

Connor Magan's Luck and Other Stories eBook

Connor Magan's Luck and Other Stories

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CONNOR MAGAN'S LUCK.

[Illustration: "*Connor.*"]

"I'm in luck, hurrah!" cried Connor Magan, as he threw up his brimless hat into the air—the ringing, jubilant shout he sent after it could only spring from the reservoir of glee in the heart of a twelve-year-old boy. Giving a push to the skiff in which his father sat waiting for him, he jumped from the shore to the boat, and struck out into the Ohio river.

Tim Magan, father, and Connor Magan, son, were central figures in a very strange picture.

Let us take in the situation.

It was a Western spring freshet. The Ohio was on a rampage—a turbulent, coffee-colored stream, it had risen far beyond its usual boundaries, washed out the familiar land-marks, and, still insolent and greedy, was licking the banks, as if preparatory to swallowing up the whole country. Trees torn up by the roots, their green branches waving high above the flood, timbers from cottages, and wrecks of bridges, were floating down to the Gulf of Mexico.

It was curious to watch the various things in the water as they sailed slowly along. Demijohns bobbed about. Empty store boxes mockingly labelled *dry goods* elbowed bales of hay. Sometimes a weak cock-a-doodle-doo from a travelling chicken-coop announced the whereabouts of a helpless though still irrepressible rooster. Back yards had been visited, and oyster-cans, ash-barrels and unsightly kitchen debris brought to light. It was a mighty revolution where the dregs of society were no longer suppressed, but sailed in state on the top wave.

"It is an idle wind which blows no one good," and amid the general destruction the drift-wood was a God-send to the poor people, and they caught enough to supply them with fire-wood for months. Logs, fences, boards and the contents of steamboat woodyards were swept into the current. On high points of land near the shore were collected piles bristling with ragged stumps and limbs of trees. The great gnarled branches of forest trees sometimes spread over half the river, while timbers lodging among them formed a sort of raft which kept out of the water the most wonderful things—pieces of furniture, and kitchen utensils which shone in the sun like silver.

Cullum's Ripple is a few miles below Cincinnati. Here the deep current sets close to the shore, making a wild kind of whirlpool or eddy that brings drift-wood almost to land; the rippling water makes a sudden turn and scoops out a little cove in the sand. It is a splendid place for fishermen, but quite dangerous for boats.

Not far above Cullum's Ripple is situated the Magan family mansion, or shanty. The river is on one side, and two parallel railroads are on the other. On the top of the bank, and on a level with the railroads, is a piece of land not much longer or wider than a rope-walk, and on this only available scrap the Railroad Company have built a few temporary houses for their workmen. They are all alike, except that a morning-glory grows over Magan's door.

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The colony is called Twinrip possibly the short of “Between Strip.” (If the name does not mean that, will some one skilled in digging up language roots, please tell me what it does mean?) The atmosphere around these cabins is as filled with bustling, whistling confusion as a chimney with smoke.

Besides the water highway, on the other side, just a few feet beyond the iron roads, a horse-car track and a turnpike offer additional facilities for locomotion. Birds perch on the numerous telegraph wires amid wrecks of kites and dingy pennons—once kite-tails—nothing hurts them; and below the children of Twinrip appear just as free and safe, and seem to have as much delight in mere living as their feathered friends.

The Magans were a light-hearted Irish family, whose cheerfulness seemed better than eucalyptus or sunflowers to keep off the fever and ague, and who made the most of the little bits of sunshine that came to them. Tim, a strong-armed laborer, was brakeman on the Road. His wife, a hopeful little body, a woman of expedients, was voted by her neighbors the “cheeriest, condolingest” woman in Twinrip.

Good luck, according to her, was always coming to the Magans. It was good luck brought them to America—by good luck Tim became brakeman. It was good luck that the school for Connor was free of expense, and so convenient.

Her loyalty to her husband rather modified the expression of her views, yet she often expatiated to her eldest on his advantages, beginning, “There’s your father, Connor—I hope you’ll be as good a man! remember it wasn’t the fashion in the ould country to bother over the little black letters—people don’t *have* to read there—but you just mind your books, and some day you may come to be a conductor, and snap a punch of your own.”

No doubt Connor made good resolutions, but when he sat by the window in the school-room and looked at the dimpling, sparkling river, so suggestive of fishing, or at the green trees filled with birds, he was not as devoted to literature as a free-born expectant American citizen ought to be. The teacher was somewhat strict, and it may have been in some of her passes with Connor, the “bubblingoverest” of all her youngsters, that she earned the name of a “daisy lammer.”

But the boy knew some things by heart that could not be learned at school. To his ear, the steam whistle of each boat spoke its name as plainly as if it could talk. He need not look to tell whether a passing train was on the O. & M. or on the I.C. & L. He knew the name of every fiery engine, and felt an admiration—a real friendship for the resistless creatures.

To climb a tree was as easy for him as if he were a cat; there were rumors that he had worked himself to the top of the tall flag-staff—which was as smooth as a greased pole—but I will not vouch for their truth. He could swim like a duck, and paddled about on a

board in the river till an ill-natured flat-boatman often snarled out that “that youngster would certain be drowned, if he wasn’t born to be hanged.”

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But the delight of Connor's life was to "catch the first wave" from a big steamer. Dennis Maloney was his comrade in this perilous game. They rowed their egg-shell of a boat close to the wheel. Drenched with spray—for a moment they felt the wild excitement of danger. Four alert eyes, four steady hands kept them from being sucked under—then came the triumph of meeting the first wave that left the steamboat, and the extatic rocking motion of the skiff as she rode the other waves in the wake—but to catch the first was the point in the frolic! Connor was known to many of the pilots as an adept in "catching the first wave." Sometimes he was "tipped" by an unlooked for motion of the machinery, but was as certain as an india-rubber ball to rise to the surface, and a swim to shore was but fun to the young Magan.

In the house, Mother Maggie was happy when little Mike was tied in his chair, and a bar put in the doorway to keep him from crawling into the attractive water, if he should break loose; and when the door was bolted on the railroad side, he was allowed to gaze through the window at the engines smoking and thundering by all day, and fixing each blazing red eye on him at night—an entrancing spectacle to the child. And when the still younger Pat was tucked up in bed sucking a moist rag, with sugar tied up in it, her world was all right, and at rest.

But it would have taken a person of considerable penetration, or as Maggie said one who knew all "the ins and the outs" to see the peculiar good luck of *this* day. The water was swashing round within a few feet of the door. Some of the workmen had moved their beds to the space between the tracks, which was piled up with kitchen utensils, and looked like a second-hand store.

In these days of devotion to antiques, we hear dealers in such wares say that things are more valuable for being carefully used. This would not apply to Twinrip's relics. The poor shabby furniture looked more than ever dilapidated in the open daylight. The social air of a home that was lived in, pervaded this temporary baggage-room between the tracks. One child was asleep in a cradle, others were eating their coarse food off a board. When a sprinkling of rain fell, an old grandmother under an umbrella fastened to a bed-post went on knitting, serenely.

Youngsters who needed rubbers and waterproofs about as much as did Newfoundland dogs, enjoyed the fun. One four-year old, sitting on a tub turned upside down, was waving a small flag, a relic of the Fourth of July—and looking as happy and independent as a king.

It took all his wife's hopeful eloquence to comfort Tim. There was no water in Tim's cellar, because he had no cellar. The cow, their most valuable piece of property, was taken beyond the tracks up on the hillside, and fastened to a stake in a deserted vineyard. If the worst came to the worst, and they were drowned out of house and home, their neighbors were no better off, and they would all be lively together. That was the way Maggie put it.

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[Illustration: *Independent as A king.*]

“Do you moind, Tim,” she said, “when Keely O’Burke trated his new wife to a ride on a hand-car? Soon as your eyes lighted on him you shouted like a house-a-fire, ‘Number Five will be down in three minutes!’ Didn’t Keely clane lose his head? But between you, you pushed the car off the track in a jiffy. And Mrs. O’Burke’s new bonnet was all smashed in the ditch, an’ the bloody snort of Number Five knocked you senseless. Who would have thought that boost of the cow-catcher was jist clear good luck? And you moped about with a short draw in your chist, and seemed bound to be a grouty old man in the chimney corner that could niver lift a stroke for your childer, ah’ you didn’t see the good luck, you know, Tim—but when the prisident sent the bran new cow with a card tied to one horn, an’ Connor read it when he came home from school: ‘*For Tim Magan, who saved the train. Good luck to him!*’—wasn’t it all right then? Now you are as good as new, and our mocley is quiet as a lamb, and if I was Queen Victoria hersel, she couldn’t give any sweeter milk for me. She’s the born beauty.”

Well, Connor was his mother’s own boy for making the most and the best of everything, and *he* saw several items of good luck this day.

First: The river had risen so near the school-house that the desks and benches were moved up between the tracks and the school dismissed; therefore there was perfect freedom to enjoy the excitement of the occasion. It was as good as a move or a fire.

Second: There was so much danger that the track might be undermined that all trains were stopped by order of the Railroad Company; therefore his father was at liberty.

Third, and best of all: Larry O’Flaherty, who lived up Bald Face Creek, had lent him his skiff for the day. The boys had had an extatic time the evening before, hauling in drift-wood. Though the coal-barges had bright red lights at their bows, and the steamboats were ablaze with green and red signals, and blew their gruff whistles continually, yet it was hardly safe to go far from the shore at night because the Ripple was so near. When the river was *rising* the drift was driven close to land, while *falling* it floated near the middle of the river. Connor could see the flood was still rising, and there were possibilities of a splendid catch, for it was daylight, and they could go where they pleased with Larry’s boat.

Father and son pushed out into the river. Connor felt as if he owned the world. Short sticks and staves were put in the bottom of the boat. Both fishermen had a long pole with a sharp iron hook at the end with which, when they came close to a log, they harpooned it. Bringing it near, they drove a nail into one end, and tying a rope round the nail, they fastened their prize to the stern of the boat. They took turns rowing and spearing drift-wood; and when the log-fleet swimming after them became large, they went to shore and secured it.

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When the dripping logs were long and heavy, it was the custom to fasten them with the rope close to a stake in the bank, and leave them floating. At low water they were left high and dry on the sand.

No other drift-wood gatherers meddled with such logs. They were considered as much private property as if already burning on the hearth.

“I’m going up the hill to feed the cow, Connor,” said his father, after a great deal of wood of every size and shape had been landed. “Mind what you are about, and take care of Larry’s gim of a boat. It was mighty neighborly to lind it for the whole day. See now, how much drift you can pick up by yourself.”

Connor felt the responsibility, and worked diligently. He had twice taken a load to shore, and was quite far again in the stream, when he saw a strange sight. It was not Moses in the bulrushes, to be sure—but a child in a wicker wagon, floating down the current amid a lot of sticks and branches. The hoarse whistle of a steamboat near meant danger; and to the eye of Connor the baby-craft seemed but a little above the water, and to be slowly sinking.

Connor’s shout rang back from the Kentucky hills as if it came from the throat of an engine.

No one answered.

There were great logs between his skiff and the child—logs and child were all moving together. Should he abandon Larry’s precious boat?

Connor could not consider this. He plunged into the water and swam round the logs. He never knew how he did it—he never knew how he cut his hand—he never felt the pounding of the logs—he only knew that he caught the wagon, kept those black eyes above the water, and pulled the precious freight to shore. Then, while the water was streaming from him in every direction, he sprang up the few steps to his mother’s cabin, and without a word placed the child, still in the wagon, inside the door!

Running back as swiftly as his feet would carry him, Connor had the good luck to find the deserted boat close to shore, jammed in a mass of drift-wood, just in the turn of the Riffle.

Dragging it up and along the shore, he fastened it to a fisherman’s stake just by Twinrip. Then Connor felt he had discharged his duty—Larry O’Flaherty’s boat was safe—high and dry out of reach of eddying logs.

Now, eager, dripping, and breathless—with eyes like stars, he flew home again.

“Oh, mother,” he said, “she’s fast to the post and not a hole knocked into her, and ain’t her eyes black and soft as our mooley cow’s and I found her before the General Little ran her down—and I’m going to keep her always—*I found her*—isn’t it lucky we have a cow?”

What the boy said was rather mixed—you could not parse it, but you could understand it.

The baby’s big black eyes looked around, and she acknowledged a cup of milk and her deliverer by a smile. It was a strange group. In the midst of a puddle of water Mother Maggie was leaning over the new comer and trying to untie the numerous knots in a shawl which had kept the child in her wicker nest. Little Mike was staring open-eyed at the beads round baby’s neck, and at the coral horseshoe which hung from them. The pretty little girl seemed quite contented, and with the happy unconsciousness of infancy was evidently quite at home.

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"Poor baby, where did she come from?" said Mother Maggie. "Won't her mother cry her eyes out when she can't see her? We must advertise her in one of those big city papers."

"I found her," said Connor, "she's mine."

"Why, my boy," said his mother, "she's not a squirrel—you can't keep her as you did the bunny you found in the hickory tree, and not ask any questions!"

[Illustration]

"I wish there were no newspapers, and that people couldn't read besides," wrathfully exclaimed Connor.

"Maybe," he added, with hopeful cheerfulness, "both her father and mother are drowned. May I keep her then? She may have half of my bread and milk."

Babies were no great rarity in Twinrip, but never was there such a happy, bright-eyed little maiden as this waif proved to be. Among the children she glowed like a dandelion in the grass, and reigned like a queen among her subjects.

Connor was the scholar of the family, and at length his conscience was sufficiently roused to make him indite an advertisement which did him much credit. He hoped it might be placed in some obscure corner of the paper where it would be overlooked.

But next day, in a conspicuous part of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, with four little hands pointing to it, appeared this rather unusual notice:

"Found in the Ohio river a baby in white dress with black eyes and red horseshoe round her neck, now belonging to Connor Magan. If the father and mother are not drowned they can enquire at the house of Tim Magan in Twinrip, where all is convenient for her with a cow given by the President. None others need apply."

It was but the very next day after the "ad" appeared that a wagon drove down to Twinrip, with the father and mother of the baby.

Didn't they cry and kiss and hug the lost, the found child! They lived on a farm in Palestine, a few miles up the river. A little stream ran into the Ohio close by their door, and the baby was often tied in her carriage and placed on the bridge under the charge of a faithful dog. It was a great amusement for her to watch the ducks and geese in the water. A sudden rise swept bridge and all away. Search had been made everywhere, but nothing had been heard of little Minnie. It had seemed like a return from death to read Connor's advertisement.

And was not the brave lad that saved their child a hero! Again and again they made him tell all about the rescue. Of course they had to take their daughter home, but they made Connor promise to visit them at Palestine.

Soon after the happy parents left, a watch came by express to the Magan homestead, and when Connor opened the hunting-case cover, after changing its position till he could see something besides his own twisted face reflected in it, and after wiping away the spray that would come into his eyes, he read:

CONNOR MAGAN.

From the grateful parents of MINNIE RIVERS.

