SUSAN COOLIDGE

CLOVER

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Susan Coolidge (Biography)

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SARAH CHAUNCEY WOOLSEY (Susan Coolidge) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, January 29, 1835. Her father, John M. Woolsey, a New Yorker, had come to Cleveland to attend to property owned by his father, and had there met Jane Andrews, a charming and graceful girl from Connecticut, whom he made his wife.

Their home was on Euclid Avenue, and comprised about five acres in house-lot, garden, orchard, pasture, and woodland. Here came into the world a family of four girls and a boy,—all vigorous and active and full of life. Sarah was the eldest and the predestined leader of the little tribe. They grew up as children of that day did under similar conditions. There was the regular old-fashioned schooling, not too exacting or strenuous, and much wholesome out-of-door life. There were horses and dogs and cattle and birds for the children to care for and play with, and much climbing and romping were permitted in a place where no near neighbors could be disturbed. To the other children life was a joyous holiday, diversified with small disappointments and dismays; but to Sarah the sky and the earth held boundless anticipations and intentions, and the world was a place of enchantment.

She was always individual from the moment she first opened her big brown eyes—passionately loving and passionately wilful, with heroic intentions and desires, and with remorse and disappointments in proportion. Part of the woodland where the axe had not yet done its work of cutting and clipping was given to the children for a playground. They called it “Paradise,” and for all of them it

was a place of rapture and mystery. To the others it was full of hiding places,—to little Sarah the hiding places were bowers. They looked for eggs and birds' nests, and had thrilling encounters with furry wild creatures, which fled at their approach; but her intercourse was all with the fairies and elves and gnomes which peopled the place. After a time they felt the presence of the fairies too; but it was under the influence of her enthusiastic imagination, which controlled their own more mundane perceptions. With her for a leader they often passed into a new world of romance and adventure and high undertakings. They lived in battlemented castles, attended by knights and squires, with danger on all sides met by lofty courage; or they rode on elephants in India, always on dignified missions, attended by great pomp and ceremony; or they lived with fairies, whose gifts might crop up under every toadstool. To be sure, the elephant on which they made their proud progress might at other times, stripped of his trappings, be serviceable as a nursery table, and the fairy gifts were apt to bear a prosaic resemblance to certain well-known and well-worn nursery properties; but invested with the mystery and romance cast upon them by Sarah's vivid imagination, the little band went, as she led them, into the land of dreams, and felt no incongruity.

Her education went on much as she chose. The best teachers available were employed, and to each in turn she became a favorite and interesting pupil; but though her quick intelligence enabled her to pass excellent examinations and gave her a foremost place in her classes, she really assimilated and retained only what she enjoyed. Mathematics she ignored entirely. All scientific problems fascinated her by their results; but she would not open her mind to the processes by which the results were reached.

For languages she had no predilections, though she used her own with singular grace and precision, drawing her words from an apparently limitless vocabulary. Through life this charming use of language, combined with her keen humor and sympathetic appreciation of all that makes life stirring and vital, made her a most fascinating companion. Her delight in literature was her real education. From her early youth she revelled in books, reading so rapidly that it seemed impossible that she could remember what she read; but, in fact, remembering it all! To have looked over a poem two or three times was enough to make it a permanent possession. She devoured history, biography, romances, and poetry, and with intuitive judgment and taste revelled in what was really beautiful and interesting, and discarded the second-rate and commonplace. She began writing at a very early age,—fairy stories, verses, and romances,—but she never published anything until she had reached full maturity. Meantime she grew to vigorous, active womanhood, full of interests and friendships and delightful experiences of one sort and another. She was much loved, and gave such a wealth of self-forgetting, idolizing, ardent affection in return that her friends were all lovers. She drew a circle of loving admirers about her wherever she went, and was always totally unconscious of the charm she worked by her very sweet voice and manner, brilliant fun, and warm sympathy.

