

Jimmy, Lucy, and All eBook

Jimmy, Lucy, and All by Rebecca Sophia Clarke

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THE TALLYHO

"I never saw a gold mine in my life; and now I'm going to see one," cried Lucy, skipping along in advance of the others. It was quite a large party; the whole Dunlee family, with the two Sanfords,—Uncle James and Aunt Vi,—making ten in all, counting Maggie, the maid. They had alighted from the cars at a way-station, and were walking along the platform toward the tallyho coach which was waiting for them. Lucy was firmly impressed with the idea that they were starting for the gold mines. The truth was, they were on their way to an old mining-town high up in the Cuyamaca Mountains, called Castle Cliff; but there had been no gold there for a great many years.

Mr. Dunlee was in rather poor health, and had been "ordered" to the mountains. The others were perfectly well and had not been "ordered" anywhere: they were going merely because they wanted to have a good time.

"Papa would be so lonesome without us children," said Edith, "he needs us all for company."

He was to have still more company. Mr. and Mrs. Hale were coming to-morrow to join the party, bringing their little daughter Barbara, Lucy's dearest friend. They could not come to-day; there would have been hardly room for them in the tallyho. With all "the bonnie Dunlees,"—as Uncle James called the children,—and all the boxes, baskets, and bundles, the carriage was about as full as it could hold.

It was seldom that the driver used this tallyho. He was quite choice of it, and generally drove an old stage, unless, as happened just now, he was taking a large party. It was a very gay tallyho, as yellow as the famous pumpkin coach of Cinderella, only that the spokes of the wheels were striped off with scarlet. There were four white horses, and every horse sported two tiny American flags, one in each ear.

"All aboard!" called out the driver, a brown-faced, broad-shouldered man, with a twinkle in his eye.

"All aboard!" responded Mr. Sanford, echoed by Jimmy-boy.

Whereupon crack went the driver's long whip, round went the red and yellow wheels, and off sped the white horses as freely as if they were thinking of Lucy's gold mine and longing to show it to her, and didn't care how many miles they had to travel to reach it. But this was all Lucy's fancy. They were thinking of oats, not gold mines. These bright horses knew they were not going very far up the mountain. They would soon stop to rest in a good stable, and other horses not so handsome would take their places. It was a very hard road, and grew harder and harder, and the driver always changed horses twice before he got to the end of the journey.

As the tallyho rattled along, the older people in it fell to talking; and the children looked at the country they were passing, sang snatches of songs, and gave little exclamations of delight. Edith threw one arm around her older sister Katharine, saying:—

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"O Kyzie, aren't you glad you live in California? How sweet the air is, and how high the mountains look all around! When we were East last summer didn't you pity the people? Only think, they never saw any lemons and oranges growing! They don't know much about roses either; they only have roses once a year."

"That's true," replied Kyzie. "Let me button your gloves, Edy, you'll be dropping them off."

"See those butterflies! I'd be happy if Bab was only in here," murmured a little voice from under Lucy's hat. "Bab didn't want to come with her papa and mamma; she wanted to come with *me*!"

"Now, Lucy, don't be foolish," said Edith. "Where could we have put Bab? There's not room enough in this coach, unless one of the rest of us had got out. You'll see Bab tomorrow, and she'll be in Castle Cliff all summer; so you needn't complain."

"I wasn't complaining, no indeed! Only I don't want to go down in the gold mine till Bab comes. I s'pose they'll put us down in a bucket, won't they? I want Uncle James to go with us."

Jimmy-boy laughed and threw himself about in quite a gale. He often found his little sister very amusing.

"Excuse me, Lucy," said he; "but I do think you're very ignorant! That mine up there is all played out, and Uncle James has told us so ever so many times. Didn't you hear him? The shaft is more than half full of muddy water. I'd like to see you going down in a bucket!"

"Well, then, Jimmy Dunlee, what *shall* we do at Castle Cliff?"

"We've brought a tent with us, and for one thing I'm going to camp out," replied Jimmy. "That's a grand thing, they say."

"Don't! There'll be something come and eat you up, sure as you live," said Lucy, who had a vague notion that camping out was connected in some way with wild animals, such as coyotes and mountain lions.

"Poh! you don't know the least thing about Castle Cliff, Lucy! And Uncle James has talked and talked! Tell me what he said, now do."

Uncle James was seated nearly opposite, for the two long seats of the tallyho faced each other. Lucy spoke in a low tone, not wishing him to overhear.

"He said we were going to board at a big house pretty near the old mine."



“Yes, Mr. Templeton’s.”

“And he said somebody had a white Spanish rabbit with reddish brown eyes and its mouth all a-quiver.”

“Yes, I heard him say that about the rabbit. And what are those things that come and walk on top of the house in the morning?”

“I know. They are woodpeckers. They tap on the roof, and the noise sounds like ‘Jacob, Jacob, wake up, Jacob!’ Uncle James says when strangers hear it they think somebody is calling, and they say, ‘Oh, yes, we’re coming!’ I shan’t say that; I shall know it’s woodpeckers. Tell some more, Jimmy.”

“Yes” said Eddo, leaving Maggie and wedging himself between Lucy and Jimmy. “Tell some more, Jimmum!”

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"Well, there's a post-office in town and there's a telephone, and Mr. Templeton has lots of things brought up to Castle Cliff from the city; so we shall have plenty to eat; chicken and ice-cream and things. That makes me think, I'm hungry. Wouldn't they let us open a luncheon basket?"

Kyzie thought not; so Jimmy went on telling Lucy what he knew of Castle Cliff. "It's named for an air-castle there is up there; it's a thing they *call* an air-castle anyway. A man built it in the hollow of some trees, away up, up, up. I'm going to climb up there to see it."

"So'm I," said Lucy.

"Ho, you can't climb worth a cent; you're only a girl!"

"But she has an older brother; and sometimes older brothers are kind enough to help their little sisters," remarked Kyzie, with a meaning smile toward Jimmy; but Jimmy was looking another way.

"Uncle James told a funny story about that air-castle," went on Kyzie. "Did you hear him tell of sitting up there one day and seeing a little toad help another toad—a lame one—up the trunk of the tree?"

"No, I didn't hear," said Lucy. "How did the toad do it?"

"I'll let you all guess."

"Pushed him?" said Edith.

"No."

"Took him up pickaback," suggested Lucy.

"Nothing of the sort. He just took his friend's lame foot in his mouth, and the two toads hopped along together! Uncle James said it probably wasn't the first time, for they kept step as if they were used to it."

"Wasn't that cunning?" said Edith. And Jimmy remarked after a pause, "If Lucy wants to go up to that castle, maybe I could steady her along; only there's Bab. She'd have to go too. And I don't believe it's any place for girls!"

The ride was a long one, forty miles at least. The passengers had dinner at a little inn, the elegant horses were placed in a stable; and the tallyho started again at one o'clock with a black horse, a sorrel horse, and two gray ones.

The afternoon wore on. The horses climbed upward at every step; and though the journey was delightful, the passengers were growing rather tired.

“Wish I could sit on the seat with the king-ductor,” besought little Eddo, moving about uneasily.

“That isn’t a conductor, it’s a driver. Conductors are the men that go on the steam-cars, —the ‘choo choo cars,’” explained Jimmum. Then in a lower tone, “They don’t have any cars up at Castle Cliff, and I’m glad of it.”

Lucy did not understand why he should be glad, and Jimmy added in a lower tone:—

“Because—don’t you remember how some little folks used to act about steam-engines? They might do it again, you know.”

“Yes, I ’member now. But that was a long time ago, Jimmy. He wouldn’t run after engines now.”

“Who wouldn’t?” inquired young Master Eddo, forgetting the “king-ductor” and turning about to face his elder brother. “Who wouldn’t run after the engine, Jimmum?”

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"Nobody—I mean *you* wouldn't."

"No, no, not me," assented Eddo, shaking his flaxen head.

And there the matter would have ended, if Lucy had not added most unluckily: "'Twas when you were only a baby that you did it, Eddo. You said to the engine, 'Come here, little choo choo, Eddo won't hurt oo.' *You* didn't know any better."

"'Course I knew better," said Eddo, shaking his head again, but this time with an air of bewilderment. "*I* didn't say, 'Come here, little choo choo.' No, no, not me!"

"Oh, but you did, darling," persisted Lucy. "You were just a tiny bit of a boy. You stood right on the track, and the engine was coming, 'puff, puff,' and you said, 'Come here, little choo choo, Eddo won't hurt oo!'"

"I didn't! Oh! Oh! Oh! *When'd* I say that? *Did* the engine hurt me? *Where* did it hurt me? Say, Jimmum, where did the engine hurt me?" putting his hand to his throat, to his ears, to his side.

The more he thought of it, the worse he felt; till appalled by the idea of what he must have suffered he finally fell to sobbing in his mother's arms, and she soothed his imaginary woes with kisses and cookies. For the remainder of the journey he was in pretty good spirits and found much diversion in watching the gambols of the two dogs following the tallyho. One was a Castle Cliff dog, black and shaggy, named Slam; the other, yellow and smooth, belonged to the "king-ductor" or driver, and was called Bang. Slam and Bang often darted off for a race and Eddo nearly gave them up for lost; but they always came back wagging their tails and capering about as if to say:—

"Hello, Eddo, we ran away just to scare you, and we'll do it again if we please!"

It was a great day for dogs. Ever so many dogs ran out to meet Slam and Bang. They always bit their ears for a "How d'ye do?" and then trotted along beside them just for company. Eddo found it quite exciting. One was a Mexican dog, without a particle of hair, but he did not seem to be in the least ashamed of his singular appearance.

Edith said it was an "empty country," and indeed there were few houses; but there must have been more dogs than houses, for the whole journey had a running accompaniment of "bow-wow-wows."

The farther up hill the road wound the steeper it grew; and Jimmy exclaimed more than once:—

"This coach is standing up straight on its hind feet, papa! Just look! 'Twill spill us all out backward!"

But it did nothing of the sort. It took them straight to Castle Cliff, “nearly six thousand feet above the level of the sea,” and there it stopped, before the front door of the hotel. It was about half-past five o’clock in the afternoon, and Mr. Templeton, who had been looking out for the tallyho, came down the steps to meet his guests.

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THE FIRST DINNER

Mr. Templeton's wife was just behind him. They both greeted the party as if they had all been old friends. The house, a large white one, stood as if in the act of climbing the hill. In front was a sloping lawn full of brilliant flowers, bordered with house-leek, or "old hen and chickens," a plant running over with pink blossoms. Kyzie had not expected to see a garden like this on the mountain.

At one side of the house, between two black oak trees, was a hammock, and near it a large stone trough, into which water dripped from a faucet. Two birds, called red-hammers, were sipping the water with their bills, not at all disturbed by the arrival of strangers.

It was a small settlement. The hotel, by far the largest house in Castle Cliff, looked down with a grand air upon the few cottages in sight. These tiny cottages were not at all pretty, and had no grass or lawns in front, but people from the city were keeping house in them for the summer; and besides there were tents scattered all about, full of "campers."

As the "bonnie Dunlees" and their elders entered the hotel, a merry voice called out:—

"A hearty welcome to you, my friends, and three cheers for Castle Cliff!"

Mr. and Mrs. Dunlee and the Sanfords walked on smiling, and the children lingered awhile outside; but it was a full minute before any of them discovered that the cheery voice belonged to a parrot, whose cage swung from a tall sycamore overhead.

"Polly's pretty sociable," laughed Mr. Templeton. "Do you like animals, young ladies? If so, please stand up here in a group, and you shall have another welcome."

Then he clapped his hands and called out "Thistleblow!" and immediately a pretty red pony came frisking along and began to caper around the young people with regular dancing steps, making at the same time the most graceful salaams, pausing now and then to sway himself as if he were courtesying. It was a charming performance. The little creature had once belonged to a band of gypsies, who had given him a regular course of training.

"He is trying to tell you how glad he is to see you," said Mr. Templeton, as the children shouted and clapped their hands.

"Oh, won't Bab like it, though!" cried Lucy. "Seems as if I couldn't wait till to-morrow for Bab to get here, for then the good times will begin."

But for Kyzie and Edith and Jimmy the good times had begun already. The five Dunlees entered the house, little Eddo clinging fast to Jimmum's forefinger. They passed an old



lady who sat on the veranda knitting. She gazed after them through her spectacles, and said to Mr. Templeton in a tone of inquiry:—

“Boarders?”

“Yes,” he replied, rubbing his chin, “and they have lots of jingle in ’em too; they’re just the kind I like.”

“Well, I hope they won’t get into any mischief up here, that’s all I’ve got to say. Nobody wants to take children to board anyway, but you can’t always seem to help it.”

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And then the old lady turned to her knitting again; indeed her fingers had been flying all the while she talked. Mr. Templeton looked at her curiously, and wondered if she disliked children.

"I'd as lief have 'em 'round the house as her birds and kittens anyway," he reflected; for she kept a magpie, three cats and a canary; and these pets had not been always agreeable guests at the hotel.

It was now nearly six o'clock, and savory odors from the kitchen mingled with the balmy breath of the flowers stealing in from the lawn. The Dunlee party had barely time for hasty toilets when the gong sounded for dinner. The Templeton dining-room was large and held several tables. The Dunlees had the longest of these, the one near the west window. There were twelve plates set, though only nine were needed to-night. The three extra plates had been placed there for the Hale family, who were expected to-morrow. Mrs. Dunlee had told the landlord that she would like the Hales at her table.

"And Bab will sit side o' me," said Lucy. "Oh, won't we be happy?"

As the Dunlees took their seats to-night and looked around the room they saw a droll sight. The old lady, who had been knitting on the veranda, was seated at a small table in one corner; and on each side of her in a chair sat a cat! One cat was a gray "coon," the other an Angora; and both of them sat up as grave as judges, nibbling bits of cheese. Mrs. McQuilken herself, dressed in a very odd style, was knitting again. She was a remarkably industrious woman, and as it would be perhaps three or four minutes before the soup came in, she could not bear to waste the time in idleness. Her head-dress was odd enough. It was just a strip of white muslin wound around the head like an East Indian puggaree. Mrs. McQuilken had many outlandish fashions. She was the widow of a sea-captain and had been abroad most of her life. The children could hardly help staring at her. Even after they had learned to know her pretty well they still wanted to stare; and not being able to remember her name they spoke of her as "the knitting-woman."

"Look, Lucy," whispered Jimmy; "there's a boy I know over there at that little table. It's Nate Pollard."

He waved his hand toward him and Nate waved in reply. At home Jimmy had not known Nate very well, for he was older than himself and in higher classes; but here among strangers Jimmy-boy was glad to see a familiar face. Mr. and Mrs. Pollard were with their son. Perhaps they had all come for the summer. Jimmy hoped so.

There were two colored servants gliding about the room, and a pretty waiting-maid.

"O dear, no cook from Cathay," whispered Kyzie to Edith.

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean I wanted a cook from Cathay or Cipango," went on Kyzie, laughing behind her napkin.

"I'm going to shake you," said Edith, who suddenly bethought herself that Cathay and Cipango were the old names for China and Japan. This had been part of her history lesson a few days ago. How Kyzie did remember everything!

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At that moment the colored man from Georgia stood at her elbow with a steaming plate of soup. Lucy looked at him askance. Why couldn't he have been a Chinaman with a pigtail? She had told Bab she was almost sure there would be a "China cook" at the mountains, and when he passed the soup he would say, "Have soup-ee?" Bab had been in Europe and in Maine and in California, but knew very little of Chinamen and had often said she "wanted to eat China cooking."

The dinner was excellent. Eddo enjoyed it very much for a while; then his head began to nod over his plate, his spoon waved uncertainly in the air, and Maggie had to be sent for to take him away from the table.

