



"THAT MOUND," SAID DAN, "IS THE SHAWNEE BURYIN' MOUND."

W.A. Rogers.

THE SECRETS AT ROSELADIES

BY

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Old Caravan Days
and others

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THE SECRETS AT ROSELADIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHIRLING TABLE.

MR. SMITH'S supper was laid in the kitchen, neatly, with a clean china-towel for the cloth, and he ate with his usual humility and relish, drawing no comparisons between his service and the table in the dining-room surrounded by children.

He was a square, blue-eyed English laborer who never expected to find a better place than the one he held with the Roseladies.

Crumbs which fell between his knees he carefully picked up again, for Mrs. MacAllister often had him scour the kitchen floor and he appreciated

the misfortune of a grease-spot. As he ducked his head over his plate he listened to the children and watched them through the crack of the dining-room door with the protecting interest he felt it his duty to show in the absence of Mrs. MacAllister and Miss Sarah. Mr. Smith put the housekeeper first in all his thoughts, because Miss Sarah was a young thing and did not take much authority. The master he counted out altogether. Mrs. MacAllister had placed Mr. Smith about the house and to him she was its potentate.

Three boys and two girls sat close to the round table. All of them were guests in the house and they considered the occasion one long picnic. Penn Bidgood was going to have all the fun he could hold. Sister Bidgood, a year his junior in age, but quite his grandmother in tenderness of heart, loved to stay with the Roseladies; she loved her uncle and Cousin Sarah; she loved her brother Willie who sat beside her, and she was attentive to little Honora Jones on her other hand. More attentive, indeed, than the baby's brother Aquilla.

Aquilla was a poetic, big-eyed, languid boy with satin-smooth skin. He crumbled bread upon his plate, and said he did not care for any cake. He would have taken strong tea, but having only milk as a substitute he finished his supper at a mouthful, and wondered how the others could eat so long.

"I wish they'd use this table all the time instead of the big one," said Penn, standing up. "It isn't needed in the garret, and Mr. Smith and I had a job bringing it down. Pass the currants, please." He whirled the top of the table and it flew around with a creak, bringing the currant dish to his own hand.

"Sit down, Penn," said Sister. "It turns just as well when you sit still." She put it gently around and got another seed cooky for the baby. But the baby, being ambitious to whirl for herself, refused the cooky until she had accomplished another revolution.

"It's like tables some of the kings used to have, only they came up through the floor," said Aquilla, giving a whirl and taking the vinegar.

"Thank you for the butter," exclaimed Penn, spinning the top until the china rattled.

"Thank you for the cake," exclaimed Willie, bound to do as Penn did, and reflecting in his pleasant brown eyes all the swimming dishes as his hand sent them around.

"Thank you for salt."

"Thank you for cheese."

"Thank you for nothing."

"It will be thank you for punishment," admonished Sister. "Everything will fly off and be broken, then they'll never let us eat on this table again when they go to town."

Such a thought was enough to check the mad gyrations. Aquilla leaned one meditative elbow on the cloth, as a period. "It's centrifugal force that would make them fly off," he explained; "you find out all about that in the philosophy."

"I don't care what kind of force that is," asserted Penn Bidgood. "But I just hope no kind of force at all will make aunt Jane come here from Greensburg. We don't need her and she'd be no use at all."

"She promised father and mother she'd come, and she promised your father and mother, too, Quilly. Because Cousin Sarah isn't old enough to take care of so many children," said Sister.

"Well, Mrs. MacAllister is old enough," declared Penn. "But I don't want anybody at all to herd me. Don't you wish a lot of us had come here when this place was a school!"

"We couldn't," objected Willie. "We wasn't alive then."

"I guess I wouldn't liked the school, either," concluded Penn, on second thought.

"The school was long ago," said Sister. "I used to wish we lived in a church so I could play keep house in all the seats, but it's nicer to live in an old seminary that has the belfry on it yet."

"If they do bring aunt Jane home to-night maybe she'll read aloud to us a great deal," meditated Aquilla.

"Yes, she'll read out loud to you," exclaimed Penn, rising again with his subject. "She'll read the law and you'll have to toe it down. She be-

lieves in children minding all the time, and no honeyin' up."

"Mamma reads to me at home," said Aquilla. "Sometimes when she has a headache or a very bad cold I excuse her, but she has to read double to make up for it. And I'm read to sleep every night. It seems funny not to be read to sleep here. I expect mamma's lonesome, crossing the ocean, because she doesn't have me to read to."

"Humph!" disapproved Sister, scarcely knowing why she did so. She stood in awe of her cousin Aquilla; though she was eleven and he was only ten. He was so tall and white and learned, and continually asking questions which only Cousin Sarah could answer; Mr. Roseladies being fortunately deaf and unable to hear them. Yet Sister resented a selfishness which habit had cultivated in Aquilla—more than she did Penn's roughness. Penn would help you over logs and stones, and give you half of every nice thing he got; he liked you though you were a girl. But Aquilla said girls could not be presidents or fight battles. He liked to have girls wait upon him; though, if he

had been a king, he thought he would execute some of them.

Penn was a red-headed boy with freckles and small shrewd eyes. He had strong teeth, fists, and legs, and a very strong desire to explore the outside world. He was ashamed to have anything the matter with him, and would hide a bruised finger in his pocket, or disguise a sore toe with a long, unconcerned lope. He lived much in his muscles and lungs and was a naughty, hearty fellow, gritty and sweet like a ripe russet apple, and he felt a protecting tenderness for his sister and Willie.

Sister Bidgood was written down in the family record Mariana, but like an Indian she raised up a new name for herself in her prominent trait. She was probably the most affectionate girl who ever ran around under a fleece of curls. She threw herself upon Uncle Roseladies, startling him out of his repose. She covered Cousin Sarah with kisses and even hung around the waist of Mrs. MacAllister. Penn would rarely hold still; he felt ashamed; but Willie had long submitted to

caresses. He and Sister were not unlike. His hair was amber color and his eyes a yellow brown, set wide apart. Sister's eyes were black, planted close together, and her abundant curls were brown. She had a shy, sidelong smile, and slipped her hand into yours with a cuddling motion. The world was a great assembly of people whom Sister could love and wait upon. She was not thoughtful; she was simply a feeling creature who could not endure her friends' unhappiness.

"This is a pretty good place," continued Aquilla. "But I wish mamma had taken me to Europe with her instead of leaving me here. I want to see the English. I just hate the English."

"They never did anything to you," declared Penn.

"They're a stouter country than we are, though," acknowledged Aquilla.

"Ho!" shouted Penn, standing up once more, with his last fragment of cooky distending one cheek. "I'd like to see them be a stouter country than we are."

"They have a better navy," accorded Aquilla.

"No, they haven't!" declared Penn. "They haven't anything better than we have."

"England owns one hundred and thirty-two millions of miles in all her provinces," said Aquilla, with the calmness of a statistician.

"I don't care what she owns," said Penn, wagging his head. "She ain't any bigger or better than the United States; and I'll put it to vote at this table. Is she, Sister?"

"Girls don't know about such things," remarked Aquilla with patient scorn.

"But I have studied my history," claimed Sister, gathering her lips into a grieved bunch.

"Well, which'll you vote for," put Penn; "your own folks or the British?"

Sister said she voted for her own folks, and Willie had in his memory no strong historical reasons for siding against Penn. The baby, responding to winks and instruction from Aquilla, said the "British," and then shouted with delight over a new word.

Mr. Smith was called upon, and without giving offence voted for the old country. So Great Brit-

ain and America hung evenly balanced and Penn and Aquilla shook their heads at each other.

"Uncle Roseladies will tell you," threatened Aquilla.

"Well, Cousin Sarah won't go against her country," retorted Penn. "And if aunt Jane from Greensburg comes, you can have her, anyway."

"I ain't saying that I'm *glad* England's the stronger," argued Aquilla.

"Ask Dan what *he* thinks," suggested Willie, bringing forward the only other available voter he could call to mind.

Aquilla hooted. "Dan Marsh! *He* don't know anything about the English navy."

"He lives in a boat," claimed Willie. "He ought to know."

"And that's a lovely way to live," said Sister. "They can move every day and never tear their things up a bit."

"Only they can't keep a cow," objected Willie. "So Dan has to come and ask Mrs. MacAllister for sweet milk and buttermilk!"

"They could keep it on the bank," said Penn.

"They'd have to load her on the boat," urged Willie. "Dan's coon lives on the boat, and sometimes he has to be chained."

Mr. Smith's voice in colloquy with an unseen person now wrought sudden silence around the revolving table. "That's Dan," announced Willie.

It was Dan, moving with cat-cushioned bare feet across the kitchen floor. He appeared, carrying the tin coffee-boiler which his mother usually sent for skim-milk or buttermilk.

Dan was a lean, long boy in his earliest teens, tanned so brown that the sun could scarcely do more now than emphasize the work of past summers. His hickory shirt-sleeve was split to the shoulder, and Dan had burst the wristband as a shackle from his wrist. The drapery hung down his side, and his golden-red muscles stood prominent on the slim arm-bones. A pair of butternut-colored trousers and a straw hat without the top of the crown, completed Dan's dress. His feet arched across the door-sill, his toes playing restlessly upon the dining-room carpet while he looked at the children without saying a word. He had

beautiful long-lashed eyes, with such a light in them as you see shining from pebbles under the water; and an oval, angelic face. Though so slim, he was straight as a young sycamore; and not afraid of the most august presence in the world.

"Come and have some tea. We're eating on the whirling table to-night," exclaimed the boys.

"Been to my supper," responded Dan with the deliberate intonation of the Lower Wabash.

"Well, put your old kettle down there, and let's go and play."

Penn left his place like a hurricane, and the dreamy Aquilla dropped his napkin under the table to follow. Sister went around the board, putting the napkins in the rings, replacing dish covers and smoothing the tablecloth, while the boys burst through the back door, Dan dropping his coffee-pot with a final bang on the last step.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNITED DIGGERS.

IT was about sunset, and the Wabash River had all the milk and fire and changeable green tints of opals. It came in a broad volume round a bend betwixt hills in the north, and spread around sand-banks, islands, and across pebbled shallows, in some places pouring a swift current and in others oozing half asleep against drift ; so the distance seemed long from the east shore to the west.

Dan's skiff was pulled half out of the water and the boys went down the slope toward it.

The old building which many years before had been a flourishing country academy, was square, and built of brick, with mighty pillars supporting the porch. It had wings at the sides and various juts of additions. The old bell still hung in the high belfry. The hall extended across the whole

front of the house, but was deep enough only for a stairway to sidle up out of it in bewildered and criss-cross fashion. Tubs of blooming oleanders and large-leaved plants stood in this hall where the summer sun reached them through mighty and many-paned windows.

Upstairs remained the academy schoolroom with its platform across one end. The seats had long been removed; no maps or blackboards marred the walls; in fact, all traces of work had disappeared and it was the nicest play schoolroom you ever saw, where you could shout and make your voice echo in derision of the schoolmaster who used to forbid whispering there. Then the platform could be used as a stage for shows.

Mr. Roseladies meant to cut the schoolroom up into several apartments, but no actual change resulted. He did not like the noise of carpenters, and as Sarah and himself were the only remaining members of his family and the house was large for them, he studied and mused, and nothing was done. His father had left him a comfortable property, and remodeled this academy for a homestead.

The architecture was the same as that of the State House, and all solid temples of learning of its day.

Dan Marsh and his following formed a small political knot on the gravel by his boat. Dan had the advantage of the other three boys in that he could worm his toes through wet sand while they could only stamp across in restless shoes.

"Who is the English, anyhow?" asked Dan with unabashed countenance.

Aquilla wondered how Dan Marsh could move and have his being with such blanks in his mind. But Penn explained the case with fervor.

"Pshaw," drawled Dan, having his hands in his pockets and his straight nose slightly lifted at the nostrils by scorn. "I don't keer nothing about *them*. Let them keep as many boats as they want to. On our side the river we've got a sword that the State of Illinois give to one of our gen'r'ls for fightin' in the Mexican war. I've seen that sword and there's pictur's on it from one end to the other. The folks keeps its case all wrapped up. And what do I keer about the English? I'd a

heap sight rather know what's in that mound right over the river."

The boys looked at a rugged hill crowded with trees, rocks and brush. The setting sun sifted through foliage on its summit. There were dusk hollows and black shades over the whole side toward them. It was the most prominent point beyond the opposite bluffs.

"That mound," said Dan, "is the Shawnee buryin' mound."

"The Shawnees were just Indians," burst out Aquilla, "and the English are a great big nation."

"Well, if them Indians had got after you," pursued Dan, calmly ignoring the question he was to have voted upon, "you'd thought they was big enough. But they was very friendly with white folks before the last of them left. And I can show you their council-ring in the woods. If a fellow could git into that mound he'd see sights."

"What's in it, Dan?" urged Willie.

Dan mused, fixing his eyes across the river.

"Down to the station there is a man that has found lots of jugs and stone axes, and kittles the

Indians buried along the shores. Some of 'em he sent to the Smithsonian Institute to Washin'ton."

Aquilla drew closer and felt that Dan was more respectable than he had supposed.

Penn was grasping the subject in silence.

"*That* man'd like to git into the Shawnee mound," said Dan.

"Why doesn't he do it, then?" inquired Aquilla. The Lower Wabash boy turned upon him with a sneer.

"Why, don't you know nothin' about your own State and the one alongside of it? You better let the English alone and 'tend to home. Don't you know Mr. Roseladies' grandfather owned all that ground as well as this, and he promised them Indians their buryin' ground shouldn't never be tetched while grass growed and water run? They smoked a pipe together, and he made an oath for all his children to keep. I've heard my granny tell that tale since the very first I can recollect. Time and ag'in men have come along and wanted to see what was in that hill. But the word always was, 'No, sir, you can't do it,'"

"I wouldn't care about doing it," said Aquilla.

"Well, you couldn't, anyhow," said Penn. "If they promised the Indians."

Pursued Dan, "My granny can remember some of the old Indian squaws. And the chief's son is in that mound."

"It's all just bones," said Aquilla.

"There's stone kittles and jugs and axes," enumerated Dan, "and strings of Indian beads."

"I'd like to see them," murmured Willie.

"The young chief had a gold band, what went around his head for a crown, like. They stuck feathers into it. And my granny says a squaw told her there was a stone jar put alongside of him with the top cemented on. And that jar was brimfull of gold money."

The old charm which has stirred boy's blood generation after generation, begun to work in Dan's hearers.

"Oh, pshaw," said Penn Bidgood, making an effort against it. "That ain't like Captain Kidd, 'cause he meant to dig his up again, but the young chief couldn't do that."

"The Indians always put something by their dead folks," explained Dan with dignity. "They thought it was a long road, and their folks needed clothes and vittles and their way paid. And sometimes they built a fire."

"I'd like to see the crown," remarked Aquilla. "Do you s'pose he is near the top?"

"And what's the use of that money's staying there?" inquired Penn. "They oughtn't to have promised not to dig sometime."

All the boys looked down on the gravel and Willie stooped to pick up a crinoid. "Here's an Indian bead," said he, rubbing it clean on his trousers and intending to give it to Sister.

"The banks is full of them," said Dan, with disdain.

"Say, Quill," suggested Penn, "uncle likes to have you sitting around with him reading. You ask if we can't make just a little hole in that mound."

"'Twon't do you a bit of good," said the river-boy stolidly. "He's bound to say no as long as grass grows or water runs. If somebody was to

go and dig in unbeknowin' to him," mused Dan, jerking a stone into the river, "specially somebody that was kin but hadn't made any promise, maybe he wouldn't care so bad. It wouldn't be *my* place to go there *alone* and do it. There's boys have tried to hire me many a time," he confessed virtuously, "but I wouldn't no more do it than fly."

"I tell you what we'll do," burst out Penn — "if none of you run and tattle."

"I don't tattle," denied Aquilla from the plane of his superiority.

"And I don't," said Willie with a tang of injury. But Dan only uttered a grunt of contempt at the bare thought.

"We'll form a society to dig into that mound. Us four. And we'll call ourselves the United Diggers."

"The United Band of Heroic Diggers," amended Aquilla.

"I'm in it, ain't I?" said Willie.

"Yes," granted Penn. "But don't you ever let Sister know what we're up to."

"I won't," said Willie.

"And if anybody catches us, don't you take the blame to yourself, because I started it."

Willie looked doubtful on this point, but Aquilla resented it: "I guess I started it as much as you did, Penn Bidgood."

"'Tisn't started yet," observed Dan slowly. "We ain't took oath to dig as long as grass grows or water runs."

"That'll just be in the summer," said Willie, "'cause grass don't grow and water don't run in the winter."

"Till we find that stone jar," said Dan. "And we'll never durse to let anybody see us diggin'." "Tisn't started till we've took our oath and got our spades and sighted the spot."

Twilight was succeeding to sunset. A solemn light played over the river. The boys gazed at that Shawnee mound which grew every moment more irresistible.

