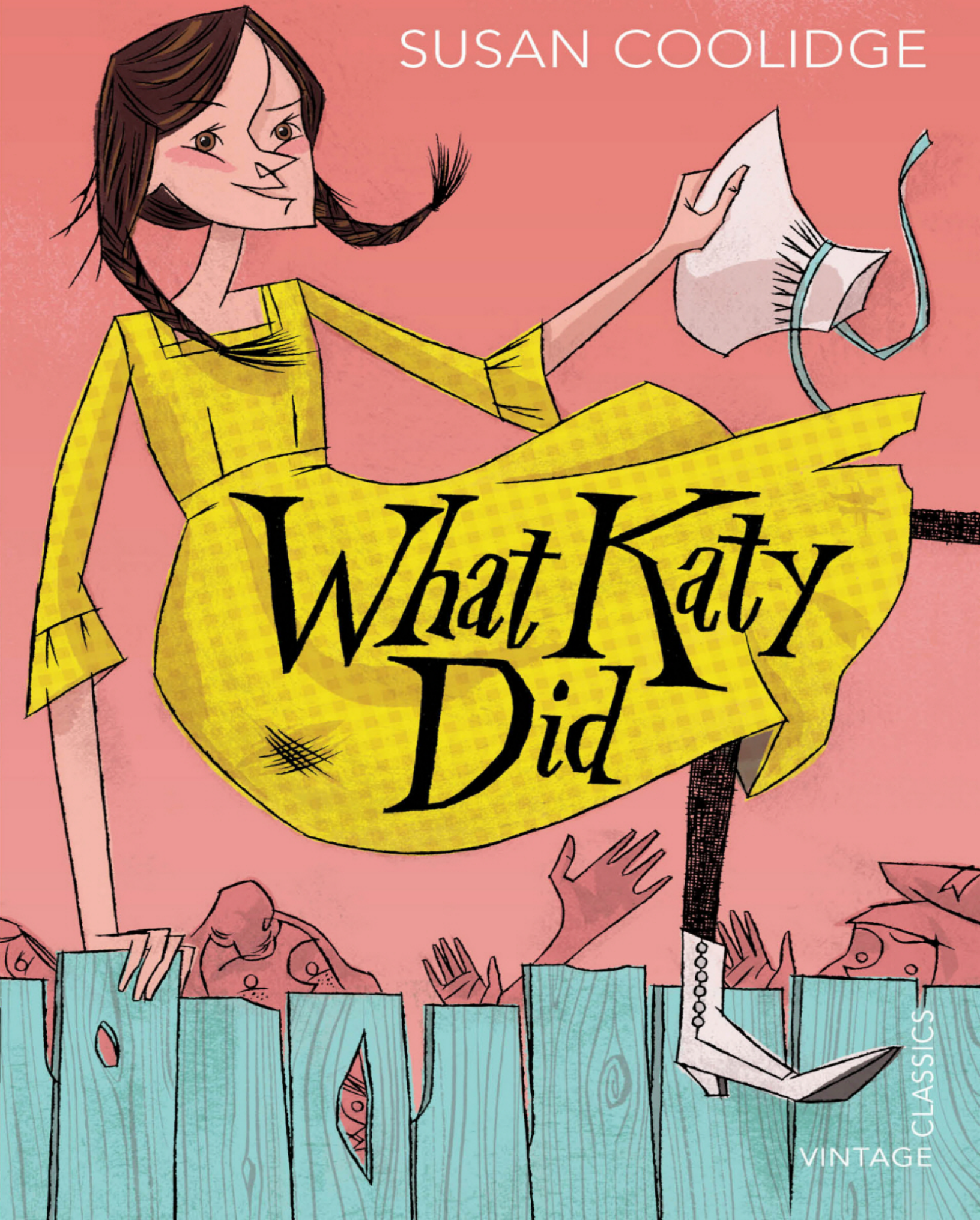
SUSAN COOLIDGE



What Katy Did

VINTAGE CLASSICS

Contents

About the Book

‘*I mean to do something grand. I don’t know what, yet; but when I’m grown up I shall find out*’

Katy Carr is the longest girl that was ever seen. She is all legs and elbows, and angles and joints. She tears her dress every day, hates sewing and doesn’t care a button about being called ‘good’. Her head is full of schemes and one day she plans to do something important. But a great deal is to happen to Katy before that time comes…

Backstory: Find out which character you most resemble and learn how to make a pin cushion.