The ride up the mountain had been so fatiguing that by eight o'clock all the Dunlees, little and big, were glad to find themselves snugly in bed. They slept late, every one of them, and even the woodpeckers, tapping on the roof next morning, failed to arouse them with their "Jacob, Jacob, wake up, wake up, Jacob!"

After breakfast Edith happened to leave the dining-room just behind Mrs. McQuilken, who held her two cats cuddled up in her arms like babies, and was kissing their foreheads and calling them "mamma's precious darlings." As Edith heard this she could not help smiling, and Mrs. McQuilken paused in the entry a moment to say:—

"I guess you like cats."

"I do, ma'am. Oh, yes, very much."

"That's right. I like to see children fond of animals. Now, I've got a new kitty upstairs, a zebra kitty, that you'd be pleased with. It's a beauty, and *such* a tail! Come up to my room and see it if you want to. My room's Number Five. But don't you come now; I shall be busy an hour and a half. Remember, an hour and a half."

Edith thanked her and ran to tell Kyzie what the "knitting-woman" had been saying.

"Go get your kodak," said Kyzie. "Nate Pollard is going to take us all out on an exploring expedition. You know he has been in Castle Cliff a whole week, and knows the places."

"First thing I want to see is that mine," said Lucy, as they all met outside the hotel.

"The mine?" repeated Kyzie, and looked at Eddo. "I'm afraid it isn't quite safe to take little bits of people to such a place as that. Do you think it is, Nate?"

"Rather risky," replied Nate.

Eddo had caught the words, "little bits of people," and his eyes opened wide.

“What does *mine* mean, Jimmum?”

“A great big hole, I guess. See here, Eddo, let’s go in the house and find Maggie.”

“Yes,” chimed in Edith, “let’s go find Maggie. There’s a *beau*-tiful picture book in mamma’s drawer. You just ask Maggie and she’ll show you the picture of those nice little guinea-pigs.”

Though very young, Eddo was acute enough to see through this little manoeuvre. It was not the first time the other children had tried to get him out of the way. They wanted to go to see a charming “great big hole” somewhere, and they thought he would fall into it and get hurt. They were always thinking such things—so stupid of them! They thought he used to run after “choo choos” and talk to them, when of course he never did it; ’twas some other little boy.

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"I want to go with Jimmum," said he, stoutly. "You ought to not go 'thout me! I shan't talk to that mine. I shan't say, 'Come, little mine, Eddo won't hurt oo.' No, no, not me! I shan't say nuffin', and I shan't fall in the hole needer. So there! H'm! 'm! 'm!"

It was not easy to resist his pleading. Perhaps Aunt Vi saw how matters were, for she appeared just then, bearing the news that she and Uncle James were going to drive, and would like to take one of the children.

"And Eddo is the one we want. He is so small that he can sit on the seat between us. Aren't the rest of you willing to give him up just for this morning? He can go to walk with you another time."

So they all said they would try to give him up, and he bounded away with Aunt Vi, his dear little face beaming with proud satisfaction.

III

LUCY'S GOLD MINE

The other children strolled leisurely along toward a place that looked like a long strip of sand.

"A sand beach," said Kyzie.

"No," said Nate; "it isn't a beach and it isn't sand."

"What *can* you mean? What else is it, pray?"

She stooped and took up a handful of something that certainly looked like sand. The others did the same.

"What do you call that?" they all asked, as they sifted it through their fingers.

Nate smiled in a superior way.

"Well, I don't call it sand, because it isn't sand. I thought it was when I first saw it; I got cheated, same as you. But there's no sand to it; it's just *tailings*."

"What in the world is tailings?" asked Kyzie, taking up another handful and looking it over very carefully. Strange if she, a girl in her teens, couldn't tell sand when she saw it! But she politely refrained from making any more remarks, and waited for Nate to answer her question. He was an intelligent boy, between eleven and twelve.

"Well, tailings are just powdered rocks," said Nate.

“Powdered rocks? Who powdered them? What for?” asked Edith.

“Why, the miners did it years ago. They ground up the rocks in the mine into powder just as fine as they could, and then washed the powder to get the gold out.”

“Oh, I see,” said Edith. “So these tailings are what’s left after the gold’s washed out.”

“Yes, they brought ’em and spread ’em ’round here to get rid of ’em I suppose.”

“Is the gold all washed out, every bit?” asked Jimmy. “Seems as if I could see a little shine to it now.”

“Well, they got out all they could. There may be a little dust of it left though. Mr. Templeton says the folks in ’Frisco that own the mine think there’s *some* left, and the tailings ought to be sent to San Diego and worked over.”

Jimmy took up another handful. Yes, there was a faint shine to it; it began to look precious.

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"Well, there's a heap of it anyway. It goes ever so far down," said he, thrusting in a stick.

"It's from ten to twelve feet deep," replied Nate, proud of his knowledge; "and see how long and wide!"

"I don't see how they ever ground up rocks so fine," said Kyzie. "Exactly like sand. And it stretches out so far that you'd think 'twas a sand beach by the sea,—only there isn't any sea."

"Well, it's just as good as a beach anyway," said Nate. "Just as good for picnics and the like of that. When there's anything going on, they get out the brass band and have fireworks and bring chairs and benches and sit round here. I tell you it's great!"

"There are lots of benches here now," remarked Edith. "And what's that long wooden thing?"

"That's a staging. That's where they have the brass band sit; that's where they send up the fireworks."

"Oh, I hope they'll have fireworks while we're here, and picnics."

"Of course they will. They're always having 'em. And I heard somebody say they're talking of a barbecue."

Edith clapped her hands. She did not know what a barbecue might be, but it sounded wild and jolly.

"What a long stretch of mud-puddle right here by the tailings," said Kyzie.

Nate laughed. "It *is* a damp spot, that's a fact!"

They all wondered what he was laughing at. "I guess there used to be water here once," said Jimmy at a venture. "There's water here now standing round in spots. And,—why, it's *fishes*!"

Lucy stooped all of a sudden and picked up a dead fish.

"Ugh! I never caught a fish before!" But next moment she threw it away in disgust.

"How did dead fishes ever get into this mud-puddle?" queried Edith.

"Well, they used to live in it before it dried up," replied Nate. "Fact is, this is a *lake*!"

Everybody exclaimed in surprise; and Kyzie said:—

"It doesn't seem possible; but then things are so queer up here that you can believe almost anything."

"Really it is a lake. It's all right in the winter, and swells tremendously then; but this is a dry year, you know, and it's all dried up." Kyzie forgave the lake for drying up, but pitied the fishes. Edith thought Castle Cliff was "a funny place anyway."

"What little bits of houses! Did they dry up too?"

"Oh, those are just the cabins and bunk-houses that were built for the miners, ever so long ago when the mine was going. Fixed up into cottages now for summer boarders. Do you want to see the mine?"

They went around behind the shaft-house and beyond the old saw-mill.

"O my senses!" cried Edith, "is that the old gold mine, that monstrous great thing? Isn't it horrid?"

They all agreed that it was "perfectly awful and dreadful," and that it made you shudder to look into it; and that they were glad baby Eddo was safely out of the way. The mine was a deep, irregular chasm, full of dirty water and rocks. It had a hungry, cruel look; you could almost fancy it was waiting in wicked glee to swallow up thoughtless little children.

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"It doesn't seem as if anybody could ever have dug for gold in that horrid ditch," exclaimed Kyzie.

"You'd better believe they did, though," said the young guide. "They used to get it out in nuggets, cart-loads of it."

He was not quite sure of the nuggets, but liked the sound of the word.

"Yes, cart-loads of it. I tell you 'twas the richest mine in the whole Cuyamaca Mountains."

"Too bad the gold gave out," said Kyzie, gazing regretfully into the watery depths.

"But it didn't give out! Why, there's gold enough left down there to buy up the whole United States! They lost the vein, that's all"

"The vein? What's a vein?" asked Edith.

"Well, you see," replied the guide, "gold goes along underground in streaks; they call it veins. The miners had to stop digging here because they lost track of the streak. But they'll find it again."

"How do *you* know?" asked Jimmy-boy, who thought Nate was putting on too many airs.

"Because Mr. Templeton said so. They've sent for Colonel Somebody from I—forget where. He's a splendid mining engineer, great for finding lost veins. He'll be here next week and bring a lot of men."

"Whoop-ee!" cried Jimmy, "he'll find the vein and things, and we'll be having gold as plenty as blackberries!"

"Just what I was talking about yesterday when you laughed," broke in Lucy. "I said I'd go down in a bucket; don't you know I did?"

Edith was gazing spellbound at the yawning chasm.

"Look at those rickety steps! The men will get killed! 'Twill all cave in!"

"No danger," said Nate, "there are walls down there, stone walls, papa says, that keep it all safe."

He meant "galleries," but had forgotten the word.

"Well, I don't care if there are five hundred stone walls, I guess the men could drown all the same!" said Edith. "That water ought to be let out, Nate Pollard! If the colonel is

coming next week why don't they let out the water this very day and give the place a chance to dry off."

She spoke in a tone of the gravest anxiety, as if she understood the matter perfectly, and felt the whole care of the mine. Indeed, the mine had become suddenly very interesting to all the children. It certainly looked like a rough, wild, frightful hole; nothing more than a hole; but if there were gold down there in "nuggets," why, that was quite another matter; it became at once an enchanted hole; it was as delightful as a fairy story.

"I hope it's true that they've sent for that colonel," said Kyzie.

"Of course it's true," replied Nate, who did not like to have his word doubted.

"I s'pose there are buckets 'round here. Oh, aren't you glad we came to Castle Cliff?" said Lucy, pirouetting around Jimmy.

"Bab will be glad, too," she thought. For Lucy never could look forward to any pleasure without wishing her darling "niece" to share it with her.

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"Well, I guess we've seen everything there is to see," remarked Nate, who had now told all he knew and was ready to go.

While they still wandered about, talking of "tailings" and "nuggets," they were startled by the peal of a bell.

"Twelve o'clock! Two minutes ahead of time though," said Nate, taking from his pocket a handsome gold watch which Jimmy had always admired.

"What bell is that? Where is it?" they all asked. "And what is it ringing for?"

"It's on top of the schoolhouse and it's ringing for noon. 'Twill ring again in the evening at nine o'clock. But I can tell 'em they ought to set it back two minutes."

"A nine o'clock bell? Why, that's a *curfew* bell! How romantic!" cried Kyzie. She had read of "the mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells," but had never heard it. "Let's go to the schoolhouse."

As luncheon at the Templeton House would not be served for an hour yet, they kept on to the hollow where the schoolhouse stood. It was a small, unpainted building in the shade of three pine trees.

"Just wait a minute right here," said Edith, the young artist, unstrapping her kodak. "I want a snap-shot at it. Stand there by that tree, Jimmum. Put your foot out just so. I wish you were barefooted!"

Just then, as if they had overheard the wish, two little boys came running down the hill, and one of them was barefooted. Moreover, when Kyzie asked if they would stand for a picture, they consented at once.

"My name's Joseph Rolfe," said the elder, twitching off his hat, "and his name,"—pointing to his companion with a chuckle,— "his name is Chicken Little."

"No such a thing! Now you quit!" retorted the younger lad in a choked voice, digging his toes into the dirt, "quit a-plaguing me! My name's Henry Small and you know it!"

While Edith was busy taking their photographs, Kyzie thanked the urchins very pleasantly. They both gazed at her with admiration.

"See here," said Joe Rolfe, twitching off his hat again very respectfully, "Are you going to keep school in the schoolhouse? I wish you would!"

At this remarkable speech Jimmy and Edith fell to laughing; but Kyzie only blushed a little, and smiled. How very grown-up she must seem to Joe if he could think of her as a teacher! She was now a tall girl of fourteen, with a fine strong face and an earnest

manner. She was beginning to tire of being classed among little girls, and it was delightful to find herself looked upon for the first time in her life as a young lady. But she only said:—

“Oh, no, Joe, people don’t teach school in summer! Summer is vacation.”

“Well, but they do sometimes,” persisted Joe; “there was a girl kep’ this school last summer. She called it ‘vacation school.’ But we didn’t like her; she licked like fury.”

“So she did,” echoed Chicken Little, “licked and pulled ears. Kep’ a stick on the desk.”

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And with these last words both the little boys took their leave, running up hill with great speed, as if they thought that standing for a picture had been a great waste of time.

"That Chicken boy is the biggest cry-baby," said Nate. "The boys like to plague him to see him cry. Joe Rolfe has some sense."

As the little party walked on, Miss Katharine turned her head more than once for another look at the schoolhouse.

"Wouldn't it be fun, Edy, to teach school in there and ring that 'lin-lan-lone bell' to call in the scholars? I'd make you study botany harder'n you ever did before."

"No, thank you, Miss Dunlee," replied Edith, courtesying. "You'll not get me to worrying over botany. I studied it a month once, but when I go up in the mountains I go to have a good time."

She pursed her pretty mouth as she spoke. Her sister Katharine was by far the best botanist in her class, and was always tearing up flowers in the most wasteful manner. Worse than that, she expected Edith to do the same thing and learn the hard names of the poor little withered pieces.

"You don't love flowers as well as I do, Kyzie, or you couldn't abuse them so!"

This is what she often said to her learned sister after Kyzie had made "a little preach" about the beauties of botany.

As they entered the hotel for luncheon, Kyzie was still thinking of the schoolhouse and the sweet-toned bell and the singular speech of Joe Rolfe, about wanting her for a teacher. What came of these thoughts you shall hear later on.

"Well, I declare, I forgot all about that zebra kitty," said Edith. "What will the knitting-woman think of such actions?"

IV

THE "KNITTING-WOMAN"

The "knitting-woman" met Edith at the dining-room door after luncheon, and said to her rather sharply:—

"Well, little girl, I thought you liked kittens?"

"I do, Mrs.—madam, I certainly do," replied Edith feeling guilty and ashamed. "But Nate Pollard took us to see the gold mine and the schoolhouse and we've just got back."

“Oh, that’s it! I thought ’twas very still around here—I missed the noise of the *boyoes*. —You don’t know what I mean by *boyoes*,” she added, smiling. “I picked up the word in Ireland. I’m always picking up words. It means *boys*.”

“I understand; oh, yes.”

“Well, ’twas a little trouble to me, your not coming when I expected you; but you may come this afternoon. I’ll be ready in ten minutes.”

“Yes, madam, thank you.”

Edith ran to her mother laughing. “Oh, mamma, she is the queerest woman! Calls boys *boyoes*! I must go to see her kitten whether I want to or not—in just ten minutes! I wish I could take Kyzie with me; would you dare?”

“Certainly not. Katharine has not been invited. And don’t make a long call, Edith.”

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"No, mamma, I'll not even sit down. I'll just look at the zebra kitty and come right away."

Mrs. Dunlee smiled. If there were many pets at Number Five it was not likely that Edith would hasten away. "Remember, daughter, fifteen minutes is long enough for a call on an entire stranger. You don't wish to annoy Mrs. McQuilken; but if you should happen to forget, you'll hear this little bell tinkle, and that will remind you to leave."

Number Five was a very interesting room, about as full as it could hold of oddities from various countries, together with four cats, a canary, and a mocking-bird.

"If you had come this morning you would have seen Mag, that's the magpie," said Mrs. McQuilken. "She's off now, pretty creature. She likes to be picking a fuss with the chickens."

The good lady had been knitting, but she dropped her work into the large pocket of her black apron, and moved up an easy-chair for her guest. Edith forgot to take it. Her eyes were roving about the room, attracted by the curiosities, though she dared not ask a single question.

