

# ***HAMLIN GARLAND***



***ROSE OF DUTCHER'S  
COOLLY***

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# **Rose of Dutcher's Coolly**

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Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)



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# CHAPTER I

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## HER CHILDHOOD

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Rose was an unaccountable child from the start. She learned to speak early and while she did not use "baby-talk" she had strange words of her own. She called hard money "tow" and a picture "tac," names which had nothing to do with onomatopoeia though it seemed so in some cases. Bread and milk she called "plop."

She began to read of her own accord when four years old, picking out the letters from the advertisements of the newspapers, and running to her mother at the sink or bread-board to learn what each word meant. Her demand for stories grew to be a burden. She was insatiate, nothing but sleep subdued her eager brain.

As she grew older she read and re-read her picture books when alone, but when older people were talking she listened as attentively as if she understood every word. She had the power of amusing herself and visited very little with other children. It was deeply moving to see her with her poor playthings out under the poplar tree, talking to herself, arranging and rearranging her chairs and tables, the sunlight flecking her hair, and the birds singing overhead.

She seemed only a larger sort of insect, and her prattle mixed easily with the chirp of crickets and the rustle of leaves.

She was only five years old when her mother suddenly withdrew her hands from pans and kettles, gave up all thought of bread and butter making, and took rest in death. Only a few hours of waiting on her bed near the kitchen fire and Ann Dutcher was through with toil and troubled dreaming, and lay in the dim best-room, taking no account of anything in the light of day.

Rose got up the next morning after her mother's last kiss and went into the room where the body lay. A gnomish little figure the child was, for at that time her head was large and her cropped hair bristled till she seemed a sort of brownie. Also, her lonely child-life had given her quaint, grave ways.

She knew her mother was dead, and that death was a kind of sleep which lasted longer than common sleep, that was all the difference, so she went in and stood by the bed and tried to see her mother's face. It was early in the morning and the curtains being drawn it was dark in the room, but Rose had no fear, for mother was there.

She talked softly to herself a little while, then went over to the window and pulled on the string of the curtain till it rolled up. Then she went back and looked at her mother. She grew tired of waiting at last.

"Mamma," she called, "wake up. Can't you wake up, mamma?"

She patted the cold, rigid cheeks with her rough brown little palms. Then she blew in the dead face, gravely. Then she thought if she could only open mamma's eyes she'd be awake. So she took her finger and thumb and tried to lift the lashes, and when she did she was frightened by the look of the set faded gray eyes. Then the terrible vague shadow of

the Unknown settled upon her and she cried convulsively: "Mamma! mamma, I want you!" Thus she met death, early in her life.

After her mother's burial Rose turned to her father more hungrily than before. She rode into the fields with him in the spring, when he went out to sow, sitting on the seeder box with the pockets of her little pink apron filled with wheat, and her sweet, piping little voice calling to the horses or laughing in glee at the swarms of sparrows. When he was plowing corn she rode on the horses, clinging like a blue-jay to the rings in the back-pad, her yellow-brown hair blowing.

She talked sagely about the crops and the weather, and asked innumerable questions. Often John could not hear her questions, which were like soft soliloquies, but she babbled on just the same.

"See the little birds, pappa John. They's 'bout a million of 'um, ain't they? They're glad spring has come, ain't they, pappa? They can understand each other just the same as we can, can't they, pappa John?"

John Dutcher was not a talker, and he seldom answered her unless she turned her eager face to him, and her bird-like voice repeated her question. But it mattered very little to Rose. She had her father's power of self-amusement. In case she got tired of riding about with him she brought her playthings out and established them in a corner of the fence. Her favorite game was playing horses.

Her horses were sticks of the size of canes, and of all sorts and colors. Each one had a name. How she selected them, and why she selected them out of the vast world of sticks, was a mystery to John Dutcher.

The brown stick she called Dan, the fork handle, Nellie, and the crooked stick with the big knot was Barney. She had from six to ten and she never forgot their names. Each had a string for a bridle and they all were placed in stalls, which she built with infinite labor and calculation out of twigs. She led each stick by its halter up to the manger (a rail) on which she had placed oats and grass. She talked to them.