The Civil War broke out just as she passed from girlhood to young womanhood. It aroused in her a passion of enthusiasm and devotion, and she threw herself with all her heart and soul into work for the soldiers at home and afield. In the Soldiers' Hospital at New Haven she was an enthusiastic helper, in the wards, or storeroom, or linen closet, wherever her energy was most needed. And her

leisure was filled with knitting or sewing or preparing special diet for the sick and wounded. She was a tireless worker then and ever, and nature had endowed her with great practical gifts. She was an excellent cook and an expert needlewoman, both in plain sewing and the most dainty embroidery, and all work was done with such rapidity and perfection that it was a despair for the race of plodders even to watch her swift achievements.

From New Haven she went to the Convalescent Hospital established at Portsmouth Grove, and was one of a band of excellent workers there during the second year of the war. It was a very developing and vivid experience, and one which she counted among the greatest points of interest in her life.

When the war was over, her old career of busy, never-slackening industry and purpose began again. It was full, as ever, of friendships which could not possibly claim more than she was willing to give. She naturally drew around her the cleverest men and women of her acquaintance, and her society was sought far and near.

But she did not really begin her life as an author until a few years later, when in a grove at Bethlehem, N. H., sitting on a fallen tree, she sketched the outline of “The New Year’s Bargain.” She had sent a few fugitive articles to certain magazines before this, but only now did she take up writing as a real work. That dainty little book, with its fantastic and graceful imaginings, was so well received by the public that she went on in a different vein, through the series of the “Katy Did” books, where fact and fiction, experience and fancy, were so blended that it was hardly possible to say in answer to the eager questionings of some of her little readers where the one ended and the other began. Katy found a large audience, and her biographer went on from

children’s books to verses or historical studies, such as “Old Convent Days,” or mere editor’s work, like the condensations of those famous old diaries of Mrs. Delany and Miss Burney. She was consulting reader for Roberts Company in the days when the hall-mark of that firm was a proof of excellence. She was very industrious, but her literary work never seemed the most absorbing part of her life. This was partly because of her intense and vivid interest in the rest of life,—the journeys, the visits, and above all the friends,—and largely because she was absolutely devoid of literary vanity or self-consciousness. She seldom talked of her work or referred in any way to her success. Her verses found a warm welcome in many hearts whose owners were all unknown to her, and sometimes she acknowledged, with a sort of tender surprise, that it was a great reward to have been able to help and encourage others. But anything like flattery or mere compliment was very distasteful to her, and she sometimes owned impatiently that “Susan Coolidge” bored her to death, and she wished she had never heard of her!

While literature became the chief occupation of her life, her artistic temperament and love of the beautiful found expression in many other ways. She instinctively surrounded herself with beautiful objects and colors. Her taste was almost unerring, and harmony of design and softly shaded tints seemed to be her natural setting. She transformed every room she lived in, were it for a week only.

She thought little of her drawings in water color. They were all flower pieces studied from life, and she was conscious of the little instruction she had received and her ignorance of technique. But all the same these lovely panels were a joy to those who were fortunate enough to possess them. As was once said by one who was no mean artist

himself, “She can do what many artists—adepts in technique—fail in. She gives us the flower in all its life and spirit.” Her china painting—necessarily more conventional—was still charming, holding something of her individuality.

This vivid life of purpose and energy and never-failing zest appeared to bubble up from such an inexhaustible fountain of vitality that it seemed as if it might go on for ever. But gradually a shadow stole over it—not a very dark one at first, but inexorable. She fought with it, played with it, defied it, but it was always there! She could not acknowledge defeat and was always planning for the future with gay self-confidence; but the shadow grew! By and by the narrowing limits shut her in her chamber, but even then she looked out upon the days to come with undaunted courage. The chamber was not like a sick room. It was bright with sunshine and the sparkle of fire, and scented and gay with the flowers she so dearly loved. Here she read and wrote and saw her many friends. From hence came words of rejoicing for all her dear ones who were happy, and words of truest sympathy for those who were sad. She was one of the few people to whom the joys and sorrows of others are of equal importance to their own. She pondered over the lives of her friends with never-ending interest, and gave at every turn and crisis the truest and most comprehending sympathy. No wonder that so many warmed hands and hearts by that generous flame!

Slowly the shadow deepened. She was disturbed by it, but still wrote happily of the future and filled it with plans and purposes. But one day, April 9, 1905, very gently, Death’s finger touched her. She was not conscious of pain or trouble, “only a new sensation,” but she closed her eyes, and without a word of farewell, was gone away from us.