There was a rattle of carriage harness up the slope, and they saw Uncle Roseladies turn the horses before the door. Mr. Smith was at hand

to hold the bits. Then the old gentleman got stiffly down from his front seat, and helped out Sarah and Mrs. MacAllister. Sarah ran into the house, but Mrs. MacAllister marched, laden to her chin, with grocery packages which she allowed nobody to buy but herself.

The deaf uncle swept his eyes over the river landscape, saw the boys, and lifted his hat.

They all pulled at their head coverings except Dan, and not another word was said about the United Diggers as they trooped up hill.

Dan was going to get his buttermilk and row back with it. The sight of Mr. Roseladies could not alter any purpose of his. He cast an inquiring glance on each side and hinted, "Them that's concluded not to take the oath, better out with it."

"We aren't such babies," declared Penn. "Only it made me feel mean to see Uncle take of his hat to us just then."

"Well, you come over to my house to-morrow night," said Dan. "Folks is goin' to granny's, and we'll take the oath and smoke a pipe."

"What'll be in the pipe?" inquired Willie.

"Just dried catnip leaves. And smokin' that," said Dan with a solemn chill in his voice which went down the other conspirators' spines, "will turn us into United Diggers."

CHAPTER III.

COUSIN SARAH'S AWFUL SECRET.

M^RS. MACALLISTER set out a substantial cold supper for the master of the house, his daughter and himself, and added a pot of hot tea made over the spirit-furnace. Over the same furnace, with small consumption of spirit, she heated water, and soon had the china washed and put in place. Then her long housekeeping apron was laid aside, and another, which might be called her nursery apron, tied over her lustrous black cashmere. Mr. Smith knew he must milk the cows, strain the milk in the cellar and leave his tins exquisitely clean. He must also lay his kitchen fire ready to light. Mrs. MacAllister was the mainspring of this house and its inhabitants. She not only did the work, but kept all accounts and bought all provisions. She felt pride in her

position. There was a great difference between that and the position of Mr. Smith whom she considered merely her servant. Mr. Smith took kindly to his place, and would on no account have eaten out of the kitchen or have rated himself with so great a woman as the housekeeper, though all his acquaintances in the country round provoked him to rebellion.

Having her dominion so well in hand, Mrs. MacAllister was not put out by five children in the house, one of them barely three years old and requiring a nurse's attentions. Nor was she displeased because aunt Jane from Greensburg, a Roseladies by marriage only, had failed to arrive and take charge of the entire family. She thought she could manage ten children, for she had partially brought up Sarah; and if there was anything Mrs. MacAllister disliked it was to have a woman of her own age, but of superior worldly advantages, coming into the house to upset its smooth routine.

She therefore, a little after dusk, began to send the children to bed, as she would patiently but persistently drive truant poultry to the proper

roost. Sister and Honora were easily got into a small and a large bed in the room next to Cousin Sarah's. Cousin Sarah wanted to have the flock under her charge. But Mrs. MacAllister never failed to undress the baby and keep a superintending eye upon the others. The boys did not go so meekly to their couches. She had to warn them out of trees, or off the roofs of the wings, or call them up from the river, or argue them out of the old school-room if they went in there with a lamp and locked the door.

Though so precise in her appearance, Mrs. MacAllister was even-tempered and the children liked her. She was quite straight and thin, with smooth auburn hair folded over her ears and uniting in a small button just above her collar. She had a bent-down nose and flattened mouth, but even on wash-days her dress remained neat enough to receive company in. When arrayed in full grandeur she wore a gearing at the back of her head made by Sarah of lace and purple ribbon, which hid the button of hair and made an effective background for her placid face.

This evening Sister did not want to go to bed at half-past eight. The boys would yell and play, and Mrs. MacAllister would follow them, figuratively with the sand-man's box in her hand, for half an hour longer. The doors and windows stood open and there was such a large moon. Sister sat on the deep window-sill. Outside there was no eye to see her. There were deep woods in the distance, and near by, moist-looking shadows made by shrubbery. You could hear some frogs which lived in the back-water of the Wabash, and the deep bull-note of the river frog.

Cousin Sarah was playing on her piano in the parlor. And Sister knew Cousin Sarah's father was sitting close to the keys with his hand behind his ear.

Some nights, she believed, were made on purpose to keep people awake having a good time. Sister really wished she might start out and saunter all over this country which looked so different by daylight. She was not timid or nervous. But no other little girl had done such a thing, and the friends of most little girls would object to such a

course. Sister thought when she was grown she would let her children do just as they pleased.

Then her mind dwelt on her father and mother who were by this time nearly across the ocean. It was a dangerous theme for an affectionate child. All the distance betwixt herself and them seemed crowded with the naughty things she had done. Now she wished herself with them, and now she was torn by parting from Penn and Willie. It seemed as if people never could be quite easy in this world.

After awhile the boys made a rush to their room, and Mrs. MacAllister could be heard locking doors. Then Cousin Sarah said, "Good-night, papa," in a distinct shout, and ran upstairs in a rustle of muslins beneath which you could not hear a footfall. Cousin Sarah was one of those light and pliant girls who appear to get about without treading. You never heard her shoe-soles squeaking along the hall, and not even the tap of a slipper-heel emphasized her walk. She moved in undulations, and one of her young admirers wondered if Sister Bidgood could ever move as silently and beautifully as Cousin Sarah, apparently on the bottom

of her dress. Yet none of Cousin Sarah's dresses were quite long though she was a young lady seventeen years old. She wore a great deal of white and blue and lavender-gray. She had not very pretty features, and there was a light, half-transparent powder of freckles over them. Still, to the children, Cousin Sarah was a phantom of delight. She had soft hair which would roll up easily into puffs or curls, or stand out in an ashes-of-roses nimbus all around her head, and her hands and arms were beautiful. Every gesture she made went in curves. Cousin Sarah never had been known to knock things over, or stick her elbows out like spear-points. She had a great many dimples without being very plump, and her voice could rise high and clear without a rasping note in its mellow range. Besides, she was an accomplished young lady. She could play on the piano and had studied through a large stack of school-books. Her water-color paintings were Sister's admiration, and her embroidery and hemstitching, her scented, orderly bureau-drawers, and casket of laces, were beyond all imitation.

Sister Bidgood never could be as nice as Cousin Sarah. Some girls will play with the boys, and rub their stockings through at the heel without aspiring to learn how to darn, and care more for outdoors than for the most beautiful of houses. Sister never doubted that Cousin Sarah had always been a model to girls. Such a being as she would not want to wade out to the first sand-bar, or run without her bonnet, or roll side-wise down a grassy slope. It was discouraging to young amazons. But lately Sister had been practicing soft domestic ways. She keyed her voice low, and slipped about after Cousin Sarah, sometimes even taking to a needle.

She heard her pattern moving about in the next room for a long time. Sometimes Sarah spoke a word or two and sometimes she hummed a tune. The door between the rooms was ajar, and Sister concluded to get off the window-sill and go in to Cousin Sarah. The formality of knocking she avoided by calling in a whisper through the crack.

The young lady sprung up with a scream, flung

her drawers shut, and slammed a wardrobe, locking it in the very act.

"Oh, what's the matter!" pleaded Sister in fright.

"I thought you were all asleep," said Cousin Sarah. She laughed and looked hurriedly around her room.

"I'm not," explained Sister Bidgood. "Did I scare you?"

"Yes, dreadfully."

"I didn't mean to. The moon's so bright I couldn't go to sleep. And you were up, so I thought I'd come in."

"You didn't see what I was doing, did you?" inquired Miss Roseladies with a penetrating expression.

"No," replied Sister, wondering if Cousin Sarah could be making Christmas things in summer, or working up some beautiful surprise. But her lamp was out and she had nothing but the moonlight.

"You didn't see me hide a little dog or monkey or kitten?"

"No," breathed Sister, staring.

"I have an awful secret," said Cousin Sarah. "Did you ever do anything silly, Sister?" Sister should think she had! Almost every day she made a goose of herself, and once at school she fell asleep and dreamed it was noon, and got up beginning to dance and shout in the midst of a recitation.

"But I thought *you* never did anything," she added, transfixed between wonder and satisfaction.

"Oh, I do. I have a fetich—that's a charm that brings out all my foolishness—and you would be astonished to see me caper around it."

If this perfect Cousin Sarah cut capers, Sister had more hopes of growing to be somebody than she ever before entertained.

"Maybe to-morrow I'll confess the whole thing if you can keep the secret. It's an awful secret. I'd be ashamed to have papa or Mrs. MacAllister know it, or the boys. And if aunt Jane should come and find it out, where would your disgraced cousin hide her head?"



COUSIN SARAH LOOKED HURRIEDLY ROUND THE ROOM.

"O, *indeed* I won't tell!" promised Sister;
"and I didn't see a glimpse of it myself."

Cousin Sarah kissed her.

"You run back to bed now, and I'll get you to help me break off my ridiculous habits. Maybe if I had a little sister I shouldn't be so babyish myself when I'm seventeen years old."

CHAPTER IV.

A RIVER-HOUSE.

THE boys had no room in their minds for thoughts of aunt Jane and her failure to arrive from Greensburg. It sufficed that she was *not* there to inspect them. By evening of the next day they had talked whole books to each other about mound-digging. They had shovelled out armies of Indians in a mummied state, each holding a crock of money in his extended hand, and discovered a cavern which would thenceforward be their den and secret headquarters. Willie claimed all the papposes and wanted exceedingly to give Sister her pick of them, and Honora a nice one to play with. Penn and Aquilla had not a much clearer vision of what they were about to undertake. They knew it was something lawless and fierce, something that demanded whispering

and sign-making ; but they did not doubt their muscular ability to shovel acres of earth or pile up cords of resurrected savages. Indians as wooden and as little to be respected as those ladies and gentlemen who stand outside of cigar shops, peopled the Shawnee mound.

Directly after supper the boys flew down and pushed off Uncle Roseladies' boat. They were used to rowing up and down and playing in the shallow water ; therefore nobody regarded them with dismay, except Sister whom Cousin Sarah had promised a pull up stream to a bar where the prettiest periwinkle shells abounded.

" But you'll bring the boat in before dusk, won't you, Penn ? " she called from the slope, with the downward inflection of assurance.

But no promise, not even the wave of a hand, came back to her. The boys pretended they heard her not. It was desirable to avoid inquiries. Penn put his strength to the oars and panted, while Quill and Willie fixed their eyes upon Dan's anchored residence at the other side of the river.

It was a cloudy evening, and gusts played along

the water. You could hear the groan of the wind away off, and sudden black stripes like bruised places, shuddered upon the river. The moon would be up later and she might be so wadded with clouds as to give no light at all. This was a fit evening on which to go forth and form secret societies. Penn had never seen the Wabash in stormy weather, and he felt a little disturbed about the return and about Willie. Penn could swim; he might also be able to help keep one other boy's head above water. There were two boys besides himself in the boat, and he wished one of them was not Willie.

"It tips," said Aquilla uneasily, as the water freshened.

"Well, do you want to go back?" said Penn, scowling.

"We're more than half way to Dan's boat," said Willie; "and he's out on the front part of it, too."

The boat which Dan inhabited was shaped somewhat like a barge. The prow and stern projected so as to make small pointed platforms or

porches. Dan stood on the forward platform and his pet coon rolled in awkward gambols beside him. It snarled at the approaching boys and had to be driven within the door. Dan shook his head backwards and made many cautious signals, until Penn began to keep the skiff off and guard it from running aground across the barge's prow.

"O, come on," whispered Dan. "That isn't it."

"What's the matter, anyhow?"

"They're both at home," said Dan between his hands. "Don't say anything."

He lay flat down, caught their side and shoved them well upon the sand. The barge was tied to trees upon shore and well sheltered behind a rocky jut.

Penn shipped his oars and climbed up on the large boat. Aquilla and Willie followed.

"Don't say anything," repeated Dan. "We'll take the pipe and go up the bank a piece. They concluded they wouldn't go to Granny's to-night."

Mrs. Marsh came to the door and invited Dan's guests in. They passed through a room, in which were two bunks, and a quantity of clothing hang-

ing on the wall. A smell of weak coffee scented the boat, for in the remaining room stood a table, and there the boat-master was eating his supper. He was a bushy, surly-looking man, spreading to whisker as a gooseberry shrub spreads to thorny foliage, and he glowered at the boys before giving them a short good-evening. Aquilla thought he would make a bold pirate if he had a plumed hat, a belt and sword, but instead of attacking the few freight boats working up and down the Wabash, this man's peaceful employment was cutting wood on shore when he could get a job to do, and fishing with seines and trot-lines when he could not.

There were a cooking-stove and a cupboard in this room, besides some splint-bottomed chairs, three of which Mrs. Marsh set in a row, asking the boys to "take cheers."

They sat, holding their hats in their hands, feeling much balked about the pipe of catnip.

She said it looked like a storm, and Aquilla responded yes it did, upon which Mr. Marsh stared at him like an ogre and growled that folks livin'

on shore better take to the river when high waters come.

Mrs. Marsh responded yes indeed, when other people was all overflowed, *they* had a good home. You ought to seen Shawneetown under water the last flood, she added. Some lost all their things and had to run to high places ; and there you could only see the roofs of the houses stickin' out. For her part she liked a boat, and then you could live away up yander or away down yander, just as you's a mine to.

"It's something like Noah's Ark," said Aquilla, on whom Penn and Willie left all the burden of conversation.

Mr. Marsh glared at him in a manner to quicken his pulses. He wondered what there was about Noah's Ark which Mr. Marsh could object to, and after suffering a moment, tried to appease him by declaring this boat was lots newer than Noah's Ark and hadn't so many animals in it.

Mrs. Marsh inquired if it was churnin' day up to the house. She considered "the house" a store from which she could draw various supplies ; she

was interested in the ripening of the apples and grapes, and often knew before Mrs. MacAllister that currants were turning red ! as to the surplus milk, she considered it her own as long as the barge anchored near it.

Aquilla asked Penn if it was churning day up at the house ; Penn put the question past to Willie, and Willie squirmed in the distress of ignorance upon his chair. They could hear the water wash higher and higher on the sides of the boat, and feel that it swayed in its shelter. A continuous roar came through the woods, which might be falling rain, and they wished they were in it instead of in Mr. Marsh's eyes. He reached his muscular arm across the table and harpooned food as if he wished to be cruel to it, and then fastening his eyes on the boys, ground with his bushy jaws as if he were steadily eating his way to them. Even Mrs. Marsh, though she was a hospitable woman, seemed to wonder what business brought them to the boat, if they carried no tidings of fresh butter-milk.

All this time Dan leaned against the casing of

the inner door, supporting himself first on one foot and then on the other, at intervals kicking the coon back to renew its monotonous march toward the intruders.

He cast secret looks and half winks at the boys and they waited for him to be their deliverer. Mr. Marsh might object to their going out with a great rush. He might intend to hold them all night in the boat since they had put themselves in his way. Penn was twelve years old, yet he experienced objections to Mr. Marsh as strong as Willie's.

Aquilla felt the silence growing painful like a stricture, and he caught at some subject which might interest and mollify Mr. Marsh.

"One shell-boat, one gun-boat and eight wooden ships make up the navy of Japan," he remarked.

Mr. Marsh suspended harpooning a slice of bread, and gazed at him. Aquilla felt he had somehow made a mistake, and tried to remedy it.

"Kings when they were nine years old used to have to get married. I'm glad I wasn't a king in those days," he said.

At this Mr. Marsh's face underwent a change.

It broadened and shortened, and wrinkles gathered around his eyes. You could not see through the hair exactly what his emotions were, but he seemed to turn what had been said over and over in his mind, and it visibly affected him.

Having finished his meal, he arose, keeping his eye particularly fixed on Aquilla. He took a pipe from his pocket, and filled it. This was the moment for which Dan had waited. Mrs. Marsh began to clear the table, and Dan based himself on both feet, saying indifferently: "Come on, boys, let's go up the bank a piece."

CHAPTER V.

THE CATNIP-PIPE AND ITS WITNESS.

HOW much farther is it?" panted Willie, when he thought they had left the river miles behind them.

Dan said he was "only drownin' the duck." He was winding in and out among rocks and trees and mysteriously creeping on his hands and knees behind fallen logs. The other boys imitated him, scratching their trousers and hands. Willie carried the marks of blackberry briars; they seemed to claw him like spiteful cats.

"The duck's about drowned," said Penn decidedly. "It's been sprinkling ever since we started, and we'll be drowned ourselves if you keep on."

"Right down there's the river," responded Dan. "You can easy get to the boat. I 'lowed first I'd take you to the mound."

"But we've been gone a long time already, and they'll miss us at the house," urged Aquilla. "And Mrs. MacAllister will want to know what we've been doing over here."

Dan now took from his pocket a hollow corn-cob having a stem thrust into the side. The bunch of dried catnip followed. He had first to ravel a string and then jerk a fish-hook with the worm mummied upon it, from the bunch.

