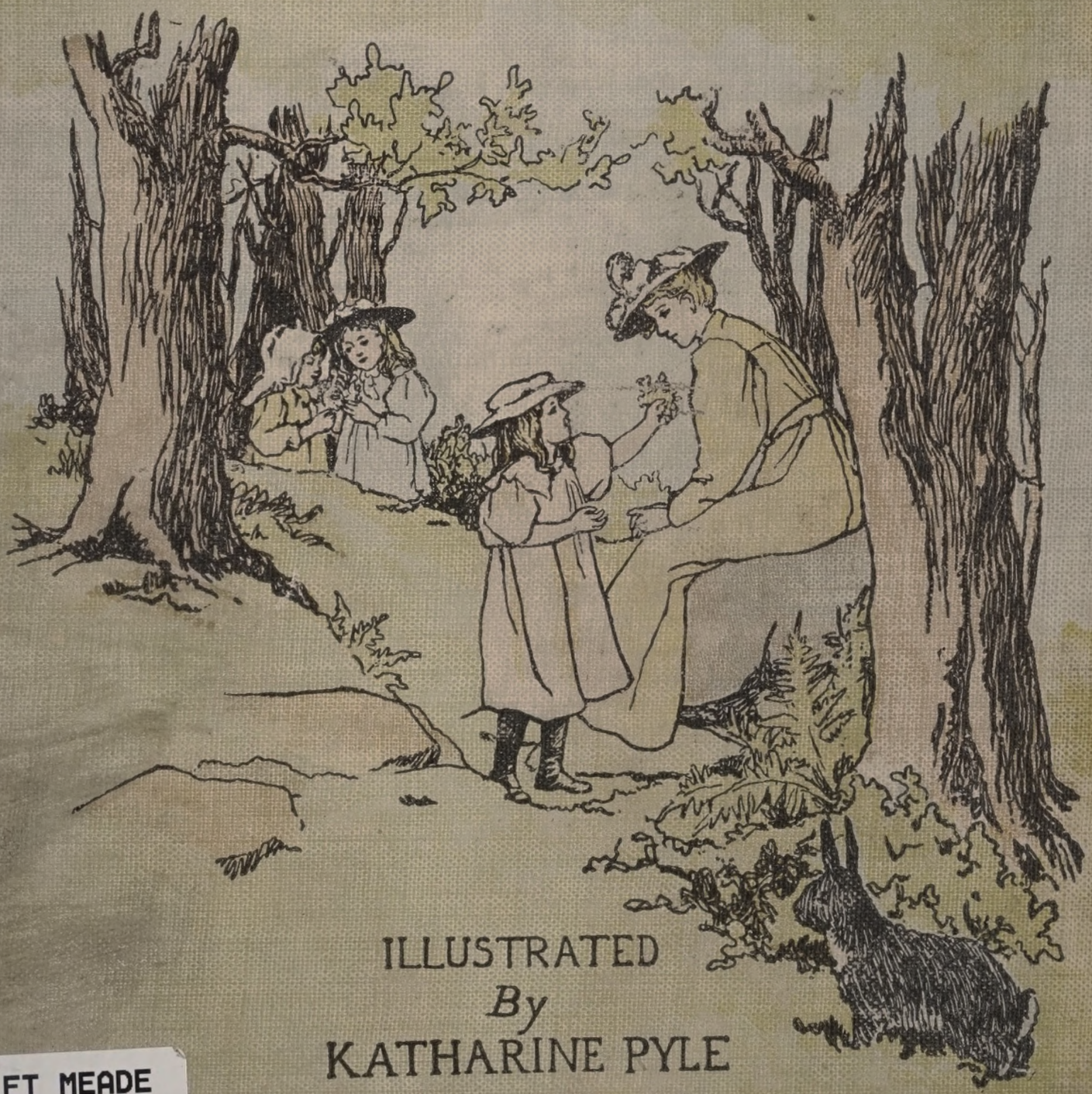
When Molly was Six

By

Eliza Orne White



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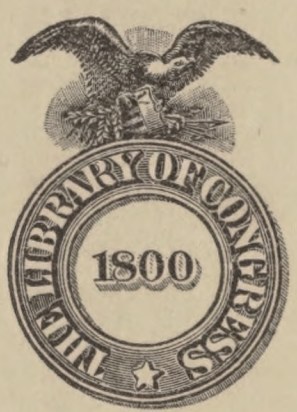

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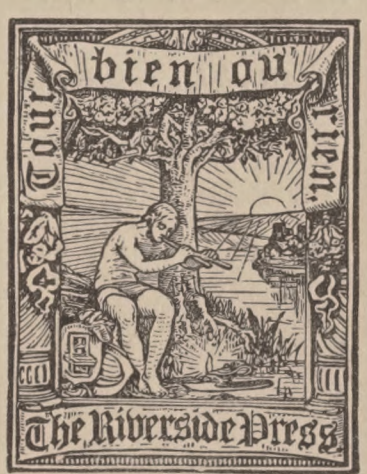
ELIZA ORNE WHITE

AUTHOR OF "MISS BROOKS," "WINTERBOROUGH," ETC.



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TO

JULIA AND ELIZABETH

MOLLY'S BEST FRIENDS

CONTENTS.

"A Sunday Valentine" is reprinted from "Every Other Sunday," and "Afternoon Tea" from "St. Nicholas," by permission of the publishers.

WHEN MOLLY WAS SIX.

January.

MOLLY'S BIRTHDAY.

Molly's birthday came on the first of January with that of the year. It was so near to Christmas that she always felt a little uncertain as to whether she should have any presents.

"Now that you are getting to be such a big girl," her father said the night before her birthday, "I think that Christmas presents are enough."

"Don't tease the poor child, Henry," said her mother.

"I shall expect to see a very different looking person to-morrow," her brother Turner observed. "The human body changes entirely once in seven years, and as this is your seventh birthday, the change will undoubtedly begin in the morning."

"But I am only going to be six," Molly objected.

"That is true; but all the same it is your seventh birthday."

Molly was never sure when Turner was joking and when he was in earnest, so she looked at him somewhat doubtfully as she put up her face to be kissed. She then bade her grown-up sister Ruth and her ten year old sister Flora good-night, and went upstairs with her mamma.

Molly woke early the next morning, so early that the daylight was only just beginning to come in at the windows. Her aunt Mary, whose room she shared, was still fast asleep, for she had been to a New Year's party the night before. Molly crept stealthily out of bed and ran to the long looking-glass that stood near one of the windows. It was light enough for her to see that she was not in the least changed. She was still a very small girl, and her curly hair was as tangled as it always was in the morning. She had never really expected to be different, but she had had a faint hope that she might be a little taller, and that her hair would have straightened in the night. She went back to bed and stayed there quietly for some minutes, hoping that her aunt would wake of her own accord, for Molly had learned by sad experience that she did not like to be disturbed in the morning. It was growing lighter every moment, and Molly was so anxious to go downstairs to see her presents that at last she

could stay still no longer. She sprang out of bed and began to dress in haste. She got on pretty well until she tried to fasten the waist of her gown, which seemed to have altogether too many buttons. She wondered why it was that grown people, who had long arms, had gowns that buttoned in front, while the gowns of little children, who had such short arms, always buttoned behind.

At this moment her aunt opened her eyes. "Molly Benson, what are you doing?" she cried.

"I'm dressing myself," said Molly proudly, "for I am in a hurry to see my presents."

"Dressing yourself! I should think so!" and Miss Benson began to undo the little girl's unevenly buttoned gown.

When Molly was at last made tidy, she went downstairs to the dining-room, where the family had assembled for breakfast. At her plate there were five mysterious-looking paper parcels. One was irregular in shape and had a knob on top.

"It is a doll! I know it is a doll!" she exclaimed in excitement. On the outside of the bundle was written: "For Molly, from her loving mother." She undid the string with trembling fingers. "It is a boy. I am *so* glad," she said, "because I have so many daughters."

"I told mother that the girls needed a brother to keep them in order," said Turner.

The new-comer was dressed in a dark blue sailor suit, trimmed with white braid. A sailor cap of dark blue was on the top of his flaxen curls, and his blue eyes were full of beauty and intelligence.

"He is lovely," said Molly enthusiastically, "and I know he is going to be the best of all my children, except Jane. I shall call him George Washington, because he is so good."

"Boys are always good," said Turner.

The next package she opened was small and hard. On it was written: "For Molly, from her papa."

It contained a napkin-ring of plain silver with a beaded edge. On the outside was engraved, "Molly;" and inside were her initials and her papa's, and the date.

Molly could not like the napkin-ring so well as the doll, but she kissed her father and thanked him for his present.

"Twenty years from now," said Turner, "you will prefer the napkin-ring to George Washington. I can foretell that he will be a total wreck by that time in spite of his name."

The next present which Molly undid was a family of paper dolls from Flora. Ruth had painted them,

but Flora had planned their clothes and named them. Molly was much pleased with these new friends. There were two more presents: one was a little paint box from Ruth; the other a Testament, bound in red morocco, from Molly's aunt Mary.

"Turner did not give me anything," the little girl thought, feeling somewhat aggrieved. At that moment she chanced to look under the table, and there she saw — oh, joyful sight! — a sled! a large sled, large enough for her and Turner and Flora all to coast on together. It was low, wide, and long, and it was painted black.

"Oh, how lovely!" said Molly. "Is that your present, Turner?"

He nodded.

"You are the nicest boy I ever saw."

"Even nicer than George Washington?"

"Even nicer."

"And handsomer, of course?"

Molly glanced from her brother's freckled face to the blue-eyed, flaxen-haired doll, and felt a little doubtful; so she said nothing, but dived under the table and dragged out her sled.

"If you will only tell me that I am handsome as well as good, I will take you and Flora coasting on Brown's hill this afternoon," said Turner.

"Truly! How perfectly splendid!" and Molly clapped her hands.

"But if you don't tell me that I am handsome, my feelings will be so deeply hurt that I shall be obliged to leave you at home," he added.

"Of course you are handsome," said Molly, "only not the same kind of handsome that George Washington is."

Molly had been too busy, so far, to give any thought to the weather, but now she ran to the window and saw a beautiful sight. The sun was just rising and sending rays of light over the trees and shrubs in the garden. When she had gone to bed the night before, there had been only commonplace snow on the ground, but it had rained all night, and the rain had frozen as it fell. Each twig was outlined in ice, and the garden looked like a fairy wood full of trees and shrubs made of glass. Even the summer-house had turned to glass in the night.

"The year has changed on its birthday," said Molly, "even if I am the same on mine."

It was so cold all day that the snow did not melt, and when Molly started with Turner and Flora, after dinner, the sun was shining so brightly that the trees and shrubs took on an added splendor, and it seemed as if they were not made of common glass,

but hung with sparkling diamonds. Molly felt as if she were a young princess wandering in an enchanted wood.

"How lovely it is!" she said with a deep drawn sigh of delight.

"It 's awfully slippery," said Flora.

When they reached the pasture that led to Brown's hill, Turner let down the bars and his little sisters ran through joyously.

The hill was a long one; it was quite steep in the beginning, and then sloped away more gradually until it reached the level meadow below. Here there was a little pond which was covered with ice.

Turner put Flora in front, on the big black sled, and Molly in the middle, and then he got on behind so that he could steer.

Away they went, so fast that Molly was frightened, and clung to Flora with both hands. It seemed as if they were flying down the hill, and Molly felt as if they were running a race with the wind. At last they reached the little pond and skimmed over that too, and then they began to go slower and slower until at length the sled stopped, as if it were worn out and needed rest.

"Oh, dear!" said Molly, as they began to walk

up the long hill, "I wish that hills were all down without any up."

"And yet if they were all upside down you would n't like it," said Turner. "Get on, and I will drag you up the rest of the way."

"I wish I were only six years old," said Flora, as Molly took her place on the sled.

"You are a lazy thing," said Turner.

The next time they went down the hill Molly was less afraid, and after they had gone down three or four times she thought there was nothing in the world so delightful as coasting on a big sled with a big brother. Did birds feel so free and joyful when they spread their wings and flew away? Were fairies any happier? On the whole, she thought that she would rather take her chances as Molly Benson, for birds and fairies could not have a sled for a birthday present, or a silver napkin-ring, or a George Washington.

They coasted all the afternoon, until the sun went down, and the diamonds faded into common glass. But the world still seemed like an enchanted place to the little girl, for something of the glory of the day was in her heart.

"Mamma," she said, as her mother was putting her to bed that night, "how many more days shall I be six?"

"There are three hundred and sixty-four days left, Molly."

"Will they all be as happy as this, do you suppose, mamma?"

"Not all, darling; but there will be something beautiful in each day for my little girl if she has the eyes to see it."

"Yes, there will always be George Washington," said Molly.

February.

A SUNDAY VALENTINE.

Molly was sitting in the square old-fashioned pew at church. As she was a very little person, her view was somewhat limited. It was chiefly confined to the row of heads that appeared above the back of the seat in front of her. To-day there was only one head there. It was a shiny bald head belonging to a very old gentleman. Molly wondered as she looked at him whether he was thankful enough that he did not have long curly hair to be pulled by his aunt Mary when she combed it. But perhaps he did not have an aunt Mary. Her aunt Mary was sitting in the pew by her side, tall, straight, and handsome. If she had not been there, Molly would have ventured to climb upon the seat, and enlarge her view by looking over the back of the pew; for directly behind her there often sat a very beautiful young lady who looked just like a fairy princess. Molly was sure of this; because she had often seen

pictures of fairy princesses, and they always had curly yellow hair and blue eyes, like Miss Sylvia.

It was Valentine's Day; and Molly wondered whether there would be an especial service, as there had been at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

That morning she had heard her sister Flora say, "It 's Valentine's Day! I think it 's a mean shame to have it come on Sunday."

"What is Valentine's Day?" Molly had asked her father.

"It is a day when people tell their friends how much they love them," he had said, stooping to kiss her upturned face.

Molly was thinking about this now, while she sat very still on the faded damask pew-cushion, with her legs dangling down in a most uncomfortable fashion. She thought: "How nice it would be to write a valentine all my own self to Miss Sylvia, and tell her how much I love her; and I can give it to her when church is over."

Molly had a pencil in her pocket, and she knew that her mamma kept some paper under the pew-cushion, so that her little daughter could amuse herself during the sermon. Molly looked up furtively at her aunt Mary, and saw that her face was fixed with apparent absorption upon the minister; so she

ventured to put one of her hands under the pew-cushion to try and find the paper. First she found a palm-leaf fan, all torn on the edge, and looking so shabby that she felt quite ashamed of it and hastily put it back; and then she moved softly along to the other end of the pew toward her father, that she might see if the paper was under the cushion where she had been sitting. She found it; but she could not help making it rustle as she pulled it out. Her aunt Mary shook her head at her with decision. Her father looked at her aunt appealingly. "Let her write; it is a harmless amusement," he seemed to say.

Molly glanced doubtfully from one to the other, and then cautiously slid down and seated herself on the cricket. She looked up with shy apprehension at her aunt, but gained confidence when she saw that she was merely looking at her father with an expression with which the little girl was familiar. It was half resigned, half protesting. It said as plainly as words: —

"If that were my child, I would make her behave herself."

It was a whole year since Molly had had any valentines, and she could only dimly remember what they were like. Should she write on her paper, "I

love you, Miss Sylvia. — Molly Benson"? No, that was not enough; and besides it was Sunday, and it would be better to make it a Sunday valentine. She could find something about loving one another, in the Bible, and she could copy it. She took down her little Testament, which happened to open toward the end of the volume, and turned the leaves diligently. Her aunt Mary looked at her, and was beginning to shake her head again; but Molly held her book up triumphantly. Even her aunt Mary could not object to her reading in church if the book that she read was the Bible.

Molly looked through the pages slowly, for she found it hard to read the long words. At first she could not find anything at all appropriate, and she began to be afraid that they did not have any Valentine's Day when the New Testament was first written. She felt discouraged, and was just going to shut her book, when she came to a whole chapter that seemed to be all about loving one another. Molly thought it must be the "Valentine Chapter." She was glad now that her aunt Mary had persevered and taught her to read, in spite of the fact that her father and mother had thought her too young to learn.