It is hard to sum up such a life. It was a very full and happy one. She gave much, but received much. She loved beauty, and she was always surrounded by it. She loved friendship, and nobody had more or better friends. She gave them of her best, but she drew their best from them. Hers was an ideal companionship, so full of appreciative interest and sympathy, so illuminated by wit and humor. She was ardent and eager in her plans of life. Nothing could exceed the absorption and energy with which she carried them out. But she accepted disappointment, after a little struggle, with a gay *insouciance*. So when the final defeat came she seemed to resign herself without struggle to the inevitable, and to those of us who loved her best it seemed as if that sweet and brilliant and unwearied spirit had only folded its wings for a moment before taking a longer and surer flight.

E. D. W. G.

April, 1906.

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Chapter I.

A Talk on the Doorsteps

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It was one of those afternoons in late April which are as mild and balmy as any June day. The air was full of the chirps and twitters of nest-building birds, and of sweet indefinable odors from half-developed leaf-buds and cherry and pear blossoms. The wisterias overhead were thickly starred with pointed pearl-colored sacs, growing purpler with each hour, which would be flowers before long; the hedges were quickening into life, the long pensile willow-boughs and the honey-locusts hung in a mist of fine green against the sky, and delicious smells came with every puff of wind from the bed of white violets under the parlor windows.

Katy and Clover Carr, sitting with their sewing on the door-steps, drew in with every breath the sense of spring. Who does not know the delightfulness of that first sitting out of doors after a long winter’s confinement? It seems like flinging the gauntlet down to the powers of cold. Hope and renovation are in the air. Life has conquered Death, and to the happy hearts in love with life there is joy in the victory. The two sisters talked busily as they sewed, but all the time an only half-conscious rapture informed their senses,—the sympathy of that which is immortal in human souls with the resurrection of natural things, which is the sure pledge of immortality.

It was nearly a year since Katy had come back from that too brief journey to Europe with Mrs. Ashe and Amy, about which some of you have read, and many things of interest to the Carr family had happened during the interval. The “Natchitoches” had duly arrived in New York in October, and

presently afterward Burnet was convulsed by the appearance of a tall young fellow in naval uniform, and the announcement of Katy's engagement to Lieutenant Worthington.

It was a piece of news which interested everybody in the little town, for Dr. Carr was a universal friend and favorite. For a time he had been the only physician in the place; and though with the gradual growth of population two or three younger men had appeared to dispute the ground with him, they were forced for the most part to content themselves with doctoring the new arrivals, and with such fragments and leavings of practice as Dr. Carr chose to intrust to them. None of the old established families would consent to call in any one else if they could possibly get the "old" doctor.

A skilful practitioner, who is at the same time a wise adviser, a helpful friend, and an agreeable man, must necessarily command a wide influence. Dr. Carr was "by all odds and far away," as our English cousins would express it, the most popular person in Burnet, wanted for all pleasant occasions, and doubly wanted for all painful ones.

So the news of Katy's engagement was made a matter of personal concern by a great many people, and caused a general stir, partly because she was her father's daughter, and partly because she was herself; for Katy had won many friends by her own merit. So long as Ned Worthington stayed, a sort of tide of congratulation and sympathy seemed to sweep through the house all day long. Tea-roses and chrysanthemums, and baskets of pears and the beautiful Burnet grapes flooded the premises, and the door-bell rang so often that Clover threatened to leave the door open, with a card attached,—"Walk straight in. *He* is in the parlor!"

Everybody wanted to see and know Katy's lover, and to have him as a guest. Ten tea-drinkings a week would scarcely have contented Katy's well-wishers, had the limitations of mortal weeks permitted such a thing; and not a can of oysters would have been left in the place if Lieutenant Worthington's leave had lasted three days longer. Clover and Elsie loudly complained that they themselves never had a chance to see him; for whenever he was not driving or walking with Katy, or having long *tête-à-têtes* in the library, he was eating muffins somewhere, or making calls on old ladies whose feelings would be dreadfully hurt if he went away without their seeing him.