"Now, Barney, whoa-whoa there now! Don't you kick Kit again—now sir! Kit, you better stand over here by Pete—Barney, you need exercise, that's what you need—yessir."

She exercised them by riding them in plunging circles about the fields, forgetting, with the quick imagination of a child, that she was doing all the hard work of the riding with her own stout, brown legs. It was a pleasure to John to have her there though he said little to her.

Often at night as he saw her lying asleep, her long lashes upon her roughened sun-burned skin, his heart went out to her in a great gush of tenderness. His throat ached and his eyes grew wet as he thought how unresponsive he had been that day. His remorseful memory went back over her eager questions to which he had not replied. Dear, sweet, restless little heart! And then he vowed never to lose patience with her again. And sometimes standing there beside her bed his arms closed about the little mound under the quilts, and his lips touched the round, sleep-enraptured face. At such times his needy soul went out in a cry to his dead wife for help to care for his child.

He grew afraid of the mystery and danger of coming womanhood. Her needs came to him more powerfully each day.

When she began going to school with the other children the effects of her lonely life and of her companionship with her father set her apart from the boys and girls of her own age and placed her among those several years older, whom she dominated by her gravity and her audacity. She was not mischievous or quarrelsome, but she was a fearless investigator. She tested their childish superstitions at once.

When they told her that if she swore at God and shook her fist at the sky she would certainly drop dead, she calmly stepped forward and shook her little fist up at the sun and swore, while the awe-stricken children cowered like a covey of partridges.

"There! you see *that's* a lie," she said scornfully. "God can't kill me—or else he don't care."

She went on exploding these strange superstitious fancies, which are only the survivals in civilized children of savage ancestry. She stood erect in the door of the school-house when she was eight years old, and pointed her hand at the lightning while the teacher sat cowed and weeping at her desk.

"You said I dassn't," the little elf cried, "But I dass't, and nothing ain't struck me yet."

Her absolute fearlessness of the things which children shrank from, the dark, and things of the dark, made her a marked figure. The women of the Coolly thought it due to the lack of a mother's care. They spoke to the minister about it and urged him to see Dutcher and ask him to try and do something for the child's good.

But Dutcher simply said, "Oh, don't bother the child about her soul. She's all right. I don't bother myself about

those things, and what's the use o' spoilin' the child's fun. If she wants to go to Sunday-school, why all right. She'll go where she's interested."

"But, Brother Dutcher, the child is doing outrageous things—heathenish, defying her God."

"I don't s'pose what she does will make any particular difference to God. We understand each other, Rosie and me. Don't worry. If she does anything real bad she'll come an' tell me of it. *Chk! Chk!* G' wan, Barney!" He cut the matter short by driving away into the field of corn.

He saw rushing upon him the most solemn and severe trials of a parent. Rose was a sturdy girl and promised to develop into a maiden early, and there were a hundred things which ought to be said to her which must be said by some one. He was not philosopher enough to know that she held in her expanding brain the germs of self-knowledge.

He had been passing through a running fire of questions from the child for two years, but these questions now took hold of deeper things, and they could no longer be put aside by saying, "Wait a few years and then I'll tell you." She would learn them elsewhere, if not from him. He braced himself for the trial, which increased in severity.

The child's horizon was limited, but within its circle her searching eyes let nothing escape. She came to Dutcher with appalling questions.

She not only asked him, "Who made God?" but she wanted to know how she came to be born, and a thousand other questions of the same searching nature. He saw that the day of petty fictions had gone by. The child knew that little lambs, and calves, and kittens did not grow down in

the woods. She knew that babies were not brought by the doctor, and that they did not come from heaven.

"Good Lord!" groaned her father one day, after an unusually persistent attack from her, caused by the appearance of a little colt out in the barn, "I wish your mother was here, or some woman. You do make it hard for me, Rosie."

