The Louisa Alcott Reader

Louisa M. Alcott

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THE LOUISA ALCOTT READER
A Supplementary Reader for the Fourth Year of School
BY LOUISA M. ALCOTT

[Illustration: “Lily rocked and ate till she finished the top of the little tree.”]

[Illustration: She actually stood in “a grove of Christmas trees.”]

I. A CHRISTMAS DREAM, AND HOW IT CAME TRUE.

“I'm so tired of Christmas I wish there never would be another one!” exclaimed a discontented−looking little girl, as she sat idly watching her mother arrange a pile of gifts two days before they were to be given.

“Why, Effie, what a dreadful thing to say! You are as bad as old Scrooge; and I'm afraid something will happen to you, as it did to him, if you don't care for dear Christmas,” answered mamma, almost dropping the silver horn she was filling with delicious candies.

“Who was Scrooge? What happened to him?” asked Effie, with a glimmer of interest in her listless face, as she picked out the sourest lemon−drop she could find; for nothing sweet suited her just then.

“He was one of Dickens's best people, and you can read the charming story some day. He hated Christmas until a strange dream showed him how dear and beautiful it was, and made a better man of him.”

“I shall read it; for I like dreams, and have a great many curious ones myself. But they don't keep me from being tired of Christmas,” said Effie, poking discontentedly among the sweeties for something worth eating.

“Why are you tired of what should be the happiest time of all the year?” asked mamma, anxiously.

“Perhaps I shouldn't be if I had something new. But it is always the same, and there isn't any more surprise about it. I always find heaps of goodies in my stocking. Don't like some of them, and soon get tired of those I do like. We always have a great dinner, and I eat too much, and feel ill next day. Then there is a Christmas tree somewhere, with a doll on top, or a stupid old Santa Claus, and children dancing and screaming over bonbons and toys that break, and shiny things that are of no use. Really, mamma, I've had so many Christmases all alike that I don't think I *can* bear another one.” And Effie laid herself flat on the sofa, as if the mere idea was too much for her.

Her mother laughed at her despair, but was sorry to see her little girl so discontented, when she had everything to make her happy, and had known but ten Christmas days.

“Suppose we don't give you *any* presents at all,—how would that suit you?” asked mamma, anxious to please her spoiled child.

“I should like one large and splendid one, and one dear little one, to remember some very nice person by,” said Effie, who was a fanciful little body, full of odd whims and notions, which her friends loved to gratify, regardless of time, trouble, or money; for she was the last of three little girls, and very dear to all the family.

“Well, my darling, I will see what I can do to please you, and not say a word until all is ready. If I could only get a new idea to start with!” And mamma went on tying up her pretty bundles with a thoughtful face, while Effie strolled to the window to watch the rain that kept her in−doors and made her dismal.

“Seems to me poor children have better times than rich ones. I can't go out, and there is a girl about my age splashing along, without any maid to fuss about rubbers and cloaks and umbrellas and colds. I wish I was a beggar−girl.”

“Would you like to be hungry, cold, and ragged, to beg all day, and sleep on an ash−heap at night?” asked mamma, wondering what would come next.

“Cinderella did, and had a nice time in the end. This girl out here has a basket of scraps on her arm, and a big old shawl all round her, and doesn't seem to care a bit, though the water runs out of the toes of her boots. She goes paddling along, laughing at the rain, and eating a cold potato as if it tasted nicer than the chicken and ice−cream I had for dinner. Yes, I do think poor children are happier than rich ones.”

“So do I, sometimes. At the Orphan Asylum today I saw two dozen merry little souls who have no parents, no home, and no hope of Christmas beyond a stick of candy or a cake. I wish you had been there to see how happy they were, playing with the old toys some richer children had sent them.”

“You may give them all mine; I'm so tired of them I never want to see them again,” said Effie, turning from the window to the pretty baby−house full of everything a child's heart could desire.

“I will, and let you begin again with something you will not tire of, if I can only find it.” And mamma knit her brows trying to discover some grand surprise for this child who didn't care for Christmas.

Nothing more was said then; and wandering off to the library, Effie found “A Christmas Carol,” and curling herself up in the sofa corner, read it all before tea. Some of it she did not understand; but she laughed and cried

over many parts of the charming story, and felt better without knowing why.

All the evening she thought of poor Tiny Tim, Mrs. Cratchit with the pudding, and the stout old gentleman who danced so gayly that “his legs twinkled in the air.” Presently bedtime arrived.

“Come, now, and toast your feet,” said Effie's nurse, “while I do your pretty hair and tell stories.”

“I'll have a fairy tale to−night, a very interesting one,” commanded Effie, as she put on her blue silk wrapper and little fur−lined slippers to sit before the fire and have her long curls brushed.

So Nursey told her best tales; and when at last the child lay down under her lace curtains, her head was full of a curious jumble of Christmas elves, poor children, snow−storms, sugarplums, and surprises. So it is no wonder that she dreamed all night; and this was the dream, which she never quite forgot.

She found herself sitting on a stone, in the middle of a great field, all alone. The snow was falling fast, a bitter wind whistled by, and night was coming on. She felt hungry, cold, and tired, and did not know where to go nor what to do.

“I wanted to be a beggar−girl, and now I am one; but I don't like it, and wish somebody would come and take care of me. I don't know who I am, and I think I must be lost,” thought Effie, with the curious interest one takes in one's self in dreams.

But the more she thought about it, the more bewildered she felt. Faster fell the snow, colder blew the wind, darker grew the night; and poor Effie made up her mind that she was quite forgotten and left to freeze alone. The tears were chilled on her cheeks, her feet felt like icicles, and her heart died within her, so hungry, frightened, and forlorn was she. Laying her head on her knees, she gave herself up for lost, and sat there with the great flakes fast turning her to a little white mound, when suddenly the sound of music reached her, and starting up, she looked and listened with all her eyes and ears.

Far away a dim light shone, and a voice was heard singing. She tried to run toward the welcome glimmer, but could not stir, and stood like a small statue of expectation while the light drew nearer, and the sweet words of the song grew clearer.

From our happy home
Through the world we roam
One week in all the year,
Making winter spring
With the joy we bring,
For Christmas−tide is here.
Now the eastern star
Shines from afar
To light the poorest home;
Hearts warmer grow,
Gifts freely flow,
For Christmas−tide has come.
Now gay trees rise
Before young eyes,
Abloom with tempting cheer;
Blithe voices sing,
And blithe bells ring,
For Christmas−tide is here.
Oh, happy chime,
Oh, blessed time,
That draws us all so near!
“Welcome, dear day,”
All creatures say,
For Christmas−tide is here.

A child's voice sang, a child's hand carried the little candle; and in the circle of soft light it shed, Effie saw a pretty child coming to her through the night and snow. A rosy, smiling creature, wrapped in white fur, with a wreath of green and scarlet holly on its shining hair, the magic candle in one hand, and the other outstretched as if

to shower gifts and warmly press all other hands.

Effie forgot to speak as this bright vision came nearer, leaving no trace of footsteps in the snow, only lighting the way with its little candle, and filling the air with the music of its song.

“Dear child, you are lost, and I have come to find you,” said the stranger, taking Effie's cold hands in his, with a smile like sunshine, while every holly berry glowed like a little fire.

“Do you know me?” asked Effie, feeling no fear, but a great gladness, at his coming.

“I know all children, and go to find them; for this is my holiday, and I gather them from all parts of the world to be merry with me once a year.”

“Are you an angel?” asked Effie, looking for the wings.

“No; I am a Christmas spirit, and live with my mates in a pleasant place, getting ready for our holiday, when we are let out to roam about the world, helping make this a happy time for all who will let us in. Will you come and see how we work?”

“I will go anywhere with you. Don't leave me again,” cried Effie, gladly.

“First I will make you comfortable. That is what we love to do. You are cold, and you shall be warm, hungry, and I will feed you; sorrowful, and I will make you gay.”

With a wave of his candle all three miracles were wrought,—for the snow− flakes turned to a white fur cloak and hood on Effie's head and shoulders, a bowl of hot soup came sailing to her lips, and vanished when she had eagerly drunk the last drop; and suddenly the dismal field changed to a new world so full of wonders that all her troubles were forgotten in a minute.

Bells were ringing so merrily that it was hard to keep from dancing. Green garlands hung on the walls, and every tree was a Christmas tree full of toys, and blazing with candles that never went out.

In one place many little spirits sewed like mad on warm clothes, turning off work faster than any sewing−machine ever invented, and great piles were made ready to be sent to poor people. Other busy creatures packed money into purses, and wrote checks which they sent flying away on the wind,—a lovely kind of snow−storm to fall into a world below full of poverty.

Older and graver spirits were looking over piles of little books, in which the records of the past year were kept, telling how different people had spent it, and what sort of gifts they deserved. Some got peace, some disappointment, some remorse and sorrow, some great joy and hope. The rich had generous thoughts sent them; the poor, gratitude and contentment. Children had more love and duty to parents; and parents renewed patience, wisdom, and satisfaction for and in their children. No one was forgotten.

“Please tell me what splendid place this is?” asked Effie, as soon as she could collect her wits after the first look at all these astonishing things.

“This is the Christmas world; and here we work all the year round, never tired of getting ready for the happy day. See, these are the saints just setting off; for some have far to go, and the children must not be disappointed.”

As he spoke the spirit pointed to four gates, out of which four great sleighs were just driving, laden with toys, while a jolly old Santa Claus sat in the middle of each, drawing on his mittens and tucking up his wraps for a long cold drive.

“Why, I thought there was only one Santa Claus, and even he was a humbug,” cried Effie, astonished at the sight.

“Never give up your faith in the sweet old stones, even after you come to see that they are only the pleasant shadow of a lovely truth.”

Just then the sleighs went off with a great jingling of bells and pattering of reindeer hoofs, while all the spirits gave a cheer that was heard in the lower world, where people said, “Hear the stars sing.”

“I never will say there isn't any Santa Claus again. Now, show me more.”

“You will like to see this place, I think, and may learn something here perhaps”

The spirit smiled as he led the way to a little door, through which Effie peeped into a world of dolls. Baby−houses were in full blast, with dolls of all sorts going on like live people. Waxen ladies sat in their parlors elegantly dressed; black dolls cooked in the kitchens; nurses walked out with the bits of dollies; and the streets were full of tin soldiers marching, wooden horses prancing, express wagons rumbling, and little men hurrying to and fro. Shops were there, and tiny people buying legs of mutton, pounds of tea, mites of clothes, and everything dolls use or wear or want.

But presently she saw that in some ways the dolls improved upon the manners and customs of human beings, and she watched eagerly to learn why they did these things. A fine Paris doll driving in her carriage took up a black worsted Dinah who was hobbling along with a basket of clean clothes, and carried her to her journey's end, as if it were the proper thing to do. Another interesting china lady took off her comfortable red cloak and put it round a poor wooden creature done up in a paper shift, and so badly painted that its face would have sent some babies into fits.

“Seems to me I once knew a rich girl who didn't give her things to poor girls. I wish I could remember who she was, and tell her to be as kind as that china doll,” said Effie, much touched at the sweet way the pretty creature wrapped up the poor fright, and then ran off in her little gray gown to buy a shiny fowl stuck on a wooden platter for her invalid mother's dinner.

“We recall these things to people's minds by dreams. I think the girl you speak of won't forget this one.” And the spirit smiled, as if he enjoyed some joke which she did not see.

A little bell rang as she looked, and away scampered the children into the red−and−green school−house with the roof that lifted up, so one could see how nicely they sat at their desks with mites of books, or drew on the inch−square blackboards with crumbs of chalk.

“They know their lessons very well, and are as still as mice. We make a great racket at our school, and get bad marks every day. I shall tell the girls they had better mind what they do, or their dolls will be better scholars than they are,” said Effie, much impressed, as she peeped in and saw no rod in the hand of the little mistress, who looked up and shook her head at the intruder, as if begging her to go away before the order of the school was disturbed.

Effie retired at once, but could not resist one look in at the window of a fine mansion, where the family were at dinner, the children behaved so well at table, and never grumbled a bit when their mamma said they could not have any more fruit.

“Now, show me something else,” she said, as they came again to the low door that led out of Doll−land.

“You have seen how we prepare for Christmas; let me show you where we love best to send our good and happy gifts,” answered the spirit, giving her his hand again.

“I know. I've seen ever so many,” began Effie, thinking of her own Christmases.

“No, you have never seen what I will show you. Come away, and remember what you see to−night.”

Like a flash that bright world vanished, and Effie found herself in a part of the city she had never seen before. It was far away from the gayer places, where every store was brilliant with lights and full of pretty things, and every house wore a festival air, while people hurried to and fro with merry greetings. It was down among the dingy streets where the poor lived, and where there was no making ready for Christmas.

Hungry women looked in at the shabby shops, longing to buy meat and bread, but empty pockets forbade. Tipsy men drank up their wages in the bar− rooms; and in many cold dark chambers little children huddled under the thin blankets, trying to forget their misery in sleep.

No nice dinners filled the air with savory smells, no gay trees dropped toys and bonbons into eager hands, no little stockings hung in rows beside the chimney−piece ready to be filled, no happy sounds of music, gay voices, and dancing feet were heard; and there were no signs of Christmas anywhere.

“Don't they have any in this place?” asked Effie, shivering, as she held fast the spirit's hand, following where he led her.

“We come to bring it. Let me show you our best workers.” And the spirit pointed to some sweet−faced men and women who came stealing into the poor houses, working such beautiful miracles that Effie could only stand and watch.

Some slipped money into the empty pockets, and sent the happy mothers to buy all the comforts they needed; others led the drunken men out of temptation, and took them home to find safer pleasures there. Fires were kindled on cold hearths, tables spread as if by magic, and warm clothes wrapped round shivering limbs. Flowers suddenly bloomed in the chambers of the sick; old people found themselves remembered; sad hearts were consoled by a tender word, and wicked ones softened by the story of Him who forgave all sin.

But the sweetest work was for the children; and Effie held her breath to watch these human fairies hang up and fill the little stockings without which a child's Christmas is not perfect, putting in things that once she would have thought very humble presents, but which now seemed beautiful and precious because these poor babies had

nothing.

"That is so beautiful! I wish I could make merry Christmases as these good people do, and be loved and thanked as they are," said Effie, softly, as she watched the busy men and women do their work and steal away without thinking of any reward but their own satisfaction.

"You can if you will. I have shown you the way. Try it, and see how happy your own holiday will be hereafter."

As he spoke, the spirit seemed to put his arms about her, and vanished with a kiss.

"Oh, stay and show me more!" cried Effie, trying to hold him fast.

"Darling, wake up, and tell me why you are smiling in your sleep," said a voice in her ear; and opening her eyes, there was mamma bending over her, and morning sunshine streaming into the room.

"Are they all gone? Did you hear the bells? Wasn't it splendid?" she asked, rubbing her eyes, and looking about her for the pretty child who was so real and sweet.

"You have been dreaming at a great rate,—talking in your sleep, laughing, and clapping your hands as if you were cheering some one. Tell me what was so splendid," said mamma, smoothing the tumbled hair and lifting up the sleepy head.

Then, while she was being dressed, Effie told her dream, and Nursey thought it very wonderful; but mamma smiled to see how curiously things the child had thought, read, heard, and seen through the day were mixed up in her sleep.

"The spirit said I could work lovely miracles if I tried; but I don't know how to begin, for I have no magic candle to make feasts appear, and light up groves of Christmas trees, as he did," said Effie, sorrowfully.

"Yes, you have. We will do it! we will do it!" And clapping her hands, mamma suddenly began to dance all over the room as if she had lost her wits.

"How? how? You must tell me, mamma," cried Effie, dancing after her, and ready to believe anything possible when she remembered the adventures of the past night.

"I've got it! I've got it!—the new idea. A splendid one, if I can only carry it out!" And mamma waltzed the little girl round till her curls flew wildly in the air, while Nursey laughed as if she would die.

"Tell me! tell me!" shrieked Effie. "No, no; it is a surprise,—a grand surprise for Christmas day!" sung mamma, evidently charmed with her happy thought. "Now, come to breakfast; for we must work like bees if we want to play spirits tomorrow. You and Nursey will go out shopping, and get heaps of things, while I arrange matters behind the scenes."

They were running downstairs as mamma spoke, and Effie called out breathlessly,—

"It won't be a surprise; for I know you are going to ask some poor children here, and have a tree or something. It won't be like my dream; for they had ever so many trees, and more children than we can find anywhere."

"There will be no tree, no party, no dinner, in this house at all, and no presents for you. Won't that be a surprise?" And mamma laughed at Effie's bewildered face.

"Do it. I shall like it, I think; and I won't ask any questions, so it will all burst upon me when the time comes," she said; and she ate her breakfast thoughtfully, for this really would be a new sort of Christmas.

All that morning Effie trotted after Nursey in and out of shops, buying dozens of barking dogs, woolly lambs, and squeaking birds; tiny tea−sets, gay picture−books, mittens and hoods, dolls and candy. Parcel after parcel was sent home; but when Effie returned she saw no trace of them, though she peeped everywhere. Nursey chuckled, but wouldn't give a hint, and went out again in the afternoon with a long list of more things to buy; while Effie wandered forlornly about the house, missing the usual merry stir that went before the Christmas dinner and the evening fun.

As for mamma, she was quite invisible all day, and came in at night so tired that she could only lie on the sofa to rest, smiling as if some very pleasant thought made her happy in spite of weariness.

"Is the surprise going on all right?" asked Effie, anxiously; for it seemed an immense time to wait till another evening came.

"Beautifully! better than I expected; for several of my good friends are helping, or I couldn't have done it as I wish. I know you will like it, dear, and long remember this new way of making Christmas merry."

Mamma gave her a very tender kiss, and Effie went to bed.

* * * * *

The next day was a very strange one; for when she woke there was no stocking to examine, no pile of gifts under her napkin, no one said “Merry Christmas!” to her, and the dinner was just as usual to her. Mamma vanished again, and Nursey kept wiping her eyes and saying: “The dear things! It's the prettiest idea I ever heard of. No one but your blessed ma could have done it.”

“Do stop, Nursey, or I shall go crazy because I don't know the secret!” cried Effie, more than once; and she kept her eye on the clock, for at seven in the evening the surprise was to come off.

The longed−for hour arrived at last, and the child was too excited to ask questions when Nurse put on her cloak and hood, led her to the carriage, and they drove away, leaving their house the one dark and silent one in the row.

“I feel like the girls in the fairy tales who are led off to strange places and see fine things,” said Effie, in a whisper, as they jingled through the gay streets.

“Ah, my deary, it *is* like a fairy tale, I do assure you, and you *will* see finer things than most children will tonight. Steady, now, and do just as I tell you, and don't say one word whatever you see,” answered Nursey, quite quivering with excitement as she patted a large box in her lap, and nodded and laughed with twinkling eyes.

They drove into a dark yard, and Effie was led through a back door to a little room, where Nurse coolly proceeded to take off not only her cloak and hood, but her dress and shoes also. Effie stared and bit her lips, but kept still until out of the box came a little white fur coat and boots, a wreath of holly leaves and berries, and a candle with a frill of gold paper round it. A long “Oh!” escaped her then; and when she was dressed and saw herself in the glass, she started back, exclaiming, “Why, Nursey, I look like the spirit in my dream!”

“So you do; and that's the part you are to play, my pretty! Now whist, while I blind your eyes and put you in your place.”

“Shall I be afraid?” whispered Effie, full of wonder; for as they went out she heard the sound of many voices, the tramp of many feet, and, in spite of the bandage, was sure a great light shone upon her when she stopped.

“You needn't be; I shall stand close by, and your ma will be there.”

After the handkerchief was tied about her eyes, Nurse led Effie up some steps, and placed her on a high platform, where something like leaves touched her head, and the soft snap of lamps seemed to fill the air.

Music began as soon as Nurse clapped her hands, the voices outside sounded nearer, and the tramp was evidently coming up the stairs.

“Now, my precious, look and see how you and your dear ma have made a merry Christmas for them that needed it!”

Off went the bandage; and for a minute Effie really did think she was asleep again, for she actually stood in “a grove of Christmas trees,” all gay and shining as in her vision. Twelve on a side, in two rows down the room, stood the little pines, each on its low table; and behind Effie a taller one rose to the roof, hung with wreaths of popcorn, apples, oranges, horns of candy, and cakes of all sorts, from sugary hearts to gingerbread Jumbos. On the smaller trees she saw many of her own discarded toys and those Nursey bought, as well as heaps that seemed to have rained down straight from that delightful Christmas country where she felt as if she was again.

“How splendid! Who is it for? What is that noise? Where is mamma?” cried Effie, pale with pleasure and surprise, as she stood looking down the brilliant little street from her high place.

Before Nurse could answer, the doors at the lower end flew open, and in marched twenty−four little blue−gowned orphan girls, singing sweetly, until amazement changed the song to cries of joy and wonder as the shining spectacle appeared. While they stood staring with round eyes at the wilderness of pretty things about them, mamma stepped up beside Effie, and holding her hand fast to give her courage, told the story of the dream in a few simple words, ending in this way:—

“So my little girl wanted to be a Christmas spirit too, and make this a happy day for those who had not as many pleasures and comforts as she has. She likes surprises, and we planned this for you all. She shall play the good fairy, and give each of you something from this tree, after which every one will find her own name on a small tree, and can go to enjoy it in her own way. March by, my dears, and let us fill your hands.”

Nobody told them to do it, but all the hands were clapped heartily before a single child stirred; then one by one they came to look up wonderingly at the pretty giver of the feast as she leaned down to offer them great yellow oranges, red apples, bunches of grapes, bonbons, and cakes, till all were gone, and a double row of smiling faces turned toward her as the children filed back to their places in the orderly way they had been taught.

Then each was led to her own tree by the good ladies who had helped mamma with all their hearts; and the happy hubbub that arose would have satisfied even Santa Claus himself,—shrieks of joy, dances of delight, laughter and tears (for some tender little things could not bear so much pleasure at once, and sobbed with mouths full of candy and hands full of toys). How they ran to show one another the new treasures! how they peeped and tasted, pulled and pinched, until the air was full of queer noises, the floor covered with papers, and the little trees left bare of all but candles!