"Sisters seem to come off worst of all," protested Johnnie. But in spite of their lamentations they all saw enough of their future brother-in-law to grow fond of him; and notwithstanding some natural pangs of jealousy at having to share Katy with an outsider, it was a happy visit, and every one was sorry when the leave of absence ended, and Ned had to go away.

A month later the "Natchitoches" sailed for the Bahamas. It was to be a six months' cruise only; and on her return she was for a while to make part of the home squadron. This furnished a good opportunity for her first lieutenant to marry; so it was agreed that the wedding should take place in June, and Katy set about her preparations in the leisurely and simple fashion which was characteristic of her. She had no ambition for a great *trousseau*, and desired to save her father expense; so her outfit, as compared with that of most modern brides, was a very moderate one, but being planned and mostly made at home, it necessarily involved thought, time, and a good deal of personal exertion.

Dear little Clover flung herself into the affair with even more interest than if it had been her own. Many happy

mornings that winter did the sisters spend together over their dainty stitches and “white seam.” Elsie and Johnnie were good needle-women now, and could help in many ways. Mrs. Ashe often joined them; even Amy could contribute aid in the plainer sewing, and thread everybody’s needles. But the most daring and indefatigable of all was Clover, who never swerved in her determination that Katy’s “things” should be as nice and as pretty as love and industry combined could make them. Her ideas as to decoration soared far beyond Katy’s. She hem-stitched, she cat-stitched, she feather-stitched, she lace-stitched, she tucked and frilled and embroidered, and generally worked her fingers off; while the bride vainly protested that all this finery was quite unnecessary, and that simple hems and a little Hamburg edging would answer just as well. Clover merely repeated the words, “Hamburg edging!” with an accent of scorn, and went straight on in her elected way.

As each article received its last touch, and came from the laundry white and immaculate, it was folded to perfection, tied with a narrow blue or pale rose-colored ribbon, and laid aside in a sacred receptacle known as “The Wedding Bureau.” The handkerchiefs, grouped in dozens, were strewn with dried violets and rose-leaves to make them sweet. Lavender-bags and sachets of orris lay among the linen; and perfumes as of Araby were discernible whenever a drawer in the bureau was pulled out.

So the winter passed, and now spring was come; and the two girls on the doorsteps were talking about the wedding, which seemed very near now.

“Tell me just what sort of an affair you want it to be,” said Clover.

“It seems more your wedding than mine, you have worked so hard for it,” replied Katy. “You might give your

ideas first."

"My ideas are not very distinct. It's only lately that I have begun to think about it at all, there has been so much to do. I'd like to have you have a beautiful dress and a great many wedding-presents and everything as pretty as can be, but not so many bridesmaids as Cecy, because there is always such a fuss in getting them nicely up the aisle in church and out again,—that is as far as I've got. But so long as you are pleased, and it goes off well, I don't care exactly how it is managed."

"Then, since you are in such an accommodating frame of mind, it seems a good time to break my views to you. Don't be shocked, Clovy; but, do you know, I don't want to be married in church at all, or to have any bridesmaids, or anything arranged for beforehand particularly. I should like things to be simple, and to just *happen*."

"But, Katy, you can't do it like that. It will all get into a snarl if there is no planning beforehand or rehearsals; it would be confused and horrid."

"I don't see why it would be confused if there were nothing to confuse. Please not be vexed; but I always have hated the ordinary kind of wedding, with its fuss and worry and so much of everything, and just like all the other weddings, and the bride looking tired to death, and nobody enjoying it a bit. I'd like mine to be different, and more—more—real. I don't want any show or processing about, but just to have things nice and pretty, and all the people I love and who love me to come to it, and nothing cut and dried, and nobody tired, and to make it a sort of dear, loving occasion, with leisure to realize how dear it is and what it all means. Don't you think it would really be nicer in that way?"

"Well, yes, as you put it, and 'viewed from the higher standard,' as Miss Inches would say, perhaps it would. Still,

bridesmaids and all that are very pretty to look at; and folks will be surprised if you don’t have them.”