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Was not her name a prophecy?

At the sill of the Magan homestead the flood had stopped, hesitated, and then gone back. Maggie always said she knew it would—they always had good luck. The little woman was happier than ever when she thought of the whole train of people that *might* have been thrown into the ditch—of the cut-off legs, arms and heads, and the poor creatures without them that *might* have been cast bleeding on the track, if it had not been for her faithful old Tim—and of the home with niver a baby, and of the darlint that would have been drowned in the bottom of the Ohio with her ears and eyes full of mud, if it had not been for her slip of a boy.

As for Connor, he felt as if that bright-eyed girl belonged to him, and now that he had a watch towards it, he seemed almost a ready-made Conductor.

When the waters subsided and he went back to school, he studied with a will. His percentage grew higher.

“Sometime,” he said to himself, “I will go to Palestine. I *will* be *somebody*—maybe a Conductor! And a beautiful young woman with soft black eyes will wave her handkerchief to me as I pass by in my train! And after I make a lot of money”—how full the world is of money that young people are so sure of getting—“after I make this money I will bring Minnie back with me! And she will live in my house with me! And she will say, ‘Conor I am so glad you fished me out of the Ohio with your drift-wood!’ And won’t *that* be good luck for Connor Magan!”

WHY MAMMY DELPHY’S BABY WAS NAMED GRIEF.

Mammy Delphy was sitting out under the vines that climbed over the kitchen gallery, picking a chicken for dinner, and singing. And such singing! Some of the words ran this way:

“Aldo you sees me go 'long so,
I has my trials here below,
Sometimes I'se up, sometimes I'se down,
Sometimes I'se lebel wid de groun;
Oh, git out, Satan
Halla_lu_!”

And these words sound queer to you as you read them, perhaps, but they did not sound queer when Mammy Delphy was singing them. I don't believe that a song out of heaven could be sweeter than this and other songs like it that dear old Mammy sings, with her turbaned head bobbing up and down and her foot softly keeping time to the melody. There is a sort of plaintive—what shall I call it?—*twist* in her voice that makes



you choke up about the throat, if you are a boy, and sob right out if you are a girl. And it makes you, somehow, remember, in hearing it, all the sweet, sad little stories that your mother has told you about your little baby sister who died before you were born; or, if you have stood in a darkened room, holding fast to some tender and loving hand, and looked at a face that was dear to you lying upon its coffin pillow, you think of that strange and sad time. And with these thoughts come, as you listen, other thoughts of flying angels and shining crowns, and wide-opened gates of pearl. A sweetness mixed with pain—that is, the feeling which Mammy Delphy's singing brings to you, though you could not describe it, perhaps, if you tried—at least that's the feeling it brings to me.

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"I'll take my shoes from off'n my feet,
And walk into de golden street,
Glory, Halla_lu_!"

sang Mammy. Sam and Jim and Joe came filing in. They had been—well, where *hadn't* they been! They had been down to the Bayou, which ran a good quarter of a mile back of the place, "fishin for cat," and chunking at an unwary rabbit that had taken refuge in a hollow tree; they had been out in the field, cutting open two or three half-grown watermelons to see if they were ripe; they had been across the prairie to a *mott* of sweet-gum trees, where they had stuck up the cuffs and bosoms of their shirts with gum and torn their trousers in climbing a persimmon tree to peep into a bird's-nest. And they were rushing across the yard in chase of a horned-frog when they caught sight of Mammy Delphy under the kitchen shed.

"Let's go and get Mammy Delphy to give us some meat and go a crawfishin', boys," suggested Sam.

"And I'm hungry, for one," added Joe.

Accordingly they filed in, as I said, and stood for a moment listening to Mammy Delphy's song.

"Give us somethin' to eat, Mammy, please," said Jim.

"An' some craw-fish bait and a piece of string," put in the other two in a breath.

"I ain't a gwine to do it, chillun," replied Mammy Delphy, giving them a gentle push with her elbow, for they were leaning coaxingly against her shoulders, "I ain't a gwine to *do* it. Yer ma's got comp'ny for dinner and dat sassy Marthy-Ann done tuk herself to 'Mancipation-Day, an' Jin, she totin of Mis' May's baby to sleep, an' I ain't got *no* time to wase on yer. Go'long!" And as she spoke Mammy arose, chicken in hand, and went into the kitchen to get whatever the boys wanted, as they were perfectly aware she would, from the beginning.

"Lawd o' mussy! Jest look at dat lazy nigger! Grief!" she exclaimed as she entered, "Grief, yer lazy good-for-nuthin' nigger, is yer gwine ter let dem sweet-taters burn clar up?"

And seizing the collar of a negro man who sat nodding by the stove, she gave him a sound shaking. He opened his eyes, grinned and got up slowly, looking a little sheepish as he did so. At that moment the woolly head of Jin, the baby's little black nurse, was poked in at the door.

"Daddy," she cried, "Miss May say as how she want you to come an' tie up her Malcasum rose, whar dem boys is done pull down."

And Jin bestowed a withering look upon the culprits, who were already digging their fingers into the remnants of a meat-pie, and disappeared, followed by her father.

“Mammy Delphy,” said Joe, when they were out under the vines again and Mammy had recommenced her work, “what made you name Uncle Grief, *Grief*? That’s a mighty funny name, *ain’t* it, boys?”

“Well, chillun,” said Mammy, plucking away at the chicken, “dat’s so; it *is* a curus name like; me’n de ole man—he dead an’ gone, chillun, long fo’ you was born;—me’n de ole man ’sulted long time ’bout dat chile’s name an’ he war goin’ on six months old fo’ we name him at all.”

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“Well, how *did* you happen to call him Grief?” insisted Joe.

“Yes, honey, yes. ‘Twar a long time ago, chile, when Mas’ Will—dat’s yer pa (she nodded towards Joe) war a little fellow, heap littler’n you, heap littler, an’ Mas’ Charley—dat’s yer pappy (to the other two) war a baby. I war nussen *him* long o’ Grief an’ Grief warn’t name yet. Miss May—dat’s yer all’s Gramma whar died las’ year—she use to come out to de back steps an’ watch dem two babies nussen’, Grief an’ Mas’ Charley bof at de same time in my lap; an’ Mas’ Will an’ Jerry—dat’s my little boy what war jes’ ‘bout his age—a-playing in de back-yard, an’ sometime she laugh an’ cry all at de same time an’ she say: ‘We is all one fam’ly, Delphy!’ she say. Law’s, chillun, dem was times! You don’t know nuthin’ ‘bout dem times. Disher house was full up all de time wid comp’ny; gran’ comp’ny, what dress all de time in silk an’ go walkin’ ‘bout under de trees an’ ridin’ ‘bout over de prairie in de day time; and mos’ every night dey call my ole man in to play de fiddle an’ den, laws, how dem young folks dance! An’ ole Mas’ an’ ole Mis’ an’ all de young ladies an’ gentlemen use to come down to de cabins—*dey* was all burnt up, time o’ de war—an’ sakes, honey! de hosses an’ de cayages an’ de niggers an’ disher big plantation, all shinin’ wid corn an’ cotton! Dem was times!” And Mammy’s old eyes lighted up as she went back to her youth and the glory of her family, for she still speaks with pride of her “fam’ly.”

“But Grief, Mammy?” said Jim.

“Yes, honey, yes. Yer pappy and Grief war babies, an’ Grief warn’t named, an’ Mas’ Will an’ Jerry was little boys, littler’n you. ‘N one day Miss May, she come to the back do’ an’ call me. I was sittin’ in disher very place dat day, nussin dem two babies, an’ my mammy (she de cook), gittin’ dinner in de kitchen. ‘Delphy,’ Miss May say, ‘Delphy, does you know whar Will an’ Jerry is? Dey ain’t been seen sence breakfast dis mornin’.

[Illustration: “YER PAPPY AN’ GRIEF WAR BABIES, AN’ GRIEF WARN’T NAMED.”]

“I felt curus-like dat minit, an’ I jump up an’ run all over de place lookin’ for dem boys. ‘Rectly all de house gals an’ everybody—Mas’ and Mis’ an’ everybody—commence to hunt for dem chillun. We look everywhere—in de hay-top, in de cotton gin-house, out on de prairie—*everywhere*. Den I saw Miss May—dat’s yer granma, turn white-like, an’ she say, ‘Oh Delphy, oh James’—dat’s yer grandpa—’de ole well in de field! de ole well in de field!’

“Over in de bayou-field—it done full up now, ole Mas’ had a well dug to water de hosses out in. It war kivered up wid some bodes.

“I don’t ‘zactly ‘member ‘bout goin’ over to de field, but when I got dar wid dem two babies in my arms an’ stood ‘long side o’ Miss May—”

Mammy Delphy spoke more and more slowly. She had stopped picking the chicken, and great tears were rolling down her cheeks. The boys stood stricken and silent.

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—“Stood ‘long side o’ Miss May, fus thing I hear war Jerry sayin’ weak-like an’ way down in de well: ‘Don’t you cry, Mas’ Will! Hol’ on to my neck, Mas’ Will! Hol’ tight, Mas’ Will! I kin hol’ you up. Don’t you be feerd Mas’ Will, I kin hol’ you up! Don’t you be feerd Mas’ Will; I kin hol’ you up!’

“Ole Mas’ lean over de well an’ look in. Mas’ Will he warn’t as high as Jerry, an’ Jerry he war standin in de water up to his neck an’ hol’in’ Mas’ Will up out’n de water. An’ dem chillun had been in dat well all day, honey, ‘all day, an’ my Jerry holdin Mas’ Will out’n de water; an’ dat water col’ as ice! Den ole Mas’ let down de rope dey fotch an’ tole Mas’ Will to ketch hol’. An Mas’ Will—dat yer pappy, honey—he say, weak-like, ‘Take Jerry too, pappy, take Jerry too!’

“‘We’ll get Jerry next time,’ says ole Mas’. An’ Jerry help Mas’ Will fix de rope roun’ him an’ dey pull him up out’n de water. He done fainted when dey got him out, an’ he tuk de fever, an’ dat chile war sick mos’ six months, an’ all de time he had de fever, he say: ‘Take Jerry too, pappy, take Jerry too!’ And when he come to hisself, he say right off:

“‘Where’s Jerry? I want Jerry.’”

Mammy Delphy stopped.

“And where was Jerry, mammy?” cried the boys, breathless.

“‘Where war Jerry?’ Ole Mas’ let down de rope an’ say right loud: ‘Ketch holt, Jerry my boy!’ But Jerry couldn’t ketch holt, chillen. Jerry war dead.”

“*Oh mammy!*”

“Yes, chillun, yes. Dey rub him an’ rub him, an’ do everything to fotch him to life. But, my Jerry war dead. An’ when me’n de ole man come home from de funeral—dey buried him in de white folks’ buryin’-groun,’ long side o’ Miss May’s little gal what died—an’ put a tombstone at de head—when we come home from de funeral dat night, de ole man look at de baby on my lap an’ he say, ‘Delphy, honey,’ he say, ‘I think disher baby mout be name *Grief*.’ An’ we name him *Grief*.”

Mammy Delphy wiped her eyes and resumed her work. Then, looking up to the blue sky which shone between the vines, she began singing again:

“Call me in de mornin’ Lord,
Or call me in de night,
I’s always ready Lord,

Glory Halla_lu_!”

And the boys, subdued and silent, and for a moment forgetful of horned-frogs and crawfish, went away softly, as if leaving a grave.

SAMMY SEALSKIN'S ENEMY.

"Where going, Sammy Sealskin?"

"Down to my kayah, Tommy Fishscales."

"Is there any fish to-day?"

"A few, they say, but there is lots of seals—plenty of 'em on the rocks in the bay."

"All right; bring home something to your friend, Tommy."

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Sammy pushed off his kayak from shore. It was a funny sort of boat, according to our notions. It was only nine inches deep, and about a foot and a half wide in the middle, tapering to a point at either end and curving upward. It was about sixteen feet long. Its frame was of very light wood, and this was covered with tanned seal-skin. Sammy's mother was a Greenlander, and she could sew on seal-skin very handily, using sinews for thread; and she had covered her little boy's boat with seal-skin, leaving a hole in the centre just large enough to receive Sammy.

When he had dropped into his place, he then laced the lower border of his jacket to the rim of the hole, and there he was all snug—not a drop of water could get in. Grasping his single oar, about six feet long, with a paddle at either end, and flourishing it in the water right and left, away swept the young fisherman.

"I should think his craft would be top-heavy, and over he would go," says some reader.

One naturally would think his craft would be top-heavy and over he would go, as the kayak has no keel and carries no ballast, and if we should try a kayak, it would certainly be on land. But those Greenlanders learn to handle themselves so well that their kayahs will go dancing over the big billows and then fly through a ragged, dangerous surf. From their kayahs, too, they will fight the fierce white bear.

Ah! Sammy, what is the matter?

"Ugh-h-h-h!"

Sammy gives a melancholy groan. He begins to suspect that his boat is leaking.

Could any one have slit the seal-skin bottom?

The kayak is really settling.

Sammy feels troubled. "*I must go home,*" he says.

He turns his back upon the bright, beautiful sea, tufted with cakes of ice that seem in the distance like the white, pure lilies on a glassy pond, and paddles off home with good-by to the fishing, good-by to the black-headed seals, good-by to the low islands with their gulls and mollimucks and burgomeisters and tern and kittiwakes and eider-ducks—good-by to the long day's fun!

"It makes me feel like a mad whale," said Sammy, "to be cheated out of my fishing. I wonder who cut my kayak!"

Just then he looked off to the shore, and there stood Billy Blubber, an ancient enemy.

"There's the fellow," said Sammy. "He slit my kayak, I know. If I had him, I'd eat him quicker than a tern's egg. Just see how he looks!"

Billy did look exasperating. He saw everything and he enjoyed everything. Plainly he was the miscreant. He was waddling round on his stout little legs, flourishing a huge jack-knife, and grinning as if he were going to have a big dish of whale-fat for dinner. He looked comical enough. He was dressed in seal-skin, and was bobbing up and down in his mother's seal-skin boots. The women's boots are of tanned seal-skin, bleached white and then colored. The boots of Billy's mother were very gay. They were bright red ones. When Billy from his tent-door saw Sammy coming, he crawled into the huge big boots, and bare-headed rushed—no, waddled out, to greet the discomfited fisherman.

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"Billy, I'll give it to you?"

"Will you, Sammy? Try it, old boy."

Thereupon, he put his thumb to his nose and wriggled his finger as exasperatingly as any Yankee boy here in this enlightened land. His flat face, his black little eyes, his stubby little nose, his hair black as coal and long behind, but fashionably "banged" in front, the seal-skin suit, mother's big red boots, and the nasal gesture made a very interesting picture, and a most provoking one also.

"Billy, you *will* catch it!"

"I should rather think you had caught it already. Did you bring any seal-fat, Sammy?"

Sammy felt mad enough and hot enough to set the water to boiling between his kayak and the shore.

