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Kate and Mephibosheth

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Perhaps I ought to put the names in reverse order, since Mephibosheth was so much older than the little girl, besides being the son of a prince; but I know Kate so much better than I know him and love her so much more, that I think I shall let the names stand just as they set themselves down in my mind and on this paper. Therefore I shall first tell you about Kate.

Her home, nestling between the Great Smoky and the Blue Ridge Mountains, is in Western North Carolina, and from its doorway you can look upon the most pleasing and picturesque scenery our country affords. I will leave it to the railroad and newspaper men to tell you

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all about the beauties of the landscape, the healthfulness of climate, and the business prospects of this section, while I devote my time and yours to Kate, the dear little mountain lassie, and to Mephibosheth, King Saul's grandson.

I can hear you asking, "What was Kate like, and how did she and Mephibosheth have anything to do with each other?" Being something of a Yankee, I ask you a question before answering yours. Do you know that species of azalea commonly called flame bush? It is the color of fire, and flames out here in the dense woods and along streams in the early summer. I cannot send you a specimen as I might of the rhododendron, the laurel, the bird-foot violet, or even flowers of the flame bush's own sister, pinkster azalea. These splendid blossoms would look like little snips of rags when they reached you. You can see a good picture of the flame bush in Alice Lounsberry's book, "Southern Wild Flowers." The color is given there, and you will

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get a clear idea of how it looks, although the blossoms are so tender and fragile you cannot enjoy them in reality unless you see them in their native setting. Kate is like the flame bush flower. I have known her eight years, and she loses none of the resemblance which first struck me. Her fluffy hair, her fair face, her sensitive nature are all portrayed by that; and if she had not been handled wisely and carefully, she would have had a bramble-bush disposition, or if she had been restrained and cramped unduly she would have been a mere rag-doll-sort-of-a-girl instead of the sweet, strong, true, beautiful maiden of sixteen, standing nearly six feet tall. She is a practical and thorough-going girl, and is doing good work and making her life tell for good in the work to which Providence called her a few weeks after her graduation last June.

Kate's father died when she was a little bit of a girl, and when I first saw her she was only eight years old. There were a

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number of brothers and sisters, both older and younger than she, all of whom the mother was bravely trying to keep together and to bring up to be respectable men and women. This I believe she would have succeeded in doing, but I doubt whether she could have reached the heights of placing them on the plane of intelligent Christians had not the Home and the Farm Presbyterian Schools come to her aid. At least her problem would have been greater, her struggle harder, and perhaps failure would have marked the end. I knew the mother slightly and had reason to esteem her; so when Jerry, my horse, and I took a sick girl to her home over the mountains twenty-five miles, we called to see the widow, and accepted an invitation to return and spend the night with her. I had been spoken to before this about taking Kate into school, and perhaps that was the reason I loved her on sight more than I did the other children, though she apparently paid far less attention to me.

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When we were all gathered around the open fire that November evening, I am sure we made a wholesome-looking, happy group. After a time I asked if we should have family prayer. All readily consented. In order to interest and help this circle of assorted sizes and ages, to keep the little wrigglers still, and bring something of comfort, help and joy to the burdened mother's heart, I decided to tell, reading in part, the story of Mephibosheth.

The tragic death of King Saul and the beloved Prince Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, in battle against the Philistines, first caught the attention of the children, and they were ready for the bit of fine poetry expressing David's lament for both, and his great love for Jonathan. They were sure David would love and care for all Jonathan's children left without a father, but I could not tell them of any except one who was a little child with a very big name. Everybody learned to say the name before I would tell them about him,

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and we had merry laughter over the attempts to get it right. Then I read of the flight of the nurse with Mephibosheth when tidings of the death of Saul and Jonathan came, and of the accident which caused the little boy's lameness. Being mountain children themselves, they understood what a perilous thing it was for a woman with a heavy child in her arms to run along a steep and rocky mountain trail. They expressed pity for little Mephibosheth, so seriously hurt, and sympathy with the good nurse in her grief because of the accident. They were ready to believe she loved him much and took good care to keep him hid from his grandfather's enemies, so that when he had grown to be a big boy, King David, who wished to show him kindness for his father Jonathan's sake, could hardly find him. They were deeply interested in my reading of the King's finding the boy and ever after having him eat at his own table, treating him as a son and sparing his life when his grandfather's enemies

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slew all his kinsfolk. They were sure King David loved Mephibosheth none the less and probably did many more kind and beautiful and loving things in his behalf because "he was lame in both his feet."

When I asked, "Is anybody in this room lame?" a chorus said, "No," and the six children promptly stretched out their sturdy, straight legs in proof. After some conversation, they understood that we are all lame spiritually, and that our King, if we let Him, adopts us into His family for Jesus' sake, and besides giving us the best things in this life, adds also the gift of eternal life.

All faces were alight with other than the glow of the big wood fire coming from the wide-throated chimney, as we knelt around that family altar; and the inspiring picture of the widow and her children dwells in my memory. However, I believe the picture might have faded a bit, had not Kate, who soon afterwards became a member of the Home In-

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dustrial family, touched up its coloring for me.

About three years after my visit, I read at school family prayers the story of Mephibosheth, and having finished, I asked how many had ever before heard that story. Only one hand among the one hundred and ten girls came up in response. It was Kate's, and she could hardly wait to answer. She was on her feet and in her impetuous way was soon telling us all, "I know every word of it. You read that story to us the time you stayed all night with us; and we're every one lame, but God loves us for Jesus' sake."

It was not many months afterwards when Kate heard and hearkened to the invitation to come into the King's household, where she eats continually at His table, though on account of her impetuous nature she often shows her lameness more than some who are far worse crippled by the fall. Had she not known about Mephibosheth she would often

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have been persuaded by the "enemy who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" of her utter unworthiness to remain in the King's household, and so have been unhappy and discouraged; but the truth of God's constant love for Jesus' sake, His completeness filling up the measure for her, and His hold upon her for time and eternity took such deep root in her childish heart that none can pluck it out.

Is any opportunity in the world more precious or more far reaching than the privilege of bringing the little children and the young people among all classes and conditions of society unto the Lord Christ Jesus, that by His word the Holy Spirit may touch them and teach them and bring to mind what He has said unto them even after scores of years have passed? Is it not cause for thanksgiving that the Woman's Board is given this opportunity in such abundant measure? Through its organization of auxiliary societies, the children and young people

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in the churches are reached by their leaders, and the workers holding commissions from the Board are daily teaching the Scriptures to the twelve thousand children and youth gathered into the schools under their care for the exceptional populations of our country. Does not this constitute a corps in the Lord's army representing the dew of his youth (Psa. 110:3)? That Kate remembered the truth she had heard but once is one of the thousand proofs, among the children of our home churches and mission schools, of the fulfillment of the promises "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." We, as workers at both ends of the line, are given the "great permission" to carry swiftly and surely the King's invitation to sit at His table, and as sons, to enter His glad service for time and for eternity.

THE WILLETT PRESS
NEW YORK

