

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells James Hastings Cooke
Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

The Palace Beautiful A Story for Girls

L. T. Meade

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: L. T. Meade

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7761-2

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I. Early Days
- II. The First Month of their Trouble
- III. Miss Martineau
- IV. To the Rescue
- V. The Contents of the Cabinet
- VI. Many Visitors
- VII. Shortlands
- VIII. Thirty Pounds a Year
- IX. A Strange Letter and a Proposed Visit to London
- X. Ways and Means of Earning a Living
- XI. Bread and Butter
- XII. They Would Not be Parted
- XIII. Mrs. Ellsworthy's Letter
- XIV. Quite Contrary
- XV. In Spite of Opposition
- XVI. Penelope Mansion
- XVII. Escorted by Miss Slowcum
- XVIII. In St. Paul's Cathedral
- XIX. A Bright Day

- XX. Getting Lost
- XXI. How to Paint China and How to Form Style
- XXII. Cross Purposes
- XXIII. Dark Days
- XXIV. Dove's Joke
- XXV. Daisy's Promise
- XXVI. A Delightful Plan
- XXVII. The Poor Doves
- XXVIII. A Startling Discovery
- XXIX. A Blessing
- XXX. Voice of the Prince
- XXXI. A "Continual Reader"
- XXXII. Jasmine Begins to Soar
- XXXIII. Visiting the Publishers
- XXXIV. A Plan
- XXXV. Their Quarter's Allowance
- XXXVI. *The Joy-Bell*
- XXXVII. Endorsing a Cheque
- XXXVIII. Daisy's Request
- XXXIX. The Journey
- XL. A Bitter Disappointment

- XXI.** Mrs. Dredge to the Rescue
- XLII.** A New Employment
- XLIII.** In the Field
- XLIV.** Too Much for Dove
- XLV.** The Prince to the Rescue
- XLVI.** Delivered from the Ogre
- XLVII.** Almost Defeated
- XLVIII.** One Shoe Off and One Shoe On
- XLIX.** Spanish Lace
 - L.** A Dazzling Day
 - LI.** A Letter
 - LII.** "I Love Mrs. Ellsworthy"
 - LIII.** Telegraph Wires
 - LIV.** A Discovery
 - LV.** An Invitation for the Ladies of Penelope Mansion
 - LVI.** A Palace Beautiful

THE PALACE BEAUTIFUL.

A STORY FOR GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

The three girls were called after flowers. This is how it came about:

When Primrose opened her eyes on the world she brought back a little bit of spring to her mother's heart.

Mrs. Mainwaring had gone through a terrible trouble—a trouble so dark and mysterious, so impossible to feel reconciled to, that her health had been almost shattered, and she had almost said good-bye to hope.

The baby came in the spring-time, and the soft, velvety touch of the little face, and the sight of the round baby limbs, had made Mrs. Mainwaring smile: had caused her to pluck up heart, and to determine resolutely to take this new blessing, and to begin to live again.

The baby came in the month of March, just when the primroses were beginning to open their pale and yet bright blossoms. Mrs. Mainwaring said that the child was a symbol of spring to her, and she called her Primrose.

The next girl was born in Italy, in the middle of a rich and brilliant summer. Flowers were everywhere, and the baby, a black-haired, dark-eyed little mite, had a starry look about her. She was called Jasmine, and the name from the very first suited her exactly.

The third and youngest of the sisters also came in the summer, but she was born in an English cottage. Her mother, who had been rich when Jasmine was born, was now poor; that is, she was poor as far as money is concerned, but the three little daughters made her feel rich. She called the child from the first her little country wild flower, and allowed Primrose and Jasmine to select her name. They

brought in handfuls of field daisies, and begged to have the baby called after them.