"How do I make it hard for you, pappa?" was her quick new question. "O, Lord, what a young un," he said, in deeper despair. "Come, ain't it about time for you to be leggin' it toward school? Give me a rest, Rosie. But I'll answer all your questions—don't ask about them things of the children—come right to me always—only don't pile 'em all on me to once."

"All right, pappa, I won't."

"That's a good old soul!" he said, patting her on the back. After she had gone he sat down on the feed-box and wiped his face. "I wonder how women do explain things like that to girls," he thought. "I'll ask the preacher's wife to explain it—no, I won't. I'll do it myself, and I'll get her books to read about it—good books."

It was evidence of the girl's innate strength and purity of soul that the long succession of hired hands had not poisoned her mind. They soon discovered, however, the complete confidence between the father and child, and knew that their words and actions would be taken straight to John as soon as night came and Rose climbed into his lap. This made them careful before her, and the shame of their words and stories came to the child's ears only in fragments.

Dutcher concluded that he should have a woman in the house, and so sent back to Pennsylvania for his sister, lately widowed. Rose looked forward to seeing her aunt with the wildest delight. She went with her father down the valley to Bluff Siding to meet her. Bluff Siding was the only town the child knew, and it was a wonderful thing to go to town.

As they stood on the platform, waiting, her eyes swept along the great curve of the rails to the east, and suddenly, like a pain in the heart, came her first realization of distance, of the infinity of the world.

"Where does it go to, pappa?"

"O, a long way off. To Madison, Chicago, and Pennsylvania."

"How far is it? Could we go there with old Barney and Nell?"

"O, no. If we drove there it would take us days and days, and the wheat would grow up and get yellow, an' the snow come, almost, before we'd get there."

"O, dear!" she sighed. "I don't like to have it so big. Do people live all along the whole way?"

"Yes, the whole way, and lots of big cities."

"Big as Madison?" Madison was her unseen measure of greatness.

"O, yes. A hundred times bigger."

She sighed again and looked away to the east with a strange, unchildish, set stare in her eyes. She was trying to realize it.

"It makes me ache, pappa," she sighed, putting her little brown hand to her throat.

When the engine came in with its thunder and whizz, she shrank back against the station wall, white and breathless, not so much with fear as with awe. She had never stood so close to this monster before. It attracted all her attention so that for the moment she forgot about the coming of her aunt.

When she looked into the large dull face of Mrs. Diehl she was deeply disappointed. She liked her but she not love her!

She had looked forward to her coming almost as if to the return of her mother. She had imagined her looking strange and beautiful because she came out of the mystical, far-off land her father often spoke of. Instead of these things Mrs. Diehl was a strong-featured, mild-voiced woman, rather large and ungraceful, who looked upon the motherless child and clicked her tongue—tch!

"You poor chick!"

But the thing which had happened was this: Rose had conceived of distance and great cities.

The next day she said: "Pappa John, I want to go way up on the bluffs. I want to go up to Table Rock where I can see way, way off."

"It's a long climb up there, Rosie. You'll get tired."

But Rosie insisted and together they climbed the hill. Up beyond the pasture—beyond the black-berry patch—beyond the clinging birches in their white jackets—up where the rocks cropped out of the ground and where curious little wave-worn pebbles lay scattered on the scant grass.

Once a glittering rattle-snake lying in the sun awoke, and slipped under a stone like a stream of golden oil, and the child shrank against her father's thigh in horror.

They climbed slowly up the steep grassy slope and stood at last on the flat rock which topped the bluff. Rose stood there, dizzy, out of breath, with her hair blown across her cheek and looked away, at the curving valley and its river gleaming here and there through the willows and elders. It was like looking over an unexplored world to the child. Her eyes expanded and her heart filled with the same ache which came into it when she looked down along the curving railway track. She turned suddenly and fell sobbing against her father.

"Why, Rosie, what's the matter? Poor little girl—she's all tired out, climbin' up here." He sat down and took her on his lap and talked to her of the valley below and where the river went—but she would not look up again.

