



Kitty Love
Anna Alice Chapin



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KITTY LOVE



And then everyone sat and waited for the kettle
to boil (*page 22*)

KITTY LOVE

BY

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

AUTHOR OF

"Humpty Dumpty,"

"The Now-A-Days Fairy Book," etc.

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ONE JULY AFTERNOON

We loved the game, the hearth-stone flame,
The little beasts and butterflies,
And knew that all was ours to claim,—
The whole world and the skies.

Oh, golden ways of summer days,
When songs were sung and stories told,—
And every rainbow's gleaming rays
Led to a Pot of Gold!

The Children's Pilgrimage.

CHAPTER I

ONE JULY AFTERNOON

“I LOVE things so!” said Kitty Love, for the hundredth time. And of course when she said it, both Tad and Midge began to laugh at her, and her big brother Chris—(he was a whole year older)—said, “Wait till you get to Decimals and Fractions. Maybe you’ll love them too!”

“Courth the will!” cried Taddie shrilly.

“Kitty loveth everything,” lisped little Midge, whose real name was Margaret, of course, though everyone but Mamma had forgotten the fact long ago.

Kitty herself smiled around at them, not a bit bothered by being made fun of.

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“Yes!” she said, cheerfully matter-of-fact, “I really think I do love everything!”

“Well, that’s a silly no-account girl’s idea!” declared Christopher, from the scornful heights of eleven.

“Race you to the boathouse!” retorted Kitty promptly. And they set off, followed by the two smaller children, shrieking encouragement and falling over their own feet in their excitement.

“There!” gasped Kitty triumphantly, as she beat her brother by a full yard.

“Good for you!” he said generously. “Kitty, you can run—even if you are *nothing but a girl!*”

Kitty beamed upon him, and peace reigned. It was her one way of revenging herself, and a harmless way,—take it all in all.

When she and Chris did not agree about something, she made him race with her, and

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nearly always beat him. Being human, even if she was sweet-natured, she liked to win, and Chris was too good a sport to mind, so it was really a very pleasant arrangement all around.

I wish I could carry you to Merry Vale, that lovely, warm, good-smelling afternoon, and let you play with the four Love children,—the “Cupids,” their Uncle Mark called them jokingly, because that’s what the young “loves” are called in books,—but as I can’t quite do that, I shall have to tell you about them instead. Christopher was the oldest, and eleven. He was a fair, sturdy, freckled lad, hot-tempered and kind-hearted. And, though he was not particularly neat, nor very clever, nor absolutely good and obedient all the time, he was a dear boy, just the same, and people were very fond of him.

Kitty was next,—not quite ten, and such a merry, happy, loving little person! Uncle

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Mark always said that there was something about the name Love that had done it, but whatever the reason was, she simply bubbled over with tenderness and affection and sweetness. I don't mean that she was perfect. She had quite a little temper of her own, and she was a bit lazy, and she liked to doze and day-dream in the hay-loft or under the willows better than picking up her clothes off the nursery floor, or carrying baskets of soup and sugar and tea to the poor people of the neighbourhood! But she *did* pick up her clothes—because she was too fond of Nurse to let her do it all by herself, and she *did* carry the poor peoples' baskets because it pleased Mamma, and of course she adored Mamma.

Kitty was not really pretty, but she had lovely blue-grey eyes very soft and bright and wide-open, and a quantity of light brown hair, fine and silky, which simply would not stay

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tidy! Now do you think you can see Kitty? If you really knew her, you and she would love each other, you may be sure!

And so we come to Tad and Midge! They were twins, you see, so when you describe one you really describe the other. They were only five years old apiece, and they were both fat and buncy and round, and like really truly Cupids, and they had very fair hair that curled a little and stood up on end all over their heads, and they were very busy and very jolly, and very much amused by everything in the world!

Uncle Mark said that they were so short that their names had to be extra short too, and so they were! Midge was short for Madge, and Madge was short for Margaret. And Tad was short for—what do you think?—The Tadpole! And both were short for Theodore. Of course Mother stopped at “Madge,” but she said “Tad” like everyone else. You simply

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couldn't say "Theodore" to anything as small as Tad! Except of course when you were christening him, when people do the most dreadful things in the way of names anyway!

And now for Merry Vale! It was a dear, roomy, comfortable, old farmhouse,—down in a valley, as you might guess from the name—with an apple orchard and a grape arbour, and a rather messy little garden where the children all had plots to take care of which they planted and cared for themselves—or didn't, just as it happened.

Mr. Love was a writer and not very strong, and he had been ordered to the country to live when Kitty and Chris were only six and seven, and the twins just babies. So it had been that they had spent four long years there taking lessons from their father and mother—and from Uncle Mark when he was with them,—and the rest of the time running wild over

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the rambling old place. They had been very happy, in spite of one thing which sometimes troubled them in a dim sort of way, without their putting it into words to themselves.

Don't you know when you wake in the morning of the day you are going to the dentist's, and can't remember immediately what it is that makes you so sad and scared? It's a sort of black cloud hanging over you, a feeling that something horrid is happening or going to happen, but for a few moments you just lie and scowl and wonder what's wrong. Till suddenly—presto! you remember, and dig down into the bed-clothes again and try to pretend to think about going to sleep again! Well, it was something of that feeling, only very, very faint and vague and indistinct, which the four Love children had now and then, and I must tell you, before we go on, what the feeling came from.

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It wasn't only Papa's health which had brought him to the country. Kitty and Chris could just barely remember something else. Papa had been in business with Mamma's father, and some dreadful thing had happened—the children did not know what. But there had been a quarrel, and their father had left Mamma's father for ever, and now he—their grandfather—was never spoken of in the household. The children often wondered what "grand-people" were like, for their Papa's parents had died many years before and Mamma's father and mother had never even seen their grandchildren. What the quarrel was the four children didn't know. They puzzled about it, and as I say they always felt the shadow of it, for Papa and Mamma were often grave, and seemed to be thinking of something that was very, very mournful. It was sadly mixed up, and Kitty had been determined for

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ages to ask her mother about it. She confided this intention to Christopher that very afternoon after the race to the boathouse, while they were resting on the landing platform, swinging their legs over the water.

You must understand, before we go any further, that Merry Vale was on the edge of a delightful little river that moved along through the Valley. It was not a very wide river but it was deep enough for boating, and just at Merry Vale it widened out into a sort of little bay or pond, and that was where the boathouse was, and a rowboat and canoe, and where, one of those fine days when they got rich, they were to have a motor boat!

“Chris,” Kitty said seriously, “Mamma got a letter this morning, and it made her cry!”

“Made Mummy cry!” Chris was hotly indignant. “I’d like to see whoever it was that wrote it—that’s all!”

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And he doubled up a sunburned fist and looked fierce.

“Hush!” remonstrated Kitty. “It—it was—Oh, Chrissy, I think it was from our Grandmother!” This was in a tone of awe, for as I have told you their mother’s parents were never spoken of in Merry Vale.

Christopher’s jaw dropped.

“No!” he exclaimed, greatly impressed. “How do you know that, Kit?”

The twins approached at this point and began to tell with excited shrieks of a turtle, and a frog with six legs which they’d just seen down the stream.

“Don’t be sillies, you two,” said Christopher impatiently. “They couldn’t have six legs. Frogs don’t!”

“But they *did* have thikth!” — howled Midge.

“Go back and count them again!” suggested

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Kitty tactfully, and got rid of them for another five minutes.

“Well, go on,” said Chris, taking a handful of pebbles from a pocket in his corduroy knickerbockers, and beginning to shy them over the pond water.

“Well!” said Kitty, feeling important and excited—“Mamma took up the letter at breakfast—you were late so you didn’t see!—and she gave a little queer sound, as though she were going to cry—only she didn’t, you know—”

“Had she tears running down?” asked Chris, very solemnly.

“No; I tell you she didn’t cry at all, only was going to. I know what I mean anyway, if *you* don’t—and she said to Papa—‘Oh, Jack,—it’s from Mother!’ And *he* said, ‘My poor Katherine, I hope, oh,—I do hope it is a kind letter!’ And he looked so anxious and so sad

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and yet so sort of excited too. You *do* know what I mean, don't you, Chris?"

"I don't know, whether I know or not!" said Chris. "But go on anyhow. Did Mother open the letter right there before you?"

Kitty looked suddenly abashed, as she shook her head.

"N—No," she said, meekly. She said, 'Run away, darling, and ask Becky for some hot muffins before Chris comes down.' And I went out."

"Pooh!" said her brother disdainfully. "Is *that* all? I thought you'd got something really exciting to tell."

"Well, so I had," cried Kitty, with some heat. "I think it's most awfully exciting—Mamma getting a letter from Grandmother! I'm sure it's not happened before in years and years and *years!*"

"'Years' is two years anyhow," said Chris,

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provokingly practical. "So 'years, and years, and years' would be six years, and it can't be as long as that."

"You're *horrid!*" exclaimed Kitty, flushing violently as she always did when she was getting ready to cry. "I thought you'd be as excited as I was, and—"

"Come on, Kitsy!" said Chris coaxingly. "Let's see which can hit that floating stick first. Here's some pebbles!"

Kitty seized some pebbles and threw them with a good aim but a bit short. Sport was breathless for about twenty minutes. The floating stick had drifted out of reach by that time, but both children felt better.

"Oh, I *love* throwing stones!" sighed Kitty.

"And I love tea and cake!" said Chris, getting up and stretching himself. "Come along, Kit! it's tea-time, and Mummy's going to have it on the lawn to-day. I heard her tell Becky

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to take the table down near the lilac bushes.”

“Oh, I love tea on the lawn,” said Kitty, springing to her feet. “And I love raspberries and cake! And I love—”

“Oh, you love everything!” said Chris in an indulgent tone.

And they scampered off toward the house.

“But,” said Kitty, pausing a little just as they came in sight of the pretty table, all silver and white among the cool green shadows, “I’m going to ask Mamma to tell me all about it one of these days!”

“Would you—really,” asked Chris doubtfully. Boy-like, such daring in a delicate and perhaps emotional matter would have been quite beyond him. He looked at Kitty with a grudging respect.

“I would!” she declared stoutly. “You’re eleven—and I’m ten—”

“You’re not,” said her brother.

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Poor Kitty gave a sigh of exasperation at such unkind and masculine exactness.

“I’m nine and nine months and two weeks,” she said, humbly. “It’s time we knew the Family Secrets!”

Before Chris could make up his mind whether to be impressed or to make fun of her, the twins were upon them from behind.

“The frog hadn’t thikth legth!” shrieked Tad.

“Of course not,” said Chris.

“Did you count them, honey?” said Kitty kindly.

“Yeth,” said Midge proudly. “We counted them theven timeth.”

“And they had four legs, didn’t they?” said Kitty, smiling down at their pink cheeks.

“No,” cried Tad excitedly.

“No,” echoed Midge—and she added—
“They had thirthteen legth.”

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“Of all the little liars!” said Chris, stopping short.

“You mustn’t say that,” Kitty quickly reproved him. “It’s just their *imagination*!”

A clear voice called to them across the lawn.

“Tea and cake, children!”

“Cake! Hurrah!” shouted Chris, and all four of them raced through the golden light of late afternoon to the table where their mother was waiting for them.

**THE TEAKETTLE AND THE FIRE
FAIRIES**

“Gutter, sputter,
Leap and flutter!”—

This is all I say.

There’s a song
Both sweet and strong
That I sang one day;
Now I only hiss and chatter,
Chuckling over every matter,
In a mocking way:

“Watch us, catch us,
Try to match us!”—

All the flamelets say!

Hear me, fear me,
Gather near me,

Hark to what I say!

Faint and low

They come and go,

My dreams of yesterday.

Once upon a star in splendour

Sang we music wild and tender,—

Oh, so far away!

“Gleam and glitter,

Fate is bitter!—”

Is all we sing to-day.

The Voice of the Fire.

CHAPTER II

THE TEAKETTLE AND THE FIRE FAIRIES

MRS. LOVE was a very small woman, with a delicate pale face that often looked a little sad, and smooth, fair hair. She was so frail and sweet and gentle that everyone, even her children, longed to shield her from every trouble. Kitty especially had a perfect passion of protecting tenderness for her mother. Now, as Mrs. Love sat there in a cool grey linen dress, in the shadow of the giant lilac shrubs, she looked altogether too young and pretty to be the mother of the four strong and high-spirited young creatures crowding around her. Kitty was rather like her, only Kitty's skin was tanned several shades darker, and her

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hair, too, was not quite so fair—and not nearly so neat! Kitty's blue gown was tumbled and torn, and there were bramble scratches on her arms, and a good deal of mud and grass stains about her generally. But, dirt and all, she rushed into her mother's arms and nearly smothered her in a loving hug before she began work on the tea-table.

“A good day, darling?” asked Mrs. Love, smoothing Kitty's hair with one hand and holding out the other to the twins who fell upon it both together, with incoherent screams about frogs, swimming, berries and cake.

Christopher was already sitting at the table, eyeing a pile of little brown cakes with a hungry look, but too polite to begin till he was told to.

“A *lovely* day!” Kitty answered, with a rapturous snuggle closer to her mother's shoulder, —“I *love* July!”

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Mrs. Love smiled.

“You do love so many things, little girl!” she said, patting the brown arm with its bramble-scratches. “July—and fairy-stories—and Becky’s ginger cakes (there are some to-day, you see!) and kittens, and—”

“And skipping stones, and racing,” put in Chris, “and beating people—”

Kitty reddened.

“Beating people?” Mrs. Love’s tone was slightly shocked.

“At games, I mean,” went on her son. “And she loves raspberries.”

“And tearing her frock!” said Mamma, putting a finger through a particularly large rent. “And, she loves—”

“*You!*” cried Kitty, throwing her arms around her neck.

After which they all settled themselves down for afternoon tea.

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The children thought it the very nicest meal there ever was—afternoon tea at Merry Vale. Of course they didn't have real tea themselves, but Mamma did, and sometimes Papa too, and part of the fun was watching her make it. First the little lamp under the copper kettle had to be examined to see if there was enough alcohol in it, and then it was lighted, and a sort of curved screen set about it to keep the wind away from the flame. And then when the water began to get hot a wee steaming drop was poured into the teapot and then out again, and then the tea caddy that had belonged to Mother's great-grandmother was opened and the tea was measured out carefully. And then everyone sat and waited for the kettle to boil, and held their breath as though that would help it along faster!

And first the kettle would give a little soft, whispering noise like a kitten, and then a sort

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of queer aromatic rather nice smell would come from the alcohol flame. (You only get that smell at afternoon tea time, or when you are sick and they heat things for you in the middle of the night.) And then the kettle would purr louder, and begin to sing, first very softly and then very loud—and then—all of a sudden, the singing would change to a thick, low sort of chuckling, and a great gush of white steam would rush out of the spout, and—the kettle would be boiling and ready for tea.

And then what a delicious fragrance from the brown brew as it steeped in the china pot! And how good it looked in Mamma's pretty cup, and how good it tasted poured (by the teaspoonful only) into their own hot, sweet cambric tea! And how pleasantly it blended with buttered toast, and tea-cake, and jam, and the clotted cream that no one in America but Becky could prepare!

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To-day the kettle was lazy—even the kettle had a right to be, on an afternoon like that! And from the first it dawdled along taking twice as long as usual to even begin its preliminary purr.

But at last came a little soft sound: it had started!

“Why does it make such a funny, pretty noise when it’s beginning to boil?” asked Kitty, swinging one leg idly, while she sat on the other one.

Now some mothers would have explained the scientific reasons, and talked about temperature, and combustion and things like that, which one has to learn sometime, though surely not in July! But Mrs. Love was not that sort of a mother at all. She promptly answered, with a pretty twinkle in her blue-grey eyes:

“Dear me! Did I never tell you about the Fire Fairies? And how their song was taken

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away from them, except when they— Well, I *have* been neglecting my duties and no mistake, if I never told you about them!”

And all four children gave four little wriggles of satisfaction, for they knew that they were going to have an unexpected fairy story! And they had learned by experience that Mamma's fairy tales, told in her own, especial way, were nicer than any others in the world. They were obliged to admit that, just as stories, they were not so *very* wonderful, but Mamma had a way of making things seem real, and thrilling, and *right!*

Ah! such a happy hour—with the shadows long and dark across the lawn, and a sort of light breath of coolness coming up now and again as the hot July sun went down. And birds, and scarlet geraniums in little round bright beds; and such a wonderful, sweet scent of grass which had just been cut by Braxton

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that very afternoon! You know there are hours when you are so happy you don't want the time to pass at all—hours that you remember for ever and ever so long afterward and that always stay perfect even when, later, things go wrong. This July afternoon was one of those good hours for the four children.

And this is the story of the Fire Fairies and the Teakettle, which Mrs. Love told them that day. Even the Tadpole and Midge listened attentively—a real compliment to any story, for they hated sitting still at all—except when, as Nurse Ann said, they were “plotting something!”

“Once upon a time,” said Mamma, “there was a very vain proud stuck up branch of the Fairy family called the Fire Fairies. They lived in a volcano in Mars, and they dressed in red-hot coals, and rubies, and some of the

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brightest of the clouds that are woven every mid-summer evening at sunset. Their eyes were brighter than stars, and redder than rubies, and their wings were nothing but pure flame. They were, as you can imagine, exceedingly gorgeous creatures."

"Better than dragonflies?" demanded the Tadpole.

"Yes."

"And fireflies?" persisted Midge.

"Oh, much!"

"They must have been splendid," declared Kitty with rapture, for she was not too old to adore fairy stories, and even Chris liked them, though he spoke scornfully about fairies between times.

"They were, as I have said, very conceited," went on Mrs. Love. "They were not only proud of their personal appearance, and their power to make people afraid of them, and of

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a number of things of that sort, but they were exceedingly proud of their *singing*.

“You know that mostly all fairies are musical: The goblins sing and play queer little instruments; the ordinary elves make a specialty of dance-music; the water folk play on harps and reeds; and the gnomes have a really wonderful sense of rhythm and tune. But the Fire Fairies were the most musical of all. They had beautiful voices, and they could also play on any magical instrument, from a jew’s-harp to an organ.”

“*Do* fairies play jew’s-harps?” demanded Chris, with interest.

“Or organs?” added Kitty eagerly.

Mrs. Love laughed a little.

“Magical ones!” she said. “I’m sure that there *must* be magical harps, and organs! Anyway, the Fire Fairies could play on any kind of instrument, and sing better than the

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birds themselves. Some of the more advanced of them even composed music, I have heard.”

“Music,” cried Kitty with an inspiration—
“Music for the other fairies to sing!”

“Not at all!” said Mamma. “They were far too greedy and selfish to help other people. I’m sure they would never let any other fairies use their music. No, they kept it locked up in a Lost Star that was floating around close to Mars.”

“What’s a lost star?” Chris was anxious to know.

“A star that has gone out, and fallen, and then has been fetched back to the sky by the fairies for all sorts of uses: to play with, and to keep things in, and sometimes to ride on when going on stormy journeys.

“Well, as I was saying, the Fire Fairies kept their music locked up in one of these old stars.”

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“What sort of a lock was it?” Chris simply had to interrupt to ask.

Mamma considered this and bent over to listen to the teakettle at the same time.

“Let me see,” she said, “I think it must have been a—*bolt of lightning!*” And she looked very mischievous over her little pun. “Of course,” she added, “they may have used *bars* of sunlight, on *strings* of little stars, besides, or a silver *key* made out of moonshine, or a number of other very serviceable fastenings; but I think that this particular star was made fast with a *thunder bolt!*”

“As you all know, the Fairy Kingdom is so large that it has to have many rulers: one for the heavens, one for the sea, one for the lakes and streams and all inland waters, one for the world under-ground, and great numbers scattered over the surface of the earth, from the Goblin Marsh to Fairyland; from Troll Town

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to the Country of Giants, and from the Flower Kingdom to the Sea of Glass and the Wonderful Mountains. And even all these rulers have under-rulers!”

“Like sub-lieutenants?” suggested Chris, who dreamed of West Point.

“Yes, like sub-lieutenants; and like the mayors of cities, all working under the Governor of the State. For instance, the Fire World, which, as I’ve told you, was the planet Mars—”

“Was!” repeated Kitty quickly; “you say *is* about all the other fairy stories, Mamma; I thought you were pretending that it was all real.”

“So I am, that is why I say ‘*was.*’ It’s a point of the story!”

“Mars was one of the most brilliant of all the fairy kingdoms in those days. The palaces were built of rubies and fire opals and garnets

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and amber and carbuncles, and all the gems that reflect the colours of flame; and there was a lake of vivid fire in the middle of the kingdom where the Fire Fairies went bathing when their wings got dull from too much use.

“Now nearly everyone was afraid of the Fire Fairies, but there was one person who wasn't. At least, I am not sure that one should call her a person; she was a Witch! A very wise, cruel, strong, clever, mock-and-make-fun-of-you, nasty, wonderful Witch. And her name was Coga, because that comes from a Latin word that means wise. Fairies' names are often Latin,” she added hastily, fairly sure of a question. “Even the word ‘fairy’ comes from ‘fatum,’ which is Latin.

“Coga was very much down on the Fire Fairies, and as she lived quite near them she found many ways of making herself unpleasant. She lived in one wing of the House of

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the Sky, where the old Cobweb Lady keeps her brooms—and that is quite close to Mars, as *anyone* knows. She used to set out big pails and fill them with rain water and snow and empty them into the Fairies' Lake of Fire so it would burn low and be half out in the morning. I think that the reason why she hated them so much was because when she had her birthday party every year the Fire Fairies never would take the trouble to come, being too stuck up. Instead they just sent her baskets of fire coals as presents, and the coals burnt holes in her clouds, as the fairies knew they would. And so she carried over pails of water and splashed it over their lake to get even with them!