Molly did not know how to write; but she could

print very neatly, although it took her a long time to do it. She printed: "Beloved, let us love one another." Then she found something so much to the point that it seemed as if it must have been written on purpose: "I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

Molly thought that the words "commandment" and "beginning" were too long to write, so she left out that part of the sentence, and printed the rest of it as carefully as she could: "I beseech thee, lady, that we love one another." Then some more words on the page caught her eye: "I would not write with paper and ink."

Molly wondered why the person who had written this letter would not write with ink. Could it be for the same reason that she was not allowed to write with ink? No, that was not possible; because, if his letter was in the Bible, he must have been a grown-up person, and there would have been no danger of his upsetting the inkstand. She could think of no way of explaining this little sentence; but it gave her a very friendly feeling for the man who had been writing his letter without ink such a long, long time ago.

Molly was so absorbed in her occupation that she forgot to get up with the others when they stood up to sing. She rose hastily in the middle of the second verse. She did not know what they were singing; but she liked the music, and so she joined in and sang the tune softly, as well as she could, to words of her own.

"I am very happy," Molly sang; "I love everybody. I love papa, and mamma, and Ruth, and Turner, and Flora, and Aunt Mary, and dear Miss Sylvia; and I love the gentleman who could n't write with ink and paper. I love everybody, everybody, everybody! I love God too. He has made me very happy. I hope he won't mind because I did n't find the place in the hymn-book, and so have to sing my own words, which are n't as pretty as the music. This is my valentine-hymn, and this my special service."

When church was over, and the people began to leave their pews with the rustle and buzz that always follows, Molly clasped her paper tightly in her hand, and shyly opened the door of Miss Sylvia's pew. Molly wished that all doors were as small as pew-doors, they would be so much easier to open. A pew-door seemed made on purpose for little children.

Alas! there was no pretty golden-haired fairy princess there; the pew was empty. Molly felt bitterly disappointed; but then she remembered that she could copy her valentine on pink paper, and carry it that afternoon her own self to Miss Sylvia. Her papa said that she might; and Flora gave her some pink paper.

Molly felt some misgivings as she walked up the driveway that led to the house where Miss Sylvia lived with her uncle.

"Suppose she should n't like the valentine," she thought. "Suppose she should say, as Aunt Mary did, 'You silly child'" —

Just then a big black dog came out from behind a tree, and jumped up on Molly, putting two of his big paws on her shoulders. Poor Molly was now thoroughly frightened. She ran up to the door very fast, and pulled the bell; and then she turned to look at the dog, who raised his eyes to hers reproachfully.

"Poor thing, you did n't mean to hurt me, did you?" she said doubtfully. "That was your way of hugging. I suppose you wanted to tell me that you loved me. It is your kind of valentine. Oh, please, don't do it again! *Please* don't; for you are so big, and I 'm so very little."

At that moment the maid came to the door.

"Down, Ponto! Down!" she said. "Don't touch the little lady. Whom do you want to see, miss?"

"Miss Sylvia. Please tell her it's Molly Benson."

The maid looked doubtful.

"I don't think Miss Sylvia can see any one today."

Molly's heart sank. She felt like crying. Presently, however, Miss Sylvia, who had heard the voices below, came to the head of the stairs.

"My dear little Molly," she said, "I am so very glad to see you."

Molly watched her come down the stairway, and she thought her more lovely than ever. She made up her mind that if she ever grew up into a young lady, she would have a blue gown with ribbon and lace down the front of it, just like Miss Sylvia's.

"What do you want, dear?" asked Miss Sylvia. Her face looked sad; and if she had not been a grown-up person, Molly would have thought that she had been crying.

The little girl did not answer. A sudden fit of shyness had seized her. She held out her valentine mutely.

"For me?" asked Miss Sylvia.

Molly nodded.

"Oh, how pretty!" Miss Sylvia said, as she took it. "Pink is my favorite color."

She seated herself on the lowest step of the staircase, and motioned to Molly to come and sit beside her.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is a Sunday valentine, all out of the Bible," said Molly, who had found her tongue.

Miss Sylvia opened it and read it.

"Beloved, let us love one another. I beseech thee, lady, that we love one another. I love you. — Molly Benson."

Miss Sylvia turned and put her arms around the little girl.

"You dear child, how lovely of you to write this for me all yourself!" she said.

"It would have been much nicer," said Molly, "only Flora would n't let me have the ink, and so I had to print it in pencil."

"It could n't have been nicer," said Miss Sylvia; "I like it best just as it is. How did you ever think of anything so sweet?"

"Aunt Mary said you would n't care for it at all," observed Molly. "She" —

"Mary knows nothing about it," said Miss Sylvia, with decision.

She kissed Molly again and again. "I can't tell you how much good you have done me," she said. "Something has happened which has made me very unhappy to-day, and I was feeling as if nobody cared very much about me; and just then you came in at the door, like a little good fairy."

. . . . . .

"She liked it ever so much, papa," said Molly, that evening. "She said she had never had such a lovely valentine. Do you suppose it was because it was a Sunday valentine, or because it was on pink paper?"

March.

AFTERNOON TEA.

Miss Sylvia Russell was to be "At Home" on a certain afternoon, and she asked Mr. and Mrs. Henry Turner Benson and family, among other people to come and see her. Poor little Molly was heartbroken, when the day arrived, because she was not allowed to go with the others.

"'Family' means Flora and me, mamma, just as much as it means Turner and Ruth, and Aunt Mary," she suggested.

"My dear," said her aunt Mary, "little girls do not go to teas given by grown-up young ladies."

Molly thought this very hard, for she knew that Miss Sylvia was fond of her, and she cried a little when she saw Ruth and Turner start for the tea with the older members of the family. Her aunt Mary told her not to be such a baby, but her mamma comforted her by promising to bring her home a

macaroon and a cocoanut cake, and perhaps a piece of candy.

Molly sent a message by her mamma to Miss Sylvia, who, she was quite sure, was expecting to see her. Molly was afraid Miss Sylvia would be very much disappointed when she did not come; indeed she felt almost sorrier for Miss Sylvia than for herself.

Bridget was putting Molly to bed when the family came home, but Molly slipped out of the door and ran along the passage with her little bare feet.

"Did you give my message to Miss Sylvia, mamma?" she asked, as she buried her curly head in her mamma's black silk gown.

"Yes, darling; and she said she was very sorry, but that she could not have seen anything of her little Molly if she had come, because there were so many, many people; and she sent you these roses and this candy, and she says some day soon she will have a very small afternoon tea on purpose for you."

Molly took the pretty pink roses, and her mamma kept the candy for another day. The little girl felt very happy as she crept back to bed.

A few days later, when the postman came to the door bringing big envelopes with big letters in them

for big people, he also brought a little envelope with a little card in it for a little person. The direction was printed, so that Molly could read it herself. It ran : —

MISS MOLLY BENSON AND TWO OF HER FAMILY,
KNIGHTSBRIDGE, MASS.

There was a rough little picture of a doll in the right-hand corner next the word "family," so that Molly should make no mistake.

Molly opened the envelope neatly with a pair of scissors, as she had seen her aunt Mary do, and on the card inside she read : —

Miss Sylvia Russell,
At Home,
Friday, March nineteenth,
From three to five o'clock.
To meet Miss Julia Esterhazy.

Molly clapped her hands and danced with delight, for Julia Esterhazy was her dearest friend, who lived in the big white house just across the way.

Molly ranged her dolls in a row, and tried to decide which were the most deserving. Some had

been so naughty that there was no question of taking them, and others were too small to go out to tea with a grown-up lady; but there were four about whom she was uncertain, and she finally took them into the library, that Turner and Flora, who were studying their lessons, might help her decide.

In the first place, there was Jenny, named for Molly's mamma, and usually called Jane to avoid confusion. She was the oldest of all the dolls, and did not look so fresh as in her early youth, but she was the most unselfish of the family.

"Jane's complexion seems to have gone off," Turner remarked. "Too many late hours, I suppose."

"I think I ought to take her to Miss Sylvia's," Molly said, "she is so good; and then I ought to do more for her than for the rest, because she is so ugly."

Next came Sylvia Russell Benson, who, Molly felt, must surely have the honor of drinking tea with Miss Sylvia, because she was her namesake. She was a fair-haired, blue-eyed doll, with a sweet disposition, and a blue cashmere gown.

Then came George Washington Benson, who was dressed in his neat sailor suit; Molly wished him to go because he was her only son.

"Don't take George Washington," Turner advised; "for if he is the only fellow there he 'll be awfully bored."

Lastly there was the Princess, a very grand personage, in a red-velvet gown. She was so distinguished that Molly felt in awe of her and afraid to leave her behind; at which Turner said that she did not show proper spirit. Molly, therefore, left it uncertain whether the Princess or Jane should have the pleasure.

The day before the tea, Molly caught cold; it was not a bad cold, but as her aunt Mary was putting her to bed she said carelessly, "If it is n't pleasant to-morrow, you won't be able to go to Miss Sylvia's."

Molly felt that she should surely die if she could not go to the tea.

The next morning she crept out of bed at an early hour, and ran to the window. She pulled back the blue-and-white chintz curtains softly, that she might not wake her aunt Mary, and peered out into the gray dawn. The night before everything was brown, for there had been a thaw which had melted all the pretty white snow from the fields and the hills, but now, in the places where everything had been dark, there was a soft white powder. The ground was all white, and the hills were white too,

and even the trees were bending under the weight of a white burden; while from the sky, as far up as Molly could see, floated down myriads of feathery, starlike little snowflakes. It was all so beautiful that she clasped her hands together, and looked at it in silence. She was brought back to the actual world at last by her aunt Mary.

"Molly Benson!" she exclaimed, "come back into bed this minute, unless you want to have pneumonia."

"You won't be able to go out of the house today," her aunt observed as she was dressing Molly, a little later.

Molly said nothing; she had learned by experience that it was best not to dispute her aunt's decisions.

"I *think* mamma will let me go. I *think* mamma will let me go," she kept murmuring to herself.

At breakfast everybody was delighted with the snowstorm, for different reasons.

"We shall have some good coasting," said Turner.

"And tobogganing," added Ruth.

"I can take my dinner to school and stay over the noon recess," said Flora.

They all had forgotten about Molly's afternoon

tea. She sat quite silent for a time, but at last she plucked up her courage.

"Papa," she asked, "don't you think we may have a thaw by afternoon?"

"Not the least chance of it," her father replied with a laugh.

There was another silence.

"Papa," said Molly at last, "don't you think it will stop snowing pretty soon?"

"Oh, no; we are in for a solid snowstorm this time."

"Papa," said Molly wistfully, "don't you think I can go to Miss Sylvia's, even if it does snow?"

"Indeed, she can't, Henry," interposed Molly's aunt Mary; "she has too much of a cold. It would be a ridiculous idea, and besides, Sylvia won't expect the children to come in such a storm."

Molly's spirits sank lower and lower. Two tears trembled on the lids of her blue eyes doubtfully for a minute; then she bravely forced them back. Her mamma looked up just in time to catch the pleading, eager expression of her face.

"Do you want to go very much, my little girl?" she asked.

"Very, *very* much," said Molly.

"But if you were to take cold and be ill, and

make yourself and all of us very unhappy, you would wish you had stayed at home."

Molly was not sure about this, so she kept silent. She thought she would be willing to be sick if only she could be sure of the afternoon tea first.

When breakfast was over she went up to the play-room, and, taking in her arms Jane, who was always her comfort in sorrow, she wept bitterly.

"We are not to go to the tea, Jenny," she said, "none of us; none of us. So you need n't feel badly, dear, because you might have had to stay at home. The Princess can't go, and Sylvia can't go, and I am not to go myself."

She was still sobbing when Turner came in to get his French grammar. "Hullo!" he said. "What 's the matter?"

Molly continued to sob.

It always made Turner feel sorry to see people cry, even if they were very small people like Molly.

"I guess I would n't cry," he said slowly. "Would n't you like a popcorn ball if I can get one down street?" he added.

She shook her head.

"Perhaps Miss Sylvia will ask you another day," he suggested.

"She 's going away for a visit pretty soon," Molly said in a subdued voice.

"Well, if I were the clerk of the weather, I'd tell the snow to hold up this afternoon," said Turner. "I 'd say, 'Winds to the north, colder weather, a thundering big snowstorm all through New England, and especially on the hills and toboggan-slide in Knightsbridge; but in the village itself, between Main and Chatham streets, pleasant weather, fair, southerly winds, and a flood of sunshine.'"

Molly began to laugh, and Turner felt as if the sunshine were coming. "I wish you were the weather man," she said.

Everybody went out that morning except Molly and her mamma. Molly's papa went to his law office; her aunt Mary went to teach the Literature class at the high school, as she did every Friday, while Ruth and Turner took their dinners to the high school, and Flora carried hers to the grammar school.

Molly's mamma told her to get her work and come and sew with her while she mended the stockings. The little girl felt as if she could never be happy any more, but she did not wish to trouble her dear mamma, and so she said nothing about the

afternoon tea. By and by they heard the telephone-bell ring, and Mrs. Benson went to see what was wanted. Presently Molly heard her say, "It 's such a storm and she has a little cold, so her father is afraid to let her go."

Molly listened eagerly ; she wished she could hear the voice at the other end of the telephone, which she was sure was Miss Sylvia's. What could she be saying ?

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Benson, "but that will be a great deal of trouble, and do you want to send the horse out on such a day ? "

Molly could hardly wait for the next words.

"Very well, then," said her mamma ; "she will be ready at three o'clock."

Molly ran and flung her arms around her mother and pressed her cheek against her hand ; she was too happy to speak. Then she caught up Jenny and hugged her too. "Jane, you shall go to the party instead of the Princess," she said, "because you are the best of all my children. Mamma, what did Miss Sylvia say ? "

"She said she would send the covered sleigh for you and Julia this afternoon, and that she is sure you won't take cold if you are well wrapped up."

Julia was already in the sleigh when it came, and

she laughed because Molly had on so many wraps, and called her "Mother Bunch." Julia was six months older than Molly, and an inch taller. Her hair was much darker, and her eyes were a very dark brown.

"Why did you bring that hideous old Jane?" Julia asked, as she caressed her two pretty Paris dolls, Lily and Maud.

"I love her the best of all my children," Molly said sturdily.

"I should get her a new head if she belonged to me."

"But she would n't be the same person then," Molly objected.

When they reached Miss Sylvia's house, John, the man, helped them out of the sleigh, and then he handed out the four dolls very respectfully, as if they had been live ladies.

Miss Sylvia was waiting in the hall to receive them; she had on her pretty blue gown with ribbon and lace down the front of it. She kissed both the children, and then she shook hands gravely with the four dolls, but she evidently preferred Jane, who, she said, looked as if she had force of character and reserve strength. Presently she led the way into the dining-room. At one end, in the bow win-

dow, there was a small table about as high as a kindergarten table, covered with a white cloth. On it were two very small silver candlesticks, with a white candle in one and a blue one in the other. Some forget-me-nots and lilies of the valley were in a blue bowl on the middle of the table. There were seven places laid, with three small plates for Miss Sylvia and the little girls, and four very tiny plates for the four dolls. There were, besides, three small white-and-gilt cups and saucers for Miss Sylvia and the little girls, and four tiny white cups and saucers for the four dolls. At Miss Sylvia's end of the table were a small silver cream-pitcher and a white china teapot with a wreath of roses painted on it. The teapot contained tea made of molasses and water which was very delicious. In front of Molly was a little china dish full of animal crackers, and in front of Julia a silver dish filled with cocoanut cakes and macaroons. Each doll had an oyster cracker on her plate, and Miss Sylvia hoped they would not find these too large to eat; she said they were their pilot biscuit. Molly and Julia each had a little card with verses at her plate, and a barley-sugar animal. Julia's was a cat, and her verse said: —

Here 's a sweet cat for a sweet child.
She ne'er will scratch nor bite.

E'en if you bite her, she 's so mild
She 'll think you wholly right.