“Never mind folks,” remarked the irreverent Katy. “I don’t care a button for that argument. Yes; bridesmaids and going up the aisle in a long procession and all the rest *are* pretty to look at,—or were before they got to be so hackneyed. I can imagine the first bridal procession up the aisle of some early cathedral as having been perfectly beautiful. But nowadays, when the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker and everybody else do it just alike, the custom seems to me to have lost its charm. I never did enjoy having things exactly as every one else has them,—all going in the same direction like a flock of sheep. I would like my little wedding to be something especially my own. There was a poetical meaning in those old customs; but now that the custom has swallowed up so much of the meaning, it would please me better to retain the meaning and drop the custom.”

“I see what you mean,” said Clover, not quite convinced, but inclined as usual to admire Katy and think that whatever she meant must be right. “But tell me a little more. You mean to have a wedding-dress, don’t you?” doubtfully.

“Yes, indeed!”

“Have you thought what it shall be?”

“Do you recollect that beautiful white crape shawl of mamma’s which papa gave me two years ago? It has a lovely wreath of embroidery round it; and it came to me the other day that it would make a charming gown, with white surah or something for the under-dress. I should like that better than anything new, because mamma used to wear it, and it would seem as if she were here still, helping me to get ready. Don’t you think so?”

“It is a lovely idea,” said Clover, the ever-ready tears dimming her happy blue eyes for a moment, “and just like

you. Yes, that shall be the dress,—dear mamma's shawl. It will please papa too, I think, to have you choose it."

"I thought perhaps it would," said Katy, soberly. "Then I have a wide white watered sash which Aunt Izzy gave me, and I mean to have that worked into the dress somehow. I should like to wear something of hers too, for she was really good to us when we were little, and all that long time that I was ill; and we were not always good to her, I am afraid. Poor Aunt Izzy! What troublesome little wretches we were,—I most of all!"

"Were you? Somehow I never can recollect the time when you were not a born angel. I am afraid I don't remember Aunt Izzy well. I just have a vague memory of somebody who was pretty strict and cross."

"Ah, you never had a back, and needed to be waited on night and day, or you would recollect a great deal more than that. Cousin Helen helped me to appreciate what Aunt Izzy really was. By the way, one of the two things I have set my heart on is to have Cousin Helen come to my wedding."

"It would be lovely if she could. Do you suppose there is any chance?"

"I wrote her week before last, but she hasn't answered yet. Of course it depends on how she is; but the accounts from her have been pretty good this year."

"What is the other thing you have set your heart on? You said 'two.'"

"The other is that Rose Red shall be here, and little Rose. I wrote to her the other day also, and coaxed hard. Wouldn't it be too enchanting? You know how we have always longed to have her in Burnet; and if she could come now it would make everything twice as pleasant."

"Katy, what an enchanting thought!" cried Clover, who had not seen Rose since they all left Hillsover. "It would be

the greatest lark that ever was to have the Roses. When do you suppose we shall hear? I can hardly wait, I am in such a hurry to have her say ‘Yes.’”

“But suppose she says ‘No’?”

“I won’t think of such a possibility. Now go on. I suppose your principles don’t preclude a wedding-cake?”

“On the contrary, they include a great deal of wedding-cake. I want to send a box to everybody in Burnet,—all the poor people, I mean, and the old people and the children at the Home and those forlorn creatures at the poor-house and all papa’s patients.”

“But, Katy, that will cost a lot,” objected the thrifty Clover.

“I know it; so we must do it in the cheapest way, and make the cake ourselves. I have Aunt Izzy’s recipe, which is a very good one; and if we all take hold, it won’t be such an immense piece of work. Debby has quantities of raisins stoned already. She has been doing them in the evenings a few at a time for the last month. Mrs. Ashe knows a factory where you can get the little white boxes for ten dollars a thousand, and I have commissioned her to send for five hundred.”

“Five hundred! What an immense quantity!”

“Yes; but there are all the Hillsover girls to be remembered, and all our kith and kin, and everybody at the wedding will want one. I don’t think it will be too many. Oh, I have arranged it all in my mind. Johnnie will slice the citron, Elsie will wash the currants, Debby measure and bake, Alexander mix, you and I will attend to the icing, and all of us will cut it up.”

“Alexander!”

