COOLIDGE SUSAN

WHAT KATY DID

Susan Coolidge

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Coolidge S.

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Содержание

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TO FIVE

Six of us once, my darlings, played together
    Beneath green boughs, which faded long ago,
Made merry in the golden summer weather,
    Pelted each other with new-fallen snow.

Did the sun always shine? I can't remember
    A single cloud that dimmed the happy blue,—
A single lightning-bolt or peal of thunder,
    To daunt our bright, unfearing lives: can you?

We quarrelled often, but made peace as quickly,
    Shed many tears, but laughed the while they fell,
Had our small woes, our childish bumps and bruises,
    But Mother always "kissed and made them well."

Is it long since?—it seems a moment only:
    Yet here we are in bonnets and tail-coats,
Grave men of business, members of committees,
    Our play-time ended: even Baby votes!

And star-eyed children, in whose innocent faces
    Kindles the gladness which was once our own,
Crowd round our knees, with sweet and coaxing voices,
    Asking for stories of that old-time home.

"Were *you* once little too?" they say, astonished;
    "Did you too play? How funny! tell us how."
Almost we start, forgetful for a moment;
    Almost we answer, "We are little *now!* "

Dear friend and lover, whom to-day we christen,
    Forgive such brief bewilderment,—thy true
And kindly hand we hold; we own thee fairest.
    But ah! our yesterday was precious too.

So, darlings, take this little childish story,
    In which some gleams of the old sunshine play,
And, as with careless hands you turn the pages,
    Look back and smile, as here I smile to-day.

CHAPTER I
THE LITTLE CARRS

I was sitting in the meadows one day, not long ago, at a place where there was a small brook. It was a hot day. The sky was very blue, and white clouds, like great swans, went floating over it to and fro. Just opposite me was a clump of green rushes, with dark velvety spikes, and among them one single tall, red cardinal flower, which was bending over the brook as if to see its own beautiful face in the water. But the cardinal did not seem to be vain.

The picture was so pretty that I sat a long time enjoying it. Suddenly, close to me, two small voices began to talk—or to sing, for I couldn't tell exactly which it was. One voice was shrill; the other, which was a little deeper, sounded very positive and cross. They were evidently disputing about something, for they said the same words over and over again. These were the words—"Katy did." "Katy didn't." "She did." "She didn't." "She did." "She didn't." "Did." "Didn't." I think they must have repeated them at least a hundred times.

I got up from my seat to see if I could find the speakers; and sure enough, there on one of the cat-tail bulrushes, I spied two tiny pale-green creatures. Their eyes seemed to be weak, for they both wore black goggles. They had six legs apiece,—two short ones, two not so short, and two very long. These last legs had joints like the springs to buggy-tops; and as I watched, they began walking up the rush, and then I saw that they moved exactly like an old-fashioned gig. In fact, if I hadn't been too big, I *think* I should have heard them creak as they went along. They didn't say anything so long as I was there, but the moment my back was turned they began to quarrel again, and in the same old words—"Katy did." "Katy didn't." "She did." "She didn't."

As I walked home I fell to thinking about another Katy,—a Katy I once knew, who planned to do a great many wonderful things, and in the end did none of them, but something quite different,—something she didn't like at all at first, but which, on the whole, was a great deal better than any of the doings she had dreamed about. And as I thought, this little story grew in my head, and I resolved to write it down for you. I have done it; and, in memory of my two little friends on the bulrush, I give it their name. Here it is—the story of What Katy Did.

Katy's name was Katy Carr. She lived in the town of Burnet, which wasn't a very big town, but was growing as fast as it knew how. The house she lived in stood on the edge of the town. It was a large square house, white, with green blinds, and had a porch in front, over which roses and clematis made a thick bower. Four tall locust trees shaded the gravel path which led to the front gate. On one side of the house was an orchard; on the other side were wood piles and barns, and an ice-house. Behind was a kitchen garden sloping to the south; and behind that a pasture with a brook in it, and butternut trees, and four cows—two red ones, a yellow one with sharp horns tipped with tin, and a dear little white one named Daisy.

There were six of the Carr children—four girls and two boys. Katy, the oldest, was twelve years old; little Phil, the youngest, was four, and the rest fitted in between.

Dr. Carr, their Papa, was a dear, kind, busy man, who was away from home all day, and sometimes all night, too, taking care of sick people. The children hadn't any Mamma. She had died when Phil was a baby, four years before my story began. Katy could remember her pretty well; to the rest she was but a sad, sweet name, spoken on Sunday, and at prayer-times, or when Papa was especially gentle and solemn.

In place of this Mamma, whom they recollected so dimly, there was Aunt Izzie, Papa's sister, who came to take care of them when Mamma went away on that long journey, from which, for so many months, the little ones kept hoping she might return. Aunt Izzie was a small woman, sharp-faced and thin, rather old-looking, and very neat and particular about everything. She meant to be

kind to the children, but they puzzled her much, because they were not a bit like herself when she was a child. Aunt Izzie had been a gentle, tidy little thing, who loved to sit as Curly Locks did, sewing long seams in the parlor, and to have her head patted by older people, and be told that she was a good girl; whereas Katy tore her dress every day, hated sewing, and didn't care a button about being called "good," while Clover and Elsie shied off like restless ponies when any one tried to pat their heads. It was very perplexing to Aunt Izzie, and she found it hard to quite forgive the children for being so "unaccountable," and so little like the good boys and girls in Sunday-school memoirs, who were the young people she liked best, and understood most about.

Then Dr. Carr was another person who worried her. He wished to have the children hardy and bold, and encouraged climbing and rough plays, in spite of the bumps and ragged clothes which resulted. In fact, there was just one half-hour of the day when Aunt Izzie was really satisfied about her charges, and that was the half-hour before breakfast, when she had made a law that they were all to sit in their little chairs and learn the Bible verse for the day. At this time she looked at them with pleased eyes, they were all so spick and span, with such nicely-brushed jackets and such neatly-combed hair. But the moment the bell rang her comfort was over. From that time on, they were what she called "not fit to be seen." The neighbors pitied her very much. They used to count the sixty stiff white pantalette legs hung out to dry every Monday morning, and say to each other what a sight of washing those children made, and what a chore it must be for poor Miss Carr to keep them so nice. But poor Miss Carr didn't think them at all nice; that was the worst of it.

"Clover, go up stairs and wash your hands! Dorry, pick your hat off the floor and hang it on the nail! Not that nail—the third nail from the corner!" These were the kind of things Aunt Izzie was saying all day long. The children minded her pretty well, but they didn't exactly love her, I fear. They called her "Aunt Izzie" always, never "Aunty." Boys and girls will know what *that* meant.

