

Dear Cousin Kate.—I have got two brothers and one sister, Poppy, Dick, and Frank. Our teacher reads us a story once every week, we like jolly stories, our teacher never reads us sad stories. I have got three cats and two dogs. A lot of men painted one of the dogs blue, up at the tan-yard. Mr Anderson gave us a magpie, but it cannot talk yet, he has another one that can talk, but he said that the other will be able to talk soon. Good-bye.—Alice Gower.

Dear Cousin Kate.—I am nine years old and I will be ten on 29th of August. I have two brothers and one sister. We have one cat. We used to live in town. My father works over at the meat works. Good-bye.—Charles Furness.

Dear Cousin Kate.—I am seven years old and will be eight on June 3rd. There is a lamb that chases us, and it bunts us. I have two brothers and four sisters. My mother has a little shop and keeps many things. My father works at the tan-yard. I have one dog and two cats. Good-bye.—Leslie Laurenson.

Dear Cousin Kate.—I have one brother and his name is Willie Croton. There was once a man on the train who was pushed off on Wednesday night. We have one cat and dog. I am eight years old. It is getting very cold and we have a fire in the school. Good-bye.—Ernest Croton.

ORIGIN OF BLIND MAN'S BUFF.

Blind man's buff is of French origin and of very great antiquity, having been introduced into England in the train of the Norman conquerors. Its French name, "Colin Maillard," was that of a brave warrior, the memory of whose exploits still lives in the chronicles of the middle ages.

In the year 999 Lewis, reckoned among its valiant chiefs, one Jean Colin. He acquired the name Maillard from his chosen weapon being a mallet, wherewith in battle he used literally to crush his opponents.

In one of the feuds which were of perpetual recurrence in those times he encountered the Count de Tourain in a pitched battle, and, so runs the story, in the first onset Colin Maillard lost both his eyes.

He ordered his esquire to take him in the thickest of the fight, and, furiously brandishing his mallet, did such fearful execution that victory soon declared itself for him.

When Robert of France heard of these feats of arms he lavished favour and honours upon Colin, and so great was the fame of the exploit that it was commemorated in the pantomimic representation that formed part of the rude dramatic performances of the age. By degrees the children learned to act it for themselves, and it took the form of a familiar sport.

The blindfold pursuer, as, with bandaged eyes and extended hands, he gropes for a victim to pounce upon, in some degree repeats the action of Colin Maillard, the tradition of which is also traceable in the name blind man's buff.

In Italy it is to be found a whole village of well-to-do retired organ grinders, who are now spending comfortable fortunes acquired in England.

HOW SUSY SOLD THE BABY.

Poor little Susy sat under a tree that shaded her doll-house, and bit the corner of her apron and wrinkled up her forehead until her yellow curls lolled into her eyes and almost made her cry. A noisy bird flew up into the hedge and scolded at her; another perched on the fence and whistled saucily. Fat old cook was pounding away on the back porch, making "heat-biscuit," and singing to herself as she pounded.

But Susy paid no heed either to the birds or even to the pounding of heat-biscuit. She was in great trouble.

Papa was away on business, and mamma was very ill, and must not be disturbed. Freddy, George, and Rob were at the station with Mr Piper, the over-seer. Mary, the nurse, was always busy with the new baby. Susy was sure the new baby was the cause of all her trouble. If papa would only come home! Susy was obliged to use the corner of her apron now for a handkerchief. Oh, dear! In all the seven long years of her life she had never known such trouble. That dreadful baby! He cried so that he made mamma ill, and they had to send the boys away, and Mary was cross, and no wonder everything went wrong.

Now, it was not the baby at all that was at fault, but Susy's love of peanuts. She could not resist a peanut-seller.

She strolled down the street. She stopped at the corner, where old Mary sat, with a basket of peanuts before her. The little girl looked so longingly at them that the good-natured woman offered to sell her some on credit.

"I'll pay you very soon," said Susy. "Oh, I kin trest you," said old Mary. "If you don't pay, I'll send the bailiff after you."

Susy had not been afraid then, for she thought her father would soon be home, but now papa would not be home for a week, and there was no knowing what might happen. Susy decided to find out what old Mary would think of the delay. She tried to saunter towards her as if she was just happening by.

"Old Mary," she asked, as carelessly as she could, "how long do you think you can wait for me to pay you?"

"Well, I can't wait so very long. Circus is a-coming Saturday, an' I'm goin' to go off if I have to send the sheriff fur that sixpence."