“Alexander. He is quite pleased with the idea, and has constructed an implement—a sort of spade, cut out of new

pine wood—for the purpose. He says it will be a sight easier than digging flower-beds. We will set about it next week; for the cake improves by keeping, and as it is the heaviest job we have to do, it will be well to get it out of the way early."

"Sha'n't you have a floral bell, or a bower to stand in, or something of that kind?" ventured Clover, timidly.

"Indeed I shall not," replied Katy. "I particularly dislike floral bells and bowers. They are next worst to anchors and harps and 'floral pillows' and all the rest of the dreadful things that they have at funerals. No, we will have plenty of fresh flowers, but not in stiff arrangements. I want it all to seem easy and to *be* easy. Don't look so disgusted, Clovy."

"Oh, I'm not disgusted. It's your wedding. I want you to have everything in your own way."

"It's everybody's wedding, I think," said Katy, tenderly. "Everybody is so kind about it. Did you see the thing that Polly sent this morning?"

"No. It must have come after I went out. What was it?"

"Seven yards of beautiful nun's lace which she bought in Florence. She says it is to trim a morning dress; but it's really too pretty. How dear Polly is! She sends me something almost every day. I seem to be in her thoughts all the time. It is because she loves Ned so much, of course; but it is just as kind of her."

"I think she loves you almost as much as Ned," said Clover.

"Oh, she couldn't do that; Ned is her only brother. There is Amy at the gate now."

It was a much taller Amy than had come home from Italy the year before who was walking toward them under the budding locust-boughs. Roman fever had seemed to quicken and stimulate all Amy's powers, and she had grown very fast during the past year. Her face was as frank and childlike

as ever, and her eyes as blue; but she was prettier than when she went to Europe, for her cheeks were pink, and the mane of waving hair which framed them in was very becoming. The hair was just long enough now to touch her shoulders; it was turning brown as it lengthened, but the ends of the locks still shone with childish gold, and caught the sun in little shining rings as it filtered down through the tree branches.

She kissed Clover several times, and gave Katy a long, close hug; then she produced a parcel daintily hid in silver paper.

"Tanta," she said,—this was a pet name lately invented for Katy,—"here is something for you from mamma. It's something quite particular, I think, for mamma cried when she was writing the note; not a hard cry, you know, but just two little teeny-weeny tears in her eyes. She kept smiling, though, and she looked happy, so I guess it isn't anything very bad. She said I was to give it to you with her best, *best* love."

Katy opened the parcel, and beheld a square veil of beautiful old blonde. The note said:

> This was my wedding-veil, dearest Katy, and my mother wore it before me. It has been laid aside all these years with the idea that perhaps Amy might want it some day; but instead I send it to you, without whom there would be no Amy to wear this or anything else. I think it would please Ned to see it on your head, and I know it would make me very happy; but if you don't feel like using it, don't mind for a moment saying so to
>
> Your loving
> Polly.

“Katy opened the parcel, and beheld a square veil of beautiful old blonde.”

Katy handed the note silently to Clover, and laid her face for a little while among the soft folds of the lace, about which a faint odor of roses hung like the breath of old-time and unforgotten loves and affections.

“Shall you?” queried Clover, softly.

“Why, of course! Doesn’t it seem too sweet? Both our mothers!”

“There!” cried Amy, “you are going to cry too, Tanta! I thought weddings were nice funny things. I never supposed they made people feel badly. I sha’n’t ever let Mabel get married, I think. But she’ll have to stay a little girl always in that case, for I certainly won’t have her an old maid.”

“What do you know about old maids, midget?” asked Clover.

“Why, Miss Clover, I have seen lots of them. There was that one at the Pension Suisse; you remember, Tanta? And

the two on the steamer when we came home. And there's Miss Fitz who made my blue frock; Ellen said she was a regular old maid. I never mean to let Mabel be like that."

"I don't think there's the least danger," remarked Katy, glancing at the inseparable Mabel, who was perched on Amy's arm, and who did not look a day older than she had done eighteen months previously. "Amy, we're going to make wedding-cake next week,—heaps and heaps of wedding-cake. Don't you want to come and help?"

"Why, of course I do. What fun! Which day may I come?"