I want to show you the little Carrs, and I don't know that I could ever have a better chance than one day when five out of the six were perched on top of the ice-house, like chickens on a roost. This ice-house was one of their favorite places. It was only a low roof set over a hole in the ground, and, as it stood in the middle of the side-yard, it always seemed to the children that the shortest road to every place was up one of its slopes and down the other. They also liked to mount to the ridge-pole, and then, still keeping the sitting position, to let go, and scrape slowly down over the warm shingles to the ground. It was bad for their shoes and trousers, of course, but what of that? Shoes and trousers, and clothes generally, were Aunt Izzie's affair; theirs was to slide and enjoy themselves.

Clover, next in age to Katy, sat in the middle. She was a fair, sweet dumpling of a girl, with thick pig-tails of light brown hair, and short-sighted blue eyes, which seemed to hold tears, just ready to fall from under the blue. Really, Clover was the jolliest little thing in the world; but these eyes, and her soft cooing voice, always made people feel like petting her and taking her part. Once, when she was very small, she ran away with Katy's doll, and when Katy pursued, and tried to take it from her, Clover held fast and would not let go. Dr. Carr, who wasn't attending particularly, heard nothing but the pathetic tone of Clover's voice, as she said: "Me won't! Me want dolly!" and, without stopping to inquire, he called out sharply: "For shame, Katy! give your sister *her* doll at once!" which Katy, much surprised, did; while Clover purred in triumph, like a satisfied kitten. Clover was sunny and sweet-tempered, a little indolent, and very modest about herself, though, in fact, she was particularly clever in all sorts of games, and extremely droll and funny in a quiet way. Everybody loved her, and she loved everybody, especially Katy, whom she looked up to as one of the wisest people in the world.

Pretty little Phil sat next on the roof to Clover, and she held him tight with her arm. Then came Elsie, a thin, brown child of eight, with beautiful dark eyes, and crisp, short curls covering the whole of her small head. Poor little Elsie was the "odd one" among the Carrs. She didn't seem to belong exactly to either the older or the younger children. The great desire and ambition of her heart was to be allowed to go about with Katy and Clover and Cecy Hall, and to know their secrets, and be permitted to put notes into the little post-offices they were forever establishing in all sorts of hidden

places. But they didn't want Elsie, and used to tell her to "run away and play with the children," which hurt her feelings very much. When she wouldn't run away, I am sorry to say they ran away from her, which, as their legs were longest, it was easy to do. Poor Elsie, left behind, would cry bitter tears, and, as she was too proud to play much with Dorry and John, her principal comfort was tracking the older ones about and discovering their mysteries, especially the post-offices, which were her greatest grievance. Her eyes were bright and quick as a bird's. She would peep and peer, and follow and watch, till at last, in some odd, unlikely place, the crotch of a tree, the middle of the asparagus bed, or, perhaps, on the very top step of the scuttle ladder, she spied the little paper box, with its load of notes, all ending with: "Be sure and not let Elsie know." Then she would seize the box, and, marching up to wherever the others were, she would throw it down, saying, defiantly: "There's your old post-office!" but feeling all the time just like crying. Poor little Elsie! In almost every big family, there is one of these unmated, left-out children. Katy, who had the finest plans in the world for being "heroic," and of use, never saw, as she drifted on her heedless way, that here, in this lonely little sister, was the very chance she wanted for being a comfort to somebody who needed comfort very much. She never saw it, and Elsie's heavy heart went uncheered.

Dorry and Joanna sat on the two ends of the ridge-pole. Dorry was six years old; a pale, pudgy boy, with rather a solemn face, and smears of molasses on the sleeve of his jacket. Joanna, whom the children called "John," and "Johnnie," was a square, splendid child, a year younger than Dorry; she had big brave eyes, and a wide rosy mouth, which always looked ready to laugh. These two were great friends, though Dorry seemed like a girl who had got into boy's clothes by mistake, and Johnnie like a boy who, in a fit of fun, had borrowed his sister's frock. And now, as they all sat there chattering and giggling, the window above opened, a glad shriek was heard, and Katy's head appeared. In her hand she held a heap of stockings, which she waved triumphantly.

"Hurray!" she cried, "all done, and Aunt Izzie says we may go. Are you tired out waiting? I couldn't help it, the holes were so big, and took so long. Hurry up, Clover, and get the things! Cecy and I will be down in a minute."

The children jumped up gladly, and slid down the roof. Clover fetched a couple of baskets from the wood-shed. Elsie ran for her kitten. Dorry and John loaded themselves with two great fagots of green boughs. Just as they were ready, the side-door banged, and Katy and Cecy Hall came into the yard.

I must tell you about Cecy. She was a great friend of the children's, and lived in a house next door. The yards of the houses were only separated by a green hedge, with no gate, so that Cecy spent two-thirds of her time at Dr. Carr's, and was exactly like one of the family. She was a neat, dapper, pink-and-white-girl, modest and prim in manner, with light shiny hair, which always kept smooth, and slim hands, which never looked dirty. How different from my poor Katy! Katy's hair was forever in a snarl; her gowns were always catching on nails and tearing "themselves"; and, in spite of her age and size, she was as heedless and innocent as a child of six. Katy was the *longest* girl that was ever seen. What she did to make herself grow so, nobody could tell; but there she was—up above Papa's ear, and half a head taller than poor Aunt Izzie. Whenever she stopped to think about her height she became very awkward, and felt as if she were all legs and elbows, and angles and joints. Happily, her head was so full of other things, of plans and schemes, and fancies of all sorts, that she didn't often take time to remember how tall she was. She was a dear, loving child, for all her careless habits, and made bushels of good resolutions every week of her life, only unluckily she never kept any of them. She had fits of responsibility about the other children, and longed to set them a good example, but when the chance came, she generally forgot to do so. Katy's days flew like the wind; for when she wasn't studying lessons, or sewing and darning with Aunt Izzie, which she hated extremely, there were always so many delightful schemes rioting in her brains, that all she wished for was ten pairs of hands to carry them out. These same active brains got her into perpetual scrapes. She was fond of building castles in the air, and dreaming of the time when something she had done would make her

famous, so that everybody would hear of her, and want to know her. I don't think she had made up her mind what this wonderful thing was to be; but while thinking about it she often forgot to learn a lesson, or to lace her boots, and then she had a bad mark, or a scolding from Aunt Izzie. At such times she consoled herself with planning how, by and by, she would be beautiful and beloved, and amiable as an angel. A great deal was to happen to Katy before that time came. Her eyes, which were black, were to turn blue; her nose was to lengthen and straighten, and her mouth, quite too large at present to suit the part of a heroine, was to be made over into a sort of rosy button. Meantime, and until these charming changes should take place, Katy forgot her features as much as she could, though still, I think, the person on earth whom she most envied was that lady on the outside of the Tricopherous bottles with the wonderful hair which sweeps the ground.