"You had better run, Billy."

"Plenty of time, Sammy."

Sammy's kayak was now ashore. Sammy unlaced his jacket and let himself out of jail. Pulling his kayak high up the shore, he turned it over and let the water escape. There were two ugly gashes in the seal-skin bottom—just as he expected.

"Now where's that Billy?" asked Sammy at last. But mother's red boots had prudently withdrawn.

"I *will* give it to him," said Sammy; "but I will mend this first."

He took up his beloved kayak and walked to the little village. It was not very large. There were half a dozen seal-skin tents, a few houses of stone and turf, and one or two wooden buildings, besides the government-house that proudly supported the flag of Denmark.

"What do you want, Sammy?" said his mother, as he appeared at the door of one of the seal-skin tents. She was sitting on a bed of reindeer skins.

"I want needle and thread, mother. That Billy Blubber cut some holes in my kayak."

"Billy Blubber did?"

"Yes," said Sammy, "and I would like to sew him up in a seal-skin and drop him from the top of an iceberg into the sea."

“Tut, tut, Sammy. It’s a boy’s trick. Let it go.”

“There,” thought Sammy, shouldering his kayak and moving off, “that is what mother always says when Billy harms me.”

“Where are you going, Sammy?”

“Off to mend my kayak, mother.”

“Nonsense! Only women can mend kayaks. I will fix it. You go off and take a walk, and then come to dinner. We are going to have a young seal.”

A seal! Wasn’t that nice? Who wouldn’t be a young Greenlander, own a kayak, and have seal for dinner? The prospect before Sammy made him feel better. The world, too, looked different.

“What a nice place we live in!” thought Sammy. “I wouldn’t live in Denmark for anything, old Denmark, where our rulers come from.”

The scenery about the Greenland village was indeed interesting. There was the blue sea before it, dotted with “pond-lilies.” Off the mouth of the harbor, the icebergs went sailing by, so white, so stately, so slow, like a fleet almost becalmed. Back of the village swelled the rocky cliffs bare of snow now, and many rivulets went flashing down their sides from ponds and pools nestling in granite recesses. Away off, towered the mountains, their still snowy tops suggesting the powdered heads of grand old Titans sitting there in state.

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"Who wouldn't live in Greenland?" thought Sammy, entirely forgetting the long, cold, dark winter.

However, it was summer then. He went back of his mother's seal-skin tent. There he could see a beautiful valley in the shadow of the cliffs. Moss and grasses thickly carpeted it. Little brooks went sparkling through it. There were flowers in bloom, poppies of gold, dandelions and buttercups, saxifrages of purple, white and yellow. "And trees were there?" asks a reader. Do you see that shrub just before Sammy? That is the nearest thing to a tree. It is pine. If the fat for cooking the dinner should give out, young Miss Seal may be warmed up by the help of this giant pine. As a rule, we are inclined to think that Sammy takes his seal same as folks who like "oysters on the shell"—raw.

"Ky-ey! Ky-ey!"

"My!" exclaimed Sammy. "What is that noise? It must be a dog somewhere—hurt!"

Sammy started to the rescue.

"Ky-ey! Ky-ey!"

"It must be a dog," declared Sammy, and he expected to see one of those large Greenland dogs, wolf-like, with sharp, pointed nose, and ears held up stiff as if to catch every sound of danger in their dangerous travels.

Sammy rushed up a little hill before him, and rushed in such a hurry that he did not think how steep the other side was. He lost his balance, and over he went, head down, seal-skin boots up, turning over like a cart-wheel.

"Ky-ey! Ky-ey! Ah, Sammy! Ky-ey! Ky-ey! Catch him!"

It was that old enemy, Billy Blubber, ky-eying in part, and laughing also as if he would split. He only expected to get Sammy to the top of the hill and there tell him he was fooled.

"This though is better than a sea-lion hunt," thought Billy, and he roared again and shook till he threatened to come in pieces like a barrel when the hoops are off.

"I will catch you and pay you," said Sammy.

"Try it," defiantly shouted Billy, wearing now his own boots, having dropped his mother's red casings.

Off went Billy. Right ahead, was a great gray ledge. There was a crack in the ledge big enough for a boy's foot. Billy was the boy to have his foot caught in it! He tried to pull it

out, but the sudden wrench was not good for his foot, and there he stood yelling—he was ky-eying now in good earnest.

“I have a great mind,” thought Sammy, “to let you stay there. I wonder how you would like to stay and have a duck come along and nip off your nose.”

It would have been a nice little nip, for Billy’s nose was quite plump. It looked like a fat plum stuck on to the side of a pumpkin.

Well, how long should Sammy have kept him there?

“Till the sun went down,” says some one.

The idea! Why, the sun in summer goes round and round and round, never setting through June and July. Then the sun begins to dip below the horizon, going lower and lower, till at last it disappears. For one hundred and twenty-six days Sammy and Billy did not see the sun. Through that long, dark night, the stars would shine, so white and solemn, down upon the ice and snow everywhere stretching. Until the last of July would have been a long time for plum-nosed Billy to stand with his foot in that crack. Suddenly, Sammy heard a noise. “What is that?” he asked.

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It was a walrus bellowing in the bay. Sammy turned toward the blue water. As he turned, he saw the minister standing near his chapel. Sammy thought of the text he preached from, the Sunday before, and he began to repeat it to himself:

“Love your enemies—”

“I guess I will let Billy stay here about an hour,” said Sammy, meditating.

“Bless them that curse you—”

“I guess I will let Billy stay here half an hour.”

“Do good to them that hate you—”

“I guess I will let Billy stay here ten minutes.”

“And pray for them which despitefully use you—”

“I guess I will take Billy out now!” And Sammy ran towards the prisoner.

“Billy, are you hurt?”

Billy turned his head away, ashamed to speak.

“Let me take your foot out.”

Billy’s foot was about as fat as a bear’s in July, and it came hard. He shook his head. His tongue stuck to his mouth like a clam to his shell, and moved not. Neither could he step.

“I will take you on my back, Billy!” said Sammy.

And that’s the way they went home. Billy in his dress generally looked like a seal standing on his hind flippers, and Sammy resembled one also—nevertheless it was a pleasant sight.

NANNETTE’S LIVE BABY.

A good many years ago, in the city of Philadelphia, lived a little girl, named Nannette.

One summer afternoon her mother went to pay a short visit to her aunt, who lived near by, and gave her little girl permission to amuse herself on the front door-steps until her return. So Nannette, in a clean pink frock and white apron, playing and chatting with her big, wax “Didy,” which was her doll’s name, formed a pretty picture to the passers-by, some of whom walked slowly, in order to hear the child’s talk to her doll.



“You’s a big, old girl,” she went on, smoothing out Didy’s petticoats, “and I’ve had you for ever and ever, and I’s mos’ six. But you grow no bigger. You never, never cry, you don’t. You’s a stupid old thing, and I’m *tired* of *you*, I am! I b’leve you’s only a *make b’leve* baby, and I want a *real, live* baby, I do—a baby that will cry! Now don’t you see,” and she gave the doll’s head a whack—“that you don’t cry? If anybody should hit *me* so, I’d squeam *m-u-r-d-e-r*, I would! And then the p’lissman would come, and there would be an *awful* time. There, now sit up, can’t you? Your back is like a broken stick. Oh, hum, I’m tired of *you*, Didy.”

Leaving the doll leaning in a one-sided way against the door, Nannette posed her dimpled chin in her hands, and sat quietly looking into the street. Presently a woman came along with a bundle in her arms, and seeing Nannette and “Didy” in the doorway, went up the steps and asked the little girl if she would not like to have a real little *live* baby.

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“One that will *cry*?” eagerly asked Nannette.

“Yes, one that will cry, and laugh, too, after a bit,” answered the woman, all the time looking keenly about her; and then in a hushed voice she asked the child if her mother was at home.

“No—she’s gone to see my auntie, shall I call her?” replied Nannette, jumping to her feet, and clapping her hands, from a feeling as if in some way she was to have her long-wished-for *live* baby.

“No; don’t call her; and if you want a baby that will *cry*, you must be very quiet, and listen to me. Mark me now—have you a quarter of a dollar, to pay for a baby?”

“I guess so,” answered Nannette; “I’ve a lot of money up stairs.” And running up to her room, she climbed into a chair, took down her money box from a shelf, and emptying all her pennies and small silver coin into her apron, ran down again.

“This is as much as a quarter of a dollar, isn’t it?”

The woman saw at a glance that there was more than that amount, and hastily taking poor little Nannette’s carefully hoarded pennies, she whispered:

“Now carry the baby up-stairs and keep it in your own little bed. Be careful to make no noise, for it is sound asleep. Don’t tell anybody you have it, until it cries. Mind that. When you hear it cry, you may know it is hungry.”

Then the woman went hurriedly away, and Nannette never saw her again.

Nannette’s little heart was nearly breaking with delight at the thought of having a real, live baby; and holding the bundle fast in her arms, where the woman had placed it, she began trudging up-stairs with it. Finally puffing and panting, her cheeks all aglow, she reached her little bed, and turning down the covers, she put in the bundle and covering it up carefully, she gave it some loving little pats, saying softly, “My baby, my real, little live baby that will *cry*!” And then she carefully tripped out of the room and down-stairs again.

Very soon Nannette’s mother came home, bringing her a fine large apple, which drove all thoughts of the baby from her mind, and it was only when night came, and she was seated at the supper-table with her papa and mamma that she remembered her baby; but at that time, suddenly, from somewhere that surely was in the house, came a baby’s cry; and clapping her hands, her eyes dancing with joy, Nannette began to slide down from her chair, saying with great emphasis, “That’s *my* baby.”

Her mother laughed. “*Your* baby, Nannette?”



“Yes, mamma, *my* baby; don’t you hear it *cry*? ’Tis *hungry*!” And she started to run upstairs, but her mother called her back.

“Why, Nannette, what ails you? What do you mean about *your* baby?” she asked in surprise.

“Why MY BABY, mamma! I bought it for a quarter of a dollar! a baby that *cries*—not a mis’ble make b’leve baby. Oh, how it *does* cry! it must be *awful* hungry!” And away she darted up the stairs.

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Her father and mother arose from their seats in perfect amazement, and followed their little girl to her room, where, lying upon her bed, was a bundle from which came a baby's cries. Nannette's mother began to unfasten the wrappings, and sure enough there was a wee little girl not more than two or three weeks old looking up at them with two great wet eyes.

Of course Nannette was questioned, and she related all she could remember of her talk with the woman from whom she bought the baby. Her papa said perhaps the baby had been stolen, and that something had been given to it to make it sleep.

"But what shall we do with it?" asked both the father and mother. "*Do with it?*" cried Nannette. "Why, it is *my* baby, mamma! I paid all my money for it. It *cries*, it does! I will keep it always."

So it was decided, that the baby should stay, if nobody came to claim it, which nobody ever did, although Nannette's papa put an advertisement in a newspaper about it.

It would take a larger book than this one in which to tell all of Nannette's experiences in taking care of "*my* baby," as she called the little girl, whom she afterward named Victoria, in honor of the then young queen of England.

Victoria is now a woman, and she lives, as does Nannette, in the city of Philadelphia. She has a little girl of her own, "mos' six" who is named Nannette for the good little "sister-mother," who once upon a time bought her mamma of a strange woman for a quarter of a dollar, as she thought. And this other little Nannette never tires of hearing the romantic story of the indolent "Diddy" and the "real little live baby that will *cry*."

BROTHERS FOR SALE.

Molly was six years old; a plump, roly-poly little girl with long, crimped golden hair and great blue eyes. She had ever so many brothers; Fred, a year older than herself, and who went to the Kindergarten with her, was her favorite. Molly was very fond of swinging on the front-yard gate; a forbidden pleasure, by the way. This is the preface to my story about Molly.

One windy, sunny day the little girl was "riding to Boston" on the front gate; she had swung out and let the wind blow her back again a half dozen times, and she was happy as a captain on the high seas, enjoying the swaying, dizzy motion.

Every little girl—and many a boy—has swung on a gate, standing tip-toe on the lower bar, leaning the chin on the upper bar; and as the gate swayed outward, watched the brick pavement rush under foot like a swift stream, all the time dreaming she was a steamboat.

[Illustration]

In some such position, with some such thoughts. I suppose, was our Molly when a strange cry reached her ears.

“Brothers for sale? Brothers for sale? Got any brothers for sale?”

“Dot a plenty,” said Molly as the gate swung plump against the oddest great man.

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He was very tall, wore a huge fur cap, and great coat that reached from his chin to his ankles. The pockets were evidently so full that they bulged out on all sides, and his red belt was stuck full of every odd toy imaginable.

He had besides, an enormous pack on his back.

Molly's eyes, always wholly devoted to the business of seeing, observed all this.

But she only remarked, "What makes your face so *rusty*?"

Perhaps he didn't hear her; anyway he repeated his cry, "Brothers for sale? Got any brothers for sale?" and was moving on when Molly's piping voice screamed after him, "Tell yer yes; dot a plenty!"

This time he stood still.

"Dot one, two, free—many's *ten* I fink. Tommy, he's naughty, calls my rag dolly a meal-bag—I'll sell him. He's a drefful wicked boy; he snaps beans at the teacher and gets a whipping every single day."

"I'll take him," said the big man. "How much shall I pay you—what shall I give you for him?"

"A han'kercher with some *perfoomery* on it."

"Yes, yes, here you have it," he said, and taking a great bottle from his belt, and a little blue-bordered handkerchief from one pocket, he sprinkled it profusely with some real cologne and gave it to the delighted child.

"Any more brothers for sale, little girl? I'm in want of some boys?"

"Yes, sir! You can have Johnny, he tears up my dolls and mamma lets him wear my bestest sash—and the baby, he gets the coli'c and screams—and Harry, he won't bring in the wood for mamma, and he eats up my candy and has cookies for supper and I don't, *and*—"

"I'll take 'em all," grunted the big man.

"I'll sell Harry for a doll with *truly* hair and a black silk and ear-rings and some choc'late ca'mels," said she with the air of an old trader.

"What luck!" he laughed; and diving into another pocket, he brought forth a handful of candy and filled Molly's apron pockets, then taking off his great cap he shook down a lovely doll, with *truly* hair indeed, long and curly, dressed in a black silk with train and pull-back just like mamma's.

“And what’ll you sell Jonathan for?”

“Johnny, you mean—you can have him for a kitten sir.”

In an instant the fur cap was off, and a little mewling kitten was produced, for her wondering and delighted gaze.

“And the baby—he wouldn’t be worth much to me—”

“Well, he is to me—but I’ll sell him for a red cardinal sash and a little sister ’bout as big as Tilly White.”

“Whew!” he exclaimed, “you most take my breath away! but here’s the sash—a beauty, too—I don’t happen to have any little sisters with me,” feeling of the outside of his pockets, peering into his pack, and even taking off the great cap and shaking it as if a little girl *might* be folded up in that. “No, really I haven’t a little sister about me, but don’t you cry; I’ll bring one round to-morrow—and now I must be picking up these brothers—where are they?”

