

**LITTLE BLUEBIRD,  
THE GIRL  
MISSIONARY**

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Little Bluebird, the Girl Missionary by John Strathesk

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# LITTLE BLUEBIRD

*THE GIRL MISSIONARY*

BY

JOHN STRATHESK

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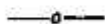
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## LITTLE BLUEBIRD.



### CHAPTER I.

#### AT SOUTHFORT.

**T**HE Nortons of Hollybush had gone to the pleasant sea-side town of Southport to spend the months of July and August 1874, and were staying in a pretty villa that faced the beach.

A family of four sisters, the Misses Butler of Blackburn, had taken up their summer quarters in the next house. One of these ladies, Miss Fanny, was lame, and not at all strong. She could with difficulty walk a very short distance, leaning heavily on the arm of one of her sisters; while another carried

a camp stool, on which she might rest as she knitted or read by the sea-shore.

There was a low iron railing between the front plots of the two houses, and as Miss Fanny sat on the garden chair, which stood near her front door, she saw on the lawn, just over the railing, a blithe girl of nearly eleven years of age skipping about like a little fairy.

This girl was Edith Norton. In the afternoon she wore a light-blue dress with a great many white buttons on it, so many that, had she been a boy, some folks would have been apt to call her 'little Buttons;' but as she had also on a blue sunshade bonnet, as well as blue shoes, when Miss Fanny first saw her, the name 'Bluebird' came into her head, and a very suitable name it proved to be, for it pleased all Edith's friends.

As Miss Fanny was knitting out of doors on the afternoon of the second day of her stay at Southport, the ball of worsted rolled off her lap and got caught among the thorns of a rose-bush that grew by the side of the little lawn. As soon as Edith, who was playing in front of her own house, observed this, she



darted out at her gate, in through Miss Butler's, picked up the runaway ball, and handed it to Miss Fanny so quickly, and with such a happy, beaming face, that Miss Fanny drew her closely to her side, and said, 'You dear child! you kind, sweet, little "Bluebird!" Do give me a kiss.'

Edith did this so heartily, and looked so pleased, that Miss Fanny drew her still closer to her side, and called her 'a dear, dear child; a merry little "Bluebird,"' and kissed her again and again. The two had a long talk together—so long that the nurse, wondering where Edith was, had set off to look for her, and was surprised to find her chatting away with the stranger lady next door.

'Edith, dear,' said nurse, 'whatever are you doing, bothering the lady?' Then, looking towards Miss Fanny, she added, 'I beg pardon, Miss, I'm afraid Miss Edith has been bothering—'

But Miss Fanny quickly stopped the nurse by saying, 'Bothering? not at all. Don't say a single word against my dear little Bluebird, she has been so kind. My ball of worsted got caught in a rose-bush, and she ran and brought it to me, just like a

little fairy. I'm sure we'll be great friends. Won't we, my darling Bluebird ?'

As she said this she put her arm round Edith's shoulders, and pressed her to her side. The pale face of the invalid grew brighter as she did so, although the healthy look of the child made Miss Fanny's thin cheeks appear still more careworn.

'You'll sometimes hop in to see me,' said Miss Fanny, 'won't you, my little Bluebird ?'

'Oh yes,' said Edith, 'if mamma and nurse will let me.' And she darted off with a laughing face past the nurse, who was greatly pleased with the new name that she had now got for Edith, and kept repeating to herself, 'little Bluebird, little Bluebird.' Mamma liked the new name too, and when papa heard the story he was delighted. He felt as if it made his girl dearer to him than ever, for he kept calling her his 'little Bluebird ;' sometimes he put another pretty word to it, such as 'darling,' or 'singing,' and when she came to bid him good-night he put a whole string of names together, something like 'His own sweet, darling, singing, pretty little Bluebird.'

Edith was their only child ; she once had a brother called 'little Tommie,' but she hardly remembered anything about him ; he was two years older than Edith, but he had taken a sore throat, called diphtheria, and he died when she was only four years old.

The thing that she remembered best about Tommie was, that when he died, nurse took her blue dress away and put on a black one ; and that she had nothing on but black dresses for a long, long time. When she asked her mamma to let her wear her blue dress again, mamma used to cry, and say that the black dress was to show that she was sorry that they had lost little Tommie ; and when Edith said, ' If papa will bring back little Tommie, I'll put on my blue dress to play with him,' her mamma only cried the more.

When Mr. Norton came down by the afternoon train from Preston, where their home was, he allowed his servants or the railway porters to carry the hampers of nice things that Hollybush provided for the sea-bathers at Southport, but there was one little basket which he always carried himself. Inside of it were generally a bouquet, or cut flowers, and often