

# **THE THREE LITTLE SPADES**

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The Three Little Spades by Anna Bartlett Warner

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**ANNA BARTLETT WARNER**

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LITTLE SPADES**



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"Can you spare it, Sir?" she said.—P. 63.

THE  
THREE LITTLE SPADES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE GOLDEN LADDER," &c.

*F. J. J.*



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## THE THREE LITTLE SPADES.

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### CHAPTER I.

"PAPA, please," said little Primrose, "what smells so sweet?"

Her father sat by the table, untying a large brown package; and from it came a strange, fresh, wild sort of perfume but sweet, as Primrose said, and very pleasant.

"What smells so sweet?" Mr May answered, cutting the last stubborn knot with his penknife. "Why, my dear, I fancy it is some of my new seeds." And selecting a small paper-bag from the heap which now lay spread out before him, Mr May held it down to the little girl's nose as she stood at his side. Primrose took a long whiff with great delight.

"Oh, papa, how good!"

"Good, is it?" said Mr May, laughing. "Prim, you ought to be a seedsman!"

"No, papa. But I wish I had a garden."

"So as to plant such sweet things as celery seed?" said her father. "Prim, this is not a flower."

"But, papa," cried the impetuous Lilian, flinging down her book on the window-seat, and coming to the table with a bound, "there *are* flowers, you know, and we might plant 'em! Oh, papa, won't you give us a garden?"

"If you please, papa!" said another little voice, now drawing near; "there is nothing we should like so much! Only I should prefer to have our gardens separate, because I should wish to keep mine in order."

"There spoke my methodical Clover!" said Mr May, with another laugh, as his orderly, sedate, chubby little daughter came gently and stood behind Primrose, who had not spoken again, but whose dark eyes watched her father with intense interest.

"One would like a garden to keep in order, and the other to run wild in; and the third— What does my little Prim want of a garden?" he said, bending down to kiss her.

"I should like it so much, papa!"

"Prim would nestle there just like a little bird," said her tall brother Sam.

"Papa," cried Lilian, "will you give us three gardens?—I should like that best too."

"Yes, Lily should be allowed to grow weeds entirely on her own account," said Jack.

"When I grow any you'll know it," said Lily, with great good-humour. "Will you, papa?"

"I find one garden pretty expensive now," said Mr May; "what should I do with three more?"

"Oh, they wouldn't cost anything—*our* gardens," said Lily.

"A very excellent sort of gardens yours will be then," said her father. "Where do you propose to get your seeds and plants?"

"Well—just a little," amended Lily.

"Perhaps we could get wild flowers, papa," said Clover, thoughtfully. "And I've got one package of seeds already, that Maria Jarvis gave me. It's mignonette."

"And then just the ground is so pretty, papa!" urged little Primrose.

"Think so?" said Mr May. "I must confess I like to see the ground well covered. But who'll dig it up, to begin with?"

"Why, Robin," said Lily.

"Robin has a great deal to do."

"I guess Sam would," said Primrose. "He's never *too* busy, you know, papa, to do anything."

It was very ridiculous, of course, but—tall fellow as he was—Sam's eyes actually flushed with pleasure at this compliment from his little sister.

"And will Sam take care of the gardens all summer after they are dug up and planted?" said Mr May, lifting Primrose upon his knee.

"Oh no, papa! that's what we want to do."

"Well," said her father, "upon three conditions I will give you each a garden: First of all, mamma must approve. Next, each one is to choose her own seeds and plants, to suit her own taste. And, lastly, each must keep her own garden in order, after the first heavy digging is done. She must sow the seeds, and plant the plants, and dispute possession with the weeds—all herself. Now, what does mamma say?"

"I say yes, with all my heart!" answered Mrs May. "But I too shall make conditions—or, at least, one: In each garden, no matter how full it may be, there must be one corner set apart for patience, perseverance, brotherly-kind-