The cob pipe being loaded with the herb, Dan again returned to his pocket for a match; this time he turned the dirt-colored bag wrong side out and put its contents back piece-meal, coming upon the bunch of lucifers only to find their heads nearly all imbedded in a lump of sandy taffy.

"Now, sir," said Dan, addressing the assembly, and culling out his match-heads to save from pattering rain under his hat, "we've all got to take the oath."

He was on his knees at the roots of a stump which would shelter a weak flame, and the boys stood by, rain-pelted and anxious for the rite.

Gray, damp twilight was on the river, but in the

woods night itself made awful glooms among the barky trunks and close-huddled thickets. The bunchy foliage of pecan trees would have shut out all after-glow had there been any.

Aquilla turned his jacket-collar up to his white ears. He felt chilly, and his active mind peopled the woods with moving figures.

"What if the Shawnees are around here watching us," he suggested, "and would let a lot of arrows fly in among us the minute we did it."

Willie uttered a bleat.

"Hush up!" said Penn indignantly. "What do you want to scare a little fellow for, Quill?"

"The Shawnees couldn't hurt you," observed Dan, addressing his youngest follower with a lifted and courageous voice. "Nor nothin' else in these woods. I hain't seen any wildcat in my lifetime, and taggers only goes in shows now."

"What you going to have for the oath?" put forth Penn impatiently.

Dan struck a match, sheltered its flame, and then thrust it into the catnip, and smoked it.

"You say 'Deed and double, cross my heart

and 'pon my word and honor, if I don't dig in that there mound till I find them things, while grass grows and water runs. Unbeknownst to anybody.' Then you pull a whiff at the pipe."

Penn said deed and double, cross his heart and 'pon his word and honor, he would dig at the mound till he found the things while grass grew and water ran. Unbeknown to anybody. He pulled at the pipe, made a face, and passed it on.

Aquilla said, Deed and double, cross *his* heart, and upon *his* word and honor, he would dig in the mound while grass grew and water ran, until he found the chief's crown and money; and tell nobody, drawing the pipe and uttering a nauseated cough.

Willie stumbled anxiously through his part, saying, Deed and double, 'pon his heart and cross his honor he would dig in the mound till grass grew and water run, and not know anything about it; feeling homesick, and not in harmony with the three bold spirits who put him to such trials.

"When a fellow crosses his heart and 'pons his word and honor," warned Dan, shaking his head and explaining the nature of the oath, "he's

got to do what he says, or he's a goner. We've all took it, so now we're united."

"What's that!" demanded Aquilla sharply.

They all knew that a bush near them was beginning to shake. A low, mumbling growl issued therefrom, and even Penn was sure he saw a head of some sort. "Come out!" he dared the unnamed thing, grabbing a stick. "You just come out of that and we'll let you have it!"

They all four stood their ground. Then something did begin to arise from the bush, and as it rose, it uttered a howl which pierced all the woods' distances and was thrown by the echoing hill across Wabash River.

The boys rolled against stumps, caught themselves by rocks, ran against trees, plunged shoulder-deep in green burs and blackberry vine, scarcely knowing whether they rolled or ran. Dog-like pantings burst from their throats. Penn tried to seize and pilot Willie, who began to utter a note of alarm at the start and finished it only when he plunged all-fours into the skiff, Penn and Aquilla after him.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHILL.

ABOUT ten o'clock Mrs. MacAllister heard feet shuffling at the back door.

Mr. Roseladies, Sarah, and Sister were waiting about the house in suspense and looking out of various windows against a dead wall of darkness and rain. A fire was built in the back parlor on account of Mr. Roseladies' rheumatism. He had searched for the boys until he was wet and full of twinges. Mr. Smith had walked a distance to borrow a boat, and had since been breasting with it the disturbed Wabash, straining his eyes for arms or legs or bits of clothing which might float above the surface, and listening for cries of shipwreck from sandbar or island.

Justice demands that all the unnecessary anguish which boys cause their guardians, ought after-

wards to be extracted from the truants themselves. But no process of doing this has been discovered.

Mrs. MacAllister had endured much since eight o'clock. She had seen herself upbraided by Aunt Jane, the Greensburg guardian, and the parents of those boys had stood around her demanding their children. Mr. Roseladies, who had trusted in her, was again rheumatic from exposure, and Sarah had seen the housekeeper was a woman of lax management. She made her hottest ginger and pepper teas, and resolved if those boys came back without hurt, she would dose them well and keep such a hand on them in the future as they could not help feeling at eight o'clock in the evening.

Penn, Aquilla and Willie came stamping through the back door, with Mr. Smith's lantern illuminating their tracks on the exquisite kitchen floor. They were drenched to the skin and made puddles where they stood sheepishly by the stove. Everybody came to inspect them and ask questions. Mr. Smith said he found them in the middle of the river ready to swamp with their boat

full of water. Penn growled and would have refused the pepper tea, but Mr. Roseladies, having learned this fact, commanded them all to drink, while he held his watch in his hand and timed the exercise. Willie wept into his bowl. Aquilla obediently swallowed often, without lowering the flood dished up for his portion. But Penn gulped fiercely and turned red in the face. He felt mad at Dan. He felt mad at his Uncle Roseladies and the housekeeper, and enraged at himself.

Sister sidled from one to another, willing to kiss away the drenching and the scalding. But Cousin Sarah laughed at them and saw their clinging garments and hair and the steam which stove-heat sent up from them. They were United Sufferers as well as United Diggers.

However, in the morning, Penn felt new. His shame receded as the water had dried from his clothes, and he again took an interest in life. But Willie had a sore throat, and Aquilla said he did not know what in the world was the matter with him. He woke in a sad frame of mind and yawned often as he tried to dress himself. He did not

usually try to finish dressing, but waited for Mrs. MacAllister to finish him, in spite of Penn's sneers. Aquilla had been waited on all his life. Besides he had read that young English gentlemen are attended by nurses until they are old enough to have valets of their own, and considering himself a young American gentleman, he meant to exact his privileges to the utmost. But this morning he was anxious to get downstairs, and thrust himself with nervous haste into any garment, that would do. Downstairs proved no refuge. He felt an agony of nausea. His finger-nails and lips turned blue, and cold possessed him, hounding him out when he crouched even behind the kitchen stove. How dreadful it was to feel as if you were going to die on a morning when the drenched grass was drying to a brilliant green fleece, when the sun was hot and delightful, and everybody else meant to have the best kind of a day!

Mrs. MacAllister kept her eye on him as she dished the breakfast. Penn had already gone whooping to the barn to see Mr. Smith milk. Aquilla thought the sun might warm him, and he

crept over the doorstep and stood where it could beat upon him as strongly as a morning sun can ever bring itself to beat. But it only made him colder, and so sick that he lay down along a bench where Mrs. MacAllister required the milk tins to be sunned. Then he tried to resist shaking, but shook until his teeth rattled together, and when he clenched his jaws they still worked in nervous spasms.

"You've got the ague," said Mrs. MacAllister, causing him to rise from the bench. She helped him into the house and mourned as they went:

"Now we're in for it, every other day or every third day, and I *told* you boys to keep out of that water, for they say there's malaria in it if you will go swimming and keep getting wet to the skin."

"But this was the rain," chattered Aquilla.

"Yes, a spindling boy like you has no business to play out-doors in a storm. Haven't I warned you about the night air and the dew? *Now* what will your father and mother say, and what will Mrs. Roseladies from Greensburg say, and your uncle that has the rheumatism in his shoulder?"

Aquilla did not care what anybody said. His strongest desire was to find some furnace and lie down in the midst of it. He thought a mountain of blankets and hot bricks could not warm him. Mrs. MacAllister piloted him to her own room, and flew at her huge feather bed which had been spread bare to the morning breeze. It was the only one in the house, and she believed there was virtue in it. Besides, she wanted her patient on the lower floor where she could watch him. Aquilla was soon nested amidst blankets and pillows and the woolliest of comforters. He had hot-water bottles in his hands and a hissing iron at his feet. The deadly cold receded from his extremities to his back, and from his back to the arctic regions whence it first came. His teeth ceased to clash and his neck ceased to be wrung. A heavenly drowsiness soothed him after his hard exercise. He felt as if he had run until exhaustion overtook him, and rest was the sweetest thing in the world. But just as his eyes were swimming under their lids, a sense of smothering woke him. He pushed off the hot-water bottles and kicked the iron. His

back ached more than tongue could express, and he was burning up. Comforters and blankets were cast overboard. He wallowed among the feathers and panted for a breath of air — a drink of water. It was just here that Cousin Sarah and Mrs. MacAllister both came in. They brought cold water, and he drank believing that he could never get enough. They bathed his face and hands and fanned him, and finally they supported him to the sofa in the cool back parlor. The windows were all open. Aquilla could smell sweet-brier, and the birds came and went, making notes which refreshed him. Cousin Sarah sat by and fanned until he panted himself to sleep, and that was a sleep to remember his whole lifetime: so deep, so cool with returning moisture, so like immersion in health itself.

When Aquilla woke the sun was throwing long evening rays across the earth, and the swallows were taking their fish-like dives in every direction before settling. He could hear the cows lowing up toward their milking place, and Sister and Penn and Willie somewhere out-doors calling for

hide-and-seek. Cousin Sarah had left his side, but her fan and her heliotrope-scented handkerchief lay on the pillow beside his face.

A waft of supper came through the back folding-doors, and Aquilla felt suddenly ferocious with hunger. He wanted griddle-cakes buttered, with maple syrup over them, and he wanted them without an instant's waiting. How like a dream coming true, how like the fulfilled power of grown people's lives, was it to see Mrs. MacAllister bringing a tray, and on that tray to find griddle-cakes buttered and swimming in maple syrup!

"That's just what I wanted," sighed Aquilla with full satisfaction. "The wonderful lamp wouldn't have been any quicker."

"A person that's had a shake gets up pretty hungry," remarked the housekeeper. "To-morrow morning your dosing will begin."

"What sort of dosing?" besought Aquilla as he was pillowed up to take the tray upon his knees.

"Quinine," said Mrs. MacAllister, sternly. "You've got to have these chills broken up right away. Yes, I know it's bitter, but you can take it

in these cases. I've fixed ten of them ready for you. Your mother would have you take it if she was here, and your Aunt Jane in Greensburg would have you take it if *she* was here. And if you don't take it quiet, in a case with preserves after it, the doctor will come and make you take it without a case and nothing after it."

Aquilla retired early to his own bed, and upon this Penn and Willie climbed when they were sent upstairs. They asked him how he felt.

"Very weak," answered Aquilla, who made the most of his ailments. Penn regarded an invalid with aversion.

"Willie's had flannel round his neck all day, but he don't grunt."

"It did hurt me to swallow," amended Willie.

"If he'd had his head nearly shaken off, and been so sick he didn't know anything, he'd grunt," said Aquilla, with pale patience. "And now I have to take ten doses of quinine. My mamma ought to have taken me to Europe with her. She'll be sorry when she comes home and finds me dead."

"No, she won't," asserted Penn rudely. "She'll get some rest then herself."

"Oh," sighed Aquilla, "I've eaten so much I feel as heavy as Louis XIV. of France. Or like old Henry VIII. of England. I do hate him! He was a grease-spot on history. Dickens says so. He had six wives and cut three of their heads off. I wish I could cut his head off! Unless somebody reads to me I will have to lie awake a long time to-night."

Willie gazed upon his remarkable cousin with brown-eyed sympathy. He did indeed show a warmth of feeling which people cannot express through light gray.

"I could slip down and get Robinson Crusoe, if Penn would help me p'nonce the big words."

"O, Robinson Crusoe!" said Aquilla, tossing himself with impatience. "That's like a-b-c to *me*! If you could get me a history of China, or find a book about Russia, I might pay some attention to you. I've read the histories of most all the European nations except Russia, but I know Peter the Great. The French used to be called

Franks. And one time in France they made it a law that the king was of age at eighteen, and the nobles, too. Common people could be of age at twenty-one, but poor people not till they were twenty-five. Did you know Catherine DeMedicis had three sons that were kings of France?"

"No, I didn't," said Penn, resentfully. "But I know your mother and mine have three sons that took to their heels last night. Who do you suppose that was up on the hill?"

"O, I don't know," sighed Aquilla. "It raised a worse yell than the battle-cry of the Austrians."

"It was Indians," whispered Willie.

"I saw some kind of a head," said Penn. "But it didn't look like a man. If it had been a man or a dog or anything else human, I wouldn't run."

"I would," said Willie. "As soon as it yelled at me I'd run."

"Dan is bigger than we are," put forth Aquilla, "and he wasn't the last one to start. Now I wonder if he'll want to dig."

"Of course he will," said Penn. "We're all going to dig."

"At night?" whispered Willie, enlarging his eyes and curving down the corners of his mouth.

"Mrs. MacAllister won't let me go out in the night air," warned Aquilla. "I'll have to take more quinine than ever if I do."

"O, hum!" hooted Penn. "If Dan groans around I suppose I'll be the only man in the lot. *I'm* going to dig up the young chief, and you sha'n't even see him. The money'll be mine and the kettle'll be mine, and I'll keep the gold crown."

"I *want* to go along," said Aquilla.

"So do I," pleaded Willie.

"You're afraid," taunted Penn.

"I ain't any more afraid than Hannibal was," declared Aquilla, rising to his elbow. "And he kept his armies in the enemy's country a good many years."

"We don't have to dig a good many years," hedged Willie.

"But we'll dig, either in dark or daylight," said Penn. The difficulties rose before him also, and he sat mutely thinking of them. It is a serious thing to join a secret society.

CHAPTER VII.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

AT this time Cousin Sarah had just beckoned Sister into her room, and was in the act of locking both doors.

Then Cousin Sarah spread the window curtains wide apart and unfastened the bureau drawers and wardrobe, and Sister knew she was about to behold the great secret.

"We can have such a nice time in here by ourselves," said the young lady. "I think I'll get you to come and play with me a while every evening until I can quit it."

"What shall we play?"

"Have you many dolls?"

Sister replied that she had four, but she only brought the old china and the little one along, because Noanie Jones might tear them up. Her

two waxes were locked at home in mamma's lowest drawer, wrapped in silk, and if burglars broke in and got them she did not know what she should do. One was named Clara Louise, and the other was named Bessie, but Bessie could not shut her eyes.

"And don't you love them?" inquired Cousin Sarah.

Sister said yes; she never had broken one of them, but played teach them to sew, and read to them when they were good, and they all had the measles when the rest of the family did. "I just pretended that, you know," apologized Sister.

Cousin Sarah said she understood.

"And what will you do with them, Sister, when you grow to be a young lady?"

Sister pushed her fingers through her curly hair and said she would keep on playing with them.

"What a delicious little thing you are!" exclaimed Cousin Sarah. "And wouldn't you be ashamed of it a bit?"

"I'd hate to have the boys tease me, but they'd

tease anyhow, about something. And I'd hate to have papa think I was a baby."

"Of course you would."

"But I don't see how girls that have nice dolls can help playing with them, whether they are grown ladies or not."

"Well, I have a doll," said Cousin Sarah, "the first one that ever was given me. And I play with it yet!"

Sister uttered no shout. She thought it was charming; and the doll being lifted out of the wardrobe and laid across her lap, she said it was sweet enough to make Mrs. MacAllister want to play with it. Such a beautiful, long-braided, well-kept doll is seldom seen. Cousin Sarah brought out its afternoon dresses, its evening dresses, its bonnets, gloves, boots, underwear, its dressing-case, its parasols, its chairs, tables, sofa, bedroom set, and cooking furniture. They dressed it in costume after costume. I am ashamed to tell that Cousin Sarah flitted downstairs and came up with forage from the pantry and Mrs. MacAllister's spirit-furnace, and they made cracker-toast and tea

for the doll, and set forth a sumptuous table covered with small cakes and Scotch jam. Sister brought her inferior dears to the supper, wishing they were her best waxes for appearance's sake, though she loved them nearly as well. But the great doll treated them as a lady should, and even lent them some of her lace capes, and allowed them to try on all her hats.

"O," exclaimed Cousin Sarah, looking at her watch, "it's ever so late! What will become of me if I don't quit this! I am even teaching you to be sly, and what is more dreadful than a sly, deceitful girl!"

Sister protested that she did not feel sly. It had been the most fun! and she wished everybody played like Cousin Sarah instead of hating to be bothered with dolls.

"What I meant to do at the start," said the young lady, "was to give her to you so I won't be tempted any more."

Sister was speechless.

"I'd rather you'd have her than anybody else, though I used to say that doll should never be

given away. But here I am seventeen years old and getting sillier. I can't help taking her out to look at, and then I can't help making new clothes for her, and it is fearful to slip behind papa's back and almost tell him fibs, and to be afraid of Mrs. MacAllister's finding it out. So now she's yours, and all her things."

Sister felt overwhelmed by riches. "O, Cousin Sarah! *Thank* you. But how can you do it!"

"I *must* do it. But don't you ever play with her as long as I have, and O *don't* ever let her get broken and shabby."

