body and of Sound Disproving mind and Memory, Thanks be given to God--Calling to mind my mortality, Do therefore in my health make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament. And First I Recommend my Soul into the hand of God who gave it--Hoping through grace to obtain Salvation thro' the merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ my only Lord and Dear Redeemer, and my body to be Decently inter^d, at the Discretion of my Executer, believing at the General Resurrection to receive the Same again by the mighty Power of God--And such worldly estate as God in his goodness hath graciously given me after Debts, funeral Expenses &c, are Paid I give & Dispose of the Same as Followeth--

Imprimis--I Give to my beloved Wife Sarah a good Sute of mourning apparel Such as she may Choose--also if she acquit my estate of Dower and third-therin (as we have agreed) Then that my Executer return all of Household movables she bought at our marriage & since that are remaining, also to Pay to her or Her Heirs That Note of Forty Pound I gave to her, when she acquitted my estate and I hers. Before Division to be made as herin exprest, also the Southwest fire-Room in my House, a right in my Cellar, Halfe the Garden, also the Privilege of water at the well & yard room and to bake in the oven what she hath need of to improve her Life-time by her.

After this, followed a division of his property amongst his children, five sons, and two daughters. The "Homeplace" was given to his sons Ephraim and Atherton. Ephraim had a good house of his own, so he took his share of the property in land, and Atherton went to live in the old homestead. His quarters had been poor enough; he had not been so successful as his brothers, and had been unable to live as well. It had been a great cross to his wife, Dorcas, who was very high spirited. She had compared, bitterly, the poverty of her household arrangements, with the abundant comfort of her sisters-in-law.

Now, she seized eagerly at the opportunity of improving her style of living. The old Wales house was quite a pretentious edifice for those times. All the drawback to her delight was, that Grandma should have the southwest fire-room. She wanted to set up her high-posted bedstead, with its enormous feather-bed in that, and have it for her fore-room. Properly, it was the fore room, being right across the entry from the family sitting room. There was a tall chest of drawers that would fit in so nicely between the windows, too. Take it altogether, she was chagrined at having to give up the southwest room; but there was no help for it--there it was in Deacon Wales' will.

Mrs. Dorcas was the youngest of all the sons' wives, as her husband was the latest born. She was quite a girl to some of them. Grandma had never more than half approved of her. Dorcas was high-strung and flighty, she said. She had her doubts about living happily with her. But Atherton was anxious for this division of the property, and he was her youngest darling, so she gave in. She felt lonely, and out of her element, when everything was arranged, she established in the southwest fire-room, and Atherton's family keeping house in the others, though things started pleasantly and peaceably enough.

It occurred to her that her son Samuel might have her own "help," a stout woman, who had worked in her kitchen for many years, and she take in exchange his little bound girl, Ann Ginnins. She had always taken a great fancy to the child. There was a large closet out of the southwest room, where she could sleep, and she could be made very useful, taking steps, and running "arrants" for her.

Mr. Samuel and his wife hesitated a little, when this plan was proposed. In spite of the trouble she gave them, they were attached to Ann, and did not like to part with her, and Mrs. Polly was just getting her "larnt" her own ways, as she put it. Privately, she feared Grandma would undo all the good she had done, in teaching Ann to be smart and capable. Finally they gave in, with the understanding that it was not to be considered necessarily a permanent arrangement, and Ann went to live with the old lady.

Mrs. Dorcas did not relish this any more than she did the appropriation of the southwest fire-room. She had never liked Ann very well. Besides she had two little girls of her own, and she fancied Ann rivaled them in Grandma's affection. So,

soon after the girl was established in the house, she began to *show out* in various little ways.

Thirsey, her youngest child, was a mere baby, a round fat dumpling of a thing. She was sweet, and good-natured, and the pet of the whole family. Ann was very fond of playing with her, and tending her, and Mrs. Dorcas began to take advantage of it. The minute Ann was at liberty she was called upon to take care of Thirsey. The constant carrying about such a heavy child soon began to make her shoulders stoop and ache. Then Grandma took up the cudgels. She was smart and high-spirited, but she was a very peaceable old lady on her own account, and fully resolved "to put up with everything from Dorcas, rather than have strife in the family." She was not going to see this helpless little girl imposed on, however. "The little gal ain't goin' to get bent all over, tendin' that heavy baby, Dorcas," she proclaimed. "You can jist make up your mind to it. She didn't come here to do sech work."

So Dorcas had to make up her mind to it.

Ann's principal duties were scouring "the brasses" in Grandma's room, taking steps for her, and spinning her stint every day. Grandma set smaller stints than Mrs. Polly. As time went on, she helped about the cooking. She and Grandma cooked their own victuals, and ate from a little separate table in the common kitchen. It was a very large room, and might have accommodated several families, if they could have agreed. There was a big oven, and a roomy fire-place. Good Deacon Wales had probably seen no reason at all why his "beloved wife," should not have her right therein with the greatest peace and concord.

But it soon came to pass that Mrs. Dorcas' pots and kettles were all prepared to hang on the trammels when Grandma's were, and an army of cakes and pies marshalled to go in the oven when Grandma had proposed to do some baking. Grandma bore it patiently for a long time; but Ann was with difficulty restrained from freeing her small mind, and her black eyes snapped more dangerously, at every new offence.

One morning, Grandma had two loaves of "riz bread," and some election cakes, rising, and was intending to bake them in about an hour, when they should be sufficiently light. What should Mrs. Dorcas do, but mix up sour milk bread, and some pies with the greatest speed, and fill up the oven, before Grandma's cookery was ready!

Grandma sent Ann out into the kitchen to put the loaves in the oven and lo and behold! the oven was full. Ann stood staring for a minute, with a loaf of election cake in her hands; that and the bread would be ruined if they were not baked immediately, as they were raised enough. Mrs. Dorcas had taken Thirsey and stepped out somewhere, and there was no one in the kitchen. Ann set the election cake back on the table. Then, with the aid of the tongs, she reached into the brick oven and took out every one of Mrs. Dorcas' pies and loaves. Then she arranged them deliberately in a pitiful semicircle on the hearth, and put Grandma's cookery in the oven.

She went back to the southwest room then, and sat quietly down to her spinning. Grandma asked if she had put the things in, and she said "Yes, ma'am," meekly. There was a bright red spot on each of her dark cheeks.