The cake-making did really turn out fun. Many hands made light work of what would have been a formidable job for one or two. It was all done gradually. Johnnie cut the golden citron quarters into thin transparent slices in the sitting-room one morning while the others were sewing, and reading Tennyson aloud. Elsie and Amy made a regular frolic of the currant-washing. Katy, with Debby's assistance, weighed and measured; and the mixture was enthusiastically stirred by Alexander, with the "spade" which he had invented, in a large new wash-tub. Then came the baking, which for two days filled the house with spicy, plum-puddingy odors; then the great feat of icing the big square loaves; and then the cutting up, in which all took part. There was much careful measurement that the slices might be an exact fit; and the kitchen rang with bright laughter and chat as Katy and Clover wielded the sharp bread-knives, and the others fitted the portions into their boxes, and tied the ribbons in crisp little bows. Many delicious crumbs and odd corners and fragments fell to the share of the younger workers; and altogether the occasion struck Amy as so enjoyable that she announced—with her mouth full—that she had changed her mind, and that Mabel might get married as often as she pleased, if she would

have cake like *that* every time,—a liberality of permission which Mabel listened to with her invariable waxen smile.

When all was over, and the last ribbons tied, the hundreds of little boxes were stacked in careful piles on a shelf of the inner closet of the doctor’s office to wait till they were wanted,—an arrangement which naughty Clover pronounced eminently suitable, since there should always be a doctor close at hand where there was so much wedding-cake. But before all this was accomplished, came what Katy, in imitation of one of Miss Edgeworth’s heroines, called “The Day of Happy Letters.”

Chapter II.

The Day of Happy Letters

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The arrival of the morning boat with letters and newspapers from the East was the great event of the day in Burnet. It was due at eleven o’clock; and everybody, consciously or unconsciously, was on the lookout for it. The gentlemen were at the office bright and early, and stood chatting with each other, and fingering the keys of their little drawers till the rattle of the shutter announced that the mail was distributed. Their wives and daughters at home, meanwhile, were equally in a state of expectation, and whatever they might be doing kept ears and eyes on the alert for the step on the gravel and the click of the latch which betokened the arrival of the family news-bringer.

Doctors cannot command their time like other people, and Dr. Carr was often detained by his patients, and made late for the mail, so it was all the pleasanter a surprise when on the great day of the cake-baking he came in earlier than usual, with his hands quite full of letters and parcels. All the girls made a rush for him at once; but he fended them off with an elbow, while with teasing slowness he read the addresses on the envelopes.

“Miss Carr—Miss Carr—Miss Katherine Carr—Miss Carr again; four for you, Katy. Dr. P. Carr,—a bill and a newspaper, I perceive; all that an old country doctor with a daughter about to be married ought to expect, I suppose. Miss Clover E. Carr,—one for the ‘Confidante in white linen.’ Here, take it, Clovy. Miss Carr again. Katy, you have the lion’s share. Miss Joanna Carr,—in the unmistakable handwriting of Miss Inches. Miss Katherine Carr, care Dr.

Carr. That looks like a wedding present, Katy. Miss Elsie Carr; Cecy's hand, I should say. Miss Carr once more,—from the conquering hero, judging from the post-mark. Dr. Carr,—another newspaper, and—hollo!—one more for Miss Carr. Well, children, I hope for once you are satisfied with the amount of your correspondence. My arm fairly aches with the weight of it. I hope the letters are not so heavy inside as out."

"I am quite satisfied, Papa, thank you," said Katy, looking up with a happy smile from Ned's letter, which she had torn open first of all. "Are you going, dear?" She laid her packages down to help him on with his coat. Katy never forgot her father.

"Yes, I am going. Time and rheumatism wait for no man. You can tell me your news when I come back."

It is not fair to peep into love letters, so I will only say of Ned's that it was very long, very entertaining,—Katy thought,—and contained the pleasant information that the "Natchitoches" was to sail four days after it was posted, and would reach New York a week sooner than any one had dared to hope. The letter contained several other things as well, which showed Katy how continually she had been in his thoughts,—a painting on rice paper, a dried flower or two, a couple of little pen-and-ink sketches of the harbor of Santa Lucia and the shipping, and a small cravat of an odd convent lace folded very flat and smooth. Altogether it was a delightful letter, and Katy read it, as it were, in leaps, her eyes catching at the salient points, and leaving the details to be dwelt upon when she should be alone.