“I don't think heaven can be any gooder than this,” sighed one small girl, as she looked about her in a blissful maze, holding her full apron with one hand, while she luxuriously carried sugar−plums to her mouth with the other.

“Is that a truly angel up there?” asked another, fascinated by the little white figure with the wreath on its shining hair, who in some mysterious way had been the cause of all this merry−making.

“I wish I dared to go and kiss her for this splendid party,” said a lame child, leaning on her crutch, as she stood near the steps, wondering how it seemed to sit in a mother's lap, as Effie was doing, while she watched the happy scene before her.

Effie heard her, and remembering Tiny Tim, ran down and put her arms about the pale child, kissing the wistful face, as she said sweetly, “You may; but mamma deserves the thanks. She did it all; I only dreamed about it.”

Lame Katy felt as if “a truly angel” was embracing her, and could only stammer out her thanks, while the other children ran to see the pretty spirit, and touch her soft dress, until she stood in a crowd of blue gowns laughing as they held up their gifts for her to see and admire.

Mamma leaned down and whispered one word to the older girls; and suddenly they all took hands to dance round Effie, singing as they skipped.

It was a pretty sight, and the ladies found it hard to break up the happy revel; but it was late for small people, and too much fun is a mistake. So the girls fell into line, and marched before Effie and mamma again, to say goodnight with such grateful little faces that the eyes of those who looked grew dim with tears. Mamma kissed every one; and many a hungry childish heart felt as if the touch of those tender lips was their best gift. Effie shook so many small hands that her own tingled; and when Katy came she pressed a small doll into Effie's hand, whispering, “You didn't have a single present, and we had lots. Do keep that; it's the prettiest thing I got.”

“I will,” answered Effie, and held it fast until the last smiling face was gone, the surprise all over, and she safe in her own bed, too tired and happy for anything but sleep.

“Mamma, it was a beautiful surprise, and I thank you so much! I don't see how you did it; but I like it best of all the Christmases I ever had, and mean to make one every year. I had my splendid big present, and here is the dear little one to keep for love of poor Katy; so even that part of my wish came true.”

And Effie fell asleep with a happy smile on her lips, her one humble gift still in her hand, and a new love for Christmas in her heart that never changed through a long life spent in doing good.

[Illustration: “Hollo, what do you want?” he asked, staring at her.]

II. THE CANDY COUNTRY.

“I shall take mamma's red sun−umbrella, it is so warm, and none of the children at school will have one like it,” said Lily, one day, as she went through the hall.

“The wind is very high; I'm afraid you'll be blown away if you carry that big thing,” called Nurse from the window, as the red umbrella went bobbing down the garden walk with a small girl under it.

“I wish it would; I always wanted to go up in a balloon,” answered Lily, as she struggled out of the gate.

She got on very well till she came to the bridge and stopped to look over the railing at the water running by so fast, and the turtles sunning themselves on the rocks. Lily was fond of throwing stones at them; it was so funny to watch them tumble, heels over head, splash into the water. Now, when she saw three big fellows close by, she stooped for a stone, and just at that minute a gale of wind nearly took the umbrella out of her hand. She clutched it fast; and away she went like a thistle−down, right up in the air, over river and hill, houses and trees, faster and faster, till her head spun round, her breath was all gone, and she had to let go. The dear red umbrella flew away like a leaf; and Lily fell down, down, till she went crash into a tree which grew in such a curious place that she forgot her fright as she sat looking about her, wondering what part of the world it could be.

The tree looked as if made of glass or colored sugar; for she could see through the red cherries, the green leaves, and the brown branches. An agreeable smell met her nose; and she said at once, as any child would, “I smell candy!” She picked a cherry and ate it. Oh, how good it was!—all sugar and no stone. The next discovery was such a delightful one that she nearly fell off her perch; for by touching her tongue here and there, she found that the whole tree was made of candy. Think what fun to sit and break off twigs of barley sugar, candied cherries, and leaves that tasted like peppermint and sassafras!

Lily rocked and ate till she finished the top of the little tree; then she climbed down and strolled along, making more surprising and agreeable discoveries as she went.

What looked like snow under her feet was white sugar; the rocks were lumps of chocolate, the flowers of all colors and tastes; and every sort of fruit grew on these delightful trees. Little white houses soon appeared; and here lived the dainty candy−people, all made of the best sugar, and painted to look like real people.

Dear little men and women, looking as if they had stepped off of wedding cakes and bonbons, went about in their gay sugar clothes, laughing and talking in the sweetest voices. Bits of babies rocked in open−work cradles, and sugar boys and girls played with sugar toys in the most natural way. Carriages rolled along the jujube streets, drawn by the red and yellow barley horses we all love so well; cows fed in the green fields, and sugar birds sang in the trees.

Lily listened, and in a moment she understood what the song said,—

“Sweet! Sweet!
Come, come and eat,
Dear little girls
With yellow curls;
For here you'll find
Sweets to your mind.
On every tree
Sugar−plums you'll see;
In every dell
Grows the caramel.
Over every wall
Gum−drops fall;
Molasses flows
Where our river goes
Under your feet
Lies sugar sweet;
Over your head

Grow almonds red.
Our lily and rose
Are not for the nose;
Our flowers we pluck
To eat or suck
And, oh! what bliss
When two friends kiss,
For they honey sip
From lip to lip!
And all you meet,
In house or street,
At work or play,
Sweethearts are they.
So, little dear,
Pray feel no fear;
Go where you will;
Eat, eat your fill.
Here is a feast
From west to east;
And you can say,
Ere you go away,
'At last I stand
In dear Candy−land,
And no more can stuff;
For once I've enough.'
Sweet! Sweet!
Tweet! Tweet!
Tweedle−dee!
Tweedle−dee!"

"That is the most interesting song I ever heard," said Lily, clapping her sticky hands and dancing along toward a fine palace of white cream candy, with pillars of striped peppermint stick, and a roof of frosting that made it look like the Milan Cathedral.

"I'll live here, and eat candy all day long, with no tiresome school or patchwork to spoil my fun," said Lily.

So she ran up the chocolate steps into the pretty rooms, where all the chairs and tables were of different colored candies, and the beds of spun sugar. A fountain of lemonade supplied drink; and floors of ice−cream that never melted kept people and things from sticking together, as they would have done had it been warm.

For a long while Lily was quite happy, going about tasting so many different kinds of sweeties, talking to the little people, who were very amiable, and finding out curious things about them and their country.

The babies were made of plain sugar, but the grown people had different flavors. The young ladies were flavored with violet, rose, and orange; the gentlemen were apt to have cordials of some sort inside of them, as she found when she ate one now and then slyly, and got her tongue bitten by the hot, strong taste as a punishment The old people tasted of peppermint, clove, and such comfortable things, good for pain; but the old maids had lemon, hoarhound, flag−root, and all sorts of sour, bitter things in them, and did not get eaten much. Lily soon learned to know the characters of her new friends by a single taste, and some she never touched but once. The dear babies melted in her mouth, and the delicately flavored young ladies she was very fond of. Dr. Ginger was called to her more than once when so much candy made her teeth ache, and she found him a very hot− tempered little man; but he stopped the pain, so she was glad to see him.

A lime−drop boy and a little pink checker−berry girl were her favorite playmates; and they had fine times making mud−pies by scraping the chocolate rocks and mixing this dust with honey from the wells near by. These they could eat; and Lily thought this much better than throwing away the pies, as she had to do at home. They had candy−pulls very often, and made swings of long loops of molasses candy, and bird's−nests with almond eggs, out

of which came birds who sang sweetly. They played football with big bull's−eyes, sailed in sugar boats on lakes of syrup, fished in rivers of molasses, and rode the barley horses all over the country.

Lily discovered that it never rained, but snowed white sugar. There was no sun, as it would have been too hot; but a large yellow lozenge made a nice moon, and red and white comfits were the stars.

The people all lived on sugar, and never quarrelled. No one was ill; and if any got broken, as sometimes happened with such brittle creatures, they just stuck the parts together and were all right again. The way they grew old was to get thinner and thinner till there was danger of their vanishing. Then the friends of the old person put him in a neat coffin, and carried him to the great golden urn which stood in their largest temple, always full of a certain fine syrup; and here he was dipped and dipped till he was stout and strong again, and went home to enjoy himself for a long time as good as new.

This was very interesting to Lily, and she went to many funerals. But the weddings were better still; for the lovely white brides were so sweet Lily longed to eat them. The feasts were delicious; and everybody went in their best clothes, and danced at the ball till they got so warm half−a−dozen would stick together and have to be taken to the ice−cream room to cool off. Then the little pair would drive away in a fine carriage with white horses to a new palace in some other part of the country, and Lily would have another pleasant place to visit.

But by and by, when she had seen everything, and eaten so much sweet stuff that at last she longed for plain bread and butter, she began to get cross, as children always do when they live on candy; and the little people wished she would go away, for they were afraid of her. No wonder, when she would catch up a dear sugar baby and eat him, or break some respectable old grandmamma all into bits because she reproved her for naughty ways. Lily calmly sat down on the biggest church, crushing it flat, and even tried to poke the moon out of the sky in a pet one day. The king ordered her to go home; but she said, “I won't!” and bit his head off, crown and all.

Such a wail went up at this awful deed that she ran away out of the city, fearing some one would put poison in her candy, since she had no other food.

“I suppose I shall get somewhere if I keep walking; and I can't starve, though I hate the sight of this horrid stuff,” she said to herself, as she hurried over the mountains of Gibraltar Rock that divided the city of Saccharissa from the great desert of brown sugar that lay beyond.

Lily marched bravely on for a long time, and saw at last a great smoke in the sky, smelt a spicy smell, and felt a hot wind blowing toward her.

“I wonder if there are sugar savages here, roasting and eating some poor traveller like me,” she said, thinking of Robinson Crusoe and other wanderers in strange lands.

She crept carefully along till she saw a settlement of little huts very like mushrooms, for they were made of cookies set on lumps of the brown sugar; and queer people, looking as if made of gingerbread, were working very busily round several stoves which seemed to bake at a great rate.

“I'll creep nearer and see what sort of people they are before I show myself,” said Lily, going into a grove of spice−trees, and sitting down on a stone which proved to be the plummy sort of cake we used to call Brighton Rock.

Presently one of the tallest men came striding toward the trees with a pan, evidently after spice; and before she could run, he saw Lily.

“Hollo, what do you want?” he asked, staring at her with his black currant eyes, while he briskly picked the bark off a cinnamon−tree.

“I'm travelling, and would like to know what place this is, if you please,” answered Lily, very politely, being a little frightened.

“Cake−land. Where do you come from?” asked the gingerbread man, in a crisp tone of voice.

“I was blown into the Candy country, and have been there a long time; but I got tired of it, and ran away to find something better.”

“Sensible child!” and the man smiled till Lily thought his cheeks would crumble. “You'll get on better here with us Brownies than with the lazy Bonbons, who never work and are all for show. They won't own us, though we are all related through our grandparents Sugar and Molasses. We are busy folks; so they turn up their noses and don't speak when we meet at parties. Poor creatures, silly and sweet and unsubstantial! I pity 'em.”

“Could I make you a visit? I'd like to see how you live, and what you do. I'm sure it must be interesting,” said Lily, picking herself up after a tumble, having eaten nearly all the stone, she was so hungry.

“I know you will. Come on! I can talk while I work.” And the funny gingerbread man trotted off toward his kitchen, full of pans, rolling−pins, and molasses jugs.

“Sit down. I shall be at leisure as soon as this batch is baked. There are still some wise people down below who like gingerbread, and I have my hands full,” he said, dashing about, stirring, rolling out, and slapping the brown dough into pans, which he whisked into the oven and out again so fast that Lily knew there must be magic about it somewhere.

Every now and then he threw her a delicious cooky warm from the oven. She liked the queer fellow, and presently began to talk, being very curious about this country.

“What is your name, sir?”

“Ginger Snap.”

Lily thought it a good one; for he was very quick, and she fancied he could be short and sharp if he liked.

“Where does all this cake go to?” she asked, after watching the other kitchens full of workers, who were all of different kinds of cake, and each set of cooks made its own sort.

“I'll show you by and by,” answered Snap, beginning to pile up the heaps of gingerbread on a little car that ran along a track leading to some unknown storeroom, Lily thought.

“Don't you get tired of doing this all the time?”

“Yes; but I want to be promoted, and I never shall be till I've done my best, and won the prize here.”

“Oh, tell me about it! What is the prize, and how are you promoted? Is this a cooking−school?”

“Yes; the prize for best gingerbread is a cake of condensed yeast. That puts a soul into me, and I begin to rise till I am able to go over the hills yonder into the blessed land of bread, and be one of the happy creatures who are always wholesome, always needed, and without which the world below would be in a bad way.”

“Bless me! that is the queerest thing I've heard yet. But I don't wonder you want to go; I'm tired of sweets myself, and long for a good piece of bread, though I used to want cake and candy at home.”

“Ah, my dear, you'll learn a good deal here; and you are lucky not to have got into the clutches of Giant Dyspepsia, who always gets people if they eat too much of such rubbish and scorn wholesome bread. I leave my ginger behind when I go, and get white and round and beautiful, as you will see. The Gingerbread family have never been as foolish as some of the other cakes. Wedding is the worst; such extravagance in the way of wine and spice and fruit I never saw, and such a mess to eat when it's done! I don't wonder people get sick; serves 'em right.” And Snap flung down a pan with such a bang that it made Lily jump.

“Sponge cake isn't bad, is it? Mamma lets me eat it, but I like frosted pound better,” she said, looking over to the next kitchen, where piles of that sort of cake were being iced.

“Poor stuff. No substance. Ladies' fingers will do for babies, but pound has too much butter ever to be healthy. Let it alone, and eat cookies or seed−cakes, my dear. Now, come along; I'm ready.” And Snap trundled away his car−load at a great pace.

Lily ran behind to pick up whatever fell, and looked about her as she went, for this was certainly a very queer country. Lakes of eggs all beaten up, and hot springs of saleratus foamed here and there ready for use. The earth was brown sugar or ground spice; and the only fruits were raisins, dried currants, citron, and lemon peel. It was a very busy place; for every one cooked all the time, and never failed and never seemed tired, though they got so hot that they only wore sheets of paper for clothes. There were piles of it to put over the cake, so that it shouldn't burn; and they made cook's white caps and aprons of it, and looked very nice. A large clock made of a flat pancake, with cloves to mark the hours and two toothpicks for hands, showed them how long to bake things; and in one place an ice wall was built round a lake of butter, which they cut in lumps as they wanted it.

“Here we are. Now, stand away while I pitch 'em down,” said Snap, stopping at last before a hole in the ground where a dumbwaiter hung ready, with a name over it.

There were many holes all round, and many waiters, each with its name; and Lily was amazed when she read “Weber,” “Copeland,” “Dooling,” and others, which she knew very well.

Over Snap's place was the name “Newmarch;” and Lily said, “Why, that's where mamma gets her hard gingerbread, and Weber's is where we go for ice− cream. Do *you* make cake for them?”

“Yes, but no one knows it. It's one of the secrets of the trade. We cook for all the confectioners, and people think the good things come out of the cellars under their saloons. Good joke, isn't it?” And Snap laughed till a crack came in his neck and made him cough.

Lily was so surprised she sat down on a warm queen's cake that happened to be near, and watched Snap send down load after load of gingerbread to be eaten by children, who would have liked it much better if they had only known where it came from, as she did.

As she sat, the clatter of many spoons, the smell of many dinners, and the sound of many voices calling, “One vanilla, two strawberries, and a Charlotte Russe,” “Three stews, cup coffee, dry toast,” “Roast chicken and apple without,” came up the next hole, which was marked “Copeland.”

“Dear me! it seems as if I was there,” said Lily, longing to hop down, but afraid of the bump at the other end.

“I'm done. Come along, I'll ride you back,” called Snap, tossing the last cooky after the dumb−waiter as it went slowly out of sight with its spicy load.

“I wish you'd teach me to cook. It looks great fun, and mamma wants me to learn; only our cook hates to have me mess round, and is so cross that I don't like to try at home,” said Lily, as she went trundling back.

“Better wait till you get to Bread−land, and learn to make that. It's a great art, and worth knowing. Don't waste your time on cake, though plain gingerbread isn't bad to have in the house. I'll teach you that in a jiffy, if the clock doesn't strike my hour too soon,” answered Snap, helping her down.

“What hour?”

“Why, of my freedom. I never know when I've done my task till I'm called by the chimes and go to get my soul,” said Snap, turning his currant eyes anxiously to the clock.

“I hope you *will* have time.” And Lily fell to work with all her might, after Snap had put on her a paper apron and a cap like his.

It was not hard; for when she was going to make a mistake a spark flew out of the fire and burnt her in time to remind her to look at the receipt, which was a sheet of gingerbread in a frame of pie−crust hung up before her, with the directions written while it was soft and baked in. The third sheet she made came out of the oven spicy, light, and brown; and Snap, giving it one poke, said, “That's all right. Now you know. Here's your reward”

He handed her a receipt−book made of thin sheets of sugar−gingerbread held together by a gelatine binding, with her name stamped on the back, and each leaf crimped with a cake−cutter in the most elegant manner.

Lily was charmed with it, but had no time to read all it contained; for just then the clock began to strike, and a chime of bells to ring,—

“Gingerbread,
Go to the head.
Your task is done;
A soul is won.
Take it and go
Where muffins grow,
Where sweet loaves rise
To the very skies,
And biscuits fair
Perfume the air.
Away, away!
Make no delay;
In the sea of flour
Plunge this hour.
Safe in your breast
Let the yeast−cake rest,
Till you rise in joy,
A white bread boy!”

“Ha, ha! I'm free! I'm free!” cried Snap, catching up the silver−covered square that seemed to fall from heaven; and running to a great white sea of flour, he went in head first, holding the yeast−cake clasped to his breast as if his life depended on it.

Lily watched breathlessly, while a curious working and bubbling went on, as if Snap was tumbling about down there like a small earthquake. The other cake−folk stood round the shore with her; for it was a great event, and all were glad that the dear fellow was promoted so soon. Suddenly a cry was heard, and up rose a beautiful

white figure on the farther side of the sea. It moved its hand, as if saying “Good−by,” and ran over the hills so fast they had only time to see how plump and fair he was, with a little knob on the top of his head like a crown.

“He's gone to the happy land, and we shall miss him; but we'll follow his example and soon find him again,” said a gentle Sponge cake, with a sigh, as all went back to their work; while Lily hurried after Snap, eager to see the new country, which was the best of all.

A delicious odor of fresh bread blew up from the valley as she stood on the hill−top and looked down on the peaceful scene below. Fields of yellow grain waved in the breeze; hop−vines grew from tree to tree; and many windmills whirled their white sails as they ground the different grains into fresh, sweet meal, for the loaves of bread that built the houses like bricks and paved the streets, or in many shapes formed the people, furniture, and animals. A river of milk flowed through the peaceful land, and fountains of yeast rose and fell with a pleasant foam and fizz. The ground was a mixture of many meals, and the paths were golden Indian, which gave a very gay look to the scene. Buckwheat flowers bloomed on their rosy stems, and tall corn−stalks rustled their leaves in the warm air that came from the ovens hidden in the hillsides; for bread needs a slow fire, and an obliging volcano did the baking here.

“What a lovely place!” cried Lily, feeling the charm of the homelike landscape, in spite of the funny plump people moving about.

Two of these figures came running to meet her as she slowly walked down the yellow path from the hill. One was a golden boy, with a beaming face; the other a little girl in a shiny brown cloak, who looked as if she would taste very nice. They each put a warm hand into Lily's, and the boy said,—

“We are glad to see you. Muffin told us you were coming.”

“Thank you. Who is Muffin?” asked Lily, feeling as if she had seen both these little people before, and liked them.

“He was Ginger Snap once, but he's a Muffin now. We begin in that way, and work up to the perfect loaf by degrees. My name is Johnny Cake, and she's Sally Lunn. You know us; so come on and have a race.”

Lily burst out laughing at the idea of playing with these old friends of hers; and all three ran away as fast as they could tear, down the hill, over a bridge, into the middle of the village, where they stopped, panting, and sat down on some very soft rolls to rest.

“What do you all do *here*?” asked Lily, when she got her breath again.

“We farm, we study, we bake, we brew, and are as merry as grigs all day long. It's school−time now, and we must go; will you come?” said Sally, jumping up as if she liked it.

“Our schools are not like yours; we only study two things,—grain and yeast. I think you'll like it. We have yeast to−day, and the experiments are very jolly,” added Johnny, trotting off to a tall brown tower of rye and Indian bread, where the school was kept.

Lily never liked to go to school, but she was ashamed to own it; so she went along with Sally, and was so amused with all she saw that she was glad she came. The brown loaf was hollow, and had no roof; and when she asked why they used a ruin, Sally told her to wait and see why they chose strong walls and plenty of room overhead. All round was a circle of very small biscuits like cushions, and on these the Bread−children sat. A square loaf in the middle was the teacher's desk, and on it lay an ear of wheat, with several bottles of yeast well corked up. The teacher was a pleasant, plump lady from Vienna, very wise, and so famous for her good bread that she was a Professor of Grainology.

When all were seated, she began with the wheat ear, and told them all about it in such an interesting way that Lily felt as if she had never known anything about the bread she ate before. The experiments with the yeast were quite exciting,—for Fraulein Pretzel showed them how it would work till it blew the cork out, and go fizzing up to the sky if it was kept too long; how it would turn sour or flat, and spoil the bread if care was not taken to use it just at the right moment; and how too much would cause the loaf to rise till there was no substance to it.

The children were very bright; for they were fed on the best kinds of oatmeal and Graham bread, with very little white bread or hot cakes to spoil their young stomachs. Hearty, happy boys and girls they were, and their yeasty souls were very lively in them; for they danced and sung, and seemed as bright and gay as if acidity, heaviness, and mould were quite unknown.