“Coga had a daughter—a huge, ugly, wicked creature, called Elephantina because she looked so like an elephant. Her mother, however, considered her very beautiful—mothers do,

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you know, no matter *how* ugly they may be!” (And Mamma cast a severe look over her four good-looking children.) “Well, Elephantina, in the course of time became engaged to be married, and to a gentleman of some importance in the Sky,—no less a person in fact than the Man in the Moon! Of course it was a great match for a Witch’s daughter—even such an unusual witch as Coga—and she was charmed about it. The only difficulty was that the bridegroom-to-be had never yet seen Elephantina, and both mother and daughter were afraid that if he did he might not want to marry her after all.”

“I thought that her mother thought her beautiful, anyway,” said Chris, who was nothing if not inquisitive.

“*She* thought her beautiful,” explained Mrs. Love patiently, “but she knew that tastes differ. The Man in the Moon might not happen

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to like her. But she did her best to make the wedding a very grand one indeed. She sent down to earth to get a million tons of gold and jewels, and ten million bushels of lovely flowers, all to help make Elephantina the Lady of the Moon. And for the wedding she engaged ten thousand Sylphs and Wind Maidens to dance, and twenty thousand musicians and—but have you guessed what was lacking to her fine plans?”

“The Fire Fairies!” said all four children together.

“Exactly! She wanted three things from the Fire Fairies. First and foremost; Mars made a splendid stopping-place between the Moon and the Sky House, and it would be a good spot for the Man in the Moon to rest when he came to be married to Elephantina. Second: the wedding present that would please him most would be a few thousand pails of red

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fire, for even in those days it was bitter cold in the moon, and the Man felt it. And last—she needed the Fire Fairies' wonderful music for the wedding festivities.

“So she ran across to Mars to talk things over, but the Fire Fairies came to the edge of their planet and threw stones—I mean stars—at her, and made faces, and she was so angry that she called them all wicked red-faced things (which they were)—and went home again sputtering with rage. Well, she thought about it, and jumped up and down about it, till she couldn't rest nor eat, nor attend to Elephantina's clothes unless she could get even with the Fire Fairies. And after she had jumped up and down for a whole night—”

“Wathn't she tired?” asked Midge sympathetically.

“Witches are never tired.—She had a great idea! She decided to appeal to the ruler of her

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part of the Sky, who was a Giant, and a relative of the one Jack climbed up the bean stalk to kill, you remember? She told the Giant how horrid the Fire Fairies were, and the Giant, who liked Coga, ordered the Head Fire Fairies to come before him to be punished. And what do you suppose the punishment was to be?"

"I can't guess," said Kitty in a rapt way.

"The kettle's boiling!" cried out Christopher, whom no amount of fairy talk could distract from his food.

"How horrid of it!" said Kitty, while Mamma poured the water into the teapot.

"Now, I quite thought," Mrs. Love said, apologetically, "that my story and the kettle would come to the climax together! I must have been very slow or the kettle in a very great hurry! Well, anyway, dears, the punish-

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ment for the malicious Fire Fairies, for conceit and bad-temper and disobliging ways, was to have their music taken away from them—all their beautiful, remarkable, unique and particular music—forever and ever and *ever!* The Giant—who was two miles high and had for eyes two comets that whirled about and crackled as you looked at them—thundered the sentence at the Fire Fairies till they were so horrified that they nearly died—I mean went out. ‘Such disagreeable creatures you are!’ roared the giant, ‘and such snippity-snappety cockscombs you are! And such miserable, useless, unkind, unfriendly, bad-tempered villains you are every way—that you’ll have to go silent the remainder of your days.’

“‘But, Sir Giant,’ cried the Fire Fairies in chorus, ‘the world can’t get on without our music!’

“‘It’ll have to try!’ said the Giant cruelly.

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‘Now get along home with you! I’ll send a boy for the music this evening!’

“And he did! And so there, if you please, were the Fire Fairies robbed of their chief treasure, and not able to sing a single song, though they had been such *very* accomplished musicians to begin with. And then—such a funny thing happened—!”

Now Mamma was pouring out the fragrant and smoking tea, and telling the story at the same time.

“Now when the Man from the Moon arrived to marry Elephantina, he brought with him his maiden aunt, an old lady called Gobbilova—”

“Mamma!” interrupted Kitty reprovingly, “you made up her name this minute.”

“Well, and isn’t it a *beautiful* name? The Man in the Moon and his aunt Gobbilova rode on the Cow That Had Once Jumped Over The Moon. Like nearly all old ladies, she was

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afraid of cows, but her brother the Man in the Moon was masterful, and made her do it just the same! Now as soon as Gobbilova arrived in the House of the Sky, she asked for a cup of tea—as almost any old maid will, at the end of a journey, you know! So the Witch got out her best teakettle which had been double-plated with extra bright silver moonlight—and she prepared to make tea.

“When suddenly the kettle spoke up and said, ‘If you please, ma’am, where is the fire? I’ll not boil for anyone without a good fire, and there’s an end to it!’

“‘Mercy me!’ said Coga, ‘you don’t think I’ll send for one of those mischievous Fire Fairies, do you?’

“‘I’m afraid you’ll have to, ma’am,’ declared the kettle, very politely, ‘if you want me to boil!’

“Well, the Witch Coga scowled and

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hemmed and hawed over it, and she finally asked Gobbilova if she wouldn't just as leave have a glass of milk.

“‘I want my tea!’ said Gobbilova, glaring. ‘As for milk, I’m tired of it—what with the Milky Way, and that everlasting, jumping Cow!—And it does seem to me that it is bad enough to travel seventy millions of leagues through space to see your favourite grandson marry a young Ogress, without being grudged a drop of tea—that it does!’

“So the Witch had to send for a Fire Fairy after all!—‘I only want *one*, mind!’ she explained to the messenger; ‘but be sure to bring a good *bright* one!’

“Back came the messenger with a Fairy—all gleaming dress, red hot eyes, and flaming wings.

“‘Oh! Mother Witch!’ snapped he. ‘You couldn’t get on without us after all!’

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“ ‘None of your impudence!’ said the Witch sourly. ‘Get to work, and boil that kettle of mine!’

“ ‘Not so fast, mother!—I’ll do it on one condition!—That you give me back my Song!—Never mind about the other Fairies’ music, just restore me my own, little, particular Song!’

“And—if you will believe it—the Witch gave it back to him, and he sang it under his breath while he boiled the kettle for Gobbilova’s tea in the House of the Sky.—And it’s the very same song that you hear his descendants singing softly every single afternoon, whenever the kettle boils!”

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CONFIDENCES

I'll hang my happy hours upon a string

And wear it gaily ;

And when each morn brings some new, splendid thing,

I'll add it daily.

And counting all the joys, and jokes, and smiles,

I'll have a string that reaches miles and miles!

The String of Pleasures.

CHAPTER III

CONFIDENCES

“UNCLE MARK is coming after dinner!” announced Mamma, while they were having tea. Instantly they all shouted with delight.

Uncle Mark was something of a wanderer, and nearly always turned up with quaint little presents, strange and delectable sugar-plums, or—best of all!—some interesting stories of his latest adventures.

“Wonder what’ll be in the Treasure Chest this time?” said Chris, with his mouth full of tea-cake. The usual Treasure Chest was a squat brown bag which Uncle Mark was accustomed to carry and in which he had been wont to pack his remembrances for his nieces and nephews.

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Mamma shook her head at Christopher reprovingly.

“Mustn’t talk with your mouth full,” she said. “And mustn’t ‘plot for presents!’” This being a family phrase which they all perfectly understood.

Chris blushed a little. “I really didn’t mean to ‘plot,’” he explained rather crestfallen, “I was just thinking out loud!”

“Gweedy! Gweedy!” chanted the lisping twins. “Mummy,” added the Tadpole shrilly, “can we go and feed the wabbith?”

“You not only can go, but you must!” said Mrs. Love. “It’s getting late, and bunnies like to go to bed early; and how can they sleep, poor dears, while they’re hungry?”

“Mummy!” Midge stopped to demand, “will you tell uth a thory about wabbiths thome day?”

“Yes, some day. Run along now, dear!”

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The twins departed and the black kitten which had been prancing about playing with some scattered leaves about the lawn, dashed after them half way across the lawn, and then dashed back again.

“That’s the liveliest kitten I ever saw,” said Chris. “It’ll run away some day, or get killed or something.”

“It’s so black one can’t see it after dark,” said Mamma. “I wish you’d take it up to the house, Chris, and tell Becky to give it some bread and milk.”

Chris made an obedient dive for the kitten, which made an accompanying dive away from him. Mrs. Love sat laughing as Kitty joined in the chase.

“King Cole!” shouted the children in varying tones,—that being the name of the bit of black fluff careening about the lawn,—“Coley, —Coley darling! King Cole!”

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It was ten minutes before they caught King Cole, and he was a very cross little monarch at being captured at all.

“Pst! Pst!” spat his small black majesty. “Scat!” he seemed to be saying. “Let me alone, you stupid, clumsy, interfering humans, you! Pst! Scat!”

“Come along in,” Christopher said sternly. “I’ll take you in and put you in chains! Mummy, may I walk down the road as far as the willow pool? It’s so jolly about this time,” he added rather shamefacedly. Chris really loved beautiful scenery and sunsets and all that, but being a boy he thought it silly to admit it.

“Indeed you may not!” said Mrs. Love decidedly. “There have been any amount of tramps around, and an Italian organ-grinder with a dreadful-looking dog—so the servants say—I shouldn’t have a minute’s peace of mind

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if I knew that you were out of the grounds after dark.”

“ ’Tisn’t *really* dark, Mummy,” pleaded Chris.

“ ’Tis too, Chrisy dear!” Kitty contradicted. “Just look at the shadows!”

“There aren’t any,” said Chris, looking over the darkened lawn.

“Well, that’s what I mean!” said his sister. “It’s all one big shade!”

Evening had indeed fallen; it was cool and still and so sweet smelling, even sweeter than it had been in the sunlight. They could hardly see Chris’s figure as he tramped across over to the house. A thrush began to sing, hidden away in the shrubbery.

“How heavenly it smells!” said Kitty, who had lingered at the tea table with her mother. “Mamma,” she added, “why does everything smell sweeter in the dark?”

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“I suppose it’s because it’s the only way they can make themselves noticed. In the daytime the flowers have colours to attract you; and at night they’ve only scents.”

There was a little silence, and at last Kitty, with a beating heart, ventured on her great question:

“Mamma,—would you very much mind—”

“Mind what, dear?”

“Mind telling me about—about Grandmother’s letter this morning?” said Kitty with a rush, beginning at the wrong end first.

“Why, Kitty, what do you mean?”

Mrs. Love’s voice was gentle but surprised. Kitty jumped up and ran around the table in the half light. She plumped down on the ground at her mother’s feet, and rested her arms on her knees as she chattered, eagerly and rather breathlessly:

“You see, Mummy darling, Chris and I do

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most awfully want to know about things,—about why we don't know Grandmother and Grandfather,—and why you and Papa sometimes look so sad, and why,—and why—” she paused for breath.

“I understand,” said Mrs. Love softly caressing the tumbled head at her knee. “Of course you want to know all about Papa and myself, and I might have realised that you could not help guessing that we had a sort of secret,—not very much of a secret, but something that does trouble us now and then,—and of course I'll tell you, my Kitty.”

“Oh, thank you, Mamma,” said Kitty lovingly. “I don't think it's just being inquisitive,” she hastened to add, “but I'm ten and Chris is eleven, and—” she hesitated.

“And you're old enough to be in our confidence,” finished Mamma, in a most understanding way.

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“Yes, Mummy dear! At least we should so love to be!”

“You see,” said Mamma very gently, “when Papa and I were first married we lived with my mother and father and my brother Mark, and my father and your Papa and Uncle Mark were all in business together. Then,—you wouldn’t understand all of it now, dearest,—but someone forged a cheque for a large sum involving the firm,—and your Grandfather thought it was Papa!”

“Oh, Mamma! But wouldn’t that have been dishonourable?”

“Yes, darling, most dishonourable; it would have been stealing. And of course, after your Grandfather began to think it over he knew that he had been unjust, but your father could never forgive him for having believed such a wicked thing, and my father would never admit that he himself had been in the wrong. So we

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came away and I have never seen them since.”

Mamma looked very sad, but in a minute she smiled down at Kitty with bright tenderness. “Of course I miss my father and mother. Just as you would miss Papa and me if you had to go away from us—”

“I couldn’t! We couldn’t!”

“But I have your father, and I have my four little people to make me happy, and I *am* happy, Kitty dear!”

“And Grandmother’s letter?” whispered Kitty, gently stroking her mother’s hand.

“She wrote, Kitty,—she wrote to ask if I would send one of my children for them to educate and bring up!”

“Oh, Mamma,” she gasped, “how dreadful!” Her mother could not help laughing.

“My dear, don’t look so tragic! I am not going to send any of you, never fear. I can’t spare even an inch of one of you, Kitty. But

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it shows me,—oh, Kitty, it shows me that those poor old people must be very lonely, and it makes me feel so sad!”

Kitty scrambled up to hug her mother with passionate affection.

“Darling Mamma!” she murmured. “I do think you are the dearest, sweetest, loveliest—”

“Oh, dear, dear, dear! What an enthusiastic daughter!” laughed Mrs. Love, holding her close. “Come, kitten!—It is high time to go and get neat for supper.”

“Mamma,” whispered Kitty a little shyly, “thank you ten million thousand times for talking to me about—about things. It makes me feel,—it makes me feel—” She could not find just the right words.

“As if you were my own dear daughter and in my confidence!” said her mother tenderly. “Well, so you are, Kitty; and so you’ve a right to be. And you’re getting to be such a very

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old Kitty!—Before I know it, you will be a growing-up daughter, instead of a little girl!”

And she sighed and smiled almost in one breath.

“Oh, Mamma, I do love you!” cried Kitty with one final hug. Suddenly, just as she was about to run away, she stopped short and said with some hesitation, “Mamma, is it silly to love things so hard? They all laugh at me for it, but sometimes I—I feel as though I should simply burst with thinking—thinking—how *lovely* things are!” cried Kitty fervently.

“I don’t think it is silly,” said her mother softly. “I think it is very nice to find things lovely; and the very nicest and loveliest thing of all is love itself, little Kitty!”

Then she and Kitty went in through the summery sweet dusk.

The children had supper in the nursery as usual under the care of Nurse Ann. Nurse

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Ann was a thin old Scotchwoman, who looked very cross, but was really very kind. The children loved her, and she loved them devotedly, though sometimes she scolded them roundly and pretended to be very unsympathetic and disapproving.

I wonder if you like to know what sort of things the people in books had to eat? The four children had scrambled eggs that night, and little fresh brook trout beautifully broiled, and hot buttered toast, and delicious cocoa, and four big, deep saucers of ripe red raspberries! And when every last crumb and berry had been eaten up, and the last wee fish-bone polished clean, they straightened their clothes, and smoothed their hair, and went downstairs to spend an hour with the grown-ups who were there at dinner.

Uncle Mark had arrived, and he hailed them with a cheery shout when they trooped into the

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dining-room. Papa too looked up gladly at sight of them. He had not seen them before to-day, for he was finishing an important historical book and spent long hours shut up in his study secure from interruption.

Papa was tall, and very grave looking, but with little twinkles in his eyes which kept showing themselves at the most unexpected moments. Just when you thought how awfully serious he was,—presto! There would be the twinkle to prove how wrong your idea of him was after all! He was a very nice sort of Papa, the children thought, and they loved to sit leaning against his knee in the evenings, while he told them queer, interesting things out of history-books, and “travels,” and “lives of great men.” He hardly ever told regular stories about Make-Believe matters, like Mamma, but he always managed to make whatever he talked about seem interesting. As I have told

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you, he was a writer, by business,—a writer on very big, serious subjects, but that didn't keep him from having a splendid sense of humour, and the kindest, warmest heart in all the world. He was not very strong, as you already know, and had to live in the country where it was quiet, and where there was pure air, and where he could write his learned articles in peace.

Uncle Mark, on the contrary, was very merry and young-looking,—he was, in fact, several years younger than his sister, Mamma, and anyone would say that *she* was young enough to be sure! He was fair, like her, with the same greyish eyes and delightful smile, and often the children thought that one reason why they loved him so much was that he reminded them in so many little ways of their mother.

“Hello, youngsters!” he shouted gaily, jumping up from the table. “Come and give me a hug;—one at a time, please! Tadpole,

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you've grown a foot longer!—Midge,”—he held the fat little girl off at arms' length to look her over;—“*you,*” he added, “have grown a foot *round!* Hello, Chris! How's the fishing? And here's my own particular sweetheart, Kitty! Kitty Love, my love Kitty,—how goes it?”

They all pressed close around him, for there was something about Uncle Mark that won your heart immediately. He was merry, and kind, and persuasive, and so good-looking! In a few minutes the children were sitting, two on a chair, on either side of him, while he went on with his dinner.

Of course, they had scraps of particularly nice dinner-food,—at least Midge and Tad ate frankly and gratefully from spoons and forks offered to them, while Chris and Kitty behaved with more dignity, and nibbled olives and salted almonds,—a very few, because Mamma

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thought them indigestible. Then they had wee little saucers of dessert when the time came, and a bunch of four grapes each.

Then they all went up with Uncle Mark to his room, and explored the wonderful "Treasure Chest." And such delightful things were in it this time! There was a little string of coral beads for Kitty, and a Japanese doll for Midge, and a mechanical canary for Taddie, and a really splendid book of flies for Christopher, the fisherman of the family. And there was a pink Japanese lantern, and a box of candy, and two or three more trifles tucked in to fill up the corners of the brown bag.

"And oh, by the bye, Katherine," added Uncle Mark to Mamma, who was smiling at them all from the door, "I brought *you* something, too:—a magic lotus bulb!"

"A magic lotus bulb!" repeated Mrs. Love,

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looking pleased. “Why, where did you find it?”

“And what,” demanded Papa, over her shoulder, “does it do to show it is a magic one?”

Uncle Mark laughed.

“I don’t believe it does much of anything *now*,” he said. “But once upon a time it used to bloom in all sorts of different colours,—at least so an old Jap friend of mine says! I’ll tell you all about it sometime, just as he told it to me. Put it in a bowl of water, Katherine, and it’ll grow beautifully.—Come on, kids; let’s go downstairs. I want to smoke; and if you like I’ll tell you about my camping trip in the Rockies before you go to bed. They may sit up an extra hour to-night, mayn’t they?”

ADVENTURES OF KING COLE

Oh, Mortals, do you wonder why
We kitties are the way we be?
The thing that makes us wild and shy
Is memory!

When on still nights the fever burns
Within me, and I run away
To follow tempting forest turns
Till break o' day,—

I am a panther, while I roam,
A panther with a savage roar! . . .
But in the morning I'll come home,
A cat once more!

The Song of the Cats.

CHAPTER IV

ADVENTURES OF KING COLE

AND of course King Cole *would* choose that particular night, when things were so extra jolly, even for Merry Vale, to go and get lost!

Kitty went as usual, to find his majesty and put him to bed, and couldn't discover a sign of him. The royal basket was very soft and comfortable, and though it changed its quarters according to the weather, it was always the same cosy little basket, and as a rule King Cole was charmed to crawl in and curl up in it, in the happiest and most cuddlesome manner possible! In the spring when Coley first came to them, the basket always stood near the kitchen stove where it was nice and warm. Now that coolness and not warmth was the desirable thing, it was

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stowed away back of the ice-box, and Papa often pretended to grumble about it, declaring that Cole had all the best of it, and that some fine evening, he,—Papa,—was going to sleep in that basket by the ice-chest himself, and get a really good night's rest!

And to-night there was no King Cole to be found in the whole of the house and grounds!

The children were really frightened, for there are any number of dreadful things that can happen to a kitten not so very many inches long, and in a few minutes everybody was hunting,—Nurse Ann, and Becky, and even Braxton, the man-of-all-work. And Papa telephoned to all the houses near that had telephones, and Braxton went himself to the poorer cottages. But no one had seen anything of a black kitten with a remarkable tail and a very independent disposition.

It was Kitty who suggested telephoning the

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Marchmonts,—friends of the Loves whom they often went to see.

“But they live two miles away,” objected Papa. “Even such a superior kitten as King Cole could hardly have gotten as far as that all by himself!”

“But someone might have picked him up and carried him, and—and— Do try them *anyway*, Papa!” pleaded Kitty, who was almost crying with anxiety. Indeed she was fast getting into that desperate frame of mind when you will willingly try anything, just to feel that you are doing something, and that you are not giving up hope.

So Papa obediently tried them. Mr. and Mrs. Marchmont were out, but finally Ned, the twelve-year-old boy, came to the telephone.

“Hello, Mr. Love!” said he cordially. “How’s everyone? Mother and Dad are out.”

KITTY LOVE

“Hello, Ned,” said Papa. “Have you got a black kitten of ours by any chance?”

“A black which, sir?” came Ned’s surprised voice.

“A black kitten. It belongs to Kitty.”

Ned and Kitty were great friends, and he took a greatly increased interest right away.

“Oh, it belongs to Kitty? Will you wait just a minute, sir, please—I’ll ask one of the maids.”

Papa could just hear his voice speaking to someone near the instrument: “. . . Yes, a black one, . . . it belongs to Miss Kitty, Kitty Love, you know. . . . Might have been left here. . . . Oh, it is? . . . Good!” Then he turned to the telephone again very cheerfully:

“Yes; it’s here. I’ll bring it over in the morning.”

KITTY LOVE

“You’ll get it to-morrow, Kitty,” said Mr. Love. “Will that do?”

“Oh, Papa, dear!” she cried, now really almost in tears. “Couldn’t you please send to-night?”

“Kitty wants it to-night, my boy,” said Mr. Love into the telephone. “We’ll send for it.”

“Oh, all right, sir.” Ned Marchmont was always a polite boy, but Mr. Love thought that he sounded a wee bit astonished. “Couldn’t I bring it over in my pocket?”

“Certainly not!” said Mr. Love rather indignantly. “Kitty thinks a lot of that kitten! Bring it in your pocket, indeed!—My lad, I’m surprised at you!”