When Mrs. Dorcas entered the kitchen, carrying Thirsey wrapped up in an old homespun blanket, she nearly dropped as her gaze fell on the fire-place and the hearth. There sat her bread and pies, in the most lamentable half-baked, sticky, doughy condition imaginable. She opened the oven, and peered in. There were Grandma's loaves, all a lovely brown. Out they came, with a twitch. Luckily, they were done. Her own went in, but they were irretrievable failures.

Of course, quite a commotion came from this. Dorcas raised her shrill voice pretty high, and Grandma, though she had been innocent of the whole transaction, was so blamed that she gave Dorcas a piece of her mind at last. Ann surveyed the nice brown loaves, and listened to the talk in secret satisfaction; but she had to suffer for it afterward. Grandma punished her for the first time, and she discovered that that kind old hand was pretty firm and strong. "No matter what you think or whether you air in the rights on't, or not, a little gal mustn't ever sass her elders," said Grandma.

But if Ann's interference was blamable, it was productive of one good result--the matter came to Mr. Atherton's ears, and he had a stern sense of justice when roused, and a great veneration for his mother. His father's will should be carried out to the letter, he declared; and it was. Grandma baked and boiled in peace, outwardly, at least, after that.

Ann was a great comfort to her; she was outgrowing her wild, mischievous ways, and she was so bright and quick. She promised to be pretty, too. Grandma compared her favorably with her own grandchildren, especially, Mrs. Dorcas' eldest daughter Martha, who was nearly Ann's age. "Marthy's a pretty little gal enough," she used to say, "but she ain't got the *snap* to her that Ann has, though I wouldn't tell Atherton's wife so, for the world."

She promised Ann her gold beads, when she should be done with them, under strict injunctions not to say anything about it till the time came; for the others might feel hard as she wasn't her own flesh and blood. The gold beads were

Ann's ideals of beauty, and richness, though she did not like to hear Grandma talk about being "done with them." Grandma always wore them around her fair, plump old neck; she had never seen her without her string of beads.

As before said, Ann was now very seldom mischievous enough to make herself serious trouble; but, once in a while, her natural propensities would crop out. When they did, Mrs. Dorcas was exceedingly bitter. Indeed, her dislike of Ann was, at all times, smouldering, and needed only a slight fanning to break out.

One stormy winter day, Mrs. Dorcas had been working till dark, making candle-wicks. When she came to get tea, she tied the white fleecy rolls together, a great bundle of them, and hung them up in the cellar-way, over the stairs, to be out of the way. They were extra fine wicks, being made of flax for the company candles. "I've got a good job done," said Mrs. Dorcas, surveying them complacently. Her husband had gone to Boston, and was not coming home till the next day, so she had had a nice chance to work at them, without as much interruption as usual.

Ann, going down the cellar-stairs, with a lighted candle, after some butter for tea, spied the beautiful rolls swinging overhead. What possessed her to, she could not herself have told--she certainly had no wish to injure Mrs. Dorcas' wicks--but she pinched up a little end of the fluffy flax and touched her candle to it. She thought she would see how that little bit would burn off. She soon found out. The flame caught, and ran like lightning through the whole bundle. There was a great puff of fire and smoke, and poor Mrs. Dorcas' fine candle-wicks were gone. Ann screamed, and sprang downstairs. She barely escaped the whole blaze coming in her face.

"What's that!" shrieked Mrs. Dorcas, rushing to the cellar-door. Words can not describe her feeling when she saw that her nice candle-wicks, the fruit of her day's toil, were burnt up.

If ever there was a wretched culprit that night, Ann was. She had not meant to do wrong, but that, maybe, made it worse for her in one way. She had not even gratified malice to sustain her. Grandma blamed her, almost as severely as Mrs. Dorcas. She said she didn't know what would "become of a little gal, that was so keerless," and decreed that she must stay at home from school and work on candle-wicks till Mrs. Dorcas' loss was made good to her. Ann listened ruefully. She was scared and sorry, but that did not seem to help matters any. She did not want any supper, and she went to bed early and cried herself to sleep.

Somewhere about midnight, a strange sound woke her up. She called out to Grandma in alarm. The same sound had awakened her. "Get up, an' light a candle, child," said she; "I'm afeard the baby's sick."

Ann scarcely had the candle lighted, before the door opened, and Mrs. Dorcas appeared in her nightdress--she was very pale, and trembling all over. "Oh!" she gasped, "it's the baby. Thirse's got the croup, an' Atherton's away, and there ain't anybody to go for the doctor. O what shall I do, what shall I do!" She fairly wrung her hands.

"Hev you tried the skunk's oil," asked Grandma eagerly, preparing to get up.

"Yes, I have, I have! It's a good hour since she woke up, an' I've tried everything. It hasn't done any good. I thought I wouldn't call you, if I could help it, but she's worse--only hear her! An' Atherton's away! Oh! what shall I do, what shall I do?"

"Don't take on so, Dorcas," said Grandma, tremulously, but cheeringly. "I'll come right along, an'--why, child, what air you goin' to do?"

Ann had finished dressing herself, and now she was pinning a heavy homespun blanket over her head, as if she were preparing to go out doors.

"I'm going after the doctor for Thirse," said Ann, her black eyes flashing with determination.

"Oh, will you, will you!" cried Mrs. Dorcas, catching at this new help.

"Hush, Dorcas," said Grandma, sternly. "It's an awful storm out--jist hear the wind blow! It ain't fit fur her to go. Her life's jist as precious as Thirse's."

Ann said nothing more, but she went into her own little room with the same determined look in her eyes. There was a door leading from this room into the kitchen. Ann slipped through it hastily, lit a lantern which was hanging beside the kitchen chimney, and was outdoors in a minute.

The storm was one of sharp, driving sleet, which struck her face like so many needles. The first blast, as she stepped outside the door, seemed to almost force her back, but her heart did not fail her. The snow was not so very deep, but it

was hard walking. There was no pretense of a path. The doctor lived half a mile away, and there was not a house in the whole distance, save the Meeting House and schoolhouse. It was very dark. Lucky it was that she had taken the lantern; she could not have found her way without it.

On kept the little slender, erect figure, with the fierce determination in its heart, through the snow and sleet, holding the blanket close over its head, and swinging the feeble lantern bravely.

