

***SUSAN
COOLIDGE***

***WHAT
KATY
DID
NEXT***

Susan Coolidge

What Katy Did Next

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She paid a visit to the little garden

This Story is Dedicated
TO
THE MANY LITTLE GIRLS

(SOME OF THEM GROWN TO BE GREAT GIRLS NOW),

*Who, during the last twelve years, have begged that
something more might be told them about KATY
CARR, and what she did after leaving school.*

Chapter I.

An Unexpected Guest

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The September sun was glinting cheerfully into a pretty bedroom furnished with blue. It danced on the glossy hair and bright eyes of two girls, who sat together hemming ruffles for a white muslin dress. The half-finished skirt of the dress lay on the bed; and as each crisp ruffle was completed, the girls added it to the snowy heap, which looked like a drift of transparent clouds or a pile of foamy white-of-egg beaten stiff enough to stand alone.

These girls were Clover and Elsie Carr, and it was Clover's first evening dress for which they were hemming ruffles. It was nearly two years since a certain visit made by Johnnie to Inches Mills, of which some of you have read in "Nine Little Goslings;" and more than three since Clover and Katy had returned home from the boarding-school at Hillsover.

Clover was now eighteen. She was a very small Clover still, but it would have been hard to find anywhere a prettier little maiden than she had grown to be. Her skin was so exquisitely fair that her arms and wrists and shoulders, which were round and dimpled like a baby's, seemed cut out of daisies or white rose leaves. Her thick, brown hair waved and coiled gracefully about her head. Her smile was peculiarly sweet; and the eyes, always Clover's chief beauty, had still that pathetic look which made them irresistible to tender-hearted people.

Elsie, who adored Clover, considered her as beautiful as girls in books, and was proud to be permitted to hem ruffles for the dress in which she was to burst upon the world.

Though, as for that, not much “bursting” was possible in Burnet, where tea-parties of a middle-aged description, and now and then a mild little dance, represented “gayety” and “society.” Girls “came out” very much, as the sun comes out in the morning,—by slow degrees and gradual approaches, with no particular one moment which could be fixed upon as having been the crisis of the joyful event.

“There,” said Elsie, adding another ruffle to the pile on the bed,—“there’s the fifth done. It’s going to be ever so pretty, I think. I’m glad you had it all white; it’s a great deal nicer.”

“Cecy wanted me to have a blue bodice and sash,” said Clover, “but I wouldn’t. Then she tried to persuade me to get a long spray of pink roses for the skirt.”

“I’m so glad you didn’t! Cecy was always crazy about pink roses. I only wonder she didn’t wear them when she was married!”

Yes; the excellent Cecy, who at thirteen had announced her intention to devote her whole life to teaching Sunday School, visiting the poor, and setting a good example to her more worldly contemporaries, had actually forgotten these fine resolutions, and before she was twenty had become the wife of Sylvester Slack, a young lawyer in a neighboring town! Cecy’s wedding and wedding-clothes, and Cecy’s house-furnishing had been the great excitement of the preceding year in Burnet; and a fresh excitement had come since in the shape of Cecy’s baby, now about two months old, and named “Katherine Clover,” after her two friends. This made it natural that Cecy and her affairs should still be of interest in the Carr household; and Johnnie, at the time we write of, was making her a week’s visit.

“She *was* rather wedded to them,” went on Clover, pursuing the subject of the pink roses. “She was almost

vexed when I wouldn't buy the spray. But it cost lots, and I didn't want it in the least, so I stood firm. Besides, I always said that my first party dress should be plain white. Girls in novels always wear white to their first balls; and fresh flowers are a great deal prettier, any way, than artificial. Katy says she'll give me some violets to wear."

"Oh, will she? That will be lovely!" cried the adoring Elsie. "Violets look just like you, somehow. Oh, Clover, what sort of a dress do you think I shall have when I grow up and go to parties and things? Won't it be awfully interesting when you and I go out to choose it?"

Just then the noise of some one running upstairs quickly made the sisters look up from their work. Footsteps are very significant at times, and these footsteps suggested haste and excitement.

Another moment, the door opened, and Katy dashed in, calling out, "Papa!—Elsie, Clover, where's papa?"

"He went over the river to see that son of Mr. White's who broke his leg. Why, what's the matter?" asked Clover.

"Is somebody hurt?" inquired Elsie, startled at Katy's agitated looks.

"No, not hurt, but poor Mrs. Ashe is in such trouble."