The three girls grew up in the little country cottage. Their father was in India, in a very unhealthy part of the country. He wrote home by every mail, and in each letter expressed a hope that the Government under which he served would allow him to return to England and to his wife and children. Death, however, came first to the gallant captain. When Primrose was ten years old, and Daisy was little more than a baby, Mrs. Mainwaring found herself in the humble position of an officer's widow, with very little to live on besides her pension.

In the Devonshire village, however, things were cheap, rents were low, and the manners of life deliciously fresh and primitive.

Primrose, Jasmine, and Daisy grew up something like the flowers, taking no thought for the morrow, and happy in the grand facts that they were alive, that they were perfectly healthy, and that the sun shone and the sweet fresh breezes blew for them. They were as primitive as the little place where they lived, and cared nothing at all for fashionably-cut dresses; or for what people who think themselves wiser would have called the necessary enjoyments of life. Mrs. Mainwaring, who had gone through a terrible trouble before the birth of her eldest girl, had her nerves shattered a second time by her husband's death; from that moment she was more ruled by her girls than a ruler to them. They did pretty much what they pleased, and she was content that they should make themselves happy in their own way.

It was lucky for the girls that they were amiable, and had strength of character.

Primrose was delightfully matter-of-fact. When she saw that her mother allowed them to learn their lessons anyhow she made little rules for herself and her sisters—the rules were so playful and so light that the others, for mere fun, followed them—thus they insisted on their mother hearing them their daily tasks; they insisted on going regularly twice a week to a certain old Miss Martineau, who gave them lessons on an antiquated piano, and taught them obsolete French. Primrose was considered by her sisters very wise indeed but Primrose also thought Jasmine wise, and wise with a wis-

dom which she could appreciate without touching; for Jasmine had got some gifts from a fairy wand, she was touched with the spirit of Romance, and had a beautiful way of looking at life which her sisters loved to encourage. Daisy was the acknowledged baby of the family—she was very pretty, and not very strong, was everybody's darling, and was, of course, something of a spoiled child.

Primrose had a face which harmonized very well with her quaint, sweet name; her hair was soft, straight, and yellow, her eyes were light brown, her skin was fair, and her expression extremely calm, gentle, and placid. To look at Primrose was to feel soothed—she had a somewhat slow way of speaking, and she never wasted her words. Jasmine was in all particulars her opposite. She was dark, with very bright and lovely eyes; her movements were quick, her expression full of animation, and when excited—and she was generally in a state of excitement—her words tumbled out almost too quickly for coherence. Her cheeks would burn, and her eyes sparkle, over such trivial circumstances as a walk down a country lane, as blackberry-hunting, as strawberry-picking—a new story-book kept her awake half the night—she was, in short, a constant little volcano in this quiet home, and would have been an intolerable child but for the great sweetness of her temper, and also for the fact that every one more or less yielded to her.

Daisy was very pretty and fair—her hair was as yellow as Primrose's, but it curled, and was more or less always in a state of friz; her eyes were wide open and blue, and she was just a charming little child, partaking slightly of the qualities of both her elder sisters.

These girls had never had a care or an anxiety—when they were hungry they could eat, when they were tired sleep could lull them into dreamless rest—they had never seen any world but the narrow world of Rosebury, the name of the village where they lived. Even romantic Jasmine thought that life at Rosebury, with perhaps a few more books and a few more adventures must form the sum and substance of her existence. Of course there was a large world outside, but even Jasmine had not begun to long for it.

Primrose was sixteen, Jasmine between thirteen and fourteen, and Daisy ten, when a sudden break came to all this quiet and happy

routine. Mrs. Mainwaring without any warning or any leave-taking, suddenly died.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MONTH OF THEIR TROUBLE.