"That nest on the wall looks odd to you, I dare say," said Mrs. McQuilken. "The twigs are woven together so closely that it looks nice enough for a lady's work-bag, now doesn't it?"

Edith said she thought it did.

"Well, that's the magpie's nest. She laid seven eggs in it once. I keep it now for her to sleep in; it's Mag's cot-bed."

Edith's eyes, still roving, espied a handsome kitty asleep on the lounge. It must be the zebra kitty because of its black and dove-colored stripes. Most remarkable stripes, so regular and distinct, yet so softly shaded. The face was black, with whiskers snow-white. How odd! Edith had never seen white whiskers on a kitten. And then the long, sweeping black tail!

Mrs. McQuilken watched the little girl's face and no longer doubted her fondness for kittens.

"I call her Zee for short. Look at that now!" And Mrs. McQuilken straightened out the tail which was coiled around Zee's back.

"Oh, how beautifully long!" cried Edith.

"Long? I should say so! There was a cat-show at Los Angeles last fall, and one cat took a prize for a tail not so long as this by three-quarters of an inch! And Zee only six months old!"

The kitty, wide awake by this time, was holding high revel with a ball of yarn which the tortoise-shell cat had purloined from her mistress's basket.

"Dear thing! Oh, isn't she sweet?" said Edith, dropping on her knees before the graceful creature.

Mrs. McQuilken enjoyed seeing the child go off into small raptures; Edith was fast winning her heart.

"Does your mother like cats?" she suddenly inquired.

"Not particularly," replied Edith, clapping her hands, as Zee with a quick dash bore away the ball out of the very paws of the coon cat. "Mamma thinks cats are cold-hearted," said she, hugging Zee to her bosom. "She says they don't love anybody."

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"I deny it!" exclaimed Mrs. McQuilken, indignantly. "Tell your mother to make a study of cats and she'll know better."

Edith looked rather frightened. "Yes'm, I'll tell her."

"They have very deep feelings and folks ought to know it. Now, listen, little girl. I had two maltese kittens once. They were sisters and loved each other better than any girl sisters *you* ever saw. One of the kittens got caught in a trap and we had to kill her. And the other one went round mewling and couldn't be comforted. She pined away, that kitty did, and in three days she died. Now I know that for a fact."

"Poor child!" said Edith, much touched. "*She* wasn't cold-hearted, I'll tell mamma about that."

"Well, if she doesn't like 'em perhaps it wouldn't do any good; but while you're about it you might tell her of two tortoise-shell cats I had. They were sisters too. Whiff had four kittens and Puff had one and lost it. And the way Whiff comforted Puff! She took her right home into her own basket and they brought up the four kittens together. Wasn't that lovely?"

"Oh, wasn't it, though?" said Edith. "Cats have hearts, I always knew they did."

"That shows you're a sensible little girl," returned the old lady approvingly. "But you haven't told me yet what your name is?"

"Edith Dunlee."

"I knew 'twas Dunlee—that's a Scotch name; but I didn't know about the Edith. Well, Edith, so you've been to see the gold mine? Pokerish place, isn't it? I hear they're going to bring down the engine from the big plant and try to start it up again."

Edith had no idea what she meant by the "big plant," so made no reply. Mrs. McQuilken went back to the subject of cats.

"Did you know the Egyptians used to worship cats? Well, sometimes they did. And when their cats died they went into mourning for them."

"How queer!"

"It does seem so, but it's just as you look at it, Edith. Cats are a sight of company. I didn't care so much about them or about birds either when my husband was alive and my little children, but now—"

Again she paused, and this time she did not go on again. Some one out of doors laughed; it was Jimmy Dunlee, and the mocking-bird took up the merry sound and echoed it to perfection.

“Doesn’t that seem human?” cried Mrs. McQuilken. And really it did. It was exactly the laugh of a human boy, though it came from the throat of a tiny bird.

“My little boys, Pitt and Roscoe, liked to hear him do that,” said Mrs. McQuilken.

Edith observed that she did not say “my boyoes.” “Pitt, the one that died in Japan, doted on the mocking-bird. The other boy, Roscoe, was all bound up in the canary.”

“Does the canary sing?”

“Yes, he’s a grand singer. Just you wait till he pipes up. You’ll be surprised. But you remember what I was saying a little while ago about your mother? That zebra kitty—”

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Before she could finish the sentence Edith heard the warning tinkle of the tea-bell, and sprang up suddenly, exclaiming: "Good-by, Mrs.—good-by, *madam*, I must go now. You've been very kind, thank you. Good-by."

And out of the door and away she skipped, leaving her hostess, who had not heard the bell, to wonder at her haste. "She went like a shot off a shovel," said the good lady, taking up her knitting-work. "She seemed to be such a well-mannered little girl, too! What got into her all at once? She acted as if she was 'possessed of the fox.'"

This is a common expression in Japan, and naturally Mrs. McQuilken had caught it up, as she had caught up other odd things in her travels. She was something of a mocking-bird in her way, was the captain's widow.

"I've taken quite a fancy to Edith," she added, "a minute more and I should have offered to give her the zebra kitty. But there, I shouldn't want to make a fuss in the family. That woman, her mother, to think of her talking so hard about cats! She doesn't *look* like that kind of a woman. I'm surprised."

Edith ran back to her mother breathless.

"Oh, mamma, I was having such a good time! And she didn't appear to be 'annoyed,' she talked just as fast all the time! But the bell rang while she was saying something and I had to run."

"Had to run? I hope you were not abrupt, my child?"

"Oh, no, mamma, not at all. I said 'good-by' twice, and thanked her and told her she had been very kind. That wasn't abrupt, was it? But oh, that kitty's tail! I forget how many inches and a quarter longer than any other kitty's tail in this state! And they are not cold-hearted,—I mean cats,—I promised to tell you."

Here followed an account of the two cat-sisters, who loved each other better than girl-sisters.

"And think of one of them dying of grief, the sweet thing! Human people don't die of grief, do they, mamma?"

"Not often, Edith. Such instances have been known, but they are very rare."

"Well," struck in wee Lucy, who had been listening to the touching story, "well, I guess some folks would! Bab would die for grief of me, and I would die for grief of Bab; we *said* we would!"

She made this absurd little speech with tears in her eyes; but Kyzie and Edith dared not laugh, for mamma's forefinger was raised. Mamma never allowed them to ridicule the

friendship of the two little girls, who had made believe for more than a year that they were “aunt” and “niece.” The play might be rather foolish, but the love was very sweet and true.

Lucy had been thinking all day of Barbara and longing for her arrival. A full hour before it was time for the stage she went a little way up the mountain with Jimmy, and they took turns gazing down the winding, dusty road through a spy-glass. “I shan’t wait here any longer. What’s the use?” declared Jimmy.

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"She's coming! she's coming! I saw her first!" was Lucy's glad cry. And she ran down the mountain in haste, though the stage, a grayish green one, was just turning a curve at least a mile away.

"Well, you *have* been parted a good while," said Uncle James, as the two dear friends met and embraced on the coach steps; "a day and a half!"

"I'd have 'most died if I'd waited any longer," said Aunt Lucy, putting her arm around her niece and leading her up the gravel path with the pink "old hen and chickens" on either side.

The little girls were entirely unlike, and the contrast was pleasant to see. Lucy was very fair, with light curling hair:—

"Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds
That ope in the month of May."

Bab was quite as pretty, but in another way. She had brilliant dark eyes and straight dark hair with a satin gloss. She was half a head shorter than her "auntie," though their ages were about the same. People liked to see them together, for they were always sociable and happy, and loved each other "dearilee."

"Oh, Bab," said wee Lucy, "I had such a *loneness* without you!"

"I had a loneness too, Auntie Lucy. Seemed as if the time never would go."

And then the dark head and the fair head met again for more kisses, while both the mammas looked on and said, in low tones and with smiles, as they always did:—

"How sweet! Now we shall hear them singing about the place like two little birds."

This was Tuesday. The days went on happily until Thursday afternoon, when "the Dunlee party," which always included the Hales and Sanfords, set forth up the mountain for a sight of the famous "air-castle." Of course Nate was with them, but this time not as a guide; the guide was Uncle James.

The road, though rather steep, was not a hard one. Mr. Dunlee had his alpenstock, and Uncle James walked beside him, holding little Eddo by the hand. Bab and Lucy, or "the little two," as Aunt Vi called them, were side by side as usual, and Lucy had asked Bab to repeat the story of "Little Bo-Peep" in French, for Nate wanted to hear it. Bab could speak French remarkably well.



“Petit beau bouton
A perde ses moutons,
Il ne sais pas que les a pris.
O laissez les tranquille!
Ils se retournerons,
Chacun sa queue apres lui.”

Mrs. Dunlee and Kyzie were just behind the children, and while Bab was repeating the verse Kyzie said in a low tone:—

“Oh, mamma, let me walk with you all the way, please. There’s something I want to talk about.”

She looked so earnest that Mrs. Dunlee wondered not a little what it was her eldest daughter had to say.

V

THE AIR-CASTLE

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"A vacation school, Katharine? And pray what may that be?"

Kyzie's cheeks were flushed, her eyes shining. She held her mother's hand and talked fast, though plainly she did not feel quite at her ease.

"Why, mamma, you've certainly heard of vacation schools—summer schools? They're very common nowadays. In the summer, you know; so that college people can go to them, and business people."

"Ah! Like the one at Coronado Beach? Now I understand. But it didn't occur to me that my little daughter would know enough to teach college people!"

"Now, mamma, don't laugh at me! Of course I mean children, the little ignorant children right around here," making a sweeping gesture toward the cottages and "bunk houses" that dotted the country lower down the mountain, "I know enough to teach little children, I should hope, mamma."

"Possibly!"

Mrs. Dunlee's tone was so doubtful that her daughter felt crushed.

"Possibly you may know enough about books; but book-knowledge is not all that is required in a teacher. Could you keep the children in order? Would they obey you?"

The little girl's head drooped a little.

"Let me see, you are only fourteen?"

"Fourteen last April, mamma. But everybody says, don't you know, that I'm very large for my age."

She tried to speak bravely, but the look of quiet amusement on her listener's face made it rather hard for her to go on.

"I suppose," said she, dropping her eyes again, "I suppose they don't know much here, mamma,—the families that live here all the time. Some of the boys actually go barefooted."

"So I have observed. A great saving of shoes."

"And they had a school last summer," went on Kyzie, resolutely. "A young girl taught it who boarded where we do. Mr. Templeton said she did it for fun."

"Indeed!"

“But they didn’t like her a bit. I could teach as well as she did anyway, mamma, for she just went around the room boxing their ears.”

“Is it possible, Katharine?” Mrs. Dunlee was serious enough now. “To box a child’s ears is simply brutal!”

“I knew you’d say so, mamma; but that was just what Miss Severance did. Of course I wouldn’t touch their ears any more than I would fly!”

Mrs. Dunlee turned now and regarded her daughter attentively.

“But how did you ever happen to take up this sudden fancy for teaching, dear? It’s all new to me. What first made you think of it—at your age? Can you tell?”

“Oh, mamma, I’ve been thinking about it, off and on, for a year. Ever since I was at Willowbrook last summer and heard Grandma Parlin talk about *her* first school. Why, don’t you remember, she was just fourteen, she said, nearly three months younger than I am.”

Mrs. Dunlee understood it all now, and said to herself:—

“Dear old Grandma Parlin! Little did she imagine she was filling her great grand-daughter’s head with mischievous notions!”

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They walked on a short way in silence. "But you must remember, Katharine, that was seventy years ago. Grandma Parlin wouldn't advise a girl of fourteen to do in these days as she did then. Schools are very different now."

"Yes, indeed, mamma, very, very different. Isn't it too bad? I'd like to 'board 'round' the way grandma did, and rap on the window with a ferule, and 'choose sides' and all that! But there's one thing I could do!" exclaimed the little girl, brightening. "I could make the children 'toe the mark'; wouldn't that be fun? I mean stand in a line on a crack in the floor. How grandma would laugh! I'll write her all about it, and send her a photograph, bare feet and all."

In her eagerness Kyzie spoke as if the matter were all arranged and she could almost see the children "toeing the mark."

"Not so fast, my daughter. Remember there are three points to be settled before we can discuss the matter seriously. First, would your papa consent? Second, would your mamma consent? Third, do the people of Castle Cliff want a summer school anyway?"

"Three points? I see, oh, yes," said Kyzie, meekly.

"But now, Katharine, let us walk a little faster and join the others. And not a word more of this to-day."

"What did keep you two so long?" asked Edith, coming to meet them with a bright face. If her happy thoughts had not been dwelling on the zebra cat just presented her by the "knitting-woman," she would have observed at once that mamma and Kyzie had been "talking secrets"; though she might not have suspected that this had anything to do with the vacation school.

"Do hurry along," she added. "I want to show you the funniest sight! I don't believe you've seen Barbara Hale, have you?"

Edith could hardly speak for laughing; and her mother and Kyzie did not wonder when they beheld the figure that little Bab had made of herself, by a new style of dressing her hair. The two little girls were, as I have told you, as different as possible, but had an intense desire to look "just alike"; and when they tried their best the result was very funny.

I will mention here that Lucy "despised" her own hair for not being straight like Bab's, and had often tried to braid it down her back; but as the braid always came out and the ribbon came off, the attempt had been forbidden.

Now, however, as the children had left their city home and come to a place where everybody was "on holiday," the mammas decided that they might have a little more liberty.

Their dresses were off the same piece,—good, strong brown ones; their hats were alike; and, as for their hair, they were allowed to wear it as they pleased “just for this summer.”

“We’ll look exactly alike up there in the mountains,” the little souls had said to each other; and this was perhaps one reason why they had been so overjoyed at the prospect of going.

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[Illustration]

But to-day, ah! who would have dreamed that sweet little Bab could become such a fright? She had done up her hair the night before on as many as twenty curl-papers. Before starting for the air-castle she had taken out some of the papers and found—not ringlets, but wisps of very unruly hair. It would not curl any more than water will run up hill.

She went to Aunt Lucy in her trouble to seek advice. Aunt Lucy looked her over with great care and then announced:—

“It is perfectly awful! Don’t take out any more papers, Bab. Let ’em be, so you can have something to stick the curls on to.”

And so it was done. The “curls,” as Lucy was pleased to call them, were drawn up and looped and twisted and fastened by hair-pins to the other curls left in the papers. The effect was most surprising. It made Bab’s head so much higher than usual that she was as tall now as auntie, and that in itself was a great gain. Besides, this style, as Lucy said, was the “pompy-doo,” and very fashionable!

If Bab could have kept her hat on! But she couldn’t, and the moment it came off they all cried out:—

“Why-ee, Barbara!” and turned away to laugh.

If Mrs. McQuilken had been there she would have said the child looked “as if she was possessed of the fox.”

“The little goosies! Let them enjoy it!” whispered Mrs. Hale to Mrs. Dunlee. “But those topknots will have to come down before the child can go to the dinner-table.”

And then both the ladies laughed privately behind a large tree. The mountain air was doing them good, and they often had as merry times together as the young people.

“Hear the boyoes,” cried Edith, meaning Jimmy and Nate, who had now reached the air-castle and were shouting with all their might. The children ran, and so indeed did the older ones, for there was an excellent path all the way.

“So that is the air-castle,” exclaimed Kyzie, when they were all within sight of it. “It’s a real house, built right in the mountain.”

She was right. There happened to be a great crack right here in the rocky side of the mountain, and a cunning little house had been tucked into the crack. It was built of small stones. It had two real windows with glass panes, and a real door with a brass knocker, which the children declared was “too cute for anything.”