"I want to go home," she said with hidden face.

On the way down, John rolled a big stone down the hill and as it went bounding, crashing into the forest below, a deer drifted out like a gray shadow and swept along the hillside and over the ridge.

Rose saw it as if in a dream. She did not laugh nor shout. John was troubled by her silence and gravity, but laid it to weariness and took her pick-a-back on the last half mile through the brush.

That scene came to her mind again and again in the days which followed, but she did not see it again till the following spring. It appealed to her with less power then. Its beauty over-shadowed its oppressive largeness. As she grew older it came to be her favorite playing ground on holidays. She brought down those quaint little bits of limestone and made

them her playthings in her house, which was next door to her barn—and secondary to her barn.

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## CHAPTER II

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## CHILD-LIFE, PAGAN FREE

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Rose lived the life of the farm girls in the seven great Middle-West States. In summer she patted away to school, clad only in a gingham dress, white untrimmed cotton pantalets, and a straw hat that was made feminine by a band of gay ribbon. Her body was as untrammelled as a boy's. She went bare-foot and bare-headed at will, and she was part of all the sports.

She helped the boys snare gophers, on the way to school, and played house with the girls on the shady side of the school-house, and once, while the teacher was absent at noon, Rose proposed that a fire be built to heat the tea for the dolls.

She it was who constructed the stove out of thin bricks, and set a fire going in it in the corner of the boy's entry-way, and only the passing of a farmer saved the building from disaster.

She it was who found the ground-bird's nest and proposed to make a house over it, and ended by teaching the bird to walk through a long hallway made of sticks in order to get to its eggs again.

She despised hats and very seldom wore hers except hanging by the string down her back. Her face was brown and red as leather, and her stout little hands were always

covered with warts and good brown earth, which had no terrors for her.

Bugs and beetles did not scare her any more than they did the boys. She watched the beetles bury a dead gopher without the slightest repugnance; indeed, she turned to, after a long time, to help them, a kindness which they very probably resented, to judge from their scrambling.

She always urged the other girls to go down to the creek and see the boys go in swimming, and would have joined the fun had not the boys beaten her back with hands full of mud, while they uttered opprobrious cries. She saw no reason why boys should have all the fun.

When the days were hot they could go down there in the cool, nice creek, strip and have a good time, but girls must primp around and try to keep nice and clean. She looked longingly at the naked little savages running about and splashing in the water. There was something so fine and joyous in it, her childish heart rebelled at sex-distinction as she walked slowly away. She, too, loved the feel of the water and the caress of the wind.

She was a good student and developed early into a wonderful speller and reader. She always listened to the classes in reading, and long before she reached the pieces herself she knew them by heart, and said them to herself in the silence of the lane or the loneliness of the garret. She recited "The Battle of Waterloo" and "Locheil" long before she understood the words. The roll of the verse excited her, and she thrust her nut of a fist into the air like Miriam the Hebrew singer, feeling vaguely the same passion.

She went from Primer to First Reader, then to the Second and Third Readers, without effort. She read easily and dramatically. She caught at the larger meanings, and uttered them in such wise that the older pupils stopped their study to listen.

Scraps and fragments of her reading took curious lodgment in her mind. New conceptions burst into her consciousness with a golden glory upon reading these lines:

"Field of wheat so full and fair,  
Shining with a sunny air;  
Lightly swaying either way,  
Graceful as the breezes sway."

They made her see the beauty of the grainfield as never before. It seemed to be lit by some mysterious light.

"Cleon hath a million acres,  
Ne'er a one have I,"

seemed to express something immemorial and grand. She seemed to see hills stretching to vast distances, covered with cattle. "The pied frog's orchestra" came to her with sudden conscious meaning as she sat on the door-step one night eating her bowl of bread and milk, and watching the stars come out. These fragments of literature expressed the poetry of certain things about her, and helped her also to perceive others.

She was a daring swinger, and used to swing furiously out under the maple trees, hoping to some day touch the branches high up there, and, when her companions gathered in little clumps in dismayed consultation, she

swung with wild hair floating free, a sort of intoxication of delight in her heart.

