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Goethe Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Hall  
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Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
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# Daisy

Susan Warner

# Imprint

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## CHAPTER I.

### MISS PINSHON.

I want an excuse to myself for writing my own life; an excuse for the indulgence of going it all over again, as I have so often gone over bits. It has not been more remarkable than thousands of others. Yet every life has in it a thread of present truth and possible glory. Let me follow out the truth to the glory.

The first bright years of my childhood I will pass. They were childishly bright. They lasted till my eleventh summer. Then the light of heavenly truth was woven in with the web of my mortal existence; and whatever the rest of the web has been, those golden threads have always run through it all the rest of the way. Just as I reached my birthday that summer and was ten years old, I became a Christian.

For the rest of that summer I was a glad child. The brightness of those days is a treasure safe locked up in a chamber of my memory. I have known other glad times too in my life; other times of even higher enjoyment. But among all the dried flowers of my memory, there is not one that keeps a fresher perfume or a stronger scent of its life than this one. Those were the days without cloud; before life shadows had begun to cast their blackness over the landscape. And even though such shadows do go as well as come, and leave the intervals as sun-lit as ever; yet, after that change of the first life shadow is once seen, it is impossible to forget that it may come again and darken the sun. I do not mean that the days, of that summer were absolutely without things to trouble me; I had changes of light and shade; but on the whole, nothing that did not heighten the light. They were pleasant days I had in Juanita's cottage at the time when my ankle was broken; there were hours of sweetness with crippled Molly; and it was simply delight I had all alone with my pony Loupe, driving over the sunny and shady roads, free to do as I liked and go where I liked. And how I enjoyed studying English history with my cousin Preston. It is all stowed away in my heart, as fresh and sweet as at first. I will not pull it out now. The change,

and my first real life shadow came, when my father was thrown from his horse and injured his head. Then the doctors decided he must go abroad and travel, and mamma decided it was best that I should go to Magnolia with aunt Gary and have a governess.

There is no pleasure in thinking of those weeks. They went very slowly, and yet very fast; while I counted every minute and noted every step in the preparations. They were all over at last; my little world was gone from me; and I was left alone with aunt Gary.

Her preparations had been made too; and the day after the steamer sailed we set off on our journey to the south. I do not know much about that journey. For the most part the things by the way were like objects in a mist to me and no more clearly discerned. Now and then there came a rift in the mist; something woke me up out of my sorrow-dream; and of those points and of what struck my eyes at those minutes I have a most intense and vivid recollection. I can feel yet the still air of one early morning's start, and hear the talk between my aunt and the hotel people about the luggage. My aunt was a great traveller and wanted no one to help her or manage for her. I remember acutely a beggar who spoke to us on the sidewalk at Washington. We staid over a few days in Washington, and then hurried on; for when she was on the road my aunt Gary lost not a minute. We went, I presume, as fast as we could without travelling all night; and our last day's journey added that too.

By that time my head was getting steadied, perhaps, from the grief which had bewildered it; or grief was settling down and taking its proper place at the bottom of my heart, leaving the surface as usual. For twelve hours that day we went by a slow railway train through a country of weary monotony. Endless forests of pine seemed all that was to be seen; scarce ever a village; here and there a miserable clearing and forlorn- looking house; here and there stoppages of a few minutes to let somebody out or take somebody in; once, to my great surprise, a stop of rather more than a few minutes to accommodate a lady who wanted some flowers gathered for her. I was surprised to see flowers wild in the woods at that time of year, and much struck with the politeness of the railway train that was willing to delay for such a reason. We got out of the car for dinner, or for a short rest at dinner-time. My aunt had brought her

lunch in a basket. Then the forests and the rumble of the cars began again. At one time the pine forests were exchanged for oak, I remember; after that, nothing but pine.

It was late in the day, when we left the cars at one of those solitary wayside station-houses. I shall never forget the look and feeling of the place. We had been for some miles going through a region of swamp or swampy woods, where sometimes the rails were laid on piles in the water. This little station-house was in the midst of such a region. The woods were thick and tangled with vines everywhere beyond the edge of the clearing; the ground was wet beneath them and in places showed standing water. There was scarcely a clearing; the forest was all round the house; with only the two breaks in it where on one side and on the other the iron rail track ran off into the distance. It was a lonely place; almost nobody was there waiting for the train; one or two forlorn coloured people and a long lank-looking countryman, were all. Except what at first prevented my seeing anything else my cousin Preston. He met me just as I was going to get down from the car; lifted me to the platform; and then with his looks and words almost broke up the composure which for several days had been growing upon me. It was not hardened yet to bear attacks. I was like a poor shell-fish, which having lost one coat of armour and defence, craves a place of hiding and shelter for itself until its new coat be grown. While he was begging me to come into the station-house and rest, I stood still looking up the long line of railway by which we had come, feeling as if my life lay at the other end of it, out of sight and quite beyond reach. Yet I asked him not to call me "poor" Daisy. I was very tired, and I suppose my nerves not very steady. Preston said we must wait at that place for another train; there was a fork in the road beyond, and this train would not go the right way. It would not take us to Baytown. So he had me into the station-house.

