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HOW BUNNY BROUGHT GOOD LUCK

IT was Midsummer's Day, that delightful point toward which the whole year climbs, and from which it slips off like an ebbing wave in the direction of the distant winter. No wonder that superstitious people in old times gave this day to the fairies, for it is the most beautiful day of all. The world seems full of bird-songs, sunshine, and flower-smells then; storm and sorrow appear impossible things; the barest and ugliest spot takes on a brief charm and, for the moment, seems lovely and desirable.

"That's a picturesque old place," said a lady on the back seat of the big wagon in which Hiram Swift was taking his summer boarders to drive.

They were passing a low, wide farmhouse, gray from want of paint, with a shabby barn and sheds attached, all overarched by tall elms. The narrow hay-field and the vegetable-patch ended in a rocky hillside, with its steep ledges, overgrown and topped with tall pines and firs, which made a dense green background to the old buildings.

"I don't know about its being like a picter," said Hiram, dryly, as he flicked away a fly from the shoulder of his horse, "but it isn't much by way of a farm. That bit of hay-field is about all the land there is that's worth anything; the rest is all rock. I guess the Widow Gale doesn't take much comfort in its bein' picturesque. She'd be glad enough to have the land made flat, if she could."

"Oh, is that the Gale farm, where the silver-mine is said to be?"

"Yes, marm; at least, it's the farm where the man lived that, 'cordin' to what folks say, said he'd found a silver-mine. I don't take a great deal of stock in the story myself."

"A silver-mine! That sounds interesting," said a pretty girl on the front seat, who had been driving the horses half the way, aided and abetted by Hiram, with whom she was a prime favorite. "Tell me about it, Mr. Swift. Is it a story, and when did it all happen?"

"Well, I don't know as it ever did happen," responded the farmer, cautiously. "All I know for certain is, that my father used to tell a story that, before I was born (nigh on to sixty years ago, that must have been), Squire Asy Allen – that used to live up to that red house on North Street, where you bought the crockery mug, you know, Miss Rose – come up one day in a great hurry to catch the stage, with a lump of rock tied in his handkerchief. Old Roger Gale had found it, he said, and they thought it was silver ore; and the Squire was a-takin' it down to New Haven to get it analyzed. My father, he saw the rock, but he didn't think much of

it from the looks, till the Squire got back ten days afterward and said the New Haven professor pronounced it silver, sure enough, and a rich specimen; and any man who owned a mine of it had his fortune made, he said. Then, of course, the township got excited, and everybody talked silver, and there was a great to-do."

"And why didn't they go to work on the mine at once?" asked the pretty girl.

"Well, you see, unfortunately, no one knew where it was, and old Roger Gale had taken that particular day, of all others, to fall off his hay-riggin' and break his neck, and he hadn't happened to mention to any one before doing so where he found the rock! He was a close-mouthed old chap, Roger was. For ten years after that, folks that hadn't anything else to do went about hunting for the silver-mine, but they gradooally got tired, and now it's nothin' more than an old story. Does to amuse boarders with in the summer," concluded Mr. Swift, with a twinkle. "For my part, I don't believe there ever was a mine."

"But there was the piece of ore to prove it."

"Oh, that don't prove anything, because it got lost. No one knows what became of it. An' sixty years is long enough for a story to get exaggerated in."

"I don't see why there shouldn't be silver in Beulah township," remarked the lady on the back seat. "You have all kinds of other minerals here, – soapstone and mica and emery and tourmalines and beryls."

"Well, ma'am, I don't see nuther, unless, mebbe, it's the Lord's

will there shouldn't be."

"It would be so interesting if the mine could be found!" said the pretty girl.

"It would be *so*, especially to the Gale family, – that is, if it was found on their land. The widow's a smart, capable woman, but it's as much as she can do, turn and twist how she may, to make both ends meet. And there's that boy of hers, a likely boy as ever you see, and just hungry for book-l'arnin', the minister says. The chance of an eddication would be just everything to him, and the widow can't give him one."

"It's really a romance," said the pretty girl, carelessly, the wants and cravings of others slipping off her young sympathies easily.

Then the horses reached the top of the long hill they had been climbing, Hiram put on the brake, and they began to grind down a hill equally long, with a soft panorama of plumy tree-clad summits before them, shimmering in the June sunshine. Drives in Beulah township were apt to be rather perpendicular, however you took them.

Some one, high up on the hill behind the farmhouse, heard the clank of the brakes, and lifted up her head to listen. It was Hester Gale, – a brown little girl, with quick dark eyes, and a mane of curly chestnut hair, only too apt to get into tangles. She was just eight years old, and to her the old farmstead, which the neighbors scorned as worthless, was a sort of enchanted land, full of delights and surprises, – hiding-places which no one but

herself knew, rocks and thickets where she was sure real fairies dwelt, and cubby-houses sacred to the use of "Bunny," who was her sole playmate and companion, and the confidant to whom she told all her plans and secrets.

Bunny was a doll, – an old-fashioned doll, carved out of a solid piece of hickory-wood, with a stern expression of face, and a perfectly unyielding figure; but a doll whom Hester loved above all things. Her mother and her mother's mother had played with Bunny, but this only made her the dearer.

The two sat together between the gnarled roots of an old spruce which grew near the edge of a steep little cliff. It was one of the loneliest parts of the rocky hillside, and the hardest to get at. Hester liked it better than any of her other hiding-places, because no one but herself ever came there.

Bunny lay in her lap, and Hester was in the middle of a story, when she stopped to listen to the wagon grinding down-hill.

"So the little chicken said, 'Peep! Peep!' and started off to see what the big yellow fox was like," she went on. "That was a silly thing for her to do, wasn't it, Bunny? because foxes aren't a bit nice to chickens. But the little chicken didn't know any better, and she wouldn't listen to the old hens when they told her how foolish she was. That was wrong, because it's naughty to dis – dis – apute your elders, mother says; children that do are almost always sorry afterward.