Sometimes when alone she slipped off her clothes and ran amid the tall corn-stalks like a wild thing. Her slim little brown body slipped among the leaves like a weasel in the grass. Some secret, strange delight, drawn from ancestral sources, bubbled over from her pounding heart, and she ran and ran until wearied and sore with the rasping corn leaves, then she sadly put on civilized dress once more.

Her feet were brown as toads, but graceful and small, and she washed them (when the dew was heavy enough) by running in the wet grass just before going in to bed, a trick the boys of the neighborhood had taught her. She ran forward to clean the insteps and backward to clean the heels. If the grass was not wet, she omitted the ceremony. Dust was clean anyhow. Her night-gowns were of most sorry pattern till her aunt came; thereafter they were clean, though it mattered little. They were a nuisance anyway.

She wore a pink sun-bonnet, when she could find one; generally there were two or three hanging on the fences at remote places. She sat down in the middle of the road, because she had a lizard's liking for the warm soft dust, and she paddled in every pool and plunged her hand into every puddle after frogs and bugs and worms, with the action of a crane.

She ate everything that boys did. That is to say, she ate sheep sorrel, Indian tobacco, roots of ferns, May apples, rose leaves, rose-buds, raw turnips, choke-cherries, wild crab-apples, slippery elm bark, and the green balls on young oak trees, as well as the bitter acorns. These acorns she chewed

into pats, and dried in the sun, to eat at other times, like a savage.

She ate pinks and grass blades, and green watermelons, and ground cherries, and black-haws, and dew-berries, and every other conceivable thing in the woods and fields, not to mention the score of things which she tried and spit out. She became inured to poison ivy like the boys and walked the forest paths without fear of anything but snakes.

Summer was one continuous and busy play-spell for her in those days before her lessons became a serious thing, for as she sat in school she was experimenting in the same way. She chewed paper into balls and snapped them like the boys. She carried slips of elm bark to chew also, and slate pencils she crunched daily. She gnawed the corners of her slate, tasted her ink and munched the cedar of her pencil.

And through it all she grew tall and straight and brown. She could run like a partridge and fight like a wild-cat, at need. Her brown-black eyes shone in her dark warm skin with an eager light, and her calloused little claws of hands reached and took hold of all realities.

The boys respected her as a girl who wasn't afraid of bugs, and who could run, and throw a ball. Above all she was strong and well.

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## **CHAPTER III**

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## **DANGEROUS DAYS**

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A farmer's daughter is exposed to sights and sounds which the city girl knows nothing of. Mysterious processes of generation and birth go on before the eyes of the farm child, which only come as obscure whisperings to the city child of the same middle condition. And these happenings have a terrifying power to stir and develop passions prematurely.

Rose heard occasionally obscene words among the hands. She listened unperceived to the vulgar cackling of old women during afternoon calls. Before her eyes from the time of her toddling youth had proceeded the drama of animal life. She had seen it all; courtship, birth, death. Nothing escaped her keen, searching, inquisitive eyes. She asked her father about these dramatic and furious episodes of the barnyard, but he put her off, and she finally ceased to ask about them. She began to perceive they were considered of that obscure and unmentionable world of sin, with which men alone had proper right to deal.

When the girls of her age in the grasp of some gale of passion, danced about her shouting foul words in the unknowing way children have, she could not take part by word of mouth, though she felt the same savage, frenzied delight in it.

She learned early the hideous signs which pass in the country to describe the unnamable and the covert things of

human life. She saw them scrawled on the fences, on school-house doors, and written on the dust of the road. There was no escaping them. The apparently shameful fact of sex faced her everywhere.

And yet through it all she lived a glad, free, wholesome life. Her blood was sweet and clean and kept off contagion. Her brown skin flushed with its unhindered current. She dipped into this obscure questionable world only momentarily, and came back to her father wholesome and happy, except occasionally when some outrageous gesture or word had stricken her into weeping.

