

CHAPTER VII

MORE ABOUT THE FOURTH OF JULY



HEN Janet, with Phebe and her cousins, went to a wading-place along the Nodaway, they remained on the bank talking while the others, with shoes off, walked about in the water.

A rabbit stole from some brush near them and dashed across an open space. The girls followed, to see more of him. Having lost sight of the rabbit, they next chased a butterfly. Phebe caught it in her handkerchief.

“I don’t think we want it, do we?”

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she asked, setting it free very gently without waiting for an answer.

“No, Phebe dear; we only want to be doing something that gets us by ourselves, don’t we?”

“Let’s sit on this log.”

They were already quite away from their own party and from the other people. They were alone, and that suited them. The cousins in the water called and halloed for them awhile, then took for granted that they had returned to the celebration-grounds.

“Phebe, how do you dare? Is it right?”

“Janet, I’ll tell you: I heard my father say to my mother that it seemed cruel to keep us apart, but he must do it for my good because you are head-

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strong and insolent and full of evil and will have a very bad 'fluence on me. That was what he said, and he thinks it's so; he thinks you are 'full of evil.' He doesn't know. You are not full of evil; you are full of good. If he knew what is true about you, he would let us play together. He doesn't know, and nobody can tell him, but it is right for us to play together because he would let us if he knew."

"That's a long speech. May be it's true and may be it's only a 'scuse, but——"

"I *told* you I can't be good *all* the time—not quite all the time—and think how naughty I might have been! Father didn't know about our post office; he didn't know where we put our

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letters; he saw that one in my apron-pocket—and it's been so long—and Fourth of Julys are not like other days, anyway, and if they were—you're here and I'm here—Oh, Janet, don't make me think whether it's right or not!”

“No, we'll just hope we're good, and we'll be happy and not think. We'll be like butterflies and flowers.”

“Yes, that's it. We'll keep together all day, and every to-morrow that comes after we'll say to ourselves,—‘How happy we were on the Fourth of July!’”

“Let's go away a little more; some of them might come.”

Hand-in-hand they sped along the woodland way, crept under bushes, pushed through tangled grape-vines,

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until, rather suddenly, they found themselves on the edge of the prairie—for the forests in that part of the world are usually but thin fringes of woodland bordering the streams.

“We’ll just go over that little hill,” Phebe said, pointing.

Away they went. Beyond the hill was a little glen, a sudden small hollow near a spring, with a long hill rising from the farther side. Here they sat, never minding the heat and power of the sun, and talked for hours.

“Don’t you think we could make rhymes?” Phebe asked.

“We could try.”

“You know we must not write letters. Verses are not letters. Let’s make rhymes for each other—not let-

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ters—just about anything we think of. We'll put them in our little post office on the stone."

Janet clapped her hands and rolled over and over on the grass.

"We'll make 'em happy as we can," Phebe went on, "to keep us cheered up. Our letters made us cry; our verses must make us laugh—if they can."

"Yes, Phebe, we cry too much. Shall we ever learn not to cry so much?"

"We must learn; we'll begin now."

"There's nothing to cry for to-day. Oh, you Phebe! To think I really see you, you long-haired girl! You are prettier than all the flowers in the garden, and your hands—look at your hands. They make me think of a cat and a blade of grass."

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“Oh-oh-oh”—Phebe was shaking with laughter. “A cat and a blade of grass—a cat and a blade of grass—do I scratch, then, with my hands, like a cat, and cut your fingers when you draw mine through them, like a blade of grass?”

“I meant you bend them easy—you are—they are—you know what I mean.”

“Of course I do, you angel, you mean that I am graceful, but you mustn’t spoil me and make me think I’m so very—such a diff’rent girl; I’m most like anybody; but you—you’re not; you’re a flower come alive.”

Away on the ridge of land beyond them, a party of people driving fast over a roadless prairie lost the end-gate

out of their wagon, and, afterward, one of their lunch-baskets. (They had three.) The wagon rattled along its way, making so much noise that no one heard anything fall, and the people riding looked toward the end of their journey too steadily to see what had happened. The board lay where it dropped, but the basket rolled down the hill and stopped upon the lowest place, which happened to be at the feet of Phebe and Janet.

The girls were almost frightened, for a moment; they rose to look about. There was no one in sight.

Then they opened the basket and found the lunch.