This done, she thrust the letter into her pocket, and proceeded to examine the others. The first was in Cousin Helen's clear, beautiful handwriting:—

DEAR KATY,—If any one had told us ten years ago that in this particular year of grace you would be getting ready to be married, and I preparing to come to your wedding, I think we should have listened with some incredulity, as to an agreeable fairy tale which could not possibly come true. We didn’t look much like it, did we,—you in your big chair and I on my sofa? Yet here we are! When your letter first reached me it seemed a sort of impossible thing that I should accept your invitation; but the more I thought about it the more I felt as if I must, and now things seem to be working round to that end quite marvellously. I have had a good winter, but the doctor wishes me to try the experiment of the water cure again which benefited me so much the summer of your accident. This brings me in your direction; and I don’t see why I might not come a little earlier than I otherwise should, and have the great pleasure of seeing you married, and making acquaintance with Lieutenant Worthington. That is, if you are perfectly sure that to have at so busy a time a guest who, like the Queen of Spain, has the disadvantage of being without legs, will not be more care than enjoyment. Think seriously over this point, and don’t send for me unless you are certain. Meanwhile, I am making ready. Alex and Emma and little Helen—who is a pretty big Helen now—are to be my escorts as far as Buffalo on their way to Niagara. After that is all plain sailing, and Jane Carter and I can manage very well for ourselves. It seems like a dream to think that I may see you all

so soon; but it is such a pleasant one that I would not wake up on any account.

I have a little gift which I shall bring you myself, my Katy; but I have a fancy also that you shall wear some trifling thing on your wedding-day which comes from me, so for fear of being forestalled I will say now, please don’t buy any stockings for the occasion, but wear the pair which go with this, for the sake of your loving

Cousin Helen.

“These must be they,” cried Elsie, pouncing on one of the little packages. “May I cut the string, Katy?”

Permission was granted; and Elsie cut the string. It was indeed a pair of beautiful white silk stockings embroidered in an open pattern, and far finer than anything which Katy would have thought of choosing for herself.

“Don’t they look exactly like Cousin Helen?” she said, fondling them. “Her things always are choicer and prettier than anybody’s else, somehow. I can’t think how she does it, when she never by any chance goes into a shop. Who can this be from, I wonder?”

“This” was the second little package. It proved to contain a small volume bound in white and gold, entitled, “Advice to Brides.” On the fly-leaf appeared this inscription:—

To Katherine Carr, on the occasion of her approaching bridal, from her affectionate teacher,

Marianne Nipson.

1 Timothy, ii. 11.

Clover at once ran to fetch her Testament that she might verify the quotation, and announced with a shriek of laughter that it was: “Let the women learn in silence with all subjection;” while Katy, much diverted, read extracts casually selected from the work, such as: “A wife should receive her husband’s decree without cavil or question, remembering that the husband is the head of the wife, and that in all matters of dispute his opinion naturally and scripturally outweighs her own.”

Or: “‘A soft answer turneth away wrath.’ If your husband comes home fretted and impatient, do not answer him sharply, but soothe him with gentle words and caresses. Strict attention to the minor details of domestic management will often avail to secure peace.”

And again: “Keep in mind the epitaph raised in honor of an exemplary wife of the last century,—‘She never banged the door.’ Qualify yourself for a similar testimonial.”

“Tanta never does bang doors,” remarked Amy, who had come in as this last “elegant extract” was being read.

“No, that’s true; she doesn’t,” said Clover. “Her prevailing vice is to leave them open. I like that truth about a good dinner ‘availing’ to secure peace, and the advice to ‘caress’ your bear when he is at his crossest. Ned never does issue ‘decrees,’ though, I fancy; and on the whole, Katy, I don’t believe Mrs. Nipson’s present is going to be any particular comfort in your future trials. Do read something else to take the taste out of our mouths. We will listen in ‘all subjection.’”

Katy was already deep in a long epistle from Rose.

“This is too delicious,” she said; “do listen.” And she began again at the beginning:—