“Oh, very well, sir; of course it’s just as you say. I thought—it being July, there might be no particular hurry for it, but—but—well—Good-night, sir.”

KITTY LOVE

“We’ll send over,” repeated Mr. Love.
“Good-night, Ned.”

Papa hung up the receiver and knitted his brows trying to imagine why Ned should think that Kitty wanted her kitten less in July than at any other time.

Meanwhile Kitty and the twins were almost dancing with excitement. They were all so wild to go to the Marchmonts’ themselves to fetch the kitten, that Mr. Love had to be almost stern about it.

“No!” he exclaimed. “*None* of you are going! It’s probably going to rain in the first place, and you are going to bed, in the second. Braxton can take the runabout, and drive over in no time!”

Braxton was coachman, gardener, and a number of other things. He was much amused when he heard what he was to do. He and Becky and Nurse Ann were having a few quiet

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cups of tea in the kitchen, when Mamma went in to give the order.

“Drive two miles to call for a kitten!” said he, and he chuckled comfortably, for Braxton was as fat as Nurse Ann was thin. “No wonder they says animals is knowin’. Nowadays the cats is telephonin’ the hour they want their carriages!—Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!” And he shook with laughter. “Will I be puttin’ on me livery, ma’am?” he asked, suddenly pulling a long face.

“I hardly think the kitten will insist upon it!” said Mrs. Love with a grave face, but with a twinkle in her eyes as she left the kitchen.

“Ah! And there’s one lovely lady!” exclaimed Becky solemnly. Indeed, Becky was mostly solemn. She was tall and broad, and took life with great seriousness; and she adored Mrs. Love.

Braxton nodded his head, still laughing,

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and gulped down his last sugary drop of tea. Then he went off, continuing to chuckle fatly, to harness up Peter, the Loves' one horse, and go to bring his kittenish majesty home.

"How do you suppose King Cole ever got as far as the Marchmonts'?" wondered Kitty, as they listened to Peter's smart trot going off down the road into the distance.

"Someone stole him," suggested Christopher, "and then they got tired of him, or else he scratched them too much—"

"Oh, I hope tho!" cried Ted fervently.

"Good, *dear* puthy, to thcrath them!" cooed Midge.

"And then," proceeded Chris, "they threw him into a hedge, and he climbed out, and he ran across a field,—no, two fields,—those nub-bly ones with the stones, you remember, Kitty? He could run as far as that, I reckon! And then he found a farmer's market-basket resting

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by the road, and he climbed in, and—and—and—the farmer carried him to the Marchmonts'!" finished Chris triumphantly.

They all laughed at this flight of fancy.

"What a pity," said Mamma, "that King Cole can't tell us all about his adventures when he gets home!"

"If he could," put in Uncle Mark, "and if the adventures had been anything like what Chris suggests, he would be a regular Baron Munchausen!"

"Who was he?" demanded Chris hastily, who liked to know all about everything as he went along.

"Oh, Chrissy, you remember!" exclaimed Kitty reproachfully, who had a good memory for anything in books. "The old gentleman who had the adventures that couldn't possibly have happened, you know!"

"An admirable description," said Uncle

KITTY LOVE

Mark. "Now let's sit down and be comfy, all of us. Your dad and I want to smoke."

"My dear Mark," protested Mrs. Love, "it's long past their bedtime!"

"Nonsense!" said this most satisfactory uncle. "You wouldn't be cruel enough to send them to bed while that poor, lonely kitten is a wanderer upon the face of the—"

"Oh, Mummy, we *must* stay!" cried Kitty and Christopher. The twins had curled up at Mamma's feet, and were nearly asleep already, so it didn't matter so much about them!

"Oh, all right, for once!" murmured Mamma weakly. "Children, are you sure you are warm enough?"

They exclaimed "Oh, rather, Mummy!" to that, and settled themselves on the floor of the piazza, each leaning against one of the big posts that were wreathed in honeysuckle. And how good the honeysuckle smelled!

KITTY LOVE

The light from the red-shaded lamp in the parlour streamed out between the curtains of the open windows. There was no moon to-night, and the stars only peeped out occasionally from behind gathering clouds. The only sounds in the sweet, damp, dark outside world were the steady chatter of the tree-toads, and the little near by chirp of friendly crickets in the grass.

Papa and Uncle Mark were smoking, and the smell of the cigar and cigarette mixed very pleasantly with the summer night scents. It was all so happy, so peaceful, so home-like,—and now even the kitten was on the way home! Kitty had that funny feeling that you get at such moments, the feeling of wanting to cry just because everything is so beautiful, and so absolutely the way it ought to be!

They didn't talk much, and yet it seemed a very short time before they heard a sharp trot-

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ting noise on the road outside the grounds.

“That’s Peter!” said Papa, taking his cigar from his lips and listening intently. “There isn’t another horse anywhere around here that trots as well as that!”

Sure enough, in a moment they heard a trap turn in at their driveway, and up came Peter and the runabout at a smart pace. They could catch Braxton’s voice saying, “Whoa, there, boy!” and they one and all hurried forward to welcome the prodigal kitten.

As Braxton drove up into the light from the piazza, they saw his fat, good-natured face twisted up into knots of merriment. His voice was rather choked as he said to Papa, who was standing on the steps:

“Please, sir,—it—it—it’s here!”

He choked again, and then very solemnly he took from his pocket a tiny dark object, and handed it to Mr. Love.

KITTY LOVE

“But, good Heavens!” exclaimed Papa, holding it up, “why—it’s not,—it’s not a black *kitten*; it’s a black *mitten*!”

And that is just what it was, and just what Ned Marchmont had understood him to ask for,—Kitty’s black mitten which she had left there months before!

In spite of their renewed anxiety for the real kitten, they laughed till they cried over the mistake.

“No wonder,” gasped Papa, “Ned couldn’t understand why Kitty should need this so urgently in July! Here, my dear, take it! It’s had a journey in state at all events!”

“But where is King Cole?” complained Kitty, who, now that her amusement had died down, was more worried than ever about her little pet.

At this inopportune moment, Midge began to cry loudly. Mamma gathered her hastily

KITTY LOVE

up in her arms, and they all tried to comfort her between questions.

“Never mind, darling! What’s the matter? Were you crying for the kitten, Midge?”

“N-N-No,” sobbed Midge, clinging to Mamma. “It wath a ghoht.”

“A what?”

“A go-o-otht!” A long-drawn shudder of terrified tears.

“A ghost! Oh, no, dearie! You couldn’t have seen a ghost!”

“She’s been dreaming,” Mamma said, soothing her tenderly.

“What sort of a ghost was it, Midge?” asked Chris, the ever curious. “A big, tall, ghost with arms?”

“N-no. It were a little ghoht.”

“Little!”

“A little, thquare ghoht all white, an’ it wig-gled at me, an’ *whithpered!*”

KITTY LOVE

“A little, square white ghost that wiggled and whispered!” repeated Uncle Mark. “Well, it must have been a corker. It must have been a peach of a ghost! I’d like to see it!”

“Just imagination,” cried Papa, almost testily. “Really, Katherine, I do think you encourage these children’s fanciful ideas too much. You know, my dear, when it comes to seeing ghosts—”

“And describing them so clearly,” put in Uncle Mark, who was peering into the darkness with much interest.

“Perhaps it was a piece of paper,” suggested Mrs. Love.

Midge sat up on her legs, and stopped crying, so great was her indignation.

“It were *not!*” she declared loudly. “It walked all down the lawn and went round the corner, and it whithpered!”

KITTY LOVE

“What did it whisper?” said Chris.

But Midge had begun to whimper again, her head buried in Mrs. Love’s shoulder.

“I wonder,” said her mother nervously, “if it could have been a tramp prowling about.”

“If he was little, and square, and white, he was a fine tramp!” said Uncle Mark. “He—”

And just then they all heard something unmistakably, a little soft scratching noise, at the other end of the piazza. Tad, who had been very brave until then just because Midge was scared, now gave a howl of terror, and he too fled to his mother for protection. It truly was a little startling, that stealthy moving of something they couldn’t see. And then a glimmer of white showed among the green vines trained over the end of the piazza.

“Mercy!” exclaimed Mrs. Love. “It really is very odd! Now, what do you—”

Suddenly a long, weird cry rose on the air.

KITTY LOVE

“Why, it’s a young banshee!” cried Uncle Mark, and he and Papa started in the direction of the white glimmer.

But Kitty was before them.

“Oh, didn’t you know his voice!” she cried reproachfully. “I’d know it anywhere! *It’s King Cole!*”

And it was.

Poor little King Cole had gotten into—now, what do you suppose? A big piece of fly-paper on the kitchen dresser! Of course, as Becky said later, it served him right for trying to steal the fish that was lying there waiting to be made into chowder. But that didn’t help poor Coley. He got all rolled up in that dreadful, sticky fly-paper, and the more he struggled the tighter he was stuck, and the tighter he was stuck the more he struggled, and the more he struggled the more frightened he grew, until finally he and the fly-paper flopped and rustled

KITTY LOVE

off into the cellar, where he had spent two or three hours rushing about and scaring the rats till their whiskers nearly turned white!

So it was King Cole in the fly-paper that was Midge's "little, square, white ghost," and of course the rustling noise he made *had* sounded like "whispering" to her excited ears.

They caught the unfortunate kitten, not without difficulty, for he was too beside himself with his trials to be able to trust even his friends, and they finally got the fly-paper off—and King Cole scratched and wiggled and mewed all the time, for the gluey stuff stuck to his fur and pulled it. At last he was free,—but *such* a sticky, woe-begone little cat you never saw!

"I don't envy whoever washes him!" said Uncle Mark, looking at three deep red scratches on his own hand, for he had assisted at the rescue.

KITTY LOVE

Kitty seized King Cole, sticky and fighting as he was, in loving arms.

“I should think,” she cried warmly, “that anyone would be ashamed to mind a few scratches, when the poor darling is so—so *uncomfortable!* Coley, dear, I’ll wash you this minute and make you nice and clean and happy again!”

And she did, and King Cole slept on her bed, afterward, all muffled up in an old blanket so that he could dry by degrees during the night.

Kitty *was* rather scratched, but she really didn’t mind a bit. The kitten was safe!

THE PICNIC—AND FLORRIE

Your grown-up dinners may be quite nice,
With oysters and quail, and strawberry ice,
And think of the feasts in Rome of old
With carpets of roses, and platters of gold!
And fairy dishes of honey and dew
I think must be lovely to eat,—don't you?
But I'm sure that *nothing* could taste so good
As our own delicious picnic food!

The Picknickers.

CHAPTER V

THE PICNIC—AND FLORRIE

“I WISH,” said Chris, “that I could ride in an automobile just once!”

“So do I,” said Kitty eagerly. “And I wish I had an aeroplane, and a saddle-horse, and a dog, and—”

“Dear, dear!” said Mrs. Love, coming unexpectedly into the nursery. “What ambitious children! Don’t you want any little thing that Papa and I could by some chance afford to give you?”

“I want a pig-nig!” announced the Tadpole boldly.

“Well, a picnic is possible,” said Mamma, considering, “as long as Chris and Kitty don’t insist on going in automobiles or aeroplanes!”

KITTY LOVE

The picnic proved a welcome plan to everyone. Failing machines for either racing or flying, Peter and the carryall would do excellently, they all agreed. They planned it for the very next day. There were Papa and Uncle Mark; Mamma and the four children to go, and the Marchmonts,—Ned and Grace. The carryall would hold all the Loves but one, and Chris could squeeze into the Marchmonts' buckboard. The buckboard would have to take the lunch, too, as both twins and Kitty would be packed with Mamma on the back seat of the carryall, while Papa and Uncle Mark sat in front. Of course it would be a tight squeeze, but who minded that on a picnic? And Peter was strong and the carriage a light one, and no one wanted to go fast.

“And then,” as Papa said, “if anyone tumbles out, it won't hurt them and they can just run along till they catch up, and climb in again

KITTY LOVE

without our having to stop the horse at all!"

They decided to have this picnic in a dear little woodland clearing by a stream where they had been several times before, though never for a picnic. The children called it Peter Pan's Glen, because the trees around it grew so close and green, just like the trees in the tops of which Peter had his little house, you remember?

I wish you could have seen the preparations for that picnic! Becky set to work at once to bake gingerbread, and Mamma telephoned to the village store for an extra dozen of lemons for lemonade. And Papa and Christopher went every five minutes to see if the needle in the weather glass had changed to "rain" by any chance since the last time they had looked at it!

Kitty wanted to take King Cole, but she decided that after the fly-paper adventure he

KITTY LOVE

would be better off at home. Besides she would have felt she had to look out for him every single solitary minute. And no one with such a responsibility as that could really enjoy a picnic.

Almost the nicest thing of all was waking up early next morning and finding it a simply perfect day; with not a cloud to be seen, and everybody feeling well and in the highest mid-summer spirits. And the very first thing to do was to pack the hampers with luncheon. Oh, the smell of the gingerbread as Kitty did it up in big white napkins! Becky didn't bake her gingerbread in large, flat loaves like most cooks, but in little cakes—fat, round little cakes. And she frosted them and stuck nuts and raisins in the tops,—two nuts and one raisin on each. These latter were purely for decoration, but the taste of them mixed so beautifully with the taste of the gingerbread that the

KITTY LOVE

children always ate around the middle piece and saved it for one last delicious mouthful. And then Becky's egg-sandwiches! Of course I daresay you know people who *think* they can make egg-sandwiches. But, ten to one, they boil the eggs hard first and then chop them up—now, don't they? Well, Becky boiled hers *soft*, and then beat them up with salt and pepper and butter, and then spread that between thin slices of the crispest brown toast that ever was, and did each little toast sandwich up in waxed paper so the eggy filling couldn't run out, and—well, when one was hungry, how indescribably good it was!

Then there were oranges—and a bag of loaf sugar so you could press a few lumps into the end of your orange before you sucked it—the one and only right way to ever eat oranges, of course! And there were chicken sandwiches as well as egg ones, and a quart Thermos bot-

KITTY LOVE

tle full of ice-cold lemonade, and cottage cheese made at home by Becky and mixed with cream and sugar before it was put into an empty marmalade jar and corked up securely. And there were many other good things; but those I think were about the best.

Of course at a picnic you wanted to wear your most comfortable things, so Chris wore blue duck knickerbockers and a very thin, loose shirt, and Kitty a pink muslin, very old and faded, but so cool and nice to wear in hot weather; and Tad had a brown linen sailor suit that he could get just as dirty as he liked, and Midge had one just like it, except that hers had a skirt, and that the Tadpole had begun to wear real knickerbockers that summer—and was tremendously proud of them, too!

And just as everything was going so beautifully something happened, as usual. It was quite a simple, innocent little happening on

KITTY LOVE

the face of it, but it made a lot of difference to Kitty's day, as you will see later.

A little girl selling berries came to the kitchen door, and Mamma, who was helping Becky with the sandwiches, went out to speak to her herself. When she came back her kind eyes looked quite sad.

"Get a bowl for the berries, Kitty," she said. "And wouldn't you like to take the little girl out a glass of milk? It's such a warm day, and she looks tired as well as hot."

Kitty flew to the ice-chest and filled a glass with cold rich milk. Needless to say, she was in such a hurry that she nearly spilled it.

"Careful, dear!" said her mother. Then she added in a lower tone. "Be very nice to the little girl, Kitty. Poor child, she is very unfortunate. Her mother, who is dead, was a teacher, and the little girl comes from a family of ladies and gentlemen; but her father is idle

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and drunken, and ill-treats her. It is terrible that Florence Lawton's daughter should live as she has to, never speaking to any educated people except when she sells them berries!"

The little girl was sitting on the steps fanning herself with a big morning-glory leaf which she had pulled from the vine that grew beside the kitchen door. Her dress was old and needed more buttons, but it was not dirty, and neither was she—except her feet, that is, which were bare and covered with dust. Her hair was red and curled all over her head. She was pale and thin and rather freckled,—not at all a pretty little girl, and she looked rather cross besides.

"Oh, how do you do?" exclaimed Kitty shyly. "Won't you please have this milk?—It's so hot to-day!" she added hastily, fearing that the little girl might be hurt by the proffer



“Oh, how do you do?” exclaimed Kitty shyly

KITTY LOVE

of charitable food,—“and I like a glass myself, you know, when I’m hot.”

The little girl took the milk without a word of thanks, and began to gulp it down. If her feelings were hurt it was only because there wasn’t more of it.

“Oh, will you have another glass?” said Kitty. “Or would you rather have lemonade? Oh, but you can’t take milk and lemonade together—can you?”

The little girl stared at her. Her eyes were large and pale and prominent.

“Do youse have milk and lem’nade both to oncet in your house?” she said. “My! That must be grand!”

“We don’t have lemonade every day,” Kitty said, sitting down on the steps. “We—oh, do please tell me your name,—I can talk so much better if I know!”

“Florrie—”

KITTY LOVE

“Oh, yes,—Mamma said your mother’s name was Florence.”

“She’s dead,” said the little girl without emotion.

“I know!” Kitty’s sympathetic eyes filled with tears. “It must be awful not to have a mother. But—won’t you please have more milk—or some gingerbread?”

“Gingerbread!” The pale eyes seemed to stick out more than ever. “Say, you folks mus’ hev as much to eat as the man down to the village what keeps the hotel!”

“You see we’re going to have a picnic,” explained Kitty, but stopped short as she saw the bewildered expression in Florrie’s freckled face.

“What’s that?” demanded her guest.

Kitty felt herself grow scarlet. Oh, how dreadful, how *shameful* that any little girl,—of her age, whose mother had known *her*

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mother,—should never, never in all her born days have even heard of a picnic! It seemed to Kitty as though her heart would burst, and for a moment she could not find words, then in a sort of gasp she cried, “Come with us and you’ll see!”

“I don’t know what it is,” said Florrie cautiously, “but I guess if there’s lemonade an’ gingerbread in it, I’ll come anyhow.”

Kitty with a sudden qualm rushed in to her mother.

“Mamma,” she exclaimed, “please don’t scold me, but I—I’ve asked Florrie to go to the picnic.”

Mrs. Love put down the pitcher of lemonade she was sweetening and took Kitty’s hand in hers.

“Gently, my child,” she said. “Why did you do that?”

KITTY LOVE

“Because—oh, mamma!” cried Kitty with a sob, “*she’d never heard of one!*”

Mrs. Love was silent for a moment.

“Have you thought of how we are to take her?” she said quietly.

Kitty’s eyes grew wider and wider.

“Why—there isn’t room!” she said at last.

“We’re rather a tight squeeze as it is,” said Mamma, with a troubled glance toward the open kitchen-door. “I love to have you generous, Kitty, and hospitable, but I don’t see how—”

“*I* do,” said Kitty bravely. “There’s one way of us making room for Florrie. She shall go in my place, and I’ll stay at home!”

“But, little daughter,” said Mrs. Love gently, “I don’t want you to be disappointed. The picnic is for my own four children, and I can’t have one of them stay away from it.”

“Mamma, darling,” said Kitty with the

KITTY LOVE

little shy yet dignified air that she sometimes had in extremely serious moments, "Florrie is my *guest*, and I do think it's only right that I should be the one to make—s-s-sac-ri-fices for her." Kitty stammered a wee bit over long words when she was very much in earnest.

Her mother looked at her tenderly and gravely for a moment, then she drew the little girl to her and kissed her.

"Very well, Kitty," she said. "I understand. Florrie shall go as your guest, and we'll all try to make her have as good a time as possible. I wonder—I wonder if you *couldn't* squeeze in sitting on my lap or somewhere?"

Kitty flushed.

"I'm too big to ride on people's laps," she said, "and besides, you've two twins to sit on it already. And *anyway*, Mamma, wouldn't

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it spoil it if I didn't make some sac-ri-vice for my guest?"

"Very well, dear," said Mamma again. And nothing more was said about it.

Poor Kitty! After she had made her decision her heart, instead of feeling light and joyful as one's heart *should* after a "sac-ri-vice," felt as heavy as a piece of lead. She tried to be glad that she had given up her own pleasure for Florrie's sake, but somehow all she could think of was how cool and lovely it was going to be in Peter Pan's Glen, and how hot it was at Merry Vale, and how good the chicken sandwiches and gingerbread cakes and lemonade were going to taste, and what fun it would be singing "Merrily we roll along," and "Jingle bells"—no, that was what one sang in the winter, sleighing. But anyway, what wonderful sport it was all going to be, and how very, very lonely it would be at

KITTY LOVE

the house that long warm afternoon all by herself!

Even while she was feeling all this, Kitty had to be dashing about helping everyone else to get off. And she had no time to really feel the full weight of her disappointment. Besides, Florrie was so happy about it that even a selfish little girl would have rejoiced in having made her so, and Kitty was far from being selfish.

At last hampers and children were safely packed into the two vehicles. The Marchmonts came a little late as usual, and there was no time to explain Kitty's change of plan till the last moment.

"Good-bye, my own brave, unselfish little girl," whispered Mamma, kissing her as she stood on the doorstep.

"Good-bye!" said Kitty in rather a wobbly voice. "Have a good time, everybody!"

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There was a sudden cry from the Marchmonts' buckboard.

"What's that!" cried Grace, a black-eyed, pretty child. "Isn't Kitty coming?"

And Ned Marchmont exclaimed—"Why, that spoils everything!"

And so greatly was Kitty touched by this point of view that she broke down altogether, and fled into the house.

With the black kitten cuddled up against her face she listened to the carriage-wheels on the drive grow fainter and fainter.

"Well, King Cole," said she, drying her eyes on the soft black fur, "let's see what we can do to pass away the time!"

AN IMPOSSIBLE ADVENTURE

I wish I'd a galleon to breast the gale,
With a gilded prow and a silken sail,
And billows like those in a true sea-tale
That thunder about the keel!

I wish I'd a Pegasus steed to ride,
Gallopng over the heavens so wide,
And pushing the smother of clouds to one side,—
Oh, *how* do you s'pose I'd feel?