CHAPTER II
PARADISE

The place to which the children were going was a sort of marshy thicket at the bottom of a field near the house. It wasn't a big thicket, but it looked big, because the trees and bushes grew so closely that you could not see just where it ended. In winter the ground was damp and boggy, so that nobody went there, excepting cows, who don't mind getting their feet wet; but in summer the water dried away, and then it was all fresh and green, and full of delightful things—wild roses, and sassafras, and birds' nests. Narrow, winding paths ran here and there, made by the cattle as they wandered to and fro. This place the children called "Paradise," and to them it seemed as wide and endless and full of adventure as any forest of fairy land.

The way to Paradise was through some wooden bars. Katy and Cecy climbed these with a hop, skip and jump, while the smaller ones scrambled underneath. Once past the bars they were fairly in the field, and, with one consent, they all began to run till they reached the entrance of the wood. Then they halted, with a queer look of hesitation on their faces. It was always an exciting occasion to go to Paradise for the first time after the long winter. Who knew what the fairies might not have done since any of them had been there to see?

"Which path shall we go in by?" asked Clover, at last.

"Suppose we vote," said Katy. "I say by the Pilgrim's Path and the Hill of Difficulty."

"So do I!" chimed in Clover, who always agreed with Katy.

"The Path of Peace is nice," suggested Cecy.

"No, no! We want to go by Sassafras Path!" cried John and Dorry.

However, Katy, as usual, had her way. It was agreed that they should first try Pilgrim's Path, and afterward make a thorough exploration of the whole of their little kingdom, and see all that had happened since last they were there. So in they marched, Katy and Cecy heading the procession, and Dorry, with his great trailing bunch of boughs, bringing up the rear.

"Oh, there is the dear Rosary, all safe!" cried the children, as they reached the top of the Hill of Difficulty, and came upon a tall stump, out of the middle of which waved a wild rose-bush, budded over with fresh green eaves. This "Rosary" was a fascinating thing to their minds. They were always inventing stories about it, and were in constant terror lest some hungry cow should take a fancy to the rose-bush and eat it up.

"Yes," said Katy, stroking a leaf with her finger, "it was in great danger one night last winter, but it escaped."

"Oh, how? Tell us about it!" cried the others, for Katy's stories were famous in the family.

"It was Christmas Eve," continued Katy, in a mysterious tone. "The fairy of the Rosary was quite sick. She had taken a dreadful cold in her head, and the poplar-tree fairy, just over there, told her that sassafras tea is good for colds. So she made a large acorn-cup full, and then cuddled herself in where the wood looks so black and soft, and fell asleep. In the middle of the night, when she was snoring soundly, there was a noise in the forest, and a dreadful black bull with fiery eyes galloped up. He saw our poor Rosy Posy, and, opening his big mouth, he was just going to bite her in two; but at that minute a little fat man, with a wand in his hand, popped out from behind the stump. It was Santa Claus, of course. He gave the bull such a rap with his wand that he moo-ed dreadfully, and then put up his fore-paw, to see if his nose was on or not. He found it was, but it hurt him so that he 'moo-ed' again, and galloped off as fast as he could into the woods. Then Santa Claus waked up the fairy, and told her that if she didn't take better care of Rosy Posy he should put some other fairy into her place, and set her to keep guard over a prickly, scratchy, blackberry-bush."

"Is there really any fairy?" asked Dorry, who had listened to this narrative with open mouth.

"Of course," answered Katy. Then bending down toward Dorry, she added in a voice intended to be of wonderful sweetness: "I am a fairy, Dorry!"

"Pshaw!" was Dorry's reply; "you're a giraffe—Pa said so!"

The Path of Peace got its name because of its darkness and coolness. High bushes almost met over it, and trees kept it shady, even in the middle of the day. A sort of white flower grew there, which the children called Pollypods, because they didn't know the real name. They staid a long while picking bunches of these flowers, and then John and Dorry had to grub up an armful of sassafras roots; so that before they had fairly gone through Toadstool Avenue, Rabbit Hollow, and the rest, the sun was just over their heads, and it was noon.

"I'm getting hungry," said Dorry.

"Oh, no, Dorry, you mustn't be hungry till the bower is ready!" cried the little girls, alarmed, for Dorry was apt to be disconsolate if he was kept waiting for his meals. So they made haste to build the bower. It did not take long, being composed of boughs hung over skipping-ropes, which were tied to the very poplar-tree where the fairy lived who had recommended sassafras tea to the Fairy of the Rose.

When it was done they all cuddled in underneath. It was a very small bower—just big enough to hold them, and the baskets, and the kitten. I don't think there would have been room for anybody else, not even another kitten. Katy, who sat in the middle, untied and lifted the lid of the largest basket, while all the rest peeped eagerly to see what was inside.

First came a great many ginger cakes. These were carefully laid on the grass to keep till wanted: buttered biscuit came next—three apiece, with slices of cold lamb laid in between; and last of all were a dozen hard-boiled eggs, and a layer of thick bread and butter sandwiched with corn-beef. Aunt Izzie had put up lunches for Paradise before, you see, and knew pretty well what to expect in the way of appetite.

Oh, how good everything tasted in that bower, with the fresh wind rustling the poplar leaves, sunshine and sweet wood-smells about them, and birds singing overhead! No grown-up dinner party ever had half so much fun. Each mouthful was a pleasure; and when the last crumb had vanished, Katy produced the second basket, and there, oh, delightful surprise! were seven little pies—molasses pies, baked in saucers—each with a brown top and crisp candified edge, which tasted like toffy and lemon-peel, and all sorts of good things mixed up together.

There was a general shout. Even demure Cecy was pleased, and Dorry and John kicked their heels on the ground in a tumult of joy. Seven pairs of hands were held out at once toward the basket; seven sets of teeth went to work without a moment's delay. In an incredibly short time every vestige of the pie had disappeared, and a blissful stickiness pervaded the party.

"What shall we do now?" asked Clover, while little Phil tipped the baskets upside down, as if to make sure there was nothing left that could possibly be eaten.

"I don't know," replied Katy, dreamily. She had left her seat, and was half-sitting, half-lying on the low, crooked bough of a butternut tree, which hung almost over the children's heads.

"Let's play we're grown up," said Cecy, "and tell what we mean to do."

"Well," said Clover, "you begin. What do you mean to do?"

"I mean to have a black silk dress, and pink roses in my bonnet, and a white muslin long-shawl," said Cecy; "and I mean to look *exactly* like Minerva Clark! I shall be very good, too; as good as Mrs. Bedell, only a great deal prettier. All the young gentlemen will want me to go and ride, but I shan't notice them at all, because you know I shall always be teaching in Sunday-school, and visiting the poor. And some day, when I am bending over an old woman and feeding her with currant jelly, a poet will come along and see me, and he'll go home and write a poem about me," concluded Cecy, triumphantly.