Also by Susan Coolidge

What Katy Did At School
What Katy Did Next
Clover
In the High Valley

To Five

Six of us once, my darlings, played together
    Beneath green boughs, which faded long ago,
Made merry in the golden summer weather,
    Pelted each other with new-fallen snow.

Did the sun always shine? I can't remember
    A single cloud that dimmed the happy blue,
A single lightning-bolt or peal of thunder,
    To daunt our bright, unfearing lives: can you?

We quarrelled often, but made peace as quickly,
    Shed many tears, but laughed the while they fell,
Had our small woes, our childish bumps and bruises,
    But Mother always 'kissed and made them well.'

Is it long since?—it seems a moment only:
    Yet here we are in bonnets and tail-coats,
Grave men of business, members of committees,
    Our play-time ended: even Baby votes!

And star-eyed children, in whose innocent faces
    Kindles the gladness which was once our own,
Crowd round our knees, with sweet and coaxing voices,
    Asking for stories of that old-time home.

'Were *you* once little too?' they say, astonished;
    'Did you too play? How funny! tell us how.'
Almost we start, forgetful for a moment;
    Almost we answer, 'We are little *now!*'

Dear friend and lover, whom today we christen,
    Forgive such brief bewilderment—thy true
And kindly hand we hold; we own thee fairest.
    But ah! our yesterday was precious too.

So, darlings, take this little childish story,
    In which some gleams of the old sunshine play,
And, as with careless hands you turn the pages,
    Look back and smile, as here I smile today.

Susan Coolidge

What Katy Did

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

1

The Little Carrs

I WAS SITTING in the meadows one day, not long ago, at a place where there was a small brook. It was a hot day. The sky was very blue, and white clouds, like great swans, went floating over it to and fro. Just opposite me was a dump of green rushes, with dark velvety spikes, and among them one single tall, red cardinal flower, which was bending over the brook as if to see its own beautiful face in the water. But the cardinal did not seem to be vain.

The picture was so pretty that I sat a long time enjoying it. Suddenly, close to me, two small voices began to talk—or to sing, for I couldn't tell exactly which it was. One voice was shrill; the other, which was a little deeper, sounded very positive and cross. They were evidently disputing about something, for they said the same words over and over again. These were the words—'Katy did.' 'Katy didn't.' 'She did.' 'She didn't.' 'She did.' 'She didn't.' 'Did.' 'Didn't.' I think they must have repeated them at least a hundred times.

I got from my seat to see if I could find the speakers, and sure enough, there on one of the cat-tail bulrushes I

spied two tiny pale-green creatures. Their eyes seemed to be weak, for they both wore black goggles. They had six legs apiece,—two short ones, two not so short, and two very long. These last legs had joints like the springs to buggy-tops; and as I watched, they began walking up the rush, and then I saw that they moved exactly like an old-fashioned gig. In fact, if I hadn't been too big, I *think* I should have heard them creak as they went along. They didn't say anything so long as I was there, but the moment my back was turned they began to quarrel again, and in the same old words—'Katy did.' 'Katy didn't.' 'She did.' 'She didn't.'

As I walked home I fell to thinking about another Katy—a Katy I once knew, who planned to do a great many wonderful things, and in the end did none of them, but something quite different—something she didn't like at all at first, but which, on the whole, was a great deal better than any of the doings she had dreamed about. And as I thought, this story grew in my head, and I resolved to write it down for you. I have done it; and, in memory of my two little friends on the bulrush, I give it their name. Here it is—the story of What Katy Did.

Katy's name was Katy Carr. She lived in the town of Burnet, which wasn't a very big town, but was growing as fast as it knew how. The house she lived in stood on the edge of town. It was a large square house, white, with green blinds, and had a porch in front, over which roses and clematis made a thick bower. Four tall locust-trees shaded the gravel path which led to the front gate. On one side of the house was an orchard; on the other side were wood piles and barns, and an ice-house. Behind was a kitchen garden sloping to the south; and behind that a pasture with a brook in it, and butternut trees, and four cows—two red ones, a yellow one with sharp horns tipped with tin, and a dear little white one named Daisy.

There were six of the Carr children—four girls and two boys. Katy, the eldest, was twelve years old; little Phil, the youngest, was four, and the rest fitted in between.

Dr Carr, their papa, was a dear, kind, busy man, who was away from home all day, and sometimes all night too, taking care of sick people. The children hadn't any mamma. She had died when Phil was a baby, four years before my story began. Katy could remember her pretty well; to the rest she was but a sad, sweet name, spoken on Sunday, and at prayer-times, or when papa was specially gentle and solemn.