“The house is as strong as a fort,” said Uncle James. “Do you observe it is walled all around with stones?”

“Do you know who built it?” asked Aunt Vi; “and why he built it?”

“A rich Mexican named Bandini. He admired the view from the mountain, and I don’t blame him, do you? He wanted a nice, quiet place where he could read and write; that was why he came here. He has been here every summer for years.”

“Well,” said Mr. Dunlee, “if you call this an air-castle I must say it is the most solid one I ever heard of! It doesn’t look dreamy at all. Why, an earthquake could hardly shake it.”

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"The steps that lead up to it are not dreamy either," said Mrs. Dunlee. "Real granite; and there's a large flag up there floating from the evergreen tree."

The "boyoes" had already climbed the steps, and Nate called down to Mrs. Dunlee, "It's the Mexican flag!" But she had known that at a glance. The colors were red, white, and green, and the device was an eagle on a prickly pear with a snake in his mouth.

"I wonder if there's anybody at home," said Nate, and would have lifted the knocker if Jimmy had not said, "Wait for Uncle James."

Jimmy thought as Uncle James was the leader of the expedition he should be the one to do the knocking, or at any rate to tell them when to knock. Nate himself had not thought of this. He was not so refined as Jimmy, either by nature or by training.

Everybody had climbed the steps now. The older people were enjoying the magnificent view; but Bab and Lucy were looking for the two toads who had been seen going up to the castle together, the well toad taking the lame toad's foot in his mouth.

"I wish they were both here," said Uncle James, "for you would like to see them take that little journey."

"And the Mexican who built this air-castle," said Aunt Vi, "is he here this summer?"

"No, he died last spring."

"Died?" echoed little Eddo, who had heard that dying means "going up in the sky."
"What made him die, mamma? Didn't he like it down here?"

Then without waiting for a reply he added most tenderly and unexpectedly, "Isn't it nice that *you're* not dead, mamma?"

"Why do you think that, my son?" she asked, wondering what he would say.

"Oh, *be-cause* I *am* so glad about it." And at this sweet little speech his mother caught him up in her arms and kissed him. How could she help it?

"Now," said Uncle James, "let us see if we can enter the castle. 'Open locks whoever knocks.' Try it, boys."

Nate lifted the knocker and pounded with a will. There was no answer or sign of life.

"Let's see if this will help us," said Uncle James, taking a key from his vest pocket:—

"For I'm the keeper of the keys,
And I do whatever I please."

The key actually fitted the lock, the door opened at once, and they all entered the castle.

“Mr. Templeton lent me the key,” explained Mr. Sanford. “He said the castle was as empty as a last year’s bird’s nest, but I thought we might like to take a look at it.”

“We do, oh, we do,” said Lucy. “Isn’t it queer? Just two rooms and nothing in ’em at all! Oh, Bab, let’s you and I bring some dishes up here and keep house! Here’s a cupboard right in the wall.”

“I guess it’s Mother Hubbard’s cupboard, it looks bare enough. Just a table in the room and one old chair,” exclaimed Edith.

“I’m glad we came in, though,” said Kyzie. “Isn’t it beautiful to stand in the door and look down, down, and see Castle Cliff right at your feet? And off there a city—Why, what’s that noise?”

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No one answered. The older people knew the sound: it was that of an angry rattlesnake out of doors shaking his rattle.

Mr. Dunlee said:—

“Stay in the house, please, you ladies, and keep the children here. James and I will go out and attend to this.”

He had an alpenstock, Uncle James a cane. The ladies and Mr. Hale and the children watched the two gentlemen from the window,—all but little Eddo, whose mother was playing bo-peep with him to prevent him from looking out. A handsome rattlesnake was winding his way up the mountain in pursuit of a tiny baby rabbit. The little “cotton-tail” was running for the castle as fast as he could, intending to hide in a hole under the door-stone. But he never would have reached the door-stone alive, poor little trembling creature, if Mr. Dunlee and Uncle James had not come up just in time to finish the cruel snake with cane and alpenstock. Bunny got away safe, without even stopping to say, “Thank you.” The snake wore seven rattles, of which he was very proud; but Eddo had them next day for a plaything, and made as much noise with them as ever the snake had done; though Eddo never knew where they came from.

It had been a delightful day, and when the friends all met again at table they kept saying, “Didn’t we have a good time?”

It was to be noticed that Barbara’s “topknots” had disappeared; and I am glad to say that she never wore her lovely hair “pomp-doo” again.

Kyzie’s face was alight. In passing the door of her mother’s room she had heard her father say, laughing:—

“What, our Katharine? Why, how that would amuse Mr. Templeton!”

Kyzie had hurried away for fear of listening; but now she kept thinking:—

“Papa laughed. He always laughs when he is going to say ‘yes.’ He’ll talk to Mr. Templeton, and I just know I shall have the school Isn’t it splendid?”

VI

“GRANDMA GRAYMOUSE”

“Hoopty-Doo!” shouted Jimmy, alighting on the piazza on all fours. “A little girl like that keep school!”

"Well, she is going to," returned Edith, looking up from the picture she was drawing of a cherub in the clouds, "she's going to; and Mr. Templeton says the Castle Cliff people are as pleased as they can be."

"I heard what he said," struck in Nate. "He said they jumped at it like a dolphin at a silver spoon."

"He's always talking about that dolphin and that silver spoon," laughed Edith. "If I knew how a dolphin looks, I'd draw one and give it to him just for fun. But mamma, you don't expect me to go to school to that little girl; now do you?"

"Certainly not, Edith; oh, no."

"Must I go to Grandmother Graymouse?" whined Jimmy, "She's only my sister. And I came up here to play."

"Play all you like, my son. No one will ask you to go school."

"But I really want to go," said Nate. "I wouldn't miss it for anything. A girl's school like that will be larks. Only four hours anyway, two in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. Time enough left for play."

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"H'm, if that's all, let's go," cried Jimmy. "We can leave off any time we get tired of it."

Kyzie heard this as she was crossing the hall.

"Why, boys," she said, "you don't live in Castle Cliff! It's the Castle Cliff children I'm going to teach—the little ones, you know."

"But papa said if you'd show me about my arithmetic—" began Nate.

"Perhaps I don't know so much as you do, Nate. But if you go you'll be good, won't you—you and Jimmy both?"

She spoke with some concern. "For if you're naughty, the other boys will think they can be naughty too; and I shan't know what in the world to do with them."

"Oh, we'll sit up as straight as ninepins; we'll show 'em how city boys behave," said Nate, making a bow to Kyzie.

He could be a perfect little gentleman when he chose. He liked to tease Jimmy, younger than himself, but had always been polite to Kyzie. Still Kyzie did not altogether like the thought of having a boy of twelve for a pupil. What if he should laugh at her behind his slate?

Here Barbara and Lucy appeared upon the veranda, holding Edith's new kitty between them.

"We're going. We'll sit together and cut out paper dolls and eat figs under the seat," declared Lucy, never doubting that this would be pleasing news to the young teacher.

Before Kyzie had time to say, "Why, Lucy!" little Eddo ran up the steps to ask in haste:

—

"Where's Lucy going? I fink I'll go too."

Kyzie could bear no more. She ran and hid in the hammock and cried. They all thought she was to have a sort of play-school; did they? They were going just for fun. She must talk to mamma. Mamma thought the school was foolish business; but mamma always knew what ought to be done, and how to help do it. Or if mamma ever felt puzzled, there was papa to go to,—papa, who could not possibly make a mistake. Between them they would see that their eldest daughter was treated fairly.

Monday morning came. Kyzie's courage had revived. Eddo would be kept at home; Lucy and Bab had been informed that they were not to cut paper dolls, though they might write on their slates. All that they thought of just now, the dear "little two," was of dressing to "look exactly alike." As Bab had learned once for all that her hair would not

curl, she spent half an hour that morning braiding her auntie's ringlets down her back, and tying the cue with a pink ribbon like her own. But for all the little barber could do the flaxen cue would not lie flat. It was an old story, but very provoking.

"Oh dear," wailed Lucy, "'most school-time and my hair is all *over* my head!"

It did look wild. You could almost fancy it was angry because it had not been allowed to curl after its own graceful fashion.

The "little two" started off in good season, hoping not to be seen by Eddo; but he espied them from the window, and they heard him calling till his baby voice was lost in the distance:—

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"You ought to not leave me! You ought to not leave m-e-e!"

"He wants to go everywhere big people go."

"Yes," responded Bab. "Such babies think they are as old as anybody. Oh, see that Mexican dog, how straight his tail stands up!"

"Like your hair," sighed Lucy. "If my hair would only be straight like that!"

And neither of them smiled at this droll remark.

"But there's one thing we must remember, Bab. I'm glad I thought of it. We must say, 'Miss' to Kyzie."

"Miss what?"

"Miss Dunlee. If we forget it, she'll feel dreadfully." And then they began to hum a tune and keep step to the music. They often did this as they walked.

Kyzie had gone on before them. Her father was with her, but she had the key in her hand and opened the schoolhouse door. They walked in together, and Kyzie locked the door behind them, for several children were waiting about who must not enter till the bell rang.

The schoolhouse floor was very clean; the new teacher herself had swept it. On the walls were large wreaths of holly, which had been left over from last Christmas, when the Sunday-school had had a celebration here. At one end of the room was a raised platform with a large desk on it. On the wall over the desk was a motto made of red pepper berries, only the words were so close together that you could not make them out unless you knew beforehand what they were.

"That means, 'Christ is risen,'" explained Kyzie. "It looks dreadfully, but they didn't want it taken down, I'll make another by and by."

There were blackboards on three sides of the room; quite clean they looked now. The desks and benches were rude ones of black oak, and had been hacked by jack-knives. Kyzie regretted this, but supposed the boys had not been taught any better. There was only one chair in the room, a large armed chair for the little teacher, and it stood solemnly on the platform before the desk.

"You see, papa, I've brought a big blank-book to write the names in. The pen and inkstand belong here. Ahem, I begin to tremble," said she, and looked at her mother's watch which she wore in her belt. "It's five minutes of nine."

"Oh, you'll do famously," said Mr. Dunlee. "And now, daughter, I'll wish you good-by and the very best luck in the world."

"Good-by, papa," said Kyzie, and locked the door after him. "I wish I'd asked him to stay till I called them in and took their names. Papa is so dignified that it would have been a great help. My, I feel as if I weren't more than six years old!"

She walked the floor, watch in hand. "Fifty seconds of nine."

She went to the bell-rope and pulled with both hands. It was quite needless to use so much force. The bell was directly over her head; and instead of the "mellow lin-lan-lone" she expected, it made a din so tremendous that it almost seemed as if the roof were about to fall upon her. At the same time there was a scrambling and pounding at the door. The children were trying to get in.

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"Oh, miserable me, I've locked them out!" thought the little teacher in dismay.

She hastened to the door and opened it, and they rushed in with a shout. This was an odd beginning; but Kyzie said not a word. She remembered that she was now Miss Dunlee, so she threw back her shoulders and looked her straightest and tallest, and as much as possible like Miss Prince, her favorite teacher. She had intended all along to imitate Miss Prince—whenever she could think of it.

Only fourteen years old! Well, what of that? Grandma Parlin had been only fourteen when she taught *her* first school. Keep a brave heart, Katharine Dunlee!

Joe Rolfe walked in as stiffly as a wooden soldier. Behind him came a few boys and girls, some of them with their fingers in their mouths. There were twelve in all. The last ones to enter were Nate and Jimmy, followed by Aunt Lucy and her niece arm in arm.

"I wonder if Nate is laughing at me for locking the door?" thought Kyzie, not daring to look at him, as she waved her hands and said in a loud voice to be heard above the noise:—

"All please be seated."

Being seated was a work of time; and what a din it made! The children wandered about, trying one bench after another to see which they liked best.

"You would think they were getting settled for life," whispered Nate to Jimmy.

The "little two" chose a place near the west window and began at once to write on their slates.

"I'm scared of Miss Dunlee," wrote Aunt Lucy.

"Stop making me laugh," replied the niece.

When at last everybody was "settled for life," Kyzie did not know what to do next. "What would Miss Prince do? Why she would read in the Bible. I forgot that."

The new teacher took her stand on the platform behind the desk, opened her Bible, and read aloud the twenty-third Psalm. Her voice shook, partly from fright, partly from trying so hard not to laugh. But she did not even smile—far from it. Nate and Jimmy who were watching her could have told you that. If she had been at a funeral she could hardly have looked more solemn.

Jimmy touched Nate's foot under the bench; Nate gave Jimmy a shove; Bab gazed hard at Lucy's flaxen cue; Lucy gazed straight at her thumb.

After the reading “Miss Dunlee” walked about with her blank-book in one hand and her pen in the other to take down the children’s names.

“I’m Joseph Rolfe; don’t you remember me?” said the boy with red hair. “And this boy next seat is Chicken Little.”

“No, I ain’t either, I’m Henry Small,” corrected the little fellow, ready to cry.

Kyzie shook her finger at both the boys and resolved that “Joe should stop calling names, and Henry should stop being such a cry-baby.”

Annie Farrell was a dear little girl in a blue and white gingham gown, and the new teacher loved her at once. Dorothy Pratt was little more than a baby, and when spoken to she put her apron to her eyes and wanted to go home.

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"She can't go home," said her older sister Janey, "mamma's cookin' for company!"

Kyzie patted the baby's tangled hair and sent Janey to get her some water.

"I'll go," spoke up Jack Whiting, aged seven. "Janey isn't big enough. Besides the pail leaks."

"I'm so glad Edith isn't here," thought Kyzie, "or we should both get to giggling. There, it's time now to call them out to read. Let me see, where is the best crack in the floor for them to stand on? Why didn't I bring a quarter of a dollar with a hole in it for a medal? Oh, the medal will be for the spelling-class; that was what Grandma Parlin said."

It seemed a "ling-long" forenoon, and the little teacher rejoiced when eleven o'clock came. The family at home looked at her curiously, and Uncle James asked outright, "Tell us, Grandmother Graymouse, how do the scholars behave?"

"Well, I suppose they behaved as well as they knew how; but oh, it makes me so hungry!"

She could not say whether she liked teaching or not.

"Wait till Friday night, Uncle James, and then I'll tell you."

"Well said, Grandmother Graymouse! You couldn't have made a wiser remark. We'll ask no further questions till Friday night."

But when Friday night came they were all thinking of something else, something quite out of the common; and "Grandmother Graymouse" and her school were forgotten.

VII

THE ZEBRA KITTEN

It began with Zee. By this time her young mistress had become very much attached to her; and so indeed had all the "Dunlee party." Even Mrs. Dunlee petted the kitten and said she was the most graceful creature she had ever seen, except, perhaps, the dancing horse, Thistleblow. Eddo loved her because "she hadn't any pins in her feet" and did not resent his rough handling. The "little two" loved her because she allowed them to play all sorts of games with her. They could make believe she was very ill and tuck her up in bed, and she would swallow meekly such medicine as alum with salt and water without even a mew.

"She is so amiable," said Edith. "And then that wonderful tail of hers, mamma! 'Twould bring, I don't know how much money, at a cat fair. It's a regular *prize* tail, you see!"

An animal like this merited extra care. She was not to be put off like an everyday cat with saucers of milk and scraps of meat; she must have the choicest bits from the table.

“Mrs. McQuilken says the best-fed cats make the best mousers,” said Edith.

“Is that so, Miss Edith? Then the mice here at Castle Cliff haven’t long to live!” laughed good-natured Mr. Templeton, as he handed Zee’s little mistress a pitcher of excellent cream.

Edith was very grateful to Mrs. McQuilken for this remarkable kitten. She had taken much pains with her pencil drawing of a cherub in the clouds, intending it as a present for the eccentric old lady.