There are mothers and mothers. Mrs. Mainwaring was the kind of mother who could not possibly say a harsh word to her children—she could not be severe to them, she could never do anything but consider them the sweetest and best of human beings. The girls ruled her, and she liked to be ruled by them. After her husband's death, and after the first agony of his loss had passed away, she sank into a sort of subdued state—she began to live in the present, to be content with the little blessings of each day, to look upon the sunshine as an unmitigated boon, and on the girls' laughter as the sweetest music. She had been rich in her early married life, but Captain Mainwaring had lost his money, had lost all his large private means, through a bank failure, and before Daisy came into the world Mrs. Mainwaring knew that she was a very poor woman indeed. Before the captain went to India he insured his life for £1000, and after his death Mrs. Mainwaring lived very placidly on her small pension, and for any wants which she required over and above what the pension could supply she drew upon the £1000. She did not care, as a more sensible woman would have done, to invest this little sum as so much capital; no, she preferred to let it lie in the bank, and to draw upon it from time to time, as necessity arose. She had no business friends to advise her, for the few acquaintances she made at Rosebury knew nothing whatever of the value of money. Like many another woman who has been brought up in affluence, neither had Mrs. Mainwaring the faintest idea of how fast a small sum like £1,000 can dwindle. She felt comfortable during the latter years of her life at the knowledge that she had a good balance in the bank. It never occurred to her as a possibility that she who was still fairly young could die suddenly and without warning. This event, however, took place, and the girls were practically unprovided for.

Mrs. Mainwaring had never really worked for her children, but a mother who had worked hard for them, and toiled, and exerted all her strength to provide adequately for their future, might not perhaps have been loved so well. She died and her children were broken-hearted. They mourned for her each after her own fashion, and each according to her individual character. Primrose retained her calmness and her common sense in the midst of all her grief; Jasmine was tempestuous and hysterical, bursting into laughter one minute and sobbing wildly the next. Little Daisy felt frightened in Jasmine's presence—she did not quite believe that mother would never come back, and she clung to Primrose, who protected and soothed her; in short, took a mother's place to her, and felt herself several years older on the spot.

For a month the girls grieved and shut themselves away from their neighbors, and refused to go out, or to be in any measure comforted. A month in the ordinary reckoning is really a very short period of time, but to these girls, in their grief and misery, it seemed almost endless. One night Jasmine lay awake from the time she laid her head on the pillow till the first sun had dawned; then Primrose took fright, and began to resume her old gentle, but still firm authority.

"Jasmine," she said, "we have got our black dresses—they are made very neatly, and we have done them all ourselves. Staying in the house this lovely weather won't bring dear mamma back again; we will have tea a little earlier than usual, and go for a walk this evening."

Jasmine, whenever she could stop crying, had been longing for a walk, but had crushed down the desire as something unnatural, and disrespectful to dear mamma, but of course if Primrose suggested it it was all right. Her face brightened visibly, and as to Daisy, she sat down and began to play with the kitten on the spot.

That evening the three desolate young creatures put on their new black dresses, and went down a long, rambling, charming country lane. The air was delicious—Jasmine refused to cover her hot little face with a crape veil—they came back after their ramble soothed and refreshed. As they were walking up the village street a girl of

the name of Poppy, their laundress's child, stepped out of a little cottage, dropped a courtesy, and said, in a tone of delight—

"Oh, Miss Mainwaring, I'm glad to see you out; and Miss Jasmine, darling, the little canary is all reared and ready for you. I took a sight of pains with him, and he'll sing beautiful before long. Shall I bring him round in the morning, Miss Jasmine?"

"Yes, of course, Poppy; and I'm greatly obliged to you," answered Jasmine, in her old bright tones. Then she colored high, felt a good deal ashamed of herself, and hurried after Primrose, who had pulled down her crape veil, and was holding Daisy's hand tightly.

That night the sisters all slept well; they were the better for the fresh air, and also for the thought of seeing Poppy and the canary which she had reared for Jasmine in the morning.

Sharp to the hour Poppy arrived with her gift; she was a pretty little village girl, who adored the Misses Mainwaring.

"The bird will want a heap of sunshine," she said; "he's young, and my mother says that all young things want lots and lots of sun. May I pull up the blind in the bay window, Miss Primrose; and may I hang Jimmy's cage just here?"