"Well, she hadn't gone far before she heard a rustle in the bushes on one side. She thought it was the fox, and then she *did*

feel frightened, you'd better believe, and all the things she meant to say to him went straight out of her head. But it wasn't the fox that time; it was a teeny-weeny little striped squirrel, and he just said, 'It's a sightly day, isn't it?' and, without waiting for an answer, ran up a tree. So the chicken didn't mind *him* a bit.

"Then, by and by, when she had gone a long way farther off from home, she heard another rustle. It was just like – Oh, what's that, Bunny?"

Hester stopped short, and I am sorry to say that Bunny never heard the end of the chicken story, for the rustle resolved itself into – what do you think?

It was a fox! A real fox!

There he stood on the hillside, gazing straight at Hester, with his yellow brush waving behind him, and his eyes looking as sharp as the row of gleaming teeth beneath them. Foxes were rare animals in the Beulah region. Hester had never seen one before; but she had seen the picture of a fox in one of Roger's books, so she knew what it was.

The fox stared at her, and she stared back at the fox. Then her heart melted with fear, like the heart of the little chicken, and she jumped to her feet, forgetting Bunny, who fell from her lap, and rolled unobserved over the edge of the cliff. The sudden movement startled the fox, and he disappeared into the bushes with a wave of his yellow brush; just how or where he went, Hester could not have told.

"How sorry Roger will be that he wasn't here to see him!" was

her first thought. Her second was for Bunny. She turned, and stooped to pick up the doll – and lo! Bunny was not there.

High and low she searched, beneath grass tangles, under "juniper saucers," among the stems of the thickly massed blueberries and hardhacks, but nowhere was Bunny to be seen. She peered over the ledge, but nothing met her eyes below but a thick growth of blackish, stunted evergreens. This place "down below" had been a sort of terror to Hester's imagination always, as an entirely unknown and unexplored region; but in the cause of the beloved Bunny she was prepared to risk anything, and she bravely made ready to plunge into the depths.

It was not so easy to plunge, however. The cliff was ten or twelve feet in height where she stood, and ran for a considerable distance to right and left without getting lower. This way and that she quested, and at last found a crevice where it was possible to scramble down, – a steep little crevice, full of blackberry briers, which scratched her face and tore her frock. When at last she gained the lower bank, this further difficulty presented itself: she could not tell where she was. The evergreen thicket nearly met over her head, the branches got into her eyes, and buffeted and bewildered her. She could not make out the place where she had been sitting, and no signs of Bunny could be found. At last, breathless with exertion, tired, hot, and hopeless, she made her way out of the thicket, and went, crying, home to her mother.

She was still crying, and refusing to be comforted, when Roger came in from milking. He was sorry for Hester, but not so sorry

as he would have been had his mind not been full of troubles of his own. He tried to console her with a vague promise of helping her to look for Bunny "some day when there wasn't so much to do." But this was cold comfort, and, in the end, Hester went to bed heartbroken, to sob herself to sleep.

"Mother," said Roger, after she had gone, "Jim Boies is going to his uncle's, in New Ipswich, in September, to do chores and help round a little, and to go all winter to the academy."

The New Ipswich Academy was quite a famous school then, and to go there was a great chance for a studious boy.

"That's a bit of good luck for Jim."

"Yes; first-rate."

"Not quite so first-rate for you."

"No" (gloomily). "I shall miss Jim. He's always been my best friend among the boys. But what makes me mad is that he doesn't care a bit about going. Mother, why doesn't good luck ever come to us Gales?"

"It was good luck for me when you came, Roger. I don't know how I should get along without you."

"I'd be worth a great deal more to you if I could get a chance at any sort of schooling. Doesn't it seem hard, Mother? There's Squire Dennis and Farmer Atwater, and half a dozen others in this township, who are all ready to send their boys to college, and the boys don't want to go! Bob Dennis says that he'd far rather do teaming in the summer, and take the girls up to singing practice at the church, than go to all the Harvards and Yales in

the world; and I, who'd give my head, almost, to go to college, can't! It doesn't seem half right, Mother."

"No, Roger, it doesn't; not a quarter. There are a good many things that don't seem right in this world, but I don't know who's to mend 'em. I can't. The only way is to dig along hard and do what's to be done as well as you can, whatever it is, and make the best of your 'musts.' There's always a 'must.' I suppose rich people have them as well as poor ones."

"Rich people's boys can go to college."

"Yes, – and mine can't. I'd sell all we've got to send you, Roger, since your heart is so set on it, but this poor little farm wouldn't be half enough, even if any one wanted to buy it, which isn't likely. It's no use talking about it, Roger; it only makes both of us feel bad. – Did you kill the 'broilers' for the hotel?" she asked with a sudden change of tone.

"No, not yet."

"Go and do it, then, right away. You'll have to carry them down early with the eggs. Four pairs, Roger. Chickens are the best crop we can raise on this farm."

"If we could find Great-uncle Roger's mine, we'd eat the chickens ourselves," said Roger, as he reluctantly turned to go.

"Yes, and if that apple-tree'd take to bearing gold apples, we wouldn't have to work at all. Hurry and do your chores before dark, Roger."

Mrs. Gale was a Spartan in her methods, but, for all that, she sighed a bitter sigh as Roger went out of the door.

"He's such a smart boy," she told herself, "there's nothing he couldn't do, – nothing, if he had a chance. I do call it hard. The folks who have plenty of money to do with have dull boys; and I, who've got a bright one, can't do anything for him! It seems as if things weren't justly arranged."

Hester spent all her spare time during the next week in searching for the lost Bunny. It rained hard one day, and all the following night; she could not sleep for fear that Bunny was getting wet, and looked so pale in the morning that her mother forbade her going to the hill.

"Your feet were sopping when you came in yesterday," she said; "and that's the second apron you've torn. You'll just have to let Bunny go, Hester; no two ways about it."

Then Hester moped and grieved and grew thin, and at last she fell ill. It was low fever, the doctor said. Several days went by, and she was no better. One noon, Roger came in from haying to find his mother with her eyes looking very much troubled. "Hester is light-headed," she said; "we must have the doctor again."