I wish I'd a sword to kill dragons with wings,
A sword like the swords of heroes and kings,
With a handle of gold and silver and things,
And a burnished blade of steel.

And I wish I'd a magic-working gem
Like the one in the Elf-Queen's diadem;—
But more than any or all of *them*—
I wish I'd an automobile!

A Song of Wishes.

CHAPTER VI

AN IMPOSSIBLE ADVENTURE

Now one of these days you will discover, if you haven't already, that when you are in trouble, there is one thing,—and one only,—that will help you through it; and that one thing is work. It seems very hard and very cruel to have to go and do something while your heart is aching and the tears still crawling down your cheeks in spite of yourself,—but once you face it and do it, you begin to feel more like yourself. Something lightens about your head and about your heart, and though you may not forget your sorrow or your disappointment or whatever it is, you can't help feeling better and better, till you end by being

KITTY LOVE

healthily tired, which is one of the best feelings in the world.

Kitty, though she hadn't yet worked it all out in the light of experience, felt that work would be her cure during that dreadfully long and lonely afternoon, so, after she had listened to the very last echo of Peter's distant hoofs, and cried a little into King Cole's soft black fur, she suddenly sat back on her heels and wondered what she could find to do!

First and foremost, she went out and watered the flower beds. Mamma always impressed upon them all that flowers were almost as important to take care of as animals or people. "Poor, dear, green thing!" she often said, "how dreadful it must be to grow up and bloom for stupid, unkind people who don't appreciate the effort you have made! Always take care of flowers, my dears, just to

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show that you are neither dull nor ungrateful!"

So Kitty went and found the big watering-pot that Braxton used,—it was too heavy for her, but she liked to have things extra hard to-day!—and lugged it down among the sweet-peas. Though the roses had stopped blooming she gave their green and flowerless bushes some generous sprinkles, and she poured a lot on the geraniums because they were so bright and she liked them. Then she filled the skirt of her dress with sweet-peas,—pink and lavender and white and carried them in to decorate the parlour. In a little while she had a dozen vases and bowls full of the pretty things, and the house smelled like a garden.

After that, she went up to the nursery, and picked up every last bit of anything that was lying around. She laid away dolls on shelves, and ribbons in drawers, and toys in boxes, and

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after a while, without knowing she was doing it, she began to sing a little air that Nurse Ann had taught her. And finally, while she was stopping to remember the next line and to recollect whether Christopher kept his baseball in the toy-chest or the hall closet, she happened to look up, and there was Ann standing in the nursery door looking at her. When she caught Kitty's eye, she stalked in and seated herself by the open window.

The nursery was a very pretty room, all blue paper and white paint with charming fairy tale pictures hung along the walls and chintz on the furniture. You would have thought that Nurse Ann would never have matched the rest, she was so grim and so bony, but somehow, as she sat down in the big rocker, in her stiff white apron and cap, and her eternal grey knitting in her long, thin, yellow fingers, Kitty found that she fitted in very nicely.

KITTY LOVE

And somehow,—perhaps because she was so lonely to-day,—her heart quite warmed to Nurse Ann.

“So ye didn’t go to the parrty,” said Ann, in her own, sour way, clicking the steel knitting-needles as if her life depended on finishing that special lot of work.

“No, Nurse,” said Kitty in a low voice.

“Ah, weel!” said Nurse, knitting away—“it is as well, mebbe. Ye’ll find a deal to do at home.”

Kitty said nothing to that, and the old woman shot her a sharp yet affectionate glance over her horn-rimmed spectacles.

“Wad ye lak to do a bit o’ knittin’?” she asked kindly.

“No, thank you, Nurse.”

“Ah! weel!—Wad ye lak to do a bit o’ sewin’?”

“No, thank you, Nurse.”

KITTY LOVE

“Ah, weel!—Wad ye lak—Pshaw, I’ve dropped a stitch!” She lapsed into silence and attended to her knitting, but somehow Kitty felt happier for the few words they had exchanged. In some odd way that she could not explain, she knew that Nurse Ann sympathised with her, and felt kindly toward her for the disappointment about the picnic.

When she went downstairs she filled the watering pot again and watered the hydrangeas on the piazza—as a matter of fact, she watered them altogether too much, as Braxton said that night when he went to look out for them. But if one is very zealous and anxious to do all that is possible, one is very apt to over-do everything one undertakes.

Then she stood for five idle, wistful minutes staring out at the lawn with the fringe of poplars, and the high road beyond, and thinking of the picnic, and wondering what they were

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doing that minute, and hoping that they were having the nicest time a picnic party ever had in this world.

There was a cloud of white, a red streak and a piping sound, as a motor car went flying by upon the road. Kitty drew a deep breath as it passed, and hummed "How lovely!"

In all their lives the Loves, at least the four Love children, had never ridden in an automobile. They often saw them go by the house—queer flashes of red, and black, and grey, with glittering brass or nickel trimmings; they had heard the "pump-pump" of them, and their sudden stops of escaping steam and their tooting horns; they had smelled, with deep excitement, their horrid gasoline smell, and liked it the better for being so strange and unpleasant. In fact, everything about the mysterious and greatly-to-be desired motor-car fascinated them. No winged dragon of myth-

KITTY LOVE

ical, prehistoric days ever found a more appreciative and thrilled public than the sundry motors that passed Merry Vale on the high road.

While she was still standing there on the piazza, gazing out toward the mysterious road outside the grounds, and holding the empty and dripping green watering pot, she heard Becky's voice from the doorway behind her.

"If you please, Miss Kitty," Becky was saying, affectionately though respectfully, "I've gotten a bit of lunch for you, and I was thinking—if you wouldn't mind—maybe you'd care to have it in the kitchen with me to-day,—being all alone, like."

Poor Becky hesitated as she spoke, for she was a good servant and never took liberties, but with a little rush Kitty ran to her and hugged her, overwhelmingly grateful for the kind and understanding thought.

KITTY LOVE

“How nice of you, Becky!” she cried. “Of course I’ll love to have lunch with you,—I don’t think I *could* have eaten it in the dining-room alone!”

The very idea caused her voice to choke up and immediately Becky looked quite alarmed.

“There now, Miss Kitty, my dear!” she exclaimed hurriedly. “Come out until you see what a beautiful little chicken pie I’ve got for you, and I don’t know what all! Come on out, I say!”

And she led the way to the kitchen with all the pride of a hostess who is also a famous cook.

And do you know, the dear soul had saved a little of every single picnic thing for Kitty! There was a little pitcher of lemonade, and a plateful of egg-sandwiches, besides the beautiful hot chicken pie especially baked for the

KITTY LOVE

occasion. And last but not least, there was a big pile of the delicious ginger cakes with frosting and raisins and nuts on top.

Kitty was not hungry and she could not eat much luncheon, but it was very nice and sociable with Becky sitting opposite her at the exquisitely clean little table drinking her tea and talking very interestingly about the days when *she* was a little girl. And suddenly, just as Kitty was beginning to feel ever so much less lonely, there was the queerest noise at the front of the house. She dropped a half eaten ginger cake, and rushed out to see what it could possibly be.

“It sounded,” she said afterward, “like a railroad train and a dragon all mixed up together!”

Well, when she got to the front door, she stopped short, frozen with surprise. The impossible was happening. An automobile was

KITTY LOVE

coming up the drive! While Kitty was still standing rooted to the door sill, it stopped at the front steps, and its single occupant sitting at the wheel pulled off a queer looking cap and called to her,—“Beg pardon, but could I get some water here for my machine?”

“Why, of course!” exclaimed Kitty.

Oddly enough this had never happened before, and she was much flustered, but she was always polite and she went hastily in search of Braxton. When she returned the automobilist was standing on the piazza fanning himself with the cap. He had also taken off his goggles, and though still swathed in a big motor coat enough of him appeared to show that he was a nice-looking young man.

“Will you have a drink of water or anything?” inquired Kitty shyly, not sure what she ought to say to him.

“Not even anything!” returned he with a

KITTY LOVE

laugh. "I had lunch half an hour ago. But my machine will!—ah, here we are!"

As Braxton appeared with a pail, Kitty stood silently by while the two men talked, and ministered to the mysterious monster. She could hardly take her eyes off it, it was so big, and so wonderful, and so ugly—and yet so delightful!

She was day-dreaming about racing over deserts and mountain-ranges, when she came to herself with a start to hear the strange automobilist speaking to her.

"I beg your pardon?" she said, hastily thinking as she spoke.

"I was merely saying," he said, "that I was much obliged."

He was looking at her with a pleasant, quiz-zical expression that Kitty liked. Somehow she felt that he would be an understanding person,—and not just nothing but a grown-up.

KITTY LOVE

“Would you like to sit down and rest?” she ventured to ask.

He shook his head, and turned to look over the bright green, sun-warmed lawn. Kitty looked too, and there was silence.

“It’s a bully day,” said the stranger, wiping his forehead enthusiastically.

“Yes, isn’t it?” said Kitty, sympathetically responsive.

“Fine day for a picnic.”

“A picnic!” Kitty’s blue-grey eyes reproached him in an agonised fashion, and he became horribly conscience-stricken without in the least knowing why.

“I—er—don’t *you* think it would be a good day for a picnic?” he said humbly.

“Yes.” She ventured the one word, though her chin was quivering.

“It seems to me,” proceeded the young man more cheerfully, “that it’s just about the one

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right day for a jamboree in the woods. Hot, and yet not stifling you know; and not a chance of rain. And a lot of green things, and a brook somewhere—” he waved a large hand vaguely,—“and things to eat, and plenty of shade, you know, and no hurry about anything, and a jolly crowd—”

He was talking half to himself, and had almost forgotten the little girl at his side. But the picture he drew was too much for Kitty. About the middle of it all she sat down suddenly in one of the big wicker piazza chairs and began to cry.

“Hey!” exclaimed the stranger suddenly, turning to stare at her. “Oh, I say you know, little girl!—Really—I—”

“I—c-c-can’t help it!” wept Kitty. “It was your talking about the picnic!”

“Oh, it was that, was it?” said the strange young man, still with a puzzled air. He sat

KITTY LOVE

down in another wicker chair as he spoke. "Suppose you tell me about it?" he suggested. "How would that be?"

So Kitty told him about it, very simply and naturally, and in a minute or two she had entirely stopped crying and was waxing quite excited over poor Florrie and her hard life.

"I see," said the young man, nodding slowly. "Do you mind if I smoke?"

"Oh, no!" said Kitty, charmed to be asked;—it made her feel so grown up and young-ladyfied. "Papa and Uncle Mark always do!"

"By the way," said the young man, "what are your papa's and your Uncle Mark's other names? I almost forgot to ask, and that *would* be bad form!"

"Papa is John Clifford Love," said Kitty, "and Uncle Mark's last name is Alden. So was Mamma's."

"Mark Alden!" exclaimed the stranger.

KITTY LOVE

“Why, he’s the man I came down here to see. I’m an old friend of his and his family’s. And I remember he had a sister,—she was Katherine Alden.”

“That’s Mamma!” cried Kitty.

“Well, this is funny! Then you are—”

“I’m Kitty Love,” said his hostess.

“Well, Miss Kitty Love,” said the strange young man, putting on his motor-goggles, “suppose you and I go to the picnic?”

Of course there’s no use trying to describe what Kitty’s feelings were. If she had really meant to protest the young man would have had none of it. He wanted to see her Uncle Mark, and her mother, and he wanted to go to a picnic, and why shouldn’t they go together?

“And you can show me the way,” he explained.

So Kitty raced like a whirlwind up to the

KITTY LOVE

nursery, seized her best hat trimmed with roses, tried to explain to Nurse Ann, and left her spluttering disapproval and bewilderment to race back again and gasp, "I'm ready!"

"That's right!" exclaimed the stranger. "Jump in,—take care of the wheel;—right you are!"

He began to crank up, while Kitty sat quivering with joy and expectation. Oh, it was—it must be too good to be true! Surely she would wake up in one minute, and find that it had all been a dream!

The stranger climbed in, and Kitty saw Nurse Ann, Braxton and Becky gazing with startled and excited faces from the front windows as the big machine moved slowly off. She waved to them recklessly. She couldn't even take time to explain to them;—she was having an Adventure!

"Now, then," said the stranger, turning the

KITTY LOVE

wheel deftly, as the big car gathered speed and swung quivering out into the road, "which way do we go?"

The picnickers had begun lunch a good deal later than Kitty, and they were still eating when a queer puffing and snorting was heard in the little country road that led past the dell. Then they caught a joyous shout, and looking up they saw through a green vista a big red touring car slowing up, and on the front seat beside the driver was Kitty Love, who had come to the picnic after all!

**THE STORY OF THE MAGIC
LOTUS BULB**

Fairy lilies, rose and blue,
They are not for me or you;—
Fairy signs but greet our sight
When we are asleep at night.

But pinks and lilacs are as fair
As anything the fairies wear,
And water lilies in the sun
Are good enough for *anyone*!

The Flower Lover.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF THE MAGIC LOTUS BULB

THE picnic part of the day was over and the six children had wandered off through the woods with Uncle Mark.

As the shadows were lengthening they sat down by a clear pool made by an eddy in the hurrying stream. In the distance they could see the lake, blue through the trees.

“Ah!” said Uncle Mark, throwing his hat on the grass and leaning back against a tree-trunk with a deep sigh: “*This* is the best thing going!”

“What?” demanded Chris.

“Peace,” said his uncle. “Look at those pale flowers near the edge of the stream, Kitty!”

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What are they,—Trilium? They are nearly as white as lotus lilies.”

Kitty jumped at the word.

“Lotus lilies!” she repeated. “Oh, Uncle Mark, you promised to tell us the story of the Magic Lotus Bulb you gave Mamma! Do it now. Don’t you love fairy stories, Florrie?” she added. Her happy face fell, for she could see by Florrie’s expression that she didn’t. “Do tell it, Uncle Mark!” she repeated, however, and “Oh, do!” they all begged him.

“It’s a rather dull little story,” objected Uncle Mark, “and I can only tell it to you as the old Jap who gave the bulb to me told it, but if you really want it—here goes.”

Then in a low, dreamy sort of voice that seemed to mix in very pleasantly with the murmur of the stream and the wind in the woods about them, he told them the story of the Magic Lotus Bulb:

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“Once upon a time there was a little boy who lived on the shore of a round blue lake in Japan, and picked lotus flowers. He was a strange little boy, rather shy, and very grave for his age, for he was being educated to be a priest of Buddha when he should be grown up. He gathered the lotus lilies every season and carried them to the temple to the Bonze or High Priest, and the Bonze took the lilies and wove them into a white wreath and hung them about the neck of the great silver image of Buddha which stood for ever on the altar of the Temple.

“The little boy was a great dreamer, which is as it should be, for the lotus lily is the flower of dreams, and he had curious fancies about the lilies he gathered from the surface of the quiet blue water of the river. Sometimes they seemed to him like white butterflies resting with folded wings; sometimes like doves such

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as he had heard cooing in the minarets of the Shintu Monastery; sometimes like the spirits which had drifted back from the Meido, the Land of the Hereafter, floating on the slow-moving River of Souls.

“He wore a blue cotton kimono, did the little boy, and sandals, and the top of his head was shaved. And he lived on rice and fish cooked on a stone in the sun; and at night he slept in a room made out of bamboo-screens or shogie with his head on a hard round support instead of a pillow. And by day he looked at the far white mountain peak called Fujiyama, and picked lotus flowers for the Bonze.

“Well, one night he had a more wonderful dream than any that his lotus blooms had ever brought him before. He dreamed that the Spirit of the Lotus Flowers came to visit him walking on the silver water of the little round lake. And she was exceedingly beautiful, with

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stars for hair ornaments and the sweetest smile imaginable, and her kimono was all of white and her obi of silver moonshine.

“ ‘Honourable little boy!’ said the Spirit of Lotus Blooms, ‘you have given up your eight years of life to taking care of my flowers, and I should like to make you a present. What shall it be?’

“ ‘Oh, August One,’ said the little boy (for like all Japanese children he never forgot to be respectful to everyone), ‘I should like—the bulb of a lotus flower that will bloom every year as long as I live!’

“So the Spirit held out her hand and a star fell into it, and as soon as she touched it, the star turned into a lily bulb that shone very brightly, and the lady gave it to the little boy, saying:

“ ‘The first year that it blooms you shall know happiness; and the second year you shall

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know hope; and the third year you shall know wealth. But after that time I cannot tell you what the blooms will bring, so if you are afraid of the future you would better destroy the bulb after the third year.'

"Then she disappeared, and the little boy woke up, and he was sitting in his night shirt on the banks of the lake where he had wandered in his sleep, and he would have thought it all a dream like other dreams had he not found that he still held the bulb of a lotus lily in his hand.

"He got a bowl of blue pottery and planted the lotus bulb in it with plenty of water, which he changed every day, and the first year the lotus flower bloomed a lovely pink!—Never was seen such a lotus flower! People came from far and wide to look at it, and the Bonzes shook their heads solemnly, and said, 'It is a miracle! He is a very holy little boy, chosen by the gods for very particular favours!'

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And, sure enough, the Lotus Spirit's word was kept, for that first year was a wonderfully glad one for the little boy's family. His brother came home from the war, and there was feasting and great joy. Then the second year came around, and the lotus flower that bloomed was as blue as the sky,—the colour of hope, just as the Spirit had said. And at this time, there came a message from the Mikado who had heard of the little boy and his magic lotus bulb, and wished him to go to court and bring good fortune to the Imperial household.

“So the little boy and the lotus bulb with its sky blue flower were put in a beautiful gold-inlaid rickshaw and journeyed to Tokio where the Emperor's palace was. He was received most royally and given beautiful robes, and the Emperor himself talked to him and did him honour, and came to look at the lotus flower.

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“ ‘Little boy,’ said His August Majesty when he had heard the whole story, ‘there is clearly only one more year of good fortune for your lotus bloom, and after that no one will be brave enough to keep it, but for one year it appears to be a charm against misfortune. Now, you are a poor lad and I am rich, and perhaps you will sell me your lotus to bring me good luck in this next year of my reign;— for to be honest with you,’ added the Emperor, ‘the Imperial affairs are not going so well as they might!’

‘Honourable and exalted Master,’ said the little boy humbly, ‘if you will augustly cut off my head, I shall be gratefully willing, for my life is my Emperor’s. But honourably allow me to keep my lotus bulb, for it is my gift from the Spirit of the Lotus Flowers, and my destiny!’

“ ‘Oh, well,’ said the Mikado with a sigh, ‘of

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course if you must, you must! But you will have to stay at court, and then whatever good fortune your flower brings to you will benefit the rest of us as well!

“So the little boy stayed at court, and the Mikado gave him money and jewellery and wonderful things to eat, and when the following year came round the lotus bloomed as yellow as bright gold.

“Meanwhile the little boy’s family, and the priests of the temple down by the little round blue lake in the country, were feeling very sad because the little boy did not come back, and they said prayers to Buddha for his welfare and for his safe return, and whenever travellers would return from Tokio they would ask eagerly for news of the Emperor’s favourite with the magic lotus. And their hearts grew very heavy, for it seemed as though the little boy had forgotten his old home and friends and

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the temple where he was to have been a priest when he should be grown up.

“And so another year went by; and one day when the old Bonze was down by the shore of the round blue lake pulling up the lotus lilies from the water to weave into white garlands for the silver statue of Buddha in the temple, he heard a light pattering step beside him. He turned and there was the little boy, in his old blue cotton kimono which had grown rather too small for him, carefully carrying his pottery bowl in which the lotus was growing.

“And the bloom that year was black!

“‘Honourable father,’ said the little boy rather wearily, for he had walked all the way from Tokio, ‘I have come back. They all turned from me after the black bloom came on the bulb. They counselled me to fling it away; even the Spirit bade me do that, in the begin-

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ning, if I feared the future. And when I would not, they in the Mikado's Palace cast me out. But Honourable Father, I would not throw away the black bloom simply because it stands for disappointment and ill fortune. It is my destiny, and I will keep it,' said the little boy.

"The old priest meditated gravely. Then he said, 'Honourable small one, it is borne in upon me that you are right. We will take the black flower as an offering to the God Buddha.'

"'Nay,' said the little boy obstinately, 'I shall keep it in the blue pottery bowl, and tend it as usual. But I will gather the flowers for your wreaths, just as I used to, most Honoured Father and Priest!'

"So he set down his bowl and went to work pulling the wet sweet lilies from the surface of the round blue lake.

"It is strange," he said dreamily, 'that white,

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the natural colour of lotus blooms, is the only hue that my lotus has not worn.'

" 'It is not at all strange,' said the old priest wisely. 'White is the colour of peace, and when you have learned to be peaceful and contented with peaceful things, perhaps your lotus will give you a white bloom.'

"Then for a year and a day the little boy worked and prayed and dreamed by the shores of the round blue lake and before the great silver image of Buddha in the temple. And at night he dreamed sometimes of the glitter of the splendour of the Mikado's court, and by day he looked at Fujiyama shining in the sun. And one morning he went to the old Bonze and he said:

" 'Honourable one, take me in and teach me wisdom, for I have seen the wide world, and I like better the shadow of the temple and the wind upon the lake.'

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“And during that night the lotus bloomed again, and the bloom was white, which is the colour of peace.”

Uncle Mark stopped. The sun had gone down, and it was time to start for home.

RED INDIANS

I have a little lantern
That hangs inside my head;
It makes the grey days golden,
And lights my little bed.
It throws the sweetest radiance
That only I can see,
And makes a hoop of shadows
That dance so charmingly!
It lights me to the prairies,
Where Indians are riding,
It lights me o'er the ocean
With pirate ships a-gliding—
It even lights my footsteps
Unto the Fairy Nation,—
But Mother says it's only
My Strong Imagination!

Make-Believe.