"I told you Fourth of Julys were different from other days," Phebe said

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gravely. "Here's a dinner right out of the sky."

Thus it came about that Phebe and Janet did not go hungry when others were feasting.

"I stopped reading about those people who came across the ocean—those wicked people—they made me hurt too much inside," Phebe said when they had lunched and settled down for another talk. "I read fables and fairy tales, now; that is much better."

"Much better, of course," echoed Janet. "I always like play stories more than real stories."

"There's an enchanted princess, now, Janet, in the form of a lady-bug. She'll have to crawl on a human hand or she'll

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never be the same as she was before. Now, I'll be trying to rescue her——”

“Yes, Phebe, and I'll be a witch, saying more things to keep her a lady-bug.”

“Now, Evil Being, The Princess has regained her proper shape and flown away on rainbow wings, in spite of thy wicked incantations,” Phebe said, when the little creature had risen and left them.

“Do princesses have rainbow wings, Phebe?”

“Some of 'em.”

“Phebe, why don't we have wings?”

“It'd be too much trouble to fit our clothes over them.”

“Now let's have a school.”

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They gathered some weeds and broke the stems into short lengths, for pupils. For desks they made "grasshopper-nests" of long grass-blades. Leaves doubled and pressed tightly across the fold served for books. A flat stone standing on one edge was a blackboard. A bit of grayish stone was found that proved soft enough to make a mark—rather a dim one. This pleased them very much, indeed, and they were exceedingly careful with their "chalk."

They played school a long time. Phebe was always the teacher and Janet's voice did service for the whole school. Every pupil was named. Class after class was called, pupil after pupil recited by proxy, that is, Janet recited for each of them. If the dull one was

asked to spell a word, Janet always missed it for him; if the youngest was called upon for anything, whatever, Janet assisted her to cry and to beg or threaten to go home. She had a thin voice for girls; a deep guttural responded for a boy.

When singing-time came, as it did quite often, Phebe was the boys and sang contralto, Janet was the girls and sang soprano. As they knew but two songs which they could sing together in this way, the programme was always short. It consisted of Nelly Gray and The Star Spangled Banner.

They had a singing-school, next. The principal features were beating time and singing a round—the only one they knew:

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“Live by labor,
Love your neighbor,
Would you prosper, that’s the
way.”

“Teacher,” Janet asked, “what is
‘prosper’?”

“It’s getting fat and having lots of
nice things.”

“Then it makes us fat to love our
neighbors?”

“Yes.”

“Be Phebe, now; I want to ask some
more.”

They sat down and forgot the pupils,
the blackboard, the chalk.

“Is Mr. McHaffey my neighbor?”

“Yes.”

“Must I love him or I won’t ever
be fat?”

"You could love him a little, couldn't you?"

"I saw him once walking all wiggly-waggly. Mother said he had the 'toxications. That must be a very dreadful kind of a sickness. It made his breath bad and his face look like—ugh—a raw turnip—a pretty color for things to eat, but not for men. I'm sorry he's a turnip-man, but being sorry isn't love. I guess I'll have to stay lean."

"May be that was just put in the round to make enough words, or something. When I write verses for you——"

"I don't believe we can write them, Phebe," Janet interrupted.

"I've been trying already, Janet; I know I can."

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"You're smarter than I am," Janet sighed, "but I'll try. If I can't——"

"You can write things," Phebe said. "Fables'd do, or fairy stories, or anything not letters. We mustn't write letters; we can't have Fourth of July every day."

"I know. I'm glad it's Fourth of July now. Let's give a dinner to the singing-school people. They've sung a long time; they must be hungry."

A little shelf of clean short grass was the table; leaves from a wild strawberry plant were the plates. The salad was sour sorrel; the soup was water thickened with a few broken bits of grass. There was plenty of real food left in the lunch-basket, and Janet and Phebe ate heartily while their pupils stood

round the table—Janet said their backs would break if they sat.

Phebe jumped up so suddenly that the pupils flew in every direction.

“Janet!” she said, “look where the sun is!”

There was only a little rim of dazzling light, fast hiding behind a hill.

“We must go back to the river. Our people may be waiting for us. Oh, I am sorry the day is not a year long. I wish it would last till dying-time. Kiss me, Janet; hug me as hard as you can; it is almost night; there won’t be another Fourth for a long time.”

They drank at the spring, washed their faces and hands, dried them on their petticoats, then clasped hands to start.