Primrose nodded. She forgot, in her interest over Jimmy, to remember that the bay window looked directly on to the village street.

"And please, miss," said Poppy, as she was preparing to return home, "Miss Martineau says she'll look in this evening, and that she was glad when she saw you out last night, young ladies, and acting sensible again."

Primrose had always a very faint color; at Poppy's words it deepened slightly.

"We've tried to act in a sensible way all through," she said, with gentle dignity. "Perhaps Miss Martineau does not quite understand. We love one another very much; we are not going to be foolish, but we cannot help grieving for our mother."

At these words Jasmine rushed out of the room and Poppy's round eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Miss Primrose—," she began.

"Never mind, Poppy," said Primrose; "we'll see Miss Martineau to-night. I am glad you told us she was coming."

The neighbors at Rosebury were all of the most sociable type; the Mainwaring girls knew every soul in the place, and when their mother died there was quite a rush of sympathy for them, and the little cottage might have been full from morning till night. Primrose, however, would not have it; even Miss Martineau, who was their teacher, and perhaps their warmest friend, was refused admittance. The neighbors wondered, and thought the girls very extraordinary and a little stuck-up, and their sympathy, thrown back on themselves, began to cool.

The real facts of the case, however, were these: Primrose, Jasmine and Daisy would have been very pleased to see Poppy Jenkins, or old Mrs. Jones, who sometimes came in to do choring, or even the nice little Misses Price, who kept a grocery shop at the other end of the village street; they would also have not objected to a visit from good, hearty Mrs. Fry, the doctor's wife, but had they admitted any of these neighbors they must have seen Miss Martineau, and Miss Martineau, once she got a footing in the house, would have been there morning, noon and night.

Poor Jasmine would not have at all objected to crying away some of her sorrow on kind Mrs. Fry's motherly breast; Primrose could have had some really interesting talk which would have done her good with the Misses Price; they were very religious people, and their brother was a clergyman, and they might have said some things which would comfort the sore hearts of the young girls. Little Daisy could have asked some of her unceasing questions of Poppy Jenkins, and the three would really have been the better for the visits and the sympathy of the neighbors did not these visits and sympathy also mean Miss Martineau. But Miss Martineau at breakfast, dinner, and tea—Miss Martineau, with her never-ending advice, her good-natured but still unceasingly correcting tone, was felt just at first to be unendurable. She was sincerely fond of the girls, whom she had taught to play incorrectly, and to read French with an accent unrecognized in Paris, but Miss Martineau was a worry, was a great deal too officious, and so the girls shut themselves away

from her and from all other neighbors for the first month after their mother's death.

CHAPTER III.

MISS MARTINEAU.

Primrose was the soul of hospitality; having decided that Miss Martineau was to be admitted that evening, it occurred to her that she might as well make things pleasant for this angular, good-humored, and somewhat hungry personage. Primrose could cook charmingly, and when dinner was over she turned to her sisters, and said in her usual rather slow way —

"I am going to make some cream-cakes for tea; and Jasmine, dear, you might put some fresh flowers in the vases; and Daisy —"; she paused as she looked at her sister — the child's blue eyes were fixed on her, she noticed with a pang that the little face was pale, and the dimpled mouth looked sad.

"Daisy," she said, suddenly, "you can go into the garden, and have a romp with the Pink."

"The Pink" was Daisy's favorite kitten.

Daisy laughed aloud, Jasmine started up briskly from the dinner-table, and Primrose, feeling that she had done well, went into the kitchen to consult with Hannah, the old cook, over the making of the cream-cakes.

The result of all this was that when Miss Martineau, sharp at four o'clock (the hours were very primitive at Rosebury), arrived at the Mainwarings' door, the outward aspect of the house bore no tokens of violent grief on the part of its inmates — the blinds were drawn up, not quite to the top, for that would have been ugly, and Jasmine was full of artistic instincts, but they were drawn up to let in plenty of sunlight, the white muslin curtains were draped gracefully, some pots of fresh flowers could be seen on the window-ledge, and a canary in a rather battered cage hung from a hook above, and disported himself cheerfully in the sunlight.