In place of this mamma, whom they recollected so dimly, there was Aunt Izzie, papa's sister, who came to take care of them when mamma went away on that long journey, from which, for so many months, the little ones kept hoping she might return. Aunt Izzie was a small woman, sharp-faced and thin, rather old-looking, and very neat and particular about everything. She meant to be kind to the children, but they puzzled her much, because they were not a bit like herself when she was a child. Aunt Izzie had been a gentle, tidy little thing, who loved to sit, as Curly Locks did, sewing long seams in the parlour, and to have her head patted by older people, and be told that she was a good girl; whereas Katy tore her dress every day, hated sewing, and didn't care a button about being called 'good,' while Clover and Elsie shied off like restless ponies when anyone tried to pat their heads. It was very perplexing to Aunt Izzie, and she found it quite hard to forgive the children for being so 'unaccountable,' and so little like the good boys and girls in Sunday-school memoirs, who were the young people she liked best, and understood most about.

Then Dr Carr was another person who worried her. He wished to have the children hardy and bold, and encouraged climbing and rough plays, in spite of the bumps and ragged clothes which resulted. In fact, there was just one half-hour of the day when Aunt Izzie was really

satisfied about her charges, and that was the half-hour before breakfast, when she had made a law that they were all to sit in their little chairs and learn the Bible verse for the day. At this time she looked at them with pleased eyes; they were all so spick and span, with such nicely-brushed jackets and such neatly-combed hair. But the moment the bell rang her comfort was over. From that time on, they were what she called ‘not fit to be seen.’ The neighbours pitied her very much. They used to count the sixty stiff white pantalette legs hung out to dry every Monday morning, and say to each other what a sight of washing those children made, and what a labour it must be for poor Miss Carr to keep them so nice. But poor Miss Carr didn’t think them at all nice; that was the worst of it.

‘Clover, go upstairs and wash your hands! Dorry, pick your hat off the floor and hang it on the nail! Not that nail—the third nail from the corner!’ These were the kind of things Aunt Izzie was saying all day long. The children minded her pretty well, but they didn’t exactly love her, I fear. They called her ‘Aunt Izzie’ always, never ‘Aunty.’ Boys and girls will know what *that* meant.

I want to show you the little Carrs, and I don’t know that I could ever have a better chance than one day when five out of six were perched on the top of the ice-house, like chickens on a roost. This ice-house was one of their favourite places. It was only a low roof set over a hole in the ground, and, as it stood in the middle of the side-yard, it always seemed to the children that the shortest road to every place was up one of its slopes and down the other. They also liked to mount to the ridgepole, and then, still keeping the sitting position, to let go, and scrape slowly down over the warm shingles to the ground. It was bad for their shoes and trousers, of course; but what of that? Shoes and trousers, and clothes generally, were Aunt Izzie’s affair; theirs was to slide and enjoy themselves.

Clover, next in age to Katy, sat in the middle. She was a fair sweet dumpling of a girl, with thick pig-tails of light brown hair, and short-sighted blue eyes, which seemed to hold tears, just ready to fall from under the blue. Really, Clover was the jolliest little thing in the world; but these eyes, and her soft cooing voice, always made people feel like petting her and taking her part. Once, when she was very small, she ran away with Katy's doll, and when Katy pursued, and tried to take it from her, Clover held fast and would not let go. Dr Carr who wasn't attending particularly, heard nothing but the pathetic tone of Clover's voice, as she said; 'Me won't! Me want Dolly!' and, without stopping to inquire, he called out sharply; 'For shame, Katy! give your sister *her* doll at once!' which Katy, much surprised, did; while Clover purred in triumph, like a satisfied kitten. Clover was sunny and sweet-tempered, a little indolent, and very modest about herself, though, in fact, she was particularly clever in all sorts of games, and extremely droll and funny in a quiet way. Everybody loved her, and she loved everybody, especially Katy, whom she looked up to as one of the wisest people in the world.