Molly's animal was a rabbit, and her rhymes said : —

I hope you will welcome this rabbit, my dear,
I hope you will welcome this rabbit.
He puts back his ear, for he wishes to hear,
But indeed 't is a curious habit, my dear,
Indeed 't is a curious habit.

He rushes and skips through the snowstorm, my dear,
He rushes and skips, though 't is snowing,
And I can't keep him back,
But he makes a quick track,
And he says, "To my Molly I'm going, my dear,"
He says, "To my Molly I 'm going."

Molly wondered why grown people did not have molasses and water instead of tea, it was so much nicer. Miss Sylvia seemed to think so too, for she said a little went a great way, and she took only very small sips, so as to make it last a long time.

They had a merry time playing games and telling stories after they finished their tea, and five o'clock came only too soon. Miss Sylvia then put on their things, and she bade her two young friends good-by for a whole month, for she was going away on her visit the next week.

"What a lovely time we had!" said Molly to

Julia, as they were driving home. "I never had such a good time. I don't suppose we shall ever have such a good time again."

"Of course we shall," said Julia, "lots of better times."

Julia had already begun upon her candy, and said that it was very nice, and she advised Molly to eat hers; but Molly saved her rabbit and put him away tenderly in her drawer in the bureau, to remind her thenceforth of the blissful day when she had taken afternoon tea with Miss Sylvia.

April.

NONESUCH.

Poor little Molly was heartbroken because Tartar, her pussy-cat, was dead. As her name suggests, she was not an amiable pussy, but this made no difference in Molly's feelings, even although there were unhealed scratches on her little hands.

Strange to say, it was her aunt Mary who gave her the most comfort, — her aunt Mary, who never was sympathetic over small griefs, but who had a heart for pussy-cats, and could therefore understand the great sorrow of a pussy-cat's death.

"Only yesterday she was *so* well, and she gave me such long, strong scratches," sobbed Molly, "and now she is dead; run over by that dreadful cart."

"It is a great pity, and I am almost as sorry about it as you are," said her aunt. "But, after all, it isn't as if she were a young pussy. You see she is a grandmother, and might not have lived very

long, and her sight was a little dim, or it would not have happened."

"She always seemed young to me," said Molly with another sob.

"I was very fond of her too," said her aunt, who was more demonstrative with pussies than she was with people, "but it does n't do any good to cry, Molly; it will only make you ill."

"One of the hardest things," said Molly, "is that nobody understands how I feel. Turner says she was a cross old thing," — here she gave another sob, — "and papa says he will get me another; and even mamma, — even mamma says she hopes we can have one now who won't claw the furniture. Oh, dear! I don't want any other! They all talk as if a new pussy-cat could be better than the old one. Oh, what pretty fur she had!"

"She was very pretty," assented her aunt.

"Yes, she was;" and Molly buried her face once more in her small handkerchief.

"Molly, you must control yourself. Think how much better it is than if it were one of the family. You could hardly show any more feeling if I or your mother were to die."

"Oh, I should feel lots worser if it were you, Aunt Mary; and if it were mamma I should die myself.

I am glad I have *something* left," she said, as she grasped her aunt's hand. She always admired her handsome young aunt, even when she was severe; but she loved her dearly when she was kind.

"It is so nice that you understand just how I feel," Molly went on. "Aunt Mary, somehow it seems as if this — this great sorrow made us love each other more."

It was almost a week before Molly was ready to consider the idea of having another cat, and six days is a long time when one is only six years old. At the end of the sixth day her aunt proposed that she should write to Miss Sylvia Russell, who was staying with a family who were fond of cats, and ask if she could not get her a kitten.

Molly printed the note "all her own self" to Miss Sylvia. She asked her aunt at first how to spell some of the words. "How do you spell that kind of *dear*, Aunt Mary?" she began.

"D-e-a-r, of course."

"And how do you spell *Sylvia*, please?"

Her aunt, who was writing a letter herself, glanced up impatiently, but spelled the word for her. They went on in this way for some time; then Miss Benson said, "Molly, are you writing that note, or am I?"

"I am."

"Then please don't ask me how to spell any more words until I have finished my letter."

This was why the first part of the note to Miss Sylvia was spelled better than the last part. Molly said: —

DEAR MISS SYLVIA, — Aunt Mary says you know a lady who has cats. My dear cat is dead. I cried a grate deel. Plese I like a torter-shel best. Plese send one with out sharpe clors if you can.

Your loveing, MOLLY.

Three days later there came a letter for Molly from Miss Sylvia, who wrote as follows: —

DEAR MOLLY, — I am very, very sorry for you. I remember the time when my pussy-cat died. It was long, long ago, when your aunt Mary and I were little girls. I have had greater sorrows since, such as grown-up people have, but they have never crowded out the memory of those days.

Fortunately for you the friends with whom I am staying are going to Europe in a few weeks, and they want to find a good home for their cat, so I send her to you by express. Her name is

Nonesuch, and she is well named, for I know none such as she is. I suppose she has claws, like other cats, but I have never seen them. In fact she is so gentle and good that if you were not very fond of cats and very good to them I should not send her to you.

No new friend can ever quite take the place of an old one, but Nonesuch can make a place of her own. I am glad that you and I are such old, old friends, Molly. Your loving,

SYLVIA RUSSELL.

"Miss Sylvia does not say whether she is a tor-ter-shell or not," Molly said, as her mother finished reading the letter.

"She is probably a lank, cadaverous thing, with a lame leg and rough fur," said Turner; "one of those brownish cats that look as if they had been black once, and were sent to the dye-house to be done over, and came back rusty-looking."

"Oh, Turner!" said Molly reproachfully, "why do you think she will be like that?"

"Because if she had been a good and beautiful tortoise-shell, of course the Grays would have taken her to Europe with them."

"Well, anyway, she will be a cat," said Molly

contentedly; "and if she is lame, and cross, and ugly, she will need to be loved all the more."

It seemed to Molly that she could not wait for the hour that was to bring Nonesuch. All day, whenever the bell rang, she hung over the balusters to see if the expressman had come. She wished that the cat had been sent by mail, for she knew just when to look for the postman, and she was sure he would have had room for her in his brown leather bag. The day passed, however, and no pussy appeared. Molly began to be afraid that she was lost. When the expressman came at night, she ran eagerly into the kitchen. She saw that he was bringing in a barrel.

"Oh, please, have you got her there?" she asked. "Did it take all that room just for one small pussy-cat?"

"I'll be blasted if I know what the young one is talking about," the man said with a good-humored laugh. "There's potatoes in that barrel, little lady."

"Potatoes!" Molly's face fell.

She looked at the man doubtfully for a moment before she made up her mind to pursue the subject, for she was shy with strangers; but the occasion was so serious that she could not give way to fear. She

clasped her hands behind her and looked beseechingly into his face.

"Please, sir," she said, "will you look out very carefully in the express house for a pussy-cat? You see if she got left over, by mistake, the way our box from grandmamma did at Christmas, she might starve."

"I guess we'd hear her quick enough before she starved," said the man. "Cats mostly don't keep their feelings to themselves."

The next night, when Molly was sitting in the parlor after tea, playing jackstraws with Ruth and Flora, Bridget came to the door.

"There is an express package in the kitchen for you, Miss Molly," she said with a solemn face.

"An express package!" Molly slipped down from her chair and darted into the kitchen. There, in the middle of the room, stood the expressman, smiling broadly, and at his feet was a wooden box with slats across the top.

"She's come, in her own Saratogy," he said. "I wonder the ladies don't take to traveling in their own trunks, too, now that they make 'em so large."

Molly was already bending over the box. She saw two bright yellow eyes, and a sweet little face

partly yellow and partly white, with a large black spot just over the nose.

"She is a torter-shell! She is a torter-shell!" she exclaimed in delight.

The rest of the family had assembled in the kitchen by this time, and Turner began to take the slats off the box, while Ruth went to get some milk for the little traveler. As soon as the bars were removed from her prison, Nonesuch stepped daintily out and walked directly up to Molly's aunt Mary and rubbed against her feet. She seemed delighted to have found friends. Molly caught her up and held her close in her arms. "You dear thing. You dear, dear, *dear* little thing!" she said.

"The king is dead, long live the king," murmured Turner.

"Stop, Turner," said his mother, "you shall not spoil the child's pleasure."

But Molly knew and cared nothing about kings. All she thought of was a dear, fluffy creature curled up in her arms, with bright eyes and four sound legs and a beautiful tail.

"What a sweet purr she has," she said. "Come, Aunt Mary, and listen to her sweet purr."

"She must be very hungry," said Ruth, who came in just then with the milk.

"And thirsty," added her father.

Molly put her down on the floor reluctantly, and she found her way at once to the saucer and drank up all the milk.

"I don't see why Miss Sylvia's friends did n't take her to Europe with them," said Molly. "She is so beautiful and so good."

"It must have been because they were afraid she would not be satisfied with the European mice," Turner answered.

When Turner put her down cellar for the night, she gave a series of shrill and heart-breaking mews.

"What a sweet mew she has," said Turner. "Come, Molly, and listen to her sweet mew."

"You are a bad boy," said Molly gravely.

She and her aunt Mary followed Turner down-stairs to inspect the quarters of the new-comer.

"Poor little pussy, she does n't like the great, dark cellar," said Molly. "She will be very lonely if we leave her here all by herself this first night. Aunt Mary, *dear* Aunt Mary, don't you think she might sleep with us just this one night?"

"My dear child! What an idea!"

At that moment Nonesuch came and rubbed against Molly's aunt in the most human way, as if to plead her cause.

"She is telling you that she will be very good, Aunt Mary."

Miss Benson stooped to pick up the cat.

Molly waited in suspense.

Pussy put her paws around the neck of Molly's aunt, and began to purr softly.

"Good pussy," said Miss Benson; "good little Nonesuch. She will stay down cellar, won't she, like a good little cat?" As she spoke, she put her down on the floor.

"Miauw, miauw," said Nonesuch in a sad and surprised voice.

"Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary! she is *so* unhappy."

"Miauw, miauw," said Nonesuch again.

"Molly," said her aunt, "I think we shall have to keep her with us this first night."

When Molly was put to bed, dear little Nonesuch nestled down by her, and when Miss Benson came upstairs, later in the evening, they were both fast asleep; and pussy's little face was pressed close to Molly's face, and her soft paws were around Molly's neck.

May.

A MOVABLE FEAST.

"I THINK we ought to have some kind of a party for Miss Sylvia, now she has come home," said Molly to Julia one spring morning. "She had such a lovely afternoon tea for us."

The two little girls were playing in the garden behind Molly's house. They were making mud cakes and frosting them with the snow that still lingered in what had been the great drift on the north side of the house. It was very valuable now, because there was so little of it left.

"She would n't care for our kind of party," said Julia, as she made a large P on the frosting of the cake that was especially designed for the princess.

"Yes, she would," said Molly. "I wish we knew when her birthday is. It ought to come when the flowers have their birthdays, for papa says she is like a flower."

"People are never like flowers," said Julia, "and

just as likely as not her birthday is in December or January."

Miss Sylvia happened to come to see Molly's aunt Mary that very morning, and the two children ran into the house to ask her about her birthday.

"I did not have any birthday this year," she said.

"No birthday!" they exclaimed, feeling very sorry for her.

"I only have a birthday once in four years," said Miss Sylvia; "can you guess when it is?"

"On the 29th of February," said Flora, who had just come home from school.

"Yes, and there was n't any 29th of February this year, and so I am left high and dry without any birthday."

"Poor Miss Sylvia," said Molly.

"Can't you choose some other day for your birthday?" suggested the practical Julia.

"It would be a good plan. I could make a movable feast of my birthday and have it in June, one year, and in August, at the seashore, another year, or in September, in the mountains."

"Oh, have it in May this year," cried the children.

"Have it next Saturday," said Molly eagerly,

"and take us to the woods, and let us have a birthday feast for you."

"My dear, Miss Sylvia does not want to be bothered with you children," said Molly's aunt Mary.

"Indeed I do. My birthday shall be next Saturday, which is May day, and Flora and Julia and Molly and I will have a birthday feast; and we won't invite you, Mary. We don't want any tiresome, grown-up people."

"Can't Elizabeth come too?" asked Flora. "She is only eleven and a half, and although she is almost a year older than I am, she is very young for her age."

Elizabeth Dennison was Flora's most intimate friend.

"Yes, Elizabeth can come too, if she will try to be very good, and very, very young."

Early Saturday morning Molly heard some heart-rending mews outside of her window, before she opened her eyes. This was nothing new, for almost every morning, as soon as Nonesuch was let out of the cellar-door, she climbed the trellis that led to the balcony, and then ran up the roof to Molly's window.

"Oh, I hope it is a pleasant day!" she said, as she went to open the window and let in the pussy-

cat. Alas! when she pulled back the blue-and-white chintz curtains, she saw that the wind was blowing in great gusts and the raindrops were chasing each other down the window-pane.

"Oh, Nonesuch, how wet your feet are!" said Molly, as she tried to dry the pussy with a towel. "And is n't it too bad, dear Nonesuch, that it is raining? But probably it will clear before eleven o'clock," she added hopefully.

"Even if it does you can't go to the woods to-day," said her aunt Mary, "because it would be so wet that you would all take dreadful colds."

When she heard this, Molly could not help shedding a few tears.

"Don't cry, Molly," said her aunt. "You have the whole summer before you; one rainy day does n't matter."

"But the whole summer won't be Miss Sylvia's birthday," said poor Molly, "and mamma had made us such cunning little cakes to take to the woods."

"I am very sorry for you, but it can't be helped."

That morning, soon after breakfast, while Molly was telling Jane, and George Washington, about her great disappointment, she saw John, Miss Sylvia's coachman, come up the steps with a note. She went to the door herself. "Is it for me?" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

Molly ran with her note to her mamma, who read it aloud.

My dear little Molly and Julia (and my larger but not quite grown-up Flora and Elizabeth), — I am so sorry that I chose the wrong birthday. But is n't it lucky that I have n't any birthday this year? Because if it had really been the 1st of May we could n't have postponed it, but as it really is n't, we can have the feast just as well next Saturday, on the 8th, and if it turns out that I have made another mistake, and the weather still thinks it too early to go to the woods, why we 'll have my birthday the next Saturday; so if your mamma does n't get tired making little cakes, I won't get tired planning for my birthday.

Your loving friend,

Sylvia Russell.

The next Saturday morning, when Molly went to the window to let in Nonesuch, the sun was gayly shining on a world that was fresh with the beauty of early spring.

At eleven o'clock Miss Sylvia's carriage came for the little girls. Julia and Molly sat on the front

seat with John, and Flora and Elizabeth sat behind with Miss Sylvia.

When they reached the woods, Miss Sylvia found a mossy rock under a tree which she said they would have for their dinner-table by and by, and they left their lunch-baskets and shawls there while they went to look for mayflowers.

"It is rather late for them," she said. "But I hope a few of them knew about my movable birthday, and were kind enough to put off blossoming until to-day."

It was very beautiful in the woods. The leaves were only beginning to open, and so a great deal of sunshine came in and lighted up the green grass and the soft green moss and the red checkerberries. Molly began pulling at the mayflower leaves as she saw the others do. At first nobody found any blossoms.

"They are shy little things," said Miss Sylvia, "and they have hidden under the moss and the evergreen."

"I 'm afraid they thought your birthday was last Saturday," said Elizabeth.

"No they did n't," Molly cried excitedly. "They remembered!" She had found a spray well hidden under the moss that was full of beautiful pink blos-

soms and half-opened buds, and they were so fragrant that the little girl thought she had never smelled anything half so sweet.

"Take it, Miss Sylvia," and Molly held up the long spray shyly.

"It is the pinkest that I have ever seen," said Miss Sylvia, as she touched it caressingly. "It is almost as pink as my Sunday valentine."

"And ever so much sweeter," said Molly.

A great many mayflowers had remembered Miss Sylvia's birthday. The children liked to hunt for them among the dead leaves and the evergreens. Sometimes a rabbit or a squirrel would look at them with his bright eyes, as he frisked past them, and sometimes a bird would sing to them. Molly thought that she had never seen so beautiful a place as this wood full of flowers and wild creatures.