Miss Martineau was very old-fashioned in her ideas, and she did not much like the look of the bay window.

She comforted herself, however, with the reflection that even under the direst afflictions blinds must be drawn up some time, and that she would doubtless find the poor dear girls in a state of tempestuous grief within. She imagined herself soothing Jasmine, holding Primrose's hand, and allowing Daisy to sit on her knee. Miss Martineau was most kind-hearted, and would have done anything for the three girls, whom she dearly loved, only, like many another good-hearted person, she would wish to do that anything or something in her own way.

"Good evening, Hannah," she said, as the old cook opened the door; "you have had a sad affliction—a terrible affliction. I hope the dear young ladies are—" Miss Martineau paused for a word, then she said—"tranquil."

"Oh yes, miss," answered Hannah. "Walk in, please, Miss Martineau—this way—the young ladies is hoping you'll take a cup of tea with them, miss." Miss Martineau found herself the next instant in one of the most cheerful sitting-rooms to be found at Rosebury—it had always been a pretty room—furnished daintily with the odds and ends of rich and choice furniture which had belonged to Mrs. Mainwaring in her wealthy days. Now it was bright with flowers, and the western sun poured in at one angle of the wide bay window. The three girls, in their very simple black dresses, with no crape, came forward in a little group to meet her. In their hearts they were slightly excited and upset, but rather than give way they put on an air of extra cheerfulness. Miss Martineau, fond as she was of them, felt absolutely scandalized—to keep her out of the house for a whole month, and then to admit her in this fashion—such a lot of sunlight—such a heap of flowers, no crape on the black dresses, and Jasmine's face quite bright and her hair as curly as usual. Miss Martineau began a little set speech, but Jasmine interrupted her.

"Do come, and have some tea," she said. "Primrose has made some delicious cream-cakes, and we are all so hungry, aren't we, Eyebright?" turning to her little sister as she spoke.

"Yes," replied Daisy; "Pink is hungry, too—I chased Pink about fifty times round the garden, and she's quite starving. May Pink have some cream in a saucer for her tea, Primrose?"

Primrose nodded, took Miss Martineau's hand, and led her to the place of honor at the table, and sitting down herself, began to pour out the fragrant tea.

If Miss Martineau had a weakness, it was for really good tea and for cream-cakes. She took off her gloves now, arranged her bonnet-strings, put back her veil, and prepared to enjoy herself. Instead of talking common-place condolences, she chatted on little matters of local interest with the sisters. Jasmine took care to supply Miss Martineau with plenty of cream-cakes—Primrose saw that her cup was well replenished. Miss Martineau was poor and very saving, and it occurred to her, as she partook of the Mainwaring's nice tea, that she might do without much supper by-and-by. This reflection put her into an excellent humor.

When the tea was over Primrose led her to a comfortable seat by the window.

"My dear," she said, "it is well that I should sit just here, within full view of the street?—your window is, well, a little too like seeing company, my loves, and if my bonnet is seen by passers-by you'll have everybody calling directly."

"Oh, we mean to see everybody now," said Jasmine "we— we— we think it best, don't we, Primrose?"

"Yes," said Primrose, in her gentle tones. "It does not make us think less of dear mamma to see people—and—and—we have decided to go on much as usual now."

"You might have admitted me before, dears," replied Miss Martineau—"I felt so intensely for you—I could never get you out of my head. I was a good deal hurt by your refusing to admit me, my dear girls, for in all respects I would have wished to be a mother to you."

"Please, don't," said Jasmine.

"We *couldn't* have another mother," said little Daisy, clinging close to Primrose, and looking up into her sister's sweet face.

Primrose stooped and kissed her.