Lily was very happy with them, and when school was done went home with Sally and ate the best bread and milk for dinner that she ever tasted. In the afternoon Johnny took her to the cornfield, and showed her how they

kept the growing ears free from mildew and worms. Then she went to the bakehouse; and here she found her old friend Muffin hard at work making Parker House rolls, for he was such a good cook he was set to work at once on the lighter kinds of bread.

“Well, isn't this better than Candy−land or Saccharissa?” he asked, as he rolled and folded his bits of dough with a dab of butter tucked inside.

“Ever so much!” cried Lily. “I feel better already, and mean to learn all I can. Mamma will be so pleased if I can make good bread when I go home. She is rather old−fashioned, and likes me to be a nice housekeeper. I didn't think bread interesting then, but I do now; and Johnny's mother is going to teach me to make Indian cakes to−morrow.”

“Glad to hear it. Learn all you can, and tell other people how to make healthy bodies and happy souls by eating good plain food. Not like this, though these rolls are better than cake. I have to work my way up to the perfect loaf, you know; and then, oh, then, I'm a happy thing.”

“What happens then? Do you go on to some other wonderful place?” asked Lily, as Muffin paused with a smile on his face.

“Yes; I am eaten by some wise, good human being, and become a part of him or her. That is immortality and heaven; for I may nourish a poet and help him sing, or feed a good woman who makes the world better for being in it, or be crumbed into the golden porringer of a baby prince who is to rule a kingdom. Isn't that a noble way to live, and an end worth working for?” asked Muffin, in a tone that made Lily feel as if some sort of fine yeast had got into her, and was setting her brain to work with new thoughts.

“Yes, it is. I suppose all common things are made for that purpose, if we only knew it; and people should be glad to do anything to help the world along, even making good bread in a kitchen,” answered Lily, in a sober way that showed that her little mind was already digesting the new food it had got.

She stayed in Bread−land a long time, and enjoyed and learned a great deal that she never forgot. But at last, when she had made the perfect loaf, she wanted to go home, that her mother might see and taste it.

“I've put a good deal of myself into it, and I'd love to think I had given her strength or pleasure by my work,” she said, as she and Sally stood looking at the handsome loaf.

“You can go whenever you like; just take the bread in your hands and wish three times, and you'll be wherever you say. I'm sorry to have you go, but I don't wonder you want to see your mother. Don't forget what you have learned, and you will always be glad you came to us,” said Sally, kissing her good−by.

“Where is Muffin? I can't go without seeing him, my dear old friend,” answered Lily, looking round for him.

“He is here,” said Sally, touching the loaf. “He was ready to go, and chose to pass into your bread rather than any other; for he said he loved you and would be glad to help feed so good a little girl.”

“How kind of him! I must be careful to grow wise and excellent, else he will be disappointed and have died in vain,” said Lily, touched by his devotion.

Then, bidding them all farewell, she hugged her loaf close, wished three times to be in her own home, and like a flash she was there.

Whether her friends believed the wonderful tale of her adventures I cannot tell; but I know that she was a nice little housekeeper from that day, and made such good bread that other girls came to learn of her. She also grew from a sickly, fretful child into a fine, strong woman, because she ate very little cake and candy, except at Christmas time, when the oldest and the wisest love to make a short visit to Candy−land.

[Illustration: As soon as he was alone, Jocko ... jumped on his back.]

III. NAUGHTY JOCKO.

“A music−man! a music−man! Run quick, and see if he has got a monkey on his organ,” cried little Neddy, running to the window in a great hurry one day.

Yes; there was the monkey in his blue and red suit, with a funny little cap, and the long tail trailing behind. But he didn't seem to be a lively monkey; for he sat in a bunch, with his sad face turned anxiously to his master, who kept pulling the chain to make him dance. The stiff collar had made his neck sore; and when the man twitched, the poor thing moaned and put up his little hand to hold the chain. He tried to dance, but was so weak he could only hop a few steps, and stop panting for breath. The cruel man wouldn't let him rest till Neddy called out,—

“Don't hurt him; let him come up here and get this cake, and rest while you play. I've got some pennies for you.”

So poor Jocko climbed slowly up the trellis, and sat on the window−ledge trying to eat; but he was so tired he went to sleep, and when the man pulled to wake him up, he slipped and fell, and lay as if he were dead. Neddy and his aunt ran down to see if he was killed. The cross man scolded and shook him; but he never moved, and the man said,—

“He is dead. I don't want him. I will sell him to some one to stuff.”

“No; his heart beats a little. Leave him here a few days, and we will take care of him; and if he gets well, perhaps we will buy him,” said Aunt Jane, who liked to nurse even a sick monkey.

The man said he was going on for a week through the towns near by, and would call and see about it when he came back. Then he went away; and Neddy and aunty put Jocko in a nice basket, and carried him in. The minute the door was shut and he felt safe, the sly fellow peeped out with one eye, and seeing only the kind little boy began to chatter and kick off the shawl; for he was not much hurt, only tired and hungry, and dreadfully afraid of the cruel man who beat and starved him.

Neddy was delighted, and thought it very funny, and helped his aunt take off the stiff collar and put some salve on the sore neck. Then they got milk and cake; and when he had eaten a good dinner, Jocko curled himself up and slept till the next day. He was quite lively in the morning; for when Aunt Jane went to call Neddy, Jocko was not in his basket, and looking round the room for him, she saw the little black thing lying on the boy's pillow, with his arm round Neddy's neck like a queer baby.

“My patience! I can't allow that,” said the old lady, and went to pull Jocko out. But he slipped away like an eel, and crept chattering and burrowing down to the bottom of the bed, holding on to Neddy's toes, till he waked up, howling that crabs were nipping him.

Then they had a great frolic; and Jocko climbed all over the bed, up on the tall wardrobe, and the shelf over the door, where the image of an angel stood. He patted it, and hugged it, and looked so very funny with his ugly black face by the pretty white one, that Neddy rolled on the floor, and Aunt Jane laughed till her glasses flew off. By and by he came down, and had a nice breakfast, and let them tie a red ribbon over the bandage on his neck. He liked the gay color, and kept going to look in the glass, and grin and chatter at his own image, which he evidently admired.

“Now, he shall go to walk with me, and all the children shall see my new pet,” said Neddy, as he marched off with Jock on his shoulder.

Every one laughed at the funny little fellow with his twinkling eyes, brown hands, and long tail, and Neddy felt very grand till they got to the store; then troubles began. He put Jocko on a table near the door, and told him to stay there while he did his errands. Now, close by was the place where the candy was kept, and Jocko loved sweeties like any girl; so he hopped along, and began to eat whatever he liked. Some boys tried to stop him; and then he got angry at them for pulling his tail, and threw handfuls of sugarplums at them. That was great fun; and the more they laughed and scrambled and poked at him, the faster he showered chocolates, caramels, and peppermints over them, till it looked as if it had rained candy. The man was busy with Neddy at the other end of the store; but when he heard the noise, both ran to see what was the matter. Neither of them could stop naughty Jocko, who liked this game, and ran up on the high shelves among the toys. Then down came little tubs and dolls'

stoves, tin trumpets and cradles, while boxes of leaden soldiers and whole villages flew through the air, smash, bang, rattle, bump, all over the floor. The man scolded, Neddy cried, the boys shouted, and there was a lively time in that shop till a good slapping with a long stick made Jock tumble into a tub of water where some curious fishes lived, and then they caught him.

Neddy was much ashamed, and told the man his aunt would pay for all the broken things. Then he took his naughty pet, and started to go home and tie him up, for it was plain this monkey was not to be trusted. But as soon as they got out, Jocko ran up a tree and dropped on to a load of hay passing underneath. Here he danced and pranced, and had a fine time, throwing off the man's coat and rake, and eating some of the dinner tied up in a cloth. The crusts of bread and the bones he threw at the horse; this new kind of whip frightened the horse, and he ran away down a steep hill, and upset the hay and broke the cart. Oh, such a time! It was worse than the candy scrape; for the man swore, and the horse was hurt, and people said the monkey ought to be shot, he did so much mischief. Jocko didn't care a bit; he sat high up in a tree, and chattered and scolded, and swung by his tail, and was so droll that people couldn't help laughing at him. Poor Neddy cried again, and went home to tell his troubles to Aunt Jane, fearing that it would take all the money in his bank to pay for the damage the bad monkey had done in one hour.

As soon as he was alone Jocko came skipping along, and jumped on his back, and peeped at him, and patted his cheeks, and was so cunning and good Neddy couldn't whip him; but he shut him up in a closet to punish him.

Jocko was tired; so he went to sleep, and all was quiet till dinner−time. They were ready for the pudding, and Neddy had saved a place for a good plateful, as he liked snow−pudding, when shrieks were heard in the kitchen, and Mary the maid rushed in to say,—

“Oh, ma'am, that horrid beast has spoilt the pudding, and is scaring Katy out of her life!”

They all ran; and there sat that naughty monkey on the table, throwing the nice white snow all over poor cook, till her face looked as if she was ready to be shaved. His own face looked the same, for he had eaten all he wanted while the pudding stood cooling in the pantry. He had crept out of a window in the closet, and had a fine rummage among the sugar−buckets, butter−boxes, and milk−pans.

Kate wailed, and Mary scolded; but Aunt Jane and grandpa laughed, and Neddy chased Jock into the garden with the broom. They had to eat bread and jelly for dessert, and it took the girls a long time to clear up the mess the rascal made.

“We will put his collar and chain on again, and keep him tied up all the time till the man comes,” said Aunt Jane.

“But I can't catch him,” sighed Neddy, watching the little imp whisk about in the garden among the currant−bushes, chasing hens and tossing green apples round in high glee.

“Sit quietly down somewhere and wait till he is tired; then he will come to you, and you can hold him fast,” said Aunt Jane.

So Neddy waited; and though he was much worried at his new pet's naughtiness, he enjoyed his pranks like a boy.

Grandpa took naps in the afternoon on the piazza, and he was dozing comfortably when Jocko swung down from the grape−vine by his long tail, and tickled the old gentleman on the nose with a straw. Grandpa sneezed, and opened one eye to brush away the fly as he supposed. Then he went to sleep again, and Jocko dropped a caterpillar on his bald head; this made him open the other eye to see what that soft, creepy thing could be. Neddy couldn't help laughing, for he often wanted to do just such things, but never dared, because grandpa was a very stern old gentleman, and no one took liberties with him. Jocko wasn't afraid, however; and presently he crept to the table, stole the glasses lying there, put them on, and taking up the paper held it before him, chattering as if he were reading it, as he had seen people do. Neddy laughed out loud at this, and clapped his hands, Jocko looked so like a little old man, in spite of the tail curled up behind. This time grandpa opened both eyes at once, and stared as if he saw a hobgoblin before him; then he snatched off the spectacles, and caught up his cane, crying angrily,—

“You rascal, how dare you!”

But Jocko tossed the paper in his face, and with one jump lighted on the back of old Tom, the big yellow cat, who lay asleep close by. Scared half out of his wits, Tom spit and bounced; but Jocko held fast to his collar, and had a fine race round the garden, while the girls laughed at the funny sight, and Neddy shouted, “It's a circus; and there's the monkey and the pony.” Even grandpa smiled, especially when puss dashed up a tree, and Jock tumbled

off. He chased him, and they had a great battle; but Tom's claws were sharp, and the monkey got a scratch on the nose, and ran crying to Neddy for comfort.

"Now, you naughty fellow, I'll chain you up, and stop these dreadful tricks. But you are great fun, and I can't whip you," said the boy; for he knew what it was to enjoy a holiday, and poor Jocko had not had one for a long time.

Jocko ate some lunch, took a nap in the grass, and then was ready for more frolics. Neddy had fastened him to a tree in the garden, so that he could enjoy the sun and air, and catch grasshoppers if he liked. But Jocko wanted something more; and presently Neddy, who was reading in his hammock on the piazza, heard a great cackling among the hens, and looked up to see the monkey swinging by his tail from a bough, holding the great cock−a−doodle by his splendid tail, while all the twenty hens clucked and cackled with wrath and fear at such a dreadful prank.

"Now, that's too bad; I *will* slap him this time," said Neddy, running to save his handsome bird from destruction. But before he got there poor cocky had pulled his fine tail−feathers all out in his struggles, and when set free was so frightened and mortified that he ran away and hid in the bushes, and the hens went to comfort him.

Neddy gave Jocko a good whipping, and left him looking as meek as a baby, all cuddled up in a little bunch, with his head in his hands as if crying for his naughtiness. But he wasn't sorry. Oh, dear, no! for in half an hour he had picked every one of the sweet peas Aunt Jane was so fond of, thrown all the tomatoes over the fence, and let the parrot out of his cage. The sight of Polly walking into the parlor with a polite "How are you, ma'am?" sent Aunt Jane to see what was going on. Neddy was fast asleep in the hammock, worn out with his cares; and Jocko, having unhooked his chain, was sitting on the chimney−top of a neighbor's house, eating corn.

"We shall not live to the end of the week if this sort of thing goes on. I don't know what to do with the little beast; he's as bad as an elephant to take care of," said the poor lady, in despair, as she saw Jocko throw his corncob down on the minister's hat as that stately gentleman went by.

As none of them could catch him, Miss Jane let him alone till Neddy waked up and could go and find some of the big boys to help him.

Jocko soon left the roof, and skipped in at a window that stood open. It was little Nelly Brown's play−room, and she had left her pet doll Maud Mabel Rose Matilda very ill in the best bed, while she went down to get a poppy leaf to rub the darling's cheeks with, because she had a high fever. Jocko took a fancy to the pretty bed, and after turning the play−house topsy−turvy, he pulled poor Maud Mabel Rose Matilda out by her flaxen hair, and stuffing her into the water−pitcher upside down, got into the bed, drew the lace curtains, and prepared to doze deliciously under the pink silk bed−cover.

Up came Nelly, and went at once to the dear invalid, saying in her motherly little voice,—

"Now, my darling child, lie quite still, and I won't hurt you one bit."

But when she drew the curtain, instead of the lovely yellow−haired doll in her ruffled nightcap, she saw an ugly little black face staring at her, and a tiny hand holding the sheet fast. Nelly gave one scream, and flew downstairs into the parlor where the Sewing−circle was at work, frightening twenty−five excellent ladies by her cries, as she clung to her mother, wailing,—

"A bogie! a bogie! I saw him, all black; and he snarled at me, and my dolly is gone! What shall I do? oh, what shall I do?"

There was great confusion, for all the ladies talked at once; and it so happened that none of them knew anything about the monkey, therefore they all agreed that Nelly was a foolish child, and had made a fuss about nothing. She cried dismally, and kept saying to her mother,—

"Go and see; it's in my dolly's bed,—I found it there, and darling Maudie is gone."

"We *will* go and see," said Mrs. Moses Merryweather,—a stout old lady, who kept her six girls in such good order that *they* would never have dared to cry if ten monkeys had popped out at them.

Miss Hetty Bumpus, a tall thin maiden lady, with a sharp eye and pointed nose, went with her; but at the door that led to the dining−room both stopped short, and after one look came flying back, calling out together,—

"Mrs. Brown, your supper is spoilt! a dreadful beast has ruined it all!"

Then twenty−five excited ladies flew across the hall to behold Jocko sitting on the great cake in the middle of the table, his feet bathed in cream from the overturned pitcher, while all around lay the ruins of custards, tarts, biscuits, and sauce, not to mention nice napkins made into hay−cocks, spoons, knives, and forks, on the floor, and

the best silver teapot in the fireplace.

While Nelly told her tale and the ladies questioned and comforted her, this bad monkey had skipped downstairs and had a delightful party all by himself. He was just scraping the jelly out of a tart when they disturbed him; and knowing that more slaps were in store for him if he stayed, he at once walked calmly down the ravaged table, and vanished out of the window carrying the silver tea−strainer with him to play with.

The ladies had no supper that night; and poor Mrs. Brown sent a note to Aunt Jane, telling her the sad story, and adding that Nelly was quite ill with the fright and the loss of dear Maud Mabel Rose Matilda, drowned in the water−pitcher and forever spoilt.

“John shall go after that man to−morrow, and bring him back to carry this terrible monkey away. I can't live with him a week; he will cost me a fortune, and wear us all out,” said Aunt Jane, when Jocko was safely shut up in the cellar, after six boys had chased him all over the neighborhood before they caught him.

Neddy was quite willing to let him go; but John was saved his journey, for in the morning poor Jocko was found dead in a trap, where his inquisitive head had been poked to see what the cheese tasted like.

So he was buried by the river, and every one felt much relieved; for the man never came back, thinking Jocko dead when he left him. But he had not lived in vain; for after this day of trial, mischievous Neddy behaved much better, and Aunt Jane could always calm his prankish spirit by saying, as her finger pointed to a little collar and chain hanging on the wall,—

“If you want to act like naughty Jocko, say so, and I'll tie you up. One monkey is enough for this family.”

[Illustration: Kitty laughed, and began to dance.... Such twirlings and skippings as she made.]

IV. THE SKIPPING SHOES.

Once there was a little girl, named Kitty, who never wanted to do what people asked her. She said “I won't” and “I can't,” and did not run at once pleasantly, as obliging children do.

One day her mother gave her a pair of new shoes; and after a fuss about putting them on, Kitty said, as she lay kicking on the floor,—

“I wish these were seven−leagued boots, like Jack the Giant Killer's, then it would be easy to run errands all the time. Now, I hate to keep trotting, and I don't like new shoes, and I won't stir a step.”

Just as she said that, the shoes gave a skip, and set her on her feet so suddenly that it scared all the naughtiness out of her. She stood looking at these curious shoes; and the bright buttons on them seemed to wink at her like eyes, while the heels tapped on the floor a sort of tune. Before she dared to stir, her mother called from the next room,—

“Kitty, run and tell the cook to make a pie for dinner; I forgot it.”

“I don't want to,” began Kitty, with a whine as usual.

But the words were hardly out of her mouth when the shoes gave one jump, and took her downstairs, through the hall, and landed her at the kitchen door. Her breath was nearly gone; but she gave the message, and turned round, trying to see if the shoes would let her walk at all. They went nicely till she wanted to turn into the china−closet where the cake was. She was forbidden to touch it, but loved to take a bit when she could. Now she found that her feet were fixed fast to the floor, and could not be moved till her father said, as he passed the window close by,—

“You will have time to go to the post−office before school and get my letters.”

“I can't,” began Kitty; but she found she could, for away went the shoes, out of the house at one bound, and trotted down the street so fast that the maid who ran after her with her hat could not catch her.

“I can't stop!” cried Kitty; and she did not till the shoes took her straight into the office.

“What's the hurry to−day?” asked the man, as he saw her without any hat, all rosy and breathless, and her face puckered up as if she did not know whether to laugh or to cry.

“I won't tell any one about these dreadful shoes, and I'll take them off as soon as I get home. I hope they will go back slowly, or people will think I'm crazy,” said Kitty to herself, as she took the letters and went away.

The shoes walked nicely along till she came to the bridge; and there she wanted to stop and watch some boys in a boat, forgetting school and her father's letters. But the shoes wouldn't stop, though she tried to make them, and held on to the railing as hard as she could. Her feet went on; and when she sat down they still dragged her along so steadily that she had to go, and she got up feeling that there was something very strange about these shoes. The minute she gave up, all went smoothly, and she got home in good time.

“I won't wear these horrid things another minute,” said Kitty, sitting on the doorstep and trying to unbutton the shoes.

But not a button could she stir, though she got red and angry struggling to do it.

“Time for school; run away, little girl,” called mamma from upstairs, as the clock struck nine.

“I won't!” said Kitty, crossly.

But she did; for those magic shoes danced her off, and landed her at her desk in five minutes.

“Well, I'm not late; that's one comfort,” she thought, wishing she had come pleasantly, and not been whisked away without any luncheon.

Her legs were so tired with the long skips that she was glad to sit still; and that pleased the teacher, for generally she was fussing about all lesson time. But at recess she got into trouble again; for one of the children knocked down the house of corn−cobs she had built, and made her angry.

“Now, I'll kick yours down, and see how you like it, Dolly.”

Up went her foot, but it didn't come down; it stayed in the air, and there she stood looking as if she were going to dance. The children laughed to see her, and she could do nothing till she said to Dolly in a great hurry,—

“Never mind; if you didn't mean to, I'll forgive you.”

Then the foot went down, and Kitty felt so glad about it that she tried to be pleasant, fearing some new caper

of those dreadful shoes. She began to see how they worked, and thought she would try if she had any power over them. So, when one of the children wanted his ball, which had bounced over the hedge, she said kindly,—"Perhaps I can get it for you, Willy."

And over she jumped as lightly as if she too were an india−rubber ball.

"How could you do it?" cried the boys, much surprised; for not one of them dared try such a high leap.

Kitty laughed, and began to dance, feeling pleased and proud to find there was a good side to the shoes after all. Such twirlings and skippings as she made, such pretty steps and airy little bounds it was pretty to see; for it seemed as if her feet were bewitched, and went of themselves. The little girls were charmed, and tried to imitate her, but no one could, and they stood in a circle watching her dance till the bell rang, then all rushed in to tell about it.

Kitty said it was her new shoes, and never told how queerly they acted, hoping to have good times now. But she was mistaken.

On the way home she wanted to stop and see her friend Bell's new doll, but at the gate her feet stuck fast, and she had to give up her wishes and go straight on, as mamma had told her always to do.

"Run and pick a nice little dish of strawberries for dinner," said her sister, as she went in.

"I'm too ti—" There was no time to finish, for the shoes landed her in the middle of the strawberry bed at one jump.

"I might as well be a grasshopper if I'm to skip round like this," she said, forgetting to feel tired out there in the pleasant garden, with the robins picking berries close by, and a cool wind lifting the leaves to show here the reddest and ripest ones hid.