After they had picked all the mayflowers that they could find, Miss Sylvia said she thought they might like to make a wood and a lake just as she used to do when she was a little girl.

"Shall we make a wild lake in the Adirondacks, where there are n't any people?" she asked.

"How can you make a lake when there is n't any water here?" Julia protested.

Miss Sylvia took an irregular piece of glass out

of one of the baskets, and said, "When my mirror fell and broke the other day, I thought, 'Now we can have a lake on Saturday when we go to the woods."

She put the glass down on the ground as she spoke. The children pulled the moss up around the edge so that nobody could see that it was only a broken piece of glass. It looked like a tiny, tiny lake for very small people.

"I think we ought to have some trees," said Elizabeth.

"Is n't the moss their trees?" asked Molly.

"No, it is only their bushes. What kind of trees shall we have?"

"Birch trees," said Molly, "for they have the smallest leaves."

They had almost no leaves, for they were just beginning to open. The children picked some little branches, and stuck a great many of them into the ground close together near the lake, so that they might look like a wood.

"We ought to have some pine trees, too, if it is a lake in the Adirondacks," said Miss Sylvia. "We must certainly have some 'first growths'; that means the very oldest trees that have been growing for years and years."

The children ran off much pleased to look for pine balsam trees. Julia was the first to find one. They all broke off small branches and stuck them into the ground in among the birches. They looked very tall and majestic, and Miss Sylvia said it was evidently a "primeval forest."

"Let us have some apple-trees, too," she said, "full of ripe, red apples."

"It is n't the season for apples," said Julia.

"I am sure that apple-trees would n't grow where there were n't any people," added Flora.

"Oh, you terribly practical children! When I was a little girl it was the season for apples all the year round, and they always grew in a primeval forest."

"I think it is the season for apples in the Adirondacks," said Elizabeth.

"And I am sure that somebody lived there once," said Miss Sylvia. "A kind of Robinson Crusoe. He lived there a long time and he planted the apple-trees, and after a while he went back to his old home, but the apple-trees lived and flourished."

As she spoke she picked some sprays of checkerberry with their green leaves and bright red berries.

Molly clapped her hands. "Oh, Miss Sylvia,

how dear they are. They are little baby apples!"

"I think we will have only a few apple-trees," Miss Sylvia decided. "One for each of us."

Molly and Julia planted five little apple-trees full of red apples close to the edge of the lake."

"They are Fameuses," said Molly.

"No, they are Baldwins," said Julia.

"I am sure they are Astrachans," said Elizabeth, "because they come very early before the leaves turn."

The little forest was reflected in the placid lake, and so were the five apple trees. Molly counted five more apple trees, only these were upside down.

"This is the loveliest place I ever saw; it is like the Garden of Eden," said Molly, who had just learned about the Garden of Eden at Sunday-school.

"Where are Adam and Eve?" asked Julia.

Molly looked perplexed. "They have been turned out," she said at last, brightening, "because they ate one of those dear little apples."

It was time for luncheon now, and Miss Sylvia and the older children went to prepare for the feast, while Molly and Julia had a tea-party on the edge of the lake, with twigs for people and acorn cups for dishes.

Miss Sylvia called them when lunch was ready, and they were sure that they had never seen any table look so pretty. There was a garland of may-flowers around the edge of the white table-cloth on the rock, and on this table-cloth were the little cakes that Molly's mamma had made, and some very small biscuits that Bridget had baked on purpose for the feast, while Miss Sylvia had brought tiny sandwiches, crackers with jelly between them, olives and candy. Everything tasted very delicious, because they were all so hungry.

"What fun we are having!" said Molly. "I am glad it rained last Saturday, for if we had come then we should n't be here now. Did you use to have such a nice time when you were a little girl, Miss Sylvia?"

"Yes, your aunt Mary and I used to have lakes and forests and crotched-stick people."

"But you seem ever so much younger than Aunt Mary," said Molly.

"That is because I have had only six birthdays."

June.

PRISCILLA.

In June, Molly and her mamma went to spend a week with Mrs. Benson's mother, who lived, in summer, in an old-fashioned farm-house on a New Hampshire hillside. Molly was very fond of her grandmother, and of her aunt Ruth, and this year her aunt Flora, whom she had never seen, was to be there too, with her little daughter Priscilla. Priscilla was just Molly's age, and Molly was delighted to make the acquaintance of a new cousin.

When Molly and her mamma reached the farm-house, they saw Priscilla standing in the doorway with a very short black gown on and very long slim legs in black stockings.

"She 's lots taller than I am," said Molly, in a disappointed tone, "and I wish I had such short dresses; but why does she have on a black dress, mamma?"

"Because her papa has died, Molly."

Molly looked very sober. "Poor Priscilla," she said. She had known that she should like her cousin, but now she felt as if she could not love her enough.

She ran up the steps and flung her arms around her aunt Ruth.

"Priscilla," said her aunt, "this is your little cousin Molly; shake hands with her."

Priscilla put out a small brown hand awkwardly.

"I am very glad to see you," said Molly; "and I am so sorry that I could n't have brought Nonesuch. She is my pussy-cat, but papa said he would be too lonely if mamma and Nonesuch and I all came away together."

Priscilla looked hard at Molly with her black eyes. She was shy with children of her own age, for she had no brothers or sisters, and it seemed to her as if she could not say one word.

"I think if we leave these children together they will get acquainted faster," said their aunt Ruth. "I will show you to your room, Jenny."

As her aunt went out of the room, poor Priscilla cast a beseeching glance at her. She wriggled about on her chair, and looked down at the pattern on the rug.

"Do you like candy?" she asked at last, in despair.

"Very much," said Molly, brightening. "Have you got some?"

"No," said Priscilla, growing very red. "My mamma generally does not let me eat it."

"Oh," said Molly, trying to hide her disappointment. "I never can have much," she added.

There was another long pause.

"Don't you think it would be nice to go out to the barn and see the cows?" Molly asked, sliding down from her chair. "Last year there were such pretty cows and lovely bossies."

"There is a bossy out there now," said Priscilla. "It's quite small. Its name is Daisy; it's quite yellow.

"How perfectly lovely," said Molly. "Let's go to see it right off."

The ice was broken, and when the little girls came in from the barn their arms were around each other's waists, and they were chattering as fast as if they had known each other all their lives. A bossy is a very enlivening mutual friend.

The next morning Molly could hardly wait until breakfast was over, she was so eager to go to the barn with her aunt Ruth and Priscilla when they fed the chickens.

After breakfast the two little girls followed their

aunt into the kitchen, where she put some Indian meal in a large yellow bowl, and turned some water on it and stirred it with a spoon. Then she carried the bowl out to the hencoop, which was close by the barn. In the coop there was a brown hen, who had twelve dear, downy, fluffy little yellow chickens.

"Let me feed them," Molly begged.

The little chickens were afraid to come to her, and the old hen scolded away in an angry fashion.

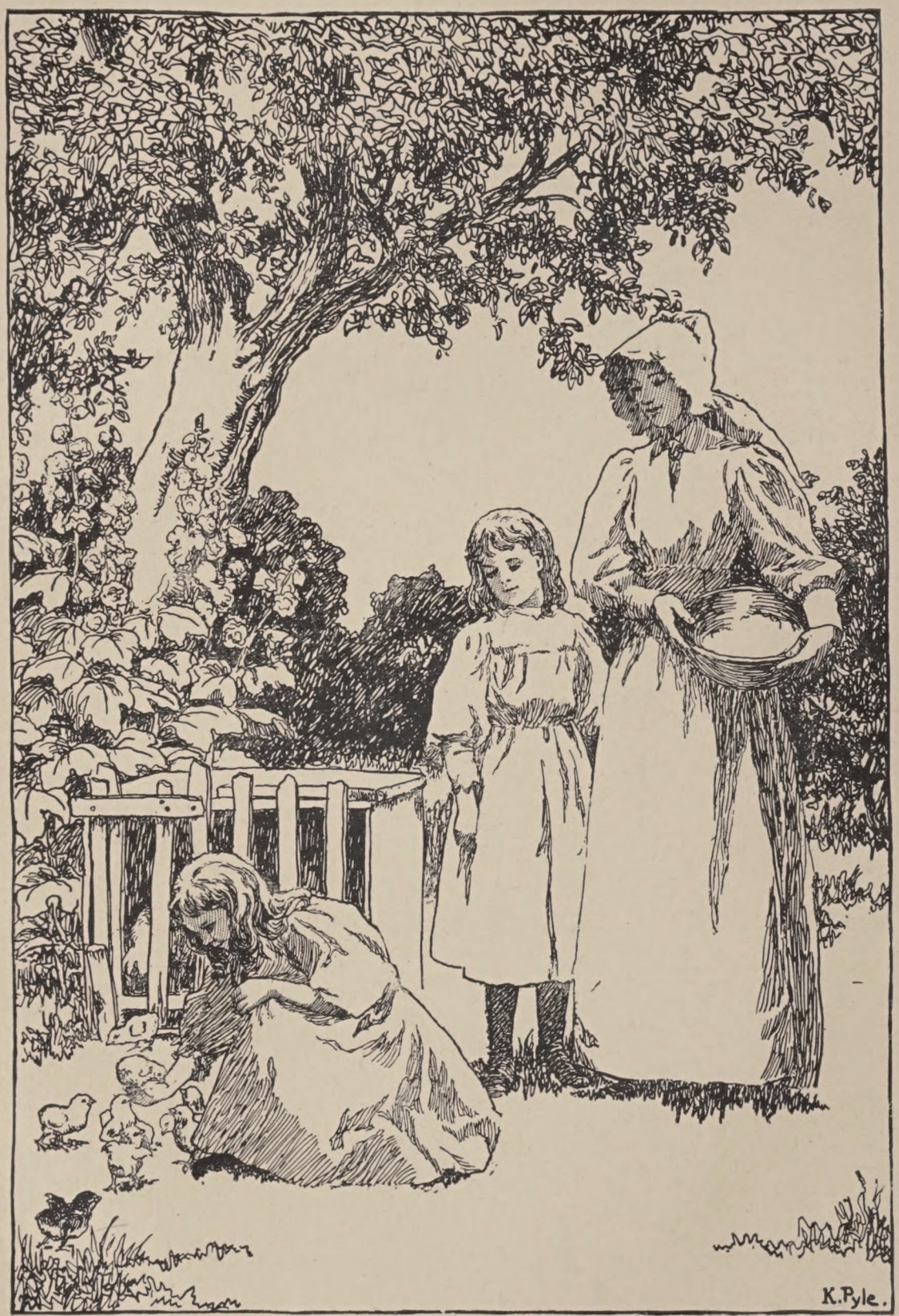
"Give the hen a little to try, Molly," said her aunt, "and when she sees how good it is she will tell all the little chickens that they may have some."

Molly took the spoon and dropped a little of the meal inside the coop. The old hen tasted it and thought it very delicious.

"Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!" she said, and all the little chickens ran as fast as they could to the meal which Molly held in her hand, almost tumbling over each other in their eagerness to get a taste.

"I suppose it is like ice-cream to them," said Molly. "They are such dear, soft little things," she added, as she stroked them.

After the chickens were fed, Molly and Priscilla went into the garden with their aunt. Molly thought that she had never seen such a beautiful garden. The rosebushes were covered with blossoms and



MOLLY FEEDING THE CHICKENS

half-opened buds, and the air was full of their fragrance and of the odor of mignonette; and there were pink-and-white dyaletras too, and blue larkspurs, and so many yellow butterflies flitting from flower to flower that Molly could not count them. She and Priscilla helped their aunt Ruth cut long sprays of pink roses, and white roses, and red ones, and they carried them into the house for her in a large basket. She gave them each a small bowl to fill with roses, because they were little girls, and she arranged some in a large bowl, because she was a grown-up person. When the house was fragrant with roses, the children went out-of-doors again.

Let's play a game," said Molly. "Let's play 'Follow your Leader,' and you will have to do every single thing that I do."

"All right," said Priscilla, "only I will be leader, and you must do just what I do."

She led Molly a race all over the barn, and then through the garden and back to the barn, sometimes hopping on one foot, and sometimes waving both hands wildly in the air, while Molly tried hard to keep in view a pair of slim black legs which whisked very fast around corners. At last Priscilla climbed the ladder that led to the hayloft and sank down on the hay. Molly scrambled up the ladder, quite

out of breath, only to see Priscilla slip over the edge of the loft and land on the hay below. She looked up with laughing eyes at Molly.

"You 've got to do it; you promised to follow me!"

Molly went to the edge of the loft and leaned over dubiously. "I 'm afraid."

"Coward!"

"It might hurt me."

"It 's only soft hay; and it 's great fun; it 's just like flying."

"But I 'm not a bird."

"I would n't be a fraid cat," said Priscilla, "and besides, you promised."

Molly hung her feet over the edge of what appeared to her a frightful precipice and looked down at her smiling cousin.

"Come on," said Priscilla. "One, two, three."

"Oh, I can't do it," said Molly, drawing back.

"I hate people who are afraid," observed Priscilla, "and you promised, you know."

Molly slipped part way over the edge. It seemed to the poor little girl as if she could never land safely on the hay below.

"One, two, three."

She had let go and was flying through the air,

and — here she was at the bottom, quite safe and sound, only a little out of breath.

"Is n't it fun?" asked Priscilla.

"I don't know," said Molly doubtfully. But before the morning was over she liked it just as much as Priscilla did.

While they were sitting together in the hayloft, Priscilla accidentally ran her head into a large cobweb, and got her hair and dress covered with it. "You must do it too, Molly," she said. "I am the leader."

"But you did not do it on purpose," Molly protested, "and it is so horrid."

"Never mind; you must do it."

"But there may be spiders in it."

"*There are*, but you have got to do it."

"I would rather go into the house to see Aunt Ruth."

"You don't play fairly; you must run your head into the cobweb; it 's part of the game, and then I will tell you a lovely story about a fairy princess."

So Molly ran her curly head into the cobweb and was well covered with dust and dirt; and when the two little girls went in to dinner Priscilla's mamma said, "Priscilla Drayton, what a looking child! What have you been doing?"

And Molly's mamma said, "My dear little girl, did n't you remember that I put a clean gingham on you this morning?"

Molly hung her head.

"It was all my fault, Aunt Jenny," said Priscilla.

"Priscilla is generally very good," said Priscilla's mamma, "but she is n't used to playing with other children, and it excites her."

"Molly is the best little thing at home," said Molly's mamma.

"They seemed so quiet and demure yesterday afternoon," said their grandmother.

Quiet and demure they might be when they were apart, but they were never quiet and demure again when they were together. The long summer days were not long enough for Molly and Priscilla, and the week sped by altogether too fast.

Poor Priscilla was inconsolable when the last day came. She had never seen so much of any little girl before, and she loved Molly with all the passionate affection of a lonely child.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," she sobbed. "It seems as if I should truly die if you go home, Molly."

"But you are coming to stay with us at Christmas," said Molly cheerfully.

"Christmas is years and years away. Would n't you like to stay here all summer and be my sister?"

Molly did not want to hurt the feelings of her dear Priscilla whom she loved so much, but she loved so many people at home that she was not sorry to be going there.

"I should like it if you could be my sister and live with me," she said; "but I have Flora, and Turner, and Ruth, and papa, and Aunt Mary, and my dear Nonesuch, and then there is Julia Esterhazy and Miss Sylvia Russell, so you see I could n't live with you."

When it was time for Molly and her mamma to be driven to the station, Molly's hat was nowhere to be found. They looked for it high and low, in the hayloft and in the garden, as well as all over the house.

"Molly, you must not be so careless," said her mamma. "I am afraid we shall lose the train."

Priscilla, red-eyed and very sober, sat silently in a corner of the room.

"If you expect to catch the train, you must start at once," said Mrs. Benson's mother.

"We shall have to lend Molly one of Priscilla's hats," said Mrs. Drayton. "Priscilla, run upstairs and bring me down your best hat."