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"Do you suppose she'll like it, mamma? You know she's so odd that one never can tell."

Mrs. Dunlee was sure the picture would be appreciated. The cherub's sweet face looked like Eddo's, and the clouds lay about him very softly, leaving bare his pretty dimpled feet, and hands, and arms, and neck. On Friday afternoon Edith took the picture in her hand and knocked with a beating heart at the door of Number Five.

"Mrs. Me—McQuilken," said she, in a timid voice, on entering the room, "you're so fond of pictures that I thought I'd bring you one I drew myself. I'm afraid it's not so very, very good; but I hope you'll like it just a little."

[Illustration]

Mrs. McQuilken was much surprised as well as gratified; and actually there were tears in her eyes as she took the offering from Edith's hand. She was a lonely old body, and never expected much attention from any one, especially from children.

"Why, how kind of you, my dear! It's a beauty!" she exclaimed, gazing at the cherub through her spectacles. She was a good judge of pictures. "That face is well drawn, and the clouds are fleecy. Did you really do it your own self—and for me? Thank you, dear child!"

Edith blushed with pleasure. She had by no means counted on such praise.

"I'll always be kind to old people after this," she thought. "I believe they care more about it than you think they do."

But here they were interrupted by the very loud mewing of a cat out of doors. They both ran downstairs to see what it meant.

"I do hope and trust it isn't my Zee," cried Edith in alarm.

But it was. They did not see her at first; she was in the back yard behind the hotel. It seems a pan of clams had been left standing on the back door-step; and Zee must have been frolicking about the pan, never dreaming any live creature was in it, when one of the clams, attracted by her black waving tail, had caught the tip of the tail in his mouth and was holding it fast!

This was pretty severe. Being only an ignorant bivalve, the clam did not know that what he had in his mouth was a very precious article, the "prize tail" of a beautiful cat. But having once taken hold of it, the clam was too obstinate to let go.

Poor Zee jumped up and down, and ran around in circles, mewing with all her might. What had happened she did not know; she only knew some heavy thing was dragging at her tail and pinching it fearfully. Every one in the back of the house was busy; no one

but Eddo heard Zee's cries. He ran to the maid to ask "what made the kitty sing so sorry?" Whenever she mewed he called it singing.

The maid looked out then and threw down her mixing-spoon for laughing. It was an odd sight to see a cat prancing about, waving her plume-like tail with a clam at the end of it! Nancy was sorry for the kitten, but did not know how in the world to get off the clam.

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"Take an axe! Take a hatchet!" cried Mrs. McQuilken.

And without waiting for Nancy she seized a hatchet herself, split the shell of the clam, and let poor kitty free.

When Kyzie got home from school, Mrs. McQuilken had just mended Zee's bleeding member with a piece of court-plaster. All the boarders were grouped about on the lawn and veranda talking it over. Mrs. Dunlee held in her lap a very forlorn and crumpled little bundle of kitty; and Edith and Eddo were crying as if their hearts would break.

"That beautiful, beautiful tail!" sobbed Edith.

"Don't be unhappy about it, darling," said Aunt Vi, "it will heal in time."

"I know 't will heal, auntie; but what I'm thinking of is, won't it be stiff? Aren't you afraid 'twill lose the—the—*expression of the wiggle?*"

No one even smiled at the question; everybody tried to comfort Edith. And right in the midst of this trying scene another event occurred of a different sort, but far more serious. It was little wonder that nobody once thought of saying to Kyzie:—

"Well, Grandma Graymouse, you promised to tell us to-night how you like your school."

The school was quite forgotten, and so was the injured kitten. It happened in this way: As soon as the kitten had been placed in a basket of cotton and seemed tolerably comfortable, Jimmy and "the little two" went along the road as they often did to watch for the stage. "The colonel" might be coming now at almost any time, to find the lost vein of the gold mine, and they wanted to see him first of any one. Lucy had her papa's watch fastened to the waist of her dress, and took great pleasure in seeing the hands move. This was not the first time she had been allowed to carry the watch, and she was very proud because papa had just said, "See how I trust my little girl."

Jimmy had Uncle James's spy-glass.

"Nate thinks the colonel won't come till to-morrow; but I expect him to-night. Let's go farther up," said Jimmy-boy.

They all climbed a little way and stood on a rock gazing down toward the dusty road. They could see the roofs of several houses, and Lucy asked why there was so much wire on them.

"Oh, that's to hold the chimneys on," was Jimmy's reply.

"How queer!"

“Not queer at all. I’ve seen lots of chimneys tied on that way.”

Bab doubted this, but Lucy was proud to think how much Jimmy knew.

“Six minutes past five,” said she, looking at the watch again. “It takes these little hands just as long to go round this little face as it takes a clock’s hands to go round a clock’s face. How funny!”

“Not funny at all,” said Jimmy. “They’re made that way. But be careful, Lucy Dunlee, or you’ll drop that watch. I shouldn’t have thought papa would have let you bring it up here. Did you tell him where we were going?”

“No, I never,” replied Lucy with a sudden prick of conscience. “I didn’t know we’d go so far. ’Twas you that spoke and said we’d go higher up.”

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"Well, you'd better let me take it, Lucy. I'm older than you are, and I've got a little pocket, too, just the right size to hold it."

Lucy hesitated, not wishing to part with the watch, and not at all sure that it would be safer with Jimmy than with herself. He was not a famous care-taker.

"I don't see why you want to get it away when papa lent it to me and it's fastened on so tight. How do I know papa would be willing?"

As she spoke, however, Jimmy was fingering the little chain to see if he could undo the clasp which held it to her dress.

"There, I don't believe you could have got it off, Lucy, you didn't know how."

"Why, I never tried—papa fastened it on himself—oh, Jimmy-boy, you will be so careful of it, now won't you?"

For the watch lay in his hand, and she did not know how to get it back again. When he had set his heart on anything Lucy usually gave up. Barbara looked on in disapproval as the big brother put the watch in his pocket.

It had long been Jimmy's unspoken wish to have a watch of his very own like Nate Pollard and various other boys. How rich and handsome the short gold chain looked! What a bright spot it made as it dangled down his new jacket. He gazed at it admiringly, while Bab and Lucy took turns in looking through the spy-glass.

"The stage is coming," they cried. Then they all started and ran down the mountain; but as the stage drove up to the hotel no colonel alighted, or at least, no one who looked like a colonel. Jimmy was playing with the short gold chain which made a bright spot on his jacket. He meant to restore the watch to its owner at dinner-time; but it was early, he was not going in yet. And there was Nate Pollard throwing up his cap and looking ready for a frolic.

"I stump you to catch me!" said Nate.

"Poh, I can catch you and not half try."

Jimmy-boy was agile, Nate rather heavily built and clumsy. But if Jimmy had suspected what a foolhardy project was in Nate's mind he would have held back from the race.

As it was, they both planted themselves against a tree, shouted, "One, two, three!" and off they started. No one was watching, no one remembered afterward which way they were going.

VIII

STEALING A CHIMNEY

The “knitting-woman” sat knitting in her chamber that looked up the mountain side, and thinking how the zebra kitten had suffered from her enemy, the clam. Mrs. McQuilken’s own cats were most of them asleep; the blind canary was eating her supper of hemp-seed; and the noisy magpie had run off to chat with the dog and hens. The room seemed remarkably quiet. Mrs. McQuilken narrowed two stitches and glanced out of the window.

“Mercy upon us!” she exclaimed, though there was not a soul to hear her. “Mercy upon us, what are those boyoes doing atop of that house?”

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In her astonishment she actually dropped her knitting-work on the floor and rushed out of the room crying, "Fire!" though there was not a spark of fire to be seen.

The "boyoes" were Nate and Jimmy. Nate had said to Jimmy just as they started on the race:—

"You won't dare follow where I lead;" and Jimmy, stung by the defiant tone, had answered:—

"Poh, yes, I will! Who's afraid?" never once suspecting that Nate was going to climb the ridge-pole of a house!

The house was a small cabin painted green, but there were people living in it, and nothing could be ruder than to storm it in this way, as both boys knew.

"Why, Nate why, *Nate*, what are you doing?"

"Ho, needn't come if you're scared," retorted Nate.

"Who said I was scared? But I'm not your 'caddy,' I won't go another step," gasped Jimmy.

Still he did not stop climbing. Hadn't Nate "stumped" him; and hadn't he "taken the stump," agreeing to follow his lead? Besides, Nate was already on the roof, and it was necessary to catch him at once.

Jimmy reached the roof easily enough and darted toward Nate with both arms out-stretched. But by that time Nate had turned around and begun to slide down another ridge-pole, shouting:—

"Here, my caddy, here I am; catch me, caddy!"

It was most exasperating. Jimmy saw that he had been outwitted. On the solid earth, running a fair race, the chances were that he could have beaten Nate. But was this a fair race?

"No, I'll leave it out to anybody if it's fair! Nate Pollard is the meanest boy in California," thought angry Jimmy, as he started to follow his leader down the ridge-pole.

At this moment something hit him just below the knee and held him fast. In his haste he had not stopped to notice that the chimney was of the very sort he had just described to Lucy—built of tiles and held on to the roof by wires. He was caught in these wires; and whenever he tried to move he found he was actually pulling the chimney after him! Nate, safely landed on the ground, called back to him in triumph:—

“Hello, Jimmy-cum-jim! Hello, my caddy! Where are you? Why don’t you come along?”

Jimmy was coming as fast as he could. He lay face downward, sliding along toward the edge of the roof, and carrying with him that most undesirable chimney! What would become of him if he should fall head-first with the chimney on his back?

It was a rough scramble; but he managed to turn over before he reached the ground—so that he landed on his feet. The chimney landed near him, a wreck. Jimmy was unhurt except for a few scratches. But oh, it was dreadful to hear himself laughed at, not only by that mischievous Nate, but by half a dozen other boys and a few grown people, who had collected on the spot; among them the landlord and Mrs. McQuilken.

Not that any one could be blamed for laughing. Jimmy was a comical object. In carrying away a chimney which did not belong to him, he had of course torn his clothes frightfully and left big pieces sticking on the broken wires of the roof. A more “raggety” boy never was seen.

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"Wouldn't he make a good scarecrow?" said the landlord, shaking his sides. "Jimmum, chimney, and all!"

It was necessary to tear his clothes still more in order to get them free from the tangle of wires. As the poor young culprit crept unwillingly back to the hotel all the cats, dogs, donkeys, and chickens in Castle Cliff seemed to combine in a chorus of mewing, barking, braying, and cackling to inform the whole world that here was a boy who had stolen a chimney!

What wretched little beggar was this coming to the house? No one thought of its being Jimmy Dunlee.

"We caught this young rogue stealing a chimney," said Mr. Templeton.

It seemed funny at first, and the Dunlees and Sanfords and Hales all laughed heartily, till it occurred to them that the dear child had been in actual danger; and then they drew long breaths and shuddered, thinking how he might have pitched headlong to the ground and been crushed by the weight of the chimney.

"But my little son," asked Mrs. Dunlee presently, when the child was once more respectably clad, and was walking down to dinner between herself and Aunt Vi, "but my little son, what could have possessed you to climb a roof? Was that a nice thing to do?"

"No, mamma, of course not. But 'twas all Nate Pollard's fault. Nate stumped me to it and I took the stump."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Why, he said, 'You won't dare follow me,' and I said, 'Yes, I would.' And I never mistrusted where he was going. Who'd have thought of his climbing top of a house?"

"Why, Jamie Dunlee, you did not follow Nate without knowing where he was going?"

"Yes, mamma; if I *had* known I wouldn't have followed. But you see he had stumped me and I'd taken the stump, so I was *obliged* to go!"

"Obliged to go!" repeated Aunt Vi, laughing, "Isn't that characteristic of Jimmy?"

The little fellow felt guiltier than ever. When Aunt Vi used that word of five syllables it always meant that people had done very wrong, so he thought.

"Jamie," said his mother very seriously, "I am surprised that you should have promised to follow Nate without knowing where he was going! And you never even asked him where he was going! Is that the way you play, you boys?"

“No, mamma, it isn’t. Nate makes you play his way because he’s the oldest. He’s just as mean! But I couldn’t back out after I was stumped.”

“Oh, fie! Backing out is exactly the thing to do when a boy is trying to lead you into mischief! But we’ll talk more of this by and by.”

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As they entered the dining-room, Jimmy squared his shoulders and would not look toward Nate's table; and Nate, who had been severely reprov'd by his parents, never once raised his eyes from his plate. No one felt very happy. Jimmy's new suit was ruined; and Mr. Dunlee had already learned that it would cost ten dollars to restore the tile chimney. Nor was this all. While Jimmy was trying to console himself with ice-cream he suddenly thought of his father's watch! It must have dropped out of his pocket when he slid down the roof; but where, oh, where was it now? Was it still on the ground, or had some one picked it up? Joe Rolfe had been there, so had Chicken Little and a dozen others. He must go and look for that watch, he must go this minute.

"Mamma," he murmured, pushing aside his saucer of ice-cream, "may I—may I be excused?"

There was no answer; his mother had not heard him.

"Mamma," in a louder tone, "oh, mamma!"

"What is it, my son?"

Seeing by his unhappy face that something was wrong, she nodded permission for him to leave the table; and at the same time arose and followed him into the hall.

"Dear child, what is the matter?"

"Papa's watch," he moaned. "I'm afraid somebody will steal it."

As Mrs. Dunlee knew nothing whatever about the watch this sounded very strange. She wondered if Jimmy had really been hurt by his fall and was out of his head.

"Why, my precious little boy," said she, taking his hot hand in hers. "Papa's watch is safe in his vest pocket. Nobody is going to steal it."

Jimmy looked immensely relieved.

"Oh, has he got it back again? I'm so glad! Where did he find it?"

"Darling," said Mrs. Dunlee, now really alarmed. "Come upstairs with mamma. Does your head ache? I think it will be best for you to go right to bed."

But Jimmy persisted in talking about the watch.

"Where did papa find it? He let Lucy have it; don't you know?"

"No, I did not know."

“And I took it away from Lucy. I was afraid she’d lose it. And then,—oh, dear, oh, dear, —then I went and lost it myself!”

Mrs. Dunlee understood it all now. Jimmy’s head was clear enough; he knew perfectly well what he was talking about. The watch was gone, a very valuable one. Search must be made for it at once. Without waiting to speak to her husband, Mrs. Dunlee put on her hat and went with Jimmy up the hill. He limped a little from the bruise of his fall and she steadied him with her arm as they walked.

IX

“CHICKEN LITTLE” AND JOE

The man and woman who lived in the green cottage had gone to a neighbor’s to stay till their chimney should be fastened on again. There was no one in sight.

“Here’s the place where I went up,” said Jimmy, laying his hand on one of the ridge-poles. “And here’s the place where I came down,” pointing to another ridge-pole.

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Mrs. Dunlee was stooping and looking around carefully. There was not a tuft of grass or a clump of weeds behind which even a small article could be hidden, much less a large bright object like a gold watch. She took a wooden pencil from her pocket and scraped the earth with it; but only disturbed a few ants and beetles. If the watch had ever been dropped here, it certainly was not here now. She and Jimmy turned and walked home in the twilight,—or as Mrs. McQuilken called it, “the dimmets,” and poor Jimmy drew a cloud of gloom about him like a cloak.

They looked on the ground at every step of the way.

“There’s a piece of chaparral over there. Did you go through that?” asked Mrs. Dunlee.

“No, I never, I’m sure I never. I walked in the road right straight along. Oh, mamma, if I’ve lost that watch ’twill break my heart. But I’ll pay papa for it, you see if I don’t! I’ll save every penny I get and put it together and pay papa!”