The little dish was soon filled, and she wanted to stay and eat a few, warm and sweet from the vines; but the bell rang, and away she went, over the wood−pile, across the piazza, and into the dining−room before the berry in her mouth was half eaten.

"How this child does rush about to−day!" said her mother. "It is so delightful to have such a quick little errand−girl that I shall get her to carry some bundles to my poor people this afternoon.

"Oh, dear me! I do hate to lug those old clothes and bottles and baskets of cold victuals round. Must I do it?" sighed Kitty, dismally, while the shoes tapped on the floor under the table, as if to remind her that she must, whether she liked it or not.

"It would be right and kind, and would please me very much. But you may do as you choose about it. I am very tired, and some one must go; for the little Bryan baby is sick and needs what I send," said mamma, looking disappointed.

Kitty sat very still and sober for some time, and no one spoke to her. She was making up her mind whether she would go pleasantly or be whisked about like a grasshopper against her will. When dinner was over, she said in a cheerful voice,—

"I'll go, mamma; and when all the errands are done, may I come back through Fairyland, as we call the little grove where the tall ferns grow?"

"Yes, dear; when you oblige me, I am happy to please you."

"I'm glad I decided to be good; now I shall have a lovely time," said Kitty to herself, as she trotted away with a basket in one hand, a bundle in the other, and some money in her pocket for a poor old woman who needed help.

The shoes went quietly along, and seemed to know just where to stop. The sick baby's mother thanked her for the soft little nightgowns; the lame girl smiled when she saw the books; the hungry children gathered round the basket of food, like young birds eager to be fed; and the old woman gave her a beautiful pink shell that her sailor son brought home from sea.

When all the errands were done Kitty skipped away to Fairyland, feeling very happy, as people always do when they have done kind things. It was a lovely place; for the ferns made green arches tall enough for little girls to sit under, and the ground was covered with pretty green moss and wood− flowers. Birds flew about in the pines, squirrels chattered in the oaks, butterflies floated here and there, and from the pond near by came the croak of frogs sunning their green backs on the mossy stones.

"I wonder if the shoes will let me stop and rest; it is so cool here, and I'm so tired," said Kitty, as she came to a cosey nook at the foot of a tree.

The words were hardly out of her mouth when her feet folded under her, and there she sat on a cushion of moss, like the queen of the wood on her throne. Something lighted with a bump close by her; and looking down she saw a large black cricket with a stiff tail, staring at her curiously.

"Bless my heart! I thought you were some relation of my cousin Grasshopper's. You came down the hill with long leaps just like him; so I stopped to say, How d' ye do," said the cricket, in its creaky voice.

"I'm not a grasshopper; but I have on fairy shoes to−day, and so do many things that I never did before," answered Kitty, much surprised to be able to understand what the cricket said.

"It is midsummer day, and fairies can play whatever pranks they like. If you didn't have those shoes on, you couldn't understand what I say. Hark, and hear those squirrels talk, and the birds, and the ants down here. Make the most of this chance; for at sunset your shoes will stop skipping, and the fun all be over."

While the cricket talked Kitty did hear all sorts of little voices, singing, laughing, chatting in the gayest way, and understood every word they said. The squirrels called to one another as they raced about,—

"Here's a nut, there's a nut;
Hide it quick away,
In a hole, under leaves,
To eat some winter day.
Acorns sweet are plenty,
We will have them all:
Skip and scamper lively
Till the last ones fall."

The birds were singing softly,—

"Rock a bye, babies,
Your cradle hangs high;
Soft down your pillow,
Your curtain the sky.
Father will feed you,
While mother will sing,
And shelter our darlings
With her warm wing."

And the ants were saying to one another as they hurried in and out of their little houses,—

"Work, neighbor, work!
Do not stop to play;
Wander far and wide,
Gather all you may.
We are never like
Idle butterflies,
But like the busy bees,
Industrious and wise."

"Ants always were dreadfully good, but butterflies are ever so much prettier," said Kitty, listening to the little voices with wonder and pleasure.

"Hello! hello!
Come down below,—
It's lovely and cool
Out here in the pool;
On a lily−pad float
For a nice green boat.
Here we sit and sing
In a pleasant ring;
Or leap frog play,
In the jolliest way.
Our games have begun,

Come join in the fun."

"Dear me! what could I do over there in the mud with the queer green frogs?" laughed Kitty, as this song was croaked at her.

"No, no, come and fly
Through the sunny sky,
Or honey sip
From the rose's lip,
Or dance in the air,
Like spirits fair.
Come away, come away;
'Tis our holiday."

A cloud of lovely yellow butterflies flew up from a wild−rose bush, and went dancing away higher and higher, till they vanished in the light beyond the wood.

"That is better than leap−frog. I wish my skipping shoes would let me fly up somewhere, instead of carrying me on errands and where I ought to go all the time," said Kitty, watching the pretty things glitter as they flew.

Just at that minute a clock struck, and away went the shoes over the pool, the hill, the road, till they pranced in at the gate as the tea−bell rang. Kitty amused the family by telling what she had done and seen; but no one believed the Fairyland part, and her father said, laughing,—

"Go on, my dear, making up little stories, and by and by you may be as famous as Hans Christian Andersen, whose books you like so well."

"The sun will soon set, and then my fun will be over; so I must skip while I can," thought Kitty, and went waltzing round the lawn so prettily that all the family came to see her.

"She dances so well that she shall go to dancing−school," said her mother, pleased with the pretty antics of her little girl.

Kitty was delighted to hear that; for she had longed to go, and went on skipping as hard as she could, that she might learn some of the graceful steps the shoes took before the day was done.

"Come, dear, stop now, and run up to your bath and bed. It has been a long hot day, and you are tired; so get to sleep early, for Nursey wants to go out," said her mother, as the sun went down behind the hills with a last bright glimmer, like the wink of a great sleepy eye.

"Oh, please, a few minutes more," began Kitty, but was off like a flash; for the shoes trotted her upstairs so fast that she ran against old Nursey, and down she went, splashing the water all over the floor, and scolding in such a funny way that it made Kitty laugh so that she could hardly pick her up again.

By the time she was ready to undress the sun was quite gone, and the shoes she took off were common ones again, for midsummer day was over. But Kitty never forgot the little lessons she had learned: she tried to run willingly when spoken to; she remembered the pretty steps and danced like a fairy; and best of all, she always loved the innocent and interesting little creatures in the woods and fields, and whenever she was told she might go to play with them, she hurried away almost as quickly as if she still wore the skipping shoes.

[Illustration: So Cocky was brought in, and petted.]

V. COCKYLOO.

In the barnyard a gray hen sat on her nest, feeling very happy because it was time for her eggs to hatch, and she hoped to have a fine brood of chickens. Presently crack, crack, went the shells, “Peep, peep!” cried the chicks; “Cluck, cluck!” called the hen; and out came ten downy little things one after the other, all ready to run and eat and scratch,—for chickens are not like babies, and don't have to be tended at all.

There were eight little hens and two little cockerels, one black and one as white as snow, with yellow legs, bright eyes, and a tiny red comb on his head. This was Cockyloo, the good chick; but the black one was named Peck, and was a quarrelsome bad fowl, as we shall see.

Mrs. Partlet, the mamma, was very proud of her fine family; for the eight little daughters were all white and very pretty. She led them out into the farmyard, clucking and scratching busily; for all were hungry, and ran chirping round her to pick up the worms and seeds she found for them. Cocky soon began to help take care of his sisters; and when a nice corn or a fat bug was found, he would step back and let little Downy or Snowball have it. But Peck would run and push them away, and gobble up the food greedily. He chased them away from the pan where the meal was, and picked the down off their necks if they tried to get their share. His mother scolded him when the little ones ran to hide under her wings; but he didn't care, and was very naughty. Cocky began to crow when he was very young, and had such a fine voice that people liked to hear his loud, clear “Cock−a−doodle−doo!” early in the morning; for he woke before the sun was up, and began his song. Peck used to grumble at being roused at dawn, for he was lazy; but the hens bustled up, and were glad to get out of the hen−house.

The father cock had been killed by a dog; so they made Cocky king of the farmyard, and Peck was very jealous of him.

“I came out of the shell first, and I am the oldest; so I ought to be king,” he said.

“But we don't like you, because you are selfish, cross, and lazy. We want Cocky; he is so lively, kind, and brave. He will make a splendid bird, and *he* must be our king,” answered the hens; and Peck had to mind, or they would have pulled every feather out of his little tail.

He resolved to do some harm to his good brother, and plagued him all he could. One day, when Cocky was swinging with three of his sisters on a bush that hung over the brook, Peck asked a stupid donkey feeding near to come and put his heavy foot on the bush. He did it, and crack went the branch, splash went the poor chicks into the water, and all were drowned but Cocky, who flew across and was saved. Poor little Hop, Chirp, and Downy went floating down the brook like balls of white foam, and were never seen again. All the hens mourned for them, and put a black feather in their heads to show how sorry they were. Mamma Partlet was heart−broken to lose three darlings at once; but Cocky comforted her, and never told how it happened, because he was ashamed to have people know what a bad bird Peck was.

A butterfly saw it all, and he told Granny Cockletop about it; and the hens were so angry that they turned Peck out of the barnyard, and he had to go and live in the woods alone. He said he didn't care; but he did, and was very unhappy, and used to go and peep into the pleasant field where the fowls scratched and talked together. He dared not show himself, for they would have driven him out. But kind Cocky saw him, and would run with some nice bit and creep through the fence into the wood, saying,—“Poor brother, I'm sorry for you, and I'll come and play with you, and tell you the news.”

Now in this wood lived a fox, and he had been planning to eat Peck as soon as he was fat; for he missed the good corn and meal he used to have, and grew very thin living on grasshoppers and berries. While he waited the sly fellow made friends with Peck, though the bird knew that foxes ate hens.

“I'm not afraid, and I don't believe old Granny Cockletop's tales. I can take care of myself, I guess,” he said, and went on playing with the fox, who got him to tell all about the hen−house,—how the door was fastened, and where the plump chickens roosted, and what time they went to bed,—so that he could creep in and steal a good supper by and by. Silly Peck never guessed what harm he was doing, and only laughed when Cocky said,—

“You will be sorry if you play with the fox. He is a bad fellow; so be careful and sleep on a high branch, and keep out of his way, as I do.”

Cocky was fat and large, and the fox longed to eat him, but never could, because he wisely ran home whenever he saw the rogue hiding in the wood. This made Peck angry, for he wanted his brother to stay and play; and so one day, when Cocky ran off in the midst of a nice game, Peck said to the fox,—

"See here, if you want to catch that fellow, I'll tell you how to do it. He has promised to bring me some food to−night, when all the rest are at roost. He will hide and not get shut up; then, when those cross old biddies are asleep, he will cluck softly, and I am to go in and eat all I want out of the pan. You hide on the top of the hen−house; and while he talks to me, you can pounce on him. Then I shall be the only cock here, and they will have to make me king."

"All right," said the fox, much pleased with the plan, and very glad that Peck had a chance to get fatter.

So when it was night, Peck crept through the broken paling and waited till he heard the signal. Now, good Cocky had saved up nice bits from his own dinner, and put them in a paper hidden under a bush. He spread them all out in the barnyard and called; and Peck came in a great hurry to eat them, never stopping to say, "Thank you."

Cocky stood by talking pleasantly till a little shower came up.

"Peck, dear, put this nice thick paper over you; then you will be dry, and can go on eating. I'll step under that burdock leaf and wait till you are done," said Cocky; and Peck was too busy gobbling up the food to remember anything else.

Now the fox had just crept up on the hen−house roof; and when he peeped down, there was just light enough to see a white thing bobbing about.

"Ah, ha! that's Cockyloo; now for a good supper!" And with a jump he seized Peck by the head before he could explain the mistake.

One squawk, and the naughty bird was dead; but though the paper fell off, and the fox saw what he had done, it was too late, and he began to eat Peck up, while Cocky flew into a tree and crowed so loud that the farmer ran with his gun and shot the fox before he could squeeze through the hole in the fence with the fowl in his mouth.

After that the hens felt safe, for there were no more foxes; and when they heard about Peck they did not mourn at all, but liked Cocky better than ever, and lived happily together, with nothing to trouble them.

King Cockyloo grew to be a splendid bird,—pure white, with a tall red comb on his head, long spurs on his yellow legs, many fine feathers in his tail, and eyes that shone like diamonds. His crow was so loud that it could be heard all over the neighborhood, and people used to say, "Hark! hear Farmer Hunt's cock crow. Isn't it a sweet sound to wake us in the dawn?" All the other cocks used to answer him, and there was a fine matinee concert every day.

He was a good brother, and led his five little sisters all about the field, feeding, guarding, and amusing them; for mamma was lame now, and could not stir far from the yard. It was a pretty sight to see Cocky run home with a worm in his bill or a nice berry, and give it to his mother, who was very proud of her handsome son. Even old Granny Cockletop, who scolded about everything, liked him; and often said, as the hens sat scuffling in the dust,—

"A fine bird, my dears, a very fine bird, and I know he will do something remarkable before he dies."

She was right for once; and this is what he did.

One day the farmer had to go away and stay all night, leaving the old lady alone with two boys. They were not afraid; for they had a gun, and quite longed for a chance to fire it. Now it happened that the farmer had a good deal of money in the house, and some bad men knew it; so they waited for him to go away that they might steal it. Cocky was picking about in the field when he heard voices behind the wall, and peeping through a hole saw two shabby men hiding there.

"At twelve, to−night, when all are asleep, we will creep in at the kitchen window and steal the money. You shall watch on the outside and whistle if any one comes along while I'm looking for the box where the farmer keeps it," said one man.

"You needn't be afraid; there is no dog, and no one to wake the family, so we are quite safe," said the other man; and then they both went to sleep till night came.

Cocky was much troubled, and didn't know what to do. He could not tell the old lady about it; for he could only cackle and crow, and she would not understand that language. So he went about all day looking very sober, and would not chase grasshoppers, play hide−and−seek under the big burdock leaves, or hunt the cricket with his sisters. At sunset he did not go into the hen−house with the rest, but flew up to the shed roof over the kitchen, and

sat there in the cold ready to scare the robbers with a loud crow, as he could do nothing else.

At midnight the men came creeping along; one stopped outside, and the other went in. Presently he handed a basket of silver out, and went back for the money. Just as he came creeping along with the box, Cocky gave a loud, long crow, that frightened the robbers and woke the boys. The man with the basket ran away in such a hurry that he tumbled into a well; the other was going to get out of the window, when Cocky flew down and picked at his eyes and flapped his wings in his face, so that he turned to run some other way, and met the boys, who fired at him and shot him in the legs. The old lady popped her head out of the upper window and rang the dinner−bell, and called "Fire! fire!" so loud that it roused the neighbors, who came running to see what the trouble could be.

They fished one man out of the well and picked up the wounded one, and carried them both off to prison.

"Who caught them?" asked the people.

"We did," cried the boys, very proud of what they had done; "but we shouldn't have waked if our good Cocky had not crowed, and scared the rascals. He deserves half the praise, for this is the second time he has caught a thief."

So Cocky was brought in, and petted, and called a fine fellow; and his family were so proud of him they clucked about it for weeks afterward.

When the robbers were tried, it was found that they were the men who had robbed the bank, and taken a great deal of money; so every one was glad to have them shut up for twenty years. It made a great stir, and people would go to see Cocky and tell how he helped catch the men; and he was so brave and handsome, they said at last,—

"We want a new weather−cock on our court−house, and instead of an arrow let us have a cock; and he shall look like this fine fellow."

"Yes, yes," cried the young folks, much pleased; for they thought Cocky ought to be remembered in some way.

So a picture was taken, and Cocky stood very still, with his bright eye on the man; then one like it was made of brass, and put high up on the court− house, where all could see the splendid bird shining like gold, and twirling about to tell which way the wind was. The children were never tired of admiring him; and all the hens and chickens went in a procession one moonlight night to see it,—yes, even Mamma Partlet and Granny Cockletop, though one was lame and the other very old, so full of pride were they in the great honor done King Cockyloo.

This was not the end of his good deeds; and the last was the best of all, though it cost him his life. He ruled for some years, and kept his kingdom in good order; for no one would kill him, when many of the other fowls were taken for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. But he did die at last; and even then he was good and brave, as you shall hear.

One of the boys wanted to smoke a pipe, and went behind the hen−house, so nobody should see him do such a silly thing. He thought he heard his father coming, and hid the pipe under the house. Some straw and dry leaves lay about, and took fire, setting the place in a blaze; for the boy ran away when he saw the mischief he had done, and the fire got to burning nicely before the cries of the poor hens called people to help. The door was locked, and could not be opened, because the key was in the pocket of the naughty boy; so the farmer got an axe and chopped down the wall, letting the poor biddies fly out, squawking and smoking.

"Where is Cocky?" cried the other boy, as he counted the hens and missed the king of the farmyard.

"Burnt up, I'm afraid," said the farmer, who was throwing water on the flames.

Alas! yes, he was: for when the fire was out they found good old Cocky sitting on a nest, with his wide wings spread over some little chicks whose mother had left them. They were too small to run away, and sat chirping sadly till Cocky covered and kept them safe, though the smoke choked *him* to death.

Every one was very sorry; and the children gave the good bird a fine funeral, and buried him in the middle of the field, with a green mound over him, and a white stone, on which was written,—

Here lies the bravest cock that ever crew:
We mourn for him with sorrow true.
Now nevermore at dawn his music shall we hear,
Waking the world like trumpet shrill and clear.
The hens all hang their heads, the chickens sadly peep;
The boys look sober, and the girls all weep.

Good−by, dear Cocky: sleep and rest,
With grass and daisies on your faithful breast;
And when you wake, brave bird, so good and true,
Clap your white wings and crow, “Cock−a−doodle−doo.”

[Illustration: The lion walked awhile to rest himself.]

VI. ROSY'S JOURNEY.

Rosy was a nice little girl who lived with her mother in a small house in the woods. They were very poor, for the father had gone away to dig gold, and did not come back; so they had to work hard to get food to eat and clothes to wear. The mother spun yarn when she was able, for she was often sick, and Rosy did all she could to help. She milked the red cow and fed the hens; dug the garden, and went to town to sell the yarn and the eggs.

She was very good and sweet, and every one loved her; but the neighbors were all poor, and could do little to help the child. So, when at last the mother died, the cow and hens and house had to be sold to pay the doctor and the debts. Then Rosy was left all alone, with no mother, no home, and no money to buy clothes and dinners with.

“What will you do?” said the people, who were very sorry for her.

“I will go and find my father,” answered Rosy, bravely.

“But he is far away, and you don't know just where he is, up among the mountains. Stay with us and spin on your little wheel, and we will buy the yarn, and take care of you, dear little girl,” said the kind people.

“No, I must go; for mother told me to, and my father will be glad to have me. I'm not afraid, for every one is good to me,” said Rosy, gratefully.

Then the people gave her a warm red cloak, and a basket with a little loaf and bottle of milk in it, and some pennies to buy more to eat when the bread was gone. They all kissed her, and wished her good luck; and she trotted away through the wood to find her father.

For some days she got on very well; for the wood−cutters were kind, and let her sleep in their huts, and gave her things to eat. But by and by she came to lonely places, where there were no houses; and then she was afraid, and used to climb up in the trees to sleep, and had to eat berries and leaves, like the Children in the Wood.

She made a fire at night, so wild beasts would not come near her; and if she met other travellers, she was so young and innocent no one had the heart to hurt her. She was kind to everything she met; so all little creatures were friends to her, as we shall see.

One day, as she was resting by a river, she saw a tiny fish on the bank, nearly dead for want of water.

“Poor thing! go and be happy again,” she said, softly taking him up, and dropping him into the nice cool river.

“Thank you, dear child; I'll not forget, but will help you some day,” said the fish, when he had taken a good drink, and felt better.

“Why, how can a tiny fish help such a great girl as I am?” laughed Rosy.

“Wait and see,” answered the fish, as he swam away with a flap of his little tail.

Rosy went on her way, and forgot all about it. But she never forgot to be kind; and soon after, as she was looking in the grass for strawberries, she found a field−mouse with a broken leg.

“Help me to my nest, or my babies will starve,” cried the poor thing.

“Yes, I will; and bring these berries so that you can keep still till your leg is better, and have something to eat.”

Rosy took the mouse carefully in her little hand, and tied up the broken leg with a leaf of spearmint and a blade of grass. Then she carried her to the nest under the roots of an old tree, where four baby mice were squeaking sadly for their mother. She made a bed of thistledown for the sick mouse, and put close within reach all the berries and seeds she could find, and brought an acorn−cup of water from the spring, so they could be comfortable.

“Good little Rosy, I shall pay you for all this kindness some day,” said the mouse, when she was done.

“I'm afraid you are not big enough to do much,” answered Rosy, as she ran off to go on her journey.

“Wait and see,” called the mouse; and all the little ones squeaked, as if they said the same.

Some time after, as Rosy lay up in a tree, waiting for the sun to rise, she heard a great buzzing close by, and saw a fly caught in a cobweb that went from one twig to another. The big spider was trying to spin him all up, and the poor fly was struggling to get away before his legs and wings were helpless.

Rosy put up her finger and pulled down the web, and the spider ran away at once to hide under the leaves. But the happy fly sat on Rosy's hand, cleaning his wings, and buzzing so loud for joy that it sounded like a little trumpet.

"You've saved my life, and I'll save yours, if I can," said the fly, twinkling his bright eye at Rosy.

"You silly thing, you can't help me," answered Rosy, climbing down, while the fly buzzed away, saying, like the mouse and fish,—

"Wait and see; wait and see."

Rosy trudged on and on, till at last she came to the sea. The mountains were on the other side; but how should she get over the wide water? No ships were there, and she had no money to hire one if there had been any; so she sat on the shore, very tired and sad, and cried a few big tears as salt as the sea.

"Hullo!" called a bubbly sort of voice close by; and the fish popped up his head. Rosy ran to see what he wanted.

"I've come to help you over the water," said the fish.

"How can you, when I want a ship, and some one to show me the way?" answered Rosy.