It wearied me, and so did all that my eyes lighted upon, strange though it was. The bare room, not clean; the board partition, with swinging doors, behind which, Preston said, were the cook and the baker; the untidy waiting girls that came and went, with scant gowns and coarse shoes, and no thread of white collar to relieve the dusky throat and head rising out of the dark gown; and no apron at all. Preston did what he could. He sent away the girls with their

trays of eatables; he had a table pulled out from the wall and wiped off; and then he ordered a supper of eggs, and johnny cake, and all sorts of things. But I could not eat. As soon as supper was over I went out on the platform to watch the long lines of railway running off through the forest, and wait for the coming train. The evening fell while we looked; the train was late; and at last when it came I could only know it in the distance by the red spark of its locomotive gleaming like a firefly.

It was a freight train; there was but one passenger car, and that was full. We got seats with difficulty, and apart from each other. I hardly know whether that, or anything, could have made me more forlorn. I was already stiff and weary with the twelve hours of travelling we had gone through that day; inexpressibly weary in heart. It seemed to me that I could not endure long the rumble and the jar and the closeness of this last car. The passengers, too, had habits which made me draw my clothes as tight around me as I could, and shrink away mentally into the smallest compass possible. I had noticed the like, to be sure, ever since we left Washington; but tonight, in my weary, faint, and tired-out state of mind and body, every unseemly sight or sound struck my nerves with a sense of pain that was hardly endurable. I wondered if the train would go on all night; it went very slowly. And I noticed that nobody seemed impatient or had the air of expecting that it would soon find its journey's end. I felt as if I could not bear it many half hours. My next neighbour was a fat, good-natured old lady, who rather made matters worse by putting her arm round me and hugging me up, and begging me to make a pillow of her and go to sleep. My nerves were twitching with impatience and the desire for relief; when suddenly the thought came to me that I might please the Lord by being patient. I remember what a lull the thought of Him brought; and yet how difficult it was not to be impatient, till I fixed my mind on some Bible words, they were the words of the twenty-third psalm, and began to think and pray them over. So good they were, that by and by they rested me. I dropped asleep and forgot my aches and weariness until the train arrived at Baytown.

They took me to a hotel then, and put me to bed, and I did not get up for several days. I must have been feverish; for my fancies wandered incessantly in unknown places with papa, in regions of the

old world; and sometimes, I think, took both him and myself to rest and home where wanderings are over. After a few days this passed away. I was able to come downstairs; and both Preston and his mother did their best to take good care of me. Especially Preston. He brought me books, and fruit and birds to tempt me to eat; and was my kind and constant companion when his mother was out, and indeed when she was in, too. So I got better, by the help of oranges and rice-birds. I could have got better faster, but for my dread of a governess which was hanging over me. I heard nothing about her, and could not bear to ask. One day Preston brought the matter up and asked if Daisy was going to have a schoolmistress?

"Certainly," my aunt Gary said. "She must be educated, you know."

"I don't know," said Preston; "but if they say so, I suppose she must. Who is it to be, mamma?"

"You do not know anything about it," said aunt Gary. "If my son was going to marry the greatest heiress in the State and she is very nearly that; goodness! I did not see you were there, Daisy, my dear; but it makes no difference; I should think it proper that she should be educated."

"I can't see what her being an heiress should have to do with it," said Preston, "except rather to make it unnecessary as well as a bore. Who is it, mamma?"

"I have recommended Miss Pinshon."

"Oh, then, it is not fixed yet."

"Yes, it is fixed. Miss Pinshon is coming as soon as we get to Magnolia."

"I'll be off before that," said Preston. "Who is Miss Pinshon?"

"How should *you* know? She has lived at Jessamine Bank, educated the Dalzell girls."

"What sort of a person, mamma?"

"What sort of a person?" said my aunt Gary; "why, a governess sort of person. What sort should she be?"

"Any other sort in the world," said Preston, "for my money. That is just the sort to worry poor little Daisy out of her life."

