

complications begin. Ludwig has to set aside Liza, to whom he is engaged, for Julia as leading lady claims (Grand Duchess—Ludwig's wife. They are hardly married when the baroness arrives to press her claim, she being betrothed to Rudolph, and Ludwig having taken over his responsibilities, puts Julia aside and marries the baroness. Next the Prince of Monte Carlo and his daughter arrive. This young lady was wed to Rudolph in infancy. She having the prior claim, Ludwig is about to marry her when Rudolph and Ernest come in with the notary, who has discovered that in statutory duels the ace counts as lowest. This enables everyone to get back to their original positions, and the audience has had their fun.—Your loving cousin Jack.

[Dear Cousin Jack,—Your letter about the Grand Duke is very interesting, but I can only give a short answer, as your letter takes up a good deal of our space, does it not? Mind you enter for the essay competition. I am sure you would do very well. Next time you write tell me about yourself and your likes and dislikes.—Cousin Kate.]



The First Day of the Holidays.
A STORY OF THE SILVERTON CHILDREN.

"And now, what shall we do?" inquired Nellie, when the garden gate was reached.

The Silvertons had been "seeing Fraulein, the German governess, off." All the previous day they had been examining boxes and portmanteaux of that curious manufacture which somehow makes it impossible to take a foreigner's luggage seriously.

"I say, what a funny bag!" I heard Jim exclaim, strolling into Fraulein's room, where, flushed and voluble, she knelt on the floor, almost enveloped by clouds of assisting pupils and surrounded by Teutonic wearing apparel of a thoroughgoing appearance.

"Ach, leave ze bag!" cried Fraulein in exasperated accents, as Jim, in the character of a porter, ran up and down between piles of stockings and stout petticoats, the bag in one hand and the dinner bell in the other. "Leave ze bag! And all you children go into ze garden. So, I pack better."

"Oh, no! No, Fraulein!" came in a protesting chorus. "Send Jim out. He's such a little idiot, always coming and spoiling everything. Jim, do you hear? Put down the bag."

"I don't want the silly old bag," declared Jim, as with a last deafening crash, the bell was finally wrested from his grasp. "Looks as if it was made of cardboard, with bits of shiny black paper gummed on for the straps."

I had barely time to recognise the accuracy of the description when, after much scuffling and considerable flow of language, Jim was forcibly ejected.

He walked slowly backwards down the passage, hurling insults at the feminine sex and the German Empire till pulled up short by the rail at the head of the staircase. It occurred to him to slide down the banisters, and the rapid movement not being favourable to its continuance, the monologue ceased.

Peace had been restored and again broken twenty times between then and the thrilling moment of departure. The cardboard portmanteaux and the purple-mottled paper boxes were finally placed on the cab containing Fraulein and a great many Silvertons. Then, amidst last words from Mrs Silverton as to sandwiches, amidst handshakes from Mr Silverton, amidst excited squeals from the rest of the family, the cab drove off stationwards conveying Fraulein on the first stage of her journey to the Fatherland.

"Lebe wohl! Lebe wohl!" she cried, putting her beaming face out of the carriage-window at the station.

"In one month I return. Be all good children, so that the - ran Mamma." Her last admonitions were drowned in the shriek of the engine, and a rather depressed and saddened little group turned from the platform to wend its way towards home.

It was ridiculous to be depressed, of course, since all Fraulein's were dead, and for weeks parans of joy had heralded their coming freedom. Still, somehow, Fraulein had a pretty talent for cutting out paper dolls. Nellie remembered this before the train was out of sight. She confided the ludicrous reflection to Madge the same evening, and Madge sighed.

"She used to tell jolly fairy tales," was her reflective remark.

It was odd how silent the consuming hatred they bore, Fraulein kept the entire family on the homeward journey, and it was with some sense of inconsistent behavior that Nellie forced herself to give utterance to the question as one who would prove to all the world that she, at least, was no poor-spirited child.

After all, it was the first day of the holidays, the others reflected. "Let's go into Uncle John's," said Norah.

"Back garden?" observed Jim, laconically.

"Yes! yes!" assented the others, beginning to brighten.

"What about the handkerchief trick?" inquired Jim.

An appreciative grin went round.

"What's the time?" was Jim's next question.

Nellie ran in to see.

"Quarter to twelve," she announced, with a satisfaction only comprehensible to the initiated.

"All right," said Jim. "We've got half an hour to prepare. Now, who's going in to Uncle John's?"

"Madge!" everyone shouted. "Madge and Phil!"

"I always go!" protested Madge.



"In one month I return. Be all good children, so that Frau-mamma." Her last admonitions were drowned in the shriek of the engine.

"You shouldn't have such a silly, affected manner, then?" returned Jim unguardedly.

Rebutions were often a little strained between Madge and Jim; but no sooner were the words uttered than he felt that, from motives of self-interest, he had gone too far.

"Silly, affected manner!" his sister repeated, blazing up at once. "What are you, I should like to know? A little clumsy bear! Everyone says so; and a conceited little donkey, and a —"

Norah and Nellie here interrupted with soothing words.

"Don't pay any attention to the little idiot!" they cried. "He always goes on like that, just because he couldn't go in to Uncle John, and manage so beautifully as you do, Madge. You will go, won't you? You might just as well! You can ask for the

key so splendidly—how the vines are getting on, and the cucumbers, you know, and the fowls, and all that! You remember what to say. You manage splendidly!"

James, with feminine cajoleries, they at length succeeded in pushing Madge gently out of the front gate on her mission of diplomacy.

Jim meanwhile had stood sulkily apart, forced to hear himself described as a silly little idiot, without a protest, and conscious that the moment Madge had departed with the blandly smiling Phil, the two girls would turn and rend him.