"I'll take the best care of her in the world. But what shall I do *now*? Noanie might get into my things if I try to put this big dolly away. And all the furniture" —

"We'll, you'll just have to leave her here," said Sarah, with a relaxing sigh. "But she's yours, and when you go home you must take her."

"But I can come in here to play with her?" suggested Sister.

"Yes, indeed, and cure me of playing with her myself! We have had such a glorious time."

"O, haven't we?" said Sister.

"And I must cut you some new patterns and teach you to sew for her," said Cousin Sarah. "She's very particular what she wears. I made up my mind once I would dress her in a full costume of the First Empire because her name is Josephine. I'll let *you* do that now, and won't she be lovely! A waist quite under her arm-pits and a slim skirt and puff sleeves. You've seen pictures of it?"

"O, yes," responded the other enchanted plotter.

"And we'll do her hair high with two curls on each side of her forehead, like the portrait of Elizabeth Patterson. Then, satin slippers and stockings to match, and a gauze scarf! I can see how she would look!"

"So can I," said Sister.

They were both sitting on the soft carpet in a flood of moonlight, watching the silent revelry of the dolls at table. No lamp was lighted, and the pretty furnishings of Cousin Sarah's room were the prettier for being indistinct. Her dressing-glass was hooded with tulle, and dozens of Christmas and Easter cards, cut glass bottles, and painted

glove and handkerchief cases, bedecked it. On the wall hung a crayon portrait of her mother, and under it was an offering of fresh heliotrope. The bed-spread and pillow-covers were of lace and lavender silk, to which the scent of heliotrope unchangingly clung. Whenever Sister caught Cousin Sarah around the waist and coaxed her face to a level where it could be kissed, she felt as if she had been among flowers. It seemed to Sister beautiful and proper that such a young lady, in such a bower-chamber, should still love and play with a doll given her by her mother; and if all big women who could play on the piano and read a French Testament and a Spanish prayer-book, would only do likewise, this world could not help being a delightful place.

"And did you ever have a doll-wedding?" whispered Cousin Sarah.

Sister responded that her children were too young to get married, but she took them to a wedding at another little girl's house, and the bride wore a veil and had the longest train! The back parlor was full of invited dolls, and they had splen-

did refreshments, peach and pistache ice-cream and lady-fingers, oranges and white grapes and iced loaf cake, and the little girls sat at the same table.

Cousin Sarah said it must have been sumptuous. "I never had such fun, for there were not many playmates for me down here in the country, and when I went away to school the girls all felt grown up, of course, and would have despised me if they had known I kept Josephine in my trunk."

Sister went on to say that the bride was soon a widow ; for the bridegroom lived next door, and as his mother was carrying him home she let him fall on the stone steps and broke his head all to pieces. Then the bride went into mourning for two weeks, until she got married to a doll that came visiting at her house. "But the second wedding happened after I came away," said Sister, "so I only saw the cards."

"Sarah," said Mrs. MacAllister's voice outside the door, "have you got my spirit-furnace in here? I can't find it at all, and nobody else knows where I keep it."

"O," whispered the panic-stricken young lady, "now what shall I do! I never thought you'd want the furnace to-night, Mrs. MacAllister. Just wait till I unlock the door and I'll slip it out to you."

"Your Aunt Jane has just got here from Greensburg, and I want to make her some tea before she goes to bed."

"O dear!" whispered Sarah in a greater panic, as she slipped the furnace through as small a crack as possible. "I'll come right down to see her. We didn't hear wheels or anything."

"What on earth were you doing with it?" urged the housekeeper, "and what have you strowed all over your room?"

"O, please run away and don't ask me, dear!"

"Well, here's your Aunt Jane, coming in to see you. She has her things off, and I guess she knows by the talk that you're up."

And Sarah turned to her companion with a look of despair:

"O Sister!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER DISGRACEFUL THING.

UNCLE ROSELADIES came down to breakfast unconscious that there had been a great arrival in the night. He might have read it on the disturbed face of Mrs. MacAllister, who moved between kitchen and dining-room with a sort of skating-step, her dress-skirts crackling with haste and precision. He might have seen it in the best china and silver coffee-urn which did not come off closet shelves for common folks. But he was a meditative, unobservant man, and hear it he could not. Aunt Jane lay harmless in her room, and Mrs. MacAllister was not so rejoiced as to make a proclamation of it.

But Sarah came flying downstairs, looking behind her once with a guilty stare, and was soon holding on to her father's arm. They promenaded

up and down the long walk between the gate and front entrance. It was a morning to make one forget his troubles, and though Sarah's eyelids were of a larger size and redder color than usual, she began to enjoy life once more.

"Do you think I'm a goose, papa?" she shouted, fluttering close to his ear as you have seen a humming-bird hanging to a trumpet-flower.

He smiled and gave a decided nod. But at the same time he pressed her hand upon his arm with warm approval of the goose. He was a tall, thin gentleman, and wore shirt-collars standing up to his cheek-bones, and wound round the shirt-collar was a black silk neckerchief tied with long ends upon his bosom. His hair was iron-gray, carefully brushed, but standing as upright as a sheaf of wheat upon his head. He wore a long-tailed coat, and his trousers were stretched down by straps passing under his boots. Nowhere in the State was there a quainter and older-fashioned man. His face was gentle and benevolent, clean-shaven and of a waxy delicacy. He listened to Sarah with his ear bent down toward her, and answered

much by gestures and signs, though as often as necessary he spoke aloud. The birds in the trees around him, whose fathers and grandfathers had lived in those same trees, were not more innocent in their methods of living, nor more attached to the spot, than this old gentleman. He never had been obliged to take thought about increasing his income or bettering his estate. The natural advance in value of wild lands taken up by his forefathers, had made him rich. He had only to look at his river, wander about the premises, draw a check occasionally for Sarah or Mrs. MacAllister, and indulge himself with curious books.

"Did you know Aunt Jane had come?" shouted Sarah.

Mr. Roseladies lifted his eyebrows.

"She came last night, quite late, and walked into my room."

"You dreamed it," spoke Mr. Roseladies.

"O no indeed! For I know she's going to tell you something *dreadful* about me."

He shook his head decidedly, as if such a telling would never find a gateway through his ear.

And he asked at once, "Did her baggage come with her?"

"No, and I meant you should hear that first thing. She left it at the depot to be sent for, because the man drove her out in a phaeton. Mr. Smith can bring it, can't he?"

"No. He's going to Carmi. I promised him some time ago, and it's business he cannot postpone. I will take the spring-wagon and Aunt Jane's check and bring her baggage myself. Directly after breakfast. She will want it."

"Well, do, Chicky," said Sarah, petting her father without a thought of detracting from his dignity. "And will you take Noanie along? Don't you remember what you told her the day we drove into town?"

Mr. Roseladies nodded, and said she should go. He would hold her beside him on the seat. And Sarah promised to wake the child if she slept late, and have her ready.

They kept on walking up and down and Sarah wondered how she could possibly go in to breakfast and meet Aunt Jane. The brief and almost

silent interview she had had with Aunt Jane the night before, kept rising to appall her. She felt sure she could never outlive the shame of being looked at that way, and of stammering and saying words without meaning. She could not pour her heart out to anybody. Sister Bidgood was too young, Mrs. MacAllister was too old, and her father might see her tragedy as comedy, or he might be more cast down about it than she could bear. O it was an unheard-of calamity to be caught playing seriously with dolls when you are seventeen years old and past, and by Aunt Jane Roseladies who embodied and expected human perfection!

Breakfast was ready at seven o'clock, but they all knew it was Aunt Jane's invariable habit never to leave her room until eight. Therefore she was to breakfast on special dishes, and glad would Mrs. MacAllister have been, could she have bought the lady's good graces so cheaply. The family congregated, for Mr. Roseladies was in haste to start upon his errand.

"Now you'll catch it," said Penn to Aquilla, as the boys sauntered toward the river after break-

fast. "You won't get off with just one isinglass chunk full of quinine like you did this time. She always expects folks to do twice as much as anybody else does, and folks all mind her, too."

"Maybe she'll read to me, now I'm sick," mused Aquilla.

"Maybe she'll make you read to her, you better say. I heard my father tell that she brought all her boys straight up from the ground, and when they got to college they didn't know how to cut up enough."

"We can't dig the Shawnee Mound — Aunt Jane's come," said Willie with a tang of satisfaction.

"If we don't do it to-day, before she finds out what we're about," admitted Penn, "I don't know when we can."

That which had seemed only half desirable last night when they could do as they pleased, seemed a necessity to-day when their liberty was threatened.

"And you fellows can do just as you please; I'm going over the river before she gets up."

"But that won't be polite," objected Aquilla.

"It will be better than not going at all," hinted Penn.

The other two silently agreed with him.

"I'll take Mr. Smith's spade and pick. Mr. Smith's gone off to stay all day."

"Then he can't come after us this time," regretted Aquilla.

"If Dan intends to do anything, he can get a spade."

"But what'll I take?" besought Willie. "Will a rake or a hoe do?"

"You needn't take anything, or Quill, either. Two spades and a pick ought to do, and we can take it turn about, so the digging will go right on."

The boat which Mr. Smith had borrowed lay where he left it when he lighted the boys home with his lantern. It was much heavier than their uncle's boat, and sat deeper in the water. Having unpleasant recollections of the little boat in mid-Wabash, they took the larger one, and Willie and Aquilla got into it with the tools. Then Penn pushed it afloat and leaped after them.

Mr. Roseladies walked forth to his gate to mount into the spring-wagon which was there waiting for him.

Honora through her bedroom window saw him stalking forth fastening his black gloves; he wore his tall hat, and the horse was at the gate. She remembered his promise to take her to town the next time he went, and the horror of being left behind made her raise a cry. But what good would crying after Uncle Roseladies do? He could not hear, and the only way to check him was to put herself before his eyes.

She panted downstairs, holding to the rail and whimpering with suspense, descended the front steps, and toddled after him as fast as her naked feet could carry her over the gravel.

He was already in his wagon and in the act of turning the horse. She scrambled up the fence and extended one pleading hand. "Take me 'long, Uncle Wosel, take me 'long. I want to go widing, too! You *said* I could go widing, too!"

"Why, sure enough!" said the placid old gentleman. "I almost forgot her."



UNCLE ROSELADIES IS ABSENT-MINDED.

So, smiling, he leaned far over, lifted her off the gate and placed her by his side. They drove away, Noanie laughing through tears, and drawing her feet under her gown when the dewy branches overhead showered them.

The satisfaction of gaining her point soon gave place to anxiety. When she put up her plea to Uncle Roseladies she meant that she wanted him to wait for her. It was better to have sprung aboard the departing ship at the last minute than to have been left behind. But he was after all treating her badly to take her away before she was dressed. Noanie was little past three years old, but she knew little girls ought not to go to town in their night-gowns. She tried to express this idea to Uncle Roseladies :

"I didn't get dessed !"

But her good uncle with his usual absent-minded and genial kindness, gazed smiling ahead of him, and responded, "Yes, indeed," every time he had reason to think she spoke.

"My foots is bare," complained Noanie.

"Yes, indeed," said Uncle Roseladies.

"C'un Sa'ah didn't b'ush my cuyls."

"Yes, indeed," chirruped Uncle Roseladies.

"But she's *didn't!*" insisted Noanie, pulling the golden tangle upon her head.

"Yes, indeed," said Uncle Roseladies, putting his left hand around her and holding the lines in his right.

Some of her pleasantest experiences had been rides with him. He treated her grandly, like a young princess on a royal progress. In town she was sure of candy or fruit or dolls. Noanie knew she was a favorite with this uncle. And after her first resentment at the situation wore off, she left the whole responsibility in his hands. If Uncle Roseladies wanted to take her undressed he probably did so for excellent reasons. The infallibility of grown people was a comfortable part of Noanie's belief. Big men and ladies might do with perfect grace and propriety what little girls might not.

It was a warm morning and she puckered her eyelids to keep out the glare of the sun. Her gown ruffles and her hair wavered in the wind.

They passed a man driving calves, then some children swinging their dinner buckets and going to district schools, then a farmer and his wife jogging in his wagon, and everybody looked amazed at Noanie. The children chuckled, and the farmer's wife inquired if that baby had been lost. To each one Uncle Roseladies lifted his hat with his left hand and made a courtly bow.

They drove into cool hollows where pebbly tributaries of the Wabash made mere threads of moving light across the wheel tracks. And they drove along high open ridges where the road glared white. They wound among trees and rubbed against grape-vine arms looped too low. And they were quite at the edge of the railroad town before Uncle Roseladies turned to please himself by the enjoyment of his little companion.

She was sitting quite still, squinting in the sun, her bare toes standing in a row before her. Already the heat was giving them terra-cotta tints, and the bits of toes occasionally made a blinking motion.

"Well, I am astonished!" exclaimed Uncle

Roseladies, pulling the horse back to a sudden stop.

Noanie smiled amiably, to win his heart.

"Haven't you any clothing on?"

"I didn't get dessed," she repeated.

"This is an astonishing thing!" said Uncle Roseladies, between indignation and distress. "Why didn't you *tell* me?"

"I want to go widing," responded Noanie.

"This is an astonishing thing!" remarked Uncle Roseladies once more. "I don't think I was ever placed in such circumstances before!"

"You wouldn't wait till 'ey dess me," observed Honora with a wail.

"It is more than likely I was to blame," he admitted. "Really, I don't know what to do."

He looked all over his wagon and could discover no place of concealment. Then he turned his horse half-way towards home and Honora lifted her voice on high.

"Don't distort your face that way," begged Uncle Roseladies. "Really, I don't know *what* to do. I wish Sarah were here."

His duty toward Aunt Jane's baggage flashed over him. Being so near the depot, how could he go back without it? The horse's head was again set toward his destination.

"But where shall I take *you*?" he said to Noanie, examining his own apparel helplessly to see if anything could be spared for her.

"Take me down cheet to buy candy," and the tears still hung one above another upon her cheeks as she laughed with anticipation.

"No, no," said Mr. Roseladies. "No, indeed! I really don't know what to do, but I can't do that! Poor Sarah, she will be mortified past endurance! And this is a great trial to you," he confessed sincerely to Honora. "I'm sure I beg your pardon. It's all my fault, but it quite throws me off my balance."

They stood still. Uncle Roseladies did not know in what direction to move. Honora divided her attention between him and the horse. She had long curved eyelashes, a short nose, full, scarlet cheeks and a pink chin. Clothed in Greenaway gowns and pokes with boots and stockings to match

them, she had been the pride of her relatives, upon the streets, for she made a picture no one could help turning to watch. With a rolling toddle she patted on her way, giving back smile for smile freely to every passer. She was a little person for whom much beautiful clothing had been made — the results paid so well for the trouble. She had at the Roseladies' that very moment, piles of mull, cambric, and lace slips, to say nothing of seer-suckers and gingham intended for forenoon wear, and caps, pokes, capes, ribbons and slippers in abundance. Uncle Roseladies thought ruefully of what her mother would say could *she* see the child thus abroad with him.

He shook the lines and even struck his horse, and they clattered ahead with a dash. Thus do people when spurred behind by necessity plunge into a dangerous stream. He decided to take Noanie to a friend of Sarah's, and in order to deliver her by way of the back door he tangled himself in alleys, drove over boxes and ancient tin vessels and lost the locality himself.

Having found it, he knocked humbly at the side-

door, and the mistress of the house being out, besought the servant to dress Noanie in something which she might wear home.

"She's my niece, Honora Jones," said Mr. Rose-ladies, holding his hat in his hand and introducing the waif. And he left his niece remonstrating and screaming in the hands of the stranger.

Composure after so much disturbance was only to be found in the cloister quiet of book-stores. Mr. Roseladies remembered he had an unfilled order, and drove into the busiest portion of the town, fastened his horse in a convenient place, and entered the door of the principal book-seller. There he met Sarah's friend, lifted his hat, bowed over her hand and began to explain his perplexities. While he spoke, Noanie caught him around the knee and wailed with all her might :

"Take me, Uncle Wosel, take me !"

She had escaped from the house as soon as he left her, and kept him in sight. The crossings and horses' feet which she dared no one but her unseen angel kept account of. Nor did any other individual know what she suffered when her uncle

waved her off from him and said, in abject embarrassment :

“Run away ! run away !”

She felt most forsaken, yet she did not want to be carried home by that lady who ridiculed as much as she petted her. Neither did she want to put on garments belonging to the lady's daughter, and feel lost in their bigness, and patronized like a beggar baby by their owner. She sulked behind a sofa, all the family making remarks which they supposed she was too young to notice. She was hungry and ashamed to ask for food after they had given her clothes, and she lay with her cheek in the carpet wondering why such things happened to her since mamma went off. Thus do mere externals change even little creatures from objects of admiration to objects of amusement ; a drop of bitter which Honora never forgot, fell into her life.

And her Aunt Jane Roseladies, who always saw happiness in the light of common sense rather than in that of sentiment, was remarking to Sarah that this was another disgraceful thing.