Then her father told her not to mind; just be good and sweet herself, and it would help the others to be good too. He blundered sometimes and struggled for words, and talked in grotesque riddles, but she understood his meaning some way and was comforted.

She did not go to her aunt. She had heard her say coarse words and she did not care to go and tell her of these strange things. Her father was her hero and guide. She went to him as naturally as to a mother. It was a great thing for him to achieve, but he did not know it. He did not seek it. It was indeed thrust upon him. He would gladly have escaped from it, but Rose refused to listen to anyone else, so the puzzled and disturbed father continued to be her timorous guide as a matter of need.

He could not understand her quick perception—something seemed to rise in the child to help him explain. Germs of latent perception seemed to spring up like a conjuror's magic seed, here a kernel, there a tree. One by one obscure ideas rose from the deep like bubbles, and

burst into thought in her conscious self. A hint organized in her brain long trains of sequential conceptions, which she had inherited with her sex. She did not require teaching on the most fundamental problems of her nature.

Rose began to work early, but her work, like her playing, was not that of other girls. As she never played with dolls, caring more for hobby-horses, so she early learned to do work in the barn. From taking care of make-believe stick horses she came easily to take care of real horses.

When a toddling babe she had moved about under the huge plow-horses in their stalls, and put straw about them, and patted their columnar limbs with her little pads of palms, talking to them in soft indefinite gurgle of love and command.

She knew how much hay and oats they needed, and she learned early to curry them, though they resented her first trials with the comb. She cared less for the cows and pigs, but before she was ten she could milk the "easy" cows. She liked the chickens, and it was part of her daily duty to feed the hens and gather the eggs.

She could use a fork in the barn deftly as a boy by the time she was twelve, and in stacking times she handed bundles across the stack to her father. It was the variety of work, perhaps, which prevented her from acquiring that pathetic and lamentable stoop (or crook) in the shoulders and back which many country girls have in varying degree.

All things tended to make her powerful, lithe and erect. The naked facts of nature were hers to command. She touched undisguised and unrefined nature at all points. Her feet met not merely soil, but mud. Her hands smelled of the

barn yard as well as of the flowers of the wild places of wood and meadow.

Meanwhile her comradeship was sweet to John Dutcher. He hardly knew his loss of a son so completely was he companioned by Rose. He had put far away the time when she should wear shoes and long dresses and become a "young lady."

"Let her be, as long as you can," he said to his sister. "She's a mighty comfort to me now, and she's happy; don't disturb her; time to wear long dresses and corsets'll come soon enough without hurryin' things."

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## CHAPTER IV

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### AN OPENING CLOVER-BLOOM

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There are times in a child's life when it leaps suddenly into larger growth as the imprisoned bud blooms larger than its promise, when the green fist of its straining calyx loosens in the warm glow of a May morning. Knowledge comes to the child, especially all the subtler knowledge of time, of space, of love, in a vague, indefinite, unconscious way, developing out of the child's organic self precisely as the flower blooms.

This knowledge comes to definite knowledge for an instant only and then returns to the subconscious, waiting the next day of warm sun, shining water and smell of spring. Each time it stays longer, till at last the child can contemplate its own thought and finally express it. These times form our real life epochs.

One day in June, a party of the school children, with flashing tin pails and willow baskets, went up into the woods after the wild-wood strawberries. It was late June and the strawberries of the meadows and uplands were nearly gone. The roads were dusty, the pastures close-clipped.

Merry, bare-footed little creatures! They started forth in the early morning while the dew still flamed on the clover-leaves, and around each corn-hill the ground was still moist. The girls romped and picked wild flowers, the boys threw stones at the chipmunks on the fence, and tossed their tin

pails in the air, performing feats of deftness in imitation of the circus-men, whom they had lately seen on the green at Tyre.

They entered the forest and kept on up the wood-road until it seemed as if they were explorers. They had the delicious, tremulous feeling of having penetrated into the primeval, where nothing but the birds and animals lived. On past cool deeps of poplar, where the mandrake grew, and the sweet fern spread its magnificent leaves. On until the strawberries appeared, growing in clumps on long swaying stems, pale scarlet globes of delicious tartness.