Roger went in to look at the child, who was lying in a little bedroom off the kitchen. The small, flushed face on the pillow did not light up at his approach. On the contrary, Hester's eyes, which were unnaturally big and bright, looked past and beyond him.

"Hessie, dear, don't you know Roger?"

"He said he'd find Bunny for me some day," muttered the little voice; "but he never did. Oh, I wish he would! – I wish he would!

I do want her so much!" Then she rambled on about foxes, and the old spruce-tree, and the rocks, – always with the refrain, "I wish I had Bunny; I want her so much!"

"Mother, I do believe it's that wretched old doll she's fretted herself sick over," said Roger, going back into the kitchen. "Now, I'll tell you what! Mr. Hinsdale's going up to the town this noon, and he'll leave word for the doctor to come; and the minute I've swallowed my dinner, I'm going up to the hill to find Bunny. I don't believe Hessie'll get any better till she's found."

"Very well," said Mrs. Gale. "I suppose the hay'll be spoiled, but we've got to get Hessie cured at any price."

"Oh, I'll find the doll. I know about where Hessie was when she lost it. And the hay'll take no harm. I only got a quarter of the field cut, and it's good drying weather."

Roger made haste with his dinner. His conscience pricked him as he remembered his neglected promise and his indifference to Hester's griefs; he felt in haste to make amends. He went straight to the old spruce, which, he had gathered from Hester's rambling speech, was the scene of Bunny's disappearance. It was easily found, being the oldest and largest on the hillside.

Roger had brought a stout stick with him, and now, leaning over the cliff edge, he tried to poke with it in the branches below, while searching for the dolly. But the stick was not long enough, and slipped through his fingers, disappearing suddenly and completely through the evergreens.

"Hallo!" cried Roger. "There must be a hole there of some

sort. Bunny's at the bottom of it, no doubt. Here goes to find her!"

His longer legs made easy work of the steep descent which had so puzzled his little sister. Presently he stood, waist-deep, in tangled hemlock boughs, below the old spruce. He parted the bushes in advance, and moved cautiously forward, step by step. He felt a cavity just before him, but the thicket was so dense that he could see nothing.

Feeling for his pocket-knife, which luckily was a stout one, he stood still, cutting, slashing, and breaking off the tough boughs, and throwing them on one side. It was hard work, but after ten minutes a space was cleared which let in a ray of light, and, with a hot, red face and surprised eyes, Roger Gale stooped over the edge of a rocky cavity, on the sides of which something glittered and shone. He swung himself over the edge, and dropped into the hole, which was but a few feet deep. His foot struck on something hard as he landed. He stooped to pick it up, and his hand encountered a soft substance. He lifted both objects out together.

The soft substance was a doll's woollen frock. There, indeed, was the lost Bunny, looking no whit the worse for her adventures, and the hard thing on which her wooden head had lain was a pickaxe, – an old iron pick, red with rust. Three letters were rudely cut on the handle, – R. P. G. They were Roger's own initials. Roger Perkins Gale. It had been his father's name also, and that of the great-uncle after whom they both were named.

With an excited cry, Roger stooped again, and lifted out of

the hole a lump of quartz mingled with ore. Suddenly he realized where he was and what he had found. This was the long lost silver-mine, whose finding and whose disappearance had for so many years been a tradition in the township. Here it was that old Roger Gale had found his "speciment," knocked off probably with that very pick, and, covering up all traces of his discovery, had gone sturdily off to his farm-work, to meet his death next week on the hay-rigging, with the secret locked within his breast. For sixty years the evergreen thicket had grown and toughened and guarded the hidden cavity beneath its roots; and it might easily have done so for sixty years longer, if Bunny, – little wooden Bunny, with her lack-lustre eyes and expressionless features, – had not led the way into its tangles.

Hester got well. When Roger placed the doll in her arms, she seemed to come to herself, fondled and kissed her, and presently dropped into a satisfied sleep, from which she awoke conscious and relieved. The "mine" did not prove exactly a mine, – it was not deep or wide enough for that; but the ore in it was rich in quality, and the news of its finding made a great stir in the neighborhood. Mrs. Gale was offered a price for her hillside which made her what she considered a rich woman, and she was wise enough to close with the offer at once, and neither stand out for higher terms nor risk the chance of mining on her own account. She and her family left the quiet little farmhouse soon after that, and went to live in Worcester. Roger had all the schooling he desired, and made ready for Harvard and the law-

school, where he worked hard, and laid the foundations of what has since proved a brilliant career. You may be sure that Bunny went to Worcester also, treated and regarded as one of the most valued members of the family. Hester took great care of her, and so did Hester's little girl later on; and even Mrs. Gale spoke respectfully of her always, and treated her with honor. For was it not Bunny who broke the long spell of evil fate, and brought good luck back to the Gale family?

A BIT OF WILFULNESS

THERE was a great excitement in the Keene's pleasant home at Wrentham, one morning, about three years ago. The servants were hard at work, making everything neat and orderly. The children buzzed about like active flies, for in the evening some one was coming whom none of them had as yet seen, – a new mamma, whom their father had just married.

The three older children remembered their own mamma pretty well; to the babies, she was only a name. Janet, the eldest, recollected her best of all, and the idea of somebody coming to take her place did not please her at all. This was not from a sense of jealousy for the mother who was gone, but rather from a jealousy for herself; for since Mrs. Keene's death, three years before, Janet had done pretty much as she liked, and the idea of control and interference aroused within her, in advance, the spirit of resistance.

Janet's father was a busy lawyer, and had little time to give to the study of his children's characters. He liked to come home at night, after a hard day at his office, or in the courts, and find a nicely arranged table and room, and a bright fire in the grate, beside which he could read his newspaper without interruption, just stopping now and then to say a word to the children, or have a frolic with the younger ones before they went to bed. Old Maria, who had been nurse to all the five in turn, managed the

housekeeping; and so long as there was no outward disturbance, Mr. Keene asked no questions.

He had no idea that Janet, in fact, ruled the family. She was only twelve, but she had the spirit of a dictator, and none of the little ones dared to dispute her will or to complain. In fact, there was not often cause for complaint. When Janet was not opposed, she was both kind and amusing. She had much sense and capacity for a child of her years, and her brothers and sisters were not old enough to detect the mistakes which she sometimes made.

