

‘No, Miss Alice, there isn’t; but they don’t take a deal of cutting down, don’t them little ones. They’re like my seedling balsams or them bonnie pink geraniums as your Ma sets such store by. A frosty night does it all, and when you come to them in a morning, their little heads is drooping, and their colours faded, and you can’t do nothing no more for ’em.’

‘Give over, Watson,’ I said, quite sharply; ‘I don’t like to hear you talk like that.’

‘Don’t you, miss?’ said Watson; ‘then I won’t say no more.’ And with his long, lean, wiry fingers he gathered together some more little sprigs of box, and stuck them down in the trenches, and then filled the earth in and padded it down with his spade, just as I had seen the old man pad down the graves in the churchyard at Linwick.

I had another romp with Callie, and another race with her to the bottom of the garden, she running forwards and I backwards. Then I gave her ever so many kisses, and came into the house to help aunt Mary to make the things for our Christmas-tree.

For we were to have a children’s party the next week, and a Christmas-tree. Papa and mamma had