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"Baby Willie is in the back-yard in his carriage and Johnny and Harry are playing *fooner* with him," said she, gravely.

"But that wasn't all; don't cheat me, little girl!" frowned the big freckled-faced man.

"No! I wasn't going to—Tommy—he's in the yard round the corner there with the big boys—he's 'leven—he's my greatest brother—he's a drefful wicked boy—" Molly was going on with the bean-story very likely, but at that moment the funeral procession of a baby carriage and two followers filed up.

The great man darted forward, seized three-year-old Johnny and Harry in his arms, stuffed one head-first, the other legs-first, into the monstrous pack.

The one that went in head-first had his fat legs left dangling; the one that went in legs-first, his head sticking out.

The baby went into one of his deep pockets where his screams were stifled.

This was the work of a second and the man hurried out of sight, saying cheerily over his shoulder to Molly, "I'll bring round the little sister to-morrow."

Molly had so many things to take her attention that she had no time to be conscience-smitten.

There was her odorous handkerchief; her sash, which she hung over her arm; her pockets full of candy; under one arm the wonderful doll; under the other, the live kitten.

But in a half hour the doll had ceased to charm; she couldn't tie the sash herself; the "perfoomery" had evaporated; the kitten had scratched her hand because Molly had picked her up by the tail; only a few chocolate caramels were left, and, I suspect that all seemed as "vanity of vanities" to poor Molly. Just then Fred, her favorite and only remaining brother, came dancing down the path and stopped, amazed before Molly's display of wealth.

[Illustration: SHE COULDN'T SPARE FREDDIE.]

Somehow the "choc'late ca'amels" tasted sweeter again when she shared them with Fred, and she couldn't help saying, "Ain't they *boolicious*, Freddie?"

She hadn't time to tell Freddie how she came possessed of all her treasures, for there again appeared at the gate the same great man, with his cry, "Brother for sale!"

"No, no!" screamed Molly, throwing her two fat arms round Fred, at the same time crying, "Run away Freddie, quick! run away."

Now considering that Fred had the doll and the kitten in his lap, and his sister's arms around his neck, it wasn't strange that the little fellow didn't run.

"I'll give you ten dollars for this boy," said the great man, unwinding Molly's arms, and picking fat Fred up, and thrusting him like a roll of cotton batting under his arm.

Molly screamed and—and—well—she woke.

She hadn't been swinging on the gate at all; there wasn't any horrid, *rusty*-faced man standing by her; she had been asleep in school and dreaming.

But she couldn't believe it; and with all Miss Winche's kind coaxing, she wouldn't lift her face from her desk, and would only sob, "I want my Freddie! I want my Freddie!"

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The funniest part of it was, the child hadn't been asleep five minutes. She had been idly listening to a spelling class, and just after the word "*sail*" dropped into a nap.

By the way, perhaps I should not omit to mention that before she went to school that morning she had declared to her mother that boys were *bothers*; no wonder! baby Willie, at breakfast, had punched his little fist down into her mug, spilled the milk, and sent the mug crashing on the floor. Johnny had taken the orange out of her sacque pocket, and she had to let him have it because he was "a little fellow," and Harry and Tommy had carried all the cookies to school in their pockets.

But now—after the dream, Molly hugged the baby; and she said confidentially to mamma, "Isn't he sweet?—I don't think boys are a bother, do you, mamma?"

And a little later, while rocking her old rag-doll, "mamma," said she, "I won't ever swing on the front-gate again ever—ever—ever in my life."

A STORY OF A CLOCK.

My real name was so short that I was called Nancy, "for long." I was the fourth child in a very large family. The three elder were a brother and two sisters. The first, very quick at books and figures, finished his education at an early age, and seemed to me about as old and dignified as my father. My sisters, Sarah and Mary, were exemplary in school and out. The former, at eight, read Virgil; painted "Our Mother's Grave" at eleven—'twas an imaginary grave judging from the happy children standing by; wrote rhymes for all the albums, printed verses on card-board and kept on living. Mary read every book she could find; had a prize at six years of age for digesting "Rollins' Ancient History;" had great mathematical talent, and though she sighed in her fourteenth year that she had grown old, yet continues to add to her age, being one of the oldest professors in a flourishing college.

With such precedences, it is not strange that my parents were astonished when their fourth child developed other and less exaggerated traits, with no inclination to be moulded. Within ten months of my eighth year, my teacher, who had previously dealt with Sarah and Mary with great success, made the following remark to me: "If thou wilt learn to answer all those questions in astronomy," passing her pencil lightly over two pages in *Wilkin's Elements* "before next seventh day, I'll give thee two cents and a nice note to thy parents" (my father was a scientific man, and my mother a prime mover in our education).

"Two cents" did seem quite a temptation, but the lesson I concluded not to get. "I worked wiser than I knew." I may have wanted a "two cents" many a time since, but I never was sorry about that. Spelling, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history and reading, though they were the Peter-Parley edition, seemed about enough food for a

child that was hungering and thirsting for a doll like Judith Collin's, and for capacity to outrun the neighboring boys. To be sure the recitation in concert, where the names of the asteroids, only four in number (instead of a million and four) were brought out by some of us, as "vesper," "pallid," "you know," and "serious" showed that we did not confine ourselves too closely to the book.

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Seventh-day afternoon was a holiday, and on one of these occasions I was sent to stay with my grandmother, as my mother, as my maiden aunt (the latter lived with my grandmother) were going to Polpis to a corn-pudding party. I was too troublesome to be left at home, therefore, two birds were to be killed with one stone.

Now I had for a long time desired to be left alone with my lame and deaf grandmother and the Tall Clock, especially the Tall Clock. I went, therefore, to her old house on Plover street in a calm and lovely frame of mind and helped get my aunt ready for the ride.

'Twas a cold day though September; and after she took her seat in the flag-chair tied into the cart, I conceived the notion to add my grandmother's best "heppy" to the wraps which they had already put into the calash. I always had wanted a chance at that camphor-trunk; and the above cloak, too nice to be worn, lay in the bottom underneath a mighty weight of neatly-folded articles of winter raiment. It came out with a "long pull" and many a "strong pull" and I got to the door with the head of it, while the whole length of this precious bright coating was dragging on the floor. But the cart had started, and when my aunt looked back, I was flourishing this "heppy" to see the wind fill it.

I returned to the room, restored the article to the chest quite snugly, leaving one corner hanging out and that I stuffed in afterwards and jumped upon the cover of the trunk so that it shut. Very demurely I sat down before the open fire by my grandmother's easy chair, rocking furiously, watching my own face in the bright andirons, whose convex surfaces reflected first a "small Nancy" far off, then as I rocked forward, a large and distorted figure. My rapid motions made such rapid caricatures that I remained absorbed and attentive. My grandmother, not seeing the cause of my content, decided (as she told my mother afterwards), "that the child was sick, or becoming regenerated." Happy illusion!

At last, my grandmother got to nodding and I sprang to my long-contemplated work.

Putting a cricket into one of the best rush-bottom chairs, I climbed to the Clock; took off the frame glass and all, from its head, placing it noiselessly on the floor; opened the tall door in the body of the clock; drew out and unhung the pendulum—the striking weight, whose string was broken, was made all right and put for the time being on the table. Then the "moon and stars" which had been fixed for a quarter of a century, were made to spin; the "days of the month" refused to pass in review without a squeak that must be remedied, so I flew into the closet to get some sweet oil which was goose-grease; but shutting the closet-door I roused my grandmother.

I quietly went at the old rocking again, the bottle of goose-grease in my pocket, which I feared might melt and I should lose the material—the bottle was already low.

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Fortunately my grandmother began napping again, and I resumed my task. Applying the oil with a bird's wing was a lavish process—the wheels moved easily; the hands became quite slippery; the moon “rose and set” to order; the days of the month glided thirty times a minute, and I was just using a pin to prove the material of the dial when my grandmother turned her head, at the same time reaching for her cane (the emergency had been foreseen and special care had I taken that the cane should not be forthcoming). “Nancy! Nancy! is thee crazy?”

Thinking to strengthen this idea, I jumped into the clock and held the door fast; but finally thinking 'twas cowardly not to face it I jumped out again, up into the chair, saying, “I am mending this old clock;” and notwithstanding her remonstrances, continued my work putting back the various pieces. When I was afraid of “giving out and giving up,” I decided I would just answer her back once and say “I wont.” The wickedness would certainly discourage her beyond a hope, and then I could finish.

So I put the moon on, staring full; in putting on the hands I got, I thought, sufficiently worked up to venture my prepared reply to her repeated “get down!”

I accordingly approached my grandmother, stopping some feet from her; bent my body half-over, my long red hair covering my eyes, and my head suiting its action to my earnestness, and in a decided rebellious tone, I spelled, “I W-O-N-T;” but accidentally giving myself a turn on my heel I fell to the floor, with the pronunciation still unexpressed.

I quickly rose, though I saw stars without any “two cents,” and returned to, and finished my work. I had just put the last touch on when I heard the wheels. How I dreaded my aunt's appearance! As she entered the door I was found “demurely rocking” to the pictures in the andirons.

My aunt thought I did not seem natural, and kissed me as being “too good, perhaps, to be well.” My grandmother tried to speak, but I interrupted:

“I must go home without my tea. I am not afraid of the dark, and I better go.”

This was another proof of indisposition to the aunt. I left the house, kissing as I thought, my grandmother into silence; but as I looked back I saw she could not utter a word without laughing at the aunt's anxiety, and so had to put off the narration till after my departure.

I went home about as fast as possible; desired to go to bed immediately—never went before without being sent, and then not in a very good mood. My mother followed me with a talk of “herb tea,” and as I thought I must have some “end to the farce,” I agreed that a little might do me good. My mother consequently brought me, I do believe, a “Scripture measure” pint of bitter tea, which I hurriedly drank, as I knew my sisters had

already started for my grandmother's, to see how I had been through the afternoon. When they returned, though I heard the laughing and talking in the sitting-room below, I was, to all intents and purposes, sound asleep and snoring.

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No allusion was ever made to my demeanor. I went to school as usual, and told the school-girls that I had had such a good time at my aunt's the day before that I would never go there again "as long as I lived."

My grandmother and aunt died long ago. For years I had no reason to believe that my afternoon's tragedy was known to any one. But once, not long since, speaking of that clock, I said, "I'm glad it did not descend to me;" when a friend replied, with a very knowing look, "So is your grandmother!"

NAUGHTY ZAY.

[Illustration]

Once upon a time there was a dear little naughty girl, not *bad*, she would not have been so dear had she been really bad, but just naughty sometimes, and I must confess "sometimes" came pretty often. She had all sorts of loving scolding names, such as "precious torment," "darling bother," and she kept her poor dear grandmother on a continuous trot to see what mischief she was in, and frightened her mother (who thought everybody must want to steal Zay) by hiding behind the Missouri currant bush until every nook and corner had been searched; and she made her uncle shake his head gravely because she never could get beyond the first question in the Catechism, "what is your name?" and even then would answer Zay, although he had told her that "that was not her name at all; she had been baptized Salome; and Zay was a name she had no right to whatever." Nor can I begin to tell you the times I have exhausted all my strength putting her sturdy little self into the closet, and then standing first on one foot, then on the other, until I was ready to drop, listening at the keyhole for the first small sob of repentance.

Things had gone wrong with our naughty little Zay this morning. Mary, the good old cook, who had been in the house years before Zay was born, had actually refused to let her make any more mud-pies on her kitchen window; and mamma and grandma had sided with the enemy.

Zay was a little dumpling of a girl, with hard round cheeks like red apples, fat dimpled arms, and such wide-open eyes, and she looked very funny now as she drew herself up to her fullest height, which was not much of a height after all, brushed off her pretty blue dress, shook down her clean ruffled apron, and addressed us all in very solemn tones:

"I jes' want to tell you, I've been *resulted*, and I am never going to live here anymore! I'll go 'way; clear off in the woods! And then I guess you'll all be sorry! Mary need never make any more scrambled eggs for breakfast, cause" (she almost broke down at the bare thought of so direful a catastrophe), "cause there'll never be any chil'en to eat 'em

anymore! And *then* I guess grandpa will be sorry when he comes home tired, and doesn't have his s'ippers all yeddy!"

"O," said her mamma, gravely, "you are going right off, are you, before dinner?"

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"Yes, wight st'ait away, *now*! I'll go get my hat."

Down stairs the quick feet pattered to the hall-closet where the little sun hat hung, always ready for the garden. Soon she was back, and held her chin up with great composure for grandma to tie the strings.

The dear grandmother quietly laid her fine sewing down beside her on the sofa. "Is my little girl going away off by herself in the woods?"

"Yes, miles and *mileses*!"

"And what will you do when you get hungry?"

"Why, I'm going to take all my money," forthwith going to a drawer in the old-fashioned book-case, and taking out a diminutive porte-monnaie, which contained her whole fortune, three silver three-cent pieces, and hanging it on her fat little hand, "and I can go to some g'ocery in the woods, and buy lots of butter crackers."

I, sitting in an easy chair, just recovered from a long illness, suggested, "But, Zay, you might want something besides crackers. I know a little girl who is very fond of 'drum-sticks' and 'wish-bones'!"

"I can eat bears and wolves. I can make gravy, and," she added, "I'm going to take grandpa's gun wif me."

"Very well," answered her mamma, going to grandfather's closet and bringing out the gun, which was twice as large as the child.

There she stood before us—a little blue-eyed girl with a demure sun-hat shading a very resolute and, as yet, untroubled face, the gun held up tight against her with one fat dimpled hand, while from the other dangled the little purse.

"I'm all yeddy now, so good-bye ev'ybody," she said at last.

"Good-bye," said gentle grandma, holding up the little face to kiss the firm red lips. "I am afraid I shall miss my little girl to-night when I want the red stand drawn out for the drop light; and I'm sure grandpa will need his slippers."

Zay looked somewhat irresolute; but her mamma here spoke:

"I think," said she, "if you intend to reach the woods before dark you should start at once, for it is almost two o'clock now."

"Good-bye ev'ybody," said Zay again.

“And,” said Lita, “I’ll carry the gun down and open the front gate for you.”

Bravely the child marched out of the room, out of the front door and gate. There Lita handed her the gun; but after trying several times to walk with it, she told Lita that she didn’t know as she should care for any wolf wish-bone with her butter crackers, and asked her to take the gun back in the house, and then she banged the gate, hoping Mary saw her, with an air of importance, and pattered off on a fast little dog-trot down the street.

Meanwhile we were all watching her behind the blinds.

“Don’t lose sight of her,” said mamma, “but don’t let her see you!”

This is what Lita saw. A sturdy little figure walking steadily onward, never looking back. At length it stops, opens the little purse, counts its money, but never noting that in the trouble with the clasps the three little coins fall, like three silver rain drops, to the pavement. It goes on and on, till Lita fears it will really go out of sight. Then the little figure “slows up” again, opens the little purse, and stops short!