And now a stepmother was coming to spoil all this, as Janet thought. Her meditations, as she dusted the china and arranged the flowers, ran something after this fashion:

"She's only twenty-one, Papa said, and that's only nine years older than I am, and nine years isn't much. I'm not going to call her 'Mamma,' anyway. I shall call her 'Jerusha,' from the very first; for Maria said that Jessie was only a nickname, and I hate nicknames. I know she'll want me to begin school next fall, but I don't mean to, for she don't know anything about the schools here, and I can judge better than she can. There, that looks nice!" putting a tall spike of lilies in a pale green vase. "Now I'll dress baby and little Jim, and we shall all be ready when they come."

It was exactly six, that loveliest hour of a lovely June day, when the carriage stopped at the gate. Mr. Keene helped his wife out, and looked eagerly toward the piazza, on which the five children were grouped.

"Well, my dears," he cried, "how do you do? Why don't you

come and kiss your new mamma?"

They all came obediently, pretty little Jim and baby Alice, hand in hand, then Harry and Mabel, and, last of all, Janet. The little ones shyly allowed themselves to be kissed, saying nothing, but Janet, true to her resolution, returned her stepmother's salute in a matter-of-fact way, kissed her father, and remarked:

"Do come in, Papa; Jerusha must be tired!"

Mr. Keene gave an amazed look at his wife. The corners of her mouth twitched, and Janet thought wrathfully, "I do believe she is laughing at me!" But Mrs. Keene stifled the laugh, and, taking little Alice's hand, led the way into the house.

"Oh, how nice, how pretty!" were her first words. "Look at the flowers, James! Did you arrange them, Janet? I suspect you did."

"Yes," said Janet; "I did them all."

"Thank you, dear," said Mrs. Keene, and stooped to kiss her again. It was an affectionate kiss, and Janet had to confess to herself that this new – person was pleasant looking. She had pretty brown hair and eyes, a warm glow of color in a pair of round cheeks, and an expression at once sweet and sensible and decided. It was a face full of attraction; the younger children felt it, and began to sidle up and cuddle against the new mamma. Janet felt the attraction, too, but she resisted it.

"Don't squeeze Jerusha in that way," she said to Mabel; "you are creasing her jacket. Jim, come here, you are in the way."

"Janet," said Mr. Keene, in a voice of displeasure, "what do you mean by calling your mother 'Jerusha'?"

"She isn't my real mother," explained Janet, defiantly. "I don't want to call her 'Mamma;' she's too young."

Mrs. Keene laughed, – she couldn't help it.

"We will settle by and by what you shall call me," she said. "But, Janet, it can't be Jerusha, for that is not my name. I was baptized Jessie."

"I shall call you Mrs. Keene, then," said Janet, mortified, but persistent. Her stepmother looked pained, but she said no more.

None of the other children made any difficulty about saying "Mamma" to this sweet new friend. Jessie Keene was the very woman to "mother" a family of children. Bright and tender and firm all at once, she was playmate to them as well as authority, and in a very little while they all learned to love her dearly, – all but Janet; and even she, at times, found it hard to resist this influence, which was at the same time so strong and so kind.

Still, she did resist, and the result was constant discomfort to both parties. To the younger children the new mamma brought added happiness, because they yielded to her wise and reasonable authority. To Janet she brought only friction and resentment, because she would not yield.

So two months passed. Late in August, Mr. and Mrs Keene started on a short journey which was to keep them away from home for two days. Just as the carriage was driving away, Mrs. Keene suddenly said, —

"Oh, Janet! I forgot to say that I would rather you didn't go see Ellen Colton while we are away, or let any of the other children.

Please tell nurse about it."

"Why mustn't I?" demanded Janet.

"Because – " began her mother, but Mr. Keene broke in.

"Never mind 'becauses,' Jessie; we must be off. It's enough for you, Janet, that your mother orders it. And see that you do as she says."

"It's a shame!" muttered Janet, as she slowly went back to the house. "I always have gone to see Ellen whenever I liked. No one ever stopped me before. I don't think it's a bit fair; and I wish Papa wouldn't speak to me like that before – her."

Gradually she worked herself into a strong fit of ill-temper. All day long she felt a growing sense of injury, and she made up her mind not to bear it. Next morning, in a towering state of self-will, she marched straight down to the Coltons, resolved at least to find out the meaning of this vexatious prohibition.

No one was on the piazza, and Janet ran up-stairs to Ellen's room, expecting to find her studying her lessons.

No; Ellen was in the bed, fast asleep. Janet took a story-book, and sat down beside her. "She'll be surprised when she wakes up," she thought.

The book proved interesting, and Janet read on for nearly half an hour before Mrs. Colton came in with a cup and spoon in her hand. She gave a scream when she saw Janet.

"Mercy!" she cried, "what are you doing here? Didn't your ma tell you? Ellen's got scarlet-fever."

"No, she didn't tell me *that*. She only said I mustn't come

here."

"And why did you come?"

Somehow Janet found it hard to explain, even to herself, why she had been so determined not to obey.

Very sorrowfully she walked homeward. She had sense enough to know how dreadful might be the result of her disobedience, and she felt humble and wretched. "Oh, if only I hadn't!" was the language of her heart.

The little ones had gone out to play. Janet hurried to her own room, and locked the door.

"I won't see any of them till Papa comes," she thought. "Then perhaps they won't catch it from me."

She watched from the window till Maria came out to hang something on the clothesline, and called to her.

"I'm not coming down to dinner," she said. "Will you please bring me some, and leave it by my door? No, I'm not ill, but there are reasons. I'd rather not tell anybody about them but Mamma."

"Sakes alive!" said old Maria to herself, "she called missus 'Mamma.' The skies must be going to fall."

Mrs. Keene's surprise may be imagined at finding Janet thus, in a state of voluntary quarantine.

