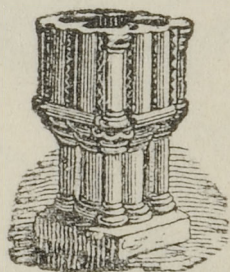


Fretful Fanny.



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Fretful Fanny.

LITTLE FANNY was sitting on the door-sill of nurse Warner's cottage, with her doll in her arms, and the little tabby kitten by her side. So you may suppose she did not want for playfellows. The kitten was

young and playful; the doll was old enough, to be sure,—but I have seen little girls very fond of an old doll, and an ugly one. But instead of playing, Fanny from time to time made a whining noise; as the kitten used to do when it got shut up in the wood-house.

“What in the world is the matter with you now, child,” said Mrs. Warner; “can’t you play prettily, and be quiet?”

“Oh, I want to go with the girls into the fields, to gather the daffodowndillies.”

“They promised to bring you some. Nanny won’t forget you. You will have plenty by and by.”

“No; I want to gather them myself. Do let me go; do, do,” said she, pulling nurse Warner’s apron.

“I can’t let you go running and making yourself hot, because of your head. Your head will ache, and then you must have the doctor’s bad stuff.”

Fanny sat down again, and leaned her head against the door-post, looking as sorrowful as possible, and not minding her kitten or her doll. All this time Mrs Warner was putting away her tea-things, and sweeping up the hearth. When that was done, she said,

“Come, don't fret; we will go a little way down the street, and see if they are coming.”

Fanny got up, only half-pleased, and trotted by Mrs. Warner's side. Whenever she stopped, and said, “You must not go farther,” Fanny began in her whining tone, “Oh, do go on—go a little farther.”

It was not a street like those in a town, but a village-street, with cottages and nice gardens beside or before them. As they stopped before one of them, they saw Mrs. Walker's children, two little girls and one boy, at play before the door. They had made a tiny doll's garden in the empty border under

the window, and very pretty it was, fenced round with twigs bent into the ground at the two ends, and little sticks tied together with thread for a stile, not so big as your hand, though, I daresay, it is a little one. And some green things out of the hedge stuck in, and some spring-flowers, as they called them (older people, who can manage to say hard words, would call them polyanthus-es), stuck into the ground too. The children were all kneeling round their little garden, looking at it with all their might.

“Look,” said Mrs. Warner, “there’s a pretty play! Now, why could not you be satisfied, dear, to play at home so? You know you might have some of my spring-flowers.”

Why, indeed! Because Fanny was a little girl very much given to fret and pine after things. There was one excuse for her as to this; for she was a sickly child, and had

a complaint in her head ; and the doctor had told Mrs. Warner that she must not let her cry. Fanny's father and mother were dead, and she might have gone to the work-house : but her mother had some kind friends with whom she had lived as a servant, and they put little Fanny to nurse with Mrs. Warner, till she could do something for herself. But now she was old enough to know that it was wrong to fret and cry for things, and that she could not have any thing she wanted. And Nancy Warner, who was only a year older, was a good pattern for her. For she never set her heart on things she could not have. I am quite sure that if she had not had leave to go to the field for the daffodowndillies, she would have been quite as happy making a doll's garden. And, I think, she would have been glad her playfellows should go, though she could not.

While Mrs. Warner and little Fanny stood looking at the Walkers, they heard the voices of the girls coming over the stile, and into the village-street. The girls ran towards them with their pinafores held up. All of them had got their flowers safe in their pinafores; and Nancy called out,

“Now, Fanny, you shall choose the best of mine. You shall have all that are blown, if you like—and look, I have got one up by the root; perhaps it will grow in the garden.”

So they ran home together, and Fanny sat down again on the door-sill; while Nancy let down her pinafore, and spread all the flowers out beside her. Fanny was very quiet, but she took up the flowers and looked at them, and stripped off the outer leaves to see the inside, that was so pretty, and golden, and shining; the prettiest part of the flower, as they called it.

While they were doing this, Miss

Fuller and her father (who was the clergyman of the parish) came up to the door. They were taking a walk, that fine spring evening, and they stopped to speak to Mrs. Warner, who had been Miss Fuller's nurse formerly, and therefore Miss Fuller was very fond of her, and of Nancy, and she always noticed little Fanny Smith too.