Mrs. Dunlee did not reply for a moment; she took time to reflect. Jimmy was a dear boy, but very heedless. He had done wrong in the first place to take the watch from Lucy without his father’s permission. He must be taught to respect other people’s property and other people’s rights. He must learn to think, and learn to be careful. Here was a chance for a lesson.

“Jamie,” said she at last, “I am glad you wish to atone for the wrong you have done; it shows a proper spirit. I agree with you that if the watch isn’t found you ought to give papa what you can toward paying for it. That is no more than fair.”

“I want to, mamma, I just want to!” burst forth Jimmy. “I wish I was little like Eddo, before ’twas wrong for me to be naughty.”

His mother took him in her arms and kissed him, for he was so tired and miserable that he could not keep the tears back another moment.

Friday night passed and most of Saturday; and though diligent search was made, the watch was not found.

“Poor papa!” said Kyzie. “He doesn’t say much; but how sober he looks! Grandma Dunlee gave him that watch, Jimmy, when he was a young man; and he did love it so!”

“I know it. Oh, dear, how can he stand it?” responded jimmy, who had been deeply touched from the first by his father’s forbearance. “Mr. Pollard punished Nate dreadfully, you know; but here’s Papa Dunlee, why, he hasn’t even scolded!”

Papa Dunlee was a wise man. He saw that his little son was suffering enough already; he was learning a hard lesson, and perhaps would learn it all the better for being left alone with his own conscience.

On Sunday afternoon the boy was very disconsolate, and Mr. Dunlee patted him on the head, saying:—

“Maybe we’ll find the watch yet, my son. And anyway, I know Jimmum didn’t mean to lose it.”

Then he sat down to read, and Jimmy gazed at him reverently. The sunshine about his head seemed almost like a halo, and the boy thought of the angels, and wondered if they could possibly be any better than papa!

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"Papa is the best man! Never was cross in his life. I should be cross as fury! I should shake *my* boy all to pieces if he should carry off my gold watch and drop it in the sand!"

Monday morning came and the missing article did not appear. Everybody looked troubled. Edith walked about, carrying her lame kitten in a basket, and saying:—

"Zee is getting better all the while, but how can I be happy when papa's watch is lost!"

"Who knows but I shall be the one to find it?" returned Katharine with a mysterious smile, as she was leaving the house.

"You forgot to tell us, and we forgot to ask you, How do you like your school?" said Aunt Vi.

"Oh, ever so much, auntie. I'm making it just as old-fashioned as I can. I'm going to write Grandma Parlin this week and ask her if what I do is old-fashioned enough. Good-by."

Jimmy was waiting for her down the path.

"What makes you think you'll find the watch, Kyzie?"

"Oh, I don't know, myself, what I meant. I just said it for fun."

"Well, do you think Joe Rolfe has got it, or Chicken Little? That's what I want to know."

"Hush, Jimmy! Papa wouldn't allow you to speak names in that way. Somebody stole it, I suppose, but we don't know who it was."

Still Kyzie's face wore a stern look that morning. It was a thing not to be spoken of, but she had resolved to "keep an eye" on two or three of the boys, and see if there was anything peculiar in their appearance. Should one of them blush or turn pale when spoken to, it would be a sure sign of guilt, and she should go home and announce with triumph to her father:—

"Papa, I've found out the thief!"

The scholars all appeared pretty much as usual; raising their hands very often to ask, "May I speak?" or, "May I have a drink of water?" The little teacher had always wished they would not do so, but how could she help it? It was "an old-fashioned school," perhaps that was why it was so noisy. Whatever went wrong, Kyzie always said to herself, "Oh, it's just an old-fashioned school."

Nate Pollard and Jimmy sat to-day as far apart as possible, almost turning their backs upon each other. At the bottom of his heart Nate was truly ashamed of himself, though

he would not have owned it. There were five new scholars, and Katharine wrote down their names with much pride. Best of all, some of the children really seemed to be trying to get their lessons.

She had never known Joe Rolfe to study like this. "Is it because he is guilty?" thought the little teacher watching him from under her eyebrows. She walked along toward him so softly that he did not hear her footsteps.

"Joseph!" she exclaimed, suddenly. Her voice startled him; he looked up in surprise.

"I'm glad to see you studying, Joseph."

Did he blush? His face was of a brownish red hue at any time, being much tanned; she could not be quite sure of the blush. But why did he look so sober? Children generally smile when they are praised.

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She had been to Bab and Lucy and said, "How still you are, darlings!" and they had seemed delighted.

Next she tried Chicken Little. He certainly jumped when she spoke his name close to his ear, "Henry." Now why should he jump and seem so confused unless he knew he had done something wrong? She forgot that he was a very timid boy.

"Henry, what is the matter with you?" she asked, frowning severely.

She had never frowned on him before, for she liked the little fellow, and was trying her best to "make a man of him."

"What is the matter, Henry?"

By this time he was scared nearly out of his wits, and stole a side glance at her to see if she had a switch in her hand.

"Don't whip me," he pleaded in a trembling voice. "Don't whip me, teacher; and I'll give you f-i-v-e thousand dollars!"

As he offered this modest sum to save himself from her wrath, the little teacher nearly laughed aloud, Henry did not know it, however; her face was hidden behind a book.

"What made you think, you silly boy, that I was going to punish you?" she asked as soon as she could find her voice. "Have you done something wicked?"

She spoke in a low tone for his ear alone, but he writhed under it as if it had been a blow.

"I—don'—know."

"He is the thief," thought Kyzie. "Oh, Henry, if you've done something wrong you must know it. Tell me what it was."

"I—can't!"

She put her lips nearer his ear. "Was it you and Joseph Rolfe together? Perhaps you *both* did something wicked?"

"I—don'—know."

"Was it last Friday?"

"I—don'—know!"

"Will you tell me after school?"

Henry was unable to answer. Worn out with contending emotions he put his head down on the seat and cried.

This did not seem like innocence. Joseph Rolfe was looking on from across the aisle, as if he wished very much to know what she and Henry were talking about.

"I'll make them tell me the whole story, the wicked boys," thought Kyzie, indignantly. "But I can't hurry about it; I must be very careful. I think I'll wait till to-morrow."

So she calmed herself and called out her classes. Katharine was a "golden girl," and had a strong sense of justice. She would say nothing yet to her father, for the boys might possibly be innocent; still she went home that afternoon feeling that she had almost made a discovery.

"Good evening, Grandmother Graymouse," said Uncle James, as they were all seated on the veranda after dinner, "do I understand that you are hunting for a watch?"

"I'm hunting for it, oh, yes," replied Kyzie, trying not to look too triumphant; "but I haven't found it yet. Just wait till to-morrow, Uncle James."

"I don't believe we'll wait another minute!" declared Mr. Sanford, looking around with a roguish smile. "I see the Dunlee people are all here, Jimmum, Lucy, and all. Attention, my friends! The thief has been found!"

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"What thief?" asked Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Dunlee.

"Why, *the* thief! The one we're looking for! The one that stole the watch!"

"Do you really mean it?" asked the ladies again. "Did he bring it back?"

"Come and see," said Uncle James, leading the way upstairs.

"Of course it's Joe Rolfe," thought Kyzie. "I suppose he was frightened by what I said to Henry Small."

"Is the thief in your room, Uncle James?" said Jimmy. "Why didn't you put him in jail?"

"Ah, Jimmum, do you think all thieves ought to go to jail? I once knew a little boy who stole a chimney right off a house; yet I never heard a word said about putting *him* in jail!"

"But here we are at the chamber door. Stand behind me, all of you, in single file."

X

THE THIEF FOUND

"I don't know so much as I thought I did," said Kyzie to herself. "Joe Rolfe wouldn't be in this room."

For Uncle James was knocking at the door of Number Five.

"Walk right in," said Mrs. McQuilken, coming to meet her guests. She had her knitting in one hand. "Come in, all of you. Why, Mr. Templeton, are you here too? You wouldn't have taken me into your house if you'd known I was a thief; now would you, Mr. Templeton?"

And laughing, she put her right hand in her apron pocket and drew out a gold watch and chain.

"If this belongs to anybody present, let him step up and claim his property."

Mr. Dunlee came forward in amazement, while Jimmy gave a little squeal of delight.

"This is mine, thank you, madam," said Mr. Dunlee, looking at the watch closely. It seemed very much battered.

"Dreadfully smashed up, isn't it, sir? I can't tell you how sorry I am."

Mr. Dunlee shook it, and held it to his ear.

“Oh, it won’t go,” said Mrs. McQuilken. “The inside seems worse off, if anything, than the outside. ’Twill have to have new works.”

“Very likely. But it is so precious to me, madam, that even in this condition I’m glad to get it back again. Pray, where has it been?”

“Right here in this room. Didn’t you understand me to confess to stealing it? Why, you’re shaking your head as if you doubted my word.”

They were all laughing now, and the old lady’s eyes twinkled with fun.

“Well, if I didn’t steal it myself, one of my family did, so it amounts to the same thing. Come out here, you unprincipled girl, and beg the gentleman’s pardon,” she added, kneeling and dragging forth from under the bed a beautiful bird.

It was her own magpie, chattering and scolding.

“Now tell the gentleman who stole his watch? Speak up loud and clear!”

The bird flapped her wings, and cawed out very crossly:—

“Mag! Mag! Mag!”

“Hear her! Hear that!” cried her mistress. “So you did steal it, Mag—I’m glad to hear you tell the truth for once in your life.”

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"Did she take the watch? Did she really and truly?" cried the children in chorus.

"To be sure she did, the bad girl. She has done such things before, and I have always found her out; but this time she was too sly for me. She went and put it in my mending-basket; and who would have thought of looking for it there?"

Mag tipped her head to one side saucily, and kept muttering to herself.

"Well, I happened to go to the basket this afternoon and take up a pair of stockings to mend. They felt amazingly heavy. There was a hard wad in them, and I wondered what it could be. I put in my hand and pulled out the watch. Yes, 'twas tucked right into the stockings."

"I wonder we didn't any of us mistrust her at the time of it," said Mr. Templeton; "those magpies are dreadful thieves."

"Well, I suppose you thought 'twas my business to take care of her, and it was. I'm ashamed of myself," said Mrs. McQuilken. "I was looking out of the window when the boys shied over that roof, but my mind wasn't on jewelry then. All I thought of was to run and call for help."

Yes, and it was her screams which had aroused the whole neighborhood.

"And at that very time my Mag was roaming at large. No doubt she saw the watch the moment it fell; and to use your expression, Mr. Templeton, she jumped at it like a dolphin at a silver spoon."

The landlord laughed. "But the mystery is," said he, "how she got back to the house without being seen. She must have been pretty spry."

"O Mag, Mag, to think I never once thought to look after you!" exclaimed Mrs. McQuilken, penitently.

The bird was scolding all the while, and running about with short, jerky movements, trying her best to get out of the room; but the door was closed.

"Pretty thing," said Edith. "What a shame she should be a thief!"

"She is pretty, now isn't she?" returned her mistress, fondly. "My husband brought her from China. You don't often see a Chinese magpie, with blue plumage,—cobalt blue."

"She's a perfect oddity," said Mrs. Hale. "See those two centre tail-feathers, so very long, barred with black and tipped with white."

“Yes,” said Mr. Dunlee, “and the red bill and red legs. She’s a brilliant creature, Mrs. McQuilken.”

“Well, you’ll try to forgive her, won’t you, sir? I mean to bring her up as well as I know how; but what are you going to do with a girl that can’t sense the ten commandments?”

“What indeed!” laughed Mr. Dunlee.

“You see she’s naturally light-fingered. Yes, you are, Mag, you needn’t deny it. Those red claws of yours are just pickers and stealers.”

Here Edith called attention to Mag’s nest on the wall, and they all admired it; and Mrs. McQuilken said the canary liked to have Mag near him at night, he was apt to be lonesome.

“I wish you’d come in the daytime,” said she. “Come any and all of you, and hear him sing. He does sing so sweetly, poor blind thing; it’s as good as a sermon to hear him.”

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On leaving Mrs. McQuilken the children went to Aunt Vi's room and Jimmy kept repeating joyously:—

"We've found the watch, we've found the watch!"

"Yes," said Aunt Vi; "but what a wreck it is! Your papa will have to spend a deal of money in repairing it."

"Too bad!" said Lucy, "I 'spect 'twould cost him cheaper to buy a new one."

"'Twouldn't cost him so much; that's what you mean," corrected Jimmy. "But I'm going to pay for mending it anyway."

"How can you?" asked Kyzie. "All you have is just your tin box with silver in it."

"Well, but don't I keep having presents? And can't I ask folks to stop giving me toys and books and give me money? And they'll do it every time."

"But that would be begging."

Jimmy's face fell. Yes, on the whole it did seem like begging. He had not thought of that.

"Why can't it ever snow in this country?" he exclaimed suddenly. "Then I could shovel it. That's the way boys make money 'back East'"

Then after a pause he burst forth again, "Or, I might pick berries—if there were any berries!"

"It's not so very easy for little boys to earn money; is it, dear?" said Aunt Vi, putting her arm around her young nephew and drawing him toward her. "But when they've done wrong—you still think you did wrong, don't you, Jimmy?"

"He knows he did," broke in Lucy. "My papa lent me the watch."

"She wasn't talking to you," remonstrated Jimmy. "Yes, auntie, I did wrong; but Lucy needn't twit me of it! I won't be *characteristic* any more as long as I live."

Aunt Vi smiled and patted his head lovingly.

"No, dear, I think you'll be more thoughtful in future. But now let us try to think what can be done to pay for the watch."

"I'll let him have some of the money I get for teaching. I always meant to," said Kyzie.

“Very kind of you,” returned Aunt Vi; “but we’ll not take it if we can help it, will we, Jimmy? I’ve been thinking it over for some days, children; and a little plan has occurred to me. Would you like to know what it is?”

They all looked interested. If Aunt Vi had a plan, it was sure to be worth hearing.

“It is this: mightn’t we get up some entertainments,—good ones that would be worth paying for?”

“And sell the tickets? Oh, auntie, that’s just the thing! That’s capital!” cried Edith and Kyzie. “You’d do it beautifully.”

“I’m not so sure of that, girls. But we might join together and act a little play that I’ve been writing; that is, we might try. What have you to say, Jimmy? Could you help?”

“I don’t know. I can’t speak pieces worth a cent,” replied the boy, writhing and shuffling his feet. “Look here!” he said, brightening. “Don’t you want some nails driven? I can do that first rate.”

Aunt Vi laughed and said nails might be needed in putting up a staging, and she was sure that he could use a hammer better than she could.



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Jimmy-boy, much gratified, struck an attitude, and pounding his left palm with his thumb, repeated the rhyme:—

“Drive the nail straight, boys,
Hit it on the head;
Work with your might, boys,
Ere the day has fled.”

“There, he can speak, I knew he could speak!” cried Lucy, in admiration.

It was settled that they were all to meet Wednesday morning, and their mother with them, to talk over the matter.

“That’s great,” said Jimmy.

The watch was found and the world looked bright once more. True, he was deeply in debt; but with such a grand helper as Aunt Vi he was sure the debt would very soon be paid.

XI

BEGGING PARDON

Next morning Jimmy walked to school with “the little two,” whistling as he went. Lucy had tortured her hair into a “cue,” and

“The happy wind upon her played,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid.”

“I’ve got the snarling-est, flying-est hair,” scolded she. “I never’ll braid it again as long as I live; so there!”

“Good!” cried Jimmy. “It has looked like fury ever since we came up here.”

Here Nate overtook the children. He had not been very social since the accident, but seemed now to want to talk.