CHAPTER IX.

AUNT JANE.

O PAPA!" said Miss Roseladies at a quarter to twelve o'clock.

She leaned on the fence, holding her parasol over her bare head.

Mr. Roseladies lifted Honora out of the spring-wagon and dejectedly tied his horse. For the moment he forgot Smith was not there to take it.

"O, you dear abused baby!" continued Sarah, lifting up the child. "Have you had anything to eat? I'm sure he'd never think of it."

"Peanuts," said Noanie, showing a bag of diversified stuff.

"O, I had her little slip and sash and cap and all her things laid ready," cried Sarah, attaching herself to her father's ear. "And for a long time after you started I thought Mrs. MacAllister had

dressed and fed her, and Mrs. MacAllister thought I had done it. But Aunt Jane discovered just how it was."

"Of course," said Mr. Roseladies, rubbing his gloves helplessly. "Of course."

"But I couldn't believe for a long time that you'd gone. For you didn't take the checks!"

"No," confessed Mr. Roseladies. "And they wouldn't let me have the baggage. Naturally."

"She knows *that*, too. O, papa, we have completely spoiled our credit."

"I am afraid so," said Mr. Roseladies. "It was the most extraordinary predicament I ever found myself in. Noanie has recovered from it to some extent. She has made up with me."

"Poor little girl! I wish I could get her into the house and change her before she is seen!"

"Take off twail," said Noanie. "*My* dess don't have twail."

"I must beg everybody's pardon," said Mr. Roseladies. "I have already begged Mrs. Walker's. But I fear, for the trouble I gave her, inadequately."

"So you took her to Mrs. Walker's? I was going to ask where you got these clothes. I could laugh and cry both together until I made myself perfectly ridiculous."

"One should always avoid being ridiculous," seriously admonished her father. "I confess that I fail in my attempts to avoid it, but I should always like to see my daughter behave with discretion and good taste."

"You dear rose-leaf man! I wish I could go and meet Aunt Jane for you."

"Yes, I must hurry in at once to see her. I haven't been of much service to her this morning, so my absence is almost inexcusable."

"Dear," insisted Sarah, "don't be too much cast down, you know."

"Your Aunt Jane has a most lucid understanding," said Mr. Roseladies as they walked up the path. "And we may always expect exact justice from her. Exact justice." -

"I know it," said Sarah; "but never any mercy."

At first glance Aunt Jane did not look severe. She was a very tall, handsome woman, dressed

in good black silk, for which material she had a strong preference. The orbs of her eyes were very large; not many little wrinkles lay imbedded around them. She could throw a piercing blueness into her look. Her gray and brown hair was always done in a classic knot, for Aunt Jane was spoken of as having an admirably balanced head. She was making rick-rack work because it was strong, sensible trimming, filled in idle minutes, and did not hurt her strong, sensible eyes. All her relations knew she was a remarkable person, and submitted in various degrees to her advice. She always spoke with decision because her mind was made up on most subjects. If you differed from her she allowed you to do so, but she had good reason to pity you. She was overwhelming rather than attractive to affectionate or imaginative people. Her will was as well-grown and strong as herself. Aunt Jane was indeed like a serene giantess moving through the world's meadow, all the grasshoppers and crickets flying before her. She did not intend them any unkindness, but they naturally wished to get out of her way.

With something of the cricket's humble cheerfulness Mr. Roseladies came in, having his black gloves in his black hat, and extended his hand to Aunt Jane. As soon as she saw him her nose bent downward and the corners of her mouth flattened. This slight change clothed her in her severe look, and she said after she had taken her brother-in-law's hand she hoped he was no worse than when they met last.

"My memory *is* growing a little defective," admitted the scholar. "I'm very glad to have you here with us — very glad."

"I wish it had been possible for me to come before," said Aunt Jane.

"We did drive to the station for you a couple of days ago. Of course you left everybody well?"

"Certainly," said Aunt Jane. "But it seems you have sickness in the house here."

"The boys stayed out in a rainstorm," confessed Uncle Roseladies, "and I believe one of them did have a turn of the ague."

"There is always some one to blame when sick-

ness breaks out in a family," truly observed Aunt Jane.

"Assuredly," admitted the old gentleman.

"The boys ran off across the river," put forth Sister in her uncle's defence. She was hovering on the threshold of the folding doors. "And they got their boat swamped themselves, and Uncle Roseladies did not know anything about it."

"Of course not," said Aunt Jane. It was worse for Uncle Roseladies than if no plea had been uttered. "This house seems to be quite a distributing point. I saw you bring the baby in from her remarkable journey, but I have seen nothing of the boys the whole morning." She looked at her watch, the best time-piece owned by any Roseladies.

"It was remarkable," confessed the old gentleman, drooping in his chair. "Upon my word, I never found myself in such a position! It was, moreover, trying to the child. Yes, I felt it. I can't bring myself yet, to see how I did it!"

"The boys'll never get done laughing about it," said Sister, "when they come home."

"And from what point will the boys arrive," asked Aunt Jane, not inclining to laugh at all, "when they do come home?"

"Really," said Mr. Roseladies, "I am not posted as to their motions this morning. Sarah and Mrs. MacAllister will know."

Dinner was on the table at one o'clock. Noanie appeared in the glory of mull and lace, kid slippers and tinted stockings, and her curls were burnished like a tulip's petals. Sarah overdressed her as an atonement. But the boys were absent and Sarah and Mrs. MacAllister did not know where they were.

The afternoon proved very long. Sister was lured aside a few minutes by her cousin when Sarah said everything that *could* happen wrong was happening wrong. She would perfectly fly if those boys did not come soon!

Though this flitting cousin seemed always on the point of perfectly flying — in a pleasant, aerial sense, Sister knew what she meant and recognized the desperate situation.

Mr. Smith was not there to send after

them. Nobody could go after them — unless she did.

Sister put on her hat and went down to the shore. She did not doubt they were across the river, and it rolled so broad and threatening before her!

CHAPTER X.

SISTER SETS FORTH.

VERY far from Cousin Sarah's mind was the thought of sending another dove out of the ark, and she would have flown up in terror from her quiet embroidering and chat with Aunt Jane, had she seen Sister tugging to get the home skiff afloat.

Sister had been learning to row, but was not sure of her lesson. She wavered in her decision until fairly off the shore, then she was obliged to take the oars and do something, and she pointed the boat courageously at Dan's house.

You cannot picture what this voyage was to a little girl still afraid of the water. It danced around and made her dizzy. Now it leaked through seams and she was in terror of swamping, and now it resisted her awkward oar with a jerk which

nearly upset her. The current took hold and turned her helplessly down river. Dan's house was abreast of her in the distance. She passed below its range, struggling with the oars until all her pulses beat like trip-hammers. She could not swim, so if she meant to escape from this whispering, dazzling, rushing current, she must do her best without fear. By degrees the management of the oars came to her like a revelation. She pointed the boat across her adversary and pulled with a steady stroke. Once out of the current it was easy to work up stream, easy to avoid shoals, and pleasant to feel the shadow of the bluff after all her heat.

Sister felt ashamed because she had trembled with terror and was now trembling with fatigue. She realized what a companion and beloved competitor water could be; the Wabash had a thousand allurements for her after she had conquered it.

Mrs. Marsh came to the rear door of the barge-house and saluted Sister. Rowing a boat in smooth water was nothing in Mrs. Marsh's eyes. She could herself pull with a beautiful motion, and

take a boat up and down the rapids quite as a matter of course. She set the trot-lines when her husband and Dan were absent; and often of a pleasant evening, clothed in gear which was not made for bathing purposes, took a header from her veranda and swam until she was tired.

Sister had seen her several times, but had only seen Mr. Marsh once when he was seining with Dan near the opposite shore. She thought Mrs. Marsh was a pleasant woman like the wife of the Bean-stalk Giant, but, like her, unfortunate in having such a terrifying husband. The sound of his axe came from the hills. It was comforting to know he surely would not step out saying "Fee, fo, fum!" or something equally surly.

"How are they all to the house?" said Mrs. Marsh, stooping down to reach the skiff-rope.

"O don't do that, please," said Sister. "I want to run it on the bank and get out."

"But I'll help you on to the boat."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Marsh. I'm looking for our boys, and I don't hear them here."

"No, the boys ain't here," said Mrs. Marsh.

"Them and Dan has been up in the woods ever sence this mornin'."

"I thought you'd know where they were."

"But I don't rightly know just where they are, only I 'lowed they were somewhere round his choppin'-place. He hadn't seen nothin' of them, though, when he come to his dinner."

"Who — Dan?"

"No; my man," replied Mrs. Marsh.

"Then they didn't come here and get any dinner?"

"No. Dan, he took a chunk of cold pone and side-meat in his pocket. Laws! boys will run all day and never think of a meal's vittles till they're done out at night. They took some shovels, and I 'lowed they started out to dig for roots. I told Dan to be sure and git me some jing sang."

"But what are they going to do with roots?" puzzled Sister.

"Roots is very needy," said Mrs. Marsh. "And so is barks. Bitter-sweet will cure the fever, and cumfrey is mighty good for weak lungs. Rattleweed root and sycamore bark will take all this

here badness out of your blood, and red willow is good for achin' in your bones."

"Quilly had a chill. Maybe they *have* gone to hunt something for him."

"Black nettle-bloom is good for the bone-hives," continued Mrs. Marsh. "But dandeline made into bitters with quinine and spirits is the best thing for the aigur ever I tried."

"Did the boys go straight up the hill, Mrs. Marsh?"

"No, they sidled off yon-way like, as if they meant to take a southwest shoot. You come in and take a cheer and wait awhile, and they'll be back. Their boat's somewhere nigh, so they can't slip ye."

"But they ought to come right home now, Mrs. Marsh. You know our Aunt Jane has come from Greensburg."

"Law! no, I didn't," said Mrs. Marsh.

"Yes, she got here last night. And the boys went off this morning without waiting to say, 'how do you do!'"

"Land, that's just like boys!"

"That's why I came after them. Cousin Sarah is just as uneasy!"

"Well, they're up yonder," said Mrs. Marsh, resigning her claims on Sister.

"I hope you're pretty well," said Sister in departing. "I was thinking so much about the boys at first, I didn't ask you."

"Tol'able like," responded the river-wife. "I git lonesome and run-down, like, and feel the need of a good drink of buttermilk."

"Mrs. McAllister churned this forenoon, and I knew she expected Dan."

"Well, now, just as soon as you ketch them boys you tell Dan to put for the boat, and start the fire for his father's supper. I'll take the coffee-pot and go for the buttermilk myself."

"I will," said Sister.

When she had scrambled diagonally along the bluff's slope to its summit, Sister paused to rest and looked back over the river. Mrs. Marsh was far out on the cream-hued water, her oars rising and falling like the dip of some stately bird's wings.

"She'll tell them I'm up here," said Sister aloud, with a start, for the first time feeling doubtful of her undertaking.

The sound of an axe at intervals echoed through the woods. She tried to catch sight of the wood-chopper, not because she wanted to give good evening to Mr. Marsh or even let him know she was near, but because his wife had said the boys were somewhere around his chopping-place. She could no more readily find him, however, than if he were flitting from tree to tree. The axe-sound came in disjointed notes from the north, then from remote western depths, then from across the river. Still as Sister changed her course, other trees received or multiplied the echo. She gave the chopper up and began to call to the boys.

How one's lone voice is magnified in the deep woods! How audacious it seemed for Sister to throw out a single word when that word instantly swelled its volume and lengthened itself until the treetops were full of "Penn-n-n!" and "Quill-ill-lill!"

Her stockings and dress were studded with small

green burrs and Spanish needles, and she could hardly save pieces of her curls from the brambles. She found herself pushing through endless thickets as high as her head and with difficulty keeping the twigs out of her eyes. Sister thought of snakes moreover, and squealed when some weed entangled her ankle.

"If ever I take moonlight walks," said she, "I won't come to this place, and I don't see what brings the boys here. They love to run off to this side of the river where it's all rocks and brush and choky weeds, when they might stay on the other side and have a lots better time."

It finally became a mere struggle to get out of the undergrowth. Sister did not know in what direction she was going. She crept under here and climbed over there. The land ascended and rocks lay together in heaps. It was no use to call the boys. She quite wished she was back at the river edge herself, and fervently wished it when she crawled up a great gray back of limestone—crouched like a petrified elephant on its knees—and saw the amber light was gone.

The woods hugged close up to her, interlacing her sight with branches. It was impossible to see far in any direction, had high noon been there to help her. Sister concluded to slip down the rock-side up which she had crawled and follow her own path back to the river. But her little body had not made such a tunnel that one bent or broken bush remained to guide her. She was soon floundering through green as a swimmer parts his way through water, excepting that her head was below the surface oftener than above it. There was one thing which she could do to change her course, and that was to follow the downward slope of the land. In places it became so steep that she hung to bushes while groping with a foot lower in the dusk. The dusk became gradually one great shade, intensely black in spots, and full of sighs and short coughs, which might be twigs dropping, or squirrels in the trees, or the trees themselves clearing their voices for their long night-anthem.

Sister knew just how an elm or walnut sways from crown to root, playing with all its fingers on the instrument of the wind, and looking upward as

its voice rises through the diapason. But she did not think of that. She thought only of getting out of the tangle, and finding the river before the boys did, so they would row her over. The moon would be up late. Tears as well as hazel leaves bothered Sister's sight. Cousin Sarah and Aunt Jane would blame her so. And it was awful to be lost all by yourself in the dark woods, and hear your heart beat, and be unable to convince yourself that something would not catch you from behind, or spring up at you from the ground. She was not usually a coward, but her limbs wavered with exhaustion. She felt an irresistible panic rise within her, and tore ahead blindly, holding both arms over her face, without knowing whether she was running on level ground or hillside. The scrape of her tearing garments and the crackling and resistance of brush continued but a moment longer. She was free, and tumbling with a bump against a wall.

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE GRASS GROWS AND WATER RUNS.

DAN led his sappers and miners up the Shawnee Mound at about ten o'clock in the forenoon.

Long before that hour Mr. Marsh had eaten his early breakfast and gone to chop. He left many tasks for his son to do: such as mending a seine, carrying wood into the barge, going to the station-store for tobacco and to a neighbor's to borrow a saw. Everything was forgotten by Dan when the boatload of United Diggers arrived, though he was careful to skirt widely the scene of his father's labors and add a safe couple of miles to the ascent of the mound.

Aquilla and Penn expected to find the summit a monumental height which might throw their figures into gigantic relief against the sky if they

dangerously worked by daylight. But dense woods, thickets and rock piles ascended with them. The mound was a mighty cone ending in a blunt point.

"Right here," said Dan, scraping his bare foot, across the turf, "my granny always said he was. There's a pin-oak, and there's a pecawn-tree, and there's a pile o' stone. It's between them three."

"That's a pretty wide place," observed Penn dubiously, throwing down his load of shovels.

"You be keerful what noise you make," admonished Dan. "They can hear from this top all over the country."

"But they can't see us," said Aquilla.

"I ain't so sure o' *that*, nuther," said Dan. "We've got to keep a watch-out, now I tell ye."

"Do you know what it was yelled at us the night we run, Dan?" inquired Willie.

This subject had not been mentioned before, and no answer was returned for several minutes. Dan grunted while he marked off a space several yards square with his shovel.

"We ain't going to dig a cellar," suggested Penn.

"I thought you said you knew just the *exact* spot where the young chief was," hinted Aquilla. "And he wasn't as big as a stack of elephants."

"Well, if you two is going to boss this thing," said Dan, spreading one hand in eloquence and tendering the spade with the other, "and you ain't willin' to take my granny's word that seen the place 'fore you's born, just stake it out for yourselves and I'll go back down to the boat. I got plenty to do without runnin' the resk o' state's prison for the likes of you."

This bold and business-like speech, so lurid with a threat of impending doom, killed at once all interference with Dan's surveying. Penn said, "Aw—go on. Who's trying to boss?" And Aquilla said if Dan gave it up the rest of them would have to give up, too.

"I never 'lowed to give up," grumbled Dan. "But I don't like to see anybody act as if they knowed it all."

"*Do* you know who it was yelled at us?" repeated Willie.

"Yes, sir," replied Dan, pressing down with his

bare foot and throwing aside the first shovelful of earth, "I do. But that there's sumpin you don't want to talk about."

"Why?" said Willie, feeling his scalp prickle.

"'Cause," returned Dan with dreadful brevity.

"There's 'nuff said."

Willie was now more horrified by that noise than he had been in the dark with it sounding after him.

Penn grasped the other shovel and Aquilla took the pick, but laid it down again.

"Now, look here," said Dan. "Two of us will have to watch while two digs. One feller can slip down a piece on that side, and one feller can slip down a piece on *that* side, and if they see or hear anybody they can call 'Lay low!'"

"Well, you and Willie go first," said Penn, "and let Quill and me spade awhile."