"You are a foolish boy!" said aunt Gary. "Of course, if you fill Daisy's head with notions, she will not get them out again. If you have anything of that sort to say, you had better say it where she will not hear."

"Daisy has eyes and a head," said Preston.

As soon as I was able for it Preston took me out for short walks; and as I grew stronger he made the walks longer. The city was a strange place to me; very unlike New York; there was much to see and many a story to hear; and Preston and I enjoyed ourselves. Aunt Gary was busy making visits, I think. There was a beautiful walk by the sea, which I liked best of all; and when it was not too cold my greatest pleasure was to sit there looking over the dark waters and sending my whole soul across them to that unknown spot where my father and mother were. "Home," that spot was to me. Preston did not know what I liked the Esplanade for; he sometimes laughed at me for being poetical and meditative; when I was only sending my heart over the water. But he was glad to please me in all that he could; and whenever it was not too cold, our walks always took me there.

One day, sitting there, I remember we had a great argument about studying. Preston began with saying that I must not mind this governess that was coming, nor do anything she bade me unless I liked it. As I gave him no answer, he repeated what he had said.

"You know, Daisy, you are not obliged to care what she thinks."

I said I thought I was.

"What for?" said Preston.

"I have a great deal to learn, you know," I said, feeling it very gravely indeed in my little heart.

"What do you want to know so much?" said Preston.

I said, "everything". I was very ignorant.

"You are no such thing," said Preston. "Your head is full this minute. I think you have about as much knowledge as is good for you. I mean to take care that you do not get too much."

"Oh, Preston," said I, "that is very wrong. I have not any knowledge scarcely."

"There is no occasion," said Preston stoutly. "I hate learned women."

"Don't you like to learn things?"

"That's another matter," said he. "A man must know things, or he can't get along. Women are different."

"But I think it is nice to know things too," said I. "I don't see how it is different."

"Why, a woman need not be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a professor," said Preston; "all she need do, is to have good sense and dress herself nicely."

"Is dressing so important?" said I, with a new light breaking over me.

"Certainly. Ribbands of the wrong colour will half kill a woman. And I have heard aunt Randolph say that a particular lady was ruined by her gloves."

"Ruined by her gloves!" said I. "Did she buy so many?"

Preston went into such a laugh at that, I had to wait some time before I could go on. I saw I had made some mistake, and I would not renew that subject.

"Do *you* mean to be anything of that sort?" I said, with some want of connection.

"What sort? Ruined by my gloves? Not if I know it."

"No, no! I mean, a lawyer or a doctor or a professor?"

"I should think not!" said Preston, with a more emphatic denial.

"Then, what are you studying for?"

"Because, as I told you, Daisy, a man must know things, or he cannot get on in the world."

I pondered the matter, and then I said, I should think good sense would make a woman study too. I did not see the difference. "Besides, Preston," I said, "if she didn't, they would not be equal."

"Equal!" cried Preston. "Equal! Oh, Daisy, you ought to have lived in some old times. You are two hundred years old, at least. Now don't go to studying that, but come home. You have sat here long enough."

It was my last hour of freedom. Perhaps for that reason I remember every minute so distinctly. On our way home we met a negro funeral. I stopped to look at it. Something, I do not know what, in the long line of dark figures, orderly and even stately in their demeanour, the white dresses of the women, the peculiar faces of men and women both, fascinated my eyes. Preston exclaimed at me again. It was the commonest sight in the world, he said. It was their pride to have a grand funeral. I asked if this was a grand funeral. Preston said "Pretty well; there must be several hundred of them and they were well dressed." And then he grew impatient and hurried me on. But I was thinking; and before we got to the hotel where we lodged, I asked Preston if there were many coloured people at Magnolia.

"Lots of them," he said. "There isn't anything else."

"Preston," I said presently, "I want to buy some candy somewhere."

Preston was very much pleased, I believe, thinking that my thoughts had quite left the current of sober things. He took me to a famous confectioner's; and there I bought sweet things till my little stock of money was all gone.

"No more funds?" said Preston. Never mind, go on, and I'll help you. Why, I never knew you liked sugarplums so much. What next? burnt almonds? this is good, Daisy, this confection of roses. But you must take all this sugar in small doses, or I am afraid it wouldn't be just beneficial."

"Oh, Preston!" I said, "I do not mean to eat all this myself."

"Are you going to propitiate Miss Pinshon with it? I have a pre-sentiment that sweets wont sweeten her, Daisy."

"I don't know what "propitiate" means," I said, sighing. "I will not take the almonds, Preston."