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They looked about, uncertain.

"Which way did we come?" Janet asked: "down the little hill or down the big hill, or——"

"This way, I think," and Phebe led up the long hill.

They walked fast on and on and on in a wrong direction, wrong as could be, for it led neither toward the picnic-grounds nor toward Amity.

"The sun has risen again," Janet said joyfully after they were on higher ground. "I thought when it went down it always stayed over night. Perhaps we might play a little longer."

"I'm afraid we went farther than we thought we were going," Phebe replied. "We'd better not stop."

Fortunate it was for them that they

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had sat so much, played quiet games all day and started forth refreshed by such resting. When the long summer twilight was nearly merged in the deep darkness of night, they were still walking.

Before the light all faded, a darker line appeared above the horizon. This they supposed to be the fringe of woodland along the Nodaway River, and toward it they went forward, but there were fears in their hearts, now.

What would their friends think had become of them?

Would any one be still waiting for them when at last they reached the river?

Why did it take so much longer to go back than it took to come?

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Both were thinking these thoughts, yet each was resolved not to frighten the other by speaking of them.

Janet stumbled against an ant-hill, clambered up and went on more slowly, then, suddenly, sat down. "I can't walk any farther," she said. "It's so dark I can't tell where to step, and Oh, I'm thirsty and hot and my feet are baking, just baking; I guess they're blistered."

"Well, I'm pretty tired, too," Phebe admitted, sitting on the grass beside Janet.

Their arms went round each other and clasped tightly.

"Anyway," Janet said, "we're together. If we're lost, it makes the Fourth of July last longer."

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She had spoken the dread thought at last—"If we're lost."

Quite a long time they scarcely moved, leaning upon each other, resting. Then Janet said:

"Why, daylight is coming already! We've walked all night!"

Sure enough, a faint light was in the sky on one side of the horizon. They watched in silence a long time while it spread and grew brighter. Then, both together, they said:

"It's the moon!"

"How big it looks," Janet said. "It never looked so big before."

"We shall be more lonely, now," Phebe whispered, "for we can see how far away from everything we are. How very, very large the world is! Oh, I

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shiver in my bones, because the little stars look so cold and so far off! It seems as if we might *fall up* into the awfulness there—the sky.”

“If we do, we’ll fall both together, holding very tight,” Janet whispered back comfortingly.

They were silent again for a time, then Janet asked:

“What shall we do next?”

Phebe, answerer of questions, had no answer now but tears. She laid her face in Janet’s lap and wept.

“Phebe, Phebe, Oh, my darling, how can you cry so when I am with you? It’s Fourth of July yet; Janet is here; come, let’s tell funny stories! Phebe, Phebe, which shall tell the funniest story, you or I?”

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"You make me—ashamed—ashamed—my pretty little white flower. I—I'm so tired—yes—that's it, I'm tired, but, yes, we'll—we'll tell funny stories."

"I'll begin," Janet said bravely, though she had not a thought in her little head. "I'll begin, so's you can get rested up, you know: Once there was a very funny dog, very funny. He had a tail and two ears, and—and—and he had four paws and when he was hungry he wanted—he wanted—he wanted to eat. And if you gave him a piece of meat, he did not act nice, at all; he acted like a dog. Will that do—for the first one, you know, just the first one? Yes, you're laughing; it must be funny, for it made you laugh."

"Now I'll tell one," Phebe said. "A

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boy named Jerry was eating his dinner. It was April, the first day of April. That's All-Fools' Day, you know, so his sister Susan poked a raw bean into Jerry's piece of bread. He felt it in his mouth, but it was too late; he had to swallow it.

" 'You'll be sorry, when I die,' Jerry said to Susan——"

" Phebe, that isn't a funny story; that 'most makes me cry."

" Wait—wait—I'll make it funnier—lots funnier.

" So, after a few weeks, Jerry stopped eating. He didn't eat anything, at all, but he was as fat as ever.

" His mother sent for the doctor.

" 'Why doesn't Jerry eat?' she asked the doctor.

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“ ‘He does,’ the doctor said.

“ So they paid the doctor and he went away, but still Jerry did not eat, though he felt very well and looked the same, only fatter.

“ At last the bean-stalk grew quite out of his mouth, then they knew that he had been fed by beans growing inside his body, and his mother pulled up the bean-stalk by the roots out of his mouth, and after that he ate as much as anybody.”