"I shall just call my friend the whale, and he will take you over better than a ship, because he won't get wrecked. Don't mind if he spouts and flounces about a good deal, he is only playing; so you needn't be frightened."

Down dived the little fish, and Rosy waited to see what would happen; for she didn't believe such a tiny thing could really bring a whale to help her.

Presently what looked like a small island came floating through the sea; and turning round, so that its tail touched the shore, the whale said, in a roaring voice that made her jump,—

"Come aboard, little girl, and hold on tight. I'll carry you wherever you like."

It was rather a slippery bridge, and Rosy was rather scared at this big, strange boat; but she got safely over, and held on fast; then, with a roll and a plunge, off went the whale, spouting two fountains, while his tail steered him like the rudder of a ship.

Rosy liked it, and looked down into the deep sea, where all sorts of queer and lovely things were to be seen. Great fishes came and looked at her; dolphins played near to amuse her; the pretty nautilus sailed by in its transparent boat; and porpoises made her laugh with their rough play. Mermaids brought her pearls and red coral to wear, sea−apples to eat, and at night sung her to sleep with their sweet lullabies.

So she had a very pleasant voyage, and ran on shore with many thanks to the good whale, who gave a splendid spout, and swam away.

Then Rosy travelled along till she came to a desert. Hundreds of miles of hot sand, with no trees or brooks or houses.

"I never can go that way," she said; "I should starve, and soon be worn out walking in that hot sand. What *shall* I do?"

"Quee, quee!
Wait and see:
You were good to me;
So here I come,
From my little home,
To help you willingly,"

said a friendly voice; and there was the mouse, looking at her with its bright eyes full of gratitude.

"Why, you dear little thing, I'm very glad to see you; but I'm sure you can't help me across this desert," said Rosy, stroking its soft back.

"That's easy enough," answered the mouse, rubbing its paws briskly. "I'll just call my friend the lion; he lives here, and he'll take you across with pleasure."

"Oh, I'm afraid he'd rather eat me. How dare you call that fierce beast?" cried Rosy, much surprised.

"I gnawed him out of a net once, and he promised to help me. He is a noble animal, and he will keep his word."

Then the mouse sang, in its shrill little voice,—

"O lion, grand,
Come over the sand,
And help me now, I pray!
Here's a little lass,

Who wants to pass;
Please carry her on her way."

In a moment a loud roar was heard, and a splendid yellow lion, with fiery eyes and a long mane, came bounding over the sand to meet them.

"What can I do for you, tiny friend?" he said, looking at the mouse, who was not a bit frightened, though Rosy hid behind a rock, expecting every moment to be eaten.

Mousie told him, and the good lion said pleasantly,—

"I'll take the child along. Come on, my dear; sit on my back and hold fast to my mane, for I'm a swift horse, and you might fall off."

Then he crouched down like a great cat, and Rosy climbed up, for he was so kind she could not fear him; and away they went, racing over the sand till her hair whistled in the wind. As soon as she got her breath, she thought it great fun to go flying along, while other lions and tigers rolled their fierce eyes at her, but dared not touch her; for this lion was king of all, and she was quite safe. They met a train of camels with loads on their backs; and the people travelling with them wondered what queer thing was riding that fine lion. It looked like a very large monkey in a red cloak, but went so fast they never saw that it was a little girl.

"How glad I am that I was kind to the mouse; for if the good little creature had not helped me, I never could have crossed this desert," said Rosy, as the lion walked awhile to rest himself.

"And if the mouse had not gnawed me out of the net I never should have come at her call. You see, little people can conquer big ones, and make them gentle and friendly by kindness," answered the lion.

Then away they went again, faster than ever, till they came to the green country. Rosy thanked the good beast, and he ran back, for if any one saw him, they would try to catch him.

"Now I have only to climb up these mountains and find father," thought Rosy, as she saw the great hills before her, with many steep roads winding up to the top, and far, far away rose the smoke from the huts where the men lived and dug for gold. She started off bravely, but took the wrong road, and after climbing a long while found the path ended in rocks over which she could not go. She was very tired and hungry; for her food was gone, and there were no houses in this wild place. Night was coming on, and it was so cold she was afraid she would freeze before morning, but dared not go on lest she should fall down some steep hole and be killed. Much discouraged, she lay down on the moss and cried a little; then she tried to sleep, but something kept buzzing in her ear, and looking carefully she saw a fly prancing about on the moss, as if anxious to make her listen to his song,—

"Rosy, my dear,
Don't cry,—I'm here
To help you all I can.
I'm only a fly,
But you'll see that I
Will keep my word like a man."

Rosy couldn't help laughing to hear the brisk little fellow talk as if he could do great things; but she was very glad to see him and hear his cheerful song, so she held out her finger, and while he sat there told him all her troubles.

"Bless your heart! my friend the eagle will carry you right up the mountains and leave you at your father's door," cried the fly; and he was off with a flirt of his gauzy wings, for he meant what he said.

Rosy was ready for her new horse, and not at all afraid after the whale and the lion; so when a great eagle swooped down and alighted near her, she just looked at his sharp claws, big eyes, and crooked beak as coolly as if he had been a cock−robin.

He liked her courage, and said kindly in his rough voice,—

"Hop up, little girl, and sit among my feathers. Hold me fast round the neck, or you may grow dizzy and get a fall."

Rosy nestled down among the thick gray feathers, and put both arms round his neck; and whiz they went, up, up, up, higher and higher, till the trees looked like grass, they were so far below. At first it was very cold, and Rosy cuddled deeper into her feather bed; then, as they came nearer to the sun, it grew warm, and she peeped out to see the huts standing in a green spot on the top of the mountain.

"Here we are. You'll find all the men are down in the mine at this time. They won't come up till morning; so

you will have to wait for your father. Good−by; good luck, my dear.” And the eagle soared away, higher still, to his nest among the clouds.

It was night now, but fires were burning in all the houses; so Rosy went from hut to hut trying to find her father's, that she might rest while she waited: at last in one the picture of a pretty little girl hung on the wall, and under it was written, “My Rosy.” Then she knew that this was the right place; and she ate some supper, put on more wood, and went to bed, for she wanted to be fresh when her father came in the morning.

While she slept a storm came on,—thunder rolled and lightning flashed, the wind blew a gale, and rain poured,—but Rosy never waked till dawn, when she heard men shouting outside,—

“Run, run! The river is rising! We shall all be drowned!”

Rosy ran out to see what was the matter, though the wind nearly blew her away; she found that so much rain had made the river overflow till it began to wash the banks away.

“What shall I do? what shall I do?” cried Rosy, watching the men rush about like ants, getting their bags of gold ready to carry off before the water swept them away, if it became a flood.

As if in answer to her cry, Rosy heard a voice say close by,—

“Splash, dash!
Rumble and crash!
Here come the beavers gay;
See what they do,
Rosy, for you,
Because you helped *me* one day.”

And there in the water was the little fish swimming about, while an army of beavers began to pile up earth and stones in a high bank to keep the river back. How they worked, digging and heaping with teeth and claws, and beating the earth hard with their queer tails like shovels! Rosy and the men watched them work, glad to be safe, while the storm cleared up; and by the time the dam was made, all danger was over. Rosy looked into the faces of the rough men, hoping her father was there, and was just going to ask about him, when a great shouting rose again, and all began to run to the pit hole, saying,—

“The sand has fallen in! The poor fellows will be smothered! How can we get them out? how can we get them out?”

Rosy ran too, feeling as if her heart would break; for her father was down in the mine, and would die soon if air did not come to him. The men dug as hard as they could; but it was a long job, and they feared they would not be in time.

Suddenly hundreds of moles came scampering along, and began to burrow down through the earth, making many holes for air to go in; for they know how to build galleries through the ground better than men can. Every one was so surprised they stopped to look on; for the dirt flew like rain as the busy little fellows scratched and bored as if making an underground railway.

“What does it mean?” said the men. “They work faster than we can, and better; but who sent them? Is this strange little girl a fairy?”

Before Rosy could speak, all heard a shrill, small voice singing,—

“They come at my call;
And though they are small,
They'll dig the passage clear:
I never forget;
We'll save them yet,
For love of Rosy dear.”

Then all saw a little gray mouse sitting on a stone, waving her tail about, and pointing with her tiny paw to show the moles where to dig.

The men laughed; and Rosy was telling them who she was, when a cry came from the pit, and they saw that the way was clear so they could pull the buried men up. In a minute they got ropes, and soon had ten poor fellows safe on the ground; pale and dirty, but all alive, and all shouting as if they were crazy,—

“Tom's got it! Tom's got it! Hooray for Tom!”

“What is it?” cried the others; and then they saw Tom come up with the biggest lump of gold ever found in the

mountains.

Every one was glad of Tom's luck; for he was a good man, and had worked a long time, and been sick, and couldn't go back to his wife and child. When he saw Rosy, he dropped the lump, and caught her up, saying,—

"My little girl! she's better than a million pounds of gold."

Then Rosy was very happy, and went back to the hut, and had a lovely time telling her father all about her troubles and her travels. He cried when he heard that the poor mother was dead before she could have any of the good things the gold would buy them.

"We will go away and be happy together in the pleasantest home I can find, and never part any more, my darling," said the father, kissing Rosy as she sat on his knee with her arms round his neck.

She was just going to say something very sweet to comfort him, when a fly lit on her arm and buzzed very loud,—

"Don't drive me away,
But hear what I say:
Bad men want the gold;
They will steal it to−night,
And you must take flight;
So be quiet and busy and bold."

"I was afraid some one would take my lump away. I'll pack up at once, and we will creep off while the men are busy at work; though I'm afraid we can't go fast enough to be safe, if they miss us and come after," said Tom, bundling his gold into a bag and looking very sober; for some of the miners were wild fellows, and might kill him for the sake of that great lump.

But the fly sang again,—

"Slip away with me,
And you will see
What a wise little thing am I;
For the road I show
No man can know,
Since it's up in the pathless sky."

Then they followed Buzz to a quiet nook in the wood; and there were the eagle and his mate waiting to fly away with them so fast and so far that no one could follow. Rosy and the bag of gold were put on the mother eagle; Tom sat astride the king bird; and away they flew to a great city, where the little girl and her father lived happily together all their lives.

[Illustration: Poor Billy dangling from a bough, high above the ground.]

VII. HOW THEY RAN AWAY.

Two little boys sat on the fence whittling arrows one fine day. Said one little boy to the other little boy,—

"Let's do something jolly."

"All right. What will we do?"

"Run off to the woods and be hunters."

"What can we hunt?"

"Bears and foxes"

"Mullin says there ain't any round here."

"Well, we can shoot squirrels and snare wood−chucks."

"Haven't got any guns and trap."

"We've got our bows, and I found an old trap behind the barn."

"What will we eat?"

"Here's our lunch; and when that's gone we can roast the squirrels and cook the fish on a stick. I know how."

"Where will you get the fire?"

"Got matches in my pocket."

"I've got a lot of things we could use. Let's see."

And as if satisfied at last, cautious Billy displayed his treasures, while bold Tommy did the same.

Besides the two knives there were strings, nails, matches, a piece of putty, fish−hooks, and two very dirty handkerchiefs.

"There, sir, that's a first−rate fit−out for hunters; and with the jolly basket of lunch Mrs. Mullin gave us, we can get on tip−top for two or three days," said Tommy, eager to be off.

"Where shall we sleep?" asked Billy, who liked to be comfortable both night and day.

"Oh, up in trees or on beds of leaves, like the fellows in our books. If you are afraid, stay at home; I'm going to have no end of a good time." And Tommy crammed the things back into his pockets as if there were no time to lose.

"Pooh! I ain't afraid. Come on!" And jumping down Billy caught up his rod, rather ashamed of his many questions.

No one was looking at them, and they might have walked quietly off; but that the "running away" might be all right, both raced down the road, tumbled over a wall, and dashed into the woods as if a whole tribe of wild Indians were after them.

"Do you know the way?" panted Billy, when at last they stopped for breath.

"Yes, it winds right up the mountain; but we'd better not keep to it, or some one will see us and take us back. We are going to be *real* hunters and have adventures; so we must get lost, and find our way by the sun and the stars," answered Tommy, who had read so many Boys' Books his little head was a jumble of Texan Rangers, African Explorers, and Buffalo Bills; and he burned to outdo them all.

"What will our mothers say if we really get lost?" asked Billy, always ready with a question.

"Mine won't fuss. She lets me do what I like."

That was true; for Tommy's poor mamma was tired of trying to keep the lively little fellow in order, and had got used to seeing him come out of all his scrapes without much harm.

"Mine will be scared; she's always afraid I'm going to get hurt, so I'm careful. But I guess I'll risk it, and have some fun to tell about when we go home," said Billy, trudging after Captain Tommy, who always took the lead.

These eleven−year−old boys were staying with their mothers at a farm−house up among the mountains; and having got tired of the tame bears, the big barn, the trout brook, the thirty colts at pasture, and the society of the few little girls and younger boys at the hotel near by, these fine fellows longed to break loose and "rough it in the bush," as the hunters did in their favorite stories.

Away they went, deeper and deeper into the great forest that covered the side of the mountain. A pleasant place that August day; for it was cool and green, with many brooks splashing over the rocks, or lying in brown pools under the ferns. Squirrels chattered and raced in the tall pines; now and then a gray rabbit skipped out of

sight among the brakes, or a strange bird flew by. Here and there blackberries grew in the open places, sassafras bushes were plentiful, and black−birch bark was ready for chewing.

“Don't you call this nice?” asked Tommy, pausing at last in a little dell where a noisy brook came tumbling down the mountain side, and the pines sung overhead.

“Yes; but I'm awful hungry. Let's rest and eat our lunch,” said Billy, sitting down on a cushion of moss.

“You always want to be stuffing and resting,” answered sturdy Tommy, who liked to be moving all the time.

He took the fishing−basket, which hung over his shoulder by a strap, and opened it carefully; for good Mrs. Mullin had packed a nice lunch of bread and butter, cake and peaches, with a bottle of milk, and two large pickles slipped in on the sly to please the boys.

Tommy's face grew very sober as he looked in, for all he saw was a box of worms for bait and an old jacket.

“By George! we've got the wrong basket. This is Mullin's, and he's gone off with our prog. Won't he be mad?”

“Not as mad as I am. Why didn't you look? You are always in such a hurry to start. What *shall* we do now without anything to eat?” whined Billy; for losing his lunch was a dreadful blow to him.

“We shall have to catch some fish and eat blackberries. Which will you do, old cry−baby?” said Tommy, laughing at the other boy's dismal face.

“I'll fish; I'm so tired I can't go scratching round after berries. I don't love 'em, either.” And Billy began to fix his line and bait his hook.

“Lucky we got the worms; you can eat 'em if you can't wait for fish,” said Tommy, bustling about to empty the basket and pile up their few possessions in a heap. “There's a quiet pool below here, you go and fish there. I'll pick the berries, and then show you how to get dinner in the woods. This is our camp; so fly round and do your best.”

Then Tommy ran off to a place near by where he had seen the berries, while Billy found a comfortable nook by the pool, and sat scowling at the water so crossly, it was a wonder any trout came to his hook. But the fat worms tempted several small ones, and he cheered up at the prospect of food. Tommy whistled while he picked, and in half an hour came back with two quarts of nice berries and an armful of dry sticks for the fire.

“We'll have a jolly dinner, after all,” he said, as the flames went crackling up, and the dry leaves made a pleasant smell.

“Got four, but don't see how we'll ever cook 'em; no frying−pan,” grumbled Billy, throwing down the four little trout, which he had half cleaned.

“Don't want any. Broil 'em on the coals, or toast 'em on a forked stick. I'll show you how,” said cheerful Tommy, whittling away, and feeding his fire as much like a real hunter as a small boy could be.

While he worked, Billy ate berries and sighed for bread and butter. At last, after much trouble, two of the trout were half cooked and eagerly eaten by the hungry boys. But they were very different from the nice brown ones Mrs. Mullin gave them; for in spite of Tommy's struggles they would fall in the ashes, and there was no salt to eat with them. By the time the last were toasted, the young hunters were so hungry they could have eaten anything, and not a berry was left.

“I set the trap down there, for I saw a hole among the vines, and I shouldn't wonder if we got a rabbit or something,” said Tommy, when the last bone was polished. “You go and catch some more fish, and I'll see if I have caught any old chap as he went home to dinner.”

Off ran Tommy; and the other boy went slowly back to the brook, wishing with all his might he was at home eating sweet corn and berry pie.

The trout had evidently gone to their dinners, for not one bite did poor Billy get; and he was just falling asleep when a loud shout gave him such a fright that he tumbled into the brook up to his knees.

“I've got him! Come and see! He's a bouncer,” roared Tommy, from the berry bushes some way off.

Billy scrambled out, and went as fast as his wet boots would let him, to see what the prize was. He found Tommy dancing wildly round a fat gray animal, who was fighting to get his paws out of the trap, and making a queer noise as he struggled about.

“What is it?” asked Billy, getting behind a tree as fast as possible, for the thing looked fierce, and he was very timid.

“A raccoon, I guess, or a big woodchuck. Won't his fur make a fine cap? I guess the other fellows will wish they'd come with us.” said Tommy, prancing to and fro, without the least idea what to do with the creature.

“He'll bite. We'd better run away and wait till he's dead,” said Billy.

“Wish he'd got his head in, then I could carry him off; but he does look savage, so we'll have to leave him awhile, and get him when we come back. But he's a real beauty.” And Tommy looked proudly at the bunch of gray fur scuffling in the sand.

“Can we ever eat him?” asked hungry Billy, ready for a fried crocodile if he could get it.

“If he's a raccoon, we can; but I don't know about woodchucks. The fellows in my books don't seem to have caught any. He's nice and fat; we might try him when he's dead,” said Tommy, who cared more for the skin to show than the best meal ever cooked.

The sound of a gun echoing through the wood gave Tommy a good idea,—

“Let's find the man and get him to shoot this chap; then we needn't wait, but skin him right away, and eat him too.”

Off they went to the camp; and catching up their things, the two hunters hurried away in the direction of the sound, feeling glad to know that some one was near them, for two or three hours of wood life made them a little homesick.

They ran and scrambled, and listened and called; but not until they had gone a long way up the mountain did they find the man, resting in an old hut left by the lumbermen. The remains of his dinner were spread on the floor, and he lay smoking, and reading a newspaper, while his dog dozed at his feet, close to a well−filled game−bag.

He looked surprised when two dirty, wet little boys suddenly appeared before him,—one grinning cheerfully, the other looking very dismal and scared as the dog growled and glared at them as if they were two rabbits.

“Hollo!” said the man

“Hollo!” answered Tommy.

“Who are you?” asked the man.

“Hunters,” said Tommy.

“Had good luck?” And the man laughed.

“First−rate. Got a raccoon in our trap, and we want you to come and shoot him,” answered Tommy, proudly.

“Sure?” said the man, looking interested as well as amused.

“No, but I think so.”

“What's he like?”

Tommy described him, and was much disappointed when the man lay down again, saying, with another laugh,—

“It's a woodchuck; he's no good.”

“But I want the skin.”

“Then don't shoot him, let him die; that's better for the skin,” said the man, who was tired and didn't want to stop for such poor game.

All this time Billy had been staring hard at the sandwiches and bread and cheese on the floor, and sniffing at them, as the dog sniffed at him.

“Want some grub?” asked the man, seeing the hungry look.

“I just do! We left our lunch, and I've only had two little trout and some old berries since breakfast,” answered Billy, with tears in his eyes and a hand on his stomach.

“Eat away then; I'm done, and don't want the stuff.” And the man took up his paper as if glad to be let alone.

It was lucky that the dog had been fed, for in ten minutes nothing was left but the napkin; and the boys sat picking up the crumbs, much refreshed, but ready for more.

“Better be going home, my lads; it's pretty cold on the mountain after sunset, and you are a long way from town,” said the man, who had peeped at them over his paper now and then, and saw, in spite of the dirt and rips, that they were not farmer boys.

“We don't live in town; we are at Mullin's, in the valley. No hurry; we know the way, and we want to have some sport first. You seem to have done well,” answered Tommy, looking enviously from the gun to the game−bag, out of which hung a rabbit's head and a squirrel's tail.

“Pretty fair; but I want a shot at the bear. People tell me there is one up here, and I'm after him; for he kills the sheep, and might hurt some of the young folks round here,” said the man, loading his gun with a very sober air; for he wanted to get rid of the boys and send them home.

Billy looked alarmed; but Tommy's brown face beamed with joy as he said eagerly,—

"I hope you'll get him. I'd rather shoot a bear than any other animal but a lion. We don't have those here, and bears are scarce. Mullin said he hadn't heard of one for a long time; so this must be a young one, for they killed the big one two years ago."

That was true, and the man knew it. He did not really expect or want to meet a bear, but thought the idea of one would send the little fellows home at once. Finding one of them was unscared, he laughed, and said with a nod to Tommy,—

"If I had time I'd take *you* along, and show you how to hunt; but this fat friend of yours couldn't rough it with us, and we can't leave him alone; so go ahead your own way. Only I wouldn't climb any higher, for among the rocks you are sure to get hurt or lost."

"Oh, I say, let's go! Such fun, Billy! I know you'll like it. A real gun and dog and hunter! Come on, and don't be a molly−coddle," cried Tommy, wild to go.

"I won't! I'm tired, and I'm going home; you can go after your old bears if you want to. I don't think much of hunting anyway, and wish I hadn't come," growled Billy, very cross at being left out, yet with no desire to scramble any more.

"Can't stop. Good−by. Get along home, and some day I'll come and take you out with me, little Leatherstocking," said the man, striding off with the dear gun and dog and bag, leaving Billy to wonder what he meant by that queer name, and Tommy to console himself with the promise made him.

"Let's go and see how old Chucky gets on," he said good−naturedly, when the man vanished.

"Not till I'm rested. I can get a good nap on this pile of hay; then we'll go home before it's late," answered lazy Billy, settling himself on the rough bed the lumbermen had used.