CHAPTER VIII

RED INDIANS

THE children were playing in the far end of the apple orchard, on a sultry and close afternoon in August. Dull mutterings of thunder sounded occasionally, and Mamma had advised them to keep near the house in case of a sudden shower. Kitty, Midge and Grace Marchmont were sitting on the grass, fanning each other with rather limp plantain leaves and watching the boys' energetic preparations for the next game. They did not join in the preparations because they were not perfectly sure that they were expected to join in the amusement. Boys were such queer things, and had such positive notions about what games

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girls were to be allowed to play with them, and what they weren't!

"Now, I'll tell you," said Ned Marchmont, "we'll have a real Red Indian game!"

"Goody!" crowed Tad, dancing till his sailor collar flapped in the breeze. "Goody! Goody! Goody! Thall I be a Wed Injun, with a tomow-hook?"

"Sure," said Ned, "unless you'd rather be one of the prisoners. You'd make a very nice prisoner," he added, looking the Tadpole over critically. But Taddie was firm.

"No!" he squealed, "a Wed Injun with a tomow-hook!" And he opened his mouth to howl.

"Right you are!" said Ned hurriedly. He was the leader in most of their games, and a very capable, masterful lad, but even he quailed before the strength of Tad's lungs.

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“Where’th the tomow-hook” said Tad, coming down to business promptly.

“You have to make your own ‘tomow-hook,’ as you call it,” said Chris. “You take a stick of kindling,—so, and you cut a slit in the end of it, so, and then you stick a piece of card board in the slit,—and there you are.” He held up an impressive looking weapon, and Tad gazed at it admiringly.

“It’th beaukiful,” he declared gravely. “Chrithty make my tomow-hook, too?” and he smiled a sly, beguiling smile.

“Oh, bother!” grumbled Chris. “I suppose I’ll have to!”

He was at an age when little things seem a lot of trouble. However, he was kind hearted, and he went to work on his little brother’s tomahawk forthwith.

At the “tomow-hook” junction, however, Kitty ventured to put in a word.

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"I'll make the Tadpole's tommyhawk, Chris," she offered. "I've nothing to do."

"Well," said Chris, handing over the materials, "as long as you don't cut yourself. *Girls* always do! And don't go and lose my jack-knife in the grass, either!" he added sternly.

"Chris Love," said Kitty, whittling away, "I've used a knife just as long as you have!"

"You haven't, either!" exclaimed Christopher indignantly. "We weren't either of us let to cut with real knives till we were seven, and I was seven long before you."

"But," said Kitty, with entire good humour but making a little face at him, "Mamma let *me* have a knife a year ahead, 'cause I was so *careful!*"

There was a general shout at this.

"You careful!" cried Gracie Marchmont. "Why, Kit! you're the most careless girl I know!"

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Kitty laughed cheerfully, shut up the jack-knife so it couldn't cut anybody, and tossed it across to Chris.

"Good throw!" said Ned Marchmont.

"I suppose," said Christopher, "you girls will want to play too?"

"Of course!" cried Gracie eagerly, jumping up. "You just watch me scalp Tad!" and she made a dive at the little boy, who ran out of reach shrieking with pretended terror.

"I'll tell you what," suggested Ned, "why can't the girls be the prisoners?"

"And we'll chase them across the prairies!" shouted Chris, waving a tomahawk.

"It's so hot!" complained Gracie. "Oh, I know, we'll travel in a stage coach!"

"Chris's old express waggon!" cried Kitty. "And the boys can be the horses."

"*Talking* of its being so hot!" said Ned

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rather ruefully. "Do you see yourself being a horse to-day, Chris?"

"Well," said Chris, thinking it over, "I'm willing to be a horse if they'll break down in a wild cañon, and then let us be a tribe of savage braves and capture them."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Kitty, with a delicious shudder.

"And we will burn them at the stake!" growled Ned, looking very fierce and blood-thirsty.

"Will I be burned at the thtake too?" asked Midge excitedly.

"Well, rather!"

"And wide in the expweth waggon?—and *everything?*"

"Everything," laughed Ned, "express waggon, break down, capture, burning—all the amusements of the season! Where's the express waggon, Kitty?"

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At the farther end of the orchard was a ravine which was the joy of the children's lives. It was not a very big one, but it was quite large enough to have thrilling games in;—they themselves had made paths winding along its steep sides, and stepping stones in the little stream that threaded its way through the bottom. The trees grew close together, it was always cool and shady there, and never in this world was there anything so exciting as hide and seek in the Merry Vale ravine.

By mutual consent the six children agreed that the cañon *must* be the ravine, and that the capture by the Indians must take place in its mysterious and thrilling depths. There was one good path that led down the nearest side,—and down here the two older boys, as prancing steeds, dashed gallantly, hauling the three little girls in a very rickety old express waggon, which Tad ran shouting behind. If you have

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never tried being dragged headlong down an up-and-down path in a vehicle which never went on more than two wheels at once, you have never known the real thrill of adventure. It is, you may take my word for it, one of the most remarkable experiences possible, and Gracie and Kitty were worked up to such a pitch of excitement that they hardly minded at all when the inevitable happened, and they all rolled down the bank in a general heap. Fortunately they were already nearly at the bottom and no one was hurt at all,—not even Midge, who, when she had cried loudly a minute purely out of habit, sat up interestedly and declared herself “weddy” to go on.

In two minutes the wrecked stage coach was surrounded by howling savages, who had big leaves stuck in their hair instead of feathers, and waved their tomahawks in a very menacing fashion. The three girls were bound straight-

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way with stout string to saplings, and the Red Indians danced a fearful and wonderful war-dance about them with occasional whoops to make it more exciting.

They were beginning to get tired of the play, and would probably have stopped peaceably enough in another moment if a big growl of thunder hadn't interrupted things in an exceedingly sudden manner.

"There! It *is* going to rain," exclaimed Kitty from her "stake," "and Mamma said we mustn't go far from the house! Hurry, Chris, and get the twins home before it really begins!"

A big drop fell on her upturned face as she spoke.

"Oh, it's coming! It's come!" cried Gracie. "Come and cut the string, Ned. I hate getting wet!"

Ned and Chris both had their jack-knives

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out, and in a moment both Grace and Midge were free.

“You cut Kitty’s strings,” shouted Chris as he hurried his small brother and sister away. A big clap of thunder drowned the words; a sudden wild downpour of rain blurred everything and bewildered the children. Ned thought Chris had set Kitty free, and Chris was perfectly content in the conviction that Ned had seen to it. So it happened that nobody cut her bonds at all, and the others fled home frantically through the thunderstorm and left her tied to the sapling in the ravine alone,—a really-truly captive this time!

At first poor Kitty could not believe the awful truth.

“Chris!—Ned!—Gracie!” she called wildly after them, but the crashing thunder made it hopeless, and she stopped, hoping that someone would remember her on the way home and come

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back. As a matter of fact it was not until they had all gotten into the nursery, and half out of their clothes, and Nurse Ann had said "Where is Miss Kitty?" that anyone realised that she had not come with them.

The rain poured down into the ravine in torrents. Kitty ducked her head to keep the water from getting into her eyes, and even then she could feel it soaking through her hair and down the back of her neck. She thought of the way she watered her flowers and wondered if it felt like this, and if they could possibly like it! She had never gotten wet through before, except in her bath tub, and she found it a very queer feeling—just at the very first it was rather nice; she was hot, and the cool little soft drops were quite refreshing and pleasant. But as it came harder and harder, and colder and colder, she found it hard to realise that it was really August and an unusually hot August

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into the bargain. She began to get shivery, and then really a little too cold, and then chilled through; and then, though she tried to be brave, she found two tears forcing themselves out of her eyes and down her cheeks. She noticed that the tears were warm,—the only warm thing about her at present!

“I wonder,” thought poor Kitty, “if the Christian martyrs were very much more uncomfortable than this?”

And with that thought came a funny little feeling of comfort. It is rather a difficult feeling to describe—it’s a sort of comradeship of suffering—do you know what I mean? Let me see if I can explain. When you are sick, or disappointed, or have hurt yourself, the very hardest part of it is that you have to bear it alone, isn’t it?—that no one else can possibly understand how wretched you are? Well, once in a while you remember all the other peo-

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ple who are suffering and have 'suffered exactly as you are, and felt the same loneliness,—and suddenly you don't feel so much alone! That is what I mean by the comradeship of suffering; and that's why even *thinking* of the Christian martyrs made it easier for Kitty to bear her discomfort.

“Let's see,” said she, speaking aloud, and finding it more cheerful to think that way just now, “let's see if I can remember who the book people were who got wet through, and were nice about it! Well, there was Andromeda, lashed by the waves, and she,—yes, she was chained, like me! Poor dear, she must have hated it! And a dragon coming too! That must have been even worse. I wonder how it would feel to be Andromeda, and sacrificed to save your people? Of course Perseus was coming to rescue her, though she didn't know that. But I suppose, being a Greek and a

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king's daughter, she was very brave. I wonder how you could show you were brave, chained to a rock in the wet?—I know! You'd be cheerful! Maybe she sang. I don't know any Greek songs, but—yes, I do, I'll sing 'Down, Troy, Down! Old Troy's on Fire!'"

And Kitty lifted a rather quavering voice and sang in the rain. She got quite absorbed playing she was Andromeda, and when five minutes later Ned Marchmont, followed by Chris, both very white and scared and conscience-stricken, dashed down into the ravine, she greeted them with a dramatic cry of "Rescue! At last! Oh, greeting!"

"Oh, Kitty, I'm so sorry!" gasped Ned, pulling out his knife and cutting the string with hands that shook. "We forgot all about you! It was simply horrible of us! Can you ever, ever forgive us?"

"Oh, Ned," cried the freed captive, shaking

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her wet hair out of her eyes, "don't spoil it all! Don't you see I'm playing I'm Andromeda? And you are Perseus, come to rescue me from the dragon and seething waves!"

Ned and Chris stood and stared at the dripping little figure and eager face.

"Well, there's one thing," said Ned bluntly, "you—you're just a brick, Kitty Love!"

FLORRIE'S SICKNESS

Shadows walking,—round the room,
Shadows talking,—in the gloom,—
Are you real, as it seems,
Or nothing but my fever dreams?

Ladies singing, bright and fair,
Angels winging through the air,
Lions roaring by my bed,
Cool rain pouring on my head,—

Though I see you all, I know
Not a single thing is so!
All have just one reason why:—
It's cause my temp'ature's so high!

The Child in Fever.

CHAPTER IX

FLORRIE'S SICKNESS

KITTY came out onto the piazza one morning after breakfast, and found her mother talking to Braxton very earnestly. As Kitty slipped her hand through her arm, Mrs. Love turned with a tender look in her eyes, but her face was still grave.

“Mamma, is anything the matter?” asked Kitty anxiously.

Mrs. Love did not answer immediately. She only patted the hand that lay on her arm and said, “Did you sleep well, dear?”

“Why, yes, Mamma,—I always do,” smiled Kitty. “Oh, Mamma, are you going to water the piazza garden? Please let me help!”

They always called the window boxes, tubs,

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and flower pots the "piazza garden," and these plants Mrs. Love cared for herself.

"Look at those morning glories!" said Mamma softly, "did you ever see anything so lovely?" And then she quoted the delightful and celebrated rooster, Chantecler, who said that his eyes had grown so round and bright, "gazing in wonder at a morning glory."

"They say," added Mamma as she watered the fuschias and moved one of the little pots out of the early sun, "that the morning glories are the fairies' trumpets. Can't you imagine the small elves sounding them, the first thing at dawn, just as the sun comes up?"

"Oh, yes!" said Kitty softly, with very wide eyes. She could always imagine anything that had to do with the fairy folk. Something made her think of Florrie, the poor little waif who had been her "guest" at the picnic, and she added, "Isn't it dreadful, Mamma, that Florrie

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doesn't believe in fairies?—at least," she corrected herself, "I think she doesn't."

"Well," said Mamma, though the mention of Florrie's name had made her look grave again,—“neither do you!”

"N-no," said Kitty doubtfully. "I don't with my *head*, mummy,—but I do with my *heart!*"

Mamma carefully emptied the last drops from the watering pot into a big green tub that held a hydrangea.

"Braxton was just telling me about little Florrie," said she quietly. "She is very ill, it seems."

Kitty nearly cried.

"Oh, Mamma!" she said. "What is it? Can't I go to see her right away?"

"I'm afraid not, Kitty. She has scarlet fever."

"Oh! And that is catching, isn't it?"

KITTY LOVE

“Very catching, dear.”

“Oh, poor, poor Florrie. And she had such a horrid time anyway—and now to have *scarlet fever!* Mummy darling, can’t—can’t I do something?”

“What do you want to do?” asked Mamma, sitting down and putting her arm around Kitty as she stood beside her.

“I—I don’t know,” said the little girl rather forlornly. “Oh, it’s *mis’able* to be—to be—”

“Helpless?” suggested Mrs. Love, and Kitty nodded eagerly, brushing away her gathering tears. “My little Kitty, it *is* miserable to feel helpless when people are sick or in trouble! But you must try not to grieve too much about Florrie. After all, dear, you had only seen her that once; it isn’t as if she were a great friend.”

“No, Mamma,” said Kitty, hesitating as she tried to express a feeling she had, “but I feel

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as if she *ought* to have been a friend, only—only I was *forgetful* about it!”

Mamma smiled tenderly.

“I understand,” she said in her comforting way, “but don’t reproach yourself, my Kitty. And don’t worry too much about the poor little girl now. The district nurse, Miss Manning, is looking out for her. I have told Braxton to take a big basket of milk and soup and fresh eggs over to the cottage where she and her father live, and Papa will telephone our own good Dr. McLean to go to see her himself. Does that make you happier?”

“Yes! But *I* want to do something,” said Kitty, with a quivering lip. “Mamma, do you think if I picked a lot of our very *loveliest* flowers—”

“I think it would be very nice indeed,” said Mrs. Love warmly, smothering a moment’s regret for her carefully cultivated garden.

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“And, Mamma,” Kitty was breathless with eagerness, “please mightn’t I go to see her—” Mrs. Love shook her head and she added quickly—“from a distance, mummy love—from a *long* distance?”

“But Kitty,” said Mrs. Love gently, “how could you go to see Florrie from a distance? Her father’s cottage is very small, and Florrie’s room has probably only one door and that door is near the bed. I should be very much afraid to have you even go into the house.”

Kitty considered this for a moment or two. Then she looked up at her mother with a pleading look in her blue-grey eyes that were so like Mrs. Love’s own.

“Mamma,” she said, “if I *promise* you not to go into the house, may I please go and see Florrie?”

Mrs. Love looked greatly mystified, but she knew that she could trust Kitty.

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“Yes, if you promise not to go inside the house,” she said.

“Oh, thank you, Mamma!” cried her little daughter, her face clearing wonderfully. Then she ran away.

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Florrie was dreadfully uncomfortable.

Her fever made her light-headed, and every shadow on the wall looked twice as big as it really was. Her father, a big rough man, hardly ever came near her, but the district nurse had her in charge and treated her so sweetly and gently that poor Florrie's feverish fancy painted the lady in the white uniform as “a angel.” And good Dr. McLean had called in the afternoon and been so cheery and jolly and friendly that her heart would have been comforted if she had been well enough to really care what was said to her.

Now she lay alone tossing and muttering and

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wondering why she felt so heavy and achy all over, and why her head throbbed so hard.

Suddenly a very soft little voice called to her from somewhere outside the open window.

“Florrie,—Oh, Florrie!”

Florrie turned stupidly and stared in the direction of the voice.

An old apple tree grew just outside the cottage, and one of its twisted boughs pulled out close to the window of her little room. Sitting on the bough and leaning far forward so that she could peer into the room sat Kitty Love!

“Hello,” said Florrie weakly. Her surprise cleared her brain for the moment. She was able to talk almost as though she had no fever and no feverish fancies.

“Oh, Florrie, I’m so sorry you’re sick,” cried Kitty softly, nearly falling off the branch in her earnestness. “Do you feel *very* badly?”



“Florrie,—Oh, Florrie!”

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“Sort of,” said Florrie, turning her flushed face to a cooler part of the pillow.

“What does it feel like?” asked Kitty, who had once had diphtheria and was curious to compare notes.

“Like—like—” Florrie cast about for a simile. “Like you had a Jack-in-the-box spring in your head, and it kept goin’ off,—all funny like,—when you didn’t want it to.”

“Why, that’s just it!” cried Kitty appreciatively, clapping her hands. “I felt just like that in my head, only I called it frogs jumping up and down!”

Florrie’s momentary interest and clearness of mind had faded. She had begun to toss and scowl once more, and she kept muttering under her breath bits of meaningless sentences that had no ending. Kitty watched her in troubled silence for a moment, longing to cross the forbidden window sill and try to make her more

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comfortable. But she had promised Mamma. *Promised!* To disobey was bad enough, but to break a promise!—why, no one, Kitty firmly believed, could be as wicked as that. She heaved a deep sigh and drew back the foot she had involuntarily put onto the window sill.

“Florrie!” she called softly.

But Florrie was counting the shadows that danced across the wall at the end of her bed. One, two, three; one, two, three, four; she tried to check them off on her thin little fingers, but grew too tired and fell into a restless sleep, moaning and moaning whenever she moved on the narrow little bed.

“Oh, Florrie,—Florrie dear!” whispered Kitty, “I so terribly wish I could do something for you—you do know that, don’t you?”

She didn’t expect Florrie to answer, and she was just preparing to climb down from the apple tree branch when she caught, quite

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clearly, a little sentence from the sick room,—spoken in the thick, fretful voice of fever:

“Ain’t no use tellin’ me there’s fairies. I’ve never seed one anyhow, though I’ve tried to, hard enough!”

The voice died away into muttering and Kitty slipped down out of the tree, with her eyes full of tears. Poor Florrie! So she had wanted to see and believe in fairies in spite of making fun of them.

It was on the way home that a simply marvellous idea came to Kitty. When it came to her she stood still in the middle of a field and jumped up and down, and she declared very solemnly to a rabbit whose long ears flapped at her from behind a stubble of cut corn:

“Bunny, I’ve just the wonderfulest notion you’ve ever thought of in all your born days, so there!”

Then she ran homeward as fast as she could

KITTY LOVE

go. She could hardly wait to get into the house and up to her mother's room. It was a dear place, Mamma's morning room, where she sewed and wrote and attended to household orders. The children thought that it looked just the way a princess's should look, though in truth it was very simple, and inexpensively furnished. Everything about it was grey and lavender,—Mamma's two favourite colours, and there was a wistaria border on the walls, and a dove-coloured carpet on the floor. In the middle of it was the little Mamma herself, dressed in white to-day, sitting at her pretty work-table, and stitching away at a gingham pinafore for Midge, with the soft wind blowing in at the open window and ruffling her fair hair ever so little.

“Why, Kitty!” said she, looking up with the *welcoming* look in her eyes that mothers always have,—“where have you been so long?”

KITTY LOVE

“I’ve been to see Florrie!” said Kitty, sitting down in a breathless heap at her mother’s feet, “and—” Mrs. Love looked suddenly serious, and rather distressed—“Oh, Mamma,” Kitty hastened to add, “I *didn’t* go into the house! You surely knew I wouldn’t? But I sat in the apple tree and talked to her, and she wants to see a fairy, and—and—” Kitty clasped her hands, “I’ve the most splendid idea that I know will make her well, certain,—sure,—if only you will help!”

FLORRIE AND THE FAIRY

I'm a fairy, swift of wing
I have come a-visiting;
Who I am, and how I go,
You must never seek to know.
Just take the little gifts I bring;
For does it matter really where
I have come from?—do you care?

I'm a fairy, as you see,
Well supplied with witchery:
Dainty food and flowers rare,
Everything that's blithe and fair;
Aren't you glad to welcome me?
*And if by day a dream it seem,
At least it is a fairy dream!*

The Visiting Fairy.

CHAPTER X

FLORRIE AND THE FAIRY

MISS MANNING, the district nurse, was a pleasant, brisk young woman who had learned to get the greatest possible amount of work done in the least possible time. So when she came to fix Florrie for the night it seemed to the lonely little girl that she only took about five minutes. Medicine given, face washed, hair brushed, bed smoothed, an egg beaten up with some milk, and a night light set where it would not shine in her eyes. One of the neighbours, Mrs. Flynn, was coming in before she went to bed, and Miss Manning would be around again bright and early in the morning. Florrie's father was no help at all, though he was so

KITTY LOVE

frightened about the child that he was behaving wonderfully well for the time being.

“Now, then, you’re fixed!” said Miss Manning cheerfully, looping back the dirty, ragged window curtain to let in all the air possible. “Do you feel pretty comfortable, my dear?”

“Yes,” said Florrie without much enthusiasm.

“Mercy, what a child!” said Miss Manning, but she did not speak at all unkindly. “What’s wrong? Pillow need to be turned again? Or still thirsty?”

“N-no,” said Florrie.

“Then *what* is it?”

“I—don’t want you to go away,” blurted Florrie, and looked cross as she said it, because she was as shy about showing sentiment as if she had been a boy.

Miss Manning was quite touched.

“Dear, dear!” she said, coming close to the

KITTY LOVE

bed, and patting Florrie's shoulder as she lay huddled under the sheet. "Well, I daresay it's very lonesome at night—I'll tell you, honey, I've a man with a broken leg a mile from here, and I have to go and see how he's getting on, but if you like I'll stop in here again for just a minute after I get through with him. How'd that be?"

Florrie was such a dumb, unsocial little thing that she didn't say a word, not even a word of thanks. But Miss Manning understood. She was getting used to Florrie by that time, and patted her again before she turned away.

"Now go to sleep!" she said from the door, "and dream of the good fairies. I hope I'll find you snoring when I come back!"

She went off briskly, stopping to speak a cheery good-evening to Florrie's father, who was smoking on the doorsteps. He was kept away from Florrie as much as possible, on ac-

KITTY LOVE

count of the infection, for he had to work with other men in the daytime.