“ If his name had been Jack instead of Jerry ”—Janet began.

Phebe laughed. “ Why didn’t I think of it? Jack and the bean-stalk! ”

“ The moon is very bright, Janet. Let’s go yonder and get some of that

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tall grass—a lot of it—and bring it to make us a kind of nest.”

“Yes, and we’ll be birds, to-night, baby meadow-larks in a nest.”

It was not for the sake of being warmer that they wanted to be cuddled together with grass stacked all about them; it was for the same reason that some children pull the blankets over their heads after the lights are out. There is a wonderful feeling of safety about being within walls; the closer the walls, the safer one feels. A small room seems safer than a large one, and covers drawn snugly around the shoulders make much better protection against earthquakes and hurricanes than covers hanging loosely over the arms.

So Janet and Phebe brought armful

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after armful of the long, sweet-smelling prairie grass, got into a hole they had left in the middle of it, drew it about them and sat comfortably to rest—a little warm, but very secure—almost as if they were in a house, in the middle of a feather-bed, which is the safest place in the world, excepting a mother's arms.

“Now I'll tell you about the ant and the rock,” Janet said. “One time an ant that was very busy carrying things to The Hill, said to The Stone,—‘Get out of my way, or I shall have to step on you.’ The Stone replied,—‘Do you think you're a camel?’ The ant said,—‘I'm not a camel, but I can carry a load of wheat.’ You know, Phebe, he meant a grain. A grain of 'most any-

thing's a load for an ant. My mother made up that story and told it to me for bed-time, but she had it longer. I like long stories, but I can't stretch 'em out and tell 'em long."

"I like short ones, such as Æsop's Fables," Phebe answered, "but mine always seem to string out like unwinding a spool of thread. So, I like your stories and you like mine. Now, I'll tell you one that my Aunt Fanny thought up to amuse me when it was raining:

"'Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat,' said the rain, falling on a kennel, 'We're going to the dogs, We're going to the dogs, We're going to the dogs.'

"'Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat,' said other rain, falling on the roof of

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an attic in the morning when a mother was just coming to get her children out of bed, 'Pit-a-pat, We're going to a wake, We're going to a wake, We're going to a wake.'

" 'Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat,' said more rain, falling past a big window with a bright light shining through showing people inside having a party, 'Pit-a-pat, pat-a-pea, We are going, going to sea.'

" Then the rain found a sign nailed to a post at the middle so that it looked like a letter T. The drops had now learned that they could sing, so they sang in chorus:

" 'Pit-a-pat, pat-a-ree,
' We are going to a T.'

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“ Then they kept on something like this:

“ ‘ We are running splish-a-splash,
We are going to cut a dash.’ ”

“ Then, after a good while the rain was all together again in a big river. It kept on singing, but it didn’t sound like little baby-rain any more; it sounded very solemn and grown-up. It said this:

“ ‘ Going, going, going to sea;
Dash or wake, or dogs or T
Wheresoe’er we hoped to be
We are going, going to sea!’ ”

“ If you wanted to make a verse and couldn’t get it to come out right, would your Aunt Fanny help you? ”

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"Yes, I am sure she would, she is so kind. Then I'd put the two names down under, her name and my name, because it wouldn't be—wouldn't be lady-like to say I wrote it when I didn't."

"No, I s'pose it wouldn't be lady-like, nor gentleman-like, either, nor Phebe-like. It'd be thief-like, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, very."

"Now, can you tell me another of your aunt's stories?"

"Here's one; it's called:

BESSIE'S ADVENTURES

"Bessie was tired of hearing about all sorts of boys having all sorts of adventures. She said it was time a girl

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should have adventures, and she meant to have some of them, herself.

“ So Bessie made a peaked cap and a pair of boots and some gloves and a very long-tailed sacque, all of the stiff paper bags in which flour is put up.

“ Why she made them is her own affair. One cannot expect to have adventures if one dresses and behaves just just like everybody else, for the chances are that if you dress like everybody else and act like everybody else and talk like everybody else, things will happen to you just as they do to everybody else—that is, things won’t happen at all, but one day will be precisely like another.

“ So Bessie began by dressing herself in paper clothes.

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“First, then, she took a walk through the hen-yard.

“Soon she entered the house, greatly excited, and said to her mother:

“‘I’ve had an adventure, already!’

“‘What was it, dear?’ her mother asked.