Pretty little Phil sat next on the roof to Clover, and she held him tight with her arm. Then came Elsie, a thin, brown child of eight, with beautiful dark eyes, and crisp, short curls covering the whole of her small head. Poor little Elsie was the 'odd one' among the Carrs. She didn't seem to belong exactly to either the older or the younger children. The great desire and ambition of her heart was to be allowed to go about with Katy and Clover and Cecy Hall, and to know their secrets, and be permitted to put notes into the little post-offices they were for ever establishing in all sorts of hidden places. But they didn't want Elsie, and used to tell her to 'run away and play with the children,' which hurt her feelings very much. When she wouldn't run away, I am sorry to say they ran away from her, which, as their legs were longer, it was easy to do. Poor Elsie, left

behind, would cry bitter tears, and, as she was too proud to play much with Dorry and John, her principal comfort was tracking the older ones about, and discovering their mysteries, especially the post-offices, which were her greatest grievance. Her eyes were bright and quick as a bird's. She would peep and peer, and follow and watch, till at last, in some odd, unlikely place, the crotch of a tree, the middle of the asparagus bed, or, perhaps, on the very top step of the scuttle ladder, she spied the little paper box, with its load of notes, all ending with 'Be sure and not let Elsie know.' Then she would seize the box, and, marching up to wherever the others were, she would throw it down, saying defiantly: 'There's your old post-office!' but feeling all the time just like crying. Poor little Elsie! In almost every large family, there is one of these unmated, left-out children. Katy, who had the finest plans in the world for being 'heroic,' and of use, never saw, as she drifted on her heedless way, that here, in this lonely little sister, was the very chance she wanted for being a comfort to somebody who needed comfort very much. She never saw it, and Elsie's heavy heart went uncheered.

Dorry and Joanna sat on the two ends of the ridgepole. Dorry was six years old; a pale, pudgy boy, with rather a solemn face, and smears of molasses on the sleeve of his jacket. Joanna, whom the children called 'John,' and 'Johnnie,' was a square, splendid child, a year younger than Dorry; she had big grave eyes, and a wide rosy mouth, which always looked ready to laugh. These two were great friends, though Dorry seemed like a girl who had got into boy's clothes by mistake, and Johnnie like a boy who, in a fit of fun, had borrowed his sister's frock. And now, as they all sat there chattering and giggling, the window above opened, a glad shriek was heard, and Katy's head appeared. In her hand she held a heap of stockings, which she waved triumphantly.

‘Hurray!’ she cried, ‘all done, and Aunt Izzie says we may go. Are you tired of waiting? I couldn’t help it, the holes, were *so* big, and took so long. Hurry up, Clover, and get the things! Cecy and I will be down in a minute.’

The children jumped up gladly, and slid down the roof. Clover fetched a couple of baskets from the wood-shed. Elsie ran for her kitten. Dorry and John loaded themselves with two great faggots of green boughs. Just as they were ready the side-door banged, and Katy and Cecy Hall came into the yard.

I must tell you about Cecy. She was a great friend of the children’s, and lived in a house next door. The yards of the houses were only separated by a green hedge, with no gate, so that Cecy spent two-thirds of her time at Dr Carr’s, and was exactly like one of the family. She was a neat, dapper, pink-and-white-girl, modest and prim in manner, with light shiny hair which always kept smooth, and slim hands which never looked dirty. How different from my poor Katy! Katy’s hair was forever in a tangle; her gowns were always catching on nails and ‘tearing themselves’; and, in spite of her age and size, she was as heedless and innocent as a child of six. Katy was the *longest* girl that was ever seen. What she did to make herself grow so, nobody could tell; but there she was—up above papa’s ear, and half a head taller than poor Aunt Izzie. Whenever she stopped to think about her height she became very awkward, and felt as if she were all legs and elbows, and angles and joints. Happily, her head was so full of other things, of plans and schemes, and fancies of all sorts that she didn’t often take time to remember how tall she was. She was a dear, loving child, for all her careless habits, and made bushels of good resolutions every week of her life, only unluckily she never kept any of them. She had fits of responsibility about the other children, and longed to set them a good example, but when the chance came, she generally forgot to do so. Katy’s days flew like the wind; for when she

wasn’t studying lessons, or sewing and darning with Aunt Izzie, which she hated extremely, there were always so many delightful schemes rioting in her brains, that all she wished for was ten pairs of hands to carry them out. These same active brains got her into perpetual scrapes. She was fond of building castles in the air, and dreaming of the time when something she had done would make her famous, so that everybody would hear of her, and want to know her. I don’t think she had made up her mind what this wonderful thing was to be; but while thinking about it she often forgot to learn a lesson, or to lace her boots, and then she had a bad mark, or a scolding from Aunt Izzie. At such times she consoled herself with planning how, by-and-by, she would be beautiful and beloved, and amiable as an angel. A great deal was to happen to Katy before that time came. Her eyes, which were black, were to turn blue; her nose was to lengthen and straighten, and her mouth, quite too large at present to suit the part of a heroine, was to be made over into a sort of rosy button. Meantime, and until these charming changes should take place, Katy forgot her features as much as she could, though still, I think, the person on earth whom she most envied was that lady on the big posters with the wonderful hair which sweeps the ground.