"You dig right straight down where I begun, then," said Dan, "and throw your dirt outside o' the line. And you listen sharp. Don't you holler loud, Willie, if you see anything. Just kind o' whisper up 'Lay low!'"

Willie accordingly descended a few yards at one side of the conical mountain, and Dan stalked bare-legged and serene, over nettles and young thistles, down the other.

Aquilla and Penn worked with the zest of beginners. In ten minutes the sun was very hot. In fifteen minutes they were panting hard, though each still tried to throw out more shovelfuls than the other.

"I feel pretty weak, as though I were going to have another chill," said Aquilla.

"You better rest yourself," observed Penn sarcastically.

"I won't do it," responded Aquilla with resentment. "I wish you had to take my quinine."

"Quinine's nothing. We'll all have to take worse than quinine. But I'm bound to see it through now," said Penn grimly.

"Aunt Jane'll think we haven't any manners," regretted Aquilla.

"I haven't very many. But I've got lots of curiosity and I want to see what's underneath here worse than I do Aunt Jane."

"Lay low!" was hissed up the hill in Dan's curdling whisper.

The boys dropped their spades and threw themselves flat on the ground. Aquilla thought of taking to a tree, but fearing to be winged in mid-climbing, imitated Penn. They held their breath and flattened themselves. A shadow, tipping a little upwards from the south, but not much, for it was so near noon, advanced towards them; and it was Dan's.

"Git up," said he.

"What did you do that for?" demanded Penn.

"Who was it?" said Aquilla

"'Twasn't nobody. But if you fellers keep a-talkin' all the time there *will* be somebody as sure as guns. You don't want to clink your spades so, nuther."

"S'pose you take hold and show us how," suggested Penn with a boy's merciless sarcasm. He brushed the loam off his knees.

"Well, I would 'a' showed you fust, if you hadn't been so keen," returned Dan severely. "Willie and me will take our turns and you can see how."



"LAY LOW!"

"Willie's too little to dig," said Penn. "I'll take his place and let him watch all the time." And after some argument Dan agreed to this.

Aquilla descended to Dan's lookout, and sat with his back to a mossy stump. He could hear the muffled tone of the spades. There was a shimmer of heat over every vista toward which he turned his eye, and he was high enough to see the river glinting through meshes of foliage.

Penn and Dan, having their jaws resolutely set and their foreheads puckered, tossed out fierce shovelfuls and sunk in the hole above their knees. Penn parted with his jacket, his collar and tie. Dan had no such things to embarrass him. His brown toes took a sensitive grip of the damp earth, enjoying their freedom; but he found it expedient to borrow Penn's handkerchief to tie around his right foot, so the spade-top need not cut a channel in his sole.

About noon they halted. Penn was drenched and exhausted with double exertion. He said he would give anything for a drink of water, and Willie and Aquilla were hungry. They broke off

some branches and laid them carefully over hole and shovels. Then Dan led the way to a spring which he said was right down yonder, but which seemed to be at the borders of the next State.

When the spring was found, the boys lay down on their stomachs around it and drank like oxen. It was between the mossy roots of a sycamore, and moss and grass made a broad divan all around it. Dan took from his trousers pockets the cornpone and fried pork, and divided it. Afterwards they foraged for berries and browsed on sassafras leaves. Dan knew a tree some miles further on full of red thornberries if they were ripe, but the others were against visiting it.

Three o'clock was indicated by all shadows before they felt like ascending the Shawnee Mound again, and Aquilla took his turn at the shovel with trembling arms.

"I feel pretty nearly as bad as Harold did at the battle of Hastings when that arrow came down in his eye," observed Aquilla.

"I feel just as the man in the story did when he was plowing, and the pot of money came up

and hit his heel," said Penn, who was sore through all his muscles, but would not own it.

"O, Berne, Luzerne and Zurich!" groaned Aquilla. "Those are the three capitals of Switzerland, and I wish I was in one of them."

"Dan'll run up and tell us somebody's heard us, pretty soon, and then it'll be Turn, Concern and Fury till we get away — Say, Quill!"

This exclamation was sudden and sharp. It startled Aquilla into a hysterical shriek like the utterance of a nervous girl.

"Aw — what's the matter with you!" said Penn, modifying his own excitement.

"What's the matter with *you*?" demanded his cousin. "You scared me."

"Don't you feel it with your shovel?"

"No."

"Well, I struck something hard."

He sunk his spade first with one foot then with the other and pried to lift its load. Aquilla came and planted his spade beside it. They leaned upon the handles as levers, and the resisting object flew up at their faces.

CHAPTER XII.

A SILENT SAVAGE AND A WAR-WHOOP.

AQUILLA jumped backwards and fell down. "He just wants to shake hands with us," said Penn after his own startled recoil.

Aquilla looked into the hole and shuddered. Yet there was nothing horrible in the white arm-bones standing out of the earth with fingers all extended. Every phalange was perfect; the whole arm looked bleached to lime-purity instead of stained with damp.

"It's the young chief, isn't it!" whispered Aquilla.

"It's mighty little of him then," replied Penn.

"Some savages buried their friends sitting down," said Aquilla, "so if you dug to the head, all you had to do was to keep straight on and you'd get the whole figure out."

"I wish the Shawnees had buried that way," said his cousin. "Le's call Dan. If we don't all work together hard as we can put, we can't get through to-night."

Both the outposts came in, eager and excited. Dan said the best thing to be done now was to "H'iste her up as quick as they could." Willie might scrape dirt back from the edge of the trench so the spaders need not tire themselves throwing so far. So Willie scraped and the others threw up earth as furiously as moles.

The sun slipped low. Penn and Dan mercifully and sincerely urged Aquilla to sit down, and he did so while they uncovered the last bits of the Indian skeleton. He leaned back against a tree, his face white with weariness, his mouth circled by beads of dampness. Penn and Dan were up to their waists in the trench, and the last sunrays glinted on their bobbing heads. Twilight was threatening even the Shawnee heights.

"The Greeks used to burn their dead," said Aquilla, when he had recovered sufficient strength of voice, "and put it out with wine. And if any-

body came to the funeral that the dead person hated, they made him go off. And that was a great disgrace."

"I knowed a feller what said where he come from they put their dead people in ovens," spoke Dan out of the trench, growing aggressive and less cautious in voice as he labored harder to complete his work. "He worked on a boat down by Shawneetown. He was an Irishman from New Orleans."

"The people in New Orleans are more French than Irish," observed Aquilla.

"I don't care," responded Dan combatively. "This here feller was an Irishman. He *talked* Irish."

"What did he say, Dan?" asked Willie.

"O, I don't mind any of it now."

"Don't you know some Irish words?"

"Well, he used to say, 'Wee, McShay,' when the boss told him to do anything."

Aquilla heard these facts with a doubtful face. Penn paid no attention to anything except the last bone he was scraping clear of dirt. His damp,

red face was smeared with marks of the soil. His shirt-band clung to his neck and his hair clung to his forehead.

"There you are," said Penn, throwing his spade out of the trench; "and I don't see anything of the gold crown."

"Maybe this isn't him," suggested Willie, looking down with quiet terror at the white outline.

"My granny wasn't sure the crown was on his head," said Dan, also throwing out his shovel. "But there *was* a crown. Nor she didn't know whether the kittle was at his head or his feet or alongside of him. But there *was* a kittle."

"I don't s'pose this is the young chief at all," said Penn, assuming indifference. "But now we've found him le's hoist him out and have a look at him, any way."

The two younger boys stood aside while their daring elders lifted the Indian skeleton to the surface. It rattled and dropped in pieces, but they set it with its still articulated spine against a tree, spread the legs out in front of it and placed the

skull at its top. The arms hung down sprawling, the long phalange bones on the turf.

Aquilla and Willie retreated backward.

"I feel as if it would chase us," said Aquilla. And Willie whimpering in his throat pleaded: "Will it?"

"How's it going to chase you, you baby!" said Penn impatiently. "It's had the best and coolest time of any of us this afternoon, so it wouldn't want to chase you if it was able."

Dan dropped again into the trench and took the pick to sound its sides.

Penn, Aquilla and Willie turned their backs on the Indian chief and squatted to watch this process. It was growing dusk, and they craned their necks over the hole. Willie at first cast cautious looks over his shoulder to make sure that the Indian was not creeping towards them. But he sat in such stoical quiet and Dan's search became so absorbing that Willie forgot their witness in the search.

"Now, you mind," said Dan, having thumped all around his boundary to the right-hand side

near where the head had lain, "sumpin's in here."

It was the more impressive because Dan whispered instead of sounding his usual deliberate drawl aloud.

He stuck the point of the pick into that place.

"Look out!" shouted Penn, also in a whisper. "You'll bang it to pieces if anything is there."

"I know what I'm about," whispered Dan. "And it's just as hard as a darnick."

"I'll dig it out," volunteered Willie, barely above his breath.

"No, you won't," whispered back Dan with a snuff of disapproval. "They used to tell me when I'se your age little fellers should be seen and not heard."

"That's nothing but a root you're picking at," accused Penn.

"Root, is it?" whispered Dan. "Do you hear that click?"

He struck a hard blow.

"No, I don't. Do you, Quill?"

"No," whispered Aquilla. "It sounded more like a rattle."

"Well, that's it," said Dan. "It's the pieces rattlin' against the sides."

The three slipped down upon their stomachs and stared closer into the trench, under Dan's arm, between his legs or around his side. Willie felt certain of the precious kettle, and wished Sister could see it. Aquilla knew some noise had answered the strokes, and Penn wanted to get hold of the pick himself, he was so impatient of long-armed, deliberate river-boys.

Yet a hole was growing in the side of the trench somewhat like a branch chamber off the main shaft of a mine. If Dan had made quicker strokes, if the ground had been softer, if dusk had not gathered so fast between their eyes and their object, and if they had not been interrupted at the intensest moment, the Indian prince's crown and treasure must have fallen into their hands.

"There she is!" hissed Dan, as his blow was answered by a clattering sound like the breaking of a dry gourd.

"O—o!" yelled Willie. "Hoo—o! Look—he's throwing his head at us!"

The head of the Indian chief actually flew between Willie and Aquilla, and fell upon Dan in the trench.

Dan crouched backwards and menaced the other boys. "Stop that, now!"

Willie was sure his eyes deceived him when he stared back at the tree against which their Indian had been propped. A large figure stood in its place, clothed in trousers, boots and hickory shirt, and holding a club in his hand.

The United Diggers after their first terror, might have scattered down all sides of the mound. But each one felt instantly the merciless power of that club. It looked capable of tripping their legs and stretching indefinite reaches after them.

Aquilla took courage to notice that the skeleton lay in fragments at the roots of the tree, and this hairy being expanded and contracted with mortal breath.

"Come out o' that!" said the hairy being with

a force and anger calculated to make larger boys tremble.

"We air comin' out," responded Dan sulkily, climbing to the surface.

"What you doin' *here*?" continued the club-bearer.

"Diggin'," replied Dan.

"Diggin' what fer? Fish-wums?"

"No."

"Injuns?"

"Digging for money," said Penn, boldly. "It's my uncle's mound."

At this the hairy man opened his mouth hugely and uttered a roaring laugh which filled many cubic yards of air. It was intimidating, and made him terrible. He seemed to know he had a talent for this kind of yelling, and added another shriek by way of emphasizing the first and expressing his power over mound-diggers of every degree.

Even Willie knew this was Dan's father. And he began to suspect it was Dan's father who created such a panic on the occasion of the catnip-pipe. He was a dreadful man, probably the

hairiest one that ever escaped being downright wild. He could bury them in the hole, and mind it no more than if he were chopping up a log. Penn was in his power; Aquilla looked as pale as sycamore bark; even Dan shrunk up and looked years younger, years weaker.

Their captor with motions of his club ranged them in line. Their trophy remained under the tree. Their tools lay scattered, the pick in the bottom of the trench.

"We want to go home," said Penn, with a daring shake of the head, and the club threatened him so close that he dodged, though he was ashamed of it. He felt it due to himself to add in a mutter, "You don't dare to hurt us, anyhow," when he was tripped by some means and fell on his face, making a bruise all along one cheek; and it did hurt.

"What you goin' to do with us, pap?" inquired Dan in a tone of supplication. The bold, deliberate Dan, who could plan and do dangerous things, now cowered in his jeans trousers as if he were shrivelled by recollections which these other boys could not even imagine.

No reply was granted him except the reply of the club. It grazed his ear indicating the direction in which Dan was to head the procession, and he dodged with a cringe and marched off. Penn, Aquilla and Willie trod on each other's heels in a line behind him, for their captor marched last, crowding them forward.

Down the Shawnee mound and into the heart of those tangled woods, out of the afterglow into dusk, burs, rotten log-dust, scratching foliage, they stumbled and pushed.

Aquilla held to Penn's trouser-band, and Penn growled rebelliously when he heard Willie whimper so near the club.

"Don't say nothin' at all," breathed Dan, when the undergrowth gave him a chance to whisper. "There's sumpin' the matter with his head, and mother and me never know what he'll do if he ain't humored!"

CHAPTER XIII.

EIGHT BOYLESS LEGS.

WHEN Sister bumped against the wall and found it was a substance through which she could not force herself, she was obliged to check her panic and feel along the surface. It was ridgy, part clay and part hewn wood, and old axe-wounds could be detected in the wood. Sister's eyes helped her to the certainty that she had run against a cabin in the woods. She could see the outline of shingled eaves jutting not very far above her head; and though no noise could be heard within, somebody lived here. Barn-odors came to her nose, and chickens stirred with a sleepy "qua-qua?" in trees near her.

Little girls who feel a great deal of distance between their natural guardians and themselves, always hope to fall into the hands of some nice

good person who will take them home. Sister's mind swiftly sketched the people in this house. She knew there must be a lovely old man and woman who would exclaim "Law, child!" So many Wabash folks invoked the law when they made a general exclamation. "Are you the little girl from Mr. Roseladies'? Well, you must be taken straight back, for they will be so uneasy about you." The old man would carry that kind of a lantern that sheds light through tin holes, and give Sister his big forefinger to hold by while he guided her through the woods.

While this half-acknowledged etching of the brain was going on, she kept feeling along the wall to find corner or door. There was no window on that side. She ran against a thicket of bushes growing close against the logs, and retreated from them in the opposite direction. This brought her to a corner where the log-ends interlaced like huge fingers locked, and she could now see the doorstep and front of the house. Through small deep windows on each side of the door a little light was strained.

Sister tried to penetrate the single dim distorted pane of the window she passed. The sash was made for four panes of glass, but rags or old clothing bulged through three places, and the glass looked cobwebbed or smoked or mud-soaked until its original uses were suspended.

Sister stepped upon the door-log and rapped with her fingers. The dropping of beechnuts could be no lighter than her rap. She did not want to make the old couple jump. The outline of a string hanging through a latch-hole, could be discerned on the door. And Sister believed if she pulled that string it might in some mysterious way open the door. Still, she hesitated to do so, dark as were the woods and pressing as was her wish to get inside.

It seemed long to wait. She rapped again, this time with somewhat of the woodpecker's aggressive rattle, and the door pounced open, a flaring tin lamp pounced at her, and was the only object between her face and the face of a strange old woman.

The old woman's reddishness and wrinkles, and

wisp of gray hair escaping like a scant horse-tail down her back, were not what frightened Sister. Her fierce eyes, her opening and shutting her mouth with a gnash of two lone teeth, like an angry owl, each time before she spoke, her red flannel petticoat and butternut-colored short sack, were what Sister objected to. Moreover she had a broomstick under one arm.

Sister wished she had not knocked at the door and wondered how far it was to a neighbor's. She pushed the fleece of curls well out of her eyes, and experimentally smiled at the old woman.

"I just stopped to ask the way to the river," gasped Sister.

The old woman snapped with her mouth as if trying to catch words which escaped.

"The river!" she shouted so loud it struck your ears like a shot. "What do you want of the river?"

"O, I want to go home!" pleaded Sister. "I live on the other side. I'm the little girl at Mr. Roseladies'. I came after the boys and got lost. Have you seen anything of our boys?"

The click came before the shout : " What boys ? "

" The boys from Mr. Roseladies', ma'am. "

" The boys that was down among the Injuns ? "

" No, ma'am, " replied Sister, with bulging eyes.

" There isn't any Indians. "

" The woods is full of 'em, " shouted this fortress-holder from the security of her dwelling. " *You've* been among 'em, too, " she added, shaking her head at Sister's clothes.

" Please don't scare me ! " besought Sister.

" Come into the house then, will ye ! " exclaimed the old woman, after several ineffectual clicks. " Come in if you don't want to be ketched, for the Injuns has been disturbed, and the woods is full of Shawnees to-night, I tell ye ! "

Sister made up a lip to cry, being at once frightened over the doorstep into the house and repelled by its inmate.

The grandmother set her tin lamp on the mantel where it made a yellow circle of flickering light around itself, leaving the rest of the one-roomed cabin in uncertainty.

