

with white fur all round it, and a scarlet frock too, and a white pinafore. She looked just like a flower, or a bright crested humming-bird, or gay butterfly skimming about when all the rest of the beautiful summer things had quite gone away, frightened by the frost and the snow and the cold.

‘There’s Skinny yonder, Miss Alice. She’s only a little girl, not a deal bigger than what you are, and yet she’s learned to think, a long time ago. She’s as good as a woman for the thinking, is Skinny.’

‘Oh! but,’ I said, ‘Skinny has had a great trouble, and that makes all the difference. People can’t help learning to think when they have so much trouble, even if they are only little girls.’

‘Then maybe, Miss Alice,’ old Watson said, ‘if you don’t learn it in no other way, you’ll have a great trouble too, to teach you, same as poor little Skinny has had. Your Ma might be took, or maybe bonnie Miss Callie there; I’ve known a many younger than what she is, sicken for death, in my time.’

‘Oh, Watson!’ and I turned away from him, feeling so angry and impatient, ‘how stupid of you to talk in that way! Callie *couldn’t* die. There’s not a bit of anything the matter with her.’