“‘Why, when I went into the hen-yard, the hens all began to say:

“‘“Cut-cut-cut the tail off! Cut-cut-cut the tail off!”’”

“Phebe, I’ve heard our hens talk almost like that.”

“Then her mother answered,—‘No wonder the hens think the tail of the sacque is too long. I agree with them; and no wonder your strange looks made them cackle.’

“‘Pray, mamma,’ Bessie said, ‘don’t

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call it cackling; that's too much like everyday.'

"Bessie then visited the pigeons and soon ran in, almost out of breath, to say:

" 'Oh, mamma, I've had another adventure, already!'

" 'Yes?'

" 'I went to see the pigeons, and they all said:

" ' "*I-am-so-cold, I-am-so-cold, I-am-so-cold, I-am-so-cold.*" '

" 'Sympathy with your thin clothes?'

" 'That's such a kind of an every-day reason, mamma.'

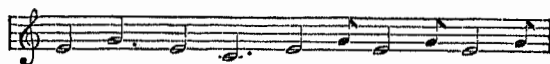
"Next, Bessie came from the barn-yard, and said:

" 'This was very funny, mamma. As soon as the baby-turkeys saw me

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they began to say,—“Feed! feed! feed!” But their mother seemed to be ashamed of her little ones’ ignorance in supposing that I was good to eat, so she kept crying out,—“Quit! quit! quit! Stop! stop! stop!”

“Next, Bessie came in from the meadow and reported the best adventure of all, for one meadow-lark had said:



“‘Ah-ah, ah-ah, what’s that? what’s that? what’s that?’ and another had replied from across the next field, saying the same thing. Then a donkey had lifted its head and looked at her and

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said almost the same thing to a different tune.

“Here’s another story, a short one. I’ll try to remember auntie’s words, but some of them are pretty long:

“On the morning of April 1st The Sun said to The Clouds:

“‘It is customary for mortals to fool each other on the first day of April; let us fool all of them, by the assistance of The Wind.’

“‘Agreed,’ said The Clouds. ‘How shall we do it? Mortals know a lot about us and our ways.’

“‘Yes,’ said The Sun, ‘they do, but we’ll behave differently from the way we did in March. I will shine out brightly in the morning, as if I meant to shine till Christmas without stopping.

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Then do you, Clouds, come together suddenly in The Wind and pour down rain on people who have gone out with no umbrellas because of my clean face in the sky. Then do you, Wind, shriek in their ears,—“All-Fools’ Day! All-Fools’ Day! April fools!”’

“So The Clouds went where they didn’t show very much—near the horizon, auntie said, but I’ll say close to the edge of the world. The Sun just dazzled people’s eyes, and The Wind waited.

“Now, The Wind was in a muff, because he had not been asked his opinion in the beginning, had had no proper share in the agreement and was to be pressed into service whether he liked it or not. ‘Even if I am a subject of The

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Sun, I mean to be treated with plenty of respect,' he muttered low down close to the ground where The Clouds and The Sun could not hear him. So he grumbled and growled and threatened, and finally made up his mind to fool The Clouds and The Sun, not the children of men, and, instead of drawing The Clouds together according to The Sun's directions, he scattered them and blew them out of sight until there was not one to be seen anywhere.

"Then he shrieked in the face of The Sun loud enough to be heard by the far-away Clouds,—'All-Fools' Day! April fools!'

"I wish my aunt was here. She'd tell us that kind of stories all night and just make 'em up as she went along."

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“Did she tell you any more?” Janet asked.

“Lots! I remember two others, but not exactly the way she told them.”

“I’d like them—if they’re not scarey”—Janet cuddled closer to Phebe—“I felt, you know, as if The Wind was a big giant and might blow us with his breath, away—away—over the edge of the world—but I’ll try not to feel that way again; are they funny?”

“Well, a little. One teaches us that different kinds of birds don’t all want the same kind of food, and one shows us how queer fishes and frogs are—just lay eggs and go off, and don’t take care of their own little babies. There’s an opossum in it. That’s a funny kind

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of an animal that has a meat sack on her body for her babies to ride in when they don't feel like walking, but auntie says they generally get on their mother's back and wind their little tails all round and round her tail when they want to be carried."

"Tell me that story first, please, Phebe."

"This is it: 'Is it a funeral?' asked Mrs. Opossum, seeing that Mrs. Fish and Mrs. Frog were both weeping.