"Pooh!" said Clover. "I don't think that would be nice at all. *I'm* going to be a beautiful lady—the most beautiful lady in the world! And I'm going to live in a yellow castle, with yellow pillars to

the portico, and a square thing on top, like Mr. Sawyer's. My children are going to have a play-house up there. There's going to be a spy-glass in the window, to look out of. I shall wear gold dresses and silver dresses every day, and diamond rings, and have white satin aprons to tie on when I'm dusting, or doing anything dirty. In the middle of my back-yard there will be a pond-full of Lubin's Extracts, and whenever I want any I shall go just out and dip a bottle in. And I shan't teach in Sunday schools, like Cecy, because I don't want to; but every Sunday I'll go and stand by the gate, and when her scholars go by on their way home, I'll put Lubin's Extracts on their handkerchiefs."

"I mean to have just the same," cried Elsie, whose imagination was fired by this gorgeous vision, "only my pond will be the biggest. I shall be a great deal beautifuller, too," she added.

"You can't," said Katy from overhead. "Clover is going to be the most beautiful lady in the world."

"But I'll be more beautiful than the most beautiful," persisted poor little Elsie; "and I'll be big, too, and know everybody's secrets. And everybody'll be kind, then, and never run away and hide; and there won't be any post offices, or anything disagreeable."

"What'll you be, Johnnie?" asked Clover, anxious to change the subject, for Elsie's voice was growing plaintive.

But Johnnie had no clear ideas as to her future. She laughed a great deal, and squeezed Dorry's arm very tight, but that was all. Dorry was more explicit.

"I mean to have turkey every day," he declared, "and batter-puddings; not boiled ones, you know, but little baked ones, with brown shiny tops, and a great deal of pudding sauce to eat on them. And I shall be so big then that nobody will say, 'Three helps is quite enough for a little boy.'"

"Oh, Dorry, you pig!" cried Katy, while the others screamed with laughter. Dorry was much affronted.

"I shall just go and tell Aunt Izzie what you called me," he said, getting up in a great pet.

But Clover, who was a born peacemaker, caught hold of his arm, and her coaxings and entreaties consoled him so much that he finally said he would stay; especially as the others were quite grave now, and promised that they wouldn't laugh any more.

"And now, Katy, it's your turn," said Cecy; "tell us what you're going to be when you grow up."

"I'm not sure about what I'll be," replied Katy, from overhead; "beautiful, of course, and good if I can, only not so good as you, Cecy, because it would be nice to go and ride with the young gentlemen *sometimes*. And I'd like to have a large house and a splendiferous garden, and then you could all come and live with me, and we would play in the garden, and Dorry should have turkey five times a day if he liked. And we'd have a machine to darn the stockings, and another machine to put the bureau drawers in order, and we'd never sew or knit garters, or do anything we didn't want to. That's what I'd like to *be*. But now I'll tell you what I mean to *do*."

"Isn't it the same thing?" asked Cecy.

"Oh, no!" replied Katy, "quite different; for you see I mean to *do* something grand. I don't know what, yet; but when I'm grown up I shall find out." (Poor Katy always said "when I'm grown up," forgetting how very much she had grown already.) "Perhaps," she went on, "it will be rowing out in boats, and saving peoples' lives, like that girl in the book. Or perhaps I shall go and nurse in the hospital, like Miss Nightingale. Or else I'll head a crusade and ride on a white horse, with armor and a helmet on my head, and carry a sacred flag. Or if I don't do that, I'll paint pictures, or sing, or scalp —sculp,—what is it? you know—make figures in marble. Anyhow it shall be *something*. And when Aunt Izzie sees it, and reads about me in the newspapers she will say, 'The dear child! I always knew she would turn out an ornament to the family,' People very often say, afterward, that they 'always knew,'" concluded Katy sagaciously.

"Oh, Katy! how beautiful it will be!" said Clover, clasping her hands. Clover believed in Katy as she did in the Bible.

"I don't believe the newspapers would be so silly as to print things about *you*, Katy Carr," put in Elsie, vindictively.

"Yes they will!" said Clover; and gave Elsie a push.

By and by John and Dorry trotted away on mysterious errands of their own.

"Wasn't Dorry funny with his turkey?" remarked Cecy; and they all laughed again.

"If you won't tell," said Katy, "I'll let you see Dorry's journal. He kept it once for almost two weeks, and then gave it up. I found the book, this morning, in the nursery closet."

All of them promised, and Katy produced it from her pocket. It began thus:

"March 12.—Have resolved to keep a jurnal.

March 13.—Had rost befe for diner, and cabage, and potato and appel sawse, and rice puding. I do not like rice puding when it is like ours. Charley Slack's kind is rele good. Mush and sirup for tea.

March 19.—Forgit what did. John and me saved our pie to take to schule.

March 21.—Forgit what did. Gridel cakes for brekfast. Debby didn't fry enuff.

March 24.—This is Sunday. Corn befe for dinnir. Studdied my Bibel leson. Aunt Issy said I was gredy. Have resollved not to think so much about things to ete. Wish I was a beter boy. Nothing pertikeler for tea.

March 25.—Forgit what did.

March 27.—Forgit what did.

March 29.—Played.

March 31.—Forgit what did.

April 1.—Have dissided not to kepe a jurnal enny more."

Here ended the extracts; and it seemed as if only a minute had passed since they stopped laughing over them, before the long shadows began to fall, and Mary came to say that all of them must come in to get ready for tea. It was dreadful to have to pick up the empty baskets and go home, feeling that the long, delightful Saturday was over, and that there wouldn't be another for a week. But it was comforting to remember that Paradise was always there; and that at any moment when Kate and Aunt Izzie were willing, they had only to climb a pair of bars—very easy ones, and without any fear of an angel with flaming sword to stop the way—enter in, and take possession of their Eden.

CHAPTER III
THE DAY OF SCRAPES

Mrs. Knight's school, to which Katy and Clover and Cecy went, stood quite at the other end of the town from Dr. Carr's. It was a low, one-story building and had a yard behind it, in which the girls played at recess. Unfortunately, next door to it was Miss Miller's school, equally large and popular, and with a yard behind it also. Only a high board fence separated the two playgrounds.

Mrs. Knight was a stout, gentle woman, who moved slowly, and had a face which made you think of an amiable and well-disposed cow. Miss Miller, on the contrary, had black eyes, with black corkscrew curls waving about them, and was generally brisk and snappy. A constant feud raged between the two schools as to the respective merits of the teachers and the instruction. The Knight girls for some unknown reason, considered themselves genteel and the Miller girls vulgar, and took no pains to conceal this opinion; while the Miller girls, on the other hand, retaliated by being as aggravating as they knew how. They spent their recesses and intermissions mostly in making faces through the knot-holes in the fence, and over the top of it when they could get there, which wasn't an easy thing to do, as the fence was pretty high. The Knight girls could make faces too, for all their gentility. Their yard had one great advantage over the other: it possessed a wood-shed, with a climbable roof, which commanded Miss Miller's premises, and upon this the girls used to sit in rows, turning up their noses at the next yard, and irritating the foe by jeering remarks. "Knights" and "Millerites," the two schools called each other; and the feud raged so high, that sometimes it was hardly safe for a Knight to meet a Millerite in the street; all of which, as may be imagined, was exceedingly improving both to the manners and morals of the young ladies concerned.