Florrie lay in an uncomfortable little knot in the middle of the bed. She was really better, and she knew it, but she still felt miserable enough to be sorry for herself, and she was, as Miss Manning had realised, dreadfully lonely. She was not particularly cordial to people when she was well, but she missed them now that she was ill,—which is very apt to be the way with grown-ups as well as little girls. We can't get on without friends,—even if we are silly, or grumpy, or selfish enough to imagine that we can.

Florrie fell to thinking of what the nurse had said just before she went out. “Dream of the good fairies!—Dream of the good fairies!—Dream of the good fairies!” Florrie repeated the words over and over to herself. They made her feel crosser and lonelier than ever.

KITTY LOVE

You see she had always been horrid about fairies, poor child! and never, even as a very little thing, had believed in them. And now she wished that she had. "I wish—I wish," she muttered, half aloud, "that I wasn't too old to begin to believe in 'em now!"

The next moment she jumped nearly out of her skin, to say nothing of the bed, for in the dark square of the window she saw a pink light. It was a small light that moved, and might have been a lantern, only as I say it was the brightest and prettiest pink in colour, and seemed to be scattered with gay flowers and butterflies. Florrie had never seen a lantern like that before, and she rubbed her eyes as she looked at it. Then the lantern, or whatever it was, was set down softly by the window sill, and Florrie saw a pair of silver wings!—Yes, actually, that was what the pink light fell on,—two bright butterfly wings, and between them

KITTY LOVE

a little figure—about Florrie's own height, with a long white veil all over it and a shining crown on its head. Florrie could not see the face, but of course she knew immediately that it was a fairy.

The fairy did not speak, but lifted an arm from under the white veil and waved a wand with some green leaves at the end of it—the pink light shone softly upon the white draperies and the silver wings. Florrie sat up in bed and stared, her eyes wide with wonder and joy. A fairy,—a fairy with a wand and silver wings had come to *her!*

Then pat!—something fell onto the bed. It was a big bunch of roses,—sweet, fresh roses, more beautiful than Florrie herself had ever seen close to her. Only the gardens of the quality of that region had roses like these. The fragrance filled the little room, and Florrie put out a shy finger to touch one of the beauties.

KITTY LOVE

Then pat, pat, pat! Three or four big ripe peaches fell onto the bed one after the other. How good they looked, and poor Florrie's fevered throat longed for them. Then came more flowers and more fruit till the bed was fragrant and beautiful, and then three delightful presents: First a small soft pillow with a fine linen cover; then a charming little doll all nicely dressed, and last a picture book, light and easy to hold in bed. Then the fairy waved its wand again, and disappeared, leaving Florrie uncertain whether it was really a dream or not. But it couldn't have been altogether a dream. For here was the doll in her arms, and here was the pillow under her head, and she could smell the flowers, and was wondering whether she dared try a peach without Miss Manning's permission. And then, too, there was the pink lantern glowing softly on the window sill.

KITTY LOVE

“No,” said Florrie solemnly to the doll, “it was real. And you I suppose are a fairy doll!”

When Miss Manning came in later Florrie was not asleep, but she looked so much happier and more peaceful that the nurse’s tired face brightened at once.

“Aha!” she said, coming forward. “Things looking up a bit here.” Then she caught sight of the bed. “Bless me!” she exclaimed. “Who’s been here?”

“A fairy!” said Florrie solemnly. Good Miss Manning was puzzled, but she would not spoil Florrie’s happy mood by a suggestion of doubt. She listened interestedly to the tale, and said:

“What a very kind fairy!” Then she put the flowers in water and stood them on the window sill, and laid the fruit on a dish on the shelf, and put out the candle in the Japanese lantern. Personally Florrie would have liked

KITTY LOVE

it to go on burning as long as it was, but Miss Manning told her it would probably burn the house down.

“Even a fairy lantern?” said Florrie incredulously.

“Sure!” said Miss Manning. “Does the doll want to sleep with you?”

“Of course!” said Florrie rather indignantly, hugging it closer.

.
At Merry Vale Kitty was incoherently telling her mother what a success it had been.

“And oh, Mamma!” she wound up, “you don’t think it was wrong to *deceive* Florrie that once?”

“No,” said Mrs. Love seriously, “I don’t. If I had thought it wrong I shouldn’t have let you do it. The reason why deception is wrong is because we nearly always deceive people from some wrong notion or unkind reason.

KITTY LOVE

You have given Florrie a pleasure, and probably done her good, and you can tell her all about it when she gets well, you know.”

But Kitty never did. When Florrie was well enough, the Loves went to visit her, and they heard all about the fairy. And when Chris exclaimed, “Why, that lantern looks like the one Uncle Mar—” Kitty shut him up and changed the subject.

“Somehow,” she told Mamma afterward, “I just *couldn't* tell her it hadn't been real. Oh, Mummy, love, I do believe she will sort of half believe in fairies after this!”

THE MADNESS OF KITTY

Take the road and hear the call;
Now the year is at the fall;—
All the merry world is moving,
Move ye one and all!

Take the road and hear the cry;—
Speeding birds are in the sky;
Take the road and seek your fortune,
Lest your chance go by!

The Flitting.

CHAPTER XI

THE MADNESS OF KITTY

“OH, dear!” sighed Kitty Love. “It does seem sometimes as though I should *die* if I couldn’t go and be a Gipsy!”

She said it out loud, though there was no one to hear her excepting Cole, who was washing his face in the middle of the sunlit driveway. Kitty was sitting on the stone steps where carriages stopped; the sun was beating down on her uncovered head, and freckling the end of her small nose. Her shoes were white with the dust she had kicked up with impatient, scuffling feet. It seemed as though she simply could not keep still. Since September had come, and the first autumn restlessness was in

KITTY LOVE

the air,—with the birds beginning to fly South in big flocks black and thick against the blue sky, and little flecks of gold were appearing here and there in the green woods, and the rollicking, blustery wind danced about everywhere,—she had been as restless as the birds. Nearly everybody has the Gipsy longing once in a while,—even very quiet, unimaginative, stay-at-home persons, and Kitty was not at all quiet, was very imaginative, and did not care for staying at home except to be near people she loved. So it was not unnatural that she wanted to run off and have adventures in this wonderful fall season; and it would have been all right if she had stopped there. It is not naughty to *want* things that you cannot have; it only becomes naughty if you try to *get* them!

Well, Kitty did try, and so she was naughty. It is dreadful to have to write it

KITTY LOVE

about our Kitty, but I must tell you everything about her, bad and good. Otherwise, she would be just an impossible, angelic, make-believe person, instead of a real little girl, as full of kind, and heedless, and sweet, and naughty impulses as—well, as *you* are!

“King Cole,” said Kitty solemnly, “I’m going to do something dreadful!”

King Cole left off washing his face for a moment. Kitty thought he had stopped to listen, but it was merely in order to yawn widely; then he went back to his face-washing again without paying the slightest attention to the important things his mistress was saying.

“King Cole,” said Kitty, “you are getting to be a grown-up cat now, and I suppose you’ll never want to do dreadful things any more, but when you were a kitten I *know* you liked adventures yourself,—’cause you were always running away, and getting lost!”

KITTY LOVE

She suddenly thought of the fly-paper, and she added, doubtfully,—“Maybe it wasn’t always worth while, but I’m certain sure you must have liked *some* of it, Coley, or you wouldn’t have kept on doing it so many times. Coley, I’ve never run away in all my born days—*yet.*” The last word was said in a dramatic whisper, and Kitty looked hastily around to be sure that no one could overhear her.

She was quite alone. Mamma had gone calling. Papa was writing in his study. Uncle Mark’s visit was long since over and he had gone to join the children’s mysterious grandparents at the seaside for the rest of the summer. The twins were taking a nap, and Chris and Ned Marchmont had gone to Peter Pan’s Glen for an afternoon’s fishing. It was Becky’s afternoon off, and she had walked into the village to call on the general storekeeper’s

KITTY LOVE

sister, who was an old friend of hers. Braxton was cleaning harnesses. Nurse Ann was as usual darning stockings upstairs. Kitty could hear her cracked voice humming "I'm wearin' awa', Jean," in such a way as to make that dismal song a hundred times more mournful even than it was by nature. Poor Ann! Perhaps it was the everlasting darning that affected her spirits. It is certain, anyway, that no family of children were ever so hard on their stockings as the Loves.

Braxton came around the corner of the house with a rake, and Kitty started guiltily.

"Oh, Braxton!" she exclaimed, "I thought you were cleaning harnesses!"

"So I was, miss," said Braxton with a cheerful grin. "But I done remember that the missus wanted the rose-bed weeded to-day, and I come down to see to it."

"But there won't be any more roses till next

KITTY LOVE

June," said Kitty, watching him set to work with the rake.

"No, miss, but we must make ready for them now. September is none too soon to be getting ready for June!" And he grinned his wide, comfortable grin.

"It seems a long time ahead," said Kitty.

"Eh, miss! Long, indeed. Wait till you're my age and you'll know what's long an' what's short!"

He nodded his head busily and raked away.

"These'll be bedded down soon," he muttered. "They must be wrapped up warm before the first frost."

In the silence that followed Kitty screwed herself up to the point of asking a question that had been trembling on her lips all day:

"Braxton," she said, "is—is it true there are —*Gipsies* round here?"

KITTY LOVE

“True enough, miss,” replied Braxton, straightening himself to rest his back. “They’ve a big camp this side o’ the village.”

“Oh, Braxton!” cried Kitty, clasping her hands. “What are Gipsies like?”

“Like, miss?” repeated Braxton, scratching his head. “Why, they’re quiet, peaceable folk for the most part, an’—”

“I mean,” said Kitty eagerly, “what do they look like? Are they dressed in bright-coloured things, with gold rings in their ears, and do they eat out of iron pots, and tell fortunes, and—” she paused for want of breath.

“More or less, miss, more or less,” said Braxton, smilingly indulgent. “They do heaps of them things yet, just because people expects it.”

“Oh!” cried Kitty longingly, “I do wish I could see a Gipsy camp.”

KITTY LOVE

Braxton shook his head, as he stooped over the rose-bed once more.

“It’s nothin’ much, miss!” said he. “Just a few tents, an’ a bit of a fire, an’ some dirty people sittin’ about.”

He finished his work tranquilly and went off to the barn whistling “The Last Rose of Summer” a good deal off the key.

“Yes,” said Kitty again, even more positively this time, “I am going to do something dreadful, King Cole. I’m going—” she took a long breath, and let it all out in one burst of defiance. “I’m-going-to-run-away-to-the-Gipsy-camp-and-pay-them-a-visit!”

A squirrel fled across the lawn with a nut in his teeth; a big robin flew up into the sunshine; a cool little breeze blew a handful of russet leaves down the drive. Everything in the bright September world was moving, and busy, and full of bustle. So was Kitty!

KITTY LOVE

She got up slowly and reached for her white sunbonnet hanging on one of the piazza rocking chairs.

“Good-bye, King Cole,” said she. “*Maybe* I’ll be back for supper! But Braxton says there are Gipsies on the road between here and the village, and I’ve *got* to see them,—that’s all!”

She scorned to sneak away, so she walked boldly down the drive, her heart beating wildly for fear Braxton should see her from the barn, and call to ask where she was going.

But no one stopped her nor bothered her, and she reached the dusty highroad in safety. It was the first time she had ever been on it all by herself! Just before she went out of sight of the house, she looked back and saw King Cole sitting in the drive, gazing after her. She waved to him, though she was afraid he would not take much interest in the gesture

KITTY LOVE

of farewell, then trudged off in the sunshine in the direction of the village. Somewhere on the road she would come to the Gipsy camp!

“Pump—pump!” behind her and an automobile snorted loudly to a standstill in the road.

“Oh, little girl in the sunbonnet!” cried a lady in a brown veil. “Won’t you please reach one of those wonderful tiger lilies for me?”

“Oh, of course!” exclaimed Kitty eagerly, and in a few moments had brought not one but a dozen splendid orange and black blooms to the car.

“Thank you, dear!” said the lady. “You have lovely eyes. What’s your name?”

“Kitty Love.”

“Love!—How ideally appropriate!” And the car snorted off. Kitty trudged along rather bewildered, for she did not think much about herself.

Suddenly, about fifteen minutes later, she

KITTY LOVE

heard familiar voices—her brother's and Ned Marchmont's! She ran into the grape tangles beside the road and hid herself as the two boys came into view. They were carrying their fishing rods and a basket between them, and loudly discussing the day's catch.

"I say!" Ned was saying, "won't they be surprised to see us home so early!"

"We *did* have good luck and no mistake," declared Chris. "See here, let's sit down and rest. We're a good twenty minutes from home."

They sat down by the roadside and fanned themselves with their hats.

"Glory! I'm thirsty!" said Ned. "Is there a brook or anything near here, Chris?"

"Sure!—a bully spring in Farmer Griff's pasture just over that fence!"

They ran across the road and disappeared. Kitty picked a dozen bunches of wild grapes

KITTY LOVE

—sour, but aromatically flavoured—and laid them stealthily beside the basket of fish. She laid some big grape leaves over the basket to protect the fish from the sun; and then she stole swiftly off down the road and around the bend before they returned from their search for water!

She hurried a little at first, but the sun was warm and she soon dropped into a leisurely steady walk. She covered the ground quickly, nevertheless, and indeed, though she had no more adventures by the way, it seemed but a little while before she came around a turn to find herself looking at a cluster of brown and white tents with people moving about, and a delicious smell of cooking in the air.

It was the Gipsy camp!

THE MADNESS OF GIUSEPPE

“The sun beat down upon my head,
My thirst was very bad;
They’d walked me till my four paws bled,
And when I gasped and cried, they said:
‘Look out, the dog is mad!’

“Oh, human people, good and sweet,
Kind girl and gentle lad,
When any wornout dog you meet
With frothing jaw and shaking feet,
Don’t say that he is mad!

“Just drop a pat of kindly cheer
And, if it’s to be had,
A cup of water fresh and clear;
He’ll prove to you,—oh, never fear,—
He’s suffering, not mad!”

The Mad Dog.

CHAPTER XII

THE MADNESS OF GIUSEPPE

“HEIGH! Little lady, and what may you be a-wanting?”

Kitty had not realised that anyone had caught sight of her yet, but Gipsies have sharp eyes. She found herself looking up into the brown face of a big handsome Romany woman with a bright coloured kerchief folded over her breast, and—oh, joy!—large round ear-rings of yellow metal in her ears.

“Oh, please—” cried Kitty, so excited that she quite forgot to be shy, “are you a Gipsy?”

The brown woman laughed. “Aye, that I am! Have slept under the stars since I was

KITTY LOVE

born, and know more about herbs and weather than book-learning! And what may you be doing here, my little miss?"

"I wanted to see the Gipsies," said Kitty, "and to have my fortune told, and hear about their travels, and—"

"Are you sure," said the woman slyly, "that you wouldn't like to become a Gipsy yourself?"

She smiled broadly, showing large white teeth like those of a healthy animal.

"Come," she went on, turning and leading the way with a stride, "sit down and have a cup of water after your walk. I'll ask Mother Zora if she will tell your fortune."

"Mother Zora! What a pretty name!" said Kitty. "Please tell me yours."

"Hilda!" said the Romany woman, with her brilliant smile. "Here, little lady, sit you there on the log near another wayfarer whom

KITTY LOVE

we've just made welcome, and I'll fetch you water."

Kitty sat down obediently, and stared about her at the busy camp with the queerly dressed dark people all eyeing her so curiously. In a moment Hilda was back with some clear water in a cup made of birch bark. Kitty thought she had never tasted anything so refreshing, and of course it tasted a thousand times better for being drunk from birch bark, as you may easily imagine.

By the smouldering fire a slim, foreign-looking man was sitting gnawing a big bone. On the grass on one side of him rested a small hand-organ, and on the other a weary-looking black spaniel with a worn red collar lay panting.

"Oh, are you an organ-grinder?" cried Kitty, much interested. "And is this your dog?"

KITTY LOVE

The organ-grinder nodded, but he would not stop gnawing long enough to say anything.

“What’s his name?” persisted Kitty, stooping to pat the dog. The organ-grinder took the bone from his mouth long enough to answer “Giuseppe” and then fell to gnawing again.

“Isn’t that an Italian name?” asked Kitty, continuing to pat the dog. The poor little beast looked up at her with surprised brown eyes. He was evidently not used to patting. Apparently he was not sufficiently accustomed to happy sensations even to know how to wag his tail.

“Mother Zora will see you!” cried Hilda from the door of one of the dirty, greyish-brown tents, and Kitty raced off with a beating heart, to think that she was actually going to have her fortune told by a real Gipsy crone.

Inside the tent it was hot and stuffy and



“What’s his name?” persisted Kitty, stooping to pat the dog

KITTY LOVE

smelled of sweet-grass. This, she soon saw, came from the pile of half-finished baskets on which Zora had been working.

Almost before Kitty was in the tent a voice out of the darkness croaked,—“Have you silver to cover my palm, little lady?” Kitty stopped in dismay. She had no money with her, and had quite forgotten that the Gipsies would expect it. In her embarrassment a thought struck her and she unpinned a tiny silver brooch from the front of her dress and laid it in the outstretched brown palm.

“Here is all my silver, if you please,” she said gently.

The old woman examined it in the dim light. “True metal,” she muttered huskily. “And true manners to go with it!” She put the pin into a bag that hung at her side.

Mother Zora was a little bit of a Gipsy woman, very old indeed, with a wizened dark

KITTY LOVE

face, and bright black eyes that were both wise and merry. She leaned forward with her brown claw-like fingers grasping her two knees and peered sideways up into Kitty's face, looking for all the world like a bird.

“Hey,” said she in a shrill old voice, “so the little lady wants her fortune told? Very good! Very good! Come now, my love. Cut me cards will ye, and make a wish,—a solemn wish, a true wish, a wish for your heart's desire and cross your heart!”

Kitty nearly laughed at the funny look of the old crone, and the funny way she had of putting things, but she cut the cards obediently, and crossed her heart, and tried to think of what to wish.

A sudden idea came to her, she wished talking to herself under her breath. “I wish that Papa and Mamma may soon be friends again with Grandfather and Grandmother!” She

KITTY LOVE

did not say the words out loud, but the old Gipsy saw her lips move and cried out.

“Eh, have a care, my dear, have a care, but I hear ye! Never tell your wish! Never, never, never, never!” She shook her aged head vehemently and began to shuffle the cards, keeping up the oddest sort of low muttering as she did so. The cards were very old and dirty. They looked as though they had been used for fortune telling since the days of the Ark, or before if such a thing were possible!

Kitty sat as quiet as a mouse and watched and waited.

At last the old woman peered at her once more, and cried:

“Hey there! The little miss is going to have a rare stroke of good luck, before the hands of the New Year begin to run! I see merrymaking! And good cheer! And warm hearts! And a welcome—and—and—does

KITTY LOVE

any of that touch your wish, my pretty?" and blinked at the little girl inquiringly.

"Why—I don't know—" returned Kitty hesitatingly. "It's funny I can't tell but—it might, of course!"

She was still puzzling about the "welcome" and the "merrymaking" when a great confusion rose on the other side of the camp fire.

The air was filled with cries and shouts and a high barking noise. Children ran about screaming, and women hurriedly pulled them inside the tents. Then a stone flew through the air, and someone shouted "Mad dog! Mad dog!"

Others caught up the cry, and the whole camp echoed with the words repeated over and over again in every tone of fear and of fierceness: "Mad dog! Mad dog! Mad dog!"

Kitty sprang to her feet startled, and saw Giuseppe, the organ-grinder's little black

KITTY LOVE

spaniel, running wildly about with his tongue hanging out.

“Mad dog!” howled a Gipsy boy, seizing a stick to throw. Kitty took hold of his shoulder and shook him angrily.

“Drop that stick this minute!” she cried, and the boy obeyed, more afraid of her than of the dog. When she let go of his shoulder he ran slinking to his mother in one of the tents.

Kitty made her way to the centre of the group of gesticulating Gipsies.

“I don’t believe he’s mad at all!” she exclaimed in a clear voice. “He’s probably sick or thirsty! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves,—big, strong men like you afraid of a little dog!”

Giuseppe was panting painfully while he went racing about. As he came within reach Kitty suddenly knelt down and caught hold of him. He turned in her grasp snapping

KITTY LOVE

frantically, but she held on to him, patting his head as well as she could for his struggles, and talking to him soothingly.

The Gipsies were so annoyed at seeing a little girl do what they had neither dared nor wanted to do, that they turned on Kitty with gestures and words of anger.

“Get you off!” shouted a big Romany, shaking his fist at her. “Take the ill-conditioned beast and be off with you!”

“I certainly will!” retorted Kitty boldly. “I think you are horrid, unkind people and I wouldn’t be a Gipsy now, for anything!”

Still carrying the heavy, panting dog she ran out of the camp-grounds and off along the high road in the direction of home. It seemed to Kitty as though she would never, never get to Merry Vale! If the journey to the Gipsy camp had seemed short, the way back seemed unspeakably long. She carried

KITTY LOVE

poor Giuseppe all the way, for though he had ceased struggling and panting, he was evidently very weak and sick and lay in her arms trembling from the tip of his black nose to the end of his stubby tail. Kitty talked to him as cheerfully and encouragingly as she could, though her breath gave out occasionally, for it was hard going, and soon it began to get dark, and then it was not only tiring but frightening. Every sound by the roadside and every shadow made her jump and it was a very woe begone and weary little would-be adventurer who finally came in sight of dear, safe, comfortable Merry Vale.

“There now, Giuseppe,” said Kitty bravely, patting him as she panted along. “In a few minutes you will have a big drink of water and then you will crawl into a cool, dark corner on a nice, soft, old blanket, and go to sleep, and you’ll forget the horrid Gipsies,

KITTY LOVE

and the horrid organ grinder and all the horrid people who thought you were mad,—you poor, dear, angel doggie!”

Mrs. Love was standing by the gate of the drive as Kitty came in sight.

“Oh, my child!” she cried in a broken voice —“we have been so anxious!—Kitty, Kitty!—How could you go away like that?”