"I am so sorry," she said, when she had listened to her confession. "Most sorry of all for you, my child, because you may have to bear the worst penalty. But it was brave and thoughtful in you to shut yourself up to spare the little ones, dear Janet."

"Oh, Mamma!" cried Janet, bursting into tears. "How kind

you are not to scold me! I have been so horrid to you always." All the pride and hardness were melted out of her now, and for the first time she clung to her stepmother with a sense of protection and comfort.

Janet said afterwards, that the fortnight which she spent in her room, waiting to know if she had caught the fever, was one of the nicest times she ever had. The children and the servants, and even Papa, kept away from her, but Mrs. Keene came as often and stayed as long as she could; and, thrown thus upon her sole companionship, Janet found out the worth of this dear, kind stepmother. She did *not* have scarlet-fever, and at the end of three weeks was allowed to go back to her old ways, but with a different spirit.

"I can't think why I didn't love you sooner," she told Mamma once.

"I think I know," replied Mrs. Keene, smiling. "That stiff little will was in the way. You willed not to like me, and it was easy to obey your will; but now you will to love me, and loving is as easy as unloving was."

THE WOLVES OF ST. GERVAS

THERE never seemed a place more in need of something to make it merry than was the little Swiss hamlet of St. Gervas toward the end of March, some years since.

The winter had been the hardest ever known in the Bernese Oberland. Ever since November the snow had fallen steadily, with few intermissions, and the fierce winds from the Breithorn and the St. Theodule Pass had blown day and night, and the drifts deepened in the valleys, and the icicles on the eaves of the chalets grown thicker and longer. The old wives had quoted comforting saws about a "white Michaelmas making a brown Easter;" but Easter was at hand now, and there were no signs of relenting yet.

Week after week the strong men had sallied forth with shovels and pickaxes to dig out the half-buried dwellings, and to open the paths between them, which had grown so deep that they seemed more like trenches than footways.

Month after month the intercourse between neighbors had become more difficult and meetings less frequent. People looked over the white wastes at each other, the children ran to the doors and shouted messages across the snow, but no one was brave enough to face the cold and the drifts.

Even the village inn was deserted. Occasionally some hardy wayfarer came by and stopped for a mug of beer and to tell Dame Ursel, the landlady, how deep the snows were, how black clouds

lay to the north, betokening another fall, and that the shoulders and flanks of the Matterhorn were whiter than man had ever seen them before. Then he would struggle on his way, and perhaps two or three days would pass before another guest crossed the threshold.

It was a sad change for the Kröne, whose big sanded kitchen was usually crowded with jolly peasants, and full of laughter and jest, the clinking of glasses, and the smoke from long pipes. Dame Ursel felt it keenly.

But such jolly meetings were clearly impossible now. The weather was too hard. Women could not easily make their way through the snow, and they dared not let the children play even close to the doors; for as the wind blew strongly down from the sheltering forest on the hill above, which was the protection of St. Gervas from landslides and avalanches, shrill yelping cries would ever and anon be heard, which sounded very near. The mothers listened with a shudder, for it was known that the wolves, driven by hunger, had ventured nearer to the hamlet than they had ever before done, and were there just above on the hillside, waiting to make a prey of anything not strong enough to protect itself against them.

"Three pigs have they carried off since Christmas," said Mère Kronk, "and one of those the pig of a widow! Two sheep and a calf have they also taken; and only night before last they all but got at the Alleene's cow. Matters have come to a pass indeed in St. Gervas, if cows are to be devoured in our very midst! Toinette

and Pertal, come in at once! Thou must not venture even so far as the doorstep unless thy father be along, and he with his rifle over his shoulder, if he wants me to sleep of nights."

"Oh, dear!" sighed little Toinette for the hundredth time. "How I wish the dear summer would come! Then the wolves would go away, and we could run about as we used, and Gretchen Slaut and I go to the Alp for berries. It seems as if it had been winter forever and ever. I haven't seen Gretchen or little Marie for two whole weeks. *Their* mother, too, is fearful of the wolves."

All the mothers in St. Gervas were fearful of the wolves.

The little hamlet was, as it were, in a state of siege. Winter, the fierce foe, was the besieger. Month by month he had drawn his lines nearer, and made them stronger; the only hope was in the rescue which spring might bring. Like a beleaguered garrison, whose hopes and provisions are running low, the villagers looked out with eager eyes for the signs of coming help, and still the snows fell, and the help did not come.

How fared it meanwhile in the forest slopes above?

It is not a sin for a wolf to be hungry, any more than it is for a man; and the wolves of St. Gervas were ravenous indeed. All their customary supplies were cut off. The leverets and marmots, and other small animals on which they were accustomed to prey, had been driven by the cold into the recesses of their hidden holes, from which they did not venture out. There was no herbage to tempt the rabbits forth, no tender birch growths for the strong gray hares.

No doubt the wolves talked the situation over in their wolfish language, realized that it was a desperate one, and planned the daring forays which resulted in the disappearance of the pigs and sheep and the attack on the Alleene's cow. The animals killed all belonged to outlying houses a little further from the village than the rest; but the wolves had grown bold with impunity, and, as Mère Kronk said, there was no knowing at what moment they might make a dash at the centre of the hamlet.

I fear they would have enjoyed a fat little boy or girl if they could have come across one astray on the hillside, near their haunts, very much. But no such luck befell them. The mothers of St. Gervas were too wary for that, and no child went out after dark, or ventured more than a few yards from the open house-door, even at high noon.

"Something must be done," declared Johann Vecht, the bailiff. "We are growing sickly and timorous. My wife hasn't smiled for a month. She talks of nothing but snow and wolves, and it is making the children fearful. My Annerle cried out in her sleep last night that she was being devoured, and little Kasper woke up and cried too. Something must be done!"

"Something must indeed be done!" repeated Solomon, the forester. "We are letting the winter get the better of us, and losing heart and courage. We must make an effort to get together in the old neighborly way; that's what we want."