"I just wish I had a boy with some go in him; you ain't much better than a girl," sighed Tommy, walking off to a pine−tree where some squirrels seemed to be having a party, they chattered and raced up and down at such a rate.

He tried his bow and shot all his arrows many times in vain, for the lively creatures gave him no chance. He had better luck with a brown bird who sat in a bush and was hit full in the breast with the sharpest arrow. The poor thing fluttered and fell, and its blood wet the green leaves as it lay dying on the grass. Tommy was much pleased at first; but as he stood watching its bright eye grow dim and its pretty brown wings stop fluttering, he felt sorry that its happy little life was so cruelly ended, and ashamed that his thoughtless fun had given so much pain.

"I'll never shoot another bird except hawks after chickens, and I won't brag about this one. It was so tame, and trusted me, I was very mean to kill it."

As he thought this, Tommy smoothed the ruffled feathers of the dead thrush, and, making a little grave under the pine, buried it wrapped in green leaves, and left it there where its mate could sing over it, and no rude hands disturb its rest.

"I'll tell mamma and she will understand: but I *won't* tell Billy. He is such a greedy old chap he'll say I ought to have kept the poor bird to eat," thought Tommy, as he went back to the hut, and sat there, restringing his bow, till Billy woke up, much more amiable for his sleep.

They tried to find the woodchuck, but lost their way, and wandered deeper into the great forest till they came to a rocky place and could go no farther. They climbed up and tumbled down, turned back and went round, looked at the sun and knew it was late, chewed sassafras bark and checkerberry leaves for supper, and grew more and more worried and tired as hour after hour went by and they saw no end to woods and rocks. Once or twice they heard the hunter's gun far away, and called and tried to find him.

Tommy scolded Billy for not going with the man, who knew his way and was probably safe in the valley when the last faint shot came up to them. Billy cried, and reproached Tommy for proposing to run away; and both felt very homesick for their mothers and their good safe beds at Farmer Mullin's.

The sun set, and found them in a dreary place full of rocks and blasted trees half−way up the mountain. They were so tired they could hardly walk, and longed to lie down anywhere to sleep; but, remembering the hunter's story of the bear, they were afraid to do it, till Tommy suggested climbing a tree, after making a fire at the foot of it to scare away the bear, lest he climb too and get them.

But, alas! the matches were left in their first camp; so they decided to take turns to sleep and watch, since it was plain that they must spend the night there. Billy went up first, and creeping into a good notch of the bare tree

tried to sleep, while brave Tommy, armed with a big stick, marched to and fro below. Every few minutes a trembling voice would call from above, “Is anything coming?” and an anxious voice would answer from below, “Not yet. Hurry up and go to sleep! I want my turn.”

At last Billy began to snore, and then Tommy felt so lonely he couldn't bear it; so he climbed to a lower branch, and sat nodding and trying to keep watch, till he too fell fast asleep, and the early moon saw the poor boys roosting there like two little owls.

A loud cry, a scrambling overhead, and then a great shaking and howling waked Tommy so suddenly that he lost his wits for a moment and did not know where he was.

“The bear! the bear! don't let him get me! Tommy, Tommy, come and make him let go,” cried Billy, filling the quiet night with dismal howls.

Tommy looked up, expecting to behold a large bear eating his unhappy friend; but the moonlight showed him nothing but poor Billy dangling from a bough, high above the ground, caught by his belt when he fell. He had been dreaming of bears, and rolled off his perch; so there he hung, kicking and wailing, half awake, and so scared it was long before Tommy could make him believe that he was quite safe.

How to get him down was the next question. The branch was not strong enough to bear Tommy, though he climbed up and tried to unhook poor Billy. The belt was firmly twisted at the back, and Billy could not reach to undo it, nor could he get his legs round the branch to pull himself up. There seemed no way but to unbuckle the belt and drop. That he was afraid to try; for the ground was hard, and the fall a high one. Fortunately both belt and buckle were strong; so he hung safely, though very uncomfortably, while Tommy racked his boyish brain to find a way to help him.

Billy had just declared that he should be cut in two very soon if something was not done for him, and Tommy was in despair, when they thought they heard a far−off shout, and both answered it till their throats were nearly split with screaming.

“I seem to see a light moving round down that way,” cried Billy from his hook, pointing toward the valley.

“They are looking for us, but they won't hear us. I'll run and holler louder, and bring 'em up here,” answered Tommy, glad to do anything that would put an end to this dreadful state of things.

“Don't leave me! I may fall and be killed! The bear might come! Don't go! don't go!” wailed Billy, longing to drop, but afraid.

“I won't go far, and I'll come back as quick as I can. You are safe up there. Hold on, and we'll soon get you down,” answered Tommy, rushing away helter−skelter, never minding where he went, and too much excited to care for any damage.

The moon was bright on the blasted trees; but when he came down among the green pines, it grew dark, and he often stumbled and fell. Never minding bumps and bruises, he scrambled over rocks, leaped fallen trunks, floundered through brooks, and climbed down steep places, till, with a reckless jump, he went heels over head into a deep hole, and lay there for a moment stunned by the fall. It was an old bear−trap, long unused, and fortunately well carpeted with dead leaves, or poor Tommy would have broken his bones.

When he came to himself he was so used up that he lay still for some time in a sort of daze, too tired to know or care about anything, only dimly conscious that somebody was lost in a tree or a well, and that, on the whole, running away was not all fun.

By and by the sound of a gun roused him; and remembering poor Billy, he tried to get out of the pit,—for the moon showed him where he was. But it was too deep, and he was too stiff with weariness and the fall to be very nimble. So he shouted, and whistled, and raged about very like a little bear caught in the pit.

It is very difficult to find a lost person on these great mountains, and many wander for hours not far from help, bewildered by the thick woods, the deep ravines, and precipices which shut them in. Some have lost their lives; and as Tommy lay on the leaves used up by his various struggles, he thought of all the stories he had lately heard at the farm, and began to wonder how it would feel to starve to death down there, and to wish poor Billy could come to share his prison, that they might die together, like the Babes in the Wood, or better still the Boy Scouts lost on the prairies in that thrilling story, “Bill Boomerang, the Wild Hunter of the West.”

“I guess mother is worried this time, because I never stayed out all night before, and I never will again without leave. It's rather good fun, though, if they only find me. I ain't afraid, and it isn't very cold. I always wanted to sleep out, and now I'm doing it. Wish poor Billy was safely down and in this good bed with me. Won't he be

scared all alone there? Maybe the belt will break and he get hurt bumping down. Sorry now I left him, he's such a 'fraid−cat. There's the gun again! Guess it's that man after us. Hi! hollo! Here I am! Whoop! Hurrah! Hi! hi! hi!”

Tommy's meditations ended in a series of yells as loud as his shrill little voice could make them, and he thought some one answered. But it must have been an echo, for no one came; and after another rampage round his prison, the poor boy nestled down among the leaves, and went fast asleep because there was nothing else to do.

So there they were, the two young hunters, lost at midnight on the mountain,—one hanging like an apple on the old tree, and the other sound asleep in a bear−pit. Their distracted mothers meantime were weeping and wringing their hands at the farm, while all the men in the neighborhood were out looking for the lost boys. The hunter on his return to the hotel had reported meeting the runaways and his effort to send them home in good season; so people knew where to look, and, led by the man and dog, up the mountain went Mr. Mullin with his troop. It was a mild night, and the moon shone high and clear; so the hunt was, on the whole, rather easy and pleasant at first, and lanterns flashed through the dark forest like fireflies, the lonely cliffs seemed alive with men, and voices echoed in places where usually only the brooks babbled and the hawks screamed. But as time went on, and no sign of the boys appeared, the men grew anxious, and began to fear some serious harm had come to the runaways.

“I can't go home without them little shavers no way, 'specially Tommy,” said Mr. Mullin, as they stopped to rest after a hard climb through the blasted grove. “He's a boy after my own heart, spry as a chipmunk, smart as a young cockerel, and as full of mischief as a monkey. He ain't afraid of anything, and I shouldn't be a mite surprised to find him enjoyin' himself first−rate, and as cool as a coocumber.”

“The fat boy won't take it so easily, I fancy. If it hadn't been for him I'd have kept the lively fellow with me, and shown him how to hunt. Sorry now I didn't take them both home,” said the man with the gun, seeing his mistake too late, as people often do.

“Maybe they've fell down a precipice and got killed, like Moses Warner, when he was lost,” suggested a tall fellow, who had shouted himself hoarse.

“Hush up, and come on! The dog is barkin' yonder, and he may have found 'em,” said the farmer, hurrying toward the place where the hound was baying at something in a tree.

It was poor Billy, hanging there still, half unconscious with weariness and fear. The belt had slipped up under his arms, so he could breathe easily; and there he was, looking like a queer sort of cone on the blasted pine.

“Wal, I never!” exclaimed the farmer, as the tall lad climbed up, and, unhooking Billy, handed him down like a young bird, into the arms held up to catch him.

“He's all right, only scared out of his wits. Come along and look for the other one. I'll warrant he went for help, and may be half−way home by this time,” said the hunter, who didn't take much interest in the fat boy.

Tommy's hat lay on the ground; and showing it to the dog, his master told him to find the boy. The good hound sniffed about, and then set off with his nose to the ground, following the zigzag track Tommy had taken in his hurry. The hunter and several of the men went after him, leaving the farmer with the others to take care of Billy.

Presently the dog came to the bear−pit, and began to bark again.

“He's got him!” cried the men, much relieved; and rushing on soon saw the good beast looking down at a little white object in one corner of the dark hole.

It was Tommy's face in the moonlight, for the rest of him was covered up with leaves. The little round face seemed very quiet; and for a moment the men stood quite still, fearing that the fall might have done the boy some harm. Then the hunter leaped down, and gently touched the brown cheek. It was warm, and a soft snore from the pug nose made the man call out, much relieved,—

“He's all right. Wake up here, little chap; you are wanted at home. Had hunting enough for this time?”

As he spoke, Tommy opened his eyes, gave a stretch, and said, “Hollo, Billy,” as calmly as if in his own bed at home. Then the rustle of the leaves, the moonlight in his face, and the sight of several men staring down at him startled him wide awake.

“Did you shoot the big bear?” he asked, looking up at the hunter with a grin.

“No; but I caught a little one, and here he is,” answered the man, giving Tommy a roll in the leaves, much pleased because he did not whine or make a fuss.

“Got lost, didn't we? Oh, I say, where's Billy? I left him up a tree like a coon, and he wouldn't come down,”

laughed Tommy, kicking off his brown bed−clothes, and quite ready to get up now.

They all laughed with him; and presently, when the story was told, they pulled the boy out of the pit, and went back to join the other wanderer, who was now sitting up eating the bread and butter Mrs. Mullin sent for their very late supper.

The men roared again, as the two boys told their various tribulations; and when they had been refreshed, the party started for home, blowing the tin horns, and firing shot after shot to let the scattered searchers know that the lost children were found. Billy was very quiet, and gladly rode on the various broad backs offered for his use, but Tommy stoutly refused to be carried, and with an occasional “boost” over a very rough place, walked all the way down on his own sturdy legs. He was the hero of the adventure, and was never tired of relating how he caught the woodchuck, cooked the fish, slid down the big rock, and went to bed in the old bear−pit. But in his own little mind he resolved to wait till he was older before he tried to be a hunter; and though he caught several wood−chucks that summer, he never shot another harmless little bird.

[Illustration: A wasp flew out and stung her lips.]

VIII. THE FAIRY BOX.

"I wish I had a magic bracelet like Rosamond's, that would prick me when I was going to do wrong," said little May, as she put down the story she had been reading.

There was no one else in the room, but she heard a sweet voice sing these words close to her ear:—

"Now hark, little May,
If you want to do right,
Under your pillow
Just look every night.
If you have been good
All through the day,
A gift you will find,
Useful or gay;
But if you have been
Cross, selfish, or wild,
A bad thing will come
For the naughty child.
So try, little dear,
And soon you will see
How easy and sweet
To grow good it will be."

May was very much surprised at this, and looked everywhere to see who spoke, but could find no one.

"I guess I dreamed it; but my eyes are wide open, and I can't make up poetry, asleep or awake."

As she said that, some one laughed; and the same voice sang again,—

"Ha, ha, you can't see,
Although I am here;
But listen to what
I say in your ear.
Tell no one of this.
Because, if you do,
My fun will be spoilt,
And so will yours too.
But if you are good,
And patient, and gay,
A real fairy will come
To see little May."

"Oh, how splendid that will be! I'll try hard, and be as good as an angel if I can only get one peep at a live fairy. I always said there were such people, and now I shall know how they look," cried the little girl, so pleased that she danced all about the room, clapping her hands.

Something bright darted out of the window from among the flowers that stood there, and no more songs were heard; so May knew that the elf had gone.

"I've got a fine secret all to myself, and I'll keep it carefully. I wonder what present will come to−night," she said, thinking this a very interesting play.

She was very good all day, and made no fuss about going to bed, though usually she fretted, and wanted to play, and called for water, and plagued poor Nursey in many ways. She got safely into her little nest, and then was in such a hurry to see what was under her pillow that she forgot, and called out crossly,—

"Do hurry and go away. Don't wait to hang up my clothes, you slow old thing! Go, go!"

That hurt Nurse's feelings, and she went away without her good−night kiss. But May didn't care, and felt under her pillow the minute the door was shut. A lamp was always left burning; so she could see the little gold

box she drew out.

"How pretty! I hope there is some candy in it," she said, opening it very carefully.

Oh, dear! what *do* you think happened? A wasp flew out and stung her lips; then both wasp and box vanished, and May was left to cry alone, with a sharp pain in the lips that said the unkind words.

"What a dreadful present! I don't like that spiteful fairy who sends such horrid things," she sobbed.

Then she lay still and thought about it; for she dared not call any one, because nobody must guess the secret. She knew in her own little heart that the cross words hurt Nursey as the sting did her lips, and she felt sorry. At once the smart got better, and by the time she had resolved to ask the good old woman to forgive her, it was all gone.

Next morning she kissed Nursey and begged pardon, and tried hard to be good till tea−time; then she ran to see what nice things they were going to have to eat, though she had often been told not to go into the dining−room. No one was there; and on the table stood a dish of delicious little cakes, all white like snowballs.

"I must have just a taste, and I'll tell mamma afterward," she said; and before she knew it one little cake was eaten all up.

"Nobody will miss it, and I can have another at tea. Now, a lump of sugar and a sip of cream before mamma comes, I so like to pick round."

Having done one wrong thing, May felt like going on; so she nibbled and meddled with all sorts of forbidden things till she heard a step, then she ran away; and by and by, when the bell rang, came in with the rest as prim and proper as if she did not know how to play pranks. No one missed the cake, and her mother gave her another, saying,—

"There, dear, is a nice plummy one for my good child."

May turned red, and wanted to tell what she had done, but was ashamed because there was company; and people thought she blushed like a modest little girl at being praised.

But when she went to bed she was almost afraid to look under the pillow, knowing that she had done wrong. At last she slowly drew out the box, and slowly opened it, expecting something to fly at her. All she saw was a tiny black bag, that began at once to grow larger, till it was big enough to hold her two hands. Then it tied itself tight round her wrists, as if to keep these meddlesome hands out of mischief.

"Well, this is very queer, but not so dreadful as the wasp. I hope no one will see it when I'm asleep. I do wish I'd let those cakes and things alone," sighed May, looking at the black bag, and vainly trying to get her hands free.

She cried herself to sleep, and when she woke the bag was gone. No one had seen it; but she told her mamma about the cake, and promised not to do so any more.

"Now this shall be a *truly* good day, every bit of it," she said, as she skipped away, feeling as light as a feather after she had confessed her little sins.

But, alas! it is so easy to forget and do wrong, that May spoilt her day before dinner by going to the river and playing with the boats, in spite of many orders not to do it. She did not tell of it, and went to a party in the afternoon, where she was so merry she never remembered the naughty thing till she was in bed and opened the fairy box. A little chain appeared, which in a flash grew long and large, and fastened round her ankles as if she were a prisoner. May liked to tumble about, and was much disgusted to be chained in this way; but there was no help for it, so she lay very still and had plenty of time to be sorry.

"It is a good punishment for me, and I deserve it. I won't cry, but I will—I *will* remember." And May said her prayers very soberly, really meaning to keep her word this time.

All the next day she was very careful to keep her lips from cross words, her hands from forbidden things, and her feet from going wrong. Nothing spoilt this day, she watched so well; and when mamma gave the good−night kiss, she said,—

"What shall I give my good little daughter, who has been gentle, obedient, and busy all day?"

"I want a white kitty, with blue eyes, and a pink ribbon on its neck," answered May.

"I'll try and find one. Now go to bed, deary, and happy dreams!" said mamma, with many kisses on the rosy cheeks, and the smile that was a reward.

May was so busy thinking about the kitty and the good day that she forgot the box till she heard a little "Mew, mew!" under her pillow.

"Mercy me! what's that?" And she popped up her head to see.

Out came the box; off flew the lid, and there, on a red cushion, lay a white kit about two inches long. May couldn't believe that it was alive till it jumped out of its nest, stretched itself, and grew all at once just the right size to play with and be pretty. Its eyes were blue, its tail like a white plume, and a sweet pink bow was on its neck. It danced all over the bed, ran up the curtains, hid under the clothes, nipped May's toes, licked her face, patted her nose with its soft paw, and winked at her in such a funny way that she laughed for joy at having such a dear kitty. Presently, as if it knew that bed was the place to lie quiet in, puss cuddled down in a little bunch and purred May to sleep.

"I suppose that darling kit will be gone like all the other things," said May, as she waked up and looked round for her first pretty gift.

No; there was the lovely thing sitting in the sun among the flower−pots, washing her face and getting ready for play. What a fine frolic they had; and how surprised every one was to see just the pussy May wanted! They supposed it came as kitties often come; and May never told them it was a fairy present, because she had promised not to. She was so happy with little puss that she was good all day; and when she went to bed she thought,—

"I wish I had a dog to play with darling Snowdrop, and run with me when I go to walk."

"Bow, wow, wow!" came from under the pillow; and out of the box trotted a curly black dog, with long ears, a silver collar, and such bright, kind eyes May was not a bit afraid of him, but loved him at once, and named him Floss, he was so soft and silky. Pussy liked him too; and when May was sleepy they both snuggled down in the same basket like two good babies, and went to by−low.

"Well, I never! What shall we find next?" said Nurse, when she saw the dog in the morning.

"Perhaps it will be an elephant, to fill the whole house, and scare you out of your wits," laughed May, dancing about with Snowdrop chasing her bare toes, while Floss shook and growled over her shoes as if they were rats.

"If your cousin John wants to give you any more animals, I wish he'd send a pony to take you to school, and save my old legs the pain of trotting after you," said Nurse; for May did have a rich cousin who was very fond of her, and often gave her nice things.

"Perhaps he will," laughed May, much tickled with the idea that it was a fairy, and not Cousin John, who sent the cunning little creatures to her.

But she didn't get the pony that night; for in the afternoon her mother told her not to sit on the lawn, because it was damp, and May did not mind, being busy with a nice story. So when she took up her box, a loud sneeze seemed to blow the lid off, and all she saw was a bit of red flannel.

"What is this for?" she asked, much disappointed; and as if to answer, the strip of flannel wrapped itself round her neck.

"There! my throat *is* sore, and I *am* hoarse. I wonder how that fairy knew I sat on the damp grass. I'm so sorry; for I did want a pony, and might have had it if I'd only minded," said May, angry with herself for spoiling all her fun.

It *was* spoilt; for she had such a cold next day she couldn't go out at all, but had to take medicine and keep by the fire, while the other children had a lovely picnic.

"I won't wish for anything to−night; I don't deserve a present, I was so disobedient. But I *have* tried to be patient," said May, feeling for the box.

The fairy had not forgotten her, and there was a beautiful picture−book, full of new, nice stories printed in colored ink.

"How splendid to read to−morrow while I'm shut up!" she said, and went to sleep very happily.

All the next day she enjoyed the pretty pictures and funny tales, and never complained or fretted at all, but was so much better the doctor said she could go out to−morrow, if it was fine.

"Now I will wish for the pony," said May, in her bed. But there was nothing in the box except a little red−silk rope, like a halter. She did not know what to do with it that night, but she did the next morning; for just as she was dressed her brother called from the garden,—

"May, look out and see what we found in the stable. None of us can catch him, so do come and see if you can; your name is on the card tied to his mane."

May looked, and there was a snow−white pony racing about the yard as if he was having a fine frolic. Then she knew the halter was for him, and ran down to catch him. The minute she appeared, the pony went to her and put his nose in her hand, neighing, as if he said,—

"This is my little mistress; I will mind her and serve her well."

May was delighted, and very proud when the pony let her put on the saddle and bridle that lay in the barn all ready to use. She jumped up and rode gayly down the road; and Will and mamma and all the maids and Floss and Snowdrop ran to see the pretty sight. The children at school were much excited when she came trotting up, and all wanted to ride Prince. He was very gentle, and every one had a ride; but May had the best fun, for she could go every day for long trots by the carriage when mamma and Will drove out. A blue habit and a hat with a long feather were bought that afternoon; and May was so happy and contented at night that she said to herself as she lay in bed,—

"I'll wish for something for Will now, and see if I get it. I don't want any more presents yet; I've had my share, and I'd love to give away to other people who have no fairy box."

So she wished for a nice boat, and in the box lay a key with the name "Water Lily" on it. She guessed what it meant, and in the morning told her brother to come to the river and see what she had for him. There lay a pretty green and white boat, with cushioned seats, a sail all spread, and at the mast−head a little flag flying in the wind, with the words "Water Lily" on it in gold letters.

Will was so surprised and pleased to find that it was his, he turned heels over head on the grass, kissed May, and skipped into his boat, crying, "All aboard!" as if eager to try it at once.

May followed, and they sailed away down the lovely river, white with real lilies, while the blackbirds sang in the green meadows on either side, and boys and girls stopped on the bridges to see them pass.