One morning, not long after the day in Paradise, Katy was late. She could not find her things. Her algebra, as she expressed it, had "gone and lost itself," her slate was missing, and the string was off her sun-bonnet. She ran about, searching for these articles and banging doors, till Aunt Izzie was out of patience.

"As for your algebra," she said, "if it is that very dirty book with only one cover, and scribbled all over the leaves, you will find it under the kitchen-table. Philly was playing before breakfast that it was a pig: no wonder, I'm sure, for it looks good for nothing else. How you do manage to spoil your school-books in this manner, Katy, I cannot imagine. It is less than a month since your father got you a new algebra, and look at it now—not fit to be carried about. I do wish you would realize what books cost!

"About your slate," she went on, "I know nothing; but here is the bonnet-string;" taking it out of her pocket.

"Oh, thank you!" said Katy, hastily sticking it on with a pin.

"Katy Carr!" almost screamed Miss Izzie, "what are you about? Pinning on your bonnet-string! Mercy on me, what shiftless thing will you do next? Now stand still, and don't fidget. You sha'n't stir till I have sewed it on properly."

It wasn't easy to "stand still and not fidget," with Aunt Izzie fussing away and lecturing, and now and then, in a moment of forgetfulness, sticking her needle into one's chin. Katy bore it as well as she could, only shifting perpetually from one foot to the other, and now and then uttering a little snort, like an impatient horse. The minute she was released she flew into the kitchen, seized the algebra, and rushed like a whirlwind to the gate, where good little Clover stood patiently waiting, though all ready herself, and terribly afraid she should be late.

"We shall have to run," gasped Katy, quite out of breath. "Aunt Izzie kept me. She has been so horrid!"

They did run as fast as they could, but time ran faster, and before they were half-way to school the town clock struck nine, and all hope was over. This vexed Katy very much; for, though often late, she was always eager to be early.

"There," she said, stopping short, "I shall just tell Aunt Izzie that it was her fault. It is *too* bad." And she marched into school in a very cross mood.

A day begun in this manner is pretty sure to end badly, as most of us know. All the morning through, things seemed to go wrong. Katy missed twice in her grammar lesson, and lost her place in the class. Her hand shook so when she copied her composition, that the writing, not good at best, turned out almost illegible, so that Mrs. Knight said it must all be done over again. This made Katy crosser than ever; and almost before she thought, she had whispered to Clover, "How hateful!" And then, when just before recess all who had "communicated" were requested to stand up, her conscience gave such a twinge that she was forced to get up with the rest, and see a black mark put against her name on the list. The tears came into her eyes from vexation; and, for fear the other girls would notice them, she made a bolt for the yard as soon as the bell rang, and mounted up all alone to the wood-house roof, where she sat with her back to the school, fighting with her eyes, and trying to get her face in order before the rest should come.

Miss Miller's clock was about four minutes slower than Mrs. Knight's, so the next playground was empty. It was a warm, breezy day, and as Katy sat here, suddenly a gust of wind came, and seizing her sun-bonnet, which was only half tied on, whirled it across the roof. She clutched after it as it flew, but too late. Once, twice, thrice, it flapped, then it disappeared over the edge, and Katy, flying after, saw it lying a crumpled lilac heap in the very middle of the enemy's yard.

This was horrible! Not merely losing the bonnet, for Katy was comfortably indifferent as to what became of her clothes, but to lose it *so*. In another minute the Miller girls would be out. Already she seemed to see them dancing war-dances round the unfortunate bonnet, pinning it on a pole, using it as a football, waving it over the fence, and otherwise treating it as Indians treat a captive taken in war. Was it to be endured? Never! Better die first! And with very much the feeling of a person who faces destruction rather than forfeit honor, Katy set her teeth, and sliding rapidly down the roof, seized the fence, and with one bold leap vaulted into Miss Miller's yard.

Just then the recess bell tinkled; and a little Millerite who sat by the window, and who, for two seconds, had been dying to give the exciting information, squeaked out to the others: "There's Katy Carr in our back-yard!"

Out poured the Millerites, big and little. Their wrath and indignation at this daring invasion cannot be described. With a howl of fury they precipitated themselves upon Katy, but she was quick as they, and holding the rescued bonnet in her hand, was already half-way up the fence.

There are moments when it is a fine thing to be tall. On this occasion Katy's long legs and arms served her an excellent turn. Nothing but a Daddy Long Legs ever climbed so fast or so wildly as she did now. In one second she had gained the top of the fence. Just as she went over a Millerite seized her by the last foot, and almost dragged her boot off.

Almost, not quite, thanks to the stout thread with which Aunt Izzie had sewed on the buttons. With a frantic kick Katy released herself, and had the satisfaction of seeing her assailant go head over heels backward, while, with a shriek of triumph and fright, she herself plunged headlong into the midst of a group of Knights. They were listening with open mouths to the uproar, and now stood transfixed at the astonishing spectacle of one of their number absolutely returning alive from the camp of the enemy.

I cannot tell you what a commotion ensued. The Knights were beside themselves with pride and triumph. Katy was kissed and hugged, and made to tell her story over and over again, while rows of exulting girls sat on the wood-house roof to crow over the discomfited Millerites: and when, later, the foe rallied and began to retort over the fence, Clover, armed with a tack-hammer, was lifted up in the arms of one of the tall girls to rap the intruding knuckles as they appeared on the top. This she

did with such good-will that the Millerites were glad to drop down again, and mutter vengeance at a safe distance. Altogether it was a great day for the school, a day to be remembered. As time went on, Katy, what with the excitement of her adventure, and of being praised and petted by the big girls, grew perfectly reckless, and hardly knew what she said or did.

A good many of the scholars lived too far from school to go home at noon, and were in the habit of bringing their lunches in baskets, and staying all day. Katy and Clover were of this number. This noon, after the dinners were eaten, it was proposed that they should play something in the school-room, and Katy's unlucky star put it into her head to invent a new game, which she called the Game of Rivers.

It was played in the following manner: Each girl took the name of a river, and laid out for herself an appointed path through the room, winding among the desks and benches, and making a low, roaring sound, to imitate the noise of water. Cecy was the Platte, Marianne Brooks, a tall girl, the Mississippi, Alice Blair, the Ohio, Clover, the Penobscot, and so on. They were instructed to run into each other once in a while, because, as Katy said, "rivers do." As for Katy herself, she was "Father Ocean," and, growling horribly, raged up and down the platform where Mrs. Knight usually sat. Every now and then, when the others were at the far end of the room, she would suddenly cry out, "Now for a meeting of the waters!" whereupon all the rivers bouncing, bounding, scrambling, screaming, would turn and run toward Father Ocean, while he roared louder than all of them put together, and made short rushes up and down, to represent the movement of waves on a beach.

