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Mary got up and put her hand on her mother's forehead—it was icy cold. That coldness ran through the girl's arm to her body, and she shivered. She shook her mother's shoulder and called to her, but the closed eyes didn't open. She put her cheek to her mother's hair and because the feel of it was familiar, she felt comforted.

Mary heard the door-knob turn and, looking up, saw her father. She beckoned to him with her finger on her lips. She watched him tip-toe across the room and saw him look down at his wife with a curious expression on his face; then he stooped down and laid his hand on her heart. "She's dead," he said.

After that, strange things happened. A black wagon drove up the street and stopped before the house. Two men got down from the front seat, carrying small satchels in their hands, came into the room where Mrs. Tompkins lay, and locked the door.

The children, with Mary to look after them, crowded close to each other in the kitchen. They felt a little frightened and awed, and very important. Their eyes never left the door where the two strange men had gone. After a long while the two men came out, and the children from the window saw them get into the black wagon and drive away.

The next afternoon a great many people came. All the men patted the children's heads, and all the women cried over the maid called them, "Poor little motherless things." The children cried, too, and felt both flattered and sorry for themselves.

Then they all assembled in the parlor, where Mrs. Tompkins lay in a long, black box without any cover. The children were told to go up and kiss their mother. Mary took each one in turn by the hand, and they walked up to the black box and put their warm mouths to the coldly smiling lips of Mrs. Tompkins.

The younger Tompkinses howled dismally while a man read prayers and spoke often of the dear deceased. But their tears were dried when, for the first time in their uneventful lives, they rode in carriages, sitting opposite each other on upholstered seats and being carried along by fat, brown horses.

Even Mary felt excited at the novelty of the ride, and, with her serious little face pressed against the carriage window, watched houses and trees and telegraph poles go sedately by.

The carriage stopped at what Mary thought was a park, with white, square blocks springing up from the earth among the trees. The long, narrow box was lowered into a hole in the ground, and the hole was filled up with spadefuls of earth.

Then the people turned away, murmuring among themselves, "poor man," and "motherless children," while they glanced furtively at Mr. Tompkins and his family, who were entering the first two carriages.

But the poor man bore up nobly. He ate quite as much as formerly, read the papers as thoroughly, and smoked his pipe with his accustomed pleasure. The younger children missed the figure on the bed for a day or so, then promptly forgot. Mary didn't forget. She thought of the long, black hair and missed braiding it into two thick plaits; she thought of the fretful voice and found herself waiting to hear it, demanding peevishly to be made comfortable.

After Mrs. Tompkins' death the neighbors consulted together about the affairs of the family and finally decided that they ought to persuade Mary's father to send her to school.

Mr. Tompkins gave a laconical assent—it was something that didn't much interest him—and Mary started getting educated the following week. She had to go into a class with little children, and her size and age were humiliations that caused her many secret tears.

(Continued on page 12.)

*Saturday Afternoon*

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*at the*

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