Priscilla was gone a long time, and when she came back she had Molly's brown hat in her hand. "I found it," she said. "I hid it, for I thought if she did n't have a hat she could n't go home; but if she 's got to go, I 'd rather she would go in her old hat than in my best one."

They did lose the train, and came back to spend one more night. Priscilla was much pleased at first, but as the evening wore on she felt that it would have been better if Molly had gone in the afternoon, for now they must have the sad parting all over again.

The next day, just before Molly was to go home, Priscilla came into her room with a ten-cent piece in her hand.

"Molly," she said, "I love you very much, and I want to give you something to remember me by, and I have n't anything but common money."

"I don't want to take your ten-cent piece," said Molly, for she knew that her cousin had very little money.

"Molly, money is nothing to me," said Priscilla loftily; "I only care for it for what it will buy."

"It will buy such lovely things," said Molly, looking wistfully at the dime, "paper-doll furniture and dear little china dolls."

"And tissue paper for paper dolls' dresses," added Priscilla, "pink and blue and yellow."

Poor Priscilla was already half sorry that she had been so generous, as visions of the enchanting things she had meant to buy with that ten-cent piece floated before her eyes.

"Take it!" she cried heroically, as she thrust it into Molly's hand.

Molly hesitated.

"Take it!" Priscilla repeated.

Molly got her little purse, which had just a dime in it, and looked doubtfully at Priscilla's money. "Fourth of July is coming," she observed; "perhaps you might want your ten cents."

Priscilla caught a glimpse of that other dime in Molly's purse. The sight of it and the idea of the Fourth of July were too much for her strength of mind.

"Molly," she suggested, "suppose we exchange. Suppose I give you my dime and you give me yours? Then we shall each have something that belongs to the other."

July.

HOW MOLLY SPENT HER TEN CENTS.

Molly meant to keep Priscilla's ten cents always, but she had not been at home many days before she received a letter from her cousin that changed her plans. It was a long letter because Priscilla had dictated it to her mamma. Molly's mamma read it aloud.

"Dear Molly, — I miss you very, very much. I cried the day you went, for it was so lonely. I have spent your ten cents. I meant to get pink and blue and yellow tissue paper, but the Fourth of July came and I got fire-crackers instead. They are all gone now, but it was fun while they lasted. They made a splendid noise. I like fire-crackers.

"We have a new bossy. She is an Alderney, and she is mine. I have named her for the person I love the best next to mamma. She has a very pretty name. Can you guess what it is?"

Molly's mamma paused when she came to this part of the letter.

"Ruth, for Aunt Ruth?" Molly suggested.

"No."

"Rebecca, for grandmamma?"

"No."

"What has she named it?"

"I have named her Molly for you," Mrs. Benson read.

Molly looked very much pleased at the idea of having such a charming namesake.

"Please get something to remember me by on my birthday," the letter proceeded. "As I have spent your ten cents, I want you to spend mine, and then we shall be even. My birthday is the 8th of July. I wish you were my sister.

"Your loving cousin,

"PRISCILLA DRAYTON."

"It is the 8th of July to-day, Molly dear," said Mrs. Benson.

"Then I think I had better go and look around in the shops."

"You will find a great variety of things at Fletcher's," said her mamma; "and if you like, you

may go there all by yourself like a grown-up person."

This pleased Molly, and she put on her brown hat and started out with a little shopping-bag that her aunt Ruth had given her at Christmas, with her small purse in the bottom holding her ten-cent piece. Just as she reached the gate, she saw Julia Esterhazy coming out of the big white house across the way.

"Where are you going, Molly?" Julia asked. "I was coming over to play with you."

"I am going down town shopping," said Molly, feeling that she was a very important person.

"What are you going to buy?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know what you are going to buy?"

"It may be tissue paper, or it may be paper dolls' furniture, or it may be a new dress for Sylvia or Jane, but whatever it is, it must cost just ten cents;" and Molly told Julia the story of the exchange of the dimes.

"I should get candy if it were mine," said Julia, "and then you could give me some."

"But I don't want to eat up my lovely present," said Molly.

It was a warm day, and the two little girls

were glad to get under shelter away from the hot sun.

Fletcher's was a very delightful shop. It had almost everything in it that any one could want. In fact, it was so full of charming things that it was hard to make a choice. Molly's eyes were first fascinated by a card full of paper-doll children, and their pretty blue, red, and white dresses. There was a back and a front view of each little girl that were to be cut out and pasted together to make a complete person, and there were besides a tennis racket and a hoop and a dear little doll in a doll's carriage for the paper-doll children to play with, and a shopping-bag and a green watering-pot. Molly was afraid these children and their outfit cost a great deal of money, and that she could not afford to buy them.

"How much are they?" she shyly asked the man behind the counter.

"Twelve cents and a half a card. They are cheap for that, for they came from Germany. Do you want one of these cards?"

Molly shook her head. "I only have ten cents," she answered, with a sigh.

"I would call it ten cents, seeing that it is you," he said.

He was a pleasant man, with kind gray eyes. "Ten cents is dirt cheap for two children and their entire wardrobe, not to mention playthings," he added.

"Yes, it is very cheap," said Molly.

Julia, meanwhile, had discovered some paper-doll furniture. One card was full of kitchen things, and another was devoted to parlor furniture, while a third displayed a bedroom set.

"How perfectly beautiful!" Molly said, as she looked at the little brown bureau, with its white-and-red bureau cover and the red pincushion full of pins.

"What a dear little rug!" said Julia, pointing to a charming brown coon-skin rug.

"And look at the towels and the little towel-rack," said Molly.

"And the bed and washstand and the pretty blue screen," added Julia.

"See the brown chairs and the dear little brown clock. What fun it would be to cut them out, Julia."

"Look at the parlor set," said Julia. "See the piano, and the red sofa and chairs, and the tall piano-lamp with its red shade."

"The kitchen is a dear place," said Molly. "See

the table with a lobster on it in a dish, and the sweet little cooking-stove, and the pretty blue dishes in the cupboard; they all look so real."

"See the spice-box," said Julia. "Pepper, nut meg, c-i-n-n-a-m-o-n, cinnamon."

"Oh, look at that dear pussy cat in the kitchen!" said Molly. "How much are these cards?" she asked.

"Ten cents apiece."

"Only ten cents! I don't know which I want the most."

"*I* should choose the parlor set," said Julia.

"I like the kitchen and the bedroom set best, because we could have the most fun with them."

"The same things come at five cents a card in a smaller size," the man behind the counter stated.

"At five cents a card! Then I can have two of them, Julia! and I can send one of them to Priscilla, for poor Priscilla has spent all her money on fire-crackers, and has n't anything to remember me by."

"I should keep them both," said Julia. "If she chose to spend her money on fire-crackers, that is her lookout. We could have lots more fun with the kitchen and parlor furniture too."

"Yes, we could," said Molly. "I must look

around a little more before I decide," she added prudently. "Oh, Julia! See that pretty pink gingham with white spots on it! How becoming that would be to Sylvia! It takes only half a yard for her clothes. How much is it for half a yard?"

"It is twenty-five cents a yard," the clerk replied.

"How much would that be for half a yard, Julia?"

"I don't know."

"We don't know how much it would be for half a yard," said Molly appealingly.

"Well, I'll call it ten cents."

"Ten cents!" said Molly. She was almost sorry, for if it had cost more she could not have bought it, and it would have been a little easier to choose.

"Look at this sweet doll, Molly," said Julia, from the other end of the shop. "A tiny doll and yet so prettily dressed. How much is it?"

"Ten cents."

"Everything is ten cents in this store," said Molly, in despair. "I can't ever decide; but I have so many dolls that I don't really need any more."

"Oh, Molly, see this!" and Julia paused before a tall, round basket. A white card hung above it,

and on this card was printed in large black letters: —

CHILDREN'S GRAB BASKET.

5 CENTS A GRAB.

EACH ARTICLE FULLY WORTH 7 CENTS.

Julia pushed up the cover of the basket, and she and Molly peeped in over the top. There were flat parcels to be seen and three-cornered parcels, and long ones and square ones, and they were all done up in tissue paper. There was something very interesting and mysterious about the grab basket. Those paper packages might have something in them even rarer and more beautiful than the paper dolls, or the furniture, or the pink gingham.

"You could have two grabs for ten cents," Julia suggested. "You could grab and I could grab, and I could give you my thing."

She was longing to know the contents of a certain interesting irregular parcel.

"The furniture is so sweet," said Molly; "and I am sure I want it."

"The paper dolls are sweet, too," said Julia.

"Yes, and so is the pink gingham. I shall *have* to grab to decide it."

Meanwhile a more important customer had come

in with whom the clerk was absorbed, so Molly went over to him and handed him her ten cents.

"We have decided to take two grabs, and here is the money," she said.

"All right. Did you say you would have silesia or percaline, madam?" he asked, turning to the other customer.

"You grab first," said Julia.

Molly looked from the flat parcels to the three-cornered ones, and could not decide which to choose.

"I think I will shut up my eyes," she said, and she put in her hand at random and pulled out a small, flat parcel. She opened it eagerly, and took out a block of black paper, to be used as a slate, and a pencil with which to write on it. She was sadly disappointed, and felt very much like crying.

"It is a horrid thing," said Julia. "We don't want a paper slate when you have got that nice blackboard. You were very silly to shut your eyes. I shall choose with my eyes open. I am going to take that queer thing that looks as if it might be a doll."

She took out the enticing-looking package, and began to untie the string, and presently drew forth a pink-and-green-and-white china vase of a hideous shape. It was too large for dolls and too small for people, and too ugly to please either.

"That grab bag is perfectly horrid," said Julia.

Molly was sure that she had never been so unhappy. She knew, now that it was too late, that she wanted the paper-doll furniture more than anything in the whole world. The two little girls were very sober all the way home. When they reached Molly's gate, Julia handed over the vase.

"Take the old thing," she said. "You have got something to remember Priscilla by always now, and you can send the paper slate to her."

"Well, what did you buy, dear?" her mamma asked cheerfully, as Molly came into the parlor.

The little girl found it hard to keep back her tears. Her aunt Mary and Turner were sitting there too. She felt that it would have been easier to confess her folly to her mamma alone.

She held up the vase and the paper block silently.

"The block was a sensible choice," said her mamma, "but I don't see why you chose the vase."

"I did n't choose either of them," Molly burst out. "We grabbed and we got them."

"In short, they chose you," said Turner.

Then the little girl told the whole sad story. "I *did* want the paper-doll furniture so much," she ended.

"Why didn't you buy it, then?" asked her aunt.

"Because we thought it would be more fun to grab."

"This will be a very good lesson for you, Molly," said her aunt. "It is never well to spend money unless you are sure what you are spending it for. I am sorry for you, but you will never be so foolish again."

"There will be time to go to Fletcher's before tea," said Turner. "I will go with you, and we will pretend that the dime I have was Priscilla's, and you shall choose what you want all over again."

Miss Benson raised her eyebrows in disapproval, but Turner added quickly, "She can't learn a lesson, Aunt Mary, unless she has some more money to spend."

Molly danced up and down with pleasure, and she and Turner went to Fletcher's together. This time she made her choice very quickly, for she knew just what she wanted. She bought the bedroom set and the kitchen furniture. She remembered Julia's words: "I should keep them both. If Priscilla chose to spend her money on fire-crackers, that is her lookout."

But now she herself had spent her money fool-

ishly, and if Turner had thought, as Julia did, that nobody who had made an unwise investment ought to have anything given her, she would never have had the dear paper-doll furniture. So she kept the kitchen set, and sent the bedroom set to Priscilla.

August.

LITTLE MISS ROBINSON CRUSOE.

In August, Molly went to the seashore with her aunt Mary and Ruth and Turner. The Bensons had taken a cottage there for six weeks. As it was a very small cottage, and they were not a very small family, they could not all be there at once; and besides, somebody had to stay at home with Molly's papa until his vacation.

The cottage was close by the sea, and there was a beach where Molly could dig with her shovel, and where she could go in bathing with the others, in her little red bathing-dress. It was all pleasant enough, but there were times when she was very lonely, for all her life she had had a child to play with, and now there was nobody, not even Flora. She used to look wistfully at the children on the beach, and tell her aunt Mary about them.

"None of them are the right size," she would say. "They are either too big or too little; but

there was a sweet one in the water to-day. She was very young, not more than four; but she would be better than nothing. Can't you ask her mamma if if I may play with her?"

"I don't know her mamma, Molly."

"Can't you find some little girl the right age, Aunt Mary?"

"I can't go about like the town crier, asking if anybody has a little girl six years old who could play with my niece Molly."

Molly laughed.

"There are a great many little girls who don't have any child to play with. Think of poor Priscilla," said Miss Benson. "Suppose you and I go to the beach and try to find some of those pretty shells. Don't you think that I am almost as nice as a little girl, Molly?"

"You are different. I love you best, but you don't dig wells and play house. You just read your book and say, 'Don't get your feet wet, Molly Benson.'"

Molly and her aunt went over to the long beach beyond the bathing beach, and they were soon so busy picking up shells that Molly forgot to wish for a child. It was such a beautiful day that one could not but be happy. The sky was blue, and the sea

was bluer still, and there was enough wind to make little waves, just the right size for a little girl, and there was a great deal of brown seaweed on the beach, and there were so many shells that Molly began to dance with delight. They were all of one variety, but some were pale cream color, and others were a brighter yellow. The most remarkable thing about them was that each shell had a small hole at one end. They seemed made on purpose for a little girl to string together. On the whole, Molly had a pleasant afternoon, although her aunt grew tired of looking for shells after a time, and sat down on the sand and put up her red sunshade and took out her book. Molly hated that book, for it was always appearing just as she was beginning to have a nice time. To-day she had not seen it, for it had been concealed in her aunt's brown shopping-bag. Molly could not understand how any one could want to read when it was possible to pick up shells and dig deep wells in the sand. She had never been away from her mamma so long before, and she missed her sadly, for she was one of those grown people who seem exactly like a little girl, and so did Ruth when she had any time to give to Molly, but at present she and Turner were very busy, for they had a great many friends who invited them to take long sails or

to play tennis. Molly could not go on sails because it made her seasick, and nobody seemed to remember how much she liked to play tennis in her own way.

One afternoon, Ruth found her crying. "Why, you poor little dear, what is the matter?" she asked.

"Turner does n't want me to play tennis with him and Frank," she sobbed. "But I would have picked up the balls for them so nicely; and Aunt Mary says you won't want to be bothered with me, and that I may go to the post-office with her when she finishes her letters. I don't want to go to the post-office! It is n't a pretty walk! She told me I ought to be thankful I was at the seashore, for so many children can't go there, but I 'm not glad one bit. The seashore is n't any use if you have n't anybody to play with, and your brother is cross, and you can't go to the beach, but have to take a walk in the dusty, hot road to the horrid post-office. She says I am a naughty girl. Oh, dear, I want to go home to papa and mamma and Flora."

"I will go to the beach with you, Molly," said Ruth, "if Aunt Mary does n't mind."

Molly stopped crying and her face brightened.

"Run and tell her that I will take care of you

until tea-time, and that she can have an 'afternoon out.'"

Molly ran off, and came back presently. "She says I may go! She says I may go!" she cried, clapping her hands.

"I suppose I may as well take a book," Ruth suggested.