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Ah, the horrors of poverty! Lita understands the poor little irresolute figure. No money means no butter crackers, and no butter crackers means despair. The little steps come homeward. The blue eyes are bent on the ground. She does not know that grandpa has come quietly up behind her, and found each little silver piece.

The little rebel appeared in the hall just as dinner was carried in. There was a most savory odor of fricassee. Grandma and mamma and Lita were just entering the dining room.

"Well," Zay calmly announced, "I 'cluded not to go till after dinner."

"Is that so?" quietly replied her mother. "But you might better have gone on. Any little girl who wants to leave a nice home because she can't have her own way, needn't look for any dinner here! I expected you to dine on butter crackers and bears."

"I like chicken, I do," said proud little Zay with appealing eyes, but no tears; "and then I lost all my pennies!"

In vain did the tender hearted grandma pull mamma's dress,—mamma entered the dining room and shut the door; and up came poor Zay to the room where I awaited my dinner, for she had seen a tray borne hither. But she did not know that her mamma's parting injunction had been, "you must not give her anything! I must—indeed, I *wish* to teach my child a lesson."

Little sun-hat and empty porte-monnaie put away, quietly she seated herself on the sofa opposite me, with two little fat feet hanging dangling down. Dignity kept her silent, and amusement mingled with pity made me so.

This state of things lasted for some moments, while the dainties were diminishing from my plate. Every mouthful was wistfully watched. At length with grave old-fashioned face, she asked, "Are you sorry for beggar chil'en, Aunty?"

"Very sorry indeed," I replied with composure.

Then with a tremor in the voice:

"Aunty, if you saw a little child in the street a starvin' to death for some bread and butter wif jelly on it, wouldn't you give her some?"

I shook my head. Another pause, and then with little fat hands clasped, and voice full of sobs, poor little Zay cried out, "Oh, Aunty, if you saw a little girl starvin' to death for sponge cake, wouldn't you give her some?"

"How could I, Zay, if the little girl's mamma had forbidden it?"



All her fortitude was gone. She burst into tears. She laid her head down on the sofa and sobbed.

“Oh, oh! and they had fricasseed chicken, with Mary’s nice toast under it; and you have sponge-cake and wine-jelly; and I haven’t nuffin; there isn’t one single butter cracker in the house!”

At this climax of misery the house resounded with her lamentations, in which my tears would mingle; but fortunately the dear grand-parents soon appeared to comfort their darling. And so, somehow, up on grandpa’s lap it became easier to see how naughty it was to annoy good old Mary, and how ungrateful it was to wish to run away from home. And pardons were begged and kisses were given, and the three little silver pieces crept back into the tiny porte-monnaie, and Zay had some of Mary’s nice toast with lots of gravy, and a drum-stick and a wish-bone.

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Zay is a young lady now, and I presume when she reads this story she will pout and blush, and the more because it is every word true.

THE LEGEND OF THE SALT SEA.

Once upon a time there lived by the great sea two brothers, named Klaus and Koerg; the elder inheriting the rich estates of his ancestors; the younger a woodchopper, and so poor that it was oftentimes a difficult task for him to provide bread for his wife and little children.

Hard as life often seems it may be even harder; and so bitterly realized Koerg when, nigh on to one merry Christmas-tide, an accident deprived him of his strong right hand, thereby cutting off forever his slender means of livelihood. There was but one resource, and, with crushed spirit Koerg betook himself to his elder brother to crave some mercy for his starving babes.

Klaus was a harsh man, with love only for his yellow gold. He frowned impatiently when Koerg interrupted his selfish dreams, and, for answer to his pitiful story, threw him a loaf of bread and a pudding, bidding him begone and be satisfied. And Koerg went forth with a heavy heart, his faint hope dead.

His homeward path followed the raging sea. The night was dark and stormy, the waves bellowed and lashed at the shore like an army of infuriated beasts; but Koerg heeded it not, only clutched his bread and pudding, and walked on with a white despairing face. Suddenly, as he emerged from a thick bit of woods, he became conscious of a strange light encircling him, and halting, quite terrified at the phenomenon, he beheld a little old man, snow-haired and bearded, standing plump in the path before him.

"You seem in trouble, friend," he ejaculated, with a chuckle. "Something twists in your world, I trow."

Koerg was not slow to recognize a *geist*; his knees shook, and he dared not utter a word. The elf looked down upon him half displeased, yet chuckling merrily withal.

"You have nothing to fear from me," he continued, sweetly. "I am the guardian of the honest poor. This night I come to reveal to you a secret, which, rightly used, will bestow upon you riches, life-lasting and unlimited."

Koerg, bewildered, could not yet yield simple faith. He clutched desperately his bread and pudding. He found no joyful words.

The little man frowned scathingly on the gift of Klaus, then burst into a scornful laugh.

[Illustration: THE WONDER-MILL GRINDS.]



“It is always thus, friend, with the money elves; they deal niggardly, even at the full. But, care not, since this meagre chip will prove to you a barter for millions. Follow me! The great estates to Klaus; the treasures of the sea Koerg shall know, to-night!” And, with a hand-wave, the elf led the way over the rough cliffs, Koerg mutely following.

[Illustration: THE GEIST.]

He paused at the base of a hillock, shaped like a horseshoe—a spot which Koerg knew well—a place of rocks, reefs, and general ill-report.

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"The time is favorable," muttered the little man, "my children are hungry, to-night." And, turning to Koerg, he continued: "Take the gift of Klaus and go down into the sea. A crowd will swarm upon you, as persistent and voracious as any in this upper world. Ask for the *wonder-mill*, and sacrifice your treasures only in its exchange. I will await you here."

A spell immediately enwrapped the senses of Koerg. Calm and fearless, he descended into the deep, floating dreamily downward to the glittering caves from whence, exactly as the elf had depicted, swarmed forth troops of mermen and mermaids, with eyes and arms voraciously extended towards the bread and the pudding he held tightly clutched to his breast. But Koerg, spurred on by the elf, resisted them all, nor parted with a single crumb till the wonder-mill lay safe in his embrace. The little man stood waiting on the brink.

"I dedicate this to the honest poor," he said, softly. "Yes, Koerg, it is yours. Ask of it what you will, and it shall never fail you—gold, silver, hundreds of loaves and puddings. But—" and here the little man paused, a shudder quivered through his frame, and he continued, solemnly—"remember, that by no hand but yours can it be controlled. Guard it carefully, for the day you part with it your portion shall be ashes, and *mine* annihilation."

When Koerg dared lift his eyes the elf had disappeared.

Rahel sat at home with the children, weeping. She knew well the heart of her brother Klaus, and how vain would be Koerg's last effort to save them from starvation. A step sounded on the path without. Rahel and the babes stopped to listen. It was not dull and heavy as they had expected, but blithe as the jingle of sleigh-bells, and, in a second, Koerg burst in upon them, dimpling all over with merry laughter. Rahel regarded him, amazed.

"You bring no bread to our starving babes, and yet you laugh," she said. "Oh, Koerg! Koerg! trouble has made you mad!"

Still chuckling he slipped the wonder-mill from beneath his coat and said, softly:

"Hush, Rahel! A *geist* has been with me to-night. I have brought endless fortune from the depths of the sea." And, plump in the eyes of his astonished wife, he began turning out loaves and puddings with such a gusto that the room was soon filled, and Rahel fain to implore him to cease his elfish work.

From that night, just as the little man had said, riches unlimited came to the house of Koerg. No treasure too great for the mill to produce; and, though the woodchopper strove hard at secrecy, its fame spread far and wide from the mountains back to the sea, and folks flocked by thousands to view the magic engine that Koerg had fished up

from the the ocean's depths. And though, always good humoredly, he tested its powers and loaded his guests with princely gifts, yet he rested night after night more uneasily upon his pillow, remembering the solemn words of the *geist*:

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“The day you part with it your portion shall be ashes, and *mine* annihilation.”

One day, after the space of a year, there came to the woodchopper’s door a captain from far-off lands.

“I am here,” he said, “to see the famous wonder-mill that blesses the house of Koerg.”

There was a simplicity about the old tar that completely dismantled Koerg. With less than ordinary caution he brought forth the mill, and displayed it, in all its phases, before his astonished guest.

“It is a clever trickster,” finally he quoth. “I wonder if it could grind so common a thing as salt.”

Koerg chuckled contemptuously, and speedily spurted right and left such a briny shower as made the old tar blink spasmodically and walk hurriedly away.

But, alas! that night Koerg missed the mill from his side; and when, pale and shivering, he sought the golden treasures hid ’neath the floor, he found only an ashy heap, heard only the mournful words:

“The mermen and mermaids are dead. The *geists* have ceased to reign.”

Far out on the blue bosom of the sea the jolly captain rode, shouting uproariously over the treasure he had secured.

“Precious wonder-mill,” he sang, “I will try thee in all thy ways. First salt for savor, then ducks for food, and gold to the end of my days.” And he started the tiny wheels, and clapped his hands frantically at its ready compliance to his will.

Forth poured the sparkling, crusty grain in one buzzing maze of whiteness. Thick gathered the milky drifts from bow to stern. Still shouted the captain his savage joy till—a-sudden he paused, gazed as if spell-bound on the mill’s mad work, with a cry of terror sprang forward and grasped the check. But, in vain. There was no surcease to its labor. Higher and higher up lifted the mighty salt banks, and, in a twinkling, both destroyed and destroyer sank helpless into the depths of the sea.

And, down amid the green sea-weeds, the wonder-mill still stands, pouring forth salt the whole day long—no hand to check its raging; for the mermen and mermaids are all dead, and the *geists* have ceased to reign.

And this is why the sea-water is salt.

[Illustration]

THE MAN WITH THE STRAW HAT.

It is nothing strange that a man should wear a straw hat; but—well, listen to my story.

One winter I was travelling near Lake Ontario, and, as the day was dark, I could not see every one in the car very plainly. There was a little old man near whose face I could but just see—for he had on a small black hat, and his coat collar was turned up. Soon after I noticed him the train stopped at the station where I was to get off. The old man and five or six other persons also left the train. We all stepped into a sleigh, and were driven several miles over the snow to a hotel.

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"It is *very* cold," said the little old man as we started.

"Yes," said one of the passengers; "but we shall not be long going."

After a short pause, he again spoke:

"It is certainly very cold. I am truly afraid I shall freeze before we get there."

"O, no! not so very cold," said I, drawing my fur cap tightly over my ears.

"I was never so cold in my life!" growled the little man. "My ears are freezing, now."

"Sorry I can't help you," I said, with a feeling of true sympathy; "but we have not much further to go."

Presently he growled again:

"I know I shall freeze, anyhow. Can I take your muffler?"

I spared my muffler. But, pretty soon, I heard from him again:

"The top of my head is very cold, and I shall have a fearful headache."

We soon reached the hotel and entered the office, where a warm fire welcomed us. The little old man undid the muffler and handed it to me. He then removed his hat, and I discovered *that it was of straw*, and, also, that he was very bald.

My pity for the man was all gone in a moment. It could not be that he had no other hat, for he was dressed well enough to own twenty hats. I never found out what his reason was for wearing such a hat in the winter.

I fell to moralizing presently; but I will not here write down my reflections. Suffice it to say that every day in the year I meet children, and grown people too, for that matter, who are "*wearing straw hats in the winter*," and suffering various dreadful things in consequence thereof. The very next time you get into trouble, before you grumble and fret, see if it is not because you are *wearing a straw hat in winter*.

[Illustration]

RUFFLES AND PUFFS.

She stood looking down upon her neat plaid dress with a very dissatisfied face.

"Mamma," she said, "why can't I wear pretty clothes every day like Irene Clarke? She always has puffs and ruffles, and her aprons are trimmed so nice."

Mamma finished buttoning the tippet and tied down the snug little hat.

“Puffs and ruffles and dainty aprons *are* nice,” she replied gently. “Mamma likes pretty things as well as Lou, but always in their place, dearie.”

But mamma’s words did not help. Little Lou went out with the same dissatisfied face.

“They say mammas know best,” she spoke. “It’s funny, though. Irene’s mamma knows a different best from mine—O, there she is!” and Lou hurried to meet the little city girl whose puffs and ruffles had made her plaid frock seem so mean.

[Illustration: LOU.]

It chanced that Irene wore a fresh suit, one that Lou had never seen. Delightedly she spied the dainty robe.

“Ain’t that sweet!” she exclaimed, and feasted her eyes till, suddenly looking down at Irene’s gaiters, she caught a glimpse of a curious field-bug trotting along on the ground. My little lady forgot the ruffles, forgot everything but her desire for a closer view.

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"O, see—see!" she cried excitedly, half-running, half-crawling after the bug, "see this funny thing! I can't catch him! But, O my—ain't he cunnin'! Irene, do get down here and see!"

Irene took a step forward, then stood still.

"I can't," she said, "I might soil my dress."

But Lou scarcely heard. She was absorbed in the funny bug. On she went trying to catch him, till finally he slipped round a tree-root and was seen no more.

Back came Lou to Irene brushing the dirt from her frock.

"It's cold standin' here," she said, "let's play tag."

"I can't," spoke Irene again, "I might trip and soil my dress."

Lou's eyes went up and down the dainty robe. "It isn't much of a tag-frock," she thought. But she was a restless maid. Between hopping and dancing she glanced up at the sky and exclaimed:

"I guess it'll snow to-night. If it does, come over to my house to-morrow and we'll get out the sled. We can take turns bein' horse, you know."

But Irene shook her head.

"I'd like to," she replied, "but mamma won't let me. I haven't a dress that's fit."

Lou's face gleamed with surprise.

"O, my!" she said, "can't you ever take a hill-ride, or build a snow-man, or—" but Irene looked so sober that Lou's sympathies awoke. "Never mind," she added, "you'll come up to your grandpa's again in the summer; then you'll wear *do-up* clothes, and we'll have lots of fun."

"The *do-up* clothes are the worst," replied Irene sadly. "Mamma don't want *them* soiled."

Lou looked down at her plaid frock; she thought of the plentiful gingham at home. Suddenly she turned and rushed headlong back to mamma.

"O my!" she began, "Irene Clarke can't have no fun! She ain't got no slide-dresses, she can't soil her *do-up* clothes, and—O my! mamma—it's all them ruffles and puffs! I wouldn't wear 'em for the world! No, I just wouldn't!"



Mamma could but smile.

"I am glad my little girl has changed," she said. "I feared, a while ago, that because she could not have ruffles and puffs on her dresses she was going to wear them up in her face."

The free little out-of-doors girl blushed; and then she could have hugged her plaid frock for very joy.

SUGAR RIVER.

[Illustration]

"Sugar River!" The little cup-bearing hand stood transfixed halfway from table to lip. The silver cup tilted part way over in sheer astonishment. Drip, drip, drip, dripped the contents down into Tot's scrap of ruffled and embroidered lap.