Mrs. Ashe, it should be explained, was a widow who had come to Burnet some months previously, and had taken a pleasant house not far from the Carrs'. She was a pretty, lady-like woman, with a particularly graceful, appealing manner, and very fond of her one child, a little girl. Katy and papa both took a fancy to her at once; and the families had grown neighborly and intimate in a short time, as people occasionally do when circumstances are favorable.

"I'll tell you all about it in a minute," went on Katy. "But first I must find Alexander, and send him off to meet papa and beg him to hurry home." She went to the head of the

stairs as she spoke, and called "Debby! Debby!" Debby answered. Katy gave her direction, and then came back again to the room where the other two were sitting.

"Now," she said, speaking more collectedly, "I must explain as fast as I can, for I have got to go back. You know that Mrs. Ashe's little nephew is here for a visit, don't you?"

"Yes, he came on Saturday."

"Well, he was ailing all day yesterday, and to-day he is worse, and she is afraid it is scarlet-fever. Luckily, Amy was spending the day with the Uphams yesterday, so she scarcely saw the boy at all; and as soon as her mother became alarmed, she sent her out into the garden to play, and hasn't let her come indoors since, so she can't have been exposed to any particular danger yet. I went by the house on my way down street, and there sat the poor little thing all alone in the arbor, with her dolly in her lap, looking so disconsolate. I spoke to her over the fence, and Mrs. Ashe heard my voice, and opened the upstairs window and called to me. She said Amy had never had the fever, and that the very idea of her having it frightened her to death. She is such a delicate child, you know."

"Oh, poor Mrs. Ashe!" cried Clover; "I am so sorry for her! Well, Katy, what did you do?"

"I hope I didn't do wrong, but I offered to bring Amy here. Papa won't object, I am almost sure."

"Why, of course he won't. Well?"

"I am going back now to fetch Amy. Mrs. Ashe is to let Ellen, who hasn't been in the room with the little boy, pack a bagful of clothes and put it out on the steps, and I shall send Alexander for it by and by. You can't think how troubled poor Mrs. Ashe was. She couldn't help crying when she said that Amy was all she had left in the world. And I nearly cried too, I was so sorry for her. She was so relieved when I said that

we would take Amy. You know she has a great deal of confidence in papa.”

“Yes, and in you too. Where will you put Amy to sleep, Katy?”

“What do you think would be best? In Dorry’s room?”

“I think she’d better come in here with you, and I’ll go into Dorry’s room. She is used to sleeping with her mother, you know, and she would be lonely if she were left to herself.”

“Perhaps that will be better, only it is a great bother for you, Clovy dear.”

“I don’t mind,” responded Clover, cheerfully. “I rather like to change about and try a new room once in a while. It’s as good as going on a journey—almost.”

She pushed aside the half-finished dress as she spoke, opened a drawer, took out its contents, and began to carry them across the entry to Dorry’s room, doing everything with the orderly deliberation that was characteristic of whatever Clover did. Her preparations were almost complete before Katy returned, bringing with her little Amy Ashe.

Amy was a tall child of eight, with a frank, happy face, and long light hair hanging down her back. She looked like the pictures of “Alice in Wonderland;” but just at that moment it was a very woful little Alice indeed that she resembled, for her cheeks were stained with tears and her eyes swollen with recent crying.

“Why, what is the matter?” cried kind little Clover, taking Amy in her arms, and giving her a great hug. “Aren’t you glad that you are coming to make us a visit? We are.”

“Mamma didn’t kiss me for good-by,” sobbed the little girl. “She didn’t come downstairs at all. She just put her head out of the window and said, ‘Good-by; Amy, be very

good, and don't make Miss Carr any trouble,' and then she went away. I never went anywhere before without kissing mamma for good-by."

"Mamma was afraid to kiss you for fear she might give you the fever," explained Katy, taking her turn as a comforter. "It wasn't because she forgot. She felt worse about it than you did, I imagine. You know the thing she cares most for is that you shall not be ill as your cousin Walter is. She would rather do anything than have that happen. As soon as he gets well she will kiss you dozens of times, see if she doesn't. Meanwhile, she says in this note that you must write her a little letter every day, and she will hang a basket by a string out of the window, and you and I will go and drop the letters into the basket, and stand by the gate and see her pull it up. That will be funny, won't it? We will play that you are my little girl, and that you have a real mamma and a make-believe mamma."

"Shall I sleep with you?" demanded Amy,

"Yes, in that bed over there."