She looked at the pretty yellow flowers, and said,

"Do you remember, nurse, how you used to take us to that very field? How glad I used to be when spring came, and we could go to look for the first that were blown; and I hope Fanny is as happy as we were then."

"Come in, Miss Mary; come in, sir. Do rest yourselves a bit." And Mrs. Warner dusted one chair with her apron for Mr. Fuller; and Nancy got another for Miss Fuller, curtesying and smiling, but not speaking.

After which she sat down to play with Fanny.

“You would not think, Miss,” said Mrs. Warner, “how that child has fretted, because she could not go to the daff-field, as they call it. She would not rest till I took her to meet Nancy. I never saw such a girl for setting her heart on things.”

“I am afraid, nurse,” said Mr. Fuller, who was standing up looking at the pictures on the wall, “that you let her have her own way too much.”

“Perhaps I do, poor motherless thing. I am afraid to let her cry. Last Sunday I could not tell what to do with her. She did take on so because she could not go to church with Nancy. She does like to keep her church; but you remember, I daresay, Miss, the hail-storm. I could not let the poor sickly thing go and take cold. So she fretted all church-time. I must say I was almost out of patience; for, as my

foot was bad, I could not get there, and I wanted to read the service quietly at the right time. How she kept worrying! But, sir, I was pleased afterwards to think it was about going to church."

"Why, as to that nurse, little girls, and grown people too, may have different reasons, good or bad, for wanting to go to church. They must be wrong, if they do not want to go at all. But with such a child as that, the first thing is to obey; so that Fanny was quite wrong when she worried you about going to church. It is little good to go to a good place, if we go there in a bad spirit. And you must try to make her understand, nurse, that it is wicked to fret and cry after what she cannot have. Remember what a sin it is in a grown person. I am afraid you spoil her."

"Just as you used to do with us, nurse," said Miss Fuller; "you spoiled us all sadly. Out of your

love for us it was, I believe," added she kindly.

"I'm sure, Miss Mary, neither Fanny nor any one else need grow up more good than you are. I do believe you never let yourself fret for any thing that it does not please God to send you."

Miss Fuller looked grave, and said,

"I wish you would not say that, nurse; don't say what I don't deserve." Then she smiled, and added,

"But you don't know how much trouble I had afterwards with myself, because I had had my own way too much when I was a child."

Fanny and Nancy had come up to Miss Fuller's chair, so she turned to Fanny, and said,

"You must not be a fretful little maid, Fanny; whining and pining, when you ought to be merry and good. Mind what nurse says to you. She takes a great deal of care

of you, as she did once of me. You must not be a trouble to her. Look at your kitten at play; it makes me laugh to see her. Can't you laugh too?"

Fanny did laugh, and toss her ball to the kitten; and, by the time Mr. Fuller and his daughter were gone, she was merry and happy enough. She said her prayers nicely, and stood quite still to be undressed, and was in as good a humour, for the time, as Nancy.

As far as I know, she was merry and cheerful enough the next day; though I am afraid that often, when she went to play on the green with the school-children, something happened to make her discontented. If the play was bull-in-the-park, Fanny could not be easy without being bull. If they played at schoolmistress and scholar, Fanny wished to be just what her playfellows had settled she should not be. And then she was rather apt, if they did not give

way, to get into a corner by herself, and fancy she was very unhappy, and that nobody loved her, or cared for her.

The next day brought a great trial. Nancy had been sent for to the parsonage; and Miss Fuller's little niece, who was visiting there, had been allowed to give her a new doll, because Nancy was a good girl. Nancy came running home, out of breath, with her doll wrapped up in her pinafore. Before she had breath to speak, she uncovered it, and held it out to her mother and little Fanny. All she could say was, "Only look here!"