It never occurred to Susy that the old woman was teasing her. Her lips trembled as she answered, "Very well, old Mary, you'll have the sixpence by Saturday."

By Saturday! It was Thursday and papa would not be at home for a week. How could she get a sixpence? If papa were at home! If mamma were only well! Oh, she wished she had never tasted a peanut. By this time Susy was at her own gate again. She glanced fearfully toward old Mary's corner. Her heart stood still. She felt little funny cold things crawl up and down her back. There was old Mary, and talking to her—it was terrible—talking to her as a man—the bailiff himself. Now, they were looking at her. Old Mary was telling him about that sixpence. Susy ran in to hide behind the doll house. There lay the big bag of peanuts. Susy gave it a vicious kick and sat down and just cried and cried. And that is how it happened that Susy was in trouble.

Just at this moment Phoebe came out on the porch. She had a silver waiter in her hands, and on it was mamma's best cut-glass dish filled with white foamy syllabubs, dotted with delicious dabs of jelly. Susy could see her quite plainly between the long leaves. She stopped crying and kept still.

"Miss Susy! Oh, Miss Susy! where are you?" called Phoebe. "Miss Susy, this syllabub is su'otin'."

Now Susy was sure that it could not be about the bailiff, because then Phoebe would not be worrying over heat syllabub. She got up slowly and went towards the house.

"Heigh-ho, where have you been? Run, wash your face, an' carry this syllabub over to Miss Langley's with your ma's compliments."

Susy thought Mrs Langley's as safe a place as any, so she went. Mrs Langley herself opened the door when Susy fell full the heavy knocker. "How is your mother to-day, dear?" she asked after admiring the syllabub.

"She isn't very well. I mean she is dreadfully sick, thank you," said Susy, dolefully.

"I am very sorry indeed. And how is that dear little baby?"

"He's very well," began Susy and then blurted out, "I don't think he is a dear little baby one bit. He cries so, and he is a dretful bother, and anyway Phoebe says we have enough boys." Susy shook her head as if she were relieved of a terrible secret.

Mrs Langley laughed, but she did not seem at all shocked. "Dear me! too many boys. I wish you would sell him to me. I should dearly love a little boy."

Mrs Langley had no sooner said "sell him" than a great idea dawned upon unhappy Susy. Here was the way to get money. She would sell the baby for a sixpence. Nobody at home wanted that baby, and Mrs Langley said she would love him dearly. Yes, she would sell the baby. Her voice shook with excitement as she answered, "I reckon you can have him. He isn't a very nice baby, but don't you think he is worth a sixpence?"

Mrs Langley laughed more than before, and determined to find out whether Susy would really sell her little brother. "Of course he is worth a sixpence," she said. "Now, I tell you, Susy, if you will bring me that baby I will give you a sixpence. Come, is it a bargain?"

"Yes," said Susy, promptly. She wanted very much to ask for the money then, but she was ashamed. "When shall I bring him to you?" "Oh, any time will do. Tomorrow, if you want. When do you want your money?"

"I'd like," hesitated Susy, "I'd like to have it now if it's convenient."

Susy was perfectly happy as she skipped home. Now the bailiff could not put her in gaol. She would pay that mean old Mary and never buy another peanut from her. Then she began to think of the baby. He was not such a horrid baby after all, and, besides, how would he feel when he grew up and found he was a sold baby? Susy began to waver. By the time she reached home she heartily regretted her bargain. She went to her refuge behind the doll house. She sat down and thought very hard, giving one or two sad little sighs. Then she got up and went straight back to Mrs Langley. She found her weeding the pansy bed.

"Mrs Langley," she began. "Why, is that you? Where is little Joseph?" Mrs Langley inquired.

Susy wondered why she called the baby Joseph, but was too intent upon her errand to ask. "Here is your sixpence," she said.

"My sixpence? I don't want the sixpence. I want the baby."

"Well," said Susy, "I don't believe you would if you saw him. He's weal bwright wed."

"But he will grow white."

"But he isn't worth a sixpence. Weenly he isn't. His neck's broke."

"My good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs Langley, dropping her trowel. "His neck broken! What do you mean?"

"Well," exclaimed Susy, impressively, "every single time you try to make him sit up, his head flops over so," and Susy dropped her curly head on her shoulder to illustrate the baby's broken neck.

Mrs Langley fairly shouted. "Never mind," she said, when she stopped laughing awhile. "I will bandage his neck. I am sure he will be all right, and at any rate even a baby with a broken neck is better than none."