But he was determined I should; and to the almonds he added a quantity of the delicate confection he spoke of, which I had thought too delicate and costly for the uses I purposed; and after the rose he ordered candied fruits; till a great package of varieties was made up. Preston paid for them I could not help it and desired them sent home; but I was bent on taking the package myself. Preston would not let me do that, so he carried it; which was a much more serious token of kindness, in him, than footing the bill. It was but a little way, however, to the hotel. We were in the hall, and I was just taking my sugars from Preston to carry them upstairs, when I heard aunt Gary call my name from the parlour. Instinctively, I cannot tell how, I knew from her tone what she wanted me for. I put back the package in Preston's hands, and walked in; my play over.

How well I knew my play was over, when I saw my governess. She was sitting by my aunt on the sofa. Quite different from what I had expected, so different that I walked up to her in a maze, and yet seemed to recognise in that first view all that was coming after. Probably that is fancy; but it seems to me now that all I ever knew or felt about Miss Pinshon in the years that followed, was duly begun and betokened in those first five minutes. She was a young-looking lady, younger-looking than she was. She had a dark, rich complexion, and a face that I suppose would have been called handsome; it was never handsome to me. Long black curls on each side of her face, and large black eyes, were the features that first struck one; but I immediately decided that Miss Pinshon was not born a lady. I do not mean that I think blood and breeding are unseverable; or that half a dozen lady ancestors in a direct line secure the character to the seventh in descent; though they *do* often secure the look of it; nevertheless, ladies are born who never know all their lives how to make a curtsy, and curtsies are made with infinite grace by those who have nothing of a lady beyond the trappings. I never saw Miss Pinshon do a rude or an awkward thing, that I remember; nor one which changed my first mind about her. She was handsomely dressed; but there again I felt the same want. Miss Pinshon's dresses made me think always of the mercer's counter

and the dressmaker's shop. My mother's robes always seemed part of her own self; and so in a certain true sense they were.

My aunt introduced me. Miss Pinshon studied me. Her first remark was that I looked very young. My aunt excused that, on the ground of my having been always a delicate child. Miss Pinshon observed further that the way I wore my hair produced part of the effect. My aunt explained *that* to be my father's and mother's fancy; and agreed that she thought cropped heads were always ungraceful. If my hair were allowed to fall in ringlets on my neck, I would look very different. Miss Pinshon next inquired how much I knew? turning her great black eyes from me to aunt Gary. My aunt declared she could not tell; delicate health had also here interfered; and she appealed to me to say what knowledge I was possessed of. I could not answer. I could not say. It seemed to me I had not learned anything. Then Preston spoke for me.

"Modesty is apt to be silent on its own merits," he said. "My cousin has learned the usual rudiments; and in addition to those the art of driving."

"Of *what*? What did you say?" inquired my governess.

"Of driving, ma'am. Daisy is an excellent whip, for her years and strength."

Miss Pinshon turned to Preston's mother. My aunt confirmed and enlarged the statement, again throwing the blame on my father and mother. For herself, she always thought it very dangerous for a little girl like me to go about the country in a pony- chaise all alone. Miss Pinshon's eyes could not be said to express anything, but to my fancy they concealed a good deal. She remarked that the roads were easy.

"Oh, it was not here," said my aunt; "it was at the North, where the roads are not like our pine forests. However, the roads were not dangerous there, that I know of; not for anybody but a child. But horses and carriages are always dangerous."

Miss Pinshon next applied herself to me. What did I know? "beside this whip accomplishment," as she said. I was tongue-tied. It did not seem to me that I knew anything. At last I said so. Preston

exclaimed. I looked at him to beg him to be still; and I remember how he smiled at me.

"You can read, I suppose?" my governess went on.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And write, I suppose?"

"I do not think you would say I know how to write," I answered. "I cannot do it at all well; and it takes me a long time."

"Come back to the driving, Daisy," said Preston. "That is one thing you do know. And English history, I will bear witness."

"What have you got there, Preston?" my aunt asked.

"Some hoarhound drops, mamma."

"You haven't a sore throat?" she asked eagerly.

"No, ma'am not just now, but I had yesterday; and I thought I would be provided."

"You seem provided for a long time" Miss Pinshon remarked.

"Can't get anything up at Magnolia except rice," said Preston, after making the lady a bow which did not promise good fellowship. "You must take with you what you are likely to want there."

"You will not want all that," said his mother.

"No, ma'am, I hope not," said Preston, looking at his package demurely. "Old uncle Lot, you know, always has a cough; and I purpose delighting him with some of my purchases. I will go and put them away."