It was indeed worth looking at. It was a wooden doll, with jointed legs and arms; so that it could be made to sit down, or to hold up one hand, or to cross its arms before it, as if it was going to make a curtesy. It had a pretty striped frock, exactly like Miss Fuller's gown that she wore on Sundays, and a little

tippet of the same. And on its head was a straw-bonnet, a *real* straw-bonnet, and a tiny cap underneath; and a little black silk shawl, like a lady's. How they looked at it! Mrs. Warner left her ironing, to take it up, and wonder if Miss Fuller had made the shawl; and Fanny looked at the straw-bonnet, and said it *was* pretty! Nancy kissed her doll, and hugged it, and called it her darling twenty times over! Then they carefully untied the little green bonnet-strings, and quite screamed for joy when they saw the little cap underneath.

They sat down at the door to consider what name to give it. And, after a few minutes, Nancy said to her mother,

“Do you think Miss Fuller would mind, if I was to call my doll Mary, after her?”

“You might call it Emily, after her little niece; she gave it you.”

“Yes, but I love Miss Fuller

better, because I have always known her, and she has always been so good-natured to me. It was very good of Miss Emily to give me my dear beautiful doll; but Miss Fuller gave her leave."

"Well, call it Mary, dear; and don't trouble me now. I've done my work. I want to read the Psalms, and you must be quiet; but first bring my great Prayer-book."

So the little girls crept up stairs, not to disturb Mrs. Warner while she read the Evening Lessons and Psalms, to refresh her after her work. They played very happily with the new doll in the bedroom, where they had a bed beside Mrs. Warner's. Nancy pretended to be nurse Warner, and Fanny was the nursery-maid; and of course the doll was Miss Fuller when she was a baby. They did all they could think of that nurse Warner had told them she used to do. She often talked to them a great deal about Mrs. Ful-

ler's nursery, and how she took care of the children there, after their mother died.

The last thing Nancy did after saying her prayers, was to put her dear doll carefully in bed by her side; on her own side of the bed. And then the first longing thought came into Fanny's mind; for she thought she should like to have the doll on her side, and see her the first thing in the morning. And the second thought was, "I wish it was mine." And the third, "I wish I was as happy as Nancy. Nobody gives me a new doll." She had better have stopped at the first discontented thought, but she did not; and so she went on thinking and longing when Nancy was asleep. And when she woke in the morning, instead of jumping up good and happy, and being thankful to her Father in heaven for all the good things and kind friends He had given her, when she said her prayers, she

felt as if she was wanting something, and then thought of the doll; and now it was no pleasure to see Nancy take it up and kiss it after she was dressed. For Nancy dressed herself quick, and then she turned carefully away while she said her prayers, that she might not be thinking of her doll and her play.

“What are you moping for, child, now?” said Mrs. Warner, as Fanny eat her bread and butter. “Are you quarrelling with your breakfast?”

“No, nurse,” said Fanny in a dismal tone, and looking as if the tears would start out; “but I want a doll just like Nancy’s.”

“Nonsense, dear; you can play with Nancy, as you did yesterday; you were very happy together.”

“But I want a doll of my own, to sleep on my side of the bed. I do wish somebody would give me one.”

“Never mind,” said Nancy; “you shall have her all to yourself this

morning, while I go to school, till I come home to dinner. I must have her at dinner-time."

"All the time from ten till twelve," said Mrs. Warner; "sure that may satisfy you."

Fanny made no answer, for she was rather ashamed of herself: and when Nancy put on her bonnet to go to school, leaving Fanny, who being younger did not go, she put the doll into her arms, and said, "Take care of my doll; how pretty she is!"

Fanny played with the doll, pretended to feed her, walked up and down the garden with her, took off her bonnet, put her to sleep. But still she was not happy; for longing to have a doll of her own hindered her from enjoying Nancy's. So that Nancy's pleasure was only a grief to her; and how sad that was! For when she had nothing to amuse her, she always began longing to have a doll of her own, like Nancy's. She

was uncomfortable herself, and made others so too.

One afternoon the next week, as little Fanny was sitting at the door, a woman, whom she did not know, came to speak to Mrs. Warner. Fanny did not know all that they were talking about ; but she understood that somebody was ill, and wanted Mrs. Warner to come. And they looked at her, and she heard something about her aunt ; but Mrs. Warner said nothing more then, nor after the stranger was gone, only she put on her bonnet, and told Fanny to play with the little Walkers, while she went to speak to Miss Fuller.