When she reached the doctor's house, he was gone. He had started for the North Precinct early in the evening, his good wife said; he was called down to Captain Isaac Lovejoy's, the house next the North Precinct Meeting House. She'd been sitting up waiting for him, it was such an awful storm, and such a lonely road. She was worried, but she didn't think he'd start for home that night; she guessed he'd stay at Captain Lovejoy's till morning.

The doctor's wife, holding her door open, as best she could, in the violent wind, had hardly given this information to the little snow-bedraggled object standing out there in the inky darkness, through which the lantern made a faint circle of light, before she had disappeared.

"She went like a speerit," said the good woman, staring out into the blackness in amazement. She never dreamed of such a thing as Ann's going to the North Precinct after the doctor, but that was what the daring girl had determined to do. She had listened to the doctor's wife in dismay, but with never one doubt as to her own course of proceeding.

Straight along the road to the North Precinct she kept. It would have been an awful journey that night for a strong man. It seemed incredible that a little girl could have the strength or courage to accomplish it. There were four miles to traverse in a black, howling storm, over a pathless road, through forests, with hardly a house by the way.

When she reached Captain Isaac Lovejoy's house, next to the Meeting House in the North Precinct of Braintree, stumbling blindly into the warm, lighted kitchen, the captain and the doctor could hardly believe their senses. She told the doctor about Thirse; then she almost fainted from cold and exhaustion.

Good wife Lovejoy laid her on the settee, and brewed her some hot herb tea. She almost forgot her own sick little girl, for a few minutes, in trying to restore this brave child who had come from the South Precinct in this dreadful storm to save little Thirse Wales' life.

When Ann came to herself a little, her first question was, if the doctor were ready to go.

"He's gone," said Mrs. Lovejoy, cheeringly.

Ann felt disappointed. She had thought she was going back with him. But that would have been impossible. She could not have stood the journey for the second time that night, even on horseback behind the doctor, as she had planned.

She drank a second bowlful of herb tea, and went to bed with a hot stone at her feet, and a great many blankets and coverlids over her.

The next morning, Captain Lovejoy carried her home. He had a rough wood sled, and she rode on that, on an old quilt; it was easier than horseback, and she was pretty lame and tired.

Mrs. Dorcas saw her coming and opened the door. When Ann came up on the stoop, she just threw her arms around her and kissed her.

"You needn't make the candle-wicks," said she. "It's no matter about them at all. Thirse's better this morning, an' I guess you saved her life."

Grandma was fairly bursting with pride and delight in her little gal's brave feat, now that she saw her safe. She untied the gold beads on her neck, and fastened them around Ann's. "There," said she, "you may wear them to school to-day, if you'll be keerful."

That day, with the gold beads by way of celebration, began a new era in Ann's life. There was no more secret animosity between her and Mrs. Dorcas. The doctor had come that night in the very nick of time. Thirse was almost dying. Her mother was fully convinced that Ann had saved her life, and she never forgot it. She was a woman of strong feelings, who never did things by halves, and she not only treated Ann with kindness, but she seemed to smother her grudge against Grandma for robbing her of the southwest fire-room.

III

The Adopted Daughter

The Inventory of the Estate of Samuel Wales Late of Braintree, Taken by the Subscribers, March the 14th, 1761.

His Purse in Cash	PS11-15-01
His apparel . . . . .	.10-11-00
His watch . . . . .	. 2-13-04
The Best Bed with two Coverlids, three sheets, two underbeds, two Bolsters, two pillows, Bedstead rope	PS 6
One mill Blanket, two Phlanel sheets, 12 toe Sheets	PS 3- 4- 8
Eleven Towels & table Cloth . . . . .	. 0-15- 0
a pair of mittens & pr. of Gloves . . . . .	. 0- 2- 0
a neck Handkerchief & neckband . . . . .	. 0- 4- 0
an ovel Tabel--Two other Tabela . . . . .	. 1-12- 0
A Chist with Draws . . . . .	. 2- 8- 0
Another Low Chist with Draws & three other Chists . . . . .	. 1-10- 0
Six best Chears and a great chear . . . . .	. 1- 6- 0
a warming pan--Two Brass Kittles . . . . .	. 1- 5- 0
a Small Looking Glass, five Pewter Basons . . . . .	. 0- 7- 8
fifteen other Chears . . . . .	. 0-15- 0
fire arms, Sword & bayonet . . . . .	. 1- 4- 0
Six Porringers, four platters, Two Pewter Pots auger Chisel, Gimlet, a Bible & other Books	PS 1- 0- 4 . 0-15- 0
A chese press, great spinning-wheel, & spindle . . . . .	. 0- 9- 4
a smith's anvil . . . . .	. 3-12- 0
the Pillion . . . . .	. 0- 8- 0
a Bleu Jacket . . . . .	. 0- 0- 3
Aaron Whitcomb.	
Silas White.	

The foregoing is only a small portion of the original inventory of Samuel Wales' estate. He was an exceedingly well-to-do man for these times. He had a good many acres of rich pasture and woodland, and considerable live stock. Then his home was larger and more comfortable than was usual then; and his stock of household utensils plentiful.

He died three years after Ann Ginnins went to live with Grandma, when she was about thirteen years old. Grandma spared her to Mrs. Polly for a few weeks after the funeral; there was a great deal to be done, and she needed some extra help. And, after all, Ann was legally bound to her, and her lawful servant.

So the day after good Samuel Wales was laid away in the little Braintree burying-ground, Ann returned to her old quarters for a little while. She did not really want to go; but she did not object to the plan at all. She was sincerely sorry for poor Mrs. Polly, and wanted to help her, if she could. She mourned, herself, for Mr. Samuel. He had always been very kind to her.

Mrs. Polly had for company, besides Ann, Nabby Porter, Grandma's old hired woman whom she had made over to her, and a young man who had been serving as apprentice to Mr. Samuel. His name was Phineas Adams. He was very shy and silent, but a good workman.

Samuel Wales left a will bequeathing every thing to his widow; that was solemnly read in the fore-room one afternoon; then the inventory had to be taken. That on account of the amount of property was quite an undertaking; but it was carried out with the greatest formality and precision.

For several days, Mr. Aaron Whitcomb, and Mr. Silas White, were stalking majestically about the premises, with notebooks and pens. Aaron Whitcomb was a grave portly old man, with a large head of white hair. Silas White was little and wiry and fussy. He monopolized the greater part of the business, although he was not half as well fitted for it as his companion.