2

Paradise

THE PLACE TO which the children were going was a sort of marshy thicket at the bottom of a field near the house. It wasn't a big thicket, but it looked big, because the trees and bushes grew so closely that you could not see just where it ended. In the winter the ground was damp and boggy, so that nobody went there, excepting cows, who didn't mind getting their feet wet; but in summer the water dried away, and then it was all fresh and green, and full of delightful things—wild roses, and sassafras, and birds' nests. Narrow, winding paths ran here, and there, made by the cattle as they wandered to and fro. This place the children called 'Paradise,' and to them it seemed as wide and endless and full of adventure as any forest of fairy-land.

The way to Paradise was through some wooden bars. Katy and Cecy climbed these with a hop, skip, and jump, while the smaller ones scrambled underneath. Once past the bars they were fairly in the field, and, with one consent, they all began to run till they reached the entrance of the wood. Then they halted, with a queer look of hesitation on

their faces. It was always an exciting occasion to go to Paradise for the first time after the long winter. Who knew what the fairies might not have done since any of them had been there to see?

‘Which path shall we go in by?’ asked Clover, at last.

‘Suppose we vote,’ said Katy. ‘I say by the Pilgrim’s Path and the Hill of Difficulty.’

‘So do I!’ chimed in Clover, who always agreed with Katy.

‘The Path of Peace is nice,’ suggested Cecy.

‘No, no! We want to go by Sassafras Path!’ cried John and Dorry.

However, Katy, as usual, had her way. It was agreed that they should first try Pilgrim’s Path, and afterward make a thorough exploration of the whole of their little kingdom, and see all that happened, since last they were there. So in they marched, Katy and Cecy heading the procession, and Dorry, with his great trailing bunch of boughs, bringing up the rear.

‘Oh, there is the dear rosary, all safe!’ cried the children, as they reached the top of the Hill of Difficulty, and came upon a tall stump, out of the middle of which waved a wild rose-bush budded over with fresh green leaves. This ‘rosary’ was a fascinating thing to their minds. They were always inventing stories about it, and were in constant terror lest some hungry cow should take a fancy to the rosebush and eat it up.

‘Yes,’ said Katy, stroking a leaf with her finger, ‘it was in great danger one night last winter, but it escaped.’

‘Oh! how? Tell us about it!’ cried the others, for Katy’s stories were famous in the family.

‘It was Christmas Eve,’ continued Katy, in a mysterious tone. ‘The fairy of the rosary was quite sick. She had taken a dreadful cold in her head, and the poplar-tree fairy, just over there, told her that sassafras tea is good for colds. So she made a large acorn-cup full, and then cuddled herself

in where the wood looks so black and soft, and fell asleep. In the middle of the night, when she was snoring soundly, there was a noise in the forest, and a dreadful black bull with fiery eyes galloped up. He saw our poor Rosy Posy, and, opening his big mouth, he was just going to bite her in two; but at that minute a little fat man, with a wand in his hand, popped out from behind the stump. It was Santa Claus, of course. He gave the bull such a rap with his wand that he moo-ed dreadfully, and then put up his forepaw, to see if his nose was on or not. He found it was, but it hurt him so that he moo-ed again, and galloped off as fast as he could into the woods. Then Santa Claus woke up the fairy, and told her that if she didn't take better care of Rosy Posy he should put some other fairy into her place, and set her to keep guard over a prickly, scratchy, blackberry bush.'

'Is there really any fairy?' asked Dorry, who had listened to this narrative with open mouth.

'Of course,' answered Katy. Then bending down toward Dorry, she added in a voice intended to be of wonderful sweetness: 'I am a fairy, Dorry!'

'Pshaw!' was Dorry's reply; 'you're a giraffe—pa said so!'

The Path of Peace got its name because of its darkness and coolness. High bushes almost met over it, and trees kept it shady, even in the middle of the day. A sort of white flower grew there, which the children called Pollypods, because they didn't know the real name. They stayed a long while picking bunches of these flowers, and then John and Dorry had to grub up an armful of sassafras roots; so that before they had fairly gone through Toadstool Avenue, Rabbit Hollow, and the rest, the sun was just over their heads, and it was noon.

'I'm getting hungry,' said Dorry.

'Oh, no, Dorry, you mustn't be hungry till the bower is ready!' cried the little girls, alarmed, for Dorry was apt to be disconsolate if he was kept waiting for his meals. So