"Bless me! Look at that child!" cried Tot's papa. And Tot was looked at and hustled away, and the little silver mug tried to drown itself in a yellow stream of sunshine flowing across the table; and, failing in that, tried to sparkle just as Tot's eyes had sparkled, and failed in that, too. For that was O, very bright—nothing was brighter than Tot's eyes.

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"Well, Totchen," said Tot's boy-uncle Will, looking up from his book as something pierced his knee, as only Tot's small elbow could pierce. "Well, Totchen; what is it? Stories? Then *jump!*"

O, what happy state to sit enthroned upon a big boy-uncle's knee, and listen, listen, listen, with eyes like the dog's in the fairy story—"as big as the great round tower at Copenhagen"—more or less!

"What shall I tell you? Aladdin? Puss in Boots? Cin—"

"Soogar Wiver" interrupted Tot, promptly.

"*Soogar Wiver?* Why, what a little pitcher for ears! What do you know about Soogar Wiver?"

"Oo said," said Tot, with decision, "that oo went fisin' in Soogar Wiver."

"Why, so I did," said the boy, reflectively.

"Is it vewy sweet?" asked Tot.

"Sweet?" echoed the boy, taking his wicked cue and with a prolonged drawing in of the lips. "I should say so! Why, its bed is solid sugar, with as many grades of sugar grains for sand as one finds in a grocer shop."

"Do wivers do to bed dus 'ike 'ittle dirls?" demanded Tot, whose young existence was embittered by that seemingly needless ceremony.

"You see," said the boy, with the air of communicating much useful information, "it is even worse than that. They never get up at all. Only once in a while they get into tantrums and break loose and make every one scatter; for a river is one of the quickest fellows at a run you ever saw. And well they might be, for they are at it all the time, asleep or awake."

"I sood 'ike to see Soogar Wiver," said Tot.

"Wouldn't you!" And Will, fairly launched, tossed all conscientious scruples overboard, and steered boldly out into the deep waters of wildest imagination. "You just would! Why, as I said, the river bed is solid sugar. Think how nice to be able to turn over and take a gnaw at your bed-post when you feel hungry! The pebbles are sugar plums, the bigger stones are broken sugar loaves, and the rocks, why, the rocks are made out of rock candy, of course."

Tot sighed, blissfully.

“It is the jolliest place to go fishing. You just lie down on a rock, nibble it occasionally, chew up a few pebbles, take a bite at a stone, and if you are thirsty—as, of course, you would be—there is a whole river of *eau sucre*—that is what the French call sweetened water—running right by, enough to supply all France. And, all the time, you are hauling up the fish just as fast as they can bite. They are a peculiar kind of fish, wouldn’t look at a worm. Nothing short of taffy bait will tempt them. They look like those fishes you buy at the confectioners—penny apiece—very high-colored, very flat, and mostly tail; and, when cooked, they taste very much like them.”

Tot still gazed up into the remorseless boy’s face in unblinking confidence. And, indeed, from one who, for the last two weeks, together with Tot, had been on the most familiar footing with giants, ogres, and hop-o-my-thumbs, and held the most sympathizing relations towards enchanted princesses and conquering knights, an account of a “Soogar Wiver,” was not to be regarded as startling. As for Will’s conscience—well, his mission with Tot was to amuse, not instruct—if Tot was amused the whole end and aim of his efforts was attained.

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"We tried having dories made of the same material of those candy marbles that nothing but time and long-enduring patience will ever make an end of. But the fellows had such a habit, as they floated down the stream, of eating up the oars, we had to give it up—"

"Will," said Tot's mamma, at the open door, "are you ready? Run away to Ellen, Tot, and be a good little girl."

Tot descended from her throne, slowly and unwillingly, and, going obediently away, never knew about the beautiful river fairy just then springing to life, like Minerva in the brain of Jove, in Will's fancy, purposely to make Tot's acquaintance.

With glistening wonder in her eyes, in robe of trailing, snowy, sun-shot mist, with water lilies dropping from her hair, and the cave—Will could have provided for her such a cave, the water tinkling and trickling from the walls hung with silver spray, stalactites of purest barley sugar glittering, pillars of creamiest cream candy shimmering; and, to crown all and above all, the fairy would have had a daily diet of cream cakes and caramels.

But, before all this splendor of material could be built up into words, the builder had departed, the river fairy had melted back and away into her native mist, and Tot never knew.

That night, Will tossed Tot flying once more into the air, rescued once more his fresh collar from her crumpling embrace, kissed her once more, good-by this time, and was off and away on the cars to school. No more stories. No more fairies. No more anything. Only a wonderful river winding and gleaming and leaping through Tot's childish dreams—beautiful, wonderful "Soogar Wiver," where happy Uncle Will went fishing, lying on the bed of rock candy.

One morning, all in the gray and quiet, Tot had a queer dream. She thought some one said, with a funny little catch in the voice: "Wake up, little Tot, mamma's treasure," and some one held her so tightly she could hardly breathe. And she opened her eyes and shut them again, quite dazzled; but she thought she saw papa and mamma standing beside her bed, and the room was all on fire it was so bright to two, poor, sleepy, baby eyes, and papa's voice seemed to say, a great way off:

"Poor, little, sleepy Tot."

It was such a queer dream, but not half so queer as what followed; for, after a while, she woke up and went right on dreaming just the same. That was very strange. How could it be anything else than a dream, to be taken up by gaslight and dressed all in her little street coat and hat before breakfast, to be made to drink milk and eat when she wasn't hungry, to be petted and cried over and half crushed in mamma's arms, to be taken by papa out into the cool, clear dawning, with the sky just beginning to flush like a sea shell

and a waking bird or two to twitter about getting up, to be put into a coach that rolled and rumbled, to be put into something else that rolled and rumbled a thousand times worse; nothing had ever happened anything like this in any of Tot's waking hours before.

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After the sun had climbed up a little way into the sky, grown blue and bluer, Tot began to accept the situation a little, and lay very still in papa's arms (the fresh morning breeze tapping her cheek and lifting her long crimped hair with cool, gentle fingers), watching the fences running away like mad, the trees gliding gracefully by in long endless procession, little white cottages and funny little hovels, and pretty little villages hopping suddenly in and then as suddenly out of the scene, a glimpse into shady depths of woods, a glint of a blue, nestling, lily-pad-speckled pond, an emerald gleam of peaceful meadows, a sight at a snowy tethered goat, of dappled grazing cows, a roll and rush and roar through riven, dripping rocks.

Papa told his little girl all about it. How little children in the town where Tot lived were very sick of a dangerous disease—diphtheria. And how, coming home last evening from business and learning of several fresh cases, he had become alarmed for his darling and consulted mamma, and had succeeded in frightening her so thoroughly, that she had sat up all night to get Tot's things ready so that she might start the very next morning, on the very first early morning train, to where grandmamma lived.

"And, there," said papa, after they had ridden all the long forenoon, "there's Sugar River, Tot, where I used to fish when I was a boy!"

"O!" cried Tot, and then, immediately, with a roll and a pitch, they came to a little white farmhouse and stopped again, and Tot was at grandmamma's.

Tot didn't like being kissed quite so much all at a time, if it was by a grandmamma. The chickens, though, were fascinating, and as for some plushy round balls of yellow fuzz, rolling about—little ducks just hatched—Tot had never seen anything at all to compare with them. But there was a dreadful and discordant procession of big ducks that struck terror to Tot's soul, and it was very still and lonely when the night and dark crept on. The crickets and the frogs did their best, but they only made it stiller and lonelier; and the hills gleamed against the sky, and Tot missed her mamma. But yet, Tot was very sleepy, and the next she knew it was morning and she was at grandma's, where Uncle Will lived, and Uncle Will was coming pretty soon, and, better than that, mamma was coming, too; and there was a little girl, a short distance up the road, whom Tot was to play with, and then there were the chickens and the ducks, and old Brindle and the pigs, and the pony and the hay cart, and—yes, it was very delightful at grandmamma's.

Once or twice, during the next few days, Tot asked—preserving that singular reticence regarding her illusions, so common to children—to be taken to Sugar River; but grandpapa was busy haying, and grandmamma said:

"Will will come pretty soon and he will take you."

"When *is* pwetty soon!" asked Tot, in hopeless tones.

One afternoon grandmamma gave Tot and Susie (that was the name of Tot's little playmate) each a fat hot jumble, and left them playing happily in the yard while she went back to her sewing. Susie was seven, so very safe company for little four-year-old Tot. After a while over ran Susie's brother, to summon her home to go with her mother to the village.

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Tot stood at the gate, looking down the long road. Sturdy maples threw curving, interlacing boughs across, through which the sun-light filtered and flickered. How cool and shady it was! Tot all at once felt the little sunny yard grow hot and stupid, and then Susie's mamma drove out of the gate and down the long shady arch over the sun-flecked road. Tot wished she was going to the village, too. Tot wished she was going to—to—Sugar River.

[Illustration: ON THE WAY TO SUGAR RIVER.]

"Run in to grandmamma, little Tot," whispered the still small voice. But Tot never heeded. Tot was tired. Tot was hot. Tot was homesick. Tot would walk down the road just a few little steps. What harm? How delightful! How grateful the cool green shade! How alluring the long level stretch of road under the arching maples! Where did it lead? It led—O, Tot knew—it led to Sugar River.

Step by step, a little and a little further on the tiny white figure glanced. A sense of happy freedom possessed the little girl. A cloud of golden butterflies beckoned on before. Here a dark thread of water crept down over the hills and splashed musically into the great stone trough. All the way an invisible brooklet gurgled and kept her company. Only one bird seemed to sing at a time—first one, then another. Wasn't it charming? And at the end of it all must be—Tot could see it now in fancy—the fluttering blue ribbon uncurling between sunny sloping banks—SUGAR RIVER—fast asleep under the summer sun, on its glittering bed of rock candy. O, rapture! Tot's mouth watered for its sugary delights.

On and on and on, with the brook and the butterflies and the welcoming bird. On, till the maples stopped and could go no further, and so she left them behind. Out into the open sun-light she came, and only the long, hot, and dazzling road stretched on before.

Tot's small feet trudged on, steadily. Just a little further on—Tot was sure—and then—But how long the road grew, how deep the dust lay, how tired the little feet were getting, little feet that can trudge about all day long in play, yet drag so wearily over long straight roads.

"I sood fink I would tum to Soogar Wiver pwetty soon," she sighed.

At last she came to where some cross-roads met, and looking down one she saw the cool green shade again. Not maples this time, but close and clustering shrubbery.

She left the brook gurgling "go-oo-oo-d-by," and the butterflies waving adieu with their golden wings, and went on alone. How sweet and still it was here! The tall grass drooped over two brown beaten paths that horses feet had worn, and a tender green light lay over all. But where was the sweet river hiding? Another meeting of cross



roads. Tot looked this way, that. Ah, there it was over the road! Over the meadow. Gleaming, gliding, Sugar River, at last.

"I fought I sood det to it pwetty soon," murmured Tot, triumphantly. "Won't dwandma be glad to get some nice sugar plums? I wis I tood det froo dis fence."

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Through she got, with much squeezing and rending. Tot eyed her torn pinafore, ruefully.

"I wis' 'ittle dirl's aprons wouldn't teep tearing on every single fing."

"Pears to me," doubtfully, putting one little foot down on the soft marshy ground, "it is wather wet."

Rather wet? Yes, Totchen, very wet. Too wet for such little little feet as yours. And see, little one, the sun is getting lower. Crawl back through the fence and run home. The sleepy murmuring river has nothing but trouble for you.

But Tot stumbled on over the marshy ground.

"I don't 'ike to go down so far," sighed Tot, drawing a little drenched boot up from a treacherous bog. "And my new boots is detting all wet."

But Tot had a Spartan soul; and at last, beside the wonderful stream, on the beautiful shore she stood, and—poor, poor little Tot! The little pinafore torn, the pretty, trim boots soaked and soiled, all Tot's little body dragged and weary; yet, it isn't that that makes me say "poor little Tot!" It is to see her standing there at the goal of her childish hopes with such happy, radiant eyes, and know how soon will come to her that "saddest pain of all—to grasp the thing we long for and find how it can fail us."

Up and down she walks, searching for sweetmeat pebbles and sugary stones, and when she finds none—the water running high and close to the grassy ground—she stoops and, dipping her little fingers, she lifts them, wet and dripping, to her longing lips.

"It isn't vewy sweet," she said.

Poor little Tot! Down the stream she came to a ford, and the shallow water had left stones and pebbles bare. Big and little, and half size; white and yellow, and brown and gray.

Here was richness at last. All in a minute Tot's little, nibbling, crunching teeth went on edge on a perverse, grating pebble that sternly refused to be nibbled or crunched. Another and another and another she tried.

"Pwobably," she thought, "they has to be cwacked dus 'ike nuts." And she proceeded to crack, not the stones, but her own little, eager, blundering fingers, instead. O stony, stony-hearted stones and pebbly-hearted pebbles! Tot's cup of bitterness seemed to flow over. She stood up, sobbing. A sudden sense of desolation oppressed her.

"I wis' I was at home wiv dwandma. I wis,' oh, I wis' I hadn't tum!" she sobbed.



Her only thought, now, was to get home. But, first, what do you think she did? She filled her bit of a pocket full of pebbles for grandmamma to crack; then the little weary feet stumbled back again over the weary way.

“My feet’s is detting so heavy,” she sighed, “and I *fink* I’s detting tired.”

Tot was crying piteously now, and no one heard. All alone, mamma’s baby, who had never been alone before in all her short cherished life. All alone with the croaking frogs and lonesome crickets. Hark! what was that? A roll of wheels and the clatter of a horse’s hoofs.

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"Whoa!" called out a boy's shrill voice. Down to the ground dropped the owner of the voice. "What is the matter, little girl?"

"I'se been to Soogar Wiver, and I don't know how to det home aden, I'se so vewy tired, and I toodn't cwack the candy, and I want to see dwandma," and Tot's words ended in a wail of inarticulate woe.

"Where do you live?" asked the boy.

"A dwate, dwate ways off," answered Tot.

"What is your name?"

"Tot Lindsay."

"Lindsay? O, I know! All you've got to do is to jump into this wagon and have a nice ride, and, presently, we'll be there."

And presently, in the gloaming, they stopped before grandpapa's house, and the boy, lifting out Tot in his arms, carried her to the door and bade her good-by, and, jumping into his wagon, rattled away. Empty and silent stood the little house, like the dwelling of the Three Talking Bears, and little Tot might have been Silver Hair herself.

"Dwandma, dwandma!" she called. But no grandmamma replied.

"Perhaps she has dus dorn out a minute," thought she. "I'll det up on dis lounge and tover dis shawl over me, and s'prise her when she tums back."

Something else besides the shawl covered Tot's eyes. Down over the blue orbs drifted the snowy lids. Tired little Tot.