They pried into everything with religious exactitude. Mrs. Polly watched them with beseeching awe and deference, but

it was a great trial to her, and she grew very nervous over it. It seemed dreadful to have all her husband's little personal effects, down to his neck-band and mittens, handed over, and their worth in shillings and pence calculated. She had a price fixed on them already in higher currency.

Ann found her crying one afternoon sitting on the kitchen settle, with her apron over her head. When she saw the little girl's pitying look, she poured out her trouble to her.

"They've just been valuing *his* mittens and gloves," said she, sobbing, "at two-and-sixpence. I shall be thankful, when they are through."

"Are there any more of *his* things?" asked Ann, her black eyes flashing, with the tears in them.

"I think they've seen about all. There's his blue jacket he used to milk in, a-hanging behind the shed-door--I guess they haven't valued that yet."

"I think it's a shame!" quoth Ann. "I don't believe there's any need of so much law."

"Hush, child! You mustn't set yourself up against the judgment of your elders. Such things have to be done."

Ann said no more, but the indignant sparkle did not fade out of her eyes at all. She watched her opportunity, and took down Mr. Wales' old blue jacket from its peg behind the shed-door, ran with it up stairs and hid it in her own room behind the bed. "There," said she, "Mrs. Wales sha'n't cry over *that!*"

That night, at tea time, the work of taking the inventory was complete. Mr. Whitcomb and Mr. White walked away with their long lists, satisfied that they had done their duty according to the law. Every article of Samuel Wales' property, from a warming pan to a chest of drawers, was set down, with the sole exception of that old blue jacket which Ann had hidden.

She felt complacent over it at first; then she began to be uneasy.

"Nabby," said she confidentially to the old servant woman, when they were washing the pewter plates together after supper, "what would they do, if anybody shouldn't let them set down all the things--if they hid some of 'em away, I mean?"

"They'd make a dretful time on't," said Nabby, impressively. She was a large, stern-looking old woman. "They air dretful perticklar 'bout these things. They hev to be."

Ann was scared when she heard that. When the dishes were done, she sat down on the settle and thought it over, and made up her mind what to do.

The next morning, in the frosty dawning, before the rest of the family were up, a slim, erect little figure could have been seen speeding across lots toward Mr. Silas White's. She had the old blue jacket tucked under her arm. When she reached the house, she spied Mr. White just coming out of the back door with a milking pail. He carried a lantern, too, for it was hardly light.

He stopped, and stared, when Ann ran up to him.

"Mr. White," said she, all breathless, "here's--something--I guess yer didn't see yesterday."

Mr. White set down the milk pail, took the blue jacket which she handed him, and scrutinized it sharply, by the light of the lantern.

"I guess we *didn't* see it," said he, finally.

"I will put it down--it's worth about three pence, I judge. Where"--

"Silas, Silas!" called a shrill voice from the house. Silas White dropped the jacket and trotted briskly in, his lantern bobbing agitatedly. He never delayed a moment when his wife called; important and tyrannical as the little man was abroad, he had his own tyrant at home.

Ann did not wait for him to return; she snatched up the blue jacket and fled home, leaping like a little deer over the hoary fields. She hung up the precious old jacket behind the shed-door again, and no one ever knew the whole story of its entrance in the inventory. If she had been questioned, she would have told the truth boldly, though. But Samuel

Wales' Inventory had for its last item that blue jacket, spelled after Silas White's own individual method, as was many another word in the long list. Silas White consulted his own taste with respect to capital letters too.

After a few weeks, Grandma said she must have Ann again; and back she went. Grandma was very feeble lately, and everybody humored her. Mrs. Polly was sorry to have the little girl leave her. She said it was wonderful how much she had improved. But she would not have admitted that the improvement was owing to the different influence she had been under; she said Ann had outgrown her mischievous ways.

Grandma did not live very long after this however. Mrs. Polly had her bound girl at her own disposal in a year's time. Poor Ann was sorrowful enough for a long while after Grandma's death. She wore the beloved gold beads round her neck, and a sad ache in her heart. The dear old woman had taken the beads off her neck with her own hands and given them to Ann before she died, that there might be no mistake about it.

Mrs. Polly said she was glad Ann had them. "You might jist as well have 'em as Dorcas's girl," said she; "she set enough sight more by you."

Ann could not help growing cheerful again, after a while. Affairs in Mrs. Polly's house were much brighter for her, in some ways, than they had ever been before.

Either the hot iron of affliction had smoothed some of the puckers out of her mistress' disposition, or she was growing, naturally, less sharp and dictatorial. Anyway, she was becoming as gentle and loving with Ann as it was in her nature to be, and Ann, following her impulsive temper, returned all the affection with vigor, and never bestowed a thought on past unpleasantness.

For the next two years, Ann's position in the family grew to be more and more that of a daughter. If it had not been for the indentures lying serenely in that tall wooden desk, she would almost have forgotten, herself, that she was a bound girl.

One spring afternoon, when Ann was about sixteen years old, her mistress called her solemnly into the fore-room. "Ann," said she, "come here, I want to speak to you."

Nabby stared wonderingly; and Ann, as she obeyed, felt awed. There was something unusual in her mistress's tone.

Standing there in the fore-room, in the august company of the best bed, with its high posts and flowered-chintz curtains, the best chest of drawers, and the best chairs, Ann listened to what Mrs. Polly had to tell her. It was a plan which almost took her breath away; for it was this: Mrs. Polly proposed to adopt her, and change her name to Wales. She would be no longer Ann Ginnins, and a bound girl; but Ann Wales, and a daughter in her mother's home.

Ann dropped into one of the best chairs, and sat there, her little dark face very pale. "Should I have the--*papers*?" she gasped at length.

"Your papers? Yes, child, you can have them."

"I don't want them!" cried Ann, "never. I want them to stay just where they are, till my time is out. If I am adopted, I don't want the papers!"

Mrs. Polly stared. She had never known how Ann had taken the indentures with her on her run-away trip years ago; but now Ann told her the whole story. In her gratitude to her mistress, and her contrition, she had to.

It was so long ago in Ann's childhood, it did not seem so very dreadful to Mrs. Polly, probably. But Ann insisted on the indentures remaining in the desk, even after the papers of adoption were made out, and she had become "Ann Wales." It seemed to go a little way toward satisfying her conscience. This adoption meant a good deal to Ann; for besides a legal home, and a mother, it secured to her a right in a comfortable property in the future. Mrs. Polly Wales was considered very well off. She was a smart business-woman, and knew how to take care of her property too. She still hired Phineas Adams to carry on the blacksmith's business, and kept her farm-work running just as her husband had. Neither she nor Ann were afraid of work, and Ann Wales used to milk the cows, and escort them to and from pasture, as faithfully as Ann Ginnins.