"Old uncle Lot!" my aunt repeated. "What uncle Lot? I did not know you had been enough at Magnolia to get the servants' names. But I don't remember any uncle Lot."

Preston turned to leave the room with his candy, and in turning gave me a look of such supreme fun and mischief that at another time I could hardly have helped laughing. But Miss Pinshon was asking me if I understood arithmetic?

"I think I know very little about it," I said hesitating. "I can do a sum."

"In what?"

"On the slate, ma'am."

"Yes, but in what?"

"I don't know, ma'am it is adding up the columns."

"Oh, in *addition*, then. Do you know the multiplication and division tables?"

"No, ma'am."

"Go and get off your things, and then come back to me; and I will have some more talk with you."

I remember to this day how heavily my feet went up the stairs. I was not very strong yet in body, and now the strength seemed to have gone out of my heart.

"I declare," said Preston, who waited for me on the landing, "she falls into position easy! Does she think she is going to take *that* tone with you?"

I made no answer. Preston followed me into my room.

"I won't have it, little Daisy. Nobody shall be mistress at Magnolia but you. This woman shall not. See, Daisy I am going to put these things in my trunk for you, until we get where you want them. That will be safe."

I thanked him.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I am going downstairs, as soon as I am ready."

"Do you expect to be under all the commands this High Mightiness may think proper to lay upon you?"

I begged him to be still and leave me.

"She will turn you into stone!" he exclaimed. "She is a regular Gorgon, with those heavy eyes of hers. I never saw such eyes. I

believe she would petrify me if I had to bear them. Don't you give Medusa one of those sweet almonds, Daisy, not one, do you hear?"

I heard too well. I faced round upon him and begged him to remember that it was my *mother* I must obey in Miss Pinshon's orders; and said that he must not talk to me. Whereupon Preston threw down his candies, and pulled my cloak out of my unsteady hands, and locked his arms about me; kissing me and lamenting over me that it was "too bad." I tried to keep my self-command; but the end was a great burst of tears; and I went down to Miss Pinshon with red eyes and at a disadvantage. I think Preston was pleased.

I had need of all my quiet and self-command. My governess stretched out her hand, drew me to her side and kissed me; then with the other hand went on to arrange the ruffle round my neck, stroking it and pulling it into order, and even taking out a little bit of a pin I wore, and putting it in again to suit herself. It annoyed me excessively. I knew all was right about my ruffle and pin; I never left them carelessly arranged; no fingers but mamma's had ever dared to meddle with them before. But Miss Pinshon arranged the ruffle and the pin, and still holding me, looked in my face with those eyes of hers. I began to feel that they were "heavy." They did not waver. They did not seem to wink, like other eyes. They bore down upon my face with a steady power, that was not bright but ponderous. Her first question was, whether I was a good girl?

I could not tell how to answer. My aunt answered for me, that she believed Daisy meant to be a good girl, though she liked to have her own way.

Miss Pinshon ordered me to bring up a chair and sit down; and then asked if I knew anything about mathematics; told me it was the science of quantity; remarked to my aunt that it was the very best study for teaching children to think, and that she always gave them a great deal of it in the first years of their pupilage. "It puts the mind in order," the black-eyed lady went on; "and other things come so easily after it. Daisy, do you know what I mean by 'quantity'?"

I knew what *I* meant by quantity; but whether the English language had anything in common for Miss Pinshon and me, I had great doubts. I hesitated.

"I always teach my little girls to answer promptly when they are asked anything. I notice that you do not answer promptly. You can always tell whether you know a thing or whether you do not."

I was not so sure of that. Miss Pinshon desired me now to repeat the multiplication table. Here at least there was certainty. I had never learned it.

"It appears to me," said my governess, "you have done very little with the first ten years of your life. It gives you a great deal to do for the next ten."

"Health has prevented her applying to her studies," said my aunt.

"The want of health. Yes, I suppose so. I hope Daisy will be very well now, for we must make up for lost time."

"I do not suppose so much time need have been lost," said my aunt; "but parents are easily alarmed, you know; they think of nothing but one thing."

So now there was nobody about me who would be easily alarmed. I took the full force of that.

"Of course," said Miss Pinshon, "I shall have a careful regard to her health. Nothing can be done without that. I shall take her out regularly to walk with me, and see that she does not expose herself in any way. Study is no hindrance to health; learning has no malevolent effect upon the body. I think people often get sick for want of something to think of."

How sure I felt, as I went up to bed that night, that no such easy cause of sickness would be mine for long years to come!