Such a noise as this beautiful game made was never heard in the town of Burnet before or since. It was like the bellowing of the bulls of Bashan, the squeaking of pigs, the cackle of turkey-cocks, and the laugh of wild hyenas all at once; and, in addition, there was a great banging of furniture and scraping of many feet on an uncarpeted floor. People going by stopped and stared, children cried, an old lady asked why some one didn't run for a policeman; while the Miller girls listened to the proceedings with malicious pleasure, and told everybody that it was the noise that Mrs. Knight's scholars "usually made at recess."

Mrs. Knight coming back from dinner, was much amazed to see a crowd of people collected in front of her school. As she drew near, the sounds reached her, and then she became really frightened, for she thought somebody was being murdered on her premises. Hurrying in, she threw open the door, and there, to her dismay, was the whole room in a frightful state of confusion and uproar: chairs flung down, desks upset, ink streaming on the floor; while in the midst of the ruin the frantic rivers raced and screamed, and old Father Ocean, with a face as red as fire, capered like a lunatic on the platform.

"What *does* this mean?" gasped poor Mrs. Knight, almost unable to speak for horror.

At the sound of her voice the Rivers stood still, Father Ocean brought his prances to an abrupt close, and slunk down from the platform. All of a sudden, each girl seemed to realize what a condition the room was in, and what a horrible thing she had done. The timid ones cowered behind their desks, the bold ones tried to look unconscious, and, to make matters worse, the scholars who had gone home to dinner began to return, staring at the scene of disaster, and asking, in whispers, what had been going on?

Mrs. Knight rang the bell. When the school had come to order, she had the desks and chairs picked up, while she herself brought wet cloths to sop the ink from the floor. This was done in profound silence; and the expression of Mrs. Knight's face was so direful and solemn, that a fresh damp fell upon the spirits of the guilty Rivers, and Father Ocean wished himself thousands of miles away.

When all was in order again, and the girls had taken their seats, Mrs. Knight made a short speech. She said she never was so shocked in her life before; she had supposed that she could trust them to behave like ladies when her back was turned. The idea that they could act so disgracefully, make such an uproar and alarm people going by, had never occurred to her, and she was deeply pained. It was setting a bad example to all the neighborhood—by which Mrs. Knight meant the rival

school, Miss Miller having just sent over a little girl, with her compliments, to ask if any one was hurt, and could *she* do anything? which was naturally aggravating! Mrs. Knight hoped they were sorry; she thought they must be—sorry and ashamed. The exercises could now go on as usual. Of course some punishment would be inflicted for the offense, but she should have to reflect before deciding what it ought to be. Meantime she wanted them all to think it over seriously; and if any one felt that she was more to blame than the others, now was the moment to rise and confess it.

Katy's heart gave a great thump, but she rose bravely: "I made up the game, and I was Father Ocean," she said to the astonished Mrs. Knight, who glared at her for a minute, and then replied solemnly: "Very well, Katy—sit down;" which Katy did, feeling more ashamed than ever, but somehow relieved in her mind. There is a saving grace in truth which helps truth-tellers through the worst of their troubles, and Katy found this out now.

The afternoon was long and hard. Mrs. Knight did not smile once; the lessons dragged; and Katy, after the heat and excitement of the forenoon, began to feel miserable. She had received more than one hard blow during the meetings of the waters, and had bruised herself almost without knowing it, against the desks and chairs. All these places now began to ache: her head throbbed so that she could hardly see, and a lump of something heavy seemed to be lying on her heart.

When school was over, Mrs. Knight rose and said, "The young ladies who took part in the game this afternoon are requested to remain." All the others went away, and shut the door behind them. It was a horrible moment: the girls never forgot it, or the hopeless sound of the door as the last departing scholar clapped it after her as she left.

I can't begin to tell you what it was that Mrs. Knight said to them: it was very affecting, and before long most of the girls began to cry. The penalty for their offense was announced to be the loss of recess for three weeks; but that wasn't half so bad as seeing Mrs. Knight so "religious and afflicted," as Cecy told her mother afterward. One by one the sobbing sinners departed from the schoolroom. When most of them were gone, Mrs. Knight called Katy up to the platform, and said a few words to her specially. She was not really severe, but Katy was too penitent and worn out to bear much, and before long was weeping like a water-spout, or like the ocean she had pretended to be.

At this, tender-hearted Mrs. Knight was so much affected that she let her off at once, and even kissed her in token of forgiveness, which made poor Ocean sob harder than ever. All the way home she sobbed; faithful little Clover, running along by her side in great distress, begging her to stop crying, and trying in vain to hold up the fragments of her dress, which was torn in, at least, a dozen places. Katy could not stop crying, and it was fortunate that Aunt Izzie happened to be out, and that the only person who saw her in this piteous plight was Mary, the nurse, who doted on the children, and was always ready to help them out of their troubles.

On this occasion she petted and cosseted Katy exactly as if it had been Johnnie or little Phil. She took her on her lap, bathed the hot head, brushed the hair, put arnica on the bruises, and produced a clean frock, so that by tea-time the poor child, except for her red eyes, looked like herself again, and Aunt Izzie didn't notice anything unusual.

For a wonder, Dr. Carr was at home that evening. It was always a great treat to the children when this happened, and Katy thought herself happy when, after the little ones had gone to bed, she got Papa to herself, and told him the whole story.

"Papa," she said, sitting on his knee, which, big girl as she was, she liked very much to do, "what is the reason that makes some days so lucky and other days so unlucky? Now today began all wrong, and everything that happened in it was wrong, and on other days I begin right, and all goes right, straight through. If Aunt Izzie hadn't kept me in the morning, I shouldn't have lost my mark, and then I shouldn't have been cross, and then *perhaps* I shouldn't have got in my other scrapes."

"But what made Aunt Izzie keep you, Katy?"

"To sew on the string of my bonnet, Papa."

"But how did it happen that the string was off?"

"Well," said Katy, reluctantly, "I am afraid that was *my* fault, for it came off on Tuesday, and I didn't fasten it on."

"So you see we must go back of Aunt Izzie for the beginning of this unlucky day of yours, Childie. Did you ever hear the old saying about, 'For the want of a nail the shoe was lost'?"

"No, never—tell it to me!" cried Katy, who loved stories as well as when she was three years old.

So Dr. Carr repeated—

"For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For the want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For the want of a horse the rider was lost,
For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost,
And all for want of a horse-shoe nail."

"Oh, Papa!" exclaimed Katy, giving him a great hug as she got off his knee, "I see what you mean! Who would have thought such a little speck of a thing as not sewing on my string could make a difference? But I don't believe I shall get in any more scrapes, for I sha'n't ever forget—

"'For the want of a nail the shoe was lost.'"