It was along in spring time when Ann was adopted, and Mrs. Polly fulfilled her part of the contract in the indentures by getting the Sunday suit therein spoken of.

They often rode on horseback to meeting, but they usually walked on the fine Sundays in spring. Ann had probably

never been so happy in her life as she was walking by Mrs. Polly's side to meeting that first Sunday after her adoption. Most of the way was through the woods; the tender light green boughs met over their heads; the violets and anemones were springing beside their path. There were green buds and white blossoms all around; the sky showed blue between the waving branches, and the birds were singing.

Ann in her pretty petticoat of rose-colored stuff, stepping daintily over the young grass and the flowers, looked and felt like a part of it all. Her dark cheeks had a beautiful red glow on them; her black eyes shone. She was as straight and graceful and stately as an Indian.

"She's as handsome as a picture," thought Mrs. Polly in her secret heart. A good many people said that Ann resembled Mrs. Polly in her youth, and that may have added force to her admiration.

Her new gown was very fine for those days; but fine as she was, and adopted daughter though she was, Ann did not omit her thrifty ways for once. This identical morning Mrs. Polly and she carried their best shoes under their arms, and wore their old ones, till within a short distance from the meeting-house. Then the old shoes were tucked away under a stone wall for safety, and the best ones put on. Stone walls, very likely, sheltered a good many well-worn little shoes, of a Puritan Sabbath, that their prudent owners might appear in the House of God trimly shod. Ah! these beautiful, new peaked-toed, high-heeled shoes of Ann's--what would she have said to walking in them *all* the way to meeting!

If that Sunday was an eventful one to Ann Wales, so was the week following. The next Tuesday, right after dinner, she was up in a little unfinished chamber over the kitchen, where they did such work when the weather permitted, carding wool. All at once, she heard voices down below. They had a strange inflection, which gave her warning at once. She dropped her work and listened: "What *is* the matter?" thought she.

Then there was a heavy tramp on the stairs, and Captain Abraham French stood in the door, his stern weather-beaten face white and set. Mrs. Polly followed him, looking very pale and excited.

"When did you see anything of our Hannah?" asked Captain French, controlling as best he could the tremor in his resolute voice.

Ann rose, gathering up her big blue apron, cards, wool and all. "Oh," she cried, "not since last Sabbath, at meeting! What is it?"

"She's lost," answered Captain French. "She started to go up to her Aunt Sarah's Monday forenoon; and Enos has just been down, and they haven't seen anything of her." Poor Captain French gave a deep groan.

Then they all went down into the kitchen together, talking and lamenting. And then, Captain French was galloping away on his gray horse to call assistance, and Ann was flying away over the fields, blue apron, cards, wool and all.

"O, Ann!" Mrs. Polly cried after, "where are you going?"

"I'm going--to find--*Hannah!*" Ann shouted back, in a shrill, desperate voice, and kept on.

She had no definite notion as to where she was going; she had only one thought--Hannah French, her darling, tender little Hannah French, her friend whom she loved better than a sister, was lost.

A good three miles from the Wales home was a large tract of rough land, half swamp, known as "Bear Swamp." There was an opinion, more or less correct, that bears might be found there. Some had been shot in that vicinity. Why Ann turned her footsteps in that direction, she could not have told herself. Possibly the vague impression of conversations she and Hannah had had, lingering in her mind, had something to do with it. Many a time the two little girls had remarked to each other with a shudder, "How awful it would be to get lost in Bear Swamp."

Anyway, Ann went straight there, through pasture and woodland, over ditches and stone walls. She knew every step of the way for a long distance. When she gradually got into the unfamiliar wilderness of the swamp, a thought struck her--suppose she got lost too! It would be easy enough--the unbroken forest stretched for miles in some directions. She would not find a living thing but Indians; and, maybe, wild beasts, the whole distance.

If she should get lost she would not find Hannah, and the people would have to hunt for her too. But Ann had quick wits for an emergency. She had actually carried those cards, with a big wad of wool between them all the time, in her gathered-up apron. Now she began picking off little bits of wool and marking her way with them, sticking them on the trees and bushes. Every few feet a fluffy scrap of wool showed the road Ann had gone.

But poor Ann went on, farther and farther--and no sign of Hannah. She kept calling her, from time to time, hallooing at the top of her shrill sweet voice: "Hannah! Hannah! Hannah Fre-nch."

But never a response got the dauntless little girl, slipping almost up to her knees, sometimes, in black swamp-mud; and sometimes stumbling painfully over tree-stumps, and through tangled undergrowth.

"I'll go till my wool gives out," said Ann Wales; then she used it more sparingly.

But it was almost gone before she thought she heard in the distance a faint little cry in response to her call: "Hannah! Hannah Fre-nch!" She called again and listened. Yes; she certainly did hear a little cry off toward the west. Calling from time to time, she went as nearly as she could in that direction. The pitiful answering cry grew louder and nearer; finally Ann could distinguish Hannah's voice.

Wild with joy, she came, at last, upon her sitting on a fallen hemlock-tree, her pretty face pale, and her sweet blue eyes strained with terror.

"O, Hannah!" "O, Ann!"

"How did you ever get here, Hannah?"

"I--started for aunt Sarah's--that morning," explained Hannah, between sobs. "And--I got frightened, in the woods, about a mile from father's. I saw something ahead, I thought was a bear. A great black thing! Then I ran--and, somehow, the first thing I knew, I was lost. I walked and walked, and it seems to me I kept coming right back to the same place. Finally I sat down here, and staid; I thought it was all the way for me to be found."

"O, Hannah, what did you do last night?"

"I staid somewhere, under some pine trees," replied Hannah, with a shudder, "and I kept hearing things--O Ann!"

Ann hugged her sympathizingly. "I guess I wouldn't have slept much if I had known," said she. "O Hannah, you haven't had anything to eat! ain't you starved?"

Hannah laughed faintly. "I ate up two whole pumpkin pies I was carrying to aunt Sarah," said she.

"O how lucky it was you had them!"

"Yes; mother called me back to get them, after I started. They were some new ones, made with cream, and she thought aunt Sarah would like them."

