

CHAPTER X

THE ILLUMINATION

ONE fine morning, Peter Grey persuaded a party of his companions to spend all the money that they had on cakes and sweets, and to make a splendid entertainment under the trees in Charlotte Square, where they were to sit like a horde of gipsies, and amuse themselves with telling fortunes to each other. Harry and Laura had no one with them but Betty, who gladly joined a group of nurserymaids at a distance, leaving them to their own devices; upon which they rushed up to Peter and offered their assistance, subscribing all their pocket-money, and begging him to set forth and obtain provisions for them as well as for himself. Neither Harry nor Laura cared for eating the trash that was collected on this occasion, and would have been quite as well pleased to distribute it among their companions; but they both enjoyed extremely the bustle of arranging this elegant *déjeuné*, or "*disjune*," as Peter called it. Harry gathered leaves off the trees to represent plates, on each of which Peter arranged some of the fruit or sweets he had purchased, while

they placed benches together as a table, and borrowed Laura's white Indian shawl for a table-cloth.

"It looks like that grand public dinner we saw at the Assembly Room one day!" exclaimed Harry, in an ecstasy of admiration. "We must have speeches and toasts like real gentlemen and officers. Peter! if you will make a fine oration, full of compliments to me, I shall say something wonderful about you, and then Laura must beat upon the table with a stick, to show that she agrees to all that we observe in praise of each other."

"Or suppose we all take the names of some great personages," added Peter; "I shall be the Duke of Wellington, and Laura, you must be Nelson, and, Harry, you are Sir Walter Raleigh, that we may seem as different as possible; but here comes the usher of the black rod to disperse us all! Mrs. Crabtree hurrying into the square, her very gown flaming with rage! what can be the matter! she must have smelled the sugar-plums a mile off! One comfort is, if Harry and Laura are taken away, we shall have the fewer people to divide these cakes among, and I could devour every one of them for my own share."

Before Peter finished speaking, Mrs. Crabtree had come close up to the table, and without waiting to utter a word, or even to scold, she twitched up Laura's shawl in her hand, and thus scattered the whole feast in every direction on the ground, after which she trampled the sugar-plums and cakes into the earth, saying,—

"I knew how it would be, as soon as I saw whose company you were in, Master Harry! Peter Grey is the father of mischief! he ought to be put into the monkey's cage at the Geological gardens! I would not be your maid, Master Grey, for a hundred a-year."

Some days after this adventure of Harry and Laura's, there arrived newspapers from London containing accounts of a great battle which had been fought abroad. On that occasion the British troops of course performed prodigies of valour, and completely conquered the enemy, in consequence of which it was ordered by Government that, in every town, and every village, and every house throughout the whole kingdom, there should be a grand illumination.

Neither Harry nor Laura had ever heard of such a thing as an illumination before, and they were full of curiosity to know what it was like; but their very faces became lighted up with joy, when Major Graham described that they would see crowds of candles flaming in every window, tar-barrels blazing on every hill, flambeaux glaring at the doors, and transparencies, fireworks, and coloured lamps, shining in all the streets.

"How delightful! and walking out in the dark to see it," cried Harry, "that will be best of all! oh! and a whole holiday! I hardly know whether I am in my right wits or my wrong wits for joy! I wish we gained a victory every day!"

"What a warrior you would be, Harry! Cæsar