Susy was in despair. She had to keep the money and give up the baby. The tears gathered in her eyes as she went down the wide shady street. She stopped at the corner, undid a piece of money from the corner of her apron, and handed it to old Mary. "Here's your sixpence," she said. Then she walked quickly home. She must manage to get the baby to Mrs Langley's without being seen.

As luck would have it, Mary was just putting the baby to sleep, walking up and down the garden path. When he fell asleep she laid him in his carriage and went off. No sooner had Mary gone than Susy began pushing and pulling the baby-carriage along the path. She had a hard time crossing the street without bumping the carriage and waking the baby. She reached Mrs Langley's house safely, but how to get him into the house? She lifted him carefully out. He was very heavy for her poor little strength, but she managed to carry him on the front steps. The door, as usual, stood open, and there was no shadow of a lock. She staggered in to the cool dark parlour, and laid the baby quietly on the big sofa. Then she placed a chair so that he could not roll off. She wanted to kiss him good-bye, but did not dare, so she tipped out and went down the road crying as if her heart would break.

She walked towards the country without the least idea of where she was going; she could not go back home. She walked and walked, stopping to rest occasionally. She was hungrier than she had ever been in all her life, for she had had no dinner. She was so tired that she lay down under a hedge and cried harder than ever. She rubbed her dirty little fists in her eyes until her face was a beautiful array of black and pink streaks. By-and-by the sun dropped down behind the trees; the little birds flew into their nests; it began to grow dark; very soon poor little runaway Susy was asleep.

It seemed to her the middle of the night when she was awakened by shouts. There were many lights and big men, and a dog was barking. She sat up terribly frightened. What had happened? She did not remember that she had sold the baby and run away. The shouts grew distinct; they were calling "Susy! Miss Susy! Oh, Susy! Halloo, Miss Susse-lee!" She got up and ran against a big man, who dropped his torch and shouted. The big man took the little girl up in his arms and said: "My little girlie, my Susy. Where have you been?"

"It was papa! Susy was too tired and confused to do anything but cry. "Take me home, oh, take me home!" Very soon she was lying on the bed in mamma's room. Her mother was laughing, but there were tears in her eyes. Susy glanced toward the crib. She rubbed her eyes. She sat up in amazement. There lay the very identical baby she had sold.

Such hugging and kissing and explanations! The baby winked and blinked as if he liked it. Papa held his little girl very close while she told him how she had to keep her promise and give up the baby, and how she was sorry and "runned away." Then they told her how Mrs Langley had returned the baby, and how old Mrs Paton had seen Susy trudging along the road, and how papa had returned unexpectedly and set out to find her.

"But you dear goosy, why didn't you tell some one?" asked mamma. "Cause there was nobody to tell," said Susy, conclusively.

When the boys came home they made great fun of poor Susy. Georgie called her Joseph's brethren, and Rob called her "peanuts"; but they stopped when they saw how it pained her. Susy was almost a grown-up young lady before she would eat peanuts again, but before long her very dearest brother was the baby she had sold.

A MEAN LITTLE PIG.

A little pig once had a field wherein he used to root up the ground with a good deal of industry, and raise a number of choice vegetables for market, so he in time acquired some little reputation as a market gardener.

One season, however, there appeared in a corner of his garden a new and peculiar growth. No one knew what it was or cared to find out by trying.

The little pig was about to destroy it when one day a friendly goose looked in for a few moments' chat. Upon being shown the stuff he said eagerly: "Why, that is a salad much used by a certain people with scrambled eggs. I know some folks who would buy all you have if you offered it to them with nice fresh eggs. I will lay some at once, and we will offer it together."

This the goose proceeded to do, and some days later offered the salad and eggs together, and sold the entire lot, much to the joy of the little pig, who took a day off to celebrate his good fortune and buy some new clothes.

A few days later the goose came again to the little pig, saying that she had a few eggs on hand which she thought might be easily disposed of with salad.

"Oh," said the little pig, "but my salad is all gone, and he rooted away busily."

"Yes," replied the goose, "but it grows very quickly, and if you will root up the bed a little there will be plenty in a few days, and it will be a favour to me."

"Sorry, indeed," granted the little pig, without looking up, "but my time is well occupied just now in raising vegetables that sell on their own merits," and he continued grunting away to himself and rooting as the poor goose walked sorrowfully on.

Moral: Don't be goose enough to expect gratitude from a little pig.



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