Pretty soon they started. It was hard work; for the way was very rough, and poor Hannah weak. But Ann had a good deal of strength in her lithe young frame, and she half carried Hannah over the worst places. Still both of the girls were pretty well spent when they came to the last of the bits of wool on the border of Bear Swamp. However, they kept on a little farther; then they had to stop and rest. "I know where I am now," said Hannah, with a sigh of delight; "but I don't think I can walk another step." She was, in fact, almost exhausted.

Ann looked at her thoughtfully. She hardly knew what to do. She could not carry Hannah herself--indeed, her own strength began to fail; and she did not want to leave her to go for assistance.

All of a sudden, she jumped up. "You stay just where you are a few minutes, Hannah," said she. "I'm going somewhere. I'll be back soon." Ann was laughing.

Hannah looked up at her pitifully: "O Ann, don't go!"

"I'm coming right back, and it is the only way. You must get home. Only think how your father and mother are worrying!"

Hannah said no more after that mention of her parents, and Ann started.

She was not gone long. When she came in sight she was laughing, and Hannah, weak as she was, laughed, too. Ann had torn her blue apron into strips, and tied it together for a rope, and by it she was leading a red cow.

Hannah knew the cow, and knew at once what the plan was.

"O Ann! you mean for me to ride Betty!"

"Of course I do. I just happened to think our cows were in the pasture, down below here. And we've ridden Betty, lots of times, when we were children, and she's just as gentle now. Whoa, Betty, good cow."

It was very hard work to get Hannah on to the broad back of her novel steed, but it was finally accomplished. Betty had been a perfect pet from a calf, and was exceedingly gentle. She started off soberly across the fields, with Hannah sitting on her back, and Ann leading her by her blue rope.

It was a funny cavalcade for Captain Abraham French and a score of anxious men to meet, when they were nearly in sight of home; but they were too overjoyed to see much fun in it.

Hannah rode the rest of the way with her father on his gray horse; and Ann walked joyfully by her side, leading the cow.

Captain French and his friends had, in fact, just started to search Bear Swamp, well armed with lanterns, for night was coming on.

It was dark when they got home. Mrs. French was not much more delighted to see her beloved daughter Hannah safe again, than Mrs. Polly was to see Ann.

She listened admiringly to the story Ann told.

"Nobody but you would have thought of the wool or of the cow," said she.

"I do declare," cried Ann, at the mention of the wool, "I have lost the cards!"

"Never mind the cards!" said Mrs. Polly.

IV

The "Horse House" Deed

Know all Men By These Presents, that I Seth Towner of Braintree, in the County of Suffolk & Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, Gent. In Consideration that I may promote & encourage the worship of God, I have given liberty to Ephriam, and Atherton Wales, & Th'o:^s Penniman of Stoughton who attend Publick worship with us to erect a Stable or Horse House, on my Land near the Meeting House, in the South Precinct in Braintree afores:^d, to serve their Horses, while attending the service of God--and to the intent that the s:^d Ephriam, Atherton & Thomas, their Heirs or assigns shall and may hereafter So long as they or any of them incline or Desire to keep up & maintain a Horse House for the afores:^d use and Purpose; have s:^d Land whereon s:^d House Stands without mollestation: I the said Seth Towner for my Selfe, my Heirs, exec. and admin.: Do hereby Covenant promise bind & oblige my selfe & them to warrant & Defend the afores:^d Privilege of Land. To the s:^d Ephriam Wales, Atherton Wales, & Tho:^s Penniman their Heirs or assigns So long as they or any of them keep a Horse House their, for the afores:^d use: they keeping s:^d House in Such repair at all times, as that I the s:^d Seth Towner, my Heirs or assigns, may not receive Damage by any Creature Coming through s:^d House into my Land adjoining. In Witness Whereof, I the s:^d Seth Towner have hereunto set my Hand & Seal the first Day of November One Thous. and Seven Hundred Sixty & four: in the fifth year of his Majesty's Reign George the third King etc.

Signed Sealed and Del:^d

presence of Seth Towner, Daniel Linfield, Simeon Thayer."

Ann's two uncles by adoption, and Thomas Penniman of Stoughton, were well pleased to get this permission to erect a stable, or Horse-House, as they put it then, to shelter their horses during divine worship. The want of one had long been a sore inconvenience to them. The few stables already erected around the meeting-house, could not accommodate half of the horses congregated there on a Puritan Sabbath, and every barn, for a quarter of a mile about, was put into requisition on severe days. After the women had dismounted from their pillions at the meeting-house door, the men-folks patiently rode the horses to some place of shelter, and then trudged back through the snow-drifts, wrestling with the icy wind.

So this new "Horse-House" was a great benefit to the Waleses, and to the Pennimans, who lived three miles from them over the Stoughton line. They were all constant meeting-folks. Hard indeed was the storm which could keep a Wales or

a Penniman away from meeting.

Mrs. Polly Wales' horses were accommodated in this new stable also. In the winter time, there were two of them; one which she and Ann rode, Ann using the pillion, and one for Nabby Porter. Phineas Adams always walked. Often the sturdy young blacksmith was at the meeting-house, before the women, and waiting to take their horses.

One Sunday, the winter after the Horse-House was built, Mrs. Polly, Ann, Phineas, and Nabby went to meeting as usual. It was a very cold, bleak day; the wind blew in through the slight wooden walls of the old meeting-house, and the snow lay in little heaps here and there. There was no stove in the building, as every one knows. Some of the women had hot bricks and little foot-stoves, and that was all. Ann did not care for either. She sat up straight in the comfortless, high-backed pew. Her cheeks were as red as her crimson cloak, her black eyes shone like stars. She let Mrs. Polly and Nabby have the hot stones, but her own agile little feet were as warm as toast. Little Hannah French, over across the meeting-house, looked chilled and blue, but somehow Ann never seemed to be affected much by the cold.

The Wales pew was close to a window on the south side; the side where the new stable was. Indeed Ann could see it, if she looked out. She sat next the window because the other women minded the draught more.

Right across the aisle from Mrs. Polly's pew was Thomas Penniman's. He was there with his wife, and six stalwart sons. The two youngest, Levi and John, were crowded out of the pew proper, and sat in the one directly back.

John sat at the end. He was a tall, handsome young fellow, two or three years older than Ann. He was well spoken of amongst his acquaintances for two reasons. First, on account of his own brave, steady character; and second, on account of his owning one of the finest horses anywhere about. A good horse was, if anything, a more important piece of property then than now. This one was a beautiful bay. They called him "Red Robin."