"'No,' Mrs. Frog replied, 'worse than that.'

"'What can be worse?'

"'We cannot find our children.'

"'I am a better mother than that,' said Mrs. Opossum, 'for I carry mine about with me.'

“‘One must find them, first,’ sighed Mrs. Fish.

“‘But they needn’t be lost; just—’

“‘Oh, you don’t understand,’ Mrs. Fish said. ‘Our babies are all mixed up with a lot of other mothers’ babies in a great nursery-pond, and we never knew, we *never*, NEVER knew, which babies were our own, and the babies, themselves, seem to feel no need of us, at all. In fact, they don’t recognize their kinship with any of us; they just go swimming about and scarcely look at us.’

“‘I don’t pity you,’ Mrs. Opossum said severely. ‘You should have kept them with you, as I keep mine with me.’

“‘But ——’ began Mrs. Frog.

“‘There are no ifs and buts in the

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case,' Mrs. Opossum persisted. 'The truth is, you've waked up too late and found out that you weren't fit to be trusted with your own children. I hope this will teach you a lesson. Good-day, Mesdames.'

"Mrs. Fish wiped her eyes and looked at Mrs. Frog. 'How can we be good mothers, like the Mrs. Opossums?' she asked.

" 'I'm sure I don't know,' said Mrs. Frog."

"Well, how could they?" Janet asked.

"If I was a fish or a frog, I'd find a little pond of my own——"

"And build a fence round it?"

"Yes, a mud fence. Then the babies'd have to keep to themselves and

not get all mixed up with other babies. What'd you do if you were a mother fish or frog?"

"I'd—I'd paste their names on their backs," Janet answered timidly; "but I s'pose that wouldn't be as good as your way. What's the other story?"

"Early one morning a humming-bird met a buzzard and inquired:

" ' Good-morning, neighbor, can you tell me where to find a breakfast? ' "

" ' No, my little friend, I am sorry to say I smell nothing, ' replied the buzzard, for he supposed that the humming-bird, like himself, was in search of spoiled meat.

" Ruby-throat next spoke to a hawk and said:

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“ ‘Good Sir, will you kindly direct me toward a breakfast?’

“ ‘You are the only fresh meat I have seen this morning, and I suppose you cannot eat yourself,’ said the hawk, flying unpleasantly close.

“ ‘Thank you, but I have no desire for fresh meat. Good-day.’

“ The humming-bird darted off quickly and next spoke to a wren:

“ ‘A fine morning, Jenny; can you commend a good eating-place?’

“ ‘I would do so with pleasure, but I have found no worms yet.’

“ ‘Many thanks, but I do not care for worms. Farewell.’

“ Ruby-throat next met a sparrow and asked:

“ ‘Shall we breakfast together?’

“‘Here are plenty of seeds, but I want them all myself,’ said the greedy little brown ball of feathers.

“‘You are very welcome to them; I prefer honey. Adieu.’

“Then the humming-bird inquired its way of a bee.

“‘I’ll show you the way with pleasure; follow me,’ the bee replied, leading to a garden of lovely phlox, where they feasted and hummed together merrily.”

“That isn’t a true story,” Janet said gravely, “because, you know, the bee would have been cross. I think if I lived on honey, like a bee, I wouldn’t always be wanting to sting people; I’d be nice and—and, yes, I’d be sweet, you know,—that is, sweetened.”

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"You're sweet enough to eat as you are, honey," Phebe said.

"What's the reason bees are so ill-tempered, Phebe?"

"Because we don't sing 'God Save the Queen' when we come near their hive. They sing it 'most all the time, and they think their queen is nicer than governors or anybody."

"I didn't know they had a queen."

"Yes, they have one; father told me so, but I guess she doesn't wear a crown."

"Now, Phebe, s'pose we tell what we'd do and what we'd have if we were queens and could have everything we wanted."

"Well," Phebe began, "I'd have a palace, of course. A queen always has

a palace, but when I'm as tired as I am now, I'd hate to walk from one end of it to the other. In pictures they're so big that men and women look like specks of dust on the steps going up and down. I guess I'd wish for a little palace.

"I wouldn't stay in the attic bedroom alone, like I do now. I'd have several ladies-in-waiting to sleep in my bed. You'd be the one next to me.

"I'd never eat bread or meat or potatoes any more; I'd have cake and candy and popcorn every meal, and Oh! I'd have a real bell to ring when I wanted to play school."