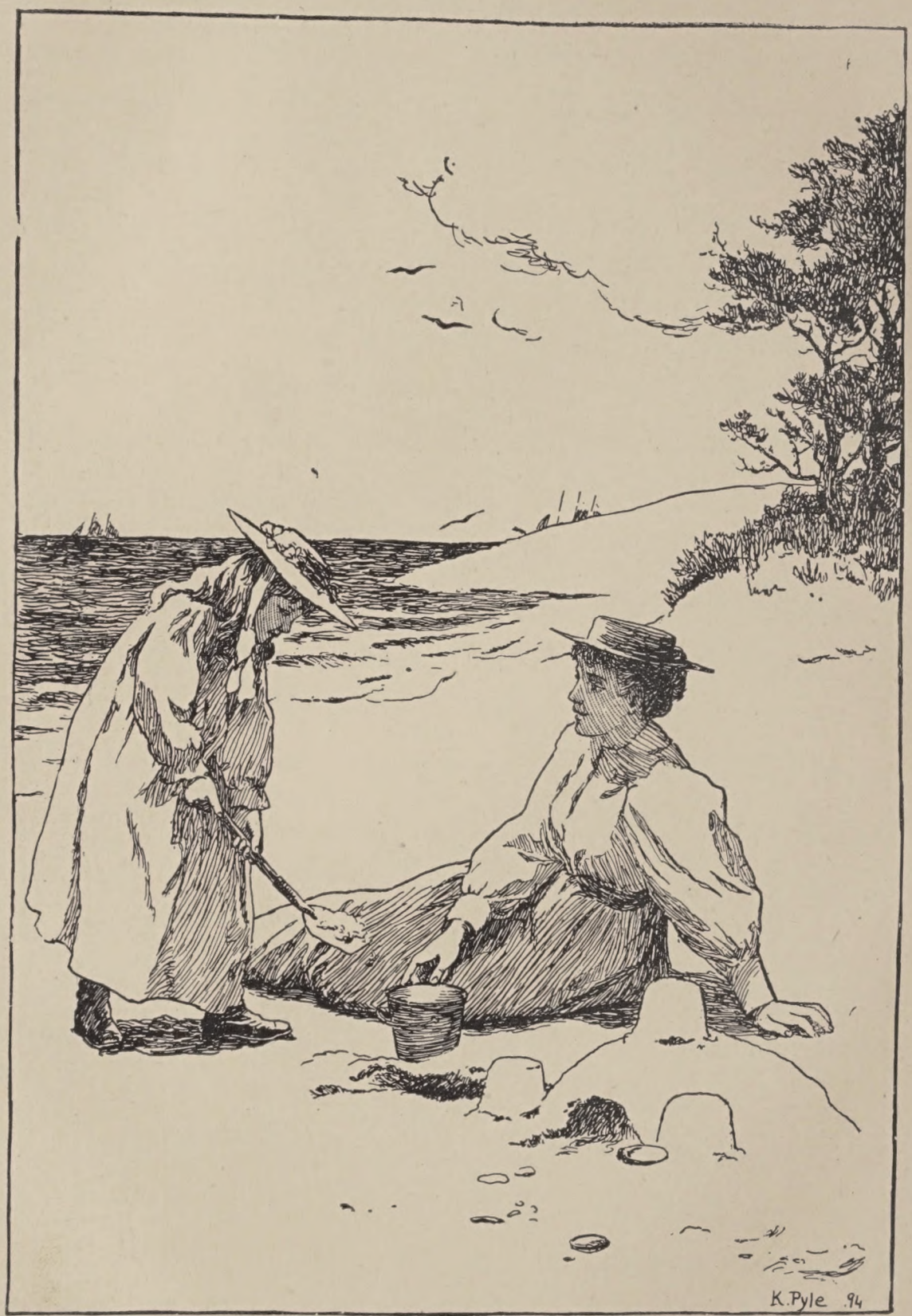
"Oh, please don't; you might lose it, you know."

Ruth laughed. "I am afraid you are getting spoiled," she said; but she did not take her book. It was not so many years since she had been a little girl herself, and she could remember how unhappy she was when Turner went away and she had n't anybody to play with. She and Molly walked to the long beach, and dug such deep wells that Ruth expected every moment to reach China; and they made a fort, and watched the tide rise and wash it away.

"Suppose we walk to the little desert island at the end of the beach," said Ruth at last. "I have never been there, and it looks as if Robinson Crusoe lived there."

"It is n't really an island," Molly declared.

"I know it, and I don't suppose we shall really find Robinson Crusoe; but we may as well imagine something interesting while we are about it."



DIGGING DOWN TO CHINA

The water went almost around the point that they called Robinson Crusoe's island, and when the tide was high, as it was now, only a narrow, rocky path led to it. Ruth and Molly picked their way over the stones. The white sand dune and the long, coarse green grass looked very picturesque against the blue sky.

"We ought to find a deserted hut on the other side of that sand dune," Ruth observed impressively.

When they reached the "desert island," Molly ran on ahead. "Now we will find Robinson Crusoe's house," she cried. She stopped suddenly on the other side of the sand dune. "It is here! A real little house!" she said.

There, in very truth, was a little shelter something like their summer-house in the garden at home, with a roof and a seat. On this seat there was a red parasol.

"It must be that Mrs. Robinson Crusoe lives here," said Molly, much pleased.

"Look on the floor," said Ruth.

Under the seat was a small pail, just the size of Molly's pail, and painted blue like hers, and in it was a small shovel, just the size of Molly's shovel; while in a corner of the summer-house sat a doll, a charming Paris doll, with flaxen hair and brown

eyes. She wore a pink gingham gown and a broad-brimmed white hat.

"Oh," said Molly, with a sigh of delight, "there is a little Miss Robinson Crusoe!"

"We will sit on this seat to rest," said Ruth; "I don't believe the Robinson Crusoes will mind."

Presently they saw two sail-boats coming into view, and also two tiny sail-boats, the right size for a family of dolls.

"Look, Ruth," said Molly eagerly; "see the big sail-boats and their children. Did you ever see anything so sweet as those little young, small sail-boats, exactly like the big ones! They look as if they were just hatched out."

In each of the large boats was a grave, elderly gentleman.

"I know who they are," said Ruth; "one of them is Esther Dana's father, and the other must be Mr. Townsend. They are great yachtsmen, and the little boats must be models that they are trying."

It was so exciting to watch the boats that Molly forgot all about little Miss Robinson Crusoe until the fleet went around the promontory and was lost to sight.

"I suppose we may as well go home," Ruth said, after the last sail had disappeared.

"Please can't we wait to see if Mrs. Robinson Crusoe and her little girl won't come back?" Molly begged.

A moment later, a lady and a child came into view.

"They are coming," said Molly. "They have been down to the beach to watch the boats. There *is* a little Miss Robinson Crusoe! There truly is! And she's just about as large as I am."

Ruth stepped forward to explain to the lady how they happened to be where they were. Mrs. Robinson Crusoe had a pleasant face, and she looked at the sisters with interest. Little Miss Robinson Crusoe clung to her mamma, and whispered something that Molly could not hear.

"Yes," said Mrs. Robinson Crusoe, "I will ask her."

"Are not you one of Mrs. Benson's daughters?" she inquired of Ruth, presently.

"Yes, I am Ruth, and this is Molly."

"I used to go to school with your mother. I have been trying to get to see her ever since she has been down here."

"Mamma will be delighted to see you," said Ruth, "but she will not be here until next week."

The little girl pulled her mamma's gown impa-

tiently again and whispered something, looking hard at Molly.

"Lucy is very anxious to know if Molly cannot come to play with her sometimes," said Lucy's mother.

"Molly will be very glad to play with Lucy," Ruth replied.

The children immediately made friends over the Paris doll.

"What is her name?" Molly asked.

"Grace."

"That is a pretty name. I have a Sylvia at home who looks something like her, except she has blue eyes. I only brought Jane down here, for there was n't room for my whole family, and she needed the change most. Your little pail and shovel are just like mine."

"Do you like to dig wells?" Lucy asked.

"I love it. Do you like to play house?"

"Of course I do."

"Whose little boats are those that were sailing around the point just now?" was the next question.

"One of them is my papa's, and he will sail it for us to-morrow if we like."

"Do you play house every day in this dear place?"

"Yes, with mamma. I have n't any little girl to play with, but now you have come we can keep house together."

"Molly," said Ruth, "it is getting late, we must go home."

"But I can come again to-morrow, can't I, Ruth?" Molly pleaded.

"Do let her," said Mrs. Robinson Crusoe.

"Yes, she can come if Aunt Mary does not object."

"Be sure to bring Jane to-morrow," said Lucy, as she bade Molly good-by.

The next day, Ruth took Molly to the point early in the morning. Lucy was waiting for her with Grace in her arms, and Mrs. Robinson Crusoe was sitting in the shelter reading a book. Now that Molly had a little girl to play with, it did not trouble her to have people read books.

Lucy and Molly became great friends before the morning was over, and so did Grace and Jane.

After a time, Lucy's papa came to say that he would sail his little boat if they wished.

"How lovely!" said Molly.

"Would you like to have your daughter go on a sail?" he asked Molly.

"Is there room for her?"

"Yes, there is just room; she is n't so large as Grace."

The children walked down to the beach, carrying their dolls. Mr. Robinson Crusoe put a shingle in the sand for Grace to lean against, for he said she looked delicate. He seated Jane in the little boat, and he got into a row-boat himself. There was a strong breeze, and the little boat flapped its sails as a bird might flap its wings, and started to go out to sea. The children looked on eagerly. Jane seemed to enjoy her sail immensely at first, but all at once there came a strong gust of wind, and the little boat dipped far down in the water.

"It 's going to upset," said Lucy.

"Oh dear, Jane will drown," cried Molly.

Alas! before Mr. Robinson Crusoe could reach the boat it had capsized, and poor Jane had sunk.

"Papa, you must get her," Lucy said eagerly, "she 's Molly's favorite child. She 's there, right there, under your oar."

"Of course I will get her," he called back cheerfully; "I am not going to be responsible for the death of a favorite child."

Fortunately, the accident happened so near the shore that Mr. Robinson Crusoe was able to fish Jane out. Her clothes were all bedraggled, and her

complexion, which had been poor for a long time, was ruined, but these are trifles to a mother, and Molly clasped her in her arms with great joy.

When Mrs. Robinson Crusoe saw what had happened, she said that Jane was so pale she must have fainted, and that they ought to send for the doctor. Mrs. Robinson Crusoe played that she was the doctor, and she ordered a wash to be put on Jane's face. She had her painting materials with her, for she was going to make a sketch later in the morning, so she touched Jane's complexion with the wash the doctor recommended, and she looked as beautiful as she had ever looked in her early youth.

When Turner came for Molly at noon and was shown Jane, he said that the sea air had evidently made her over.

Henceforth, every pleasant day Molly went to play with Lucy, and Miss Benson and Ruth heard no more about the lonely seashore; for a desert island is a charming spot, if the joys of the sea and the sand can be shared with a little Miss Robinson Crusoe.

September.

A FAMILY FLIGHT.

Molly and her aunt Mary came home from the seashore before the rest of the family, to take care of Molly's papa, whose vacation was over early in September.

The morning after their return, her aunt said, "There is something that I think you will like to see down cellar, Molly."

"Down cellar!" said Molly. "What can it be?"

"Guess."

"Apples?"

"No."

"Rats?"

"No, not rats."

"Something alive?"

"Something very much alive."

"Mice?"

"No."

"I can't guess," said Molly; "you will have to tell me."

"I won't tell you, but I will show you."

Miss Benson went down the steep, dark cellar stairs and Molly followed her. There was only a gray light in the cellar, although the sun was shining, for the windows were very small and high up. It was cold and damp, and Molly was glad that she did not have to live there. Her aunt went into the coal-cellar, where a barrel was standing near the window. Molly peeped over the edge, but the light was so dim that at first she merely saw something moving.

"Feel of them," said her aunt.

Molly put her hand into the barrel, but before she had touched anything, Nonesuch, who had just come running down the cellar stairs, jumped into the barrel. Molly's eyes were getting used to the light, and she cried in excitement, "They are little baby Nonesuches."

"Yes, little kittens," said her aunt.

"How many, Aunt Mary?"

"Count them and see."

"Nonesuch won't let me."

Miss Benson put Nonesuch on the cellar floor, and made her stay there while Molly counted the kittens.

"There are three of them! Oh, Aunt Mary, how lovely! A white one with a little black spot on its chin and a cunning black tail, and a yellow one, and — oh, Aunt Mary! there is a little tortoise-shell one just like its mamma! Oh, oh, Aunt Mary, it is too sweet! There will be one for Flora, when she comes home, and one for me, and one for Julia Esterhazy. May I go and get Julia now?"

"Yes, if you like."

Molly ran across the street to tell the good news to Julia.

"Guess what has happened over at our house?" she cried. "We have ever so many new people in the family."

"Do you mean that your aunt Flora and your cousin Priscilla have come to make you a visit?" Julia inquired.

"No, it is n't big people, it 's little people: a new family. Nonesuch has three baby children, and you are to have one."

Julia was almost as excited as Molly, and she ran eagerly after her across the street and down the cellar stairs.

Miss Benson followed the children, and took one kitten after another out of the barrel that Julia might get a good view of them.

"You can choose which you will have, Julia," said Molly.

"The tortoise-shell," Julia decided promptly.

Poor Molly wanted that one herself, but they were all very sweet, and she could be contented with any of them.

"They haven't got their eyes open," said Julia.

"They are very, very young," Miss Benson explained, "and it will be almost a week longer before their eyes open."

The next morning, Molly went down cellar "all by her own self" to see the kittens. She put her hand eagerly into the barrel, but to her great surprise she could feel nothing but hay; and when she looked into the barrel there was not one kitten to be seen. She put her hand as far down in the hay as she could reach, for she thought the kittens might be hidden in it, but she could not find them. She ran upstairs with the tears in her eyes and her lips trembling.

"Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary!" she said, "the kittens are lost, all of them; somebody has taken them away."

Her aunt went downstairs and looked in the barrel herself. It was too true, the kittens had vanished.

Molly sat down on a box in the cellar and began to cry.

"They were all *so* lovely," she sobbed, "but especially the dear tortoise-shell one. And now they are lost, quite lost."

"Don't cry, Molly, we shall be sure to find them," said her aunt. "Nonesuch probably did not like to have us meddle with the kittens, and it is she who has hidden them."

"Oh, I wish she would tell us where they are."

Molly ran upstairs to find Nonesuch, and taking her in her arms said, "Dear Nonesuch, won't you please show us what you have done with your children? The white one and the yellow one, but especially the dear tortoise-shell? I wouldn't hurt them for anything in the world. I love them, Nonesuch; I *love* them just as much as if I were their grandmother. Won't you please run and show me where they are?"

But Nonesuch only shut her eyes and began to purr.

"I think if we watch her we shall soon find the kittens," Molly's aunt suggested.

A few minutes later, Nonesuch went to the door at the top of the cellar stairs and began to mew.

"She wants us to let her down cellar," said

Molly, who ran to open the door. Molly and her aunt walked softly downstairs behind the pussy, and waited to see where she would go, but Nonesuch heard them coming, and as she did not want them to find her family, she stayed quietly in a corner of the cellar.

"I expect we shall have to spend the day down cellar," Molly observed gravely.

"You run upstairs and play with your dolls," said her aunt. "It is too damp for you here; and I will pretend to go away too, but really I will watch Nonesuch."

Molly ran off, but she was too excited to play with her dolls, although she told Jane and George Washington all about the dear kittens who were found yesterday only to be lost to-day. It seemed a long time before she heard her aunt come upstairs.

"Have you found them, Aunt Mary?" she asked eagerly.

"No, I can't get any clue to them; I don't believe they are in the cellar. I think Nonesuch has been playing a game of bluff with us, and I can't spend any more time looking for them."

Molly's face fell. "I wish Turner were at home," she said, "for he would find them."

"Turner is coming home this afternoon for a day

or two; but I have no doubt the kittens will turn up before he does."

Miss Benson was very busy that morning, helping Bridget preserve peaches, and so she did not think again of the kittens.

Julia came over to play with Molly, as usual, but although the two little girls hunted in every corner of the cellar and all over the shed, and although they watched Nonesuch carefully, they could find no trace of the missing family.

When Turner came home in the middle of the afternoon, Molly ran up to him and flung her arms around him.

"Dear Turner," she said, "I am so glad to get you back, for you will find my lovely family."

"I left your lovely family in a blooming condition at the seashore."

"I mean kittens, not people. Nonesuch has carried away her three dear babies, and we can't find them anywhere."

"I suppose she thinks that one cat is enough for one family. Why try to find them? Why" — but as he saw Molly's face change he added hastily, "I was only joking. I am as hungry as a wolf, for I have n't had any dinner; but after I have foraged for something to eat, I will find the kittens."

"But they may starve first," Molly objected.

