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APPENDIX

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

A Little Princess, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, is a tale about young Sara Crewe's encounters and how she copes with her fortunes rising and falling.

Sara Crewe is the seven-year-old daughter of Captain Ralph Crewe, a wealthy British Soldier stationed in India. Captain Crewe loves and adores his daughter and her quaint, precocious ways. He loves to spoil his daughter and makes sure she always gets the best of everything. But despite this, Sara Crewe remains an unaffected, generous, and friendly child, not placing much on her riches, her good looks, or her intelligence.

The story opens with Sara Crewe and her father on their way to Miss Minchin's Boarding School to enroll Sara there. When they reach the seminary, Captain Crewe tells Miss Minchin to treat his daughter as "a parlor boarder" (a privileged category of pupils at a boarding school) and that she was to enjoy even greater privileges than parlor boarders usually did. Before he finally leaves for India, he also gets Sara a new doll, with curling golden-brown hair, eyes which were a deep, clear, gray-blue, with soft, thick eyelashes. Miss Minchin agrees with everything and also flatters both of them to ensure their continued patronage, not wanting to lose such a prize pupil.

When school begins, Sara has no difficulty coping with her subjects, being a vast and enthusiastic reader. She surprises her French master, Monsieur Dufarge with her knowledge of French and her accent, making an enemy out of Miss Minchin who doesn't like to be intimidated in front of others. Critical also start teaching other sidelined pupils like Ermengarde, the school dunce. She tames Lottie, a four-year-old student whose tantrums had been a great trouble to Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia. She also makes a friend out of Becky, the scullery maid. Sara Crewe captivates most of the students with her cheerful, generous, and unaffected manner, and through the stories she tells that they start calling her Princess Sara.

Four years pass by and on Sara's eleventh birthday, Miss Minchin throws a large party for her, contributing her own money to it. However, during the party, Captain

Crewe's lawyer arrives with some unfortunate news that Captain Crewe has died. His most recent investment, which was in a Diamond Mine with his friend Mr. Carrisford, had failed, leaving Sara penniless. This throws Miss Minchin into a rage as she had spent an abundance of her own money on the party. Miss Minchin takes everything away from Sara except for the doll Emily, and one simple dress, to pay these bills. She makes Sara work in the school without pay from that day forward. Miss Minchin forces Sara to teach the younger children French, run errands, and help in the kitchen and the schoolroom. She shifts Sara's living quarters to a cold and poorly furnished room in the attic next to Becky's room. Yet, despite the change in her fortunes, Sara manages to maintain her graceful, princess-like manner. Despite starving most of the time, she cheers herself and Becky up with her imagination, pretending to be a prisoner in the Bastille or a princess disguised as a servant.

An Indian Gentleman moves to the house next to the school. This man happens to be Mr. Carrisford, who had been searching for Sara Crewe. While working in the Diamond Mines, Carrisford had fallen sick with brain fever and had not been able to communicate with Captain Crewe. The Captain, fearing that he had been cheated out of all his fortunes, had died of shock, not knowing that the mines were, in fact a hugely successful enterprise. When Mr. Carrisford recovered and had realized what happened, he spent two years trying to find Sara to make it up to her. He was misled, and for two years, he had no idea where Sara was, presuming that she was in school in France.

One day, Mr. Carrisford's monkey escapes to the adjoining attic of Miss Minchin's seminary, and Mr. Carrisford's servant, Ram Dass, goes over to the attic to retrieve it. Seeing the poor state of Sara's room, Ram Dass tells Carrisford about the girls living conditions. Together they decide to give Sara and Becky a pleasant surprise. They leave warm blankets, comfortable furniture, food, and other such gifts in the attic for Sara and Becky. This help comes at a time when Miss Minchin decided to punish Sara by not giving her anything to eat. Sara and Becky, who often play pretend, are pleasantly surprised to find their dreams come true and believe it to be the work of magic.

One day, a package arrives at the school for Sara, from a 'Mr. Carrisford', with an expensive dress in Sara's correct size. This makes Miss Minchin panic, and she, believing Sara must have a long-lost wealthy relative, starts treating her better. She begins to allow Sara to attend the class again, and goes back to treating Sara as her prize pupil, to make up for the abuse she inflicted on Sara over the years.

The same night, the monkey again comes into Sara's room, and she coaxes it to stay for the night. The next morning, Sara visits Carrisford's house to return him. While talking to him, Sara casually mentions that she too, was born in India. This surprises Mr. Carrisford, who starts questioning her with the help of his lawyer. In the end, she is found to be the lost child of Captain Crewe, and Carrisford offers Sara to stay in his own house. Sara gladly accepts, but Miss Minchin comes over when she hears of the change in Sara's fortunes and tries to coax and then threaten Sara into returning. But she is rebuffed. Becky's fortunes improve too when Sara asks her to live with her and be her maid, in much better living conditions than at Miss Minchin's. The story comes to a happy conclusion with the poetic justice of evil being punished and good rewarded.

Biography of Author

Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in Manchester, England, on November 24, 1849. After Burnett's father's death in 1853, her mother ran the family's iron foundry until the American Civil War caused the business to fail. Destitute, the Hodgsons moved to Tennessee in 1865 to stay with relatives in a log cabin. Burnett lived there until 1873, when she married a doctor, Swan Burnett, whom she later divorced in 1898. She married Peter Townsend, an actor, in 1900. In her teens Burnett had written stories and tales to help support the family and later claimed never to have written a manuscript that was not published. Her first widespread success came with *That Lass o' Lowrie's* in 1877, a tale of the Lancashire coal mines. But it was the publication of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, in 1886, that brought the author fame and wealth and established Cedric as the model for a generation of young boys. *Sara Crewe* was published in 1888, and the rags-to-riches story was so successful that Burnett revised, expanded, and republished it in 1905 as *A Little Princess*. The beloved *The Secret Garden* appeared four years later to enormous critical and popular acclaim. A prolific writer, Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote more than 40 novels and plays and dozens of short stories during her lifetime. She died in Plandome, New York, on October 29, 1924.