To-day, Red Robin was carefully blanketed and fastened in the new stable. John thought when he tied him there how thankful he was he had such a good shelter this bitter day. He felt grateful to Lieutenant Seth Turner, who owned all the land hereabouts and had given the liberty to build it.

The people all sat quietly listening to the long sermon. Two hours long it was. When the minister perched up in his beetling pulpit with the sounding-board over his head, was about half through his discourse, Ann Wales happened to glance out of the window at her side. She rarely did such a thing in meeting-time; indeed she had been better instructed. How she happened to to-day, she could not have told, but she did.

It was well she did. Just at that moment, a man in a gray cloak sprang into the Horse-House, and began untying John Penniman's Red Robin.

Ann gave one glance; then she never hesitated. There was no time to send whispers along the pew; to tell Phineas Adams to give the alarm.

Out of the pew darted Ann, like a red robin herself, her red cloak flying back, crowding nimbly past the others, across the aisle to John Penniman.

"Somebody's stealing Red Robin, John," said she in a clear whisper. They heard it for several pews around. Up sprang the powerful of staunch Pennimans, father and sons, and made for the door in a great rush after John, who was out before the whisper had much more than left Ann's lips.

The alarm spread; other men went too. The minister paused, and the women waited. Finally the men returned, all but a few who were detailed to watch the horses through the remainder of the services, and the meeting proceeded.

Phineas sent the whisper along the pew, that John had got out in time to save Red Robin; but the robber had escaped. Somehow, he had taken alarm before John got there. Red Robin was standing in the stable untied; but the robber had disappeared.

After meeting the people all came and questioned Ann. "He was a very tall man, in a gray cloak," said she. "He turned his face, or I saw it, just for one second, when I looked. He had black eyes and a dark curling beard."

It seemed very extraordinary. If it had not been for Red Robin's being untied, they would almost have doubted if Ann had seen rightly. The thief had disappeared so suddenly and utterly, it almost seemed impossible that he could have been there at all.

There was much talk over it after meeting. "Are you *sure* you saw him, Ann?" Mrs. Polly asked.

"Yes; I am *sure*," Ann would reply. She began to feel rather uncomfortable over it. She feared people would think she had been napping and dreaming although Red Robin *was* untied.

That night the family were all in bed at nine o'clock, as usual; but Ann up in her snug feather-bed in her little western chamber, could not sleep. She kept thinking about the horse-thief, and grew more and more nervous. Finally she thought of some fine linen cloth she and Mrs. Polly had left out in the snowy field south of the house to bleach, and she worried about that. A web of linen cloth and a horse were very dissimilar booty; but a thief was a thief. Suppose anything should happen to the linen they had worked so hard over!

At last, she could not endure it any longer. Up she got, put on her clothes hurriedly, crept softly down stairs and out doors. There was a full moon and it was almost as light as day. The snow looked like a vast sheet of silver stretching far away over the fields.

Ann was hastening along the path between two high snowbanks when all of a sudden she stopped, and gave a choked kind of a scream. No one with nerves could have helped it. Right in the path before her stood the horse-thief, gray cloak and all.

Ann turned, after her scream and first wild stare, and ran. But the man caught her before she had taken three steps. "Don't scream," he said in a terrible, anxious whisper. "Don't make a noise, for God's sake! They're after me! Can't you hide me?"

"No," said Ann, white and trembling all over but on her mettle, "I won't. You are a sinful man, and you ought to be punished. I won't do a thing to help you!"

The man's face bending over her was ghastly in the moonlight. He went on pleading. "If you will hide me somewhere about your place, they will not find me," said he, still in that sharp agonized whisper. "They are after me--can't you hear them?"

Ann could, listening, hear distant voices on the night air.

"I was just going to hide in your barn," said the thief, "when I met you. O let me in there, now! don't betray me!"

Great tears were rolling down his bearded cheeks. Ann began to waver. "They might look in the barn," said she hesitatingly.

The man followed up his advantages. "Then hide me in the house," said he. "I have a daughter at home, about your age. She's waiting for me, and it's long she'll wait, and sad news she'll get at the end of the waiting, if you don't help me. She hasn't any mother, she's a little tender thing--it'll kill her!" He groaned as he said it.

The voices came nearer. Ann hesitated no longer. "Come," said she, "quick!"

Then she fled into the house, the man following. Inside, she bolted the door, and made her unwelcome guest take off his boots in the kitchen, and follow her softly up stairs with them in his hand.

Ann's terror, leading him up, almost overwhelmed her. What if anybody should wake! Nabby slept near the head of the stairs. Luckily, she was a little deaf, and Ann counted on that.

She conducted the man across a little entry into a back, unfurnished chamber, where, among other things, were stored some chests of grain. The moon shone directly in the window of the attic-chamber, so it was light enough to distinguish objects quite plainly.

Ann tiptoed softly from one grain-chest to another. There were three of them. Two were quite full; the third was nearly empty.

"Get in here," said Ann. "Don't make any noise."

He climbed in obediently, and Ann closed the lid. The chest was a rickety old affair and full of cracks--there was no danger but he would have air enough. She heard the voices out in the yard, as she shut the lid. Back she crept softly into her own room, undressed and got into bed. She could hear the men out in the yard quite plainly. "We've lost him again," she heard one of them say.

Presently Phineas Adams opened a window, and shouted out, to know what was the matter.

"Seen anything of the horse-thief?" queried a voice from the yard.

"No!" said Phineas. "I have been asleep these three hours. You just waked me up."

"He was hiding under the meeting-house," said the voice, "must have slipped in there this morning, when we missed him. We went down there and watched to-night, and almost caught him. But he disappeared a little below here, and we've lost him again. It's my opinion he's an evil spirit in disguise. He ran like the wind, in amongst the trees, where we couldn't follow with the horses. Are you sure he did not skulk in here somewhere? Sim White thinks he did."

"I knew I saw him turn the corner of the lane," chimed in another voice, "and we've scoured the woods."

"I think we'd better search the barn, anyhow," some one else said, and a good many murmured assent.

"Wait a minute, I'll be down," said Phineas, shutting his window.

How long poor Ann lay there shaking, she never knew. It seemed hours. She heard Phineas go down stairs, and unlock the door. She heard them tramp into the barn. "O, if I had hidden him there!" she thought.