After that May kept on trying to be good, and wishing for things for herself and other people, till she forgot how to be naughty, and was the sweetest little girl in the world. Then there was no need of fairies to help her; and one night the box was not under the pillow.

"Well, I've had my share of pretty things, and must learn to do without. I'm glad I tried; for now it is easy to be good, and I don't need to be rewarded," said May, as she fell asleep, quite happy and contented, though she did wish she could have seen the fairy just once.

Next morning the first thing she saw was a beautiful bracelet, shining on the table; and while she stood admiring it, she heard the little voice sing,—

"Here is the bracelet
For good little May
To wear on her arm
By night and by day.
When it shines like the sun,
All's going well;
But when you are bad,
A sharp prick will tell.
Farewell, little girl,
For now we must part.
Make a fairy−box, dear,
Of your own happy heart;
And take out for all
Sweet gifts every day,
Till all the year round
Is like beautiful May."

As the last words were sung, right before her eyes she saw a tiny creature swinging on the rose that stood there in a vase,—a lovely elf, with wings like a butterfly, a gauzy dress, and a star on her forehead. She smiled, and waved her hand as she slowly rose and fluttered away into the sunshine, till she vanished from sight, leaving May with the magic bracelet on her arm, and the happy thought that at last she had *really* seen a fairy.

[Illustration: Johnny leaned forward to enjoy the long−desired "peek."]

IX. A HOLE IN THE WALL.

PART I.

If any one had asked Johnny Morris who were his best friends, he would have answered,—

"The sun and the wind, next to mother."

Johnny lived in a little court that led off from one of the busiest streets in the city,—a noisy street, where horse−car bells tinkled and omnibuses rumbled all day long, going and coming from several great depots near by. The court was a dull place, with only two or three shabby houses in it, and a high blank wall at the end.

The people who hurried by were too busy to do more than to glance at the lame boy who sat in the sunshine against the wall, or to guess that there was a picture−gallery and a circulating−library in the court. But Johnny had both, and took such comfort in them that he never could be grateful enough to the wind that brought him his books and pictures, nor to the sun that made it possible for him to enjoy them in the open air, far more than richer folk enjoy their fine galleries and libraries.

A bad fall, some months before the time this story begins, did something to Johnny's back which made his poor legs nearly useless, and changed the lively, rosy boy into a pale cripple. His mother took in fine washing, and worked hard to pay doctors' bills and feed and clothe her boy, who could no longer run errands, help with the heavy tubs, or go to school. He could only pick out laces for her to iron, lie on his bed in pain for hours, and, each fair day, hobble out to sit in a little old chair between the water−butt and the leaky tin boiler in which he kept his library.

But he was a happy boy, in spite of poverty and pain; and the day a great gust came blowing fragments of a gay placard and a dusty newspaper down the court to his feet, was the beginning of good fortune for patient Johnny. There was a theatre in the street beyond, and other pictured bits found their way to him; for the frolicsome wind liked to whisk the papers around the corner, and chase them here and there till they settled under the chair or flew wildly over the wall.

Faces, animals, people, and big letters, all came to cheer the boy, who was never tired of collecting these waifs and strays; cutting out the big pictures to paste on the wall with the leavings of mother's starch, and the smaller in the scrap−book he made out of stout brown wrappers or newspapers, when he had read the latter carefully. Soon it was a very gay wall; for mother helped, standing on a chair, to put the large pictures up, when Johnny had covered all the space he could reach. The books were laid carefully away in the boiler, after being smoothly ironed out and named to suit Johnny's fancy by pasting letters on the back. This was the circulating library; for not only did the papers whisk about the court to begin with, but the books they afterward made went the rounds among the neighbors till they were worn out.

The old cobbler next door enjoyed reading the anecdotes on Sunday when he could not work; the pale seamstress upstairs liked to look over advertisements of the fine things which she longed for; and Patsey Flynn, the newsboy, who went by each day to sell his papers at the station, often paused to look at the play−bills,—for he adored the theatre, and entertained Johnny with descriptions of the splendors there to be beheld, till he felt as if he had really been, and had known all the famous actors, from Humpty Dumpty to the great Salvini.

Now and then a flock of dirty children would stray into the court and ask to see the "pretty picters." Then Johnny was a proud and happy boy; for, armed with a clothes−pole, he pointed out and explained the beauties of his gallery, feeling that he was a public benefactor when the poor babies thanked him warmly, and promised to come again and bring all the nice papers they could pick up.

These were Johnny's pleasures: but he had two sorrows,—one, a very real one, his aching back; and the other, a boyish longing to climb the wall and see what was on the other side, for it seemed a most wonderful and delightful place to the poor child, shut up in that dismal court, with no playmates and few comforts.

He amused himself with imagining how it looked over there, and nearly every night added some new charm to this unseen country, when his mother told him fairy tales to get him to sleep. He peopled it with the dear old characters all children know and love. The white cat that sat on the wall was Puss in Boots to him, or Whittington's good friend. Blue−beard's wives were hidden in the house of whose upper windows the boy could just catch glimpses. Red Riding−hood met the wolf in the grove of chestnuts that rustled over there; and Jack's Beanstalk grew up just such a wall as that, he was sure.

But the story he liked best was the “Sleeping Beauty in the Wood;" for he was sure some lovely creature lived in that garden, and he longed to get in to find and play with her. He actually planted a bean in a bit of damp earth behind the water−barrel, and watched it grow, hoping for as strong a ladder as Jack's. But the vine grew very slowly, and Johnny was so impatient that he promised Patsey his best book “for his ownty−donty,” if he would climb up and report what was to be seen in that enchanted garden.

“Faix, and I will, thin.” And up went good−natured Pat, after laying an old board over the hogshead to stand on; for there were spikes all along the top of the wall, and only cats and sparrows could walk there.

Alas for Johnny's eager hopes, and alas for Pat's Sunday best! The board broke, and splash went the climber, with a wild Irish howl that startled Johnny half out of his wits and brought both Mrs. Morris and the cobbler to the rescue.

After this sad event Pat kept away for a time in high dudgeon, and Johnny was more lonely than ever. But he was a cheery little soul, so he was grateful for what joys he had, and worked away at his wall,—for the March winds had brought him many treasures, and after April rains were over, May sunshine made the court warm enough for him to be out nearly all day.

“I'm so sorry Pat is mad, 'cause he saw this piece and told me about it, and he'd like to help me put up these pictures,” said Johnny to himself, one breezy morning, as he sat examining a big poster which the wind had sent flying into his lap a few minutes before.

The play was “Monte Cristo,” and the pictures represented the hero getting out of prison by making holes in the wall, among other remarkable performances.

“This is a jolly red one! Now, where will I put it to show best and not spoil the other beauties?”

As he spoke, Johnny turned his chair around and surveyed his gallery with as much pride and satisfaction as if it held all the wonders of art.

It really *was* quite splendid; for every sort of picture shone in the sun,—simpering ladies, tragic scenes, circus parades, labels from tin cans, rosy tomatoes, yellow peaches, and purple plums, funny advertisements, and gay bills of all kinds. None were perfect, but they were arranged with care; and the effect was very fine, Johnny thought.

Presently his eyes wandered from these treasures to the budding bushes that nodded so tantalizingly over the wall. A grape−vine ran along the top, trying to hide the sharp spikes; lilacs tossed their purple plumes above it, and several tall chestnuts rose over all, making green tents with their broad leaves, where spires of blossom began to show like candles on a mammoth Christmas tree. Sparrows were chirping gayly everywhere; the white cat, with a fresh blue bow, basked on the coping of the wall, and from the depths of the enchanted garden came a sweet voice singing,—

“And she bids you to come in,
With a dimple in your chin,
Billy boy, Billy boy.”

Johnny smiled as he listened, and put his finger to the little dent in his own chin, wishing the singer would finish this pleasing song. But she never did, though he often heard that, as well as other childish ditties, sung in the same gay voice, with bursts of laughter and the sound of lively feet tripping up and down the boarded walks. Johnny longed intensely to know who the singer was; for her music cheered his solitude, and the mysterious sounds he heard in the garden increased his wonder and his longing day by day.

Sometimes a man's voice called, “Fay, where are you?” and Johnny was sure “Fay” was short for Fairy. Another voice was often heard talking in a strange, soft language, full of exclamations and pretty sounds. A little dog barked, and answered to the name Pippo. Canaries carolled, and some elfish bird scolded, screamed, and laughed so like a human being, that Johnny felt sure that magic of some sort was at work next door.

A delicious fragrance was now wafted over the wall as of flowers, and the poor boy imagined untold loveliness behind that cruel wall, as he tended the dandelions his mother brought him from the Common, when she had time to stop and gather them; for he loved flowers dearly, and tried to make them out of colored paper, since he could have no sweeter sort.

Now and then a soft, rushing sound excited his curiosity to such a pitch that once he hobbled painfully up the court till he could see into the trees; and once his eager eyes caught glimpses of a little creature, all blue and white and gold, who peeped out from the green fans, and nodded, and tried to toss him a cluster of the chestnut flowers.

He stretched his hands to her with speechless delight, forgetting his crutches, and would have fallen if he had not caught by the shutter of a window so quickly that he gave the poor back a sad wrench; and when he could look up again, the fairy had vanished, and nothing was to be seen but the leaves dancing in the wind.

Johnny dared not try this again for fear of a fall, and every step cost him a pang; but he never forgot it, and was thinking of it as he sat staring at the wall on that memorable May day.

"How I *should* like to peek in and see just how it all really looks! It sounds and smells so summery and nice in there. I know it must be splendid. I say, Pussy, can't you tell a feller what you see?"

Johnny laughed as he spoke, and the white cat purred politely; for she liked the boy who never threw stones at her, nor disturbed her naps. But Puss could not describe the beauties of the happy hunting−ground below; and, to console himself for the disappointment, Johnny went back to his new picture.

"Now, if this man in the play dug his way out through a wall ten feet thick with a rusty nail and a broken knife, I don't see why I couldn't pick away one brick and get a peek. It's all quiet in there now; here's a good place, and nobody will know, if I stick a picture over the hole. And I'll try it, I declare I will!"

Fired with the idea of acting Monte Cristo on a small scale, Johnny caught up the old scissors in his lap, and began to dig out the mortar around a brick already loose, and crumbling at the corners. His mother smiled at his energy, then sighed and said, as she clapped her laces with a heavy heart,—

"Ah, poor dear, if he only had his health he'd make his way in the world. But now he's like to find a blank wall before him while he lives, and none to help him over."

Puss, in her white boots, sat aloft and looked on, wise as the cat in the story, but offered no advice. The toad who lived behind the water−barrel hopped under the few leaves of the struggling bean, like Jack waiting to climb; and just then the noon bells began to ring as if they sang clear and loud,—

"Turn again, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London."

So, cheered by his friends, Johnny scraped and dug vigorously till the old brick fell out, showing another behind it. Only pausing to take breath, he caught up his crutch and gave two or three hearty pokes, which soon cleared the way and let the sunshine stream through, while the wind tossed the lilacs like triumphal banners, and the jolly sparrows chirped,—

"Hail, the conquering hero comes!"

Rather scared by his unexpected success, the boy sat silent for a moment to see what would happen. But all was still; and presently, with a beating heart, Johnny leaned forward to enjoy the long−desired "peek." He could not see much; but that little increased his curiosity and delight, for it seemed like looking into fairy−land, after the dust and noise and dingy houses of the court.

A bed of splendid tulips tossed their gay garments in the middle of a grass−plot; a strange and brilliant bird sat dressing its feathers on a golden cage; a little white dog dozed in the sun; and on a red carpet under the trees lay the Princess, fast asleep.

"It's all right," said Johnny, with a long sigh of pleasure; "that's the Sleeping Beauty, sure enough. There's the blue gown, the white fur−cloak sweeping round, the pretty hair, and—yes—there's the old nurse, spinning and nodding, just as she did in the picture−book mother got me when I cried because I couldn't go to see the play."

This last discovery really did bewilder Johnny, and make him believe that fairy tales *might* be true, after all, for how could he know that the strange woman was an Italian servant, in her native dress, with a distaff in her hand? After pausing a moment, to rub his eyes, he took another look, and made fresh discoveries by twisting his head about. A basket of oranges stood near the Princess, a striped curtain hung from a limb of the tree to keep the wind off, and several books fluttered their pictured leaves temptingly before Johnny's longing eyes.

"Oh, if I could only go in and eat 'em and read 'em and speak to 'em and see all the splendid things!" thought the poor boy, as he looked from one delight to another, and felt shut out from all. "I can't go and wake her like the Prince did, but I do wish she'd get up and do something, now I *can* see. I daren't throw a stone, it might hit some one, or holler, it might scare her. Pussy won't help, and the sparrows are too busy scolding one another. I know! I'll fly a kite over, and that will please her any way. Don't believe she has kites; girls never do."

Eager to carry out his plan, Johnny tied a long string to his gayest poster, and then fastening it to the pole with which he sometimes fished in the water−cask, held it up to catch the fresh breezes blowing down the court. His good friend, the wind, soon caught the idea, and with a strong breath sent the red paper whisking over the wall, to hang a moment on the trees and then drop among the tulips, where its frantic struggles to escape waked the dog,

and set him to racing and barking, as Johnny hurriedly let the string go, and put his eye to his peep−hole.

The eyes of the Princess were wide open now, and she clapped her hands when Pippo brought the gay picture for her to see; while the old woman, with a long yawn, went away, carrying her distaff, like a gun, over her shoulder.

“She likes it! I'm so glad. Wish I had some more to send over. This will come off, I'll poke it through, and maybe she will see it.”

Very much excited, Johnny recklessly tore from the wall his most cherished picture, a gay flower−piece, just put up; and folding it, he thrust it through the hole and waited to see what followed.

Nothing but a rustle, a bark, and a queer croak from the splendid bird, which set the canaries to trilling sweetly.

“She don't see, maybe she will hear,” said Johnny. And he began to whistle like a mocking−bird; for this was his one accomplishment, and he was proud of it.

Presently he heard a funny burst of laughter from the parrot, and then the voice said,—

“No, Polly, you can't sing like that bird. I wonder where he is? Among the bushes over there, I think. Come, Pippo, let us go and find him.”

“Now she's coming!” And Johnny grew red in the face trying to give his best trills and chirrups.

Nearer and nearer came the steps, the lilacs rustled as if shaken, and presently the roll of paper vanished. A pause, and then the little voice exclaimed, in a tone of great surprise,—

“Why, there's a hole! I never saw it before. Oh! I can see the street. How nice! how nice!”

“She likes the hole! I wonder if she will like me?” And, emboldened by these various successes, Johnny took another peep. This was the most delicious one of all; for he looked right into a great blue eye, with glimpses of golden hair above, a little round nose in the middle, and red lips below. It was like a flash of sunshine, and Johnny winked, as if dazzled; for the eye sparkled, the nose sniffed daintily, and the pretty mouth broke into a laugh as the voice cried out delightedly,—

“I see some one! Who are you? Come and tell me!”

“I'm Johnny Morris,” answered the boy, quite trembling with pleasure.

“Did you make this nice hole?”

“I just poked a brick, and it fell out.”

“Papa won't mind. Is that your bird?”

“No; it's me. I whistled.”

“It's very pretty. Do it again,” commanded the voice, as if used to give orders.

Johnny obeyed; and when he paused, out of breath, a small hand came through the hole, grasping as many lilies of the valley as it could hold, and the Princess graciously expressed her pleasure by saying,—

“I like it; you shall do it again, by and by. Here are some flowers for you. Now we will talk. Are you a nice boy?”

This was a poser; and Johnny answered meekly, with his nose luxuriously buried in the lovely flowers,—

“Not very,—I'm lame; I can't play like other fellers.”

“*Porverino*!” sighed the little voice, full of pity; and, in a moment, three red−and−yellow tulips fell at Johnny's feet, making him feel as if he really had slipped into fairy−land through that delightful hole.

“Oh, thank you! Aren't they just elegant? I never see such beauties,” stammered the poor boy, grasping his treasures as if he feared they might vanish away.

“You shall have as many as you like. Nanna will scold, but papa won't mind. Tell me more. What do you do over there?” asked the child, eagerly.

“Nothing but paste pictures and make books, when I don't ache too bad. I used to help mother; but I got hurt, and I can't do much now,” answered the boy, ashamed to mention how many laces he patiently picked or clapped, since it was all he could do to help.

“If you like pictures, you shall come and see mine some day. I do a great many. Papa shows me how. His are splendid. Do you draw or paint yours?”

“I only cut 'em out of papers, and stick 'em on this wall or put 'em in scrap−books. I can't draw, and I haven't got no paints,” answered Johnny.

“You should say 'haven't any paints.' I will come and see you some day; and if I like you, I will let you have

my old paint−box. Do you want it?”

“Guess I do!”

“I think I *shall* like you; so I'll bring it when I come. Do you ache much?”

“Awfully, sometimes. Have to lay down all day, and can't do a thing.”

“Do you cry?”

“No! I'm too big for that. I whistle.”

“I *know* I shall like you, because you are brave!” cried the impetuous voice, with its pretty accent; and then an orange came tumbling through the hole, as if the new acquaintance longed to do something to help the “ache.”

“Isn't that a rouser! I do love 'em, but mother can't afford 'em often.” And Johnny took one delicious taste on the spot.

“Then I shall give you many. We have loads at home, much finer than these. Ah, you should see our garden there!”

“Where do you live?” Johnny ventured to ask; for there was a homesick sound to the voice as it said those last words.

“In Rome. Here we only stay a year, while papa arranges his affairs; then we go back, and I am happy.”

“I should think you'd be happy in there. It looks real splendid to me, and I've been longing to see it ever since I could come out.”

“It's a dull place to me. I like better to be where it's always warm, and people are more beautiful than here. Are *you* beautiful?”

“What queer questions she does ask!” And poor Johnny was so perplexed he could only stammer, with a laugh,—

“I guess not. Boys don't care for looks.”

“Peep, and let me see. I like pretty persons,” commanded the voice.

“Don't she order round?” thought Johnny, as he obeyed. But he liked it, and showed such a smiling face at the peep−hole, that Princess Fay was pleased to say, after a long look at him,—

“No, you are not beautiful; but your eyes are bright, and you look pleasant, so I don't mind the freckles on your nose and the whiteness of your face. I think you are good. I am sorry for you, and I shall lend you a book to read when the pain comes.”

“I couldn't wait for that if I had a book. I do *love* so to read!” And Johnny laughed out from sheer delight at the thought of a new book; for he seldom got one, being too poor to buy them, and too helpless to enjoy the free libraries of the city.

“Then you shall have it *now*.” And there was another quick rush in the garden, followed by the appearance of a fat little book, slowly pushed through the hole in the wall.

“This is the only one that will pass. You will like Hans Andersen's fairy tales, I know. Keep it as long as you please. I have many more.”

“You're so good! I wish I had something for you,” said the boy, quite overcome by this sweet friendliness.

“Let me see one of *your* books. They will be new to me. I'm tired of all mine.”

Quick as a flash, off went the cover of the old boiler, and out came half− a−dozen of Johnny's best works, to be crammed through the wall, with the earnest request,—

“Keep 'em all; they're not good for much, but they're the best I've got. I'll do some prettier ones as soon as I can find more nice pictures and pieces.”

“They look very interesting. I thank you. I shall go and read them now, and then come and talk again. Addio, Giovanni.”

“Good−by, Miss.”

Thus ended the first interview of little Pyramus and Thisbe through the hole in the wall, while puss sat up above and played moonshine with her yellow eyes.

PART II.

After that day a new life began for Johnny, and he flourished like a poor little plant that has struggled out of some dark corner into the sunshine. All sorts of delightful things happened, and good times really seemed to have come. The mysterious papa made no objection to the liberties taken with his wall, being busy with his own affairs, and glad to have his little girl happy. Old Nanna, being more careful, came to see the new neighbors, and was disarmed at once by the affliction of the boy and the gentle manners of the mother. She brought all the curtains of the house for Mrs. Morris to do up, and in her pretty broken English praised Johnny's gallery and library, promising to bring Fay to see him some day.

Meantime the little people prattled daily together, and all manner of things came and went between them. Flowers, fruit, books, and bonbons kept Johnny in a state of bliss, and inspired him with such brilliant inventions that the Princess never knew what agreeable surprise would come next. Astonishing kites flew over the wall, and tissue balloons exploded in the flower−beds. All the birds of the air seemed to live in that court; for the boy whistled and piped till he was hoarse, because she liked it. The last of the long−hoarded cents came out of his tin bank to buy paper and pictures for the gay little books he made for her. His side of the wall was ravaged that hers might be adorned; and, as the last offering his grateful heart could give, he poked the toad through the hole, to live among the lilies and eat the flies that began to buzz about her Highness when she came to give her orders to her devoted subjects.

She always called the lad Giovanni, because she thought it a prettier name than John; and she was never tired of telling stories, asking questions, and making plans. The favorite one was what they would do when Johnny came to see her, as she had been promised he should when papa was not too busy to let them enjoy the charms of the studio; for Fay was a true artist's child, and thought nothing so lovely as pictures. Johnny thought so, too, and dreamed of the happy day when he should go and see the wonders his little friend described so well.

“I think it will be to−morrow; for papa has a lazy fit coming on, and then he always plays with me and lets me rummage where I like, while he goes out or smokes in the garden. So be ready; and if he says you can come, I will have the flag up early and you can hurry.”

These agreeable remarks were breathed into Johnny's willing ear about a fortnight after the acquaintance began; and he hastened to promise, adding soberly, a minute after,—

“Mother says she's afraid it will be too much for me to go around and up steps, and see new things; for I get tired so easy, and then the pain comes on. But I don't care how I ache if I can only see the pictures—and you.”

“Won't you ever be any better? Nanna thinks you might.”

“So does mother, if we had money to go away in the country, and eat nice things; and have doctors. But we can't; so it's no use worrying.” And Johnny gave a great sigh.