"Would you rather have a starved brother, or starved kittens? Do you love them better than you love me?"

"No," Molly said, with some hesitation, "only they might die, you know, and it would n't hurt you to be a little hungry."

Turner, however, insisted upon satisfying his appetite at once; but after he had disposed of some cold beef and bread and butter and half a pie, he and Molly started on what he called "a life-saving expedition."

They went through the shed in vain, and they even explored the summer-house and looked under the piazza, but not a trace of a kitten could be found.

"It is a regular 'Family Flight,'" said Turner. "Nonesuch evidently believes with Miss Hale in change of scene for a young family. We have had our outing, and she does not want to be behind the fashion and so is taking hers."

Turner and Molly next directed their attention to the cellar, but the kittens were nowhere to be seen.

"I think they may be in the coal," Molly said, diving into it for the fifth time that day and coming out with very black hands. "If we could only find

one of them it would be some comfort; the tortoise-shell is such a darling, and besides, she belongs to Julia."

"My poor sister Molly
Is quite melancholy
Just because a small kit
Has decided to flit,"

said Turner.

Molly began to laugh. "Did you make that up your own self?" she asked.

"No; it is a translation from Ovid."

Nonesuch meanwhile had walked down the cellar stairs, for the door was open. Turner and Molly were so far away that she thought it safe to go to her starving family, so she climbed up on an old blind at the other end of the cellar. Molly happened to turn her head just in time.

"Look, Turner! Look! Where is she going? She was over there this morning, but Julia and I could n't find anything in that corner."

Molly and Turner quickly crossed the cellar. "It is almost as exciting as a game of 'Hunt the thimble,'" he remarked.

When they reached the spot where Nonesuch had been, she had jumped down on the floor and was demurely licking her paws.

"We 're warm, we 're very, very warm," said Turner.

"I'm cold."

"I mean we are very near finding them. Look here; here is a hole where the pipe used to go. Perhaps she has hidden them there. We'll go back into the other cellar, Molly, and watch her."

It was not long before they saw Nonesuch climb up on the blind again. Molly held her breath. Yes, it was really so; she was climbing into the hole. Her head was lost to sight; presently there was nothing to be seen but her tail, and then even that had disappeared.

"Now, Molly, we must find how far in she has carried the kittens. It will be very hard to get them out."

"But you *must* get them out."

"They are in between the cellar ceiling and the kitchen floor." Turner put his arm as far into the hole as he could, but he did not reach Nonesuch.

Molly's face fell. "We shall have to get a plumber to take up the kitchen floor," she stated.

"I shall have to take up some boards myself, I suppose; but are you sure you care enough about the kittens to make me take all that trouble?"

"Oh, Turner! of course I do."

"Do you love them as well as you love George Washington?"

"Yes."

"Better?"

"You are a bad boy, and I shall ask papa to take the floor up when he comes home."

"I suppose I may as well save father the trouble."

Molly followed Turner upstairs, and she and her aunt Mary and Bridget all watched him take up a board under the sink, where he expected to find the kittens. After it was up they listened, and could hear a very faint mew.

"Oh, they are there! They are there!" Molly cried.

Turner had to take up two more boards before he could reach the kittens. At last he put his arm under the floor and fished out a soft little ball of fur.

"It's the white one," said Molly, "my own dear white one! And it's alive, quite alive."

"Very much so," said Turner. "It is mewing for all it is worth."

He put in his hand once more and pulled out, not a plum, but another kitten.

"It's Flora's! It's the darling yellow one," said Molly. "Oh, Turner, you must find the tortoise-shell too."

"Here she is," and he successfully landed the third member of the family.

"They are all three alive," said Molly. "How sweet they are! I am almost glad they were lost, are n't you, Aunt Mary? for it is so nice to find them. Turner, you are just as good as a plumber."

October.

PRISCILLA THE SECOND.

When a cousin has done one the great honor of naming her bossy Molly, the least one can do is to give the dear cousin the lesser glory of a kitten for a namesake. So Molly's kitten was called Priscilla. At first this caused some confusion.

"Priscilla has her eyes open at last," Molly announced one day.

"At last!" said Turner. "I should think from your description of that young woman she had always had her eyes open."

"I mean Priscilla the kitten, of course," Molly explained impatiently.

Another day she said, "Oh, mamma! Priscilla was carried upstairs to-day by her mamma."

"Is the poor child ill?" Molly's mother asked.

"How funny you are, mamma! I mean Priscilla the kitten;" and Molly began to laugh.

"We shall have to call the kitten Priscilla the

Second, to avoid mistakes," said her mother. And Priscilla the Second she always remained after that. It was rather a long name for a small kitten, but Turner said he had no doubt that she would grow up to it, if she lived long enough.

The first day that Nonesuch brought her babies upstairs was a very exciting time. Molly and Julia were having school with Miss Benson, as they always did now in the morning. The door was partly open, and in walked Nonesuch carrying Priscilla the Second by the nape of her neck.

"Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary!" Molly cried. "See Nonesuch walk into school just as if she were a person, except she carries her baby in her mouth instead of her arms."

Nonesuch left the kitten at Miss Benson's feet, and then went down cellar and brought up the tortoise-shell kitten. She evidently thought that her children needed the advantages of school. She tried hard to bring up the third kitten, but it was a little too heavy for her. It was distracting to the lessons to have so many pupils, and so, to the children's great regret, Miss Benson would not let Nonesuch and her daughters stay.

When Molly told Turner what had happened, he made a rhyme to celebrate the occasion: —

"Nonesuch had a little kit
Whose coat was beauteous reckoned,
And everywhere that Nonesuch went
She took Priscilla Second.

"She carried her to school one day
To get an education ;
The stern Miss Benson turned her out
Because she caused elation."

The next day, something still more wonderful happened. When Molly awoke in the morning, she heard Nonesuch mewing, as usual, outside her window. She ran to open it, and in jumped pussy. She did not seem satisfied, however, but kept on mewing, and went back to the window.

"What is the matter with you?" said Miss Benson. "She wants us to see something, Molly."

Molly and her aunt Mary followed Nonesuch to the window, and looking down to the balcony below, they saw Priscilla the Second, who seemed very lonely all by her small self on the large balcony. Nonesuch had successfully carried her up the trellis, but she could not get her up the long slant of the roof to the second story.

"Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary! Please, please run down and get Priscilla the Second before she tumbles through the railings," Molly cried.

Happily, Miss Benson arrived just in time to save the little creature from an accident.

All this was in Priscilla the Second's babyhood, so to speak. She was a lovable little kitten from the first, and more like her mother in disposition than the "dear tortoise-shell," who was a small copy of her parent in looks, but who was selfish and self-willed. The yellow kitten, whom Flora named Buffy, was the largest and most enterprising of the three. He was the first to leave his mother. A comfortable home was found for him, when he was a few weeks old, with the kind expressman who had brought Nonesuch to Molly.

As soon as Nancy, the tortoise-shell kitten, was old enough to be happy away from her mamma, she went across the road to live in the big white house with Julia and her mother.

After the departure of her brother and sister, Priscilla the Second became still more intimate with her mother. Nonesuch was gradually teaching her all the things she knew herself. She showed her how to keep her pretty coat clean, and she taught her how to play, and one morning she gave her a lesson in climbing.

Julia and Molly were having their lesson in spelling in the schoolroom by the window which over-

looked the garden where the other lesson was taking place. Nonesuch was sitting in the shed watching Priscilla the Second feebly climb into the lilac bush. A tub full of water stood just below the bush. It was sunk into the ground, and was used for watering the plants by Molly's mother, and for a lake by Molly and Julia. The little kitten was so small that she found it hard to climb.

"There she goes," Molly said under her breath; "she is really beginning to climb."

"How do you spell 'tongue,' Molly?" her aunt asked for the second time. "I shall not let you children sit near the window, if you can't attend to your lessons."

Molly darted out of her seat and ran swiftly towards the door.

"Sit still, Molly Benson," her aunt commanded.

"Priscilla the Second is drowning," Molly explained, in tragic tones; and without waiting for permission, she rushed to the rescue. The poor little kitten had lost her balance, and had fallen from the bush into the tub of water. Miss Benson and Julia eagerly watched to see what would happen. Would Molly be in time? The little creature had sunk, and could not be seen. Nonesuch, however, had hastened to help her child. She braced herself

against the edge of the tub, and waited until her daughter rose to the surface of the water; then she leaned over and grasped Priscilla the Second's neck with her teeth and landed her safely on the grass. When Molly reached them, she found the kitten was quite well, only very wet, and thoroughly frightened. Molly took Priscilla the Second into the house, and there was a very long recess in school that morning.

When October began to draw to its chilly close, and it was no longer pleasant for kittens to live out-of-doors, Mrs. Benson tried to find a new home for Priscilla the Second. She heard that Patrick Riley, the man who worked for the Esterhazys, wanted a kitten for his children, and she told Molly the fact.

"But I don't want to give away my dear kitten," said Molly, "I want to keep her forever."

"Darling, we shall only have room for one cat this winter. Would you rather give up Nonesuch and keep Priscilla the Second?"

"I would rather keep both of them. It 's pretty hard if we have n't room for one cat and a small kitten in our large house."

"The poor little Rileys have n't any kitten. They had one, just as you used to have Tartar, but it died."

"They must get another of some little girl who has five or six kittens."

Mrs. Benson said no more about the departure of Priscilla the Second for a day or two, but she told Patrick that he might ask his children to come and look at her. Molly was very unhappy when she heard this. "They will want her, if they see her, mamma," she said. "They will never be contented with any other kitten."

When the three little girls arrived at the kitchen door, Bridget summoned Molly. Poor Molly held Priscilla the Second very tight in her arms, as if she were afraid that the Rileys would carry her away by main force. They were pleasant-looking children. One of them was about Molly's age, — she was the quietest and shyest of the three; another was older; and there was a younger one. The little one had on a blue coat that had once belonged to Julia.

"What is the kitten's name?" asked the oldest child.

"Priscilla the Second."

"That 's a funny name; it 's too long."

"That is her name, and if I ever give her away she has always got to be called by the whole of it, *Priscilla the Second*."

"It 's a very pretty name," the youngest child hastened to say.

"What is your name?" inquired Molly.

"Her name is Katie," said the oldest girl, "and this is Lizzie, and I am Annie."

"Do you like cats, Katie?"

"We love them," Annie replied.

The little Katie meanwhile was stroking Priscilla the Second's fur in an ecstasy of delight. "What a beauty she is," she murmured. "Dear, darling kitty;" and she put her cheek down to the pussy's soft fur.

Molly's heart sank.

"What bright eyes she has," said Annie. "And look, Katie, at her dear little black tail, and the rest of her as white as a snow-drift."

"Except for the black spot on her chin," said Katie.

Molly felt still more unhappy when she saw that every beauty of her pet was being discovered by the sharp eyes of the little Rileys.

"I should think it would be very easy to get kittens where you live," she hazarded, "there are so many children."

"We've moved up to a house all by itself, where there are n't any neighbors," Annie explained. "And where we used to live there are n't any pretty kittens, they are mostly black or gray."

"Oh."

"I never saw such a pretty kitten," said Katie.

"There never was such a pretty kitten," said Lizzie, speaking for the first time.

"Would n't you rather have a doll than the kitten?" Molly asked desperately. "I could n't give up Jane, or George Washington, or Sylvia, or the Princess, but I would give each of you one of my dear smaller dolls."

Lizzie evidently wavered, and Molly grew hopeful, but Annie and Katie remained firm. "We 'd rather have the kitten, for it 's alive," Annie decided.

"Come, Molly; your tea is ready," said Mrs. Benson. "Say good-by to the children."

"Good-by," said Molly, hugging Priscilla the Second tighter than ever, and trying to forget the longing glances that the Rileys cast upon her.

That night, after her mamma had put Molly to bed, the little girl called to her as she was leaving the room. She had been very sober all the evening, and it was evident that something weighed on her mind.

"Do you suppose that Annie and Lizzie and Katie would give Priscilla the Second enough to eat, mamma?" she inquired.

"I am sure they would, dear."

"But if they are quite poor, they may not have enough for people and a kitten too."

"They always have enough to eat, and it takes very little to feed a cat."

"Mamma."

"Yes, darling."

"I wish those children had n't come here."

"Why, dear?"

"Because they seem to want Priscilla the Second so very, very much, and I can't give her up, I can't, I can't!"

"Suppose your cat had died, and you had very few playthings; and suppose you lived in a lonely place away from other children; don't you think you would care more for Priscilla the Second than a little girl could who had a great many playthings, and ever so many neighbors, and one cat already?"

"No, I don't," Molly said stoutly.

"Good-night, Molly."

"Good-night, mamma."

For three days Molly looked very serious indeed. Julia wondered what could be the matter, and Miss Benson was afraid that she was going to be ill. Towards the end of the third day she said to her mamma, "I suppose those children have got to have

Priscilla the Second. Annie and Katie came to see her again yesterday, and Patrick told Julia that they were 'clean gone' over her. If she must go, I'd rather have her go right off. Can Julia and I take her there this afternoon in a basket? It will be *some* comfort if I can carry her there myself."

"Yes, dear, if your aunt Mary or Ruth will go with you."

Miss Benson and the two little girls set forth with Priscilla the Second that afternoon. Molly carried the basket all the way. It was a long walk to the Rileys' house, for they lived at the other end of the town. On the way they met Miss Sylvia, who had just come back from the mountains.

"Where are you all going?" she asked.

When they told her, she said she would like to join the procession. She and Miss Benson walked on ahead, for they had a great deal to talk about, as they had not seen each other since June.

There was a large field opposite the Rileys' house that was used as a cow pasture in summer. Molly thought that it must be even more fun to play there than in the garden at home, for it was so much bigger, and besides, a little brook ran through it, which would make a delightful river to sail boats in or span with bridges. The Rileys' house was very

small, but this made it all the more sociable. The kitchen seemed to be the parlor and the dining-room too, and Molly thought it was a very nice arrangement, because the little girls would never have to be careful of the furniture. Annie and Lizzie and Katie were running about the room barefooted.

"Why don't you wear your shoes and stockings?" Julia asked.

"Sure, miss, I want to save their shoes and stockings for school," Mrs. Riley replied.

"I wish mamma would let me take off my shoes and stockings every afternoon," Molly said.

The three little girls and two older boys and a toddling baby boy all looked with interest at Molly and her basket.

"Guess what I 've got here?" she asked.

"Is it — is it the kitten?" Katie demanded breathlessly.

Before Molly could reply, Priscilla the Second answered the question herself by giving a long, wailing "Miauw."

The faces of the children were so radiant that Molly felt somewhat comforted.

"It *is* the kitten," said Katie rapturously. "It is Priscilla the Second."

November.

A THANKSGIVING DINNER.

The Bensons were to dine with Mrs. Benson's mother, in Boston, on Thanksgiving Day. She always left New Hampshire just before Thanksgiving. This year Priscilla and her mamma were to be there too.

Molly took cold a few days before Thanksgiving, and so she could not go to Boston with the others. Her mother stayed at home with her, but in spite of this, the little girl could not help crying when she saw the rest of the family going out of the door.

"Poor Molly," said Flora, "I would stay with you, if it would make you feel any better."

"I will bring you home a nice, large orange," said her father.

"And I will bring you some candy," Ruth promised.

"I will eat enough turkey for both you and myself," said Turner generously.

"Oh, dear," said Molly, after she and her mother were left alone, "why should I have such a dreadful cold just at Thanksgiving time, when I wanted to go to grandmamma's *so* much?"

"We must try to have a nice little Thanksgiving all by ourselves, Molly. Suppose we stop and count up all the things we have to be thankful about."

"There is George Washington," said Molly, brightening, "and there is dear Nonesuch."

"Suppose we let Nonesuch eat her Thanksgiving dinner with us?" suggested Molly's mamma.

"Can we truly have her? What fun!"

Nonesuch was not usually allowed to come into the dining-room, but Mrs. Benson thought that it would do no harm to give her her dinner there just this once. Nonesuch rubbed against Molly, and began to purr in a pleased way, when she found herself in the room.

