

Miss Dobson.

BY LADY BELL

CHARACTERS.

BERTHA. EVA. DOROTHEA. FANNY.

ALL entering together.

BERTHA.--Are we very late, Miss Dobson?

(Looking round them.)

DOROTHEA.--Why, there is nobody here!

FANNY.--Where can she be?

EVA.--Perhaps she is late.

B.--Miss Dobson is never late.

F.--What is that letter on the table? Why, it's her writing! It's a letter from Miss Dobson!

F.--With our names written on it!

D.--It must be to say why she has not come.

B.--Quick! Let's open it.

E.--*(Snatches at it.)* No, no, I'll open it.

D.--Let us all open it together, and read it at the same time.

ALL.--Capital!

(They all rush at the letter which they tear in two.)

D.--Now, then, what shall we do?

B.--We shall have so much less to read.

E.--Let us see what is on this piece.

ALL.--*(Reading together.)* "My dear children, I am obliged to go off to Clapham by the ten o'clock train, to see my mother who is ill."

D.--Go to Clapham!

F.--By the ten o'clock train!

B.--To see her mother who is ill!

E.--Oh, how delightful!

B.--How delightful that her mother should be ill?

E.--No, of course not. I mean, how terrible!

ALL.--Poor Miss Dobson's mother!

D.--Come, let us see what else she says.

ALL.--*(Reading.)* "I shall not be back until the evening."

F.--She won't be back until the evening!

E.--We shall have a holiday then! *(All dancing round.)* A holiday! A holiday!

D.--Here's the other piece of the letter which we haven't read. *(They pick it up and read it.)*

D.--*(Reading.)* "I hope you will be good children, and work by yourselves."

ALL.--Work by ourselves!

D.--(*Reading.*) "You can prepare your German, history, and geography, and do some drawing and practising."

F.--I never heard such a thing.

B.--I do call that a shame!

D.--It's horrid doing one's lessons alone.

E.--But still, it's nice not being scolded when one makes mistakes.

F.--I am quite sure I can't do my geography alone, because I never can find the additional towns on the map.

E.--Besides, Mamma does not like us to bend over the atlas, she says it is bad for the eyes.

D.--As for the drawing, we certainly can't do it, because Miss Dobson has got the key of the cupboard, where the soft pencils are.

B.--And as for the German, I never can find the words in the dictionary.

E.--And I certainly can't practise alone, because I never know where to put my thumb in the scale of F sharp minor.

F.--And I never know where to put my little finger in the scale of B.

D.--Then the only thing we can do alone is the history.

B.--And there will be quite time enough for that this afternoon.

F.--Then, in that case, we have our whole morning free.

B.--Oh, how delightful!

E.--Let's play at hide-and-seek.

F.--You all hide, and I'll come and look for you.

(Hides her face in her hands. The others go towards the door. A bell is heard. They stop.)

F.--*(Uncovering her eyes.)* A bell!

E.--Who can it be? *(They listen.)*

E.--Suppose it were Miss Dobson!

B.--I'll go and see. *(Exit.)*

F.--What shall we say if it is Miss Dobson?

D.--That we were going to play at hide-and-seek instead of doing our lessons!

E.--The point is, what will she say!

D.--She'll say a good deal.

Re-enter BERTHA.

B.--It is Miss Dobson! Her mother is much better. Her sister sent a telegram, and so she did not go to Clapham after all.

F.--What shall we do?

D.--Let's go and tell her how glad we are she has such good news.

B.--Yes, and let's ask for a holiday to celebrate her mother's recovery.

F.--Excellent! Let's go and meet her.

(They rush out to meet her, calling, "Miss Dobson! Miss Dobson!")