CHAPTER IV
KIKERI

But I am sorry to say that my poor, thoughtless Katy *did* forget, and did get into another scrape, and that no later than the very next Monday.

Monday was apt to be rather a stormy day at the Carrs'. There was the big wash to be done, and Aunt Izzie always seemed a little harder to please, and the servants a good deal crosser than on common days. But I think it was also, in part, the fault of the children, who, after the quiet of Sunday, were specially frisky and uproarious, and readier than usual for all sorts of mischief.

To Clover and Elsie, Sunday seemed to begin at Saturday's bed-time, when their hair was wet, and screwed up in papers, that it might curl next day. Elsie's waved naturally, so Aunt Izzie didn't think it necessary to pin her papers very tight; but Clover's thick, straight locks required to be pinched hard before they would give even the least twirl, and to her, Saturday night was one of misery. She would lie tossing, and turning, and trying first one side of her head and then the other; but whichever way she placed herself, the hard knobs and the pins stuck out and hurt her; so when at last she fell asleep, it was face down, with her small nose buried in the pillow, which was not comfortable, and gave her bad dreams. In consequence of these sufferings Clover hated curls, and when she "made up" stories for the younger children, they always commenced: "The hair of the beautiful princess was as straight as a yard-stick, and she never did it up in papers—never!"

Sunday always began with a Bible story, followed by a breakfast of baked beans, which two things were much tangled up together in Philly's mind. After breakfast the children studied their Sunday-school lessons, and then the big carryall came round, and they drove to church, which was a good mile off. It was a large, old-fashioned church, with galleries, and long pews with high red-cushioned seats.

The choir sat at the end, behind a low, green curtain, which slipped from side to side on rods. When the sermon began, they would draw the curtain aside and show themselves, all ready to listen, but the rest of the time they kept it shut. Katy always guessed that they must be having good times behind the green curtain—eating orange-peel, perhaps, or reading the Sunday-school books—and she often wished she might sit up there among them.

The seat in Dr. Carr's pew was so high that none of the children, except Katy, could touch the floor, even with the point of a toe. This made their feet go to sleep; and when they felt the queer little pin-pricks which drowsy feet use to rouse themselves with, they would slide off the seat, and sit on the benches to get over it. Once there, and well hidden from view, it was almost impossible not to whisper. Aunt Izzie would frown and shake her head, but it did little good, especially as Phil and Dorry were sleeping with their heads on her lap, and it took both her hands to keep them from rolling off into the bottom of the pew. When good old Dr. Stone said, "Finally, my brethren," she would begin waking them up. It was hard work sometimes, but generally she succeeded, so that during the last hymn the two stood together on the seat, quite brisk and refreshed, sharing a hymn-book, and making believe to sing like the older people.

After church came Sunday-school, which the children liked very much, and then they went home to dinner, which was always the same on Sunday—cold corned-beef, baked potatoes, and rice pudding. They did not go to church in the afternoon unless they wished, but were pounced upon by Katy instead, and forced to listen to the reading of *The Sunday Visitor*, a religious paper, of which she was the editor. This paper was partly written, partly printed, on a large sheet of foolscap, and had at the top an ornamental device, in lead pencil, with "Sunday Visitor" in the middle of it. The reading part began with a dull little piece of the kind which grown people call an editorial, about "Neatness," or "Obedience," or "Punctuality." The children always fidgeted when listening to this,

partly, I think, because it aggravated them to have Katy recommending on paper, as very easy, the virtues which she herself found it so hard to practise in real life. Next came anecdotes about dogs and elephants and snakes, taken from the Natural History book, and not very interesting, because the audience knew them by heart already. A hymn or two followed, or a string of original verses, and, last of all, a chapter of "Little Maria and Her Sisters," a dreadful tale, in which Katy drew so much moral, and made such personal allusions to the faults of the rest, that it was almost more than they could bear. In fact, there had just been a nursery rebellion on the subject. You must know that, for some weeks back, Katy had been too lazy to prepare any fresh *Sunday Visitors*, and so had forced the children to sit in a row and listen to the back numbers, which she read aloud from the very beginning! "Little Maria" sounded much worse when taken in these large doses, and Clover and Elsie, combining for once, made up their minds to endure it no longer. So, watching their chance, they carried off the whole edition, and poked it into the kitchen fire, where they watched it burn with a mixture of fear and delight which it was comical to witness. They dared not confess the deed, but it was impossible not to look conscious when Katy was flying about and rummaging after her lost treasure, and she suspected them, and was very irate in consequence.

The evenings of Sunday were always spent in repeating hymns to Papa and Aunt Izzie. This was fun, for they all took turns, and there was quite a scramble as to who should secure the favorites, such as, "The west hath shut its gate of gold," and "Go when the morning shineth." On the whole, Sunday was a sweet and pleasant day, and the children thought so; but, from its being so much quieter than other days, they always got up on Monday full of life and mischief, and ready to fizz over at any minute, like champagne bottles with the wires just cut.

This particular Monday was rainy, so there couldn't be any out-door play, which was the usual vent for over-high spirits. The little ones, cooped up in the nursery all the afternoon, had grown perfectly riotous. Philly was not quite well, and had been taking medicine. The medicine was called *Elixir Pro*. It was a great favorite with Aunt Izzie, who kept a bottle of it always on hand. The bottle was large and black, with a paper label tied round its neck, and the children shuddered at the sight of it.

After Phil had stopped roaring and spluttering, and play had begun again, the dolls, as was only natural, were taken ill also, and so was "Pikery," John's little yellow chair, which she always pretended was a doll too. She kept an old apron tied on his back, and generally took him to bed with her—not into bed, that would have been troublesome; but close by, tied to the bed-post. Now, as she told the others, Pikery was very sick indeed. He must have some medicine, just like Philly.

"Give him some water," suggested Dorry.

"No," said John, decidedly, "it must be black and out of a bottle, or it won't do any good."

After thinking a moment, she trotted quietly across the passage into Aunt Izzie's room. Nobody was there, but John knew where the Elixir Pro was kept—in the closet on the third shelf. She pulled one of the drawers out a little, climbed up, and reached it down. The children were enchanted when she marched back, the bottle in one hand, the cork in the other, and proceeded to pour a liberal dose on to Pikery's wooden seat, which John called his lap.

"There! there! my poor boy," she said, patting his shoulder—I mean his arm—"swallow it down —it'll do you good."

Just then Aunt Izzie came in, and to her dismay saw a long trickle of something dark and sticky running down on to the carpet. It was Pikery's medicine, which he had refused to swallow.

"What is that?" she asked sharply.

"My baby is sick," faltered John, displaying the guilty bottle.