This conversation took place at the Kröne, and here the landlady, who was tired of empty kitchen and scant custom, put

in her word: —

"You are right, neighbors. What we need is to get together, and feast and make merry, forgetting the hard times. Make your plans, and trust me to carry them out to the letter. Is it a feast that you decide upon? I will cook it. Is it a *musiker fest*? My Carl, there, can play the zither with any other, no matter whom it be, and can sing. *Himmel*! how he can sing! Command me! I will work my fingers to the bone rather than you shall not be satisfied."

"Aha, the sun!" cried Solomon; for as the landlady spoke, a pale yellow ray shot through the pane and streamed over the floor. "That is a good omen. Dame Ursel, thou art right. A jolly merrymaking is what we all want. We will have one, and thou shalt cook the supper according to thy promise."

Several neighbors had entered the inn kitchen since the talk began, so that quite a company had collected, – more than had got together since the mass on Christmas Day. All were feeling cheered by the sight of the sunshine; it seemed a happy moment to propose the merrymaking.

So it was decided then and there that a supper should be held that day week at the Kröne, men and women both to be invited, – all, in fact, who could pay and wished to come. It seemed likely that most of the inhabitants of St. Gervas would be present, such enthusiasm did the plan awake in young and old. The week's delay would allow time to send to the villagers lower down in the valley for a reinforcement of tobacco, for the supply of that

essential article was running low, and what was a feast without tobacco?

"We shall have a quarter of mutton," declared the landlady. "Neils Austerman is to kill next Monday, and I will send at once to bespeak the hind-quarter. That will insure a magnificent roast. Three fat geese have I also, fit for the spit, and four hens. Oh, I assure you, my masters, that there shall be no lack on my part! My Fritz shall get a large mess of eels from the Lake. He fishes through the ice, as thou knowest, and is lucky; the creatures always take his hook. Fried eels are excellent eating! You will want a plenty of them. Three months *maigre* is good preparation for a feast. Wine and beer we have in plenty in the cellar, and the cheese I shall cut is as a cartwheel for bigness. Bring you the appetites, my masters, and I will engage that the supply is sufficient."

The landlady rubbed her hands as she spoke, with an air of joyful anticipation.

"My mouth waters already with thy list," declared Kronk. "I must hasten home and tell my dame of the plan. It will raise her spirits, poor soul, and she is sadly in need of cheering."

The next week seemed shorter than any week had seemed since Michaelmas. True, the weather was no better. The brief sunshine had been followed by a wild snowstorm, and the wind was still blowing furiously.

But now there was something to talk and think about besides weather. Everybody was full of the forthcoming feast. Morning

after morning Fritz of the Kröne could be seen sitting beside his fishing-holes on the frozen lake, patiently letting down his lines, and later, climbing the hill, his basket laden with brown and wriggling eels. Everybody crowded to the windows to watch him, – the catch was a matter of public interest.

Three hardy men on snow-shoes, with guns over their shoulders, had ventured down to St. Nicklaus, and returned, bringing the wished-for tobacco and word that the lower valleys were no better off than the upper, that everything was buried in snow, and no one had got in from the Rhone valley for three weeks or more.

Anxiously was the weather watched as the day of the feast drew near; and when the morning dawned, every one gave a sigh of relief that it did not snow. It was gray and threatening, but the wind had veered, and blew from the southwest. It was not nearly so cold, and a change seemed at hand.

The wolves of St. Gervas were quite as well aware as the inhabitants that something unusual was going forward.

From their covert in the sheltering wood they watched the stir and excitement, the running to and fro, the columns of smoke which streamed upward from the chimneys of the inn. As the afternoon drew on, strange savory smells were wafted upward by the strong-blowing wind, – smells of frying and roasting, and hissing fat.

"Oh, how it smells! How good it does smell!" said one wolf. He snuffed the wind greedily, then threw back his head and gave

vent to a long "O-w!"

The other wolves joined in the howl.

"What can it be? Oh, how hungry it makes me!" cried one of the younger ones. "O-w-w-w!"

"What a dreadful noise those creatures are making up there," remarked Frau Kronk as, under the protection of her stalwart husband, she hurried her children along the snow path toward the Kröne. "They sound so hungry! I shall not feel really safe till we are all at home again, with the door fast barred."

But she forgot her fears when the door of the inn was thrown hospitably open as they drew near, and the merry scene inside revealed itself.

The big sanded kitchen had been dressed with fir boughs, and was brightly lighted with many candles. At the great table in the midst sat rows of men and women, clad in their Sunday best. The men were smoking long pipes, tall mugs of beer stood before everybody, and a buzz of talk and laughter filled the place.

Beyond, in the wide chimney, blazed a glorious fire, and about and over it the supper could be seen cooking. The quarter of mutton, done to a turn, hung on its spit, and on either side of it sputtered the geese and the fat hens, brown and savory, and smelling delicious. Over the fire on iron hooks hung a great kettle of potatoes and another of cabbage.

On one side of the hearth knelt Gretel, the landlord's daughter, grinding coffee, while on the other her brother Fritz brandished an immense frying-pan heaped with sizzling eels, which sent out

the loudest smells of all.

The air of the room was thick with the steam of the fry mingled with the smoke of the pipes. A fastidious person might have objected to it as hard to breathe, but the natives of St. Gervas were not fastidious, and found no fault whatever with the smells and the smoke which, to them, represented conviviality and good cheer. Even the dogs under the table were rejoicing in it, and sending looks of expectation toward the fireplace.

"Welcome, welcome!" cried the jolly company as the Kronks appeared. "Last to come is as well off as first, if a seat remains, and the supper is still uneaten. Sit thee down, Dame, while the young ones join the other children in the little kitchen. Supper is all but ready, and a good one too, as all noses testify. Those eels smell rarely. It is but to fetch the wine now, and then fall to, eh, Landlady?"

"Nor shall the wine be long lacking!" cried Dame Ursel, snatching up a big brown pitcher. "Sit thee down, Frau Kronk. That place beside thy gossip Barbe was saved for thee. 'Tis but to go to the cellar and return, and all will be ready. Stir the eels once more, Fritz; and thou, Gretchen, set the coffee-pot on the coals. I shall be back in the twinkling of an eye."