"Wouldn't you have any new dresses?"

"I have dresses enough," Phebe an-

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swered. "I have one for mornings and two for afternoons and two for nice—summer-nice and winter-nice. This one'll be spoiled, though, to-day. Yes, I'd have a new dress—one; I hate to have new dresses tried on."

"Is that all? Wouldn't you want anything more?"

"Yes, of course. I'd want a whole house full of books—a big house, and I'd get presents for everybody I know, and a barn for Old Strings—Mr. Peter's horse, you know—for I'm afraid he doesn't keep warm in winter nor cool in summer. And I'd want two colleges, so't my father and your father could have one apiece. I believe that's all. Now, Little White Kitten, what'd you wish if you were queen?"

"First, I'd have a magic house——"

"Oh, did you mean a fairy queen?"

"Couldn't any kind of a queen have a magic house?"

"No."

"Then we'll play she could. There's no use in being a queen if I can't have things different from other people, and I partic'larly want the magic house to shut up cross people and bad people and people that don't understand, and keep them there until they become very gentle and nice to live with. It wouldn't be long—they wouldn't be shut up but a few minutes—it'd be a *magic* house, you know, and they'd get good in 'most no time."

"It'd have to be a very big house, Janet."

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“Why?”

“Because, nearly all the people in the world’d have to be shut up in it.”

“Why, Phebe, I can’t think of but two; who are the others?”

“I—I guess I didn’t mean it. I was thinking of the men that came to America a long time ago—the bad history-men—but I s’pose they’re all dead by this time, and—and—others are different.”

“Yes, of course they are, Phebe, ’most all the bad people are dead. And I’d wish that mothers didn’t have to work so hard and that fathers didn’t mind so much about The College, and I’d have sorghum molasses all poured into Nodaway River. There shouldn’t be any more molasses cake; there

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should be plenty of sugar for everybody—and white flour, too; I hate rye bread.”

“So—do—I,” Phebe said in a very slow, soft, faraway voice.

“And—I’d have a new—a new—a new blue dress, and two new—two new—two new—aprons—two—two——” Janet’s voice sank away in a gentle murmur.

They were falling asleep.

Nights are short and days are long in July.

Phebe dreamed that her hair was on fire, and waked to find a big, hot sun blazing in the sky. She stirred and Janet opened her eyes.

“We’ve been sleeping,” Janet said.
“How could we waste the time so?”

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Wasn't it foolish of us? To-day, we must go home."

"I suppose we ought," Phebe said. "Then our Fourth of July will be over, and, Oh, dear, how can we bear it?"

"Don't cry, Phebe, darling. Perhaps we won't find the way, then staying won't be our fault."

"But we can't live here, little Flower-Blossom; we haven't any breakfast. And, besides, our mothers may be crying."

"I didn't think of that," Janet said with a very grave face. "Perhaps they stayed in the wood all night hunting for us, so we'd better go right to the place where they may be."

"Then," Phebe said, "if they are not there, we'll find the road and go home."

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They shook the grass from their hair and clothing, stretched their limbs and started toward the only trees in sight, which they mistakenly supposed to be those bordering on Nodaway River.

They were really walking toward Walnut Grove, a little strip of woodland fringing a creek much smaller than Nodaway River.

At first they talked a little and even turned aside here and there to gather flowers, but they grew tired quickly, having been so wearied the night before and so long without food or drink, and soon they were quite silent, moving ahead in as straight a line as they could over the wide, wide prairie.

At last the wood was reached, but it looked so different from the way they

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were prepared to find it, so unfamiliar, they sat on two stumps that were near together and rested, each wondering which way they ought to go.

A squirrel leaned boldly from a branch and peered at them.

"Phebe," Janet said, "do you see it? Do you see that dear little bright-eyed animal?"

"Yes; it's a squirrel."

"Do squirrels live in the woods?"

"Yes."

Janet clapped her hands.

"Well, what are you glad about?" Phebe asked.

"Why, this: if such little, little things as squirrels can live in woods and take care of themselves, we can. We're much bigger than they are and we

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know a great deal more. We'd—we'd need things, though."

"Yes—I s'pose we would—a few things. What'd we need most?"

"Why, Phebe darling, we have what we need most—that's you and me; I need you and you need me. I s'pose breakfast comes next, and a drink. I hear water running; we can get some of it. I wonder what squirrels have for their breakfast."