Aunt Izzie rapped her over the head with a thimble, and told her that she was a very naughty child, whereupon Johnnie pouted, and cried a little. Aunt Izzie wiped up the slop, and taking away the Elixir, retired with it to her closet, saying that she "never knew anything like it—it was always so on Mondays."

What further pranks were played in the nursery that day, I cannot pretend to tell. But late in the afternoon a dreadful screaming was heard, and when people rushed from all parts of the house to see what was the matter, behold the nursery door was locked, and nobody could get in. Aunt Izzie called through the keyhole to have it opened, but the roars were so loud that it was long before she could get an answer. At last Elsie, sobbing violently, explained that Dorry had locked the door, and now the key wouldn't turn, and they couldn't open it. *Would* they have to stay there always, and starve?

"Of course you won't, you foolish child," exclaimed Aunt Izzie. "Dear, dear, what on earth will come next? Stop crying, Elsie—do you hear me? You shall all be got out in a few minutes."

And sure enough, the next thing came a rattling at the blinds, and there was Alexander, the hired man, standing outside on a tall ladder and nodding his head at the children. The little ones forgot their fright. They flew to open the window, and frisked and jumped about Alexander as he climbed in and unlocked the door. It struck them as being such a fine thing to be let out in this way, that Dorry began to rather plume himself for fastening them in.

But Aunt Izzie didn't take this view of the case. She scolded them well, and declared they were troublesome children, who couldn't be trusted one moment out of sight, and that she was more than half sorry she had promised to go to the Lecture that evening. "How do I know," she concluded, "that before I come home you won't have set the house on fire, or killed somebody?"

"Oh, no we won't! no we won't!" whined the children, quite moved by this frightful picture. But bless you—ten minutes afterward they had forgotten all about it.

All this time Katy had been sitting on the ledge of the bookcase in the Library, poring over a book. It was called Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. The man who wrote it was an Italian, but somebody had done the story over into English. It was rather a queer book for a little girl to take a fancy to, but somehow Katy liked it very much. It told about knights, and ladies, and giants, and battles, and made her feel hot and cold by turns as she read, and as if she must rush at something, and shout, and strike blows. Katy was naturally fond of reading. Papa encouraged it. He kept a few books locked up, and then turned her loose in the Library. She read all sorts of things: travels, and sermons, and old magazines. Nothing was so dull that she couldn't get through with it. Anything really interesting absorbed her so that she never knew what was going on about her. The little girls to whose houses she went visiting had found this out, and always hid away their story-books when she was expected to tea. If they didn't do this, she was sure to pick one up and plunge in, and then it was no use to call her, or tug at her dress, for she neither saw nor heard anything more, till it was time to go home.

This afternoon she read the Jerusalem till It was too dark to see any more. On her way up stairs she met Aunt Izzie, with bonnet and shawl on.

"Where *have* you been?" she said. "I have been calling you for the last half-hour."

"I didn't hear you, ma'am."

"But where were you?" persisted Miss Izzie.

"In the Library, reading," replied Katy.

Her aunt gave a sort of sniff, but she knew Katy's ways, and said no more.

"I'm going out to drink tea with Mrs. Hall and attend the evening Lecture," she went on. "Be sure that Clover gets her lesson, and if Cecy comes over as usual, you must send her home early. All of you must be in bed by nine."

"Yes'm," said Katy, but I fear she was not attending much, but thinking, in her secret soul, how jolly it was to have Aunt Izzie go out for once. Miss Carr was very faithful to her duties: she seldom left the children, even for an evening, so whenever she did, they felt a certain sense of novelty and freedom, which was dangerous as well as pleasant.

Still, I am sure that on this occasion Katy meant no mischief. Like all excitable people she seldom did *mean* to do wrong, she just did it when it came into her head. Supper passed off successfully, and all might have gone well, had it not been that after the lessons were learned and Cecy had come in, they fell to talking about "Kikeri."

Kikeri was a game which had been very popular with them a year before. They had invented it themselves, and chosen for it this queer name out of an old fairy story. It was a sort of mixture of Blindman's Buff and Tag—only instead of any one's eyes being bandaged, they all played in the dark. One of the children would stay out in the hall, which was dimly lighted from the stairs, while the others hid themselves in the nursery. When they were all hidden, they would call out "Kikeri," as a signal for the one in the hall to come in and find them. Of course, coming from the light he could see nothing, while the others could see only dimly. It was very exciting to stand crouching up in a corner and watch the dark figure stumbling about and feeling to right and left, while every now and then somebody, just escaping his clutches, would slip past and gain the hall, which was "Freedom Castle," with a joyful shout of "Kikeri, Kikeri, Kikeri, Ki!" Whoever was caught had to take the place of the catcher. For a long time this game was the delight of the Carr children; but so many scratches and black-and-blue spots came of it, and so many of the nursery things were thrown down and broken, that at last Aunt Izzie issued an order that it should not be played any more. This was almost a year since; but talking of it now put it into their heads to want to try it again.

"After all we didn't promise," said Cecy.

"No, and *Papa* never said a word about our not playing it," added Katy, to whom "Papa" was authority, and must always be minded, while Aunt Izzie might now and then be defied.

So they all went up stairs. Dorry and John, though half undressed, were allowed to join the game. Philly was fast asleep in another room.

It was certainly splendid fun. Once Clover climbed up on the mantel-piece and sat there, and when Katy, who was finder, groped about a little more wildly than usual, she caught hold of Clover's foot, and couldn't imagine where it came from. Dorry got a hard knock, and cried, and at another time Katy's dress caught on the bureau handle and was frightfully torn, but these were too much affairs of every day to interfere in the least with the pleasures of Kikeri. The fun and frolic seemed to grow greater the longer they played. In the excitement, time went on much faster than any of them dreamed. Suddenly, in the midst of the noise, came a sound—the sharp distinct slam of the carryall-door at the side entrance. Aunt Izzie had returned from her Lecture.

The dismay and confusion of that moment! Cecy slipped down stairs like an eel, and fled on the wings of fear along the path which led to her home. Mrs. Hall, as she bade Aunt Izzie good-night, and shut Dr. Carr's front door behind her with a bang, might have been struck with the singular fact that a distant bang came from her own front door like a sort of echo. But she was not a suspicious woman; and when she went up stairs there were Cecy's clothes neatly folded on a chair, and Cecy herself in bed, fast asleep, only with a little more color than usual in her cheeks.

Meantime, Aunt Izzie was on *her* way up stairs, and such a panic as prevailed in the nursery! Katie felt it, and basely scuttled off to her own room, where she went to bed with all possible speed. But the others found it much harder to go to bed; there were so many of them, all getting into each other's way, and with no lamp to see by. Dorry and John popped under the clothes half undressed, Elsie disappeared, and Clover, too late for either, and hearing Aunt Izzie's step in the hall, did this horrible thing—fell on her knees, with her face buried in a chair, and began to say her prayers very hard indeed.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.