

APPENDIX SYNOPSIS

A Little Princess opens with seven-year-old Sara Crewe and her father, Captain Crewe, arriving at Miss Minchin's boarding school for girls in London. Captain Crewe is very wealthy and states that Sara is destined for a lavish, comfortable future. Despite being pampered all her life in India, Sara herself is very intelligent, polite, and creative. Headmistress Miss Minchin is secretly jealous and dislikes Sara for her cleverness, but openly praises and flatters her because of her father's wealth. Before departing for India, Captain Crewe purchases Sara an elegant wardrobe and a doll that Sara adores and names "Emily." Sara's friendliness and love for pretending and storytelling makes her popular with most of the school's students. They soon begin regarding her as a princess, which she embraces. Sara befriends Ermengarde, the school dunce; Lottie, a spoiled four-year-old student; and Becky, the scullery maid.

A few years later, Sara receives word from Captain Crewe that he and a childhood friend have become partners in a scheme to gain control of a diamond mine which could potentially multiply his wealth enormously. Miss Minchin later treats Sara to a very luxurious eleventh birthday party per Captain Crewe's request. Just as the party is ending, Captain Crewe's lawyer arrives unexpectedly and tells Miss Minchin that Captain Crewe has died of jungle fever and his partner has gone missing. He then adds that business troubles rendered Captain Crewe's estate completely insolvent, leaving Sara an orphaned pauper. Enraged that she will never be reimbursed for all the services and goods spent on Sara since

receiving the last cheque, Miss Minchin seizes all of Sara's possessions except for an outgrown black frock and Emily. Miss Minchin then tells Sara that she will live in the attic next to Becky and work as a servant to continue living in the school.

For the next several years Sara is made to teach the younger students and run errands in all weathers; she is starved and abused by Miss Minchin, the cook, and the other servants. She is consoled by Ermengarde, Lottie, and Becky, who visit her during the night, as well as Emily and a rat she names Melchisedec. Sara extensively uses her imagination as a means of coping, pretending that she and Becky are prisoners in the Bastille. Sara also continues pretending she is still a princess and continues to be kind and polite to everyone including her offenders. One day Sara finds a four pence in the street and uses it to buy six buns from a friendly baker. The baker witnesses Sara give five of the buns to a beggar girl before leaving. The baker regards Sara as a princess and invites the beggar girl to live with her.

Meanwhile, a sickly man from India, Tom Carrisford, moves into the house next door. Sara sympathises with him, and becomes interested in him. It is revealed that Mr. Carrisford was Captain Crewe's childhood friend and partner. During their time in India, they had both caught high fevers, and in his delirium, Mr. Carrisford abandoned Captain Crewe. However, the diamond mine scheme had not fallen through as they both had initially believed, and Carrisford became extraordinarily wealthy. Mr. Carrisford feels extremely guilty that Captain

Crewe's daughter is missing because of the ordeal and seeks to find her. Her name and school are unknown to him, and he has asked his family to follow false leads in Paris and Moscow. Sara meets Ram Dass, Mr. Carrisford's servant, when his pet monkey escapes into her room through her skylight. Ram Dass immediately admires Sara when she speaks to him in Hindustani. Ram Dass climbs across the roof into Sara's room to retrieve the monkey and sees the poor condition of her room. Ram Dass tells Mr. Carrisford of Sara, who becomes interested in her. Mr. Carrisford decides to secretly send food and gifts to Sara and Becky. Sara is very thankful but does not know who her "mysterious friend" is. The following days become less burdensome to Sara and Becky, to Miss Minchin's confusion.

One night, the monkey escapes into Sara's room through the skylight; Sara decides to return the monkey to Mr. Carrisford the next morning. Sara mentions she had lived in India to Mr. Carrisford. In the climax of the novel, the benefactor learns that Sara is the missing daughter of his late business partner, Captain Crewe. Sara learns that Mr. Carrisford was her father's friend and forgives him when she realises that he is the mysterious friend who helped her. When Miss Minchin visits to reclaim Sara, she is informed that Sara will be living with Mr. Carrisford and her entire fortune has been restored. Miss Minchin coldly asks Sara to come back and continue being a student at her school, but Sara rejects her offer. Becky is invited to live with and be the personal attendant of Sara. With her newfound wealth Sara makes a deal with the baker, proposing to cover the bills for food given to any hungry child.

BIOGRAPHY

Frances Eliza Hodgson was born in Cheetham, near Manchester, England. After her father died in 1852, the family eventually fell on straitened circumstances and in 1865 immigrated to the United States, settling near Knoxville, Tennessee. There, Frances began writing to help earn money for the family, publishing stories in magazines from the age of 19.

In 1870 her mother died and in 1872 she married Swan Burnett, who became a medical doctor after which they lived in Paris for two years where their two sons were born before returning to the US to live in Washington D.C. There she began to write novels, the first of which (*That Lass o' Lowries*), was published to good reviews. *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was published in 1886 and made her a popular writer of children's fiction, although her romantic adult novels written in the 1890s were also popular. She wrote and helped to produce stage versions of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *A Little Princess*.

Burnett enjoyed socializing and lived a lavish lifestyle. Beginning in the 1880s, she began to travel to England frequently and bought a home there in the 1890s where she wrote *The Secret Garden*. Her oldest son, Lionel, died of tuberculosis in 1892, which caused a relapse of the depression she struggled with for much of her life. She divorced Swan Burnett in 1898 and married Stephen Townsend in 1900, and divorced him in 1902. Towards the end of her life she settled in Long Island, where she died in 1924 and is buried in Roslyn Cemetery, on Long Island.

In 1936 a memorial sculpture by Bessie Potter Vonnoh was erected in her honour in Central Park's Conservatory Garden. The statue depicts her two famous *Secret Garden* characters, Mary and Dickon.

The thread of the book is evident in the novellas, in which Sara Crewe is left at Miss Minchin's, loses her father, is worked as a drudge, and is surprised with the kindness of an Indian gentleman who turns out to be Captain Crewe's friend. However, at just over one-third the length of the later book, the novella is much less detailed.

Generally, the novel expanded on things in the novella; Captain Crewe's "investments" are only referred to briefly and generally, and much of the information revealed in conversations in the novel is simply summarised. However, there are details in the novella which were dropped for the novel. While a drudge, Sara is said to have frequented a library, in which she read books about women in rough circumstances being rescued by princes and other powerful men. In addition, Mr. Carrisford's illness is specified as liver trouble.

After writing *Sara Crewe*, Burnett returned to the material in 1902, penning the three-act stage play *A Little Un-fairy Princess*, which ran in London over the autumn of that year. Around the time it transferred to New York City at the start of 1903, however, the title was shortened to the one with which it became famous: *A Little Princess*. (It was *A Little Princess* in London, but *The Little Princess* in New York.)

The play was a success on Broadway, and it is probable that this triumph is what led Burnett to revise it yet again, this time as an expanded, full-length novel. Both versions of the book remain in print, although *A Little Princess* is better known.