After a while, she heard them out in the yard again. "He could *not* have gotten into the house, in any way," she heard one man remark speculatively. How she waited for the response. It came in Phineas Adams' slow, sensible tones: "How could he? Didn't you hear me unbolt the door when I came out? The doors are all fastened, I saw to it myself."

"Well, of course he didn't," agreed the voice.

At last, Phineas came in, and Ann heard them go. She was so thankful. However, the future perplexities, which lay before her, were enough to keep her awake for the rest of the night. In the morning, a new anxiety beset her. The poor thief must have some breakfast. She could easily have smuggled some dry bread up to him; but she did want him to have some of the hot Indian mush, which the family had. Ann, impulsive in this as everything, now that she had made up her mind to protect a thief, wanted to do it handsomely. She did want him to have some of that hot mush; but how could she manage it?

The family at the breakfast table discussed the matter of the horse-thief pretty thoroughly. It was a hard ordeal for poor Ann, who could not take easily to deception. She had unexpected trouble too with Nabby. Nabby *had* waked up the preceding night.

"I didn't see anything," proclaimed Nabby; "but I heard a noise. I think there's mice out in the grain-chest in the back chamber."

"I must go up there and look," said Mrs. Polly. "They did considerable mischief, last year."

Ann turned pale; what if she should take it into her head to look that day!

She watched her chance very narrowly for the hot mush; and after breakfast she caught a minute, when Phineas had gone to work, and Mrs. Polly was in the pantry, and Nabby down cellar. She had barely time to fill a bowl with mush, and scud.

How lightly she stepped over that back chamber floor, and how gingerly she opened the grain-chest lid. The thief looked piteously out at her from his bed of Indian corn. He was a handsome man, somewhere between forty and fifty. Indeed he came of a very good family in a town not so very far away. Horse-thiefs numbered some very respectable personages in their clan in those days sometimes.

They carried on a whispered conversation while he ate. It was arranged that Ann was to assist him off that night.

What a day poor Ann had, listening and watching in constant terror every moment, for fear something would betray her. Beside, her conscience troubled her sadly; she was far from being sure that she was doing right in hiding a thief from justice. But the poor man's tears, and the mention of his daughter, had turned the scale with her; she could not give him up.

Her greatest fear was lest Mrs. Polly should take a notion to search for mice in the grain-chests. She so hoped Nabby would not broach the subject again. But there was a peculiarity about Nabby--she had an exceedingly bitter hatred of rats and mice. Still there was no danger of her investigating the grain-chests on her own account, for she was very much afraid. She would not have lifted one of those lids, with the chance of a rat or mouse being under it, for the world.

If ever a mouse was seen in the kitchen Nabby took immediate refuge on the settle or the table and left some one else to do the fighting.

So Nabby, being so constituted, could not be easy on the subject this time. All day long she heard rats and mice in the grain-chests; she stopped and listened with her broom, and she stopped and listened with her mop.

Ann went to look, indeed that was the way she smuggled the thief's dinner to him, but her report of nothing the matter with the grain did not satisfy Nabby. She had more confidence in Mrs. Polly. But Mrs. Polly did not offer to investigate herself until after supper. They had been very busy that day, washing, and now there was churning to do. Ann sat at the churn, Mrs. Polly was cutting up apples for pies; and Nabby was washing dishes, when the rats and mice smote her deaf ears again.

"I knew I heerd 'em then," she said; "I don't believe but what them grain-chists is full of 'em."

"I am going to look," quoth Mrs. Polly then, in a tone of decision, and straightway she rose and got a candle.

Ann's heart beat terribly. "O, I wouldn't go up there to-night," said she.

"Yes; I am going. I'm going to satisfy Nabby about the rats in the grain-chest, if I can."

She was out the door, at the foot of the stairs, Nabby behind her, dishcloth and plate in hand, peering fearfully over her shoulder. Ann was in despair. Only one chance of averting the discovery suggested itself to her. *She tipped over the churn.* "O, oh!" she screamed. Back rushed Mrs. Polly and Nabby, and that ended the rat-hunt for that night. The waste of all that beautiful cream was all Mrs. Polly could think of--prudent housewife that she was.

So in the night, when the moon was up, and the others were sound asleep, Ann assisted her thief safely out of the grain-chest and out of the house. "But, first," said Ann Wales, pausing bravely, with her hand on the grain-chest lid, speaking in a solemn whisper, "before I let you out, you must make me a promise."

"What?" came back feebly.

"That you will never, never, steal a horse again. If you don't promise, I will give you up, now."

"I promise I won't," said the man, readily.

Let us hope he never did. That, speeding out into the clear winter night, he did bear with him a better determination in his heart. At all events, there were no more attempts made to rob the new Horse-House at the Braintree meeting-house. Many a Sunday after that, Red Robin stood there peaceful and unmolested. Occasionally, as the years went by, he was tied, of a Sunday night, in Mrs. Polly Wales' barn.

For, by and by, his master, good brave young John Penniman, married Ann Wales. The handsomest couple that ever went into the meeting-house, people said. Ann's linen-chest was well stocked; and she had an immense silk bonnet, with a worked white veil, a velvet cloak, and a flowered damask petticoat for her wedding attire. Even Hannah French had nothing finer when she was married to Phineas Adams a year later.

All the drawback to the happiness was that John had taken some land up in Vermont, and there the young couple went, shortly after the wedding. It was a great cross to Mrs. Polly; but she bore it bravely. Not a tear sparkled in her black eyes, watching the pair start off down the bridle-path, riding Red Robin, Ann on a pillion behind her husband. But, sitting down beside her lonely hearth when she entered the house, she cried bitterly. "I did hope I could keep Ann with me as long as I lived," she sobbed.

"Don't you take on," said Nabby, consolingly. "You take my word for't, they'll be back 'afore long."

Nabby proved a true prophet. Red Robin did come trotting back from the Vermont wilds, bearing his master and mistress before long. Various considerations induced them to return; and Mrs. Polly was overjoyed. They came to live with her.

Riding through the wilderness to Vermont on their wedding journey, Ann had confessed to her husband how she had secreted the thief who had tried to steal his Red Robin. She had been afraid to tell; but he had turned on the saddle, and smiled down in her face. "I am content that the man is safe," said John Penniman. "Prithee, why should I wish him evil, whilst I am riding along with thee, on Red Robin, Ann?"