"Listen! Listen!"

"It's a wagon."

Janet burst into tears. "They're coming to get us," she said. "Kiss me; hug me tight, before they come."

"Janet, don't you really want to go to your mother and your father? Don't you want to go home?"

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"Yes—yes—dear Phebe, dear, dear Phebe, but I don't want to say good-by, to you."

"There isn't any way but that, Angel. We can't be wild people and live in the woods like squirrels; you know up in your head we can't. We're our father's and mother's little girls, and we ought to—to go home and—and—and be whipped, and live like we did."

"We won't be whipped for getting lost, Phebe; it isn't being bad to get lost, is it?"

"If I hadn't disobeyed my father, I shouldn't have been lost," Phebe said. They were standing, now, with their arms round each other, between the two stumps. "They'll try to make me say

I'm sorry, and I don't believe I can be sorry. How can I? It was such a day, such a day,—with you—no—I can't be sorry."

By this time the wagon had come quite near, winding along upon a road which they wondered they had not seen.

A man in shirt-sleeves and overalls walked beside the horses, looking about a great deal, probably making up his mind which tree to cut.

There was no box on the wagon, but there was a rough kind of frame-work partly filled with wood. The driver in charge was Mr. Alfred Ross, whom they had often seen at church in Amity on Sundays, with his wife and children.

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"Good-mornin', young'n's," he said, stopping his horses, "ye're out airly; know the road home, do ye?"

"N-o, not for certain," Phebe admitted. "We're lost from the Fourth of July."

"Great blazes! Ye don't say! Not home all night!"

They shook their heads.

"Why, ther' warn't no meetin' nigh here. Land o' Moses! ye must 'a' pegged it fur!"

Janet and Phebe looked at each other in wonder. Then Phebe asked:

"Where are we? Isn't this the Nod-away River?"

"Bless y'r eyes, no; it's Walnut Crick 'nd Walnut Grove, though I c'd never find a blame walnut in the hull

wood. You come right up to my shanty. The woman'll feed ye, 'nd then I'll fetch ye home to y'r folks. I 'low they're powerful skeered."

The girls were soon in the wagon, jolting over a rough track, then in Mr. Ross' house, where his wife gave them many motherly attentions and set before them plenty of corn-bread and sorghum molasses, with a little butter and a taste of wild grapes preserved in molasses.

In less than two hours Mr. Ross, with one of the girls on each side of him, drew up to water his horses at The Town Well in Amity.

It seemed like a dream that they were so near home.

Janet peered shyly across to look

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once more into the eyes of her friend, when Phebe's Aunt Fanny dashed up on horseback.

"Where were you, Phebe?" she asked in a tone shrill with excitement. "I've been down to your father's house this morning, to make sure you were safely at home, and there's not a soul in sight. The neighbors said your father and mother haven't returned from Hawleyville. Did you stay with Janet last night?"

"Yes," Phebe answered, "we—I——"

"Very well," her aunt interrupted, "but you must get up on the horse behind me and ride back to Clarinda. It's ten miles, but you were left in my care, you know. There, climb up, so.

I won't scold about what's happened, but you must go with me now."

"Well I never!" Mr. Ross was saying under his breath.

"Good-by, White Flower of Amity," Phebe said softly, as near Janet's ear as she could reach.

"Good-by, Tall Red Poppy," Janet returned in a voice soft and trembling with coming tears.

"Mr. Ross," Phebe called back as the horse trotted off, bearing her away, "we won't forget how good you've been—you are."

Mrs. Loring received Janet with great joy and shed many tears over the story of what had happened, as she learned it, little by little, from Janet and Mr. Ross.

Mrs. Loring smuggled a small sack

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of wheat flour—all she had—into Mr. Ross' wagon. She also picked all the green beans in her garden for Mrs. Ross and all her French-pink blossoms for the babies.

“I'd like to send them something more—if I could think—of anything,” Mrs. Loring said, out of breath with hurry and excitement. “It was so good of you—to bring the girls home—Oh, if you hadn't found them! If the wolves——”

“They're safe and sound,” Mr. Ross assured her, “and the wolves ain't ever that bad roun' our parts 't they'd tussle a growin' young'n like her.”

“Oh, but I'm so thankful—so grateful——”

“Nothin' to thank f'r; so good-by; I must be a-goin'.”