“I wish papa was rich, then he would give you money. He works hard to make enough to go back to Italy, so I cannot ask him; but perhaps I can sell *my* pictures also, and get a little. Papa's friends often offer me sweets for kisses; I will have money instead, and that will help. Yes, I shall do it.” And Fay clapped her hands decidedly.

“Don't you mind about it. I'm going to learn to mend shoes. Mr. Pegget says he'll teach me. That doesn't need legs, and he gets enough to live on very well.”

“It isn't pretty work. Nanna can teach you to braid straw as she did at home; that is easy and nice, and the baskets sell very well, she says. I shall speak to her about it, and you can try to−morrow when you come.”

“I will. Do you really think I *can* come, then?” And Johnny stood up to try his legs; for he dreaded the long walk, as it seemed to him.

“I will go at once and ask papa.”

Away flew Fay, and soon came back with a glad “Yes!” that sent Johnny hobbling in to tell his mother, and beg her to mend the elbows of his only jacket; for, suddenly, his old clothes looked so shabby he feared to show himself to the neighbors he so longed to see.

“Hurrah! I'm really going to−morrow. And you, too, mammy dear,” cried the boy, waving his crutch so vigorously that he slipped and fell.

“Never mind; I'm used to it. Pull me up, and I'll rest while we talk about it,” he said cheerily, as his mother

helped him to the bed, where he forgot his pain in thinking of the delights in store for him.

Next day, the flag was flying from the wall, and Fay early at the hole, but no Johnny came; and when Nanna went to see what kept him, she returned with the sad news that the poor boy was suffering much, and would not be able to stir for some days.

“Let me go and see him,” begged Fay, imploringly.

“Cara mia, it is no place for you. So dark, so damp, so poor, it is enough to break the heart,” said Nanna, decidedly.

“If papa was here, he would let me go. I shall not play; I shall sit here and make some plans for my poor boy.”

Nanna left her indignant little mistress, and went to cook a nice bowl of soup for Johnny; while Fay concocted a fine plan, and, what was more remarkable, carried it out.

For a week it rained, for a week Johnny lay in pain, and for a week Fay worked quietly at her little easel in the corner of the studio, while her father put the last touches to his fine picture, too busy to take much notice of the child. On Saturday the sun shone, Johnny was better, and the great picture was done. So were the small ones; for as her father sat resting after his work, Fay went to him, with a tired but happy face, and, putting several drawings into his hand, told her cherished plan.

“Papa, you said you would pay me a dollar for every good copy I made of the cast you gave me. I tried very hard, and here are three. I want some money very, very much. Could you pay for these?”

“They are excellent,” said the artist, after carefully looking at them. “You *have* tried, my good child, and here are your well−earned dollars. What do you want them for?”

“To help my boy. I want him to come in here and see the pictures, and let Nanna teach him to plait baskets; and he can rest, and you will like him, and he might get well if he had some money, and I have three quarters the friends gave me instead of bonbons. Would that be enough to send poor Giovanni into the country and have doctors?”

No wonder Fay's papa was bewildered by this queer jumble, because, being absorbed in his work, he had never heard half the child had told him, and had forgotten all about Johnny. Now he listened with half an ear, studying the effect of sunshine upon his picture meantime, while Fay told him the little story, and begged to know how much money it would take to make Johnny's back well.

“Bless your sweet soul, my darling, it would need more than I can spare or you earn in a year. By and by, when I am at leisure, we will see what can be done,” answered papa, smoking comfortably, as he lay on the sofa in the large studio at the top of the house.

“You say that about a great many things, papa. 'By and by' won't be long enough to do all you promise then. I like *now* much better, and poor Giovanni needs the country more than you need cigars or I new frocks,” said Fay, stroking her father's tired forehead and looking at him with an imploring face.

“My dear, I cannot give up my cigar, for in this soothing smoke I find inspiration, and though you are a little angel, you must be clothed; so wait a bit, and we will attend to the boy—later.” He was going to say “by and by” again, but paused just in time, with a laugh.

“Then *I* shall take him to the country all myself. I cannot wait for this hateful 'by and by.' I know how I shall do it, and at once. Now, now!” cried Fay, losing patience; and with an indignant glance at the lazy papa, who seemed going to sleep, she dashed out of the room, down many stairs, through the kitchen, startling Nanna and scattering the salad as if a whirlwind had gone by, and never paused for breath till she stood before the garden wall with a little hatchet in her hand.

“This shall be the country for him till I get enough money to send him away. I will show what *I* can do. He pulled out two bricks. *I* will beat down the wall, and he *shall* come in at once,” panted Fay; and she gave a great blow at the bricks, bent on having her will without delay,—for she was an impetuous little creature, full of love and pity for the poor boy pining for the fresh air and sunshine, of which she had so much.

Bang, bang, went the little hatchet, and down came one brick after another, till the hole was large enough for Fay to thrust her head through; and being breathless by that time, she paused to rest and take a look at Johnny's court.

Meanwhile Nanna, having collected her lettuce leaves and her wits, went to see what the child was about; and finding her at work like a little fury, the old woman hurried up to tell “the Signor,” Fay's papa, that his little daughter was about to destroy the garden and bury herself under the ruins of the wall. This report, delivered with

groans and wringing of the hands, roused the artist and sent him to the rescue, as he well knew that his angel was a very energetic one, and capable of great destruction.

When he arrived, he beheld a cloud of dust, a pile of bricks among the lilies, and the feet of his child sticking out of a large hole in the wall, while her head and shoulders were on the other side. Much amused, yet fearful that the stone coping might come down on her, he pulled her back with the assurance that he would listen and help her now immediately, if there was such need of haste.

But he grew sober when he saw Fay's face; for it was bathed in tears, her hands were bleeding, and dust covered her from head to foot.

"My darling, what afflicts you? Tell papa, and he will do anything you wish."

"No, you will forget, you will say 'Wait;' and now that I have seen it all, I cannot stop till I get him out of that dreadful place. Look, look, and see if it is not sad to live there all in pain and darkness, and so poor."

As she spoke, Fay urged her father toward the hole; and to please her he looked, seeing the dull court, the noisy street beyond, and close by the low room, where Johnny's mother worked all day, while the poor boy's pale face was dimly seen as he lay on his bed waiting for deliverance.

"Well, well, it *is* a pitiful case; and easily mended, since Fay is so eager about it. Hope the lad is all she says, and nothing catching about his illness. Nanna can tell me."

Then he drew back his head, and leading Fay to the seat, took her on his knee, all flushed, dirty, and tearful as she was, soothing her by saying tenderly,—

"Now let me hear all about it, and be sure I'll not forget. What shall I do to please you, dear, before you pull down the house about my ears?"

Then Fay told her tale all over again; and being no longer busy, her father found it very touching, with the dear, grimy little face looking into his, and the wounded hands clasped beseechingly as she pleaded for poor Johnny.

"God bless your tender heart, child; you shall have him in here to−morrow, and we will see what can be done for those pathetic legs of his. But listen, Fay, I have an easier way to do it than yours, and a grand surprise for the boy. Time is short, but it can be done; and to show you that I am in earnest, I will go this instant and begin the work. Come and wash your face while I get on my boots, and then we will go together."

At these words Fay threw her arms about papa's neck and gave him many grateful kisses, stopping in the midst to ask,—

"Truly, *now*?"

"See if it is not so." And putting her down, papa went off with great strides, while she ran laughing after him, all her doubts set at rest by this agreeable energy on his part.

If Johnny had not been asleep in the back room, he would have seen strange and pleasant sights that afternoon and evening; for something went on in the court that delighted his mother, amused the artist, and made Fay the happiest child in Boston. No one was to tell till the next day, that Johnny's surprise might be quite perfect, and Mrs. Morris sat up till eleven to get his old clothes in order; for Fay's papa had been to see her, and became interested in the boy, as no one could help being when they saw his patient little face.

So hammers rang, trowels scraped, shovels dug, and wonderful changes were made, while Fay danced about in the moonlight, like Puck intent upon some pretty prank, and papa quoted *Snout*, [Footnote: A character in Shakspeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream."] the tinker's parting words, as appropriate to the hour,—

"Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus wall away doth go."

PART III.

A lovely Sunday morning dawned without a cloud; and even in the dingy court the May sunshine shone warmly, and the spring breezes blew freshly from green fields far away. Johnny begged to go out; and being much better, his mother consented, helping him to dress with such a bright face and eager hands that the boy said innocently,—

"How glad you are when I get over a bad turn! I don't know what you'd do if I ever got well."

"My poor dear, I begin to think you *will* pick up, now the good weather has come and you have got a little friend to play with. God bless her!"

Why his mother should suddenly hug him tight, and then brush his hair so carefully, with tears in her eyes, he did not understand; but was in such a hurry to get out, he could only give her a good kiss, and hobble away to see how his gallery fared after the rain, and to take a joyful "peek" at the enchanted garden.

Mrs. Morris kept close behind him, and it was well she did; for he nearly tumbled down, so great was his surprise when he beheld the old familiar wall after the good fairies Love and Pity had worked their pretty miracle in the moonlight.

The ragged hole had changed to a little arched door, painted red. On either side stood a green tub, with a tall oleander in full bloom; from the arch above hung a great bunch of gay flowers; and before the threshold lay a letter directed to "Signor Giovanni Morris," in a childish hand. As soon as he recovered from the agreeable shock of this splendid transformation scene, Johnny sank into his chair, where a soft cushion had been placed, and read his note, with little sighs of rapture at the charming prospect opening before him.

DEAR GIOVANNI,—Papa has made this nice gate, so you can come in when you like and not be tired. We are to have two keys, and no one else can open it. A little bell is to ring when we pull the cord, and we can run and see what we want. The paint is wet. Papa did it, and the men put up the door last night. I helped them, and did not go in my bed till ten. It was very nice to do it so. I hope you will like it. Come in as soon as you can; I am all ready.

Your friend,

FAY.

"Mother, she must be a real fairy to do all that, mustn't she?" said Johnny, leaning back to look at the dear door behind which lay such happiness for him.

"Yes, my sonny, she is the right sort of good fairy, and I just wish I could do her washing for love the rest of her blessed little life," answered Mrs. Morris, in a burst of grateful ardor.

"You shall! you shall! Do come in! I cannot wait another minute!" cried an eager little voice as the red door flew open; and there stood Fay, looking very like a happy elf in her fresh white frock, a wreath of spring flowers on her pretty hair, and a tall green wand in her hand, while the brilliant bird sat on her shoulder, and the little white dog danced about her feet.

"So she bids you to come in,
With a dimple in your chin,
Billy boy, Billy boy,"

sung the child, remembering how Johnny liked that song; and waving her wand, she went slowly backward as the boy, with a shining face, passed under the blooming arch into a new world, full of sunshine, liberty, and sweet companionship.

Neither Johnny nor his mother ever forgot that happy day, for it was the beginning of help and hope to both just when life seemed hardest and the future looked darkest.

Papa kept out of sight, but enjoyed peeps at the little party as they sat under the chestnuts, Nanna and Fay doing the honors of the garden to their guests with Italian grace and skill, while the poor mother folded her tired hands with unutterable content, and the boy looked like a happy soul in heaven.

Sabbath silence, broken only by the chime of bells and the feet of church− goers, brooded over the city;

sunshine made golden shadows on the grass; the sweet wind brought spring odors from the woods; and every flower seemed to nod and beckon, as if welcoming the new playmate to their lovely home.

While the women talked together, Fay led Johnny up and down her little world, showing all her favorite nooks, making him rest often on the seats that stood all about, and amusing him immensely by relating the various fanciful plays with which she beguiled her loneliness.

"Now we can have much nicer ones; for you will tell me yours, and we can do great things," she said, when she had displayed her big rocking−horse, her grotto full of ferns, her mimic sea, where a fleet of toy boats lay at anchor in the basin of an old fountain, her fairy−land under the lilacs, with paper elves sitting among the leaves, her swing, that tossed one high up among the green boughs, and the basket of white kittens, where Topaz, the yellow−eyed cat, now purred with maternal pride. Books were piled on the rustic table, and all the pictures Fay thought worthy to be seen.

Here also appeared a nice lunch, before the visitors could remember it was noon and tear themselves away. Such enchanted grapes and oranges Johnny never ate before; such delightful little tarts and Italian messes of various sorts; even the bread and butter seemed glorified because served in a plate trimmed with leaves and cut in dainty bits. Coffee that perfumed the air put heart into poor Mrs. Morris, who half starved herself that the boy might be fed; and he drank milk till Nanna said, laughing, as she refilled the pitcher,—

"He takes more than both the blessed lambs we used to feed for Saint Agnes in the convent at home. And he is truly welcome, the dear child, to the best we have; for he is as innocent and helpless as they."

"What does she mean?" whispered Johnny to Fay, rather abashed at having forgotten his manners in the satisfaction which three mugfuls of good milk had given him.

So, sitting in the big rustic chair beside him, Fay told the pretty story of the lambs who are dedicated to Saint Agnes, with ribbons tied to their snowy wool, and then raised with care till their fleeces are shorn to make garments for the Pope. A fit tale for the day, the child thought, and went on to tell about the wonders of Rome till Johnny's head was filled with a splendid confusion of new ideas, in which Saint Peter's and apple−tarts, holy lambs and red doors, ancient images and dear little girls, were delightfully mixed. It all seemed like a fairy tale, and nothing was too wonderful or lovely to happen on that memorable day.

So when Fay's papa at last appeared, finding it impossible to keep away from the happy little party any longer, Johnny decided at once that the handsome man in the velvet coat was the king of the enchanted land, and gazed at him with reverence and awe. A most gracious king he proved to be; for after talking pleasantly to Mrs. Morris, and joking Fay on storming the walls, he proposed to carry Johnny off, and catching him up, strode away with the astonished boy on his shoulder, while the little girl danced before to open doors and clear the way.

Johnny thought he couldn't be surprised any more; but when he had mounted many stairs and found himself in a great room with a glass roof, full of rich curtains, strange armor, pretty things, and pictures everywhere, he just sat in the big chair where he was placed, and stared in silent delight.

"This is papa's studio, and that the famous picture, and here is where I work; and isn't it pleasant? and aren't you glad to see it?" said Fay, skipping about to do the honors of the place.

"I don't believe heaven is beautifuller," answered Johnny, in a low tone, as his eyes went from the green tree−tops peeping in at the windows to the great sunny picture of a Roman garden, with pretty children at play among the crumbling statues and fountains.

"I'm glad you like it, for we mean to have you come here a great deal. I sit to papa very often, and get *so* tired; and you can talk to me, and then you can see me draw and model in clay, and then we'll go in the garden, and Nanna will show you how to make baskets, and *then* we'll play."

Johnny nodded and beamed at this charming prospect, and for an hour explored the mysteries of the studio, with Fay for a guide and papa for an amused spectator. He liked the boy more and more, and was glad Fay had so harmless a playmate to expend her energies and compassion upon. He assented to every plan proposed, and really hoped to be able to help these poor neighbors; for he had a kind heart, and loved his little daughter even more than his art.

When at last Mrs. Morris found courage to call Johnny away, he went without a word, and lay down in the dingy room, his face still shining with the happy thoughts that filled his mind, hungry for just such pleasures, and never fed before.

After that day everything went smoothly, and both children blossomed like the flowers in that pleasant garden,

where the magic of love and pity, fresh air and sunshine, soon worked miracles. Fay learned patience and gentleness from Johnny; he grew daily stronger on the better food Nanna gave him, and the exercise he was tempted to take; and both spent very happy days working and playing, sometimes under the trees, where the pretty baskets were made, or in the studio, where both pairs of small hands modelled graceful things in clay, or daubed amazing pictures with the artist's old brushes and discarded canvases.

Mrs. Morris washed everything washable in the house, and did up Fay's frocks so daintily that she looked more like an elf than ever when her head shone out from the fluted frills, like the yellow middle of a daisy with its white petals all spread.

As he watched the children playing together, the artist, having no great work in hand, made several pretty sketches of them, and then had a fine idea of painting the garden scene where Fay first talked to Johnny. It pleased his fancy, and the little people sat for him nicely; so he made a charming thing of it, putting in the cat, dog, bird, and toad as the various characters in Shakspeare's lovely play, while the flowers were the elves, peeping and listening in all manner of merry, pretty ways.

He called it “Little Pyramus and Thisbe,” and it so pleased a certain rich lady that she paid a large price for it; and then, discovering that it told a true story, she generously added enough to send Johnny and his mother to the country, when Fay and her father were ready to go.

But it was to a lovelier land than the boy had ever read of in his fairy books, and to a happier life than mending shoes in the dingy court. In the autumn they all sailed gayly away together, to live for years in sunny Italy, where Johnny grew tall and strong, and learned to paint with a kind master and a faithful young friend, who always rejoiced that she found and delivered him, thanks to the wonderful hole in the wall.

[Illustration: She got too lazy to care for anything but sleeping and eating.]

X. THE PIGGY GIRL.

“I won't be washed! I won't be washed!” screamed little Betty, kicking and slapping the maid who undressed her one night.

“You'd better go and live with the pigs, dirty child,” said Maria, scrubbing away at two very grubby hands.

“I wish I could! I love to be dirty,—I *will* be dirty!” roared Betty, throwing the sponge out of the window and the soap under the table.

Maria could do nothing with her; so she bundled her into bed half wiped, telling her to go to sleep right away.

“I won't! I'll go and live with Mrs. Gleason's pigs, and have nothing to do but eat and sleep, and roll in the dirt, and never, never be washed any more,” said Betty to herself.

She lay thinking about it and blinking at the moon for a while; then she got up very softly, and crept down the back stairs, through the garden, to the sty where two nice little pigs were fast asleep among the straw in their small house. They only grunted when Betty crept into a corner, laughing at the fun it would be to play piggy and live here with no Maria to wash her and no careful mamma to keep saying,—

“Put on a clean apron, dear!”

Next morning she was waked up by hearing Mrs. Gleason pour milk into the trough. She lay very still till the woman was gone; then she crept out and drank all she wanted, and took the best bits of cold potato and bread for her breakfast, and the lazy pigs did not get up till she was done. While they ate and rooted in the dirt, Betty slept as long as she liked, with no school, no errands, no patchwork to do. She liked it, and kept hidden till night; then she went home, and opened the little window in the store closet, and got in and took as many good things to eat and carry away as she liked. She had a fine walk in her nightgown, and saw the flowers asleep, heard the little birds chirp in the nest, and watched the fireflies and moths at their pretty play. No one saw her but the cats; and they played with her, and hopped at her toes, in the moonlight, and had great fun.

When she was tired she went to sleep with the pigs, and dozed all the next day, only coming out to eat and drink when the milk was brought and the cold bits; for Mrs. Gleason took good care of her pigs, and gave them clean straw often, and kept them as nice as she could.

Betty lived in this queer way a long time, and soon looked more like a pig than a little girl; for her nightgown got dirty, her hair was never combed, her face was never washed, and she loved to dig in the mud till her hands looked like paws. She never talked, but began to grunt as the pigs did, and burrowed into the straw to sleep, and squealed when they crowded her, and quarrelled over the food, eating with her nose in the trough like a real pig. At first she used to play about at night, and steal things to eat; and people set traps to catch the thief in their gardens, and the cook in her own house scolded about the rats that carried off the cake and pies out of her pantry. But by and by she got too lazy and fat to care for anything but sleeping and eating, and never left the sty. She went on her hands and knees now, and began to wonder if a little tail wouldn't grow and her nose change to a snout.

All summer she played be a pig, and thought it good fun; but when the autumn came it was cold, and she longed for her nice warm flannel nightgown, and got tired of cold victuals, and began to wish she had a fire to sit by and good buckwheat cakes to eat. She was ashamed to go home, and wondered what she should do after this silly frolic. She asked the pigs how they managed in winter; but they only grunted, and she could not remember what became of them, for the sty was always empty in cold weather.

One dreadful night she found out. She was smuggled down between the great fat piggies to keep warm; but her toes were cold, and she was trying to pull the straw over them when she heard Mr. Gleason say to his boy,—

“We must kill those pigs to−morrow. They are fat enough; so come and help me sharpen the big knife.”

“Oh, dear, what will become of *me*?” thought Betty, as she heard the grindstone go round and round as the knife got sharper and sharper. “I look so like a pig they will kill me too, and make me into sausages if I don't run away. I'm tired of playing piggy, and I'd rather be washed a hundred times a day than be put in a pork barrel.”

So she lay trembling till morning; then she ran through the garden and found the back door open. It was very early, and no one saw her, for the cook was in the shed getting wood to make her fire; so Betty slipped upstairs to the nursery and was going to whisk into bed, when she saw in the glass an ugly black creature, all rags and dirt,

with rumpled hair, and a little round nose covered with mud.

"Can it be me?" she said. "How horrid I am!" And she could not spoil her nice white bed, but hopped into the bathtub and had a good scrubbing. Next she got a clean nightgown, and brushed her hair, and cut her long nails, and looked like a tidy little girl again.

Then she lay down in her cosey crib with the pink cover and the lace curtains, and fell fast asleep, glad to have clean sheets, soft blankets, and her own little pillow once more.

* * * * *

"Come, darling, wake up and see the new frock I have got for you, and the nice ruffled apron. It's Thanksgiving day, and all the cousins are coming to dinner," said her mamma, with a soft kiss on the rosy cheek.

Betty started up, screaming,—

"Don't kill me! Oh, please don't! I'm not a truly pig, I'm a little girl; and if you'll let me run home, I'll never fret when I'm washed again."

"What is the dear child afraid of?" said mamma, cuddling her close, and laughing to see Betty stare wildly about for the fat pigs and the stuffy sty.

She told her mother all about the queer time she had had, and was much surprised to hear mamma say,—

"It was all a dream, dear; you have been safely asleep in your little bed ever since you slapped poor Maria last night."

"Well, I'm glad I dreamed it, for it has made me love to be clean. Come, Maria, soap and scrub as much as you like, I won't kick and scream ever any more," cried Betty, skipping about, glad to be safe in her pleasant home and no longer a dirty, lazy piggy girl.