“How do you do, Jimmy?” he said: and Jimmy responded, “How d’ye do yourself?”

The little girls ran on in advance, and Jimmy would have joined them, but Nate said:—

“Hold on! What’s your hurry?”

Jimmy turned then and saw that Nate was scowling and twisting his watch-chain.



"I've got something to say to you—I mean papa wants me to say something."

"Oh ho!"

"I don't see any need of it, but papa says I must."

Jimmy waited, curious to hear what was coming.

"Papa says I jollied you the other day."

"What's that?"

"Why, fooled you."

"So you did, Nate Pollard, and 'twas awful mean."

[Illustration]

"It wasn't either. What made you climb that ridge-pole? You needn't have done it just because I did. But papa says I've got to—to—ask your pardon."

"H'm! I should think you'd better! Tore my clothes to pieces. Smashed a gold watch."

"You hadn't any business taking that watch."

There was a pause.

"Look here, Jimmy Dunlee, why don't you speak?"

"Haven't anything to say."

"Can't you say, 'I forgive you'?"

"Of course I can't. You never asked me."

"Well, I ask you now. James S. Dunlee, will—you—forgive me?"

"H'm! I suppose I'll have to," replied Jimmy, firing a pebble at nothing in particular. "I forgive you all right because we've found the watch. If we hadn't found it, I wouldn't! But don't you 'jolly' me again, Nate Pollard, or you'll catch it!"

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This did not sound very forgiving; but neither had Nate's remark sounded very penitent. Nate smiled good-naturedly and seemed satisfied. The fact was, he and Jimmy were both of them trying, after the manner of boys, to hide their real feelings. Nate knew that his conduct had been very shabby and contemptible, and he was ashamed of it, but did not like to say so. Jimmy, for his part, was glad to make up, but did not wish to seem too glad.

Then they each tried to think of something else to say. They were fully agreed that they had talked long enough about their foolish quarrel and would never allude to it again.

"Glad that watch has come," said Nate.

"So am I. It has come, but it won't *go*," said Jimmy. And they laughed as if this were a great joke.

Next Jimmy inquired about "the colonel," and Nate asked: "What colonel? Oh, you mean the mining engineer. He'll be here next week with his men."

By this time the boys were feeling so friendly that Jimmy asked Nate to go with him before school next morning to see the knitting-woman's pets and hear the blind canary sing.

"Do you suppose the magpie will be there?" returned Nate. "I want to catch her some time and wring her old neck."

"Wish you would," said Jimmy. "Hello, there's Chicken Little crying again. He's more of a baby than our Eddo."

Henry was crying now because Dave Blake had called him a coward. So very, very unjust! He stood near the schoolhouse door, wiping his eyes on his checked apron and saying:—

"I'll go tell the teacher, Dave Blake!"

"Well, go along and tell her then. Fie, for shame!"

Henry, a feeble, petted child, was always falling into trouble and always threatening to tell the teacher. Kyzie considered him very tiresome; but to-day when he came to her with his tale of woe, she listened patiently, because she had done him a wrong and wished to atone for it. She had "really and truly" suspected this simple child of a crime! He would not take so much as a pin without leave; neither would Joseph Rolfe. Yet in her heart she had been accusing these innocent children of stealing her father's watch!

"Miserable me!" thought Kyzie. "I must be very good to both of them now, to make up for my dreadful injustice!"

She went to Joe and sweetly offered to lend him her knife to whittle his lead pencil. He looked surprised. He did not know she had ever wronged him in her heart.

She wiped Henry's eyes on her own pocket handkerchief.

"Poor little cry-baby!" thought she. "I told my mother I would try to make a man of him, and now I mean to begin."

She walked part of the way home with him that afternoon. He considered it a great honor. She looked like a little girl, but her wish to help the child made her feel quite grown-up and very wise.

"Henry," said she, "how nice you look when you are not crying. Why, now you're smiling, and you look like a darling!"

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He laughed.

“There! laugh again. I want to tell you something, Henry. You’d be a great deal happier if you didn’t cry so much; do you know it?”

“Well, Miss Dunlee,”—Kyzie liked extremely to be called Miss Dunlee,—“well, Miss Dunlee, you see, the boys keep a-plaguing me. And when they plague me I have to cry.”

“Oh, fie, don’t you do it! If I were a little black-eyed boy about your age I’d laugh, and I’d say to those boys: ‘You needn’t try to plague me; you just can’t do it. The more you try, the more I’ll laugh.’”

Henry’s eyes opened wide in surprise, and he laughed before he knew it.

“There! that’s the way, Henry. If you do that they’ll stop right off. There’s no fun in plaguing a little boy that laughs.”

Henry laughed again and threw back his shoulders. Why, this was something new. This wasn’t the way his mamma talked to him. She always said, “Mamma’s boy is sick and mustn’t be plagued.”

“Another thing,” went on the little girl, pleased to see that her words had had some effect; “whatever else you may do, Henry, *don’t* ‘run and tell,’ Do you suppose George Washington ever crept along to his teacher, rubbing his eyes this way on his jacket sleeve, and said ‘Miss Dunlee—ah, the boys have been a-making fun of me—ah! They called me names, they did!’”

Henry dropped his chin into his neck.

“Never mind! You’re a good little boy, after all. *You* wouldn’t steal anything, would you, Henry?”

This sudden question was naturally rather startling. He had no answer ready.

“Oh, I know you wouldn’t! But sometimes little *birds* steal. Did you hear that a magpie stole a watch the other day?”

“Yes, I heard.”

“Well, here’s some candy for you, Henry.”

The boy held out his hand eagerly, though looking rather bewildered. Was the candy given because George Washington didn’t “run and tell”? Or because magpies steal watches?

“Now, good night, Henry, and don’t forget what: I’ve been saying to you.”

Henry walked on, feeling somewhat ashamed, but enjoying the candy nevertheless. If his pretty teacher didn’t want him to tell tales, he wouldn’t do it any more. He would act just like George Washington; and then how would the big boys feel?

He did not forget his resolve. Next morning when Dave Blake ran out his tongue at him and Joe Rolfe said, “Got any chickens to sell?” he laughed with all his might, just to see how it would seem. Both the boys stared; they didn’t understand it. “Hello, Chicken Little, what’s the matter with you?”

Henry could see the eyes of his young teacher twinkling from between the slats of the window-blinds, and he spoke up with a courage quite unheard-of:—

“Nothing’s the matter with *me!*”

“Hear that chicken,” cried Joe Rolfe. “He’s beginning to crow!”

Henry felt the tears starting; but as Miss Katharine at that moment opened the blind far enough to shake her finger at him privately he thought better of it, and faltered out:—

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"See here, boys, I like to be called Chicken Little first rate! Say it again. Say it fi-ive thousand times if you want to!"

"Oh, you're too willing," said Joe. "We'll try it some other time when you get over being so willing!"

The bell rang; it sounded to Henry like a peal of joy. He walked in in triumph, and as he passed by the little teacher she patted him on the head. She did not need to wipe his eyes with her handkerchief, there were no tears to be seen. He was not a brave boy yet by any means, but he had made a beginning; yes, that very morning he had made a beginning.

"Don't you tease Henry Small any more, I don't like it at all," said Katharine to Joseph Rolfe.

And then she slipped a paper of choice candy into Joe's hand, charging him "not to eat it in school, now remember." It was a queer thing to do; but then this was a queer school; and besides Kyzie had her own reasons for thinking she ought to be very kind to Joe.

"How silly I was to suspect those little boys! I'm afraid I never shall have much judgment. Still, on the whole, I believe I'm doing pretty well," thought she, looking proudly at Henry Small's bright face, and remembering too how Mr. Pollard had told her that very morning that his son Nate was learning more arithmetic at her little school than he had ever learned in the city schools. "Oh, I'm so glad," mused the little teacher.

Mrs. Dunlee thought Kyzie did not get time enough for play. And just now the little girl was unusually busy. They were talking at home of the new entertainment to be given for Jimmy-boy's benefit, and she was to act a part in it as well as Edith. It was "Jimmy's play," but Jimmy was not to appear in it at all. Kyzie and Edith together were to print the tickets with a pen. The white pasteboard had been cut into strips for this purpose; but as it was not decided yet whether the play would be enacted on the tailings or in the schoolhouse, the young printers had got no farther than to print these words very neatly at the bottom of the tickets:

"ADMIT THE BEARER."

XII

"THE LITTLE SCHOOLMA'AM'S EARTHQUAKE"

There were only ten days in which to prepare for the play called "Granny's Quilting." The children met Wednesday morning in Aunt Vi's room, all but Bab, who was off riding. So unfortunate, Lucy thought; for how could any plans be made without Bab?



The play was very old-fashioned, requiring four people, all clad in the style of one hundred and fifty years ago. Uncle James would wear a gray wig and “small clothes” and personate “Grandsir Whalen”; Kyzie Dunlee, Grandsir’s old wife, in white cap, “short gown,” and petticoat, was to be “Granny Whalen” of course.

A grandson and granddaughter were needed for this aged couple. Edith would make a lovely granddaughter and pretend to spin flax. Who would play the grandson and shell the corn? Jimmy thought Nate Pollard was just the one, he was “so good at speaking pieces.” They decided to ask Nate at once, and have that matter settled.

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Aunt Vi showed a collection of articles which “the knitting-woman” had kindly offered for their use; a three-legged light stand, two fiddle-backed chairs, and a very old hour-glass.

“I should call it a pair of glasses,” said Edith, as they watched the sand drip slowly from one glass into the other.

Aunt Vi said it took exactly an hour for it to drain out, and our forefathers used to tell the time of day by hour-glasses before clocks were invented.

“What are forefathers?” Lucy asked Edith.

“Oh, Adam and Eve and all those old people,” was the careless reply.

“And didn’t they have any clocks?”

“Of course not. What do you suppose?”

There was a knock at the door. Nate had come to find Jimmy and go with him to see the blind canary.

“We were just talking about you,” said Aunt Vi. “Are you willing to be Katharine’s grandson in the play?”

Nate replied laughing that he would do whatever was wanted of him, and he could send home and get some knee-buckles and a cocked hat.

Aunt Vi said “Capital!” and gave Jimmy a look which said, “Everything seems to be going on famously for our new play.”

Jimmy led the way to Mrs. McQuilken’s room, his face wreathed with smiles.

“Ah, good morning; how do you all do?” said the lady, meeting the children with courteous smiles. “I see you’ve brought your kitten, Edith.”

“Yes, ma’am; will you please look at her wounds again?”

“They are pretty well healed, dear. I’ve never felt much concerned about Zee’s wounds. She makes believe half of her sufferings for the sake of being petted.”

“Does she, though? I’m so glad.”

“Yes; that ‘prize tail’ will soon be waving as proudly as ever. But I suppose you all came to see the canary. Mag, you naughty girl,” she added, turning to the magpie, “hide under the bed. They didn’t come to see you. Here, Job, you are the one that’s wanted.”

Little Job, the canary, was standing on the rug. He came forward now to greet his visitors, putting out a foot to feel his way, like a blind man with a cane. Then he began to sing joyously.

“Don’t you call that good music?” asked his mistress, knitting as she spoke. “He came from Germany; there’s where you get the best singers. Some canaries won’t sing before company and some won’t sing alone; they are fussy,—I call it *pernickitty*. Why, I had one with a voice like a flute; but I happened to buy some new wall-paper, and she didn’t like the looks of it, and after that she never would sing a note.”

“Are you in earnest?” asked Kyzie.

“Yes, it’s a fact. But Job never was *pernickitty*, bless his little heart!”

She brought a tiny bell and let him take it in his claws.

“Now, I’ll go out of the room, and you all keep still and see if he’ll ring to call me back.”

She went, closing the door after her. No one spoke. Job moved his head from side to side, and, apparently making up his little mind that he was all alone, he shook the bell peal after peal. Presently his mistress appeared. “Did you think mamma had gone and left you, Job darling? Mamma can’t stay away from her baby.”

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The cooing tone pleased the little creature, and he sang again even more sweetly than before.

"Let me show you another of his tricks. You see this little gun? Well, when he fires it off that will be the end of poor Job!"

The gun was about two inches long and as large around as a lead pencil. Inside was a tiny spring; and when Job's claw touched the spring the gun went off with a loud report. Job fell over at once as if shot and lay perfectly still and stiff on the rug. Lucy screamed out:—

"Oh, I'm so sorry he is dead!"

But next moment he roused himself and sat up and shook his feathers as if he relished the joke.

The children had a delightful half hour with the captain's widow and her pets; only Lucy could not be satisfied because Bab was away.

"Too bad you went off riding yesterday," said she as they sat next morning playing with their dolls. "You never saw that blind canary that shoots himself, and comes to life and rings a bell."

"But can't I see him sometime, Auntie Lucy?"

"You can, oh, yes, and I'll go with you. But, Bab, you ought to have heard our talk about the play! Kyzie is going to be as much as a hundred years old, and I guess Uncle James will be a hundred and fifty. And they've got a pair of old glasses with sand inside—the same kind that Adam and Eve used to have."

"Why-ee! Did Adam and Eve wear glasses? 'Tisn't in their pictures; I never saw 'em with glasses on!"

"No, no, I don't mean glasses *wear*! I said glasses with sand inside; *that's* what Uncle James has got. Runs out every hour. Sits on the table."

"Oh, I know what you mean, auntie! You mean an *hour-glass*! Grandpa Hale has one and I've seen lots of 'em in France."

Lucy felt humbled. Though pretending to be Bab's aunt, she often found that her little niece knew more than she knew herself!

"Seems queer about Adam and Eve," said she, hastening to change the subject; "who do you s'pose took care of 'em when they were little babies?"

“Why, Auntie Lucy, there wasn’t ever any *babiness* about Adam and Eve! Don’t you remember, they stayed just exactly as they were made!”

“Yes, so they did. I forgot.”

Lucy had made another mistake. This was not like a “truly auntie”; still it did not matter so very much, for Bab never laughed at her and they loved each other “dearilee.”

“You know a great many things, don’t you, Bab? And I keep forgetting ’em.”

“Oh, I know all about the world and the garden of Eden; *that’s* easy enough,” replied the wise niece.

And then they went back to their dolls.

Half an hour later Kyzie Dunlee was standing in the schoolhouse door with a group of children about her when Nate Pollard appeared. As he looked at her he remembered “Jimmy’s play,” and the parts they were both to take in it; and the thought of little Kyzie as his poor old grandmother seemed so funny to Nate that he began to laugh and called out, “Good morning, grandmother!”

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He meant no harm; but Kyzie thought him very disrespectful to accost her in that way before the children, and she tossed her head without answering him.

Nate was angry. How polite he had always been to her, never telling her what a queer school she kept! And now that he had consented to be her grandson in Jimmy's play, just to please her and the rest of the family, it did seem as if she needn't put on airs in this way!

"Ahem!" said he; "did you hear about that dreadful earthquake in San Diego?"

There had been a very slight one, but he was trying to tease her.

"No, oh, no!" she replied, throwing up both hands. "When was it?"

"Last night. I'm afraid of 'em myself, and if we get one here to-day you needn't be surprised to see me cut and run right out of the schoolhouse."

The children looked at him in alarm. Kyzie could not allow this.

"Oh, you wouldn't do that!" said she, with another toss of the head. "Before I'd run away from an earthquake! Besides, what good would it do?"

By afternoon the news had spread about among the children that there was to be a terrible earthquake that day. They huddled together like frightened lambs. The little teacher, wishing to reassure them, planted herself against the wall, and made what Edith would have called a "little preach."

She pointed out of the window to the clear sky and said she "could not see the least sign of an earthquake." But even if one should come they need not be afraid, for their heavenly Father would take care of them.