When she came back, and Nancy was come in from school, they sat down to tea ; and then Mrs. Warner told them that she was going to nurse a friend of hers in the next village, who was ill, and that Nancy had got leave from school to go with her. But, because she could not

take Fanny too, she had settled with Miss Fuller, that Fanny should go for a month to her aunt's, Mrs. Smith, who lived at the town ten miles off, and kept a school there. Miss Fuller was going there to-morrow, and would speak to aunt Smith; and Fanny was to go in the errand-cart, if her aunt was willing to have her.

Now Fanny, who liked something new, and had never seen the town, was very much pleased. She did not doubt that aunt Smith would be very kind; she thought she should play with the school-children, and see a great many new things. The thought of this quite put the doll out of her head for a time; all her wish was to know if aunt Smith would have her.

When Miss Fuller's pony-chaise stopped at the door the next evening, Fanny's cheek grew quite red. "If aunt can't have me," she thought, "how sorry I should be! I don't

care for the doll now. I only want to go to the town."

"Well," said Miss Fuller, "I have settled it all, nurse, with Mrs. Smith; she is willing to take care of Fanny; and I have told her all about her. And Fanny must be a good girl; for her aunt is strict, and keeps all the school in good order, and her own girls too."

This last part Fanny did not much attend to; she was so pleased with the thought of her visit. She only wished it was the next day, that she might see Molly Simmonds' cart stop at the door; and all her fear was lest Molly should forget to stop there.

She could hardly sleep for thinking of it all. At last the morning came, and the cart did stop. However, when she recollected that she should not see Mrs. Warner, or her companion Nancy, for a whole month, she felt all at once sad. At that moment, the tears came into her

eyes; and when they said "Good bye" over and over again, she thought of nothing but the pain of parting with them.

However, as she jolted along on the bench, by Molly's side, she saw so much that she had not seen before, that she soon became merry and happy. And Molly had enough to do, when they got into the high-road, Fanny's questions came so quick. But when they got into the wide streets of the large town, Fanny could not speak; she could only wonder and stare about her.

Her aunt lived in a narrow street, with a little court behind and garden beyond. As the cart stopped at the door, the school had just broken up. The children were all going away; and Mrs. Smith came out smiling to lift Fanny from the cart. She kissed her, and seemed very much pleased to see her; and Fanny was pleased too, though she was tired, and her little limbs were stiff with the jolting

of the cart. When she went in, she found her cousins getting ready the tea-things. There were three girls; the youngest about her own age, and the eldest a great girl twelve years old.

Fanny was so tired, she was glad to go to bed. The next morning she got up quite rested, and was much amused with watching all that was going on. How, when breakfast was over, the children all came in, scraping their shoes carefully, and making their bows and curtesies in a very orderly manner, taking their places on the benches without speaking a word, and looking very much afraid to offend Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith said Fanny should sit on a bench with the youngest, and say her spelling, and what she had been taught at home. She sat quiet, and was attentive as they were; and after school she went out with them to play, on a little green beyond the garden. In the afternoon it

was the same; and then, after school, her cousins had different things to do, and they let Fanny help them.

On the whole she felt happy, because she had been busy all day, and thought Mrs. Smith was very good-natured to her; she felt as if she should not dare to fret or whine before her.

For near a week things went on very smoothly. Her aunt took her out in the streets sometimes, to see the fine things in the shop-windows. On Sunday she went with the school-children to the handsome large church; and she was surprised and half-frightened to hear the loud sound of the organ, and wondered very much at the singing.

One day it was showery; and Mrs. Smith told little Fanny to keep in the court, instead of going to play on the green with the others. Her youngest cousin was to stay there too; and she said they might try to pull up the weeds there. So Jenny

Smith set to work pulling weeds, and putting them in little heaps; and she said there was a little cart in the shed, and she should take them away in that. But Fanny, who had a fancy to play with the others, would not help, but sat down, in her old way, under the paling, "all in a heap," as Jenny said, laughing.

Presently aunt Smith asked what Fanny was doing there.

"I want to go to play," said Fanny in a sorrowful tone; but she saw by her aunt's looks that whining would not do with her.