"It's a pretty bed," pronounced Amy after examining it gravely for a moment. "Will you tell me a story every morning?"



["She was having the measles on the back shelf of the closet, you know."]

"If you don't wake me up too early. My stories are always sleepy till seven o'clock. Let us see what Ellen has packed in that bag, and then I'll give you some drawers of your own, and we will put the things away."

The bag was full of neat little frocks and underclothes stuffed hastily in all together. Katy took them out, smoothing the folds, and crimping the tumbled ruffles with her fingers. As she lifted the last skirt, Amy, with a cry of joy, pounced on something that lay beneath it.

"It is Maria Matilda," she said, "I'm glad of that. I thought Ellen would forget her, and the poor child wouldn't know what to do with me and her little sister not coming to see her for so long. She was having the measles on the back

shelf of the closet, you know, and nobody would have heard her if she had cried ever so loud.”

“What a pretty face she has!” said Katy, taking the doll out of Amy’s hands.

“Yes, but not so pretty as Mabel. Miss Upham says that Mabel is the prettiest child she ever saw. Look, Miss Clover,” lifting the other doll from the table where she had laid it; “hasn’t she got *sweet* eyes? She’s older than Maria Matilda, and she knows a great deal more. She’s begun on French verbs!”

“Not really! Which ones?”

“Oh, only ‘J’aime, tu aimes, il aime,’ you know,—the same that our class is learning at school. She hasn’t tried any but that. Sometimes she says it quite nicely, but sometimes she’s very stupid, and I have to scold her.” Amy had quite recovered her spirits by this time.

“Are these the only dolls you have?”

“Oh, please don’t call them *that!*” urged Amy. “It hurts their feelings dreadfully. I never let them know that they are dolls. They think that they are real children, only sometimes when they are very bad I use the word for a punishment. I’ve got several other children. There’s old Ragazza. My uncle named her, and she’s made of rag, but she has such bad rheumatism that I don’t play with her any longer; I just give her medicine. Then there’s Effie Deans, she’s only got one leg; and Mopsa the Fairy, she’s a tiny one made out of china; and Peg of Linkinvaddy,—but she don’t count, for she’s all come to pieces.”

“What very queer names your children have!” said Elsie, who had come in during the enumeration.

“Yes; Uncle Ned named them. He’s a very funny uncle, but he’s nice. He’s always so much interested in my children.”

“There’s papa now!” cried Katy; and she ran downstairs to meet him.

“Did I do right?” she asked anxiously after she had told her story.

“Yes, my dear, perfectly right,” replied Dr. Carr. “I only hope Amy was taken away in time. I will go round at once to see Mrs. Ashe and the boy; and, Katy, keep away from me when I come back, and keep the others away, till I have changed my coat.”

It is odd how soon and how easily human beings accustom themselves to a new condition of things. When sudden illness comes, or sudden sorrow, or a house is burned up, or blown down by a tornado, there are a few hours or days of confusion and bewilderment, and then people gather up their wits and their courage and set to work to repair damages. They clear away ruins, plant, rebuild, very much as ants whose hill has been trodden upon, after running wildly about for a little while, begin all together to reconstruct the tiny cone of sand which is so important in their eyes. In a very short time the changes which at first seem so sad and strange become accustomed and matter-of-course things which no longer surprise us.

It seemed to the Carrs after a few days as if they had always had Amy in the house with them. Papa’s daily visit to the sick-room, their avoidance of him till after he had “changed his coat,” Amy’s lessons and games of play, her dressing and undressing, the walks with the make-believe mamma, the dropping of notes into the little basket, seemed part of a system of things which had been going on for a long, long time, and which everybody would miss should they suddenly stop.

But they by no means suddenly stopped. Little Walter Ashe’s case proved to be rather a severe one; and after he

had begun to mend, he caught cold somehow and was taken worse again. There were some serious symptoms, and for a few days Dr. Carr did not feel sure how things would turn. He did not speak of his anxiety at home, but kept silence and a cheerful face, as doctors know how to do. Only Katy, who was more intimate with her father than the rest, guessed that things were going gravely at the other house, and she was too well trained to ask questions. The threatening symptoms passed off, however, and little Walter slowly got better; but it was a long convalescence, and Mrs. Ashe grew thin and pale before he began to look rosy. There was no one on whom she could devolve the charge of the child. His mother was dead; his father, an overworked business man, had barely time to run up once a week to see about him; there was no one at his home but a housekeeper, in whom Mrs. Ashe had not full confidence. So the good aunt denied herself the sight of her own child, and devoted her strength and time to Walter; and nearly two months passed, and still little Amy remained at Dr. Carr's.