There was a little hungry pause. From the smaller kitchen, behind, the children's laughter could be heard.

"It is good to be in company again," said Frau Kronk, sinking into her seat with a sigh of pleasure.

"Yes, so we thought, – we who got up the feast," responded

Solomon, the forester. "'Neighbors,' says I, 'we are all getting out of spirits with so much cold and snow, and we must rouse ourselves and do something.' 'Yes,' says they, 'but what?' 'Nothing can be plainer,' says I, 'we must' —*Himmel*! what is that?"

What was it, indeed?

For even as Solomon spoke, the heavy door of the kitchen burst open, letting in a whirl of cold wind and sleet, and letting in something else as well.

For out of the darkness, as if blown by the wind, a troop of dark swift shapes darted in.

They were the wolves of St. Gervas, who, made bold by hunger, and attracted and led on by the strong fragrance of the feast, had forgotten their usual cowardice, and, stealing from the mountain-side and through the deserted streets of the hamlet, had made a dash at the inn.

There were not less than twenty of them; there seemed to be a hundred.

As if acting by a preconcerted plan, they made a rush at the fireplace. The guests sat petrified round the table, with their dogs cowering at their feet, and no one stirred or moved, while the biggest wolf, who seemed the leader of the band, tore the mutton from the spit, while the next in size made a grab at the fat geese and the fowls, and the rest seized upon the eels, hissing hot as they were, in the pan. Gretchen and Fritz sat in their respective corners of the hearth, paralyzed with fright at the near, snapping

jaws and the fierce red eyes which glared at them.

Then, overturning the cabbage-pot as they went, the whole pack whirled, and sped out again into the night, which seemed to swallow them up all in a moment.

And still the guests sat as if turned to stone, their eyes fixed upon the door, through which the flakes of the snow-squall were rapidly drifting; and no one had recovered voice to utter a word, when Dame Ursel, rosy and beaming, came up from the cellar with her brimming pitcher.

"Why is the door open?" she demanded. Then her eyes went over to the fireplace, where but a moment before the supper had been. Had been; for not an eatable article remained except the potatoes and the cabbages and cabbage water on the hearth. From far without rang back a long howl which had in it a note of triumph.

This was the end of the merrymaking. The guests were too startled and terrified to remain for another supper, even had there been time to cook one. Potatoes, black bread, and beer remained, and with these the braver of the guests consoled themselves, while the more timorous hurried home, well protected with guns, to barricade their doors, and rejoice that it was their intended feast and not themselves which was being discussed at that moment by the hungry denizens of the forest above.

There was a great furbishing up of bolts and locks next day, and a fitting of stout bars to doors which had hitherto done very well without such safeguards; but it was a long time before any

inhabitant of St. Gervas felt it safe to go from home alone, or without a rifle over his shoulder.

So the wolves had the best of the merrymaking, and the villagers decidedly the worst. Still, the wolves were not altogether to be congratulated; for, stung by their disappointment and by the unmerciful laughter and ridicule of the other villages, the men of St. Gervas organized a great wolf-hunt later in the spring, and killed such a number that to hear a wolf howl has become a rare thing in that part of the Oberland.

"Ha! ha! my fine fellow, you are the one that made off with our mutton so fast," said the stout forester, as he stripped the skin from the largest of the slain. "Your days for mutton are over, my friend. It will be one while before you and your thievish pack come down again to interrupt Christian folk at their supper!"

But, in spite of Solomon's bold words, the tale of the frustrated feast has passed into a proverb; and to-day in the neighboring chalets and hamlets you may hear people say, "Don't count on your mutton till it's in your mouth, or it may fare with you as with the merry-makers at St. Gervas."

THREE LITTLE CANDLES

THE winter dusk was settling down upon the old farmhouse where three generations of Marshes had already lived and died. It stood on a gentle rise of ground above the Kittery sands, – a low, wide, rambling structure, outgrowth of the gradual years since great-grandfather Marsh, in the early days of the colony, had built the first log-house, and so laid the foundation of the settlement.

This log-house still existed. It served as a lean-to for the larger building, and held the buttery, the "out-kitchen" for rougher work, and the woodshed. Moss and lichens clustered thickly between the old logs, to which time had communicated a rich brown tint; a mat of luxuriant hop-vine clothed the porch, and sent fantastic garlands up to the ridgepole. The small heavily-puttied panes in the windows had taken on that strange iridescence which comes to glass with the lapse of time, and glowed, when the light touched them at a certain angle, with odd gleams of red, opal, and green-blue.

On one of the central panes was an odd blur or cloud. Cynthia Marsh liked to "play" that it was a face, – the face of a girl who used to crawl out of that window in the early days of the house, but had long since grown up and passed away. It was rather a ghostly playmate, but Cynthia enjoyed her.

This same imaginative little Cynthia was sitting with her

brother and sister in the "new kitchen," which yet was a pretty old one, and had rafters overhead, and bunches of herbs and strings of dried apples tied to them. It was still the days of pot-hooks and trammels, and a kettle of bubbling mush hung on the crane over the fire, which smelt very good. Every now and then Hepzibah, the old servant, would come and give it a stir, plunging her long spoon to the very bottom of the pot. It was the "Children's Hour," though no Longfellow had as yet given the pretty name to that delightful time between daylight and dark, when the toils of the day are over, and even grown people can fold their busy hands and rest and talk and love each other, with no sense of wasted time to spoil their pleasure.

"I say," began Reuben, who, if he had lived to-day, would have put on his cards "Reuben Marsh, 4th," "what do you think? We're going to have our little candles to-night. Aunt Doris said that mother said so. Isn't that famous!"

"Are we really?" cried Cynthia, clasping her hands. "How glad I am! It's more than a year since we had any little candles, and though I've tried to be good, I was so afraid when you broke the oil-lamp, the other day, that it would put them off. I do love them so!"

"How many candles may we have?" asked little Eunice.

"Oh, there are only three, – one for each of us. Mother gave the rest away, you know. Have you made up any story yet, Eunice?"