“Oh, Mamma!” sobbed Kitty, trying to cling to Giuseppe and her mother at the same time, “I went to see the Gipsies, and to have adventures, but it was dreadful,—and so hot—and they threw stones at Giuseppe and wanted to kill him, and—and—I’m so tired, Mummy dear, and do please try to forgive me, for I never want any more adventures as long as I live!”

THE LITTLE MUNCHAUSEN

Baron Münchhausen a boaster was he,
(Just exactly like you and me!)
He wasn't a liar,
His talent was higher,
He liked things to sound just as good as could be!

When he talked of what he could dare or do,
He didn't just mean to say what wasn't true,
But to give himself glory,
He touched up the story,—
(Just exactly like me and you!)

The Great Münchhausen.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LITTLE MUNCHAUSEN

JUST after the middle of the month the wild storm which Papa said was "the Equinoxial" settled down for three solid days and nights upon Merry Vale. The house stood in a puddle; the driveway was a brown, gravelly river, the trees swayed to and fro with a rushing sighing wind, and the sky seemed to be pushing, pushing down upon the earth like a great, cold, grey lid.

At night the wind in the telephone-wires sang and wailed in a weird and mournful fashion, and every chimney in the house smoked abominably.

The Love family were cheerful in spite of

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the weather and even if the children did grumble a bit about the postponement of the chestnutting party for which they had been planning so long, it wasn't very bad grumbling. They were such a large and such a happy family that they could get on very contentedly even when shut up in the house for a few days.

Braxton kept bringing in big armfuls of logs and kindling to keep the fires bright, and they all sat around the library hearth by the hour, talking, telling stories, reading aloud, popping corn, roasting apples on strings, playing games and otherwise passing the time very gaily indeed.

It was at this time that Mamma organised what she called a Fable Club. It was for the sole purpose of story telling, and like Æsop's Fables, every story had to have some sort of a moral or proverb to end it. They all tried

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their hand at it,—even the twins, though their stories were incoherent and they forgot the morals, if indeed they had ever known them! There is no space here to give all the “fables,”—but they were a great help during the long storm, and afforded everyone much entertainment.

“It’s your turn to tell a story now, Papa,” declared Kitty, as they sat around one of the first fires of the season.

Papa pretended to be very much frightened by the very idea, and then made a half-hearted attempt to escape, but the four children seized upon him, and made him sit down in the “story telling chair,” as they always called the big rocker where mamma usually sat when she told stories, and after quite a little grumbling, Papa said he would tell a small one! Mamma was sewing near the lamp, and she laughed merrily, and said:

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“Now we’ll see if they like your stories better than mine!”

“I don’t know what to tell about,” objected Papa, as Chris put another log on the fire. “Well,—all right, if I must! I’ll tell you the story of—of—The Little Münchausen.

“Have you ever heard of the great Baron Münchausen? Of course you have! Baron Münchausen was a fine, swashbuckling old nobleman, with a great imagination, a vast conceit, and a keen taste for adventure. He delighted in telling tales of his experiences, and every tale was more marvellous than the last, and everything that he described himself as doing was one to make angels wonder. He had visited the moon! He had carried coach horses in his arms,—two at a time! He had—
But what use to enumerate the extraordinary and exciting things which he had done? Everyone knows his name to this day, and

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when one meets a great boaster forever telling strange stories of his doings, one says 'Ha! A friend of Baron Münchhausen's.'

"Now Baron Münchhausen in his old age adopted a small boy to bring up to be almost as valiant and as clever as he himself had been. 'It would be a dreadful thing,' he was wont to declare over his glass of Madeira after dinner, 'if the race of great men should die with me! Of course there will never be another Baron Münchhausen, but there may be a Münchhausen the Second, a Münchhausen the younger, the weaker and the lesser in every way! Insignificant as he *must* be in comparison to *Me*,' the Baron would say, with a wave of the hand, 'he will yet be greater and braver and more remarkable than all other men, because *I* shall bring him up in the way he should go!'

"So the prospective Little Münchhausen was

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picked out from a very worthy family of market gardeners, and formally adopted by the celebrated Baron.

“He wasn’t much to look at when that great nobleman first got him. He was little, scared-looking and pasty-faced and no one would have expected anything startling from him—‘So much the better,’ said Münchhausen, ‘I shall be able to begin at the beginning and make him, all by myself!’

“When the lad would cry,—‘Master, that is a fine cabbage; it must be nearly a foot across!’—the Baron would exclaim: “What! is your eyesight so weak, so commonplace as that!—I tell you that it is at least six feet across!’

“And when the boy pointed out a little lark fluttering across the sky his master would reprove him, assuring him that is an eagle, at the smallest!

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“And at last he had the little fellow so well trained in the idea of exaggeration, that he fully understood that when he told about anything, he must make it just six times as large, and six times as remarkable, and six times as important as it was in reality. But the Little Münchausen was rather an honest youngster by nature, so he resolved to give his noble lord a lesson which would put a stop to the absurd teaching which he was being given.

“So one day he came to old Münchausen and said very gravely, ‘Master, when I was out walking to-day, I met a crowd of very rude and disagreeable boys, who taunted me with your poverty!’

“‘My poverty!’ cried the Baron, nearly getting apoplexy with rage, ‘when I have ten million Spanish doubloons and a hundred lakhes of rubies!’ (He hadn’t, but no matter!)

“‘Softly, Master!—Indeed I explained all

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this, but they declared you a puffed up, lying, ridiculous old—'

" 'I'll have them whipped! I'll have them hanged! I'll have them racked, flayed, burned alive, drawn, quartered and stoned!' roared Münchhausen,—as if one could do so many things as that to one batch of boys, even if one wanted to.

" 'Precisely, good Master, and so I told them. But they said that nothing would convince them except a purseful of gold and a ruby or two thrown in!'

" 'They shall have it; they shall see my yellow gold and my priceless rubies to boot! and *then* I will have them racked, hanged, whipped, burned and—'

" 'Where shall I find the purse, Master?' asked the Little Münchhausen patiently.

"Now the poor old Baron could very ill afford a purseful of gold, and a ruby or two

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thrown in. Indeed they came near to being all he had in the world. But his honour was at stake—people would think him a common boaster if he did not take a big stand. So he went down his cellar and dug out a number of gold coins and the only two rubies he possessed, and he put these in a purse and handed them proudly to his adopted son, who departed with them.

“He was gone a long time, and when he came back he found the Baron pacing the floor with nervous exasperation.

“‘Oh, Master,’ he exclaimed, ‘the boys—there were six of them,—all fell upon me, and tried each to get possession of the valuables! And oh, Master, while we struggled, the purse fell down into a well one hundred feet deep!’

“‘What!’ gasped Baron Münchhausen. ‘And what did you do then?’

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“ ‘I tied the six boys together in a rope and let them down into the well!’

“ ‘Excellent!—Well?’

“ ‘*Well*, as you say, Master,—a deep well, a steep well!—The boy at the end got wedged there, and I was obliged to climb down to undo him. When I was once down, unwedging the end-boy and rescuing the purse, all the six boys climbed out one after the other, and left me there!’

“ ‘Left you! Then how—’

“ ‘Patience, Master!—Just as I was despairing a huge hawk flew just above the mouth of the well. A sudden inspiration came to me! I had a ball of string in my pocket, and I tied one of the rubies to the end of the string, then I threw it up as far as I might toward the mouth of the well. This attracted the attention of the hawk which accordingly swooped upon the ruby and swallowed it, then flew away

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with the string trailing from its beak. As the string was unwound from my ball, I tied the purse to it, and that too flew upward out of the well!

“ ‘But where is the purse now? And where are the rubies?’

“The Little Münchausen paused and then he said: “If I succeed in getting it for you, Master, will you promise to present me with five of the gold pieces, and give up trying to educate me above my station?”

“ ‘I will give you the five gold pieces gladly,’ said the Baron, ‘but is it possible you do not wish to be the Little Mün—’

“ ‘I wish,’ said the boy, ‘to be a market gardener like my father and my grandfather before me. I have no genius; I am sure you could never do anything with me! Oh, Master, let me go!’

“ ‘Very well,’ said Münchausen with a sigh,

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‘I dare say you are right. You haven’t very much imagination, and that’s a fact. Be off with you, and catch the hawk that is flying about with my money and jewels!—How did you get out of the well, by the bye?’ he remembered to ask.

“The Little Münchausen vanished into the next room and returned with the fat leather purse. ‘Here is your purse, Master,’ he said, handing it over. ‘I took the liberty of counting out the gold pieces before returning it.’

“‘You rascal!’ gasped the Baron, ‘I believe it never fell into the well at all!’

“‘Oh, Master, it did indeed fall into a hole, but it was only a foot deep.’

“‘And the hawk?’

“‘It was a fly, dear Master, which I chased away.’

“‘And the boys?’

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“ ‘There was but one, Master, and he was a very little one.’

“ ‘Liar!’ cried the Baron reproachfully.

“ ‘Nay, most honoured Master,’ said the Little Münchhausen, ‘I have simply carried out your teachings to the letter. You bade me exaggerate,—well, that’s what I have been doing.’

“ ‘And earning five gold pieces!’ said the Baron ruefully. At that point he looked into the purse. ‘What!’ he exclaimed. ‘I told you five gold pieces. As far as I can see, you have taken about fifty!’

“ ‘Oh, no, Master,’ protested the Little Münchhausen, ‘only thirty. You told me that great minds assumed things to be six times more than others imagined;—to simply multiply all things by six. And thirty is six times five.’

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“The Baron sat and stared, with deep respect.

“ ‘And *you* want to be a market gardener!’ said he.

“ ‘Yes, Master; I find the strain is too much upon my imagination!’ said the Little Münchausen.

“Moral: ‘If you’re going to lay down a rule, take care you are willing to stand by it!’ ”

THE FABLE OF THE MALICIOUS
MOUSE

Crickety, snickety, flippety, flop!—
What was that on the table top?—
First a scratching and then a peep,
Oh, but I want to go to sleep!

Scratchety, crackety, bubbledy, blop!—
First a scramble and then a drop—
And then a nibble, and then a leap,—
Oh, won't it let me go to sleep?

Snippety, snoppety, squiggledy, wop!—
Won't that horrid mouse *ever* stop?
Or all night long will it nibble and creep,
Just 'cause I *want* to go to sleep?

Mice.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FABLE OF THE MALICIOUS MOUSE

IT was Mamma's turn next. She began at once, to save time, as the hands of the clock were hurrying on.

“There was once a simply detestable and wicked little mouse, whose only happiness was in making people wretched. He made himself unpopular with other mice and with the crickets, and black beetles, and with the old grey rat that studied philosophy in the cellar, and the sparrows that had a nest on the piazza roof, and the mole that occasionally came to walk in the geranium border after dark, and all the other animal creatures that made their home in the same old tumbledown house that he did.”

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“Wath it *thith* house?” Tad demanded anxiously.

“Maybe. It doesn’t matter,—and you mustn’t interrupt!

“Well, he not only, as I say, made himself unpopular with the animals, but, when he had nothing else to do, he amused himself by annoying the human beings who lived in the house.”

“Now I *know* it was this house!” exclaimed Kitty, “and *he* is the mouse that kept me awake last night—”

“Don’t interrupt! When people were trying to go to sleep, he had a simply horrid way of walking very softly across the table and then taking a big header into the waste paper basket. And when he landed in the old torn letters and papers, and made a sudden loud crackling noise, he would chuckle with delight. And when he heard the poor tired people in

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bed sighing and tossing and grunting with wakefulness and irritation, he chuckled harder than ever, and thought it ever such a good joke.

“Best of all, he liked to make them throw things at him! Of course people *always* throw things at mice,—not to hit them, but in the hope that they will be able to scare them away. A clever mouse rather enjoys the exercise and amusement of avoiding the shoes and magazines and things caught up hastily in the dark. But our friend, the Malicious Mouse, got a special amount of pleasure out of it. He had a way of sitting down on the extreme edge of a newspaper, for instance, and wiggling his tail; and the whole paper would rustle gently. If it was all spread out so much the better. The minute he heard the person in bed sit up,—and mice have ears that can hear everything almost before it happens, you may take my

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word for it,—he would whish out of reach, and slap! would come a bedroom slipper onto the paper! Then he would scamper up and sit in the slipper and chuckle at the person in bed till you could hear it quite plainly!”

“The chuckling?” said Chris incredulously.

“Yes. People usually thought it was some particularly nasty kind of rustling or nibbling.

“Well, one of the persons in the house whose life the Malicious Mouse managed to make miserable, was an old gentleman with a love for collecting beautiful pieces of china and delicate valuable antiques. He was a gentle old creature, who had lived among lovely things so long that his soul had grown almost as delicate and as perfect as they, and he had a patience and sweetness past belief.

“Now *he* was the man the Malicious Mouse set himself to annoy most steadily. The Mouse could not bear the old gentleman’s pa-

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tience. He hated him because he alone never threw things at him or gave him any fun at all. And just because it was so hard to make the good old man lose his temper that wicked little beast gave up all other occupations just to be able to spend every bit of his time at night in the kind collector's room. There he would do all his most unpleasant tricks:—rustle the newspapers, and jump into the waste paper basket, and softly nibble the edge of the mantelpiece, and dance daintily up and down the writing table; everything, in fact, that he could think of,—which is a great deal more than I can!

“And still the good old collector-gentleman would not abuse him, nor fling books at him, nor do anything except sigh occasionally as if even his placid soul proved it a little bit trying.

“The old gentleman's collection of china

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was very beautiful, and the pieces were nearly as valuable as if they had been jewels. There was rose-pink china and deep blue china, and delicate, strange, green china, and brown china, and lily-white china, and china inlaid with gold leaf or gleaming silver. And some of the vases had wonderful flowers painted on them, and some of the bowls had exquisite little patterns and pictures let in under the glazing,—in a way which people cannot do nowadays, for it is a great, forgotten art. But of all of these rare and lovely pieces the old collector was proudest of a very ancient Chinese vase with red dragons chasing themselves around and around it. And he kept the dragon vase in his bedroom on a stand, so that he could look at it the last thing before blowing his candle out, and the first thing in the morning when the sun peered in between the window curtains.

“The Malicious Mouse knew very well that

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the collector loved the dragon vase the best of all his treasures, and a simply wicked notion came into his little head: He would so greatly aggravate the old man some night that he would throw something at last, and, if the mouse was clever enough, the poor old gentleman might smash his own precious vase himself!

“This was such a delightful idea that, when he thought of it, the Malicious Mouse danced around in circles for sixteen full minutes, and the other mice shook their heads and said: ‘Look how pleased he is! *Somebody’s* going to get into trouble!’

“All that day the Malicious Mouse worked hard, carrying little bits of paper to a big hole in the corner of the old gentleman’s bedroom. He journeyed to the attic, and the cellar, and the ash barrel, and all over, and at last he had a big pile of rustling scraps. Then

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he sat down and whisked his tail and twirled his whiskers and waited.

“Early in the evening the collector came up to bed carrying a lighted candle in an old-fashioned brass candlestick.

“‘You beauty! You treasure!’ said he to the dragon vase, for he often talked to it as if it were a living pet. ‘Some day I will have a splendid rich house to keep you in, something worthy of you, my love,—instead of this dusty old place, filled with rats and mice!’

“Then he undressed, and put on a pointed white night cap and got into bed. And then he gave a last loving look at the vase, and blew out the candle.

“The mouse began work at once. No sooner was the old man snugly settled under his patchwork quilt than the sly little creature seized a piece of paper in his teeth and scampered out into the room. Round and round

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he dashed, making a little pattering noise very hard on the nerves of anyone trying to go to sleep. And then he ran up the legs of the stand and dropped the paper near the base of the dragon vase. And then he whisked off for more. He brought, altogether, sixty-two pieces of paper to that table and left them there, and every piece that he put down rustled against the other.

“ ‘There’s a mouse on my writing table where I left those letters!’ said the old man to himself.

“You see he was confused by the darkness and could not tell exactly where the rustling came from. Of course he thought it *must* be the writing table, for he knew that there was no paper at all on the dragon vase’s stand.

“Just about then, the mouse began to prance about among the papers, making the most dreadful scrabbling noise, and, as it had now

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gone on for about an hour, the old man lost his wonderful patience at last. Reaching out in the dark he seized the candle-stick on the little table beside his bed and threw it across the room in the direction of the scratching and rustling. And then—there was a crash! And the Malicious Mouse galloped away squealing loudly with glee at the success of his plot.

“The poor old collector had a dreadful qualm of terror and went feeling about with trembling hands, till he found a match and lighted it.

“Alas! It was just as he had feared! His beloved vase with the red dragons, the pride of his collection, lay in pieces upon the floor!

“He gathered them up carefully, with many lamentations, and to himself he sighed: ‘How could I have done such a dreadful thing? I’m sure it’s a judgment on quick temper!’

“‘Quick!’ chuckled the mouse from his hole,

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as he watched him with bad little beady eyes, 'why, you old dunce, it's taken you eight months to lose your temper! I had pretty nearly given up hope!' And he ran up inside the wall to have supper,—a delicious one, by the bye, of some cheese which he had stolen from a trap, a bit of dried herring, and a half inch of bacon-rind, which—as anyone knows who has read Hans Christian Anderson—is the most popular of all tidbits for the mice people!

“Well, our friend the collector was not old and wise for nothing. He examined the bits of paper on the stand, half-nibbled about the edges, and he saw clearly enough that some mouse had been putting up a practical joke upon him. So, as he was feeling very badly about the vase, he decided that he would pay the mouse back.

“First he got out a bottle of wonderful cement and stuck the pieces of the vase together

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securely; all except one piece at the side. That he did not stick but laid in lightly so that it would fall out at a touch. Then he tied a bag over the mouth of the vase tight, and then he laid the whole vase on its sides on his writing-table, so that the little loose piece of china came on the upper side. And on the loose piece he very gently laid a delicious, savory strip of fat bacon,—no mouse in the world could resist the smell of it!

“Then it was his turn to sit down and wait. He had put the light out, and pretended to get into bed, though he was really only sitting on the edge of it.

“In a few minutes along came the Malicious Mouse. Of course he could see in the dark, and when he saw the vase that the old man had so carefully glued together, he squeaked with laughter. He didn't notice the bag tied over the mouth of it!

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“ ‘Well, well! Poor old goose!’ said he, curling his whiskers. ‘He has been trying to mend the thing!—Maybe I can make him smash it all over again!’

“He ran up over the vase and just then he smelled the bacon.

“ ‘Oh, my fur and whiskers!’ he exclaimed,—quoting Alice’s White Rabbit,—‘But that smells good!’

“With that he bounced full onto the piece of bacon, and of course the loose piece gave way, and down he went into the vase!

“ ‘Let me out!’ he squealed, running about inside; but of course he couldn’t get out, and in a minute the old collector was peering down at him through the hole by the light of the candle.

“ ‘I’ve got you, you wicked creature!’ said the collector.

“ ‘Let me out!’ pleaded the mouse, almost crying.

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“ ‘Are you sorry you smashed my vase?’ said the collector, who was a highly educated old gentleman and could talk the mouse language.

“ ‘I like that!—You smashed your old vase yourself!’

“ ‘Well, are you sorry, anyway?’ asked the collector.

“ ‘Yes!’ grunted the Malicious Mouse. ‘I certainly am. So would you be if you were shut up in a vase!—And the sticky stuff you used to mend it smells horrid too . . .!’ ”

The clock struck nine, and Mamma stopped short.

“ ‘Mercy!’ ” she exclaimed. “ ‘I’d no idea it was so late.—Run away to bed, all of you!’ ”

“ ‘Oh, Mamma,’ ” cried Kitty reproachfully. “ ‘You might tell us what the old man did with the Mouse!’ ”

“ ‘The Mouse,’ ” said Mrs. Love, “ ‘promised solemnly to reform and the old man—’ ”

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“Let him go?” asked Chris, rather disappointed.

“No, he took him as a servant, and taught him how to dust china and keep the candle trimmed. The Mouse stopped being malicious and became a shining light of virtue and meekness.”

“And what’s the moral of *that*?” asked papa from his corner.

Mamma laughed. “The moral,” she repeated. “I think the moral must be: ‘If you sit up late at night, you are sure to get into trouble!’—Good night, my babies all!”

ROBBERS!

I think that only pleasant things
Will happen while I see,
But when the night its darkness brings,
Why,—*anything* could be!

The owlets hoot,
The black cats scoot
Like shadows in a dream;
And Pixies wee
Come stealthily
To steal the morning cream!

The Kobolds glare
From out the flare
That flickers 'round the pot;
The lamp burns blue,
And demons too
Are there as like as not!

Now in the day quite brave am I,
But in the night-time's shade
When *anything* could happen,—why
I'm awfully afraid!!!

Night Fancies.

CHAPTER XV

ROBBERS!

THE children were so carried away by the last meeting of the "Fable Club" that they could not seem to get out of the mood, and tried to get Nurse Ann to tell them still another story, after they had gone upstairs to bed. But she was very stern and as far from an intention to tell stories as one could well be. The wet weather made her rheumatic, and, in consequence, even growlier and more severe than usual.

The three nursery chimneys were smoking particularly badly that evening, so Ann had only built small fires in each, and scurried the children through their undressing, so they wouldn't get cold. Yes,—three nursery chim-

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neys! You see the twins had one room, and Chris another, and Kitty slept with Nurse. Chris's room was the day nursery and play-room, and all three rooms opened into each other, and all three had open fireplaces—once three open fireplaces smoked.

“What a *lovely* night!” exclaimed Kitty, with a pleasurable shiver as she jumped into bed and snuggled over under the big blue quilt.

“Lovely!” grumbled Nurse Ann, trying to pick up the smouldering logs so that they wouldn't smoke so much. “Lovely, is it, indeed? With six inches of rain outside, and a raw wind that would turn ye inside out!—Master Christopher, I can see ye in there through the door! Now don't go hoppin' about like that! Get into bed this instant, or ye'll get yer death!—The pixies take this candle!—It near blows out every breath of air that comes nigh it!”