To have rendered himself powerless to return scorn for scorn was galling, but inevitable; unless, indeed, he should refuse to play. But the sacrifice was too great. He braced himself up for the onslaught, therefore, which, owing to the excitement as to the result of Madge's mission, was mercifully brief. Uncle John's garden adjoined the garden of the Silvertons.

A stately gentleman of the old school devoted to his roses, his vineyard, and his poultry-yard, his grand-nieces and nephews were practically unknown to him.

With the unconscious adaptability of the young, they always appeared before Uncle John in the guise which he expected—that is to say, as quiet, well-behaved, deferential young folks, whose awakening intelligence he loved to train.

Uncle John was kindness itself, but he was curious. There was, for instance, a certain ritual to be observed in asking for the key of the fruit garden. You could not, for example, explain to him that the rockery which extended the length of one wall commanded the road down which the school children were wont to pass, nor that the straight, narrow paths of the garden lent themselves admirably to the chase of fowls, nor that cherries in summer time were refreshing. No, your interest in a fruit garden was, naturally, of a totally different nature, as Madge was now on her way to testify.

She knocked at the study door. "Come in," said her uncle, looking up from his writing.

"Good-morning, Uncle John!" exclaimed Madge brightly, running up to be kissed.

"Good-morning!" echoed Phil, raising limpid blue eyes.

If Uncle John had owned to the weakness of a preference among "such excellent young people" it would have been for Madge and Phil.

"Nice, intelligent children," he was wont to observe, "whose manners are above the ordinary standard of courtesy which this generation appears to exact."

"We've come to ask you for the key of the back garden, Uncle John," said Madge. "It is such a long time since we looked at the vines."

"Ah, yes! Well, you will find the grapes are colouring nicely. I should also like you to look at a very beautiful little Calophyllum, which you will find on the right hand side of the small glasshouse. Its habit of growth is most interesting."

Madge's expression became more markedly intelligent than ever.

"Oh, we will. We must look out for that. There are the fuchsias, too. How are they getting on?"

"Admirably, admirably!" Before you return, go also into the hothouse. I should like you all to see two orchids there—a latifolia and a globosa. Magnificent specimens! You know which is the latifolia? I pointed it out to you some three weeks ago."

"Yes, Uncle John," returned Madge a little hastily. "Thank you so much," as he put the key into her hand.

"You will bring it back, of course; and in case I am not in, replace it on this nail. Good-bye for the present, then. I think you will find much to interest you in the garden to-day."

The family was evidently of Uncle John's opinion, for Madge found an excited group waiting for her outside the gate.

(To be Continued.)

How Elsie Became a Good Girl.

Elsie Grayson was a very naughty little girl, and did not like to obey her mother. One afternoon she was sitting at the window reading. She should have been mending her dress, which her mother had told her to do, but Elsie had no notion of putting down her book at the best part of the story. As she was sitting there, she heard a noise, and, looking up, she

saw a beautiful little fairy standing before her.

"Elsie," said the fairy, "are you a good girl, and do you always do as your mother tells you?"

Elsie hung her head and did not reply.

"Answer me, Elsie," the fairy said at length. "Do you always do as your mother tells you?"

"No," stammered Elsie looking very much abashed.

"Take this ring," said the fairy, putting a ring on Elsie's finger. "At eight o'clock to-night take it off and lay it on your window sill. Now, remember to do exactly as I tell you." Saying this, she vanished from Elsie's sight.

Elsie looked at the ring a minute, then she mended her dress; after this she was very good for the rest of the evening. That night she remembered what the fairy had said, and at eight o'clock she took the ring from her finger and laid it on the window sill. As soon as she had laid it there a number of little black objects came and settled on the sill. Elsie thought they looked like little people; she could not quite make out what they were.

"Who are you?" she said to the first one.

"My name is Disobedience," said the thing. "I was not far off when you were reading that book this afternoon."

The second one said its name was Deceit, the third Ill-nature, the fourth Discontent, and so on all the way down the row, until Elsie recognised in them all the faults of which she had been guilty. After a little while Elsie heard something telling her to pick up the ring, and when she did so all the black things flew away.

The next day the fairy came again and told Elsie to lay the ring on the window that night, just as she had done the night before, but fewer black things came that night, for Elsie had tried to be a better girl during the day, and every night there were less and less, until there were none at all.

When Elsie had become a good little girl the fairy came and took back the ring, telling her she was glad she had conquered her faults so well.

Shortly after Elsie told her mother what I have told you about the fairy ring. On Elsie's next birthday, her father gave her a pretty silver bangle for being a good girl.

A Sugar Barrel.

"A sugar barrel, boys!" What a scampering that announcement used to cause among the boys in the vicinity of a country store, a few years ago, when much soft brown sugar was used. The emptied hogsheads, with a luscious coat of sweetness adhering to the rough staves, were cast out in the back yard, much to the boys' delight. John B. Grozier, who spent his youth in Canada, recalls these "sugar-barrel" scenes from his own experience.

One of the boys was always on the watch as informal scout, to give notice to the rest of anything interesting and available in the way of fun. The empty sugar hogshead used to appear with considerable regularity. The scout would see it, and after a liberal taste himself, would rush to the mill-pond, where he would probably find the rest of us basking.

"A sugar barrel, boys!" was his greeting. It was enough. Putting on half of our clothes as we went, we would dash off after our guide, like a scattered train of camp followers.

It must have been comical to see a dozen orchids struggling along, picking their way barefooted over the rocks and rough ground; struggling to put on a rugged vest, or a coat, while maintaining a sort of Indian jog trot for fear of losing a share in the feast.

Then, lo, the hogshead; and into it the first comers rushed pell-mell. Those who came after contented themselves with looting there would be enough for all; or possibly they obtained a morsel or two by clever reaching from the outside.

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