Where was dwandma and the rest all this time? In trouble and confusion. Calling and searching, searching and calling: "Tot, Tot, Tot, little Tot! Where are you?" Grandpapa and grandmamma, and Uncle Will and Tot's mamma.

At last, on the road running beside the river, they had found the fragment of dotted cambric, held fast by a detaining splinter; and then Tot's mamma had run ahead and led them across the meadow, right in the track of Tot's little feet, straight to the river. And then grandmamma had said, quaveringly, that Tot was always asking to go to Sugar River; and then Will's heart had given a great guilty throb, and sank way, way down. He knew so well *why*. And then Tot's mamma had thrown up her two hands, and darted towards a little string of coral beads and picked it up. And, as they stood there, the river's murmur seemed like the murmur of the river of death, and the white fog, beginning to rise, like the folds of a little child's shroud; and Tot's mamma threw up her hands again and fell among all the unfeeling stones and pebbles.



Will ran all the way home and went straight to the barn and harnessed the horse, and then went into the house and into the sitting-room and snatched a shawl from the lounge, and—"Jerusalem Crickets!" was all he had breath enough left to say. Tot had surprised somebody, indeed.

Down by the river, in the dusk and the river damp, as they waited, came Will, striding along with what looked like a bundle of old shawls upon his shoulder; and presently, parting the folds like the calyx of a flower, Tot's rosy face blossomed out.

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“Peekabo!” she said, with a sweet sound of laughter. “O mamma, mamma!”

It was wonderful how quickly mamma recovered; and it was more wonderful still how ever Tot escaped sudden death, then and there, from suffocation. But, bless you! You need not worry, it was larks to Tot.

What a triumphal procession home it was. Tot, in her little night-dress sat in her mother’s lap, and told her adventures; and Will sat in the darkest corner and said not a word, but resolved that no story more fabulous than that of George Washington and his hatchet should ever again pass his lips. His lip quivered, as much as a boy’s lip is ever allowed, when Tot said:

“And I brought home a whole pottet full to cwack.”

“Never mind, to-night. Wait till to-morrow,” said mamma.

Tot went obediently to sleep, and woke in the morning to find beside her pillow, such lots of candy—her Sugar River candy she thought, all cracked and ready to eat.

“It tastes dus ’ike any tandy,” said Tot.

They didn’t tell her then, the illusion was so dear to her childish heart. But, when she was a little older, Tot laughed as long and as gleefully as anyone over the story of the little girl who went to Sugar River for sugar plums.

A PIONEER “WIDE AWAKE.”

One event in the life of Jacob Lohr qualified him, in my opinion, to be mustered into the army of “Wide Awakes.” Let me tell the children the incident and see if they agree with me.

He was a native of the Mohawk Valley near Schenectady, New York, and when about twenty years old, with his young wife, Polly, emigrated to the wilds of Western Pennsylvania. This was more than seventy years ago, when the magnificent forests of that region afforded some of the finest hunting-grounds in America. Here Jacob began clearing a farm, built a log dwelling-house, planted corn and potatoes, and in a few years became a thriving pioneer.

But the pride of his forest farm was his pigs. He had built a strong pen of logs, with a heavy door, in order to protect them in the night from wild animals. It stood about five rods from the house, near the brook, just across which, and not thirty feet from the sty, was the edge of the dense natural forest.



During the day they were permitted to roam at large in the woods eating nuts, by which they fattened for the larder; but when night approached, they were called and zealously secured in the pen, a practice which soon taught the pigs the habit of early retiring. Gradually, however, Mr. Lohr's punctuality in this matter abated, until one evening it had become fairly dark ere he went to shut them in. As he walked down the beaten path, a rustling in the adjacent bushes made him think that the pigs might still be out; and to satisfy himself on the point, he entered the pen and felt around, saying as he did so, "One two, three—all here." Then as he turned to the door, he wondered what caused the rustling across the brook. But as he stooped to go out, his wonder was threateningly answered by a low growl from a dark crouching object, only two or three steps in front of him.

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With swift hands he closed the door, shutting himself in; and none too soon, for instantly a heavy animal leaped on the roof over his head and began fiercely scratching at the cover. At the same time a mewling at the door, and a snuffing at the side of the pen, showed him that he was a prisoner, with at least three panthers as his jailors. But unlike jailors generally, these were more eager to get their captive out than to keep him in; while the prisoner, instead of wishing to “break jail,” was anxious not to do so.

All night long he was a “Wide Awake,” as were also the pigs, for the panthers were growling and screaming, scratching and digging around and upon the pen, trying to tear it to pieces and seize the occupants. Although feverishly excited, he felt quite secure, because the sty was so substantially built.

Yet such lodgings and neighbors, within and without, would not tend to produce very placid slumbers, even if the walls were cannon-proof.

Various plans were tried by Polly, his wife, who had become aware of the situation, to drive away the creatures, but in vain.

She held a torch where it shone toward the pen; she screamed through the narrow casement, and rattled a tin pan at the animals; but she did not know how to load and fire the gun; and as to going outside the door, it is doubtful if even the boldest hunter, well armed, would have dared so much at night, in the face of a whole family of hungry panthers.

Meanwhile, Jacob kept up a lively interest among his jailors.

Discovering that they had scratched at some of the larger cracks between the logs, until they could thrust in their noses, he peeled a piece of tough bark from the side of the pen, and began striking at them, giving them many stinging blows.

And afterward, when relating the story, he would laugh heartily at remembering the sneezing, snarling and grumbling this occasioned. Although he had so much to keep him excited, the night seemed very long.

At last, however, the daylight began to dawn, and he heard his jailors mewling and purring together as if in council, and then all was silent all around the pen.

Half an hour later, Polly called to him that they were gone away.

It was with extreme caution, however, that he opened the door a little and peered out.

A panther is like a cat in slyness or cunning, watching stealthily for prey and springing upon it in the most unexpected way.

And so, before he ventured out, he scanned with sharp eyes the edge of the woods across the brook; for he did not fancy being the mouse for these three great cats. Satisfying himself as well as he could, that the way was clear, he sprang forth, closed the door quickly behind him, and rushed for the house. But no panthers appeared; they had probably retired into the deep shadows of the hemlocks.

His "Wide Awake" night was ended.

Upon investigating the scene of the night's operations, he found the sty amazingly scratched and gnawed in many places, proving the strength of tooth and nail and the ferocity of his jailors. Several long deep gashes on one of the pigs showed where a panther had thrust in his paw by a crack and tried to seize a victim.

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But my story is only half told.

* * * * *

An old adage says, "It is a poor rule that won't work both ways;" and so thought Jacob. He resolved in the morning, that if the creatures should come back the next night, as they would be quite apt to do, he would turn the tables and try to teach them the pleasure of being imprisoned in a pig-sty.

Anybody who has lived in a region infested by carnivorous animals, knows how they prowl around the settler's cabin the night after any fat animal, cattle or swine is killed, for the meat. They snuff the blood from afar in the forest, and hasten to the place to have a tooth, or a paw, in the division of the spoils. Knowing this peculiarity of panthers, Jacob and Polly held a consultation, and as it was about time in the autumn to make pork of the pigs, they decided to perform that work during the day. The scent of blood would serve as a double inducement for his visitors to return.

So, in the afternoon, the task was done, the pen and vicinity being the scene of the slaughter, and all the bloody tidbits placed inside the door. Every such thing was arranged to attract the animals into the sty if possible. The meat was placed safely in the garret of the house.

The door of the pen was so constructed as to open and shut something like the lower sash of a window, by sliding up and down, a peg holding it open by day and closed by night. When the door was open, this peg had only to be pulled out, to let it shut down like a flash; and being shut no animal could open it. Jacob went along the brook and obtained a quantity of bark from the moosewood, (*Dirca palustris*,) of which he made a strong cord, long enough to reach from the pen to the house. One end of this he tied tightly to the peg that supported the door, and the other he made fast inside the house.

When night came, he was ready for visitors.

Stationing themselves at the window, he and Polly watched and listened.

Hardly had it become dark, when they heard the mewing of the panthers at no great distance in the forest. Persons who are familiar only with the mewing of cats, have little idea how a panther's stronger, but similar voice will ring through the woods.

In a little time they distinctly heard one of them leap upon the pen and begin scratching as the night before; and in a moment more, by the confined sound of purring and growling, it was evident they had entered the sty and were disputing over the morsels of meat.

Then Jacob gave the bark cord a vigorous jerk and they heard the door drop.

I suppose it would be impossible to describe the excitement of Polly and Jacob at this moment, but the girls and boys can imagine something of it.

They did not dare to go out to see if they had caught the *panthers*, lest, having failed, the panthers might catch *them*.

Before morning, however, they were sure enough that one or more was captured, for there was a great deal of smothered howling, just as it would sound from animals shut in a pen.

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Previous wakefulness made sleep necessary during most of the night, but at daybreak they were astir and at the casement to catch the first possible glimpse of the situation. As it became light enough, they discovered a huge, handsome panther stretched out on the roof of the pen, her head lying across her paws, like a cat asleep. By this they knew that others were confined inside, for whose escape this one was waiting. It was but a brief task for Jacob, who was a good marksman, to point his rifle through the window and give her its contents. Without a struggle the splendid animal straightened her powerful limbs and died. Reloading his gun, Jacob walked cautiously toward the pen, watching in every direction, lest there might be another one outside ready to spring upon him, but seeing none, he went up and peered through a crack.

At once two pairs of eyes flashed at him, and fierce growls remonstrated against the state of affairs.

Had Barnum flourished in those days, Jacob might have found a market for the animals alive, but as it was he regarded it safer to shoot them as quickly as possible, through a crevice between the logs.

Upon placing the dead animals side by side near the house he discovered that they were mother and full-grown kittens, all very large and plump, with thick, glossy fur.

I have only to add, that he was paid by the state a bounty of twenty-four dollars apiece for killing the panthers, which was quite a fortune for a pioneer in those days. Their red-brown skins, sewed together, made a larger and nicer lap-robe than the hide of any buffalo; and years after, with Jacob's children, I took many a sleigh-ride under this warm covering.

All in favor of numbering Jacob among the "Wide Awakes," say aye!

SURPRISED.

I.

"Mitz" began to cry piteously. "Mieu—mieu—mi-e-e," he cried, and all little Hannah's trotting only made him worse. At that moment "Mitz" was wrapped in a pillow-case, while his head was buried in Hannah's little shawl. His ears were pulled down, and his promising tail was all in a heap, and his resplendent moustache was crushed. Therefore was it a wonder that Mitz howled most dolefully? It is not necessary to say that Mitz was a kitten.

Mitz's mother was sitting in a corner of the fire-place, with tail neatly curled about her paws. Three of Mitz's brothers and sisters were lost somewhere in the shadow about her, and two others the children had put to bed.

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It was a queer old room in an old German house; a room large and dim, with two great windows full of diamond-shaped panes, and on the opposite side a huge chimney with a tall, narrow mantel-shelf and a tiled hearth, on which stood two brass griffins, shiny and ferocious. In the depths in the fire-place, behind the griffins, there Mitz was sobbing. I say sobbing because the children were playing “house,” and Mitz was supposed to be the baby. What a fine play-house this big fire-place was in summer! It had in turn figured as Aladdin’s cave and a school-house; a brigand ambush, and a dwelling with modern improvements. But now it was growing dark in the big, bare room, and you had to look closely into the back of the hearth to see the two little figures—one trotting the baby, and the other rocking the doll’s cradle in which two of Mitz’s sisters were tied with cord, for their good, of course. But Mitz’s piteous cries raised echoes.

“Mieu, mieu!” cried Mitz, trying to claw something under the pillow case. “Mieu, mieu!” chimed in Mitz’s sisters, while little Hannah trotted desperately, and the doll’s cradle was rocked as if by a small tempest.

[Illustration: HE WOULDN’T EAT HIS BREAD AND MILK.]

“It’s no use,” said little Hannah, in great perplexity; “all people’s children arn’t always bad! Mitz—you wicked Mitz!” And she shook that badly-behaved child. “He’s been crying ever since we began to play. He wouldn’t eat his bread and milk, though I tied on his best new bib. Oh, dear me, Mrs. Liseke, how noisy your children are! Suppose,” said little Hannah, vainly endeavoring to pacify the indignant Mitz, “suppose, Mrs. Liseke, we take the children out for a walk?”

Out of the hearth crept Hannah, with Mitz hugged to her heart, and her short, round figure all the rounder for an ancient shawl and a venerable cap perched on the top of her plump, rosy face. Hannah had just passed the brass griffins, when some one burst into the room. There was a vision of two long stockings with a hole in one knee, a faded velveteen suit, a pair of brass-tipped boots, a bright patch in the seat of the short breeches, and a look of triumph on a round face with a turn-up nose, while a grin, extending from ear to ear, discovered a loss of several front teeth in the big mouth.

“Max, how you frightened me!” cried Hannah; then, “oh, Maxy, what’s the matter?” Mitz was forgotten; he gave a leap, shawl and pillow-case, and before Hannah could prevent, had crept out of his bandages and was standing a free cat, with arched back and a defiant tail. By this time Mrs. Liseke had come out of the fire-place with her two youngest in her arms. She was elegantly dressed in a bed-sheet, which trailed behind her and was gracefully tied under her chin. Mitz’s mother followed, stretching all-fours luxuriously.

No, Max wouldn’t tell. He plunged two black hands in his breeches’ pockets and made up faces and danced a wild war dance, while Mitz and family fled into various corners.

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"Why don't you slap him?" pouted Liseke.

"No," little Hannah said, wisely. "He likes cookies." Coaxingly: "Maxy dear, won't you tell?"

"No, you bet I won't! you're nothing but girls."

"Is it a surprise, Max?" Hannah suggested, anxiously.

"Won't tell yer," contemplating his brass-tipped toes.

"Maxy, I'll give you a big cookey if you'll tell."

"You nasty thing, I don't want a cookey."

"Maxy: two? three—four—five—six—there! now you'll tell?"

"Give 'em first," said this practical boy, apparently conquered.

Six noble cookies were counted into his hand.

"Now I won't tell yer at all. It's a surprise! Father said I wasn't to tell," he cried, scornfully, with his mouth full.

"Oh, Haneke, papa's going to surprise us! Now I know what it is!" Liseke whispered excitedly "It is a piano, and perhaps—perhaps a stool. Try and find out from Max."

"Maxy, dear," Hannah said, imploringly, "is it covered with plush?"

"Why, how do you know?" Max cried, unguardedly, as he was finishing his sixth cookey.

"I knew it, I knew it," Liseke gasped, wildly.

"Does it make a noise if, well, say, if you bang on it?" Hannah cried, with a beating heart.

"Why—why—yes," Max acknowledged, wrathfully, with a futile kick at Mitz's mother, who was purring about his legs. "There, you mean thing, you're always trying to find out something! Just you wait till I tell yer anything more!" he cried, and slam-banged himself out of the room, with his bosom full of suppressed injuries.

"He was mad because we guessed," Liseke cried, joyfully.