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“Do you believe in pixies, Nurse?” asked Kitty, with the bed clothes pulled up over her chin, and nothing but the end of her nose sticking out.

“Maybe I do, an’ maybe I don’t!” muttered Ann, looking sour and not at all sympathetic, polishing off Tad’s little shoes with a vigorous palm. “I’ll tell ye this:—whatever of bad there is, pixies or mankind, will be abroad a night like this here!”

“Robbers?” suggested Chris, from the next room. He had at last ducked into bed, with some smothered grunts over the chilliness of the sheets. “Robbers, Nurse?”

“Aye,—robbers, or bogies, or such like!—Take care ye don’t stay awake long enough to catch sight of any of ’em!—Good-night to ye!”

She went off with the old china candlestick they knew so well, visiting each bedside in turn to be sure that everyone was tucked up, and

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had plenty of coverings, and that the windows were all open.

“Good-night to ye,” she said again, not unkindly, and they saw her light flicker down the hall through the crack of the door, for the nursery doors were left ajar till she came to bed later. The wind and rain made such an uproar that neither Kitty nor Christopher could go to sleep immediately. They each felt excited and wide awake, and each, if they could have known it,—was wishing they dared go in and sit on the other’s bed for a chat. Only they were such good children that they were afraid of disturbing one another.

After a little while Mamma came in softly and leaned over Kitty.

“Asleep and dreaming, little daughter?” she asked in her gentle whisper.

“Oh, no, Mamma! Not asleep,—but dreaming a little!”

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“What about?” laughed Mamma.

“Robbers!”

“What an exciting subject to dream about! Try something more peaceful—like sheep!”

She kissed Kitty softly, and went in to Chris. He was sitting up in bed.

“Didn’t I hear Kitty talking about robbers?” he demanded.

“She said she was dreaming about them.—Lie down, my dear. It’s cold in here. There! I’ll tuck up the small of your back where the wind always gets.—Go to sleep. Listen to that rain!—Good-night, son!”

In a minute she was gone. Kitty must have dozed off after all, for she did not hear Nurse come to bed, and only woke when it was quite dark. She didn’t know what had awakened her, but she heard a startled voice near her say—

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“The Lord bless an’ save us—what was that?”

Kitty sat up, and heard Nurse Ann fumbling about on the little table between the beds for matches. For a minute Kitty was confused and half asleep, and, thinking of the Malicious Mouse Fable, she said,—

“Did you smash the vase?”

“Vase, is it?” said Nurse Ann, finally getting the candle lighted and climbing stiffly out of bed. “’Twas more nor a vase I’m thinkin’ made yon noise below!”

“What noise?” asked Kitty, bewildered. And just then Chris scurried in slowly, sleepy, but much excited, to exclaim: “I say, Kit, did you hear it? It’s robbers this time, and no mistake; and I’ll tell you—” he lowered his voice mysteriously, “they’re stealing the silver, that’s what *they’re* doing!”

“Put on something, Master Chris,” said

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Nurse sternly. She was already wrapped in her own old dressing-gown of grey sprinkled with yellow spots, and making for the door. The children were relieved and grateful to notice that she did not tell them to stay in bed!

Hastily and softly Kitty jumped up and put on her pink bath-robe, while Chris hunted up his blue one, and then, too excited to feel cold, they tiptoed out into the hall.

People were moving about and speaking in low voices, and a sound of steps sounded on the stairs. Mamma, looking lovely in a fluffy thing of pale lavender and lace with a sort of fur cloak pulled on over that, passed them looking puzzled and anxious. Her hair was hanging down her back in two blond braids, and she looked nearly as young as Kitty herself.

“Oh, Mummy,” cried Chris, under his breath, “is it robbers?”

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Mrs. Love turned with a startled look.

“Oh, darlings, do run in and keep warm, will you?” she pleaded,—but the children did not consider it a real command. As she hurried on down the stairs they seized hands and followed her, stepping very lightly and exchanging glances of delightful apprehension. Is anything in this world so thrilling as a night alarm? It was the first in Christopher’s and Kitty’s lives, and they felt as though they were living in a book of adventure!

Downstairs everything was in confusion. Mr. Love, with a candle in one hand and a revolver in the other, was examining the sideboard in the dining-room.

“It certainly sounded like the crash of silver,” he said. “If all the stuff did not seem to be safe here I should certainly feel sure that some burglar had filled his bag and dropped it just as he was starting to escape.”

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“Perhaps,” said Mamma tremulously, “one of the pictures or mirrors fell in the library.”

“Or the wind blew a window in,” suggested Ann gloomily.

“Or a pipe burst,” added Becky, who looked, by-the-bye, too queer for words, with a red cotton handkerchief tied over her head and under her chin as a precaution against the toothache. And suddenly Kitty darted forward to the sideboard.

“Where’s the silver water pitcher?” she exclaimed. “Mamma! Papa! Somebody’s taken the silver water pitcher!”

It was quite true. There was not a sign of the pitcher, which was very large and very heavy, and, one would imagine, the last thing a burglar would pick out to carry with him.

Well, they didn’t know what to make of it. They just stood and stared at each other, and

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offered absurd explanations and suggestions in a half-hearted way.

It was, oddly enough, Chris who said: "If that pitcher fell down—"

"It couldn't fall down," put in Kitty.

"Well, if it was dropped down, or thrown down, or whatever happened to it," said Christopher rather impatiently, "I'll bet it's on the floor now. And I'm going to hunt!"

"Oh, my dear!" cried his mother nervously; perhaps she had visions of a very clever burglar hiding under the dining-room chairs,—they had already looked under the table. But Chris had already plumped down on his hands and knees and was peering behind the sideboard.

"You look like a dog," said Kitty, giggling, "a light blue dog;—oh, where is Giuseppe?"

"Here," answered Giuseppe plainly, with a little soft "wuff," nuzzling her hand. His

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silky black ears were very much cocked, and he seemed vastly interested in what was happening, though quite at sea as to the cause of the disturbance.

And then, quite suddenly, his ears went up higher and more excitedly than ever, and he “wuffed” again louder and more emphatically, —looked up at Kitty, wagged his black stump of a tail, and peered intently into the dark space beyond the hanging edge of the table cloth.

“He sees something under the table!” exclaimed Mamma.

“Yes!” barked Giuseppe eagerly.

Kitty patted him.

“What is it, Giuseppe?” she asked.

And with this Giuseppe made a dash under the table, and then reached out again, wagging and barking violently.

“What on earth—” said Papa, stooping and

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scratching a match. He followed Giuseppe's excited dashes, and then began to chuckle.

"Well, if that isn't the limit!" said Papa.

The silver pitcher had rolled under the table, and the reason why they had not seen its gleam before was because the "robber" who had knocked it off the sideboard, was carefully and slyly sitting in front of it, hiding it from the light.

Of course, you have guessed without my telling you that the "guilty party" was King Cole!

"Did you *ever* see such a wonderful cat?" exclaimed Kitty proudly.

**THE OLD COUPLE AT THE
GRANGE**

Living is such splendid fun,
Every golden day begun
 Brings new joys about!
Sometimes, in a fairy book
You are dying for one look
 At how it all comes out;

But if you're wise you do not peep,
But let the sweet excitement keep
 The story-teller wrought you;
So too, in living, patient be;
Just wait, my dear, and you will see
 What some fine morn has brought you!

Rewards.

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLD COUPLE AT THE GRANGE

ONE day Uncle Mark came into the nursery with a funny sort of look, half excited and half mysterious, yet as though he did not care to seem either. He was smoking a cigarette and he leaned against the table and put his hands in his pockets and looked at Kitty for a whole minute without saying a word.

“Why, Uncle Mark,” she exclaimed, getting a little uncomfortable, “what is it? Is my hair-ribbon coming off? Or have I a smudge on my nose?” She rubbed it anxiously.

Kitty liked to draw, and was always getting lead-pencil smooches all over herself. But Uncle Mark shook his head.

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“No,” he said thoughtfully, still staring at her. “No, there’s nothing the matter with you. In fact, you’re just right.”

“Just right for *what?*” demanded Kitty, for she knew very well that her uncle didn’t mean she was perfect.

“For a little adventure which I think—mind, I only say *think*—we’re going to have together.”

“An adventure!” Kitty clapped her hands. “Oh, what is it?”

Uncle Mark took his hands out of his pockets, and suddenly seemed to wake up.

“Kitty Love,” said he, “there’s an old couple moved into the old Grange between here and the Marchmonts’. They’re lonely old souls, and the old gentleman is not well. How would you like to go to see them, and take them some flowers?”

“Why, of course I should like to, Uncle

KITTY LOVE

Mark," said Kitty at once, feeling a little puzzled. "But where is the adventure part of it?"

"Ah!" said Uncle Mark mysteriously, "the adventure part of it will come later. Get your hat and cape, and come along—oh, by-the-bye," he added carelessly, "don't speak to your father and mother about it."

"Oh, Uncle Mark! Is it a secret?"

"N-no,—not exactly. It's a surprise."

"A secret from *Mamma*?"

"Just now!" pleaded Uncle Mark. "Honest Injun, Kitty, I wouldn't ask you to do something that your mother wouldn't like."

"Of course not, Uncle Mark."—But still Kitty hesitated.

"All right. I'll agree that you shall tell your mother all about it the minute you come home—if you still want to. Will that do?"

"Oh, yes, that will do beautifully." And Kitty flew with joyful heart to get down her

KITTY LOVE

shade hat and the little blue cape she wore when the days were chilly.

It was a simply delicious Autumn morning, with just enough crisp freshness in the air to set the blood tingling and the heart dancing. Everything seemed to sparkle as if the little weather-sprites had spent the night polishing and brushing and cleaning the world and bur-nishing it up generally.

“Going for a walk?” called Mamma from the library where she was dusting books.

“Yes, Mamma!”

And “Yes, Katherine!” called the two.

Kitty cast a slightly wistful glance through the library door as she passed. As a rule she adored helping her mother arrange the books. They always stopped every few minutes to look at some illustration, or to read a tiny bit, and Mrs. Love would tell delightful stories about the contents of the old volumes.

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But Uncle Mark hurried her out of the house before she could change her mind about the visit.

First they stopped and picked a bouquet of such late flowers as yet lingered in the garden.

“There’s nothing really very nice left,” Kitty complained. “Still, I do love late flowers, don’t you, Uncle Mark?”

He smiled. “I do,” he said, “and I also love you, Kitty.”

Kitty flushed up happily. Uncle Mark was hardly ever seriously affectionate, and when he showed her any real tenderness she always felt greatly touched and pleased. The walk to the Grange was a very pleasant one. They talked like good comrades, and it seemed soon over.

“Here we are!” said Uncle Mark, as they came in sight of the old white house with its colonial pillars in front, and its box hedges and elms all about.

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They went up the stiff path and on the piazza they were met by an old lady. She was a little old lady, with smoothly parted silver hair and a very sweet face,—rather sad, too, Kitty thought. She wore an old-fashioned silver-grey silk dress very puffed out as to skirt, with collar and cuffs of very delicate lace which had grown a little yellow with time. At her throat was a round cameo brooch like an old one Mamma had in her jewel-box. And she wore a number of quaint, handsome rings, with curious settings and the gold worn very thin.

When she saw Uncle Mark and Kitty she gave a little soft “oh!” as though she was startled, and her wrinkled cheeks flushed faintly. She seemed to be rather nervous and doubtful of what to say, and Kitty decided that she must be shy. She felt sorry for her, for she herself suffered from shyness, so she went forward at

KITTY LOVE

once and offered the little bouquet, saying very prettily indeed: "Uncle Mark thought you might like these. I'm so sorry that all the really nice flowers are over."

"Thank you," said the little old lady in rather a tremulous tone. Kitty looked up at her—and she didn't have to look so very far!—and saw that her eyes were full of tears. What a very nervous old lady she appeared, to be sure!

"Where is—" began Uncle Mark, and then seemed to check himself. The old lady evidently understood whom he meant.

"On the other side of the piazza where there is more sun. He feels the need so, you know, after Roselands."

Kitty noticed that she spoke in a curious and yet pretty way; rather as Mamma sometimes did, and Uncle Mark, too, when they were very much excited about something. She couldn't tell just what it was that made this way of

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speaking different from that of other people, but later on she learned that it was the Southern accent.

“Will you—will you come and see him?” asked the old lady in a rather hesitating way.

Then they all three walked around the corner of the house to a sheltered side-piazza. And there in the sun sat an old, old, old man, muffled up in blankets. He looked a thousand years old, Kitty thought, and very thin and white, but his eyes were very bright and not particularly pleasant. He looked toward them with a sort of grunt as they appeared.

“My dear,” said the lady gently, “here is Mark and—and the little girl.”

“Mph!” grunted the old man in the blankets again. “The little girl, eh?”—He scowled and peered like a bad-tempered old gnome. “What’s your name?” he demanded harshly.

KITTY LOVE

“Kitty Love,” said she politely, “and I hope you are feeling better.”

“It’s a foolish name,” returned the old gentleman, “and I don’t feel better; I feel worse. I feel a good deal worse!”

He wriggled and flounced about like a restless child, and two blankets fell off. Uncle Mark picked them up, but the invalid cried out crossly, “*You* won’t be able to fix them! Where’s Pike? I want Pike. He’s the only one who knows how to make me comfortable.”

Kitty saw Uncle Mark frown and press his lips together at the name. But he went at once to one of the French windows and called: “Pike! You’re wanted.”

Immediately as though he had been waiting for the summons a man came out onto the piazza. He was evidently a servant—middle-aged and respectable looking. With a pale face and cold eyes—he looked as though he had

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not one single feeling in his body or his heart, and Kitty disliked him at once, but he picked up his master's things with great tenderness and care, and said in a low, respectful voice,—
“Will you have your eggnog, sir?”

The old gentleman grunted something. No one but Pike could have understood whether he said “yes” or “no,” but Pike bowed and said, “Very good, sir.” Then he went with a soft step back to the long window through which he had come. At the threshold he turned.

“Will you have any refreshment, Mr. Mark?” he asked.

“No, thanks, Pike.”

The man looked at Kitty. She thought a little flicker of interest showed in his face. “And the young lady?” he said. “Would she take a glass of milk, or a cup of chocolate?”

“No, thank you,” said Kitty politely.

The man looked almost disappointed.

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“Very good, miss,” he said; then he bowed and vanished.

“Brr!” said Uncle Mark. “That fellow gives me the creeps. How you can have him around all the time!—”

“Oh, I’m sure,” said the old lady nervously, “he’s a very good servant, and faithful.”

“I wouldn’t trust him around the corner,” said Uncle Mark curtly.

Now all this time Kitty had been coming to a conclusion. At first it was but a wild idea—then it became a definite thought—and now she felt absolutely certain. She looked from the old gentleman to the old lady and then she looked at Uncle Mark, and suddenly she clasped her hands and took a step forward.

“Oh, please—” she exclaimed in a trembling voice, “aren’t you my Grandfather and Grandmother?”

And the next moment she was caught in her grandmother’s arms.

KITTY DOES IT!

A journey ends with loving friends to meet you,
And something nice occurs where'er you go;
The very gladdest things turn up to greet you,
And if you'll only wait, you'll find it's so!

They lie around and soon or late they'll find you,
You mustn't feel they've once forgotten you,
For *nothing* is impossible—now mind you!—
And every single dream can *once* come true!

Faith.

CHAPTER XVII

KITTY DOES IT!

KITTY did not tell Mamma as soon as she got back. Indeed, she felt quite justified in keeping it a secret for yet a little longer. She was as anxious as Uncle Mark to bring about a general "kiss-and-make-things-up," but somehow, since she had seen her grandfather she felt more than ever that some sort of clearing up would have to come before complete forgiveness on both sides. "And I guess," thought Kitty seriously, "that *I'll* have to do it."

Oddly enough, though she did not like Pike the man servant, Kitty felt that he was the person who could help her to straighten out the tangle.

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She walked over to the Grange a week later during the afternoon hour when she knew that both "the grandpeople" would be taking their after-luncheon naps, and hunted up Pike for a comfortable chat.

He was sorting papers in the library, and his pale, cold face lit up with a surprisingly pleasant look when he saw her.

"Sit down, miss," he urged. "You'll not be expecting to see your grandparents."

"Oh, no," said Kitty cheerfully, laying down the bouquet. "I thought I'd leave these, that's all. Oh, Pike, I'm so *dull!* Tell me a story!" She spoke pleadingly.

Pike began to tear up a letter and went on tearing as if he did not entirely know what he was doing; tearing, tearing, into smaller and yet smaller bits . . . some little white scraps of paper fluttered to the floor like flakes of snow. After there was nothing left to tear

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he went through the motions of tearing, as though his long, yellow fingers moved mechanically.

“You like fairy tales?” he said.

“Oh, rather!” said Kitty, lifting herself up by her two hands to sit on the edge of the table. “Do you know any fairy tales, Pike?”

“No, miss,—not to say *know* any,” said the man doubtfully, “but I—I should like to tell you one just the same.”

“Not know any,—but can tell one! How funny! Do go ahead, Pike!” and she settled herself attentively to listen.

“It is one which I—have merely lived, miss!” said Pike respectfully. He was silent a moment, then he began.

“Once, miss, there was a—a—what is a very bad sort of fairy, miss?”

Kitty thought.

“A—Troll?” she suggested.

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“Yes, miss, maybe! I don’t know, I’m sure. Once there was a Troll who acted very wickedly, but—whose heart was not bad,—no, indeed not!” He paused.

“Yes?” said Kitty sympathetically.

“Yes, miss.—The Troll was in debt.”

“In debt!” cried Kitty, much interested and surprised. “I didn’t know Trolls were ever in debt.”

“I dare say, miss,” said Pike precisely, “that they might not be as a rule. This Troll now was, as you might say, in trouble. He had a mother—”

“A mother Troll!”

“Why—er—yes, miss, I suppose so,” said Pike uncomfortably. “Anyway, there was a mortgage, and so on, and the Troll needed money horribly . . . he needed money.” Pike corrected himself primly; but his lips twisted a little.

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“Poor Troll!”

“Yes, miss.—He didn’t know what to do, the Troll didn’t. And he—he knew of a spell which belonged to a Wizard he knew. It—it was a very fine spell,” said Pike, coughing slightly. “The Troll knew that it would bring him all the money he needed if he could only get hold of it—the spell—for a little while.”

“Yes? Do go on.”

“Well, miss, there was a magic charm to be said before you could get the paper that had the spell written on it. And there were three people that knew the charm. The Wizard—” Pike spoke slowly, as though he were considering each word,—“and the Troll, and—a Fairy Prince who was—who was married to the Wizard’s daughter. So the Troll said the charm, and stole the paper that had the spell, and—”

“Stole, Pike!”

KITTY LOVE

“Yes, miss. He—”

Suddenly Pike stopped, and hunted for the letter which he had torn up long since. Not finding it he sat heavily staring straight in front of him.

“Well, then,” said Kitty, in a wondering whisper, “after he had—stolen—it, how did he keep his Wizard from punishing him?”

“He let him think,” said Pike, speaking as though he were in a sort of dream, “he let the Wizard think, miss, that the Fairy Prince had done it!”

“I see,” said Kitty, still staring at him. “And—and—then what happened?”

“The Troll,” said Pike, rather shakily, and Kitty saw that the knuckles of his yellow hands were very white as he clenched his fists,—“the Troll suffered for it all his life long—until—until—”

He moved his head as if he couldn't go on.

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“Pike,” said Kitty suddenly, “I wonder—” she stopped short and stared at him. Her pulse was pounding, all her blood seemed pouring into her head. An idea had come to her,—such a strange, exciting, dreadful, impossible idea!—“Pike!” she said again, tremblingly, “that fairy story . . . you . . . Pike!” said Kitty, the third time, and she jumped off the table to him across the room and looked at him intently. “Were *you* the Troll in the Fairy Story? And did you steal the money from Grandfather and let him think it was Prince Charming?—I mean—”

“Your Papa,” finished Pike quietly. He was very pale, but just as respectful as ever. “Yes, miss . . . I—I was the Troll in the Fairy Story, miss!” . . .

Mrs. Love was sitting in the library by the open fire wondering where Kitty was, and feeling just a wee bit lonely, when a hurricane of

KITTY LOVE

flying steps approached over the veranda and down the hall.

In another moment Kitty herself fell into her arms.

“Oh, Mamma—darling,” she gasped—“it was a secret, but now it isn’t! It’s all right. Grandfather and Grandmother are at the Grange and they want to see you, dearest; and Pike forged the check and let Papa be blamed! *Only you mustn’t do anything to him for it, because he told me himself!*”

Well, it was all right after that, as you may imagine it would be, and “the grandpeople” were so pathetically happy to have their daughter back again! And Mamma was so happy! And Papa was so happy! And everyone was so happy,—dear, dear!—There never, never was such a happy time—and even Pike was forgiven!

Of course Kitty did that;—somehow she

KITTY LOVE

couldn't let *him* be left entirely out of the family joy. So, though he would humbly have accepted any punishment they decided upon for him, she persuaded them to let him go on taking care of Grandfather Alden, whom he loved, and who needed him, and trying to prove his real penitence.

And of course "the grandpeople" wanted them all to go South with them for the winter.

"Well," said Chris jokingly, "I suppose you 'love' the idea of going to Roselands, too, Kit?"

"Yes," she said softly. "I love the idea of Roselands, and I love the grandpeople—"

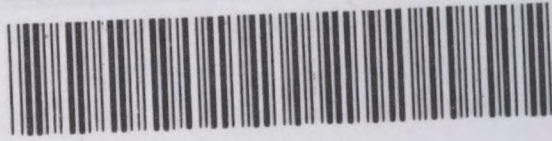
"And Pike?" put in Chris slyly.

"Ye-es,—*sort* of, because he was honest at the end, you know!—and—and—*I guess I just love being alive!*" said Kitty Love happily, with her face lifted toward the bright Autumn sun.

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