Finding no instant damage was to be done to

her the little girl sat in a splint-bottomed chair, holding her hat, and eying her surroundings together with that one figure which animated them.

Ashes were swept up into the fireplace, and two fire-dogs holding a lately blackened ember, seemed to stretch up or squat according to the changes in the light. A chain hung down the chimney and upon its hook was a tea-kettle. A weazened clock was fastened high up on the wall, and out of it dangled weights and brass chains enough to tear the very wheels from its bosom. Wedged close in one corner was a bed, and over it ranged a row of flannel and cotton garments, while along the logs between its head and the fireplace hung pots, skillets and iron pans. There was a cupboard on the other side of the fireplace and a small table under one window.

But the queerest, the hugest object in the house was a great framework opposite the bed. It was made of heavy dark timbers and extended quite to the rafters, and while its beams were not covered into a small house by themselves, like a pipe organ, it filled a quarter of the cabin, and there was

mystery in its shadows. At the front of it a great many threads crossed each other, coming from a roll of web on a horizontal post.

The old woman sat down on a bench in front of this machine as if she were going to play on it. Sister wondered if she had been playing on it when she knocked at the door, and why she did it, and what sort of sound the thing would make.

The old woman shot some object across between the threads, and then pulled a sort of gate hanging from the top : Ke-bang, ke-bang !

Sister was certain there was no such noise as that in the house when she went groping along the outside. And why the old woman took to working the machine without saying another word to her captive, was mysterious indeed. She may have been washing her plates when Sister rapped : they stood in polished rows upon the cupboard shelves. Or she may have been sweeping her hearth. She certainly was not making this thing boom as she now kept doing with a regular motion.

Very little light seemed necessary to her occu-

pation. She sat in the twilight far from her lamp, shot the shuttle between her threads, and pulled the hanging gate, without turning her head from the work, indeed, but also without straining her eyes upon it.

Sister now felt less afraid of her. Still, she would not have kissed this dreadful grandmother for anything in the world. She must be somebody's grandmother. Where were her grandchildren, and all the folks who ought to make the cabin lively of an evening?

Ke-bang, ke-bang! worked the loom.

And how bad it was in her to tell a little girl the woods were full of Indians. How was Sister to reach home if the old woman would not offer even to tell her the way?

Ke-bang, ke-bang! taunted the loom.

Sister rose from her chair and concluded she would go up to the old woman and beg again to be told the way to the river. It was past nine by the weazened clock. If Uncle Roseladies and Mr. Smith came over to search for her, how were they to find her, shut in this cabin?

Now Sister's eyes by constant gazing at the loom corner had grown used to its glooms, and as she changed her place, new features of the framework stared at her. She saw legs. Boys' legs.

The huge machine was draped at the back to within half a yard of the floor, with long threads hanging motionless. They were of some dull color and did not catch the eye. But between the threads and the floor were eight boys' legs. Sister tiptoed forward stretching her fearful neck, and counted them. She could not see the feet. A foundation cross-piece hid them, although Sister stooped and peeped between timbers. She felt speechless fright, as if she were dreaming a bad dream.

There were Willie's long stockings meeting his knickerbockers. There were Penn's legs; Aquilla's slim stems; and Dan's lean dark calves. All in a stiff row which neither wavered with long standing nor twitched with the workings of boys' uneasy muscles.

And regularly the great machine, as if it were absorbing them piecemeal, went Ke-bang, ke-bang!

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE DISGRACEFUL THINGS.

ON the evening of that day Honora was the only child who appeared at the Roseladies' tea-table. She had been playing by herself all the afternoon with dolls in various stages of ruin, and fell into a cherubic sleep with her cup of milk between her dimpled fists. Mrs. MacAllister was obliged to take her up to bed before the rest of the family rose from the table.

"There goes the last of the flock," remarked Aunt Jane. "The children certainly keep themselves out of the way here."

"I don't see where they can be staying so long," said Sarah uneasily.

"Mariana must be about the premises. She was with us the greater part of the afternoon. Do they come to meals whenever it suits them?"

Aunt Jane had not yet taken the reins of authority. She was observing the family methods.

"O no, indeed," said Sarah. "They have been in their places promptly. And I know Sister wouldn't be away now if I hadn't told her I was worried about the boys. I blame myself for it."

"You know where she is, then?"

"She has gone across the river," replied Sarah, blushing.

"Across the river! By herself!" exclaimed Aunt Jane so distinctly that Mr. Roseladies heard it.

"Boys will take to water just like ducks," he explained, smiling. His hair stood quite upright and his face was very placid and innocent. "Many a time have I swam across the Wabash, and my memory doesn't go back to the time when I didn't own and row a boat. There can be no more wholesome amusement for boys or girls either. Sarah has fine muscles. They come of handling oars. And I need never feel any uneasiness about her going down in a shipwreck. One of her first important lessons was learning to swim."

"But I suppose you didn't encourage her to go soaking herself all day," remarked Aunt Jane, keeping her eye upon the case in hand.

"Certainly not," said Mr. Roseladies. "There is, of course, a limit."

"Those three boys have not found the limit, then. Are they in the habit of voyaging across and up and down the river whenever they please, without asking permission?"

"O, no," said Sarah. "I think they ask papa. I'm sure they have asked him for the boat. Papa, don't the boys ask leave of you when they want to run about?"

Mr. Roseladies inclined his ear to gather these words.

"No," he replied, smiling kindly. "They enjoy the privileges of the country. There is no danger they can fall into in this neighborhood."

"And no mischief?" put Aunt Jane.

"I only require that they tell Sarah where they are going," he continued, not having heard her.

Aunt Jane smiled, flattening the corners of her mouth.

"They are over in the Illinois woods digging roots," proclaimed Sarah. "And Sister took the other boat and went to call them home. Mrs. Marsh was here for buttermilk awhile ago. She's a woman that lives in a boat, Aunt."

"Much as the boys are doing."

"I mean it's an old barge tied to the shore. And Sister had just been there inquiring for the boys. And she had gone up into the woods to find them. I do wish the child hadn't done it. We have no boat to send across now."

"Or the baby might man it and set forth after Mariana," suggested Aunt Jane.

"We haven't had such a day since they came," pleaded Sarah somewhat piteously.

She felt humbled and ashamed, having always desired the good will and approval of Aunt Jane and conscious of the level to which she had sunk.

"I do suppose Aunt Jane believes," talked Sarah, walking restlessly down to the river, as the sun set, "that I spend all my time playing with dolls, and am the real baby of the lot. Oh, how naughty those boys are to stay so long! They will

be sure to come home maimed or with some eyes out. They *can't* get drowned when the water is so still, unless they jump in for pure malice. And if Sister were not quite such a loving little thing she would aggravate my lot less. There's no sign of them on the other side. If she had but let the boat be I could pull over myself while Aunt Jane shouts to papa, and make Mrs. Marsh or her husband rake the woods for the runaways much more effectively than she can, poor little soul! Mr. Smith isn't here. Besides, we have positively no way of getting over the river. I do wish I had gone over in that Marsh woman's boat, whatever Aunt Jane might have thought."

The evening light faded.

Sarah walked up and down the river edge feeling desperate with responsibility. She waved her handkerchief to attract her neighbors from the barge, but the signal was never seen. She thought of her bathing-suit and of swimming across, but the river was so wide, and that was an undertaking she had not yet accomplished.

She sat down on a stone and waited for a boat



ECHOES ANSWERED HER.

to put out from the opposite side. The evening was still, and the water looked like glass, rippling only in the current. The western bluffs lived again on its surface. She dreaded going back to the house without having collected her sheep in a flock behind her. There was no use in slipping about to confer and condole with Mrs. MacAllister. Mrs. MacAllister had two quinine pellets laid up against Aquilla, and was in a very low state of mind regarding all the children and the family standing.

The echo of a great cry made Sarah spring to her feet. Then another cry followed, multiplying itself between the banks and bounding from wooded height to bluff. Sarah stood on the rock, and shouted between her hands the names of the missing children. Echoes answered her, until having exhausted the sound they dropped to silence. And it was nearly dusk and she did not know what to do.

CHAPTER XV.

CAPTIVES.

WHAT you doin' down on the flo'?" suddenly asked the old woman, catching Sister by the arm.

"I wanted to see," replied Sister, pierced by the shrill voice and trembling in every part.

"Stand up and see, then," said she, placing her prisoner at her left hand where the performance on the loom could be witnessed to very good advantage.

So Sister was obliged to stand and watch the shooting of the shuttle, the banging of the gate, and the changes of the crossed threads. She dared not move a step away, and grew tired on her feet and shifted her weight, thinking of those boys' legs behind the loom. If those legs were still fast to their bodies, why did they not shift about or

kick the floor? Tears started from her eyes and ran with a constant drip upon the breast of her dress.

Perhaps, after all, the woman did not know those boys were there; perhaps they had slipped in and hid themselves, and stood perfectly quiet for the sake of scaring that poor old woman. Oh, how mean boys could be when they wanted to! So Sister stood divided in her mind and suffering, now furtively stanching her tears and now stretching her neck sidewise to see the back of the loom.

It was odd to think of her uncle's pleasant homestead only two or three miles away; the lighted parlors, the dainty supper-table, and the people so different from this old woman.

The clock struck ten, which was evidently far beyond usual bedtime in the cabin. Listening on her loom bench, the grandmother gazed at Sister's face and saw, thrown up by the lamp yellowness, the track of tears. "Are you hongry?" she asked.

Sister felt a general depression and despair which might be hunger, so responded "Yes, ma'am, I

guess so," upon which the grandmother pushed her to the cupboard beside the fireplace. Both doors gaped wide and an indescribable stale smell came out of the enclosure. There were a dish of greens, some corn bread, a glass of black molasses, and a bit of butter reduced to oil by the heat of the day and cooled once more to an irregular solid by the presence of night. This cupboard convinced Sister that her symptoms did not mean hunger, after all; yet she dared not refuse to eat, and nibbled at the corn bread, feeling quite miserable. The strange hostess stepped cautiously out upon the log step. The shrill voice quavered away among the tree-tops: "Ho-oo, Wash'n'ton!"

Sister did not pause to consider whether this might be a call to the father of his country, or whether some wild son, dwelling in the woods but distinguished by an illustrious name, was being summoned by his mother. She sprang up and ran across the uneven squeaking floor to look behind the loom. The great loom-frame responded to the light jar of her feet.

Four figures were roped securely to the cross-beam at the loom back. She trod on the lavish end of a new rope which tied them : Willie, Penn, Aquilla and Dan. As Sister's sight adjusted itself to the dusk she saw their mouths were swathed tight shut as if from cold, their hands fastened down to their sides and their feet secured in a steady row by loops of woollen chain such as supplied the loom. Although reduced to breathing mummies the boys could use their eyes, and Sister saw that Willie's were shining with an overflow of tears.

Each one struggled more or less with his mouth-covering. Penn wagged his head as if he would bid her notice how he meant to pay all this back sometime with interest ; but Aquilla looked heavy-eyed and physically faint. Dan she could barely distinguish. He seemed abjectly sheepish.

" O Penn ! O Willie ! " she gasped. " O Cousin Quilly ! "

Sister did not notice that she left Dan out of the invocation.

"Did *she* tie you up here?" whispered Sister, indicating the closed cabin door.

All four heads heard her, and all four heads shook in negation.

"Don't cry, darling," said the comforter to her younger brother whom she could reach with a kiss; and kissing his cheek, she took up some falling tears.

"Ho-oo, Wash'n'ton!" soared up the grandmother's voice again.

"Was it a person named Washington that did it?" whispered Sister.

While the others paused, Dan bobbed his head in his dusky corner.

She had already begun to untie Willie's hands with as great speed as possible, the boys readily understanding that Willie could then untie Penn, Penn could untie Aquilla, and Aquilla untie Dan. Each might afterwards struggle with his own gag and foot-shackles, and thus in the course of time get free to retreat, if Sister could but succeed in unroping Willie before the grandmother came back.

The wooden door hinges creaked, while Sister tugged, and tried her teeth and her nails. But the grandmother lifted up her voice once more before stepping over her threshold, and this time the cabin and surrounding woods were filled by Mr. Marsh's answering call.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRIAL OF THE MOUND-DIGGERS.

DAN'S grandmother — for it *was* Dan's grandmother — remained upon the step until Mr. Marsh reached it, and this gave Sister time to loosen Willie's hands, but she saw in the boys' faces that her labor came too late. Their bonds would now be inspected, and no chance offer of breaking out of the cabin. She kept her place, however, determined to stand by them.

What Mr. Marsh meant to do with them, or whom he was bringing to assist him, they could not conjecture. It was therefore a wonderful relief, after the multiplied footsteps at the door, to see Sister dart across the floor while she cried out, "O, Uncle Roseladies! O, you've come after us!"

Here came home and deliverance, and very little



"O, UNCLE ROSELADIES! O, YOU'VE COME AFTER US!"

did it matter that Uncle Roseladies looked sterner and more disturbed than she had ever before seen him. He had his short cloak across his shoulders to protect his throat from night damp, and as he took his hat off which Uncle Roseladies never failed to do beneath any roof, his hair stood up with military erectness.

"Mariana here, too," he said, taking Sister by the wrist. "That is, at any rate, a relief. Where are the boys, Marsh?"

Mr. Marsh, having secured the door by a button and laid a hatchet on the loom bench, took the lamp off the mantel and beckoned with his big forefinger.

"Why, I trust, Marsh," said Mr. Roseladies, "that you have not put the boys in any unwholesome receptacle." And pressing his palms together, he tiptoed after the giant boatman to look behind the loom.

"This is too much, Marsh," spoke out Mr. Roseladies, sharply. "I am angry and distressed at what the children have done, but cruelty did not enter into my intention of punishment. Never for

an instant. They look very uncomfortable. Give me the light while you untie them. The whole business is distressing. I should have thought, Mrs. Marsh," said the gentle scholar, turning to Dan's grandmother while the lamp threw out his features in exaggerated profile, "that you could detain these culprits without allowing any such rigor as this."

"I don't 'low as it's my business," shouted back the grandmother in a pitch that never failed to penetrate Mr. Roseladies. "They done 'sturbed the Shawnees, and it's the Shawnees' business. Them and the Shawnees fur it." She withdrew to her fireplace, sat down on the splint chair that Sister had occupied, and watched further proceedings with her elbows resting on her knees.

When Mr. Marsh's skilled hands had delivered the boys one by one, they were mounted upon the high loom bench, a drooping disconsolate row, to be arraigned. Mr. Marsh took the hatchet out of their way and spread his great back against the door.

"You have done, boys," said Uncle Roseladies,

approaching, and lifting a finger, "an act for which there is scarcely any atonement. You have made me break the faith my grandfather pledged to the Shawnee tribe. In my turn I promised that burial mound should be inviolate, and now children of my own household, a son of my own neighbor, sally forth and turn my pledge into an untruth. It harrows me. I am angry. I have not been so aroused in all my recollection. Penn, what induced you to put me in this position?"

Penn mumbled that he did not think it would make any difference.

"I thought you valued honor and fair dealing more. And Aquilla whose mind inquires after knowledge—even he could not forbear, it seems."

Aquilla lifted his heavy eyes, and said his mind kept inquiring what was in that mound, and he did not like to back out when a little fellow like Willie stuck to it.

Willie spoke through the drip of tears which unceasingly washed his mouth-corners, and pleaded that he thought the money and the chief's crown would be so nice, and he meant to give the most

of his to Sister and Cousin Sarah and you. But as Uncle Roseladies could not distinguish a word any of them spoke, this magnanimity was lost upon him. Sister, however, who was standing at the end of the loom bench with her arm around Willie, appreciated it, and gave him a kiss which he endured in tearful patience.

Dan sat silent as an Indian, although he kept a furtive eye upon his father and the hatchet.

"You have hurt me," concluded Uncle Roseladies, and this simple fact touched them more sharply than his harangue. "Now what punishment do you think right to be dealt out to you?"

"Thumbs of every feller ort to come off," pronounced Mr. Marsh in the character of jury and judge. Dan reached around Aquilla and pinched Penn, who started, and gazed into Dan's deep foreboding eyes.

"You are doubtless hungry and exhausted," added the gentle uncle who did not know sentence had been pronounced. "I see that your clothes are torn, and I will not forbear hoping there are stone bruises and scratches upon your

persons. This is the reward of ill-doing. But worse punishments usually follow, and now what do you honestly think ought to be inflicted on you?"

"Thumbs," insisted Mr. Marsh, raising his voice to a roar, and approaching with his own huge possession in that line lifted so that its cracked nail, spreading ball and distorted joint might be ably seen even by the faint illumination. "Chop the'r thumbs off and put 'em into that mound when it's covered up ag'in."

The gentlemanly scholar arched a hand behind his right ear, and made a slight bow in response.

"Yes. I want the mound covered again at once. The sooner it is done the better I shall be pleased. Do it to-morrow morning early, as I said while we were coming along, and tell me nothing more about it except that the mischief is repaired as much as it possibly can be."