They fell to work mostly in pairs. Curly-haired Carl kept with Rose, and his sharp eyes and knowledge of the patch enabled them to fill their pails first; then they went about helping the others, whose voices babbled on like streams.

Everywhere the pink sun-bonnets and ragged straw hats bobbed up and down. Everywhere fresh voices. The sunlight fell in vivid yellow patches through the cool odorous gloom. Everywhere the faint odor of ferns and mandrakes and berries, and the faint rustle of leaves, as if the shadows of the clouds trampled the tree-tops.

There was something sweet and wild and primeval in the scene, and the children were carried out of their usual selves. Rose herself danced and romped, her eyes flashing with delight. Under her direction they all came together on a little slope, where the trees were less thick, and near a brook which gurgled through moss-covered stones.

"O, let's have our picnic here!"

"All right, let's!"

They made short work of the lunch they had. Their buttered biscuits were spread with berries and mixed with water from the brook, which the girls drank like the boys, that is, by lying down on their breasts and drinking as the hunter drinks. Their hunger eased they fell to games. Games centuries old. Games which the Skandinavians played in the edges of their pine forests. Games the English lads and lassies played in the oak-openings of middle-age England.

The little ones were ruled out after awhile and the five or six elder children (the oldest only fourteen), went on with their games, which told of love. They joined hands and circled about Carl, they sang:

"King William was King James' son,  
And from the royal race he run,  
Upon his breast he wore a star,  
Which points away to a conquest far.  
Go choose you east, go choose you west,  
Go choose the one that you love best."

Carl selected Rose, as they all knew he would. They stood together now, holding hands.

"Down on this carpet you must kneel,"

(they knelt)

"As sure as the grass grows in the field.  
Salute your bride with a kiss so sweet,"

(Carl kissed her gravely)

"Now you rise upon your feet."

Again they circled, and again a little bride and bridegroom knelt. The fresh young voices rang under the spaces of the trees, silencing the joy of the thrush. The flecking sunlight fell on their tousled hair and their flushed faces. They had forgotten home and kindred, and were living a strange new-old life, old as history, wild and free once more, and in their hearts something bloomed like a flower, something sweet shook them all, something unutterable and nameless, something magnificent to attain and sorrowful to lose.

When they tired of "King William," they all flung themselves down on the grass and grew quiet. Some of the girls made wreaths of flowers strung on grass stems, while the boys studied the insects under the chips and stumps, or came slyly behind the girls and stuck spears of fox-tail down their necks. Some of them rolled down the bank. Carl, when he was tired of this, came and lay down by Rose, and put his head in her lap. Other bridegrooms did the same with their brides. Some of the boys matched violets, by seeing which would hook the other's head off.

Silence fell on them. Some passion thrilled Rose as she looked down into Carl's sunny blue eyes. She brushed his hair as he looked up at the clouds sailing above the trees like wonderful mountains of snow.

She was thirteen years of age, but prophecy of womanhood, of change, of sorrow, was in her voice as she said slowly, a look not childish upon her face:

"I'd like to live here forever, wouldn't you, Carl?"

"I guess we'd have to build a house," said Carl, the practical one.

She felt a terrible hunger, a desire to take his head in her arms and kiss it. Her muscles ached and quivered with something she could not fathom. As she resisted she grew calm, but mysteriously sad, as if something were passing from her forever. The leaves whispered a message to her, and the stream repeated an occult note of joy, which was mixed with sorrow.

The struggle of wild fear and bitter-sweet hunger of desire—this vague, mystical perception of her sex, did not last, to Rose. It was lost when she came out of the wood into the road on the way homeward. It was a formless impulse and throbbing stir far down below definite thought. It was sweet and wild and innocent as the first coquettish love-note of the thrush, and yet it was the beginning of her love-life. It was the second great epoch of her life.

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