"You can't do that. I have told you so. You had better make up your mind to help Jenny."

But that Fanny would not do. She sat there till it was time to come in, feeling uncomfortable enough; while Jenny shewed her sisters her heap of weeds, and her mother said she was a handy little maid.

And that seemed pleasure enough for Jenny.

No further notice was taken of Fanny's behaviour at that time. Her cousins were very good-natured; and sometimes when Mary, the eldest, went out on errands, or to a shop, Fanny went with her; and that was always a treat. The little girl used to raise her head as she went by the shop-windows, to see all the pretty things.

"Oh, Mary, look there!" she said one day, as they passed a toy-shop; "don't you wish you had all those things?"

Mary laughed.

"I have hardly time," she said, "to be longing for all the fine things in the High-street. I have got something else to do. Come, trot along."

One evening, Fanny had set her heart very much on a walk with Mary. It began to rain; but she thought there was room for her under the umbrella. But Mrs. Smith said "No;" and Mary opened her umbrella, and went alone.

The next moment Fanny was seen in the corner of the room sobbing.

“Fanny, don't be silly,” said her aunt. “Come here, and have your supper.”

But Fanny put her fingers in her eyes, and would not stir.

“Fanny, you have got to your old trick of fretting. I will have nothing like this here. I shall punish you now, that you may remember it another time. I shall put you to bed at once, as you do not choose to do any thing better. You may have a piece of bread, but no tea.”

Her aunt gave her the bread, and took her up-stairs. She was put to bed in broad daylight; and then she had time to be awake, and think of her folly, as she heard her cousins talking cheerfully below.

By the time Mary came to bed, she had repented of her naughtiness, for she was not an obstinate child; and when Mary came to wish her

good night, she told her she was sorry, and would try not to fret another time.

But several things of the same kind happened afterwards, and always ended in Fanny's finding out her folly and naughtiness when it was too late.

In the meantime, Mrs. Warner was kept longer than she had expected. It was six weeks before she and Nancy got home again; and then they longed to have little Fanny back. Mrs. Warner settled that she would go herself in Molly's cart, the next market-day, to fetch her.

She got to Mrs. Smith's in the evening, just at the time Fanny did; and the little girl was gone out with her cousins.

Mrs. Smith welcomed Mrs. Warner, and told her Fanny was well.

"And I really hope," she said, "I have cured her of her fretfulness; she has been good-humoured all the last fortnight, and taken it

quietly when she was crossed. And I am sure, Mrs. Warner, if you will but keep a steady tight hand over her, she will do very well in time. But you are too good-natured to her, Mrs. Warner."

"It's very like I am, Mrs. Smith; that's the worst of me, they say. Well, you do know how to manage children, that's certain; so just tell me what you did with our little Fanny."

Mrs. Smith began giving an account of the way in which she punished Fanny, and a very good way it was; for she was never violent or passionate with her, but only strict and steady, as she had been that evening when she put her to bed.

Mrs. Warner listened to it all, and by this time Fanny came in; and you may suppose how glad she was to see Mrs. Warner, and hear about Nancy.

The next morning she wished her aunt and cousins good bye and asked

them to come and see her in the summer. And very happy she was to get home again, and see Nancy and the kitten, and the garden now full of flowers, and hear the birds singing, and see the lambs at play.

But the happiest thing was her having got very much the better of her fretfulness; and, as Mrs. Warner was on the watch to check it by punishing her as her aunt had done, she was in time entirely cured of it, and grew up to be a good and happy girl.

Now this story is meant for little children, as may be seen. But perhaps it may be read by older ones, or by grown-up people. And it might be well for such, for all of us, to consider, how much *we* are like fretful children.

Do not we set our hearts on things almost as trifling as a new doll, or such as will become so to us some day? Do we not fret and pine till we get them, though per-

haps we may be tired of them when something else takes our fancy?

Is not our heavenly Father like a kind parent who knows what is best for us? Do not we own that He is so; and yet are we not discontented and sullen, and unwilling to be satisfied with what He does give us, if it is not just what we ask for?

We might all learn a good deal from what we see of good and bad children, if we would but think of it in that way.