"He says," shouted the grandmother, "that the'r thumbs ort to be struck off accordin' to the promise made the Shawnees, if ever them Shawnees was 'sturbed while grass grôwed and water run."

A slow smile grew upon Uncle Roseladies' face.

He carried his eyes along the bench of disconsolate boys, and inquired : "Are you ready to yield up your thumbs?"

Willie broke into a sobbing cry, having Sister as his subdued chorus, and Uncle Roseladies could carry his joke no farther.

"There, there. Now, now. Hush, hush, Willie. I could not bear to give any of you even a whipping which you richly deserve, much less to work any harm to your persons."

Mr. Marsh's mouth showed like a cavity in his whiskers while such weak mercy was being dealt to the prisoners. "Shawnees have got to be satisfied," he thundered, which, in spite of his strength of lung Mr. Roseladies appeared not to understand, turning a puzzled gaze upon him.

"He says," the grandmother repeated in her piercing shout, "the Shawnees got to be sattyfied. No use to shet that mound 'less you shet inside them thumbs that done it. I seen them Shawnees in the'r council rings," she mused, if one can muse in a shriek; "and I seen 'em on the war-path. I been well beknown to 'm, and they won't never

lay still no mo' while grass grows and water runs if pale-faces' oaths isn't kep'. Them Shawnees'll fill the woods. They'll mur'n the cattle. They'll raise p'ison fogs on the river, and they'll kill the fish."

"My dear Mrs. Marsh, you don't believe any of that nonsense," persuaded Mr. Roseladies gently.

The grandmother's eyes burned with excitement as she cried: "Did *you* know 'em? Did *you* marry amongst 'em, and is *you* half or quarter Shawnee?"

"I had no idea you and your son were related to the tribe," said Mr. Roseladies, fumbling with his hands. "You surprise me."

"If any Shawnee had made oath to cut off his child's thumbs," continued the grandmother, pointing toward Mr. Marsh, *her* child, "off they would come. Wouldn't they, Wash'n'ton?"

Mr. Marsh jerked his head in ratification and immediately beckoned to Dan. The lank lad rose up, his face shining a waxen yellow, disdaining to cry, but quite reduced to pleading.

"Pap, if you won't do it I'll never shirk another chore."

"Lay that right thumb of your'n right down there," commanded Mr. Marsh, indicating place and position at his own feet on the puncheon floor. He sunk to one knee and held the hatchet in rest.

"Pap, you'll feel put out when I cain't take a fish off'n the hook no more, nor han'le an axe nor turn the grindstone."

"Dannel," cried his grandmother, "you ort to thort of that befo' you done done it."

"Purty please, pap," pleaded Dan, most tremulously; "purty please don't you go for to whack 'em off. I didn't 'low it would put you out so, and Granny she was al'ays talkin' about that gold crown and pot of money herself."

"Are you going to take our thumbs off, too?" spoke out Penn Bidgood.

Mr. Marsh jerked him a nod while pecking softly with his hatchet corner on that spot he expected Dan's hand to occupy.

"Nary thumb goes out of this house to-night," shouted Grandmother Marsh.

Dan cast a piercing look of helplessness at Mr. Roseladies as he passed him on light bare feet ; and he was coming slowly to his knees before his powerful father, when the gentleman suddenly understood and caught hold of the boy.

"Marsh, what are you going to do? This is brutal, sir. This is going too far again, permit me to say, even if I interfere between you and your son."

"I begin with my own boy's thumbs," roared Mr. Marsh.

"And do you mean to tell me that you actually propose to carry out your threat against all these children? You are out of your mind, man. The country would mob you. I will not allow it, sir."

"Will you come betwixt?" Mr. Marsh struck the hatchet into the floor where it stood fixed and glittering, the blow making Dan jump in rebound and the boys on the bench grab each other for mutual defence.

"Then we'll fight and settle it, Mister!" Saying which the half-Shawnee towered up in his shagginess and advanced upon the older man.

Penn stood erect and Aquilla rose with him, but Willie allowed Sister to choke him with both arms. They all knew that their entire strength added to that of Uncle Roseladies would not be sufficient to defend them from one of the river-man's arms. He was now enraged, moreover, and if his head was queer on ordinary occasions, what must be its state at this moment !

Uncle Roseladies looked beautiful and white. His eyes were stern, his jaws set, and his lips drawn out in two determined lines. He unclasped and flung away his cloak as Mr. Marsh came toward him, and squared his left arm in front of his breast.

The children expected some fearful sight. Penn intended to throw himself on his uncle's side ; Aquilla felt that he did not care what became of Aquilla, and Sister and Willie wailed aloud.

But what they did see was Mr. Marsh suddenly dropping like an avalanche, shaking the cabin with his fall, and picking himself up to fall again as he met the old gentleman's trained arm. Again and again Mr. Marsh went down before he could lunge

his strength upon his slim antagonist, and finally he sat upon the floor as if shaggily meditating on force more wonderful than the departed power of the Shawnees.

The door opened and a distant thud came from earth smitten by some clinking tool. Mr. Marsh turned his head and saw Dan's back flapped by the closing door and the grandmother in useless pursuit. He knew Dan had thrown his hatchet out, and the half-crazed man laughed a great roar in returning good nature, rocking on the boards at Mr. Roseladies' feet.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST DAY ON THE WABASH.

DOWN to breakfast, and to meet Aunt Jane, came the ex-Diggers next morning, subdued good boys, sore and stiff, and one of them not only willing but anxious to take his quinine. Formidable as Aunt Jane was, the Titanic being to whom they felt like bowing themselves was Uncle Roseladies, sitting deaf and placid as he sat every morning, though this time out of regard to the adult guest he had no book open beside his plate.

Aunt Jane had extracted from Sister the harrowing story of their digging and its consequences. She was prepared with sentence and about to put sentence into execution. Sarah sat red and pale, her hands trembling among the cups, and Mrs. MacAllister stood behind the kitchen door, her arms folded across her dejected breast.

Aunt Jane said she had mentioned to the children's parents, before their departure, that an excellent select school would be kept in Greensburg during the summer, where the children could be properly curbed if they proved troublesome down on the Wabash. And the parents had left the matter in Aunt Jane's hands and begged her to keep account of any expense she might incur, which they would make good on their return.

"Half railroad fare will be charged for only two of you," she observed, eating her omelette with niceness and precision. "And the school bill will be sent in at the end of the term."

"But this is vacation," put forth Penn, although he was too much humbled to express all the rebellion of his spirit.

Aunt Jane looked at him with her full-orbed commanding eye. His sandy-faced distress could have no effect on her plans: "If Mariana had not shared in the boys' misbehavior I should be glad to leave her and Noanie here."

"All that Sister did she did for pure love, Aunt," trembled Sarah. "Blame and punish me, not her."

"On that very account," continued Aunt Jane, considering her niece's pretty arms in their muslin sleeves, "I think Mariana would better go home with me, and the baby, of course, cannot be left here quite away from every member of her own family."

Aquilla groaned and drooped his head over the table. "Do you feel the chill coming on?" asked Willie solemnly.

"I was just thinking of Francis I. of France when he lost the battle of Pavia and wrote to his mother, 'Madam, all is lost but honor'!"

Aunt Jane fixed her exceedingly sane eye upon her precocious young relative.

"Do you know how many wars China has had, Aunt Jane?" he asked, perhaps with the view of diverting her mind from its present dreadful line of action.

"I am not dealing with Chinese warfare," she replied, with grim humor. "My business is with the last raid made upon the Indians, and matters therefrom resulting. The trunks can be packed soon after breakfast. I know you are neat-handed

at packing, Sarah, and I count particularly on your help."

"I am glad I am something," whispered Sarah. "Papa, did you know Aunt Jane is positively deciding to go home again right away?" she called to her father in a gentle shout.

He lifted his eyebrows and nodded his head in assent.

"To-morrow morning," corrected Aunt Jane. "Certainly he knows it. I made a point of rising early this morning to talk it over with him. Meantime —" she lifted her coffee-cup and drank, exactly and with no sound, as Aunt Jane never failed to do, which pause gave Penn a chance to wink conspiracy at Aquilla. They would have one more day, and might do a great deal in that little bundle of hours.

"Meantime," Aunt Jane finished, "the boys may be locked in that old school-room up-stairs. They can amuse themselves with games and reading, and be within call. We shall know where they are all the time."

"That's curtailing our liberties, as the British

did when they passed the Stamp Act," said Aquilla.

"And very grateful you may be," pronounced Aunt Jane, in a solidly convincing tone, "to get off with such a light curtailings of your liberties, considering the nature of your offence."

Willie remembered Mr. Marsh and felt able to resign the out-door world and trot submissively upstairs.

It was surely the fairest day of the season, splendid in coloring, delicious to lungs and sight and mind. The barnyard cackle, the twitter of birds, the river's wash, and the voices of free people in bowery distances, came distinctly enough through huge windows at the end of the school-room.

Aunt Jane laid *Robinson Crusoe* on the platform table, and carried off the key from the locked door in her own pocket.

From being rarely ever used the schoolroom had fallen into a state of dust and general dreariness. Some refuse chairs awaited the boys, but they sat down at first on the edge of the platform, scouring it with their uneasy wriggling.

"If it wasn't for Uncle Roseladies I'd get out of the window," growled Penn. "I wouldn't stay shut up here."

Aquilla sighed, having just partaken of a fresh pellet of quinine and knowing another would meet him at the dinner table. Mrs. MacAllister was determined to cure him by double dosing in the limited time left her.

"Well," he said, "I s'pose we shall pass our lives as prisoners-of-state. Mary Queen of Scots lived about eighteen years in prison, and Elizabeth had a dose of it herself before she came to the throne and had a chance to try it on her cousin."

"Don't know what Aunt Jane put old Crusoe in here for," growled Penn. "*Willie* knew that by heart two years ago."

"Yes, it is a story about a hairy man that looked like Mr. Marsh," said Willie.

"I wanted to stay around here," lamented Penn, "and get Uncle Roseladies to teach me to hit out, as he did last night. I think Uncle Roseladies is the nicest old gentleman I ever saw, boys. What'd we done if it hadn't been for him? — yes, and he

made Dan's father row us all home just as though nothing had happened."

"Uncle Roseladies would make a good general," said Aquilla. "He bossed things around in the enemy's country like old Hannibal or Charles XII. of Sweden. I told Sister last night coming home in the boat that girls were a good deal smarter and braver than I thought they were. She was almost as gritty as that Scotch lady who made a door-bar of her arm and let them break it while the king was getting away. Some *boys* wouldn't have acted any better than Sister."

"H'm!" said Penn. "I'd like to see a boy follow through dark and brush after a parcel of simpletons."

"I would have let Sister have every bit of my Indian money," ruminated Willie.

Though unconscious that any gratitude towards her moved in the ex-Diggers' bosoms, Sister felt in durance with them all day, and flitted under the windows or stayed in the vicinity of the door. She found in the library a quaint old copy of Grimm's stories, with illustrations and tail-pieces a

study in themselves. It was bound in wooden covers, the boards eclipsed in a striped merino case. Sister did not know this was one of Uncle Roseladies' small treasures, and she made an offering of it to the boys as they trailed upstairs after dinner. By that time they felt quarrelsome instead of chastened and more deeply humble as they should have felt ; and it wonderfully shortened the long afternoon : that calling, sweet-smelling, sun-ripened afternoon, into which they might not plunge, and of which something worse than sickness seemed to rob them. Penn and Aquilla . prodded each other into taking turns at reading aloud.

Cousin Sarah was busy under Aunt Jane's direction much of the day. Towards evening Sister herself was put into her travelling dress so none of her clothing might remain unpacked. It was Cousin Sarah who made the change, and she kept her pretty white eyelids down avoiding her little cousin's eyes. Here ashes-of-roses hair was disturbed into more than its usual aureole about her face ; yet she kept trying to smile with trembling

mouth-corners, until with a sudden abandonment of restraint she threw her arms around Sister and sobbed.

"O Cousin Sarah, I do love you so much!" exclaimed Mariana. Aunt Jane being down stairs and they being alone in the chamber where the dolls' carnival was held, Sister felt that her declaration came at a fitting moment.

"Don't say it," wept Cousin Sarah, "especially when I am just going to do something a great deal worse than I have done yet. O Sister, when I went East to visit, they used to talk about our West as if it were a howling wilderness, and we were all ourang-outangs—when they didn't know one thing about us, the small-souled creatures! Farms! they called ten acres a farm, when we think nothing of hundreds of acres. And they were ignorant—with their mighty culture!—of the commonest historical and literary facts such as my father taught me before I was in my teens; and they dropped their g's and r's! I used to inwardly *rage* against a blocky, impassive older civilization which loftily assumed it knew it all!

And now I feel just that way toward Aunt Jane!"

Sister felt that this time Cousin Sarah had confided a deep and deadly secret to her keeping, and it weighed upon her a few moments until the freckle-powdered face lifted itself from her shoulder laughing.

"Now I've got rid of my poison resentment and feel wholesome again. You must surely come to see me next summer, Sister," said Cousin Sarah, drying the rims of her eyes. "I shall be a year older and quite cured of playing with dolls. And you will be a year older, and both of us grown more in the favor and approval of our elders."

"I wish you would always stay just as you are," said Sister Bidgood pensively.

"Flattering child! to want a foolish cousin entranced here in the blue air beside the Wabash."

Blue and most entrancing appeared the up-river distances as evening settled down from the bluffs. The boys propped up the window sashes and leaned out, Penn remembering with unavailing anguish all those islands he had meant to explore

and camp out on ; densely wooded ones like boats of vegetation floating ; shaggy ones, horned with upreared rocks ; sandy reefs sparkling with shells ; sumptuous, meadow-like stretches which parted the river into two narrow sinewy arms ; and points of isles which combed the river into long shining strands of water.

"We've cut ourselves out of lots of fun this summer, us fellows have," said Penn, dejectedly.

"Yes, our conspiracy turned out wrong, like the Earl of Essex's," said Aquilla. "Do you believe Elizabeth in her grandest days was ever more of an autocrat than Aunt Jane is?"

"Aunt Jane isn't an autocrat," observed Willie who felt sure of his political information ; "she's a depublican."

"You great goose," growled Penn, turning on his little amber-eyed brother, "go and tell Noanie to quit knocking ; we can't let her in."

For at intervals all the afternoon Honora had come and struck the schoolroom door with her small palms, crying :

“‘Open ‘e doe for ‘e child’n.’ Boys, boys;
‘open ‘e doe for ‘e child’n’.”

Willie quieted her importunity this last time; for they would soon be called down to tea and then bundled to bed for an early morning start; and coming back, leaned his head upon his window sill so that all the unfaded west came within his gaze.

“That’s a pretty mound across the river, anyhow,” he stated in the very teeth of failure and humiliation.

“Boys!” pronounced a drawling voice from the ground under the window, drawing them to hang across the sills into the dewy dusk. There stood Dan, tranquil-eyed and ragged, with a bundle under his left elbow.

“Where did you go last night when you slipped off?” pointedly inquired Penn at once.

“I kind o’ kep’ around ‘in the woods where mother could fetch me some vittles,” responded Dan, unemotionally. “I’ve run off. I’m going down to Shawneetown to stay awhile with some of mother’s kin. Mebbe I’ll go West while I’m

about it," he ruminated gently. "I calkilated to look around out there this long spell."

Cautiously inquired Willie: "Where's your father, Dan?"

"Down to the boat-house smokin' his pipe. Pap won't let up," explained Dan in his indifferent drawl. "He's bound and determined to give my thumbs to the Injuns. I want my thumbs myself. Mother, she thinks he'll forget it after the mound grasses over."

"Has he filled the hole yet?" inquired Willie, stretching a fearful neck downward.

"No. He's waitin' for thumbs."

"*We* ain't going to stay here, either," whispered Willie, clasping his own thumbs under appreciative fingers. "Whose do you s'pose he'll take, Dan?"

"I dunno," responded Dan with soft carelessness. "Boys!" He gazed warily about and rose on tiptoe. "I ben up to the hole ag'in."

"Yes you have!" exclaimed Penn with strong admiration and unbelief.

"I 'lowed I'd see what that thing was we run ag'inst."

"Was it money?" demanded Penn.

"Was it the crown?" put Aquilla.

"Nah," said Dan in light scorn. "Nothin' but an Injun kittle full of arry-heads. I don't b'lieve there is no crown or pot of money now."

"Are you sorry you was bad, Dan?" sympathetically inquired Willie as Dan's brown shaft of forearm passed across the bridge of Dan's delicate nose.

"No, I ain't," responded the Wabash boy flatly. "But I don't keer to know what's in that mound like I done before I done looked. You fellers watch out for yourselves, will ye?" he hinted as his feet stirred to move away in the dew.

"We're all right," assured Penn. "Good-by, Dan. I hope you'll have a good visit."

Dan breathed a quick incredulous breath through his nose. Then he turned and ran through the dew toward the Wabash, and they heard no more of him except a screech-owl cry which Penn answered.