"A piano!" Hannah gasped, as the door went to with a crash.

"A stool," Liseke added; then, "Let's tell mamma!"



That dear, gentle mother, sitting by the dim window trying to mend by the last flicker of daylight! She looked up lovingly as the door flew open.

"Mamma," gasped Hannah, "papa's got a surprise for us."

"Max said so," chimed in the other. "We've guessed, mother dear."

"It's a piano."

"And—and a stool."

[Illustration: MAX KNOWS OF A SURPRISE.]

"He said it'd make a noise; and was covered with plush."

"O, dear children, surely papa wouldn't buy you a piano. He can not afford it," and two kind hands were stretched out to the children.

"Oh, yes it is," the two cried hopefully.

"You know, mamma, papa's always promised us a surprise, and he's never done it yet!" Hannah cried, and laid her round cheek against the delicate, pale face.

There was no use arguing; the children were convinced. They were sure of the piano.

"There, mamma, didn't we tell you so," they cried, as Max came in, mysterious and exasperating.

"Father says the surprise will be ready for you to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock in the sitting room," he cried, and was gone, leaving a momentary vision of a bright patch in the seat of his breeches.

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"Poor child," thought the little mother, regretfully; "he is all in rags—I wish I had some money!" with a patient sigh.

"There, mamma, we told you so! It'll stand by the window in the corner of the sitting-room," two excited voices cried, and the next moment the sitting-room was invaded by two small figures who looked at the empty corner by the window with delicious expectancy; and so the day went slowly by.

In another room the little mother looked at her husband wistfully. "Karl," she began, timidly, "have you really prepared a surprise for the children? You won't disappoint them?"

"Betty, don't say a word! Wait! Did I ever disappoint you?"

Betty turned away with a half-suppressed sigh, while papa Karl strode up and down the room grandly, virtuously, with a good deal of injured innocence in his face.

II.

The great day had come. Hannah and Liseke hadn't slept a wink all night.

Mitz and family had come purring into the room in the early morning, as usual, but had been shamefully neglected. All six sat in a row by the bedside, watching indignantly the two heads peeping out from the feathers.

"To-day!" Hannah sighed rapturously.

How they got into their clothes, they never knew.

As for eating! why, they couldn't touch the delicious rolls, the glasses of milk, even that delicious preserve, "Apfel-kraut."

Max alone was himself, and, in his injured way, managed to eat enough for three. Yet, he was not satisfied; at the age of eight life had few attractions left for him.

Who could believe that a September day would be so long? Or that the old clock in the hall would go so ridiculously slow? There was a quiet jocularly in the motion of its long pendulum, as if it were laughing bitterly that anyone could be in a hurry. "Ha! ha! ha!" ticked the clock.

"Oh, dear!" Hannah said with a sigh, "will it never be three?"

How they kept their ears open to hear a crowd of men come stumbling up the stone steps with the weight of the piano!

“Perhaps it is already here,” Liseke said, faintly.

“Perhaps it’s coming,” Hannah suggested, hopefully.

“One—two—three—,” the clock struck.

“Come, mamma!” the children cried; and so they opened the sitting-room door with trembling hands.

Nobody there; nothing there. Mamma sat down in a corner and began knitting, while the children looked out of the window into the narrow street to see a wagon drive up to the house.

“Perhaps they’ve forgotten all about it,” Liseke was saying tremulously, when the sitting-room door burst open and there stood Max and behind him, papa Karl.

“Oh, Max, Max, where’s the surprise?” the children implored.

“Why, don’t you see!” Max cried, mightily injured, and turning himself about disclosed his small person arrayed in a new velveteen suit brilliant with brass buttons.

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"Oh—dear—dear," sobbed little Hannah with the tears rolling down, "we thought it was a piano!"

"Did I say it was a piano?" Max howled.

"You said it—it—was—was—covered with pl—plush," Liseke sobbed.

"Well, isn't it?"

"And—and you said it 'ud make a noise if one b—banged on it," Hannah cried, piteously.

"Well, see if it don't!" Max shrieked, when papa Karl's hand came down upon him with such superb effect there was no doubting the truth of the assertion.

"Ungrateful children, you are never satisfied," papa Karl cried majestically. "No matter what I do for you, you're always ungrateful—"

[Illustration: THE SHAMEFULLY NEGLECTED SIX.]

"But Karl," mamma Betty interrupted, with quiet decision, in the midst of a storm of sobs, "you can't expect the children to be very much delighted because Max gets a new suit—something necessary."

"And it's so tight I can't breathe," Max cried, goaded to frenzy by the general grief.

"Ingrates!" gasped papa Karl, and strode up and down the room, while Liseke sobbed her grief out on mamma's shoulder, and Max hid his face in her lap, and Hannah was bravely trying to dry her brown eyes.

"Karl, they are children," mamma Betty said: softly patting Max's head; then lifting it up gently; "Max, go to the confectioners." Max sprang to his feet as a war-horse at the sound of a trumpet.

"Here are ten groschens;"—mamma Betty took them out of her scanty purse with something of a sigh;—"buy as much cake and whatever you like. Liseke tell Marie to make a pitcher of chocolate instantly. My little Hannah, you may set the table."

"Oh, mamma, may I put on the pretty china cups and saucers?" Hannah pleaded, as Max and Liseke bounded out of the room.

"Yes, but be careful, my dear."

"Chocolate!" said papa Karl with some scorn, "bribing them for the sake of peace."

They were children, she said. Had papa Karl forgotten that he, too, had once been a child?

Papa Karl had forgotten this trifling circumstance but he magnanimously declared he forgave them all.

There was a pattering of feet down the entry, and three tear-stained faces looked timidly in.

"The chocolate is on the table," Hannah said bravely, with only one tiny sob. Then the door closed and the little feet patted down the corridor.

"Come Karl, and drink a cup of chocolate. You need it as much as the children, for you were disappointed also. You thought to give them a pleasure, you mistaken man," mamma Betty said with a little smile.

"I really meant to," said Karl, quite softened.

Mamma Betty was just opening the door, when she suddenly paused.

"Karl," she said quite seriously, "will you promise me one thing?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Never surprise us again; surprises always end in disappointments."

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"Well, Betty I promise," papa Karl said hurriedly, and he kept his word. So years after, when papa Karl's purse was a good deal fuller, and a piano did make its appearance, it was welcomed solemnly, as something long and rapturously expected.

APRIL FOOLS AND OTHER FOOLS.

[Illustration]

The custom of playing a joke upon one's neighbor upon the First of April is of very ancient origin, dating so far back in the past that we are unable to tell just when or with what nation it had its birth.

There was a time, very many years ago, when the year began on the twenty-fifth of March. Then, as now, New Years' was a great feast of the Church; and as the First of April was what was termed the *octave*—that is, the eighth day after the commencement of the feast—it has been thought that the feast which terminated upon that day closed in April-fooling. In support of this theory we find that the Catholic Church, at one time in its early history, observed an annual feast called "The Feast of the Ass." The day upon which this feast was held answers to our sixth of January, which now is called "Twelfth-Day." The day was devoted to merry-making, masquerading, jesting, and to fun in general.

Among the Hindoos there is a feast which is still observed, called the "Huli," which, continuing several days, terminates on the thirty-first of March. One of the distinctive features of this feast is, that every one endeavors to send his neighbor upon some errand to some imaginary person, or to persons whom he knows are not at home; and then all enjoy a good laugh at the disappointment of the messenger. The observance of this custom by this peculiar people seems to indicate that it had a very early origin among mankind. In fact, it is not impossible that the manner in which the day is observed by us may have been suggested by some pagan custom. But whatever or whenever its origin may have been, we find it so widely prevalent over the earth, and with so very near a coincidence of day, as to be proof of its great antiquity.

[Illustration]

The observance of April Fools' Day is a very popular one in France, and we find traces of it there at a much earlier period than we do in England. It is related that Francis, Duke of Lorraine, and his wife, having been confined at Nantes as prisoners, successfully made their escape on the First of April. Taking advantage of this day, when they knew the guards would be upon the lookout lest some joke should be played upon them, they disguised themselves as peasants, the Duke carrying a hod upon his shoulder, and his wife bearing a basket of rubbish upon her back. Thus disguised, they passed through the gates of the city at an early hour of the day. There was one person,

however, who guessed their secret. This was a woman who was an enemy of the Duke and his wife, and she at once resolved that they should not thus

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escape. She therefore hastened to one of the guards and told him of the escape of the prisoners. But the soldier only regarded it as an attempt to play a joke upon him, and at once cried out "April Fool!" to let the woman know that he had not forgotten what day it was. Hearing the soldier call out this, the rest of the guard, led by their sergeant, shouted "April Fool!" until the woman was forced to retire without being able to accomplish her errand. When at last it was learned that she had told them the truth, it was too late, the Duke and his wife having made good their escape.

In France, the person who is April-fooled is called *poisson d'Avril*. Upon a certain occasion a French lady stole a watch from a friend on the First of April. The theft having been discovered, and the lady accused of having taken the watch, she endeavored to pass off the affair as *un poisson d'Avril*.

Having denied that the watch was in her possession, her rooms were searched, and the missing article found upon a chimney-piece. When shown the watch the thief coolly replied: "Yes; I think I have made the messenger a fine *poisson d'Avril*."

However, the magistrate ordered that she be confined in prison until the First of April following, "*comme un poisson d'Avril*."

[Illustration]

In England, the custom of April-fooling is practiced very much as it is in the United States. "A knowing boy will despatch a younger brother to see a public statue descend from its pedestal at a particular appointed hour. A crew of giggling servant-maids will get hold of some simple swain, and send him to a bookseller's shop for the 'History of Eve's Grandmother,' or to a chemist's for a pennyworth of 'pigeon's milk,' or to the cobbler's for a little 'strap-oil,' in which last case the messenger secures a hearty application of the strap to his shoulders, and is sent home in a state of bewilderment as to what the affair means. The urchins in the street make a sport of calling to some passing beau to look to his coat-skirts; when he either finds them with a piece of paper pinned to them or not; in either of which cases he is saluted as an 'April-fool!'"

[Illustration: FIRST OF APRIL DANGER.]

It has been said that "what compound is to simple addition, so is Scotch to English April-fooling." The people living in Scotland are not content with making a neighbor believe some single piece of absurdity, but practice jokes upon him *ad infinitum*. Having found some unsuspecting person, the individual playing the joke sends him away with a letter to some friend residing two or three miles off, for the professed purpose of asking for some useful information, or requesting a loan of some article, while in reality the letter contains only the words:

"This is the first day of April,
Hunt the gowk another mile."

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The person to whom the letter is sent at once catches the idea of the person sending it, and informs the carrier with a very grave face that he is unable to grant his friend the favor asked, but if he will take a second note to Mr. So-and-so, he will get what was wanted. The obliging, yet unsuspecting carrier receives the note, and trudges off to the person designated, only to be treated by him in the same manner; and so he goes from one to another, until some one, taking pity on him, gives him a gentle hint of the trick that has been practiced upon him. A successful affair of this kind will furnish great amusement to an entire neighborhood for a week at a time, during which time the person who has been victimized can hardly show his face. The Scotch employ the term "gowk" to express a fool in general, but more especially an April fool; and among them the practice which we have described is called "hunting the gowk."

Sometimes the First of April has been employed by persons wishing to perpetrate an extensive joke upon society. Among those which have come to our knowledge the most remarkable one occurred in the city of London in 1860. Towards the close of March a large number of persons received through the post-office a card upon which the following was printed:

"TOWER OF LONDON.

ADMIT THE BEARER AND FRIEND

to view the

ANNUAL CEREMONY OF WASHING THE WHITE LIONS,

on

SUNDAY, APRIL 1ST, 1860.

Admitted only at the White Gate.

* * * * *

It is particularly requested that no gratuities be given to the wardens or their assistants."

To give the card an official appearance, there was a seal placed at one corner of it, marked by an inverted sixpence. There were but few persons receiving the cards who saw through the trick, and hence it was highly successful. As soon as the first streaks of gray were seen in the east, cabs began to rattle about Tower Hill, and continued to do so all that Sunday morning, vainly endeavoring to discover the "White Gate," the joke being that there was no such gate.

In the United States the greater part of the attention which is paid to April Fools' Day comes from children. In cities, especially, it is made much of by the "street Arabs," who watch every opportunity to play some trick upon every countryman whom they chance to see. Although we may laugh at jokes which are played upon All-Fools' Day, yet the greater part of them are unjust and improper, and it would be much better were they left undone.

While speaking of April fools we are reminded of the Wise Fools of Gotham, and are constrained to tell our young readers about them in this connection. Gotham is a village in Nottinghamshire, in England. At one time, when King John and his retinue were marching towards the village, the people learned that he intended to pass through Gotham meadow. Now the ground over which a king passed became forever after a public highway, and should they suffer the king to pass through their meadow the villagers saw that they would lose it.

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[Illustration: DROWNING THE EEL.]

This they resolved not to do, and therefore devised a plan which caused the king to pass another way. When the king learned what had been done he was very angry, and at once sent messengers to inquire why they had been so rude, intending, no doubt, to punish them for what they had done. When the Gothamites learned of the approach of the messengers they were as anxious to escape punishment as they had been to save their meadow. They immediately came together and agreed upon a plan by which to save themselves. They at once set about carrying their plans into effect, and when the king's messengers arrived they found some of the inhabitants endeavoring to drown an eel in a pond; some dragging their carts and wagons to the top of a barn to shade the wood from the sun's rays; some tumbling cheeses down a hill in the expectation that they would find their way to Nottingham Market, and some were employed in hedging in a cuckoo which had perched upon an old bush. Seeing men engaged in such employments as these the king's servants were convinced that the villagers were all fools, and quite unworthy the king's notice. The villagers, however, seeing that they had outwitted the king, considered themselves wise. To the present day a "cuckoo bush" stands upon the spot where it is said that the inhabitants of Gotham endeavored to hedge in the bird.

There is another class of Fools which deserve mention. These are called Court Fools or Jesters. Until within a comparatively short time ago, every king had his Jester, whose duty it was to furnish mirth and merriment for the royal household. The real Court Fool was in reality a fool by birth, while a Jester was a *pretended* fool. The former was dressed in "a parti-colored dress, including a cowl, which ended in a cock's-head, and was winged with a couple of long ears; he, moreover, carried in his hand a stick called his bauble, terminating either in an inflated bladder or some other ludicrous object, to be employed in slapping inadvertent neighbors."

[Illustration: SAVING THE SHINGLES.]

On the other hand, the Jester selected his clothes not only with a view to their grotesqueness but also with an eye to their richness. While the real fool "haunted the kitchen and scullery, messing almost with the dogs, and liable, when malapert, to a whipping," the pretended fool was comparatively a companion to the sovereign who engaged his services. Berdic, the Jester of the Court of William the Conqueror, for instance, was considered of so great importance that three towns and five carucates were conferred upon him.

[Illustration]