Molly and her mother had their dinner of tomato-soup, turkey, and cranberry-sauce and mashed potato, on top of the table; and dear little Nonesuch had her dinner of tomato-soup, turkey-bones, and potato and bread, under the table.

As they were finishing their turkey, the doorbell rang, and Bridget brought in something wrapped in

white paper, which she put on the table in front of Molly.

"Miss Sylvia Russell has sent you this, Miss Molly," she announced.

"Oh, then it is something very nice, I know."

On the outside of the paper was written: —

"For my dear Molly, from Miss Sylvia, who is so sorry that her little friend has to stay at home on Thanksgiving Day."

Molly undid the bundle eagerly, and saw a tin dish.

"What is it?" she asked blankly.

"It is a mould of ice-cream, and Bridget can take it into the kitchen and turn it out."

"Ice-cream! How perfectly lovely! How do you suppose Miss Sylvia knew that ice-cream is my favorite dessert?"

Presently Bridget brought the ice-cream in on a platter.

"It is a lion, mamma! It is almost too pretty to eat!"

"It will melt, if you don't eat it. But here are some verses. We will read them, and see what Miss Sylvia says about it;" and Mrs. Benson read: —

"I hope you will welcome this lion, my dear,
I hope you will welcome this lion ·
He is gentle and kind,
And soft-hearted, you 'll find.
Pray eat him, and see if you like him, my dear,
Pray eat him ; his name is Orion.

"They tell us that lions will eat us, my dear,
They talk of the danger of lions ;
But those who speak so
Have no knowledge, I know,
Of the singular breed of Orions, my dear,
Of the singular breed of Orions.

"So eat him and grow like Orion, my dear,
As strong and as brave as Orion ;
And if he should seem
Naught but common ice-cream,
Remember he 's *really* a lion, my dear,
Remember he 's really a lion."

"Orion is a very funny name for him, I think," said Molly. "I wonder why Miss Sylvia called him Orion?"

"Orion was a mighty giant. I suppose she called him that because he was such a strong lion. You may help to him, Molly."

"Which part do you like best, mamma, his head or his tail?"

"I will take a small slice of his mane, thank you."

"I am going to take a leg and the wishbone," said Molly. "But perhaps lions don't have wishbones? Oh! It is vanilla! My favorite kind! How lovely Miss Sylvia was to send me such nice ice-cream! such a nice lion, I mean."

After Molly and her mother had finished their ice-cream, they had some nuts and raisins, and while they were eating them, the little girl looked out of the window and saw a gray squirrel scamper up a tree.

"Mamma," she said, "don't you suppose that dear squirrel would like to have some Thanksgiving dinner too? Would n't he eat some of our nuts?"

"I am sure he would, Molly. I think if I were to put some nuts in a basket outside the window on the window-sill, he would be very glad to come and eat his Thanksgiving dinner."

Molly clapped her hands with delight, and Mrs. Benson filled a small basket with nuts. Then she threw a shawl over her head and went out into the woodshed. Molly watched, and presently saw her come to the outside of the window with a plank, which she placed so that one end of it rested on the window-sill and the other end on the ground.

"That 's the squirrel's road, is n't it?" she called with glee. "Now he can walk right up to the basket, can't he?"

Mrs. Benson came back into the house presently, and she and Molly waited eagerly to see what would happen. Pretty soon the squirrel ran down the tree, and once more they saw something gray with a bushy tail whisk across the lawn.

"He is coming here! He is! He is!" cried Molly, running to the window.

"Be careful. Stand back, Molly, you have frightened him."

The little squirrel had paused to look up at the house with his bright eyes, while his sharp ears were on the alert for any sound. He saw Molly come towards the window, and being a prudent and timid little squirrel, he scampered across the lawn and ran up the oak-tree in the garden.

"Oh, dear!" said Molly. "I am afraid he won't come back any more. Who would have thought that *anything* could be afraid of a small girl like me?"

"Have patience, and keep still. If you do, I am pretty sure he will come back, for he has seen the nuts."

So Molly retreated to the sofa in the corner, and kept very, very still, scarcely daring to breathe. By and by the squirrel came down from the tree and advanced cautiously to the window. He cocked

his head on one side, and looked and listened. He heard no sound, and he did not see Molly and her mamma, so he came up the plank to the window-sill. Finally he took a nut in his two little paws. Mrs. Benson and Molly were so much interested that they had forgotten that somebody else was watching the squirrel, and before they could stop her, Nonesuch had climbed up in a chair by the window and dashed one of her paws wildly against the window-pane.

"She wants to catch the squirrel," said Molly. "Naughty Nonesuch!"

The squirrel had scurried away in great haste, and Nonesuch looked very much surprised when she found she could not catch him, for she had forgotten that the window was shut.

"Naughty, naughty Nonesuch!" Molly said again. "Or perhaps she is n't naughty. Perhaps she thinks squirrels are rats with furs on, because it is cold weather."

Molly and her mother and Nonesuch watched a long time before the squirrel came again. Nonesuch was in the chair that was close to the window. She had learned that it was shut, and so had the squirrel, or he would never have ventured back, as he did after a time. He ran up the board and stood

on the window-sill, looking in triumph at Nonesuch.

"Don't you wish you could catch me?" he seemed to say; "but you can't, on account of that window."

He came again and again for a nut, taking one at a time, and then scampering up into the oak-tree to eat it, and Nonesuch watched him patiently. He always cocked his head on one side and looked at her saucily. He came so many times that at last they began to suspect that he was not always the same squirrel.

"I can't tell whether he is many, or whether he is only one," said Molly, "but I think he is at least two, because sometimes he is very fat, and sometimes he is quite thin."

"He *is* two," she exclaimed presently, in excitement. "The fat one and the thin one are coming together."

"Look at Nonesuch, Molly."

It was altogether too much for the self-control of poor Nonesuch to see two squirrels together on the window-sill. She made a frantic dash with her paw against the glass, and looked very unhappy when she did not succeed in catching one, for she had forgotten again about the window.

"Look at the fat one. He is a greedy thing! He won't let the thin one have a single nut. You mean thing! Look quick, mamma! He is so greedy that he has upset the basket."

It was too true, the basket had been overturned, and a shower of nuts descended upon the snow. A few moments later, to Molly's intense delight, four squirrels appeared, as if by magic.

"The thin one has told all his friends about the nuts, I am sure he has," said Molly. "See how angry the fat one is to find that so many squirrels have found out his secret! He is trying to drive them away! There are nuts enough for them all, so why does he mind? How they whisk their tails! It seems as if they were all tail, mamma."

When the last nut was gone, Molly and her mother and Nonesuch regretfully left the window.

"It has been a very nice Thanksgiving," said Molly. "Lions and squirrels are almost as interesting as Priscilla and grandmamma."

December.

THE RILEYS' CHRISTMAS TREE.

The day before Christmas, something very pleasant happened: Priscilla and her mother came to make the Bensons a long visit.

When Molly saw her dear cousin once more, she flung her arms around her, and hugged and kissed her as if she could never leave off.

"You have got on a pretty blue dress," Priscilla observed, looking at her critically, "and you are taller, but I shall love you just the same."

"I must show you Nonesuch," Molly said, running to find her favorite. She picked her up and held out her right front paw, that Priscilla might shake hands with her.

"This is your cousin Priscilla, Nonesuch," she said gravely.

Priscilla and Nonesuch shook hands, and became fast friends at once.

Priscilla was then shown all Molly's dolls. She

thought that George Washington had rather a conceited look, but she supposed it was natural, as he was the only brother among so many sisters. This made Molly very unhappy, but she was pleased to have Priscilla take a great fancy to Jane. She said she put one at ease. She was rather in awe of the Princess and Sylvia.

Later, at dinner, she was very much afraid of Molly's aunt Mary and of her papa, and of Turner and Flora; but she liked Ruth, because, as she expressed it, she was a "grown-up Molly."

After dinner, Julia came over, and although Priscilla did not have a word to say to her at first, the three little girls grew very sociable before many minutes passed.

"Something nice is going to happen this afternoon," Molly confided to Priscilla. "Miss Sylvia is going with Flora, and Julia, and me, to take some Christmas presents to Patrick's children."

"He is the man who makes our fires," Julia explained.

"We went to his house," Molly proceeded, "to take Priscilla the Second."

"That 's the kitten."

"She knows it 's the kitten, Julia. They did n't seem to have anything to play with (not that it mat-

ters much, for one can always pretend); so Aunt Mary suggested that we should dress some dolls for them. She and Miss Sylvia and Ruth dressed them mostly, but we children helped, and we sewed up some muslin bags this morning in school, and filled them with candy. Turner gave us the candy."

"And we are going to take some stockings, and mittens, and picture books," Julia added.

"Flora and Julia and I bought the picture books with our own money," Molly went on; "and you can come with us, Priscilla, and carry one of the dolls. Aunt Mary and Ruth have to stay at home to get our Christmas tree ready. I must show you the dolls," and she opened the closet door with pride. "We haven't done them up yet. Here they are, all in a row. Aren't they sweet?"

The three dolls, like the Riley children, were of different sizes, making one think of a flight of steps. There was a strong family resemblance between them, for they all had flaxen hair and blue eyes. The oldest was dressed in red, and wore a red hood, which Molly's mamma had crocheted; the middle one was in blue, and had on a blue crocheted hood; and the youngest was in pink, and wore a pink hood.

"I wish they were all three mine," Priscilla said enviously.

"We have an engine and some cars for the little boy," said Molly, "and Miss Sylvia is going to give the big boys some jackknives. Here she comes now."

"So this is Priscilla," Miss Sylvia said cordially. "I feel as if we ought to be old friends, because I have heard so much about you from Molly."

Priscilla looked hard at Miss Sylvia, and she did not wonder that Molly thought her like a fairy princess.

"We will do the dolls up in tissue paper," said Miss Sylvia. "Can't you find some, Molly, without troubling your aunt Mary? The other things are all ready, I see."

After the dolls were equipped for their journey, Miss Sylvia said: —

"You can carry the largest doll, Julia, because you are the oldest; and Priscilla can carry the middle-sized doll, and Molly can take the smallest."

Miss Sylvia carried the other presents in a basket, and Flora took some oranges and the bags of candy in another basket.

When they reached the Rileys' house, Miss Sylvia knocked on the door, and Mrs. Riley opened it.

"Oh, and is it you, Miss Sylvia?" she exclaimed. "Sure and you look like the blessed Saint Elizabeth."

"We have come to see the children," Miss Sylvia explained.

"They are all out in the field making believe have a Christmas tree. I told them it was foolishness, for they have n't nothing to speak of to put on it."

Molly's eyes shone, and she ran off very fast in the direction of the field. How charming it would be to put real presents on a make-believe Christmas tree! For if it is always pleasant to "pretend," there is a certain satisfaction that comes from real things.

At first Molly could not see the Rileys, but at last she discovered them in the farther corner of the vacant lot, behind some hemlock-trees.

The snow had come early that year, and the sleet had fallen afterwards. There was a hard crust everywhere in the meadow, so that little people and big people too could walk on it as if it were ice.

When Molly and her friends reached the spot where the Rileys were playing, they became speechless with admiration, for before their astonished eyes was a whole miniature village. The buildings were all white, but so they often are in New England villages. Each house was made of blocks quar-

ried out of the snow. There were open spaces for the doors and windows, as there are in blockhouses, and the children had put branches of hemlock inside, to look like green blinds and green doors. The roofs were all flat; they were made of pieces of wood about as large as the cover of a starch-box, put across the tops of the houses, and then covered with a thin layer of crust. Some diminutive snow chimneys crowned these structures. As for the church, it was very imposing, for it had a high tower and two wide doors. It stood near the common, a charming little round inclosure, fenced in by a hedge of tiny hemlock branches. The schoolhouse stood on one side of it and the village store on the other.

"I have never seen anything so beautiful," said Molly. "Did you make it yourselves?"

"Tom and Pat helped us."

"They were your architects, I suppose," said Miss Sylvia.

Tom and Pat, meanwhile, had retreated to the other end of the field.

The children were so entranced by the snow village that at first they did not notice the Christmas tree, but at length Priscilla pointed it out.

"Is n't it beautiful?" she asked.

"A real, live, out-of-doors Christmas tree, growing in the fields. How perfectly lovely!" cried Molly.

"It is n't half so pretty as the house ones," cried Annie. "We did n't have any of them glistening balls, and we had to put on real snow instead of the make-believe kind."

"I think real snow is a great deal prettier," said Miss Sylvia.

It was a touching little Christmas tree, for it had tried so hard to copy its drawing-room sisters. The Rileys did not realize how pretty it looked out-of-doors, under the blue sky, with the real snow on its branches. There was n't much else on them, to be sure, but there was a little of the crinkly barley candy that comes at Christmas time, tied on with some bits of bright ribbon; and there was a toy watch for the little boy; while some kindergarten mats that Katie had made at school, and some Christmas cards that had been given to the children the year before, helped to brighten up the sombre green branches. To add to the gayety of the scene, Priscilla the Second was frisking about, looking as white as the snow, and wearing a pretty blue ribbon around her neck.

"Suppose you children run off to the other end

of the field for a few minutes," said Miss Sylvia to the little Rileys, "and we will call you when we want you."

After they had gone, Miss Sylvia and the children decorated the Christmas tree.

"I wish we had known that they were going to have a Christmas tree, and we would have brought some glistening balls," said Miss Sylvia.

"The candy bags and the other things will make it look very pretty," said Flora.

They tied the bags of candy to the branches of the tree.

"What shall we do with the oranges?" asked Molly.

"We 'll put them in a ring around the bottom of the trunk of the tree," Julia decided.

So they arranged them in what Miss Sylvia called a fairy ring around the trunk, and then they hung the picture books over the branches.

"What shall we do with the mittens and stockings?" Flora asked in despair.

"We 'll put them on the ends of the branches as if they were hands and feet," Miss Sylvia replied.

They left the train of cars just outside the village, and they seated the three dolls in front of three houses in the village.

"What can we do with the jackknives?" Molly inquired.

"We will put one jackknife in the lap of the doll in red, and the other in the lap of the doll in blue," said Julia.

When everything was ready, Julia and Molly ran to call the children.

"Ask the boys to come too," said Miss Sylvia.

Tom and Pat, however, had disappeared.

The little girls and the small Harry were very glad to follow Julia and Molly. When they saw the Christmas tree, they were as much overwhelmed with admiration as Molly had been when she saw the snow village. They did not say anything at first, but their eyes danced. At last Katie discovered the dolls. She gave a little cry of delight.

"There are three of them."

"Yes," said Molly. "A big one, and a middle-sized one, and a little one. The youngest is for you."

"We made some of the clothes ourselves," Julia added proudly.

"The jackknives are for Tom and Pat," said Flora.

Katie, meanwhile, had seized the doll in pink, and clasped her in her arms as tenderly as if she

had been alive. "What pretty hair she has," she said, "and such blue eyes. Sure and they shut up! Look, Annie, when you hold her this way they shut up."

"She 's asleep," said Molly.

Annie was rapturously examining the doll in red, and Lizzie had taken blissful possession of the one in blue. The little boy had discovered the train of cars, and was already beginning to play with them.

"It will soon be dark," said Miss Sylvia, "and we must be going home, for we have a long walk."

Molly looked wistfully behind her. "I never saw anything so beautiful as this snow village," she said.

"Oh, that is nothing," Annie replied. "Any one can have a snow village. Snow is plenty."

Molly meant to try to make one in the garden at home, but she was sure that it would not be so beautiful.

"We thank you very much for all the things," said Annie shyly.

"We must really go now, Molly," Miss Sylvia insisted.

"Yes," added Flora, "we must get home in time for our own Christmas tree."

"It won't be like this one," said Molly regretfully

"Nothing can be as beautiful as this." She wished that their Christmas tree was to be out-of-doors under the blue sky, with real snow on the branches, and that they could arrange it themselves, while Annie wished that she could have a Christmas tree in the house like Molly.

"We've had a lovely time," said Molly. "I never had such a lovely time before."

"Neither did we," Annie returned. "Good-by, and I wish you all a Merry Christmas."

When Molly was Six