She was entirely happy there. She had grown very fond of Katy, and was perfectly at home with the others. Phil and Johnnie, who had returned from her visit to Cecy, were by no means too old or too proud to be play-fellows to a child of eight; and with all the older members of the family Amy was a chosen pet. Debby baked turnovers, and twisted cinnamon cakes into all sorts of fantastic shapes to please her; Alexander would let her drive if she happened to sit on the front seat of the carryall; Dr. Carr was seldom so tired that he could not tell her a story,—and nobody told such nice stories as Dr. Carr, Amy thought; Elsie invented all manner of charming games for the hour before bedtime; Clover made wonderful capes and bonnets for Mabel and Maria Matilda; and Katy—Katy did all sorts of things.

Katy had a peculiar gift with children which is not easy to define. Some people possess it, and some do not; it cannot be learned, it comes by nature. She was bright and firm and equable all at once. She both amused and influenced them. There was something about her which excited the childish imagination, and always they felt her sympathy. Amy was a tractable child, and intelligent beyond her age, but she was never quite so good with any one as with Katy. She followed her about like a little lover; she lavished upon her certain special words and caresses which she gave to no one else; and would kneel on her lap, patting Katy's shoulders with her soft hand, and cooing up into her face like a happy dove, for a half-hour together. Katy laughed at these demonstrations, but they pleased her very much. She loved to be loved, as all affectionate people do, but most of all to be loved by a child.

At last, the long convalescence ended, Walter was carried away to his father, with every possible precaution against fatigue and exposure, and an army of workpeople was turned into Mrs. Ashe's house. Plaster was scraped and painted, wall-papers torn down, mattresses made over, and clothing burned. At last Dr. Carr pronounced the premises in a sanitary condition, and Mrs. Ashe sent for her little girl to come home again.

Amy was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing her mother; but at the last moment she clung to Katy and cried as if her heart would break.

"I want you too," she said. "Oh, if Dr. Carr would only let you come and live with me and mamma, I should be so happy! I shall be so lone-ly!"

"Nonsense!" cried Clover. "Lonely with mamma, and those poor children of yours who have been wondering all these weeks what has become of you! They'll want a great

deal of attention at first, I am sure; medicine and new clothes and whippings,—all manner of things. You remember I promised to make a dress for Effie Deans out of that blue and brown plaid like Johnnie's balmoral. I mean to begin it to-morrow."

"Oh, will you?"—forgetting her grief—"that will be lovely. The skirt needn't be *very* full, you know. Effie doesn't walk much, because of only having one leg. She will be *so* pleased, for she hasn't had a new dress I don't know when."

Consoled by the prospect of Effie's satisfaction, Amy departed quite cheerfully, and Mrs. Ashe was spared the pain of seeing her only child in tears on the first evening of their reunion. But Amy talked so constantly of Katy, and seemed to love her so much, that it put a plan into her mother's head which led to important results, as the next CHAPTER will show.

Chapter II.

An Invitation

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It is a curious fact, and makes life very interesting, that, generally speaking, none of us have any expectation that things are going to happen till the very moment when they do happen. We wake up some morning with no idea that a great happiness is at hand, and before night it has come, and all the world is changed for us; or we wake bright and cheerful, with never a guess that clouds of sorrow are lowering in our sky, to put all the sunshine out for a while, and before noon all is dark. Nothing whispers of either the joy or the grief. No instinct bids us to delay or to hasten the opening of the letter or telegram, or the lifting of the latch of the door at which stands the messenger of good or ill. And because it may be, and often is, happy tidings that come, and joyful things which happen, each fresh day as it dawns upon us is like an unread story, full of possible interest and adventure, to be made ours as soon as we have cut the pages and begun to read.

Nothing whispered to Katy Carr, as she sat at the window mending a long rent in Johnnie's school coat, and saw Mrs. Ashe come in at the side gate and ring the office bell, that the visit had any special significance for her. Mrs. Ashe often did come to the office to consult Dr. Carr. Amy might not be quite well, Katy thought, or there might be a letter with something about Walter in it, or perhaps matters had gone wrong at the house, where paperers and painters were still at work. So she went calmly on with her darning, drawing the "ravelling," with which her needle was threaded, carefully in and out, and taking nice even stitches without