"And you mustn't think for a moment of running away! No, children, be quiet! Look at me, I am quiet. I wouldn't run away if there were fifty earthquakes!"

Strange to say, she had hardly spoken these words when the house began to shake! They all knew too well what it meant, that frightful rocking and rumbling; the ground was opening under their feet!

Kyzie, though she may have feared it vaguely all along, was taken entirely by surprise, and did—what do you think? As quick as a flash, without waiting for a second thought, she turned and jumped out of the window!

Next moment, remembering the children, she screamed for them to follow her, and they poured out of the house, some by the window, some by the door, all shrieking like mad.

It was a wild scene,—the frantic teacher, the terrified children,—and Kyzie will never cease to blush every time she recalls it. For there was no earthquake after all! It was only the new “colonel” and his men blasting a rock in the mine!

Of course this escapade of the young teacher amused the people of Castle Cliff immensely. They called it “the little schoolma’am’s earthquake”; and the little schoolma’am heard of it and almost wished it had been a real earthquake and had swallowed her up.

“Oh, Papa Dunlee! Oh, Mamma Dunlee!” she cried, her cheeks crimson, her eyelids swollen from weeping. “I keep finding out that I’m not half so much of a girl as I thought I was! What does make me do such ridiculous things?”



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"You are only very young, you dear child," replied her parents.

They pitied her sincerely and did their best to console her. But they were wise people, and perhaps they knew that their eldest daughter needed to be humbled just a little. It was hard, very hard, yet sometimes it is the hard things which do us most good.

"O mamma, don't ask me to go down to dinner. I can't, I can't!"

"No indeed, darling, your dinner shall be sent up to you. What would you like?"

"No matter what, mamma—I don't care for eating. I can't ever hold up my head any more. And as for going into that school again, I never, never, never will do it."

"I think you will, my daughter," said Mr. Dunlee, quietly. "I think you'll go back and live this down and 'twill soon be all forgotten."

"O papa, do you really, really think 'twill ever be forgotten? Do you think so, mamma? A silly, disgraceful, foolish, outrageous, abominable,—there, I can't find words bad enough!"

As her parents were leaving the room she revived a little and added:—

"Remember, mamma, just soup and chicken and celery. But a full saucer of ice-cream. I hope 'twill be vanilla."

XIII

NATE'S CAVE

The little teacher went back to her school the very next day. It was a hard thing, but she knew her parents desired it. Her proud head was lowered; she could not meet the eyes of the children, who seemed to be trying their best not to laugh. At last she spoke:—

"I got frightened yesterday. I was not very brave; now was I? Hark! The people in the mine are blasting rocks again, but we won't run away, will we?"

They laughed, and she tried to laugh, too. Then she called the classes into the floor; and no more did she ever say to the scholars about the earthquake. She helped Nate in his arithmetic, and he treated her like a queen. He was coming to Aunt Vi's room that evening to show his knee-buckles and cocked hat and find out just what he was to do on the stage.

Kyzie wanted to see the cocked hat and felt interested in her own white cap which Mrs. McQuilken was making. It was a good thing for Katharine that she had "Jimmy's play"

to think of just now. It helped her through that long forenoon. After this the forenoons did not drag; school went on as usual, and Kyzie was glad she had had the courage to go back and “live down” her foolish behavior.

When they met in Aunt Vi’s room that evening it was decided not to have “Jimmy’s play” on the tailings, for that was a place free to all. People would not buy tickets for an entertainment out of doors.

“My tent is the thing,” said Uncle James, and so they all thought It was a large white one, and the children agreed to decorate it with evergreens. It would hold all the people who were likely to come and many more.

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During the week Uncle James set up the tent not far from the hotel and in one corner of it built a staging. He did not mind taking trouble for his beloved namesake, James Sanford Dunlee. The stage was made to look like a room in an old-fashioned house. It had a make-believe door and window and a make-believe fireplace with andirons and wood and shovel and tongs. There was a rag rug on the floor, and on the three-legged stand stood the hour-glass with candles in iron candlesticks. The fiddle-backed chairs were there and two *hard* “easy-chairs” and an old wooden “settle.” Lucy and Bab said it looked “like somebody’s house,” and they wanted to go and live in it.

On the Saturday afternoon appointed the play had been well learned by the four actors. Everything being ready, this cosy little sitting-room was now shut off from view by a calico curtain which was stretched across the stage by long strings run through brass rings.

The play would begin at half-past two. Jimmy was dressed neatly in his very best clothes. He had a roll of paper and a pencil in one of his pockets and during the play he meant to add up the number of people present and find out how much money had been taken.

“But Jimmy-boy, it won’t be very much,” said Edith. “This is an empty town, and so queer too. Something may happen at the last minute that will spoil the whole thing.”

She was right. Something did happen which no one could have foreseen. For an “empty” town Castle Cliff was famous for events.

As Jimmy left the hotel just after luncheon he overtook Nate Pollard and Joe Rolfe standing near a big sand bank, talking together earnestly.

“Come on, Jimmum,” said Nate; “we’ve got a spade for you. We’re going to dig a cave in the side of this bank.”

“What’s the use of a cave?”

“Why, for one thing, we can run into it in time of an earthquake.”

“That’s so,” said Jimmy. “Or we could stay in and be cave-dwellers.”

But as he took up the spade he chanced to look down at his new clothes. He had spoiled one nice suit already and had promised his mother he would be more careful of this one.

“Wait till I put on my old clothes, will you?”

Nate laughed and snapped his fingers. “We’re in a hurry. I’ve got to be in the tent in half an hour. Go along, you little dude! We’ll dig the cave without you.”

The laugh cut Jimmy to the heart. And he had been learning to like Nate so well. A dude? Not he! Besides, what harm would dry sand do? It's "clean dirt."

Then all in a minute he thought of that wild journey on the roof. It had made a deeper impression upon him than any other event of his life.

"Poh! Am I going to dig dirt in my best clothes just because Nate Pollard laughs at me? I don't 'take stumps' any more; there's no sense in it, so there!"

And off he started, afraid to linger lest he should fall into temptation. Jimmy might be heedless, no doubt he often was; but when he really stopped to think, he always respected his mother's wishes and always kept his word to her.

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This was the trait in Jimmy which marked him off as a highly bred little fellow. For let me tell you, boys, respect for your elders is the first point of high breeding all the world over.

Jimmy sauntered on slowly toward the door of the tent. There were a great many benches inside, but it was not time yet for the audience to arrive. Uncle James and Katharine and Edith were on the stage, and Aunt Vi was adding a few touches to Edith's dress.

"O dear," said Grandmamma Graymouse, "I hope I shan't forget my part. Tell me, Uncle James, do I look old enough?"

"You look too old to be alive," he answered; "fifty years older than I do, certainly! Mrs. Mehitable Whalen, are you my wife or my very great grandmamma?"

"But where's Nate Pollard?" Aunt Vi asked. "I told him to come early to rehearse."

"He said he'd be here in half an hour," said Jimmy. "He's off playing."

"I hope I shall not have to punish my young grandson," said Uncle James, solemnly, as he began to peel a sycamore switch.

Uncle James's name was now "Ichabod Whalen," and he and "Mehitable Whalen," his wife, were such droll objects in their old-fashioned clothes that they could not look at each other without laughing.

Their absent grandson, "Ezekiel Whalen" (or Nate Pollard), was a fine specimen of a boy of ancient times, and Aunt Vi had been much pleased with the way in which he acted his part. But where was he? Aunt Vi and the grandparents grew impatient. It was now half-past two; people were flocking into the tent; but the curtain could not rise, for nothing was yet to be seen of young Master "Ezekiel Whalen" and his small clothes and his cocked hat. The house was pretty well filled; really there were far more people than had been expected, Jimmy, with pencil and paper in hand, was figuring up the grown people and children, and multiplying these numbers by twenty-five and by fifteen. When he found that the sum amounted to nearly nine dollars he almost whistled for joy.

But all this while the audience was waiting. People looked around in surprise; the Dunlee family grew more and more anxious. Aunt Lucy pinched Bab and Bab pinched Aunt Lucy.

Suddenly there were loud voices at the entrance of the tent. The tent curtain was pushed aside violently, and Mr. Templeton and Mr. Rolfe rushed in exclaiming:—

"Two boys lost! All hands to the rescue!"

The people were on their feet in a moment and there was a grand rush for the outside. The panic, so it was said afterward, was about equal to “the little schoolma’am’s earthquake.”

XIV

JIMMY’S GOOD LUCK

“It’s the Pollard and Rolfe boys,” explained Mr. Templeton.

“Ho! I know where *they* are!” cried Jimmy, “They’re all right. They’re only digging a cave in the side of a sand-bank.”

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“Show us where! Run as fast as you can!” exclaimed Mr. Rolfe and Mr. Pollard. Mr. Pollard had been hunting for the last half-hour. He knew Nate was deeply interested in “Jimmy’s play” and would not have kept away from the tent unless something unusual had happened.

Jimmy ran, followed by several men who could not possibly keep up with him. But when they all reached the sand-bank, where were the “cave-dwellers”? They had burrowed in the sand till completely out of sight!

“Hello! Where are you”? screamed Jimmy.

There was no answer. In enlarging the cave they had loosened the very dry earth, and thus caused the roof over their heads to fall in upon them, actually burying them as far as their arm-pits! They tried to scream, but their muffled voices could not be heard. The “cave” looked like a great pile of sand and nothing more. Nobody would have dreamed that there was any one inside it if it had not been for Jimmy’s story.

“Courage, boys, we’re after you, we’ll soon have you out!” said the men cheerily; though how could they tell whether the boys heard or not? Indeed, how did they know the boys were still alive?

Two men went for shovels. The other men, not waiting for them to come back thrust their arms into the bank and scooped out the sand with their hands. The sand was loose and they worked very fast. Before the shovels arrived a moan was heard. At any rate one of the boys was alive. And before long they had unearthed both the young prisoners and dragged them out of the cave.

Not a minute too soon, Joe gasped for breath and looked wildly about; but Nate lay perfectly still; it could hardly be seen at first that he breathed. His father and mother, the doctor and plenty of other people were ready and eager to help; but it was some time before he showed signs of life. When at last he opened his eyes the joy of his parents was something touching to witness.

Jimmy, who had been standing about with the other children, watching and waiting, caught his mother by the sleeve and whispered:—

“I should have been in there too, mamma, if it hadn’t been for you!”

“What do you mean, my son? In that cave? I never knew the boys were trying to make a cave. I did not forbid your digging in the sand, did I?”

“No, mamma; but I knew you wouldn’t want me to do it in these clothes—after all my actions! And I had promised to be more careful.”

Mrs. Dunlee smiled, but there were tears in her eyes.

“How glad I am that my little boy respected his mother’s wishes,” said she, stooping to kiss his earnest face.

She dared not think what might have happened if he had disregarded her wishes!

It was a time of rejoicing. Mr. Templeton ordered out the brass band and the Hindoo tam tam. The horse Thistleblow seemed to think he must be wanted too, and came and danced in circles before the groups of happy people.

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"I could believe I was in some foreign country," said Mrs. McQuilken, smiling under her East Indian puggaree, as she had not been seen to smile before, and dropping a kiss on the cheek of her favorite Edith.

After dinner the Dunlees met in Aunt Vi's room, and Aunt Vi observed that Mrs. Dunlee kept Jimmy close by her side, looking at him in the way mothers look at good little sons, her eyes shining with happy love and pride.

They were talking over "Jimmy's play," which had not been played. The money must all be given back to the people who had sat and looked so long at that calico curtain.

"We'll try 'Granny's Quilting' again next Saturday," said Aunt Vi.

They did try it again. There were no caves to dig this time, and young Master "Ezekiel Whalen" was on the stage promptly at half-past one, eager to show his grandparents that he was a boy to be relied upon after all. The play was a remarkable success. All the "summer boarders and campers" came to it, and everybody said:—

"Oh, do give us some more entertainments, Mrs. Sanford! Let us have one every Saturday."

Aunt Vi, being the kindest soul in the world, promised to do what she could. She gave the play of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin," with children for rats; and Eddo was dressed as a mouse, and squealed so perfectly that Edith's cat could hardly be restrained from rushing headlong upon the stage.

Later there were tableaux. Edith wore red, white, and blue and was the Goddess of Liberty. Jimmy was a cowboy with cartridge-belt and pistols. Lucy and Barbara were Night and Morning, with stars on their heads. Mr. Sanford was Uncle Jonathan. Mr. Hale was an Indian chief.

Jimmy's debts were more than paid, and a happier boy was not to be found in the state of California.

After this there were plenty of free entertainments on the tailings. At one of these, when the audience was watching a flight of rockets, Katharine heard two women not far away talking together. One of them asked:—

"Where's that little Dunlee girl, the one that keeps the play-school?"

"Over there in the corner," replied the other, "She hasn't any hat on. She's sitting beside the girl with a cat in her lap."

"Oh, is that the one? So young as that? Well, she's a good girl, yes, she is. I guess she is a good girl," said the first speaker heartily. "My little Henry thinks there's nothing

like her. He never learned much of anything till he went to that play-school. He never behaved so well as he does now, never gave me so little trouble at home. She's a *good* girl."

A world of comfort fell on Kyzie. Young as she was and full of faults, she had really done a wee bit of good.

"And they didn't say a word about my jumping out of the window," thought she, with deep satisfaction. "Wait till I grow up, just wait till I grow up, and as true as I live I'll be something and do something in this world!"

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She did not say this aloud, you may be sure; but there was a look on her face of high resolve.

Uncle James had often said to Aunt Vi:—

“Our Katharine is very much in earnest. I know you agree with me that “little Prudy’s” eldest daughter is a golden girl!”

The “play-school” closed a few days later, and it was Henry Small who received the medal for good spelling. He wasn’t so much of a cry-baby nowadays and the boys had stopped calling him “Chicken Little.”

The Dunlee party went home the last week in August, declaring they had had delightful times at Castle Cliff.

“Only I never went down that mine in a bucket,” said Lucy. “How could I when the men were blowing up rocks just like an earthquake?”

“And I wanted to wait till they found that vein,” said Jimmy.

A few days before they left, Uncle James went hunting and shot a deer. I wish there were space to tell of the barbecue to which all the neighbors were invited a little later.

As it is, my young readers are not likely to hear any more of the adventures of the “bonnie Dunlees,” either at home or abroad.

But during their stay in the mountains that summer Lucy begged Aunt Vi to write some stories, with the little friends, Bab and Lucy, for the heroines.

“Some ‘once-upon-a-time stories,’ Auntie Vi. Make believe we two girls go all about among the fairies, just as Alice did in Wonderland; only there are two of us together, and we shall have a better time!”

“Oh, fie! How could I take real live little girls into the kingdom of the elves and gnomes and pixies? I shouldn’t know how!”

But she was so obliging as to try. The week before they left for home she had completed a book of “once-upon-a-time stories,” which she read aloud to all the children as they clustered around her in the “air-castle.” She called it “Lucy in Fairyland,” though she meant Bab just as much as Lucy. If the little public would like to see this book it may be offered them by and by; together with the comments which were made upon each story by the whole Dunlee family,—Jimmy, wee Lucy, and all.

[Illustration: LITTLE PRUDY SERIES Specimen illustration from “Sister Susie”]

[Illustration: LITTLE PRUDY SERIES Specimen illustration from “Dotty Dimple”]

[Illustration: LITTLE PRUDY SERIES Specimen illustration from “Cousin Grace”]

[Illustration: LITTLE PRUDY’S CHILDREN SERIES Specimen illustration from “Wee Lucy’s Secret”]