"I did make one, but I've forgotten part of it. It was a great

while ago, when I thought we were surely going to get the candles, and then Reuben had that quarrel with Friend Amos's son, and mother would not let us have them. She said a boy who gave place to wrath did not deserve a little candle."

"I know," said Reuben, penitently. "But that was a great while ago, and I've not given place to wrath since. You must begin and think of your story very hard, Eunice, or the candle will burn out while you are remembering it."

These "little candles," for the amusement of children, were an ancient custom in New England, long practised in the Marsh family. When the great annual candle-dipping took place, and the carefully saved tallow, with its due admixture of water and bayberry wax for hardness, was made hot in the kettle, and the wicks, previously steeped in alum, were tied in bunches so that no two should touch each other, and dipped and dried, and dipped again, at the end of each bundle was hung two or three tiny candles, much smaller than the rest. These were rewards for the children when they should earn them by being unusually good. They were lit at bedtime, and, by immemorial law, so long as the candles burned, the children might tell each other ghost or fairy stories, which at other times were discouraged, as having a bad effect on the mind. This privilege was greatly valued, and the advent of the little candles made a sort of holiday, when holidays were few and far between.

"I suppose Reuben will have his candle first, as he is the oldest," said Eunice.

"Mother said last year that we should have them all three on the same night," replied Cynthia. "She said she would rather that we lay awake till half-past nine for once, than till half-past eight for three times. It's much nicer, I think. It's like having plenty to eat at one dinner, instead of half-enough several days running. Eunice, you'd better burn your candle first, I think, because you get sleepy a great deal sooner than Reuby or I do. You needn't light it till after you're in bed, you know, and that will make it last longer. When it's done, I'll hurry and go to bed too, and then we'll light mine; and Reuben can do the same, and if he leaves his door open, we shall hear his story perfectly well. Oh, what fun it will be! I wish there were ever and ever so many little candles, – a hundred, at the very least!"

"Hepsy, ain't supper nearly ready? We're in such a hurry to-night!" said Eunice.

"Why, what are you in a hurry about?" demanded Hepsy, giving a last stir to the mush, which had grown deliciously thick.

"We want to go to bed early."

"That's a queer reason! You're not so sharp set after bed, as a general thing. Well, the mush is done. Reuby, ring the bell at the shed door, and as soon as the men come in, we'll be ready."

It was a good supper. The generous heat of the great fireplace in the Marsh kitchen seemed to communicate a special savor of its own to everything that was cooked before it, as if the noble hickory logs lent a forest flavor to the food. The brown bread and beans and the squash pies from the deep brick oven were

excellent; and the "pumpkin sweets," from the same charmed receptacle, had come out a deep rich red color, jellied with juice to their cores. Nothing could have improved them, unless it were the thick yellow cream which Mrs. Marsh poured over each as she passed it. The children ate as only hearty children can eat, but the recollection of the little candles was all the time in their minds, and the moment that Reuben had finished his third apple he began to fidget.

"Mayn't we go to bed now?" he asked.

"Not till father has returned thanks," said his mother, rebukingly. "You are glad enough to take the gifts of the Lord, Reuben. You should be equally ready to pay back the poor tribute of a decent gratitude."

Reuben sat abashed while Mr. Marsh uttered the customary words, which was rather a short prayer than a long grace. The boy did not dare to again allude to the candles, but stood looking sorry and shamefaced, till his mother, laying her hand indulgently on his shoulder, slipped the little candle in his fingers.

"Thee didn't mean it, dear, I know," she whispered. "It's natural enough that thee shouldst be impatient. Now take thy candle, and be off. Cynthia, Eunice, here are the other two, and remember, all of you, that not a word must be told of the stories when once the candles burn out. This is the test of obedience. Be good children, and I'll come up later to see that all is safe."

Mrs. Marsh was of Quaker stock, but she only reverted to the once familiar *thee* and *thou* at times when she felt particularly

kind and tender. The children liked to have her do so. It meant that mother loved them more than usual.

The bedrooms over the kitchen, in which the children slept, were very plain, with painted floors and scant furniture; but they were used to them, and missed nothing. The moon was shining, so that little Eunice found no difficulty in undressing without a light. As soon as she was in bed, she called to the others, who were waiting in Reuben's room, "I'm all ready!"

A queer clicking noise followed. It was made by Reuben's striking the flint of the tinder-box. In another moment the first of the little candles was lighted. They fetched it in; and the others sat on the foot of the bed while Eunice, raised on her pillow, with red, excited cheeks, began: —

"I've remembered all about my story, and this is it: Once there was a Fairy. He was not a bad fairy, but a very good one. One day he broke his wing, and the Fairy King said he mustn't come to court any more till he got it mended. This was very hard, because glue and things like that don't stick to Fairies' wings, you know."

"Couldn't he have tied it up and boiled it in milk?" asked Cynthia, who had once seen a saucer so treated, with good effect.

"Why, Cynthia Marsh! Do you suppose Fairies like to have their wings boiled? I never! Of course they don't! Well, the poor Fairy did not know what to do. He hopped away, for he could not fly, and pretty soon he met an old woman.

"'Goody,' said he, 'can you tell me what will mend a Fairy's broken wing?'

"'Is it your wing that is broken?' asked the old woman.

"'Yes,' said the Fairy, speaking very sadly.

"'There is only one thing,' said the old woman. 'If you can find a girl who has never said a cross word in her life, and she will put the pieces together, and hold them tight, and say, "*Ram shackla alla balla ba*," three times, it will mend in a minute.'

"So the Fairy thanked her, and went his way, dragging the poor wing behind him. By and by he came to a wood, and there in front of a little house was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. Her eyes were as blue as, as blue as – as the edges of mother's company saucers! And her hair, which was the color of gold, curled down to her feet.

"'A girl with hair and eyes like that couldn't say a cross word to save her life,' thought the Fairy. He was just going to speak to her. She couldn't see him, you know, because he was indivisible – "

"'Invisible,' you mean," interrupted Reuben.

"Oh, Reuben, don't stop her! See how the tallow is running down the side of the candle! She'll never have time to finish," put in Cynthia, anxiously.

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